

October 22, 1969

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Another in a series)

GOD AND NATURAL PHENOMENA

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The following paragraph was in an article in the Washington Post concerning the destructiveness of hurricane Camille on the coast of Mississippi and the subsequent floods in Virginia:

What strikes me as ludicrous is the suggestion . . . that we pray for the survivors. If God has a personal hand in all this (which I do not think) why did he permit such death and terror and horror and heartache in the first place, and if he didn't have anything to do with it, what is the basis for the presumptuousness of prayer?

These are old and to some people disturbing questions. Many Christians from time to time have asked the same or similar questions.

The questions can be restated somewhat as follows: (1) How is God related to natural phenomena such as hurricanes and floods? (2) Why pray? As implied in the statement from the Post the two questions are very closely related.

Many are disturbed when natural catastrophes occur because they have a distorted conception concerning the relations of God to such catastrophes. It is unfortunate but much teaching and preaching has led some people to attribute every natural phenomenon to the direct if not miraculous working of the Lord. Many believe that God "sends" the hurricane and the flood.

But these and most other occurrences in the natural order can be explained through the operation of certain basic laws. We know, for example, that there is a "hurricane season," and that there is a general geographic area where most of the hurricanes that hit the United States start or are spawned.

What is true of hurricanes and floods is true of other natural phenomenon. Laws may be known or unknown that explain these phenomena, but in the natural order there is a cause for every effect.

It is true that God is the creator of the world and of the laws that govern that world. He sees fit, however, with rare exceptions to let the laws operate or function. This gives us a predictable universe in which to live, and most of us would rather live in such a universe.

Some people may contend that the preceding position makes God "an absentee landlord." This is definitely not true. Notice above the words "with rare exceptions." Man cannot dictate the way God works.

When he wants to, God can step into the process and change the operation of his laws. What he has created he can control. When he does step in in some unusual way, which is a rarity, we can be sure that he has some high and holy purpose in mind. In other words, a lower law may be set aside for a higher law.

There is another sense in which God is not "an absentee landlord." We know by the kind of God revealed in the scriptures and particularly by the kind of life Jesus lived that God is concerned about people.

He reaches out in love to people, particularly people who suffer. This is one reason why we can and should pray for the survivors of a hurricane or a flood and for people in general who suffer regardless of cause.

The main thrust of our prayers for our own as well as for others should not be that God will build a wall of protection around them that will shield them from the physical and destructive forces of the world. Rather, the burden of our prayers should be that whatever comes with life that the peace that passes understanding and the grace of God that is sufficient may be ours and theirs.

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October 22, 1969

**Criswell Blasts Vietnam
Moratorium Participants**

DALLAS (BP)--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention, W. A. Criswell, blasted participants in the Vietnam Moratorium Day demonstrations (Oct. 15) during a Sunday morning sermon at the First Baptist Church here where he is pastor.

"It's an insult," Criswell cried in his sermon. He decried demonstrations "our own men are bathing the soil of Vietnam in their own blood...and our men over there in Paris at the peace conferences...trying to negotiate some kind of cessation to these hostilities."

Criswell likened the demonstrators to those seen and heard in Russia, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany.

He quoted the North Vietnamese premier who addressed the moratorium day participants as "Dear American Friend: our heroic comrades in arms..."

The outspoken pastor and president of the 11 million-member convention quoted a young American Seabee serving in Vietnam who warned Americans they will be sorry later if there is ever a battle on American soil.

Criswell pleaded, "Somewhere, sometime there has to be a line drawn. The Communist aggressor can go just so far and no further. Where are you going to draw that line? Are you going to draw it in Thailand and South Vietnam? Or are you going to pull back and draw it in the Philippines...at Hawaii...at the western coast of California...at the western line of Texas, or are you going to pull back still further and draw it at the Mississippi River? Where are you going to stand? Somewhere--sometime--America has to stand!"

At that point, Criswell's impassioned remarks prompted an outburst of applause among the members of the church attending. As the applause subsided, Criswell continued:

"This is the most critical hour in American history...we are witnessing the dissolving, the dissolution of all those principles that come out of the blessed mind of God and out of his holy book.

In closing Criswell said, "If America becomes like that, anybody can sweep us away...destroy us...come into our country, infiltrate us, leave us in shreds! That's why we need to preach and teach the word and the will of God. You cannot stand without the Lord. If you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything."

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World Missions Conference
Open To Youth, Godfrey Says

10/22/69

MEMPHIS (BP)--Youth and youth groups will be welcome at the 1970 World Missions Conference at Glorieta Baptist Assembly next summer, since new rules concerning youth attendance at the assemblies do not apply to that conference, a Baptist leader said here.

Norman Godfrey, assistant to the executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, made the statement, commenting on new rules just announced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, concerning youth assembly attendance.

A few days earlier, the Sunday School Board had announced a change in the conditions for attendance by youth groups, saying that most of the conferences are designed and planned for adult church leaders, not youth.

The rules stated that every youth under 18 must be accompanied by his parents in order to attend all conferences except the youth leadership, church recreation, foreign and home mission, and Bible conference.

Godfrey said that the announcement did not mention the World Missions Conference at Glorieta Baptist Assembly specifically, but said conferences holding special activities for youth would continue to invite them as in the past.

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An official of the Sunday School Board said that the listing of World Missions Conference as an exception was an oversight, and said that the general rule requiring one adult counselor for every five boys and one for every five girls would apply to the World Missions Conference.

The conference is sponsored jointly by the SBC Brotherhood Commission and the Woman's Missionary Union Auxiliary to the SBC.

Godfrey said that youth groups have been one of the main points of emphasis during past World Missions Conferences, "and we want all youth and their leaders to know they are as welcome as ever during the conference."

The conference alternates annually between Glorieta and Ridgecrest Baptist assemblies located in Glorieta, N.M., and Ridgecrest, N.C. Both assemblies are owned and operated by the Sunday School Board.

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Double Tragedy Hits
Baptist World Leader

10/22/69

OAK PARK, ILL. (BP)--A double tragedy struck a Baptist World Alliance official from Washington, D.C., when his wife and mother-in-law were brutally killed in a hotel room here Oct. 22.

Apparently beaten to death were Mrs. Christine A. Woyke, 58, and her mother Mrs. Anna Jacobian, over 90. They were found by police during the early morning hours of Oct. 22. Mrs. Woyke was dead, and Mrs. Jacobian died later.

Mrs. Woyke was the wife of Frank H. Woyke, an associate secretary of the Baptist World Alliance since July, 1968. Prior to that he was executive secretary of the North American Baptist General Conference for 22 years, with offices in Forest Park, Ill., a suburb of Chicago.

The Woykes were here in response to a call from their son, Frank Jr., 26, who had indicated that he needed mental help. Their plan was to bring him back to their home in Washington, D.C., for psychiatric treatment.

Woyke and his son were rooming together at the hotel, and the two women were staying together in a nearby room. During the night, Frank Jr., left his room but did not return. He was found in a closet in the women's hotel room by police when they discovered the beaten bodies.

There was no known previous history of mental illness by Frank Jr., prior to the tragedy here.

Woyke's work as associate secretary of the Baptist World Alliance includes responsibility for the study commissions, the North American Baptist Fellowship, and the Baptist World relief work.

Funeral services for Mrs. Woyke and Mrs. Jacobian were held in Forest Park, Ill., with interment in Stratford, Conn.

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