



FEATURES
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The Law, Marijuana
& Public Drunkenness

By Harry N. Hollis Jr.
For Baptist Press

Does society have the right to control what drugs we use and how we use them?

Should society prohibit the use of marijuana?

Is public drunkenness a crime for which people should be arrested?

These questions deserve the careful attention of Christians. Many people say the use of marijuana is at worst a victimless crime. No one is really involved, they say, except the drug user. Further, they say, it is futile to tie up police and the courts by arresting drunks. Such arrests will not change their behavior, they argue.

This article opposes the view that marijuana use and public drunkenness are simply victimless crimes. Marijuana and alcohol will serve as examples as we explore the place of the law in the non-medicinal use of drugs.

Legalization of marijuana is a subject that triggers emotional responses. Here are some answers to arguments favoring legalization:

1. "Marijuana is a harmless drug; therefore, it should be legal." No doubt marijuana does not lead to all the maladies that its opponents have sometimes claimed. But to say it is harmless is to ignore question marks being raised by new scientific data. All the evidence is not in, but there are already indications that marijuana is harmful to bodies and personalities.

2. "Marijuana should be legal because it is less harmful than alcohol, which is already legal." This argument is very weak, because it could very easily lead to the creation of a "pot" culture to add to our alcohol culture problem.

The truth is that if alcohol were not now legal, it would not be made so. It has brought too much damage to too many lives. We do not need to add "pot" problems to those already created by alcohol.

3. "The penalties for using marijuana are too severe, so the laws should be abolished." Where penalties are inappropriate, the laws should be changed. But this is no excuse for removing the laws entirely. The removal of "pot" laws gives social sanction to its use.

4. "The prohibition of alcohol did not work, and marijuana prohibition won't work either." Here is a defeatist approach. If marijuana is harmful to individuals and society, then American society has the will and the resources to make the laws work.

Marijuana should not be legalized:

1. It is not completely a harmless drug. Research is continuing but already there is evidence that marijuana does lead to a loss of coordination which can cause accidents, especially automobile accidents. The National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse said heavy users may suffer from organ injury, especially the diminution of pulmonary functions. With such possibilities, it would be foolish to legalize marijuana.

2. Marijuana use may lead to the use of other more dangerous drugs. Many people who use such drugs as heroin indicate that they started on "pot" or alcohol. Although there are other reasons why people turn to more harmful drugs, the use of marijuana is sometimes a link in the chain of serious drug abuse.

3. Marijuana use can lead to the loss of motivation and a desire for withdrawal. Apathy and lack of interest can result from prolonged use. There is already too much apathy in this country. Certainly, we do not need any drug which will lead to less involvement in the life of our society.

4. If marijuana is legalized, more people will feel free to experiment with it. Sanctioned by the law, they may be influenced to try it "for kicks" or curiosity. The more opportunities people of all ages have to use this drug, the more likely they are to do so.

5. The legalization of marijuana will add to drug problems in our American society. It does not make sense to pave the way for a "pot" culture when we are already overwhelmed by the problems that alcohol is creating. To legalize marijuana is to pile drug problems on top of drug problems.

It does not make sense to legalize marijuana. It is a drug our culture should shun. As Dr. Henlee Barnette says in his book "The Drug Crisis and the Church," "Our laws on marijuana must be updated, humanized and more adequately enforced."

Where penalties for the use of marijuana are too severe they should be changed. The purpose of "pot" laws is not to make criminals out of young people or adults but to discourage the use of a harmful drug.

Although, laws governing marijuana should not be abolished, this does not mean we should rely primarily on laws to deal with the drug. The laws will be ineffective unless institutions such as churches, schools, and homes work to check the use of this drug.

No one doubts that drunkenness is a problem in America. But should public drunkenness be considered a crime? An increasing number of people say, "No." They argue that such drunkenness places an almost unbearable burden on law enforcement officials.

Besides, many argue, drunkenness harms no one but the person who gets intoxicated; therefore, drunks should not be arrested, they say.

Given the serious social crisis that drunkenness brings, it is unthinkable that actions to correct this problem should be diminished. The fact that it costs a great deal to enforce laws related to drunkenness does not lessen the need for the laws to be enforced. Instead, what is needed is to spend more money on enforcement, so crimes can be combated.

One thing is certain; drunkenness is not a victimless crime. The tragedy, suffering and death caused by drunk drivers, for example, is a national scandal.

People slaughtered or maimed by drunk drivers are certainly victims. People assaulted by belligerent drunks are also victims. To say that drunkenness is victimless is to reflect an insensitivity to the millions of unfortunate victims of alcohol.

Some opponents of public drunkenness laws say such laws have not served to reform the drunks arrested. This is certainly true. What is needed, then, are laws that point toward rehabilitation. The laws should be strong enough to make the person who gets drunk want to seek help.

For example, people arrested for drunken driving should lose their driver's license. A fine is a mere inconvenience, but a lost license can convince a person of the seriousness of a drinking problem.

Laws related to drunkenness need to be changed to point toward rehabilitation, but there is real danger that enforcement of these laws will continue to be de-emphasized. In fact, laws should be more vigorously enforced so that rehabilitation can take place.

Christians must work to see that laws are enforced. But we are also called to share with others the good news about the Christ who gives men and women the power to be free of enslavement to drugs. Christ is the key to a way of life that makes drug dependency unnecessary. (BP)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the final article in a five-part series on contemporary moral issues and the law written by Harry N. Hollis Jr., Ph.D., director of family and special moral concerns for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.



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March 9, 1976

76-44

Dallas Baptist College
Gets \$1.5 Million

DALLAS (BP)--Dallas Baptist College here, which has encountered financial difficulties over the past several years, has become \$1.5 million richer following successful completion of a matching fund drive.

The funds in cash and endowment will be used to retire two debts, which the college has been unable to include in its annual operating budget, and to increase the size of the school's endowment fund for scholarships and other continuing purposes, W. E. Thorn, the college's president, told trustees here.

The matching fund drive was launched by college trustee A. Webb Roberts, who said he would give \$750,000 if the college would raise an additional \$750,000, which it did.

In other action, the trustees named Thomas J. Rector as financial administrator. He joined the college's administration in September as director of institutional research.

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Louisiana College Given
Second \$250,000 Gift

Baptist Press
3/9/76

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--A second quarter million dollar gift in as many weeks has been given to Louisiana College by the children of a Louisiana couple to bring their total memorial gift to \$500,000, the largest single contribution the Baptist college has received in its 70 year history.

Robert L. Lynn, Louisiana College president, said the \$500,000 has been designated by the family for use in a future building project on the campus.

The gift was given in honor of the late Stephen Madison and Jewel Clements English of Lisbon, La., by their five children, all Louisiana College alumni. They are Madge English Stack and Fred English, both of Meridian, Miss.; Nedra English McDonald and Max English, both of Lisbon; and Donna English Walker of Crowley, La.

The family said they were presenting the gift "because of our confidence in what Louisiana College is doing and is going to do in Christian education."

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Poston Resigns College
Presidency for Politics

Baptist Press
3/9/76

BOILING SPRINGS, N. C. (BP)--E. Eugene Poston, president of Gardner-Webb College, a Baptist school here, has resigned to seek the Democratic nomination as congressman from North Carolina's 10th District.

Poston's announcement follows recent announcements by representatives of two other Baptist schools--one a student and one a staff member--that they have succumbed to the call of politics.

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President of Gardner-Webb since 1961, Poston will run against Republican incumbent Rep. James Broyhill, also a Baptist, who is in his seventh term in Congress.

Gardner-Webb trustees have named Thomas J. McGraw, vice president for academic affairs, as acting president. McGraw, who joined the college in 1962 as director of development, said trustees would meet soon to search for a new president.

Meanwhile, E. Frank Stephenson Jr., who has served in development and admissions for the past eight years at Chowan College, Murphreesboro, N. C., has announced as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor in North Carolina.

And in Plainview, Tex., Mark Smith, 21, a junior business administration major at Wayland Baptist College, has filed as a candidate for Hale County commissioner, precinct three.

Poston said he has tried "to avoid this (political) calling" for six years but made the decision after twice hearing Billy Graham's New Year's message that called on Christians to get involved in politics. "I really don't know how this nation has survived the leadership we have in Congress," he said.

"I have completed the work that God called me to do" at Gardner-Webb, said Poston, who first joined the college in 1959 as chairman of the department of religion.

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Board Announces New
Career Guidance Section

Baptist Press
3/8/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School Board has announced establishment of a new career guidance section in response to widespread demands for more aid to pastors and other church staff members.

The new section, implemented "to intensify the board's ongoing work in this area," reflects one of the board's major corporate priorities said board President Grady C. Cothen.

The development of the section by the board's trustees was prompted by requests from a multitude of church and denominational spokesmen.

The section's "mission and ministry is to pastors and other church staff members and their families," said Bob Dale, section supervisor in the board's church administration department.

"We will minister to them throughout their entire ministry career so that they may gain greater effectiveness and fulfillment in their work," he said.

In essence, the section will be involved in four areas of work which have experienced minimum attention by the SBC in the past. These involve guidance and assistance, assessment and counseling, vocational support and resource development for church vocations workers.

According to Dale, the plan of support includes discovering those persons called to Christian ministry through vocational guidance, which involves nurturing and guiding church vocations workers throughout their ministry careers. The second phase calls for strengthening these workers through career assessment.

Thirdly, the section will encourage this group through coordination of a total pastoral support system, including family, economic, emotional and denominational support. The coordination of a nation-wide clinical counseling/referral network is also included.

"We are currently working to develop a list of referral sources which can provide local clinical counseling with a religious values foundation," says Dale. "We will establish a national referral network allowing us to tell pastors and other church staff members where to receive aid with their problems in their local area. This service includes clinical, family and vocational counseling."

The fourth purpose of the section is to provide a ministry research service designed to secure and compile research data regarding various aspects of ministry.

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Dale concludes that the pastor's greatest asset is the support of his family.

"The pastor's wife is his most important human resource in helping him cope with problems," he adds. "Along these lines, the section will encourage wives to be involved in pastoral career development and career assessment experiences at the board."

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Foreign Mission Board Sends \$297,000 More to Guatemala

RICHMOND (BP)--Relief funds amounting to \$297,000 to help reconstruction efforts in disaster-stricken Guatemala were appropriated in the March meeting of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board here.

An additional \$7,000 was appropriated for special evangelism projects during the reconstruction period.

In the February meeting, the board appropriated \$100,000 in emergency relief. That money provided immediate shelter, food and medical assistance. The March appropriation brings the total relief aid in Guatemala to \$397,000.

Of the \$297,000 March appropriation, \$176,000 will aid reconstruction of Baptist churches and pastors' homes--\$96,000 inside Guatemala City and \$80,000 outside Guatemala City.

The \$176,000 "will not completely rebuild the churches and pastors' homes," said Charles W. Bryan, the board's area secretary for Middle America and the Caribbean. "The Guatemalan church members, Guatemalan pastors, Southern Baptist missionaries and construction crews from the States will help with the actual labor involved."

Some \$100,000 (\$500 per family) is included in the appropriation to aid 200 families, including 20 Baptist families, in reconstruction of their homes. "A committee will work with each family involved according to established guidelines to assure effective use of the funds," Bryan said.

A public health clinic, completely destroyed in the quake, will be rebuilt with \$15,000 of the appropriation. The Guatemalan government has asked Baptists to rebuild the clinic. Although it will be a government clinic, officials said some indication it was built by Baptists could be placed on the building.

Of the remaining funds, \$5,000 will repair the Baptist Seminary in Guatemala City, which sustained extensive damage, and \$1,000 will repair the damaged Baptist Bookstore and Deposit.

Included in the \$7,000 appropriation for evangelism is money for travel of Spanish-speaking evangelists coming from the States and other countries. Also included is money for Bibles and literature to use in street witnessing and evangelistic services.

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Refugee Resettlement Efforts Are Reviewed

Baptist Press
3/9/76

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists who directed Vietnamese refugee resettlement met here to review what they accomplished and begin plans to do it more effectively in the future, if the occasion arises.

Some 20 persons, including state Baptist convention representatives, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board staff members and home and foreign missionaries who served in the resettlement camps, discussed their efforts that resulted in at least 768 family units and 2,777 refugees sponsored by Southern Baptists.

Those totals represent the number of refugees resettled through Church World Service (CWS) the agency through which the Home Mission Board works in refugee resettlement. However, estimates are that Southern Baptists, working through other agencies, settled at least several hundred more.

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The meeting here dealt with every aspect of the resettlement effort, from accounts of the evacuation in Vietnam to the work of the missionaries in the refugee camps and the resettlement/sponsorship process carried on by the states and the Home Mission Board.

M. Wendell Belew, director of the board's division of missions ministries, who presided over the sessions, said a subcommittee will be named to begin drafting "models" to help guide any future resettlement efforts.

"These models or ready plans," Belew said, "will try to take into consideration every contingency we might face in refugee resettlement--another Vietnam, evacuation of a country where we have no missionaries, the rather routine stream of refugees such as are coming from many countries today, and the kinds of service we feel we can offer in any situation."

"Though it's not likely we ever will face exactly the same situation as we faced with the Vietnamese," he added, "we want to try to be better prepared for that or any other situation."

Belew said that when the subcommittee completes the "models" he likely will circulate them among the other people who attended the meeting here for their suggestions before any final revamping of the refugee resettlement procedure is made.

The Home Mission Board has the assignment from the Southern Baptist Convention for refugee resettlement and has an office of immigration and refugee service in its department of language missions.

The meeting here was called at Belew's request to bring together the persons involved in the resettlement effort to explore ways it could be improved--"to brainstorm in retrospect," he said.

The board's executive director, Arthur B. Rutledge, told the group, "We hope we don't have another need such as this, but if we do we want to be ready."

Rutledge noted that Southern Baptists account for about six percent of the U. S. population but settled only about two percent of the refugees. However, he said, it was probably the best response to such a need ever made by Southern Baptists and, he added, "I want to express my joy over the way local people responded and got involved and showed compassion."

He cited cooperation between the Home and Foreign Mission Boards at "all levels." One foreign missionary, who served in Vietnam, Lewis Myers, has been assigned to the Home Mission Board and is assisting in establishing ministries among the refugees. He reported that 19 congregations are now functioning.

Rutledge and several others praised the part played by Church World Service in refugee resettlement.

Rutledge noted that some criticism had been leveled at the CWS effort, but he said that after some initial confusion the sponsorship system worked smoothly. There was also criticism, he said, that CWS retained a portion of the funds allocated by the federal government for the refugees. Those funds are now being used to meet emergency needs of the refugees, and the wisdom of the policy is evident, he said.

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Southern Baptist Hospital
Observes 50th Anniversary

Baptist Press
3/9/76

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptist Hospital, the first hospital established by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), celebrated its 50th anniversary here, March 8, 1976.

Although the SBC released the hospital from its control in 1971, it "has continued to operate within the original Christian philosophy of its founders," a spokesman said.

In 1926, the main building, consisting of a basement and eight stories, had a capacity of 248 beds with 36 bassinets in the nursery. Land, buildings, equipment and furnishings represented an investment of about \$1,250,000.00.

Today, the teaching hospital employs 1,811 persons in a 670 bed facility valued at about \$30,000,000.00. It serves more than 60,000 patients annually and has 400 physicians on its medical staff.

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