



--FEATURES
produced by Baptist Press

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April 22, 1980

80-66

T. B. Maston: 'Conscience'
Of SBC Writing Again

By Toby Druin

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Spring came to the campus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary recently. And with it came T. B. Maston.

Everyone knew spring would make it. For a long time last fall and winter it looked as if Maston would never get back to the "hill" where he has spent the last 58 years.

Maston suffered a heart attack last October and for weeks it was feared he would not pull through. But gradually he began to improve. He left the hospital and finally his doctor told him it was all right for him to walk the two blocks from his home to his office at the seminary. He is "weak as a kitten," he says, and takes it slowly; but he is back--and he is writing again.

Now 82, Maston retired as professor of Christian ethics at the seminary in 1963. His teachings over the years and his writings--almost 20 books and countless articles--unquestionably have helped shape Southern Baptist thinking and many who view him as the "conscience" of the denomination credit him with much of its progress in ethical issues.

He said when he realized he was going to pull through, he began asking the Lord what He had for him to do.

"I felt whatever time I had, whether a few days, weeks, months or whatever, it belonged to Him," said Maston, who believes a Christian should not fear death.

His work now largely is limited to writing and though he said he doesn't want to sound presumptuous, he had the conviction the Lord wanted him to write on at least two subjects that have burdened him for many years--income inequities among church and denominational staff members, and the trend to adopting secular compensation standards and the menace of materialism with neglect of the poor.

He also wants to write a personal tribute to his wife of over 58 years, Mrs. Essie Mae McDonald Maston, whom he affectionately calls "Mommie."

The heart attack was not his first near brush with death. In 1933 in Connecticut he had a near fatal case of pneumonia. At that time, he said, he felt the Lord came to him and gave him the opportunity to live or die.

"It still is very real to me," he said. "I told the Lord, it is perfectly all right with me to go on, but for the sake of my boys--they were small then--my family and work, which was incomplete, I wanted to live."

His family has always been one of his chief concerns. One son, Eugene, is a teacher at a New York City college. The other, Thomas McDonald, whom the Mastons call "Tom Mc," is handicapped and has remained with them.

He freely admits his time probably is limited. If he has time he wants to complete a book on the Bible and the family and he is contemplating one on the title of "Both, And."

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"One of the chapel messages I can remember--and you don't remember many chapel messages--was a time when Uncle Jeff Ray spoke and his title was "False Alternatives." I don't remember a thing he said, but I have never gotten away from his title. It is not a case of either, or; but both, and."

One of those "both, and" would be evangelism and ethics, he said.

"The truth of the matter is I think a proper conception of evangelism includes ethics--an emphasis on social concerns," he said.

He acknowledged what he calls an "ultraconservative binge" at present to the neglect of ethics. "But I think it is temporary," he said.

Ultraconservatives today, he said, differ from others in the past in better organization and education. "And they are more vocal," he added.

"The thing that bothers me about the ultraconservatives--and you have to use 'ultra'--is that they label a person a liberal when he is liberal on some political or social issue but conservative theologically. There are an awful lot of folks that just think if you are conservative theologically you have to be everywhere else."

Turning to the subject of race relations, Maston said, "We have made tremendous progress in race relations, but we have a long, long way to go. Many blacks don't want to come to our churches, and I don't blame them. We have made some progress, but still in the main they are second class citizens in our churches."

Maston said the racial question now has new angles, especially attitudes toward Hispanics in the Southwest.

"There's this business of the education of the children of undocumented aliens," he said. "I personally think we ought to educate the children if we are going to leave the parents here."

Southern Baptists' biggest problem today, he said, is neglect of the poor, and it is rooted in materialism.

"I feel this very deeply," he said. "It is affecting everything we do--our evangelistic results included. We talk about reasons we have a decline; we better look at this. We are drifting away from the poor people, the common people."

"Some of our buildings repel a lot of the people instead of attracting them. We go in debt so much for some of these buildings and then who are the folks we give our most time to enlisting? The folks who can help pay off the debt, the well-to-do, not the underprivileged, not the poor."

Jesus' messiahship was documented by His proclaiming the gospel to the poor, he said.

Maston gives short shrift to the now often quoted church growth tactic that would have churches reach out to people of like circumstances--"homogeneous" groups of blue-collar or white-collar people.

"Baloney," he said. "That's not a New Testament church. My conception of a New Testament church is that it is composed of all classes--classes that are forgotten within this Christian family, this Christian fellowship."

He feels deeply about pastors, church staff members and denominational employees being paid salaries in accordance with business standards.

Salary differences among ministers are difficult to justify from a biblical standpoint, he said, and added he once advocated a maximum salary for Southern Baptist employees. The rationale that an agency executive should make 40 percent more than others "is just ridiculous in a Christian organization in my viewpoint."

The trend is away from the servant concept, he said. "We simply are getting a little too competitive with the world. How a man in some of these high paying jobs, pastors included, can preach sacrifice and the cross, I don't know."

One verse of Scripture that has gripped his life more than any other in recent years, he said, is I John 2:6--"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

"Jesus walked among the common people," he said. "Take that verse to heart and it will challenge you to the end of life's journey."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Dallas bureau of Baptist Press.

High Court Hears Arguments
In Abortion Funding Battle

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
4/22/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--For the first time since ruling seven years ago that most state abortion laws were too restrictive, the U.S. Supreme Court will decide whether poor women are entitled to publicly financed abortions as a free exercise of religious conscience.

All nine justices of the high court heard arguments April 21 for and against the constitutional validity of the so-called "Hyde Amendment," named after conservative Congressman Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill. It restricts abortion payments under the federally financed Medicaid program to women whose lives are threatened by full-term pregnancies or who can prove promptly reported rape or incest.

This year's Hyde language is even more restrictive than that of previous years because it has deleted danger to the health of the pregnant woman as a sufficient basis for having an abortion.

Earlier this year, U.S. District Court Judge John F. Dooling Jr. of Brooklyn, N.Y., struck down the Hyde Amendment as a violation of the free exercise of religion by poor women. He also ruled the amendment violates the right of indigent pregnant women to equal protection under law and due process of law.

Since 1976, Hyde has enjoyed repeated success in blocking spending bills for the Department of Health and Human Resources (formerly HEW) until Congress consents to his anti-abortion language. Government surveys show that federally-financed abortions have decreased from several hundred thousand to an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 yearly under the restrictions, which Hyde has tacked onto the spending bills.

During two and one-half hours of oral argument on the issue, the justices heard U.S. Solicitor General Wade H. McCree Jr. defend the Hyde Amendment as "rationally related to legitimate governmental interest." Congress, he said, has discretion to fund or deny funding as it chooses.

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McCree said the essence of the government's legitimate interest in the matter is the protection of "potential human life." That interest alone, he declared, "is sufficient reason" for defense of the volatile Hyde provisions.

On the freedom of religion issue, McCree said that the government has "very great difficulty" with Judge Dooling's reasoning. The free exercise of religion guarantee of the First Amendment, the Justice Department's chief lawyer went on, does not obligate the state to finance abortions just as it does not obligate it to provide "religious artifacts."

New York attorney Rhonda Copelon argued on the other side that the key religious question is that of when life begins, an issue "impermissible" for government to decide. She argued that the anti-abortion movement in the U.S. "is essentially religious."

The heart of Copelon's argument, however, centered on the Hyde Amendment's preference of fetal life over maternal life and health. Such a "trade-off," she declared repeatedly, is legally "irrational."

She argued further that to single out abortion as the one medical procedure which Medicaid may not pay for violates the equal protection right of poor women and denies them due process of law.

At stake in the high court's decision over the Hyde Amendment, a ruling expected before the justices adjourn the current term in late June, are both direct federal funding and state Medicaid financing of abortions.

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Ministers' Wives Group
Celebrates 25th Year

Baptist Press
4/22/80

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Three Baptist ministers who have been married for a combined total of 150 years will address the 25th annual luncheon meeting of the Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives at noon, June 10, at the Sheraton St. Louis Hotel.

The speakers are Robert E. Naylor, retired president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and two former Southern Baptist Convention presidents, J.D. Grey, pastor emeritus of the First Baptist Church, New Orleans, and Herschel H. Hobbs, pastor emeritus of the First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City.

Theme for the conference will be "Ministering Through the Years," according to Carolyn Coggin, president of the ministers' wives and wife of James E. Coggin, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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Timothy Fields To Join
Christian Life Commission

Baptist Press
4/22/80

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Timothy J. Fields will become director of communications for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, June 1, according to Foy D. Valentine, executive director.

Fields, 34, is now assistant to the program section director at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, Memphis, Tenn., a position encompassing editorial, public relations and administrative responsibilities. He joined the Brotherhood Commission staff in 1971 as an associate editor of Royal Ambassador boys materials.

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Valentine said Fields will coordinate a program of total communications for the Christian Life Commission. "His excellent training, depth of denominational experience and commitment to the cause of applied Christianity will equip him well for that role," Valentine said.

A native of Wichita, Kan., Fields was an editor, photographer and reporter for the Dispatch Newspapers, weekly and bi-weekly newspapers published by Townsend Communications in Kansas City, Mo., 1969-71; news director at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968-69; reporter and photographer for the Manhattan (Kan.) Daily Mercury, 1965-68; and a photography and reporting intern on the Salina (Kan.) Journal, 1965.

Fields earned a bachelor of science degree in journalism from Kansas State University in 1968, where he was photo editor of the school paper, and is nearing completion of requirements for a master's degree in religious education from Midwestern Seminary.

He currently teaches Sunday School and serves as a deacon at the Raleigh Baptist Church, Memphis. Mrs. Fields, the former Linda Jean Walls of Oklahoma, is director of nursing at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis. They have three children.

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(BP) photo will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Memphis bureau of Baptist Press on 4-23-80.

Carson-Newman Students
Recover From Illness

Baptist Press
4/22/80

JEFFERSON CITY, Tenn. (BP)--Students and staff members at Carson-Newman College who suffered from suspected food poisoning are out of the hospital and the college infirmary, an official of the Baptist college said.

As of April 22, no report had been received by the college from the Tennessee Health Department as to the cause of the illness, which began to affect students on April 14. A local physician diagnosed the cause as salmonella, a form of food poisoning. As a precautionary measure, all suspected food was removed from the college dining hall.

The illness affected the students and staff members to varying degrees, with most of the 300 involved receiving medication and returning to their dorms. At one time 14 students were in the Jefferson Memorial Hospital.

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