

JAN. 24 1980

# LIGHT

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

December, 1979

## THE CRISIS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

By John A. Wood

Baptists have been among the strongest supporters of public education. Having come from "common stock," Southern Baptists have experienced first hand the importance of a good education. They have realized that the American dream of success and fulfillment is possible only through a solid education and that this education must be available to all people, regardless of background and income. But in recent years, more and more Baptists have questioned the usefulness and the future of public education. The crisis in education has been a nagging problem for many Baptists, but few have had the opportunity to study the issues carefully and objectively. We have tended to react in a knee-jerk fashion and in an emotional manner to various issues as they have arisen. But, through it all, Baptists generally have remained committed to public education.

There are at least six issues that relate to the present crisis in education: the back to basics movement, busing/integration, financing, the relationship to private schools, discipline, and the relationship to family cohesion. Each of these issues is very complex and they are closely inter-related.

### I. THE BACK TO BASICS MOVEMENT

One of the most vigorous criticisms of public education is that it is failing to teach young people the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Much of the debate centers around the declining scores in the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). It is true that the scores are lower now than they were in 1941. But some educators are quick to point out that the SAT scores are not a fair way to judge

the performance of the public schools. Dr. Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago has noted:

*The SAT comparative figures are based on the 1941 version of SAT, when approximately 41,000 students—most of them going to Ivy League colleges—took the test. Today about two million young people are going to colleges, mostly public; about one and one-half million take the SAT test.*

In other words, the public schools have not left the  
(continued, p. 3)



## Entitlement or obligation

Foy Valentine

Entitlement is a newly coined word for the notion that we have a right to anything our minds can conceive and to everything our hands can grasp. It is a malignant idea whose time has come. Because entitlement is antithetical to Christian ethics, I wish here to inveigh against it; and, at the same time, I wish to put in a good word for obligation.

I believe obligation is better than entitlement as I believe that purity is better than filth, that morality is better than degeneracy, that involvement is better than withdrawal, that incarnation is better than incantation, that order is better than chaos, that reconciliation is better than alienation, that love is better than hate, that excellence is better than mediocrity, that peace is better than war, that knowledge is better than ignorance, that truth is better than falsehood, that principles are better than expediences, that ideals are better than image, that it is better to give than to receive, and that it is better to suffer for righteousness' sake than to compromise with evil.

This generation has been sowing the wind in the Me Decade of the 1970s. It is ready to reap the whirlwind if, as it seems fully prepared to do in the 1980s, it now orients its endeavors around the false god of entitlement. Entitlement is said by some social researchers to represent a wave of the immediate future which is apparently irresistible. Already the philosophy of entitlement permeates a very great segment of public consciousness so that the bottom line on most social contracts is, "What's in

it for me?" Entitlement is not quite as high-class as a Golden Calf; it is multitudes of brass bulls, each made in our own flawed image, each crudely formed to gratify some passing whim or some base appetite, each blind, each deaf, each dumb. Entitlement is a ravening Moloch which will eat us and our children if left unchallenged and unchecked.

Christians have not a moment to lose in moving away from the unconscionable selfishness inherent in the idea of entitlement; and we have not a moment to lose in moving to the high Christian calling of cross-bearing. Such a movement toward reciprocating grace requires a conscious rejection of the pervasive madness of unvarnished hedonism; and it requires a conscious embracing of responsible self sacrifice in all of life. Anyone who decides he is entitled to his own life will still lose it; and anyone who loses his life in obligation for Christ's sake will still find it. Culture wallows in entitlement; but Christ calls Christians to unlimited obligation.

All of this speaks to the ethical agenda immediately before us. It speaks to the family crisis, the political crisis, the racial crisis, the economic crisis, the hunger crisis, the crisis in television programming, the crisis of abuse of alcohol and other drugs, the crisis in education, and all the rest. As the people of God work on this ethical agenda, we are not working for grace but from grace, we are not working for victory but from victory, we are not working for salvation but from salvation. Our goal is not to satisfy ourselves but to do the work of God that His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God's faithful people will come through proven, purified, and authenticated if the focus is not on entitlement for ourselves but on obligation for Christ's sake.

## Something new about LIGHT?

No, you didn't get one and a half copies of **LIGHT** this time. This is our new twelve-page format. And, it will be coming to you on a bimonthly schedule now.

Three additional items are in **LIGHT's** expanded format: (1) **OPINION**—a guest editorial written on a merill issue of our time; (2) **IN ADDITION**—a column consisting of resource agencies and people, quotes, and practical suggestions in applied Christianity; (3) **ON THE ETHICS FRONT**—a section featuring those people—denominational employees, professors, and church leaders—with expertise and involvement in the field of Christian ethics.

With this **LIGHT**, we are looking especially at some of the matters related to the present state of affairs in public education. In addition, with the increasing number of Southern Baptist churches beginning private schools, we asked the question, "Why do some Southern Baptist churches decide *not* to get into the private school arena?"

Charles Myers, pastor of Alta Woods Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi, gives one church's reasons.

The crises in education and the impact of private church schools on public education may well be shaping up to be one of the most controversial areas of discussion for Southern Baptists in the next decade. Questions such as "Are we confronting or withdrawing from our culture?" and "Are public schools to be perceived as hotbeds of secularism or as mission fields?" continue to be asked. We hope this issue of **LIGHT** adds some constructive points to the dialogue.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from our staff  
WMT

**LIGHT**, a bimonthly bulletin for pastors, state and national denominational workers, and other persons who have a special interest in applied Christianity, is published by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tenn. 37219.  
Foy Valentine, executive director  
William M. Tillman, Jr., managing editor

# Public education

(Continued from page 1)

basics. They have simply retained those students who used to drop out very early, such as ghetto, farm, and migrant children.

If our school systems are going to emphasize more strongly the basics, there are several things that are demanded. (1) Reading needs to be taught all the way through school and not just the first few grades. (2) We must communicate that some skills have to be mastered even if they are not enjoyable. Or, as one teacher put it, "We are back to telling students that learning may not be all fun." (3) Since writing is the best means of clarifying one's thinking, it is better to require high school students to write a paper every week. If this is carried out, there is a great need for teachers' aides to grade these papers.

## II. BUSING/INTEGRATION

The furor over busing has died down considerably due to the fact that integration has been carried out with less upheaval and opposition than was true only a short time ago. But a basic disagreement still exists concerning this issue. Some feel that segregation is an illness of society and that society should not ask the public schools to remedy it. These feel that the problem should be solved through housing patterns or through other means. Others feel that the school is the most important place to achieve harmonious race relations in America, and that it is the logical place to start.

Many blacks and whites have become disappointed and even cynical over the desegregation issue. Because of white flight, some have begun to wonder if busing has not defeated its purpose of providing contact among the races in school. A great sense of frustration exists with many over this issue. Martin Kilson, a black professor at Harvard, assesses this frustration: "Whites are of two minds in regard to racial integration; it is as if they now want an interethnic and interracial society but they do not want to pay for it."

Instead of becoming less of a problem in the future, integration will likely be a greater challenge in the future. This is due to the increased immigration of Orientals and by the fact that by the year 2000 Hispanics will comprise the largest minority in America. Because the United States has the most diverse ethnic and racial makeup of any nation in modern history, it will most likely experience serious racial problems on a permanent basis and this will always be evident in the educational systems. Without claiming to have the specific answer to this highly complex problem of integration, the Christian who takes his Bible seriously will work from a strong basis of justice for all people. The Christian will work for just housing patterns and will cooperate with those who are seeking to provide equal educational opportunities for every child.

## III. FINANCING

The cost of public education has shot up 150 percent in

the past decade (40 percent in real dollars). For 1977-78 the public schools spent \$70.7 billion dollars and the private schools \$8.8 billion. This increase has been due to several factors: inflation, the raising of teachers' salaries to be more in line with their educational and professional level, and increased energy costs.

This rapid increase of educational costs comes at a time when taxpayers are frustrated more and more about either too high taxes or the spending of tax monies or both. The tax revolt had to start somewhere and a convenient place to challenge the tax system is in property taxes because other taxes, such as income tax and state taxes, seem more remote and less subject to public influence. In state after state and county after county, the revolt has gathered momentum. In the mad scramble for tax dollars, the schools as now constituted are almost sure to lose.

An important question related to public financing of education is "Where is public education in the hierarchy of values for Americans?" People will pay for what they feel is important and there is every indication to believe that public education does not have the priority status it once enjoyed. Public education has come to be viewed by many as similar to public welfare, which in the eyes of some taxpayers is give-away money to the undeserving.

## IV. THE RELATIONSHIP TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The private school phenomenon is related to several important aspects of the crisis in education. For one thing, the process of desegregation prompted many churches to start private schools. For the Christian who is trying to apply the biblical mandate of "love your neighbor" to the issue of race, it is distressing to hear some schools, which are in fact racially segregated academies, insist that race has nothing to do with their existence. The fact that hundreds of church-related schools started during the integration process is an indication that these churches reflected and then exploited the prejudices and fears of the white, middle class and jumped into the business of education before a careful moral examination was made of the motives, intent, and consequences of this action. Thus, many church-related schools have arisen for the wrong reasons and their existence has inflicted serious damage upon public education.

This indictment is not meant to denounce all parochial schools. Many parochial schools started not for reasons of race, but for religious reasons, and they serve a useful function. Most protestant parochial schools received a big boost after the Supreme Court rulings in 1962 and 1963 which ruled out state mandated prayers and state mandated Bible-reading in the public school. Unfortunately, these Supreme Court decisions have been greatly misunderstood and abused by many well-meaning people. Most Baptist agencies and conventions have strongly supported the Supreme Court decisions, maintaining that many people refuse to understand that the Supreme Court decision does *not* rule out voluntary prayers in the public schools.

The increased secularization of their public schools has prompted some Christian parents to remove their children from the public schools. It is true that in the past the public schools have often supported and promoted the

Christian faith. Since Christians were in the majority, few felt compelled to resist this practice. But when it finally came down to litigation, the Supreme Court merely applied what the Constitution demanded. The public school is not in the business of evangelism and Christian nurture. But many parents felt that as a result of the court action Christian values were being ignored or denigrated and believed that a neutral stance toward religion was virtually equivalent to a hostile stance. These people are described by former Senator Thomas J. McIntyre:

*In America there are millions of people—the sum products of their heredity and of the influences that have shaped them from birth—who are basically decent and honest, neither paranoid nor bigoted, who are anxiety-ridden over what frequently appears to them to be an inexorable assault on their total personal value system.*

Parents have a right to expect the public school system not to propagate and demonstrate values that are in direct contradiction to basic values taught in the home. Schools have a right, conversely to expect parents to understand the pluralistic nature of society and to recognize that the public school is not to try to carry out the mission of the church. This is a fine line that needs constant attention, but it is an ideal which is essentially achievable.

Parents and society as a whole can rightfully expect that the school teach as ideals, and demonstrate as best as possible, the values of honesty, integrity, fairness, justice, compassion, unselfishness, and respect for others. It is true that these values are fruits from the roots of our Judeo-Christian heritage. But it is also true that these values are part of a commonsense decency and represent values that cut across denominational lines and which are affirmed by the overwhelming majority of Americans.

## V. DISCIPLINE

There is a good possibility that the majority of teachers would list discipline as their number-one problem. There are several factors that have made discipline in the public schools a greater problem now than it was only a decade or so ago.

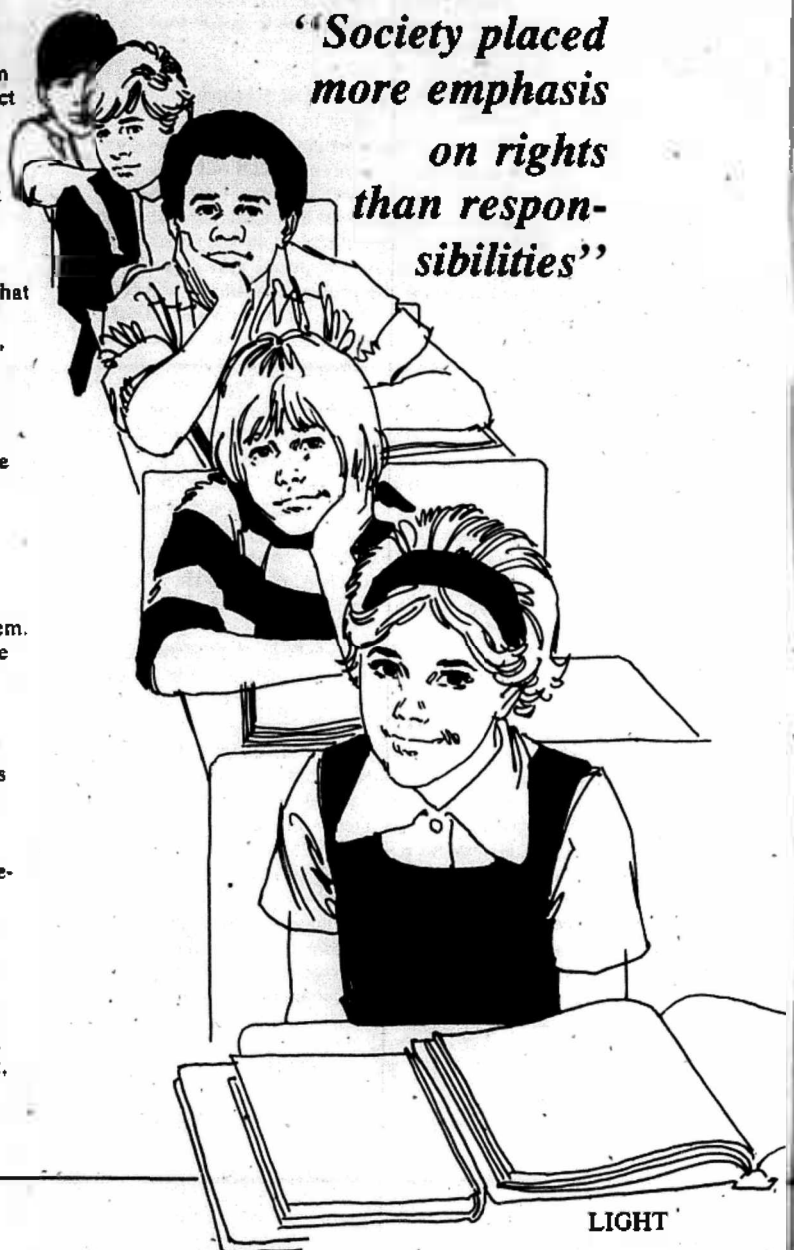
(1) Although the Civil Rights Movement had many positive facets, it had some negative impact which relates to the problem of discipline in the schools. For instance, after centuries of being intimidated by whites, blacks began to feel the sense of power in the 1960s and it proved to be an overwhelming experience to some. Therefore, school discipline became a greater problem for many blacks because of the revolution of relationships that was taking place.

In addition, in the midst of this struggle, an important thing happened. *Society placed more emphasis on rights than on responsibilities.* This kind of emphasis produced a climate in which young people are harder to discipline. The key question is no longer "What ought I to do?" but, "What's in it for me?" The "me generation" is harder to handle.

Also, the Civil Rights Movement helped contribute to the virtual elimination of corporal punishment. Isolated incidents of serious abuse of paddling brought the matter before the courts and before school boards. In some school districts, paddling was outlawed and in some places where it was not forbidden many teachers were hesitant to use it because of the threat of a lawsuit or other disciplinary actions. Young people have sensed this general ambivalence about the nature and effectiveness of all forms of punishment, including corporal punishment, and have seized the situation to their advantage. As a result of all of this, discipline has become a major problem in many schools.

(2) Television has glamorized the tough, "cool" image.

***"Society placed  
more emphasis  
on rights  
than respon-  
sibilities"***





Modern-day children are exposed to this image much more than their parents who saw their tough cowboy at the movie theater once a week. Most young people watch television at least twenty-five to thirty hours a week and there is growing proof that television does profoundly affect behavior in children. Violence and aggression are staples on television and intensify the natural aggression that young people experience as they are attempting to achieve self-identity and independence.

(3) The concept of self-esteem is related to discipline problems. Some observers believe that many people, maybe even the majority, have a low self-concept. "I'm not okay" is a basic feeling of many young people who cannot live up to the glamorous image of the super-athlete, the straight-A student, and the Miss America beauty. It is becoming an axiom in psychology that people with low self-esteem will act out in negative and destructive ways. These kinds of students are often serious discipline problems in school.

(4) Lastly, but related to all of the above points, is the clear mood in society toward permissiveness. There is apparently less discipline in American homes. Young people, by means of access to transportation and to mass media, have become more independent and less under the influence of their parents. The increase in one-parent families and working wives and busy family schedules and the separation from the extended family, has meant that some children spend less time with adults who teach them values and who discipline them. For whatever reasons, the facts appear to point to a generally less disciplined society. It would be impossible for the schools to be exempt from this general tendency.

## VI. THE RELATIONSHIP TO FAMILY COHESION

The American family has undergone some significant changes in the past few decades. The emotional and physical climate within the home has a strong bearing on the teachable attitude of the child.

The increase in divorce is well documented; the rate of divorce is now about five divorces for every one thousand population. Although it is not true in every case, marital problems and divorce tend to increase the level of stress in children and to make them more difficult to teach. Two out of every five children grow up in single parent homes and thus are often unable to receive emotional support from the single parent who must work and also take care of all the domestic chores.

Child abuse, which includes physical as well as emotional abuse, has been receiving a great deal of attention in our society. It is much more prevalent than any had thought. Estimates of child abuse range as high as two million cases per year. An abused child is likely to present problems to the school.

Even where the home is intact, there appears to be less interaction between many parents and their children. Some parents are overworked and have less energy to devote to their children. In this climate parents are less able to transmit the value of an education to their children.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that our society in general, and Southern Baptists in particular, have not determined exactly what they want from our educational system. A basic problem is confusion about just what is the purpose of the schools. Baylor University Professor Dan McGee observes:

*Are schools to prepare us for life or just for work? Are they to inculcate the basic values shared by the society's majority or to be a place where the distinctive values of the society's minorities are to be protected and fostered? Is the school's function limited to education or is it to be an instrument for achieving other social goals? As long as there are these basic conflicts about the purposes of the school, they are not likely to function smoothly.*

Criticism of the schools has always been a part of our national tradition. But there is some reason to believe that the current anxiety about the schools is intense enough to suggest that the present troubles are qualitatively different from those of the past. The prognosis is that, even if priority attention is given to the various issues involved, we are in for a long, hard struggle. The enormity and complexity of the issues defy easy answers. But this is not to paint a hopeless picture.

The public school system is indeed in trouble, but it is not a sinking ship. Baptists must not desert it. The situation demands two things from Baptists. (1) They must be informed, and (2) they must be involved. Involvement has been possible and will continue to be possible through local school boards and through the P.T.A. It is very important that this be an informed involvement. We must be willing to challenge our own perceptions through reading, research and study. A cool head which is open to new ideas is a valuable asset to the school system. Support from parents for the principals and teachers will go a long way in restoring better education for America's youth. There is no "they" who can do this. It is up to us. The task will not be easy, but all worthwhile things are achieved through hard work.

As Christians, we must follow the biblical mandate constantly to be about the task of educating our children (Deut. 11:18-21). Our obligation does not stop with our children. God calls us to serve all his children, created in his image and waiting to realize the potential he gave them. Christians can count on the grace of God to help.



**John A. Wood is Director of Program Development for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.**

# WHY WE CHOSE NOT TO HAVE A PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

By Charles E. Myers

There was a violent reaction felt in every area of our community when the courts ordered our Jackson, Mississippi public school system to integrate. Part of the reaction was the natural resistance to being ordered by an "outside" entity to make changes. But the major portion of the reaction was against integration itself.

Many leaders in our community advocated that the churches start parochial schools for the white children and leave the public schools for the blacks. Often the reason given for starting such a school was the need for a Christian emphasis in education. It was quite interesting that the need was seldom recognized until integration was ordered.

It was suggested that Alta Woods Baptist Church sponsor a parochial school. Our deacons considered the suggestion and appointed a committee to make a thorough study of the situation and to bring a recommendation to the church based on that study. These people worked diligently, studying printed materials that were available,

interviewing both parochial and public school administrators, working with other committees making similar studies, and praying earnestly for wisdom to find the best answer.

The committee began with the question, why have a parochial school? They found basically three reasons. There were some people who honestly believed that integration was wrong and they wanted to avoid it. Others were opposed to transporting children outside of their community just in order to have a racial balance in the schools. Still others believed there was a need for a Christian emphasis in education and felt this could be accomplished only through parochial schools. The same people considered that since our church had the facilities for a school and educational program, that we also had the know-how for running a school.

The committee was deeply sympathetic with those affected by the change in public school policy. They were also understanding and sympathetic about busing. It was easy to see that much good possibly could be done by having the teaching in a Christian atmosphere with a

---

***"It was quite interesting that the need (for a Christian emphasis in education) was seldom recognized until integration was ordered."***

---

---

## ***"We realized that there is more to school than a teacher, a pupil and a book."***

---

Christian emphasis. But after careful and prayerful study the committee concluded there were too many problems involved in providing a good parochial school to justify establishing one.

The problems began with a lack of adequate facilities. Though it looked like a church running between 1000 and 1100 in Sunday School would have all kinds of space, this was not the case at Alta Woods. Careful examination revealed there were only 16 rooms that would be adequate, and these rooms could serve a maximum of 320 pupils. Our rest room facilities could not adequately meet the needs of a large group spending the entire day. We had no available office space for administrators or for faculty members. We had an excellent church library, but it was not designed for school use. We had no laboratories of any kind nor space where portable laboratories could be placed. At that time we had no gymnasium, and any playground area would have been limited largely to the existing asphalt parking lots. In all honesty, our facilities were not adequate.

In addition, the committee recognized we did not have the know-how to organize and to operate a school. None of our staff members had been trained in school administration. An administrator could be hired, but that would provide no easy solution. We naturally wanted a good school man and one who was sympathetic with our church program. If such a person could be found, we still had problems in the area of building use, scheduling of activities, coordinating the school program with the church program, and finances.

The latter was a problem within itself. It was the feeling of the committee that a parochial school should be self-supporting. We checked with both public and parochial schools to find out the cost per pupil per year. In every instance the figure given us made no allowance for building costs, replacement or maintenance of equipment, or lunchroom needs. At parochial schools, the salaries paid for teaching were not in line with those paid in public schools. When we arrived at a figure which we felt was accurate and reasonable, we realized many in our congregation could not pay that amount. This meant our buildings which had been built by all our people would not be available to all. It also meant some who had no part in building our buildings would now be using them. Our church would be sponsoring a school for a certain class of people. Some of our fine Christian people would be shut out through no fault of theirs.

The initial cost for equipping class rooms would have to be borne by the church. The cost of repairing the buildings and replacing the equipment would also have to be shouldered by the church. No matter how carefully we tried, there would still be other expenses that would

have to be absorbed by the church. We found no reason to believe we could administer a school in any way that would not affect the financial program of our church.

We looked at accreditation, at curriculum, at taxes, and at the dual use of our facilities. These presented obstacles that seemed insurmountable. We realized there is more to school than a teacher, a pupil, and a book.

Our greatest concerns, however, centered around the realization that our church would have to change its present philosophy and overlook its moral responsibility. Our purpose as a church was to lead people into a vital contact with God through worship. Our emphasis was upon winning people to a knowledge of Christ as Saviour and then helping them to grow in grace through worship, study, and service. If we established a school, our primary task would be to maintain that school. We would in reality become a school that had church services on Sunday. We could not believe the change in philosophy would be in the best interest of our church nor within God's purpose for us.

We also recognized that as a church we had a moral obligation to the community and to God to be and to do what was right. The conviction of the committee was that it would be morally wrong to establish and maintain a school which would divide people on the basis of their ability to pay or on the color of their skin. Such a division would imply that our church believes one class or one race is superior to another. Though many who wanted a parochial school did not necessarily have that attitude, it was the committee's feeling that such an implication was clear. Their sentiment was that unless the church was willing to do what was morally right we had no right to expect God to bless us as a church. Based upon these convictions, the committee unanimously recommended that the church not establish a school, and the church adopted the recommendation with only three dissenting votes. That action was taken ten years ago, and time has certainly emphasized the wisdom of that decision.



*Dr. Myers has been pastor of Alta Woods Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi for eleven years.*

# OPINION

## Legalized gambling: Savior or siren's song

By Robert O'Brien

Many Christians have succumbed to the blandishments of legalized gambling, as it penetrates state after state, because of apathy, fear of appearing unsophisticated, or the influence of gambling's "siren song," which murmurs of its "sweet" fruits.

Many religious groups, including the Christian Life Commission, have led the fight against the intrusion of legalized gambling in its various forms. But, wherever they raise their voices effectively, gambling proponents attempt to characterize them as blue-nosed puritans opposed to profit and pleasure.

Those who have characteristically spoken out against vices which infiltrate society, thus get confusing signals.

From one direction they hear the charge they spend too much time condemning the "don'ts" and not enough affirming the positive aspects of their faith. Sophisticates, they're told, don't haggle over such "petty issues" as gambling. Others, equally persuasive, urge them to speak against gambling and other evils which hurt people.

Meanwhile, the refrain of supporters of legalized gambling, which has penetrated 44 states in some form since 1963, adds to the confusion. It promises a fiscally-sound way out of the financial morass of state and city governments. It claims that while dollars flow "to ease tax burdens" and serve mankind, legalized gambling will create the environment to repel illegal gambling and organized crime.

But abundant evidence—collected by law enforcement officials, economists, sociologists, educators, journalists and others—has proven the reverse is true.

Investigation reveals legalized gambling has failed miserably as a financial savior, except to line the pockets of rip-off artists, and that it systematically corrupts police and government officials.

It proves also gambling serves as a breeding ground for new suckers—setting them up for fleecing by organized crime and inflicting them and the economy with business pilferage, embezzlement, loss of productivity, bad checks, bankruptcies, regressive burden on the poor, lost jobs, victimization by loan sharks, broken homes and shattered dreams.

Such evidence speaks in a language anyone can understand. But it speaks strongly to Christians, whose faith urges redemptive action in society, not only to proclaim Christ's message of salvation but also to launch responsible opposition to bad social and public policy which corrupts and dehumanizes persons.

But, in state after state, the record of religious efforts against gambling remains a spotty one. Sometimes opposition has been forceful and effective, sometimes token, sometimes offered only after gambling forces have already driven in the opening wedge, and sometimes nonexistent.

Denominational leadership often has a hard time convincing church members to stir themselves into effective action.

Some Christians, frankly, refuse to oppose it because they have some sort of financial interest that would profit from gambling-related industries. Others approach it apathetically, declaring, "It doesn't affect me. I'm not going to gamble."

Baptist editor Al Shackleford, who has led anti-gambling efforts in Indiana and Tennessee, comments on that: "I ask in return," he says, "Why have a law against murder? I don't plan to murder." The point is that as Christians we're supposed to be concerned about things which sin against God because they mar and destroy his greatest creation—the human personality. Gambling fosters self-centered greed and has the potential of keeping people, who trust to luck rather than God, from finding Jesus Christ."

Two other distinct stripes of Christians also stay out of such issues. They are the "spiritualizers," who want to think of nothing but things of the spirit, and "intellectualizers," who assume an intellectual aloofness and disdain for the political process. Both end up as escapists.

Some take a conciliatory view toward gambling because they equate it with "good causes" of church or civic organizations.

That rationale is perhaps the most insidious form of reasoning a Christian can develop. "Good-cause" gambling—proven to be widely infiltrated by organized crime and compromising to sponsors—is a poor substitute for proper financial support of churches and charities by committed individuals. It recalls the old saying about "using the Devil's money to run the Lord's mill."

Others take a "soft" stance on legalized gambling because the nation bases its economy on risk-taking on the stock market.

That view fails to make an important distinction. High-risk, low-productivity, get-rich-quick schemes are just as wrong in grain futures or the stock market as they are in gambling, but all risk-taking is not gambling.

Christians must evaluate the ways their money will be used—to bankroll unsavory activities or support the economy. Investments in business could serve either purpose, depending on the investor's personal ethics and the end result of the investment. Legalized gambling, which investigation shows increases illegal gambling—the proven bankroller of organized crime—supports only unsavory activities. And it produces no new goods, which speaks both to the secular mind and to the Christian view of stewardship of resources.



Robert O'Brien is news editor of Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, SBC Executive Committee, Nashville. He joined the Executive Committee in 1973 after five years with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, where he served as press director.



# HAVE YOU READ?

## By Clint Hopkins

My ethical perspectives have been shaped by many of the commonly thought of authors. To mention them would take too much space. Therefore, I have chosen to call attention to books which probably fall more into the categories of sociology and biblical theology.

Langdon Gilkey's *Shantung Compound* did for me what Menninger's *Whatever Became of Sin?* did for a great many people. It reminded me how easily the greatest among us can turn toward sin and self-centeredness. The book focuses on acts of great virtue, as well as sin, committed by people crowded into a prison compound by the Japanese in World War II. The story of that community is an interesting microcosm of our everyday world.

Through *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter Berger, I realized how much of my life is shaped by my thoughtless obedience to community practices rather than Christian reflection. Berger causes the reader to distinguish between what he is because he is Christ's and what he is because of his community. It is much easier to deal with the sin of legalism after digesting the contents of Berger's book.

*The Bible and Human Transformation* by Walter Wink is a short and readable book. It considers ways to restore the use of the Bible in God's plans to change lives. A

basic and comprehensive theological confession by a Catholic scholar is *On Being a Christian* by Hans Küng. Large sections of the book deal with specific items in the Church's concern for people and society generally, and the reason and way of that concern is set strongly in biblical theology.

To stay abreast of current ethical issues, I read the newspaper daily and try to scan reflective articles on ethics and decision making in popular and religious journals including *Newsweek*, *The Christian Century*, *Christianity and Crisis*, *Sojourners*, and *Report from the Capitol*. In addition, I try to read accounts from biblical times and later history from the viewpoint of trying to understand how the people then dealt with the gray areas of moral problems in their day.



Clint Hopkins is Director of the Department of Social Ministries for the General Board of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

## By Jerry Self

I am glad to have the opportunity to relate to LIGHTS readers those books that helped shape my perspective of Christian ethics.

Perhaps the single book which has had the most impact on me beyond the Bible is *Structures of Prejudice* by Carlyle Marney. I was impressed by his world view, his scholarship, his ability to communicate, and a presentation which showed the validity and necessity of ethical questions.

The novel *Giants in the Earth* by Ole Rolvaag impressed me early on with the value of strength of character. *History of Ethics* by Vernon J. Bourke helped broaden my perspective of ethics beyond a narrow evangelical awareness. If a negative example may be allowed, *Principles of Conduct* by John Murray helped clarify my thinking as to how I would not understand or do ethics. *How to Deal With Controversial Issues* by Bill Pinson opened my eyes to techniques other than the pugnacious to deal with conflict and controversy.

There is no way to evaluate the contribution of T. B. Maston in my life. His books are a portion of that deposit. *The Bible and Race and Segregation and Desegregation* introduced me to the real world of human relations. *Biblical Ethics* is a standard on which I prop my understanding of the Bible. His *Why Live the Christian*

*Life?* provides an excellent rationale for what I am doing personally and professionally.

An important coming of age for me was the realization that I can't know or read everything I would like. In order to stay abreast of social issues I isolate the areas of highest priority for job and personal interest and read selected newspapers and periodicals looking only for those articles that match priority interests. Book reviews are useful in weeding out what lacks value or in highlighting books with potential interest.

I have the advantage of access to the mail desk of the *Baptist and Reflector* (the Tennessee Baptist Convention paper). In a few minutes each day I can skim through the various Baptist state papers. Also, I can glance over books that arrive for reviewing. This is proving to be a handy source for information.



Jerry Self is Public Affairs and Christian Life Consultant for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, Brentwood, Tennessee.

# ON THE ETHICS FRONT

(With this section of *LIGHT*, we will introduce our readers to those who are involved in the field of Christian ethics. In this issue we are featuring the teachers of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. Ed. note)

## Making students think

What do you get when you combine a fly fisherman-horse trainer with somebody who teaches a course called Christ and the Media? Doug Ezell, that's who.

Ezell is the newest member of the Christian ethics department at Southwestern. He is no stranger to the faculty, however. He began teaching at Southwestern in 1967 as an instructor in the New Testament department. His unique blend of expertise in biblical studies and interest in Christian ethics made him a natural choice for the position that recently opened at Southwestern as associate professor of Christian ethics.

A native Louisianian, Ezell and his wife Lynne married in 1962. They have two children, Laura Lynne and Timothy Douglas. Doug Ezell earned his B.S. at Louisiana State University. He earned the B.D., M. Div. and Th.D. degrees at Southwestern and has done additional study at Princeton Theological Seminary. Ezell has contributed to various Baptist Sunday School Board publications. He wrote *Revelations on Revelation: New Sounds from Old Symbols* (Word, 1978).

His original plans were to go to a pastorate after seminary and not into teaching. As he relates, though, "I guess I would say I felt like some people called me out."

Dr. Drumwright, in particular, saw the gift in me of teaching; and Dr. Naylor believed in me enough to give me a chance at it."

As a teacher, Ezell believes the major thing he is to do "is to raise questions to make the students think, so they can come to some understanding that is theirs and not just a regurgitation of my material. So I try to teach in such a way that they get caught by truth rather than just intellectually and cognitively grasping truth; I hope that the truth catches them in the midst of what we are trying to do."

Doug and his family are members of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth. He considers it to "be a really important part" of his ministry. It provides a community of support, especially his Sunday School class. The local church "makes me have touch with everyday people and doesn't let me get off and do some kind of esoteric, academic theory that has no testing ground for practicality where people really live," he comments.



Ezell



Adams

## Emphasizing character

"I have the concept that students and teacher each bring knowledge, certain skills, and ways of dealing to bear on an area—whether a problem or a challenge—and we all look for a way to cope with that area." Thus, Bob Adams, associate professor of Christian ethics since 1976, sums up his style of teaching.

Adams particularly enjoys the decision making courses. He feels that one of the major challenges to Baptists is "to try to balance our traditional approaches toward decision making. I don't think we should ever lose our issue orientation, but we need to emphasize the other side of decision making, that of character development, more."

At Southwestern, Adams applies that philosophy in a four hour Introduction to Ethics course, decision making, Christians in the Political Process, a Doctor of Ministries Colloquium on The Urban Family and Stress, a Ph.D. seminar in historical ethics, and a course on the ethics of health care delivery systems.

Adams and his wife, LaVerne, are native Oklahomans. They have three daughters—Catherine Jane, June Elaine,

and Barbara Ann. He earned his A.B. degree at Northeastern Oklahoma State, a B.D. and M.Div. at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Th.D. at Southwestern. He has done additional study at Vanderbilt University; Instituto de Idiomas, San Jose, Costa Rica; and Goethe Institut, Concepcion, Chile.

Teaching has been a career for Adams. When he was pastoring in Oklahoma, he also taught at an extension center connected to Central Baptist Theological Seminary. On the Adams' first missionary tour to Chile, he lectured as a student worker. After returning to the United States to finish his doctorate at Southwestern, Adams went to Columbia, South America to teach at the International Baptist Seminary. In 1973, Adams accepted an invitation to teach in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

When asked how he felt about the local church, he replied, "I decided when we moved to Fort Worth, after talking to Dr. T. B. Maston, that I would spend as much time as I possibly could in the local church. So, we joined Broadway Baptist Church. I teach a Sunday School class which I never miss unless I feel that I must. I won't take a Sunday morning preaching engagement unless I can get there in fifteen minutes, which means that I can leave at fifteen till eleven and be there by eleven."

## Students, not subjects

Ebbie Smith came to the conviction he wanted to teach during graduate study days at Southwestern Seminary. Yet, he also had the conviction he was to go overseas as a foreign missionary. Both convictions found fruition. He and his wife Donna spent fifteen years as Southern Baptist missionaries in Indonesia. Ebbie's assignment there was to provide pastor training. While in the United States on furlough, the Smiths were called by Southwestern Seminary to teach there. Ebbie has been associate professor of Christian ethics since 1976.

Earning a B.A. at Hardin-Simmons University, a B.D. and Ph.D. at Southwestern, an M.S. at Fuller Theological Seminary, and taking further study at the University of



Smith

teaches an elective, Christianity and Economics. In addition to teaching in the Christian ethics department, Smith began in 1979 teaching a few electives in the Missions Department.

Seminary, and taking further study at the University of Houston has provided Ebbie Smith with a good background for his teaching duties at Southwestern.

At Southwestern, Smith's primary teaching responsibilities are a four-hour introductory Christian ethics course, a Ph.D. seminar called Contemporary Christian Ethics, and The Church and Family Needs. He also

Smith's philosophy of teaching is that "you teach students rather than subjects, and I think the main goal I have is that students will come out of one of my classes with their own convictions as to what the Bible teaches about various ethical issues and the ways to make ethical decisions. I think one of the biggest challenges of teaching Christian ethics is helping people to come to a realistic position on the biblical teaching about different subjects, helping them to become biblical rather than traditional."

The Smiths have three children—Randy, Robin, and Rianna. Their church membership is at First Baptist Church, Crowley, Texas. Often sought out as an interim pastor, Ebbie is usually preaching on any given Sunday around the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He and Donna also do marriage enrichment conferences—more than a dozen in 1979.

## National Seminar

The Christian Life Commission's 1980 national seminar will be held March 24-26, 1980 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. Speakers this year will include Buckminster Fuller, Barry Commoner, Martin Marty, Ramsey Clark, and numerous others who will help us to examine "Ethical Issues for the Eighties." If you are interested in attending and have not yet received an invitation, write to David Sapp, Christian Life Commission, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tennessee 37219.

☐ I am not interested in receiving LIGHT. Please remove my name from your mailing list.

☐ The following person(s) would be interested in receiving LIGHT:

_____			_____		
Name			Name		
_____			_____		
Street			Street		
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
City	State	Zip	City	State	Zip

Cut out and mail to Christian Life Commission, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37219. There is no subscription fee.

# IN ADDITION

**JOHN CLAYPOOL**, pastor of Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi, provides a long-distance ministry to many of us through his printed sermons. The following is from his September 9, 1979 sermon, "Who Am I?":

"The ancient wisdom of Genesis rightly sees that we are incredibly diverse in makeup, and therefore face the unending challenge of orchestrating all of the parts, finding a way to harmonize not just some of the notes, but all of the notes of our being. Let me be very frank in saying that the Bible gives us no promise that at any point in this human pilgrimage will this harmonizing task be finished. The challenge of orchestrating all that is within us is for life. However, once you get over the disappointment of such a prospect, a sense of excitement begins to arise, for what it means is that there will be something to look forward to every day of our lives. We will never outgrow the need to collaborate with that Relentless One in calling forth greater and more complex struggle." In order to cover printing and postage costs, a \$10 donation per year per subscriber is suggested if you are interested in getting Claypool's sermons. Write Northminster Sermon Ministry, 3955 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi 39211 for more information.

**CHILD ABUSE**, a part of the larger picture of domestic violence, confronts us all with the question, "What can I do?". Here are some selected organizations dealing with child abuse and neglect which can provide materials and information upon request: (1) National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, U. S. Children's Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, P. O.

Box 1182, Washington, D.C. 20013; (2) National Center for Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, 1205 Oneida Street, Denver, Colorado 80220; (3) Parents Anonymous, 22330 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance, California 90505; (4) Local service agencies such as children's protective services, child abuse hotline (operating in some areas), welfare department, social service agency, public health authorities, school nurse or counseling department, police, or hospital.

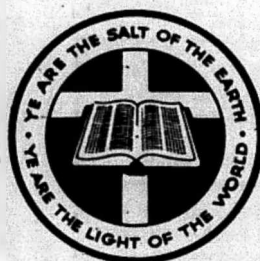
**TOO SHORT FOR COMMENT** but able to stand alone are these:

"Our calling is to be biblically discerning and historically specific without being historically captive." Wes Michaelson, *Sajourners*, October, 1979.

"Two out of three advertisements on television are for things that deprive us of the full utility of our five senses." Ramsey Clark, *The Center Magazine*, March-April, 1979.

"People say that there are not enough God-fearing people in politics but the truth is that there are not enough politics in God-fearing people." Charles Overby, special assistant to Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, in an address to the Nashville Religious Public Relations Council.

**ROBERT HASTINGS**, editor of *The Illinois Baptist*, said in a recent editorial: "Any one of our state papers gives a parochial, limited picture of Southern Baptist life. That's why I often encourage pastors, especially, to subscribe to three or four other state papers, and to rotate such subscriptions."



## Christian Life Commission

Of The Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37219

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Nashville, Tennessee  
Permit No. 2

Address Correction Requested