

BOTH-AND: A MASTON READER

Selected Readings from the Writings of T. B. Maston



A T. B. MASTON FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS PROJECT
William M. Tillman, Jr., Rodney S. Taylor, and Lauren C. Brewer, *Editors*

BOTH-AND: A MASTON READER
SELECTED READINGS FROM
THE WRITINGS OF T. B. MASTON

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THIS READER PROVIDED BY:
**THE T.B. MASTON FOUNDATION FOR
CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

The mission of the T. B. Maston Foundation for Christian Ethics is to promote the legacy of Dr. T. B. Maston, a lifelong advocate for the deeper understanding and wider application of the life and ethical teaching of Jesus Christ.

Discover more about T. B. Maston at www.tbmaston.org

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EDITORIAL NOTES

In addition to honoring the thoughts and ministry of Dr. T.B. Maston, this reader represents the efforts of many others in researching, collecting, reading, writing, editing, typing, and securing rights for the works contained herein. As a result of the number of those involved in the process of production through the years and the vast span of time, publishers, and publications from which Dr. Maston's writings have been drawn, the reader may experience some stylistic variations in the text.

The editors have made every effort to preserve the integrity of Dr. Maston's writings in their entirety, including retention of original editorial styles. However, in an effort to enhance the consistency of the reader, update typesetting practices, and comply with publisher space allotments, the editors decided to make minor adjustments to headings, spacing, and other stylistic issues which do not alter the core content of Dr. Maston's writings. One example of these minor editorial adjustments is represented in the application of thin-spaced ellipses and open-set en dashes throughout the reader. Additionally, variations in spacing resulting from justification eliminated the need for the overt use of double-spacing in instances where it might normally be expected.

In regard to references, most of Dr. Maston's original works featured footnotes to delineate his reference to external sources. Because of format and space constraints, the editors of this work made the decision to consolidate these references as an endnote section in the latter part of this book. Since some of these endnotes represent Dr. Maston's reference of other footnotes found

internally within the books, articles, and other sources from which they were drawn, readers who desire to follow Dr. Maston's meticulous trail of scholarly and practical notations are encouraged to seek out the original works for further study.

FOREWARD

The T. B. Maston Foundation for Christian Ethics was formed by former students of Dr. Thomas Buford Maston (1897-1988). It was fashioned as a scholarship foundation to encourage and enable students to be equipped to deal with ethical issues. Shortly after an unfriendly administration at Southwestern Baptist Seminary refused to let Maston continue teaching following his sixty fifth birthday, the foundation adopted the name The T. B. Maston Foundation for Christian Ethics. Its goal is to increase the impact of Christian ethics in today's world. It is designed to be a reflection of the life and teaching of T. B. Maston.

Maston turned his disciplined work ethic to the task of communicating in writing. He authored twenty-seven books and wrote hundreds of columns for Baptist state papers. He spoke all over the world as his former students in mission field settings invited him to do so. His constant correspondence turned letters into teaching opportunities.

The legendary teacher of Christian Ethics was a soft-spoken layman who was totally committed to biblical applications of the gospel to practical living. A deacon in the Gambrell St. Baptist Church, he sought to deal with complex challenges with straightforward forthrightness. He taught not just with words but also in relationships with his students.

While he never considered writing to be his special gift, Maston saw the need for educating his public on ethical issues. In taking on the task, he chose not to simply write for other scholars. His target audience was the laity since they constitute the body of believers. He did a great deal of periodical writing on issues. Utilizing the Baptist state papers, he wrote regular columns and articles to explain in clear terms the challenges of the gospel. His first book (*Of*

One) was published in 1946, and dealt with racial attitudes. It was published by the SBC Home Mission Board. Eleven of his twenty-seven books were written after he was sixty-five.

When he completed his life and work at the age of ninety-one, he had taught biblical ethics to more than 5,000 Southern Baptist (SBC) leaders (some put the estimate as high as 8,000). Many of these were in places of strategic leadership in Baptist life. In one year (1978) three of the four elected leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention had earned their doctorates in Christian Ethics from him. Of the international missionaries who had earned doctorates, more had majored in Christian ethics at Southwestern than from any other department in other Southern Baptist seminaries.

He addressed every biblical command with his understanding that the demands of Christ were always in absolutes and that we have to stretch toward them in our leadership knowing full well we have to be graced by his forgiveness as we fall short of the ideal. Dynamic tension became a strategy for timing actions. His classic challenge was the rubber band with which we pulled the load, always stretching but carefully handled to keep it from breaking. He ministered in a denomination of Christians in which efforts were centered in growth through evangelism and missions. The tough truths of the gospel about crucial issues of racial prejudice, materialism's mastery of our culture, and complex problems of daily living were easy to ignore in emphasizing church growth, revivalism, and a search for mystical experience. He became a crucial change factor as he showed that the dynamics had to include the "So What?" questions.

Dr. Chuck McCullough, pastor of the White Rock Baptist Church in Los Alamos, New Mexico first suggested the Maston Reader while he served on the T. B. Maston Foundation board. He had written his doctoral dissertation on the writings of T. B. Maston. He offered to start the process from his research. From that beginning the size of the task became apparent. Copyright issues became complex since there were several different publishers over that long

period of time. Some are now out of business. The project was greatly helped when the Baptist Standard of Texas gave unlimited access to the columns Dr. Maston had written over the years. Other complexities were encountered. The will of the Mastons was unclear on some issues since he had intended for Southwestern Seminary to receive and archive the papers. Gene Maston, the only surviving son, died without completing a change in his will. The Foundation members persisted in the project. At one phase of preparation former Maston student Dr. James Dunn, of Wake Forest University Divinity School, led the board of the Foundation through work sessions examining and prioritizing materials from a compilation of all of Dr. Maston's writings. Dr. James Carter, another former Maston student and former pastor of University Baptist Church, Fort Worth, contributed to organizing the proposed Reader.

Dr. William Tillman, T. B. Maston Professor of Christian Ethics at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon Seminary, was brought on board to sift through Maston's writings and bring together a collection that would appeal to a new generation of academic and lay readers. In the early stages of the project Dr. Tillman was assisted by Brian Edwards, a graduate student at the Logsdon Seminary. Mr. Edwards helped compile the texts that would eventually form this reader. In the final stages of the project, Dr. Tillman was joined by Miss Lauren Brewer, a graduate student at Logsdon Seminary, and Dr. Rodney Taylor, Associate Professor of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University. Miss Brewer edited texts and prepared them for publication as well as pursued copyrights. Dr. Taylor aided in editing and organizational matters. Mr. James Stone, Director of Church Relations for Hardin-Simmons University, provided an enormous service in designing and editing the layout for publication as well as assisting with various technical publishing issues.

The design of the reader is to divide Dr. Maston's writings by general subject category. Of particular help will be the index. It lets the user find quickly the Maston views on various ethical issues.

Since issues of ethical living and challenges of biblical insights are “abidingly relevant” (a favorite Maston term). It is hoped that the Maston Reader will provide both insight and inspiration to help us to “walk as Jesus walked.” The T.B. Maston Foundation expresses gratitude to Burton Patterson for the designated gift which makes this book possible.

Jimmy R. Allen

INTRODUCTION

T. B. Maston was not a big man. Indeed, he was rather small and unimposing. He was not a high-profile celebrity – not, at least, in the ways by which fame is measured today. He was not a star athlete, actor, or musician in possession of a dramatic conversion story. He never held the pulpit of a mega-church or a high office in a denominational hierarchy, nor did he hold forth on his own radio talk show.

This remarkably unremarkable man who lived most of his life in suburban Fort Worth, Texas, did, on the other hand, bequeath an inestimable legacy. His writings offer a practical, uncomplicated biblical approach to the tough issues of life, something desperately needed in these complex times. His attitude and demeanor provided in their powerful simplicity a dynamic model for Christian ministry. His was and still is a clear, authentic voice that many Christians, jaded by the banal verbosity of the electronic church and frustrated by the urbane sophistry of professional theologians, long to hear.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH T. B. MASTON

Thomas Buford (T. B.) Maston was born in east Tennessee in 1897. His family, poor and largely uneducated, were simple people for whom hard work and simple faith were the bedrock of daily life. Maston, the first person in his family to graduate from college, far surpassed those simple beginnings. He earned graduate degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas, as well as a master's degree from Texas Christian University (TCU) and a doctorate from Yale University Divinity School. He did additional study at the University of Chicago and the

University of North Carolina. Maston went on to teach in the fields of religious education and Christian ethics at SWBTS from thirty books and published hundreds of articles in academic journals, state Baptist newspapers and other publications.

Described by some as the dean of Southern Baptist Ethics, T. B. Maston embodied a unique blend of scholarship, theological and ethical fervor, cultural awareness, and social activism. He wrote on a wide array of topics, demonstrating a facility with biblical languages and familiarity with the influential thinkers of his day. He spoke with equal alacrity to fellow academics, aspiring seminary students, missionary appointees, and the folks in the pew. He was deeply involved in the pressing social issues of his day, especially race relations and the nascent civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. Though he possessed a thorough knowledge of complex ethical theory and demanded the highest standards of his doctoral students, Maston consistently articulated a simple faith and an unpretentious, down-to-earth approach to life. This compilation introduces a man whose teaching and writing ministry spanned most of the twentieth century, yet whose view of the Bible and method for doing Christian ethics is as fresh and relevant in this and future generations as they were in his own.

MASTON WAS A PIONEER IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN BAPTIST LIFE.

A contemporary of prominent shapers of Southern Baptist life in the twentieth century – such men as Henlee Barnett, J. M. Dawson, George W. Truett, H. E. Dana, J. M. Price and W. T. Conner – Maston also assumed a place alongside well-known theologians and ethicists of the time outside Baptist life such as Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr and Emil Brunner. Maston took up the banner for social justice and moral rectitude, addressing topics such as race, politics, economics, family, human sexuality, women in the church, and life and death, with force and insight.

An example of his ethical courage is particularly obvious in the manner in which Maston addressed the racial crisis. In Maston, one finds a white man from Tennessee, living in Texas, deeply connected to the traditional Baptist church of the Old South, calling upon fellow Christians to regard blacks and whites as equal before God and equally worthy of respect and full civil rights – and doing this consistently from the 1930s through the 1980s. Maston spoke widely to local churches and associations of churches, challenging them to pursue racial integration. He wrote in numerous publications of the need for the people of God to take the lead in breaking down racial barriers in both church and society. He organized the first fellowship for black students on the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary campus in Texas.

As one might expect, Maston received considerable criticism from fellow Baptists for his stand on integration. Throughout his life, however, he never wavered from the truths he believed were so clearly taught in the Scripture and right for the Church. In 1966, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission presented its “Distinguished Service Leader Award for Leadership in Christian Social Ethics” to Maston, underscoring his “unique and outstanding contributions to Southern Baptists and to the Kingdom of God through inspired teaching, insightful writing, and prophetic proclamation of the ethical imperatives of the Christian gospel.”¹

HE IS RELEVANT TODAY, TRANSCENDING REGIONAL AND DENOMINATIONAL BOUNDARIES.

Maston’s reach extends far beyond his influence on his denomination. Though Baptist in theology, ecclesiology, and ethics, his ethical methodology enabled him to speak effectively across the board to all types of Christians, often in spite of the ponderous presence of denominational politics and the diverse cultural expressions of Christianity in his native South. Speaking to fellow Southern Baptists, Maston consistently promoted a global view of Christian ethics: “We need to awaken,” he said,

to the fact that the region where most of us live is rapidly changing from a rurally oriented culture to an industrialized, urbanized area. . . . Some of the areas where we are growing most rapidly are outside the states of the Deep South. It is time for us to join the nation and the world. Let us hope that we will retain our basically conservative theological position. This will provide a solid foundation on which we can build and advance in the days ahead. Let us trust, however, that we will couple with our theological conservatism a social liberalism, which is necessary if we are to speak effectively to the world in which we live.²

Maston's biblical and Christian ethics reflect an honest effort to couple conservative theology and social relevance. His writing, liberally sprinkled with biblical references, approaches social issues from the standpoint of universal principles which offer a foundation for ethical dialogue and decision making in all times and cultures.

MASTON'S WORK MODELS A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO ISSUES FACED BY CHRISTIANS TODAY.

The model seems so simple: define the issue, bring biblical rules or principles to bear, identify possible responses, consider the consequences, consult with fellow believers, listen for the leading of the Spirit, make a decision, and act on it. Then again, perhaps ethical decision making for the Christian is not just that simple.

Maston understood the difficulties one encounters when attempting to apply the Bible to issues that it does not address directly. He knew that, for many pressing concerns, there are no ready-made answers – and that society is not often ready for change. To make matters more complicated, the Bible itself

is not always clear on a given topic, even appearing at times to give contradictory instruction.

Thus, modern Christians, more often than we care to admit, are faced with paradox in Scripture and ambiguity in ethics. In contemporary Christianity, the responses to this ambiguity generally fall on a spectrum somewhere between hard rules and inflexible formulae derived from literal interpretations of the Scripture to mushy ethical relativism obtained by combining shallow scholarship with shifting cultural mores. Maston stood between these two extremes.

Maston was confident that the diligent student of Scripture would either discover substantive ways to deal with paradox or come to a place where one learned to function in ambivalent and ambiguous areas. Maston elucidated a conversation central to Christianity for centuries: the on-going dialogue between the Bible and the historical context of its readers. Advising caution, however, Maston suggested that the conclusions at which one arrives as a result of this dialogue should be held with some tentativeness. New information or biblical insights may call for modifications in one's position.

Eschewing clichés and quick fixes, Maston believed that Christians live most of the time in a creative tension created by the ideals set forth by a holy God and the reality of finite, sinful people struggling to live up to those ideals. This tension demands movement: one simply cannot remain in a neutral zone for very long. The challenge is keeping a balance between moving too quickly to action and not moving quickly enough. Maston's idea of tension appears repeatedly in his treatment of tough moral issues.

Maston's understanding of this tension gave rise to his conviction that ethics and decision making were more often than not an issue of both/and as opposed to either/or. Inflexible rules and tightly-drawn lines in the sand were less workable, he believed, than a principle approach which considers the social context of the issue, the broad range of relevant, biblical material, and possibly more than one viable solution. Life is lived in the space between both law and

grace, both freedom and responsibility, both individual and social ethics, both perfect and permissive will, both the ideal and the real. The both/and of Maston's thought characterizes his response to a variety of issues – and is consequently a fitting title for a book that is focused on his work.

MASTON'S WAS A PROPHETIC VOICE, ANTICIPATING SOCIAL AND DENOMINATIONAL TRENDS.

T. B. Maston sensed the powerful social movements that were gaining momentum during the early days of his career. He recognized a liberalizing trend in some Christian denominations and a materialistic bent in his own. He anticipated that such forces as the feminist movement, the sexual revolution, changing family structures, the widening gap between the rich and poor, and an expanding government presence would have an enduring impact upon the church and the nation. Throughout his writing and teaching career, Maston addressed all of these concerns. Responding to what became for him a signature issue, he consistently addressed race relations in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, well before the Civil Rights movement got into full swing. His first piece on race, written for fellow Baptists, was published in 1927.

He foresaw the rise of twentieth-century Fundamentalism, particularly as it was manifested in the Southern Baptist Convention. He did not become embroiled in the denominational controversy of the 1980s, but he commented on the effects it had on Christians and the church. As early as 1968, Maston sensed trouble in the denomination. Some will “use political methods to gain the recognition they desire,” he wrote.

Political maneuvering . . . is unhealthful [sic] and a real threat to our spiritual democracy. Many Southern Baptists may doubt that the problem is real. I have personally been convinced that it is very real. . . . Unfortunately, many individuals who seek through political means and pressure to gain position and

prestige for themselves succeed. . . . Sometimes the more personally ambitious men take over the organizational structure of the denomination by default.³

Foreseeing other challenges the church would face, Maston made prophetic statements warning modern denominations to beware of what he called the major threat in American churches today; that is, materialism, the measurement of success by numbers, and budgets. He believed that this worldly attitude, which conforms to the prevalent economic standards of an affluent society, would cause the church to neglect the very people Jesus championed. Even modern seminary education, he believed, may prevent students from truly empathizing with the poor.⁴

MASTON PROMOTED SPIRITUAL FORMATION BEFORE “SPIRITUAL FORMATION” WAS WELL-KNOWN AND WIDESPREAD.

Maston believed in formal education, the explication of historical Christian doctrines and standards of right moral behavior. Unlike others who create a dichotomy between education and the spiritual disciplines, his work echoed the ancient spiritual disciplines that shaped early Christianity. He insisted upon a dynamic personal relationship; a vital, life-changing union with Jesus; a constant abiding in and with Christ, that transcends specifically mental processes, as the basis for ethics. He spoke often of the God who calls believers into God’s presence through prayer and meditation on the Scripture. Inward spiritual development (personal transformation), Maston taught, is the key to outward behavior. When his personal relationship with Christ leads to deeper love for God, then the maturing Christian will exhibit a loving response to persons around him. This integration of spiritual journey, ethics, and evangelism was, for Maston, the very essence of the Christian life.

MASTON PRESENTS A CHALLENGE TO GENERATIONS FOLLOWING AND TO THE “DROUGHT IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS” IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

T. B. Maston stands among the giants of the “greatest generation.” His voice was heard by multitudes who were inspired to engage the great social issues of their day. Many missionaries, finding themselves in difficult and often dangerous situations demanding creativity, courage, and clarity, received from Maston a model of faithfulness to God’s call and the fortitude to stand in the face of opposition. When one looks at the collection of individuals who were his graduate students, one sees a wide variety of characters, many of whom hardly conform to Maston’s quiet, modest image. Their number includes missionaries, pastors, professors, counselors, executives, professional journalists, and more. They all, however, share a heightened awareness of the issues of social justice, a strong valuing of individual freedom and responsibility and a glaring honesty with the Bible - bequeathed to them in large part by the gently insistent Maston.

The powerful influence he exerted in the time during his life presents a challenge to this and following generations. The principles he taught offer contemporary Christians a response to moral relativism and moral absolutism. Pastors and churches of the twenty-first century will discover in Maston’s work insights which will enable them to stand effectively against the seemingly inexorable acculturation of Christianity in America.

Charles McCullough
White Rock Baptist Church
Los Alamos, New Mexico

PART ONE: “INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED A LIFE”

Powerful influences in Maston’s background enabled him to accept and cope with difficulty, to stand strong in his faith, yet remain consistently gentle and humble in spirit. He endured, with patience and love, severe criticism from fellow Christians. He balanced a disciplined regimen of teaching and writing with the demands of family and church. His Southern culture could not contain him as he traveled from humble beginnings to a prodding, prophetic voice heard around the world.

How did such a personality develop? Maston credited those closest to him, particularly his father and his wife, as having probably the greatest influences on his life. Other influences include his education, his sons, and his place of work.

HIS FATHER

Sam Houston Maston, a child of the Civil War, an East Tennessee share cropper, a Southern Baptist by conviction, modeled rugged individualism and a common sense view of life, faith and the church for his son. Maston spoke often of a childhood permeated with basic Christian principles expressed in simple wisdom and shaped by his father’s faith and generous knowledge of the Bible.

His dad instilled in Maston a strong work ethic. Maston related that the experience of pulling a plow beside his brother while their father guided it developed in him not only an appreciation for biblical references to yoked oxen but a strong motivation to further his schooling. As a teenager, Maston felt a call to Christian ministry. Sam Maston strongly encouraged his youngest son

to go to college even when financial resources were almost entirely absent, and none of his siblings had done so.

Maston attended Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Through the summers of his college years, Maston did student work and taught church training courses among Baptists in Tennessee under the auspices of the Baptist Sunday School Board. These opportunities enabled Maston to realize that his calling might be to something other than the pastorate. Indeed, the idea of being a teacher began to crystallize in his mind.

ESSIE MAE MCDONALD

The greatest of his college experiences, Maston declared, was meeting the other highly influential person in his life, Essie Mae McDonald. Ms. McDonald had transferred to Carson-Newman, though she had a four year scholarship to the University of Chattanooga. They became engaged and enrolled at SWBTS in the same year, 1920, and were married a year later.

The experiences of years of further schooling, poverty, sickness, and a severely disabled child drove deeply into the Mastons the virtues of perseverance in the face of hardship and compassion for others who struggled. Maston said his wife taught him much about cross-bearing and self-sacrifice motivated by love and loyalty.

POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION

Maston went on to earn a master's degree in religious education at SWBTS in 1923. Maston's professors in his first seminary work included noted Baptist scholars W. T. Conner in theology, Charles Williams for Greek, and H. E. Dana for New Testament.

Not yet feeling qualified to teach, Maston worked toward an advanced seminary degree. He earned the first doctorate in Religious Education at SWBTS in 1925. Two years later he completed a master's degree in sociology

at TCU. At the depths of the Depression in 1932, Maston went to Yale to work on a Ph.D. in Christian Ethics.

A near fatal bout with pneumonia in 1933 and unstable financial resources (he was writing Sunday School lessons for grocery money) interrupted this work for a time. Six years later, Sam Maston's youngest son finished his doctoral dissertation under renowned ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr. At least one other professor at Yale, D. C. McIntosh, had influence on Maston toward his sense of being a writer and a teacher.

SOUTHWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

What began in 1922 at SWBTS as temporary duty filling in for a professor on sabbatical leave stretched into a teaching vocation of over forty years. In the early years of his career, Maston taught student work, adolescent psychology, church administration, church recreation and Christian sociology (or "ethics") courses. In 1943, the Department of Christian Social Ethics was moved from the Religious Education School into the School of Theology at the seminary. He was a professor there of what came to be called Christian Ethics until his retirement in 1963.

BEYOND FORT WORTH

A major reason for Dr. and Mrs. Maston to attend Southwestern Seminary originally was because of the mission emphases there even in its infancy. The Mastons considered whether to be home or foreign missionaries. However, a comment from L. R. Scarborough, the second president of Southwestern, crystallized the Mastons' sense of working at Southwestern as a mission training outpost.

During his career and afterward, Maston was actively involved in mission work, traveling on speaking tours through Central and South America and east Asia. He regularly addressed new missionary appointees at their orientation

program. Following retirement, he was guest professor at the Arab Baptist Seminary in Beirut, Lebanon. Maston continued to write and speak until his death on May 1, 1988.

TWO SONS

Close to home, Maston experienced profound personal challenges. Two sons were born to the family. The oldest, Tom Mc, born in November of 1925, was accidentally injured at birth and suffered crippling cerebral palsy.

The Mastons kept Tom Mc at home, daily spending long hours caring for his every need. Wheelchair bound, he had to be fed, bathed, and attended to practically every moment of the day. Maston admitted that there were moments when the physical weariness and the emotional strain taxed the entire family. Yet, the Mastons, far from considering their invalid son a burden, regarded him as a source of joy and inspiration.

Tom Mc tempered Maston's character, heightening his ability to express his own emotions, and developing in him a deep sensitivity for others who bear heavy burdens. Maston often shared his experience with his son, not in an appeal for sympathy, but that others might know that what he said was not armchair rhetoric. Much of Maston's compelling concern for the disenfranchised of the world was developed through sixty-one years of caring for Tom Mc. Maston carried an empathy for the life context of many whose family included those with physical, mental, or emotional challenges.

Eugene, Maston's second born, grew up in this environment wherein the bulk of time and energy was invested in caring for his brother. Though this may have cast a shadow on what would have otherwise been an idyllic upbringing, Gene held a deep respect for his father, following his footsteps into the teaching profession. He contributed significantly to the work of Baptists in his own right, starting campus ministries at universities throughout the Northeast (including Columbia, West Point, Vassar, Yale, Brown, Harvard and

Dartmouth.) He was a teacher in secondary school and college, as well as an active churchman.

In later years father and son would find themselves in the role of commentator and case study, respectively, on at least one critical issue. The Vietnam War provided the setting: Gene became a conscientious objector at the same time that Maston was writing an entry on the subject of pacifism for the encyclopedia of Southern Baptists. Maston's thoughtful reflection on the Christian and his or her conscience is an expression of his coming to terms with an issue which he faced very personally.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Toward the end of his life, Maston began expressing some of the ideas which had been there all along regarding how his life had been shaped. The following selection of readings provides insight into some of these major influences that shaped Maston's life. A brief selection illustrate the role of family and friends. A special piece, written in honor of his wife of over sixty-eight years, not only pictures the depth of his devotion to her but illustrates her influence on his entire career.

In addition, an excerpt from *Suffering: A Personal Perspective* demonstrates Maston's thoughts and work which grew from dealing with the conditions presented by Tom Mc's physical challenges.

READINGS

“Statements that Shaped a Life”

A sentence casually and unconsciously dropped may go a long ways toward shaping a life.

I may be unusually conscious of this because of the impact of such statements on my own life. I can visualize even now the places and the

occasions when a half dozen such statements were made that left an indelible imprint on my life.

Miss Gresham, my high school English teacher, sent for me. She had heard that I had quit the football team and had resigned as captain. I told her the real reason. I had become a Christian and had felt called to the ministry. I did not feel that I could take any longer the filthy, dirty talk of some on the team.

The one thing that I remembered about the conversation with Miss Gresham was a question she asked. It searched the heart of a 17-year-old boy and has continued to influence his life. Her question was, “Do you think Jesus would quit because it is hard?” I rejoined the team that afternoon.

T.B. Maston, *“Problems of the Christian Life – Statements that Shaped a Life.”* Baptist Standard, January, 1, 1969, 13.

“Mommie”

Mommie’s real strength and stability have been clearly revealed by her relation to her family. She deliberately gave up a promising teaching career to have a family. Our first son, Thomas McDonald (Tom Mc) was injured at birth (November 15, 1925). She almost gave her life that he might come into the world. He is cerebral palsied and is about as severely handicapped physically as anyone I have ever known. Almost everything has to be done for him: prepare him for bed, turn him at night, get him up and dress him in the mornings, feed him, clean his teeth, shave him, etc. He cannot even sit alone and cannot talk although we have a system of communication with him. He has a good mind, responds well to people who reach out in love and understanding to him. We are not critical of others who have done otherwise, but we have kept him in the home. Can you imagine the sacrificial service this has entailed for his mother? And remember that she had the ability to succeed in most any profession or occupation she would have chosen.

Through the years she has “stayed by the stuff” and is due a major part of the credit for anything I have done. I would say of her, as I frequently have said of another seminary professor’s wife, “She is the hero of this family.” In addition to our own immediate family, we had her widowed mother in our home for seventeen years, all of those years for the winter months and much of the time for the entire year. Grandmother lived to be almost ninety-five, and was a valuable addition to our family but was considerable care during her last declining years.

No explanation of Mommie’s stability and strength would be adequate without a brief reference to her inner mental and spiritual resources. Her life and work in and through our church and her concern for and visitation of the sick and needy in our community have previously been mentioned; there are some other contributions to this strength of hers. For example, she is usually in the process of reading a good book. The book that she reads more than any other is her well-worn and frequently marked Bible. She also reads regularly the daily paper and several magazines. In other words, she keeps her mind alert. She has matured in her faith to the place where she accepts life and what life brings as being at least within the permissive will of God. In other words, she has the capacity to rest in the Lord. This gives her a quietness of spirit regardless of what happens. Regardless of why, let me underscore again that I do not know anyone and have never known anyone that I think has more basic inner strength than Mommie.

T. B. Maston, “*Mommie*” A Personal Tribute to Essie Mae McDonald (Mrs. T. B.) Maston (Fort Worth, TX: By the Author, 1980), 3-4, 12.

God Speaks Through Suffering

Do you have some heavy burden to carry? Has some great sorrow come into your life? Are you personally suffering, or do you suffer because a member of your family or a friend suffers?

Like many of you, I have cried out, “Why suffering?” I have also struggled with the closely related question, What is God’s relation to suffering?

Several years ago I felt I had to find a reasonably satisfactory answer to the preceding questions or lose my sanity and/or faith. The position regarding suffering suggested in the following pages has been worked out, or possibly better, hammered out, because of my personal experience.

Suffering: A Personal Experience

Mommie and I have known many of the disappointments and have carried many of the burdens that come with life. For example, my dad, sister, and brother all died with cancer and experienced the intense suffering that cancer frequently brings. Our real struggle, however, with the problem of suffering began when our first child was born. I had stood by when he came into the world. When I got home, I sat down at the diningroom table and wept. It had been a trying, emotional experience. His mother had almost literally given her life that he might live. Why?

The question became louder and more persistent when we noticed that his development along some lines was slower than expected. Why? became a shout when we discovered that Tom Mc had been injured at birth. The inner struggle deepened as we took him to many doctors and several hospitals in search of help. We returned with saddened hearts as doctor after doctor told us: “We do not know anything that can be done for him. All you can do is take him home and give him the best possible care.”

Much more is being done for the cerebral palsied today. When Tom Mc was a child, there were, as far as we could discover, only four doctors in the entire United States who seemingly gave any attention to cerebral palsy. We took him to two of those doctors - one in New York and the other in New Haven. Mommie, with the help of others, spent hours and hours for several years trying to help him talk and gain better control of his body.

Tom Mc is about as seriously handicapped physically as one can be. Almost every voluntary muscle of his body is affected. His mother or I have to do well-nigh everything for him. We dress and undress him, bathe him, clean his teeth, shave him daily, feed him, and even shift or turn him in bed. We usually have to get up two to a half-dozen times each night. An unbroken night's sleep is a rarity. He cannot walk, talk, or even sit alone.

In spite of his handicap, we can usually communicate with Tom Mc. His yes is "I," which he can pronounce clearly. For no, he bats his eyelids. He also uses I when he wants something. We have lived with him long enough that we usually know what he wants. When we do not, we ask him, "Do you want. . .?" When we hit the right thing, his I tells us. You can imagine, however, our frustration when he wants something, when something is really wrong, or when he hurts somewhere and we are unable to find out what or where it is.

Fortunately for him, and for us, Tom Mc has unusually good health - better than any member of the family. His mother and I would much rather be sick than for him to be sick. Just imagine, for example, how it would be to have a severe head cold and be unable to clear your throat or blow your nose. He can do neither.

As some of you know from personal experience, our Tom Mc has not been exclusively a problem or a burden. It may be unfair to speak of him as a burden at all. There are things about him that add joy to our lives. He has a good mind and evidently gets considerable satisfaction out of life. Naturally, his mind has not developed normally. How could it when he cannot turn pages to read and cannot ask questions?

He has his favorite television programs and enjoys good music and an occasional dramatic production. He goes to church with us regularly and is loved by and responds readily to many of our fellow church members. He loves the outdoors and likes to sit in the yard in his wheelchair and "watch the world go by." Our home is on a corner lot, and he prefers to sit where he can watch both streets and the school playground across from our house.

He is timid around strangers, particularly around those who are ill at ease in his presence. He is fond of children, particularly those not afraid of his wheelchair. He usually has a captivating smile and a twinkle in his eyes for those, regardless of age, who reach out in love to him and establish good rapport with him.

He is a good traveler and has shared with his mother and daddy and his younger brother trips to many parts of the United States. The other members of the family had been on overseas trips. Tom Mc had not until a few years ago. An invitation came for me to teach in Beirut, Lebanon. I would not go and leave Mommie to care for Tom Mc by herself as long as I would have to be away. When I mentioned the invitation to her, she said, "I am game. I am willing for us to see how Tom Mc will travel by air."

He had never been on a plane until we flew to New York. We spent a few days with his younger brother, who lives in New York City. We then flew to Beirut, with stops at Paris and Rome. We had arranged our schedule so we would not have to change planes; so we were en route fourteen hours. Tom Mc made the journey like a seasoned traveler. On the return trip we toured the Holy Land, spent some time in Rome and Zurich, and then toured Great Britain by car.

Since then, Mommie, Tom Mc, and I have made extensive trips to South America and Hawaii. Tom Mc's wheelchair goes where he goes. Our travel has meant a great deal to him, and he has blessed the lives of many. A missionary friend on a field we visited was kind enough to say to that Mommie and I had been a blessing to many, but he added that Tom Mc's presence had been the greatest blessing.

Through the years we have felt that it was best to keep Tom Mc in our home. It is not necessary to spell out why we made this decision. We are not critical of others who have placed a handicapped son or daughter in a special school or institution. This decision must be personal and can be soul-searching.

As you would know, Tom Mc's presence in our home has influenced in many ways the other members of the family. For example, his presence has limited to some degree my activities and movements. It does seem, however, that God has compensated for any activities I have given up. For example, the fact that I have stayed closer at home, particularly on weekends, than I might have otherwise, has made it possible for me to have a more extensive writing ministry.

This is enough of our personal experience. As we proceed with our study, may our heavenly Father help you to work through to a personally satisfying answer to the perplexing companion questions: Why suffering and What is God's relation to human suffering? May the position to which you come strengthen your faith in God and in his goodness and grace. May you hear him speak to you in and through your suffering.

T. B. Maston, *God Speaks Through Suffering* (Waco: Word, 1977), 9-10, 13-15, 16-18.

PART TWO: “FROM GOD, OF GOD, THROUGH MAN, TO MAN”

The Bible has been scrutinized, analyzed and criticized throughout the history of Christianity. A multitude of treatments has rendered its meaning and significance both more simplistic and more complicated than called for by the text itself. Some seek to protect the sacred Scriptures, canonizing such terms as inerrancy and infallibility. Others seek to demystify, demythologize or altogether debunk the text. Mysterious and profound, its origins and history a constant source of debate, the Bible is at the heart of both unity and diversity among Christians.

T. B. Maston understood this swirling conversation about the Bible. His own position represents something of a balance between the extremes of fundamentalism and liberalism. The text, he believed, is both divine and human. Scripture contains both rule and principle, and it is inspired and authoritative, yet written by and for sinful people. The Bible functions both as a means for God to show something of Himself to mankind and for humans to understand how He expects them to live.

Though Maston commanded extensive knowledge of biblical history and language, he tended to take the meaning of a given text at its face value. He did not utilize technical or critical skills extensively in his work, nor did he employ a well-defined hermeneutic model. Asked once to comment on his hermeneutic, he expressed with a grin, “I didn’t know I had a hermeneutic!”¹

When faced with the challenge of interpreting difficult biblical texts or addressing complex contemporary issues not addressed directly in the Bible, Maston tended to fall back on a set of broad themes. These themes, inherent in Scripture, served two purposes for Maston: they were simultaneously principles for interpreting Scripture and principles for living the Christian life.

Though he did not state the fact explicitly, these themes through which texts are viewed and the significance of the narrative (including law, history, wisdom, and the prophetic texts) is illuminated. These themes also operate as exemplary ideals of attitude and behavior toward which the Christian is to strive. The basis for Christian ethics, these themes provide the starting point for ethical response to specific situations.

Given Maston's strong view of the Bible, his christocentric theology and the pervasiveness of broad themes or principles in his thought, one might set forth his approach to using the Bible in Christian ethics with the following points:

1. Ethics must be biblically based. Though the social sciences provide insight, ethical deliberation must begin with and ultimately return to a dialogue with Scripture.
2. All of the Scripture must be used in ethical discourse. The Old Testament is of value for glimpses of God's nature and will; the New Testament is normative for the Christian in morality and ethics. The teachings of Jesus are pivotal to an adequate understanding of Christian ethical living.
3. The Bible is not simply a manual of rules. Scripture offers a mix of rules, examples, and broad, general principles.
4. The continuing relevance of the Bible arises out of these principles which are found "beneath or behind" many of the rules as well as in the stories of Scripture and the teachings of Jesus. Because specific moral concerns vary from generation to generation, Scripture cannot address each of these problems directly. Thus, broad, cross-cultural, time-transcendent principles provide an outlook, a general direction or a guideline for Christian decision making. These principles are the most relevant portions of Scripture through which God speaks in some degree to every situation.

The following selection of readings includes a representative summary of Maston's comments on the nature and relevance of the Bible. An extensive section deals with the hermeneutical principles or themes introduced above, set in the context of Maston's discussion of Christianity and world transformation.

THE CENTRALITY OF SCRIPTURE

For Maston, the Bible was the single most important piece of literature for both the Christian and the church. The importance of the Bible can be seen in every piece of writing Maston produced, as biblical references saturate his writings, not to mention his spoken words. The Bible is centrally about the response of humanity to God's offer of salvation and how saved people are to live, in light of their salvation. Furthermore, though there is both an Old and a New Testament included in the Bible, Maston did not believe that we should view one as more important than the other. On the other hand, the whole is to be read in light of the full offer of salvation found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These themes, as well as others, are included in the readings for this section. The first reading is from Maston's book, *The Bible and Family Relations*. This is perhaps Maston's most concise hermeneutical treatment.

Following this material is an article in which Maston highlights his thoughts on the Old and New Testaments and their relationship.

READINGS

The Bible

The Bible is the most important possession of the Christian church. This is particularly true for Protestants who consider the Bible the final authority for their faith and practice. This means that anything the Bible says concerning the family and family relations should be considered seriously and studied carefully.

*Its Nature*²

The Bible, in a very real sense, is a divine-human book. It is divine in its origin or initiation, human in its mediation. It was written by men but by men inspired and led by the Spirit of God. There would be no Bible without the response of men to that revelation. In other words, revelation is a transitive event. A transitive verb has a subject and an object. God, the Initiator, is the subject of the revelation; man is the object or recipient. The divine-human nature of the writing of the Scriptures is rather clearly stated in various places in the New Testament. For example, Peter said, “No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:21). Men did the speaking, but they spoke “from God” and, we might add, primarily “for” and “concerning” God.

There are a number of places in the New Testament where a statement or quotation is directly attributed to a specific Old Testament speaker or writer. This is true of Moses. For example, Jesus said, “For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’” (Mark 7:10). Paul said, “Moses writes” (Rom. 10:5). References to Isaiah are particularly prominent in the Gospels. A few examples: “This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah” (Matt. 12:17); “You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said” (Matt. 15:7); “As it is written in Isaiah the prophet” (Mark 1:2); “As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet” (Luke 3:4); John the Baptist said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said” (John 1:23). For other references in the Gospels see Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 7:6-7; John 12:38-41. Paul, in Romans, also referred to something Isaiah had said (9:27-29).

There are also two or three specific references to a couple of minor prophets. Immediately preceding the above reference to Isaiah, Paul said, “As indeed he [God] says in Hosea” (Rom. 9:25-26). Peter, on the day of Pentecost, quoted at some length from the prophet Joel (Acts 2:14-21) and also from David (Acts 2:25-26). There are several additional references in the New Testament to David as God’s spokesman. For example, Jesus said, “David

. . . inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared” (Mark 12:36). This statement beautifully underscores the divine-human nature of the Bible. David did the speaking or declaring. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:16; 4:25).

In addition to these references that emphasize in a particular way the divine-human nature of the Bible, there are many places where the reference is not to a particular human source but simply says, “It is written.” A few examples will have to suffice. In response to each of the temptations by Satan, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy, without identifying the source. He simply said, “It is written” (Matt. 4:4,6,10). For a few other references in Matthew to “It is written,” see 11:10; 21:13; 26:24; 26:31. Several of these passages are found also in Mark and in Luke. There are additional references to “It is written” in John’s Gospel and the Pauline Epistles that can be located in any good concordance.

The Bible is not only a divine-human book in its writing but also in its content. It is a record of the revelation of God’s nature and character and of his attitude toward and will for humanity. But the Scriptures also portray the life struggles, the faults and failures, as well as the successes of real men and women.

Another evident characteristic of the Bible is its unity in the midst of its diversity. The diversity of the Bible in content, emphases, general approach, and style is rather obvious. One reason for the diversity is the fact that the people, particularly in Old Testament days, were not prepared to understand and accept the full revelation of God and his will. That was the explanation by Jesus for something in the Mosaic law that was not in harmony with God’s original purpose for marriage. His word was, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed [“permitted,” NASB] you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you” (Matt. 19:8-9). The same could be said for many other things in the Old Testament.

The diversity in the Bible means that the unity we find there, which is clearly evident, is a dynamic rather than a static unity. It is a unity of growth or

movement. That movement has been compared to a musical production. The Old Testament may be and is a part of the sonata but the New Testament is the climax.

The dynamic unity, so clearly evident in the Old Testament and the New Testament, stems basically from the Divine Person revealed in and through the Scriptures. In turn, that Divine Person is supremely revealed in and through the central divine event: the birth, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is this divine event that the Old Testament looks forward to and the New Testament records, interprets, and reflects upon.

The climax of the revelation of God is in Christ, his Son, a divine-human Person. In him we discover the fullest revelation of the nature and character of God, the Father. Jesus himself said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9; see 17:22). He also said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Paul said, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," or "For in him the complete being of God, by God's own choice, came to dwell" (Col. 1:19, NEB). Paul also said, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col. 2:9, NIV). The writer of Hebrews said that the Son "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp ["the exact representation," NASB] of his nature" (Heb. 1:3).

Christ was also the climax of God's revelation of his attitude toward and will for humanity. This revelation was embodied not only in what he taught but also in the kind or quality of life he lived. This has tremendous implications for family relationships, as well as for human relations in general.

The fact that Christ was the final and full revelation of the Father makes Christianity primarily a religion of a Person rather than a religion of a book. The Book is revered largely because of the Person whose life, ministry, death, and resurrection are recorded there. He is the Way, the truth, the Resurrection, the Bread of life, and the Light of the world. He is God's final and full word to humanity. It is a word that not only reveals God to people but

also reveals people to themselves. We see in Christ, the God-man, what God is like and what people, by the grace of God, should become.

The preceding means that the New Testament, and particularly the life and teachings of Jesus, is normative for the children of God in every aspect and relationship of their lives. The Old Testament has many contributions to make, but it should be read and particularly evaluated in the light of the full revelation of the New Testament. One who attributes equal authority to the Old Testament tends to become what might be termed “an Old Testament Christian.” He may defend attitudes that he has and things he does that are definitely contrary to the teachings and spirit of the New Testament. On the same basis, he will tend to defend or advocate some practices and conditions in the social order that clearly fall short of the spirit of Jesus.

Its Message

Broadly speaking, the Bible contains a twofold message: (1) how people can be saved and (2) how saved people should live. The latter involves more than one dimension. Those dimensions, in the main, can be compressed into two: (1) the vertical or right relations to God, and (2) the horizontal or right relations to other persons and to the society of which they are a part.

While the Bible dearly reveals that right relations to God and persons belong together, it reveals just as clearly that right relations to God are most basic. When stated together, right relations to God are stated first, followed by right relations to other people. The latter is, in a sense, a derivative of the former, but it is such an inevitable derivative that if one is not right with other people that is a valid reason to conclude that he is not right with God.

The fact that right relations to God are basic and that right relations to other people naturally and inevitably follow is illustrated over and over again in the Scriptures. For example, the first of the Ten Commandments, which incidentally summarizes the fundamental moral law, sets forth the requirements regarding one's relation to God. The second portion of the

Commandments deals with one's duties or responsibility to his neighbor. Several of these are directly related to the family: honor father and mother; do not commit adultery; do not covet a neighbor's wife.

The prophets struggled with a people who evidently thought they could be right with God and wrong with other people. They, particularly the great eighth-century prophets, over and over again stressed that this could not be true. Just a few examples will suffice. For instance, Isaiah (1:10-20), speaking for God, said that the latter rejected their offerings; they were vain, "worthless" (NASB), "useless" (NEB), "detestable" (NIV). He also said, "I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly" (Isa. 1:13) (what a combination – "iniquity and solemn assembly"). Their prayers would not be heard. Then he told the people what God expects:

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean,
remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes;
cease to do evil, learn to do good;
seek justice, correct oppression [Reprove the ruthless. NASB];
defend the fatherless, plead for the widow (Isa. 1:16-17).

Amos represented God as saying to his people:

I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and
cereal offerings,
I will not accept them,
and the peace offering of your fatted beasts
I will not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

Then he tells them what he wants:

But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an overflowing stream
(Amos 5:21-24; see 2:6-8; 5:10-12).

The preceding passages illustrate a continuing emphasis of the prophets. One of the greatest summaries of the basic requirements of our biblical faith is in Micah, another one of the eighth-century prophets. It is as follows:

He has showed you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord requite of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
(Mic. 6:8).

Surely these words from the prophets underscore the necessity of being right with our neighbors if we are to be right with or acceptable to our Heavenly Father. Again, let us suggest that this includes right relations of husbands and wives, parents and children, and other family relationships.

We could cite many illustrations of the two-dimensional nature of the requirements of our biblical faith, but we will restrict ourselves to a few additional examples from the New Testament. One of the most pointed illustrations is the answer of Jesus when he was asked to identify “the great commandment in the law.” The reply of Jesus, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5, was: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment” (Matt. 22:37-38). And then, possibly after a pause for emphasis, quoting Leviticus 19:18, he added: “And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39; see Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).

Why did Jesus add the second when he was only asked for the great commandment? It is possible that he thought the first was incomplete without the second. Also, Jesus may have thought the second was particularly needed

by his questioner. But what did he mean by “a second is like it”? Possibly like it because it was a commandment of love. But also possibly because it was like it in importance. The first was really incomplete without the second. At least without the second, it could not have been said, by Jesus or someone else, “On these two commandments depend [“hangs,” NEB] all the law and the prophets” (v. 40).

On another occasion Jesus gave the disciples a Model Prayer. There is a petition in that prayer and some comments concerning that petition that emphasize the two-dimensional nature of our Christian faith. Among other things in the prayer are the words

And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.
(Matt. 6:12)

The petition was the only one commented on following the prayer. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15). In other words, the forgiving are the forgiven – and we might add the forgiven should be the forgiving.

Many other references could be given that stress the two-dimensional emphasis in the Scriptures. Among these are the relation of faith and works (Eph. 2:8-10; Jas. 2:14-26), the “therefore” perspective, which is prevalent in some of the prophets (Jer. 20-21; Amos 3:11; 5:10-13), in Paul’s Epistles (Rom. 1:1; Eph. 4:1), and in 1 Peter (4:7-10).

This should be enough to underscore the fact that we cannot be right with God and that our worship will not be acceptable to him unless we are right with others, including members of our families - husbands and wives, parents and children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others. Right relations with others also include neighbors and friends, fellow church members, those with whom we work and play, casual acquaintances, and even strangers we may

meet at shops or on the streets. The horizontal dimension also includes our relations to those of different races and cultures, to society in general, and to the institutions and agencies of society: the family as such, the church, the school, the community, the state, the nation, and the world.

The *cross* is *an appropriate symbol* of the two-dimensional nature of our biblical faith and of the Christian life in general. The upright or vertical bar represents people reaching up to God and God reaching down to people. The transverse beam symbolizes people reaching out to other people and to the society of people. In other words, the cross is the unifying symbol of the Christian life.³

Its Relevance

Does a book, such as the Bible, written so long ago have any relevant or authoritative word for us today? Many contemporary trends and issues, including some in the area of family relations, were largely if not entirely unknown in biblical days. It is possible, however, if we study the Bible carefully and interpret it properly, we may discover that basically the Bible is ahead rather than behind us and our times.

Let us first suggest two or three ideas concerning the *relevance of the Bible in general*. The Bible's abiding relevance stems primarily from *the Person revealed* in it. He is the eternal "I Am," the same yesterday, today, and forever. When Moses, at the burning bush, asked God what he was to reply when the people of Israel asked, "What is his name?" the word of God to Moses was, "I AM WHO I AM . . . Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex. 3:14-15). The word to John on Patmos was: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). The self-disclosure or self-revelation of the eternally I AM One gave birth to the Bible. That self-revelation is abidingly relevant for people because they were created for fellowship with him.

Also, *the redemptive message* of the Bible is continuously relevant. People of our age and every age need that message. The testimony of the Scriptures and of our own hearts is that

All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way (Isa. 53:6).

Or, as Paul, citing Psalm 14:1-3, wrote, “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Paul also concluded that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Furthermore, the *great promises* of the Scriptures are abidingly relevant. This is true of promises, such as “underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27); “When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me” (Mic. 7:8); that great promise of Jesus, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28); the statement by Paul so hard to comprehend and yet so comforting when life caves in - “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28) - things do not work together for good automatically. God works them together “with those who love him,” requiring their cooperation. In addition to these great promises, there is the statement of God to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9). These and other promises Of God can be just as meaningful to us today as to and for those of past generations.

What about our *day-to-day decisions, problems, and relationships*? Does the Bible have a relevant message for us? What about where we work and worship? Does it or can it speak to the needs of the contemporary home? Can we find any help, direct or indirect, in the Scriptures concerning such diverse needs and problems as abortion, homosexuality, abuse of children, the working mother, divorce, single life *versus* marriage, sexual “freedom,” alcoholism and drug abuse, living together without being married, discipline of children, euthanasia, neglect of parents, and numerous others? Whether the Bible speaks

a relevant or significant word to us in these and related areas will depend a great deal on how we read, study, and interpret it. It is a *mistake* and will be disappointing *if we consider the Bible a rule book* to which we can turn for a chapter-and-verse answer to every question or a solution for every problem. While the basic needs of men, women, and children remain relatively the same from age to age, their specific needs and problems may vary a great deal.

We should also remember as we read and study the Bible that some portions of it were so thoroughly historically conditioned that they do not apply, in any direct way, to our day. They were written primarily to meet the needs of a particular group of people faced with some particular problems at a particular point in time. Examples of this are many of the laws of the Old Testament, particularly the ceremonial laws. The same is also true of some things in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline Epistles. If Paul met the needs of the people to whom he wrote, he had to direct much of what he wrote to their immediate needs. This is clearly evident in 1 Corinthians which is, incidentally, the epistle in which we find Paul's fullest statements concerning family relations.

A problem that Paul dealt with in 1 Corinthians 8; 9; and 10; as well as in Romans 14, was the eating of meat offered to idols. We do not have that problem in our day. But if we examine carefully what Paul said, we may discover even in instructions that seem entirely irrelevant some principles that are abidingly relevant.

For example: (1) Right for the children of God is not decided exclusively by what they consider right for them to do. They must also consider what others consider right for them. (2) An activity that may be right within itself can become positively wrong or sinful because of its effect on others. (3) Also, one needs to realize that love rather than knowledge, as important as it is, is the final criteria of the right: "Knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8: 1).

The preceding correctly implies that the most relevant portions of the Bible are its ideals and principles. And we might also suggest that some whose words are recorded in the Scriptures would teach us as much by what they did or by the life they lived as by anything they said or wrote. This was and is particularly true of Jesus, as seen in the four Gospels which not only recorded what he said but also portrayed the kind of life he lived: “he went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He exemplified in his life every basic truth that he taught.

The preceding means that, if we are properly to interpret and use the Bible, we should seek as best we can to capture its spirit, which may be as relevant and possibly more so than its words.

*Its Interpretation*⁴

John Wilkinson says, “It is the simple testimony of human experience throughout the centuries that the Bible, read without even note or comment, has brought spiritual illumination to a multitude of souls.”⁵ Bernard Ramm feels that “everything essential in the Scriptures is clearly revealed.” How grateful all of us should be for the wonderful blessings that have come and continue to come from the simple reading of and meditating upon the Scriptures.

If the foregoing is true, is there a need for interpretation? The conversation of Philip and the eunuch is one situation which illustrates this need (Acts 8:26-40). The eunuch was reading from Isaiah. Philip questioned, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The eunuch replied, “How can I, unless someone guides [“teaches,” Williams] me?” or “unless someone explains it to me” (v. 31 NIV). Will you not agree that the same is true, to varying degrees, of most of us at times?

The experience of Jesus with the two on the way to Emmaus also points up the need, at least at times, for someone to explain the Scriptures to us. They described to Jesus what had happened in recent days, including his resurrection and the empty tomb. Then the record says, “And beginning with Moses, and

all the prophets, he interpreted⁶ to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). *Objectives.* Dana and Glaze briefly discuss three objectives of interpretation.⁷ (1) The historical: seeks “to discover what the passage meant to the first recipients.” (2) The universal result: an effort “to discover the universal principle which, though grounded in the historical result, is not limited to any particular time or place.” (3) The practical: “The objective . . . is to find out and to apply the universal result growing out of a past situation to concrete situations confronting the Christian in the present.” They suggest that the last objective should be the controlling interest of biblical interpretation. For them, “the Scriptures are worthy of interpretation only in so far as they minister to the moral and spiritual needs of human life.” One of the great needs of the contemporary period is to hear a word from the Lord concerning many conditions and trends that threaten our homes.

Attitude. An important factor in properly interpreting the Scriptures is our attitude toward the Bible. This attitude, in turn, is shaped and informed, to a considerable degree, by ideas and principles, such as the following:

1. A reverence for God and a deep desire to know and do his will.
2. Belief in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.
3. Reverently read and study the Bible.
4. Approach the study with a searching mind, not looking for proof texts to support a preconceived position but honestly searching for the truth.
5. Realize that the Bible represents a progressive revelation becoming more clear as it nears completion. “God brings man up through theological infancy of the Old Testament to the maturity the New Testament.”⁸ The Old Testament is the bud, the New Testament, the flower. Augustine said, “The New Testament lies hid in the Old, the Old lies open in the New.”

6. Understand that any translation, such as our Bibles, inevitably involves some interpretation. Otherwise, why do we have so many translations of the Scriptures?
7. Recognize that many portions of the Scriptures have to be interpreted.
8. Welcome the work of biblical scholars who help get us closer to the original words and meaning of the Scriptures.
9. Critically use the interpretation of others, such as carefully and reverently written commentaries.
10. Understand, however, that we as individual Christians have the right and the accompanying responsibility to read and interpret the Scriptures for ourselves.

Some of the preceding attitudes are developed by Dana and Glaze and by Ramm. This is also true of the following section on principles.

Principles. Some of the above attitudes might be considered principles of interpretation. At least, they are important factors in properly interpreting the Scriptures. Some of the following principles can be of help to us as we seek to interpret some things in the Scriptures concerning the home and particularly the relationships in the home.

1. Relate as far as possible any particular Scripture to its background and its historical situation.
2. Give proper consideration to the context.
3. Use Scripture to interpret Scripture. Utilize clear teachings to clarify the less clear.

4. Recognize that usually the most natural interpretation of a particular Scripture is more likely to be correct than a more involved interpretation. “Give preference to that meaning which is clearest and most evident.”
5. Christian experience is not a substitute for a knowledge of the Bible, but it can be a valuable factor in the correct interpretation of the Scriptures. If our interpretation of a particular Scripture conflicts with our experiences as Christians, we may need to reexamine our interpretation or reinterpret our experiences.
6. In some biblical statements, the spirit of the statement should be our guide rather than its specific words. Commands or teachings in terms of one culture must be translated into our culture. Example: the statements of Jesus about cutting off a hand or plucking out an eye (Matt. 5:29-30). Also, some things that Paul said, particularly concerning women, such as the wearing of a veil and instructions concerning their hair (1 Cor. 11:6-15).
7. A distinction should be made between what the Bible records and what it approves. “The Bible no more approves of all it records than an editor approves of all that he reports in his newspaper.”⁹ Example: polygamy.
8. Commands to individuals in biblical days are not necessarily the will of God for us. Example: Abraham’s offering of Isaac.
9. Acknowledge the need for and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we interpret the Scriptures.
10. While it may not properly be called a principle, a sincere desire to live in harmony with the truth discovered in the Bible is an important factor in understanding what our Father would say to us in and through the Scriptures.

T. B. Maston and William M. Tillman, Jr. *The Bible and Family Relations* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 17-30.

Testaments: Old / New

We know that there are two testaments but do we realize when we turn from Malachi to Matthew that we pass over 400-500 years? This is more time than has elapsed since the first settlements in our country. We should naturally expect some noticeable differences in the two testaments.

THEIR UNITY – However, one of the most striking characteristics of the two testaments is their unity in the midst of their diversity. This unity stems primarily from the Person who is the central character in the Bible.

The preceding implies that the unity of the testaments is not a static but a dynamic unity. There is movement. Some movement is evident within the Old Testament; it is particularly evident when, we move from the Old to the New Testament. The two testaments have been compared to the seed or root and the fruit: the New Testament, the fruit.

One thing that largely explains the dynamic nature of the unity of the two, testaments is the central dynamic event of the scriptures: the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The Old Testament looks forward to that event; the New Testament records, reflects on and interprets that event.

THEIR AUTHORITY – The fact that the revelation of God is climaxed in His Son, means that the Old Testament should be evaluated in the light of the life and teachings of Jesus. His teachings and the New Testament in general are normative for a Christian. Unfortunately, some Christians consider both Testaments equally authoritative. They tend to become “Old Testament Christians” defending their position and practice regarding certain moral and social issues on the basis of their interpretation of the Old Testament.

The diversity of the authority of the two testaments is clearly recognized in the New Testament itself. The writer of Hebrews says that “in these last days

god has spoken to us by a Son” and that the Son “bears the very stamp of his nature” (Hebrews 1:1-3).

When the Pharisees asked Jesus about the interpretation of the Old Testament law regarding divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), Jesus took them back of the law to the original purpose of the Lawgiver. He also said, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you. . .” Jesus plainly said that here was something even in the Old Testament law that was out of harmony with God’s original purpose and with His own will and teaching (Matthew 19:3-9).

DOES THE PRECEDING mean that there is nothing in the Old Testament that is authoritative for the contemporary Christian? The answer is definitely, No! Many of the laws and teachings of the Old Testament are abidingly relevant and authoritative.

For example, the basic moral laws of the Old Testament were not set aside or abrogated by Jesus. He did not repeal laws when his teachings went beyond the law (Matthew 5). Many of the Old Testament laws and teachings are expressed of and related to the nature and fundamental needs of men and women. After all, God the initiator of those laws, was the Creator of men and women. He knew what was best for His creation. This was and is just as true of “you shall not commit adultery” as it was and is of “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:14, 8; Mark 2:27).

We should be grateful for the basic moral laws of the Old Testament; we should be doubly grateful for Jesus and for those who recorded and interpreted His life and teachings.

T.B. Maston, “Both/And – Testaments: Old/New,” *Baptist Standard*, October 7, 1981, 14.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE

Maston believed that the message of the Bible is abidingly relevant for believers of all times in all places. Though the Bible may not directly speak to all areas of life at a given time, the Bible sets out truths and principles that Christians of all times should look to in life. Therefore, we are not to believe that the Bible has nothing relevant to say about current issues. Rather, Maston believed we are to understand that the words of the Bible are about salvation and relevant issues of biblical times. Furthermore, the Bible, though culturally conditioned, is abidingly relevant in all times, as it helps believers understand their world in light of timeless truths and principles.

Three particular emphases of the relevance of the Bible to be explored in the following readings include: ethics, the church, and the individual Christian. Preface material from *Biblical Ethics* speaks to ethics. An excerpt from *Christianity and World Issues* looks at the relevance of the Bible to the church. Finally, a reading from *Why Live the Christian Life?* tackles the Bible's relevance to the individual Christian, focusing specifically upon the will of God.

READINGS

Biblical Ethics

Students of Christian ethics and of the Christian life may differ widely in the ways they use the Bible and in their interpretation of *how* it is authoritative, but they generally agree that it *is* authoritative. Some scholars and Christians in general would cite particular laws or specific rules as authoritative in the Christian life. Those who take this position turn to the commandments of the Bible which they claim are found in both Testaments.¹⁰

There are others who place the emphasis on the principles or ideals of the Bible instead of on laws or specific precepts. Those who take this approach do not necessarily turn to the Bible for specific answers for every question or as a solution for every problem. They suggest that more important than the commandments are the principles or ideals that may be expressed through the commandments and may be the source of the commandments. Also, some would say that more important than any specific principle or ideal is the spirit or attitude revealed by and through the ideal.

Whether it is believed that the authority of the Bible rests primarily in its laws or in its principles and ideals, some would suggest that many of the specific teachings of the New Testament, as well as of the Old Testament, were historically conditioned. This implies, among other things, that some of the specific teachings are irrelevant and hence not authoritative for the contemporary Christian community. This does not necessarily mean that the prescriptive element is entirely lacking. It may be that behind the particular prescription or law there lies some principle or principles that are continually relevant and, hence, abidingly valid and authoritative.

In the contemporary period there is a particular emphasis on what is variously called a contextual, relational, or situational ethic. Those who hold this position maintain a distinctive approach in their analysis of the Bible and in its use, with emphasis not on laws or precepts nor on principles or ideals, but on relationships. For example, when the Bible is applied, their concern is with relations within the context of the contemporary scene. Paul Lehmann, whose approach is contextual, says that “an analysis of Christian ethics involves a kind of running conversation between the New Testament, on the one hand, and our situation, as heirs of the New Testament, on the other.”¹¹ The movement tends to be from the present situation to the Bible rather than from the Bible to the present. Lehmann also says: “A *koinonia* ethic is concerned with relations and functions, not with principles and precepts.”¹² This statement, it seems to me, goes too far. It may be that the Christian ethic is

primarily an ethic of community or a relational ethic, but there are at least certain principles and even precepts that are applicable to, and operative within, the framework of “relations and functions.” In other words, as is so frequently true, the option should not be an “either-or” but a “both-and.” A *koinonia* ethic may be concerned primarily with relations, but it should also be concerned with principles. There are precepts and particularly principles that govern relations within the covenant community.

A strict choice does not have to be made between law, principle, and relationship. All have their proper place in biblical ethics and in the Christian life. One would do violence to the material found in the Bible if one sought to make everything in the Scriptures fit into a particular mold: law, principle, or relationship. It is a question of emphasis or primary concern. There is clearly a major emphasis in the Bible on the matter of relationship. In the Old Testament it is the relation of God to His covenant people, but also, in turn, their relation to Him and to one another within the covenant and even to people outside of the covenant. The relational element is also common in the New Testament; the Church becomes the people of the New Covenant. Much of the ethical content of the New Testament is directed to those within the covenant relationship. Present in the Old Testament, but much more evident in the New Testament, is a relationship on a more personal basis. This reaches its climax in the writings of Paul and John with their emphasis on the union of the child of God with the resurrected Christ. Whether the relation is primarily individual or group, there are enumerated certain precepts and principles that evolve from that relationship and, in turn, become the test of the reality of the relationship itself.

T. B. Maston, *Biblical Ethics* (Waco: Word, 1967), vii-x.

Christianity and World Transformation

The Church's Message

An important phase of the Christian strategy for the world is the church's proclamation of the Christian message to the world. There are some important elements in that message that will not be discussed in this section. Consideration will be given exclusively to three or four phases of the church's message and mission that are most relevant to a study of world issues.

1. *Concerning the relevance of the Bible.* The message the church proclaims to the world comes primarily from the Bible. The Christians who have turned the world upside down have been men and women with a vision in their souls, the resurrected Christ in their hearts, and the Bible in their hands.

Can this Bible make any constructive contribution to the reconstruction of our world? There are many people who contend that it is an antiquated book, that its message is not and cannot be applicable to the complex social, economic, and political problems of the modern social order. They imply that the Bible is two thousand years behind the times. A careful examination of the Bible will reveal, however, that it contains principles that may be two thousand years ahead of our time. It has maintained an eternally fresh relevance to the problems of every age. It "is not merely relevant to our age, but urgently relevant."¹³ The Christ of the Bible, to use the title of one of Walter Horton's books, is *Our Eternal Contemporary*. We do not mean by the preceding that the Bible is a rule book in which one can find a chapter-and-verse answer to every question or a solution for every personal problem or for every social issue. Neither do we mean that all the Bible is equally relevant. There are great sections, especially in the Old Testament, that can make no particular contribution to the solution of the problems of our day. Many of the specific instructions even in the New Testament, especially in Paul's epistles which were addressed to particular churches with certain distinctive problems, are not relevant to the contemporary period. However, the basic principles of the New Testament, even of the least relevant sections of Paul's epistles, are just as relevant today as when they were spoken or written. The same could be said for the fundamental moral law of the Old Testament.

The relevance of these principles and of the moral law evolves from the nature and character of the God revealed in the Bible. The Bible not only reveals the nature and character of God; it also discloses his will and purpose for man. That will has not fundamentally changed. Any insight that we receive from the Bible concerning the character of God, the nature of the universe, and the demands of God upon man and his society is relevant to study of world issues and to the resolving of the conflicts of the world.

Some people contend that the Bible is irrelevant for at least the broader social relations of life because it is too idealistic. They may agree that some of the ideals might be applied, to a limited degree, to the strictly personal relations of life; but they contend that it is “idle twaddle” to talk about applying them to the relations of races, classes, and nations.

Does the perfectionism of the basic principles of the Bible make them irrelevant for our day and our society?

We certainly should recognize the perfect nature of those ideals and our inability to attain them. For us as individuals and for our world they represent what Reinhold Niebuhr calls an “impossible possibility.”¹⁴

However, instead of the perfectionism of the principles of the Bible making them irrelevant, their perfection really adds to their relevance. The ethical ideals of the Christian religion, derived from the Bible, are “eternally transcendent.” As such they stand above and beyond history, never fully realized in the historic process, but abidingly relevant to history. They constantly judge and challenge our individual lives and our social order. The transcendence of Christianity provides a perspective from which the policies of the *status quo* and the programs of change are kept under criticism.¹⁵

The divine-human nature of the Bible and the transcendent-immanent nature of the God revealed in the Bible also tend to make the Bible relevant to every age. Through the Bible the voice of the eternal God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore, speaks with authority to the soul of man. The voice speaking through the Bible “finds man, searches him,” and

challenges him with a message that contains a moral imperative.¹⁶ It speaks to man with an absolute claim, with a command that demands his attention. The balancing of the human and the divine in the Bible is comparable to the blending of these two elements in the life of Christ. He was the God-man, fully human while being fully divine. Just as this dual, rather paradoxical nature of Jesus made him *Our Eternal Contemporary*, so the balancing of the human and divine elements in the Bible has contributed to its abiding relevance and its continuing challenge to our world.

Another thing that gives the Bible its abiding relevance is the fact that human nature and hence human problems remain basically the same from age to age. If the Bible was relevant for the day in which it was written, it is relevant for our day. It contains the message needed by men of every age. It provides for them the guidance and the inner spiritual resources to meet the challenge of their world.

T. B. Maston, *Christianity And World Issues* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 327-39.

The Bible and the Will of God

Whether we are considering the intentional or the circumstantial will of God, we still need to know how we can know his will. How can man know what God is seeking to say to him? How has God sought to speak to men in the past, and how does he attempt to speak to them today? What channels does he use to reveal his will to us? These questions correctly imply, as suggested earlier, that we believe that the final authoritative word for the child of God is in God and his will. Right for us is basically not what reason dictates but what God says. It is not what society or any segment of society approves but what our heavenly Father approves.

God through the centuries has sought to reveal his will to men through nature, through providence, and through history. These sources for the will of

God have been and are helpful, but they do not provide sufficient guidance. In addition to this general revelation there is a special or unique revelation which is recorded in the Scriptures. The Bible is the main tangible, objective source for a knowledge of God and his will. When we agree that this is true, there still remains some questions concerning the Bible that need to be answered.

Is all the Bible equally authoritative, equally a source for the will of God? There are some who contend that all of the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, is equally authoritative. This was the viewpoint, in the main, of the reformers, the Puritan fathers, and is the viewpoint of many today. Many who hold this position become what might be called "Old Testament Christians." Their perspective, in the main, is the perspective of the Old Testament rather than of the New. They have not moved from Law to Grace. They need to remember the words of Jesus, "You have heard that it was said . . . but I say unto you. . ." (Matt. 5:21,27,33,39,43).

Others suggest that authority rests primarily in the New Testament. An Old Testament scholar (H. H. Rowley) says that the New Testament must be finally normative for the Christian even in his understanding of the Old Testament. The Old Testament forms a unity with the New Testament, but to use a term of Rowley's, it is a dynamic rather than a static unity. There is movement.

A third viewpoint is that the final authority for the Christian rests in the life and teachings of Jesus. It is the writer of Hebrews who says, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son." That Son "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature" (Heb. 1:1-3). The climax of the revelation of the nature, character, and will of God is in the Son. This means that Christ is the final authority rather than the Bible as such. The authority, in the final analysis, is not in the words of the Scriptures but in *the Word* revealed in the Scriptures which produced the Scriptures and which also makes them come alive. The Scriptures can lead us to Christ but, as sacred as they are, they

cannot take the place of Christ. When properly understood, this does not detract from the authority of the Bible, it clarifies and deepens it. Back of the Bible is the divine Person who gave birth to the Bible. His authority is prior to the Bible, but it is also expressed through the Bible.

T. B. Maston, *Why Live the Christian Life?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1974), p. 96-99.

TO WHAT ENDS?

How do we go about appropriating the Bible? How should we apply what we find in the Bible to our current situations, in our community, our denomination, our nation, and in our world? These are the types of questions Maston seeks to answer in the readings for this section. Specifically, the reader will find Maston speaking to two types of appropriations of the Bible: positive and negative.

As for positive appropriation, there are two readings. The first is an article entitled, "Biblical Bases for Concern." In this reading, Maston goes to great lengths to exemplify the Christian's concern for the world and its problems and to set out ideas for how to go about dealing with such problems. A final reading, included to display Maston's thoughts on negative appropriation, or mis-appropriation of the Bible, speaks specifically and prophetically to the denominational context.

READINGS

Biblical Bases for Social Concern

One definition of religion is that it is what one does with his solitariness. There is an element of truth in this statement. The central core of the Christian faith is a face-to-face encounter of man with God. This is a strictly personal matter, but it is not a purely private matter. The Christian's encounter with God does not and cannot remain entirely private. The individual, who has been brought face to face with God, plays certain roles in society. He maintains certain relations in the home, in the church, in the work-a-day world, and in society in general. If his encounter with God is meaningful it will affect every role he plays, every relation he maintains. In other words, it will carry over into life.

This “carry over into life” stems, to a considerable degree, from the nature of the God with whom the individual has been brought face to face. The Bible plainly reveals that God, the creator and sovereign ruler of the universe, is concerned with the totality of life. The same will be true of his children if their relation to him is vital enough for them to have captured or been captured by his spirit. The preceding means that there is an important and even an inevitable place in the Christian’s life, from the biblical perspective, for a concern for the world and its problems and for the peoples of the world.

A Covenant People

One cannot understand properly the biblical bases for social concern unless he understands that the people of God are a covenant people, an idea that pervades the entire Bible. The concept is specifically stated more frequently, however, in the Old Testament. The word *berith* (covenant) is found in approximately three-fourths of the books of the Old Testament.¹⁷ The word *berith* was used by the Israelites and others to describe different types of contracts or agreements: between individuals (Gen. 21:27; 26:28), including husband and wife (Mal. 2:14), and between nations (Ex. 23:32) or the kings or leaders of those nations (1 Kings 20:34; 2 Kings 11:4). However, the word is used, in the main, in the Scriptures to refer to God’s covenant with his people. The Scriptures reveal that he was the initiator of the covenant. He stated the conditions that must be agreed to by the people for them to enter into covenant with him. He promised to bless the people, provided they would accept the obligations that the covenant entailed.

The Christian Community

The Christian’s social concern should express itself in an unusual way within the Christian community or fellowship (*koinonia*). This fellowship is drawn together and held together by the common experience in the Lord of the members and by their love for him. There was a depth of fellowship in the

Jerusalem church that has seldom been duplicated. Their fellowship was so meaningful that they shared with one another in a way and to a degree that has perplexed and at times frustrated some of the followers of Christ through the years. The record says that they “had (“kept on having,” Robertson) all things common (*koina*); and they sold (“continued to sell,” Williams) their possessions and goods and distributed them to all as any had need (“as anyone had special need,” Williams)” (Acts 2:44-45). Because they shared so freely with one another, “there was not a needy person among them” (Acts 4:34). No wonder the apostles could bear “witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,” and that “they were all held in high esteem” (Acts 4:33, NEB).

It should be remembered that the sharing in the Jerusalem Christian community resulted from the fact that those within the community “devoted themselves to fellowship (*koinonia*)” (Acts 2:42), and “were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32). Their sharing was an outer manifestation of their inner unity. Really, there is inherent in the idea of Christian fellowship *koinonia* the idea of sharing. Paul used the word *koinonia* on at least three occasions to refer to the collection for the saints at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13).

The expression of concern for those within the Christian community is particularly prominent in the epistles of Paul and John, both of whom wrote primarily to and for Christians. Paul’s concern stemmed, to a considerable degree, from his conception of the church. His favorite figure or image for the Christian fellowship was the body of Christ (*soma christou*), with Christ as the head see (1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4). The unity within the body is underscored by the fact that Paul’s sanction of the body was primarily if not exclusively Hebraic rather than Hellenic – the body for him referred to the whole person rather than exclusively to the physical body. There may be and are many parts but one body (1 Cor. 10:17; 12:20). These parts are so closely knit together that if one member suffers, they all suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). Right for a member of the body is to be determined largely by the effect of one’s actions on the body and on the other members of the body. For example, if eating meat

offered to idols offends, makes weak, or causes a weaker brother to stumble, the member of the body is to eat no more meat (1 Cor. 8; Rom. 14). Within the fellowship one should not seek his own good (“interest,” NEB; “advantage,” Phillips; “welfare,” Williams) but the good of his neighbor (1 Cor. 10:24). He should give no offense to the Jews, the Greeks, or the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32).

Paul’s concern for the Christian community is spelled out in a special way in his use of love (*agape*). Most of his references to *agape* are within the context of the Christian community, including his great love chapter which was written to the church at Corinth. In this letter he suggests that knowledge puffs up, “makes arrogant” (NASB), “or breeds conceit” (NEB), but love edifies or builds up (1 Cor. 8:1) – “Love is the solution, not knowledge, in all social problems” (Robertson). To the Thessalonians Paul says, “But concerning love of the brethren (*philadelphias*) you have no need to have anyone write to you.” Why is this true? He gives the answer as follows: “For you yourselves have been taught by God to love (*agapan*) one another.” He follows this with a statement and an exhortation. The statement is, “Indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedonia,” and the exhortation is, “But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more” (“to excel still more,” NASB) (1 Thess. 4:9-10). The Colossians are admonished to forbear “one another” and forgive “one another” and then over these and all other qualities that should characterize “God’s chosen ones (“his own, his beloved,” NEB)” they should put on love, “which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14) or “which is the perfect bond of unity” (NASB) – binds the virtues together or possibly better binds those within the Christian fellowship together.

As previously suggested, John, particularly in 1 John, expresses a comparable concern for those within the Christian community. Similar to Paul, his use of *agape* (love) is largely restricted to the Christian fellowship. Love for the brethren is both a motive for concern for them and an integral part of that concept. The source of this love is God. In its deepest and truest

sense love or *agape* is the spontaneous fruit of a vital relationship with God who is *agape* – *agape* is the very essence of his being. John says that “we know that we have passed out of death into life (“have crossed the frontier from death to life,” Phillips), because we love the brethren” (3:14) – “proof of this transition, not the ground of it” (Robertson). One who does not love, does not know (“never knew,” Vincent) God since God is love (4:8). Also, since God is love, one “who abides (“dwells,” NEB) in love abides in God (“continues in union with God,” Williams; “is dwelling in God,” NEB) and God abides in him” (4:16), – “the nature of the believer must be conformed to the nature of God” (Westcott). John also says, “We love because he first loved us” (4:19) – “the amazing love of God in Christ is the inspiration of all the love that stirs in our hearts” (Exp. Gr. T.). Love characterizes our lives because he first loved us – “our love is the light kindled by the love of God” (Westcott). Our response to his love for us is not only our love for him; we also make ourselves channels for his love for others. Or, as John says, if God loved us enough to give his Son as the propitiation, sacrifice, or remedy for our sins “we also ought to love (“keep on loving,” Robertson) one another” (4:11). Again he says that Christ laid down his life for us and “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (3:16). He also says, “Whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him” (5:1, NASB), or literally “whoever loves the one who begets, loves the begotten” (see marg. in NASB). “Love for God is the inner principle, love for the brethren its outward manifestation” (Exp. Gr. T.).

The Community of the World

The children of God are our spiritual brothers but included in this group may be neighbors and friends of all classes and races. Also, those in the community of the world who are not in the Christian family are our potential brothers in Christ. Furthermore, the effectiveness with which we reach them for Christ will be determined, to a considerable degree, by whether or not we treat them like brothers. Really, the Christian’s love and concern must and will

inevitably overflow the boundaries of the Christian community and reach out to the community of the world. This outreach is emphasized in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, it is revealed in the Old Testament that God was not only the God of Israel, but that he was also the God of all the nations. His ultimate purpose was that the words of the Lord should go out to all nations (Isa.2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2).

The word of the resurrected Christ to his disciples was that they were to go and make and baptize disciples or learners of all the nations. They were also to teach them to obey all that he had commanded them (Matt. 28:18-20) – “the teaching is with a view not to *gnosis*; but to practice; the aim not orthodox opinion but right living” (Exp. Gr. T.). They were to be witnesses not only in Jerusalem and Judea but also in hated Samaria and to the end or “remotest part” (NASB) of the earth (Acts 1:8). It was an inclusive commission, being in harmony with the general emphasis of the teachings of Jesus. He never placed any limits on any of his basic teachings. They may have been directed immediately to the disciples, but the disciples in turn were to apply them to the world community. His disciples were to be “the salt of the earth,” “the light of the world.” They should so shine their light before men that they might see their good works and give glory to their Father who was in heaven (Matt. 5:13-16) – “The noble works which glorify the Father reveal the workers to be sons” (Exp. Gr. T.).

He taught them to pray
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

What they prayed for, they were also to work and live for.

They were to love their neighbor as themselves (Matt. 22:39; cf. Lev. 19:18). Their neighbor was anyone in need (see Luke 10:25-37). They were even to love (“practice loving,” Williams) their enemies and to pray for those

who persecuted them (Matt. 5:44). If they loved only those who loved them, they would do no more than the despised tax collector, and if they saluted or greeted only their brethren, they would not do anything more than others – even the Gentiles (“heathen,” NEB) (Matt: 5:46-47). Christ did not and does not want his disciples to be “moral mediocrities, men of average morality, but to be morally superior, uncommon” (Exp. Gr. T.).

What has been said may be summarized by stating that for the Christian and the Christian community there can be no retreat from the world. God has not seceded from history; his people are to co-operate with him in the making of history. He is in a continuing struggle to extend his sovereignty, his rule, his reign, his kingdom in the world. His people are to be laborers together with him in his work in the world. G. Ernest Wright claims that “in the New Testament . . . we have much more material dealing with the responsibility of the community of Christ to its Lord *before* the world than we have of an active responsibility for the salvation of the world.”¹⁸ He suggests that this is true because salvation is in the hands of God. It is also possible that this is true because the most effective thing children of God can do to bring others to salvation in Christ is to be consistent living witnesses of the grace of God as that grace finds expression in every area of their lives.

The Kinship Motive

This study would not be complete without a brief statement concerning the kinship motive as a basis for social concern. There have been suggested, without spelling them out in detail, at least three grounds or motives for such concern: obedience, gratitude, and love. In turn, the main ground for these motives is the fact that we are a covenant people. There has been outlined, in an admittedly brief and inadequate way, the working of these motives in two major areas: within the Christian community and in the community of the world. The kinship motive likewise is operative in both of these areas.

The kinship idea is prevalent in both testaments. God has always wanted his people to be like him. The children of Israel were to be kind and helpful to the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger or sojourner in their midst. There were two reasons why this should be true: (1) God is just in his dealings with these “his special proteges” – his people should likewise treat them justly, and (2) the Israelites should remember that they were sojourners in Egypt and God delivered them (see Deut. 10:18-19; 24:17). Here is both the gratitude and the kinship motive. There are places where God specifically says that his people are to be like him. For example, he says, “You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2; cf, 11:44). The same could be said concerning every quality and attribute of God. These qualities or attributes of God, if they can properly be called attributes, were and are expressed in his concern for and his dealings with people. The acts of God in relationship to his people and to the nations of the world reveal his character. God’s people are to reveal their kinship to him by the way they treat those about them.

The appeal for kinship to God is clearly seen in the New Testament. For example, Jesus appealed to his disciples to love their enemies, and gave as the reason or motive that they might be sons of their Father “for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” He closed this great statement or appeal with the continually challenging words: “You therefore, must be perfect (“all goodness,” NEB) as your heavenly Father is perfect (“all good,” NEB)” (Matt. 5:43-48). The words that give this statement its greatest depth and challenge are: “as your heavenly Father.” His children are to be like him.

The initial invitation of Jesus was “Follow me” (Mark 1:17; 2:14; Matt. 4:19; 9:9). It was repeated at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:24) and to the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21; Matt. 19:21). It is the initial and continuing invitation of Jesus to his disciples in every age. To be a Christian is to walk in the way that he walked. He did not and does not give detailed instructions about that way. The best instructions come from examining the life he lived.

His life as well as his teachings provide, however, a compass rather than a roadmap. That compass points to the opening road of a deepening fellowship with him as we seek to go about doing good (see Acts 10:38), as we express something of his compassion for people - for sinning, suffering individuals (Lk. 7:13) as well as for the struggling, restless masses who are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36; cf. 14:14; 15:32).

We can be assured as we walk in his way that it is not an uncharted course. He has traveled that way before us. How grateful we should be, however, that he has not only traveled that way but that he walks in that way with his disciples now. His word is "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20). He is not only a pattern of life for us to follow, he is a companion to give us strength to walk in the way with him. Manson expresses beautifully something of the relation of Christ to his follower. He says, "The living Christ still has two hands, one to point the way, and the other held out to help us along."¹⁹ If we follow where he leads, we will seek as best we can to let him express himself in us and through us in every relation we live with those without as well as within the Christian community. May we be increasingly captured by his concern and compassion for the world and the peoples of the world!

T. B. Maston, "Biblical Basis for Social Concern," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 7 (April 1965): 5-16.

To Sign or Not to Sign

Writers of Sunday School and Training Union materials and teachers in Southern Baptist seminaries could have faced a difficult decision if a motion that was made at the Southern Baptist Convention had passed.

Writers and teachers would have been required to sign a statement that they believed "in the authority, doctrinal integrity, and infallibility of the entire Bible, the Word of God."

Fortunately, a substitute motion by James L. Sullivan was approved. As disturbing as the original motion itself were the “amens” and applause that greeted the introduction of the motion and the speakers defending it.

Unwise Motion

The motion was unfortunate and unwise for several reasons. Why should writers and seminary professors be picked out and isolated from all other denominational employees?

And why limit the motion to one particular aspect of our faith: the Bible? A person might agree with the content of the motion and yet be thoroughly unorthodox in regard to other great doctrines.

The implementation of the motion would have violated something basic in Baptist life. As central as any other doctrine in our Baptist faith is our belief in the priesthood of the believer. Does this doctrine apply to writers and teachers as well as to other members of our churches?

Men who might sign such a statement would differ widely in their interpretation of it. For example, in the motion that was made in New Orleans, what is meant by “authority” and particularly “doctrinal integrity” and “infallibility?”

No Orthodoxy

Does the term “the entire Bible” mean that the Old Testament is to be put on the same level as the New Testament? There would be no assurance of “orthodoxy,” whatever that word means.

When the “amens” were the loudest the following question kept coming to my mind. “What if pastors were required by a pulpit committee or by deacons to sign a similar statement?” Would they conform? Or, would they consider such a requirement an infringement of the freedom they have in Christ?

What would have happened if the original motion had passed and if administrators had attempted to enforce it? I am persuaded that it would have

created a crisis as acute as any Southern Baptists have ever faced.

I am positive that many writers and teachers whose orthodoxy is unquestioned would have refused to sign. Others, who might have signed, would have placed their own particular interpretation on every word in the statement.

T.B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – To Sign or Not to Sign," *Baptist Standard*, July 30, 1969, 19.

CONCLUSION

To conclude Part Two, a most-fitting reading is provided, the conclusion to Maston's book, *Biblical Ethics*. This excerpt will provide the reader quite possibly Maston's most concise statement of his personal conclusions regarding the Bible and ethics. Specifically, Maston puts forth his views concerning the placement of ethics within the framework of the Bible and biblical studies, the development of the New Testament from the Old Testament, and his beliefs about the authority of scripture.

READINGS

Conclusions

1. *Ethics has a very important place in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.* The ethical is a significant phase of practically every book of both testaments and is the central theme or dominant interest of a number of the books. It is clearly evident that ethics is an integral part of the biblical revelation. The Scriptures reveal primarily a way of life rather than a theory about life. This way is to be followed by those who claim to know the One who not only points out the way but who is the Way.
2. *Biblical ethics has been neglected in a great deal of Bible study.* This includes many books that have been written on the theology of the Bible and on its teachings in general. The approach has tended to be too exclusively historical and theological. No study of the Bible is complete without a consideration of its ethics.
3. *God is as central in the ethics of the Bible as He is in its theology.* He is the God not only of the sanctuary but also of the marketplace. In other words, the sovereign God of the universe is revealed as one who is interested in and has a will for the totality of the life of the individual, the nation, and the world.

Furthermore, the God who is the central character of the Bible is revealed as a moral Person. This is true whether He is Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, or the God fully revealed in Christ. Since God is a moral Person, it is natural that the ethical should have an important place in His revelation of His will and purpose for man.

4. *The dominant ethical appeal in the Bible is for the people of God to be like Him.* This kinship motive or appeal is prominent in both testaments. This is the nearest thing we have in biblical ethics to one unifying theme or motif. This means, among other things, that the nature and content of the biblical ethic evolves from the nature of God. For example, in the Old Testament certain qualities, such as holiness, justice, and righteousness are particularly prominent in the character of God and, in turn, in His expectations of His people. In the New Testament, in the light of the revelation of God in Christ there is a more central place for love, although this emphasis is present in some Old Testament books, such as Deuteronomy and Hosea.

5. *Religion and ethics are thoroughly integrated in the Bible.* This is natural since the ethical content of the Bible is derived primarily from the nature of God. The close relation of religion, strictly speaking, and ethics is particularly noticeable in the great summaries of the basic requirements of our faith, such as the Ten Commandments and the central messages of the Prophets. Similarly, right relations to God and man are thoroughly integrated in the New Testament. For example, salvation comes through faith and faith alone, but the purpose of that salvation is good works or a life of goodness (Eph. 2:8-10; cf. Matt. 5:14-16; John 15:16), and the proof of the faith that saves is the quality of life that is lived (Matt. 7:15-23; Rom. 6:1-4; James 2:14-16; 1 John 2:3-6). Love for God and man belong together and are the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:34-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). The love of our fellowman, which is the proof of our relation to and love for God (1 John 3:14-15; 4:7-8, 16, 19, 20-21), will express itself in helpful service (Luke 10:25-37; John 21:15-17; 1 John 3:11-18). Furthermore, we cannot have the

forgiveness of our heavenly Father unless we forgive those who have sinned against us (Matt. 6:12-15; 18:21-35). In other words, it is clearly revealed in both Old Testament and New Testament that one cannot be right with God unless he is right with his fellowman. The prophets cried out against the sins of a people who thought they would be acceptable to God if they were faithful to the formalities of their faith. Jesus faced the same problem with the Pharisees. His word to them and to all who err in the same direction was and is “These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others,” and “the others” referred to “the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith” (Matt. 23:23).

6. *Theology and ethics belong together.* There is no evidence in the Bible of a purely speculative theology, a type of theology that crept into the Christian movement through its contact with certain aspects of Greek thought. It is recognized that a separation of theology and ethics for study purposes may be justified, but it will be most unfortunate for both if it is not recognized that they are simply two ways of looking at a unified revelation of God and His way and will for man. Theology in the Bible is used primarily as a basis for exhortations that men live for God and their fellowmen.

7. *There is a rather remarkable unity in the midst of diversity in the ethical content of the Bible as well as in the Bible as a whole.* There tends to be unity of over-all purpose while there is diversity in approach and emphasis. The unity and diversity so prominent in the Bible stem to a considerable degree from its divine-human nature. Broadly speaking, its unity is derived from its divine nature, and its diversity from its human nature. For example, God had to use as the recipients of, or channels for, His self-disclosure men who were limited by their finiteness and, to some degree, by the historical situations surrounding them. In turn, the recipients of the revelation passed on what they, by inspiration, had been able to comprehend to people who were limited in their capacity to understand, accept, and apply the revelation. For example, Jesus said that Moses, because of the hardness of heart or the perversity of life of the

people, permitted them to put away their wives, which was contrary to the original purpose of God. The preceding means, among other things, that the unity in the ethical content as well as in the Bible as a whole is not static but, to use a recurring expression of H. H. Rowley, it is “a dynamic unity” or a “unity of growth.”

8. *The developmental nature of the unity within the Old Testament is climaxed in the ministry and messages of the great eighth-century prophets.* For the prophets the ethical was supremely important. They spoke out in particular, as prophets have in every age, in defense of the oppressed and underprivileged. This was true because they believed that God was especially concerned about the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the social and moral outcast of society.

9. *The movement or progress in the Scriptures is particularly clear when one moves from the Old Testament to the New Testament.* The climax of God’s revelation of Himself and also of His attitude toward and His will and purpose for man is in Christ. The latter is God’s final and full word to man. It is the writer of Hebrews who says, “When in former times God spoke to our forefathers, he spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through the prophets. But in this the final age he has spoken to us in the Son” (Heb. 1:1-2, NEB). Jesus Himself said, “You have heard that it was said . . . But I say to you . . .” Here is the voice of authority.

10. The fact that God’s revelation of His will for man is climaxed in Christ means that *the Old Testament should be interpreted and particularly evaluated in the light of the fuller revelation in the New Testament.* As Rowley, an Old Testament scholar, says, “The New Testament must be finally normative for the Christian understanding of the Old.”²⁰ Unfortunately, many Christians do not understand that this is true and they become what might be termed Old Testament Christians. They derive their standards of daily living primarily from the Old Testament rather than from the fuller light that is in Christ. The preceding does not mean that the Old Testament is not a legitimate part of the Christian Bible. It forms an over-all unity with the New Testament, but let us

repeat that it is a unity of progress and movement. One can properly be considered the seed or the germ, and the other, the fruit. Rowley²¹ compares the relation of the Old Testament and the New Testament to parts of a musical cadence or sonata. He suggests that the New Testament is the final movement, but that the Old Testament belongs as a part of the sonata. The close relation of the two and their movement is clearly evident in biblical ethics. Sometimes the movement is nothing more than a matter of emphasis. For example, the emphasis in the New Testament is more on principle and less on law or precept than is true in the Old Testament. Also the emphasis is greater on the inner and less on the outer in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Likewise, love is more central and has a deeper meaning in the former than in the latter.

11. While the climax of biblical ethics is reached in the life and teachings of Jesus, *there is a sense in which the biblical ethic attains its most significant stage in the post-resurrection period.* This is particularly true of the emphasis that daily Christian living is a natural outgrowth of a vital, life-changing union with the resurrected Christ. This perspective is particularly prominent in the epistles of Paul and in 1 John. The movement from within the Christian experience outward is such a natural expression of the vital relationship with the resurrected Christ that the outer expression, in turn, becomes a proof of the inner relationship.

12. Another way of stating what we have been saying is to suggest that *the ethical teachings of the Bible are not on a plain, but are a part of a path.* That path, however, does not always move smoothly or upward. There are valleys as well as mountain peaks. Whatever upward movement there is results from a clearer insight into the revelation of the character and will of God. While it may be correct to say that man has been on a constant search for God and for a fuller understanding of His way and will, the Bible also reveals that God has been seeking at the same time to reveal Himself and His will more fully to man. It is even possible that man's seeking is a result of God's seeking.

13. *The biblical perspective concerning history is an important factor and really an integral phase of biblical ethics.* There is clearly evident in the Bible a theology of history. The general view is that the sovereign God of the universe is in control of history and that He will ultimately achieve His purposes within or over history. This perspective is prevalent throughout the Old Testament but it is also evident in the New Testament, particularly in the book of the Revelation.

14. *Eschatology, which represents a particular aspect or view of history, is rather closely related to ethics in the Bible.* The biblical ethic can properly be called an eschatological ethic if one understands that this is simply one of many ways to describe it. The eschatological has a prominent place in the teachings of the prophets and in the ministry and message of Jesus. It is present as a motive and used as a basis for an appeal for daily Christian living by Paul, Peter, John, and James. The eschatological is particularly important in the Revelation or the Apocalypse.

15. As implied above and also in previous chapters, *the biblical ethic is so deep and broad, as is true of the Christian life in general, that it cannot be described adequately by the use of any one term.* One does violence to the material found in the Bible if he attempts to force everything under one descriptive term. Many terms may be used and still the depths of the biblical ethic will not be fully fathomed. It has been indicated at various stages in our study that the biblical ethic could be properly called “a covenant ethic,” “a *koinonia* ethic,” “a love ethic,” “a will of God ethic,” “a kingdom of God ethic,” “an eschatological ethic,” “a perfectionistic ethic,” “a disciples’ ethic,” “a Holy Spirit ethic” which may be the New Testament equivalent of “a holiness ethic” in the Old Testament, and “an ethic of the cross” which in a sense is the central unifying symbol of the divine revelation and of the Christian life. Some of these concepts are more prevalent in the Bible than others. For example, no one idea is more pervasive of the Old Testament ethic than the covenant concept. The idea of *koinonia* which is closely related to the covenant concept is implicit

throughout the Bible, but is particularly evident after the formation of the Church. The will of God or the way of the Lord has a prominent place in both Testaments. Love, which is central in a couple of books in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy and Hosea), permeates thoroughly the New Testament, being revealed as the crowning virtue of the Christian life. The most distinctive New Testament concept, which has much more significance for ethics than is generally supposed, is the cross. While the cross is much more than a symbol, it is the unifying symbol of the Christian life.

16. *Much of the biblical ethic is just as relevant today as it was in the days in which the books of the Bible were written.* A leading English scholar says that the Bible is “urgently relevant” to our age²² and it could be added that it is distressingly relevant in some areas. As indicated previously, the Bible is not relevant in the sense that it is a rule book to which we can go for a chapter and verse answer to every question – for a solution for every problem. There are some instructions in the Bible that are so thoroughly historically conditioned that they do not apply to our world. However, behind and sometimes permeating even these instructions there are basic principles that are relevant for every day. This correctly implies, as has been stated previously, that the most relevant portions of the Bible are its principles or ideals and, contrary to the view of many, the most constantly relevant ideals are its ideals of perfection. These ideals or principles are above and beyond history, eternally transcendent but also, and for that reason, eternally relevant. They are the ideals that create the dynamic tension at the heart of our Christian faith which is the secret to its creativity.

17. *My conviction that the Bible is authoritative has been strengthened* as this study has progressed. A recognized American biblical scholar speaks of the Bible as “the indispensable and incomparable book which speaks an urgently authoritative word to every generation.”²³ But wherein rests the authority of the Bible? While many of its precepts and principles are authoritative, its authority does not rest primarily in them, but in the God who is back of those

principles and precepts. In other words, the Bible does not possess any authority independent of God. Its authority stems from the fact that it is a product of and contains God's word to man.

There is a very real sense in which the authority is Christ's, since He is the climax of the revelation of God. The Scriptures can lead us to Christ, but as sacred as they are, they cannot take the place of Christ. He is the Word made flesh. To Him the printed page of the Bible bears record. When properly understood, this does not detract from the authority of the Bible; it clarifies and deepens it. Back of the Bible is the divine Person who gave birth to the Bible, whose authority is prior to the Bible but also is expressed through the Bible. God will speak through the Bible to our age, as well as every other age, if we have ears to hear and hearts that are willing to listen to His voice and to walk in His way.

T. B. Maston, *Biblical Ethics* (Waco: Word, 1967), 281-288.

PART THREE: “THEOLOGY AT THE END OF A CORN ROW”

Maston's theology did not form in a vacuum, nor was it simply the product of his extensive theological training. As stated earlier, one cannot overlook the role his father played in the process. Of his father, Maston said, “He taught me more Bible, more theology, and more about the Christian life than any other teacher I ever had – and most of it was done at the end of a corn row.”

This statement needs to be clarified for our era in which fewer and fewer individuals have direct agricultural experience. The farmers, in this case Samuel Houston Maston and his son Tom, would each use a hoe to remove weeds and grass which would inevitably grow among the desired corn plants. The operation would carry each along a row of corn. At the end of rows, they might stop to sharpen a hoe or get a drink of water. During these times, T. B. Maston began to gain insight into life, and especially its theological dimensions, from his father.

This straightforward Christian theology, consistently nurtured by the faith of his parents, was also forged on the anvil of experiential religion, rugged individualism, and personal struggle. Maston's core beliefs were confirmed and given more formal expression as his understanding of Scripture, social issues, and history matured through academic training and personal experience.

Maston did not consider himself a theologian, but more pointedly, he had developed his theological reflection so that he allowed his theological presuppositions to lie behind everything he did and said.

Thus, the student of Maston will not find a mass of material related to theological matters. This lack of mass belies the importance Maston placed on theology, however. His expression of Christian ethics did not begin with a

faddish issuism but rather was based solidly on theological precepts he drew from the Bible.

Following are three main subdivisions of this section, which provide development of Maston's theological persuasions. The first, "Why Live the Christian Life?" examines "Morals and Morality," "The Standard for the Christian Life," and "The Living of the Christian Life." The second, ". . . the image of God," provides a survey of Maston's perspectives on God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and humankind. Finally, "The Church and Ethics," looks at one of the primary audiences for Maston as he addressed congregations, especially regarding evangelism and ethics along with pastoral ethics.

WHY LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

T. B. Maston moved quickly from theological reflection to actional living. One of the primary reasons for attraction to his ideas from his generation to our own is that he dared bring the Christian faith to bear on everyday life.

Maston began his application with a sense of anthropology shaped by theology. He resonated with Augustine with regard to the characteristics of human nature and humans' standing before God. Human beings are not completely salvage heap material, but they are damaged enough to require help from God through Jesus Christ. Certain standards and formative factors – natural laws – are in place through the act of creation that provide bases for morals and morality. But Maston saw the guidelines for the redemption – a redemption that raises the standards of life – laid out in the Bible.

Thus, the basic definitions and differences between morals and ethics come forward. Morals and morality, what people customarily do, can be commendable. Ethics, however, articulates the "oughts" of life.

So, why live the Christian life? Because the virtues God offers, over against potential vices, are better for us and reflect the character of God. The character which eventuates is good for the rest of society. The transformed personality

demonstrates what the Kingdom of God in its yet-to-be fullest expressions can be like.

Items selected to flesh out this section of the *Reader* reflect Maston's ideas on morals and morality. As well, statements related to the standard for the Christian life follow. Finally, more specifics are given from Maston's thoughts on the Christian life.

MORALS AND MORALITY

How people live became a primary theme for T. B. Maston. Higher standards for relationship to one another and with God are available for formation, he maintained. Those standards could be repudiated, however, and thus one could read Maston as if he stood in judgment only of everyone else. For, Maston did emphasize the description and the possibilities of life emanating from human beings' essential nature without the energy and direction of God. Rather, Maston should be understood as one who articulated the lower standards of morality in order for his audience to understand the reference points for a redeemed life.

Maston's interest lay not only in personal morality. In fact, everything an individual does has implicit social ramifications, according to him. Certainly articulating the what ought to be is one thing. Maston's contributions, though, moved his hearers and readers to understanding the incrementals making up living the Christian life. A number of articles in this section provide the reader an idea of what these incrementals are all about.

READINGS

Morality

The word "therefore" usually introduces truth or statement grounded in or based upon something that has preceded it.

In the area of Christian morality the "therefore" usually refers either to the moral nature of God or more specifically to the goodness and grace of God as revealed in His attitude toward and His dealings with man. Christian morality is "therefore morality."

In the Old Testament the "therefore" usually introduces the judgment of God. This judgment in turn is a result of the sinfulness of man and in marked

contrast are the justice, righteousness, and holiness of God.

Basis for Judgment

These and other qualities may not be specifically mentioned but one or more are always in the background as a part of the basis for the judgment of God.

The word “therefore” and the therefore concept of morality are particularly prominent in prophets such as Amos and Micah.

For example, the former represents God as speaking to the children of Israel as follows: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” Notice what follows immediately: “Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2).

Blessings and Responsibility

One way to state the law is: “To whom much is given much will be required.” Every favor or blessing from the Lord increases the responsibility of the recipient, be it individual or nation.

The therefore motif is just as prevalent in the New Testament as in the Old Testament. There is a difference, however in emphasis. In the former the “therefore” usually introduces an exhortation or an appeal. The exhortation is based on what God has done through His grace and goodness.

Obligation may be implied, but the appeal is primarily to gratitude. Moses and the prophets commanded; Paul, Peter, and other writers of the New Testament appealed or exhorted.

The “therefore” type of morality is particularly evident in Paul’s epistles, especially in the epistles that are primarily theological in their over-all emphasis such as Romans and Ephesians.

In these epistles Paul lays down a theological foundation, on the basis of which he makes certain moral appeals or exhortations. The transition from the

more theological to the more hortatory part of the epistle is introduced with a “therefore” (Rom. 12:1, Eph. 4:1).

Christian Morality

The preceding paragraphs correctly imply that morality is not on a sound basis unless it is preceded or introduced with the “therefore” perspective. Distinctly Christian morality is always grounded in what God has done and is doing. It should be remembered, however, that just as Christian morality is introduced with a “therefore,” likewise one’s right relation to God is naturally and inevitably followed with a “therefore” of responsibility.

T. B. Maston, “Problems of the Christian Life – Morality,” *Baptist Standard*, May 21, 1969, 19.

Personal and Social Morality

Unfortunately personal morality and social morality are rather sharply divided in the thinking and practice of some Christians. Too frequently one or the other is neglected.

Some Christians, who seem to be above reproach regarding personal morality, have thoroughly unchristian attitudes toward and relations to some of the more serious moral and social issues. Some who have excellent attitudes in the area of social issues are quite careless concerning personal morality.

T. B. Maston, “Problems of the Christian Life – Personal and Social Morality,” *Baptist Standard*, March 26, 1969, 19.

The Double Standard

The United Methodist Church in its recent meeting in Dallas voted to remove the ban on smoking and drinking for its ministers. A major argument

for the removal was that there should not be two standards of morals, one for ministers and another for laymen.

A few years ago the same argument was advanced concerning moral standards for men and women. There was at that time a strong emphasis on a single standard.

A good case can be made out for a single standard of morals for men and women and for ministers and laymen. A single standard in both cases sounds logical. Theoretically it may be valid.

In actual practice, however, the single standard has frequently meant the lowering of the higher standard more than the lifting of the lower standard. This generally has been true regarding men and women. Many women have taken on to a distressing degree the failures and bad habits of men.

The results have been unfortunate for men, women, home, and society. The home and society, as is true of the church, need leaders to set the pace or pattern in morals. There can be no movement to higher levels of living without someone to point the way.

Men need the challenge that can and should come from women who say to them, "Come up to my level." Christian laymen need pastors who will set the pace for them in daily Christian living. Society needs Christian men and women who will demonstrate in their lives the highest level of living. There is no lifting of our level of living unless there is a continuing tension between where we are and where we should be. We cannot know where we should be unless someone already lives on that level.

Frequently an emphasis on a single standard of morals has not created a tug upward because the emphasis was wrongly placed. For example, if women had been satisfied to stop when they said, "If it is wrong for me, it is wrong for you," there would have been a pull upward for men.

There was a tendency, however, to reverse the reasoning. It was too frequently said, "If it is right for you, then it is right for me." The emphasis was shifted from responsibility to personal rights. The results are just as

unfortunate when the pastor or anyone else in a church-related vocation majors on his rights rather than on his responsibilities.

Also, let us remember that a basic rule or principle of life is that to whom much is given, much will be required. The greater one's opportunity to influence others the greater is his responsibility to them and to our heavenly Father. This is true of parents in relation to their children, of pastors in the relation to the members of their churches, and of Christians in relation to non-Christian loved ones, friends, and neighbors.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life— The Double Standard," *Baptist Standard*, September 11, 1968, 16.

Sins of the Mind Considered

Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28, RSV).

This statement by Jesus should give to you and me a deepened sense of sin in our lives. Most of us may be relatively free from the grosser sins of the flesh, but what about the sins of the mind or the meditations of the heart? What Jesus related concerning adultery applies to many other sins. Many can be sins of the mind without being overtly expressed.

It should be said that the look referred to by Jesus was not a passing glance. It was to look "at a woman so as to have an evil desire for her" (Wm.). That "evil desire" was the desire to commit adultery with her. There might be many reasons why one would not actually commit adultery; but if the desire is there, it is sin. There can be psychological as well as physical adultery.

When I was a teenager, a pastor used an old saying to distinguish between temptation and sin. The saying was, "You cannot keep birds from flying over.

Your head, you can keep them from building nests in your hair.” Only the latter is sin.

Will you not agree that many of us have difficulty keeping the birds from building nests in our hair? An appropriate daily prayer for all of us, women as well as men, would be the words of the Psalmist:

“Let the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in thy sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – Sins of the Mind Considered,” *Baptist Standard*, January 3, 1972, 19.

Because of Hardness of Heart

He saith to them, “for your hardness of heart
Moses allowed you to divorce your wives,
but in the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:8).

Jesus had stated that it was the purpose of God for one man and one woman to be joined together as husband and wife for life. The Pharisees pressed Him with one additional question: “Why, then did Moses command one to give the certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” (Deut. 20:1-4).

Notice the reply of Jesus. They had asked, “Why did Moses command?” He replied, “Moses allowed or permitted you.” Jesus also gave the reason for the permission: “For your hardness of heart” or “because you are so hard to teach” (TEV). The responsibility for the permission rested on the people rather than on Moses.

This conversation of Jesus with the Pharisees should help us understand some of the questions that some of us have regarding certain moral problems of the Old Testament.

Some things in the Old Testament seem out of harmony with the spirit and teachings of the New Testament.

What Jesus said should help us. He plainly said that the provisions for divorce in the law were by permission.

It was not a part of God's original purpose or of His ultimate will for the home.

True of Other Things

Since this is true regarding divorce, it may also be true of some other things in the Old Testament. At least, we believe that the full and perfect revelation of God was in and through Jesus. This means that the Old Testament is to be read and particularly to be evaluated in light of the New Testament.

The latter is to be normative for the child of God.

Maston, T. B. "Bible Nuggets – Because of Hardness of Heart," *Baptist Standard*, April 18, 1977, 13.

Suffering as an Ethical Problem

The central issue or problem of Job has been stated in more than one way. H. Wheeler Robinson states it as follows: "How is it possible in a world morally governed by a just and powerful God, for innocent men to suffer" Job was suffering?¹

Rowley cites S. R. Driver as one who suggested "that the principal aim of the book was to controvert the theory that suffering is a sign of Divine displeasure."² The more immediate and personal problem of Job was how his situation could "be reconciled with divine justice and benevolent providence."³

Job's problem grew, to a degree, out of the fact that he did not see God's judgment coming on the evil and guilty. He asked the question:

Why are not times of judgment
kept by the Almighty?

He then enumerates some of the sins of men: they “remove landmarks,” “seize flocks,” “drive away the ass of the fatherless,” “take the widow’s ox for a pledge,” and “thrust the poor off the road” or “push the needy from the path” (AB). He complains that

the soul of the wounded cries for help;
yet God pays no attention to their prayer.
(24:1-4,12).

“The verse describes the apparent indifference of God to the groans of suffering mortals” (CB). “God does nothing about human misery because either he does not know or does not care” (AB). Either one of these would create a serious problem for Job. The first would raise questions concerning God’s power; the second about his moral character.

When the prologue is taken into consideration, one may arrive at a somewhat different conclusion concerning the central theme or major thrust of the book. Satan’s question was, “Does Job fear God for nought?” (1:9). From this perspective the suffering of Job becomes a test of his faith. Satan’s viewpoint was that man even in his relations to God is incurably selfish. Terrien suggests that the purpose of the book “was to raise the issue of selfless piety.” He further says that the author of Job reflected on the question: Is there among men a “love of God which is not a calculating love?”⁴

While the suffering of the innocent may not be the most basic problem dealt with in Job, it is the most immediately evident one.”⁵ And after all, Job and his friends were not supposed to know anything about the prologue, which records the conversation of God with the Adversary. Suffering, and particularly suffering of the innocent, is not only a religious problem but also an ethical issue of major significance. The latter is particularly true of those

who believe that God is both all-powerful and just, which is the perspective of the book of Job. Suffering was the result of the “retributive” justice of God. The concept of retributive justice as applied to Israel as a nation and to the leaders of the nation by many of the prophets. When the nation declined, and particularly after its fall, the emphasis was shifted to the individual. It was Ezekiel, a prophet of the Exile, who said, “The soul that sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). The direct relating of sin and suffering has continued through the centuries. It was the background for the question the disciples asked Jesus, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2).

For Job’s friends, everything was wrapped into a neat package: suffering was punishment for sin, Job was suffering, therefore Job had sinned. Elihu stated the general position as follows:

according to the work of a man he [God] will requite him,
and according to his ways he will make it befall him (34:11).

The New English Bible has an interesting translation of this verse:

For he pays a man according to his work
and sees that he gets what his conduct deserves.

Bildad rather cruelly applied the principle of retributive justice to the children of Job:

Your children sinned against him,
and he paid them for their sins (8:4, AB).

It was Eliphaz who pointedly asked Job, “Is not your wickedness great?” (22:5) and then proceeded to charge Job with some of the typical sins of the day:

You have taken your brother’s pledge unjustly,
And stripped the clothing of the naked,

You gave the weary no water,
You withheld bread from the hungry.
Widows you sent away empty,
Orphans' arms you broke
(22:6-7; 9, AB; cf. 20:19-20).

The idea of retributive justice had a positive as well as a negative aspect. Not only was suffering the result of sin, but health and prosperity were the rewards of the righteous. And “so long as good conduct was the surest passport to divine favour and worldly success the natural accompaniment of religion was a frankly utilitarian morality.”⁶ It was this simple: “The sinful suffer, therefore avoid sin. The good prosper, therefore be good.”

The preceding general position was so commonly held in the Old Testament days that it is sometimes called “the orthodox position.” There are, however, some rather conspicuous exceptions such as Abel, Uriah, Naboth, and others, but these exceptions did not seem to affect noticeably the generally held position. Job’s friends evidently did not recognize any exceptions. For them God “rules the affairs of men with a justice so rigid and exact that it is always well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. . . . A man’s life and his lot in life must correspond, otherwise God would be unjust.”⁷

Whether or not it is correct to call this “the orthodox position,” the friends of Job believed in an exact individual retributive justice, which is sometimes labeled “a terrestrial eschatology:” justice is meted out so perfectly in this life that there is no need for redress or the righting of things in the next life. Really, this “terrestrial eschatology” may have resulted from the fact that there was no clear doctrine of the next life. Job’s friends believed in a just God. If there was no life after death, then there had to be the proper balancing of punishment and sin, and rewards and goodness in this life. This position or dogma may be “a great comfort to the healthy and the prosperous, but a cruel taunt to the sick and the poor.”⁸

T. B. Maston, "Ethical Content of Job," *Southwestern Journal of Theology*
14 (Fall 1971): 47-51.

THE STANDARD FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Nominal Christianity was not an option for T. B. Maston. Christianity pursued and lived in the fullest sense possible was the centerpiece of who he was. This living took on nothing less than the assimilation of the resurrected Christ in everything in one's life. Expressions, characteristics, and facets of this existence would be lived out in such ways that others perceive it. Particular marks would include love for God and other human beings and a sense of living life on behalf of others. The following articles provide specific, pastoral-like advice to Christians in how they are to live their lives and against what their lives should be measured against.

READINGS

Who Is the Good Christian?

It is unfortunate that we feel it is necessary to insert "good" or "real" as a prefix to Christian. It should be sufficient for one simply to be known as a Christian, but it is not. There are entirely too many "Christians" who are merely nominal Christians.

Many answers are given to the question, "Who is the good Christian?" The following are the major ones.

Some suggest that the good Christian is one who does not smoke, drink, dance, etc. This is the negative test of the Christian life. This emphasis is particularly prevalent among sectarian groups such as the Pentecostals and among those with a considerable sectarian tinge such as Baptists.

Faithful to Requirements

Others would say that the good Christian is one who is faithful to the formal requirements. He attends the services of his church regularly, and

supports its program with at least a tithe of his income.

Still others contend that the supreme test of whether or not one is a real or good Christian is his work in the church. The good Christian is one who teaches a Sunday School class, works with a youth program, or ministers in and through a mission.

A few people judge the Christian more by his active participation in the life of the community. He may or may not be active in the work of his church, but if he provides leadership for worthy causes in his community he is considered a good Christian.

Christian Experience

For one to comprehend what it means to be a real Christian he needs to understand the nature of the initial Christian experience. When we became children of God we were brought into a life-changing union with the resurrected Christ.

To be a real Christian means to let that which was a potentiality in the initial experience become a living, dynamic reality in our lives. Another way of expressing the same concept is to say that the real Christian is one who lets the resurrected Christ live in him and express himself through him. In other words, we are real Christians to the degree that we are Christlike.

The preceding means that the supreme test of the Christian life is positive rather than negative; vital rather than formal. Basically the Christian life is a relationship so deep and meaningful that all of one's life is influenced by it.

The good Christian will not do certain things. He will be faithful to the formalities of his faith and will be active in the work of his church and in wholesome and helpful programs in his community. The motivation for all these expressions of the Christian life, however, will be one's love for and gratitude to God for the blessings that have come through his salvation in Christ.

The whole matter can be summarized by simply saying that the Christian life flows from within outward. Its source is one's vital relationship to the living Christ.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Who Is the Good Christian?," *Baptist Standard*, February 5, 1969, 19.

Which Measuring Stick?

When they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding
(II Cor. 10:12, RSV).

Paul said that those who so measured themselves commended themselves. They could do so because as Christians they were using the wrong measuring stick. Will you not agree that this is a very common fault of many of us as Christians? We tend to measure our lives by the lives of others. Sometimes we are even selective about the ones with whom we compare ourselves.

But God does not judge us by how we compare to others. He judges us by His expectations of us as an individual Christian. It may be that His expectations of us – of you and me – are quite different from another member of our family or our church. He has a unique measurement for each of us, and we will be judged by him on the basis of how we have measured up to His standard.

Will you not agree that the supreme standard for the Christian is the life of Christ? We have been brought into a vital life-changing union with the resurrected Christ. The test of our lives is how fully we let Him live in us and express Himself through us.

In other words, how fully does He possess us? How completely do we walk in the way He walked?

Standard of Life

Here is a standard for measuring life that will continue to be challenging to us regardless of how mature we may become in the faith.

Life is not to be measured by the lives of others or by standards that we, from the human perspective, have erected in and for our lives.

No, the standard is His standard which is no less than perfection.

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – Which Measuring Stick," *Baptist Standard*, August 9, 1972, 13.

Godlikeness

God wants His people to be like Him. This is stated specifically in many ways and places in the Old Testament. One frequently quoted example is the statement in Leviticus: "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). What is said concerning holiness could be said concerning every other quality or character trait of God. God's people are to be like Him.

The appeal to be like God is also prominent in the New Testament. When Jesus exhorted His disciples to love their enemies, He gave us a reason or motive that they might be like their Father: "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

Challenging Words

He closes this exhortation with the abidingly challenging words: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

The initial and continuing invitation of Jesus was and is to follow Him. It is an invitation to walk in the way that He walked. This is what it means to be a real Christian. Although He does not give us detailed instructions concerning that way, we can discover some guidelines from what He taught and especially from the life He lived while He walked among men.

No brief statement sums up any better the quality of life Jesus lived than Peter's words concerning Him spoken in the house of Cornelius. He said that Jesus "went about doing good."

If we walk in His way we will go about doing good: comforting the sorrowing ministering to the needs of people, associating with the moral and social outcasts of society, reaching out in compassion to the restless masses who are "scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt 9:36).

Imitators of Christ

Paul over and over again exhorted those to whom he wrote to be like Jesus. He appealed to the Corinthians to be imitators of him as he was of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). He admonished the Ephesians to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. 5:2): here is both example and motive. He pleaded with the Colossians to forgive one another as Christ had forgiven them (Col. 3:13).

He told the Philippians that Christ had set the example for their humility: "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Paul used the example of Jesus to appeal for a liberal offering to the saints at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:9). He also said that the strong should not please themselves but should please their neighbors. Why? Because "Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom 15:3).

We can be assured that if we walk in the way the Lord would have us to walk it will not be an uncharted course. Christ has traveled that way before us. He never asks us to walk in a way that He has not already explored. It is even more glorious to know that we do not have to walk in that way alone. He walks with us.

His life is not only a pattern for us to follow but He also is a companion to walk by our sides and give us the strength that we need as we seek to live for Him and for our fellow man. T. W. Manson expresses beautifully the relation of the resurrected Christ to His followers. He says, "The living Christ still has two hands, one to point the way, and the other held out to help us along."

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Godlikeness?," *Baptist Standard*, April 2, 1969, 13.

Both/And: Greatness and Service

Do you know some really great Christians? What is it that makes them great? What did Jesus say concerning greatness?

His Teachings

The teachings of Jesus were frequently in sharp contrast to the perspective of people in general. In no area was this more evident than in His teachings concerning greatness. The world says, "The great are served." Jesus said, "The great serve."

The disciples argued at times about who among them was the greatest. On one occasion Jesus said to them, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be . . . servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Again he said, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23: 11).

Furthermore, there was the occasion when John and James (in Mark) and/or their mother (in Matthew) made a request of Jesus. The request was that John and James might have the seats of honor in Christ's kingdom. Jesus first made a statement that may be applicable to us at times, "Ye know not what ye ask." A request may involve a price we had not contemplated.

When the other disciples heard the request, "they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." Then "Jesus called them unto Him and said, 'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (servant, RSV); and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (slave, RSV)" (Matthew 20:20-27; Mark 10:35-44).

Example of Jesus

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Jesus as a teacher was that He exemplified the things that He taught. He never asked a disciple of His to do anything He did not or would not do.

The preceding was clearly evident in His statement at the close of His conversation with John, James, and the other disciples. His word was, "Even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:38, RSV).

The example of Jesus regarding service was most strikingly underscored on the occasion when He washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-17, RSV). It was shortly before His crucifixion. None of the disciples had volunteered to perform this accustomed and necessary service.

There are several things that make the incident particularly impressive. Notice the background: "When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart . . . to the Father"; "When the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot . . . to betray him"; and when He knew "that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God."

If there was ever a time when Jesus could justifiably have been thinking about Himself, it was at that particular time. But He rose from the supper and washed the feet of His disciples.

Then Jesus applied the truth He had demonstrated. First, He asked a question, "Do you know what I have done to you?" He answered His own question, "You call me Teacher and Lord . . . If I then . . . have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Then He pointedly said, "I have given you an example . . . A servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him."

His closing words, which are applicable to all of us, were, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Now, when we measure greatness by the standard of Jesus, who are some of the great Christians we have known? How do you and I measure up?

T. B. Maston, "Both/And – Greatness and Service," *Baptist Standard*, September 23, 1981, 12.

Both/And: Love for God and Man

This, another expression of the vertical and horizontal nature of the Christian life, is more or less evident in the synoptic gospels, Pauline epistles, and John's writings.

Synoptics

When Jesus was asked about the great commandment in the law, his answer was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Deuteronomy 6:5). Possibly after a pause for emphasis, quoting Leviticus 19:18, He added: "And a second is like unto it, thou, shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:36-40). What did He mean by "like it"? Like the first, it is a commandment of love. But possibly He meant that it was comparable to the first in importance. Neither was complete without the other.

There follows the statement: "On these two commandments hang [depend, RSV] all the law and the prophets" (v. 40). What is meant? It could mean that one who loves God supremely and his neighbor as himself will keep or fulfill all the basic moral law, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments.

Paul

Comparable to what Jesus said concerning love as the fulfillment of the law, Paul said, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Romans 12:8; Galatians 5:14). Paul also plainly revealed that God is the source of the love that reaches out through us to others. We are "taught of God to love one

another” (I Thessalonians 4:9; cf. Romans 5:5). Also, love is the first and most basic fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

This love, which has its source in God, is all-inclusive, seeking to flow out through us to all men. It is expressed in and through personal relations: the family (Ephesians 5:22-25, 33), the community, and finally to all people (I Thessalonians 3:12). Paul also says that love “binds everything together” or is “the golden chain of all the virtues” (Colossians 3:14, Phillips). Love or *agape* is “the more excellent way” or “the best of all” (I Corinthians 2:31, NEB).

Paul spoke of the dimensions of Christ’s love, a love that “passeth knowledge” (Ephesians 3:1.9). The Christian’s love for God and his fellowman can never reach the depths or the heights of the love of Christ, but from the perspective of those who do not know the love of God, we can approximate the depth of the love of Christ.

John

We should be grateful for John’s gospel. It supplements the synoptics in many wonderful ways. For example without John we would not have “For God so loved the world . . .” (John 3:16). Neither would we have a record of the words of Jesus: “A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

There is such an abundance of material in I John that all we can do is call attention to a relatively few references. John says that “God is love” (4:8, 16). One who loves is “born of God, and knoweth God” (4:7). Also, “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (3:14). “We love because he first loved us” (4:19, RSV). John even goes so far as to say, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.” This is followed by an evident reference to the teachings of Jesus: “This commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God loves his brother also (4:20, 21). He similarly says that one who loves the parent will also love the child (5:1).

Love of a Christian should move out in an expanding circle until it even encircles one's enemies (Matthew 5:44). There is no limit for *agape* in depth or range.

T. B. Maston, "Both/And – Love for God and Man," *Baptist Standard*, December 3, 1980, 11.

Its Supreme Value: The Kingdom of God

The child of God, as is true of men in general, needs a unifying center around which he can build his life. It has been said that "all men who attain have one great ruling aim." There may and will be other centers or aims, but these will be subservient to and integrated into the one unifying center or "ruling aim." The more thorough the unification or integration, the more completely the individual will fulfill his potentiality.

There is no aim or center, for the Christian, that is more inclusive or adequate, than his devotion to the kingdom, the rule, the reign of God. This means, among other things, that the supreme value for the Christian is God-centered rather than man-centered. This is in harmony with the distinctly Christian approach to life – God is always the predominant point of reference. In contrast, the philosophical approach is man-centered. For example, the *summum bonum* in philosophical ethics is found within man: it is happiness, wisdom, self-realization, or the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

The Christian discovers that when he puts God, his will, his work, his kingdom first in his life he receives as a by-product the deepest, most abiding and most meaningful happiness and personal fulfillment. He also discovers that as he "seeks first the kingdom of God," he ministers most effectively to the needs of his fellowman. In other words, one who places the kingdom first in his life also in the truest sense puts his fellowman first.

*The Meaning of "The Kingdom"*⁹

One of the difficulties in any study of the kingdom of God is the fact that it is not clearly defined in the Scriptures. As prominent as the kingdom was in the preaching and teaching of Jesus, he never defined it. He evidently assumed that the people who heard him speak of the kingdom knew what he meant. It is relatively clear that the concept of the kingdom of God was and is closely related to if not an integral part of the idea of the kingship of God. The kingdom describes or represents the relation of God as king to men as subjects. From the perspective of the king, the kingdom signifies his dignity and power. His dignity is something inherently his as king. His power is an external expression of his basic nature and dignity. Both God and men have some distinctive relations to and contributions to make to the kingdom. God, as king, provides guidance and protection. Men as subjects of the king are to trust him and to be loyal and obedient to him. The kingdom can be interpreted either as the reign or the realm of the king. From the biblical perspective, the primary emphasis is on the reign.

The whole kingdom concept is closely related to the idea of the sovereignty of God. When “kingdom” and “sovereignty” are properly understood they can be equated. The king is sovereign. His kingdom represents his sovereignty or rule. This means that for practical purposes the kingdom of God can be equated with the intentional will of God. The prayer:

Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
(Matt. 6:10)

is not two petitions but one.

Jesus and the Kingdom

When Jesus came, saying, “The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15), he was using a familiar term. The Jews in the days of Jesus connected the

kingdom idea with messianic hopes, which flourished among them.¹⁰ The idea of the kingship of God is very prevalent in the Old Testament. In the earlier days the kingship concept was restricted, in the main, to Israel. As the nation declined, the remnant idea became more prevalent and God tended, in a sense, to be the king only of those who voluntarily accepted his reign. There is also found in the Old Testament the idea that the Lord will “reign for ever and ever” (Ex. 15:18) and that his kingship is universal. He was recognized as “king of all the earth” (Ps. 47:7), as a God who “reigns over the nations” (Ps. 47:8).

The Jews in the days of Jesus looked forward to the coming of the kingdom of God as a time when God’s judgment would come upon their enemies and as a time of national justification, restoration, and exaltation. They also thought of it as an earthly kingdom to be set up and ruled over by the Messiah or the Son of Man.

As was so frequently true, Jesus utilized current terminology but breathed new life and meaning into the old. He definitely rejected the idea of an earthly kingdom with the Messiah as the king of the kingdom. He largely ignored the nationalistic elements of the current Jewish perspective. He did not abolish entirely the idea of the kingdom as a future hope, but he also made it a present reality. As John Bright says, “The future tense of the Old Testament . . . has now become an emphatic present. . . . In the person and work of Jesus the Kingdom of God has intruded into the world.”¹¹ This does not necessarily mean that the sense of the future was discarded. Pannenberg, whose major emphasis is on the “imminent kingdom” (it “was the resounding motif of Jesus’ message”), suggests that “it is a mark of Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of God that future and present are inextricably interwoven.” He further says, “Jesus underscored the present impact of the imminent future.”¹² He also suggests that the main way Jesus modified the Jewish conception of the kingdom was his emphasis on its imminence.

There can be no question about the centrality of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus. It was the subject of his earliest recorded preaching: “the

kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15; cf. Matt. 4:17), was his continuing theme, and when he appeared to the disciples after his resurrection he spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The idea of the kingdom permeated and dominated his entire ministry. It was the key or unifying theme of his preaching and teaching. For example, almost all of his parables were kingdom parables. L. H. Marshall suggests that *“all the ethical teaching of Jesus is simply an exposition of the ethics of the Kingdom of God, of the way in which men inevitably behave when they actually come under the rule of God.”*¹³

The Nature of the Kingdom

Let us examine in more detail the nature of the kingdom, basing our study primarily on the teachings of Jesus. Where else could we go for an authoritative word concerning the nature of the kingdom? Unfortunately, some biblical scholars attempt to press everything Jesus said concerning the kingdom into their pre-conceived concept or mold. Isolated verses can be quoted to support widely divergent interpretations. However, all that Jesus taught concerning the kingdom cannot be wrapped into one neat little package. His teachings contain varying and at least on the surface paradoxical perspectives.

It will help us properly to interpret and evaluate these seeming paradoxes if we will keep in mind that the kingdom is basically spiritual and inner. Paul says that “the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). But while basically it is a spiritual kingdom there is also a deep and an abiding concern for the material well-being of people. In the model prayer immediately following the prayer for the kingdom is the petition for daily bread (Matt. 6:10, 11). The basis of the separation of the sheep and the goats at the time of judgment was their service to the hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Matt. 25:3, 5-36, 42-43). The main contrast regarding the kingdom is not between the spiritual and the material but between the

spiritual and the physical. Since the kingdom is basically spiritual and inner, it should not and cannot be identified with any earthly, man-made structure or organization, not even the church. This spiritual kingdom is naturally and inevitably primarily inner. But just as inevitably it has its outer manifestations.

Also the kingdom is a gift of God: “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). As a gift it is to be received (Mark 10:15). It is also to be prayed for (Matt. 6:10), and what we pray for we should work for. We can even say that when we experience it as a gift we accept it as a task. In this regard, the kingdom is somewhat comparable to the Promised Land, which was given to Israel by the Lord, and yet they had to struggle to win it.

One of the most prevalent and perplexing paradoxes concerning the kingdom is that it is a present reality and yet a future hope. Barth expresses something of this idea when he says that according to the Old and New Testaments the rule or government of God “is always a completed fact . . . which can be known to us and yet also an imminent event towards which we are only moving and which is still concealed from us.”¹⁴ The present and the future aspects of the kingdom were not really antithetical in the life and activity of Jesus. The kingdom as future was evident in the teachings of Jesus but it was a future that had already broken into the present. The imminent kingdom had become the invading kingdom, being present in the world in the life and ministry of the Messiah, the Son of God. “The kingdom of God is the lordship of God established in the world in Jesus Christ. It is the rule of God as it takes place in Him.”¹⁵ There is also a very real sense in which the kingdom is timeless just as God is timeless. He is the great “I am.” Christ is “the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come” (Rev. 1:8). The timelessness of the kingdom is comparable to the dynamic nature of the Christian life. We are saved in all tenses. We have been saved, are in the process of being saved, and shall be saved. The kingdom has come, is a present reality, and yet it is a future hope. The present ties the past and future together.

The culmination or consummation of the kingdom may come soon or later, sudden or gradual, but it must and will come. Jesus plainly taught that no one knew when it would come. His main emphasis was that the disciple was to watch and be ready at any time. Jesus did teach that the kingdom was imminent (see Mark 1:15). This note was also present in the writings of Paul: “the appointed time has grown very short” (1 Cor. 7:29; cf. Rom. 13:11-12); in Hebrews: “you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:29); in James: “establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8); in Peter: “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7); in John: “children it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18); and in Revelation: “the time is near” (Rev. 1:3; cf. 22:7-17, 20). Some biblical scholars contend that all of these were wrong about the imminence of the coming of the kingdom. Is there not a possibility that this is the correct and the healthiest attitude for anyone to have regarding the consummation of the kingdom? It can be considered as always imminent though its consummation may be long delayed. At least a consciousness that it may come in its fullness at any time will encourage us to be alert, to seek to be ready for its coming.

An examination of some of the Scriptures mentioned above as well as other references will reveal that the eschatological and ethical aspects of the kingdom do not stand out in marked contrast. Neither dominates the other. Some scholars seek to unlock every door of the kingdom with the eschatological key but that key does not fit every door. The teachings of Jesus are largely but not exclusively set in an eschatological framework. Really, the eschatological aspects of his teachings are closely related to his ethics. The two-eschatology and ethics-belong together, although all of his ethical teachings are not eschatological in perspective. There is a close relation of eschatology and ethics not only in the teachings of Jesus’ but also in other portions of the New Testament. For example, the imminence of the coming kingdom is used at times as the basis for ethical exhortations. An example is the above reference to First Peter. His statement “The end of all things is at hand” is followed with

“therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers. Above all hold unfailing your love for one another. . . . Practice hospitality. . . . As each has received a gift, employ it for one another” (1 Pet. 4:7-10). The general relation of eschatology and ethics is clearly evident in Paul’s great chapter on the resurrection. At the close of the chapter he breaks out in those often quoted words:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is thy victory?

O death, where is thy sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then notice the exhortation that follows immediately:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:54-58)

T. B. Maston, *Why Live the Christian Life?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1974), 93-101.

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Maston took seriously the New Testament's noting of the first Christians being people who followed "The Way." The emphases in these descriptions were upon action. Maston was known for taking the action, imperative verbs of especially Jesus' conversation in the Gospels to demonstrate the Christian life. "Come," "Follow," "Rise," "Walk," and "Go" were only a few of these.

The authentication of one's Christian faith lay in how one lived life. Thus, no passive, hide-in-the-corner, or even Lone Ranger approaches were true reflections of the way which Jesus had laid out the path. Maston understood that salvation was something that had happened, that was continuing in the moment as close as one's heartbeat and breath, and that will happen. He pronounced a whole Gospel for a whole life.

The first item in this section is from Maston's book, *Why Live the Christian Life?*. This piece looks at the Christian experience not just as a one-time event but as something that is to be lived and matured throughout one's life, following his belief that salvation is a continuing event. Following this piece are some shorter articles which focus upon salvation and its implications for Christian living.

READINGS

The Christian Experience

Three foundations of or sources for an emphasis on everyday Christian living have been discussed: the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of the biblical revelation. In this chapter we shall consider another source for such an emphasis: the nature of the Christian's experience in and with Christ.

When this experience is properly interpreted, it leads naturally to an emphasis on everyday Christian living. Christian life is not primarily a theory about life but rather it is a way of life, and a distinct way. From another viewpoint, we can correctly say that Christian living is not an external attachment to the Christian's life; rather, it evolves from the nature of his life in Christ. The outer expressions of that life are the results of an inner relationship of the child of God with the resurrected Christ.

The Initial Experience

There can be no question about man's need for some experience that will basically change the perspective and direction of his life. Our experience as well as the Bible has taught us that "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6), that "none is righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10), that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Man needs help from outside himself to overcome sin in his life. He receives that help when he comes into union with the resurrected Christ.

Two things are necessary for one to have the experience which brings him into union with Christ. There must be the outreach of God to man matched by the outreach or upreach of man to God. The first is grace; the second is faith. The initiative comes from God, the response from man. God is the acting power in man's salvation man the reacting power. But he must react, he must take the leap of faith.

The Continuing Experience

Union with Christ is not only an initial experience but also a continuing and growing one. We have been made new creations in Christ Jesus. Just as surely we are in the process of being made into his likeness. In a sense we are being called to be what we already are. These two aspects of our union with Christ, the past and the present, but particularly the latter, are expressed in a distinctly Johanne word: abide or abides.¹⁶ It is comparable in meaning to

Paul's "in Christ," although Paul's term is more frequently applied to the initial Christian experience.

The word "abide" as it applies to the Christian's relation to Christ is particularly prevalent in the great Vine and Branches chapter (John 15) and in First John. In the former, Jesus revealed that he considered the union or relation of his disciples to him so close and vital that it could be compared to a vine and its branches. The branches are not separate from the vine; they are an integral part of the vine. The sap or life blood of the vine flows into and through the branches. It is the source of their life and their fruitfulness. No wonder he said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (v. 5).

There are two places in First John where the concept of abiding in Christ is in a setting that gives them special significance for the Christian life. The first one is: "All who keep his commandments abide in him" (3:24). The other statement which should be tremendously challenging to every Christian is as follows: "Here is the test by which we can make sure that we are in him: whoever claims to be dwelling in him, binds himself to live as Christ himself lived" (2:6, NEB) or he "ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

The preceding correctly suggests that being a Christian means primarily a commitment to and communion with the resurrected Christ. This in turn means commitment to his way of life. The test of our lives is not so much what we believe about the historic Jesus as it is our relation to the resurrected Christ. The acceptance of certain basic doctrines or dogmas is important, but more important is one's relation to the Divine Person. Doctrines or beliefs are important, but we should keep them in proper perspective. One may be rigidly orthodox in his beliefs and thoroughly unchristian in his relationships and attitudes. He may even attempt to make orthodoxy a substitute for everyday Christian living. It is easier to "believe" than to "practice."

This means that one is wrong when he considers any person a good Christian simply because of his adherence to a particular doctrine, the absence in his life of a certain vice, or the presence of a particular virtue. The good

Christian is one who is so vitally related to the resurrected Christ that this relationship inevitably affects every area and relation of his life. The kind of life he lives flows so naturally from his union with Christ that he is largely unconscious of the kind and quality of life he lives. This is increasingly true as he matures in his experience with Christ.

An outgoing life of service for God and to our fellowman was the basic purpose of the initial experience when we became new creations through union with Christ. We were not saved just to be saved. There was a purpose in that initial experience that reached far beyond the experience itself. Paul suggested what he considered the normal Christian experience when he said: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of "works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:8-10). Particularly important for the Christian life is the purpose of the salvation: "for good works" or "good deeds." It was Martin Luther who said, "Our faith in Christ does not free us from works but from false opinions concerning works, that is, from the foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works."

There is a statement by Jesus in the wonderful Vine and Branches chapter that sets forth the same perspective. He said to his disciples: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (John 15:16). Notice the purpose of the choosing: "that you should go and bear fruit." He did not choose them, and he does not choose us simply to enjoy fellowship with him, as rich and rewarding as that can be. No, he chose us to bear fruit, and we bear fruit as we abide in him.

Through our union with Christ there is created within us a desire to bear fruit for him. There is also born within us new motives, a new dynamic, a new desire to know and do his will. We discover in our union with the resurrected Christ not only a new desire but also a new power to move in the direction of the purposes of God for our lives. Notice it says "to move in the direction of."

We can say with Paul that we have not “already obtained,” we are not “already perfect.” Can we honestly also say with Paul, “But I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Phil. 3:12)?

There are three terms that summarize the rich blessings that come to our lives as a result of our union with and abiding in the resurrected Christ: justification, sanctification, and glorification. These are different ways of looking at our salvation in Christ. We are saved in all tenses: past, present, and future.

The Maturing Experience

Maturity in and for Christ operates in the present tense. It represents the sanctification aspect of our salvation.

The more mature the Christian, the more he realizes that his union with Christ has brought into his life a richness and fullness that he not only had not known but that he had not dreamed could be true. He discovers that the more fully he abides in Christ, the more abundant life becomes for him. He comes to understand clearly that life in Christ may mean death, but it is life in and through death. He finds that his union with Christ does not limit his life but releases new sources of life within him. Life in Christ for him does not mean the loss of freedom; rather it brings real freedom (John 8:36). It does not isolate him from people; rather it results in a more meaningful and inclusive outreach to and for people. Paul says that as he matures in Christ he will have not only a better understanding of and a changed attitude toward sin, he will also maintain a different relation to it.

The preceding and other blessings that result from our union with Christ do not come automatically and have not been fully realized in our lives. For example, there is a sense in which old things have passed away but a very real sense in which they are in the process of passing away. To use Paul’s terms, we “have put on the new nature,” but the new nature “is being renewed in

knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:10): “have put on” – past; “being renewed” – present which reaches into the future.

Let us mention again a very meaningful paradox in the Christian life, a paradox that may be expressed in various ways. The more mature we are in Christ, the more conscious we will be that our union with him is imperfect and incomplete. Another way of expressing the same idea is to say that our union with the resurrected Christ is both the end and in a very real sense the beginning of our search for meaning in life. In him there is both release from tension and the creation of tension.

This paradox is closely related to the place of the indicative and imperative in the Christian life. As we mature in Christ, the outward expressions of the Christian life will flow more naturally from the vitality of our relation with Christ. In other words, life will be lived more and more in the indicative mood. We will do what we do not so much because we are commanded to do so but because we want to. But none of us is so mature that we do not need the imperatives of life. Really, as someone has suggested, the indicatives of the Christian life are veiled imperatives. The outer expressions of the Christian life are so much an inevitable phase of our union with Christ that if those outer expressions do not take place as indicatives they then become imperatives.

The indicative and imperative are two sides of the same coin. They maintain an inner unity. Such unity is evident in the area of love. The obligation or imperative to love one another stems from the love we have received from God. It is John who says, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11), and “We love, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Lehmann, who gives primary emphasis to the indicative, suggests that there is “an imperative pressure exerted by an indicative situation.”¹⁷ Thieliicke, somewhat reversing the order, suggests that the imperative is “a demand that we should attain to that starting point where the automatic process goes into operation.”¹⁸

The preceding means, among other things, that there should be a growing or maturing experience with, in, and for Christ. We were born babes in Christ, but babies are supposed to grow. Growth is so much the nature of a babe that if he is not growing we know that something is wrong. The same is just as true of moral and spiritual babes. We were born babes but babes *in Christ*. The “in Christ” means that growth is natural, even inevitable. If growth is not evident we had better examine to see if a birth has taken place.

Paul suggested that one purpose of the work of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers was the equipment of God’s people for the “building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain . . . to a mature manhood and to a perfect measure of Christ’s moral stature” (Eph. 4:12-13, Wm.). How do we measure up when we stand beside the moral stature of Christ? Every one of us surely hangs his head in shame and admits that he falls far short of being what he ought to be. But what about the goal of our lives, what about the deep intentionality of our souls that motivates us and at the same time provides the measuring stick for our lives? It is possible that God judges us far more by the intent of our lives than by their achievement. Kierkegaard concludes that one is not “eternally responsible for whether he reaches his goal within this world of time. But without exception, he is eternally responsible for the kind of measure he uses.”¹⁹ He compares the reaching of the goal with hitting the mark, while the means used are comparable to taking aim. He concludes that “the aim is a more reliable indication of the marksman’s goal than the spot the shot strikes.”²⁰ The latter may be purely accidental.

In other words, the test of our lives is not so much where we are but where we are going. Have we set for ourselves a worthy goal? The most comprehensive and worthy goal for a child of God is to be like Christ. Are we progressing toward that goal? Are we more like him today than yesterday, this week than last week, this month than last month, this year than last year? It

was Calvin who said, “Our labour is not lost when to-day is better than yesterday.”²¹

The Worship Experience

This discussion of the Christian experience as a foundation for the Christian life would not be complete without at least a brief consideration of worship. Worship is an integral part of our union with Christ. The more real and mature the latter is the more important will be the place of worship in our lives. In turn, worship is an important factor in keeping our sense of union with Christ constantly fresh and alive. Worship is essential to growth or maturity in Christ and is also expressive of that maturity.

We shall not be concerned here with a discussion of worship in general. We shall restrict our consideration to the relation of worship and service. In other words, we want to seek an answer to the question: How is worship related to everyday Christian living? And by “worship” we mean the normal response of the Christian to the consciousness of the presence of God, when the spirit of man rises to meet the Spirit of the living God. Man is awed by the sense of the Presence of God and cries out, “Here am I, send me.” The natural outcome and final objective of worship is action.

Reflection might convince us that we are not as effective in our Christian lives as we should be because worship, in private as well as in the home and at the church, has not been given as prominent a place in our lives as it should have. This may be particularly true of many of us who are identified with one of the more activistic Protestant churches and/or denominations. Many individuals and churches need to heed the admonition of the resurrected Christ to his disciples: “Stay (“tarry,” KJV) in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Then and then only would the disciples be equipped to be his witnesses in “Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). We need to cultivate the art of tarrying until we are conscious of his presence, until we feel the touch of the

divine Spirit. Our going into the world to witness for him by the spoken word and by the life we live will be effective to the degree that we have been “clothed with power from on high.”

The preceding correctly suggests that worship and service are inextricably linked together. To a considerable degree, they interact on and are dependent on one another. For example, as Bonhoeffer says. “For the Christian, worship cannot be divorced from the service of the brethren . . . If we despise our brother our worship is insincere, and forfeits every divine promise.” Bonhoeffer’s conclusion is: “So long as we refuse to love and serve our brother . . . whether we do so individually or as a congregation, our worship. . .will be unacceptable to God.”²² On the other hand, service cannot be divorced from worship. It is doubtful if our service to our fellowman will be acceptable to God unless it stems from and to some degree is accompanied with worship. Many Christians can testify that some of the most meaningful worship experiences they have had have been as they served others in the name of the Lord. They were conscious, to an unusual degree, of his presence with them in the service.

There is a sense, as implied earlier, that worship is preparatory to service. It must not be treated, however, as merely preparatory or it will cease to serve effectively as preparation for service. Genuine worship, as was true of the experience of the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, is a deeply satisfying experience. It can properly be considered an end within itself and not a means to some other end. In actuality, however, it is an end that points to an end beyond itself. We feel impelled by the presence of the Lord to move from the mountain of worship to serve in the valley filled with human need.

T. B. Maston, *Why Live the Christian Life?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1974), 61-74.

Both/And: Saved, Saved, Saved

The Scriptures reveal that we are saved in all three tenses: past, present, and future. We have been saved (justification); we are in the process of being saved (sanctification); and our salvation will be complete when we awake in His likeness (glorification).

PAST – can you remember your initial Christian experience? It made you a new creature in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:17). That experience came to me a few days before my 17th birthday. Your experience may not have been like mine but if you are a Christian sometime you have met the Master face to face. You have let Him come into your life and the direction of your life has been changed.

That initial experience can and should be a stabilizing influence in our lives. I have doubted at some time almost everything about our Christian faith, but I have never doubted my conversion. Something happened to me at old Smithwood Church on that Friday night many years ago that changed the direction of my life.

There are scriptures that should give us assurance. Remember that Jesus once plainly said, “I . . . know my sheep and am known of mine” (John 10:14). He also said in the same beautiful “Sheep and Shepherd” chapter that He gives His sheep “eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28-29). What security! We are in His hands and His hands are in the Father’s hands.

PRESENT – Regardless of how much assurance we may have of our salvation, we should realize that we are “babes in Christ.” (I Corinthians 3:1). We should heed the admonition in the last verse of II Peter: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18).

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said that the “new nature is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator” (Colossians 3:10 RSV).

We have put on a new nature (past) but also that nature is being renewed (present which reaches into the future). Our new nature is both an achievement and a process. Paul also said: “Not that I . . . am already perfect. . . Forgetting what lies behind. . . I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upper call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14 RSV). If this was true of Paul, how much more should it be true of us?

FUTURE – One of the marvelous paradoxes of the Christian life is the fact that the more mature we are in Christ the more conscious we will be that our union with Him is incomplete and growth in Him is a constantly challenging growing experience. Martin Luther expresses something of the paradox nature of the Christian life in the statement: “A Christian man is both righteous and a sinner, holy and profane, an enemy of God and yet a child of God.” Paul said that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners “of whom I am chief” (I Timothy 1:15). Notice the “I am chief.” Paul was still conscious of being a sinner.

The more conscious we are of failure to measure up to God’s expectations for us, the deeper will be our conviction that the final stage of our salvation will come only at the end of life’s journey but how grateful we ought to be for the glorious fact that someday we shall awake in His likeness.

T. B. Maston, “Both/And – Saved, Saved, Saved,” *Baptist Standard*, November 5, 1980, 14.

Living the Christian Life

One of life’s most perplexing questions is why many people who do not claim to be Christians seem to do a better job of living the Christian life than many who are Christians, including some who are so called Christian leaders. The late Karl Barth said that it is to the shame of the church that the will of God “has often been better fulfilled outside the church than in it.”

Has this ever bothered you? Have you discovered any reasons why it is so frequently true? I have personally searched for years for a satisfactory explanation.

It may be that we have not placed enough emphasis in our churches on the positive emphasis in our churches on the positive aspects of Christian living. We have tended to measure too largely the quality of a Christian's life in negative terms – what he does not do – and on the basis of his faithfulness to the formalities of the church – attendance at worship services, support of the church program, etc.

In turn, the tendency on the part of so many church members to judge those inside and outside of the church in formalistic, negative terms contributes to a hypercritical spirit on the part of many church members. Too many of us reject those within and outside of the Christian fellowship who do things that we disapprove.

Many and possibly most church members have not developed the capacity to separate “the sinner and his sin.” If they disapprove or “hate” what a man does, they tend to reject or “hate” him. This limits many of us in our capacity to reach and to minister to the needs of people. We should be able to love people regardless of what they do and even regardless of what they are.

Shifting the emphasis somewhat, “the Christian life of the non-Christian” may be partly explained by his background. Many a non-Christian lives on borrowed or overflow religion that has come from a godly father or mother or from some other relative.

Also, there are some non-Christians whose religion is their good works. They substitute works for faith and may never identify with the Christian church. Their motivation may be self-centered or it may be thoroughly unselfish.

Theirs may be a humanistic humanitarian approach to life. They may place a high value on man and hence on their service to man, while ignoring man's relationship to God and their responsibility to God.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Living the Christian Life,"
Baptist Standard, February 26, 1969, 19.

“. . .THE IMAGE OF GOD”

Little used in the Bible, the phrase, “the image of God,” nonetheless carries a powerful, at least double-edged, message. Allusions to the Genesis 1:26-27 passage often develop the point of reference with regard to the humans created. The first question to be raised, though is what is the nature, character, personality of this God in whose image people were and are made?

This section, then, necessarily reflects the infrastructure associated with these questions as T. B. Maston developed it. His ethical perspective explicitly and implicitly carried a theological tone. Maston, as you can ascertain from a survey of his writing and teaching, explicated a sovereignty of God position. God was not so deterministic as to limit human choice. Rather human beings could have some choice regarding their lives; in fact, humans have the expectation upon them to work with God in finding “the abundant life.”

Jesus, for Maston, was the literal incarnation of God among human beings. Our best model and mode of interpretation of what it means to live in a God-like manner is to know and understand Jesus.

Maston, dealt little with pneumatology, the theology of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps he assumed this part of the Trinity to be active in his theologizing and ethicizing in much the same ways that his own teachers apparently demonstrated.

Finally, following in this section are matters pertaining to human kind, the term adopted for this Reader.

GOD

Sovereignty is key to Maston’s understanding of who God is. This sovereignty works itself out on two fronts: cosmically and in the life of the believer. God is creator. God sets up a creation that shapes and governs all aspects of our lives. But God is not just a distant lawgiver. God exercises

sovereignty in inviting humankind to respond, to take part in the life God wants for all people. Therefore, theology and ethics cannot be separated. Three brief excerpts below capture the breadth of his thinking on these matters.

READINGS

Basic Laws of Life

I am convinced that all of life is governed by certain basic laws. Some are known; others are not. “Basic laws” are those written into the nature of man and into the nature of the world! God, as creator, is the source of these laws.

The basic laws of life are not dependent on a written formula. Their validity rests in their very nature. The validity of the statutes of any government or governmental agency ultimately depends on whether those statutes are grounded in and expressive of the basic laws of God.

These basic laws are as evident in the area of health as anywhere else. We know that if we observe them, we will have good health. If we ignore or violate them, we won't.

This means, among other things, that the penalty for the violation of the basic laws of life is not external to the laws but inherent. Eventually, one must pay the price of any violation.

The laws of mental health are not as generally known. They are just as surely operative. Health of mind as well as of body follows from the observation of certain laws.

What is true of the health of the individual is also true of the health of society and of the institutions of society. Certain basic laws govern human relations, such as the relations of husband and wife, parents and children, employer and employee, and of racial, cultural, and national groups.

Insofar as people conform to the laws governing human relations, there will be sound, happy, mutually satisfying relationships. In contrast, if these

laws are violated consciously or unconsciously, discord and unhappiness will be the result.

God who is the source of these basic laws is greater than those laws. The creator has the power to control or set aside that which He has created.

It seems, however, that God, with rare exceptions, sees fit to let the basic laws of life operate. God is responsible for most that happens to us and to our world only in the sense that He permits the laws of life or His laws to operate or function.

Men should seek to know the basic laws of life; and, once knowing them, they should conform to or cooperate with them. This is good common sense.

The God who created man knows what is best for man. His basic laws are not primarily to restrict or to restrain man but to release him to creative freedom. It may seem paradoxical but creative freedom can become a reality only to the degree that we live within the restraining influence of the will of God as expressed by the basic laws of life.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Basic Laws of Life," *Baptist Standard*, April 24, 1968, 16.

Both/And: Theology and Ethics

Theology and ethics are closely related in the Bible and in Christian experience. Both are or should be grounded in God's revelation of Himself and His will in the scriptures. They have similar goals: knowledge of God and His will and purpose.

Foundation and Superstructure

While theology and ethics are closely related, they do have some distinctive phases and functions. To a degree they supplement one another. Ethics looks back to theology; theology looks forward to ethics.

If the Christian life is thought of as building, theology would represent the foundation, ethics the superstructure. Both are necessary for the completion of the building. And, incidentally, the higher building, the deeper the foundation must be dug.

Again, let me repeat, the building is not complete without the superstructure on that foundation. Few things are more pathetically disappointing than the foundation of a church or a school building covered with weeds and debris.

As important as theology is as a foundation of the Christian life, it is not worth having unless it is also worth living by. To adapt a statement of Gaston Foote, a retired Methodist minister in our city, “We can be as straight as a gun barrel theologically and yet as empty as a gun barrel morally and spiritually.”

Therefore Perspective

The “therefore perspective” which is prevalent throughout the scriptures underscores the close relationship of theology and ethics. This perspective is particularly prevalent in the eighth-century prophets and in the Pauline epistles.

We shall restrict our discussion to the Pauline epistles. Some of Paul’s epistles, such as I Corinthians and the pastorals, deal primarily with daily moral decisions; others, such as Romans and the prison epistles, were more theological. In some, however, there is clearly evident a twofold emphasis on theology and ethics. The epistle to the Romans will illustrate this.

In Romans as elsewhere he introduced the more practical or applied portion of the epistle with a “therefore” (cf. Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 3:1). It is in Romans 12:1 that he says, “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. . .” It seems rather clear that the “therefore” referred back to what he had said in the first 11 chapters: Jews and gentiles had sinned; salvation was available to all through faith; this salvation brings into life some marvelous blessings such as freedom from the

enslavement of sin, from the law and its condemnation, from death and its destruction. Furthermore, this salvation brings us into the family of God with its wonderful blessings.

It was on the basis that Paul appealed to the Romans and would appeal to us to present our “bodies a living sacrifice wholly acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.”

There follows in the other chapters of Romans one exhortation after another. These exhortations might be more pointed and challenging to us if we preceded each one of them with “therefore.” “I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that ye be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

What about the foundation you and I have laid? Is it on solid rock, or is it on wood, hay and stubble (I Corinthians 3:12)? What about the superstructure? Is it appropriate for the foundation?

T. B. Maston, “Both/And – Theology and Ethics,” *Baptist Standard*, May 6, 1981, 15.

God's Constant Search for Man

The Lord God called to the man, and said to him,
‘Where are you?’ (Gen. 3:9, RSV).

An examination of the questions of the Bible would make an interesting and profitable study. This would be true of man’s questions to God as well as God’s questions to man. “Where are you?” is the first recorded question that God asked man.

Adam and Eve had disobeyed God and had eaten the forbidden fruit. As is always true, their sin made them afraid of the presence of God. The searching question of God was, “Where are you?”

This is a question that God has continued through the centuries to ask man. He is on constant search for man. I am persuaded that if we had the ears to hear we would hear Him persistently asking us, “Where are you?”

Where are we in relation to Him, to His will and purpose for us? Have we disobeyed Him and hence are we afraid of Him? Where are we in our devotion to Him and to His cause? Do we seek first His kingdom? Do we love Him supremely?

Where are we in relation to His church and our church? Are we faithful to it, its services and its program? Where are we in relation to members of our family, neighbors, those with whom we work and men and women of other cultures, classes and colors?

Where are we in personal spiritual growth and maturity? Are we letting the resurrected Christ live in us and express Himself more fully through us from day to day?

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – God’s Constant Search for Man,” *Baptist Standard*, February 2, 1972,19.

JESUS

The reader will ascertain by reflecting across the fuller record of T. B. Maston’s writing that Maston was not so much a *theological* ethicist as he was a *Christological* one. For Maston, Jesus Christ formed the central point for the model, activation, and application of the Christian life.

Those who knew Maston heard him from time-to-time reflect on his two best friends in life, Mommie (Mrs. Maston), and Jesus. To be around Maston, one likely could come to the conclusion which others have, that Maston exhibited one of the most authentic Christian lives anyone had ever seen.

Two brief excerpts are followed by a substantial – and seminal – mediation on the significance of the cross for the Christian life.

READINGS

Apart from Him and In Him

Apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

I can do all things in Him who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13, RSV).

These two verses belong together. The first is in the great chapter where Jesus said that He was the vine, the disciples were the branches. The branches are an integral part of the vine. Their fruitfulness is dependent on the vitality of their relation to the vine. The life blood of the vine flows out through the branches.

As the branches of the grapevine bear fruit because of their connection with the vine, so it is with the disciples of Christ. He pointedly said that without Him or apart from Him they could do nothing. In other words, their lives would be barren, void of fruit.

How grateful we ought to be for the statement by Paul. It gives the other side of the picture. Apart from Christ and His presence, we can do nothing; but because of our union with Him we can do all things. The “all things” includes anything that He wants us to do. We can do whatever is the will and purpose of God.

Because none of us constantly maintain as vital a relation to Him as we should, an additional word needs to be said. The fruit we bear for Him depends on how fully we let Him live in us and express Himself through us. The vitality of the relationship will determine whether the increase is 30, 60 or 100 per cent.

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – Apart From Him and In Him,” *Baptist Standard*, September 20, 1972,19.

The Resurrected Life in Christ

If then you have been raised with Christ (Col. 3:1, RSV).

The “if ” is not an if of conjecture. It is an if of assumption. It could properly be translated “since” (Living Bible).

When were we raised with Christ? Ideally, we were raised with Him when He arose from the grave. Actually or biographically, we were raised with Christ when we came into union with Him at the time of our conversion.

Paul proceeded to describe for the Colossians the kind of life they should live since they had been raised with Christ. There are at least three distinct aspects of that life. First, he exhorted the Colossians and would exhort us to “seek the things that are above” or to set our “minds on things that are above.” We have been with Christ; we should seek the things where He is.

Paul further says that since we have been raised with Christ we should put to death “what is earthly” in us. He spells out quite specifically some of the sins and vices that are out of harmony with living the resurrected life.

Then, as is typical in the Bible, the negative is balanced and climaxed by a statement of the positive aspects of the resurrected life. What a challenge in the virtues in Paul’s list: compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience. He added a special emphasis concerning forbearance and forgiveness.

There is enough in what Paul said concerning the resurrected life to challenge us the rest of the journey. How do you and I measure up?

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – The Resurrected Life in Christ,” *Baptist Standard*, March 28, 1973,19.

Its Unifying Symbol: The Cross

When we say that the cross is the unifying symbol of the Christian life we do not mean to imply that it is merely a symbol. It is a symbol but it is much more. It is also a historic event. That was a very real cross on which Christ died. The reality of that cross gives depth and meaning to the cross as a symbol of the kind of life we should live for Christ in the world.

Christ and His Cross

What do we think about or visualize when we hear or see the words “the cross”? Most of us doubtlessly see or visualize a cross on a hill outside Jerusalem, or we may see three crosses with the central one a little more prominent than the others. Most of us tend to relate the cross almost exclusively to the death of Christ. We do not mean by the preceding to deprecate one iota the death of Christ on the cross. His death, along with his resurrection, is the central event of both human and divine history.

Jesus, however, not only died on the cross, he also lived the cross-like life and in that way as well as by his death he revealed God and was a redemptive influence among men. He went about doing good, giving himself unselfishly in service to those about him. “The whole historical life of Jesus was the way of the Cross” (Brunner).

His death on the cross was in a very real sense a continuation of the type and quality of life he had lived. His incarnation really involved the cross. For example, Paul says: “For our sake he made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Again Paul says: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

We can properly speak of the atoning life of Christ as well as of his atoning death. He is the atoning person. At least his death cannot be separated from his life. The former was the more or less natural culmination of the life he had lived. Symbolic of the life he had lived, he was crucified between two thieves. While among men he associated with and ministered to the publicans and sinners.

The cross or something closely akin to it or symbolized by it was central in a number of the decisive or crisis experience in the life of Jesus. Such experiences frequently reveal the motivating influences in one’s life and/or his dominant values.

The Christian and His Cross

The cross, when properly understood, is not exclusively for Christ nor exclusively a thing of the past tense. Jesus is not supposed to “bear the cross alone and all the world go free. No, there’s a cross for everyone, and there’s a cross for [you and] me.” Bonhoeffer’s frequently quoted statement is: “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”²³ What Jesus had attempted to teach his disciples came vividly alive with a new and deeper meaning for them after his crucifixion and resurrection.

What do we mean when we say that the Christian must take up his cross to follow Christ? It does not mean the wearing of cross around the neck or in the lapel of a coat. Neither does it refer to suffering or some burden that comes through the operation of the laws of nature. How often we hear people say when some great sorrow or some great personal suffering comes upon them, “I guess this is my cross, I will have to bear it.” This is not the basic meaning of the cross for the Christian, although the victorious acceptance of and adjustment to such suffering may be used by the Lord to bless the lives of many people.

A cross is something on which one is crucified. Crucifixion means suffering, but all suffering cannot be identified with the taking up of a cross, with Christian crucifixion. Suffering which can be identified with the cross must be among other things, suffering that is accepted for the sake of Christ and his cause. Its purpose and ultimate end must be redemptive, although in the deepest sense only the suffering of Christ on the cross is redemptive.

What does it mean in a more specific way for one to take up a cross? As suggested earlier, a cross is something on which one dies. It involves for the Christian the crucifixion of self with selfish ambitions and purposes. As Brunner says, “To be ‘in Christ’ means the death of the selfish Ego. It means the mortification of that will whose poison penetrates the whole of our nature,”²⁴ or it means “giving oneself up to Christ and his will as Christ gave himself up to God and his will.”²⁵ It may mean walking an unknown path, but

how grateful we should be that we walk with a known Companion who has walked that path before us! As we walk with the Christ of the cross, we have a deepening insight into the meaning and nature of the cross and find ourselves increasingly living in the spirit of the cross.

Results of Taking up the Cross

We have discussed quite briefly the meaning of the cross for the Christian and the nature of his cross-bearing. There is one other aspect of the Christian and his cross that we should consider. It is tremendously significant from the viewpoint of everyday Christian living. Let us formulate it as a question: what are the results of a Christian taking up his cross? We will discover the answer to this question by reviewing briefly the relation of the cross and the purposes of God in the life of Christ. As suggested earlier, Christ came to reveal God to man, to reveal his love for man and also his hatred of sin. Man could never have known fully either of these had Christ not died on the cross. It is John who says, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). The cross also elicits or produces a love that must be shared with others. One reason for this is the fact that the love expressed in the cross is not exclusively for us but for all men. Men around us will come to know that kind of love to the degree that we, in response to his love for us, take up our cross and follow him.

Also, as we take up a cross and follow him we will find life for ourselves. Immediately after his invitation at Caesarea Philippi for the disciples to deny self and take up the cross and follow him, he said, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 16:25; d. 10:39, John 12:25). Similarly, Paul says, "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom. 6:8). The cross is not only a symbol of death but also of life.

Another way of stating this same great truth is to say that resurrection follows crucifixion. Oscar Cullman says we should write it crucifixion-

resurrection. Jesus told the disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed and “on the third day be raised” (Matt. 16:21). His resurrection was mentioned in the same breath as his crucifixion. So it is with the child of God. Bonhoeffer’s frequently quoted statement is that “Jesus Christ and His call are necessarily our death and our life.”²⁶ Death comes first, then life, but there is no real crucifixion without resurrection. Here is one of the marvelous paradoxes of the Gospel: life comes through death, but it has to be a real death or crucifixion, without any motivation beyond the crucifixion itself. There is no place here for self-seeking self-denial, for crucifixion with the expectation of resurrection.

There is one other glorious result of the Christian’s cross-bearing. He will not only find life in its fullness, he also will be a source of life to others. Jesus came to redeem man as well as to reveal God. We cannot redeem men but we can be a redeeming influence among men. This we will be as we deny self, take up our cross, and follow him. In John 12 immediately preceding the statement by Jesus that “he who loves his life loses it,” he said, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone [“a single grain,” Ph.]; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (“a rich harvest,” NEB) (v. 24). Later in the same conversation he said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (v. 32). In verse 24 is found the basic law of God’s universe: new life comes through death. In verse 25 it is applied to human relations, while in verse 32 it is applied to the spiritual order. We give life to others as we give our own lives in unselfish devotion to them and to our heavenly Father.

Since none of us is perfect we are forced to say that to the degree that we deny self, to the degree that we take up our cross, to that degree and that degree only we will reveal God and his power, will discover life abundant, and will be a source of life and blessing to others.

Application to Life

Just as Christ is our “eternal contemporary,” likewise his cross, its message and spirit, is relevant for every age and every problem. It is the cross that reconciles us to one another and “to God in one body.” This reconciliation brings “hostility to an end” (Eph. 2:16), whether that hostility is based on national origin, culture, economic class, race, or religion.

The spirit symbolized by the cross is to be applied personally by the Christian. We are not just to talk about it; we are to seek as best we can to take up our cross and follow Christ. This means, among other things, that we are to love our enemies that we may be like our Father who sends rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:43-45). It means that we are not to give primary consideration to what we think is right for us to do, but we are to think in terms of what others think and the effect that our behavior will have upon others and particularly upon the cause of Christ (1 Cor. 10:24, 31). The way of the cross will remain for the best of us an aspiration rather than an actual achievement. But we should seek as best we can to move constantly in it and toward it.

The spirit symbolized by the cross is also to be applied to the broader social relations and problems of life. The cross is central in the Christian social strategy. It is the Christian method of social change. This involves the returning of good for evil, the strong serving the weak, the privileged taking the initiative in working out the problems of the underprivileged, even the just to a degree taking upon themselves the sins of the unjust.

This means that voluntary self-giving with a redemptive purpose or goal which can properly be called an ethic of the cross is abidingly relevant for our world and its problems. The cross is God’s strategy for overcoming sin, not only in the individual’s life but also in the life of the world.

Let us briefly apply this to one particular area—the area of race relations. Does it mean that those who belong to the oppressed minority are to bear patiently any injustice and discrimination? Is this their cross? This could be a

cross in the Christian sense only if it was accepted voluntarily and if it was redemptive in outcome.

The cross applies in a particular way to the majority, to the powerful, to the privileged. They are the ones who can voluntarily correct the evils or ills of our society. They are the ones to whom the voluntary principle will apply in a special way. The cross for them can mean giving of self, the sacrifice of privilege for the sake, not only of others, but also for the sake of society, and what is more important, for the sake of the cause of Christ.

Changes in society are brought about, in the main, by one of two ways: by pressure and the use of force or by peaceful methods. The latter is the Christian method for change. The only hope for a peaceful solution with a minimum even of social pressure for the contemporary racial crisis, along with other world problems, is that the powerful and privileged will accept the responsibility to find a solution in harmony with the Christian spirit and Christian teachings.

Let us sum up by saying that the cross and what it symbolizes is the central distinctive unifying element in original Christianity, including its ethic. We must in the contemporary period return to this central emphasis, must understand more clearly what the cross means in the Christian's life, and must apply more consistently the ethic of the cross if we are to revitalize contemporary Christianity and make the Christian religion a vital factor in meeting the world's needs. "The way of the cross leads home" for the individual, but it is also the way of social reconstruction and moral reformation.

Furthermore, the cross is the symbol of the fundamental law of God's universe. If we had eyes to see, we would see a cross written at the center of that universe. The first or basic law of life is not self-preservation; it is self-denial and self-sacrifice, it is "the way of the cross." This law is operative in the physical universe and in the social order as well as in the spiritual realm.

T. B. Maston, *Why Live the Christian Life?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1974), 157-172.

HOLY SPIRIT

Perhaps reflecting his Baptist context, Maston did not display an emphasis on pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit, in proportion to his thinking and writing about God, and especially Jesus Christ. To some degree, Maston considered the Holy Spirit to be included in his emphases on Jesus.

A more marked development is puzzling in light of Maston's usual close connection and derivation of his ideas to Scripture. One would think more would have been considered, for example, from the Johannine literature. The readings included to provide Maston's views are largely from his book treatments, with a shorter article to conclude the section.

READINGS

Respond to the Holy Spirit

You will understand that there is no attempt in this chapter to discuss in general the nature or the functions of the Spirit, but merely to point out his relation to the will of God in our lives. The content of the chapter, in the main, could be summed up by saying that the child of God cannot know nor have the strength to do the will of God apart from the leadership of and the power that comes from the presence of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Our Need for the Spirit

Let us spell out a little more specifically our need for the Spirit's leadership and relate this need to the other resources we can use as we seek God's will for our lives. We may use to the fullest all of the personal resources God has given

to us, and yet we will discover over and over again that we cannot know the will of God without the leadership of the Spirit of God.

We may seek the advice of the wisest and most skilled counselors, but unless they and we are led by the Spirit we shall usually find that we do not have a clear insight into the will of God. Even the Bible, God's message to us, will not give us the light we need unless its pages are illumined by the Spirit who inspired its writers. Also, we cannot pray as we ought except as the Spirit gives us utterance. We need his guidance in every decision.

You and I should be thankful to our Heavenly Father that the Holy Spirit has been given to us to dwell with us and within us (see John 14:17). We do not have to walk alone. When decisions must be made and when problems come we have one to stand by our side. This one knows the answers; he sees the way ahead. With our human limitations we may be mistaken about his leadership, but we can be sure that he is never mistaken about the way he wants to lead us.

What the Spirit Can Do

Much of the work of the Spirit in our lives as children of God depends on our willingness to respond to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. God will not force his will and way on any child of his. He could not be the kind of God he is and respect the kind of man he created. He does not want and he will not have unwilling slaves; he wants joyous, willing servants who will become partners with him in his work in the world.

This does not mean necessarily that God's Spirit cannot and does not perform any useful function in the lives of God's children who are unwilling and rebellious. Some of us know by personal experience that when we wander from the way of God, when we are consciously outside his will, the Spirit works within us to convict us of our faults, our failures, our sins. He creates within us a deep unrest. He seeks to convince us of our need for his leadership, but it should be said again that he will never override our will. We can refuse

to respond. In other words, we can say no to the Holy Spirit and make it stick. How much more glorious and blessed it would be for us and for the purposes of God in our lives and in our world, however, if we would say yes.

One of the functions of the Spirit in our lives is to lead us to a clearer understanding of the will of God and of the truth of God in general. This is seen in some statements Jesus made when he told his disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit. In those marvelous addresses immediately preceding his crucifixion he spoke of “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17,26; 15:26; 16:13-14), who was being sent to teach them “all things” or to guide them “into all the truth.” The Spirit does not speak of himself or for himself but of and for the Father and the Son.

How the Spirit Works

If we want the leadership and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives we must learn how to tarry or wait. We need to be still not only that we may know God (cf. Psalm 46:10) but also that we may know the will of God for our lives. We may become so active even in the work of the Lord that we do not have adequate time to be alone with him. Aloneness is an essential phase of our preparation for the leadership of the Spirit. He will not and cannot speak to or lead an unprepared heart. For many that preparation will take considerable time; for all it will require some time. Can and will we discipline ourselves to tarry or wait?

Jesus, after his resurrection, made some pointed statements to his disciples about waiting until the Spirit came. He told them to tarry or stay in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). After ten days of tarrying in prayer, that power came on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit descended upon the disciples. They could not have had the power of his presence without tarrying until his presence was made manifest among them.

Will you not agree that many times we stumble along in the dark, uncertain about the will of God in our lives and largely powerless in our work

for God, because we have not taken the time to tarry until we have felt the touch of God's Spirit in our lives? And, many times that is a very light touch, or to change the figure of speech, he frequently speaks to us in "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). We must be sensitive spiritually if we are to have his leadership.

"Walk By the Spirit"

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). The New English Bible translates this verse, "If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course," while Williams translates the last portion of the verse, "let us also walk where the Spirit leads." The life we have as Christians is the work of the Spirit. Since this is true, we should let him direct our course, or we should walk where he leads.

The context of this verse from Galatians reveals two marvelous results of walking where the Spirit leads or under the guiding impulse of the Spirit. One result is negative and the other positive. Both express the broader aspects of the will of God for our lives. Paul says, "If you are guided by the Spirit you will not fulfil the desires of your lower nature" (Gal. 5:16, The New English Bible). From the positive perspective he says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (vv. 22-23). Here is God's standard of excellence for us. How do we measure up?

T. B. Maston, *God's Will and Your Life* (Nashville: Broadman, 1964), 75-78.

*The Work of the Holy Spirit*²⁷

The relation of the Spirit to the maturing of the Christian is illustrated by what Paul says concerning the flesh and the Spirit. This subject is mentioned in several places, but it is discussed most fully in Romans 8. He suggests that we (Christians) "walk not according to the flesh ["lower nature," NEB] but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4). Really, we are not in the flesh but in the

Spirit,²⁸ if the Spirit dwells in us; and Paul adds: “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom. 8:9). Again he says that those who have been made alive by the indwelling Spirit are “debtors, not to the flesh [lower or carnal nature], to live according to the flesh” (Rom. 8:12), but by implication they are debtors to the Spirit to live according to or under the guiding impulse of the Spirit.

Paul also discusses the relation of the flesh or the lower nature and the Spirit in Galatians, particularly in Galatians 5.²⁹ He contrasts the works or desires of the flesh or lower nature with the fruit of the Spirit. To the Galatians he says, “Practice living by the Spirit and then by no means will you gratify the cravings of your lower nature” (Gal. 5:16, Williams).³⁰ This is a fruit of the Spirit. The only hope for one to get rid of the desires or cravings of his lower nature is to “walk by the Spirit,” be “guided by the Spirit” (NEB), or “practice living by the Spirit” (Williams). After spelling out the works of the flesh or lower nature, Paul lists the more positive fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (“fidelity,” NEB), gentleness, and self-control. Marshall suggests that all of these “lie in the ethical realm and thus provide a striking demonstration of the complete fusion of religion and ethics in Pauline thought.”³¹ Need we be reminded that fruit is natural and even inevitable? The movement of the Christian ethic is from within to its outer expression.

There are many additional references to the Spirit and His work in Paul’s epistles. These are sufficient to suggest that “the great actions and the great qualities of the Christian life are all in the Spirit,”³² that “all authentic Christian behaviour is a ‘walking by the Spirit,’”³³ and that the Spirit’s “moral efficacy is a matter of daily experience to the Christian.”³⁴

T. B. Maston, *Biblical Ethics* (Waco: Word, 1967), 197-199.

The Holy Spirit and the Will of God

The Bible, as suggested, is the main tangible, objective source for a knowledge of the will of God. The Holy Spirit is the main inner subjective source for such a knowledge. Both the Scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are needed in man's search for an authoritative word from the Lord. They do not contradict one another, although because of our human limitations they may seem to at times. They speak the same word because they both speak of and for *the Word* made flesh. In general, the Scriptures speak *of* Christ, the Spirit speaks *for* Christ. The unity of their authority rests in Christ.

It is also true that the Holy Spirit speaks in and through the Scriptures. He as the inspirer of the writers of the Scriptures is the best interpreter of those Scriptures. He illuminates the words of the Scriptures, making them come alive. To paraphrase a statement of Henlee Barnette's: To be guided by the Spirit is to be led into a knowledge of the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures and climaxed in Christ.³⁵ While the Spirit does not contradict the Scriptures, he does at times supplement them. When the Christian finds no direct word from the Lord in the Scriptures that will help in a particular situation, he then can seek the guidance of the Spirit. Both Scriptures and the Holy Spirit are needed. Brunner concludes that "as the Scriptures without the Spirit produces false legalism, . . . so the Spirit without the Scriptures produces false Antinomianism, and fanaticism."³⁶

The clarity of our insight into the Scriptures and into the will of God will be determined, to a considerable degree, by our willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit. He has been sent into the world to teach us all things (John 14:26). It is only the seeking mind and the willing heart, however, that will know: "If any man's will is to do his will, he shall know. . ." (John 7:17). At best, our knowledge of God and his will is never complete or perfect. The will of God is never static, not only because of our human limitations but also because it is the will of the living God. Furthermore, the Christian is constantly faced with new situations involving varying circumstances. The will

of God for man is not a mere abstraction. It is a dynamic reality which must find expression in constantly changing situations.

The maturing Christian acknowledges not only that his knowledge of the will of God is far from perfect; he also admits that many times he lacks the desire to know that will. Even when he knows the will of God he frequently lacks the dynamic to move him toward the attainment of that will. In other words, the child of God is in desperate need of the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁷

T. B. Maston, *Why Live the Christian Life?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1974), 83-84.

The Fruit of the Spirit

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23, RSV).

There is unity here. It is the fruit (singular) of the Spirit. This contrasts with works (plural) of the flesh (v. 13), In the latter there is disunity and conflict. Now notice that “love” is the first fruit mentioned. It is basic. The others, to a considerable degree, evolve from it. Love flows into and expresses itself through the others.

Someone has suggested that there are three clusters of the fruit: (1) inner qualities – love, joy, peace; (2) qualities that express themselves in relations with the others – patience, kindness, goodness; and general character traits – faithfulness or fidelity (NEB), gentleness or humility (TEV) and temperance or self-control.

We should remember that fruit is natural. The nature of the fruit depends on the nature of the tree. A peach tree bears peaches; an apple tree bears apples. It is just as natural, even as inevitable, that a Christian will bear some fruit of the Spirit as a peach tree will bear peaches.

The amount of the fruit may vary from life to life and from season to season. But we have no basis on which to be called “children of God” unless there is some evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

There are a few passages of scripture that will search our souls any more than this one if we will let it. How would you grade yourself on “love,” “joy,” “peace”? What about “patience,” “kindness,” “goodness” and the others?

Would you make a passing grade on each one?

What about the entire nine as a whole?

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – The Fruit of the Spirit,” *Baptist Standard*, September 13, 1972, 19.

HUMANKIND

The title of this section is likely not a term which Maston would have used. His rearing out of essentially a pre-twentieth century worldview shaped some of his vocabulary. His usual term was “man.” Where contemporary usage would perhaps frown upon this term as lacking inclusivity, Maston would be quick to add that his term “man” was meant to include all persons, all men and women. Likely his usage arose from the essential understanding behind the term in Genesis 1:26-27 and the translations which Maston used over the years. “Man” was both men and women.

Where the “image of God” found expression with reference to human beings, Maston had some things to say. The first article indicates something of Maston’s assumed inclusivity.

Maston included an interesting category with reference to humankind, that of suffering. This theme may have been one of those by which many people made connection with Maston when they otherwise might not have done so. The excerpt of an article gives a condensed version of Maston’s understanding of where the discontinuities of life find expression with human beings.

READINGS

Created in the Image of God

And God said, Let us make man in our image . . .
so God created man in his own image,
in the image- of God created him;
male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

The most significant thing about man is the fact that he was created in the image of God. What does this mean? One thing that it clearly means is that since God is a person, man is also a person. What is distinctive about a person? A person can think, feel, will. He has a capacity for self-knowledge and self-determination. Possibly no one thing is more characteristic of a person than the fact that his very nature demands communication with other persons. In other words, there is no person without other persons.

The highest expression of that need for communication is man's fellowship with God. It was Augustine who said: "Thou madest us for thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee."

The fact that man is created in the image of God provides a solid basis for respect for all men and women. One who has been created in the image of God should always be respected as an end of infinite value and never as a mere means. They are never to be manipulated or used to attain selfish ends.

It is particularly important for human relations that all men are created in the image of God. Here in the beginning it says "male and female created he them." The man and the woman are equally created in the image of God. The same can be said for any distinctive racial or cultural group.

It was on the basis of this and the provision of the grace of God for all men that Paul could say, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – Created in the Image of God," *Baptist Standard*, July 19, 1972, 13.

Man: His Dignity and Worth

The opening sentence in the introduction of a recent book by David Cairns is as follows: "There is no more fundamental debate in the world today than that about the nature of man."³⁸ This debate is one of the most prevalent and important discussions not only in theological but also in contemporary political circles.

The modern debate concerning man, along with the companion debate concerning God, is the debate or the battle of our age. It is possible that the outcome of the debate will determine the destiny of our nation and of our world. Cairns, near the end of his book, sums up the matter as follows: "What are we to make of the rights, the dignity, the sacredness of our fellow men? Man today stands at the crossroads. Will mankind, in its future development, declare itself for or against man?"³⁹

The debate or the discussion concerning man is particularly significant for the defenders of democracy – both political and spiritual. Democracy cannot and will not continue for long without a high appreciation for man as man. The stakes are high in the contemporary controversy. It is urgent that the friends of democracy restudy, restate, and reemphasize the dignity and worth of the individual person.

The Christian Estimate of Man

An abiding question of the ages has been:

What is man that thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man that thou dost care for him?⁴⁰

The Psalmist deepens the mystery, while at the same time he may hint at an answer to his question, when he says:

Yet thou has made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honor.
Thou has given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet.⁴¹

It was Jesus who asked the searching questions; “What will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?” (Matt. 16:26). It may be, as some suggest, that Jesus was referring to the eternal life of the individual. Even if this be true, man is the only created being, so far as we know, who has eternity dwelling in him. Certainly a man’s life, which spans this world and the next, is worth more than all things material.

It was Peter in the house of Cornelius who said that he had discovered that God was no respecter of persons. This attitude of the Father was revealed by the Son. Jesus had respect for human personality as such. He included Mary Magdalene as well as Mary of Bethany within the circle of his friends. His disciples were gathered from varied classes of people. He saw within them a divine potential. His word to Simon and the others was, “Thou art . . . Thou shalt become.”

But the fact that he could see potentialities within men that others could not see was not the only basis for his respect for men and women. He respected all kinds of people. For him the human person as such was of infinite worth and dignity. He used his miraculous power to minister to the outcasts, the underprivileged, the demon-possessed. His attitude toward people as such is revealed by the nameless ones who were touched, healed, and blessed by him. The best proof of the high value placed on man by Jesus and by the Father was the fact that God, the Father, gave his Son, and the Son gave his life that whoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life.

The Image of God In Man

It is important for those who are interested in political and spiritual democracy to understand the basis for the high regard for man, which has characterized the Christian movement, particularly Protestantism. The main reason for this high regard has been the conviction that man was created in the image of God. The Bible reveals that man was the crowning act of God's creation; that he was made to rule over the rest of that creation; and in addition there was a unique element in the creation of man. The record says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image: after our likeness';. . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26, 27).

But what is meant by "the image of God" and why should the fact that man is made in the image of God contribute so much to his dignity and worth? There have been a number of answers to these questions.

In the beginning it should be remembered that the image is universal; it is common to all men. If the dignity and worth of man is based on the fact that he is made in the image of God, then there can be no basis for the dignity and worth of all men unless all men have within them the image of god.

Now, what is meant by the image? Some, particularly in the past, have suggested that "the image" refers to physical likeness. This might be the viewpoint of those who hold to an anthropomorphic conception of God, but it does not satisfy one, who believes that God is spirit. There may be a hint in the New Testament of an element of truth in the theory. In the great resurrection chapter (1 Cor. 15) Paul tells us that Christ is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. He also says that we shall be raised a celestial, a spiritual body. Then in his comparison of the first Adam and of the last Adam or Christ he says, "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49). This may simply refer, however, to the spiritual nature of the resurrected body.

Others suggest that the image of God in man means that man is a personality, having the power to think, to feel, to will; that he has the capacity for self-consciousness and self-determination. This conception is correct as far as it goes, but it is not inclusive enough. Any satisfactory interpretation of the image of God in man must give primary emphasis to man's capacity for spiritual communion.

Man has "a God-given ability to respond to God's special presence and confrontation, and an inability to escape from that urgent presence."⁴² He was made for fellowship with God and he has a sense of homelessness when he is separated from God. Augustine's classic statement was: "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee."⁴³ Man may drift far away from God; he may go deep into sin, but there is something within waiting for the voice of God to come to him through the gospel else "the message of redemption would have no meaning."⁴⁴

Man, who is a creature of nature and suffers the limitations of the things of this world, does not find the full meaning of the self either in nature or within himself. He is of nature and yet, because he is made in the image of God, he stands above nature and, in a sense, outside of himself. The thing that makes him most distinctly man finds satisfaction only in fellowship with God, and in a lesser sense with man.

The individual becomes a person only in fellowship with other individuals. It is at least interesting to note that two of the three Old Testament references to the image of God in man (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:5-6) are not to man alone but to male and female.

Men and women find their fulfillment in one another. They are made, as the marginal reading in the American Standard Version suggests, to answer to one another. Are we stretching the parallel too much when we say that man's spiritual nature is made to answer to God, to find its fulfillment in fellowship with God? This is what's meant, in the deepest sense, by the image of God in man.

The image we have been considering is the universal image found in all men. It represents what is sometimes called the Old Testament conception of the image. One Old Testament passage that clearly relates the image to the value God places on man is the statement of the law of retaliation as found in Genesis 9:6: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.”

What happened to that image when sin entered the human race? If it were totally destroyed, then there would not remain a valid basis for universal respect for human beings. The only ones with real worth and dignity would be those who had the image restored by the grace of God through the new birth. Most of those who have contended that the image has been totally destroyed have thought of the image as referring to moral righteousness. God made man in his image; he made him morally righteous. This righteousness, so it is said, man lost in the fall.

But what if we think of that image as primarily a capacity for communion with God – has man lost completely that capacity? The fellowship has been broken through sin, but has man lost the capacity for the fellowship? Is there still enough of the image left that man not only has the inner equipment with which he can respond to the appeal of God, but he is actually restless and hungry until the fellowship is restored?

Biblical scholars, past and present, may use different terms to express the idea, but there has been and is almost universal agreement that the image of God was not totally destroyed when man sinned. Possibly Barth more than any recognized scholar approaches the position that the image has been destroyed. At least he says that the image has become a tarnished mirror. The glory of God can no longer be reflected in it. Man has become an enemy of God. Man cannot restore the image. However, God does purpose that it be restored and it can be and is through faith in Christ.

Athanasius said the image had been effaced and had to be repainted by the Artist. Augustine suggested that the image had been wounded and needed to

be healed by the love of Christ. Calvin and others have spoken of the relic of the image which remains with man, while Brunner suggests that man retains the formal image of God but that he lost entirely the original content of the image.⁴⁵ Regardless of the particular expression used they all agree that there is a point of contact within man from God.

What is the conclusion concerning the image of God in man? Sin did not totally destroy this image. It could not since the image was of God's creation. Sin did not change God's purposes for man. Even sinful man retains, to a degree, the image of God. He retains it only to a limited degree in his present state, if we are thinking of his immediate ability to have communion with God. He is made however to respond to God and is responsible to him. This is true of all men – saint and sinner. It is this fact that gives dignity and worth to all men.

How is this doctrine of the universal image related to the Fatherhood of God? Does it necessitate the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man?

The Bible reveals more than one viewpoint or aspect of the Fatherhood of God. He is, in a unique way, the Father of his only Son. He is also the Father of those who have come into his family through faith in his Son. The English New Testament scholar, T.W. Manson concludes that "Jesus rarely if ever spoke directly of God as Father except to his disciples and that he began to speak to them in this way only after Peter's confession."⁴⁶

What about those who are not Christians: are they children of God? No, one must be born again to come into God's family. But this much is revealed by a study of the New Testament in general and particularly of the life and ministry of Jesus. God has the fatherly attitude toward all men. He causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. His children reveal their relation to him by loving their enemies and by praying for those who persecute them.

To this much, we can certainly agree: every man is either actually or potentially a child of God. It is this that gives him dignity and worth. It is man's actual or potential relation to God that should demand our respect and even our reverence.

The Old Testament conception of the universal image of God in man is not the total picture. There is a New Testament doctrine of the image. Some phases of this doctrine have already been touched upon. A brief statement should be sufficient.

Cairns suggests that the central emphasis in the New Testament doctrine of the image is its use "to describe the likeness of God into which believers enter through faith in Christ."⁴⁷ It is God's purpose that the believer should be conformed to the image of his Son, who in turn is the express image, the exact reproduction, of the glory of God, the Father. The point of contact within man for the experience that makes the believer a child of God is the image of God within, admittedly marred. Or, if one prefers, the point of contact is, to use Calvin's term, the relic of the image, or to use Brunner's expression, the form of the image retained by sinful man. The experience itself achieves God's purposes in the image, or we might say that it restores within man the content of the original image. Man, through the new birth, is brought into communion with God in a vital way; the fellowship which he retained in his fallen state, as a potentiality, now becomes a reality in his life through his vital, life-changing union with Christ.

T. B. Maston, "Man: His Dignity and Worth," *Review and Expositor* 51, (July 1954): 299-311.

THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Maston was preeminently a church man. He never served as the pastor of one, but he was involved, for instance, in the Gambrell Street Baptist Church, only a short walk away from his home and Southwestern Seminary, for more than sixty years. There is a part of that facility now named Maston Hall. Maston served as a deacon in that church most of those years, as well. His presentations were often made in a congregation in Fort Worth or at points beyond extending around the globe.

For Maston, the church was a primary theme, principle, and mechanism in the Kingdom of God. Maston's perspective was not an uncritical perspective. The church and its many expressions was one of Maston's most addressed entities from the viewpoint of a friendly critic. He recognized the church is certainly not untouched by sin through how individuals participated in the life of a church and much more in its systemic expressions. Still, the potential for expressing the way of God in this world carried enormous possibilities.

These possibilities lie within the discovery of the church of its true base of power and how to express such. As well, Maston's address found focus on the expectations regarding those expressing a calling to ministry. Finally, Maston found ways to say that evangelism, a much noted expression of the Christian life, was to be done with ethical consideration. In these three areas, Maston called his constituency to understand that the end – the rewards/blessings of the Christian life – did not warrant unethical means.

Ecclesiology was a portion of Maston's overall theology. He resonated with the emphases which were a part of Southwestern Seminary in its earliest days where J. B. Gambrell taught a course called "Ecclesiology and Ethics." Maston recognized that a major portion of the New Testament was addressed to local churches and the church universal for some good reasons.

Christian ethical ideals were put forward first for those in the church. The practice of those virtues should bring an overflow effect toward the culture, however. One of Maston's primary concerns was that the culture had invaded the church more than the church had invaded culture.

The early articles look at what the nature of the church as a whole and its role in the Christian life. The final articles narrow the focus to Baptist churches in which Maston challenges churches concerning issues of morality.

READINGS

The Nature of the Church

To the church of God which is at Corinth
(1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1, RSV).

These words suggest that the church is a divine-human institution: "The church of God," its divine nature; "which is at Corinth," its human nature.

A church at Corinth or anywhere else cannot escape its location and the impact of that location on it.

A church is also human in the people it reaches and serves. They are very real men and women with distinctive peculiarities, limitations and sins. To minister to them effectively the church must speak to their particular needs.

But the church in the contemporary period, as well as in New Testament days, is also a divine institution. It receives its mission or commission and message from God.

We may be members of a church in the open country, the village, a suburb or the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Birmingham, Charlotte or Dallas. Let us never forget, however, that it is "the church of God."

Our churches cannot keep from being influenced by the culture in which they find themselves but being churches of God they must not be dominated

by the culture or become defenders of the culture. As God's churches they are to deliver God's message to the culture.

Let us apply the challenge that comes to churches because of their divine-human nature in one particular area. How can any church claim to be the church of God if it closes its door because of class or color to any man or woman, boy or girl whom the God of the church has accepted?

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – The Nature of the Church," *Baptist Standard*, March 22, 1972, 19.

Both/And: Church and Sect

A distinction is frequently made between a churchly and a sectarian type of church or denomination. Main line denominations are primarily churchly. Most Christian groups that minister primarily to the underprivileged or the common people are sectarian. There are several more or less distinctive characteristics of the two groups.

THE WORLD – One of the most marked differences is their attitude toward the world. The churchly denominations largely represent groups that have made their peace with the world and have a considerable stake in the world.

In contrast, the sects more or less reject the world. The more extreme even seek, as far as possible, to live in distinct communities apart from the world. They maintain more or less consistently their distinctive customs. The Amish Brethren are possibly the best known of such groups in the United States.

Other sectarian groups are less extreme and emphasize moral and spiritual separation and a distinctive lifestyle. This is true of the various contemporary "holiness" groups and has been true to a considerable degree of Southern Baptists.

SOCIAL ISSUES – The churchly and sectarian types of churches or denominations also differ somewhat in their attitude toward the broader social issues. The churchly type, to differing degrees, has a concern for the world and its problems.

Since sectarians tend to reject the world, their emphasis is on personal morality in contrast to social morality. They seek to cultivate a quality of life that will set them apart from the world.

The preceding naturally results in another difference in the churchly and sectarian groups. The latter stresses the negative aspects of the Christian life, those things that will mark their members as different from the people of the world: no smoking, no drinking, no swearing, etc.

On the other hand, the churchly type of denominations stress the positive aspects of the Christian life and frequently with relatively little attention to the negatives. We agree that the supreme test of the Christian life is positive rather than objective. But we need to define “positive.” Who is the good Christian? He is the one who lets the resurrected Christ live in him and express Himself through him. It is possible that such a one would have to have a prominent place in his life for the negative aspects of that life. He would want to leave out of his life anything that would be out of harmony with his life in Christ. In other words, there would be a place for the “thou shall nots” but the motivation would be positive.

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS – Now, where are and where should Southern Baptists be? Whether we come from a sectarian background or not, we have a strong sectarian tinge. The world-renouncing, negative attitude has been strong in the past when we were a minority group.

Generally speaking, however, Southern Baptists have moved up the economic, educational and cultural ladder. Also, we are now the largest so-called Protestant denomination in the United States. What effect has this had on our denomination and on our churches?

Whether or not we have made our peace with the world, we have become more conscious of the broader social issues of our world. In associations and conventions we speak more frequently than formerly regarding those issues.

While this emphasis is needed and seems inevitable, it is possible that we have moved too far away from our former emphasis on personal morality and even on the negative aspects of that morality. We, the Christian movement, and our world need a balanced emphasis on social and personal morality and on the negative and positive aspects of the Christian life.

In other words, in the area of everyday Christian living, we should see that it should be a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” After all, typical of Paul’s epistles, before he set forth the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) he mentioned the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21).

T. B. Maston, “Both/And – Church and Sect,” *Baptist Standard*, September 9, 1981, 21.

Regular Religious Habits Noted

And he came up to Nazareth,
where he had been brought up;
and he went to the synagogue,
as his custom was (Luke 4:16, RSV).

Jesus was no religious dropout. He was in frequent conflict with the religious leaders of His people. He did not permit this, however, to keep Him away from the regular place of worship. He went “as His custom was.” Such attendance was a fixed pattern in His life.

This statement about Jesus should speak a searching word to many of His followers. Too many of us drop out when we see real or imagined faults and failures in our churches. Certainly the limitations of the synagogues’ services

were much more evident to Jesus than the failures of our churches can ever be to us.

There are many excuses by church members for not attending the services of the church. They do not agree with the pastor on some things, they do not like some of the people in the church, they have a farm and go to check on it on weekends, they have sick or elderly members of the family that they need to visit, a husband or wife will not attend and they stay home with him or her or they don't feel good. Some church members have a recurring weekend illness.

If we are inclined to give excuses for not attending, let us remember that Jesus went to the synagogue "as His custom was." The habit of regular attendance should be so firmly fixed in our lives that only the direst kind of emergency would keep us from being present in the house of the Lord on the Lord's Day and also on Wednesday night for the midweek prayer meeting.

Such attendance should become as much a fixed pattern in our lives as it is for us to go to work or to school on Monday.

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – Regular Religious Habits Noted," *Baptist Standard*, December 20, 1972, 13.

A Full View of Newness of Life

We are buried with him by baptism into death:
that like as Christ was raised up from the dead
by the glory of the Father, even so
we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4, KJV).

Do you remember when you were baptized? I remember my baptism quite well. I was 17 when I was baptized into the membership of Smithwood Baptist Church. I had been taught that my baptism by immersion symbolized the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Later I came to understand, at least to a limited degree, that baptism also portrayed or pictured some important truths concerning the Christian's life. It should portray to him and to others that he has died to the old life, has been buried with Christ and has been raised to walk in newness of life.

What are some of the elements of this new life? There is or should be newness in attitude toward God, members of our family, our fellowman and life in general.

There should be a newness in attitude toward the things that have occupied our lives. Some things that formerly may have seemed to be quite important are now insignificant. Also, things we once considered perfectly all right to do, we may now consider wrong or at least unwise.

There enters into the Christian's life also a newness of relationship. New attitudes mean new relationships to God, family, Christian fellowship, men and women in general. Every relation of life is to be seen as a stewardship responsibility.

There is at least one other important aspect of this newness which baptism symbolizes. Ambitions, motives, purposes should be new. No longer should life be lived for self but for others and supremely for God. The ultimate question should be not what I want but what God wills.

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – A Full View of Newness of Life," *Baptist Standard*, August 2, 1972, 19.

Practice of Ordination

When I was 17 years of age I felt "called to preach." I had a conviction, which I could not explain, that I was never supposed to be the pastor of a church.

I struggled for years to find out what the Lord wanted me to do. This struggle led me to study the New Testament conception of the ministry and the New Testament practice regarding ordination.

I concluded that the basic call from the New Testament perspective was and is a call to minister or serve. It is a call to a particular type of life, a distinctive frame of mind.

This call applies to all of God's children and should be heard by all.

Distinctive Functions

There apparently is an additional call that comes to some to perform certain distinctive functions for the Christian fellowship. The work of these unique ones is to perfect or equip the saints that the latter in turn may do the work of the Lord.

Their call is basically a call to minister or to serve in a distinct way and to a unique degree rather than a call to an office that separates them from other members of the Christian group.

All of those who have been called to perform a distinctive task for the Christian fellowship may properly be ordained. Ordination, if it follows the New Testament pattern, will be a simple service of dedication or setting apart an individual to the work to which the Lord has called him.

It will include only the laying on of hands and prayer. It is possible that the laying on of hands in the New Testament days was done by all the congregation rather than being restricted to those who had been previously ordained.

Symbolic Recognition

The laying on of hands and prayer was and is the symbolic recognition of what had already taken place. The one being ordained or set apart has previously been separated unto the work of the Lord by the Lord himself. It is also possible that the laying on of hands is meant to symbolize the indument of the Holy Spirit for the task.

If we follow the New Testament conception of ordination, we will see that a church could properly ordain or set apart men or women who have felt called

to an educational or music ministry, teaching or missionary service, or any other type of work within, to, and for the Christian fellowship.

Furthermore, if the New Testament pattern were followed, it is even possible that a person might be ordained more than once. Saul and Barnabas may have been ordained previous to the occasion at Antioch when they were set apart to the work to which God had called them.

In the contemporary period, if one feels led to perform a different task, he could properly be set apart for it. This has been done in some churches for those going to a mission field.

I wish Baptists would return to the New Testament pattern of ordination. Being realistic, I doubt if that will ever be done.

If not, then we should not claim New Testament authority for our prevalent practice concerning those who can be ordained and for some features of the typical ordination service. Let us admit that our dominant perspective regarding the ministry and ordination contains some elements that are not found in the New Testament.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Practice of Ordination," *Baptist Standard*, September 3, 1969, 13.

Success Orientation

There is a trend among Southern Baptists which may be wholesome if not carried to an extreme. It is the tendency toward success orientation.

It becomes dangerous when it is measured primarily in material terms: buildings, budgets, numbers.

Our churches are in the world but they are not worldly institutions. Their success should not be measured in worldly terms. The fact that it is done to such a large degree by many church and denominational leaders has contributed to some of the problems that plague us.

This has been a factor in the superficial type of evangelism that has been entirely too prevalent. Too often the methods of worldly salesmanship are utilized rather than depending on the presence and power of the divine Spirit.

The obsession of many of our churches and church leaders with “success” helps to explain the casual way we vote people into our churches. The latter, along with much of our evangelism, explains to a degree our relatively large number of inactive church members.

Success orientation also helps to explain the fact that most churches use far more energy and time in an effort to enlist new members than to reach and minister to their inactive members. The latter would not be an evidence of growth or success.

Success orientation influences the selective nature of the enlistment and visitation programs of some of our churches. Too frequently we are more concerned about reaching people who can contribute to our church than reaching people who need its ministry.

Success orientation creates problems for the broader Baptist fellowship. There are churches, particularly in or close by the inner-city, that are declining. Does their decline mean that the church has failed or is failing?

It may have just as important a mission to fulfill as it ever had. It may be hard, however, for the church to secure and retain the kind of leadership it needs because of the attitude of other churches, pastors and denominational leaders toward the church.

Some of our denominational agencies and institutions are also adversely affected by the worldly idea of success. A college is thought by many to be failing unless the enrolment is constantly increasing. Even mission boards tend to measure their success by the number of missionaries. Any decrease may be considered an evidence of failure.

It is possible that what our Lord said about greatness in the Kingdom of God needs to be taken more seriously by all of us and by our churches and

denominational agencies. Greatness in His Kingdom is not measured by so-called worldly success but by service.

T. B. Maston, "Trends to Watch – Success Orientation," *Baptist Standard*, April 23, 1975, 13.

Christian Living and the Way Ahead

Southern Baptists have had enough problems in recent years to cause them to raise some questions about their future. Will the years ahead be their best years? Or, will our denomination be a declining one in power and influence for God in the world?

Our Weakness

As a denomination and as individual Baptists, we should be grateful to God for his blessings on us, but at the same time we should confess that we fall far short of being what we should be for him. We may have over thirty thousand churches and over ten million church members, but we have counted for so little in proportion to what we should have done.

Our largeness may be a part of our problem. We have become too number conscious, frequently more concerned with statistical reports than with the spiritual well-being of those reached. We have tended to be more interested in the birth of babes in Christ than their maturity for Christ.

Also, secularism has crept into our churches and into our denomination.

We have accepted, to a distressing degree, secular goals and have used secular methods to attain those goals. Some churches and denominational agencies and organizations seem to have become more concerned with their prestige in the world than their impact for Christ on the world.

Churches too frequently have been more anxious about the beauty of their sanctuary than about the growth in character of the people who worship in it. They seemingly have measured their success to exclusively by the size of

buildings and budgets rather than by the moral and spiritual stature of men and women reached by those churches.

Furthermore, many of our churches are little more than cultural institutions. They tend not only to identify themselves with the culture, but to become defenders of that culture. Such churches can never lift the world toward God's ideal for the world.

The impact of our secular culture on our churches is reflected in the kind of church members that are produced. Too many of us are satisfied to be second rate rather than first rate Christians. To use one of Trueblood's striking statements, many of us are equally shocked at hearing the faith denied or seeing it practiced. Entirely too many of us have split personalities. We attempt to hold on to the world with one hand and the Lord with the other. We proclaim our loyalty to God with our mouths but to the world with our lives.

Another of our weaknesses is that we sometimes tend to be more concerned with methods and programs than with the people who are reached by those methods and involved in those programs. We know how to grow "great churches," or would it be more accurate to say "large churches"? Our methods have made us masters at enlisting people. Are we equally skilled at influencing them for the Lord?

Nothing reveals our preoccupation with methods and programs more than the tendency of some to believe that a method or program will solve every problem. The contemporary problems that most persistently plague our churches and our denomination are moral and spiritual. They cannot be cured by tinkering with the machinery, by using a different method, or by promoting a new program. As long as we do not have the power from above, additional machinery and new or revised methods or programs conceivably could increase rather than decrease our basic problems.

Our responsibility as Baptists to God and hence our guilt before him is greater because we claim to be "a people of the Book." We brag about our love for and loyalty to the Bible. We frequently give this as one reason for our

“growth and greatness.” There may be a sense in which this is correct, but are we really “a people of the Book”? We cannot be by simply saying we are. We can talk long and loud about our love for and devotion to the Bible, but we are not “a people of the Book” in the deepest and truest sense unless we are seeking to let its spirit possess us and its basic principles find expression in and through our lives.

How tragic that some of the most serious social, moral, and religious problems within our nation are as prevalent, if not more so, in the so-called Bible Belt where Southern Baptists are more numerous than anywhere else. Too many of us living in that area show too little of the Christian spirit, even in our relations to those of our fellowship with whom we disagree.

God's Power

The sense of our own weakness as a group and as individual Baptists should not defeat us. It should cause us to look unto the hills from whence cometh our help, recognizing that our help comes from the Lord (Psalm 121:1-2). There should never be the least question in our minds about the power of our God and of its availability.

Our God is the sovereign God of the universe. He ultimately will be triumphant in the world. There shall come a time when: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:10-11). ““The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ”” (Rev. 11:15, RSV). It was Jesus himself who said, ““On this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it”” (Matt. 16:18, RSV).

Let us not forget, however, that the church that Christ built and continues to build cannot be contained within the confines of a particularized expression of that church, whether that expression is a local church or a denomination. The triumph of God in our world does not necessarily mean the triumph or

even the continuation of Southern Baptists or any other church or denomination.

The future of our denomination, as is true of all other Christian groups, depends on our relation to the power that is available in God. Will we let his power flow through us to accomplish his purposes in the world? Those purposes are basically redemptive, but they operate in every area of life.

God is not only concerned with the totality of life; but being the same yesterday, today, and forevermore, we know that he is active in all of life. He is on the march in our world achieving his purposes in and for the world.

We cannot have his power if we seek to restrict that power to anyone segment of life. We certainly cannot have his power if we attempt to use that power to promote ourselves and our programs.

If Southern Baptists are to advance in the years ahead, they must advance with God. Unless we seek as best we can to catch step with him, he may leave us beside the road. His cause will not and cannot fail; let us hope and pray that we shall not fail him. We shall fail him if we are more class, culture, and color conscious than Christ conscious. We cannot be used by God to lift the world toward his purposes for the world unless we challenge the world, not only by the message we proclaim, but also by the way we practice that message.

If we will make ourselves available, Southern Baptists can be assured that God will use our denomination to extend his righteous rule among men. Let us never forget, however, that God can get along without us. We should ask him to eliminate any vestiges of a Messiah complex. We should also ask him to save us from so-called leaders who tend to give us an exalted conception of ourselves, failing to help us to face realistically our problems. May he, in a particular way, preserve us from demagogues, who seek to make themselves popular by appealing to our prejudices.

Our Hope

In the light of our weaknesses and God's power, where lies the hope for our advance in the years to come? The only sound basis for that hope is in the power of God and not in our machinery, methods, or programs.

After all, God uses persons more than programs to advance his cause. This means that our churches should place the individual person at the center of their life and ministry. Pastors and denominational leaders should become person conscious rather than program conscious.

If God's power is to flow through us, there must be a revival of consistent Christian living. There is no greater need among Southern Baptists. What a tremendous influence for God we could be in our world if even a good percentage of us took seriously the matter of living the Christian life! there can be no real advance for Southern Baptists in the next ten years without an advance in Christian living. This must come in pulpit and pew, among denominational leaders as well as among the rank and file of our people.

The preceding naturally means that we must not think of the church as a building and not exclusively as a meeting congregation. The redeeming members of the congregation are the church wherever they are, at any time, or at any place.

We also must recognize that being a good Christian means more than faithfulness to the formal requirements of our faith – regular church attendance, tithing, etc. These we ought to do and not to leave undone the weightier matters of daily Christian living.

If the preceding is to be true, pastors and teachers must help our people to understand more clearly the nature of the Christian life. This should start with the initial Christian experience. When one becomes a child of God, he comes into a vital, life-changing union with the resurrected Christ. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature or a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). This union is so vital that Jesus compared it to the vine and the branches (John 15:5). The branches are not separate from the vine. The life-blood of the vine flows through the branches.

It is Paul who says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22-23). We all need to understand that fruit bearing for one who is in union with Christ is so normal, natural, and inevitable that if he does not bear fruit, he has no right to claim to know Christ.

We have been faithful in preaching and teaching that we are saved by grace through faith. We need to be just as faithful in preaching that we are created in Christ Jesus for or with a view to good works (Eph. 2:10). We need more emphasis on James's message, found also in Paul and elsewhere, that faith without works is dead (James 2:26). It was Jesus who said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16, 20), and he also said that bearing fruit was the purpose he had in choosing the disciples (John 15:16).

Paul's admonition that we should not be conformed to this world but should be transformed or transfigured (Rom. 12:2) is needed by churches and the denomination, as well as by individual Christians.

We also need to see that the rather sharp distinction that we have made between the clergy and the so-called laity is not in the New Testament. We can and should retain the uniqueness of the call to perform certain functions within the Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 12:27-31; Eph. 4:11). We need to realize, however, that the call to minister or serve is a universal call, that God's basic calls are to all and not to a select few. This is true of the call to go, to witness, to deny self, to take up a cross.

What a difference it would make in our churches, in our denomination, in our communities, and in our world all of us recognized our responsibility as children of God! What if we lived as we should as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as neighbors and friends, as employers and employees, as members of different classes and races? What if every one of us utilized the opportunities we have to witness with word of mouth and by the life we live at home, at school, at play, at work, or travel?

The best days for Southern Baptists can be ahead. Let us never forget, however, that this will not automatically be true. What the years ahead will be

will depend on us and depend largely on the quality of Christian character we develop.

There are some indications of an awakening within the Christian movement in the contemporary period. There is a hunger and thirst for something deeper and more significant than many people now have and are getting. This is a sign of hope.

Will Southern Baptists be alert and open-minded enough to provide some of the stimulus and guidance for any such movement or, will even our Baptist people find a deeper expression of their faith and a more meaningful fellowship among kindred spirits of other churches and denominational groups? The answer to this question may be an important factor in determining our direction in the future and our impact on the world.

T. B. Maston, "Christian Living and the Way Ahead," *Quarterly Review* 25 (January, February, March 1965): 47-57.

EVANGELISM AND ETHICS

No dichotomy existed for Maston between evangelism and ethics. Both in what he taught generations of students as well as what he lived out in his local church, Maston incarnated the missing link between these two major facets of the Christian life. As much in these as in anything he demonstrated the need for a both/and approach over against an either/or.

Maston concluded that the Gospel is to be extended to others and to be lived out. The excesses of a shallow evangelism which articulated the cheap grace noted by Dietrich Bonhoeffer provided grist for his pen toward unethical practices of ministers and nominal Christianity. As well, Maston did not promote a practice of Christian ethics which dealt with social issues without a theological rootage.

Many of Maston's doctoral students followed the calling of being missionaries. They recognized the inherent connection between an evangelism which calls for the conversion of people, but people who will live ethically, and that ethical living found basis in the redemptive work of God.

This section begins with three short articles in which Maston looks at the ethical implications of the various ways of doing evangelism. The section then concludes with a brief excerpt from Maston's book, *The Conscience of a Christian*, entitled, "Evangelism and Social Concern." In this excerpt, Maston demonstrates the need for evangelism to be coupled with concern for the individual.

READINGS

Evangelism and Ethics

Many Southern Baptists tend to separate evangelism and ethics, emphasizing one to the neglect of the other. But just as theology and ethics belong together,

likewise evangelism and ethics belong together. They supplement and support one another.

The ethical element should not be neglected in evangelism. And the evangelistic purpose and spirit should be evident in the teaching of ethics. The latter should be true whether in the Sunday School class or in the college or seminary classroom.

Ministry of Jesus

The close relation of evangelism and ethics is illustrated by the ministry of Jesus. One particularly graphic incident was his visit in the home of Zacchaeus. Sometime during the visit Zacchaeus showed an evidence of having a basic change in his life.

Then it was that Jesus said, "This day has salvation come to this house . . ." There follows the statement concerning the purpose of the coming of Jesus: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:9-10).

Another verse that I like to place beside the preceding is the statement by Peter in his sermon or message in the home of Cornelius that Jesus "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). In other words, Jesus came to seek and to save the lost but He also went about doing good, ministering to the needs of people.

Few verses of scripture have gripped me any more than that statement by Peter. The ministry of Jesus was a walking ministry. Everywhere He went He was alert for those in need. And there is a verse in 1 John that has challenged me for several years as no other verse: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). And we say that we abide in Him if we claim to be Christians.

Teachings of Jesus

As Jesus walked He invited men to follow Him and then taught those who joined His company what it meant to be a disciple of His. He taught them by word of mouth but also by the life He lived.

There is no greater summary of basic Christian ethical teachings than the so-called Sermon on the Mount: “so-called” because it was really a teaching session – “he . . . taught them saying” (Matthew 5:1). And what a session it was! For example in Matthew 5 are the “Blessed are . . .” (vv.1-12), followed by the challenge to be salt and light (vv. 13-16).

There is no statement clearer or more challenging about the relation of evangelism and ethics than the Great Commission.

It was the resurrected Christ who said to them: “All power is given unto me . . . Go ye therefore and teach [make disciples] all nations.” This is the evangelistic function. Then through baptism those who had become disciples were to be identified with the cause of Christ or the Christian movement.

His disciples, and we claim to be in that company, were and are to make other disciples of Him and then teach them what it means to be a real disciple of Him.

Here is evangelism and ethics tied together in one bundle.

T. B. Maston, “Both/And – Evangelism and Ethics,” *Baptist Standard*, February 18, 1981, 11.

Demonstration Evangelism

Several years ago a student made a statement that has stayed with me through the years:

“We have tried many different kinds of evangelism. I would like to suggest a type of evangelism that we have largely neglected. We have tried personal evangelism and mass evangelism. We have tried visitation evangelism and cultivation evangelism. I think it is time for us to put more emphasis on demonstration evangelism.”

What did that student, now a teacher in a theological seminary, mean by “demonstration evangelism?” He meant among other things, that more of us need to demonstrate in our lives the ultimate results of real evangelism. In other words, we need to live like men and women who have been born again, like persons who have become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Consistent Demonstration

Without belittling or deprecating one iota any other approach to evangelism, can't we agree that we need to try far more consistently than we have “demonstration evangelism”? Nothing would add more to the effectiveness of our evangelistic efforts than a demonstration by God's children of what it means to be a real Christian.

In many of our church services, Sunday after Sunday, there will not be any unsaved young people or adults. Also, in many of these churches their evangelistic results will be restricted to the children of church members.

Why are these things so generally and distressingly true? A major factor is that so many of us do such a poor job of living the Christian life. Our practice falls far short of our profession. Others see little of the spirit of Christ in our daily walk.

Areas of Demonstration

What if most Christians consistently demonstrated in the home, in the shop, on the street as well as in the sanctuary what it means to be a real Christian? What if others could see revealed in our lives the Christian spirit as we play and work as well as when we worship? What if more of us were genuine Christians in contrast to nominal Christians? What if men could honestly take knowledge of us, as they did of the early disciples, that we had been with Jesus?

Will you not agree that if the preceding were true then our neighbors, friends, and loved ones would become aware that we had something in our

lives that many of them did not have? When that happened they would want to discover what that something was.

In the search for the answer many would come to our churches and many would open their hearts and lives to the gospel message.

If the demonstration is to be most effective it must be evident where we live, work, and play as well as where we worship.

Also, for the demonstration to be most meaningful it must represent a minimum of conscious effort on our part. Some effort may be necessary because of our spiritual immaturity. However, as we mature the outer expression will increasingly flow from the inner quality of those lives. In turn, the inner quality or character of our lives will be determined by the vitality of our relation to the indwelling Christ and by our responsiveness to that relationship.

It should be added that for the demonstration to be most effective it must be group or institutional as well as individual or personal. The church as a fellowship of the redeemed should demonstrate in that fellowship the kind of society we would have if that society were redeemed.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Demonstration Evangelism," *Baptist Standard*, March 19, 1969, 19.

Witnessing or Soul Winning

Is our task to witness or to win? A few years ago many would have answered "to win." We heard a great deal about soul winners and soul winning. In the contemporary period the answer more frequently given is that our task is to witness.

I personally prefer "witness" and "witnessing" to "soul winner" and "soul winning." One reason is that the latter terms imply a compartmentalization of man. They represent a tendency to separate the soul and the body of man into

two distinct entities. But man is a unity. He is a person. It is the person and not merely man's "soul" that needs to be saved.

Preference for Witnessing

Another reason for my preference for "witnessing" is a conviction that the child of God in the truest sense cannot win another person to Christ as Savior and Lord. Some problems in our churches may stem from the fact that some members of those churches have been "won" by human techniques and skills rather than by the power of the divine Spirit.

It is our responsibility to witness. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert. It is possible that we need to restudy Christian witnessing. A study of the New Testament, particularly the book of Acts, will reveal that the main emphasis in witnessing was on the resurrection of Christ. We are not only to tell others that He died for our sins but also that He was raised for our justification.

There is another element of witnessing by the early followers of Christ that is frequently neglected. For example, Peter in the house of Cornelius said, "We are witnessing to all that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem" (Acts 10:39 RSV).

Testimony of Disciples

Notice the words "that He did." Peter and the other disciples had seen the things that Jesus had done. They could witness or testify that He had gone about doing good: healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowing, and forgiving the sinful.

Another important word to us concerning witnessing is found in the statement that Ananias made to Saul or Paul. He said: "For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15 RSV). Notice he was to be a witness "for Him" (the resurrected Christ) and "to

all men.” Also, he was to tell what he had seen and heard. This suggests the content of the witnessing.

Ananias may have referred primarily to Saul’s experience on the Damascus road. However, he doubtlessly also referred to the things that Saul or Paul had learned by personal observation and through what he had heard others say about Jesus. We are to bear witness to what we have seen and heard, including in a most significant way what we have personally experienced.

Surely we will agree that we need to be more diligent about witnessing “to all men” – in the home, where we work, on the street, and everywhere about the death and resurrection of Christ and about His ability to save to the uttermost all who will come to Him by faith.

We need also to witness concerning the type or quality of life He lived while He walked among men. In other words, we are to witness to His life, death, and resurrection.

The most effective way to witness to the kind of life He lived is to live that kind of life ourselves. He went about doing good. We should go about doing good. We will do this to the degree that we let the resurrected Christ live in us and express Himself through us.

Furthermore, our witnessing by the spoken word to the death and resurrection of Christ will be much more effective if we witness by our lives to the kind of quality of life He lived.

T. B. Maston, “Problems of the Christian Life – Witnessing or Soul Winning,” *Baptist Standard*, April 9, 1969, 19.

Evangelism and Social Concern

Christians are beginning to see with increasing clarity that they need not and must not choose between evangelism and social concern. The decision must be both/and rather than either/or.

Some of us may function primarily in the area of evangelism. Others may operate primarily in the area of applied Christianity or social compassion and concern. Let all of us have respect for one another and for our distinctive contributions to the cause of Christ and to the work of our churches.

It should not be difficult for Christians to recognize that evangelism and social concern or ethics belong together. They were joined together in the life and ministry of Jesus. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He also went about doing good, ministering to the needs of people. He not only said, "Go . . . make disciples," he also said, "teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

A proper understanding of evangelism will indicate that it is much more inclusive than many of us have realized. Through evangelism the total person is brought into a vital, life-changing union with the resurrected Christ. We do not "win souls" to the Lord. We win people to faith in and commitment to the Lord. When properly interpreted this relationship to the risen Lord inevitably affects every area of our lives.

In the contemporary world it is possible that many people will not respond to the preaching of the gospel if we are unconcerned about their daily lives and problems. The responsibility for such concern rests on individual church members as well as on churches and pastors. If we were more concerned about people as neighbors and friends, we doubtless would have more of them to attend the services of our churches and more of them would respond to the preaching of the gospel.

We can sum up the matter by saying that our social concern will not be on a sound basis unless it stems from a heart that yearns for men and women to open their hearts and lives to Christ as Savior and Lord. On the other hand, our evangelism will be increasingly unproductive unless it is accompanied by a genuine compassion for people as people, along with a sincere desire to share their problems and to minister to their needs.

May the good Lord help us to keep evangelism and social concern vibrant and vital and in proper balance in the life and work of our churches and denominations.

T. B. Maston, *The Conscience of a Christian* (Waco: Word, 1971), 103-104.

PASTORAL ETHICS

For Maston a close link lies between pastoral care and Christian ethics. One should not be surprised, then, that Maston's articulation of pastoral or ministerial ethics garnered attention from those who are/were called to be in a local church.

Few were articulating clear definitions of calling and understanding where that calling could take one. Maston's article, "The New Testament Ministry," could be called both a classic and a standard offering from his pen. Maston knew that the ministry provided contexts in which ego and the drive for power and prestige could be easily sought. He counsels against those dynamics and provides alternatives. The section ends with a number of shorter articles in which Maston tackles a number of different issues related to clergy and ethics.

READINGS

The New Testament Ministry

Baptists believe that the Bible is the final authority for every phase of their faith and practice. Since this is true, we periodically should reexamine our policies and programs to see if they conform to the New Testament pattern. It is possible for religious groups to drift away from their original principles. The traditional may be defended as biblical without a willingness to evaluate those traditions in the light of an objective study of the Bible.

A careful consideration of the New Testament conception of the ministry may challenge some of our current attitudes and practices. At least this is what it did for me. In this article I am attempting to pass on some of my conclusions concerning the New Testament ministry and some of the practical consequences if these conclusions generally were accepted by Baptists.

Conclusions

- God's basic call is a call to minister or to serve rather than a call to preach, to teach, or to perform some other particular function. Paul many times speaks of himself as a minister (Acts 26:16; Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 3:5,4:1; 2 Cor. 6:4, 11:23; Eph. 3:7) and of his work as the ministry (Acts 20:24; Rom. 11:13; 1 Tim. 1:12). He also refers to a number of his friends as ministers. (Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7; 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:6) and of their work as the ministry (Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5).

In contrast Paul speaks of himself as a preacher in only two places (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). In both of these he also refers to himself as an apostle and a teacher.

- In the New Testament the call to the ministry was primarily a call to an attitude or a frame of mind rather than to an office. It was a call to a sense of stewardship and divine partnership in the work of the Lord. The one called was a minister for God to the people.

The emphasis on the element of service in the call is seen in the Greek words that are translated "minister" or "ministry." The word most frequently used was *diakonos*, from which we get our word "deacon." It means "servant" or "laborer" and was used to designate waiters or those who served tables. Two other words translated "minister" are *leitourges*, which referred primarily to a "public worker" or "servant," and *huparetas*, which means "an assistant" or literally an "underrower."

- Another conclusion, as clear as the above, is that preaching, teaching, and other activities were functions within the broader framework of the New Testament ministry. These functions were and are methods; they are means to an end. The end is to minister or to serve. (See Eph. 4:11-16.)

It is clear from the New Testament and from the Christian experience that it is God's will for some to give themselves primarily to the preaching ministry, to the teaching ministry, to evangelism, etc. The call as found in the New Testament is basically a call to minister. And there are different functions within that ministry that are channels through which the ones called of God seek to fulfill the requirements of their ministry.

- The sharp distinction so frequently made today between those “in the ministry” or the clergy and the laymen did not exist in the New Testament churches. For example, we cannot find any biblical justification for the restriction of the public proclamation of the gospel to those who have been “ordained as preachers of the gospel.” The disciples, when they were scattered from Jerusalem due to persecution, “went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Many of these evidently were ordinary disciples. At least two of the seven – Stephen and Philip, doubtlessly forerunners of the deacons – were effective preachers and evangelists.
- The references we find in the New Testament to an ordination service suggests a comparatively simple service of laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14). This laying on of hands was evidently a symbol that individuals had been set apart or consecrated to a particular purpose to which God had called them.

Practical Consequences

What would be the results in the lives of ministers, in the work of our churches, and in our denomination if we took seriously the New Testament message concerning the ministry?

- It would give to all of us who are in vocational religious service a deeper sense of purpose in our work. Whether we preach, teach, sing, counsel, edit a paper, or administer a denominational program, our chief call and

task is to serve God and our fellowman. Recognizing that these activities are means or methods by which we minister or serve, we would tend to enter into them with renewed enthusiasm. Our hearts would be warmed and inspired. We would be saved from the inertia of professionalism.

- Rightly understood, the New Testament conception of the ministry would give to all who have been called of God a deepening sense of stewardship. We would not say in a bragging manner, “Ours is the greatest calling in the world.” Ours is not a call to some high exalted office. It is a call to a great responsibility.
- The New Testament view of the ministry also would save us from jealousy and bickering within the ministry. There is no room within the New Testament ministry for any sense of superiority or inferiority. There are no big or little people in God’s ministry except as they are big or little in the unselfish service they render for God and to their fellowmen.
- If generally understood and widely accepted, this New Testament conception of the ministry would help many young people to find more readily the will of God for their lives. They would see that the basic call is a call to minister and that within that wider framework there are many types or methods of service. They could work out more easily, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the exact type of ministry to which they would give their main emphasis.

Some who have found that they are misfits in a particular type of service would not feel forced to continue in that phase of the ministry. There would not be the criticism that we now have when those who “have been called to preach” turn to teaching, editing, or serving in some administrative capacity. How often have you heard it said, “Those who are called to preach ought to preach”? How different it would be if all of our people realized that those

individuals are called to minister. Whether they preach, teach, or perform some other type of service is secondary to this basic call and is to be used as a channel through which they will, in part, fulfill the ministry for God to man.

- The above conception of the ministry would help our churches and our denomination to settle the uncertainty concerning the ordination of those called of God to vocational religious service but who do not feel, at least for the present, that their work is to be the preaching ministry. The controversy concerning the “ordination” of such workers has grown out of misunderstanding concerning the nature of the New Testament ministry and of the “ordination” service of New Testament churches. When we remember that New Testament ordination was a simple service of dedication to a particular task and that the New Testament ministry included evangelists and teachers as well as preachers, our problems in the area of ordination will be solved.
- The New Testament conception of the ministry would restore to the average church members a keener sense of responsibility for the work of their churches and of the kingdom of God around the world. They would see that Christ did not give any commands exclusively to a select group – the clergy. All of his obligations were placed on all his disciples. Really the call to minister or serve is a universal call, applicable to all believers in Christ.

T. B. Maston, “The New Testament Ministry,” *The Student* 57 (March 1978): 18-22.

Dilemma of Theological Gap

There is considerable discussion of serious gaps such as the generation gap and the credibility gap. Another gap that should concern Christians is the theological gap.

The theological gap may not be bridged entirely, but we hope that the people on both sides will be spiritually mature enough to maintain channels of communication. As long as conversation is taking place there is hope for narrowing the gap.

It must be recognized, however, that real conversation can never be a monologue. There must be a willingness from both sides to listen with an open, searching mind. One source of such a willingness is an acceptance by both sides of some responsibility for the gap.

Poles of the Gap

The theological gap we are primarily referring to is the gap between college and seminary professors on the one hand and many pastors on the other hand. It could help if we recognize that there is a comparable gap between the pulpit and the pew. And the biggest and most disturbing gap is between what we teach, preach, and profess and what we practice.

A common consciousness of sin would help to narrow the gap between the classroom and the pulpit. All of us, teachers and preachers, have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We may speak, to some degree, a different language; but we all stand in the same need of forgiveness and cleansing.

It will help to narrow the theological gap if teachers and pastors will seek to understand each other. The teacher should recognize that most pastors are extremely busy men. They should not be expected to keep up with the most recent developments in theological thought.

Needs of People

Furthermore, they are concerned primarily with the immediate pressing needs of people.

Most pastors have little interest in “fine spun” theological theories that do not, from their perspective, touch the needs of people.

On the other hand, pastors should understand that teachers live in two or more worlds. One of those worlds, largely unknown to most pastors, is the world of scholarship. It is a part of the teacher's responsibility to keep alert to the most recent developments in the area of scholarship in general but particularly in his field of specialization.

In some areas there is a distinctive and highly technical vocabulary, and sometimes a gap arises because the language of the teacher is not understood or is misunderstood by others. Also, the teacher is disciplined to be exact in the use of words. This can lead to misunderstanding gap and mistrust.

Let us repeat that if the gap is to be bridged or even narrowed, channels of communication must be kept open. It will help to do this if teachers are invited more frequently to speak to groups of pastors. This will be particularly true if there is an opportunity provided for a dialogue.

Also, more pastors should attend special ministers' weeks provided by colleges and seminaries.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Dilemma of Theological Gap," *Baptist Standard*, September 17, 1969, 19.

Disease of "Doctoritis"

Some ministers and churches are afflicted with the rather highly contagious disease that might properly be called "doctoritis."

There are ministers who feel that they must secure a doctor's degree. There are churches, at least pulpit committees, that will not consider a man unless he has a doctor's degree.

What can we do about this disease which is entirely too prevalent among us?

Churches, particularly larger city churches, can help to reduce the seriousness of the disease.

They can do this by being concerned primarily with whether or not a particular minister will provide the leadership which that particular church needs at that particular time.

Secondary Matter

If any consideration is to be given to whether or not he has a doctor's degree, such consideration should be secondary. If the potential pastor has a doctor's degree, then the pulpit committee should find out where and how the degree was secured.

The committee and church members in general need to know that there are "degree mills" where a degree largely of one's own choosing can be secured by paying a certain fee and by doing very little work.

Pastors, teachers, and others in church-related vocations can do a great deal to cure or at least to reduce the seriousness of "doctoritis" among us.

This is particularly true of persons who have doctor's degrees. They should seek to diagnose the disease and to prescribe a remedy. At least they can let others know that they would just as soon or prefer to be addressed as "Brother" or "Mister" rather than "Doctor."

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Disease of "Doctoritis"," *Baptist Standard*, June 18, 1969, 19.

Pastor's Salary

There recently has been considerable discussion of pastors' salaries. It is generally agreed that the salaries of most pastors are entirely too low. Inadequate income has been given as one reason for some pastors leaving the ministry.

Is there any feasible way for associations, conventions, or denominational agencies to guarantee a minimum salary for men who give their full time to the ministry?

While agreeing that the average salary of pastors is entirely too low, we should be fair in reporting the salary a pastor receives.

House for Pastor

Many and possibly most churches provide a home for the pastor or furnish him a housing allowance. Many also pay all or some of his utilities. Furthermore, the pastor frequently receives a car allowance. His hospital and retirement benefits may be provided for him.

Funds are made available for convention expenses and in some cases for other meetings of his own choosing. A few churches even provide “a pastor’s fund” to be used for entertainment purposes or in any way related to the work of the church.

It is not being suggested that any of these fringe benefits should necessarily be eliminated. It is true that some church members believe it would be better for the pastor and for his relationships to his people if some of the benefits were eliminated or at least reduced.

Surely all of us will agree that nothing should be provided for the pastor that will give him a tax advantage that is not available to the members of his church.

Some may argue that most employed church members receive fringe benefits. This is correct, but their fringe benefits are considered a part of their wage or salary. At least the pastor and other staff members believe this should be true as a basis for the member’s tithe.

“Fringe Benefits”

Likewise, we believe that all the “fringe benefits” of the pastor should be considered a part of his income from the church.

It is particularly important that the members of the church should know about all the fringe benefits received by the pastor. They usually will know

about the housing allowance and the car allowance. These ordinarily will be spelled out in the church budget.

There are other items, however, such as utilities that are seldom known by most of the members.

What we have said about the pastors should also be true of other members of the church staff and denominational employees. Salaries should be spelled out specifically, and all fringe benefits should be generally known.

It is possible that some pastors of large churches and some denominational employees receive too much income. It can be a source of real temptation to them. It may contribute to material mindedness.

There is always the lurking danger that one may lose the common touch. His sympathies may be more with the privileged than with the underprivileged, which violates something basic in our Christian faith.

A wise rule of thumb that may be followed is that a pastor's income should be geared to a considerable degree to the average of the members of the church he serves. He can properly be above the average but not too much above.

Likewise, the income of denominational employees should not be too far beyond the income of pastors and other members of church staffs. It may be that in some phases of denominational life the salary scale has been determined too largely on the basis of typical practices in the business world.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Pastor's Salary," *Baptist Standard*, June 11, 1969, 19.

PART FOUR: “CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD ISSUES”

Maston was a realist, not an idealist. While he hoped for a better tomorrow, he understood the reality of the world and the way social structures operated. Because of this, Maston was able to see that Christianity is supposed to affect all the different facets of world issues. He did not think Christians should seek to change things without having any notion of what is actually happening in the world. Rather, the Christian is to be as informed as possible, concerning local, national, and world events and issues. Only through being informed can the Christian form a basis upon which to act.

Underlying these notions is Maston's belief that one's faith is not to be solely wrapped up in personal experience. While such experience is necessary to faith, Christianity must not stop here. This inner experience must cause one to be concerned about and act upon social issues.

Application, then, of one's saving experience is toward all spheres of life. One's Christianity cannot be relegated to only certain areas of life and social affairs. Personal conversion is to have public implications. One's inner awareness of faith should bring about a global awareness, in which the Christian cultivates the ability to be concerned about anything that brings about dehumanization and/or human suffering. Furthermore, the Christian is to act upon this awareness, for awareness, in and of itself, is not enough.

The reader will find a variety of readings in Part Four concerning the Christian's call to be concerned about and act upon world issues. Not only is there a variety of works, ranging from shorter articles to more extensive treatments in books, there is also a variety in substance, as these samples of Maston's work tackle everything from race relations to issues of life and death.

RACE RELATIONS

The topic, issue, and discussions of race stand as one of the hallmarks of Maston's legacy. He noted in an interview in 1988 that this area might be the matter about which he had made the most difference.¹ At the least he could be called a pioneer toward leading discussions related to race from a Baptist perspective. Maston's writings on race relations began with a pamphlet called "Racial Revelations" in 1927. He wrote occasional Sunday School and Training Union lessons on race through the 1930s. A seminary course that devoted half the term to issues regarding African-Americans began in 1937. A course on "The Church and the Race Problem" began in 1944.

Maston's three primary writings on race – excerpted frequently herein – include: *Of One*, published in 1946; *The Bible and Race* from 1959; *Segregation and Desegregation: A Christian Approach*, published the same year. Maston considered the last, more of a sociological study of events after the Supreme Court decision of 1954, to be most substantive but admits it did not have the appeal and the influence of *The Bible and Race*. In addition to these excerpts, a number of smaller ones from the Baptist state newspaper are included.

In these writings the reader can see Maston's pastoral approach to ethics shine. He combats the problems Southern Baptists had on race issues on two fronts: failure to take the implications of the gospel seriously and distortions of scripture to support the status quo. The pastoral element comes across in his generous use of scripture. Maston could have made arguments in more explicitly theological, philosophical or sociological language, but such arguments would not have had the impact among Baptists that his Bible-centered language did. Maston wrote on race issues not to earn points for being right, but in order to shepherd the wider Southern Baptist community into repentance and transformed living on racial issues. The misappropriations of scripture he critiques include the use of the so-called curse of Ham to justify

segregation, Old Testament marriage laws to prohibit interracial marriage, and obedience to authorities to discredit the Civil Rights Movement in the wake of race riots.

READINGS

Our Father

Sons of God

If God is our Father, then we are sons of His and brothers one of another. Both of these ideas are clearly found in the Bible, although the major direct emphasis is on brotherhood rather than sonship. It seems that the early Christians reserved, with few exceptions, the idea “son of God” for Jesus, the uniquely divine Son. But, nevertheless, we are children of God, we belong to one great family.

1. By Creation.

The Bible and science may disagree concerning the source from which men have come, but they agree that all men of all races have come from one common source; that we are one big family. The word of science is:

It is today generally agreed that all men belong to the same species, that they were probably derived from the same ancestral stock, and that all share in a common patrimony.²

The Bible simply records that on the sixth creative day God said, “Let us make man in our image . . . and God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:26, 27).

All men are God’s by creation. It is true that sin entered and marred, although it did not entirely destroy, man’s resemblance to God. At least there is

left within man a yearning for a restoration of fellowship with God. It is this inner hunger that makes man restless until he finds God through Christ.

2. By Redemption.

In a much fuller, deeper, and more significant sense we become sons of God and brothers one of another through the redemption we have in Christ. God sent His Son into the world “that we might receive the adoption of sons. And . . . God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba (Aramaic for father), Father. So that thou are no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God” (Gal. 4:4-7; cf. Rom. 8:14-17).

When we by faith accept Christ as our Saviour, we are adopted into the spiritual family of God. That makes all of us who are in that family brothers in Christ. This word “brother” or “brethren” was the leading word used in the New Testament to identify Christians. The church was the family of God; its members were brothers in Christ.

We prove our kinship to our Father by purifying ourselves “even as he is pure” and by freeing ourselves from habitual sin. We can know that we have passed out of death into life by our love for the brethren, a love that will be sacrificial to the extent of giving our lives, if necessary, but which will also express itself in deeds of helpful sharing with those in need (1 John 3:3-18).

We expect such love and sharing in the natural family; why not in the spiritual family of God? The members of the early church took seriously the idea of Christian brotherhood and voluntarily shared with each other even to the extent that some who had property sold it and brought the proceeds “and laid them at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as anyone had need” (Acts 4:35). That is the spirit of a family of brothers. The Christian goal is that this spirit will not only characterize every family and every church but ultimately the entire human family; that some day the society of men will become a Christian brotherhood.

Whether we like it or not, if we are Christians, we are brethren (Matt. 23:8). There is only “one body . . . one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:4-6). Just as we may not like some of our natural brothers and sisters, we may not like some of our spiritual brothers and sisters. But our likes and dislikes will not change the relationship or its obligations.

3. Brothers or Slaves?

Many of those who first accepted Christ, as is true on the mission fields today, were from the lower social and economic classes. Some of these were slaves, one of the best known being Onesimus, a runaway slave, who was won to Christ by Paul and sent back to his master, Philemon. He was returned “no longer a servant (bond-servant or slave), but more than a servant, a brother beloved” (Philem. 16). In Christ, Paul said in another place, there is neither bond nor free “for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

We find in the early Christian fellowship Jews and Gentiles, men and women, freemen and slaves joining together in the family of God, loving each other as brothers in Christ.

There arose a new society in which all difference of race, opinion, station, what not, were fused in the white heat of a great new passion for the crucified carpenter who had gone up to be King in heaven.³

It took Christians a long time to learn that brothers should not be slaves. But certainly every historian will agree that the Christian message has been an important factor in freeing the slaves of the world.

However, there are still many men and women caught in the mighty grip of our class and racial caste system who are in real, if not legal, slavery. The task of Christian brotherhood is not complete. And, the only abiding hope for the freedom of the enslaved of the world is the consistent application of the

true spirit of Christian brotherhood to the relationships of men and nations. What would this spirit do for India, Africa, the Jew, the Japanese, the Mexican, the Negro, the disinherited and underprivileged among us?

In a world that is rapidly becoming one neighborhood, it seems that we must become one brotherhood or maintain, and that temporarily, the present system by the cruel, heartless enslavement of minority groups and handicapped people. Our choice is not only between brotherhood and slavery but between brotherhood and chaos and ruin for the South, for our nation, and for our world.

T. B. Maston, *Of One* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1946), 86-90.

Civil Disorders

The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, signed by all 11 members, should be of major interest to all citizens, particularly Christians.

We should study it objectively and do what we can to see that many of its recommendations are implemented.

The President appointed the commission in the summer of 1967 when many cities in the United States were torn with riots or civil disorders. The commission was directed to learn what happened, why it happened, and what could be done to prevent its recurrence.

I make these specific suggestions related to the report:

1. All of us should recognize the seriousness of the civil disorders, of recent months. They are a real threat to our nation.

2. We should not blame Negroes in general for the disorders. The commission found that the typical rioter was a teen-ager or a young adult who was extremely hostile, not only to white people but also to the middle-class Negroes. The commission discovered that there were also Negro counter-rioters. The vast majority of our Negro citizens are strongly opposed to the riots and to the rioters.
3. We should not accept uncritically the judgment of others concerning the report. Let us not be satisfied with second hand statements. The complete text of the report is available in a Bantam paperback for \$1.25. It is also available in hardback through any bookstore.
4. Place a copy of the report in your church library. Encourage fellow church members to read it.
5. We should not be surprised if we do not agree with everything in the report.
6. We should not fail to look for the good in the report simply because we may find a few statements in it with which we strongly disagree.
7. We should discuss the report with other Christians and with Christian groups. It would be helpful if the young people and adults in our churches would enter into dialogue with one another regarding the report and some of the problems posed by civil disorders. It would be most helpful, if we are mature enough, to discuss these matters with some of our Negro friends.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Civil Disorders," *Baptist Standard*, July 3, 1968, 16.

Interracial Marriage

In the debate about race in general and intermarriage in particular the Bible has been used to some degree on both sides of the controversy. An objective examination will reveal that the Bible has no special teachings that can properly be used to support any particular position on intermarriage. However, because the bible has been quoted and misquoted so frequently, it may be helpful for us to examine what it has to say.

It is correct, as has been frequently stated, that the Jews in the Old Testament, in the main, were against intermarriage. In the Pentateuch, six (Ex. 34:10-16) or seven (Deut. 7:1-8) nations are listed with whom the children of Israel were not to marry nor to give their sons and daughters in marriage. Ezra later extended the prohibition to additional nations (Ezra 9:1).

National Restrictions

Study of the references will reveal that the restrictions were primarily national and tribal and not racial. The main motive for the restrictions was religious, as is pointedly set forth in Deuteronomy.

The statement is: “You shall not make marriages with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods” (Deut. 7:3-4). Notice particularly the last sentence.

The prohibitions regarding intermarriage in the Old Testament might be used to argue against the marriage of a Christian and a non-Christian, and even against the marriage of citizens of different nations. They cannot properly be used to support arguments against racial intermarriage. All of us should seek as best we can to rightly divide “the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

Biblical Examples

In contrast to the opposition to intermarriage in the Old Testament, there are a number of instances of intermarriages. Some of God’s Old Testament

saints, such as Abraham (Gen. 16:3), Joseph (Gen. 41:50), and Moses (Ex. 2:21), married foreign wives.

The wives of Abraham and Joseph were Egyptians, descendants of Mizraim, one of the sons of Ham. Still later, Moses married a Cushite (Num. 12:1) and Cush was one of the sons of Ham (Gen. 10:6). The word “Cush” means black and is translated “Ethiopia” in some places in the Old Testament (see Ps. 68:31, Isa. 18:1).

Furthermore, many of the great characters of the Bible were of mixed blood. In the number was David, one of whose ancestors was Ruth from Moab, one of the groups with whom Ezra had forbidden the Jews to marry. The greatest descendant of the Davidic line was Jesus. In his veins flowed the blood of the nations.

There may be and are some common sense arguments against interracial marriages; but the Bible does not contain a direct, authoritative word for or against interracial marriages. We may and can find some basic principles that will apply, but we do not find a specific enough position regarding intermarriage to be dogmatic about what the Bible teaches.

T. B. Maston, “Problems of the Christian Life – Interracial Marriage,” *Baptist Standard*, February 12, 1969, 19.

Of One

The race situation is unusually acute at the present time. Myrdal,⁴ after his comprehensive study of the race problem of the United States, came to the conclusion that not since Reconstruction days has there been more evidence of basic changes in American race relations. It will be a mistake, however, if we consider the race problem as exclusively Negro and American. What was formerly a backyards domestic situation has become a front porch international issue. Every nation of the world and the underprivileged masses

of those nations, are watching to see what we are going to do about our race problem.

The problem has become international in another and a broader sense. The stirring among the Negroes and other racial groups of the United States is a part of a world-changing people's revolution. The peoples of the world are on the march. The colored people and the minority groups of the United States are in the line of march. We had better seek to understand the movement of the masses and guide it, if possible, into constructive channels.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "America has a rendezvous with destiny." Is the United States to continue to be the symbol of democracy, the moral leader of the nations, the hope of the masses? What we do about race relations within the next few years may largely determine our place in the world for the indefinite future.

The Christian forces of America, and particularly of the South also have a rendezvous with destiny. The future of the Christian cause not only in the South but in the world will be determined, to a considerable degree, by what the Christians of the South do in the immediate future about the race situation. Are we going to attempt honestly to apply Christian principles to the race problem? If not, how can we expect others to continue to respect our Christian claims or to hear and accept the message we proclaim?

The race problem is primarily moral and spiritual. The present situation creates a moral uneasiness on the part of many of the majority group. This moral uneasiness may be the psychological explanation for the militancy of much racial prejudice. Myrdal, who approached his study of the race problem of the United States from the sociologist's viewpoint, sums up the problem as follows:

The American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on . . . Though our study includes economic, social, and political race relations, at

bottom our problem is the moral dilemma of the American. . . . The 'American Dilemma,' referred to in the title of this book, is the ever-raging conflict between, on the one hand, the valuations preserved on the general plane which we shall call the 'American Creed,' where the American thinks, talks, and acts under the influence of high national and Christian precepts, and, on the other hand, the valuations on specific planes of individual and group living.⁵

If the race problem is primarily a moral issue, then the moral forces should take the lead in its solution. It is the church's business to be in the vanguard of the moral forces of society. It will be a tragedy of tragedies for the churches of Christ to surrender their moral leadership to some social agency, political party, or labor organization. Those who are alert to modern trends sense the possibility and danger of such a loss of leadership.

T. B. Maston, *Of One* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1946), 8-9.

The Bible and Race

In these words (Acts 10:34), the opening ones of Peter's sermon in the house of Cornelius, the apostle says, "Of a truth I perceive" that God "shows no partiality."

This statement that God is no respecter of persons, or is impartial, is one of the most significant revelations in the Bible concerning God's attitude toward, and his relation to, men. He does not look on or judge men by the color of their skin or by their general external conditions; he looks on the heart. His relations to men are absolutely fair and unprejudiced. Since God expects his children to be like him, we should not be respecters of persons. We should be impartial; we should not play favorites.

But what does a study of Peter's vision, with his interpretation of it and his reaction to it, reveal? His vision plainly convinced him that he "should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

What effect did this lesson have on Peter? It caused him, as suggested previously, to violate some of the customs, mores, and taboos of his society. He invited the men sent by Cornelius, who were doubtlessly Gentiles, "in to be his guests" (Acts 10:23). He went into the house of Cornelius, which he himself said was unlawful for a Jew to do (Acts 10:28).

T. B. Maston, *The Bible and Race* (Nashville: Broadman, 1959), 33. Parallel found in: T. B. Maston, *Segregation and Desegregation* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 93-97.

"No Respector of Persons"

. . . Now let us as Christian Southerners ask ourselves a few questions and seek sincerely and objectively to answer them.

Can we defend, from the Christian viewpoint, discriminations based on race? Are they socially necessary? If so, should we defend them as a part of the permanent pattern of the South or should they be gradually eliminated? . . . Are our churches in the van [sic] or the rear of the movement in the South to treat the Negro more as a human being and less as a member of a race? What are we, as individuals, doing? Do we really want to know about conditions? Do we have a sincere desire that something be done? Do we need a repetition of Peter's vision on the housetop? If it came what would we do about it?

If tension is a sign of growth, and it usually is, then we are making progress in regard to race relations. The churches of Christ have the obligation and the opportunity to point the direction in which we should go and to take the lead in the attainment of the Christian goal for society.

T. B. Maston, *Of One* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1946), 76-77.

The following are examples of Maston's response to the misuse of scripture, related, by implication, to race:

A Postscript: "The Curse of Ham"

The only reason to give any space to "the curse of Ham" is the fact that so many people are using it today to justify the present racial pattern, just as their forefathers used it to defend slavery. The use of the curse stems, to a considerable degree, from the rather common tendency for men, and particularly for Christian men, to want divine approval for what they do, what they want to do, or what they think it is necessary for them to do. It seems that the more uncertain they are about the validity of their position, the more earnestly they search for something that seems to put God on their side. All of us, at times, are entirely too prone to clothe our sins in the garments of sanctity by an appeal to the Bible.

A careful study of the so-called "curse of Ham" (Gen. 9:25) will reveal that it has no significance for the present racial discussion. Let us notice first of all that the curse, pronounced by Noah, was not upon Ram but upon Canaan, one of the four sons of Ham.

There is not the least suggestion in the record that it was to apply to the other three sons or their descendants: Cush (Ethiopia), Mizraim (Egypt), and Phut or Put. The curse evidently was related to the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel, being in a sense a prophecy that began to be fulfilled in the days of Joshua. There is also rather general agreement that the Canaanites were not black. . . . The Cushites (Ethiopians) were descendants of Cush, a son of Ham and a brother of Canaan.

. . . Even if it could be proved conclusively that the Negroes were included in the curse, would the curse still be resting upon them? Would it be

perpetual? To answer in the affirmative would violate the nature of the God we find revealed in the Bible, particularly in the life and teachings of Jesus, the Son of God.

There may conceivably be social justifications for, or sociological defenses of, segregation in some areas for a period of time, but there is no valid biblical or theological defense for the segregation pattern. Some Christians may consider the present pattern necessary in their communities, but let them and all of us keep segregation, as well as every other aspect of our common life, under the constant judgment of the divine revelation as found in our Scriptures. Only in this way is there any hope for progress toward God's ultimate ideal for us and for our world.

T. B. Maston, *Segregation and Desegregation* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 99-100.

Of One

One Father

There are two major views concerning the meaning of the word "of one" in Paul's statement. One view is that the reference is to God. This would mean that all peoples and nations are from God, that they are equally his creation. The other view, held by most New Testament scholars and to be discussed later, is that the "one" refers to one human source for all the peoples and nations of the world. Williams and Phillips both translate the expression "from one forefather."

Regardless of which view or idea is correct, Paul's sermon stressed the oneness of God and the unity of mankind. The God who created the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. Such a God could not be contained in a temple; neither could he be worshiped or served by the hands of men. He is the one who gives life and all that is necessary to life. It was from that kind of background that Paul said, "And he made of one . . ."

Jesus in referring to God also used the expression “my Father.” He maintained a unique son-father relation to God. He was, and is, the Son of God in a way drastically different from anyone else. In more than one sense he can correctly be spoken of as “the only Son.” You and I, however, legitimately can refer to God as “my Father.” If we are children of his, we can maintain a child-father relation to him. However, God should never be considered “my Father” in a selfish, childish way. We do not have any exclusive right to God. He is no more “my Father” than he is “your Father,” if you have come into his family through faith in Christ. Really, my relation to him as “my Father” will not be most meaningful unless I equally recognize him as “your Father.” If he is “my Father” and “your Father,” then he becomes “our Father,”

There is, however, genuine consolation in times of suffering and sorrow if our relations to our Heavenly Father are on a very personal basis. The deepest suffering is always personal. The last few steps into the garden of sorrow, from the human viewpoint, must be taken alone. What a source of strength and comfort in such times to be able to look up into the face of God and say “my Father.” We can feel underneath the everlasting arms (Deut. 33:27). We can hear the familiar words: “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1); “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9); “Come to me, all who labor and are heavyladen, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). An examination of the life of Jesus will reveal that the expression “my Father” was frequently on his lips in his times of deepest need, such as the Gethsemane experience (Matt. 26:36-56) and in the intimate, personal discussions he had with his disciples in the hours immediately preceding his arrest, trial, and crucifixion.⁶

Jesus not only spoke of God as “the Father” and “my Father” but also as “your Father.” There are nineteen references to “your Father” in Matthew’s Gospel, fifteen of these in the Sermon on the Mount, with all but four of them in chapter 6. The expression “your Father” is found in only one verse in John’s Gospel, but that one time is quite important. It was in the conversation Jesus had with Mary Magdalene after his resurrection. He told her to go to his

brethren and to say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). The God and Father of the resurrected Christ was also their God and Father.

It was in the model prayer, or the so-called Lord's Prayer, that Jesus used the all-inclusive "our Father." Luke's record of the background for the prayer reveals that as Jesus prayed, one of his disciples asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). We wonder if such a request was not a natural result of hearing Jesus pray. Even the most spiritually mature among us do not know how to pray as we should.

We need to learn from Jesus how to pray. We need to comprehend the all-inclusiveness of genuine prayer. There is nothing narrow and selfish about prayer when it is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. One of the chief lessons to learn is to understand the depth and breadth of the expression "our Father." The "our" of the original prayer included Jesus and the disciples. Today it would include all who know Christ as Saviour and Lord, and hence all who know God as Father.

Have we let the Spirit of Christ so live in us and so deepen and expand Our love for men that we can pray understandingly "our Father"? Can we pray "our Father" with a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a Pentecostal? Do we remember when we pray "our Father" that there are people living in the shacks "down by the tracks" and in the mansions on the hill who likewise pray "our Father"? Do we include them in our Christian family circle? Are we big enough and Christian enough to pray "our Father" with the Japanese, the Mexican, the Negro? If I cannot pray "our Father" with these, then I have not fully comprehended him as "my Father."

It might be wise for all of us to remind ourselves that Jesus plainly taught that no man can be right with God and wrong with his fellow man. We see this in the two great commandments: love God supremely and love thy neighbor as thyself. These two belong together. They stand or fall together. We see the same general emphasis in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray,

and particularly in the comment that was made concerning one petition in the prayer. That petition was, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). This is the only petition commented on, and the statement concerning it is as follows: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15).

When comparing his principles with the Old Testament Law and the Jewish interpretation of the Law, Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill;. . .’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire” (Matt. 5:21-22). Even if “brother” is restricted to our spiritual brother he does not have to be of our national or racial group. We should be careful about our attitude toward him and what we call him.

Jesus further adds a searching statement: “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:23-24). The strong implication is that the worshiper’s gift was not acceptable to God until he had made things right with his fellow man. What if next Sunday morning everyone in our church worship service followed literally this admonition? Would the preacher have a congregation left in the pews? And we might add, “Would there be a preacher in the pulpit?”

It should give us some concern that to the sheep and the goats the word was, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it [or “did it not”] to one of the least of these my brethren you did it [or “did it not”] to me” (Matt. 25:40, 45). Surely we do not need to remind ourselves again that the “brethren” are all who have come into the family of God. What is our attitude toward, and our relation to, some of the least of the brethren? To be unbrotherly, particularly in relation to our spiritual brothers, may be “to discriminate more against our brother’s

Creator than against our brother.” Is God pleased if we reject those he has accepted as his children?

Significance of the Principle

As mentioned, the statement that God was no respecter of persons was the opening sentence of Peter’s sermon or of a digest or synopsis of his sermon, in the house of Cornelius. In the presence of Cornelius, with his loved ones and guests Peter stood to proclaim the grace and goodness of God in Christ. The light of God’s truth flooded his soul to a degree that he had not known before. He saw that “God does not accept a man because he is a Jew or reject him because he is a Gentile.”⁷ He saw that there was no class consciousness with God. Class and color lines do not belong in the realm of the Spirit.

This conviction was confirmed further before Peter completed his sermon. As he preached the good news of the gospel to them, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (Acts 10:44). This was the final testimony that God was no respecter of persons. Those who had come with Peter from Joppa “were amazed.” The outpouring of the Spirit was sufficient proof to them that God was impartial.

It seems that the clinching argument by Peter, when he was questioned by some of the Jerusalem brethren about going in to eat with uncircumcised men, was the fact that as he spoke the Holy Spirit fell on those present as he had upon Peter and the others “at the beginning.” He then asked the searching question, “Who was I that I could withstand God?” The record says, “When they heard this they were silenced” (Acts 11:17-18).

Could it be that the movement of the masses around the world in our day is of the Lord? Is it possible that any opposition to their efforts to move upward and to improve their status is really opposition to God?

The fact that Peter was questioned by some of the brethren of the Jerusalem church would indicate that they recognized the significance of the Cornelius experience. Also, their question was one concerning Peter’s violation

of a social custom or taboo. The no-respecter-of-persons principle does not apply exclusively to the spiritual realm. It had tremendous social consequences in Peter's life and will have them in our lives, if it really permeates our souls.

Paul also applies the great principle to human relations in general. The application is found in Galatians 3:28, which has been quoted previously. Williams' translation reads as follows: "There is no room for Jew or Greek, no room for slave or freeman, no room for male or female, for you are all one through union with Christ Jesus."⁸

Notice the background of Galatians 3:28. In verse 26 Paul had said, "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." We come into the family of God through faith. That is true of Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. Such faith puts all on the same level. Following faith comes baptism (v. 27), when believers put on Christ, or clothe themselves with Christ (Williams). This is also true of all who are in Christ. It is said that on the same day that Charles Evans Hughes, who was at that time the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, presented himself for membership in the Calvary Baptist Church of Washington, D. C., a Chinese laundryman came down another aisle to join the church. The pastor is reported to have said, "The ground around the cross is wondrously level." Whether or not this incident literally happened, the principle stated is true.

Do you suppose if Paul were living today that he would apply the nopartiality principle to the great divisions that tend to plague our contemporary society? We believe he would. We believe that he would say to us: "There is neither Russian nor American, there is neither male nor female, there is neither employer nor employee, there is neither white nor Negro, but you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Application of the Principle

Most Christians see clearly that the no-respecter-of-persons principle applies to the spiritual area. They believe that all men are without excuse, that

they have had enough light from God to be responsible to him. This means that all are under condemnation for sin. It is also true that most Christians agree that God has provided one plan for the salvation of all people and that this way of salvation is equally open to all. Not only have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), but it is just as true that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (Rom. 1:16).

Every invitation to salvation in the Old and New Testaments is to all men. Isaiah, “the Prince of Old Testament Prophets,” sounded the universal call:

Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters;
and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and
without price. Isaiah 55:1

Jesus similarly said, “If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37). John, in Revelation, possibly deliberately used the same symbol: “Let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price” (22:17).

There are many other Scriptures which express in different ways the universal invitation—an invitation which proves without any doubt that God is no respecter of persons. It was Jesus who said, “Him who comes to me I will not cast out” (John 6:37). Peter, in his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, quoted the following from the prophet Joel: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21; cf. Rom. 10:13).

Does the no-respecter-of-persons principle apply exclusively to the spiritual realm? There are many Christians who say that it does. They agree that God has only one plan of salvation and that it is open equally to all men of all classes and races. They contend, however, that the principle does not apply to the broader social relations. They say that it is not applicable in any way to contemporary class and racial problems.

But what does a study of Peter's vision, with his interpretation of it and his reaction to it" reveal? His vision plainly convinced him that he "should not call any man common ("vulgar," Williams) or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

What effect did this lesson have on Peter? It caused him as suggested previously, to violate some of the customs, mores, and taboos of his society. He invited the men sent by Cornelius, who were doubtlessly Gentiles, "in to be his guests" (Acts 10:23). He went into the house of Cornelius, which he himself said was unlawful for a Jew to do (Acts 10:28). Some of the members of "the circumcision party" in the Jerusalem church asked him the pointed question, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" (Acts 11:3). It is even possible that Peter acceded to the request of Cornelius and his friends and remained with them "for some days" (Acts 10:48).

The preceding may be disturbing to some Christians of the white race, but let all of us sincerely search for the fullest implications of the no-respecter-of-persons principle and of other great truths that are an integral part of the gospel we preach, teach, and profess to follow. If God is no respecter of persons, if he shows no partiality, our ultimate goal should be the elimination of all partiality, prejudice, and discrimination from our lives. All men should be considered as of infinite worth, created in the image of God, actual or potential children of God, and as members of the human race rather than of some division within that race. These attitudes may represent a long, long step for most of us, but is it not a direction that is plainly revealed by an examination of Peter's vision and of the results in his life of that vision?

The Christians who have achieved the most worthwhile things for God and men have been those who have had visions from God and who have had the faith and courage to strive to make those visions living realities among men. May God grant that we share something of Peter's vision, grasp its deeper meaning, and have the faith in God and the stamina of soul to be obedient to the heavenly vision!

However, many of us will have some criticism and opposition if our vision of God leads us to viewpoints and positions that are contrary to the customs and traditions of our society. Some of the harshest criticism and the most active opposition may come from within the Christian group itself. This at times may be very hard to understand and even more difficult to bear.

While we should have no particular desire to be martyrs, we should not forget that as long as our society and people in general fall below God's standards, there is something wrong if all men speak well of us. Such might be an indication that we are false teachers or prophets (Luke 6:26). We cannot do what we ought to do for the Lord and please everybody, and frequently the "everybody" includes some fellow Christians and church members. In times of criticism may the conviction that God has spoken to us be deep enough that we can say, within our own hearts whether or not we ever say it publicly, "Who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). Let us also be careful about our personal reaction to any criticism or opposition. May we never become embittered. May we never return evil for evil. May the Lord preserve us from a self-righteous, holier-than-thou attitude. Let us never pity ourselves or develop a martyr complex.

The Principle and the Idea of Inferiority

How is the no-respecter-of-persons principle related to the supposed superiority and inferiority of races? The debate regarding the superiority-inferiority doctrine has been brought into sharp focus again in recent years.

Most scientific students of human life and behavior would agree with Montagu that racism, which is the idea of the innate superiority-inferiority of certain races, is man's most dangerous myth.⁹ Soper says that "there is practical unanimity of conviction that races are not inherently superior or inferior."¹⁰ There might be found, after considerable search, some supposed scientific evidence of the superiority-inferiority doctrine.

However, from the Christian perspective, and even from the democratic viewpoint, it makes little difference whether the idea of inherent superiority or inferiority is correct or incorrect. For example, democracies, political and spiritual, are built on the idea of innate human dignity and an essential equality of all. This does not mean necessarily that all are equal in ability; it does mean that they are equally men, are equally members of the group, and are to be treated impartially.

We are not suggesting by the preceding that the Negro is by nature inferior and the white man superior. However, even if a particular race were innately and permanently superior, what would this mean from the perspective of the Christian religion and ethic? The Christian religion says the strong should serve the weak. It is a fundamental Christian principle that privilege and power are never to be used selfishly, that they always involve responsibility. Montagu, speaking as a scientist, says:

Suppose for a moment that significant differences did exist between different peoples which rendered one, in general, superior to the other; a reasonably developed human being would hardly consider such differences sufficient reason for withholding any opportunities for social and cultural development from such groups. On the contrary, he would be the more anxious to provide them with such opportunities. Undeveloped personalities operate in the opposite manner and, creating most of the differences they condemn, proceed to intensify those differences by making it more and more difficult for the groups thus treated to avoid or overcome them.¹¹

Are we “reasonably developed” human beings, or are we “undeveloped personalities” when measured by this standard? More important, are we mature or immature Christians in our relations to those of other races?

T. B. Maston, *The Bible and Race* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), 16-17, 19-21, 27-28, 42-43, 46-49, 50-52.

ECONOMICS

Money, material goods, and the things of creation carry explicit and implicit power. Where many Christians would play down the role of such in life, T. B. Maston, characteristically, addressed the contexts.

Economic concerns found fertile soil in his thinking, perhaps partially because he was reared in poverty. That upbringing caused Maston to be more attentive to the economically disadvantaged. He practiced a simple lifestyle throughout his life, wearing clothes until, and after, they were worn out. He was an avid gardener until late in life – the products of the garden made a direct route to the dining table in the Maston home. This theme of economic stewardship can be found in his writings.

These expressions built from Maston's sense that money was not evil in and of itself. Rather, how we use or abuse money and the power which follows is the consideration. For Maston, what we do for a living and how we spend money fall under an accountability of the Gospel and our places in the work of the Kingdom.

The following readings reflect this balanced approach to life. The reader will first find shorter articles that encapsulate Maston's thoughts on various topics regarding economics. Two pieces finish up the chapter, excerpts from *The Conscience of a Christian* and *The Christian in the Modern World*.

READINGS

A Hierarchy of Prestige

There are many trends among Southern Baptists that should encourage us. There are also others that should concern us.

Some of the latter trends are longstanding; others have arisen recently. Some are more or less inevitable; others are not inevitable and can be reversed.

Some are dangerous within themselves; others are dangerous primarily because of their possible side effects.

One of the inevitable trends is vertical mobility. Horizontal mobility, the movement from rural to urban areas and from one section of the country to the other, creates some problems.

Vertical mobility, however, is potentially far more dangerous. It is movement up or down the economic, educational and/or cultural ladder. Vertical mobility should be watched by Southern Baptists for some of its side effects which are not inevitable.

Two or three generations ago Southern Baptists were a working people's movement. We were limited in education, predominantly poor and had little prestige or standing in the world.

Now we have moved up. We have within our fellowship an increasing number of men and women with the highest academic degrees. Our churches, in contrast to the past, have members with wealth. Furthermore, some of our churches, agencies and institutions have budgets in the millions of dollars. They have become "big business."

Formally we had relatively few political leaders in our ranks. Today they are prominent politicians who are Southern Baptists.

Let us repeat that vertical mobility or movement upward seems to be inevitable. It happened previously to Methodists, Presbyterians and others. It is in the process of happening to some Pentecostal groups.

One danger of vertical mobility to Southern Baptists is that we will tend to move away from the common people. The latter is not inevitable. It will be unfortunate if it happens. The common people have provided much of the strength for Southern Baptists in years past.

There seems to be a tendency in some Baptist circles to establish or recognize a hierarchy of prestige. Churches with wealth, with prominent business and professional men and women in their membership are "looked up to." The staff members of such churches are too frequently considered more

successful than equally endowed and qualified men and women who serve in less prestigious places.

There is also some evidence, good or bad, that some churches as they move up the cultural ladder tend to be increasingly formal in their worship services. Some of our people feel that many of these churches lack the warmth and vitality of the churches of former generations and that this is a threat to Southern Baptists.

T. B. Maston, "Trends to Watch – A Hierarchy of Prestige," *Baptist Standard*, April 16, 1975, 19.

Materialistic Spirit Threatens Southern Baptists

You may disagree with some things in this article. It is hoped, however, that you will not brush it aside until you have given it careful consideration. My judgment is that there are some trends that if not kept under control, will threaten the distinctive contribution of our denomination to the work of Christ in the world.

Menace of Materialism

As Southern Baptists we have been caught up too largely by the affluent society that surrounds us. Pride in and love for material things have become entirely too prevalent in our lives.

The same tends to be true of many of our churches. They should guard against worldly pride in buildings, budgets, number of additions and size and quality of membership.

The magnifying of some of these things can be a handicap rather than an asset in reaching people who need the ministry of our churches.

Also, our denominational agencies, institutions and boards need to guard against the infiltration of the materialistic spirit with its emphasis on things of secondary importance.

The Numbers Game

Closely akin to the threat of the materialistic spirit is the danger of overemphasizing numbers. Do not misunderstand, there is a place for a proper emphasis on numbers. Our churches cannot do anything for people unless we reach them.

There is a danger, however, when numbers are overemphasized and become too largely the ultimate measure of success. For example, because of changes in the community a church may decline in membership and in financial support. And yet that church, by its ministry to its changing community may correctly be considered an effective and successful church. On the other hand, the biggest and fastest growing churches are not necessarily the most effective for the Lord.

There is too much “playing up” in denominational meetings and state denominational papers of our “biggest” churches, those with the most baptisms, the largest budgets and special offerings, etc. Churches that lead in one or more of these categories may not be a great success in ministering to the needs of their members of the communities.

A board, such as the Foreign Mission Board, may magnify too much the number of new appointees, etc. What will happen when the board will have fewer missionaries than the year before? Will that necessarily be a sign of failure? I do not believe so.

Watch the “numbers game” or it can become closely akin to the “numbers racket.”

Neglect Of The Poor

Southern Baptists are becoming increasing a middle-and-upper-class movement. The movement upward economically, educationally, and politically seems to be inevitable, but the movement away from the poor is not inevitable.

However, too many of our local churches tend to neglect “God’s little ones.” and for many of those churches those little ones are close by the church

building. Also, we may discover that some of the neglected “little ones” are really among God’s “big ones.”

We should remember one proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah was that He preached the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18; 7:22; cf. Isaiah 61:1-12).

Furthermore, we should not forget that when the “Son of man” comes in judgment He will say to those on His right hand and on His left hand, “Inasmuch as ye have done it (done not) unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it (done it not) unto me” (Matthew 25:40, 45).

He identified Himself with the little ones, even the least of them. What would be His word to us as individual Christians and churches?

These are only three of many trends among Southern Baptists that should concern us. There are others of comparable significance. Also, please understand that I recognize that there are many wholesome, encouraging trends among Southern Baptists.

T. B. Maston, “Materialistic Spirit Threatens Southern Baptists,” *Baptist Standard*, May 14, 1980, 12-13.

Rest in the Lord Emphasized

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him
(Ps. 37:7, KJV).

Will you not agree that many of us who are God’s children have never learned to rest in the Lord? Too many of us cannot or do not wait patiently for Him.

Let me share with you the picture I see when I read or repeat the words. “Rest in the Lord.” I see a person stretched out on his back on a comfortable bed relaxing or resting.

It has been my habit for years to rest after the noon meal. In years past it was a very limited time – 15 to 30 minutes.

When I was teaching there were times when I came home at noon tense and tired. After lunch I would stretch out on the bed flat on my back. Someone taught me the art of relaxing, and it is an art. Separating my feet a few inches, putting my hands and arms down by my sides, I could feel my body relaxing. In a matter of seconds, not more than a minute or two, I was sound asleep. After a few minutes I could get up rested, relaxed and ready to go again.

So it can be if we will cultivate the art of resting in the Lord. When one rests on the bed he lets go – he trusts the bed to hold him up. If we want the refreshment that comes from resting in the Lord we must trust Him and let go in Him. If we do, we can feel underneath the everlasting arms.

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – Rest in the Lord Emphasized,” *Baptist Standard*, February 16, 1972, 19.

Institutional Stewardship

There has been a great deal of emphasis on the place of stewardship in the life of the individual child of God. There is needed a comparable emphasis on institutional stewardship.

Christians should be good stewards of things material, which will be the only aspect of stewardship discussed in this article. Institutions and agencies that Christian stewards help to support with their tithes and offerings should also be good stewards. This includes the local church and every denominational agency or institution.

God's Total Ownership

We preach and teach that all of a Christian's possessions belong to God and are to be used in ways that will honor Him. We also believe that the tithes and offerings a Christian gives to his church are uniquely holy.

Those tithes and offerings do not lose their holiness or sacredness when they are pooled with the gifts of others in the church treasury. They have been or should have been dedicated to God and are to be treated as a sacred trust.

This means that church treasurers, finance committees, deacons, and church members in general should have a deep sense of responsibility to God for the way the money is used. Proper consideration should also be given to the work of the Lord outside of the local church.

It is just as tragic for a church to be selfish as it is for an individual Christian.

Institutional stewardship reaches beyond the local church. The money that goes from the church to the association, the state convention, or to support our work on national and world levels is still “holy unto our God.”

Some of that money has been given sacrificially. We hope that all of it was given with a prayer that it might be used to promote Christ’s cause in the world.

Sense of Sacred Stewardship

The preceding means that anyone who in any way determines the distribution and use of that money should have a sense of sacred stewardship. For example, shame on anyone or any group that builds more elaborately than needed. We should have attractive and efficient facilities, but it is wrong use of God’s money to build to impress. This applied to local churches as well as to denominational institutions.

Permit a special word to church and denominational employees. We should have a double sense or stewardship responsibility. Like any other child of God we should feel accountable to Him for the faithful stewardship of our total income and should cheerfully give tithes and offerings to support the work of our church and denomination.

We should also have a unique sense of stewardship for the support we receive from the tithes and offerings of others. We should have a sense of

responsibility, first of all to God but also to the people who provide the income for us and our families.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Institutional Stewardship," *Baptist Standard*, August 13, 1969, 19.

Poor: Past and Present

I grew up in a home of poverty. My father was in turn a farm laborer, a section hand on a railroad, and a sharecropper, although we were not acquainted with the term "sharecropper."

We were poor but my dad, typical of an East Tennessee hillbilly, was radically independent. He believed that a man should stand on his own feet and work out his own problems. He would not have thought of accepting aid from anyone or from any agency.

He and Mother planted in our minds the idea that poverty did not have to be a permanent handicap. They inspired us to believe that we could move up and out of it. They also insisted that while we did not have much we would be good stewards of what we had. The tithe box sat on the mantle above the fireplace. Also, Mother frequently said: "We may not have much, but we can keep what we have clean." And she did.

Like some of you, my experience has made it difficult for me to understand today's poor. Some of us need to recognize that there are some important differences in the poor of the past and the present.

When Dad was a section hand we lived in a small town. It was easy then for boys who wanted to work to find employment. I started when I was ten years old working before and after school, on Saturday, and during the summer months. From that time on I paid for my own clothes. Also, we had a big garden that provided more than enough vegetables for the family.

When we became sharecroppers, we had a rent-free house in which to live. We not only had a garden but also chickens, hogs, and a couple of cows. We

had much of our living from the farm. Mother also sold eggs, milk, and butter. We did not always have a balanced diet, but we had enough to eat most of the time.

In contrast, many of the poor in the contemporary period are crowded into the ghettos of our larger cities. Rent has to be paid. All the food for the family has to be brought in from the outside. Frequently the father does not have the skills to compete in an increasingly technical society. If he has work, his income is inadequate to meet the mounting costs of housing, clothing, and feeding a family in an urban area.

Furthermore, relatively few even of the teen-age children can find any type of employment. Many of them develop an attitude of hopelessness. They see little if any chance for them to improve their status. Poverty tends to become a way of life for them and in turn for their children.

Most of the contemporary poor have grown up in a time when more and more people have looked to the government to solve their problems. This has not only been true of the poor, it has tended to be true of the farmers, laborers, businessmen, and people in general. In our complex society this dependence may be more or less necessary, but it has weakened the desire and the determination of many people to do what they can to solve their own problems.

The preceding statement should not be interpreted as blaming the poor for their situation. Rather, it is an attempt to point out that the poor of the present, to a considerable degree, are victims of the system.

T. B. Maston, *The Conscience of a Christian* (Waco: Word, 1971), 122-123.

The Christian and Economic Life

The past century might properly be called the century of economic man. Practically every phase of life has been subordinated to economic interests. These interests have even threatened to overshadow the spiritual and to make

the latter subservient to the former. It seems that organized Christianity must conquer the economic order or be conquered by it.

Christians can have a worthy part in the conquest of the economic if they will apply Christian ideals to their own economic contacts, will evaluate critically from the Christian viewpoint all economic systems, and will cooperate with others who are seeking to make economic relations conform to Christian standards. It is admitted that this is a big program and beyond any hope of immediate attainment, but the Christian program is big and its goals are not easily attained. We shall be judged not by the goals we have achieved but by the effort we have made and by the extent of our actual as compared to our potential reach toward the higher values of life.

Preliminary Propositions

The following propositions or assumptions furnish the background for much of the material in this chapter: No one is a fully developed Christian until he has applied Christian principles to every area of his life.

The Christian is to use all of his contacts with others for the glory of God and the promotion of the cause of Christ.

Modern economic life is in need of the Christian spirit. It is dominated too largely by a pagan, grasping, jungle philosophy of life.

The only hope for abiding improvement is an increasing number of individuals saturated with Christian ideals who will honestly seek to apply those ideals to economic life and relationships.

Christianity should not be identified with any particular economic system. No economic order is completely Christian, although certain Christian values are protected and promoted more by one system than by another.

The Christian method for social reconstruction is the comparatively slow but safer process of development rather than revolution.

In the economic realm, as in other areas of reconstruction, Christian leaders are to restrict themselves to general patterns and major goals. We shall

make a mistake if we try to fill in the details of the picture or to determine all the methods by which the goals are to be achieved. Such details should be left to economic leaders and social scientists.

The Friends of Jesus

Some have sought to claim Jesus as a friend of a particular economic class. But Jesus was a friend of man. He was no respecter of persons. Some of his friends were well-to-do while he mingled freely with the common people who heard him gladly. Jesus was attracted to men not by their money but by their spiritual need. He was interested in men not because of what they had but rather because of what they might become through the divine touch. Are we friends to all – rich and poor?

The Christian and His Money

4. The Christian Conception of Stewardship

This discussion of the Christian and his money has presented the subject in the order in which we usually consider it – giving, using, and making money. But this approach is fundamentally wrong. Christian stewardship starts with the individual. Our basic stewardship is the stewardship of self. We belong to God. We are his by creation and, as Christians, by redemption. If we belong to him then all that we are and have belongs to him.

If we will let this larger conception of stewardship grip our souls, the stewardship of money will naturally follow. Tithing will fit into the general picture and will be a joyous spiritual experience. On the other hand, if we start with tithing, we will tend to cultivate a more or less legalistic, materialistic conception of a restricted stewardship that will largely lack in spontaneity and genuine joy.

Then it is also wise for us to remember that we are stewards of the gospel or the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). Being stewards of the gospel which has brought salvation to our own lives means that we should share this

gospel with others. Our first responsibility is to share it personally with those about us who are unsaved. But we should help to carry it to those also in the remotest comers of our own and other lands. This we can do by sending missionaries and Christian workers as our representatives, and through prayer and the giving of our money we can become fellow laborers with them in the Lord. This view of stewardship will invest giving with an enthusiasm and a meaning that it otherwise lacks. Our money dedicated to the spread of the gospel can make the material serve the spiritual.

There is at least one more idea that should be included in this broader conception of Christian stewardship. Not only is the individual a steward of himself and all that he has but social groups also have a stewardship responsibility. This is true of every social unit – the family, the church, nations, and civilizations. Those that are faithful will be blessed. Those that are unfaithful may lose their opportunities. Churches and denominational units such as associations and conventions are stewards not only of their spiritual opportunities but also of the moneys that come into their treasuries.

The Christian and The Economic System

Seeking to apply Christian ideals to every relationship of life means that the Christian bears some responsibility for the economic system in its various contexts of which he is a part.

I. The Christian Should Be Acquainted with the Economic System

Christians cannot properly sense their responsibility for the economic system or understand how they can build Christian ideals into the system unless they have some knowledge of the history and nature of the system itself. Christians of the Western world should be well informed about capitalism.

Modern capitalism was born in the middle ages in the period when men's minds and souls were being freed. It was a part, or at least a result of, the general movement that gave birth to the democratic trend in the political

realm and to the Protestant Reformation in the field of religion. Modern capitalism displaced the old feudal system.

Starting on a comparatively small scale as commercial capitalism, it expanded into a mighty tidal wave with the coming of the industrial revolution. In the contemporary period, capitalistic enterprises have increased in size and industrial relations have been largely impersonalized.

Although capitalism has changed considerably through the years, its fundamental principles or assumptions have remained largely the same. It believes in the private ownership and control of the basic means of production, distribution, and credit. Business is operated for profit. It is assumed that basic economic laws will so operate that there will be no conflict between the search for profits and the social good. It believes that governments should exercise a minimum of supervision and control over economic processes.

If we are to be intelligent Christian citizens, we must understand that capitalism is being challenged today from within and from without. An increasing number of farsighted business and industrial leaders are aware of the weaknesses and shortcomings of contemporary capitalism and are seeking to remedy them. They are convinced, as is true of many Christian leaders, that the best friends of the capitalistic system are those who are conscious of and who have the courage to point out the weaknesses and the flaws of the system. On the other hand, they believe that the worst enemies of the system are those who defend it without qualification. Capitalism is also being challenged by competing movements. These movements vary a great deal in their methods and to a considerable extent in their programs, but the ultimate effects on the present system would be largely the same. They seek to displace capitalism.

These competing movements differ considerably in the means they would use to displace the capitalistic system and to gain and to maintain control of economic life and processes. Communism would use force or "direct action" if necessary to gain control and to establish the communistic program. Until a classless society became a reality, the control would be exercised by a proletariat

dictatorship. This dictatorship would use the state as an instrument to attain its goals.

On the other hand, most socialists would limit themselves to the use of the peaceful methods of education and political action. They would seek to take over the present system by electing their representatives to public office and then through the orderly procedure of legal action transfer gradually to a socialistic system. Their program of education would be used to cultivate and to maintain favorable public opinion. They insist that the socialistic system would be operated in the interest of the common good.

2. The Christian Should Properly Evaluate the Economic System

The Christian should seek to evaluate objectively from the Christian viewpoint the existing system and the movements that would displace or fundamentally change it. Whatever his relation is to the system and whatever may be his ideas about any particular economic movement, he should seek to be fair and impartial.

The Christian should recognize the important contributions the capitalistic system has made to our way of life. Those countries that have been most definitely capitalistic have had the highest standards of living. Capitalism has proved its efficiency as a productive system. The capitalistic nations have been leaders in the modern missionary movement. Those who have prospered under the present system have contributed liberally to the building of educational, scientific, and benevolent institutions and agencies. There seems to be some character-building value to a certain amount of private ownership of property and to the competitive struggle which characterizes the capitalistic system.

But we should not close our eyes to the evident weaknesses and failures of the present system. Capitalism is particularly strong as a productive system. It has been weak in the area of distribution. It produces or can produce enough goods to provide for the needs of all people, but we have not learned

completely how to operate the system so that each person can acquire all that he needs. Also, in many areas there is too much economic power in the hands of a comparatively few people. There has been evidence of the dominance of political life and leaders by economic interests. A fair profit is legitimate, but a desire for material gain, when it becomes dominant, must be considered as being unchristian. The primary motive in business and in individual living should be service to all.

In the same way we should attempt to evaluate the co-operative movement, socialism, communism, and other competing movements. We should recognize that they all have one weakness in common with the capitalistic system: they are materialistic in their approach to the problems of life. They do not reach and cannot solve the basic problem of the economic realm – a selfish, grasping, materialistic spirit.

T. B. Maston, *The Christian in the Modern World* (Nashville: Convention, 1952), 68-81.

CITIZENSHIP

Christians have a duty to fulfill their obligations to the state, and the state, likewise, has a duty to provide Christians an environment in which they are able to practice their faith. Maston believed that in spite of a continuous tension between the church and the state, the two institutions complement each other in an astounding fashion. The contributions of the church and the state, however, are much greater when consistent separation is maintained between the two. Maston, therefore, stringently believed in the separation of church and state.

The first excerpt, from the book *The Christian in the Modern World*, looks at Maston's basic beliefs regarding the Christian and the state. Next is a longer section from *The Christian, The Church, and Contemporary Problems*, in which Maston discusses a number of issues, including threats to religious liberty and the ideology of democracy. Then, the reader will find selections from *The Conscience of a Christian*. Finally, there are a number of shorter articles that engage a wide array of topics regarding citizenship, from civil disobedience to taxation.

READINGS

The Christian and the State

The Christian is a citizen of two worlds – this world and the world to come. His citizenship in this world involves many relationships. He belongs to a church, a family, a particular economic class, and a distinctive racial group. He is also a citizen of the state. Even though he may want to get away from some of these relationships, he cannot wholly ignore them or evade the responsibilities they involve as long as he lives in this world. But the intelligent, sincere Christian will not want to escape any of the obligations of life. Rather,

he will earnestly desire to do what he can to make all phases of his life Christian.

There is no area of life in greater need of the application of the Christian spirit and ideal than the field of politics. Most of the more acute world problems of the contemporary period are either primarily or secondarily political in their nature. The state, or government as such, is involved directly or indirectly in practically all of these problems. It is important for the Christian to think through the place of the state in organized society, the proper relationship of the church and the state, and the extent and the limitations of his responsibility to the state.

I. The Christian Conception of the State

There are many competing and conflicting conceptions concerning the sources, the purposes, and the limitations of the state. One's viewpoint concerning these and related matters will determine considerably his attitude toward and his relation to his government.

1. The Sources of the State

The state arose in response to the needs of men. Men have social natures that demand association with others. They differ, however, in native abilities and in their capacity for self-discipline and self-control. Some orderly arrangement of their relations to one another and some equitable distribution of responsibilities seem to be required.

Also men, by nature, are sinful and selfish. Some external authority to restrain the evil is necessary if men are to have a society with fairness and justice for all. This does not mean that constituted authority is the result of sin. It does mean that, since men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, some kind of government is necessary and the government has some functions to perform that otherwise would not be so essential.

Since man is a creation of God, it is correct to say that God is the ultimate source of government among men. The state is a part of God's plan for man. Just as the home was instituted by God and the church was founded by Christ, so "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).

2. The Purposes of the State

The preamble of the Constitution of the United States states the purpose of the founding of our republic:

In order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Here we find such significant words as "justice," "tranquility" (or peace), "general welfare," and "liberty." In various ways and to different degrees, all of these functions of the state have been emphasized by political philosophers and statesmen. All of them deserve some place in any orderly government. The relative importance attached to each function by a government will determine the type of state we will have. For example in a democracy, the major emphasis will be on the maximum amount of liberty and justice for the people.

In recent years, the tendency has been for the state to expand its functions and for it to give an increasing place to the promotion of the economic security of its citizens. Significantly, one of the famous four freedoms of President Roosevelt was freedom from want. Many people contend that governments cannot provide for the security of their people and at the same time protect their liberties. Time alone will reveal whether these two important functions can be kept in proper balance.

3. The Limitations of the State

We need to remember that the government, whether it is that of a village, a city, a county, or a nation is only one phase of the total life of the community. The state is merely one organization or institution among many. Some straight thinking concerning the limitations of the state may help to save us from a dominating, totalitarian regime. We need to remember that the state is no more important nor basic than the home and the church. A happy social order is one where these fundamental social institutions are rightly related to one another, each restricting itself to its proper place and each fulfilling effectively its distinctive functions.

God's relation to the individual and to the universe sets definite limits on the state and its leaders. "Unconditional devotion, or worship; is for God alone; not for any human group, institution, or community."¹² In the realm of the Christian conscience, God's demands are supreme. Peter gave the classic answer to any conflict between the commands of men and God's will when he said for himself and the other apostles, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29; cf. Acts 4:19).

In the well-known D. C. Macintosh case,¹³ Justice Charles E. Hughes, in his dissent from a majority decision in the United States Supreme Court, said:

In the forum of conscience, duty to a moral power higher than the state has always been maintained. . . . The essence of religion is belief in a relation to God involving duties superior to those arising from any human relation.¹⁴

The source for the authority of the state places limitations upon the state. The state is derived from God. This means that the state and those in authority are responsible to God. Also, it is a part of the democratic concept that God has seen fit to mediate some of that authority to the people and hence through the people to the state. Thus governments properly should have a twofold sense of responsibility – to God and to the people.

II. The Christian's Responsibility to the State

Each Christian, particularly the one living under a democratic government, should recognize the opportunities he has of promoting the cause of Christ through the proper use of his citizenship responsibilities and rights.

1. The Christian Should Pay His Taxes

This is one responsibility clearly enjoined on every Christian by the teachings of the New Testament. Jesus plainly taught this, and possibly this is all he intended to teach when he said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21). Paul gave a similar emphasis (Rom. 13:7). If these early Christians were to pay taxes to Rome, a totalitarian, unfriendly power, how much more should we pay our taxes when we live in a democratic, friendly state. Furthermore, the Christian should pay his taxes promptly and cheerfully, never seeking to evade any tax responsibility.

2. The Christian Should Obey the Laws of the State

Again the New Testament clearly places this responsibility upon Christians. Paul says, "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: . . . he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment" (Rom. 13:1-2). This subjection was not to be just because of fear but "for conscience sake" or "as a matter of principle" (Rom. 13:5 Goodspeed).

Peter (1 Peter 2:13-17) likewise says that we are to be subject to every ordinance of man, whether to the king or unto governors appointed by him. This is to be done "for the Lord's sake," more than likely meaning "for the sake of his cause." Peter further says that such obedience will silence "the ignorance of foolish men" ("silence the ignorant charges of foolish men" – Goodspeed). Any other attitude by the followers of Christ would have brought the charge against them that they were rebellious.

The most law-abiding citizens of the state, particularly of one that provides freedom for its people and protects them in that freedom, should be the Christians. We should seek to be intelligent concerning the laws of the land, and the purposes they have been established to serve. We should always conform to the basic spirit and purpose of the law.

3. The Christian Should Pray for Those in Authority

Writing to Timothy, a younger preacher and a son in the ministry, Paul said, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place." He then gives the reason why we should pray for those that rule over us: "that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life," and he says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4). In our private and public praying we should pray for the President of the United States, for the governor of our state, and for the other officials of our county, state and nation. Prayer for these should become a fixed habit of our lives and should not depend upon whether or not we agree with their politics.

III. The Christian and Politics

If the democratic way of life is to be preserved, our democracies must have citizens with a high level of general and political intelligence. There also must be a proper balancing of our emphasis upon the state's responsibility to its citizens and their responsibility to the state.

1. The Christian Should Participate in Politics

There seems to be on the part of many Christians an aversion to any contact with political life. They tend to talk about the corruptness of politics but to do nothing to help make the situation better. This bad citizenship of

good people is one of the biggest threats to our democratic way of life. Every Christian should have a keen sense of responsibility for political conditions.

When the opportunity comes to vote, he should use his ballot, recognizing that it is a citizenship and a Christian responsibility. He should seek to vote intelligently and to express through the ballot his Christian convictions. He should maintain his independence of machine or party control. It is only through a morally independent vote that the Christian conscience can give an effective, tangible expression to Christian convictions.

Each Christian will have to determine for himself how far he can go in active participation in political campaigns. All who do participate publicly should restrict themselves to principles and programs, guarding against dealing in personalities. Preachers and other church leaders will need to be particularly careful about any public discussion of political issues. They should be sure that fundamental moral principles are involved.

2. The Christian Should Apply Christian Principles to Politics

The Christian should do what he can to carry over the Christian spirit into all phases of political life. This means that he will recognize his voting privilege as a phase of his Christian stewardship. He will understand that the state and those who are officers of the state may be and should be instrumental in the promotion of the kingdom of God among men. And although it is much more difficult for a group to apply the Christian ethic than for the individual, he will remember that the ultimate ideal should be the broadest and fullest application of Christian principles to all phases of political life – local, national, and even international.

The Christian also needs to understand that the political problems that are factors in the contemporary crisis in our nation and in our world are basically spiritual in their nature. A final solution for even the political problems involves a return to a vital type of religious experience with an honest attempt

to apply consistently Christian standards to the relations within and between nations.

3. The Christian Should Recognize Politics as a Christian Vocation

The Christian correctly may believe that there is something unique about God's call to vocational religious service, but he should recognize that any honorable work may become a sacred calling. This will be true if one is conscious that it is God's will for his life and that God is a partner with him in his work. Whatever is the plan of God for the Christian, he should recognize it as God's offer of partnership with him in the building of a Christian world. Through his calling, the Christian is to glorify and to promote his cause in the world.

There are few, if any, fields that provide greater opportunities than politics to carry the Christian ideal into the broader social relationships of life. Think of what would happen if the majority of those in our legislative halls, the courts of justice, and in the executive branches of our state and national governments were Christians who were seriously attempting to apply Christian principles to the problems of state. We should thank God for any such Christians who are now in places real political influence.

We are in need of additional Christian statesmen who have sufficient spiritual reserve and moral courage to stand for the thing that is right, regardless of the strength of the forces that oppose them. We can help to have more of that kind by letting them know that we appreciate what they are doing for our nation and for the cause of Christ. We should also encourage some of our best men to dedicate themselves to Christian service through political life.

VI. Contemporary Problems Concerning the State

There have been many problems through the centuries concerning the state, the Christian's relation to the state and the relation of church and state. Some of these problems are particularly acute in the contemporary period.

1. Problems Related to the Christian Conscience

When the Christian really believes that the will of God is the source of authority for him in every area of life, he is taking a position that may lead to serious conflicts with the state. The possibility of conflict is particularly acute for those Christians who have been nurtured in the Protestant traditions of justification by faith and the priesthood of all believers. For them, the arbitrator of right and wrong in their lives is neither the state nor the church but the will of God as interpreted and applied by their own enlightened Christian conscience. No institutional mediator is needed.

The right of conscience becomes an especially prevalent problem in an era when there is an expanding state. As the state expands its functions for its people, it tends also to increase its controls over its people.

2. Problems Related to Religious Freedom

The problems in this area are closely related to those above. Freedom of religion or the fullest religious liberty includes, from the individual's viewpoint, freedom of conscience. Some of the problems, however, that we have in this area grow out of differing conceptions of what is meant by freedom.

What Perry says of freedom or liberty in general is true of religious freedom: "Every freedom or liberty has its negative and its positive sides. There is liberty 'from' and there is a liberty 'to' and 'for.'" ¹⁵ The absence of external control and persecution would be the negative side of religious freedom, while the protection of the rights of freedom of worship and the liberty to teach and to propagate one's faith would be the positive phases of that freedom.

VII. Conclusion: Continuing Contributions and Problems

In spite of an almost continuous tension between the church and the state, these two basic human institutions supplement and contribute to each other in marvelous ways. The more consistently separation is maintained, the greater is

the contribution to each other. This is particularly true of the church's contribution to the state.

The state's chief function in relation to the church is to provide an atmosphere in which the church can fulfil effectively its distinctive functions. The church can and should make many contributions to the state. It provides for the state its most law-abiding citizens. If it is vital in its program, it gives to the state a conscience. At least the message of the church reminds the state of its stewardship – it is responsible not only to the people but also to God.

In an era when the state is tending to expand its functions, the problems of church-state relations may become even more acute. It is also possible that as the world moves toward some type of world government there may have to be a re-thinking and at least a re-emphasis on the proper relation of organized religion and the powers that be. To live effectively in the modern world, a Christian must have a world vision and must keep alert to world movements both within the field of religion and in the realm of politics.

T. B. Maston, *The Christian in the Modern World* (Nashville: Convention, 1952), 86-94, 99-100, 102-103.

Law, Order, and Morality

It may be assumed that the word “law” refers primarily to human law – the laws of towns, cities, counties, states and the nation. However, there are various classifications of laws, such as Thomas Aquinas' threefold division of natural law, human law, and divine law. The natural law and the divine law¹⁶ when properly understood have considerable significance for human relations. This is true, although some Protestant theologians have little if any place in their thought for the natural law.

A discussion of the natural law and the divine law, along with other concepts of the law, might be of considerable interest. However, we will restrict our discussion, in the main, to the human law. While some portions of this

study may seem to be rather theoretical, it is hoped that its relevance throughout to the contemporary racial Situation will be apparent.

Background Convictions

There are a number of convictions that provide the background for the remainder of this chapter.

1. Our world is in the midst of the most serious crisis or revolution it has known since the days of the Renaissance and Reformation. The stirring among the underprivileged in the South and throughout our nation cannot be understood apart from this revolution which is characterized by a restless movement of the masses of the world. This movement, in turn, is both a result of and an important factor in the crisis or revolution.
2. The expanding welfare state, with its totalitarian trends even in countries with a democratic tradition, seems to be an inevitable expression and product of the contemporary age. Such a state, with its New Deal, Fair Deal, and the Great Society, is inevitably concerned for the welfare of all the people. In other words, an expanding state more or less naturally has an expanding concern.
3. The law cannot remain static. It must be living and dynamic, particularly if it is to meet the needs of a changing society. It cannot remain static in its formulation, its interpretation, or its application. This means, among other things, that legislators and judges on local, state, and national levels should not only be thoroughly acquainted with history, they also need to be well grounded in sociology, psychology, and other social sciences. Such sciences have a proper place in the formulation and interpretation of the law, including the Constitution of the United States.

4. Democratic institutions and the democratic way of life cannot be preserved without a respect for law and for those who make, interpret, and enforce the laws. Extremists at both ends of the present racial struggle have contributed, in the contemporary period, to a rather prevalent contempt for law and for public officials in general.
5. The individual person is of supreme worth or value in our American way of life and in the way of the West. This means that laws and institutions exist primarily as instruments to serve the individual and not as ends to be served by him. This is a basic difference in the way of the West and communism and political totalitarianism in general.
6. Although men are unequal in many ways, they are equal in all that makes them men. They stand equal before God and are to be treated as equals by the law. Their equality and inequality have been compared to triangles. Triangles may be made of different materials or may be of many different shapes, but there are certain common characteristics of all triangles. These common characteristics are three sides with the combined length of any two sides longer than the third side and with the three inner angles totaling one hundred and eighty degrees.
7. The individual person finds his fulfillment in a community of persons. There is no person without other persons.
8. Rights and responsibilities belong both to the individual person and to the community of persons. These two – rights and responsibilities – must be kept in proper balance for a healthy individual person and, for a healthy community of persons, whether family, neighborhood, city, or state.
9. Because of the preceding, the law, along with those who interpret it and enforce it, should seek to protect and promote the well-being of the individual person but at the same time seek to promote the common good.

These two go together. The individual person is served when the common good is promoted, and the good of society is dependent upon the well-being of individual persons.

We shall return to and expand one or two of these background convictions while the others will not be referred to again.

Law and Morality

Law and morality, in a sense and to a degree, belong together. An understanding of their close relation along with their distinctive approaches and emphases has considerable significance for an accurate appraisal of the contemporary racial situation.

One's viewpoint concerning the relation of law and morality will be determined to some degree by his perspective concerning the nature of the state. Particularly important is whether one considers the state a natural and good institution (Aristotle, Aquinas, the Roman Catholic Church), or an institution necessitated and permeated by sin – the position of Augustine and most Protestant theologians of the past. The more one is oriented toward the thought of Aquinas, the more closely he will relate human law and the divine law, and also the more closely he will relate law and morality.

Law and morality may be merely different “manifestations of the same thing,”¹⁷ but at least there are noticeable differences. For example, they have in common a sense of responsibility, but they differ in the motive appealed to and the sanctions or punishment imposed for violation. In the area of law the punishment is primarily physical – loss of property, of liberty, and as the last resort, loss of life. The punishment is imposed from without. “The law is not normally concerned with interior attitudes but with external conduct.”¹⁸ In contrast, in the realm of morality the appeal and the punishment is primarily inner. Also, in the area of morality, the moral value of actions is determined primarily, although not exclusively, by the motives of the actor. Furthermore,

acts to be moral must be voluntary; they must be free from outer compulsion. This freedom of man as a moral person to respond responsibly and not through compulsion, as Tillich says, is man's "greatness but also his danger."¹⁹ Tillich also suggests that "a moral act is not an act in obedience to an external law, human or divine. It is the inner law of our true being, of our essential or created nature, which demands that we actualize what follows from it."²⁰ Some of us would have preferred for Tillich to have left out the reference to the divine law. After all, the divine law is in harmony with and an expression of our essential nature.

The same author also says that "the moral imperative is the demand to become actually what one is essentially and therefore potentially." He defines the moral act as one "in which an individual self establishes itself as a person."²¹ I believe we may properly go beyond what Tillich says and say also that the moral act is one in which one assists another individual self to become a person.

An additional difference between law and morality is in content or scope. Law is concerned almost exclusively with those standards of behavior that are considered essential for the existence of the community. It is really minimal in its requirements. Morality has no such limits. It calls for conformity to an ideal. It is concerned with standards or patterns of conduct that are considered good or right. Really, morality implies a dualism – right or wrong, good and evil. This dualism, in turn, indicates, as Berdyaev says, "that man is a wounded creature,"²² and that distinguishing between good and evil is a painful process for him.

One reason for this painful process is the tension between what is and what ought to be. This tension is seen not only within morality, but it is also seen within the law and between the law and morality. For example, the idea of what is good for the individual and for society changes from generation to generation. This is even true when one moves over into the area of the theoretical aspects of the Christian ethic. Whether the norms change or not,

man's. comprehension of those norms is never complete or final. If the latter is correct in the more theoretical area, it is just as true in the applied or practical areas. Actually, morality, and particularly the Christian ethic, is not fulfilling its mission unless it creates some tension between what is and what ought to be. And let it be repeated over and over again that there is no progress toward the ideal in our individual lives or in our society without tension.

The developmental idea of necessity is and must be prominent in both law and morality. It was Justice Holmes who said that "the law embodies the story of a nation's development," while Roscoe Pound's frequently quoted statement is: "Law must be stable and yet it cannot stand still." Pound also said that in the legal area we must make room for what he calls "the received ideals of the time and place." One function of the courts is to help to keep the law abreast of the times. Just as my theology professor used to say that every generation needs to rewrite its theology, so every generation needs to rewrite, or at least to reinterpret and reapply, its laws. If the law lags too far behind the needs of the people, pressure will build up which will result in ignoring the law or possibly even rebellion against it.

Perhaps it can be safely stated that there is no real progress in law or morality except for some creative souls who will set their faces toward the fuller light of the approaching tomorrows, while at the same time they respect the past and the present. These prophetic spirits have on occasions found themselves out of step with their times. They are creators of tension and frequently find themselves torn between their love for their people and for things as they are and what they interpret to be the word and will of God for them.

These creative persons are at times the martyrs of one generation and the heroes of the next. Let us never forget, however, that the true prophet is one who speaks for God to and on the behalf of his people, and particularly on the behalf of the underprivileged. He does not seek more for himself but more for others.

Law, Order, and Justice

Carl Friedrich suggests that “in the philosophical speculations concerning law and right, law has recurrently been presented or oriented either toward justice or toward order.” The tendency is for the orientation to be toward order in quiet and ordinary times. Friedrich further says that “the situation changes in times of great revolutionary upheavals and cultural crises.”²³ The orientation in such times is more toward justice. The contemporary period is such a time of crisis, with society, in the United States and elsewhere, changing at an unprecedented pace.

While it is more or less natural that the emphasis in the contemporary period should be on the use of the law to attain justice, law and order should not be neglected. After all, Paul admonished the Roman Christians to be “subject to the governing authorities” because those authorities are from God, and one “who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed” (Rom. 13:1-2).

It should be remembered that methods may be used in an effort to attain justice that tend to undermine respect for the law and for those who administer the law. While we do not condemn all marches and demonstrations, we do suggest that the courts and other orderly processes should be first used to the fullest. If no redress of grievances can be secured in that way, then we cannot rule out other methods of protest. Care should be exercised, however, that respect for law and for public officials in general is maintained. Any disobedience of the law should be done regretfully and without encouragement to rebellion. Particular care should be exercised in large group demonstrations. Such a group may become a mob composed of people who have no clear conception of what justice is and little idea about the purpose of their protest.

On the other hand, it is tragic in a time of revolution for the privileged and the powerful to use the cry “law and order” to defeat or attempt to defeat the purposes of justice. While some extremists in the civil rights movement

have tended to undermine the authority of police and others who enforce the law, segregationists and the radical right movement in general have contributed to an undermining of respect for law, for the courts and for government in general. In other words, many of those who cry the loudest for “law and order” have contributed to the breakdown of respect for law, at least as interpreted by the courts and enforced by the federal government. What they are doing results in disorder rather than order.

The major question is where the primary emphasis should be: on order or justice? In a period of rapid change and revolution, it is quite evident that justice should be given primacy. The Christian worker, including the Christian missionary, faces at times a perplexing problem at this point. It is difficult for him to divorce himself from his privileged position and throw his weight on the side of justice for the underprivileged, which incidentally has been the customary stance of the prophet of God. It is difficult for him to distinguish between some of the methods the underprivileged may use to attain their goals, which he may disapprove, and the goals they are seeking, which he should approve. If the privileged deny the legitimacy of the grievances of the underprivileged, they play into the hands of the communists or at least those who seek to provide the leadership for the underprivileged. If we want to preserve our way of life, or what is more important, if we want to be on the side of justice and right, we had better seek to catch step, at least to some degree, with the restless movement of the masses in our midst. Let us never forget, however, that while we should be on the side of justice, we should not neglect order.

It will help if we will keep in mind Friedrich’s conclusion that justice and order are dependent on one another. He says, “They cannot be realized in “legal community except jointly.”²⁴ Let us repeat, however, that one may be faced with a choice of priorities and that in a revolutionary age the priority must be with justice.

Love, Justice, and the Law

In the area of human relations in general and race relations in particular, there is a dimension more comprehensive than justice because it is inclusive of justice. That dimension is love or, possibly better, *agape*, a word that many scholars believe should not have been translated but simply brought over intact into modern languages. At least *agape* represents a distinctive quality or type of love. It is a love that gives itself unselfishly to the object loved: “for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16a); “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25b); “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

God is *agape*. Wherever *agape* is found in human life and relations, God is its source. It is potentially the most distinctive contribution of the Christian movement to the community of men. The deeper needs of individual persons and of the community of persons cannot be met apart from *agape*. Unfortunately, in the above statement we felt it necessary to use the word “potentially.” How tragic that so few Christians and Christian groups have been and are effective channels for the love or *agape* of God.

It should not be necessary to insist that no attempt should ever be made to substitute love for justice. This is a matter, however, that disturbs some people. A keen young Negro Ph.D., in a discussion period following an address, asked the searching and pointed question: “Is there not a danger that Christians will tend to substitute love for justice and make love an empty sentimentality?” A good answer to the question is found in the following statement by Tillich: “Love, in the sense of *agape* contains justice in itself as its unconditional element and as its weapon against its own sentimentalization.”²⁵ In a rather typical paradoxical statement, Reinhold Niebuhr says that “love is both the fulfillment and the negation of all achievements of justice in history.”²⁶ For Tillich, love is the creative element in justice.²⁷ The unconditional demand for justice is “in the very nature of *agape*” and “if love takes justice into itself justice is not diminished but enhanced.”²⁸

Niebuhr contends that equal justice in society is an attainable goal but that absolute love in society is not. Whether this position is true or not does not in any way affect the validity of love as the ultimate ideal in the Christian life. Niebuhr himself would agree that *agape* is abidingly relevant at least in the sense that it is the ultimate ideal and stands in judgment against our imperfect achievement even of equal justice.

The law cannot produce love. The latter stands above and beyond law, although there is a relatively close relationship between the two. Love comes to fulfill the law, not to destroy it: “The second mile of love presupposes the first mile of law.”

One distinctive quality of love is what Tillich calls the drive toward unity, “the reunion of the estranged.”²⁹ This estrangement may be between God and man or between man and man. The only sound hope for a reunion of the estranged in the area of race relations, at least in our culture, is the love of God in the hearts of his people.

The law can provide for justice. The courts can break down the physical walls that separate. For example, the authority of the government can be used to achieve desegregation, but it cannot achieve meaningful integration.

There is no real integration, which should be the ultimate goal in human relations, without a removal of separating barriers in the minds and the souls of men. The only hope for the elimination of, these barriers or walls is in Christ. This is expressed graphically in the Ephesian letter. Phillips’ translation is as follows:

But now, through the blood of Christ, you who were once outside the pale [Gentiles] are with us inside the circle of God’s love in Christ Jesus. For Christ is our living peace, He has made a unity of the conflicting elements of Jew and gentile by breaking down the barrier which lay between us. By his sacrifice he removed the hostility of the Law, with all its commandments and rules, and made in himself out of

the two, Jew and Gentile, one new man, thus producing peace. For he reconciled both to God by the sacrifice of one body on the cross, and by this act made utterly irrelevant the antagonism between them. Then he came and told both you who were far from God and us who were near that the war was over. And it is through him that both of us now can approach the Father in the one Spirit (Eph. 2:13-19).

Would it not be wonderful if all our people could see that in Christ “the antagonism” between us is irrelevant? How wonderful if we could realize that the war is over.

The original plan was to close this chapter with several conclusions similar to the background convictions that were stated in the beginning. I believe it to be the part of wisdom, however, for each of us to draw our own conclusions as individual Christians and also for the churches with which we are affiliated. Surely we win agree that it is time for our churches to face up to the full demands of the Gospel we preach in this whole area of race.

It may be wise to remind ourselves that the God we worship and serve so imperfectly is the sovereign God of the universe we can be assured that He has a will for every area of life, including race relations, and that His will ultimately will be done. There will be a time when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

T. B. Maston, *The Christian, The Church, and Contemporary Problems* (Waco: Word, 1968), 149-159.

Church, State, and the Christian Ethic

The Christian Ethic

Some may contend that the discussion so far has been theological rather than ethical. Such a viewpoint reveals a rather narrow, distorted conception of

the Christian ethic and of the Christian life in general. The nature of God and the nature of man are just as basic for the Christian ethic as for Christian theology. Really, a proper understanding of the Christian life based on the biblical revelation would convince one that a sharp distinction between theology and ethics is arbitrary and unwise. Such a distinction is not in harmony with Christian experience. The two – theology and ethics – belong together, and their separation, in most ways, has been quite unfortunate.

In this section we shall discuss some central concepts of the Christian ethic, concepts that are frequently used to describe the nature of the ethic itself. There are so many of these ideas or terms, growing out of the breadth and depth of the Christian ethic, that only two or three of the more significant and relevant ones will be discussed. The Christian ethic could be properly described as an ethic of perfection, of the will of God, of love, of the Holy Spirit, and of the cross.³⁰ These descriptive terms or labels are rather closely related to one another and to the general nature of the Christian ethic. The present discussion will be limited to a consideration of the first three of these – perfection, will of God, and love – as they relate to the church and state.

Since the Christian ethic is ultimately grounded in the nature of God, it would be expected to be an ethic of perfection. God is perfect; He expects His children to be like Him. Jesus specifically said in the Sermon on the Mount: “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). He also taught his disciples to pray:

Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
(Matt. 6:10)

If the Father’s will were done on earth as in heaven, it would mean perfection. But, there remains a very pressing and disturbing question: Is this

ideal of perfection relevant for human institutions such as the church and particularly for the state?

Some Christian scholars make a rather sharp distinction between the relevance of the Christian ethic of perfection for the life of the individual Christian and for the social group. Niebuhr goes so far as to say that this distinction “justifies and necessitates political policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing.”³¹ He also says that “group relations can never be as ethical as those which characterize individual relations,”³² and he goes so far as to say that “the demand of religious moralists that nations subject themselves to ‘the law of Christ’ is an unrealistic demand, and the hope that they will do so is a sentimental one.”³³ Although there is much validity to Niebuhr’s position, which is shared by many others, this does not relieve the Christian from seeking as best he can to apply the ideals of perfection to the groups to which he belongs as well as to his own life. He is to do the best he can and is to recognize as a compromise or an accommodation anything less than the ideal. He may under certain circumstances feel that he himself must choose the lesser of two evils, or to use a distinction of Weatherhead,³⁴ he may think that he must follow the circumstantial rather than the intentional will of God.

It should be remembered, however, that the lesser of two evils involves some evil, which means that the evil in the decision is to be kept under the constant judgment of the perfect ideal. The circumstantial will of God is never to be identified with or defended as the intentional will of God. It should always point in the direction of and be evaluated in the light of God’s intentional will. It is also true that the church, the state, and other human collectives are measured by and must ultimately come to terms with the intentional will of God. That will, which is a will of perfection, stands in judgment against the very imperfect attainment of that will by both individuals and social groups or collectives.

There is a sense in which human institutions are judged by the ideals that are inherent in those institutions themselves. Murray expresses this concept as follows: “The church itself is conceived as an ideal by which the church as an institution is continually judged.”³⁵ What he says about the church he also says about the state. He asks and answers the question. “Is there also an invisible ideal State regulative of the State on earth?” His answer is yes.³⁶ The “ideal church” and the “ideal state” from the Christian perspective may be equated with God’s ultimate will and purpose for those institutions.

The Christian ethic is not only an ethic of perfection and an ethic of the will of God; it is also an ethic of love. This emphasis is central in the New Testament as a whole and particularly in the teachings of Jesus. Niebuhr contends, however that the ethics of Jesus, including His ethic of love, are “no immediately applicable to the task of securing justice in a sinful world.”³⁷ Niebuhr’s viewpoint is that absolute love is not an attainable goal in society, while equal justice is, and hence Christians should give their time and energy to the achievement of the latter.

Even if the Christian ethic of love were not immediately applicable, would this mean that it was irrelevant? No, it is relevant, at least in the sense that it constantly judges society for its very imperfect expressions of that love and even its imperfect attainment of equal justice. And, it should not be forgotten that equal justice will not and cannot be attained apart from love as the dynamic or drive. William Temple says that “love transcends justice,”³⁸ and “that only when love is in the heart can justice be established in the world.”³⁹ Niebuhr himself says that love is ethically purer than justice,⁴⁰ and in his dialectical or paradoxical way he says that “love is both the fulfillment and the negation of the achievements of justice in history.”⁴¹ The two – Justice and love – cannot be separated “because they are united in God.”⁴²

There is another sense in which the Christian ethic of love is relevant. At least most would agree that it is to be applied as far as possible by the individual. However, the individual does not live in a vacuum. He is a member

of a family, of a church, of a labor union, of a chamber of commerce, of a particular race, and also a citizen of a state. He is under obligation to be as Christian as possible in all of these and other relations. This means that he is to apply as best he can the Christian ethic with its emphasis on love or *agape*.

Even if the love ethic could not be applied immediately, it would still be normative for the behavior of the individual and also for collectives, which would include the church and the state. The love commandment remains the law of life. The ethic of Jesus is “finally and ultimately normative,”⁴³ not only for the individual but also for the church, the state, and all human collectives. It establishes the norms or standards for every area and realm of life.

T. B. Maston, *The Christian, The Church, and Contemporary Problems* (Waco: Word, 1968), 177-188.

Independent or Party Man?

On election day will you vote a straight party ticket, or is there at least a possibility that you will split your vote? Whatever your answer to this question may be, it is hoped that you will vote.

Admittedly, it is difficult if not impossible for some men, particularly politicians, to be nonparty men. Also, more Christian men and women should be active in precinct, county, and state political affairs; and such individuals have to identify themselves with a particular party. This does not mean, however, that they should never cross over party lines. After all, the good of the country and the purposes of God should be considered more important for the Christian than loyalty to a party.

My personal opinion is that the vast majority of Christians should be politically independent. In this way, they can let the man running for office or the issues rather than the party label determine how they vote.

Also, by being an independent, they can best make their influence felt in the political world. Independent voters determine the outcome of most

elections. Because independent voters are so determinative in elections, they are the main hope for a clean-up when the party in power gets corrupt.

Another reason for being independent in politics is that there is not much to choose between the parties. Both major parties have conservative and liberal wings. The only difference is a difference of degree. Both parties, in a sense and to a degree, are split personalities. Even party platforms are strikingly similar on many issues. There would be a sounder basis for faithful adherence to one party if there could be in political realignment with a clear-cut distinction between a conservative and a liberal party.

An additional reason for my political independence is a personal aversion for most labels, particularly theological and political ones. This aversion is especially strong for a self-imposed label. When a person voluntarily accepts a label he tends to limit himself in his search for truth. The only restraint that a child of God should want should be the restraint of truth itself.

The Christian's vote is a part of his stewardship responsibility. How he votes is his business but it should be an expression of his supreme loyalty to God rather than to any human institution or organization. I personally believe that ordinarily the independent voter rather than the party man can more clearly demonstrate such loyalty. An additional word should be said: We should never permit differences in politics to become a test of fellowship with other Christians.

T. B. Maston, *The Conscience of a Christian* (Waco: Word, 1971), 133-134.

One-Issue Christians

There are one-issue voters. There are also one issue Christians. The former is unfortunate. The latter is more unfortunate.

The one-issue Christian may judge his own life on the basis of one particular issue. From his perspective he is right on that issue; and, hence, he considers himself to be a good Christian.

More frequently the one-issue Christian judges other Christians on the basis of one issue. This is usually a pet subject of his and one on which he considers himself to be right.

For some the one issue will be in the area of personal morality. For others it will be some phase of social morality. For all others the one issue will be a particular theological doctrine or perspective. Regardless of other things one is considered a good Christian if he is “right” on that doctrine or regarding the perspective.

Those who select an issue in the area of personal morality may be negative or positive in their approach but more frequently the former than the latter. If negative, the issue may be swearing, smoking, drinking, or some other comparable issue.

If one is free of that habit or “vice” he is good; if not he is bad.

For others the one issue may be in the area of positive personal morality. For example, if one is “honest in his business,” a “man of integrity,” “a good neighbor,” “generous,” “kind and considerate,” he is judged to be a good man.

Whatever the virtue it is a pet idea of the one-issue Christian. For him if one is “right” regarding that issue or virtue he is considered a good Christian. In the contemporary period the one-issue Christian will frequently concentrate on some particular social issue. The goodness or badness of a Christian will be judged upon the basis of his attitude regarding this one issue.

The issue may be capital punishment, divorce, communism, foreign aid, poverty, race, Red China, unemployment, United Nations, or war.

The one-issue Christian judges other Christians on the basis of their position regarding a particular one of these issues. If they are wrong from his perspective on the issue then they are wrong. If they agree with his position then they are right and, hence, are good Christians.

It needs to be emphasized over and over again that there is no single issue that is an adequate test of the genuineness and vitality of one’s Christian faith. The ultimate test is how much we are like the living Christ. This means,

among other things, that a Christian's life should be judged by the totality of its impact. One may be right, at least from our perspective, on one issue and yet be entirely wrong on equally important issues. We need to remember that the same thing may be true of us. We all have our blind spots.

Let us in this area as elsewhere do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us also remember that one may differ with us on what we consider to be the supreme issue or test of the Christian life, and yet over all he may be a better Christian than we are.

Maston, T. B. "Problems of the Christian Life – One-Issue Christians," *Baptist Standard*, May 28, 1969, 19.

Bible and Civil Disobedience

What should be the attitude of Christians toward civil disobedience? Should we approve, disapprove, or should theirs be a selective approval or disapproval? By "selective" we mean selective on the basis of causes, methods, and spirit.

Some people have made an effort to bring the Bible into the present controversy concerning civil disobedience. For example, some contend that Paul disobeyed the civil authorities. On the other hand, some would use Romans 12:1 and other Scriptures to insist that civil disobedience is always wrong.

Jesus as Revolutionary

Whether or not it is correct to consider Jesus a revolutionary depends on the meaning attached to the word. His teachings unquestionably were and still are revolutionary. Nothing would produce a more drastic revolution in our world than for those who claim to be followers of Christ to take seriously His teachings.

If by revolutionary it is meant that Jesus attempted to overthrow constituted authority, we would have to conclude He was not.

Also, it should be remembered that the disobedience of Jesus was against religious rather than political authorities. And even in this area His rebellion was not against the faith but against the misinterpretation of that faith.

The followers of Jesus, according to Acts, found it necessary at times to disobey civil as well as religious authorities. The position of the early Christians was stated by Peter and John when they were said they had to obey God rather than men.

Justification and Disobedience

The preceding means, among other things, that disobedience, from the biblical perspective, can be justified under some conditions. We know, for example that Paul was imprisoned because of his disobedience. The only specific cause that is evident in the Scriptures is the authorities forbade Paul to preach.

We should not forget the statement that the child of God must obey God rather than man. This might mean disobedience for various reasons.

It seems clear from the biblical perspective that any disobedience by Christians should be done regretfully. It should be in such a way as not to undermine respect of constituted authority. This means that the right of the state to punish will be recognized as well as the right of the individual to disobey. This means there will be no attempt to overthrow constituted authority.

If these concepts are applied to contemporary civil disobedience, what must be our conclusions?

First, we cannot deny the right of nonviolent civil disobedience. On the other hand, we must conclude that much contemporary civil disobedience would have to be disapproved. This disapproval would be based primarily on the motive and spirit of the disobedience.

Each incident would have to be judged on its own merits.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Bible and Civil Disobedience," *Baptist Standard*, November 5, 1969, 18.

Democracy and Its Minority

Basic in a democracy, political or religious, is majority rule accompanied with rights of the minority. The latter involves the right through peaceful means to change the viewpoint or opinion of the majority.

The creative minority group has a rough time in a democracy. The majority prefer not to be disturbed. Most are traditionalists and defenders of the status quo.

The strong desire for stability that seems to be characteristic of a democracy is one reason why the creative minority has a hard time. By "creative minority" we are not thinking primarily of an organized group but rather of individuals. Frequently there is a tendency in a democracy to ostracize them.

There also seems to be built into the democratic process a tendency toward the leveling of people. When one rises very far above the ordinary level the tendency is to push him back down. This tendency is particularly strong when he rises above the ordinary level in ideas and ideals, in motives and purposes, in dreams and thought.

The leadership of a democracy and the majority who support that leadership evidently feel threatened by creative minds and souls.

Creative individuals are disturbers of the status quo, and from the perspective of the majority there are few sins that are more serious.

There is a tendency at times in a religious democracy to apply a particular theological label to its creative minority. Because they are open to new insights and new strategies they are frequently considered "liberal." They may, however, be basically conservative in theology while being liberal in regard to structures

and programs. A creative minority is needed in any democracy. Otherwise the democracy will tend to become static and lose its relevance in a rapidly changing world. The creative minority may be like a thorn in the flesh but it is needed to suggest new insights and new directions.

There should never be a tendency to label one as “an obstructionist,” “a non-conformist,” or “a liberal” simply because he suggests a different perspective or procedure.

We should be very careful about “reading” or forcing anyone out of the denomination because he disagrees with the majority and or with the leadership of the denomination. There is a possibility that a minority perspective may represent the wave of the future. A minority may be pointing the way in which God would have us go.

At the same time, the minority, if it is to be really creative, must respect the majority and seek to work within the existing structures to bring about the desired changes.

T. B. Maston, “Problems of the Christian Life – Democracy and Its Minorities,” *Baptist Standard*, February 4, 1970, 19.

Taxation Analyzed

Baptists have made a major contribution to the separation of church and state. There are some trends now to weaken or compromise our historic position.

For example, some pastors and others are not only accepting but defending unjustifiable exemptions from taxation.

There will be a concerted movement sooner or later to include in the tax structure more property owned by churches and other benevolent institutions. This is the time for our denomination to formulate a clear statement concerning the taxation of church and denomination properties. Let us take

the initiative and help government leaders determine what is consistent with the separation of church and state.

Can we not agree on a few clear, positive statements? Surely we will all agree that all revenue-producing property should be taxed. Much of that kind of property is competitive with legitimate business. The church or denominational agency thereby has an unfair advantage.

We should not expect tax exemption on property owned by a church except that used for regular worship and educational purposes. Homes provided by the church to staff members would be taxed as well as those of staff members of denominational agencies and institutions.

This also would mean that the housing allowance for church and denominational employees should not be tax-exempt. How can we justify this?

Some question tax exemption for buildings used for worship and education. Non-Christians, so it is contended, are forced to subsidize the churches. There is enough validity to this contention that our churches should voluntarily make a contribution for fire and police protection.

It would be wise for the Southern Baptist Convention to have a carefully selected committee study the whole matter of the taxation of church and denominational property. Some of our laymen who are knowledgeable in the area of taxation should be involved in the study.

Let us at least start to move. Let us do what we can to get our house in order. How can we consistently complain about others dipping into the public treasury if we continue to benefit from tax exemptions that violate our separation theory?

T. B. Maston, "Trends to Watch – Taxation Analyzed," *Baptist Standard*, May 28, 1975, 19.

STEWARDSHIP OF LIFE

Human beings are made in the image of God, as Genesis 1:26-27 describes. Therefore, Maston believed, life and the ending of life are serious matters, as human beings are fashioned after God's own image. God cares about life and the sustaining of life, so humanity should be utterly concerned about matters of life and death, as well. The dignity and worth of humanity must, at all times, be cherished by Christians, and the carelessness and negligence that many show toward their own lives and toward the lives of others must be condemned.

Such thoughts are exhibited in the following pieces. The first excerpts explore issues such as abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment. Next follows some lengthier excerpts on war and peace, including the article on pacifism upon which his son Gene was an important influence. The section closes with a piece on environmental ethics.

READINGS

Some Guidelines

Abortion is one of the most important issues of the contemporary period. People everywhere are concerned about it. They are seeking to determine their position regarding it.

The following are some more or less tentative guidelines that may be of help:

1. While the abortion laws in some states may need to be liberalized, it is possible that legislatures and courts may go too far in the liberalizing process.

2. There may be considerable difference in the legality and the morality of abortion, as is true of many other things.
3. Human life as such should be considered sacred. This should not only be true of the mother's life but also of the life of the fetus.
4. The preceding means that when an abortion seems necessary or wise it should be justified only as the lesser of two evils. In other words, abortion should never be defended as a right or a good within itself.
5. When considering the effects of an unwanted pregnancy on a potential mother, similar consideration should be given to the possible mental and emotional effects on one who has an abortion.
6. Pastors, teachers and others in places of moral and spiritual leadership should seek to give guidance to those who are struggling with the question of abortion, including many Christian doctors and nurses. They also should seek to be of help to legislators who have the responsibility of determining the conditions for a legal abortion, particularly after the first three months of pregnancy.
7. A question needs to be asked and answered. It is: If abortion is generally justified, will this move society more or less naturally toward the justification of the termination of life at the other end? What about the aged who, because of physical and/or mental illnesses, can no longer make "a positive contribution" to society? In other words, will abortion be followed with euthanasia?

T. B. Maston, "Some Guidelines," *Baptist Standard*, May 16, 1973, 13.

Abortion

There are important moral and ethical issues involved in the contemporary effort to modify existing abortion laws. Christians should be alert to these issues and should seek to think through them to a defensible Christian position.

At the present time most states permit “induced termination of pregnancy” only when the life of the mother is endangered. A few states permit abortion to protect the “health and safety” of the mother. Three states prohibit “unlawful abortion” with no further clarification. Four or five states have recently modified and liberalized their laws regarding abortion. In many other states the legislatures have considered or are considering the revision of their abortion laws.

The abortion laws in some states possibly should be revised. With proper safeguards, abortion might be permitted in the case of incest or rape. It is possible that the interpretation of the “health of the mother” should be broadened to include mental as well as physical health.

The remainder of this article, however, will be limited to a consideration of the suggestion that abortion be permitted when “there is documented evidence that the infant may be born with incapacitating physical deformity or mental deficiency.”

The preceding is included in a statement on abortion approved by the American Medical Association. The same idea is included in a law proposed by the American Law Institute. I have great respect for doctors and lawyers, but I would like to ask the nature of the “documented evidence.” Also, how much of a chance is there for an error in judgment?

Notice that the statement says “may be born” rather than “will be born.” One group of doctors has said that only rarely can medical science predict with certainty that a child will be defective.

Furthermore, what is to be the definition of “incapacitating”? What type of physical deformity and what degree of mental deficiency would incapacitate the child.

Many parents of the handicapped can join me in testifying that the “incapacitated” son or daughter has brought many rich blessings to their lives. Pearl Buck, in a recent statement, suggested that a retarded child or handicapped person brings his or her own “gift of life, even to the life of normal human beings.”

How would the approval of the aborting of infants with “incapacitating physical deformity or mental deficiency” affect our society? One of the brightest spots in our culture is what is done for the physically handicapped and mentally retarded children among us.

There is an additional question that constantly bothers me: If we justify the abortion of the potentially handicapped child, would not the next logical step be the justification of the termination of life for the incurably ill and for the old and “useless”? If life can be artificially terminated at one end, can it not just as logically be terminated at the other end?

T. B. Maston, *The Conscience of a Christian* (Waco: Word, 1971), 69-70.

Death with Dignity

A friend of mine passed away after a long illness. The doctors concluded months before his death that the illness was terminal. Yet he was kept alive for several weeks by artificial means. This cost the family thousands of dollars.

This experience and similar incidents raise questions that should be answered. Should one whose illness is definitely terminal be kept alive by artificial means – medication, tubes, etc.?

Some people contend that the doctor’s oath binds him to preserve life and not to take it. Some even suggest that the physician is under obligation to keep one alive as long as possible. Others say that his oath simply means that he is not to take life; his is not to practice positive euthanasia.

The latter is the correct interpretation. The only statement in the oath that relates to this matter is as follows: "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel."

Another argument made by some people for the artificial continuation of life is the fact that a doctor's diagnosis may be wrong. He may consider a case terminal when it is not. For one thing, he has no way to measure a particular patient's will to live.

Furthermore, some insist that a doctor cannot predict how God will work in a particular case. Therefore, so they reason, the doctor should use every skill and technique available to keep one alive.

There are others, including some doctors, who claim that the medical profession may learn a great deal by using artificial methods to keep a patient alive. If this is a valid reason for using various means of extending life in terminal cases, we do not believe the family should have to pay the bill. The doctor, the hospital, the medical society, the government, or some charitable foundation should relieve the family of the tremendous expense frequently involved.

There is a possibility that one reason for efforts to keep people alive as long as possible is the fear of death. This may be understandable for non-Christians, but it is hard to understand why Christians should fear death personally or for their loved ones who are Christians. After all, death is inevitable. There are limits to how long it can be postponed.

Members of the family, who should have a major voice regarding any decision that is made, should be fully informed regarding possible costs. While the cost should not be the deciding factor in any decision that is made, it may properly be a major factor at least for families with limited financial resources.

The one whose voice should speak the loudest is the patient himself. This is particularly true if he decides against the artificial continuance of his life. Such a decision should be made while he is still in full control of his faculties.

If he wishes to be permitted to “die with dignity” he should let his family and his doctor know. Those wishes should be respected. We have such an understanding in our household. There is no question about our understanding being carried out by the family and by the family physician. Why should any of us want to hold on to life when our days of usefulness are over?

Why should we want to live any longer when it would simply add to the burdens of loved ones and friends?

Why not go on and be with the Lord? After all, Paul said, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21, KJV). Do we really believe this or have we been teaching and preaching something we have not believed?

T. B. Maston, *The Conscience of a Christian* (Waco: Word, 1971), 71-73.

Capital Punishment

Capital punishment has been debated for many years. Christians are rather sharply divided regarding it. The general trend in the United States has been away from capital punishment. There has been a decrease in the crimes that are punishable by death. Murder is the only capital offense in most states, although some retain it as punishment for rape, robbery, and arson.

Ramsay Clark, former Attorney General of the United States, recently suggested that capital punishment for federal offenses should be abolished. He said that it would be one more step out of barbarism.

The American Institute of Public Opinion recently released a report showing that the percentage of people approving the death penalty for persons convicted of murder had decreased from 68 percent in 1953 to 51 percent in 1960 and 49 percent in 1966.

The number of convicted murderers who have been executed in recent years has noticeably decreased. In 1936 there were 194 executions in the United States; thirty years later there was only one execution in the entire country. As

the number executed has decreased, the number in “death row” awaiting execution has sharply increased. California recently reported over seventy men awaiting execution, while Florida had fifty in death row. In addition there were many more in county jails who had been assessed the death penalty.

Several states have abolished capital punishment. A recent Associated Press report said that thirteen states had either abolished it or had so restricted it as to make it almost nonexistent. There are approximately seventy (70) foreign countries that have abolished the death penalty.

Contrary to the contention of the defenders of capital punishment, it is not an effective deterrent to crime. There is little if any evidence of an increase in capital offenses in states or countries that have abolished capital punishment. One report reveals that the five states that most frequently assess the death penalty have the highest murder rates.

There are several additional arguments against the death penalty. One of the strongest is the discriminatory way in which it is applied. Who are the ones who are executed? In the main, they are the poor or the underprivileged of society. To an unusual degree, they belong to the minority peoples of our culture.

Still another reason for the abolition of capital punishment is the fact that when carried out there is no way to correct an error. There have been cases where a man has been executed and later it was discovered that he was innocent. The fact that a judge and a jury may make a mistake should raise serious questions about capital punishment.

What is needed in contemporary America is a more enlightened and effective penal system. The emphasis should be primarily remedial rather than punitive. If one cannot be reformed so as to become again a useful citizen, then he should be separated from society for the remainder of his life.

There is no place for capital punishment in a remedially oriented penal system.

T. B. Maston, *The Conscience of a Christian* (Waco: Word, 1971), 74-75.

The Bible and Capital Punishment

The Bible has been appealed to by some who oppose capital punishment but particularly by those who defend it.

The Old Testament is used, in the main, by the latter. What do we find in the Old Testament? There are fifteen to twenty offenses that are punishable by death. Would those who use the Bible to defend capital punishment assess the death penalty for all of those offenses?

As one would expect, premeditated murder was punishable by death (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12), although six cities of refuge were provided for those who had killed another “unawares” or “without enmity” (Num. 35:9-34). The death penalty was also assessed for one stole a man and sold him (Ex. 21:16).

There were two offenses against parents that were punishable by death: smiting or striking (Ex. 21:15) and cursing (Ex. 21:17).

Certain sexual acts were capital offenses. An adulterous relation between a man and another man’s wife meant death for both (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). If a husband accused his wife of not being a virgin when he took her and “the tokens of her virginity be not found for the damsel” she was to be stoned to death (Deut 22:13-21).

If a man had relations with a betrothed virgin in the city both were to be put to death (Deut 22:23-24) – if in the field, the man alone was to be put to death. In the latter case it was assumed that the damsel cried for help and no one heard her (Deut. 22:25-27).

Incest (Lev. 20:11-12,14) and homosexuality (Lev. 20:13) were punishable by death; this was also true of lying with a beast (Ex. 22:19), which applied to women as well as men (Lev. 20:15-16).

Certain religious transgressions were considered capital offenses. This was true of one who defiled the sabbath, including doing any work on the sabbath

day (Ex. 31:14-15; cf. 35:2). One man was actually stoned to death for gathering sticks on the sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).

A prophet or a “dreamer of dreams” who would lead the people to worship false gods (Deut. 13:5), one who would entice others to “serve other gods” (Deut. 13:6-10), and those who worshiped other gods (Deut. 17:2-5) were to be put to death. The same was true of those who gave their children to Molech in sacrifice (Lev. 20:2) or who blasphemed God (Lev. 24:16).

The stranger who came near to the Tabernacle when It was being set up by the Levites (Num. 1:51) or when the sons of Aaron were ministering in it (Num. 3:10, 38) was to be put to death.

There was a provision for the death penalty for a witch (Ex. 22:18) or one who had a familiar spirit or was a wizard (Lev. 20:27).

Surely no one in the contemporary period would advocate capital punishment for all of the preceding offenses. Personally, I do not believe we can wisely or correctly use what we find in the Bible as justification for capital punishment in our day.

The severity of the punishment found in the Old Testament needs to be evaluated and understood in light of that day. Other than the cities of refuge, a penal system was nonexistent.

Furthermore, the teachings of the Old Testament should be interpreted and evaluated in the light of the fuller revelation found in the New Testament. I believe that capital punishment violates the spirit and the basic teachings of the New Testament.

T. B. Maston, *The Conscience of a Christian* (Waco: Word, 1971), 76-78.

War and Peace

2. *The New Testament and War.* What one finds in the New Testament concerning war depends largely on what he wants to find. The pacifist can find enough there to condemn war and the Christian’s participation in it. For

example, C. J. Cadoux, a thorough scholar, concludes that “any natural and straightforward exegesis” of the ethical teachings of Jesus will prove that they are “obviously and flagrantly incompatible with intentional and organized bloodshed, and therefore with war.”⁴⁴ In a more negative vein, and yet just as positive in his conclusion, is Charles E. Raven. He says, “It is, in fact, more than doubtful whether any single utterance or action of Jesus gives any sort of sanction to war in any form.”⁴⁵ In contrast, Reinhold Niebuhr says, “There is not the slightest support in Scripture for this doctrine of non-violence.”⁴⁶ And by nonviolence he means the position of the pacifists. An objective reading of the New Testament will lead one to conclude that there are no specific teachings in it concerning war and the Christian’s relation to it. War is not explicitly justified or forbidden. Leslie Weatherhead says that “the question of war between nations does not arise in the New Testament.”⁴⁷

Proof texts, approving and disapproving war, can be balanced against each other. Most of those on both sides can be explained away with relative ease; some few with more difficulty. The proof-text approach to the study of the teachings of the New Testament concerning war is barren of real results. However, because so much importance is attached by so many people to certain scriptures or incidents in the life of Jesus, we shall examine briefly a few of the references cited in defense of or against war.

There are some who suggest that Jesus was frequently in contact with men of the military, and the fact that he never disapproved their occupation would imply his approval of war. Based on the argument of silence one could claim that Jesus approved slavery, unjust oppression, and many other evil practices of his day. Is not “an ‘argument from silence’ always precarious, and never more so than when applied to the Gospels”?⁴⁸

The cleansing of the temple by Jesus⁴⁹ is frequently cited in defense of war. In appraising the incident or incidents it should be remembered: (1) that John’s gospel alone mentions the scourge or whip; (2) that some scholars suggest that the whip was made of litter from the floor; but granting that Jesus

did make a real whip of string or rope there is no sure evidence that he used it; (3) that if he used the whip it was used, so it naturally seems, on the animals only; (4) that even if he used force, including the whip, on the money-changers, which seems far-fetched, such would not justify war. It might justify the use of force under certain conditions, but using force is one thing, and war, with the taking of human lives, is something quite different.

The statement by Jesus, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword,”⁵⁰ is taken completely out of its context at times and given as a defense of war. The setting of the statement shows clearly that Jesus was using the sword as a symbol of the division that would come within families because some accepted and followed him while others rejected him.

Still another statement by Jesus that is used to defend war is the following: “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.”⁵¹ This is merely a statement of fact. The most significant portion of the passage is frequently left off. Jesus says, “See that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet.” By no stretch of the imagination can one use this scripture as a justifiable defense of war. The master was saying to his disciples: “Do not let anyone fool you by saying every time there is a war, ‘This is the end; this is the close of the age.’” And incidentally this is a warning that many need even in the contemporary period.

There are a number of other passages that are used at times to place the stamp of biblical approval on war, but there is at least one of major importance that must be examined briefly. It is the occasion when Jesus counseled the disciples, if they did not have a sword, to buy one.”⁵² This is a difficult passage of scripture to interpret. Without going into a lengthy discussion let us notice the following: (1) That in some way the instruction of Jesus to buy a sword was related to his approaching arrest, trial, and crucifixion. (2) That the two swords produced would have been inadequate for the disciples’ defense of themselves and their Master, and yet he did not say anything about the

purchase of additional swords. (3) That it is clear that Jesus did not expect them to use the sword in his defense or in their own defense. A short time later he commanded Peter to put up his sword and said, "For all who take the sword will perish by the sword."⁵³ (4) That evidently the disciples missed the whole point of his instruction. When they told him they had two swords, he said, "It is enough." It seems he meant, "That is enough of this," or "That will do." In other words, Jesus dismissed the subject. Possibly he was simply using the sword as a symbol of the difficult hours and days immediately ahead and was not referring to a physical sword at all. (5) That even if Jesus had intended that the two swords should be used in his defense this fact would not necessarily justify modern warfare.

Now for a brief consideration of a few of the teachings of Jesus that are used by those who contend that war is not Christian, and should not be approved by the Christian conscience. One of the most common arguments against war, from the Christian viewpoint, is the teaching of Jesus concerning nonresistance, non-retaliation, or the non-vindictive spirit."⁵⁴ There is rather general agreement concerning what he said but disagreement concerning its exact meaning and application. Was Jesus talking exclusively about individual relationships, or did he intend for his teachings concerning nonresistance to be applied to the broader social community? Tolstoi would say that Jesus meant the latter. Many equally sincere followers of Christ would claim that he refers entirely to individual relations. It seems that the original and primary application is to the individual. This scripture and others concerning nonresistance apply to war only in the sense that the fundamental principles of Jesus should be the ultimate goals for society and should be the standards by which the present level of living is judged.

Possibly the statement by Jesus that is cited most frequently as an argument against war is his command to Peter to put up his sword."⁵⁵ But it is doubtful if this can properly be applied to war at all. Notice the three reasons Jesus gave against taking up the sword: (1) The sword is self-defeating: they

that take it up shall perish by it. (This principle, by implication, might be applied to war.) (2) Jesus does not need the sword to defend him: his Father has available twelve legions of angels. (3) The sword if effective in his defense would defeat the basic purpose of God in his life. He had been sent into the world to do the will of him that sent him, which meant for him death on the cross.

There are several general emphases in the teachings of Jesus, such as love and the cross, that are used by some pacifists and others to support their position that war is not Christian. It should be admitted that the strongest arguments against war, from the viewpoint of the teachings of Jesus, are based on his general teachings and his spirit rather than on particular incidents or specific sayings.

Some attention could properly be given to Paul's epistles, but there is little if anything that is distinctive. Some people do attach considerable importance to the "powers that be" passage⁵⁶ and to such metaphorical statements as, "Put on the whole armor of God."⁵⁷ When these and other references in [sic] Paul are carefully examined, we are forced to the conclusion that Paul, as was true of Jesus, did not say anything directly approving or disapproving war in general or the Christian's participation in war. Both Jesus and Paul did set out some general principles applicable to the problem of war that may be used by the sincere Christian to give him guidance in regard to his relation to war.

3. *The Old Testament versus the New Testament.* Admitting that there are few, if any, specific New Testament scriptures that relate directly to the question of war, nevertheless there is a rather marked contrast between the kind of God revealed by Jesus and the God in the Old Testament who commanded the merciless killing of the enemies of Israel. How can one explain these differences or contrasts?

One approach to a solution of this very real problem is to seek for a satisfactory explanation for God's part in the wars of the Old Testament. There are at least four such explanations, although one or two of them do not come

to real grips with the problem. First, the Old Testament reveals the current Jewish conception of God. They thought he commanded them to fight and to slaughter, they believed that he led them into battle and gave them victories over their enemies, but they were mistaken. Second, God's part in the wars of the Old Testament discloses accurately one side or phase of his nature. He is not only a loving, heavenly Father; he is also a God of wrath and judgment. Or, possibly to state the matter more accurately, he would have to be a God of judgment to be a loving God in the deepest and most significant sense.

A third suggestion is that the wars of the Old Testament were in accord with the permissive, or to use an expression of Weatherhead's, the circumstantial will of God.⁵⁸ This would mean that war was not and is not a part of God's perfect or intentional will. He permits wars to come through the operation of basic laws that govern the relation of nations. He is responsible for war and for the results of war only in the sense and to the degree that he permits those laws to operate. Some contend that this was the extent of God's responsibility for war in the Old Testament and is the extent of his responsibility for wars today.

Another position, which is related more specifically and exclusively to the problem of Old Testament wars is the argument that God, in the days of the Old Testament, had to adjust himself, to some degree, to the level of living of the people of that time. War was not a part of God's original, intentional will for man. Man so rebelled against God "that God had to deal with him in a different way than He had originally intended . . . if he [man] chooses to be a saint God deals with him as a saint, whereas if he chooses to be a sinner, God deals with him as a sinner."⁵⁹ This position is somewhat similar to the explanation of the differences in the Old Testament and the New Testament in regard to other social and moral questions such as divorce. It was Jesus, himself, who said that Moses⁶⁰ permitted the sending away of a wife because of the hardness of their hearts or the perversity of their lives.⁶¹ He suggests that even in the Old Testament law there was an adjustment of God's original

purpose because the people were not ready for his perfect or ultimate ideal for them. So, it is reasoned, the cruelty of the wars of the Old Testament can be explained. God, even to accomplish his purposes, had to adapt his methods to a level where his chosen people and their enemies would understand.

While these, and other possible explanations for the differences in the Old and New Testaments, may not be fully satisfactory, the main thing is to remember that the full revelation of God is in his Son and our Saviour – Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is always to be interpreted and evaluated in the light of the revelation of God in Christ. We can also be assured that a full understanding would mean that there could be no conflict between the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament. He is the eternal “I am,” the one who is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. One thing that points in that direction is the fact that when one looks deeply enough in the Old Testament he will find that God’s original purpose and his ultimate will as revealed there is entirely compatible with the fuller revelation recorded in the New Testament. It was Jesus himself who said, when pressed by the Pharisees concerning divorce, “From the beginning it was not so.”⁶² Here Jesus goes back of the law to the original purpose which expressed the ultimate will of the Creator and Lawgiver.

T. B. Maston, *Christianity and World Issues* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 240-246.

WAR AND THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

Justice, Love, the Cross, and War

There is a theological background or basis, more or less clearly defined, for every social strategy. This is quite evidently true of both pacifism and nonpacifism.⁶³ Whatever the position may be concerning war, there is involved in it some particular theory or viewpoint concerning the nature and the character of God, along with his attitude toward, relation to, and will for man and the world. One point of major controversy between the pacifists and their opponents is the meaning of the cross as related to and as a revelation of the nature of God. An integral part of that controversy is their differing viewpoints concerning the relation and the relative importance of justice and love, and the relation of both of these to the cross.

It is difficult to know at times whether pacifists and nonpacifists start with theology, or work out their theology to support their stand on war. Whichever procedure is followed, it is impossible to understand their viewpoint concerning war without some insight into their theological position.

1. *Justice and love.* One point of difference between the pacifists and the nonpacifists, as suggested previously, is the relative importance attached to justice and love, the relation of each to the other, and the possibility or impossibility of attaining either or both. For the pacifist, love is primary, justice a derivative of love. Justice may be able to check and punish evil; love alone can overcome and redeem evil. Divorce justice from love and it becomes “a soulless legalism.” It is love that makes “justice tolerable.”⁶⁴ The two cannot be separated “because they are united in God.”⁶⁵

Possibly we should admit that in this section, to use a distinction of Paul Tillich's, we are using “justice” in the sense of “proportional justice” rather than “creative justice.” The latter, according to Tillich, is the ultimate meaning of justice, and is “the form of reuniting love,”⁶⁶ while on the other hand the

creative element in justice is love.”⁶⁷ Tillich defines love as the drive toward unity, “the reunion of the estranged.”⁶⁸ Love is considered the basic principle in justice,⁶⁹ while justice is immanent in love.⁷⁰ Since love is the basic or ultimate principle in justice, Tillich contends that “love does not do more than justice demands.”⁷¹ His viewpoint is that love has the same relation to justice that revelation has to reason. Both love and revelation “transcend the rational norm without destroying it.”⁷²

But let us return to the consideration of “justice” and “love” as used by the pacifists and their critics. Macgregor, in examining Niebuhr’s idea of “equal justice,” claims that the New Testament has little to say concerning the subject, and that justice “can hardly be said to be a New Testament category at all!” He further adds that “Jesus did not regard ‘justice’ as an end in itself. He taught that justice truly ‘fulfilled’ is nothing less than love, rather than love a by-product of justice, that if we aim at love we shall establish justice by the way.”⁷³ The emphasis by the pacifists is on the supremacy of love. The God revealed by Jesus was a loving heavenly Father. He could be and was identified with *agape*. He so loved that he gave his only Son that we might have life.

It is not at the point of the primacy of love, however, that Niebuhr and other nonpacifists attack the pacifist position. Niebuhr certainly would not say that love is a by-product of justice. William Temple, who belongs in the same general theological tradition as Niebuhr, admits that “love transcends justice”;⁷⁴ and that “justice does not exhaust the meaning of love, and that only when love is in the heart can justice be established in the world.”⁷⁵ Niebuhr himself says that love is ethically purer than justice,⁷⁶ and that love as the law of life “remains a principle of criticism over all forms of community in which elements of coercion and conflict destroy the highest type of fellowship.”⁷⁷ Again Niebuhr suggests that “love is both the fulfillment and the negation of all achievements of justice in history.”⁷⁸ Similarly Brunner, who says that justice is rational and belongs to the world of systems and that love is superrational and belongs to the world of persons, says that true love is always

more than just. It can only do more and never less than justice requires. It is in this sense that he considers justice a precondition of love.⁷⁹

On the other hand, Niebuhr says that a mistake is made when Christians attempt to apply the love ethic to society. The Christian love ethic cannot be made effective in human society. "The demand of religious moralists that nations subject themselves to 'the law of Christ' is an unrealistic demand, and the hope that they will do so is a sentimental one."⁸⁰ Niebuhr considers "the more complex political and economic relations as clearly outside of the pale of the religio-moral idea."⁸¹ In common with most nonpacifists, he would contend that equal justice is an attainable goal, but that absolute love in society is not. Most nonpacifists also suggest that because of sin justice cannot be attained without war or the use of force. If war will help to attain justice, then war is justified.

The pacifists, on the other hand, contend that a good end cannot be attained by using evil means, for them war is evil. They contend that justice results from the application of the spirit of love. For them love, which is the law of life, will be victorious sooner or later. Even if love is not immediately attainable in society, the Christian has a personal responsibility to live by the law of love in every area of his life. For the pacifist this means that he cannot take human life, which for him violates the spirit of love.

2. *Love, justice, and the cross.* Practically all theological schools of thought recognize the centrality of the cross in the Christian religion. In the cross is seen God's answer to the sin problem, which is man's major problem. The cross reveals the nature of God and God's attitude toward man and his sin. It reveals that God loves the sinner while hating his sin, that he condemns man for his sin but that he also saves man from his sin. He is a God of justice and love, or possibly more accurately he is a God "of holy love."⁸² "Holy love" includes the idea of justice or righteousness as well as love. This idea that the God revealed in the cross is just and holy as well as a loving Father helps to save love "from degenerating into amiability"⁸³ or superficial sentimentality,

Raven contends, however, that justice and love do not exist side by side “as alternate modes of activity in the divine nature.”⁸⁴ Love, for Raven, is supreme in the divine nature.

The pacifists and nonpacifists differ in their interpretation concerning the relative importance and significance of justice and love as related to the cross. To the nonpacifist the cross reveals primarily the justice of God and God’s condemnation of sin. To the pacifist the cross reveals primarily the love of God for man and God’s method of overcoming sin. Raven says, “Christ by his Cross presents to us his way of overcoming the sin of the world.”⁸⁵ His way is the way of demonstrated love. Evil is overcome by good, hate by love.

3. *The cross and war.* Both pacifist and nonpacifist would transfer their “strategy of the cross” to human relations and problems. War for the nonpacifist represents God’s judgment against sin. He may even go so far as to think of himself and other men as God’s agents or instruments in that judgment. On the other hand, the pacifist considers war a negation of the strategy of the cross, since love is the central truth of the cross. For him the love revealed in the cross is God’s method for overcoming evil in the world. Evil is never overcome by evil. The cross “is Christ’s witness to the weakness and folly of the sword, to the triumphant power of non-resistance, to the new way of overcoming evil with good.”⁸⁶

Most pacifists, although not all, have an abiding faith in the triumph of love. Some not only believe that the way of love is the most effective plan to overcome the evil of the world but that pacifism, with its doctrine of love, is the only workable plan to overcome evil. The triumph of love may be postponed but it is considered inevitable. Christ on the cross was the crowning demonstration of this fact. The cross for him was not defeat but triumph. It may have been a dark hour, but it was also his most glorious hour and the climax of all human history. And it should be remembered that following the crucifixion came the empty tomb. There can be no real crucifixion without a

resurrection. This which was literally demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus represents a basic law of life. Life is found by losing it.

The seeming defeat of the cross was no real defeat. So it is in the lives of the followers of Christ. If the strategy of the cross is followed, which is the way of self-denying love, there can be no final defeat.

Let men take every advantage of the seeming weakness of love, let them bruise and batter and seek utterly to smash it, as they did at the Cross; but let it still remain love, and in the end they will have to give up, and look upon what their hands have done, and break down in its presence.⁸⁷

Is such faith in the efficacy and the triumph of love realistic? Most nonpacifists and even some pacifists would say no. Culbert Rutenber, a leading American pacifist, criticizes Macgregor, Farmer, and others at this point. He says that the words of Farmer, quoted above, are appealing and moving but scarcely realistic. He further suggests that there is no evidence in the ministry of Jesus or in the history of the Christian church to support the idea that love must always triumph. Rutenber's contention is that the Christian should be a pacifist simply because God wills it and not because it is necessarily and ultimately the most effective strategy.⁸⁸

It would be wise not only for pacifists but for all Christians to consider seriously this warning concerning motivation. A Christian's decision should not be influenced very much by what he considers to be wisest under the conditions or even necessarily the most effective. His decision should be based primarily on what he considers to be the will of God. This means that the consequences of his decision will be definitely secondary. He may properly consider, to some degree, consequences to others, but he should never make his decisions on the basis of consequences to himself. To do the will of God may literally mean the cross. It may mean defeat and death. Following defeat and death may come triumph and life. The Christian, however, has not arrived at a fully Christian motivation until he does what he considers to be the will of God, regardless of the effects on himself and his future. If he calmly reasons

that life will follow crucifixion, then he is not being Christian in the highest and fullest sense.

Does this necessarily mean, however, that love will not triumph, that the strategy of love will not work? Did love triumph in the cross? Yes, it triumphed then and it will triumph in the world because God is love and God will ultimately win in the world. There may be many defeats; but if we take the long look – and the Christian should always include eternity in his perspective – we can and should believe in the victory of love over hate, of good over evil. We may not be able to see the victory of the cross in our individual lives; but if our lives are tied in with the purposes of God, then in the divine perspective we can believe that the price we pay today may be a part of God's triumph tomorrow.

Conclusions

Conclusions on any subject on which Christians differ as widely and honestly as they do on war will have to be largely personal. It is believed, however, that most Christians will agree, in the main, with the following general statements. Differences may arise in regard to the interpretation and the application of the statement or propositions. The emphasis in the propositions is not so much on war as such – its rightness or wrongness – as it is on the Christian conscience and what the church, the state, and individual Christians should do about the conscientious objector. What is done about the latter may be as determinatively important for the democratic state and for the Christian church as what is done about war.

1. *That war is not Christian.* In the past many Christians and even some Christian scholars have defended war as Christian and placed the stamp of divine approval upon it. Wars were frequently defended as “holy crusades.” That was true as late as World War I. For example, the well known English scholar P. T. Forsyth, during World War I identified Germany with “the Kingdom of Evil” and as an enemy of “the Kingdom of God.” Germany,

according to Forsyth, had repudiated national morality; it had sinned against mankind, and mankind, under God, had the responsibility “to arrest and to judge.” The war with Germany was not a mere national war; it represented “the Lord’s controversy with the world.”⁸⁹

There are few Christians today, regardless of their viewpoint concerning the Christian’s participation in war, who defend war as Christian or who ever label any war “a holy crusade.” One reason for this change in attitude is the terrible destructiveness of contemporary wars. For example, the total death toll of World War I was approximately twice the death toll of all the wars that had been fought during the preceding 125 years, beginning with the Napoleonic wars.⁹⁰ Leslie Weatherhead breaks this down and says that the average was 7,000 killed and 14,000 wounded for every day of the war.⁹¹ World War II was much more destructive of human life, particularly of civilians, than World War I. The total dead possibly was twice as many as during World War I. Another war on a world scale promises to be much more destructive than any the world has ever known. A leading atomic scientist has suggested that as many as 40,000,000 people might be killed during one air raid on the congested population centers of the United States.⁹²

Without deprecating one bit the cost of war in the destruction of property and particularly of human lives, we would suggest that the biggest price the world pays for war is what it does to moral and spiritual values. “Love, truth, beauty – these are the creative elements in life; and war destroys them all.”⁹³ Weatherhead sums up the whole matter as follows: “Apart from the waste involved, war rouses all the worst passions contained in human personality.” He then quotes F. A. Atkins as saying: “Even a righteous war can be guaranteed to send thousands down the slopes of hell. No amount of right at the beginning can save a nation from an orgy of trespass, arson, robbery, rape, adultery, lying, and murder.”⁹⁴

In the light of modern developments, William Temple’s classification of war as “both criminal and stupid”⁹⁵ sounds reasonable. And it should be

remembered that he was not a pacifist. Latourette says that “war and Christ are poles apart”⁹⁶ and that war “works against those values for which Christ stands.”⁹⁷ While some might like to delete the defining words in the following statement by Rufus M. Jones, words which make the statement sound quite extreme, yet most Christians doubtless will agree with his general position. He says, “From my point of view war is absolutely and eternally morally wrong, and utterly and flatly incompatible with the way of life Christ has revealed and Christianity has established.”⁹⁸ The World Council of Churches meeting at Amsterdam in 1948 said: “War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a degradation of man.”⁹⁹ War is not Christian and should never be defended again as being Christian. We have wars because men and nations are not Christian and do not and will not apply the Christian spirit and Christian principles to their relations with one another.

2. *That the will of God is the source of supreme authority for the Christian.* The word of conscientious Christians through the centuries has been, “We must obey God rather than men.”¹⁰⁰ That has been true whether those Christians were speaking to the family, the community, the church, or the state. The first question of the Christian in every time of decision should be: “What is the will of God for me in this situation?” This means that “no Christian may pledge an unconditional obedience to any State or accept its orders without reference to the will of God.”¹⁰¹ And the will of God is not mediated to the individual by the church or the state. The individual has the right and the responsibility of determining for himself the will of God for his own life.

This position which is so central, particularly in evangelical Christianity, may create rather serious conflicts and problems for the Christian who seeks consistently to apply it to the decisions of his life. There are few, if any, areas where the problems will become more acute than in regard to war. How can a

Christian accept the privileges of citizenship, including the protection and security provided by his nation, without being obligated to obey the commands of that nation and to protect her from her enemies? How can one escape his solidarity with the group? There is no easy way out of the dilemma concerning war for the serious-minded Christian. "A freedom of conscience which shall escape moral anarchy, an obedience to State authority which stops short of acquiescence in evil, represent an ideal hard to define or sustain."¹⁰² Winston King says the Christian faces a dilemma regarding war. "He is caught three ways, between his sense of responsibility for his own community, his respect for another man's community, and his loyalty to the ideal community of love."¹⁰³

The Christian faces other difficulties when he seeks to apply the will of God to the immediate decisions and problems of his life. Should the will of God be applied fully now, or is it to be applied progressively to the everyday issues of life? Is there a relative will of God as well as an absolute will of God? Is it possible that frequently a Christian's decision will not be between an unmixed good and an unmixed evil? Might it be the will of God, under such circumstances, for one to make the best possible choice, the one that would involve the maximum of good and the minimum of evil, although such a decision would not conform to God's perfect or intentional will? Such questions reveal some of the difficulties Christians face in knowing the will of God for their lives in the everyday affairs of life. Leslie Weatherhead makes some distinctions within the will of God that it seems are valid. They can be helpful to the Christian in times of decision. He distinguishes between what he calls the intentional will of God, the circumstantial will of God, and the ultimate will of God."¹⁰⁴

God's ultimate will is his big over-all will which is in line with his final purposes in the world. He moves unalterably toward that ultimate will. Men may delay the achievement of that will, but ultimately God will be triumphant. There may be circumstances or conditions under which it would

be God's will for one to make a certain decision that might not conform to God's intentional or his ultimate will. This would represent his circumstantial or permissive will. If one would defend participation in war as the lesser of two evils, he might identify his decision with the circumstantial will of God but certainly not with God's intentional will. The latter stands in constant judgment over against any adjustment of that will to the realities of life. A constant tension should be maintained between the intentional will of God and what the child of God considers to be God's will under the circumstances. This should mean continuous movement in the direction of God's intentional will. It also means that there will be limits beyond which the conscientious Christian will not dare to go and still claim that he is living within the will of God. That limit for him will not be identified with the intentional will of God but with his circumstantial will. This means that Christians who participate actively in war will not claim that their participation is in harmony with the intentional or perfect will of God but rather with his circumstantial or permissive will. This is as far as any Christian should go.

3. *That the right of individual conscience should be defended.* Forsyth claims that "unlimited liberty" of conscience, "even in a Christian man, is an impossible thing." He places the authority for conscience in the church or state rather than within the individual, and says that the matter of chief decision is which of these two is to be supreme.¹⁰⁵ Admittedly the individual should consider very seriously what his state commands and his church advises. If he differs with either he should reexamine his position; it may be that he is wrong. On the other hand, neither the state nor the church is to be a conscience for the individual. This is true regardless of how democratic either or both may be. "There is no divine right of majorities."¹⁰⁶ While the right of the majority to rule or make policy decisions is basic in the democratic way of life, yet the right of the minority or the individual who disagrees is just as fundamental.

To fail to respect and to defend the right of conscience for the individual violates the very genius of the democratic philosophy of government. Freedom of conscience and liberty of opinion “are founded firmly on the premise of the value of the individual.”¹⁰⁷ This belief that the individual is the ultimate value is the central, distinctive core of the democratic concept of the state. There is not anything that would violate this fundamental idea any more than for the state to attempt to coerce the consciences of its citizens. “Conscience must be inviolable if personality is to be sacred”¹⁰⁸

What is best for individuals is also best, sooner or later, for the institutions of society. It will be destructive of the best interests of the state for it to seek to control and particularly to coerce the consciences of its citizens. Democracy to be healthy must keep its face set toward new truth and new insights. It must retain the capacity of self-criticism. This will not and cannot be true unless the right of the individual to differ from the majority is maintained.

This freedom of the individual to determine for himself what is the will of God is dangerous, but it is more dangerous not to recognize and defend it. If carried to the extreme the right of individual conscience can lead to moral and spiritual anarchy. But to fail to respect this basic concept would lead to political totalitarianism and to the stagnation of political, moral, and spiritual life.

The church, even more than the state, should defend the right of individual conscience. It may be hard for the church, as it is for the state, to determine the proper limits of individual liberty, but there should never be any hesitation about defending the principle. Both the church and the state have the right to seek to persuade the individual who differs with the majority to change his position and to conform to the majority opinion. In extreme cases the individual may have to be punished, but even then his right to differ should be respected and defended. If the church and the state are wise they will recognize that the individual or individuals who stand alone may be right and the majority may be wrong. The church, if not the state, owes a great deal to

its heretics. Frequently the heretics of one generation have become the heroes of the next generation. They have on many occasions been the pioneering spirits who have blazed new trails.

If punishment for nonconformity comes to the conscientious Christian, he should accept it as a possible phase of the redemptive process. He may become a true Christian martyr, but he should guard against developing a martyr complex. If he follows the spirit of original Christianity, he will not lead or seek to stir up a revolution against the majority group. He may properly seek to convict them of the error of their way and convert them to his way of thinking. He will personally do what he considers to be the will of God and uncomplainingly suffer the consequences. He can have an abiding faith that if he is right his witness and his suffering will be a redemptive element, to some degree, in his church, in his nation, and in the world. Furthermore, if he is right, he can be assured that time and the Lord will be on his side.

4. *That Christians should respect those with differing opinion.* We have seen that there continue to be widely divergent opinions concerning the Christian's relation to war. This fact will not damage the Christian fellowship so long as there is a mutual respect for one another. Such a respect should be a natural and an inevitable outgrowth of the conviction that the will of God as personally interpreted is to be the final authority for the individual. One Christian may be able to go all the way, accepting without any reservation or hesitation full participation in war, including combatant service. Another concludes that he cannot, in good conscience, participate in war at all. Many others will fall in between these two positions. Regardless of what the individual's personal opinion may be, he should have the fullest respect for those who conscientiously maintain a different position.

It may help Christians to respect one another more if they will recognize that decisions concerning war for most Christians are in the "gray area." Most of them believe that some evil is involved in whatever position they take regarding their personal relation to war. Such an attitude will tend to give one

a sense of uneasiness. He may feel that it is possible that others are right and that he is wrong. This tentativeness or open-mindedness will be a healthy attitude if it does not lead to constant indecision or to an unhealthy tension. It at least will tend to make one more sympathetic with those who do not agree with him. Weatherhead, in his own personal relation to war, reveals something of this tentative attitude. He changed, over a period of years, from an active participant in war to a pacifistic position and still later back to the viewpoint that it was all right for the Christian, under certain conditions, to participate actively in war. But he concludes: "Again and again I have the uneasy feeling that the pacifist may be far more right than I am."¹⁰⁹ This attitude revealed by Weatherhead would also be a healthy one for the pacifist.

It is not only important for individual Christians but also for religious groups to respect and to defend the right of individual conscience. This should be done regardless of how much the individual might differ from the majority. Numbers of major religious bodies have attempted to lead their constituencies to do this. A good example is the following resolution passed by the American Baptist Convention during World War II (1941):

Resolved that we lay upon the consciences of our people the responsibility to maintain our bond of fellowship in Christ despite differences of opinion and to give moral support and protection to those who follow the voice of conscience either in personal participation or refusal to participate in war.¹¹⁰

T. B. Maston, *Christianity and World Issues* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 281-295.

"Pacifism"

War has been one of the most persistent and perplexing problems faced by Christians through the centuries. There have been and are at least three more or less clearly defined positions concerning the Christian's relation to war: (1)

Participation in war is a phase of the Christian's citizenship responsibility – when his nation commands, he is to obey. (2) Participation in war is frequently the choice of the lesser of two evils. (3) War violates the Christian spirit and its love ethic; hence, participation in war is wrong for the Christian. The last position is usually labeled “pacifism.”

In the years immediately following the New Testament era, Christians, for various reasons, maintained in the main the third position. “The evidence for the existence of a single Christian soldier between 60 and about 165 A.D. is exceedingly slight.” On the other hand, as the church made its peace with the state and with the world, military service for Christians was not only approved but glorified. Periodically, however, the Christian conscience has been disturbed by war. The contemporary period seems to be one of unusual concern.

Southern Baptists, who are not “in any way committed to the pacifist position,” have shared in this concern. As the United States approached World War II, the Social Service Commission (now the Christian Life Commission), in its report to the Southern Baptist Convention, said that the most vital question for Christians at such times was “whether a Christian may ever at any time and under any conditions give his approval to war or take part in war.” It was also stated that “Baptists have always believed in liberty of conscience and have honored men who were willing to brave adverse public opinion for the sake of conscientious scruples.”

The Convention itself went on record as recognizing the right of conscientious objection and instructed the executive committee of the Convention to provide facilities for the registration of conscientious objectors with the denomination, that they in turn might be accurately certified to the Government. The committee, which provided a registration card, reported to the Convention the next year that 125 conscientious objectors, representing 19 states, had been registered. The number later increased to 152. Twenty-three of these were in conscientious objector camps by 1944, and a total of 45 by the

end of the war. Southern Baptists would not have been true to their belief in the right and authority of the individual conscience if they had not defended, at least to a degree, these conscientious objectors.

Later, the executive committee was also authorized by the Convention to receive and to transmit funds to the National Service Board for the support of Baptist young men who “had the moral courage to follow the dictates of their moral courage to follow the dictates of their Christian consciences and to take the consequences.” Most of the support came from the peace churches. The total cost during World War II for the maintenance of Southern Baptist men in conscientious objector camps was \$20,956.84, with contributions totaling \$3,248.67, leaving a balance as of Aug. 13, 1946, of \$17,708.17. The Public Relations Committee, reporting to the Executive Committee, claimed that the Southern Baptist Convention had no official or legal obligation for the support of Southern Baptist conscientious objectors who served in the Civilian Public Service, and that the Executive Committee had no authority to appropriate any funds on hand to reimburse the peace churches. The Convention defended the right of conscience but did not provide, in any adequate way, for the financial support of the men who were placed in conscientious objector camps.

T. B. Maston, “Pacifism,” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, vol. 2, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), 1067-1068.

Stewardship and Pollution

The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,
the world and those that dwell therein (Psalm 24:1, RSV).

These words provide a good basis for the stewardship of the soil. An emphasis on this aspect of stewardship was particularly relevant when we were a predominately rural nation. It still applies for those who own or live on a farm.

While our family members were sharecroppers, I heard my father say on numerous occasions he believed that even a sharecropper should leave the land more productive than when he started to farm it.

What about the stewardship of the air and the water in contemporary urban society? The air and water, as well as the land, are part of God's creation.

It is increasingly evident that what is done in the next few years concerning the pollution of land, air and water will determine to a considerable degree whether or not man will have a future on the earth. Unless the pollution problem is solved we will not need to worry about the "population explosion."

As a phase of the fight against pollution Christian churches should include the pollution of the earth, air and water as an important and integral phase of Christian stewardship. God holds man responsible for what he does with God's gifts. And land, air and water are among His best gifts.

If these and other gifts of God are abused, judgment will come and that judgment will not be arbitrary. It will come as the result of the way things inevitably work. The judgment or punishment is not external to the thing done, rather it is inherent in the act. It is a part of the operation of the laws of nature.

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – Stewardship and Pollution," *Baptist Standard*, July 7, 1972, 19.

THE FAMILY AND SEX

T. B. Maston regarded the family as one of the most basic and important institutions within Christianity and church life. Central to the family, of course, is the sexual coming together of a man and a woman. Within the marriage unit of a man and woman, the husband and wife are to find the deepest relationship possible between human beings, as this relationship becomes more important than any other human relationship he/she may have.

Any break in this highest form of relationship is to be seen as sin, as missing the mark. Maston emphasized the falling short aspect of such action, though he was not one to throw stones at anyone involved in such an experience. Maston believed that divorce is wrong, but he also emphasized the need of forgiveness between all parties involved, beginning with the husband and the wife forgiving themselves.

This section begins with some excerpts on the importance of marriage and sex followed by dealing with divorce. It concludes with two articles examining the relationship between men and women within marriage.

READINGS

Not Good for Man To Be Alone

The Lord God said,
It is not good that man should be alone;
I will make a help meet for him (Gen. 2:18, KJV).

What is meant when it says that God saw that it was not good for man to be alone? It has been suggested that it is not good for him physically. As a general rule a married man (and woman) lives longer than the one who does not marry and doesn't just seem longer.

There is a deeper and more significant reason why it is not good for man to dwell alone. Man was created in the image of God.

This may mean several things, but supremely it means that man was created a person. Several things are characteristic of a person, but the one most significant thing is the need for fellowship or communication with other persons.

Really, there is no person without other persons. On the highest level the needs of the human person are met through his communication with God. On the human level the highest expression of this aspect of personhood is the communication of husband and wife.

When God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, He created a help meet for him. She was one with whom he could communicate, with whom he could find fulfillment.

The preceding, of course, is just as true of the woman as it is of the man. It is not good for men and women to live alone. This is true although it is clearly the will of God for some to forego marriage for the sake of His will and work. To such individuals it seems that our heavenly Father gives the grace to live the single or celibate life.

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – Not Good For Man To Be Alone," *Baptist Standard*, May 17, 1972, 13.

To Leave Father and Mother

Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother,
and shall cleave unto his wife:
and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:24, KJV).

This is one of the verses from the Old Testament most frequently quoted in the New Testament. It is quoted or referred to by Jesus (Matt. 19:5) and by Paul (1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31).

In biblical times, before any modern means of communication and transportation the “leaving of father and mother” could mean for life. This required a great deal of adventuresome faith and a sense of dedication to the purposes of God (e.g., Rebekkah).

The statement in Gen. 2:24 has an important word to speak to us today. If that word was taken seriously by young couples when they get married it would go a long way toward solving many of their difficulties during the early years.

Many will find it best not to live close to their parents. Some distance between them and parents will make it more difficult for their parents to get involved in their problems. Someone has suggested that this verse is “a mandate to in-laws to keep their hands off.”

Wherever a couple may live in relation to their parents they should recognize that their supreme human loyalty from the time they marry until the end of life is to their companion. It is not to father or mother or any other relative.

To make it personal, this means that none of your relatives will be permitted to cause trouble between you and your companion.

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – To Leave Father and Mother,” *Baptist Standard*, May 31, 1972, 19.

What God Has Joined Together

What God has join together,
let no man put asunder (Matt. 19:6, RSV).

What is the meaning of “has joined together”? Does it refer to marriages where the couple have [sic] sought the leadership of the Lord in choosing a companion and establishing a home? If so, then all others would be perfectly free to divorce and remarry.

The immediate background of the statement may help us to arrive at a proper interpretation of it. Jesus had quoted Gen. 2:24: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. So they are no longer two but one” or as the *New English Version* translates: “the two shall become one flesh.”

It seems clear that Jesus was referring to the fleshly union. In other words, when Jesus said “what God has joined together” He was referring to the fact that when a man and woman come together as husband and wife and have physical union they are one in the sight of God.

They may not even recognize that there is a God, but the basic laws of God that make a husband and wife one operate in their lives as well as in the lives of His spiritual children.

In other words, God has not established one set of laws for Christians and another set for other men and women.

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – What God Has Joined Together,” *Baptist Standard*, April 5, 1972, 13.

Husbands, Love Your Wives

“Husbands, love your wives
in the same way that Christ loved the church
and gave his life for it” (Eph. 5:25, TEV).

Paul, in this beautiful passage (Eph. 5:22-33), compares the relation of husband and wife to the relation of Christ and His church. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so the wife should submit herself or be subject to her husband.

In turn, Paul says that husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies (v. 28) or as they love themselves (v. 33), which is possibly simply another way of saying the same thing. The highest admonition or demand is that the

husband love his wife as Christ loved the church (v. 25). How much did Christ love the church? He loved it enough that He gave His life for it.

The word for live here is the distinctly New Testament word. In other words, the husband is to love his wife with the same quality of love with which Christ loved the church and with which God loved the world (John 3:16).

Wives may chafe at Paul's admonition for them to submit themselves to their husbands. Will you not agree, however, that very few wives would object to submitting themselves to their husbands if their husbands loved them as Christ loved the church?

T. B. Maston, "Bible Nuggets – Husbands, Love Your Wives," *Baptist Standard*, January 5, 1972, 19.

Divorce and Sin

A proper understanding of the Biblical conception of marriage and the home on the one hand, and of sin on the other hand will convince some that sin is involved in every divorce.

The Bible clearly reveals that God's original purpose and his ultimate ideal for the home was and is the union of one man and one woman as husband and wife for life.

On the other hand, a word for sin in the Old Testament and a comparable one in the New Testament that are both particularly significant for our purpose mean "to miss the mark." Any time an individual or a Godordained institution misses the mark that God has set, it is sin.

God's Mark

Since God's mark or purpose for the home was and is the lifetime union of husband and wife, divorce on any grounds involves sin. In addition, there are sins of various kinds that may contribute to the sin of divorce.

Pastors and other marriage counselors know when a divorce has occurred or is threatened that, with rare exceptions, both husband and wife must share in the responsibility for the divorce. There is seldom if ever a completely innocent party in a conflict that leads to divorce. Most of the responsibility may be on one side or the other, but both have sinned and come short of the purposes of God – they have “missed the mark.”

Either husband or wife may sin simply by not being willing to make adjustments, by being unwilling to work as hard as he or she should to make the marriage succeed. In other words, the husband and wife should be reminded that there are sins of omission as well as commission.

Refusing Responsibility

Also, one or both partners may sin by refusing to acknowledge his or her responsibility for the failure of their marriage. It is a sin to shift to others the responsibility that properly belongs to us.

Closely akin to the preceding is the fact that repentance and forgiveness are essential in any mutually satisfying human relations. There is no relation where these are more important than in the home. Insofar as a lack of either or both of these has been a factor in the divorce, sin is involved.

One other word needs to be said about sin and divorce. The sin of divorce and the sins that contribute to divorce are not unpardonable sins. This sin and these sins, like other sins, can be forgiven. God can and wants to forgive every sin, including the sin of divorce. The latter is true regardless of the reason for the divorce.

If men and women who have been divorced are to have the Father's forgiveness they must seek it. One factor in seeking God's forgiveness is genuine repentance for sins that have been factors in the divorce and repentance for the divorce itself. The forgiveness that is available from God if one will genuinely repent must be appropriated.

Entirely too many Christian men and women seemingly do not believe that God has forgiven them when the basic problem is that they have not forgiven themselves. There is no forgiveness of self without a prior acknowledgment of guilt.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Divorce and Sin," *Baptist Standard*, March 12, 1969, 19.

Divorce – The Real and Ideal

When a man hath taken a wife. . .
and it come to pass that she finds no favour in his eyes. . .
let him write her a bill of divorcement and send her out of his house
(Deut. 24:1, KJV).

For the Lord, the God of Israel,
saith that he hateth putting away (divorce, RSV)
(Mal. 2:16, KJV).

These verses reveal a twofold attitude toward divorce in the Old Testament. The law sought to regulate divorce, which was more or less prevalent.

In contrast, Malachi said that god hated "putting away" or "divorce." There are other evidences in the Old Testament that God disapproved divorce. For example, priests and high priests were not to marry one who had been put away (Lev. 21:7, 14). Why? "For he (the priest) is holy under his God." This implied there was something unholy about one who had been put away.

If God hated divorce why was there provisions for divorce in the law? Jesus plainly said it was because of the hardness of the hearts of the people. In other words, God through Moses provided some regulations of divorce. He sought

to meet the needs of people where they were. At the same time the ideal unquestionably was the union of one man and one woman for life.

Such a balancing of the ideal and the real is relevant for us today. It is just as essential in our day as it was in the days of Moses and Christ. If we minister effectively to people, we must uncompromisingly preach and teach the ideal – no divorce. But as we counsel and work with individuals, we must seek as best we can to meet their immediate needs.

This may include counseling with the divorced and those who are contemplating divorce.

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – Divorce – The Real and Ideal,” *Baptist Standard*, January 24, 1972, 19.

Women

It does not take a prophet or the son of a prophet to know that we live in a revolutionary age. And one of the most vocal expressions of that revolution has been and still is by women and about women. This is evident in society in general and to varying degrees in our churches. Some men and an increasing number of women have become conscious of the inequities suffered by women. For example, women usually outnumber men in our churches, and yet in most churches they have relatively little voice in determining programs and policies. They seldom hold places of significant leadership. When placed on a committee it is usually a committee of minor importance or as a minority member of a major committee. The work of many churches is impoverished by failure to utilize the distinctive contributions that women could make. It has been said, “Woman has always been the best friend religion has ever had, but religion has by no means been the best friend woman has had.”

The Old Testament

The first chapters of Genesis are the most important references in the Old Testament relative to women. Let us, in outline form, suggest some of the more significant aspects of the account of the creation in Genesis. . .

1. The word for *man* or *Adam*, as in Genesis 1, is found, according to Heflin,¹¹¹ 562 times in the Old Testament. It is used predominantly in the generic sense inclusive of male and female.
2. “The image of God,” found here (Gen. 1:27) and elsewhere in the Scriptures, has been variously interpreted. Heflin suggests that “we will never grasp all of the significance of being in the image of God.” One suggestion is that God is a person and that men and women are created persons.
3. As suggested previously, a person can think, feel, will. Also, he or she is conscious of self and of other selves or persons. Persons are not only capable of communication, but communication with other persons is necessary. There is no person without other persons. It is no accident that our God who is one is also the triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit. Notice, “God said, ‘Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness’” (Gen. 1:26, authors italics). God further said, “Let them have dominion.”
4. The most important aspect of the creation, from the perspective of this chapter on women, is the fact that male and female were both and equally created in the image of God. The Bible pointedly says, “So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he *him*; male and female created he *them*” (1:27, KJV, authors italics). Genesis 5:1-2 similarly says, “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.”

5. The fact that all are created in the image of God, and the companion fact that Christ died for all to restore that image, marred by sin, is or should be the basis for our respect for persons, regardless of sex, race, culture, or condition of life.
6. This means, among other things, that no person, male or female, should ever be used as a mere means. Each person is an end of infinite value.
7. While male and female are equally created in the image of God, being male and female they are different and have some distinctive functions to perform. Jewett suggests that men and women are different but then adds, “There can be no fellowship where there are no differences. Differences make for mutual enrichment.”¹¹² The complementarity of men and women is a recurring emphasis in Lois Clemens’ book *Women Liberated*.¹¹³ She correctly emphasizes that the complementarity includes much more than sex relations. It has also been unfortunate that entirely too frequently both men and women have considered the female’s distinctive contributions as inferior to that by men.

Heflin’s conclusion regarding Genesis 1:26-31 is as follows: “Woman in this passage is certainly no inferior afterthought; she is rather one with man in the responsibility of subduing the creation and propagating the race.”¹¹⁴

Let us now suggest a few things related to Genesis 2:18-24.

1. In Genesis 1:31, God looked over all his creation, including male and female, and concluded that it was very good. In contrast, in Genesis 2:18, God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” or “a partner for him” (NEB).

2. Genesis 2:18-24 supplements the account of the creation in Genesis 1, particularly the creation of male and female.
3. The word translated “rib” (v. 21) is usually translated “side.” The word for “made” (v. 22) is so translated only three times but over three hundred times “build” or “built,” and is so translated here in some of the versions (NEB, Jer. B.). This may suggest that God took some time and care in making or building woman. “Man” in verse 23 is *ish* rather than *adam*. Woman is *ishshah*. *Ish*, which refers primarily to man as an individual person, really comes into being only with the creation of *ishshah*; so far as we know, man or *ish* here speaks for the first time – *ish* comes alive in meeting *ishshah*.”
4. Some who contend that woman is innately inferior and should be subservient to man defend their position on the basis that woman was created or “built” from the rib or side of man. The statement of the apostle Paul is frequently quoted. He said, “(For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man)” (1 Cor. 11:8-9). There is another parenthetical statement in verses 11 and 12 of this same chapter of 1 Corinthians that the defenders of the superiority of men usually overlook. It is, “(Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God).”
5. If one argues that woman is inferior because she was taken or built from the side of man, what about man? It says, “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground” (Gen. 2:7). Is man inferior to the dust?
6. Closely akin to the preceding is the contention of some that the fact that woman was created after man implies her inferiority. The animals were created before man. Does this mean that they are superior to man? The

order of creation could be used to prove woman's superiority. It has been suggested "that which comes second may well be the better."

7. When God brought the woman to man, the latter's immediate response was:

This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man (Gen. 2:23).

The latter part of this statement could be interpreted to imply the inferiority of women. The first portion, however, clearly implies partnership.

Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." This statement reverses the generally accepted order or policy of the times and even the general practice in the Old Testament. The wife usually left her family and became a member of the husband's family.

There should be, for a complete picture of the Old Testament and women, some consideration of the temptation and fall as recorded in Genesis 3. Those who defend the subserviency of women justify their position frequently by using God's curse on the woman following the fall:

To the woman he said,
"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
Yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you" ("shall be your master," NEB)
(Gen. 3:16).

The desire spoken of her may have referred to desire in general, but its relation to the bearing of children suggests that the primary reference was to

sexual desire. Whatever may be the correct interpretation of “desire,” some claim that it provides the basis for man ruling over woman. Also some regard this as a prescriptive ordinance; others consider it a descriptive statement of actual conditions within marriage, resulting from human sinfulness. The prescriptive interpretation has continued to be quite prevalent in spite of the redeeming impact of the life of Jesus. In Christ the image of God is equally restored in both men and women through their union with him. The only person who has the right or authority to rule over woman is the Ruler of the universe, who has the right to rule over men as well as women. But even the Lord does not force his authority on anyone. It must be voluntarily accepted; when accepted, we will discover that his yoke is easy and that his burden is light (Matt. 11:30). In other words, his rule and authority is best for us. This is true in our individual lives and in our relationships as men and women, husbands and wives, parents and children.

Jesus

In the Jewish home, the woman’s position was one of marked subordination. Some extremists even contended that a man should not converse with a woman, even his wife. What a contrast with Jesus! “In his public ministry. . . he spoke of women and related to women as being fully human and equal in every way to men. . . thus restoring to the woman the full humanity which was given her by the Creator when he made Man male and female.”¹¹⁵ We can sum it up by simply saying that Jesus *lifted the level of womanhood*, just as he did for every other oppressed, underprivileged group.¹¹⁶

And it might be wise for us to remember again that the *final* authoritative *word* from our Heavenly Father is in his Son and our Savior and Lord. The writer of Hebrews said that God, in times past, spoke “in many and various ways . . . by the prophets; but in the last days he has spoken to us by a Son,” and the Son “reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature” (1:1-3). Possibly the Father would say to us today, as he said to the disciples on

the mount of transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son; listen to him” (Mark 9:7). We ought to listen to him regarding what he said concerning women but even more, we ought to examine his *attitude toward* and relation to *women*. After all, Jesus, as is true of any great spiritual teacher or leader, taught as much if not more by his spirit and attitude than by anything he might have said.

Really, Jesus *gave no specific teachings* concerning women. This was and is in marked contrast to most religious teachers. The sacred books of most of the peoples of the world include rather detailed instructions concerning the nature of women and how they should be treated or mistreated. Some of these sacred books contain specific instructions about how male and female children were to be trained. In contrast, Jesus either largely ignored women in his teachings or he believed that his teachings were equally applicable to men and women. The latter was clearly the case. Jewett concludes that Jesus “*treated women as . . . equal to men in every respect; no word of deprecation about women, as such, is ever found on his lips.*”¹¹⁷

There was also a marked *contrast between the attitude of Jesus toward women and the religious leaders of his day*. The latter not only did not permit women to teach the law but also they were not taught the law. Jewish men, in their morning prayer, thanked God that he had not made them Gentiles, slaves, or women. No wonder the disciples marveled when they found Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:27). Incidentally, this is the first recorded conversation of Jesus with a woman, except with his mother. The Samaritan woman was even surprised that he talked with her. She reminded him that the Jews had “no dealings with Samaritans” (John 4:9). But Jesus never permitted any barrier – race, sex, or moral condition – to keep him from reaching out to a person in need. This was just as true of the beggar as the rich man, the Samaritan as the Jew, the sinner as the saint, and the woman as the man. We can summarize by simply saying that the attitude of Jesus toward women and his relation to them were revolutionary for his day. Also, we may conclude that it would be rather revolutionary for our day.

When we remember how Jesus treated women, we do not wonder that many responded readily to him.

Paul

Some portray Paul as a chauvinist, a woman hater. This is a gross misrepresentation and misinterpretation of Paul. In seeking to *interpret correctly* and to evaluate fairly Paul's teachings concerning women, the following should be kept in mind:

1. Most of Paul's Epistles were written to particular churches, in particular locations, faced with some particular problems.
2. This means, among other things, that some portions of some of his Epistles are not directly relevant for our day. One striking example is what he said concerning the eating of meat offered to idols (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8; 9; 10). This is also true of some things he said concerning women, particularly in 1 Corinthians.
3. If we examine carefully and look deeply enough, we will discover some basic principles that are relevant for every age. This is true even in some of the most irrelevant sections of his Epistles. For example, from a study of what Paul said concerning the eating of meat offered to idols, there evolves the following abiding principles: \1 A Christian should not only consider what he thinks is right for him to do but also what others may consider right for him. \1 An activity that may be right within itself may become wrong if it is a cause of stumbling to others (1 Cor. 8:13). \1 A Christian is not to seek his own good but the good of others (1 Cor. 10:24). \1 Also, a child of God should do all things to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), which means that the Christian should give "no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to

the church of God” (v. 32). The preceding principles could apply to women in church and society in Paul’s day and even in our day.

4. In regard to women, slavery, and in general, Paul was radical or revolutionary in the ideal he proclaimed. His radical ideal is stated most pointedly in Galatians 3:28, “There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28, NEB). “There is no room for Jew or Greek, no room for slave or freeman, no room for male or female, for you are all one through union with Christ Jesus” (Williams).

“In [“with,” Williams] Christ Jesus” refers to one’s personal relation to Christ, but it also implies one’s being in the church or the family of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:12/1). For one who is in Christ or in his church, it is irrelevant whether he or she is Jew or Gentile, free or slave, male or female. This great verse (Gal. 3:28) has been referred to as “Freedom’s Manifesto” and the “Magna Charta of Humanity.” Paul not only wrote this to the Galatians but also spoke the same word loud and clear by the life he lived. After all, he was “the apostle to the Gentiles”; a visitor to Lydias house; and the friend of Onesimus, a runaway slave.

5. It does seem at times that Paul was concerned that some who had discovered a new freedom in Christ would go too far too fast in exercising the new liberty that was theirs. That seemed to have been particularly true of slaves and women. This may help to explain some things he said in 1 Corinthians, statements that are hard if not impossible to reconcile with the freedom he proclaimed, particularly in Galatians.
6. A general principle of interpretation that may help with some of the difficult passages in Paul is the fact that any particular Scripture should be interpreted and particularly evaluated in the light of the total impact of the

Scriptures. This at least means that we should not exclusively judge Paul's attitude toward women by one or two more or less isolated statements.

7. In interpreting Paul's attitude toward women, we should give proper consideration not only to his specific teachings but also to his relation to women. After all, as suggested previously, a great teacher usually teaches as much, if not more, by his attitudes and relationships as by anything he says.

Lockyer correctly says that "gifted and consecrated women figure prominently in the labors of Paul."¹¹⁸ Luke referred rather frequently to Paul's relation to women: Lydia (Acts 16:11-15), a slave girl who had "a spirit of divination" (Acts 16:16-18), "the leading women" (Acts 17:4), "a few Greek women" (Acts 17:12), and the four unmarried daughters of Philip "who prophesied" (Acts 21:8-9). Women filled an important place in the ministry of Paul.

Application

1. Because of the contemporary interest in the women's movement and in the light of the teachings of the Scriptures, many churches and church leaders need to reconsider the attitude of the churches toward women and the place they give to them in their program and work.
2. Because of the considerable church load carried by women in many churches and because of their possible distinctive contributions to the work of the churches, women should be given more of a voice in the programs and structures of many of our churches. "It would mean bringing into focus a more complete human view of things by adding woman's particular perspective to man's."¹¹⁹

3. Some churches, pastors, and other church leaders may be hesitant about doing anything about giving women more of a voice because of a fear that it will disturb the peace of the church and church family.
4. Such hesitation may in some cases be justified. However, it should not be defended as God's ultimate will concerning women in our churches. In many, and possibly most, of our churches, women are not treated as Jesus would treat them or as our Father would have them treated.
5. As a part of our effort to struggle through to some answer in the ordination of women, we need to restudy the whole matter of New Testament ordination. It seems to have been a relatively simple service of dedication by a church of an individual or individuals God had called to a particular task. If this simple type of ordination were followed, then the only concern of a church should be whether God had called the individual to some phase of specialized ministry. The so-called "ordination service" would be primarily a dedication service. If our churches continue to use the rather elaborate type of ordination with examination of the candidate, etc., then they should consider carefully before expanding it to members of church staffs (men or women) other than the pastor.¹²⁰
6. Ordination should not be sought personally by a man or a woman. The initiative should come from others unless ordination is necessary to perform some functions of the particular type of ministry.
7. In the case of ordination to the ministry, there can properly be some question about the advantages or the disadvantages of being ordained.
8. In this whole awakening of interest in women and their place in the home, the church, and society, it will be tragic if we ever belittle the traditional role of the woman as wife and mother. Even in the contemporary world with all the freedom that women have, this role should be given priority.

9. "Men and women are properly related [in church and society] when they accept each other as equals whose difference is mutually complementary in all spheres of life and human endeavor."¹²¹

T. B. Maston and William M. Tillman, Jr. *The Bible and Family Relations* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 61-71, 73-75, 82-83.

The Bible and Sex

An examination of the Bible will reveal a number of very important concepts concerning sex. These can provide guidance for us in an age of chaos and confusion.

None of these concepts is more significant than the idea that sex as such is a good gift of God. The Bible says that when God saw everything that He had made, which included male and female, "behold, it was very good." The sex urge is no more wrong than the desire for food or drink.

The Bible also reveals that sex, as is true of other good gifts of God, can be expressed in hurtful and self-defeating ways.

The sex urge can properly be compared to fire. The latter may be used to cook our food and warm our houses, but it can also destroy those houses. We warn our children not to play with fire. Sex should not be played with. Many young people and also older people can testify that, like fire, sex can get out of control.

It is also quite evident from the biblical record that God would restrict the full expression of the sex urge to the relation of husband and wife. The experience of the human race has indicated that this is not an arbitrary requirement. It is best for the husband and wife, for the home they establish, and for society in general.

Evelyn and Sylvanus Duvall, leading contemporary authorities on the family, recently said, "If you want a good marriage you have your sexual intercourse after, and not before, you are married." Most marriage counselors

can verify from their counseling experience that waiting until after marriage will pay rich dividends.

The Bible also reveals that any expression of the sex urge other than the normal physical union of husband and wife is contrary to the purposes of God. This not only includes adultery and fornication, but it also includes homosexuality and other forms of sexual deviation.

In addition to the preceding, the Bible has some helpful words for married couples. It is quite clear that the Bible considers sexual union within marriage as a normal and necessary part of married life. This, which is taken for granted throughout the Scriptures, is plainly stated by Paul (I Cor. 7:3-5).

Furthermore, husbands and wives are to be faithful to one another. The writer of Hebrews says: "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous" (Heb. 13:4, RSV). There is no sin more uniformly or strongly condemned in the Scriptures than sexual unfaithfulness.

Let all, married and unmarried, take seriously the following words of Paul:

"God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean cut with sexual immorality. Every one of you should learn to control his body, keeping it pure and treating it with respect, and never regarding it as an instrument for self-gratification, as do pagans with no knowledge of God. You cannot break this rule without in some way cheating your fellow man. And you must remember that God will punish all who do offend in this matter, and we have warned you how we have seen this work out in our experience in life. The calling of God is not to impurity but to the most thorough purity, and anyone who makes light of the matter is not making light of man's ruling but of God's command"

(I Thess. 4:3-8, Phillips).

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – The Bible and Sex," *Baptist Standard*, February 21, 1968, 16.

Premarital Pregnancy

When an unmarried young woman becomes pregnant, several major decisions must be made. Those closely associated with persons involved in premarital pregnancy sometimes can help with guidance from a Christian perspective.

Assuming that the young woman has had relations with only one boy or young man, one of the most immediate problems that they face is whether or not to marry.

Also, should they make this decision by themselves or should they consult with their parents, pastor, or some other counsellor?

Counsel with Parents

Ordinarily they should share fully with the parents. Frequently counselling with others will be helpful. It may prevent some tragic mistakes.

Parents and other counsellors should seek to lead the couple to weigh fully the choices. Decisions, however, should ultimately be made by the couple. It will be a big mistake for parents to force them to marry.

There should not be a marriage just "to give the baby a name." Such marriages seldom succeed.

Parents and the young people themselves should know that there are several things that should determine whether or not it will be wise for them to marry. A major factor is how much of a chance there is that their marriage will be a sound one. Is there genuine love and respect for one another? Is there concern for and devotion to the well-being of one another?

There are other questions that may wisely be asked by parents, pastors, and the young people themselves.

Attitude of Youth

What is the attitude of the young man and the young woman toward the pregnancy? Does each reveal a willingness to accept his or her part of the responsibility? Or, is there a tendency to blame the other? Is there a real sense of repentance and at the same time a spirit of forgiveness?

The supremely important question to be asked by all who are involved, directly or indirectly, in a premarital pregnancy is “What will be best for the child?”

The pastor will frequently have an opportunity to speak a word for the child. This opportunity may come when the parents consult with him or when the young woman or the couple come to him.

If he is asked to perform the marriage ceremony, that will give him another chance to speak for the child. For the sake of the latter as well as for the sake of the young people involved he may decline to perform the marriage ceremony.

I personally believe that he will be justified in performing the ceremony for such a couple only if after one or more conferences with them he is persuaded that they have a reasonably good chance of founding a home on a 'solid' basis and of providing a wholesome environment for the child.

If the couple decides not to marry, the pastor will frequently have an opportunity to counsel with all concerned about homes for unwed mothers. He may also be asked about the wisest procedures concerning the child. Should the latter be retained by the mother, adopted by a member of the family or by someone unknown to them?

Primary consideration should be given to what is best for the child. In the majority of cases it will be best from the child's perspective for him to be adopted by someone unknown to the family.

T. B. Maston, “Problems of the Christian Life – Premarital Pregnancy,” *Baptist Standard*, May 7, 1969, 19.

PART FIVE: “IS THIS WRITTEN SO THAT MY MOTHER COULD READ IT?”

A major purpose for this compilation of Maston’s materials is to convey to something of *how* he was a Christian ethicist. That is, are there discernable methodologies by which he conveyed his ideas so others could emulate and have perhaps the same or even better results?

The methodologies are generally fairly obvious and follow Maston’s expressions of his vocation. This compilation of Maston’s writings displays something of the immense volume of words he put forward as he interpreted the Gospel for many audiences. He believed he could have an impact on others’ thinking through what they read. For forty-one years, Maston worked from a classroom forum, shaping generations of students. Those two roles, writer and teacher, provided content for speaking engagements outside a classroom setting. A rather, not so obvious, characteristic from his mother shaped Maston’s style of engaging the world with his Christian, ethical thought.

WRITING

According to his recollection, Maston’s mother was never able to obtain more than a third-grade education. She was, he remembered, barely able to read and write. These circumstances shaped her life, significantly affecting her sense of self-worth and her interaction with other people. Maston believed his mother’s limited communication and literary skills prevented her from being as active in church as was his father.

Nevertheless, his mother’s influence on Maston at this point should not be overlooked. When Maston began to write, he was persuaded he should write in

such a way that anyone could grasp his thought. By his own account, Maston typically evaluated the articles, Sunday School so that my mother could read and understand it?” This dynamic shaped all of Maston’s writing – that is, write to one’s audience.

Though he wrote several lengthy books designed primarily for academic use, Maston believed that he may have been most influential through the books, articles, and pamphlets directed toward lay readers. This Yale-trained scholar’s style of writing exhibited an almost child-like simplicity (though he was not simplistic). His contributions to Sunday School literature and popular articles were particularly practical, concise, and relevant, strewn with biblical wisdom and common-sense personal insights. Maston’s simple, direct thought was well illustrated in his series of articles that appeared in numerous Baptist state papers over a span of twenty-plus years in the late twentieth century. These series are listed in the bibliography.

Maston continued to write until his death. He admitted that he was still “in process” on many issues. Questions remained with which he struggled. Some of his personal views were open for discussion. His honesty about the questions he continued to ask, set in the context of a life-long interest in finding answers, is a classic portrayal of the humility, strength, and abiding relevance of the man and his work. Nonetheless, his monumental contribution to Christian ethics through his writing, particularly in Southern Baptist life, speaks for itself.

TEACHING

Maston’s impulse, shaped by years of life experiences, academic training, and interaction with students in the classroom, was to encourage pastors, churches, denominations and individual Christians to reflect on the application of the gospel to the Christian life. Every believer was called to emulate Jesus, to “walk as He walked.” Churches had to come to grips with the fact that evangelism and social action are two sides of the same coin, neither

separate enterprises nor one more important than the other. He believed strongly that meeting the needs of people is part and parcel of the gospel, a companion to any witnessing effort.

A certain irony surrounds Maston's legacy in that he is remembered by former students as a master teacher. Little, if any, material remains from Maston as he described his own philosophy of teaching or his consideration of pedagogy. The irony develops further when one realizes Maston had literally thousands of students over his forty-one years at Southwestern Seminary. The impact of his classroom work came with pastors, teachers, missionaries, institutional heads, and those who worked in state and international denominational infrastructures. Likely, the proof of the pudding of his teaching prowess can be best ascertained in the lives of those students.

Most of those students will relate that Maston's teaching abilities stemmed from a passion for his work, a strong sense of calling. There was always an authenticity about him, an embodied pedagogy, if you will, as he discussed and demonstrated ways to live hermeneutically. How does one interpret the Gospel? How does one apply the Gospel?

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Perhaps one of Maston's greatest contributions, reflected in the title of this reader, is his emphasis on the "both/and" of Christianity. Ethics involves both God and man, bible and brain, science and art. One should maintain a balance, he said, between theology and ethics, evangelism and ethics, and corporate and personal expressions of faith. He continuously emphasized the paradoxes that exist in the Scripture, admitting there are many "gray" areas. Keep these in balance, he said, dismissing neither. Allow the tension which arises from the paradox to energize you and help you remain focused on what is most important. Here may be where Maston best integrated both evangelism and ethics.

The concept of tension may be the best example of the “both/and” dimension of Christian ethics. We live, he said, in that difficult tension between God’s ideals and the world’s realities – between God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. This tension does not necessarily make decision making easier. It does, however, enable one to accept the complexities of the human situation without being overwhelmed by them. A believer may acknowledge his own limitations and the enormity of the sinful forces opposing him in this world, and still have hope, still have a way to contend with them in a constructive fashion. God’s transcendent expectations and high ideals for Christian life, and the rewards incurred through the struggle toward the ideals, constantly challenge the Christian to move forward and upward, rather than acquiesce in frustration or attempt escape from the situation.

This tension is the dynamic context for the church’s existence in the world. The church’s task is to uphold the ideals and call the world to follow. If the church pulls too hard, the tension between the world and the church breaks and the church subsequently loses its influence on the world. If on the other hand, the church does not pull hard enough but rather becomes too close to the world and allows the tension to relax, the church becomes mired in the world and again loses or dilutes its influence. Maston offered a methodology for Christian ethics that incorporated both a high view of Scripture and a deep respect for the freedom of the individual. For him, the Bible was paramount in Christian ethics, yet it did not function for the decision maker as an inflexible set of rules.

Maston encouraged responsible, scholarly interpretation of Scripture along with careful application of biblical principles by the individual as led by the Spirit. The “principle approach” does not always provide automatic, cut and dried answers to every question, but it does offer a consistent starting point for dialogue and decision-making.

Admittedly, here one also finds where Maston may be weak. He does not offer clear definitions when employing such terms as “ideal” and “principle.”

He does not give adequate guidance in defining the exact nature of a principle and how it is to be “ferreted out” of the biblical narrative. Principles, Maston said, are to be found underlying the teachings and “culturally-conditioned” commands of the Bible. Yet, how one actually determines a principle receives little attention. For Maston, they were somehow self-evident.

What can be deduced, however, is that the principle approach (in which the rules and stories of the text are seen as examples of application of the principles in a given cultural/historical context) encourage Christians to be students of the Scripture while being wary of drawing the lines of interpretation too tightly. Believers learn to live in the tension – this promotes respect for the freedom of conscience; it keeps God out of the proverbial box and allows room for the mystery, adventure of the process. It allows one to trust in a God who wants the best for His people, who invites us to walk as He walked on this earth, to abide in Him, to love as He loves. This is both a safe place for the believer on the journey, as well as a motivating, energizing encouragement to stay the course.

There are no guarantees that a decision made using Maston’s approach will be the right one. Maston would be one of the first to remind us there is a certain amount of risk involved in Christian ethics. Still, the material collected in this volume stand as substantial evidence that there was and is something to T. B. Maston’s approach to life and the Gospel – really two sides of the same coin for him.

APPLIED CHRISTIANITY

T. B. Maston had various methods that can be identified regarding his teaching, speaking, and writing. However, to more fully understand his methods and techniques, one must first look at his understandings of the methods of fellow Christians, and the writings included in this section help the reader do just that. The following selections are focus on the ways in which Christian do ethics.

READINGS

Both/And: Theologians: Conservative/Liberal

Don't let the word "theologians" throw you. All of us have our own perspective concerning God, Christ, the Bible, man, sin, salvation, the Christian life, etc. Whether we know it or not, we are, at least to some degree and in some ways, theologians.

Do you consider yourself a conservative, liberal or a mixture? The terms "conservative" and "liberal" are words some of us do not like to use. They tend to become labels and most of us do not like to be labeled. It does seem necessary, however, to have some distinctive terms for different theological perspectives and positions.

Relative Nature

One problem in labeling one as a "conservative" or a "liberal" is the fact that those terms are relative. One might be considered a liberal in one location and at some time in the past and yet be considered a conservative at the present time and in another place.

For example, some things that may have been generally considered liberal in the past may be acceptable to most conservatives today. Let me give you one example: I think I am correct when I say that when I was a lad one who questioned the Pauline authorship of the book of Hebrews was generally considered a liberal. Today, most conservatives do not consider this an important issue.

Similarly, a scholar or a preacher in one area of our country might be considered a conservative and yet be labeled a liberal if he functioned in a different area.

A Mixture

Most of us are mixtures: conservative on some issues, liberal on others. A conservative is one who seeks to conserve or hold on to the past or at least to the present way of life and thought. In contrast, a liberal is one who approves or at least is willing to consider new or different ways.” Also, many of us are unquestionably conservative in our theological position and yet we advocate changes or a new perspective concerning certain social customs and issues.

One of the most prevailing fallacies, particularly among ultra-conservatives, is to label one a “liberal” simply because that one is liberal from their perspective regarding one of more social, economic or political issues. Really, labeling is a method frequently used in an attempt to get rid of an opponent whom we cannot or do not want to answer.

Some of us believe that in our contemporary world if we walked in the way that Jesus walked and the way He would have us to walk, we will have to be conservative in our theology but quite liberal from the viewpoint of many as we face the complex issues and problems of our world.

A Perplexing Question

There is a question or problem that has bothered me for many years. Why do many who are liberals theologically reveal more of the spirit of Christ in their relations to people in general and even to those who disagree with and attack them than most of us who claim to be conservatives?

For example, in my theological education I had some professors, not in any of our Southern Baptist institutions, who I considered liberals. Nevertheless, two or three of those men with whom I had an opportunity to get well acquainted put me to shame in the quality of Christian life they lived.

It would be good if all of us would seek to incorporate in our lives the familiar lines of Edwin Markham:

He drew a circle and left me out,
heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win,
we drew a circle that left him in.

Also, we might remember John Wesley's motto: "Think, and let think."

T. B. Maston, "Both/And – Theologians: Conservative/Liberal," *Baptist Standard*, May 27, 1981, 17.

Monologue or Dialogue?

Many problems arise in the area of human relations because of a failure of people to communicate with one another. A major factor contributing to this failure is the inability or the refusal of some people to enter into dialogue.

The latter is one reason for many conflicts that arise between parents and children, teachers and pupils, employers and employees, pastors and people. Also, the clashes between those of different cultures and colors stem to a considerable degree from a failure to carry on real dialogue. Martin Luther King Jr., in his famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," said: "Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue."

Failure to Participate

The failure to participate in dialogue is primarily but not exclusively the responsibility of the individual or group with the advantage of age, prestige, or power. There is always the possibility of a two-way monologue. Two people or even two groups may seemingly but not really be speaking to one another.

As the younger or less powerful individual or group matures there will be more necessity for dialogue. At least, there will be insistence on an answer to the questions that are asked. Parents of teenage children become acutely aware of this insistence. But the same thing is true of other individuals and groups.

For example, the Negro in recent years has insisted as never before on real dialogue.

The demand by the teen-ager, the college student, the employee, the Negro for dialogue may sound at times like a monologue. If it does, one possible reason is the refusal of the parent, the teacher, the administrator, the white man to enter into dialogue. The more the latter refuses to hear, the louder the former will speak.

Difficulty of Dialogue

Many people prefer monologue to dialogue because the latter is much more difficult. Dialogue means that one's position may be challenged. It is usually much easier to state a position than to defend it. Some feel threatened when they are asked to defend their position. When this happens their reaction will be emotional rather than intelligent.

Also, to carry on effective dialogue one must be able to listen attentively and to analyze objectively the position of the other person or group. This is hard to do. We need to know, however, that effective communication depends as much on ability to listen as on ability to speak.

Many problems in our churches and denomination stem from the fact that we tend to speak in monologue rather than dialogue. This is not only true of the preacher in the pulpit but also of the teacher in the classroom and of the denominational leader.

There is not enough opportunity for people generally to ask questions, to have a chance to talk back, or to state an opposing viewpoint. Unfortunately, too many of us in church-related vocations are not competent in the use of dialogue.

Dialogue is particularly important in a democracy. There is no real democracy without it. Also, the maturing of people in a democracy will be determined to a considerable degree, by their participation through dialogue in the life and work of the democracy.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Monologue or Dialogue," *Baptist Standard*, December 10, 1969, 19.

Compromise

"Compromise" is considered a nasty word by some people. They contend that it reveals a lack of conviction, courage, and character.

Compromise may be a nasty word, but it is necessary in the operation of a democracy in church or state. Most decisions that are made through the democratic process require some compromise.

"Politics" has been defined as the art of the possible. This definition applies in particular and primarily to a democracy. Our churches, associations, and conventions are not political entities. While this is true, some of the methods and techniques that are integral to political democracy are applicable to them.

Decisions, as in a political democracy, are arrived at through discussion and conference. An essential phase of such decision making is the art of compromise, and it is an art.

Decision Making

Many times in a democracy, political or religious; no decision can or will be reached without some compromise. An individual or a group, small or large, that is unwilling to compromise or make adjustments will frequently slow down the decision making process or even make a decision impossible.

An unwillingness to compromise may also disrupt or destroy the fellowship in a group. On the other hand, if the fellowship in the church or religious group is to be maintained on the highest level, all of the compromise or adjustment must not be made by one individual or by those representing one particular position. There must be a willingness on the part of all "to give a little in order to gain a little."

Compromise does not do any serious damage to the integrity of an individual or a group so long as the end attained is greater or more significant than the sacrifice that was made. This is particularly true when the end could not have been attained without the compromise.

Need for Maturity

For compromise to be most effective and least damaging there must be enough maturity by the individual or the group to distinguish between the essential and the nonessential.

There can properly be more of a readiness to compromise on the latter than the former. There are limits to how far an individual or a group can go in compromising on essentials and still maintain integrity.

There may come a time, for example, when the individual will have to take a stand even if he has to stand alone. When he reaches the limits of his accommodation, if the majority votes against him, he should accept the decision graciously.

He should beware of a martyr complex, of a self-righteous spirit, or of an attitude of superior enlightenment. After all, there is at least a possibility that he may be wrong. He should react in such a way as to strengthen rather than to weaken the fellowship of the group: church, association, or convention. He should trust the future for his vindication.

T. B. Maston, "Problems of the Christian Life – Compromise," *Baptist Standard*, December 18, 1968, 13.

Pendulums

Old fashioned clocks such as a grandfather clock have pendulums. The pendulum swings back and forth with a regular rhythm. If it stops swinging the clock stops.

The word “pendulum” is also used to refer to a change, a movement, or a rhythm of thought and conviction. For example in the political area there tends at times to be movements back and forth from conservative to liberal and from liberal to conservative.

In politics as well as in other areas people may swing too far or continue in one direction too long. After a period of time, however, the pendulum usually swings in the opposite direction. When the latter happens it serves as a correction.

Same Movement

The same type of movement or swinging back and forth is evident in areas other than political. This kind of movement is seen at times in churches and denominations.

For example, there has been a swinging of the pendulum among Southern Baptist in recent years. This has resulted from a deepening conviction that we have neglected some significant aspects of the Christian life and of the Christian gospel.

One aspect that many are convinced has been badly neglected is a compassion for people as such and a concern for the conditions that touch and influence their lives. This deepening social concern has become almost a flood tide among Southern Baptists in recent months.

Sometimes pendulums as correctives swing too far. There is no evidence so far that this is true of Southern Baptist toward social concern.

Traditional Emphases

If a few people tend to go too far and neglect the traditional emphases of our churches and denomination let us be patient with them. Pendulums frequently seem to have a built-in corrective. Most of those who may go too far will tend after a while to move back to a balanced emphasis.

The latter, a balanced emphasis, is what Southern Baptist want and need. It is what we must have if we are to continue to provide a vital dynamic ministry to both the spiritual and social needs of men.

We must retain our emphasis on bringing men into a vital, life-changing union with the resurrected Christ, but we must also have a genuine concern about the daily needs of those men. The latter means a concern for the society in which they live, the conditions that surround them and inevitably affect the development and the expression of their life in Christ. The latter also means, among other things, that we as individual Christians, as churches, as a denomination, or as denominational agencies will not be afraid to get involved in the problems of people and in the problems that plague our world.

W. A. Criswell, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, has expressed something of this idea: “We ought to be willing to get involved with the perplexities and frustrations of people around us. Jesus involved Himself in the world.”

Criswell in another statement stressed the kind of balance Southern Baptists need to maintain. His words were: “We are entering a new emphasis – that of faith and works, of soul-winning and soul sensitivity. God is in this.” Statements like these may represent the moving of a pendulum as a corrective, but they are not an “overswing” or an “overcorrective.”

T. B. Maston, “Problems of the Christian Life – Pendulums,” *Baptist Standard*, April 16, 1969, 19.

Preparing Effective Lessons

Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord,
and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel
(Ezra 7:10, RSV).

Ezra was one of the great teachers of Israel. This verse reveals the secret to his greatness as a teacher. There are lessons for all of us, but particularly for those who teach the word of the Lord or lead in that work.

First, notice that he “set his heart.” He had a sense of purpose or commitment. One does not become a great or a good teacher by accident.

Then notice that there are three things Ezra had “set his heart” to do. Each is expressed by an infinitive. These are arranged in logical order.

First, he “set his heart to study the law of the Lord.” There is no substitute for consistent study. It takes hard work to be a good teacher – in public schools, in Sunday School or in any other type of teaching. Two of the best Sunday School teachers I have ever known started the preparation of next Sunday’s lesson as soon as they were through with the one they had taught.

Second, Ezra “set his heart. . . to do it,” that is, to be obedient to whatever he discovered in his study. Here is a great truth that will apply to parents as well as teachers. After all, parents are the chief educators of their children; and we, parents and other teachers, cannot teach most effectively any truth that we have not applied already through our own lives.

Then after we have studied and applied the truth in our lives, we are ready to teach it to others whether to Israel as was the case of Ezra, to a Sunday School class or to our own sons and daughters in our homes.

T. B. Maston, “Bible Nuggets – Preparing Effective Lessons,” *Baptist Standard*, May 2, 1973, 19.

THE WILL OF GOD

The will of God is a concept that is most difficult to understand and to decipher for Christians of all ages. The will of God develops into a method and a technique as it becomes, as Maston believed, the overriding or the overarching direction in the life of a Christian.

Maston picked up on the idea that teenagers often struggle with understanding what the will of God is and what it means for the individual lives of Christians. Perhaps one of Maston's clearest and most concise definitions of the will of God is found in a book he wrote with teenagers specifically in mind, *Right or Wrong?*, a book with the following subtitle: *A Guide for Teeners and Their Leaders for Living by Christian Standards*. This particular excerpt from *Right or Wrong?* is included in this section, as well as a more lengthy piece from the book, *God's Will and Your Life*, in which Maston looks at the various ways Christians can know God's will. Additional reading can be found in the excerpt "Respond to the Holy Spirit" from *God's Will and Your Life*, in the section Holy Spirit section of the reader.

READINGS

The Will of God

In this book we are concerned primarily with decisions concerning right and wrong. These are moral decisions. They are moral because they affect people, including the ones making the decisions. Also, for a Christian a decision that affects the cause of Christ is a moral one.

This means, among other things, that a Christian in a time of decision should seek to honor Christ. When he has done so much for us, we should do what we can for him and for his cause. One thing we can do is to try to catch his spirit and to follow his example. He came not to do his own will but the

will of the One who had sent him. He came to reveal the Father; we are to reveal him. One important way we can reveal him is by the quality of life we live for him. An expression of that quality of life is the daily decisions we make.

Others and the Will of God

We will admit that it is not always easy to know the will of God. Equally sincere people may sharply differ concerning the rightness or wrongness of some activity. Also, right in one community may be considered wrong in another. This means, at least on the surface, that right or wrong and hence the will of God, under some conditions, may be relative. There is a sense in which this is correct. An activity that is innocent or right within itself can become positively wrong because of the attitude of people toward it. Paul's principle of eating meat offered to idols, which will be discussed in chapter 5, will apply to such situations. But let us never forget that an activity that is wrong within itself can never be made right because of the attitude of people toward it. That which is right may become wrong; that which is wrong can never become right.

This explanation may seem to contradict some things we have said previously about the individual's right and responsibility to decide for himself what is right and wrong for him to do. There may be a paradox involved but it is a very meaningful paradox. The maturing Christian should not let others dictate to him what is right; that is a personal decision. On the other hand, he should be so sensitive to the moral and spiritual wellbeing of others that he will let them decide, to a considerable degree, what is wrong for him to do. Even if he thinks a particular activity is entirely all right, he should not participate in it if it will be an offense or a cause of stumbling to others. This will be true because, having caught something of the spirit of his Master, he thinks primarily of others rather than of himself.

The Centrality of the Will of God

We believe that the only adequate source for or competent determinant of right and wrong for the child of God is the will of God. We believe that the right is not necessarily what man's reason dictates but what God commands. It is not what man intuits but what the divine voice says. It is not what society sanctions but what the sovereign God approves.

The most important and fundamental question that any Christian can ask when faced with a decision concerning what is right or wrong is: "What is the will of God?" This does not mean that there will be a necessary conflict between the will of God and what one's own common sense would suggest or what his home, his church, or even his group or gang would approve. It does mean that a Christian should make his decision primarily on the basis of what he considers to be the will of God. The other approaches to the right will be supplemental and will be evaluated in the light of what one interprets to be the will of God.

The Nature of the Will of God

Before we seek to answer the question "How can I know the will of God?" let us make two or three general statements concerning the nature of the will of God. (For a fuller discussion of the will of God, see T. B. Maston, *God's Will and Your Life* [Broadman Press, 1964].)

God's will is all-inclusive. . . It includes the totality of our lives. It is much broader, deeper, and more meaningful than many people think it is. God's will is a continuing experience. Frequently, one decision is preparatory to another. If we are responsive to the leadership of the Lord, we shall have a deepening understanding of his will. This, when properly understood, will tend to give us a constant sense of tentativeness, of expectancy, of open-mindedness.

Today we may consider a particular activity in accord with the will of God for our lives. If we are obedient to him, we may discover tomorrow that he has

led us to new insights, and that which we once considered right we will then understand to be wrong.

God's will is always best. His will is not only always best for him and his cause, it is also always best for us. If we are serious about doing his will, we may discover that we shall have to give up some things that we now do. There is one thing, however, about which we can be sure: what he requires us to give up is not best for us.

The Knowledge of the Will of God

How can we know the will of God when we are faced with a decision concerning what is right or wrong? It is not always easy. But if we sincerely want to know and are willing to do the will of God, we can and will have enough light to make the immediate decision. When other decisions have to be made, additional light will be given.

The chief tangible source for a knowledge of the will of God is the Bible. We find in the Bible a record of God's revelation or disclosure of himself to man; a self-disclosure that was climaxed in his Son who was "the exact likeness of God's own being" (Heb. 1:3). It was Jesus himself who said: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9), and. "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30).

We find revealed in the Bible not only the nature and character of God but also his attitude toward and his will for man. By the latter, we do not mean that we can turn to a particular chapter and verse for an answer in every time of decision. The Bible is not a rule book. Yet, if we study it consistently, prayerfully, and obediently, we shall receive much direct and indirect help from it. The Bible is such an important factor in our knowledge of God and his will that it is safe to say that a Christian cannot know God's will as he should, in a time of decision, unless he has prepared himself for such a time by seeking through a study of God's Word to know the mind of Christ.

Responsibility for the Will of God

Some discerning young people may be saying: “All this sounds like the source of right after all is in the individual. You have come back to an individual emphasis.” The latter is true, but the former does not necessarily follow.

The will of God is the final determinant of right and wrong, the ultimate source of authority for the Christian. The problem we have been dealing with in the immediately preceding paragraphs is the content of that will. We have suggested, or at least implied, that the individual has the right and the responsibility to decide for himself what the will of God is for him. He cannot shift this responsibility to someone else or to any group to which he belongs – family, friends, or church. If he is wise, he will give serious consideration to what these and others say, but the final decision is his.

No Christian concept is more basic to Protestantism in general than this idea of the responsibility of the individual. The individual Christian is to decide for himself what is right and wrong. He has direct access to God without the necessity of going through a priest or the church. This is one thing that is involved in the idea of the “priesthood of the believer.”

This means that you, as you mature, will have to decide for yourself what you should do about the matters discussed in Part II. These things you should decide in the light of what you consider to be the will of God for your life.

T. B. Maston and William M. Pinson, Jr. *Right or Wrong?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 27-29, 30, 31-32.

How Can We Know God's Will?

Use Personal Resources

Perhaps you have already asked yourself, how can I know the will of God? Or, can I know the will of God?

The answer to the latter question depends on what is meant by “the will of God” and by the word “know,” Are the terms used in a relative or in an absolute or perfect sense? If in the relative, the answer would be yes; if in the absolute, the answer would have to be no.

Man can know the will of God but never fully or perfectly. God’s will is too big, too broad, and too deep for the most mature of us ever to understand it completely. However, we are not left adrift in the world without any sense of divine direction. The experiences of many children of God, perhaps including you, prove that we can have enough insight into the will of God to take the next necessary step. We can know what we need to know at a particular point in time. We can look forward to increasingly rich experiences as we seek to follow God’s will for our lives.

On the other hand, as has been true with me, you may find it difficult at times to know the will of God. This is one reason, why we should consider every possible resource that is available to us in our search for his will. Let’s consider a number of approaches we can make in our search. We should consider all of them as one package or bundle. They belong together. In some ways they supplement each other. We cannot wisely eliminate any one of them. To varying degrees, all of them are necessary if we are to know the will of God. They are all good gifts from God and should be utilized in our search for his guidance.

Before we discuss the first of these “good gifts from God,” permit me to state an assumption, make a statement, and ask a question. The assumption: that you are active in the work of your church – its teaching and training program, its worship services, its evangelistic and missionary outreach. The statement: The best assurance of knowing the will of God in the future is to be within his will now. The question: Is there any doubt in your mind about being within the will of God now?

The Bible plainly reveals that man was created in the image of God. When man sinned, that image was marred or defaced but not totally destroyed. This

image is restored, in a sense, when man becomes a new creation through union with Christ, who is the exact image of the Father. However, the restoration will not be complete until the end of life's journey, when we shall awake in Christ's likeness.

The incompleteness of the restoration explains the continuing hunger of the child of God for a deeper and more meaningful communication with the Heavenly Father. This inner hunger often is more pronounced in the lives of God's most mature children. The more we know about the nature and will of God, the more clearly we see how much there is still to know.

This deepening desire to know is closely related to and dependent upon a strong desire to be obedient to his will. God expects us to use whatever capacities we have in our search for his will. He seldom reveals his will to us in a miraculous way. We can be sure, however, that he will respond as we seek to know.

Our Rational Nature

God has given to us our rational nature. He expects us to use it. Some plain common sense, which is not too common, will be a great asset in our search for the purposes of God.

Let us apply the common sense test to one or two specific matters. God evidently does not want a young man who has flunked his science courses and does not have the grades to be admitted to a medical school to go as a medical missionary. Similarly, common sense would suggest that it would be unwise for a woman of forty to marry a man of twenty. These are extreme examples, but the proper use of the common sense that God has given you will help you in practically every decision relating to your lifework or your life's companion. When making these major decisions, do not let your mind take a vacation.

The ability to think straight or to use common sense will also help, over and over again, in the daily decisions of life. When considering the rightness or wrongness of some particular activity, think about the potential consequences.

Observe in others the results of such activities. For example, if you are debating whether to accept or decline the cocktail when it is offered, observe what drinking has done for others – some of your friends or loved ones. Study the number of crimes committed by people who have been drinking. Study reports from the public safety commission, showing the number of fatal accidents that are caused by drinking drivers. Think of the number of alcoholics in the United States – men and women who have become slaves of alcohol. The estimates vary but there are at least five million, and the number is constantly increasing. If you want to see what drink really does, visit your city or county jail on a Saturday night or on a holiday weekend.

One of the most pathetic alcoholics I know is a brilliant, scholarly man of about forty-five. He had risen to the top of his profession but recently was relieved of all his responsibilities for a year. If he does not rid himself of this problem in that time he is through – a useful and brilliant career ended.

You may be saying, “All of this does not apply to me; I can go ahead and drink and keep it under control.” Can you? How do you know you can? Actually, no one can know for sure whether or not he will have a weakness for drink. When one takes that first drink he may take the first step toward slavery to alcohol.

Common sense would dictate that one should never take the first drink. Even if one could be entirely sure that he would never become an alcoholic, there are still many valid arguments against drinking.

Common sense also would dictate the same position regarding smoking. I do not need a special revelation from God to tell me whether or not to smoke. The American Cancer Society and other groups have given me the answer.

Through intelligent observation and the application of common sense, you can find the help you need for many other problems you face. Some of these problems, such as cheating, gambling, movies, Sunday observance, dancing, and petting, along with drinking and smoking, are discussed in my book *Right or Wrong?*

Our Conscience

This is not the place for a technical discussion of the nature of conscience. Two or three statements may be helpful, however, about what we do and do not mean by the use of the term “conscience.” We do not mean that man has some innate capacity that will unerringly guide him in the right way. God has placed within man a sense of oughtness, an inborn conviction that there is such a thing as right and wrong. This is a part of man’s equipment for knowing the will of God. It makes a man a morally responsible person.

In contrast to this innate sense of oughtness, the content of one’s conscience, what he considers to be right or wrong, is not inborn. It depends largely on his total moral experience – what he has been taught in the home and the church, the attitudes of friends and loved ones, and personal experiences.

While all of us will agree that there is such a thing as right or wrong, we will frequently differ regarding the things or activities we consider right or wrong. This implies that one can follow what he considers his conscience and be wrong. Thus, his conscience needs to be educated, it needs to be made more sensitive. Conscience is not the voice of God, although it may be “the ear of the soul.” The ear, however, needs to be trained.

Does this mean that we cannot trust and, hence, we should not follow our conscience? As previously suggested, our conscience will not always be right. However, we should always do what it says is right. There is a difference between the inerrancy of conscience and its authority. It errs or makes mistakes at times but it should be obeyed. The best assurance of a more sensitive conscience later is to be responsive to the one we now have. In other words, deliberate wrongdoing or going contrary to our conscience would affect adversely our moral judgment. This means that it is both wrong and unwise to do what our conscience tells us is wrong for us to do.

We have a twofold responsibility to our conscience to obey it and to educate it. If we keep these two responsibilities in proper perspective, we shall

find that what we call our conscience can and will aid us considerably in our search for the will of God.

Our Limitations

It has been suggested that man's personal resources are limited. It has been implied that if we could think straight we would see the wisdom of doing the will of God. But, unfortunately, it is impossible for us to think entirely straight. Sin has affected our total personality, including our rational nature. Our inability to think consistently straight helps to explain the undependability of our conscience. It is true that we are limited; nevertheless, God expects us to use what we have. We should admit the limitations of our natural resources and then recognize our need for help as we seek to know and to do the will of God. This inability to trust completely our own resources may have been the background for a statement by W. O. Carver that helped me a great deal in a time of major decision. I was in his home adjacent to the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he taught for many years. I had not gone to seek his advice, but he gave it anyway:

“When you have considered a matter from every conceivable viewpoint, if your mind tells you one thing and your heart tells you something else, you had better follow your heart.” He was saying, if I interpreted him correctly, that one had better follow the inner impression that comes from the leadership of the Holy Spirit. On that occasion I followed my heart rather than my head, and through the years I have been grateful that God used Dr. Carver to drop that thought or guideline into my life.

Do not conclude from this illustration that the head and the heart always conflict. Many times they are in perfect harmony or speak the same language. After all, it will be the part of wisdom to have the head check the heart. Only the individual who can and will think objectively can be trusted to follow his inner impressions.

Seek Counsel of Others

One source of help that is rather readily available to all of us in our search for the will of God is the counsel or the advice of others – friends, parents, teachers, and church leaders and workers, You will find these to be “good gifts from God,” gifts that are precious, that should be respected and used properly and wisely. You may take the initiative and go to one or more of them for counsel. On the other hand, they, at times, may take the initiative in giving advice to you. Their counsel may be given to you personally or in and through a group. It is also possible that some of the best advice you will ever receive will be given incidentally and unconsciously.

Counseling That Is Sought

You may have already felt the need for some help; outside of yourself. You turned to your parents, to a friend, a teacher, your pastor, or someone else for assistance. You shared with them your problem or problems. You should not hesitate to do this when there is a real need in your life, but guard against becoming too dependent on others. A part of the maturing process is increasing capacity, with the Lord’s help, to make our own decisions, to stand on our own feet. Do not become “a counselor addict.” . . . When you find it advisable to counsel with someone, select carefully the one to whom you go. He or she should be a person who will understand you, one whom you respect, who will be objective, can be trusted, has a mature Christian perspective, and has the skill to be helpful. Do not expect to receive from that individual a complete answer to your problem, neatly wrapped up in a package. There is no cut and dried or standard answer to any problem. You will discover that the wise counselor will usually refuse to tell you exactly what you ought to do. He will help you think through your problem, and examine with you the different facets of it, thus giving a basis on which you can determine for yourself what is best.

Unconscious Counseling

Some of the best help you will ever receive as you seek the will of God will come from individuals and groups when there is no conscious attempt to advise you. It may be a conversation with a friend or with a group of friends at your church or on the campus.

Or, it may be the casual contacts and conversations with loved ones in the home or on the highway. Sometimes guidance comes to us simply through the general impact that is made. Association with real Christian people tends to make us more sensitive to the touch of God on our lives. There will also be times when a chance remark is lodged in our minds that will be quite helpful to us. My own life has been tremendously influenced by about a half-dozen statements casually made by others without any evident purpose to counsel or influence me.

You may understand better what I am attempting to say if I give you a personal illustration. My brother, older than I and a young businessman, dropped by Carson-Newman College to visit me when I was a freshman. He and I were walking from the business district of the small town toward the campus. I do not remember what we were discussing, but I have never gotten away from the impact of one statement he made that day. I could go to the spot on the sidewalk on Russell Street where he made it. The statement was, "Remember, Tom, folks will respect a fellow who stands for something." That statement has come to me over and over again when I have had to decide whether or not a certain thing was right or wrong for me to do.

Watch for help that comes from these unconscious sources. If you will keep alert you will discover attitudes and ideas, as well as statements, that may be tremendously helpful to you. As suggested, you may pick these things up from loved ones or friends. You may also receive some real guidance in the Sunday school class, the youth program, or the regular worship services of your church. The last of these – worship – helps in a marvelous way to open our minds and hearts to the leadership of the Lord.

Counseling and Personal Responsibility

Regardless of how much help you may receive from others, either through personal or group counseling, the final decision regarding the will of God in your life must be your own decision. While we were children our parents had to make many decisions for us. One part of the maturing process, however, is the right and the responsibility to make our own decisions.

In seeking the will of God for your life, there may be rare occasions when you feel compelled to go contrary to all the advice that has been given. If such a situation arises, be very cautious. Be sure that you are following the leadership of the Lord – not your own personal desires. Recognize the possibility that you may be wrong. Remember that one evidence of growing maturity is the consideration one gives to the counsel of more mature people. The immature tends to assert prematurely his right to make his own decisions without a comparable sense of responsibility for these decisions.

Pray

Prayer is not something to be added after other approaches in our search for the will of God have been tried and have failed. No, we should pray as we use the personal resources God has given us. Likewise, we should consider prayerfully the counsel we receive from others, and certainly we should always pray as we read and study the Bible.

Prayer and the Will of God

As is true of the reading and study of the Bible, we can derive both direct and indirect help from prayer. By direct help we mean that which comes in response to prayer regarding some particular decision or problem. The Bible plainly says, “If any of you falls short in wisdom, he should ask God for it and it will be given him, for God is a generous giver who neither refuses nor reproaches anyone” (James 1:5, *The New English Bible*). However, if one is to receive what he asks for he must ask “in sincere faith without secret doubts as

to whether he really wants God's help or not" (James 1:6, Phillips). Do we not find here the reason why many of our prayers are not answered? We ask God to reveal his will to us, but sometimes down deep we do not want to know his will unless it coincides with our will.

It may sound contradictory to the preceding but our wills will not be brought into harmony with the will of God except through the spirit of genuine prayer. It was while Jesus prayed that he was transfigured (cf. Luke 9:29), was clothed with the glory of the Father, a glory he had known before coming into the world. The glory of the Lord can become a reality in our lives only to the degree that our total personalities are possessed by him, only to the degree that his will becomes our will.

The preceding correctly implies that prayer will help us in indirect ways to understand more fully the will of our Heavenly Father. Prayer is not just asking God for something for ourselves or for others or even expressing our gratitude to him for his blessings. It is basically communication between God and man, and that communication does not consist exclusively or even primarily of words. It is communion of spirits.

Jesus on occasions spent an entire night in prayer. Does this mean that he was pleading all that time with the Father for something? I think not. My judgment is that most of that time was spent in fellowship with the Father.

This kind of prayer or this phase of prayer, which might be a better way to express it, helps us in many indirect ways to see more clearly the purposes of God in our lives. It may include what has been called "creative silence" or "relaxed receptivity." It might be better to combine the two ideas and speak of "creative receptivity."

Prayer as communion is not necessarily silent or relaxed, although that aspect may and should be present. In an apparent but not a necessary contrast, some of the most dynamic, disturbing, and yet thrilling experiences that can ever come to a child of God is when he has been unusually conscious of the presence of the resurrected Christ. Such experiences do not come as frequently

in any of our lives as they should. This may be one reason for our uncertainty concerning the will of God.

Prayer Within the Will of God

John says, “This is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us [will listen to us, Williams]” (1 John 5:14). Notice the “according to his will.” Phillips translates this verse, “We have such confidence in him that we are certain that he hears every request that is made in accord with his own plan.” Are our prayers in accord or in harmony with his will or plan?

It may be difficult or even impossible for us to know at times whether or not we are praying within the will of God. It is so easy for us to fool ourselves. Also, there are times when we cannot formulate our prayers in words. We seem not to know how to express the desires of our hearts. I am inclined to believe that the latter is true of most of our greatest experiences in prayer. Words seem to be an encumbrance. Something within cries out to God. This may have been what Paul had in mind when he said, “We do not know how to pray as we ought” (Rom. 8:26). We do not know what to ask, nor how. We should be thankful, however, that “the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness.” He, “through our inarticulate groans,” pleads for us and “God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God’s own people in God’s own way” [according to the will of God, RSV]” (Rom. 8:26-27, *The New English Bible*). Here is both a glorious and potentially a terrible truth. It is glorious because we know that the Spirit can and does interpret or longings and even our imperfect attempts at prayer. It may be terrible because we cannot fool God. He does not listen primarily to the words we speak but to the deep desires of our souls. We may fool others and possibly even ourselves, but we cannot fool God. He knows whether or not we really want to know and do his will. Let us seek as best we can to “pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude

20). When we do we can know that our prayers will be within the will of God and will be used and blessed by him to achieve his will in the world.

Prayer for the Will of God

We cannot, in the truest sense, pray within God's will without also praying for his will to be done. Let us, however, spell out this phase of prayer a little more specifically. We have not reached maturity in our prayer life until the main burden of our prayer is not for ourselves, not even that we may know and do God's will, but rather that his will may be done in our lives and also in our world. When we reach the latter stage in our praying we are then ready to be used by God in achieving his plan in and purpose for the world.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven (Matt.6:10).

It is no mere accident that this is the first petition in the Model Prayer. George W. Truett used to say that no man has a right to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," until he has first prayed, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." And if his will were done on earth as it is in heaven, his kingdom or his reign or rule would have come. In other words, here is one petition and not two. His kingdom comes as his will is done in our lives and in the world in which we live.

What we pray for, we are to work for. The two statements that stand so close together in the Sermon on the Mount, "Thy kingdom come" (a prayer), and "Seek first his kingdom" (Matt. 6:33), belong together. That which is to be the first petition in our prayers is also to be sought by us before all other things. Praying and working for the kingdom means praying and working for the purposes of God in the world.

As we mature in Christ, God's will, plan, purpose, reign, rule, or kingdom will increasingly be the unifying center of our prayers and of our lives in general. We shall more and more see the world in which we live from the perspective of our Heavenly Father.

The Practice of Prayer

It will help a great deal as we seek to know the will of God if prayer becomes the practice of our lives. This will mean, among other things, that we shall have some regular prayer habits that have become fixed patterns in our lives. It should be just as unthinkable to start the day for the Lord without some time for communion with him as it would to begin the work of the day without our regular morning routine or preparation for the day. Likewise, at least a brief prayer should be a part of our preparation for retiring at night.

Perhaps you will want to combine Bible study and prayer. Such a period of devotion may be strictly private or you may join a friend, a roommate, or members of your family. Each will have his own particular plan and procedure, but to be sensitive to the will of the Lord in your life, cultivate his presence through *regular* Bible study and prayer.

The prayer life, however, of a mature Christian goes beyond these regular prayer habits. He discovers that increasingly he is conscious of the presence of the Lord as he goes about his daily tasks. He not only has fixed habits of prayer, which he still recognizes as important, but he also prays as he walks and talks, as he plays and works. He finds more and more that he can feel the touch of God's Spirit on his spirit as he breathes a prayer to God at most any time – day or night. This may be what Paul meant when he said, "Pray without ceasing" (1Thess. 5:17, KJV), or "Pray constantly," or "Never stop praying" (Phillips). We pray constantly when we live in the atmosphere of prayer.

As we mature in prayer, we shall discover that we shall be more alert to and less uncertain about the will of God for our lives. We shall pray less for ourselves and more that God's will might be done in the world. Our conception of his will will become more inclusive. The maturing Christian also prays less that he may know the will of God and more that he may be used by the Lord to do his will in the world. In other words, he becomes less self-centered and more God-centered. Maturity in the Christian life is not

necessarily related to age. Some of the most mature Christians are young in years.

The Privacy of Prayer

Prayer in a group or with a prayermate or prayer partner may be quite meaningful, but prayer primarily is personal and private. It is basically the communion of the individual soul with God. Just before giving the Model Prayer, Jesus said to the disciples, “When you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:6, *The New English Bible*). Jesus himself arose “a great while before day” and “went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed” (Mark 1:35). A place of real prayer is usually a lonely place, apart from others, even though others may be present. It is, however, in those lonely places, which do not mean necessarily geographic or even social isolation, that God speaks most distinctly to us.

It was in the garden of Gethsemane that Jesus left his disciples behind and went “a little farther,” and there alone with God he accepted his Father’s way and will for his life. It will be in the loneliness of “a garden experience” that may of you will be able to pray, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” The discovery of, and particularly the submission to the will of God is always a very personal experience.

Have a Willing Heart

What are the things you want most in life – happiness, peace of mind, approval of parents, popularity, wealth, economic security, success? What would head your list?

Where would the will of God be on such a list? Would it be there at all? It should be at the top of the list for every child of God. There are not enough of us, older as well as younger, who put God’s will first in our lives. We can all be sure that the depth and the sincerity of our desire to know and to do the will

of God will largely determine the extent to which God will and can reveal his will to us.

Each of the divisions of this chapter will be developed on the basis of a verse of Scripture. Will you carefully and prayerfully study and meditate upon each one?

“If any man’s will is to do his will, he shall know” (John 7:17)

If you will read the verses immediately preceding you will discover that Jesus was defending his teachings. He said that they were not his own but his Father’s who had sent him. It was from that kind of a background that he said to the people in general but to the Jews in particular: “If anyone is willing to keep on doing God’s will, he will know whether my teaching comes from God, or merely expresses my own ideas” (Williams).

Here is a basic principle that applies to the problem we have been discussing – how can we know the will of God? There is an affinity between the willing heart and the will of God. We can be sure that the more willing we are to do his will, the clearer and surer will be the revelation of his will to us. Many times we do not know the way we should go because we are not walking in the way of God now. Frequently we really do not want to know his will, or at least there are some mental reservations about doing his will. He cannot lead the unwilling heart.

Notice the verb tense in Williams’ translation – “is willing *to keep on doing* God’s will.” This brings out the idea of continual action. When the doing of God’s will has become the habit or the pattern of the individual’s life, he will seldom have serious doubts for very long concerning the will of God for any area of his life. At least, he will have enough light, with rare exceptions, to take the next necessary step. The will of God tends to become the atmosphere of his life. He lives it and breathes it. Few of us have arrived at this stage.

“Be transformed. . . that you may prove what is the will of God”

(Rom. 12:2)

Let us quote the entire verse from Williams: “Stop living in accordance with the customs of this world, but by the new ideals that mold your minds continue to transform yourselves, so as to find and follow God’s will; that is, what is good, well-pleasing to Him, and perfect.” *The New English Bible* suggests that when one’s whole nature is transformed, he “will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.”

It is not our purpose to give a general interpretation to any of the Scriptures. However, two or three things in this verse from Romans are quite important from the viewpoint of our study.

The first admonition is, “Do not be conformed to this world.” Williams translates this, “Stop living in accordance with the customs of this world.” *The New English Bible* has it, “Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world,” and A. T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, says, “Do not take this age as your fashion plate.”

Does this not touch on a temptation that all of us have, but one that is particularly prevalent among young people? Even the nonconformists tend to conform to or live in accordance with the customs or mores of their own particular group. So nonconformity may be, in a sense, conformity.

Typical of the biblical emphasis in general, there is a positive as well as a negative exhortation in this Scripture verse. Paul admonishes us, as well as the Roman Christians, to be transformed. This transformation is through an inner renewal, which evidently refers to the new birth or the new man, which in turn is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The main emphasis in the verse, for the purpose of our study, is the results of the transformed life. This transformation, which itself is an expression of the will of God, makes it possible for us to discern, to know, to test, to prove, or to find and follow the will of God. The potential for the complete transformation of life is inherent in the initial experience when we become new creations in Christ Jesus. We can understand the will of God only to the degree that we let

this potentiality become a reality in our lives. Notice that the progressive nature of this transformation is suggested by Williams' translation. It will not be complete until the end of life's journey; hence, we shall not know perfectly the will of God until we awake in his likeness. This should not discourage us; it should challenge us.

Only the individual whose mind has been renewed and whose life is in the process of being transformed can understand that the will of God is good, acceptable (Williams says "well-pleasing to Him"), and perfect. Phillips, in a characteristically free translation, says the following: "Let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity." Whether a correct translation or not, and all translations are interpretations to some degree, the ideas brought out so clearly by Phillips are true to Christian experience. As we let God reshape us from within, it is increasingly clear to us that his will and purpose is always good or best for us. Also, we see more and more clearly that following his plan or will for our lives moves us "toward the goal of true maturity."

"Knock, and the door will be opened"
(Matt.' 7:7, The New English Bible)

You recognize this as a part of that wonderful statement by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Keep on asking, and the gift will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and the door will open to you" (Williams).

Our Heavenly Father has good gifts he wants to give us, he has many doors he wants to open to us; but he will give those gifts and open those doors only if we persistently ask, seek, knock. This is the way of spiritual maturity for us. By waiting, seeking, knocking, our motives and purposes are examined and purified. We discover in the process some of the deeper truths of God. And when the door is opened and the gift is given, frequently there are riches

beyond anything we ever anticipated. We would not have had the capacity to appreciate them had they been given or revealed without our seeking and knocking.

T. B. Maston, *God's Will and Your Life* (Nashville: Broadman, 1964), 50-57, 60-61, 61-62, 69-74, 75, 76-82.

DECISION-MAKING

As is seen in the previous section, the will of God is a method and a technique as it becomes the overriding or the over-arching direction in the life of a Christian. As well, because knowing God's will informs the decision-making capabilities of Christians, God's will and decision-making are intertwined. Such a relationship is exhibited in the following two readings from *Right or Wrong?* that deal with specific strategies Christians can employ in making decisions. The section closes with a brief article on decision-making.

READINGS

Right or Wrong – Three Questions

The Effect on Us

When we are considering whether or not we should do a certain thing, let us start on the lowest level by asking the question "*How will my participation in this activity affect me as an individual?*" This wisely can and should be followed with a series of other questions that will help us to answer more accurately the original question.

Some of the additional questions are: "How will my participation affect my body? Will it contribute to good health and to the building of a strong body, or will it tend to undermine my health and weaken my body?" The physical may seem to be a very low level on which a Christian should begin his search for what is right. In one sense it is, but there is another sense in which it is not.

The body is far more important than many of us realize. The body we have will be an asset or a liability to us all of our lives regardless of what we may do for a vocation. A healthy body is a wonderful servant or instrument; a sickly,

weak body can be a terrible master. We should not participate in anything that will endanger our health or prevent the normal development and maturing of our physical selves.

Another question is, “How will my participation in this activity affect my mind, social nature, and total personality? Will participation enrich or impoverish my life?” The mental, social, and spiritual phases of our personalities are more important, in some ways, than our bodies. We have given more space to the latter primarily because that is the beginning point for our search for the right and because the physical is so frequently neglected or misinterpreted.

As Christians, we must even go beyond the consideration of the effects of our participation upon our bodies, our minds, and our moral nature. These are important but there is another phase of our total personalities that is more important. We are not merely physical bodies with minds and social natures. We are spiritual beings made in the image of God who find our highest fulfillment in fellowship with him. Our bodies, minds, and social natures should be instruments to be used by the spiritual self to promote spiritual ends. We need to ask: “How will my participation in this activity affect my spiritual life? Will it deepen or lessen my interest in things spiritual? Will it increase or decrease my sense of fellowship with my heavenly Father?”

We likewise should consider the effects of our participation on our relation to our church and on our prayer and devotional life. These things we will consider if we are serious about being real Christians instead of being just ordinary, mediocre or nominal Christians.

The Effect on Others

We admittedly started at the lowest level for the Christian. A higher level is represented by the question: “*How will my participation in this activity affect others and my influence on others?*” Other supplementary questions that might be asked are: “Is it possible that my participation may be a cause of stumbling

to a weaker Christian? May it be a factor in tempting someone who is not as mature as I am? Will my participation make it easier or more difficult for me to witness to unsaved friends about Christ? Will the unsaved expect me to do this thing?" Will you agree that these and similar questions should be asked by a Christian in a time of decision

Many times young Christians and older ones say, "I cannot see any harm in _____. I do not think it hurts me to do it." But is that the level on which a Christian should make his final decision concerning what is right for him to do? Far more important than the question "Does it or will it hurt me?" is the question "Does it or will it hurt others and my influence for good on others?"

Paul's principles regarding the eating of meat or food offered to idols provide some helpful guidance at this point (Rom. 14:13-23; 1 Cor. 8:1-13). There are three main things that Paul said: (1) There was nothing wrong as such with eating the food or meat. (2) However, if one ate and thus sinned against the conscience of a weaker brother, he sinned against Christ. (3) Paul personally concluded that if by eating the food or meat he would cause a weaker brother to stumble, he would never eat the meat again.

This principle represents a rather strong challenge, but Christians should be willing to accept such a challenge. If Paul's principles are followed sincerely, we may discover that we will need to give up some activities that we have considered perfectly all right.

We also may find that we could participate in an activity in one community and not in another because of existing differences in attitude toward our participation. Let us emphasize, however, that the attitude of people toward what we do will not and cannot make right that which is wrong within itself. The right may become wrong, but the wrong can never become right.

It is rather important to make the preceding distinction. The attitude of people does not determine what is ultimately right; their attitude may determine whether or not a particular activity is wise or right for us in a given

situation. We, as Christians, should give serious consideration to the judgment of people around us primarily because we are interested in their moral and spiritual welfare. Paul expressed it as follows: “Do not, because of food, destroy what God has done. All foods may be eaten, but it is wrong to eat anything that will cause someone else to fall into sin” (Rom. 14:20). We can substitute for the word “food” any activity concerning which we are attempting to make a decision. Man, who is God’s work, or creation, is far more important than one’s participation in this or that activity.

The Effect on the Cause of Christ

The highest level for a decision by a Christian is reached when he asks, “*How will my participation in this activity affect the cause of Christ?*” This certainly is a very high standard. Will you not agree, however, that every Christian should be willing to ask this question and seek as best he can to answer it honestly?

A similar question that we might ask ourselves is: “Can the Lord bless and use for his glory my participation in this activity?” Paul said to the Corinthian Christians: “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:31-32, RSV).

If Paul were writing to your church or mine today, do you suppose he would put in some other words in the place of “eat” and “drink”? He related his teachings to the immediate needs and problems of people. We believe he would do the same today if he were writing to contemporary churches.

Should we not ask ourselves: “Will this activity be an occasion of stumbling or will it give offense to the church of God?” Paul suggested that the child of God, in determining what is right for him to do, should go beyond himself and even beyond other individuals and should consider the effect of his actions upon the church which is the body of Christ. Good questions for us to ask would be: “Will my participation in the activity I am considering

make it more or less difficult for my church to do its work in my community and in the world? Will it reflect credit or discredit upon my church and the cause of Christ in general?”

When Christ has done so much for us, should we not be willing and even anxious to avoid anything that would be an embarrassment to him or would hurt his cause among men? The days in which we live demand unstinted devotion and selfless living. We are persuaded that many, and we hope most, Christian youth are ready to respond to that challenge.

Conclusion

The three questions that have been suggested, along with the supplementary questions, represent progressively higher levels. God has so ordered things, however, that, when properly interpreted, there can be no real conflict in the conclusions we reach on these different levels. In other words, if we make our decisions on the highest level – the effect on the cause of Christ – we shall discover that they are best not only for the cause of Christ but also for others and for ourselves. The psalmist expressed something closely akin to this idea when he said: “No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11, RSV). The Lord does not ask or expect a child of his to give up one single thing that is best for him. God may want us to give up many things, or activities that will not be best for us.

T. B. Maston and William M. Pinson, Jr. *Right or Wrong?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 34-38.

Right or Wrong: Three Tests

The Test of Secrecy

Let us imagine that, as you read this you are in the process of deciding whether it would be right or wrong for you to cheat. Or you might supply

another activity that applies especially to you. How can the test of secrecy help you?

The following questions may help you answer the preceding question: “Are there some individuals that you would prefer not to know about it if you did that thing? What about your mother; would you be embarrassed for her to know? What about your father, your Sunday School teacher, your youth leader or counselor, your pastor, your best friend, the best Christian you know? Would you prefer for one or more of them not to know?” If you would, will you not agree that you should at least raise a question about your participation in that activity? We are not saying now that it would be right or wrong but simply that it would be questionable.

We can be sure that the truth or right is never afraid of the light. On the other hand, wrong seeks to avoid or to hide itself from the light. It is no mere accident that most crimes are committed at night. It was Jesus who said, “And anyone who does evil things hates the light and will not come to the light, because he does not want his evil deeds to be shown up. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, in order that the light may show that he did his works in obedience to God” (John 3:20-21).

Do you remember how you reacted when you were a child and had done something that you knew your mother disapproved? Did you not evade her as much as possible? You were uncomfortable in her presence. This was true not only because you were afraid she might discover what you had done but also because there was an inner something that condemned you. You did not feel at ease in her presence.

Now, what about the activity you were considering? Will it pass the test of secrecy? Would you be willing to bring it into the full light of truth? To make the test more tangible, would it be all right with you, if you went ahead and did this thing, for that fact to be flashed on a screen at your school assembly or at a worship service in your church?

We may be able to keep our participation secret from others, but there is one who will know. God, whom we call “Our Father,” will know. He sees all; he hears all; he knows all. Would we want him to know?

Test of Universality

This is another simple test that can aid us in times of decision. It will be equally helpful to young people and older people as long as they are honest seekers after truth.

We may understand this test and its significance a little better if we ask some questions. Incidentally, are you keeping in mind the activity or decision you were asked to consider at the first of the chapter? Think about it as we proceed.

One question we might profitably ask ourselves is: “Would it be all right with me if everyone else did this same thing?” Occasionally, someone in a conference where we discuss these matters answers, “Oh, sure, it would be perfectly all right.” One who is inclined to answer in that way should be asked some more specific questions such as the following, which will make the general question more searching: “Would it be all right for your Mom to do it, or your Dad, or your teacher, or your pastor? Would you approve of their participation? Would you lose a little respect for them if you saw them doing it?”

What if one makes some exceptions and says: “No, I would not expect Mom to do that. I would be horrified to see my Dad doing it. I just cannot imagine my pastor participating in it.” If one raises questions concerning the participation of any of these, then does not the activity fail to pass the universality test? Should not this fact raise a question concerning one’s participation in it? Let us make it very personal. Is there not a considerable possibility that if we react unfavorably to the participation of another in a certain activity, someone may react in a similar way to our participation?

We should also make a general application of the universality test. Let us ask: "What kind of a family, a church, a community, a world would we have if everybody did this particular thing?" A slogan that many smaller churches used to have on their walls is applicable not only to the church but also to the family and the world. The slogan was: "What kind of a church would my church be, if every church member was just like me?"

If we admit that we would have a rather sorry family, church, community, and world if everyone did a particular thing, then, would that not mean that it would be wrong for us? If, on the other hand, we can honestly say, "We would have a better family, church, community, and world if everyone did this thing," then is it not right and wise for us to do it?

Test of Prayer

There is no higher test for any activity than to ask: "Can I pray about it? Can I ask God to go with me? Can I ask him to bless me in the doing of it?"

Should not a Christian feel free to pray about anything he does? If he does not consider it appropriate to invite the Lord to go with him or to bless him as he does that particular thing, is that not a good indication that the activity would be unwise or wrong for him?

To pass the test of prayer does not mean necessarily that we will always pray concerning that activity, but it does mean that we could, in good conscience, pray about it. We could feel perfectly at ease talking it over with our Father. Talking with him about it would be normal and natural and would create no strain in our relations.

A number of years ago Charles M. Sheldon wrote a book, which became a best seller, entitled *In His Steps*. It continues to be rather widely read. If you have not read it, we would suggest that you do so. In that book the author recommends that the Christian, at every time of decision should ask, "What would Jesus do?" That is a good and searching question.

Some people however, have criticized Sheldon's book and particularly his central emphasis, saying that it is an over simplification of the problems of life. Some have suggested that a more proper and helpful question would be: "What would Jesus have *me* to do?" They contend that Jesus was God as well as man and that he lived a perfect life, which we cannot do.

There may not be as much difference in the preceding two questions as some people may think. You will remember that Paul said: "Imitate me, then, just as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). If Paul followed Christ – and he did – was it not natural for him to counsel the Corinthian Christians and us to follow Christ? Also, it is possible that in most, if not all, situations of life Jesus would have us do what he would do under similar circumstances. But whether we think it should be "What would Jesus do?" or "What would Jesus have me to do?" certainly we will agree that we should ask the question or questions.

You may be saying, "There is nothing that will pass such a high test. To live life on such a high level is impossible." Surely, you do not really believe that. There are many activities that will pass the test of prayer, as well as the preceding tests.

For example, one of us played football in high school and college. He was not a Christian during the first two years of high school. His sister said that during that time he never played a game that she did not pray for him. From the time he was converted until he had finished college he never played a game that he did not first talk to the Lord about it. He asked the Lord to bless him and his teammates, to help them to play hard and clean, and to help those who were Christians, in some way, even in the midst of the game, to reveal the true Christian spirit.

There are many other activities that will pass the test of secrecy, of universality, of prayer. Also remember that if an activity will not pass the tests, it will not be best for us.

Conclusion

Have you followed through on the suggestion at the first of this chapter that you apply these tests to some particular activity? If you have not, why not try an experiment similar to the one suggested at the close of the preceding chapter? Select some activity about which you must make a decision and consistently apply the tests. See what the result will be. Do not be afraid to do it. It may be a very rewarding experience. The Lord will help you if you will ask sincerely for his guidance and wisdom.

Some may complain that the application of these tests will take the joy out of life. We believe, however, that the opposite will be true.

Christians with the deepest and most abiding joy are those who have a sense of the abiding presence of God. They have a conviction that they are within his will. Anything that does not pass these suggested tests will be outside of God's will and will sooner or later destroy the very happiness and joy we desire. God's good men and women, his obedient sons and daughters, are his happiest people.

Someone has correctly observed that most Christians have just enough religion to make them miserable. They have enough to be uncomfortable in sin; they do not have enough to keep them from sin. The only ones who ever tap the depths of the blessings that are in God are those who have the courage and the strength of character to sacrifice the lower things of life. Life on the higher levels is reserved for those who sacrifice it on the lower levels. Where do we want to live; on the mountains or high plains of vision, of challenge, and of services or in the valleys of darkness, despondency, and defeat? Right now, you may be in the process of deciding. Something that may seem to be a minor decision may set the direction of your life for the indefinite future.

T. B. Maston and William M. Pinson, Jr. *Right or Wrong?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 39-44.

Decision Making

One of the generally recognized problems among Southern Baptists is the lack of lay involvement. A major responsibility for this rests on the laymen. Many would rather pay a staff member to do the work than do it themselves.

The lack of lay involvement is evident in the decision-making process. On the local church level, the larger the church, the more the inclination of the staff to work out all programs and plans. Members are then asked to approve and promote a program few if any had any voice in shaping.

The pastor and staff are responsible to provide leadership. Unfortunately, some pastors become little less than dictators. There is a fine but important line between leadership and dictatorship.

There is a tendency in some denominational agencies to concentrate decision making and planning too largely in the staff. The chief executive or head of an agency may tend to become a dictator. In too many cases, trustees have relatively little voice in decisions.

Concentration of decision-making in a professionally trained staff may mean a more efficient program but it does not develop a maturing lay leadership. People involved in a program are more important than the program itself. Also, involvement is essential for the health and vitality of our democracy in local churches and in our denomination.

T. B. Maston, "Trends to Watch – Decision Making," *Baptist Standard*, May 21, 1975, 13

NOTES

PART ONE

1. Valentine, Foy. "Shapers of Southern Baptist Heritage." Baptist New-Mexican, 6 Feb. 1988, p. 3.
2. Maston, T. B. "Problems of the Christian Life – Conservatism-Liberalism." Baptist Standard, 16 Oct. 1986, p. 16.
3. Maston, T. B. "Problems of the Christian Life – Denominational Politics." Baptist Standard, 3 Apr. 1968, p. 16.
4. Maston, T. B. Interview by Charles McCullough. 7 Oct. 1982. See also: Maston, T. B. "Materialistic Spirit Threatens Southern Baptists." Baptist Standard, 14 May 1980, pp. 12-13; Maston, T. B. "Trends to Watch: A Hierarchy of Prestige." Baptist Standard, 16 Apr. 1975, p. 19; Maston, T. B. "Trends to Watch: Success Orientation." Baptist Standard, 23 Apr. 1975, p. 13.

PART TWO

1. Maston, T. B. Interviewed by Charles McCullough. 1985. In the same conversation, he made this cryptic observation: "Hermeneutics can be very helpful, but can also be a terrible taskmaster!"
2. This chapter, except the last section on "Its Interpretation," will be closely related to chapter 4 of T. B. Maston, *Why Live the Christian Life?* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974). There is some excellent material in Volume 1 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), pp. 1-33, by Clifton J. Allen, Robert Bratcher, and John Newport.
3. See Maston, chapter 11.
4. There is an abundance of books on principles of interpretation or biblical hermeneutics. Hermeneutics in general is much broader than the strictly biblical. The study has been quite prevalent in philosophy. One of the most helpful books on biblical hermeneutics is H. E. Dana and R. E. Glaze, Jr., *Interpreting the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961). This is an update of Dana's *Searching the Scriptures* (1933). Scholarly but very readable. Another is A. Berkley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970). It is a very helpful book by one of the top scholars in the area. He defines hermeneutics as "the science and art of Biblical Interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation" (p. 1). John T. Wilkinson, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (London: Epworth Press, 1960). A brief book of a thoroughly documented lecture (sixty pages). There are other books that are somewhat more technically scholarly. Among these are Rene Marle, *Introduction to Hermeneutics*, trans. E. Froment and R. Albrecht (New York: Herder & Herder, 1960); James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., eds., *The new Hermeneutics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). This is a scholarly discussion among a couple of continental scholars and three or four American scholars.
5. Wilkinson, p. 8.
6. The word translated "interpreted" is a form of *hermeneuo* from which hermeneutics is derived. Some form of the word is found approximately twenty times in the New Testament. In the King James Version, it is translated "interpret" or "interpretation." In the Revised Standard Version, it is usually translated "means." Some references are: Matthew 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:22, 34; John 1:42; 9:7; Acts 4:36; 13:8. Particularly interesting may be 1 Corinthians 14:28, where Paul said that if there were no interpreter present there should be no speaking in tongues.
7. Dana and Glaze, pp. 123-125.
8. Ramm, p. 102.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
10. An article by Edward Leroy Long, Jr., "The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics," *Interpretation*, XIX, No. 2 (April, 1965), 1949-62, has been unusually helpful in this discussion of the relation of biblical ethics and Christian ethics.
11. *Ethics in a Christian Context* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 29.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
13. H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of the Bible* (New York, Macmillan, 1944), p. vii.
14. *An interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York, Harper, 1935), p. 113.

15. Bennett, *Christian Ethics and Social Policy*, p. 60.
16. W. T. Conner, *Revelation and God* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1936), p. 95.
17. For material on the covenant idea in the Old Testament see Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961) – the first volume of a multiple volume work which is structured entirely around the covenant concept; Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963) – relates the covenant concept to the suzerainty treaties of the ancient Near East; and George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburg: The Bible Colloquium, 1955) – a scholarly booklet.
18. G. Ernest Wright, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society* (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 129.
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25. Edward Carpenter, *Common Sense about Christian Ethics* (Macmillan, 1961), p. 61.
26. Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration* (Longmans, Green, 1949), p. 54.
27. Barclay (*The Mind of St. Paul*) has an unusually helpful chapter on "Paul's Thinking about the Holy Spirit." A concise chapter on the teachings of the Bible as a whole on the ethic of the Holy Spirit will be found in Henlee Barnette's *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961). 30. Lindsay Dewar in *An Outline of New Testament Ethics* also uses the heading "The Ethic of the Holy Spirit" for a discussion of the ethical content of the book of Acts. An unusually helpful unpublished source is Guy H. Greenfield's doctoral dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1961) entitled "The Ethical Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Writings of Paul."
28. Deissmann (*St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, p. 126) says that the formula "in the Spirit" occurs nineteen times in Paul's Epistles.
29. Barclay's *Flesh and Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) is a helpful study, based on the Greek text, of Galatians 5:16-23.
30. Notice that Williams here as usual brings out the verb tense, "practice living;" and the double negative, "by no means," of the original. The Revised Standard Version stands practically alone in making the last portion of the verse an exhortation: "and do not gratify the desires of the flesh."
31. Marshall, p. 290; see pp. 291-303 for an excellent analysis based on the Greek text of each of the fruit of the Spirit.
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37. One of the most evident weaknesses of situation ethics is the limited place given to the Holy Spirit. For example, the index to Joseph Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* (Westminster Press, 1966), has only four references to the Holy Spirit. One is a quotation from Paul, while in two places he equates the Holy Spirit and love: "Love is not the work of the Holy Spirit, it is the Holy Spirit – working in us" (p. 51, cf. p. 155).

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41. Psalm 8:5-6.
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13. See Doctor Macintosh’s own discussion of the case in his book *Social Religion* (New York: Scribner, 1989), pp. 280 ff.
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53. Matt. 26:52

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115. Jewett, p. 86.
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120. Both Jewett and the Staggs discuss the ordination of women at some length. After a rather thorough examination, Jewett concludes, "We conclude that women have full tide to the order of Christian ministry as God shall call them" (p. 170). The Staggs, after carefully examining the words in the Greek that are translated "ordain" and the Scriptures in general regarding the ministry, come to a conclusion somewhat comparable to Jewett, although it is not stated as positively: "The basic criterion for ministry in any form is having the gift for it by God's grace" (p. 186).
121. Jewett, p. 114.

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