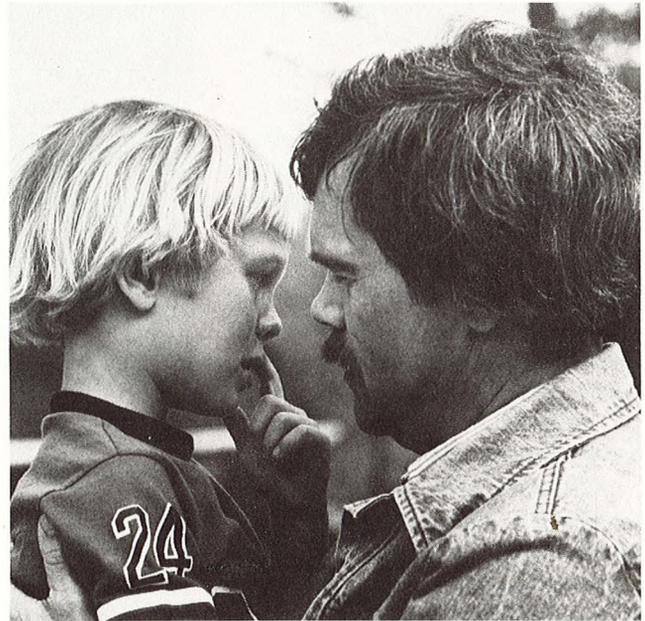


LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

September 1981



Inside LIGHT

Criminal Justice

“. . . and I was in prison and you came to me.” Dismiss it as one of Jesus’ enigmatic sayings? Ignore it? How do you deal with that part of Matthew 25?

As overcrowding, riots, and skyrocketing costs (with little rehabilitation demonstrated) plague our prisons, more people than ever are considering that Jesus touched on an important point of demonstrating one’s faith—ministry *and* reform must be applied in his name to even those who are incarcerated.

You may not agree with the ideas presented but to be intellectually honest and a responsible Christian you will have to deal with the points made in “Is There A Better Way?—A Perspective on American Prisons.”

Childrearing

“Shell shock,” “battle fatigue,” “hazardous duty”—part of the script from *The Longest Day*? No, those are phrases some people use to explain what it’s like being a parent. These same ones will balance the ledger, though, by explaining their children also are “a great source of joy” or “the apple of my eye.”

Yes, parenting, even for Christians, can be a seesaw affair. Some days are a breeze; others are a tropical storm. And, as one sage put it, “About the time you know how to parent, you don’t need to.” That is too true; but, it does not have to be. Logan Wright’s “Childrearing: An Important Christian Stewardship” will be of some parental aid and comfort in this respect.—WMT

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Doing the Word

The church of God in Christ, quickened by the Holy Spirit, is a *transformed* community. Lifted by God's grace out of the quicksands of culture, it is set firmly on the solid rock of Christ Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

The church of God in Christ is also a *transforming* community, committed, as James 1:22 puts it, to being doers of the word.

In order to be transforming, it is necessary for the church to be spiritually and morally secure for the winds of adversity blow hardest against the church seeking most faithfully to do God's work in the world. So, the Christian Life Commission seeks to call Southern Baptists to stand fast in our experience of grace and in our moral convictions and in moral integrity, confident in the freedom with which Christ has made us free.

In order to be transforming, it is necessary for the church to be sacrificial, for the giving of God's own Son in the incarnation sets the pattern for those who choose to be his disciples. So the Christian Life Commission seeks to help Southern Baptists take up the cross of self-sacrifice *daily* to follow Christ in every area of the social order and in every relationship of life.

In order to be transforming, it is necessary for the church to be boldly aggressive, for timid missionaries unsure of their orders, unconvinced that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life," and unsteady in the assurance that they have a clear word from the Lord, need harbor no hope for an effective witness to the world of hurting families, hostile races, alienated neighbors, and warring nations.

In order to be transforming, it is necessary for the church to be involved in the moral issues, great and small, of the day, for disengagement from these concerns in the face of humanity's tremendous need would represent a tragic misreading of the

Bible and an inexcusable rejection of the meaning of the incarnation of God in Christ.

In order to be transforming, it is necessary for the church to be scattered, on mission as God's salt of the earth and as God's light of the world. So the Christian Life Commission works daily with the understanding that God's redemptive purposes cannot be served by a permanently gathered church that keeps trying to find refuge from the pressing moral battles of the day, from the cries of the oppressed, the prisoners, the destitute, the hungry, the abused, the sick, the weak, the poor, the tired, and the old.

Believers come to Christ singly but we cannot live the Christian life solitarily. God has made us for community. The world is calling.

But the world, we know, is lost. It is preoccupied with strewing beer cans along the highway of life. Richard Burton has spoken for this age when he said, "I've been in trouble all my life; I've done the most unutterable rubbish, all because of money. I didn't need it. . . the lure of the zeroes was simply too great."

Yet, the world is worth saving. We know because "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The Christian Life Commission's commitment to help Southern Baptists apply the gospel in every area of the social order and in every relationship of life is built on the conviction that Christianity is, as William Temple said, indeed the most worldly of all the great world religions. Our work is built on the belief that Christians should be concerned about anything and everything that affects human beings created in God's image and for whom Christ died and now lives again.

The Christian Life Commission is

seeking to help Southern Baptists be doers of the word.

In a world where family life is on the rocks, the Christian Life Commission affirms that the gospel is good news for families.

In a world where morals, private and public, are mercilessly battered and shamelessly assaulted, the Christian Life Commission affirms that the Christian way is the way of uncompromised and uncompromising moral integrity.

In a world of daily work characterized by unemployment, manipulation, burn-out, inflation, poverty in the midst of plenty, and great gulfs growing between the haves and the have nots, the Christian Life Commission affirms the importance of responsible Christian stewardship and a Bible-based ethic of parsimony.

In a world of race relations not yet delivered from the demons of prejudice and hostility, the Christian Life Commission affirms that in God our Father we are experiencing reconciliation and at-onement, that in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior we are experiencing a breaking down of the middle walls of partition that have separated us, and that in the Holy Spirit's kindly light we are being led in the direction of brotherhood and sisterhood and neighborhood.

In a world of citizenship where cowardice and corruption are all too seldom put to flight by course and conscience, the Christian Life Commission affirms that the running of our communities, our schools, our states, and our country must not and will not be left to the wisdom of unbelievers.

It is the Christian Life Commission's purpose to help changed people change the world. To that end we pledge Southern Baptists anew the very best we have to give.

Joy Valentine

Is There A Better Way?

A Perspective on American Prisons

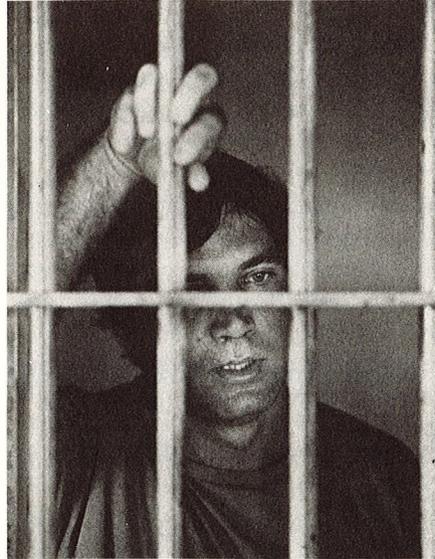
Editors Note: This article was condensed from a pamphlet by Prison Fellowship and was used by permission. For more information write to Prison Fellowship P.O. Box 40562, Washington, D.C.

Despite modern views to the contrary, the punishment of criminals in ancient societies was neither simple nor exclusively barbaric. The Code of Hammurabi and the Law of Moses were incredibly complex penal systems, almost exotic in their detailed delineation of crimes and punishments. The Roman legal system was similarly complicated, and offered several options of civil and physical punishment to judges.

By contrast, later punishment structures in European countries and their colonies *do* seem barbaric. They were patently unfair: the rich could often buy their way out of jail or, failing that, could purchase privileges and comforts. The punishments were also harsh: branding, flogging, the rack and the stocks, all reflected a disposition toward brutal punishment. And not least, these punishments were flaunted: beheadings and hangings became spectacles, and the lashing of even women and children for lesser crimes was common. With the establishment of the colonies came the mass deportation of criminals, both to the New World and later to Australia.

Prisons as Punishment

In none of these systems of punishment, however, was imprisonment itself often used as a penalty. There have been prisons for thousands of years, but they were used mainly to keep political offenders, hold lawbreakers until trial or execution, or detain insolvent debtors until their debts were paid. Imprisonment as a primary means of criminal punishment is a relatively modern concept. It was turned to as a humane alternative to older patterns of harsh physical



penalties for nearly all crimes. Quakers introduced the concept, in colonial Pennsylvania.

The first American prison was established in Philadelphia when the Walnut Street jail was converted into a series of solitary cells where offenders were kept in silent confinement. The theory was that they would become "penitents," confessing their crimes before God and thereby gaining a spiritual rehabilitation. Hence the name "penitentiary"—as a place for penitents. In 1790, the State of Pennsylvania enacted laws making imprisonment the ordinary punishment for crimes.

There were problems with this approach from the beginning: many early "penitents," locked in their solitary cells, went mad, and there was little evidence that this treatment produced any rehabilitation. Even so, the idea caught on, and by 1850 all the states had adopted similar laws. The concept of imprisonment as a principal form of punishment has since been exported from the United States to almost all Western nations.

Justice and Punishment

In some ways these Quaker reformers were on the right track. Certainly the

brutal physical punishments they hoped to supplant were more forms of crude retaliation and cruel entertainment than expressions of the spirit of justice. Moreover, the notion of "penitence" by individual criminals as the only sure basis for their rehabilitation was biblically sound.

Indeed, we at Prison Fellowship share many of these assumptions. Punishment, in the scriptural view, serves justice; and part of this service is to seek the inner reform and rehabilitation of the evildoer. Even in the Old Testament, the penalties of the Law are aimed at restitution to victims and reassertion of the divine order established by the Commandments. Both Jesus and Paul explicitly rejected vengeance as the way to justice (cf Matthew 5:38-44 and Romans 12:19-21).

Nevertheless, today we question whether the shift to imprisonment that began in Philadelphia has achieved its laudable purposes. The bulk of the evidence, and our experience in Prison Fellowship, show convincingly that most prisons not only fail to promote justice and personal reform, but instead they very often have become obstacles to them. Thus our own commitments to the biblical concepts of punishment and justice have led us to seek better, more effective forms of punishment.

Do Prisons Prevent Crime?

One of the principal justifications for using prisons to punish crime is the belief that prisons are a deterrent to criminal behavior. But crime statistics show that imprisonment is a very questionable deterrent to crime. The United States of America, for example, incarcerates more people as a percentage of population than any other country except the Soviet Union and South Africa. Yet the United States also has the highest crime rate in the western world.

Within our borders the same disparity
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shows up: in fifteen states where prison capacity increased 56 percent from 1955 to 1975, the increase in reported crime was *greater* than in fifteen other states where prison capacity increased only four percent. While admittedly it is difficult to draw causal connections, it would seem on the face of it that increased imprisonment and longer prison sentences do not deter crime. Indeed, many informed observers have suggested that, instead of deterring crime, our prisons contribute to it; and our experience in prisons supports this assertion.

How Prisons Manufacture Crime

Depending on the jurisdiction, as many as 80 percent of American prisoners are incarcerated for non-violent crimes. Yet placing non-violent offenders in a penitentiary can often be counter-productive. Frequently they are subjected to brutal treatment, homosexual rape, the continual threat of violence, and a boring routine that deadens the human spirit. Studies have shown that a great many non-violent offenders come out of prison not rehabilitated but instead in far worse mental, physical and moral condition than when they went in.

Nor are the effects of imprisonment on inmates found only behind the walls. Many prisoner families break up during the period of incarceration. Thus, a prison term often deprives an offender of the basic family relationship which experts agree is absolutely critical to re-

habilitation upon release. Further, felony disability statutes in most states deprive the ex-offender of his civil liberties, including his right to vote, thus making it difficult for him to return to a normal life in society. And not least, very few after-care services are available to offenders upon their release.

It is not surprising, then, that according to some studies, up to 80 percent of all felonies are committed by repeat offenders. Once we put a person in prison, the odds are that he will get out of prison, commit another crime and return behind bars, in a vicious cycle that goes on and on. A recent CBS TV documentary, after dramatizing this process, closed with a sober warning: "Maybe prisoners do deserve what they get here (in prison). But society cannot continue to ignore that we deserve what we get when they eventually get out."

We believe, based on data like this and our experience in prisons all over America, that all of us who support law and order and the just punishment of criminal behavior must face the question of whether it is wise, given any viable alternatives, to put more people than absolutely necessary in prison in the first place.

Prisons: Expensive Failures

This question was raised three years ago by the Canadian Parliament. Perplexed and frustrated by the seeming inability of prisons to deter crime, the legislators commissioned an exhaustive study of the Canadian prison system. The study concluded, "Society has spent millions of dollars over the years to create and maintain the proven failure of prisons. Incarceration has failed in its two essential purposes—correcting the offender and providing permanent protection to society. The recidivist rate of up to 80 percent is the evidence of both."

Building a new prison in the United States today costs from \$50,000 to \$80,000 per bed. The average annual cost of simply maintaining an inmate is well over \$10,000 for adult state prisons. In some states, the cost is over \$20,000 per prisoner per year. This does not include construction costs, lost taxes, and welfare payments to inmates' families. In the federal prison system, the average annual cost of maintaining an inmate in

1980 was calculated at \$13,588. High as it is, this figure does not include all related costs mentioned above. If they are added in, the final cost figure is realistically nearer \$20,000 annually per inmate, and on the rise constantly.

Dissatisfaction with prisons and their effectiveness in dealing with crime is now widespread among American observers. Chief Justice Warren Burger recently said, "We have developed systems of correction which do not correct If anyone is tempted to regard humane prison reform as 'coddling' criminals, let him visit a prison and talk with inmates and staff. I have visited some of the best and some of the worst prisons and have never seen any signs of 'coddling,' but I have seen the terrible results of the boredom and frustration of empty hours and pointless existence."

The Failure of Rehabilitation

The second rationale for prisons has been that they rehabilitate criminals. The staggering recidivism statistics, running as high as 80 percent in America and 90 percent in Europe, have largely discredited this claim, and it is not made today as often as it was. For instance, Norman Carlson, head of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, said in a recent speech that "Had this been five years ago, I'd probably have gotten up here and talked about the glories of 'rehabilitation'I've given up hope for rehabilitation, because there's nothing we can do to force change on offenders. Change has got to come from in here (Carlson pointed to his heart)." Michigan legislator, Paul Henry, who has worked on these issues at the state level, argues that imprisonment is far more likely to dehumanize men and women than to rehabilitate them: "To place a criminal offender in an artificial world composed only of other criminal offenders and then to expect that person to emerge from that abnormal environment as a healthy and whole person is certainly a questionable strategy."

The Real Value of Prisons

If prisons do not deter crime or rehabilitate offenders, what purpose can they serve? We believe prisons are necessary for that roughly 20 percent of the prison population convicted of

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dangerously violent crimes. These individuals must be kept in prison for the protection of the general public. Yet every opportunity should still be offered those who must be confined to rehabilitate *themselves*, if and when they choose to do so.

Why Reform Is Difficult

If prisons do not rehabilitate and are only necessary for violent criminals, why haven't we come up with some better and cheaper ways of dealing with the non-violent majority of offenders? The answer is simple: Change in criminal justice policy and practice is notoriously slow. Most Americans simply don't care what happens in prisons and are prepared instead to spend the money necessary to incarcerate hundreds of thousands of criminals. The public doesn't understand the enormous cost of prisons, not just in money but also in lives and in public safety; nor is the public aware of our penal system's incredibly consistent record of failure.

Further, prisons and the criminal justice system frequently become the fall guys of the political process. As election time approaches, the temptation is to "talk tough" about crime, which translates into vengeful policies of longer sentences and more prisons. Even when a politician is persuaded to look into alternative forms of punishment, the fight has often only begun. On the one hand there is the threat of being labeled "a bleeding heart," which is politically damaging in a society clinging to cliché-ridden perceptions of law and order. On the other hand, those in prison have no constituency, hence no leverage. Thus community-based reform efforts frequently run head-on into resistance from citizens, who want the problem to be solved elsewhere.

Prison Reform: A Matter of Life and Death

The problems in American prisons are mushrooming. Riots have occurred recently in many prisons, the most tragic one occurring in early 1980 when 33 inmates were killed by fellow prisoners in New Mexico's state penitentiary. In 25 states, court orders are in effect mandating drastic changes in prison systems.

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Finding better ways to deal with criminal offenders is not only timely it is a matter of life and death. And fortunately those better ways are readily available.

Over-crowding is an epidemic-scale problem, but the only response now being considered is billions of dollars of new prison construction. If all the prisons proposed today are actually built, they would cost at least 5.6 billion dollars. Finding better ways to deal with criminal offenders is not only timely; it is a matter of life and death. And fortunately, these better ways are readily available.

Alternative Punishments

There are several alternatives to incarceration which may well prove to be better measures of punishment, both for society and for the offender, than imprisonment. They could improve safety, save taxpayers huge amounts, and offer far better hope for rehabilitation of offenders. These alternatives constitute "just punishment," often far more just than imprisonment. Let's briefly consider several of these alternatives.

A. Restitution

"Restitution" requires the offender to repay the crime victim for property loss or property or personal damages. Though an alternative to prison, a restitution sentence is not an "easy out." The offender's schedule is rigidly controlled, often through his/her return at the end of the work day to a half-way house. The offender's pay is diverted into channels beyond his/her control: repayment of the victim, compensation of the state, supporting the offender's family, and establishing a capital reserve which will help keep an offender from being impelled back toward crime by poverty after release.

B. Community Service Orders

A criminal act is an offense against particular victims, of course, but it is also an offense against society. Both suffer loss: an individual is violated, and public safety is di-

minished; the offender is thereby said to incur a "debt to society." But as long as punishment and imprisonment are considered synonymous, neither the victim nor society is compensated; to the contrary, both then incur the additional heavy costs of imprisonment. We have discussed restitution by offenders to their individual victims. Is there a comparable approach to compensating society?

Too often offenders now pay their "debt to society" in prison. The resulting waste of valuable human resources is easy to document. For instance, the prisoner operating the washing machine next to Charles Colson at Maxwell Federal Prison had been a prominent doctor, convicted of stock fraud. There was no resident doctor in this particular prison, so the many inmates with medical needs had to rely on a paramedic while a qualified doctor spent his days putting dirty underwear into the washing machine each morning and taking it out each afternoon. Later he volunteered to help meet a shortage of doctors in the surrounding community by working nights, but his offer was refused. Such shortsightedness serves neither the victim, the offender, nor society.

Instead of being sent to prison, offenders could be required to work for a period of years, either at a very modest pay or none at all, in ghettos, hospitals, or other areas of public need. Such alternatives need not be limited to white-collar offenders. Present community service programs provide work opportunities for skilled and unskilled workers alike. California is operating some 50 Community Service Alternatives for offenders. Similar Community

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Service Orders have been employed in England with dramatic success.

C. House Arrest

This alternative is primarily for convicted felons whose probation reports indicate they are unlikely to be involved in further criminal behavior. Many of those sentenced to house arrest are first-time offenders with no record of prior criminal activity.

D. Probation and Contract Probation

Probation is one of the most widely used alternatives. Offenders on probation are sentenced to obey specific behavior guidelines under the supervision of a Probation Officer. Violation of the guidelines can result in incarceration, so the offender has every incentive to avoid that prospect.

Contract probation is usually offered as an alternative to incarceration by one of the lawyers involved (interestingly enough, often the prosecutor's office advocates the program). The judge is presented with a program of punishment, often including Community Service or restitution.

E. Deferred Sentencing

Offenders assigned this alternative to incarceration plead guilty to their charge, and undergo a pre-sentence investigation. The presiding judge then defers sentencing for several months, during which the offender is referred to service agencies—alcohol and drug treatment, for example. If the offender's response is positive, the judge may impose a sentence of probation with the stipulation of continued participation in rehabilitative programs.

F. Suspended Sentencing

This alternative involves establishment of a fixed sentence by the

presiding judge, who then suspends the sentence for a specified period of time, subject to the offender's compliance with behavioral guidelines. If the guidelines are violated, the original sentence takes effect.

G. Fines

Assessment of fines is already a typical penalty for many crimes, but such sentences could be more widely used in place of imprisonment for non-violent offenses. However, the amount of a fine should be based on both the seriousness of the offense and the offender's ability to pay. Only thus can the United States reduce the blatant discrimination which leads to incarceration of a disproportionate number of the poor—those unable either to pay fines or secure sophisticated legal representation.

H. Alcohol and Drug Treatment

In the past two decades drug abuse has become a major cause of crime. Incarceration seldom confronts this frequent problem other than by temporarily removing the abuser-offender from society, and often exacerbates it because drug abuse is widespread in our prisons.

Incarceration is thus the last sentence which should be imposed upon an offender whose crimes are drug abuse related. Instead, drug abusers should be assigned to institutions specifically designed to deal with their unique problems. Many such programs, both residential and non-residential, have been developed across the country. (Note: We distinguish drug abusers from drug suppliers; the categories and punishments ought to be held as distinct offenses.)

I. Employment Assistance

Besides alcohol or drug abuse, other contributing factors to much crime are poverty and unemployment. Whenever possible, alternatives to imprisonment should be found for those whose criminal behavior might be eliminated by the

development of job skills. Responsibility for developing employment programs must be shared by government, the community, and the church. Crime may reflect *both* personal and societal failure; yet too often only the convict is punished, and underlying conditions and attitudes remain unchanged.

J. Pre-Trial Intervention

Some jurisdictions in America provide what is called a "second chance" system. A first offender or an unintentional law-breaker is given counseling; if after a year his conduct is satisfactory, the indictment is expunged and his record cleared. Researchers are still debating the value of this approach but it's worth pursuing and refining.

Why Provide Alternatives?

Underlying all these alternative punishment programs is our conviction that they are better than incarceration, both for society and for the offender. They do not let convicts off easy, nor are they intended merely to relieve overcrowding. Too often, however, these programs are not used as true alternatives. Rather, they are tacked on the prison sentences, to follow the "real punishment." This creates a disparity between the intent of these programs and their application. Unfortunately, this has been a frequent outcome of reform efforts: if reformers, prosecutors and judges do not all concur on the intent of a given reform, its impact can easily be lost or perverted.

A. Shorter Sentences

It is a startling fact that with the possible exception of political prisons in countries ruled by totalitarian governments, American prisoners serve the longest sentences in the world.

Furthermore, the United States imprisons offenders at a higher rate than any other industrialized country in the world. The United States rate is several times the average of most European countries. The average sentence imposed on federal offenders in the United States has increased steadily from 16.5 months in 1945 to 45.5 months by 1975.

We believe that sentencing reform must move in two ways. First,

judges must be given both guidelines for sentencing and discretion to modify those guidelines to suit the individual. Second, the attitudes of judges must be addressed, so that the discretion produces both equity and reform. In one state, for instance, some judges have reacted to a five-year maximum sentencing limit (which permits parole) by proliferating sentences of four years and 364 days (which does not)!

B. Weekend Sentences

In cases where long-term continuous imprisonment would wreck an offender's employment or family, the presiding judge may impose a sentence to be served on weekends or other times not disruptive of an offender's responsibilities. We believe, however, that this alternative is not to be preferred to Community Service Orders; moreover, it has merits for only a relatively small percentage of cases.

C. Classification

In no case should non-violent offenders (or those with demonstrated good behavior records) be housed in cells or dormitories with those guilty of violent crimes or behavior. The need for classification in this regard goes far beyond existing designations of "Minimum," "Medium" and "Maximum" security sections within penal institutions, which are far too crude.

D. Protection Against Violence

Offenders who must be incarcerated should also be protected against the physical, psychological or homosexual intimidation which has always been too much a part of prison life. Men and women do not forfeit their right to life and personal safety when they are sentenced to prison.

E. Increased "Good-time" Credit

Inmates should have the incen-

tive of a reduced sentence based on constructive, positive response to their imprisonment. Consistent guidelines delineating that behavior should replace a system too often based on caprice or individual bias.

F. The Use of Smaller Modern Prison Units

Most studies show that big penitentiaries breed violence and gang control, and suffer as well from poor staff supervision. The trend today is to build prisons to hold 300-500 inmates. They should be located near the major population centers rather than out in the country, so that both the family of the inmate and volunteers have better access. Generally, these are far more humane and manageable facilities.

G. End Mandatory Sentences

Mandatory Sentencing, or "flat time," works under the theory that standardized sentences, which in practice are usually made longer by various legislation than those of the discretionary kind, will be more equitable and serve as a deterrent to crime. In both instances they fail. On the one hand, they remove from the judge the authority to allow for mitigating circumstances or first-time offenders. On the other hand, longer sentences result in more persons in prisons.

H. End Habitual Criminal Acts

In our judgment, Habitual Criminal Acts do nothing more than overload the prisons. They also produce gross injustices. One such case, which recently reached the United States Supreme Court, is not as rare as we would like to think. It involved an offender in Texas who after his third conviction received a mandatory life sentence, as specified by Texas law. Yet *the total cumulative monetary value of his three offenses, spread over a nine-year period, was only \$221.00.*

Most prison guards would favor repeal of mandatory Habitual Criminal Act sentences because such laws make their jobs more danger-

ous. For instance, a guard in the State of Washington was killed a year ago when he apprehended a two-time offender. The offender "chose" to kill the guard in the hope of avoiding capture and a third offense that would mean an automatic life sentence. He had nothing to lose and, had he gotten away with it, everything to gain.

How Needed Reforms Can Happen

Many earlier prison reform efforts have come to nothing, or ended up leaving offenders worse off in prison and society less safe from crime. Thus it is proper to be modest and cautious in proposing a new reform campaign. We believe the proposals presented here do represent such a cautious, moderate program, one growing out of our extensive experience in American prisons as well as considerable study of the proposals of various correctional specialists.

This program is also, and ultimately, based on our understanding of biblical concepts of justice, punishment, and the responsibility to care for those in prisons.

It is also our conviction that the best hope for lasting humane prison reform lies with American Christians. This reform will come when Christians examine the Scripture and realize that prison is nowhere used for punishment of crimes. Rather, whenever practical, restitution is the scripturally-mandated form of punishment, and reform of the offender is central to its purpose. Jesus applied this principle with Zaccheus (Luke 19). Moreover, the orientation of punishment toward reform and rehabilitation of evildoers is found throughout the Bible, as in Ezekiel 33:11: "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

A genuinely biblical view of criminal justice provides the basis for reforms which can improve public safety, lead to enormous savings for American taxpayers, and produce far more effective punishments that will indeed do something to curb rising rates. In the process, we will discover that the punishment which is both humane and just is also the most effective.

Childrearing: An Important Christian Stewardship

by Logan Wright

Is childrearing an important Christian stewardship? To solve the equation, one simply needs to determine first of all if it is *important*, and second if it is a major area of *Christian* responsibility.

To say that childrearing is important is to excel at the fine art of understatement. Childrearing is America's biggest industry, exceeding in size such giants as national defense and even the fast-foods business. Over fifty million Americans are now engaged in the process of rearing or otherwise refining over seventy-five million youngsters under fifteen years of age. More man-hours and woman-hours are expended in this endeavor than any other. Clearly it is our nation's largest enterprise; it is also our most important.

America has been accused of "slipping," and the jury is still out. What is going to happen to us monetarily, with the gross national product, with the value of the dollar? Scientifically, can we maintain our position of international leadership in the space program and elsewhere? Morally, where are we going with respect to human rights and the problems of human suffering in underdeveloped countries and here at home?

Whether this nation flourishes or flounders depends on its national character, and that in turn depends on the character of its individual citizens. And nothing is more important in determining the character of individuals than the quality of childrearing they receive. Dr. Ernest Fremont Tittle has written, "Every new generation is a fresh invasion of savages." If today's generation of savages is going to turn around the decline in the American dollar, to establish permanent colonies on the moon or terrestrial bodies which lie beyond, and to solve the problems of welfare, corrections, and health care which threaten us internally like spreading cancers, then the parents of America have their work cut out for them. A lot hangs in the balance. Whether we succeed or fail depends on the personality and the character our



children develop now. That in turn depends on the childrearing skills of America's parents. Obviously, childrearing is important.

Part two of our equation concerns whether childrearing is Christian. To answer that we must determine what is Christlike, or like Christ. One of the most profound experiences of my young adult life was an attempt to discover Jesus firsthand by reading the Gospel accounts of how he spent his time and how he behaved himself in day-to-day life. The Christ I discovered in the Gospels was different in important ways from the one I had heard about repeatedly from the pulpit. Mainly, his priorities seemed to be different from what I had been led to believe. First of all, he was not an institutional man. Rather, I got the impression that if he were walking the earth today, he would be less concerned with subscribing the annual budget and otherwise undergirding the institution than I had been led to suspect (particularly on Stewardship Sunday). It still puzzles me that we rarely hear anything about childrearing or a number of other relevant topics on Stewardship Sunday.

Secondly, I was astonished to find that

the Jesus of Matthew, Mark,⁴ Luke, and John was not an aggressive evangelist. He did *not* do anything equivalent to handing out tracts or holding revival meetings. He never aggressively pressed individuals whom he might never see again for quick changes in their basic religious commitments. He is reported on only three occasions to have been called "preacher." By contrast, Jesus was referred to as "teacher" on approximately seventy-five occasions but even more frequently was portrayed as one who responded to the needs of those whose path he crossed: the blind, the poor and needy, the outcasts, the fatherless. His main trait, as well as his main activity, was compassion. If this picture of Jesus is an accurate one, then those among us who are most Christlike may be the workers in our children's homes or others who work to treat or prevent human misery.

If the best way to be Christlike is to respond to human misery, and the best way to respond is to prevent it; then one of the best ways we can be Christian is by helping parents to succeed in their childrearing efforts. So, as the author of another book released recently used to

say: "Let me make it perfectly clear." With this topic of childrearing, *we are about the Lord's business!*

Allowance for Changing Times

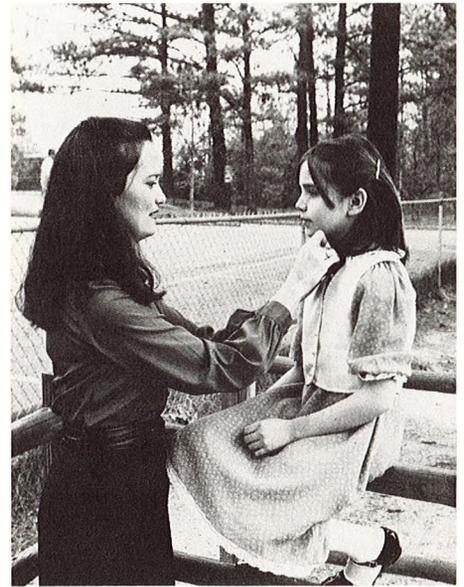
Both the problems of childrearing and the proposed solutions have changed greatly over the last half century. Today, the problems which would ensnare a child along the course of proper development are quite different from those of one or two generations ago. Strange drugs, other than old familiar villains such as alcohol and nicotine, no longer merely lurk in the shadows, but emerge in open defiance on the school grounds and in the recreational parlors which are frequented by today's young people. Running away is no longer an infrequent, individual undertaking; but an epidemic in which the victim may be abetted by everything from religious cults to pimps. Groups of runaways now covey together for protection in neighborhoods like Georgetown or the Sunset Strip. They are usually well-subsidized by money which is provided by guilty parents or which results from the fact that today almost anyone who is willing to work can find some kind of job. It seems ironic that many parents who have worked hard to spare their children the pains of financial insecurity have instead produced a medicine which cripples and maims.

Fifty years ago when the majority of children in this country grew up on farms, they tended to learn responsibility regardless of whether their parents were skillful or not in their childrearing practices. They performed useful work and were depended upon by the rest of the family. Today, in urbanized America, there is very little work for which children are really needed. They grow progressively more dependent rather than more dependable. Getting a kid to carry out the garbage is regarded as a major victory in many homes. Today, for a child to develop the trait of responsibility requires *skillful* parents. It will not happen in the normal course of events as it did in the past.

Not only have the problems of childrearing changed; but so have the prescriptions which so-called experts have to offer. In the early part of this century, most parents exercised a great deal of

overkill in socializing their children. That is, they started too early and were unduly harsh in weaning, toilet training, and teaching children to inhibit their unacceptable (i.e., sexual and aggressive) impulses. For that reason, Sigmund Freud, Benjamin Spock, and many others recommended parental permissiveness as the best potion for curing these ills. We soon learned that permissiveness alone was not enough. During the 1960s, the idea of reasoning with children came into vogue. It was during this time that books on active listening and other communication skills were published (e.g., *Between Parent and Child* by Haim Ginott and *Parent Effectiveness Training* by Thomas Gordon). Now, in the latter half of the 1970s we are realizing that other ingredients are still missing. This has led to a period which some have called *The Age of Responsibility*. Now we see books with titles such as *Dare to Discipline* and *How to Rear a Responsible Child*. This new age brings with it an emphasis on discipline, on rules or limits, and on re-

Nagasaki, and other places is now history. Regardless of whether you see the development as positive or negative, the fact remains that where military capabilities are concerned, if someone builds a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to his door. The same, how-



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wards and punishments. So now, in order to be modern, one must be a little old-fashioned. Yes, the times have changed with regard to the problems of childrearing and the prescriptions we make.

State of the Art

During the early 1940s Albert Einstein asked for and received an audience with President Franklin Roosevelt. During that meeting, Einstein explained that there was now sufficient knowledge to build a bomb which was many times more powerful than anything that had ever been known. Roosevelt personally saw to it that three million dollars was set aside for what became known as the Manhattan Project. Several months later Einstein and his colleagues delivered the bomb which was exploded on the New Mexico desert near White Sands. The rest of what happened at Hiroshima,

ever, is *not* true where new advancements in mental health or child development are concerned.

For years experts and parents alike have argued about whether a "good" parent is one who is firm, consistent, and otherwise able to manage and control a child; or whether he or she is one who is loving, supportive, and can provide for the child's basic psychological needs. We now understand that this is like arguing about whether a child needs food or water. Both are obviously indispensable ingredients for wholesome development. Though the field of psychology lags behind that of many other disciplines, we are now at the place where the physical sciences stood in the early 1940s. That is, we now have the knowledge about how to get a child to do or not do anything, taking one behavior at a time. We also know how to skillfully provide love and

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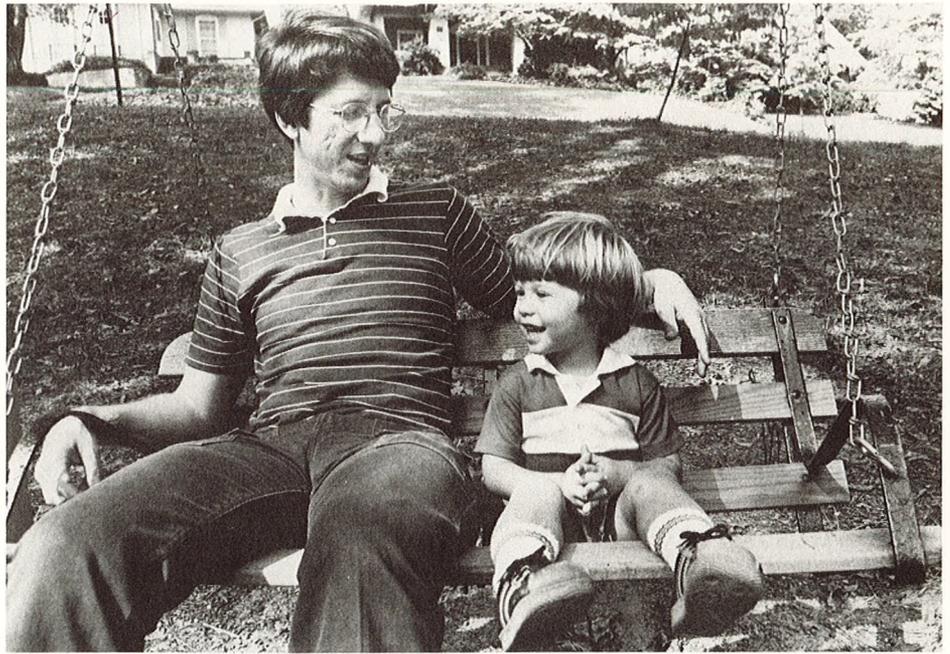
. . . Childrearing

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other forms of emotional support so that a child's basic psychological needs are met, and so that self-esteem (with its inseparable companion of acceptance for others) emerges.

Adequate control for children results when parents understand certain principles of behavior related to: (1) accepting the challenge to be in control; (2) focusing on overt behavior (rather than dynamic causes of behavior); (3) emphasizing reward rather than punishment; (4) understanding individual differences; and (5) being consistent. Principles of human behavior are just as essential for childrearing as principles of physics (such as gravity) are for properly roofing or plumbing a house. The Chinese have a proverb: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for life." Cookbook solutions which attempt to tell parents what to do every time Johnny does this or Mary does that will never solve our dilemma. There are too many Johnnys and Marys with too many different kinds of problems. That would require that we learn the answers to literally thousands of questions. What can help parents is an understanding of basic principles of human behavior applied to childrearing. Once these are learned, they can be generalized to whatever problem may occur.

One name stands out among those who write about principles of behavior for providing emotional support for children. It is that of Dr. Carl Rogers. He is generally regarded by workers in the mental health field as the one who provides the best information in this area, and his own personal history is something you may find interesting. Dr. Rogers grew up in Wisconsin and originally planned to enter the ministry. After attending the University of Wisconsin, he went to Union Theological Seminary in New York. This was during the 1930s, something of a "heyday" for theological liberalism. The thinking in most seminaries at that time was that religion should be stripped of all of its supernatural or metaphysical trimmings. It was



viewed as nothing more than a means for helping people. Rogers reasoned that if religion was just helping people, that other professions were more advanced in this respect than was theology; so he literally walked across the street to Columbia University and enrolled in their doctoral program in psychology. Following graduation Rogers took a position at the Rochester Child Guidance Clinic and eventually served on the faculties at Ohio State, the University of Chicago, and the Wisconsin School of Medicine. At one point, long after having ceased to be a "religious" man, Rogers wrote on the "Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Healthy Personality Growth." Here he outlines the five basic ingredients for helping relationships: intimacy, genuineness, valuing, empathy, and responsibility. I would like to elaborate on these briefly and then, at the end of that discussion, return to what may prove to be a very interesting exploration about where these concepts may have come from in the first place.

Intimacy

There is an old saying, "Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades"; but within a family, closeness can count for a great deal. A child who does not experience intimacy during early childhood will invariably experience psychological problems. He will have difficulty establishing close and meaningful relationships with others both inside and outside the family. He

will have a variety of other difficulties including a disinclination to behave spontaneously or to be his *real* self.

Genuineness

Genuineness, sometimes called congruence, means both an absence of phoniness and a high degree of self-awareness. Congruent parents are not hypocritical, and they possess a high degree of credibility in what they tell their children about such topics as drugs, sex, and happiness in general.

Valuing or Loving

Rogers used the term "unconditional" to describe the best way of loving children. This means loving them at all times regardless of whether they are behaving or misbehaving. It means loving them whether they agree with us or reject our beliefs. Unconditional means loving children whether or not we have had our morning cup of coffee. Unconditional love means never communicating rejection under any circumstances.

Understanding

The term "understanding" has two very different meanings. One is what might be called *diagnostic* understanding. This involves figuring out why a child behaves in a certain way. Empathy, on the other hand, involves a completely different type of understanding. It is not diagnostic but rather understanding something from the *other* person's point of view.

Responsibility

Every person (including every child) has a free will. If this is not true then little else in life or religion makes sense. Each person must eventually make his or her own decisions about important behavior and assume the consequences for those decisions. Every parent desires to rear a responsible child, but children will not behave in a responsible manner unless they are responsible. Therefore, allow children to take responsibility for their own beliefs and behavior. Over a hundred years ago the Danish theologian Kierkegaard said: "To make our religion someone else's without allowing them, yea requiring them, to go through the process necessary to make it their own is to deprive that person of his relationship to God."

In summarizing, I would like to reflect on where Dr. Rogers may have gotten these ideas in the first place. Remember his early exposure to religion and his theological training. Possibly Rogers retained more of his early Christian concepts than anyone realized. Reflect for a moment on the scene of Jesus with the woman at the well. Notice how suddenly their relationship becomes a close and intimate one, and how skillfully he deals with her on the most intimate aspects of her life.

Concerning genuineness, who, in the process of becoming a leader, never pretended to be anything other than a simple carpenter and teacher?

And, who in your opinion provides the best example of *unconditionally* valuing others? Who was able to say, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," of the people who were at that very moment crucifying him?

Who in your opinion was best able to empathize, that is, to see things from the other person's point of view? Picture the scene of Jesus with the woman taken in adultery. Notice how he writes in the sand and then says, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Here we see a clear example of an individual who is able to see both sides of the situation and thus provide true understanding.

Finally, concerning the principle of responsibility, who never twisted anyone's arm into following His way of thinking? Who always respected the other per-

son's right to self-determination?

It is entirely possible that what Dr. Rogers has done is to translate the fundamental teachings from Christianity into modern-day mental terminology. As such, the best principles on how to be a good parent may be nothing more than the message of Jesus translated into modern-day language which people can both understand and apply.

Childrearing is not only an important Christian Stewardship it is an important issue related to national survival.

Means to an End

What remains in this discussion is an identification of the *process* or mechanism by which this important aspect of Christian stewardship can be accomplished. One solution involves training parents as paraprofessional therapists. This simply means that they are provided with knowledge which is generally transmitted only to psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric social workers, psychiatric nurses, and others who serve as counselors. If I, as a psychotherapist, spend one hour a week doing psychotherapy with a child, I have in essence altered one hour of that child's experience. If, on the other hand, I spend one hour a week training a group of seven mothers who have an average of three children each, and who provide a somewhat different environment for those children four hours per day seven days a week (as parents so trained indicated they do); then I have translated my one hour of professional time into 7 parents x 3 children = 21 x 4 hours per day = 84 x 7 days per week = more than 500+ hours per week of difference in children's experience. If I provide these parents with a full-length book on childrearing which they read, research shows the amount of time required to get the same amount of change in parent attitudes, parent behaviors, and children behaviors is cut essentially by 50 percent.

Pediatricians and other consultants are discovering the value of bib-

liotherapy, that is, of giving parents something to read prior to consultation in an attempt to maximize the benefits of these short sessions.

Having a common set of concepts provided by the reading can provide a common ground which maximizes the benefit of any help parents may receive. In fact, if forced to choose between the most commonly offered form of mental health assistance (five to ten minutes of advice from a non-psychiatric physician and five to ten hours of reading), most parents and professionals would now choose bibliotherapy.

What is needed in this country is a plan. At the risk of sounding bureaucratic, I will say we need a program. We have an energy program, one with specific goals to be accomplished by 1985. It involves such objectives as (1) decreased dependence on foreign oil; (2) degasification of coal; and (3) development of more energy efficient units in housing, transportation, etc. I submit that a more crying need in our society is for a program of child development which focuses on families, and parents' ability to meet their children's basic psychological needs. This means we need⁴ a program whereby in 1985, ninety-five percent of the children in this country will be born to parents who both want them and who are capable of providing for their development. We need a program which clarifies where we must be in 1984, where we must be in 1983, and 1982 in order to achieve this goal.

Childrearing is not only an important Christian stewardship; it is an important issue related to national survival. I am asking you to join with me in this effort, the objective of which is to make sure that the children born in this country will have parents who both want them and who are capable of providing for their development. I ask you to join not only in an individual commitment but in a commitment which you will attempt to foster within your church, within your community, within our denomination, and within the nation as a whole.

Logan Wright is associate professor, department of pediatrics, University of Oklahoma Medical School, Norman, Oklahoma, and author of *Parent Power*.

ON THE ETHICS FRONT

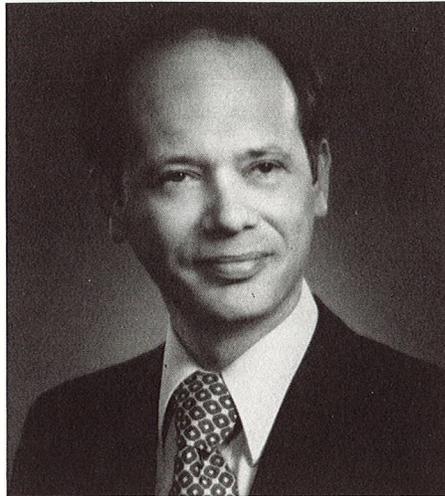
In more ways than one, Jerry Self is breaking new ground as the Tennessee Baptist Convention's consultant for the Public Affairs and Christian Life Committee.

Jerry is the Committee's first full-time professional. Before assuming the ethics position, Self had been in the pastorate all of his ministerial career.

Self has an added agenda to keep his work uniquely interesting. As he relates, "In Tennessee we particularly are bothered by confusion between the Tennessee Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Sunday School Board. The fact that all three have headquarters in Nashville has functional value but makes it difficult for the lay people in Tennessee to distinguish between us and what we do."

Self's job responsibilities to Tennessee Baptists include Christian citizenship emphases, church-state separation, family life, human relations, and alcohol and drug abuse. As Self puts it, "While I have training and experience in all of these areas my expertise falls in the area of marriage enrichment and family counseling, producing educational materials, involving others in the change process, and writing." Incidentally, Jerry and his wife Peggy are both provisionally certified as marriage enrichment counselors by the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment.

As are all state convention ethicists, Self is faced by particular moral concerns which demand his time and energy. "In Tennessee we are surrounded by gambling states and therefore we have a pe-



Jerry Self

rennial push for pari-mutual gambling. There is a tendency for Tennesseans to get weary and let down their guard on this important social issue," he explains.

A great bit of Self's job involves making sure Tennesseans are aware of such developments as the pari-mutual gambling issue, visiting the Tennessee legislature when it is in session, communicating Baptist concerns to Tennessee's "capitol hill," and relating important political developments to Tennessee Baptists by way of a column in the state paper, the *Baptist and Reflector*.

In defining his role and philosophy of applying Christianity, Self says: "I see myself as a catalyst and an interpreter. My role should be to feed the consciences of Baptists by educating them and prompting them to redemptive action. I see myself as helping people discover the prompting of the Holy Spirit within their lives."

A plainspoken type, Self minces no words as he expresses what he feels are some developments in the eighties that affect his work.

"The growth of the New Right bringing with it inappropriate church-politics arrangements and relationships will be a challenge for several years to come," he stressed. "The question of separation of church and state should get more and more attention for reasons other than the New Right's entrance into the political arena. Some church-state questions will deal with the proposition 13 mentality and the crunch of the economy.

"There appears to be a growing tendency on the part of those who are hurting to look around to find scapegoats for sacrifice. We are also in a national struggle with our values and image. This creates an ethical vacuum in which seven worse devils can enter," Self said.

A native of Wichita, Kansas, Self earned a B.A. from Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas and the B.D., Th.M., and Ph.D. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. Self's hobbies include photography, calligraphy, and playing with a home computer.

Like many denominational employees, Self has travel demands and requests for interim pastoral duties that take him out of his local church many Sundays. However, Self is actively committed to the local church and its ministry. He and his wife, Peggy, and children Jay Mark and Angela are active members at Immanuel Baptist Church, Nashville.



Christian Life Commission

Of The Southern Baptist Convention

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