



CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

April-May, 1980

# Love, Anger and Intimacy

By David Mace

I have spent most of my professional life—a period of now forty-five years—working for better marriages and better families, in a total of sixty-one countries of the world. I have been in at the early beginning of marriage and family counseling. I have tried to study the family closely, and to keep up with the literature in the field.

Now, in my later years, I have come to see that much of what I have been doing and thinking has been secondary and peripheral. I have become deeply convinced that we have been ignoring the vital, central reality about the business of living together in families. We have made tremendous efforts to *improve the social environment of the family*, and I hope we shall continue to do so. We have made great advances in *identifying the areas in which families manifest functional dislocation*, and I am very happy about that deeper understanding. We have vastly *improved our skills in offering help to families in serious trouble*, and trained hundreds of thousands of professionals to use these skills.

However, I believe that behind all these studies and efforts there is something vital and essential that we have missed. Let me try to spell it out, very simply, under four headings:

1. When a marriage ends in divorce, or a family breaks down, the failure always takes place *from the inside*.
2. The generally supposed causes of marital trouble—difficulties with sex, money, in-laws, and child raising—are *not the real causes*. These are only the *arenas* in which the inner failure of the relationship is outwardly demonstrated.
3. The inner failure of a close relationship takes place always for the same reason—*because the persons*

*involved have been unable to achieve mutual love and intimacy.*

4. The failure to achieve love and intimacy is almost always due to *the inability of the persons concerned to deal creatively with anger.*

Let me make two other statements that may well surprise you:

1. Marriage and family living generates, in normal people, more anger than they experience in any other social situation in which they habitually find themselves.

2. The overwhelming majority of family members know of only two ways of dealing with anger—to vent it, or to suppress it. Both of these methods are destructive of love and intimacy. There is a third method, but most members of families don't even know that it exists, so of course they are quite unable to make use of it.

If you have followed me so far, you will realize that I am now in serious trouble. I have opened up a subject of vast importance; but in the short space at my disposal I can't possibly do justice to it.

Never mind, let me do what I can, and let the chips fall where they may. This is all very new material, which can't be fitted into any of our existing frames of reference; so the chances are great that I shall be misunderstood. But I must take that risk, because what I have to say is vital not only to our culture in general, but even more vital to practicing Christians in our culture.

To simplify our discussion, I shall from now on confine my attention to *marriage*—but let me make it clear that what I have to say applies equally, with minor modifications, to all other family relationships.

What are two married people trying to do? Outwardly, they are creating a new unit of human society. The social obligations of marriage are clearly stated

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# Enemies and what to do with them

By Foy Valentine

I would not give a dime for a full grown man or woman who has for decades lived and worked and struggled and contended for the faith once for all delivered to the saints and then comes to the end of the journey without any real, live, genuine, authentic enemies.

Enemies, like personal finances and sex and family quarrels, are hardly talked about in polite Christian company. The Bible, nevertheless, has much to say about enemies; and we can ignore that substantial witness only at our own peril for Biblical people ought not to ignore what the Bible says, about enemies or anything else.

Enemies, in this kind of world, seem to be a fact of life. Even when people go smiling through life, affirming everybody and everything (including the world, the flesh, and the devil), declaring, "I'm OK and you're OK," there are nevertheless enemies. That is, there are still people who see things differently, who want to solve problems in ways you find unacceptable, or who are just on the absolutely opposite side from you regarding some really important issues.

The four billion human beings now on earth are so individually made, the races and nations and tribes and tongues and cultures are so differently structured, and all these human psyches are so uniquely developed that almost infinite variety is guaranteed. Where such variety and otherness exist, anger, conflict, and

controversy follow as the night the day; and where anger, conflict, and controversy are, enemies are hardly ever far behind. In our human estate of fallenness, enemies seem to be a part of the given.

To have enemies means that you have taken some stand, that you have not compromised some conviction, that you have communicated some position, that you feel strongly about something, or that you have been in some particular place at some particular time when someone was substantially offended just by your being there.

So, most folks, even most Christian folks, especially those in places of some leadership, have some enemies. The question is, "What am I to do with these enemies?" Jesus says, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44). Christians are sacrificially and aggressively to seek good and not evil for them. Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21 to tell the Christian that if he finds his enemy hungry he is to feed him or thirsty he is to give him drink (Romans 12:20). Righteous Job defends his integrity by noting that he never rejoiced over the misfortune of an enemy (Job 31:29). Exodus 23:4-5 instructs anyone who finds his enemy's lost domestic animals to return them to him. Jeremiah calls the people of God to pray for the peace and welfare of their enemies (29:7).

So what do I do with my enemies?

I pray for them.

I seek their good.

I never rejoice over their misfortune.

I help them when they are in need.

I work for their peace and welfare.

I love them.

By taking such a position toward my enemies, I may win some to be friends. I guard the prerogatives of God who has said, "Vengeance is mine." And I resist the canker of anger and hostility and hate in the knowledge that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20).

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## In this LIGHT

Conflict is inevitable. People are going to argue, fight, or, at the very least, suffer in silence over differences. The marriage relationship is not immune to any of this. How does a couple deal constructively with conflict and hostile feelings? Dr. David Mace breaks some new ground for us in his article, "Love, Anger, and Intimacy."

We talk about social issues from the perspective of identification. But, identification is not always enough. How does one make decisions about the rightness and wrongness of these issues? More specifically, how does a pastor help people make important decisions about moral matters in the midst of life's process. Fred McGehee, Consultant in Career Guidance in the Sunday School Board's Church Administration Department, offers some suggestions in "Ethical Issues from the Pastoral Perspective." Both those concerned with the

"oughtness" and those concerned with the "isness" of life will profit from his thinking.

Few people address the crisis of integrity as pointedly and perceptively as C. R. Daley. He directs his pen toward ministers in this issue's OPINION column. Dr. Daley calls for ministers to do serious thinking and acting upon this timely and timeless concern of integrity.

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## Love, Anger, and Intimacy

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in the wedding services of most churches. They are to beget children, to keep sex under reasonable control, and to foster man/woman companionship. The last of these three has, throughout most of Christian history, been given little attention. Today, in the judgment of most people, it has moved up to first place. The primary goal of modern marriage, whether we approve of it or not, is to achieve a close relationship of love and intimacy.

We could talk for a long time about what love really means. But it will serve my purpose better if I focus on intimacy, which is the manifestation of real love, and also the test of its validity. A simple definition of intimacy is "shared privacy." Most of us live in a big, complex world where multitudes of people interact on very superficial and often competitive levels; but this doesn't meet our inner needs, so we have to find refuge in a smaller, private world where we can take off our masks, be honest and open about who we really are, and have a chance to become fully known and deeply loved. I would go so far as to say that *no person can achieve a full sense of his identity until he has established an interpersonal relationship in which he is "fully known and deeply loved."* This need not be marriage—but for most of us, marriage is the best way to achieve it—and deep down, this is the dream we all have of what we want marriage to do for us.

However, intimacy, like every other pearl of great price, has to be paid for. And the price of intimacy is clear and simple. It is that, in this vital and private relationship, we must take down all our defenses, and make ourselves totally vulnerable. No married couple really knows what marriage at its best can mean until they have done that with each other. Then, and only then, love flows like a healing stream, cleansing and refreshing their personal lives and their jointly shared life.

After a lifetime of seeing the inside of people's marriages, including my own, I would have to say reluctantly that most marriages never reach this goal. All strive for it, but few find it. Why is this?

The answer—you guessed it!—is because anger blocks the way. Let me now try to explain how this happens.

We need to consider briefly just what anger is, and the role it plays in our lives. I can only touch on this very superficially.

Most of the literature about anger is based on widely accepted psychological and sociological theories about hostility and aggression. I prefer to begin with a *physiological approach*. I see anger as a complex series of body changes triggered off by a sudden awareness of danger. This reaction to stress can be regarded as our survival kit, shared in some measure with all living creatures.

All of us live, to some extent, in danger. At any moment an unforeseen catastrophe could overtake us. If this happened, the way in which we responded might decide whether or not we survived. In such a situation, we would need two vital resources—first, an immediate

surge of energy; and second, the necessary control of our actions to use that energy to good purpose.

The first need is met by the onset of anger. The way in which our bodies provide "instant energy" is an amazing process. As soon as a warning is received, with remarkable speed, a complex series of bodily changes takes place. The heartbeat speeds up, blood pressure rises, muscles become tense, adrenalin-like substances pour out into the blood stream, and anti-coagulants are withdrawn. These and other changes make us ready for either fight or flight—the two classical ways of responding to an attack.

How is the alarm signal given? Awareness of danger can be activated in a number of ways, through our five senses. It is hardly possible, however, that the first alarm could be dealt with by our reasoning, conscious minds—there just wouldn't be time to analyze the nature of the stimulus and to decide whether or not it was one which called for an anger reaction. So it is logical to conclude that, despite the teaching of some modern cults, we do not make ourselves angry, and are not responsible for being in a state of anger.

This is important. Many people feel ashamed and guilty about being angry, and try to deny their own feelings. I believe that anger is a natural, healthy emotional state, and should be accepted as such. Rightly used, anger could save our lives. Short of that, it can provide the motivation for personal and social action that could change all our lives for the better. Let us therefore affirm our anger, and be thankful for it.

However, once the anger is there, it must be rightly used. If you are confronted by someone who has designs on your life, you must fight, and you had better use all your cunning and skill so that you have a good chance of winning. Or, if the best course seems to be to run for it, you had better run in the right direction, so that you don't land in a dead end or find your escape cut off by an accomplice of your attacker.

So you are not responsible for your anger being there—that is beyond the scope of your conscious mind; but you *are* responsible for what you *do* with the anger, as soon as you are consciously aware of it. In other words, you are capable of *controlling* your anger, so that you may use it effectively. As the Bible so well puts it—"Be angry, and sin not." Being angry is not sinful—but misusing anger can be sinful.

By this time you may be saying—"What's all this talk about danger and survival, about a crisis in which your life is threatened? Surely we are not talking about life-and-death issues? We know that some married couples lose control and batter each other; but we are thinking of responsible Christian husbands and wives."

What we must understand is that, in marriage, people live very close to each other, and share their lives deeply. Yet as individuals they have differences of opinions—quite strong differences. And because of their closeness and dependence on each other, these differences easily become disagreements, and the disagreements in turn produce anger. Wanting to have your own way, and then being thwarted by your marriage partner, develops frustration, and frustration is as much a state of crisis as fear is. We all know about the difficulty of doing heart transplants, because the body's defense system responds by trying to destroy the transplanted organ, treating it as an invader. Similarly, the

body's system will equally respond with anger to a disagreement with a person who is otherwise deeply loved. The body has no power to judge the seriousness or otherwise of the situation—it simply responds with a surge of energy to any incident that heightens emotional tension.

When you experience a surge of anger, you have a choice of three ways in which you can deal with it:

The first is to *vent* it, in the form of physical action. This is the most natural response, because one of the physiological conditions that anger brings about is muscular tension, and by *using* the muscles, as in fighting or running, the tension is somewhat relieved. What this means is that you begin to *expend* the energy supply your body has provided. However, when people speak about “getting rid of their anger by venting it,” this is not really accurate; because drawing on the energy supply is actually a message to your body to keep the anger coming.

Another way of dealing with anger is to *suppress* it. Because we have the power to control how anger is used, we may choose not to use it at all. There are life situations where this is obviously the sensible thing to do. If your boss bawls you out, and you have a strong urge to respond by punching his nose, your superior wisdom tells you that this might lead to a chain of very inconvenient consequences, and you had better not do it.

Many smaller creatures, in a danger situation, respond neither by fight nor by flight—they *freeze*. They may “play dead” in the hope that no attack will be made. And we also have the capacity to respond to anger by suppressing action altogether.

What happens when we do this? Does it “go away”? It does in time, because the body has no wish to remain in a state of internal crisis, and it welcomes a signal to return to a relaxed condition. However, if the stimulus that caused the anger is still there, it isn't easy to turn off the head of steam. What occurs, when this happens again and again, is that the body establishes a state of continuing low-key tension—a kind of slow, simmering anger that never entirely goes away. We often call this resentment. It is a very unhealthy state to be in, and it lies at the root of many psychosomatic illnesses.

This “bottling up” of anger is particularly harmful in the marriage relationship. Anger and love are in fact mutually exclusive emotions. When you are angry you can't be loving, especially toward the source of your anger. However, when a fight takes place, the couple may expend some of their anger on each other, make up, and be warm and affectionate again. Many marriages work on that yo-yo principle.

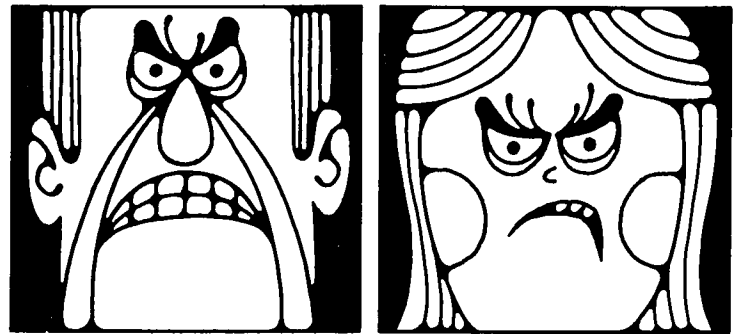
However, when anger is bottled up and becomes resentment, there is a continuing state of hostility between the two people, and this is all the more difficult to deal with if it is not openly acknowledged. It forces these people to keep at a distance from each other, because there is no “making up” experience. As a marriage counselor, over a period of many years, I have noticed that couples who habitually suppress their anger toward each other become incapable of tenderness. The inner core of love between them withers away; and although they may go through the motions

of being affectionate, it is not genuine. This is the tragic price they pay. Many counselors believe that even if venting anger is not appropriate in a loving relationship, bottling it up is even worse.

What then are couples to do? If venting anger is damaging to love and intimacy, and suppressing anger is even more damaging, they seem to be confronted by a choice of two evils. Large numbers of husbands and wives live most of their lives in this predicament.

Fortunately, there is a way out, although it is known to very few couples; and these few seem to have stumbled on it by some lucky chance. This is just not good enough. Even in the marriage enrichment movement, I have encountered well-meaning couples who talk about learning the art of marital fighting, or of suppressing their negative feelings toward each other.

In my own marriage, our discovery that our anger could be dissolved came about almost by accident. We



had found the other two approaches quite unsatisfactory, and we were looking for a better solution. I need not recount a long and discouraging process. It will be enough to describe the solution that finally emerged. It took the form of what we call a three-step system, which we mutually adopted by making appropriate contracts with each other.

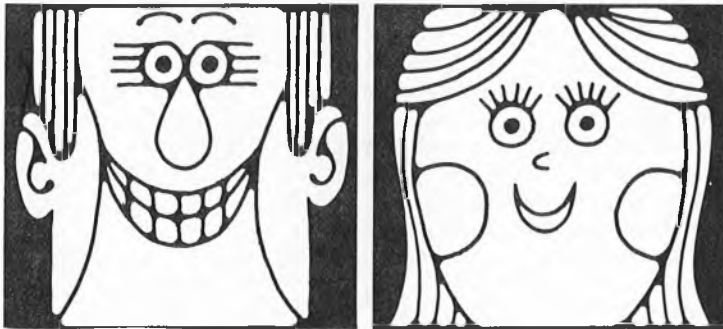
The first step was to recognize openly that anger, in marriage as anywhere else, is a healthy emotion, and that it is not in our power to prevent it. We therefore freely gave each other the right to be angry with each other, without any judgments or penalties. However, we agreed that when one of us *did* get angry with the other, we would communicate this as soon as possible. We recognize that it should be acceptable to say “I am feeling angry” as to say “I am feeling sad” or “I am feeling hungry.” All these are bodily states which a caring partner should be able to understand.

However, we drew a clear line between acknowledging anger and venting anger. This enabled us to take our second step, which was a commitment on both sides that we would never again *attack* each other, because we took the view that this was entirely inappropriate between two people who were trying to establish a loving and intimate relationship.

The assurance that there would be no attack made it unnecessary for the other partner to go on the defensive and to develop retaliatory anger. Instead, we tried to develop a compassionate concern, rather than a sense of hostility, toward the angry partner; and to communicate our desire to understand how and why the state of anger had arisen.

The third step developed naturally from this. Acknowledging anger, and promising not to vent it, doesn't take away the negative emotions. The anger is still there, and it will not be healthily cleared up until the stimulus that caused it has been faced, understood, and removed.

In order to do this, we had to accept the fact that the state of anger in one partner, evoked by the other, is an integral part of our total relationship, and that *we both have an equal responsibility to clear it up*. I know that this directly challenges the frequent assertion that my anger is mine alone, and that I must be responsible for dealing with it. We found that this simply does not work in an intimate relationship. Only when we clearly saw that anger, on either side, is a barrier between us, which must be removed by *both of us acting together*, did we find the answer. If you have made me angry, I cannot clear up the situation completely



without your active sharing in the process. I readily admit that it isn't practicable to clear up anger toward more distant people in this way; although I think we would be creating a wonderful world if this could actually be done. However, in an intimate relationship, I am convinced that unless it *is* done, the relationship will inevitably be damaged, and if this continues to happen, the damage will be progressive. This underlines my conviction that the failure to deal realistically with every anger situation as it arises is the major cause of failure in modern marriages.

What do I mean by "dealing realistically with an anger situation"? We must remember that anger is not a primary, but a secondary emotion. It is the body's response to another kind of stimulus that usually takes the form of fear or frustration. Anger is a spontaneous response to a situation in which my sense of security is threatened, my self-esteem damaged, my feelings hurt. In such a situation, the last thing I really want is to get into a fight. My real need is to be understood, loved, and supported. As someone once said of teenagers, the time when they need love most is the time when they seem most unlovable.

The approach is therefore—"I find myself getting angry with you. But you know I am pledged not to attack you, which would only make you angry, too, and alienate us both. What I need is your help to get behind my anger to what is really causing it, so that we can do something about it together." The response to this is—"I don't like you being angry with me, but I don't blame you for it. And since I know you are not going to attack me, I needn't put up my defenses and get

angry with you in turn. I appreciate your invitation to help you get through to the underlying cause of your anger, because I care about our relationship, and it should help both of us to find out what is really happening to us."

Of course this must be followed up by a session in which the situation which produced the anger is carefully examined. And this must be done in an atmosphere of openness and honesty, with all the relevant facts and feelings shared. If the anger is still too hot to handle, it may be necessary to wait. But postponement must not become evasion. Every anger situation must be worked through as soon as possible. If this is not done, each new situation will gather up previously unsettled ones, and build up to a level of tension in which anger is likely to be so intense that it gets out of control.

What in fact happens when anger situations in marriage are faced together in this way? Years of experience have shown my wife and myself clearly that careful examination always reveals one of two situations. Either it turns out that my anger was based on misinterpretation of your words or deeds; in which case we must improve our communication system so that I am less likely in the future to misinterpret your behavior, or on the other hand it turns out that you pushed me beyond the limits of my tolerance at that particular time, in which case we must find a way to improve your understanding of my sensitivity to your words and actions, and at the same time help me to widen the limits of my tolerance to sensitive issues that I have to learn to live with. In other words, the anger situation has been used to promote a growth experience for both of us.

I cannot deny that this is a complex process, and it is simply not likely, as I have already said, to be stumbled upon accidentally by any but a few exceptionally fortunate couples. I am also aware that some couples are not even seeking a relationship of loving intimacy, and therefore would not be motivated to pay the price that has to be paid for it. I have to admit also that the initial task of changing over to this new approach from a fighting pattern or a suppressing pattern is a major undertaking, because you have to begin with a formidable backlog of unresolved conflicts. I can only say, however, that when a marriage is finally freed of the damage that anger can do to it, either by violent upheaval or by slow corrosion, it is like passing through a sound barrier into a new atmosphere of ongoing growth and creative love which has to be experienced to be believed. This is what we call "dissolving" anger, using it creatively; and I am speaking from actual experience.

Let me conclude with three further comments:

1. I believe that the creative handling of anger is the key, and the only key, to the achievement of genuine and lasting love and intimacy in a close relationship. All other methods of dealing with interpersonal conflict, which arises inevitably in close relationships, are superficial solutions, and leave the roots of conflict undisturbed, so that they are likely to reappear later. Love and intimacy in their full meaning are simply not attainable in a relationship in which conflict is avoided and anger suppressed. The inevitable anger developed in a love relationship must be used positively as raw



material for ongoing growth. The onset of anger is very like a squeaking noise in the motor of your automobile. Use it as a warning, and deal with the cause of the trouble, and the performance of your car will be improved. Ignore it, and the car's performance will sooner or later deteriorate.

2. I believe that this is a vital message for Christians, because Christianity alone, among the world's religions, puts the central emphasis on love—the love of God revealed in the life of love that Jesus lived, and the promise that this divine love can bring forth a corresponding quality of love in our hearts and our homes. We constantly give lip-service to these concepts; but we simply do not teach Christian families in practical terms how it can be done; so many of them suffer from frustration, guilt and shame because they know well that their family life is not reflecting their Christian beliefs, but all their efforts to do better seem to be ineffective.

3. Finally, I have to make it clear that what I have been saying applies primarily to the companionship marriage and the companionship family. In the traditional (that is, the hierarchical one) marriage, anger caused little trouble as long as it didn't lead to extreme violence. It was considered entirely appropriate for a husband to be angry with his wife. Indeed, if he stamped and bellowed he was supposed to be exhibiting his masculine strength and showing that he was the master in his own home. The wife, on the other hand, was not expected to show anger, but to behave with the yielding sweetness and the passive acquiescence which were considered to be the feminine virtues. By this ingenious arrangement, open conflict in marriage was neatly avoided. Of course it didn't always work; and in any case, *it made loving intimacy completely impossible.*

There is no evidence that I have ever encountered that a woman confronted with a corresponding stimulus, generates less anger than a man does. The acquiescence of those traditional wives was entirely the result of social conditioning, which led to the repression of the wife's normal and healthy anger.

The advent of the companionship marriage has given husbands and wives equal opportunities to express their feelings, and this has resulted in marital conflict on a hitherto unprecedented scale. There are some who feel that the Christian answer is to go back to the traditional marriage. I do not share this view. The full, rich quality of love in a marriage cannot be released until we respond to the great commandment of Jesus to love

your neighbor as you love yourself. We don't yet live in a world where we can very easily treat the people next door in this Christian spirit. But after all, who *is* the nearest of all your neighbors? Surely it is the person with whom you have entered, by the most solemn vows, into a life deeply shared. That, for me, represents the clear and central and final Christian message about marriage, in response to words to which Jesus Himself gave the seal of final authority, and which we call the "Great Commandment." It seems tragic to me that we should go on structuring marriage so that it falls short of the fullness of relational love and intimacy, simply because we cannot deal with the inevitable anger that develops in a close relationship, by transforming it into a means of mutual growth.

Anger will inevitably develop in Christian families as in all others. This does not mean that it is to be treated as shameful or wicked. It is a vital part of our biological heritage. Venting it, or suppressing it, are both ineffective ways of dealing with it. There is, however, a more excellent way—to heed the message it is trying to make us hear, and respond by dealing with the situation that has caused the anger, and using it constructively as a means of continuing growth toward our goals of love and intimacy.

I believe that this is a vital message for all families in our world today—and especially for Christian families. Everything else we do to try to help families is, by comparison, scratching the surface. Only by going right to the inner core of our intimate relationships, and learning how to resolve what I call the love-anger cycle, shall we release the power to make family living warm, loving, and tender. And when we can do this for families, they should be able to do just about everything else for themselves.



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## The Integrity Crisis

By C. R. Daley

The 80s may become known as the decade of crises in America. Surely this decade is beginning with crises in nearly every area of national and international affairs. Of all crises we face, the crisis of integrity nationally and personally is the most serious.

Integrity is the moral fiber that holds the cloth together and without this virtue the future holds no hope for our society.

The temptation always is to point out and criticize the lack of integrity in government and politics, in the business world, or anywhere else the one judging is not involved. But, of all persons, it behooves those of us in the Christian ministry to do some soul-searching at this point. What can be said for integrity in the Baptist ministry?

First of all, there is an integrity crisis related to our self-image. Usually a minister inherits a place of prestige and influence in the community where he serves. If he accepts this gratefully and humbly and perpetuates it by hard work and committed service, he needs no artificial props.

But there is always the temptation to resort to shortcuts and cheap prestige symbols in order to enhance reputation. One of the flagrant examples of our day is the growing practice of ministers securing doctors degrees from schools that are hardly more than "degree mills."

The amazing thing is how many seminary graduates with the basic theological degree are succumbing to this temptation. They already have the tools for their profession if they would use them but there's something about the title "doctor" which they covet. So for a fee, a little reading, and a "thesis" that is hardly more than a term paper for an undergraduate course, they become a "doctor."

For those not knowing the academic road, this might be excusable but it's hard to see how one who knows the requirements for an earned doctor's degree in a reputable institution and decides for a "mail-order degree" can preserve self-respect.

Another concern for modern ministers is integrity of lifestyle. The death of millions every year from malnutrition, disease, and starvation is a haunting thing for anyone taking the teachings of Jesus seriously. We preach on the problem, take hunger offerings, bring groceries, used clothes, and other supplies for a few of the poor, but that's about as far as we go.

Saying we have to have dependable transportation, many ministers drive luxurious, gas-guzzling cars. Saying we have to dress according to our position, we wear suits that make us among the best dressed. Saying we could make more in another job or profession, we expect and sometimes get salaries that deny our claim to be servants.

The most serious crisis of integrity for a minister arises in speaking his convictions and declaring the whole gospel of God. A minister knows his message should always come from God but what about it when that message is unpopular and is resented by important members of the congregation he serves? Is the unwanted message worth losing the opportunity to be heard and disrupting the harmony of the congregation?

Is it possible to exercise discretion in dealing with controversial issues without becoming guilty of compromise? Is it possible to speak the truth in love and not lose the ears of listeners who disagree with us?

Let's admit it. This poses a real dilemma. Sometimes a minister finds himself like a starving bear on the back of a walrus floating in the sea a long way from land. If the bear stays on the back of the walrus, he will starve. If he eats the walrus, he will drown.

These are but three facets of a personal ministry where integrity is at stake. There are many others. In fact, integrity or lack of it is revealed in every word and every deed of a minister.

A leader can get by without a lot of other desirable traits if those who follow him are convinced he has integrity. A present illustration is the attitude of many Americans today toward President Jimmy Carter. They continue to support him not because of his success in foreign policy and certainly not in his ability to handle the American economy but because they believe in his basic honesty and integrity.

Many attributes enhance a minister's opportunity to serve effectively but none in the long run is as necessary as integrity. Our lives must measure up to our professions or as John Sutherland Bonnell said, "either we shall expel from our personal lives . . . those things that are a contradiction to our profession of faith in Christ, or God will cast us off as cumberers of the ground."

Sooner or later it becomes apparent whether one has integrity or not. The world has a name for those who pretend to have but do not practice integrity. It is "phony" and God have mercy on any minister so regarded.



**C. R. Daley** is editor of the Kentucky Baptist Convention paper, **The Western Recorder**.

# Ethical Issues and the Pastoral Perspective

By Fred McGehee

Searching for one's way in a permissive and ethically pluralistic society has become a source of chronic distress for people today. Their strength for making moral distinctions has been overtaxed by exposure to a multitude of issues they never expected to meet. Meanwhile, their supportive relationships have grown increasingly superficial. Still, some of these persons have sense enough to know that their moral choices exert a disproportionate influence on the outcome of the one life each has to live.

Many people today hunger for someone with whom to discuss issues at the core of their existence, issues often related to right and wrong.

How do you as a minister talk with persons informally on ethical issues? I mean in places like in front of TV sets, at recreation events, on airplanes, on the sidewalk of a college campus, at coffee breaks, in car pools, at supermarkets, on the church steps, in hospital rooms, and homes. Persons who learn to be sensitive to human needs in such places and who learn to be unthreatened by unstructured encounters report the most interesting experiences of ministry. One outcome is the teaching of Christian ethics to persons at a deeper than intellectual level.

## SYMBOLIC ROLE

Although changing role expectations represents one of the minister's chief sources of stress today, some aspects of ministry role have not changed. Most people expect ministers to care, to be honest and to be able to tell them what God says is right and wrong. Such expectations have their roots in the Bible, and every minister would do well to accept these expectations as soon as possible upon entrance to ministry.

In informal conversations persons discover quickly how the minister feels he must implement these expectations. Will he simply be a source of reassurance? Will he be the ethical weatherman with frightening up-to-the-minute information on immoral heatwaves that are moving in? Maybe he advocates a don't-think, only-believe viewpoint. When they are at their best, most people probably hope that their minister will care enough for them to help them to grow as persons of character and social action and to believe in them that they can.

Everyone a minister meets has a preconceived notion of what a minister should be like, so some negotiation is necessary before a relationship can be established. The simplest way to do this is to discuss the person's favorite minister, if he has one, and to acknowledge ways you are similar and different from that minister.

The appropriate utilization of role in informal caring calls for great flexibility on the minister's part, for in

one brief conversation the minister may move from the shepherding role to the prophetic role to the priestly role. But make no mistake, the ministry role when properly utilized exerts a catalytic influence in speeding and deepening the quality of informal caring.

## READING ETHICS FROM HUMAN DOCUMENTS

What lulls us into complacency in many informal conversations is that we do not expect anything important to be said. We therefore do not listen for it and consequently do not hear what people are really sharing. Often we think we are on our way to an important meeting when in actuality we are in one but don't know it.

When we do listen, what do we hear? The theological and ethical concerns are certainly not compartmentalized as they are in seminary. At times, personal theological and ethical matters are handed to us like a stack of transparencies, and we are asked to read all of the material without unstacking it first. Fortunately, most people do not expect us to do this while standing on one foot, but people do expect us to try to understand them.

While listening to a person's personal concern ask yourself, "What does this report imply about this person's theology and ethics?" When listening to a person's explanation of his or her faith, "What is implied about personal concerns?" When a person advocates a specific ethical viewpoint, what does this reveal about his relationships to others? What do his words say when compared to his feelings? Contact with a minister quickens specific concerns in people. When these concerns do not come up in the conversation, the minister should at least wonder why.

## THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF OPENNESS

In far too many instances today pastoral conversation is friendly, superficial, purposeless chit-chat meant to satisfy congregations who demand it without remembering why. What is needed, if this be the case, is a new basis for pastoral conversation that returns it to its original model, namely, the recorded conversations of Jesus.

These conversations evolved their purpose from the encounter between Jesus and the person involved. Jesus did not impose a threadbare preconceived purpose upon the encounter. Neither did people talk to Jesus just to do him a favor. He encouraged persons to share the responsibility for the conversation, and for its success or failure. In regard to personal needs these conversations were not filled with indifference, evasion, or repression, but support, clarification of needs, and confession. These talks did not end with momentary inspiration that quickly faded. Instead the talks ended



with the responsibility of living with new understanding.

In conversations with Jesus, scripture and prayer were used in response to needs that surfaced in the discussion, not as substitutes for the words, "I've got to go." People to whom Jesus talked recognized his respect for their personal freedom. He never rejected persons because he could not get them to do what he wanted them to do. These events fostered mutual trust and acceptance. Even when persons rejected Jesus on the basis of talks with him, it was not because of some vague suspicion they had about something about him that they could not quite put their finger on. When persons did reject Jesus, it was for very specific reasons. Apparently, he did not like rejection. No one does. But he was not afraid of it. When it happened, he did not become judgmental and blame his rejectors or himself.

The persons he engaged in conversation grew in importance to him as they talked, so he felt a sense of loss when they walked away. He also celebrated with them when they chose to change after talking with him.

Openness in relationship to others comes from trust. In Jesus' case he trusted his Heavenly Father and his disciples to be with him. He trusted himself that he was who he was and could do what he could do, and he trusted the persons to whom he spoke that they would share themselves with him, and they did.

### **LIFE'S SUPREME VENTURES**

Events such as marriage, the birth of a baby, the choice of vocation, leaving home, going to war, serious illness, the death of a loved one and commitment to a religious faith are times of self-transcendence and therefore call for the exercise of faith. People have for generations turned to religious leaders in such times for assurance of divine blessing, guidance, and hope. Our generation may have one more request of ministers in such times—to serve as a bridge to a cultural and spiritual heritage sacrificed to mobility and personal goals. It is not unusual for the outcropping of a person's value system to be quite prominent at such times.

If one has time, the minister can render the person or persons a service by helping them to focus and prioritize their values. What place does fame, material possessions, friendship, pleasing others, love, immediate and future gratification, and the will of God have in this pivotal experience in their lives? Since personal values influence decision-making in all of life, it is an act of personal responsibility to identify and acknowledge which values are to influence the most. Here the minister can help.

### **WHEN EMOTIONS AND ETHICS COLLIDE**

When a person becomes upset in discussion of an ethical issue, the minister does well who deals with the person's emotions first.

The minister should begin with the clarification of his own attitudes about specific emotions. Anger is meant to generate energy to correct injustice. Fear generates energy for survival. Anxiety equips us to meet expectations, and grief mobilizes us to recover a loss. What is your attitude toward specific emotions? If you fear certain feelings, it makes it difficult to engage persons in conversation who manifest those feelings.

Give the person who expresses excessive emotions your attention. Discover how the emotion leaves the person feeling. Does the person feel wronged,

humiliated, threatened, misunderstood, unappreciated? When has the person felt like this before?

Discover what the person expects of you. Does the person demand agreement with his point of view? Does the person want sympathy or an ally? Maybe the person wants to tattle or blame. Is the person wanting you to rescue him or simply to respect his or her point of view? When emotions get out of hand, persons customarily relinquish responsibility for their actions.

Now explore the issue and plans of action. Say, "Suppose you could improve this situation, what would be your first step?" Enlarge the plan. Ask, "Would you feel that you were receiving justice if you were on the receiving end of your plan?"

Support. Assure the person of your concern. If possible, follow up on the conversation later. Share your enlarged respect for the person for his reflection on the issue and his responsible action. In these ways conversations on controversial issues result not just in peacemaking but people making.

### **THOU ART THE MAN!**

How can confrontation take place in informal caring so that a person experiences the rightness of discipline without simultaneously feeling rejection and rejecting in return? What about confrontation that reminds a person of his or her worth so as to raise self-esteem?

Confrontation can only take place within relationship. The relationship needs to be a strong one, for confrontation often tests the strength of a relationship. The weaker the relationship, the higher the risk of losing it when such a face-off comes.

The minister should not have anything to prove in confronting another person on an issue. The minister must confront out of his personhood and his personal concern for fellow human beings. If the minister tries to confront out of his role alone rather than out of his personal concern, he runs the risk of hurting an individual and being rejected for being neither a minister nor a courageous person. If the minister chooses confrontation as a means of caring, the minister had better be able to stand the loss if failure results. Of course, the reason for confrontation and the risk involved is the hope of offering significant help. If the minister initiates the confrontation, he chooses the time and the place. But in any case, confrontation means risk-taking.

Much more could be written about the multiplication of your ministry through the use of informal conversations. But the point is made. Informal conversations with persons on ethical issues possess enormous potential for addressing the most significant issues in contemporary life. Such talks, when done appropriately, produce changed attitudes and actions in keeping with the redemptive plan of Jesus Christ.



*Fred McGehee is Career Guidance Consultant, Church Administration Department, Baptist Sunday School Board.*

## 'Being, not teaching'

**D. GLENN SAUL**

"Being a certain kind of person is probably more important than teaching certain content" expresses Glenn Saul's interest in the meaning of discipleship and its application to his life and style of teaching. Saul perceives his role as teacher as "a minister to the students. Each student has needs beyond the classroom and I want to help meet those needs if I can."

Glenn Saul was no stranger to Golden Gate when he began serving as an adjunct professor in biblical ethics in 1976. He earned his B.D. degree there in 1966 after completing a B.A. at Wayland Baptist College in 1962. He followed his work at Golden Gate with a Th.M. in 1969 and a Ph.D. in 1972 from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

This spring, Saul has taught the survey Christian ethics course, *The Minister's Life and Work* (dealing with ethical problems faced by ministers); and *Christian Social Ethics in America* (a survey of American ethics from Puritanism to Realism).

Glenn's interest in pioneer missions is apparent when it is noticed he has pastored churches outside of his native Texas in Colorado, California, and Arizona. He has also done summer mission work in Oregon and Mexico. In his local church he is serving presently as the chairman of the Missions Committee.

Glenn and his wife, Martha, have three children: Leslie Carol, Stephen Glenn, and Rebekah Susan.

## 'Must be action'

**DONALD A. COPELAND**

Twin boys! That's how Don and Evelyn Copeland began 1980. Thus, Andrew Clark and James Thomas Copeland on January 7 doubled the number of children in the Copeland home. Christy and Donald, Jr. were overjoyed, naturally, with the new additions.

Don has been Visiting Professor of Christian ethics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary since August, 1978. His teaching responsibilities during the spring semester have been *Religion in Society*; *Christian Social Ethics*; and *Current Ethical Issues*.

For Don, the challenge of teaching in a Southern Baptist seminary is "the blending of the theoretical and

the applied. We must not think that we have dealt adequately with a problem by just studying it—there must be action." Copeland's approach to the classroom is "to expose students to as many different viewpoints as possible in dealing with contemporary social issues while never losing sight of Christian principles or Southern Baptist identity."

A former pastor and teacher/chaplain, Don Copeland has also found time to prepare himself academically. He graduated with a B.S. in Chemistry from Clemson University in 1967; received the Th.M. in 1970 and the Th.D. in 1976 from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; and earned the M.A. in Sociology from Louisiana State University in 1979.

The Copelands are active in the First Baptist Church of New Orleans where Don and Evelyn teach a young married couples' Sunday School class.



*Saul*



*Copeland*

## Christian Life Conferences

### **RIDGECREST**

*June 28-July 4, 1980*

*Families in Christian Perspective*

- Dr. David Mace, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
  - Dr. Charles Petty, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Citizen Affairs, Raleigh, North Carolina
- Reservations are to be made directly with the Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, P.O. Box 128, Ridgecrest, NC 28770.

### **GLORIETA**

*July 19-25, 1980*

*Issues in the 1980 Elections*

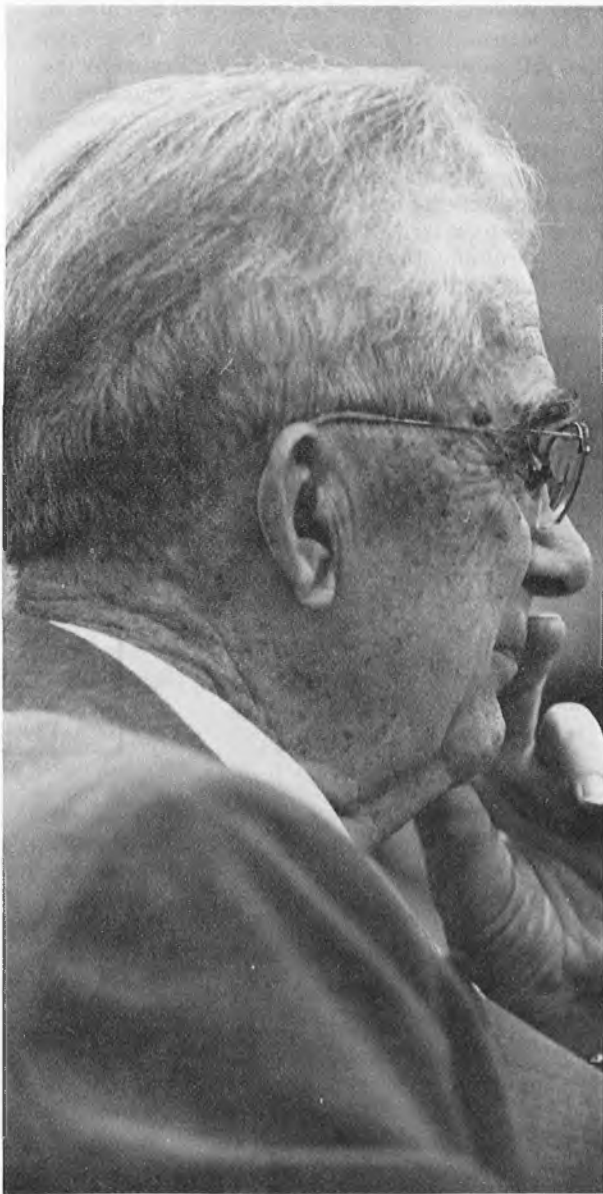
- Dr. Glen Stassen, Professor of Christian Ethics, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky
  - Dr. William Elder, Director of Christian Citizenship Development, Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tennessee
- Reservations are to be made directly with Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, P.O. Box 8, Glorieta, New Mexico 87535

# HAVE YOU READ?

By T. B. Maston

(T. B. Maston, professor emeritus of Christian ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, relates to *LIGHT* readers some books and writers important to him in his formative years as a Christian ethicist—ed. note)

Let me mention first of all some men who influenced my thinking. At least I am conscious of their influence and I know that there are others that may have influ-



T. B. Maston

enced me more that I am not conscious of. I do not mean to sound pious but I think I was influenced far more by the Bible, particularly the prophets and the New Testament, than by any other book.

Naturally I was influenced a great deal by my major professor at Yale, H. Richard Niebuhr. His influence, however, was more through personal contact with him in the classroom and in his office than through the things that he had written. He really did most of his writings after I had him as a professor. I think his one book that I have prized most highly is *Christ and Culture* (1951). Its major emphasis is related very closely to what I have termed through the years "Christian strategies."

As I judge you would expect, I was influenced considerably by H. Richard's brother, Reinhold. I derived considerable help from two of his books, in particular. One is *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. My viewpoint is that this should be the first book that one would read who would want to understand Reinhold Niebuhr. Much of what he developed later was simply an expansion of this particular book. It was published in 1932. His *Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941), particularly volume I, I found to be quite helpful.

Of the many books written by Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (1937) was most specifically on Christian ethics. The first half of the book, which dealt primarily with basic ethics, in contrast to social or applied ethics, was of particular interest to me. I still consider it one of the outstanding books in the field of Christian ethics.

Another writer who came on the scene somewhat later than the preceding was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was too late to influence my thinking very much. I did find his books very stimulating. I also found some things in his writings that were supportive of some aspects of my own thought. For example, his book on *The Cost of Discipleship* (1948) is more closely related to my idea of the ethic of the cross than any book or article that I have found.

A major interest of mine has been and is in the world crisis or world revolution. I personally consider the contemporary crisis as a revolution which has been going on for some time, the most serious our world has had since the Renaissance and Reformation. One cannot understand the racial situation in our nation, the struggle of the underprivileged masses around the world, and the increasing influence of the Third World nations without some understanding of this crisis or revolution. This interest in the world crisis led me to discover Nicholas Berdyaev, a Russian-born Christian philosopher and prolific writer. Most of his writings were philosophical but he wrote some that are very perceptive volumes on the world crisis.

The others who have been helpful to me in this same area are Pitirim Sorokin, Arnold Toynbee, and Elton Trueblood.

A major interest of mine has been biblical ethics. I could list a number of writers that I have found to be very helpful in that area.

Still another area of continuing interest has been the history of Christian ethics. Unfortunately, there has been very little written in this area.

# IN ADDITION

The Christianity/culture conflict, though ever with us, periodically takes on new faces, new battlefronts. We need help in identifying where the confrontation is. Ernest Becker in *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973) thinks "religion is no longer valid as a hero system, and so the youth scorn it. If traditional culture is discredited as heroics, then the church that supports that culture automatically discredits itself. If the church, on the other hand, chooses to insist on its own special heroics, it might find that in crucial ways it must work against the culture, recruit youth to be anti-heroes to the ways of life of the society they live in. This is the dilemma of religion in our time."

In the same vein, Waldo Beach addresses the problem of oversimplifying the identification of social sin: "In contemporary Christian social ethics, we have rightly reacted against pietism but in the process have unduly hypostasized social structures and institutions, and think of them, like Rauschenbusch's 'Super-personal Forces of Evil'—the Pentagon, the FBI, IBM, whatever be the bureaucracy over there—as having a mode of existence completely independent of the wills of those running them or overrun by them. But on a Tuesday morning go look for 'a social structure.' Eventually, behind the computers and the systems you run on persons, willing, choosing, deciding. Social structures prove to be not as impersonal as we have taken for granted: Their policies are turned toward or away from true community by compassion, cruelty, or benign neglect in the wills of those who stand inside them." ("The Old and the New in Christian Ethics," *The American Society of Christian Ethics*, 19th annual meeting, 1978.)

One of the most stinging criticisms in a while on the "being in the world and not of it" category comes from Wendell Barry (*The Unsettling of America: Culture and*

*Agriculture*, New York: Avon Books, 1977): "For many of the churchly, the life of the Spirit is reduced to a dull preoccupation with getting to heaven. At best, the world is no more than an embarrassment and a trial to the Spirit which is otherwise radically separated from it. A true lover of God must not be burdened with any care or respect for His works. While the body goes about its business of destroying the earth, the soul is supposed to lie back and wait for Sunday, keeping itself free of earthly contaminance. While the body exploits other bodies, the soul stands aloof, free from sin, crying to the gawking bystanders: . . . 'I am not enjoying it!' As far as this sort of 'religion' is concerned, the body is no more than the illustrious container of the soul, a mere 'package,' that will nevertheless light up eternity, forever cool and shiny as a neon cross."

Barry's book leads to an area under study by David R. Currie, former Special Projects Coordinator for the Home Mission Board and Christian Life Commission, and now pastor of First Baptist Church, Mason, Texas. Currie recently testified at a hearing conducted by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Currie, who feels the structure of American agriculture should be viewed as a moral issue with far-reaching implications, said, "Agricultural structure affects the stewardship of land, food prices, energy use, rural communities, and ultimately food security . . ." Currie urged the Department of Agriculture "to look carefully at the ethical implications of U. S. agricultural policy." He suggested that the department "structure policies to preserve the family farms as the primary source of American food production; examine tax policies, commodity programs, export-import restrictions; and research programs to see if they help or hurt family farms."

The SBC gave some attention to this issue in the 1979 Houston Convention. A resolution was passed supporting protection of family farms.



## Christian Life Commission

Of The Southern Baptist Convention

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## ETHICAL ISSUES: 1980 AND BEYOND

by

Daniel B. McGee

Professor of Christian Ethics

Baylor University

Waco, Texas

A Resource Paper Prepared for the

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

With our calendars now turned to a new year and a new decade, we are reminded that our God is the Lord of history. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who has been with us through the 1960s and 1970s. He leads us into the 1980s. The purpose of this brief paper is to identify a few of the most pressing ethical responsibilities Christians will confront in the near future.

### WORLD HUNGER

The crunch of world hunger will tighten its grip on humanity during the 1980s. The severity of the resulting devastation on human lives will depend on many different factors--economic and political instability, climatic conditions, population growth, and the human compassion and ingenuity to fight against world hunger.

One of the more encouraging signs of the late 1970s was the growing awareness by Southern Baptists and other Christians of the starving world. It is not likely that we can escape the acceptance of a growing responsibility to deal concretely and constructively with this massive human suffering. Our nation's involvement throughout the world, the mass media's ability to portray graphically and immediately the pain of hunger, the stark contrast with our own affluence and Christ's commands to feed the poor--all of these factors will challenge Southern Baptists to plan and act boldly in fulfilling Christ's command. If we accept this challenge, this ministry to a hungry world can be the means of revitalizing our local, home, and foreign mission programs. If we ignore the pain of the world's starving, it can be the means of crippling our spiritual growth and our missionary vision. The misery of human hunger in the 1980s presents Southern Baptists with the option of either taking up the cross of service to a desperate world or retreating into an affluence-lined cocoon of selfishness and indifference.

### THREATS TO AFFLUENT LIFE STYLE

Ironically, just as the American people are becoming accustomed to affluence as a way of life, that very affluence is threatened by a variety of developments that will continue into the 1980s. General economic instability, marked especially by inflation and the energy crunch, threatens the affluent life style that has come to characterize the American way of life. Christians should be completely secure in the face of the turbulent economy because our faith is not based on wealth or possessions. While others may panic in the face of an economy that swings wildly from recession to inflation, as Christians we must be prepared to testify by our lives that our hope is not rooted in Mammon but in God.

Significant adjustments will be required as the energy crisis deepens. The Christian doctrine of stewardship calls for us to lead out in policies of conservation and frugality.

The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention asked Dr. Dan McGee to prepare this resource paper. The Commission presents it in this form for the additional study and use of those who have a special interest in Christian ethics and who have a special commitment as Christians to deal with ethical issues in morally responsible ways.

Foy Valentine, Executive Secretary  
The Christian Life Commission of the  
Southern Baptist Convention  
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Indeed the specter of world hunger abroad and limited resources at home should prompt Christians to adopt life styles that reflect our confidence in God and not worldly possessions. Life styles marked by frugality, simplicity, and generosity will witness to a frantic world that salvation which is found through faith in God as revealed in Christ is sensitive to human need and is morally responsible. In the coming year and decade we will be forced by economic and environmental realities to hear again Christ's charge to those who would be His disciples to leave their wealth and follow Him. If we can do that, we can show others a better way. If not, we will, like the rest of the world, stumble through a confusing and frightening age of economic uncertainty.

#### POLITICAL CONFLICT

1980 is an election year. This, plus the turbulent state of international politics at the end of the 1970s, assures us that in the immediate future we will be challenged by numerous political problems. The indications are that the trend of reduced citizen participation in American elections will continue into the 1980 elections. In the last four presidential elections the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots decreased from 63.8 in 1960 to 54.4 in 1976. This not only reflects irresponsible citizenship by millions of American voters but it also creates a vacuum into which irresponsible and fanatical special interest groups are moving. This creates a very unstable political setting in which governmental policies can become dominated by small, fanatical groups rather than reflective of the broad spectrum of our pluralistic society.

Christians have an obligation to accept the responsibility of being leaven in the political world and contributing to a responsible and stable government. Yet, we are also obligated to avoid becoming a part of any fanaticism that would control the government for any special interest group. Baptists, with our tradition of church-state separation, must guard against any attempt by any church group to control governmental policy. While Christians are responsible for participating in and influencing government, we never attempt to impose Christian theology or Christian ethics upon the total society through the power of the state. Furthermore, we must never become so obsessed with a single political goal that we lose sight of the broad range of constructive goals that we share with all people of good will. Finally, in our enthusiasm for "righteousness" we must never use tactics that are unfair and destructive.

#### INTERNATIONAL TURMOIL

If the end of the 1970s is an accurate indicator, we can expect 1980 to be a year of turmoil and threats on the international scene. Revolutionary passions will prompt dangerous and unreasonable policies. Competition for Middle Eastern oil fields added to the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict will encourage increased military efforts to secure control of that area of the world. American response will be the subject of significant debate and the church's role in that debate will be critical. The debate will likely include such issues as the reinstitution of the military draft, détente, the arms race, and the military budget.

The Christian response must be carefully balanced to avoid either a frantic, jingoistic militarism or an isolationist pacifism. The greatest pressure will come from our violence-prone culture to solve all international conflicts with bullets and bombs. The Christian's commitment to peace and reconciliation joined with an understanding of the devastation associated with modern warfare must steer us away from the quick path of violence. On the other hand, Christian commitment to justice and human rights, plus an understanding of the pervasiveness of human sin, lead us to the recognition that a carefully controlled use of force is required to maintain order in a sinful world. Others with less patience and compassion will be inclined either to abandon the world and its conflicts or seek to solve those conflicts with a bigger and more violent stick. Christians must do neither and must warn others of the dangers inherent in either of these simplistic approaches.

### RACE RELATIONS

The ogre of racial conflict is still with us and promises to continue inflicting its special abuse upon our society. The various forms of ethnic pride that found new expression in the 1960s and 1970s will continue. The new stirring of the Ku Klux Klan is only one of the many signs of the reemergence of the old racism that has characterized our culture. Affirmative action programs will continue to stir feelings of resentment. A new dimension of the racial scene will become increasingly obvious in the nation throughout the 1980s as the Hispanic population grows to become the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S. This will not only create anxiety among whites but also among blacks as they see Mexican Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans threaten the blacks' hard-won though still marginal economic and social status. These problems will present a special challenge to Southern Baptists because they will be most evident in those regions of the U.S. where Southern Baptists are strongest.

The church must not abandon its role as champion of racial reconciliation and justice. We were slow in coming to this role in the 1960s, and we must not now lose patience in this long struggle for peace and justice among the races. We must understand the proper place and limits of racial pride. We must understand the frustrations of minority groups when they are denied the opportunity to dream the dreams that make life meaningful for most of us. We must understand that deeply ingrained hostilities and prejudices result from many years of deprivation and conflict. The correction of those injustices is not likely to occur easily or smoothly; and there will be prices that must be paid by us today for the injustices of yesterday. Finally, we must understand that some prejudice among whites is rooted in a poor and oppressed white subculture that needs attention and care from all of us.

### FAMILY LIFE

A disturbed and unsettled American family will be a major concern in 1980. For years we have watched the divorce rate climb. It reflects the distressing instability of the husband-wife relationship. In the last few years, child abuse has become a highly visible sign of a pervasive hostility embedded in the American parent-child relationship. Indeed some recent studies indicate that, contrary to our public image, Americans do not like children. There is every reason to believe that the pressure of a growing population and the financial pressures of an uncertain economy will contribute to an even more troubled and violent American family life. Also contributing to this trouble is the dominant view of sex in our culture. It teaches that sex is for the purpose of conquest and manipulation. This becomes the model for how we relate to each other before and during marriage. Finally abuse of others becomes a way of life.

Christians must help recover the view of family as the place where those who are different become one flesh. The family is held together by mutual submission, one to another, not by domination or mutual exploitation. The family is an instrument of God's reconciliation where commitment of husband and wife to each other and of parent and child to each other wherein we consciously learn and deliberately exercise the gifts of forgiveness, mutual affirmation, and reconciliation.

The question of women's rights is yet unsettled in our society. The church should witness to the truth we know that "in Christ there is neither male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). Social roles and patterns of dominance that are based on gender alone fail to reflect the Christian understanding that each of us is to be mutually submissive to each other.

### RELIGIOUS FANATICISM

The year 1980 was ushered in by an Ayatollah--a Moslem extremist who brands all who disagree with him as infidels deserving the worst of fates. He represents a resurgence of religious fanaticism throughout the world. It may be that by observing this phenomenon clearly in an alien religion we can see more clearly its threat to us within the Christian

community. Traditionally we have spoken to the ethics of life within government, family, and business. We have called for honesty, fair play, and consideration of others. It is time for the same standards to be applied at all levels and in all relationships of church life. The Christian ethic of love and reconciliation applies as much to church splits, denominational power struggles, and theological debates as to any other events in God's world. If we cannot demonstrate such a spirit within the life of the church, there is little hope for us to witness effectively to any segment of the world.

The fact that the Ayatollah Khomeini was featured on the cover of TIME for 1979 is an illustration of the phenomenon of religious fanaticism which is becoming a major ethical issue of our age. In the grips of this fanaticism some would come to glory in power, money, and conquest. These would be driven to win at any cost and with any method. Others are forced to agree or they are anathematized. The destructiveness of this behavior is abundantly evident in the tragic history of religious conflicts in human history.

The root cause of religious fanaticism is the most basic of all sins--idolatry. We elevate that which in itself may be good, to the status of God. Our theological system, ecclesiastical structure, or religious mission becomes the god of our lives and thus worth any cost to defend. Our task is to recover both the spirit and purpose of Christ's ministry. At the temptation experience, Christ rejected all the power plays available to Him. He chose the way of the cross--a sacrificial witness to the power of love and honesty. That is the kind of faith we must recover to prevent constructive Christian commitment from becoming a destructive religious fanaticism.

#### CONCLUSION

The resources of Southern Baptists for dealing with these issues are many. We have a tradition deeply rooted in the Biblical perspective of life. That perspective gives us both hope and direction as we face these issues. Baptists also have within our tradition those who serve as worthy models for our active ministry to the world's problems. From the early anabaptists to the pioneer English and American Baptists and down to modern times, there are those moral heroes who have stood for love, justice, human rights, and public righteousness against strong forces of evil. Finally, today Southern Baptists have enormous influence, finances, and personnel. We must be good stewards of this power and use it for serving others and not just for personal security or institutional aggrandizement so that we can be counted among those of whom the Lord says, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Master" (Matthew 25:21).