

LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

March 1981

The Church, Crime and Criminal Justice

Criminal justice is a sadly neglected social issue.—It's an issue marked "very unclear" when prioritizing time comes. Guy Greenfield of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary gives in "The Church, Crime, and Criminal Justice" an overview of the present situation in crime and criminal justice in the United States. He suggests some constructive Christian responses which need to be made.

What does one make of the wedding of political and religious emphases in 1980? What sort of post-election ripples are being felt? As a follow-up to his article, "The New Right—Is It Right or Wrong?," in the October-November 1980 LIGHT, Bill Elder surveys some of the more recent developments surrounding the New Right/Conservative Christian Coalition in "The New Right, 1981."—WMT

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A Case for Values



“Without the immanence of the moral imperative,” wrote Paul Tillich in *MORALITY AND BEYOND*, “both culture and religion disintegrate because of lack of ultimate seriousness.”

It is precisely that loss of the moral imperative with its resulting loss of ultimate seriousness that plagues both culture and religion today. Dis-integrity, or disintegration, is the order of the day.

Disintegration? Look at the leader of the so-called Moral Majority who at a Ronald Reagan rally in Alaska last summer told a fantastic lie about Jimmy Carter and, when later exposed, called it a parable.

Disintegration? Look at the family. Look at the American automobile industry. Look at the once organized labor movement. Look at the tottering economy. Look at the Democratic Party’s old political coalitions. Look at established social institutions like the public schools. And look at the mainline denominations whose seams are mighty close to coming loose.

They are all threatened with dis-integrity. That is, disintegration may be imminent because the moral imperative has not been immanent.

Glibness has been substituted for wisdom, lies for truth, coffee breaks for work, fringe benefits for freedom, coasting for racing, relaxation for enthusiasm, I’m-OK-You’re-OK for repentance, fantasy for vision, and spectatorship for involvement. Today’s best sellers reflect our concerns: looking out for number one, losing weight, and finding new nerve endings to stimulate.

All is not lost, however. Christians can face

tomorrow. The world is not growing cold. We need not huddle together and wait for Armageddon. Our only choice is not, as Jean-Paul Sartre thought, to decide whether or not to commit suicide.

The way out is the way of recovered moral values, reclaimed moral ideals, the reinstated moral imperative.

The moral imperative has at its very heart the commitment to love God with our whole beings and our neighbors as ourselves.

The moral imperative, bringing ultimate seriousness to all of life and to all of life’s endeavors, must become truly immanent. That is, this commitment to values, this sense of oughtness, this discernment of the difference between right and wrong, this rejection of evil and choice of good must become essentially present for us all the time in all areas of our lives and must be a here-and-now reality in our social institutions and public life as well if integrity is to be recovered and if civilization is to be preserved.

Whatever the future may hold for all of us, it is crystal clear that moral values and spiritual ideals must be given far more careful attention and far greater substance if life in the future is to be more satisfying and less terrifying, more full and less fearful, than ours is today.

Joy Valentine

IN ADDITION

OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM—FAIR REPORTING? That is the quandary for Baptist journalists says Dan Martin, news editor for *Baptist Press*, Nashville. In the December, 1980 *Baptist Public Relations Association* newsletter, Martin’s article “Objective Journalism is a Myth . . . Fair Reporting is Not” elaborates:

“Objective reporting is a treasured concept among journalists. They like to think of themselves as noble observers, above the vulgar clash and bang, objectively pecking out wise and beautiful gems of absolute truth. It just ain’t so.

“Journalists—secular or denominational—face the problems of objectivity in these days when the news media are as much news makers as news reporters. The media, depending on your view, are either advocate or foe, friend or enemy, champion or challenger, defender or ambusher.

“It is a time in which objectivity is blurred by causes. Often they are huge, swirling causes critical to the life of the nation, the denomination, the world. . . . While objective reporting is impossible, fair reporting is not. Perhaps that is what denominational journalists should strive to achieve.”

The New Right, 1981

by William H. Elder, III

Consistency is one of the criteria by which political candidates can be evaluated. Ronald Reagan's performance in Campaign '80 can receive nothing less than A+ in the consistency category. And the substance of that consistency was the political camp of the New Right. He was for Kemp-Roth, a burgeoning military, atomic energy, and oil deregulation. He was against abortion and busing, and he was for state-sponsored prayer in the public schools. In foreign relations, he took the position that, even though "human rights" is an important and worthwhile value, when push comes to shove, our own self-interest has a higher priority. He called for an almost comprehensive compendium of New Right social causes.

While Reagan was pushing the New Right ideology, the polls continued to indicate that the majority of Americans were not right wing. The people weren't New Right devotees, and no one could miss that Reagan was. But then came November 4.

As I tried to make some sense out of this obvious incongruity, my initial conclusion was that the polls had been wrong.

However, the post-election period offered some additional information and perspective. Apparently the polls were right after all. Post-election polls looked just like pre-election polls as to the attitudes of the American public. The majority of people are still not devoted to the New Right creed.

The first thing to recognize about the New Right is that it is not a homogeneous movement. It is at least bipolar.

The public composite is certainly conservative but it is more progressive than the present governmental composite. Given the present economic turmoil, John Q. Citizen is easily enamored by the "productivity paradigms" of the New Right and will therefore sell out his natural birthright for a bowl of tax-cut porridge.

In thinking about what a Christian social action agenda ought to include given the new prevailing political winds, it is imperative that we understand dynamics of the New Right accurately. It now has a President, a Senate majority, and a strong likelihood of a bipartisan majority in the House. It has also succeeded in attracting the public imagination through a sophisticated communications network and can easily and efficiently utilize that network whenever it pleases.

The first thing to recognize about the New Right is that it is not a homogeneous movement. It is at least

bipolar. William Safire of the *New York Times* has suggested two workable labels. On the one hand there are the Libertarian Conservative New Righters, abbreviated "Librights," and on the other the Traditional Conservative New Righters, or "Tradrights."

Libright Concerns

The Librights essentially have only two overriding concerns: (1) a stimulated economy, and (2) a beefed-up military. All other concerns are secondary. The Libright economic philosophy is totally supply-side oriented. Stimulate production and inflation will make a speedy retreat. That needed shot of economic adrenaline, the Librights say, comes by removing government from the marketplace. Government is the problem, not the solution. It must step aside and let business and the private sector go.

What distinguishes this philosophy from business-as-usual republicanism is the radical degree to which they are willing to go on the matter of government noninterference. The Librights do not call for government to become the handmaiden of big business, at least not directly. Rather, they believe that the best way to help business and subsequently everyone else is to let business sink or swim on its own. The true Librights did not favor the government bailout of Chrysler. What they do favor is slashing government spending and instituting a big tax cut. Let the people keep the money. They will spend it, and business will receive its crucial inflation/recession antidote.

This economic radicalism won some friends in the blue collar, traditionally democratic community. They liked its promises of more pocket money, less protection for management, and less interference from "Big Brother." But that's not all. The Librights presented this whole approach as a return to good old American capitalism and therefore an expression of true patriotism. It had the right heritage, and thus, the essential credentials, earning for it its conservative label. Yet, at the same time, it sounded fresh, new, different. So the gospel according to Librightism says we can be progressive, modern, revolutionary, forward-looking, while at the same time being true to, indeed, rescuing our true roots.

Who are these Librights? They're the New Right intelligentsia in blue serge suits with ivy league credentials. David Broder in his recent book, *Changing of the Guard*, has an excellent treatment of this group. The engendering organization seems to have been Young Americans for Freedom which began at the home of William F. Buckley in Sharon, Connecticut in 1960. It is more than coincidental that

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so many of the Libright leaders today have a long-standing heritage in YAF. Probably the most influential Libright organization today is the Heritage Foundation which amounts to a Washington Libright think tank. It recently published an exhaustive policy/issue manual which has become a major plank in the ideological platform for the Reagan transition team.

It is apparent that for establishment Republicans, 1980 electioneering focused on the dual-focus Libright doctrine. . .

The thinkers most often touted in Libright circles are Adam Smith; Edmund Burke; Friedrich von Hayek for his 1944 book, *The Road to Serfdom*; Milton Friedman; Martin Feldstein (Harvard); Michael Boskin (Stanford); and Robert Mundell (Columbia). And their favorite contemporary economist is Arthur Laffer of USC with his much revered Laffer Curve. The Libright periodicals are William F. Buckley's *National Review* and the Heritage Foundation's *Policy Review*.

It is apparent that for the establishment Republicans 1980 electioneering focused on the dual-focus Libright doctrine, i.e., Laffer economics and a military buildup. And it is in this camp that the essential Ronald Reagan appears to be most at home.

Now the other face of the New Right is the Tradrights. They authenticate old-line Republicans who believe that "What's good for General Motors is good for the country." In many ways their objective is to turn the clock back socially.

The Tradrights would be the fundamentalists and the Librights the liberals. The Librights are the intellectuals, the "slightly" creative thinkers, and the Tradrights are the anti-intellectuals of the Flat Earth Society variety.

The Tradrights are not content to conclude their agenda with removing the government from the marketplace and building a bigger military. They want to see government use its power to create and to engineer, the kind of society they favor where abortions

are outlawed, the death penalty is federally instituted, busing for racial balance is eliminated, state-sponsored prayers are institutionalized, ERA is interred once and for all.

The differences between the Tradrights and Librights are obvious. It appears that their uniting common ground was really limited to Ronald Reagan's rhetoric and their common antagonism for the Democrats. But in Campaign '80 that was enough to create an effective coalition. To use a biblical analogy to describe their functional relationship, the Librights are David in his path to the Hebrew monarchy and the Tradrights are Joab, the blood-and-guts general who played a major role in David's success, though in a distasteful, utilitarian, plebeian way. The Tradrights are the pragmatists, the political green berets, the special forces, whose tough, radical tactics provided the marginal victories sufficient to ensure success in the war against the dreaded liberals.

They developed sophisticated political weapons: mailing lists, campaign law loopholes like independent expenditures, and media expertise.

They went to war for Reagan and other New Right candidates. But their devotion for Reagan was not like Joab's for David. Joab never wanted to be king. The Tradrights do. The 1980 victory is for them only a preliminary one. They are looking down the road for a purebred, true-believing, exclusively Tradrightist to occupy the Oval Office. Reagan is merely a step in the right direction. That explains why as soon as November 4 became history the Tradrights were quick to remind Reagan how lucky he had been, how many mistakes he had made, and how important they had been to the victory. They even went so far with their arrogance to warn Reagan, Bush, and others that they would be in a great danger politically if they did not move quickly to implement the Tradright societal blueprint.

Tradright Philosophy

Who are the Tradrights? I mentioned the favored thinkers in the earlier treatment given to the Librights. That category is basically absent here. These are the technicians. They register high in categories of commitment, devotion, political savvy, and resources, but low in rationale. Lacking in "why," they are abundant in "how." They know how to deliver a punch in elections and its corollary, how to peddle influence on the hill. Because of this synthesis of power unformed by reason and non or anti-intellectualism, the Tradrights are possibly the most dangerous wing of the New Right.

Tradrights are rich in organizations, since organizations are obviously indispensable for political effectiveness. In Congress there are two forums. In the House it is the Republican Study Committee which was formed to counter the liberal Democratic Study Group. In the Senate there is the Steering Committee, chaired by Jim McClure. The real action takes place in the

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Tradright lobbying organizations. In this category are the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, the American Conservative Union, and the Conservative Caucus. The organization receiving most of the credit/blame for the ouster of Democrats like George McGovern, Frank Church, Birch Bayh, and John Culver is the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC). In fact, as soon as the dust had settled from this election, NCPAC issued its hit list of 20 senators targeted for defeat in 1982. Included are Edward Kennedy, Henry Jackson, and Robert Byrd. These Tradright organizations are undergirded by a myriad of smaller, single interest, lobbying concerns of the pro-life, pro-family, anti-ERA sort.

Two publications lead the way in selling the Tradright doctrine. There is *Conservative Digest*, published by Richard Viguerie, the fund-raising mogul of ultraconservatism. And there is *The Conservative Register* which is published by the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. (CFSFC).

The Tradright leadership can be easily compiled by simply listing the executive directors and legislative directors of the noncongressional organizations. At the top of that list would be Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich (CFSFC), and Terry Dolan (NCPAC).

The Tradrights are smaller in number than the Librights. Ronald Reagan and the Republican National Committee spoke their language and received their assistance. The Reagan victory, however, is not to be understood as the Tradrights having come to power. They have gained wide attention and mustered some clout. However, the underlying philosophical differences with the Librights on the role government ought to play in relation to social issues and values suggests that they will not be as influential in the new Washington establishment as they had hoped. It does appear that a significant rift is developing between these two factions.

New Religious Right Philosophy

Now to a segment of the New Right which is really a subgroup of the Tradrights, the New Religious Right. New Religious Right organizations include Christian Voice, The Roundtable, and Moral Majority. They've received far more press than their election impact merits. The situation is different now. They are not new. There is no adrenaline-raising election. The press will be less interested, and these groups cannot survive without high visibility, an objective which cannot be achieved without incredible effort.

A few months ago *Christian Voice* was covered by "60 Minutes." At that time Christian Voice exhibited an almost cocky attitude. Recently, it has shown a demise in strength. Richard Zone, executive director of the organization who took the position that the Democratic Party and Christianity were mutually exclusive, is no longer with Christian Voice. He is back in the pastorate. Robert Grant, Voice's founder and president, is not

very visible now. What is left of the operation really rests on the shoulders of Gary Jarmin, who oversees a small office in a little carriage house not far from Capitol Hill. Voice's most recent embarrassment has been the resignations of several of their Congressional Advisory Board members, many of whom objected to Voice's moral issues report card which rated Richard Kelly of Abscam at 100 and Paul Simon, "Mr. Ethics of Congress," at zero. Voice's future agenda is primarily the Family Protection Act and similar legislation.

But there is a Cadillac in the New Religious Right's garage. It is Moral Majority, with its own building four blocks from the Capitol. . .

The Roundtable is the smallest of the three groups. For the most part it is a one-man operation with a P.R. man. The P.R. man is Eddy McAteer, and the central workhorse is Ed Row. James Robison was involved with Roundtable, but it appears that he is emphasizing his own approach now and has decreased his profile there considerably. Roundtable's big splash last year was the National Affairs Briefing in Dallas, and they hope to do more of this kind of rallying in the future.

But there is a Cadillac in the New Religious Right's garage. It is *Moral Majority*, with its own building four blocks from the Capitol, lots of lobbyists, memberships in both the Republican and Democratic luncheon clubs, and a \$5 million budget. Moral Majority's long-term objective is to become a powerful political force on the order of NCPAC. But to do that they must have abundant resources, and to bring those resources in, they must have high visibility, and it needs to be secular press visibility. Their own in-shop push won't do it alone. They have accurately seen the signs of diminishing coverage and clout in D.C. and have shrewdly turned to a less controversial but publicity fertile immediate objective: cleaning up TV. Thus, we now have the formation of the Coalition for Better TV, a coalition of Tradrights and religious Rights.

The Christian Agenda

A final question is: What should Christian citizens and Christian organizations have on their agenda for the near future in response to the status, faces, and dynamics of the New Right?

With regard to the New Religious Right, we need to continue to speak of the dangers of civil religion which not only work against authentic discipleship, but reduce our sensitivity to those factors which undermine the principle of religious liberty and its corollary the separation of church and state.

Our answer to the broader Tradright thrust needs to come on two levels: the ideological and the organizational. We need to challenge their simplistic placebos. We need to point out where their blueprint for society departs from the normative American values. And for the Christian citizens we need to

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evaluate the Tradright prescription in light of the biblical norm.

Our response, however, must go beyond the analytical to the practical, from countering ideas to alternative organizations and actions. If John Q. Citizen could be counted on to follow the debate through its nuances and complexities and then act rationally, we could avoid this. But the record clearly shows that when it comes to politics most citizens follow the party of least resistance. They respond to those who keep on cajoling them through the electronic media, the press, and the mail, who simplify and emotionalize complex issues, and who facilitate the desired action through clear, easy steps.

Probably far more Southern Baptists learned of and were attracted to Moral Majority than was the case with our own denominational mechanism, the Christian Citizenship Corps.

Shaping and orchestrating public opinion does not happen without organization. The Tradrights have aggressively seized the initiative at this point, and the progressives have had no real answering mechanism. The same situation exists in the religious community. Moral Majority had no organized competition. Their critics tried to check them with logical disapproval. The cold, hard fact of political life is, the masses were not then and are not now tuned in to the dialogue, especially not when they can so easily fit into a slot in a fully functioning organization. The organizational advantage can only be overcome by alternative organizations.

To develop alternative organizations obviously requires either extensive funding or the adapting and development of already existing organizations. Jerry Falwell obviously chose the first option. He has done remarkably well. Probably far more Southern Baptists learned of and were attracted to Moral Majority than was the case with our own denominational mechanism, the Christian Citizenship Corps. Many well-intentioned Southern Baptists are being lured into the Right-Wing fold for lack of an alternative. Our Convention needs the citizenship involvement of its people. Ours is a day when government is responsive to grass-roots political involvement and special interest groups. Because of this combination, government policy is anything but comprehensive and consistent. Volatility is the proper characterization. The time for disengagement is no longer. Government has too many tentacles and there are too many vying for directing those tentacles. Involved, but how. We can play defensive, catch-up, reaction politics or we can prepare ourselves for efficient, effective, appropriate, principled involvement.

The Christian Citizenship Corps is dedicated to this latter option.

Our agenda with regard to the Librights is largely one of dealing with the value ramifications of their enshrining marketplace competition and battlefield mind-set. This prioritization suggests that many of the biblically-mandated ethical causes in the arena of public policy from human rights to public-interest television programming are in jeopardy. They continue to say "economics is everything." They promise that when business prospers all benefit. But they are also willing to admit that in this kind of game there have to be winners and losers. Sensitivity for the losers may become a rare commodity, and working for that sensitivity must be on any authentic Christian agenda.

Obviously, this point has ramifications both at home and abroad. Foreign aid may still include food in addition to military hardware, but it's very possible that food itself may be militarized.

In foreign policy the causes of human rights and world peace could easily suffer. An arms race seems inevitable. Détente may be scrapped in favor of heightened competition with the Soviets.

On the environmental front it looks like conservation and ecology interests can hope for little more than lip service. As a corollary, all sorts of deregulation are likely to follow. It will be more and more difficult to talk about consumer protection. The TV and radio industries will push with renewed vigor their fights for no-strings-attached broadcasting, for marketing whatever will sell. Christians need to stand firmly against this abandonment of the public interest. We need to sound the note of our corporate identity, our interrelationships, our mutual responsibilities.

In short, we need to be advocates for the powerless, while at the same time working realistically within today's cautious public opinion.

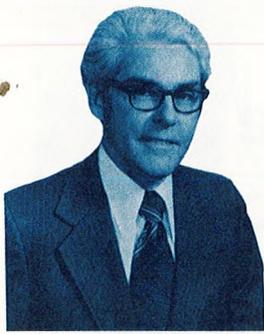
We need to do some new thinking about how to safeguard the crucial ethical values in today's context. Thus, we have an intellectual, theoretical responsibility at this point of safeguarding ethical values in this new day.

This has been offered as a kind of a reconnaissance report.

A mission awaits us, a mission to safeguard and facilitate authentic Christian citizenship, and thereby advance the whole cause of applied Christianity.

**William H. Elder, III
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tian citizenship de-
velopment for the
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Commission.**





ON THE ETHICS FRONT

John C. Howell

Arriving at Midwestern from the pastorate of the West Bradenton Baptist Church, Bradenton, Florida in 1960, John Howell has been best known among Southern Baptists as a Christian ethicist with special expertise in family life.

Though he also has served as academic dean since 1976, Howell maintains a heavy schedule of teaching, writing, and speaking—especially in family life. His courses for the spring semester, for instance, are Family Ministry through the Church, and Human Sexuality in Christian Perspective. These courses reflect Howell's feeling that in the 80s, Southern Baptist churches must "cope with divorce through their ministry of reconciliation" and deal adequately with "sexual ethics and parenting education."

As professor of Christian ethics, Howell hopes "to inform and inspire—give information relevant to the course topic and to help create a desire to live the Christian experience in an ethically appropriate way."

After earning his B.A. at Stetson University in his native Florida, Howell moved to Ft. Worth where he received his B.D. from Southwestern Seminary, served as pastor in a nearby town, and began work on the Th.D. He has since done post-graduate study at the University of London and earned a M.A. from The University of Missouri, Kansas City.



Nathan Larry Baker

Larry Baker's interest and involvement in Christian ethics reaches back to his days as BSU Director and instructor of Bible at Texas Woman's University. His experience in the field of Christian ethics has been, ever since, a healthy blend of pastoral ministry and teaching.

While serving pastorates in Texas and Louisiana (his native state), he also taught at nearby colleges or extension centers. During a two-year teaching stint at Southwestern Seminary teaching pastoral ministry and Christian ethics, he served several interims in the area. (Describing his pilgrimage he sees himself as a "two-track person—one foot in the church and one foot in teaching.")

Baker left Southwestern in 1975 to be pastor of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas. A decision he felt would take him out of theological education. The opportunity to teach at Midwestern came, however, and he accepted with the reflection: "I came to feel I had a contribution—one I could make here that I couldn't make in the pastorate."

Larry Baker identifies his teaching role as one of being an encourager and enabler. "I hope to enable the student to understand his own gifts, the kind of world we live in, and how the Christian faith engages in that world."

Baker has earned degrees from East Texas Baptist College (B.S.) and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (B.D., Th.M., and Th.D.).



C. W. Scudder

Though serving most recently at Midwestern as vice-president of business and development, C. W. Scudder is known still as a teacher of applied Christianity. After teaching twenty-one years in the Christian ethics department of Southwestern Seminary, Scudder moved to Kansas City to join Midwestern in 1975.

As an ethics professor, Scudder viewed his role as "helping to lead my students to become confident

decision makers from a Christian theological perspective. That is what Christian ethics is all about." He particularly devoted himself to "helping young ministers to broaden and deepen their commitment to teach and preach the gospel in such a way as to be Good News for *all* of life—to relate evangelism to ethics and Christian conversion to Christian living."

A native of Maquon, Illinois, C. W. Scudder earned his B.S. degree at George Peabody College for Teachers; B.D. and Th.D. degrees at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and has done advanced study at Boston University.

Scudder's articles have appeared in a number of publications. He has written extensively for the Sunday School Board, as well as preparing study guides for the Seminary Extension Department. While contributing to several books, he has also written on his own *Danger Ahead*, *The Family in Christian Perspective*, and edited *Crises in Morality*.

The Church, Crime and Criminal Justice

by Guy Greenfield

The Church of Jesus Christ ought to be no stranger to the halls of criminology and criminal justice. God's people have at times known what the inside of a jail or prison looks like, whether Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 12:4ff), Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:19ff), Paul in Caesarea (Acts 23-26) and Rome (Acts 28), John Bunyan in Bedford jail, William Wallace in a Chinese communist cell, or Martin Luther King, Jr. in Birmingham.

How can we forget the words of Jesus, "I was in prison, and you came to Me" (Matt. 25:36 NASB)? Or dare we forget that our Lord himself was crucified (the capital punishment of that day) between two criminals?

The Bible reveals a God of justice who calls for the righting of wrongs (Jer. 22:3; Amos 5:24), but he is also a God who identifies with prisoners (Ps. 146:7; 68:6; 69:33). One of the signs of the Messiah's coming was that he would "proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners" (Isa. 61:1 NASB; cf. Lk. 4:18).

The God of the Bible is the one who hears "the groaning of the prisoner" (Ps. 102:20 NASB). God's concern for justice, prisons and prisoners is, of course, a redemptive concern. If you would like to know one of the places where you can find God today, go to your local jail or state prison (Isa. 58:6-9). He has not abandoned the people who are there. Neither should we.

Crisis in Texas

The state of Texas was recently hit with a stinging court order from U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice of Tyler. The 248-page opinion contained a scathing list of deficiencies in the state prison system. The time has come, the judge declared, for the state prison system to stop the cruel and unusual punishment of inmates, to end the sheer misery and degradation, to halt the physical suffering and psychological stress, to stop the brutality, to end the unhealthy, unsafe conditions; in short, to reform.

Many state leaders were surprised over the ruling since some criminal justice authorities call the Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) one of the best run in the United States. One assistant district attorney, head of the felony trial section that sent over 1200 people to prison in 1980, said, "If we've got those problems in Texas, think of what it must be like in other states."

TDC and several other state prison systems have come a long way since the 1950s. However, if what Judge Justice found is true, then what?

Since Judge Justice's ruling, the U.S. Department of Justice has issued a 150-page book of 352 penal system standards. Meeting these standards will be even more costly than measuring up to guidelines laid down by Judge Justice. The standards call for major improvements in such things as size of prisons and cells, inmates' rights and discipline, food, health, education, recreation, religious activities, and prison management. The standards were drawn up over a three-year period by federal prison officials in consultation with various professionals in the correctional, medical, and legal fields.

. . . the traditional Bible Belt where Southern Baptists are strongest has the highest murder rate in the nation. . .

Crisis in the Nation

The latest crime statistics reveal that in 1979 there were 12,152,700 serious crimes reported in the United States. (These are called Crime Index offenses, made up of seven major felonies: murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and auto theft.) The 1979 Index crime rate (per 100,000 population) was 5,521.5.

This compares with 1970 figures of 8,098,000 Index crimes with a rate of 3,984.5. The population during the ten years grew only from 203,235,298 to 220,099,000. The rate comparison reveals what a significant increase in crime we have had. To put it another way, the 1979 figures show a percentage growth in crime of 50.1% for the total number and 38.6% for the rate during these past ten years. This is unquestionably alarming.

An examination of the *Uniform Crime Reports for 1979* reveals that the traditional Bible Belt of the southern states where Baptists are strongest has the highest murder rate in the nation: northeastern region, 7.6; north central region, 7.6; western region, 10.2; southern region, 12.7. This is an interesting but sad piece of news for such a heavily church-ed area. The churches certainly are not cutting into the violence syndrome of the southern sub-culture.

The national crime picture portrayed in the annual *Uniform Crime Reports* is only a partial scene. Federal crimes, though fewer by comparison, and so-called white-collar crimes, usually handled outside of criminal courts, are not listed. However, in terms of sums of money involved and numbers of victims affected, these



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crimes are significant. Moreover, there are unknown thousands of crimes committed annually that are never reported to the authorities for various reasons.

Crisis in Criminal Justice

Criminal justice is concerned with the decision process in crime control agencies such as the police, prosecutor's offices, trial courts, and correctional facilities, and in such programs as probation, parole, and work release. In short, criminal justice describes a multidisciplinary concern with crime and crime control measures.

The evidence today shows that across the board there is a major crisis in criminal justice in our nation. The mammoth crime problem has caused many people to call for an overreaction that could eventually endanger the nation's freedom. Some are foreseeing a call for what amounts to police-station action. The battle between democratic order and crime could result in the health and strength of our national freedom being the basic victim.

The stifling of independence in journalism; the desire for a protodictatorship out of fear, and yet a welcoming of tyranny in the name of patriotism illustrate the frustration felt by many concerning criminal justice. The popular impatience with court decisions in criminal cases; attacks on the Miranda decision involving a continuing debate over the rights of the offender vs. the rights of the victim, and the fear of letting the guilty go free, yet the imprisonment of the intimidated innocent further illustrate this frustration.

Because of the crime problem, liberty in America is under stress. In fighting crime, will we destroy our basic freedoms in order to save the nation? Repressive tactics

can be addictive and usually fall heaviest on the already repressed. A cyclic reaction can set in which increases hostility and requires greater repression to restrain it. Where does it stop?

The criminal justice system seems now to be poorly prepared to make the necessary changes being called for by the best experts in the field. There appears to be a lack of national will to combat crime adequately. Moreover, the various levels of law enforcement, the prosecutors, the courts, and the correctional systems are woefully underpaid, undertrained, and lacking in adequate funding.

There is a general public disrepute of criminal justice. There is a widespread lack of cooperation with the police as well as a disrespect for police.

There is also a loss of confidence in the law and the courts. Charges of corruption and ineptness can often be found in the news. Payoffs to police are commonly reported. By others, charges of softness by judges are heard often. There are numerous complaints that the system is irrationally vengeful and barbaric, as Menninger documented in *The Crime of Punishment*.

Of course, it is easier to blame the police, the prosecutors, the legislators, the courts, and the correction officials than to do something about the social conditions that produce crime. Yet scapegoating encourages public disrepute of the system. Corruption and incompetence do exist. Rackets could not exist without police cooperation and there are unqualified and untrained officials at all levels. Yet terribly low salaries are usually the cause.

Space does not allow a thorough treatment of the injustices of many of our criminal laws and agencies of enforcement. However, a sampling of the injustices include unequal laws (misdemeanors in some states are felonies in others), the unequal nature of penalties and

Criminal Justice

sentences, differences in the treatment of offenders, and the abuses of some plea bargainings (87% of convicted persons are convicted by plea bargaining). Other injustices are "street-corner justice" by police who are disgusted with the courts' releasing the "guilty" over "technicalities," the "strategy of delay" in the courts, crowded court case loads, crowded jails with people awaiting trial, overly aggressive police action, and illegal wiretapping and eavesdropping by police.

As Harold DeWolf says in *Crime and Justice in America*, "When violation of law and rank injustice are perpetrated by or on behalf of people appointed or elected as guardians of justice, we are in deep trouble."

Another aspect of the crisis in American criminal justice is the vast waste of the correctional system. The financial cost of prisons is staggering. Fifteen years ago, the total annual operating costs for all types and levels of prisons exceeded \$1 billion. Today that figure could easily be two to three times more.

The operating costs of prisons are over four times that of community treatment programs. Are we getting our money's worth? Very little. Only minimal direct protection from criminals is possible since the 500,000 behind bars are a small fraction of recent serious offenders. About all we can say is a few are being punished if that is our purpose. It costs about \$10,000 a year to keep a person in prison today. "If the prisoner is 'paying a debt to society,' it is costing the creditor about \$10,000 per year to collect it!" Dewolf says.

The dehumanizing effects of prisons, both the physical and psychological brutality, is awesome.

The least popular state budget item is the one for corrections. Who wants to spend money for criminals? What legislator wants to "improve conditions" or "build a resort" for criminals? Few votes are gained for such legislative action. Wardens are constantly frustrated over lack of funds to pay decent salaries for correctional officers and provide adequate facilities and treatment programs. No one represents prisoners in the state legislature.

The dehumanizing effect of prisons, both the physical and psychological brutality, is awesome. Prisons often seem designed to destroy one's humanity. The structure and organization of prison life usually works against any meaningful rehabilitation taking place. Prisoners need to change, to learn how to live on the outside, but are not allowed to do so. An atmosphere

of hate, fear, punishment, cruelty, and anti-social behavior prevails among both the guards and prisoners. The worst thing about prison life is the other prisoners, the prison counter-society of inmates with its own mores which run counter to the outside society. So often, prisons are virtually schools of crime, especially for young, first-time offenders.

No wonder about one-third of all prisoners who are released eventually return to prison. Youthful offenders have a much higher rate of recidivism. The younger a prisoner is when first arrested, convicted, or confined for any crime, the more likely he is to continue in crime.

It has been generally concluded by most criminologists that prisons are, at the least, ineffective means of turning people away from lives of crime. California's experience with probation since 1965 ought to be studied and adopted nationwide. That state found that considerable money has been saved and the rate of recidivism has significantly dropped as a result of their Probation Subsidy Act of 1965 which encouraged the use of a county-level program of probation.

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger in his recent annual state of the judiciary message said: "It is wrong. It is expensive. It is stupid. To put people behind walls and bars and do little or nothing to change them is to win a battle and lose a war." As long as we consider prisons dumping grounds for society's problems, we will continue to see an escalating crime rate.

Rehabilitation in our vastly overcrowded prisons is almost non-existent. Once, while taking a criminology class on a tour of a large state prison, one of my students asked the warden if they were rehabilitating very many. His reply was curt yet true: "You had better hope we are, because most of the people you see in here will be out on the streets within five years." His tone of voice, however, revealed that he realized they were not able to do much effective rehabilitation.

Crises for the Church

To a socially and morally conscious church, these crises are crises for the church's redemptive ministry. If the church is to be the conscience of the community and collectively of the nation, we cannot have a "good conscience" if we turn our backs on these problems.

A few months ago, the state prison of a western state was almost totally destroyed by a riot of the inmates. Many were killed or injured. The prison was in terrible shape for some time before the riot. It suffered from overcrowding, racial conflicts, poor management, too few and poorly trained correctional officers, and was largely ignored by state politicians.

Following the riot, several groups throughout the state made suggestions via task force study committees to the appropriate state officials as plans were being drawn up for building a new system. Here was the state's unique opportunity to build a model system. Some Southern Baptist pastors sought to relate to these

efforts but had no channel for doing so through the state convention structure and had to work through other religious channels. For all practical purposes the churches had turned their backs on the "prison mess" hoping it would go away. They failed to see that this was a crisis for the church, a rare opportunity to fulfil Matthew 25:36 NASB, "I was in prison, and you came to Me."

A police captain once told me, "I think preachers are the most naive people when it comes to my business that I know of."

Understanding Required

If the church is going to carry its ministry of God's grace into the arena of crime and criminal justice it must begin with understanding. First, and most significantly, the church must understand that crime is a very complex problem and there are no simple solutions. It does help to be acquainted with the various theories of crime causation. A basic course in criminology would be a good place to begin.

However, it seems most unfortunate that so few pastors have ever had such a course. For several years I taught a course in criminology on a Baptist university campus with heavy enrollments of all types of students except ministerial students who seemed to avoid such "worldly subjects." Personal surveys of my own have revealed that few church leaders have ever made an intensive study of crime and its causes. A veteran police captain once told me, "I think preachers are the most naive people when it comes to my business that I know of." He was probably right.

A study of the psychogenic and sociogenic theories of crime causation can do much to set the church's agenda for dealing with crime in a local setting. It can assist the church in determining target groups and areas for ministry.

Nearly three decades ago, sociologist Daniel Bell declared that crime is "an American way of life." Though dealing specifically with organized crime, Bell exposed the fact that crime is essentially the result of the type of society we have which is a public that demands services and substances outlawed by our legislatures.

Taft and England dealt with the broader picture by saying that ours is a "criminogenic society." The value conflicts, impersonality, individualism, disrespect for law and order, exploitativeness, an obsession with violence, materialism, and an overemphasis on money and other ingredients central to the American way of life make widespread criminality an inevitable by-product of American culture.

The general social causes of crime are known to be poverty, racism, discrimination, ignorance, unemployment, materialism, inflation, family disintegration, and condoning violence especially in the

media. If the church wants to attack the causes of crime, these issues provide a full agenda.

Ministry Proposals

If the church wants to minister to a society wounded by crime and injustice, it needs to build meaningful relationships with the people most directly involved. Take a quick look at your local church. How many police men and women belong to your congregation? Not very many if yours is typical. I recently asked the pastor of a church with over 6000 members how many police persons he had in his church. He knew of one retired officer!

What types of contacts do you have with community leaders who are directly fighting poverty, racism, and discrimination? What involvement does your church have with the vast numbers of poor people in your community?

It is not enough to have a jail preaching ministry as important as that is. It is so much better to build a fence at the top of the cliff than it is to run an ambulance service at the bottom. The church must shift its emphasis from symptoms to causes.

A good place to begin is for each local church to set up a task force of committed people to channel the resources of the church and its programs in the direction of dealing with the local problems of crime and criminal justice. They could begin by establishing meaningful contacts with criminal court judges, prosecuting attorneys, lawyers, city and county council persons, police, community action personnel, and school officials to learn what the problems are and to marshal the resources of the church to address the problems in meaningful programs of ministry.

State conventions could do a similar thing on the state level through Christian Life Commissions or appropriate committees, working especially with the governor's office, the state department of corrections, the state attorney-general's office, and influential legislators. The problems must be attacked on all possible levels. We do this sort of thing in such areas as gambling and alcohol legislation. Why not in regard to crime and criminal justice? This is not to suggest that nothing has been or is being done. There is so much yet to be done; we have only just begun.

The most important thing Southern Baptists need to do to deal with the problems of crime and criminal justice is to be committed to the will of God. Not many convention presidents will ever get elected with this as their main identity issue, just as not many politicians get elected because of a campaign promise to reform the prisons and the courts. Not many pastors will be called to leading churches because of their leadership in criminal justice reform or because of their ministry to criminals. But I believe Jesus said something about the agenda of the church including a ministry to the poor, the deprived, the convicted and the imprisoned.

Guy Greenfield is professor of Christian Ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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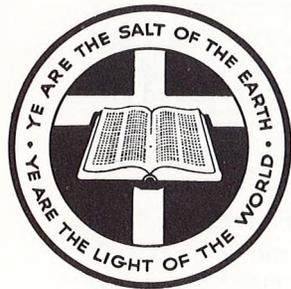
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