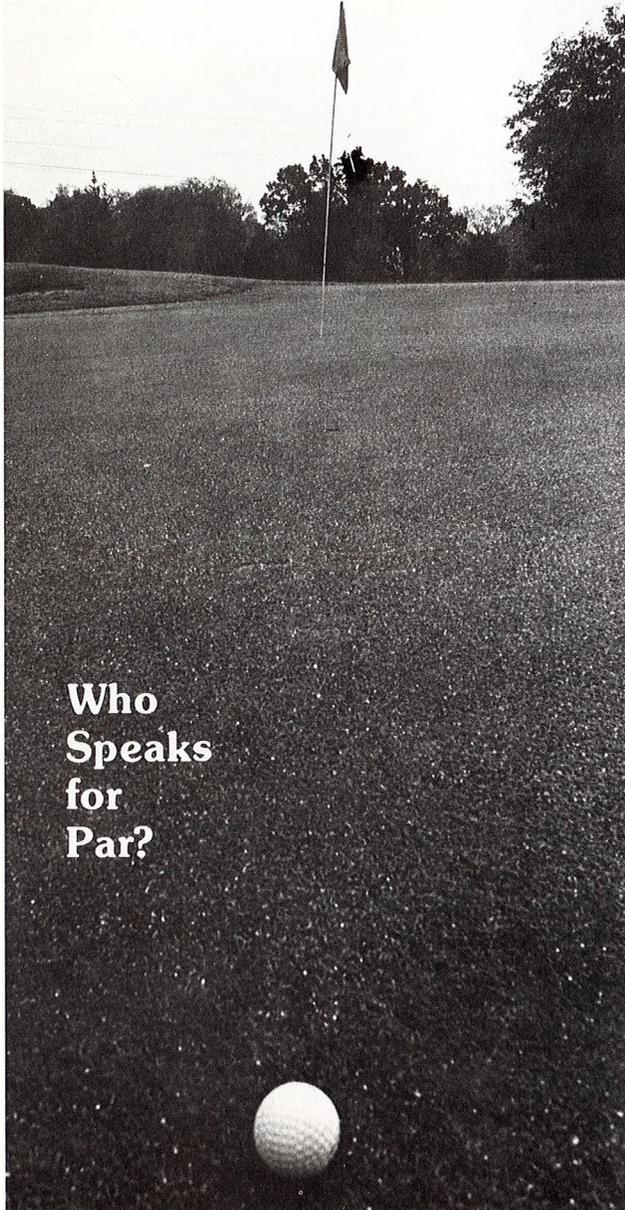


LIGHT

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

November 1981



Who Speaks for Par?

Inside LIGHT

Evangelism and Ethics

Daniel Vestal says that evangelism and ethics are both expressions of obedience to the Great Commission. In his article on evangelism and ethics he calls on Southern Baptists to unite their gifts and diversity for the common goals of Bold Mission Thrust.

Simple Lifestyle

The phrase "simple lifestyle" suffers from overuse and misuse. Not many can define it; fewer practice it. Often it is applied only to the economic sphere of life. W. David Sapp in "A Responsible, Simple, Christian Lifestyle" articulates well the position that lifestyle goes beyond economics. Your lifestyle is determined to a great degree by your *mindstyle*, he says.

Who Speaks for Par?

"Who Speaks for Par?"—C. Welton Gaddy does. In an engaging style, Gaddy elucidates not about your golf game but the necessity for ethical standards in belief and behavior. He calls for the need continually to emphasize foundational Christian concepts like commitment, integrity, and loyalty. And, finally, Gaddy asks penetratingly, *who* will take up the mantle to speak for and preserve par?

Church and Community

An "enduring problem," H. Richard Niebuhr called it in *Christ and Culture*, is how do we relate the gospel to the culture in which we find ourselves? More specifically, how do members of a local church express their concern for their community? A jointly written article provided by the staff of the Metropolitan Missions Department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, suggests some practical avenues for this concern.—WMT

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What Do You Know?

In the process of preparing for the Friday devotionals that we share every Friday with workers in the Southern Baptist Convention building in Nashville a few weeks ago, Dr. W. C. Fields threw out the challenge: What three things do you know? My first response was frivolous: (1) I know my good friend must be desperate for a program filler; (2) I know that Baptist meetings are a weariness to the flesh; and (3) I know that the harder I run the behinder I get.

More serious reflection on this challenge, however, has been intensely exciting to me. The three things I know are presented as testimony and not as teaching, as personal experience and not as universal expectation, and as rudimentary rather than revelatory.

What three things do I know?

I know that God is good.

I know that all things are working together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

I know that it is better to do good than to do evil, or to do nothing.

I know that God is good. He is not

against us but for us. He is kindly light. He is perfect love and justice. He is holy, characterized at the very core of his being by wholeness, integrity, righteousness, uprightness, morality. He is Prince of Peace. As Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit, God is the communicator and mediator of redemptive kindness and compassionate goodness. He has shown us his reconciling face in Jesus Christ. In spite of violence, racism, injustice, chauvinism, oppression, greed, privatized piety, and irrelevant religion, I know that God is good and that his goodness is laid hold of through personal repentance and personal faith.

I know that all things are working together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. While I have sometimes had personal and professional reasons to wonder whether Romans 8:28 may have been repealed, I have always come back to Job's magnificent affirmation (shouted out with eyes blazing and fists clinched or hoarsely whispered with eyes closed and hands limp, I don't know), "Though he slay

me, yet will I trust in him." My whole Christian experience throughout my entire Christian pilgrimage affirms the insight that our moral God has made this a moral universe, that "the stars in their courses" are always fighting against Sisera (Judges 5:20) and his forces of evil while the whole creation is moaning and travailing (Romans 8:22) in the direction of God's great love and purpose.

I know that it is better to do good than to do evil, or to do nothing. It is true that I am a Christian ethicist and that by temperament, disposition, heritage, calling, training, and daily work I live and breathe Christian ethics. Aside from all this, however, I know in my bones that it is better to do good than to do evil and that it is better to do good than to do nothing at all. Our good God requires us to do good. Salvation is deeply personal but never private. Religion relates to life, all of it.

Well, what do you know?

Joy Valentine

An Agenda for Evangelism and Ethics: Bold Mission Thrust

by Daniel Vestal

The mission of the church is reconciliation. It is our privilege and responsibility to participate with God in His reconciling mission to the world. In that grand passage from Ephesians the Apostle Paul states the ultimate goal of the Gospel: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him" (1:9-10).

In redemptive love God has purposed

to reconcile the world to Himself. Implicit in that purpose is a reconciliation between alienated people, and even a reconciliation between people and the natural world. In order to achieve His eternal purpose, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). Then in his sovereign will God purposed to use human instrumentality in the reconciling process for he "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18-19). The task of the church, then, is reconciliation. We are to proclaim reconciliation and we are to practice reconciliation. We cannot adequately do one

without the other.

Evangelism is proclaiming the Gospel of reconciliation. The proclamation has as its aim the glory of God and the good of man, and it is to be both personal and corporate. Ethics is applying the Gospel of reconciliation. The application also has as its aim the glory of God and the good of man, and it is to be both personal and social. Both proclamation and application are evidences of love to God and love to man. And they both are expressions of obedience to the Great

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A Responsible, Simple, Christian Lifestyle

by W. David Sapp

Let me begin with a confession: "lifestyle" is a term which makes me uncomfortable. It has not always been that way. When I first heard the term in the sixties, I was a college student and had just seen my very first hippie. The term excited me, for it reminded me of the vast, untapped richness the world had to offer. "Lifestyle" reminded me that not everyone lived like I did or like my family did. There were other ways to do it, and the thought of trying all those new possibilities was invigorating. There is still something about new possibilities which invigorates me, for I am at heart an adventurous soul, and I am convinced that most of us live our lives in unnecessary ruts.

"Lifestyle" Has Been Redefined

But the term "lifestyle" has changed in the last fifteen years, and now it has come to carry different connotations. In the sixties, I thought that lifestyle was a matter of personal preferences which may or may not involve questions of morality. Now, I nearly always hear it used as a moral term, and the users of the term most often seem to feel that my lifestyle must be just like theirs if I am to be considered moral. And so for the same reason that the term was freeing and exciting in the sixties, it is often oppressive now. Instead of opening possibilities for me, those who talk most about lifestyle seem to want to close possibilities for me.

Now, I do not advocate immoral or amoral lifestyles. But I believe we were on the right track earlier when we saw lifestyle as a matter which may or may not involve morality. And we were on the right track when we saw the lifestyle issue as one which opened, rather than closed, the possibility of human existence. There is law in the gospel, but the gospel is not law. The law sees lifestyle as a constraint; the gospel sees lifestyle as a possibility.

The point at which lifestyle becomes a

moral question is the point at which it becomes relational. When our lifestyle begins to affect our relationships with those around us, and with the world around us, then it becomes a moral question. And so not all lifestyles are acceptable to the Christian. The lifestyle which is destructive of one's neighbor or one's environment or one's self is a sub-Christian lifestyle. The lifestyle which does not take initiative toward building relationships with God and with others is also sub-Christian.

The point at which lifestyle is not a moral question is the point at which it is simply a description of our uniqueness. The special flavor of our individual personalities, the unique character of our relationships with spouse or friends or acquaintances, our special abilities, and even our weaknesses—these are part of the endless variations of the snowflake, the awe-inspiring artwork of the Holy Spirit done in collaboration with those of us he deigns to make his "co-laborers."

Lifestyle More Than Economics

I suspect my assigned topic was intended to be more specific than I have so far made it. For "lifestyle" today has come to be associated almost exclusively with the economic realm. Generally, the term "lifestyle" makes us expect a speech on how my over-consumption is starving the rest of the world. I chose not to begin there because I wanted to make a point: lifestyle is an issue with much broader import than just its economic implications. Indeed, if we start with economics, we will probably not be heard for we will be emphasizing the constraints we are calling for and not the opportunities we are offering.

What we are really talking about when we advocate lifestyle changes for ourselves and for others, is the quality of life. We are speaking to a world of busy people who are chasing the wind; people who are caught up in a whirlwind of activity, most of which is meaningless; people

who have few if any satisfying human relationships; people who are stung by divorce and loneliness and crime and war and emptiness and shallow friendships; people who have no time for each other; and people who are so consumed with getting things for themselves that they have no time just to be with themselves. And we are telling those people—and we are reminding ourselves—that life can have real quality. It can taste sweet and not bitter. It can be fulfilling and not draining; It can be rich and not tasteless. You see, Jesus really was serious. He *did* come to bring life, and to bring it abundantly.

More is Less

And what is the magic secret to this elusive quality of life? Well, what is the secret of quality in literature or architecture or music or art or even food? A great part of the secret is just this: simplicity. This is a case where more is less and less is more. Abundant life, ironically, may come where there are fewer of those things which choke it out. The truths which sustain and guide me in my life (surprisingly to me) have turned out to be the simple truths which deepen as I learn more about them. The virtues which enable the world to retain some sort of limited sanity are the simple virtues: honesty, justice, peace, kindness, generosity, love.

And that is what we are after in the economic realm, too. We are after un-complicating people's lives so that they can really experience life as God intended it. People take risks all the time to make money. Christians are urging them to take the risk of simplicity in order to make a life.

Several years ago I spoke on world hunger to a very thoughtful audience. I urged my hearers to live more simply in deference to the great human suffering and starvation in our world. During the question and answer period after my talk

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I was challenged by a man who was insistent that his lifestyle sacrifices would make no appreciable or lasting difference for the hungry of the world. In his view, he had might as well enjoy all he could get his hands on since he could not find an effective way to share it with others anyway. His attitude raises a number of important concerns.

First, it raises the concern that we really cannot deliver an uneaten hamburger to Bangladesh or Upper Volta. That is part of the structural evil of this world. Why can we not get food to the hungry? Only because there are man-made barriers which prevent us. But all man-made barriers will yield to love if the onslaught is strong enough.

Second, it raises the question of whether or not we really can help the less fortunate by our sacrifices. The answer is, obviously, that there is not enough food for everyone to eat as Americans do, but there is enough food for everyone to stay alive if it is shared equitably. And it can never be shared equitably as long as some of us take more than our share. But most importantly, the gentleman's complaint about my remarks raises the question of why it is that we cannot understand that simplicity is not just for the benefit of others, but also for the good of ourselves? We need to simplify our lives, not just to feed the hungry mouths on the other side of the ocean, but to feed the hungry souls within us. There is enough in the Bible about the need to rid ourselves of the tyranny of the material to keep us busy for a long time even if we never get far enough to understand the impact of our own gluttony on the rest of the world community.

Living Cluttered Lives

Most of us live cluttered lives. I have been living an especially cluttered life of late. My family and I have moved from Nashville to Atlanta where, amidst a sea of boxes and two crying toddlers we have undertaken the pastorate of a typical, hyperactive, backbreaking Baptist church. Life is cluttered in every way imaginable right now. The house is physically cluttered. Our schedule is impossi-

bly cluttered. Our relationships with the government are all of a sudden cluttered by a move from one state to another; and our minds are cluttered, too, but that is nothing unusual.

That marvelous Quaker, Elton Trueblood, wrote about the complicated "clutteredness" of our lives in a recent issue of *Missions, U.S.A.* We ought to have more time in modern society rather than less, said Trueblood, because we have invented and acquired so many time-saving and labor-saving devices. But instead we seem to have less time. Henry David Thoreau was on to this phenomenon over a hundred years ago. It took an hour by train in his time to get to a neighboring town. It took all day to walk. But Thoreau reasoned that walking was faster since you had to work a whole day to earn the train fare before you could ever board the train. Labor-saving devices really do work like that—they do not often seem to give us more of whatever it is we are trying to save. Where are all the people who were supposed to have been put out of work by computers? They are working on computers! Trueblood, in his article, pointed out, "The problem is not a matter of mechanics or of externals, but of philosophy. We shall be helped, not by mechanical devices, but only by a clear decision to live more simply." Only in this way can we really live the good life. Only in this way can we ever have time really to listen to a friend, to read all the great books we have intended to read for so long, to appreciate beauty, to experience Beethoven, to meditate, to pray, to really read the Bible. We must decide to unclutter ourselves. It will not happen automatically.

A Simple Lifestyle is Not Enough

Simple lifestyles, however, are not enough. One can live simply and irresponsibly. The limit on lifestyle choices for Christians is the limit of responsible behavior. The trouble with at least some of the "free lifestyle" advocates of the sixties is that their lives were lived irresponsibly. The limit on lifestyle choices for Christians is the limit of responsible behavior. The trouble with at least some of the "free lifestyle" advocates of the sixties is that their lives were lived irrespon-

sibly. Championing peace, racial harmony, and economic simplicity, many abandoned their parents, betrayed their friends, destroyed their lives with drugs, and undermined the meaning of their own sexuality by living with members of the opposite sex with whom they had no intimacy and to whom they made no commitments. Many of us live different versions of an irresponsible lifestyle. We are "consumaholics," who have no regard for others or for the environment. We are workaholics who have no regard for our families. We are pursuers of an impossible dream which we chase at the expense of self-development and often with the cost of self-destruction. To live a responsible lifestyle is to live, as we have already said, in a way that nurtures relationships with God, others, self, and environment.

If our *lifestyles* are simple and responsible, then, do they need anything else to be *Christian*? Is there anything special about a Christian lifestyle, or can others live as righteously as we without wearing our label of faith? The uniqueness of the Christian lifestyle is just this: Its motivation and purpose are God. He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of Christian living. Others can live morally, even sacrificially, out of motivation known but to them. What is special about Christians is that they live righteously out of the motivation of the cross and out of dedication to a loving Lord. Christians live righteously in hope of the coming kingdom with eyes fixed on the horizons of faith. There is one word which describes any really Christian lifestyle. The word is love. The deed is love. Many styles. Many lives. Many flavors. One Lord. One faith. One love. One world which waits on a few who are willing to live a responsible, Christian lifestyle. One world which waits on a few who live like our Lord, the man for others.

This article was adapted from an address given by W. David Sapp, pastor of First Baptist Church, Chamblee, Georgia, at the South Carolina Christian Life Conference, Columbia, South Carolina, July 21, 1981.

Who Speaks for Par?

by C. Welton Gaddy

Ernest Campbell told the story. This former preacher at Riverside Church in New York City used to play golf regularly with a friend.

Evidently neither of them was very good. Both were duffers. While some people make up for a bad shot by taking a "mulligan" on the first hole—a second shot with no penalty—Campbell confessed that he and his partner took mulligans on the first nine holes. As you would expect, a great deal of time lapsed between each tee and the next green. Once on the green, however, an interesting ritual would occur.

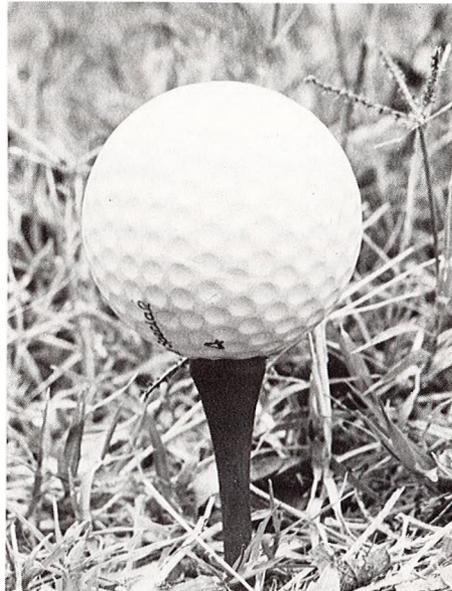
Non-golfers need to know that a "gimme" is the term used to describe a ball lying so close to the hole that all assume the player can hit it in. When a shot is called a "gimme," it does not have to be hit.

With Campbell's ball lying about 16 feet from the cup and his friend's ball about 14 feet from the cup, Campbell would back off, take a hard look, and say to his buddy, "I believe that's a gimme." Of course, the friend would not hit, but just pick up the ball. It is awfully embarrassing to go ahead and hit a gimme and then miss it. Then out of kindness this fellow golfer would look over to Campbell and say, "Ernie, I believe yours is a gimme, too."

You can just imagine these two golfers making their merry way around the course hitting mulligans and picking up gimmes. The very thought of it brings a chuckle. Just after telling this story, however, Campbell wiped away any smile caused by it with a piercing question, "But, who speaks for par?" If everything is a gimme, who speaks for par? How do you play without losing all sense of regulation and norm? What is par?

Of course, my fascination with this question goes far beyond the game of golf. The issue at hand gets right to the heart of real religion. Consider the question as it relates both to belief and to behavior.

What about belief? I hear a lot of discussions regarding belief. Is one religious idea just as good as another? Some say that sincerity is all that really matters—"It doesn't really matter what you believe.



As long as you are sincere, you are all-right." Is that true? A few people boast about disregarding the matter entirely. "I don't know anything about all of that doctrinal stuff. I just believe what I believe and that's enough." Is it? Can I give you your beliefs, whatever they are, and you give me mine? If so, who speaks for par?

If fundamentalist theology has erred in a narrow dogmatism which debates creedal propositions and splits doctrinal hairs, liberal theology has erred in another direction. A dangerous tendency of recent years has been to respond to every assertion with "whatever you think." Thus, God has grown to look very much like he was created in our image and doctrine has come to sound very much like self-rationalization. Just as closed-mindedness which misses new truth is wrong, open-mindedness which knows no conviction is wrong. Sooner or later we must be able to say, "I believe this. I will stake my life on it." That kind of conviction is informed and nurtured by revealed truth.

As long as any belief is acceptable and every idea considered worthy of affirmation, the question must be raised, "Who speaks for par?"

What about behavior? Apply the par principle to this area of concern. Thankfully in recent years we have recognized the massive complexity which is a part of moral decision-making. Labeling

"rights" and "wrongs" is not as easy as some have thought. Yet a recognition of complexity should not negate a devotion to morality. There are "rights" and "wrongs" though at times they may be difficult to determine.

Again, if fundamentalist theologians erred in reducing morality to a binding law, liberal theologians erred in equating morality with self will. Much of the language of contemporary morality is "pop" and "in." You have heard it. "It's your life, do with it as you will. What is right is what is self-fulfilling. I've got to be me. There is nothing wrong with doing what makes you feel good." Such litanies of relative morality seem to go on endlessly. I can give you your sins and you can give me mine. Explanations can sound reasonable. But, who speaks for par?

Overreactions to a superficial, hurtful guilt have sought to eradicate all guilt—even a redemptive, beneficial guilt. If guilt is gone, then, who speaks for par? We simply cannot affirm everything and feel good about all behavior. Some actions ought to precipitate guilt because they necessitate confession and require forgiveness.

You see, the underlying issue at stake here is substance. Does the gospel have substance or does it not? If the answer is "no," then it matters little what a person believes or how a person behaves. There is no par. However, if the answer is "yes," then it matters a great deal what a person believes and how a person behaves.

I remember the first time I really pondered the "dark side" of the gospel. Frank Stagg made me do it. I had always assumed that the gospel is "good news" and that "good news" for one was "good news" for all. Certainly for those who accept the gospel and follow the Christ to whom it points, the gospel is good news. However, rejection of the gospel inevitably calls forth judgment—bad news. Failure to follow Christ as Lord creates a bad situation.

The gospel is both gift and demand. The indicative—"the Kingdom of God is

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at hand”—is followed swiftly by an imperative—“repent and believe the gospel.” So it goes throughout the gospel message. We are told of God’s love for us and then commanded to love each other. An emphasis on either one without the other—gift without demand or demand without gift—creates a distortion of the gospel. Both celebration and obedience are in order.

Please recognize that this matter of substance is crucial. If you start without it on your spiritual pilgrimage, no matter how far you go you will not have anything at the end of the journey. Fifty times zero is zero. Regardless of how you package it, promote it, and sell it, without substance you have nothing. That is a real problem with much popular religion. It looks good and sounds good and makes people feel good, but there is not much to it. What sells may not be the same as what saves. I doubt if Jesus’ teaching would really fare very well in the Nielson ratings!

If there is no substance to belief and behavior, there is no par. Everything is a gimme. Do what you will. Believe what you will. Take what you want. Leave the rest. If you think that is ridiculous on the golf course, try to conceive of what such a mentality ultimately does to the content of Christianity.

More and more I am convinced that some big words representing some major concepts need to be respoken, underlined, explained again, and heeded. Maybe many people do not know what par is. Perhaps that is why everything seems to be a gimme.

Please ponder some of the words I have in mind:

Commitment. To what, if anything, will most people today make an unequivocal commitment—to another person, to a job, or to a marriage? To what or whom will you make such a commitment? Of course, commitment is essential within Christianity. Apart from commitment there is no possibility for spiritual regeneration, meaningful personhood, or durable institutions. Quite honestly, I fear that we could be losing the capacity to give of ourselves in the only

way which is acceptable to Christ, beneficial to personhood, and helpful to institutions.

Making a commitment is not like formulating a deal or signing a contract. Deals fail. Contracts can be broken. Commitments last. Reread the Old Testament’s teaching about the nature of a covenant and you will be close to the New Testament’s idea of commitment. Genuine commitments are for all times and all situations. You cannot hedge on them, change your mind about them, or compromise them and still call them commitments.

Jesus would allow no gimmes in this matter of commitment. Getting close was not enough. He demanded everything—total, unconditional commitment—and he would accept nothing less.

Integrity. I still like the old story about General Dean’s communique before facing a firing squad. This brave prisoner of war was given the privilege of writing just one note before walking to his death. To whom would you write and what would you say in such a situation? He wrote his only son Bill. His words made up only one sentence—“Tell Bill the word is integrity.”

Integrity is still the word. Without it life comes apart. With it life has honor as well as order.

How fares integrity today? How good is a person’s word? Can honesty be bought and sold at the price of a promotion, a bonus, or a forfeiture of responsibility? What is the difference between a small lie about a big issue and a big lie about a small issue? How far from the truth can we stray and still be truthful? Who speaks for par?

Robert Bolt had Sir Thomas More state the truth succinctly in *A Man For All Seasons*. “When a man takes an oath . . . he’s holding his own self in his own hands like water. And if he opens his fingers *then*—he needn’t hope to find himself again.” The word is integrity.

Membership. To be a member of a fellowship is to benefit from the blessings and to accept the responsibilities of that fellowship. More is involved than merely joining a group or identifying with a body. Long-term participation and support are at stake.

Particularly is this matter of member-

ship important in relationship to the church. How irregular in attendance can you be, how nonsupportive can you be, and still be a member? Is the norm of membership nominal participation? What is par? Who speaks for par? Those questions take on even greater significance when the church is seen as “the body of Christ” and each member a part of that body.

Some persons may very well ask, “Who are you to say these things? What makes you think you are worthy to speak for par?” These are good questions. Allow me to assure you of my unworthiness in this regard and of my need to be confronted by the same word which I share with you. The issue is not my character or worth, but God’s expectations of all of us. God sets par and speaks for par. At the same time, he expects his people to speak for par as well as to respect it and to attempt by his grace to achieve it.

An old story from Rabbi Heschel provides an excellent illustration for what it means to preserve par. In a certain kingdom, the grain crop was poisoned. As a result, anyone who ate the grain went insane. Other sources of food in that land were insufficient to feed all of the people. No choice existed. People would have to eat the poisoned grain. Finally, the king of that kingdom made the conclusion official. He decreed the people should go on and partake of the only food available but with one major provision. A few people must be singled out and fed a different diet so there would always be some persons in the kingdom who remembered that the others were insane. The wise king wanted no confusion between abnormality and normality. He acted to preserve par. He spoke for par.

The church, like society, needs constant reminders of a better way, a more excellent life, a life of commitment to Christian discipleship in which integrity is a personal trait and faithful membership in the church is a basic characteristic. We can’t afford to settle for less and confuse it with Christianity. Someone must speak for par. Who will do it? Who speaks for par?

This article was adapted from a sermon delivered by Dr. Gaddy at Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, where he is pastor.

Equipping the Church for Community Evangelism and Ministry

by George Bullard, Don Hammer and Jere Allen

A local church and its community are inseparable. This has always been true, but has always been debated. The debate is not so much over whether they should be related, but rather over ways they can be related.

Church, as used here, refers to the local congregation of believers. Community refers first to the geographical area around a church building known as the church neighborhood or the primary ministry area. Second, it refers to a non-geographical slice of society which a church may define as its community of concern, or target group. In either case, ministry always takes place in a setting or a community.

How are Church and Community Interrelated?

In their book *The Management of Ministry*,¹ James Anderson and Ezra Earl Jones have given us some important concepts concerning the interrelation between church and community. For them the ministry of the church may be divided into four component parts which have a relationship to one another. Illustrated here is the integral role which the community plays in the ministry framework of the local church. It is not an afterthought or an appendage. Anderson and Jones see the church as the arena in which people are related to God and prepared to enable other people in the community to be related to God.

As a church plans its community ministry effects it should focus first on the members of the congregation and second on the people, processes and structures of society which those members touch.

Involvement of churches in a clearly defined community is becoming increasingly difficult as society is undergoing a movement from an emphasis upon community to an emphasis upon mass

society. Modern interstate highways illustrate the manner in which our society has moved from communities where people lived out all aspects of their lives with the same people, to mass society where life's activities are conducted over a widely scattered region, usually with different groups of people.²

One result of this shift is that many parts of life are no longer within the church's influence. Contemporary lifestyles have effectively placed a gap between church as an institution, and the remainder of life. "Persons massed together are forced to live segmented, fragmented lives and experience alienation. Even at the point of residence, most people are no longer neighbors or members of a community."³

This movement from community to mass society has several implications for a church concerned for its community. First, an increasing number of churches will need to adopt a community concept which is non-geographical in nature. Second, as churches move away from geographical communities their new communities will be less visible, more difficult to define, and changing constantly.

Third, the very churches which ought

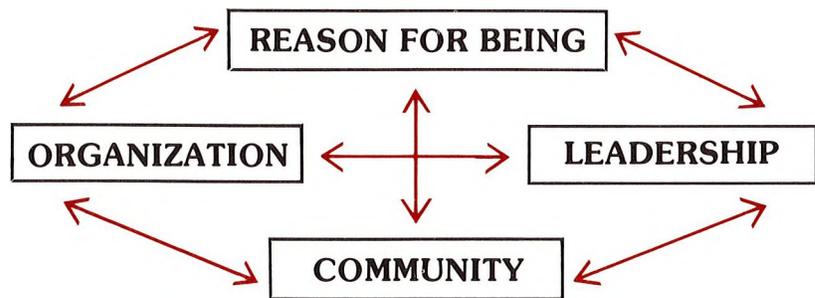
to maintain a strong geographical community concept because of their location in a community of great need will choose a non-geographical target group without including a strategy which will guarantee that someone addresses the spiritual and social needs of their former geographical community.

Fourth, a strategy unit outside the church, probably the local association, will need to assist community planning by pointing out the geographical areas and the target groups which are not being adequately addressed by the ministry of a sufficient number of churches.

A Historical Perspective

At the local church level the ministry and concern of the church for its community has taken various forms throughout history. The four forms which follow are all present today, and all valid in certain situations. The form chosen by a local church may depend upon the stage of interrelation at which the church and community find themselves. The form may also be determined by the socio-economic and cultural gap between the church and the community. A specific church may be open to one form

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of interrelation, and its community to another. If an ideal exists it is probably the fourth form.

Detached Ministry

First of all, churches have ministered to their communities from a stance of detachment. This detachment may be represented by several programs. The goodwill or mission center approach to community ministry is an institutional form of detachment. Modeling the social settlement houses of the nineteenth century, these centers seek to provide for primarily low income target groups the life-support systems and spiritual guidance which existing churches are unable or unwilling to provide. Preaching stations or new churches are a representation of detachment, as are associational, state convention, or Home Mission Board projects engaged in for churches when churches are unable or unwilling to do them.

Non-Institutional Ministry

Second, churches minister to the community by going out to the community with various ministry programs which are non-institutional in nature; or, by periodically involving themselves in the programs of an institutional ministry but taking no primary responsibility for the ministry of that institution. In recent Baptist history this might be represented by the Big A Club, Backyard Bible Club, or Mission Vacation Bible School approach. Inherent in this form is the concept of the church performing what is perceived to be a needed function for the community.

Church-Based Ministry

Third, churches minister to their community by bringing portions of the community to the church. Church-based community ministry programs have included social ministries and evangelism cultivation activities. The most important idea concerning this form is that it may say more about the church's openness to the community than about the community's openness to the church. Inviting the community into the church is a big step for many churches, but does not

necessarily signal full concern for the community.

Interrelating Church and Community

Fourth, churches may interrelate church and community to the point that there exists no dichotomy between the two. The church itself becomes that needed mission center. The church feels comfortable with the community, and the community feels comfortable with the church. When the church goes out into the community to minister it feels that it is among its family of fellowship. When the community comes into the church it is as though it is natural for the community people to be present. The church and community share and touch not only at points of ministry, but also at points of church membership and spiritual experience. This form is the ultimate marriage of evangelism and social action in a local church's genuine concern for its community.

Issues for Church Concern

Any aspect of a community which "causes man to be less than God made

him to be, any condition which robs man of health, dignity, and well-being, any situation which prevents a person from developing to the fullest of his God-given potential—these are legitimate concerns for Christian action."⁴

Reflecting upon this reality, the issues of a church's concern for its community include, but are not limited to, race relations, crime, poverty, the elderly, family, and non-Christians. These issues, however, are manifested in new forms such as "regentrification and reinvestment displacement" (pushing the urban underclass out of their homes to make room for the urban middle class); the influx of illegal aliens and large numbers of Asian and Latin American refugees; the movement of blacks and Hispanics to the suburbs; community-based treatment programs and halfway houses for both the convicted criminal and for the recovering mental patient; a diversity of adult living arrangements outside of marriage; the effects of Reaganomics on the poor, elderly and middle class; and the unique issues of the unchurched, particularly those who are unchurched by choice.



Resources for Strategy Development

The resources available for church and community issues are numerous. Most of the following resources are ones used by the Associational Missions Division of the Home Mission Board as associations and their churches are assisted in responding with ministry and evangelism to human and spiritual needs.

The Association Mission Division assists associations in planning systemically for their future through a process of Associational Strategy Planning. This planning aids associations in making decisions regarding priorities and directions. Five study guides are available from the Home Mission Board to assist in gathering data for planning. These study guides cover the churches, the association, population demographics, social systems, and other religious groups. In addition to this printed material associations can request a consultant to help guide them through the process.

Where Associational Strategy Planning highlights mission and ministry concerns the Associational Missions Committee becomes a vital group. These mission and ministry concerns include the issues of a church concerned for its community and are coordinated by the Associational Missions Committee. It will be this committee following up on the associational planning which will point out to churches the geographical areas and target groups where ministry does not exist. A companion group to the missions committee is the Associational Evangelism Committee. A manual is available from the Home Mission Board for working with both of these committees, and training can be provided.

The next group which plays a vital role in planning is the Church Missions Committee. The Missions Committee is most important because it is the local church which should respond to all ministry and evangelism concerns. It is hoped that members of the Church Missions Committee can see themselves linked together in a common effort with associational strategies, and that they will seek to respond to a portion of the overall strategy in addition to developing their own customized strategy. A manual and training for this committee is available from the Board.



In addition to the above resources the Metropolitan Missions Department has three specific programs which address issues of church and community concern. First, many times in addressing issues new insights, awareness, and training are needed. The response to this need is a training network known as the Urban Training Cooperative. This network provides twenty to thirty training events each year on specific topics requested by associational and state leadership.

Second, is the PACT program (Project: Assistance for Churches in Transitional Communities). Research reveals there are more than 2,900 Southern Baptist churches in metropolitan areas which are in significantly changing communities. PACT provides printed process materials and a consultant to churches who wish to discover how they can respond to their geographical community, know some available target groups which they have the resources to respond to, or know how their current membership would respond to the various opportunities available to them. The manual released in July, 1981 to assist this process is entitled, *Shaping A Future*

for the Church in the Changing Community.

Third, is a program targeting people in multifamily housing. A full-time consultant in this area has recently developed a resource packet entitled, "Opening Doors to Multifamily Housing Ministry." He is available for training conferences and ministry consultation throughout the nation.

Finally, the Metropolitan Mission Department sees itself in teamship with a holistic response to the church concerned for its community. Therefore, for a church to address adequately its community it must be moving toward an evangelism stance. One significant aid in this area is the seminar, "Growing An Evangelistic Church," offered by the Evangelism Section of the Home Mission Board. With some urban context to the training, and a holistic approach to church ministry, this is an important resource.⁵

FOOTNOTES

¹ James D. Anderson and Ezra Earl Jones, *The Management of Ministry* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

² Douglas A. Walrath, "Social Change and Local Churches: 1951-1975," in Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen, *Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), pp. 249-250.

³ Walrath, p. 250.

⁴ William M. Pinson, Jr., "Issues and Priorities," in George A. Torney, *Toward Creative Urban Strategy* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1970), p. 50.

⁵ The resources mentioned in this section may be ordered from Orders Processing, Home Mission Board, S.B.C., 1350 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30367.

Jere Allen and George Bullard are associates in the Metropolitan Missions Department of the Home Mission Board, SBC. Don Hammer is department director.

. . . Evangelism and Ethics

(continued from page 2)

Commission: "Make disciples, baptize, and teach."

Interface

What is the interface between evangelism and ethics? Some have argued that ethics is pre-evangelism (i.e., the application of the Gospel precedes the proclamation of the Gospel and prepares people for it). Others have argued that evangelism is pre-ethics (i.e., the application of the Gospel is the result of the proclamation of the Gospel and automatically follows its acceptance). Still others have argued that ethics is evangelism or evangelism is ethics (i.e., the application of the proclamation of the Gospel are one and the same).

If we see the mission of the church in terms of reconciliation we will not feel a compelling need to define the interface too exactly. Evangelism and ethics need not be compartmentalized so neatly. Truth is a whole even though it may appear paradoxical. Is God sovereign or is man responsible? Both. Is salvation personal or social? The Bible teaches that it is both. When someone asks me, "Are you an evangelism man or an ethics man," my answer is, "I am both."

Evangelism and ethics cannot be polarized, for both are rooted in the nature of the Gospel of reconciliation. Salvation cannot be separated from discipleship. Conversion cannot be separated from character. Faith cannot be separated from works. Therefore the evangelistic task must never be separated from the ethical task. Both are necessary if we are to cooperate with God in his reconciling mission to the world.

The application of the Gospel gives credibility to the proclamation of the Gospel. When we proclaim that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, we are not very believable if we stand idly by in the face of injustices or show no compassion for the most basic needs of people. Our message may be believable, but we are not believable. Also the proclamation of the Gospel gives explanation and definition to our application of the Gospel. When we act in justice and

mercy we do so from a different perspective than the secularist. The root and reference of our action is the Kingdom of God, and we act so as to express that Kingdom and extend that Kingdom.

A Baptist Agenda

Baptists have had a tendency in the past to divide into groups where we then "shout at each other across seas of misunderstanding." In the recent past Baptists have polarized over eschatology, charismatic gifts, and the nature of Scripture. There are some in our denomination who would divide us into groups over the mission of the church. Some seem to see it only in terms of evangelism while others seem to see it only in terms of ethics.

But if the mission of the church is seen in terms of reconciliation, then the evangelistic task and the ethical task are inextricably bound together. The ministry of the church is to be an extension of the ministry of Jesus. As he was in the world, so are we to be. We not only follow him as our pattern, but we continue what he began. And just as one cannot separate the words of Jesus from the deeds of Jesus or his person from his work, so one cannot separate the proclamation from the application of reconciliation.

Now is the time in Baptist life when those who believe in the evangelistic task and those who believe in the ethical task to adopt a joint agenda. I would like to suggest that Bold Mission Thrust offers that agenda. The goal of Bold Mission Thrust is to confront every person in the world with the Gospel by the year 2,000. It is an ambitious goal that will not only require mobilization of our resources but will require a serious evaluation of who we are as Christians and the way we as Baptists "do church life."

Because Bold Mission Thrust has a global perspective it challenges our provincialism and narrow nationalism. Because Bold Mission Thrust aims at confronting every culture and language with the Gospel, it judges our racial attitudes and sensitivity to human rights. Because Bold Mission Thrust calls for radical new

commitment to mission support it questions our spending habits and economic life styles. Because Bold Mission Thrust is asking for lay involvement in world missions it calls into question family life and the meaning of vocation. Because Bold Mission Thrust will require massive prayer support it forces us to deeper understanding of personal integrity and purity of character.

Bold Mission Thrust provides a remarkable opportunity for those whose gifts and calling are in evangelism and those whose gifts and calling are in ethics to pray for one another and support one another in a common commitment to the ministry of reconciliation. The problem of world hunger is related to the establishment of churches. The development of third world countries is related to the discipling of the nations. World peace is related to the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. The practice of reconciliation and the proclamation of reconciliation cannot be separated.

Perhaps Bold Mission Thrust will be nothing more than a nice phrase or empty slogan. Perhaps it will be nothing more than a denominational ploy to create activity. But perhaps—just perhaps—Bold Mission Thrust will provide the challenge for a people called Baptists to unite their gifts and diversity for a common goal. Perhaps it will transcend our personal agendas, political ambitions, and polarization. Perhaps it will create new trust and respect for one another. Perhaps it will be a catalyst that thrusts us to the day when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

May God grant it.

Dr. Daniel Vestal, the son of a full-time evangelist, is pastor of the First Baptist Church in Midland, Texas, the church that leads all the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention in gifts through the Cooperative Program. He holds the Doctor of Theology degree from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Fancy Footwork

by Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr.

It's strange how we forget the events of hundreds of days in our childhood and youth-hood, yet one day, even a few moments of one day, will stand out in our memory. Such moments, for many of us, are more than just past, but are in reality always present, for those events which seemed at the time to be of slight importance, appear in retrospect to be pivotal, life-changing.

Such a moment happened to me one wet mid-winter afternoon in south Mississippi as my best friend and I left the high school gym after a basketball game. Most of the cars in the parking lot were gone, but as we walked toward my friend's car we discovered that it was circled like a wagon train by four or five cars. On the hood of each car sat some of the local "toughs"—guys we had known but had not run around with. They wanted, we discovered, to fight—all of them against us, it seemed. We must have done some smooth talking, for as I remember we did drive away without a major battle, and I'm grateful to this day that we did.

Those few moments have stood out in my mind because I learned something that day that made me grow up in large measure. It was something that I have had to re-learn from time to time, but that particular learning of it stands out in my memory.

What struck me harder than the fist of one of those "toughs" could have, was that no matter how good a fellow I was, I still had enemies—people who

genuinely wanted to hurt me for reasons beyond my imagination. After all, I had for the most part done what my parents and church and school wanted me to do. I had followed the "script" written by my community. I was, in short, successful. I was not unlike the young man David, who, in another era, received the acclaim of the crowds.

Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his ten thousands.
(I Samuel 18:7)

I had slain my twentieth century equivalent, of course, and whatever I did seemed to draw more acclaim.

What struck me so hard was not the anger in the eyes of those toughs, but what to me was the unreasonableness of it all. I felt betrayed by my society, as though their end of the contract had been broken. "Do this, this, and this," I believed, "and not only acclaim will come your way but also immense popularity." Now the contract, I thought, was shattered.

I learned that day what young David learned the moment he did some fancy footwork to dodge that spear thrust at

him by King Saul. Whenever you take stands for what you believe is right, honest, and good—in short, what you believe is the will of God—someone will show up to try to pin you to the wall with a modern version of Saul's spear.

Churches, especially, are full of that "evil spirit" that "rushed upon Saul" (I Samuel 18:10), and the raving of old Saul is still heard by many a pastor. Just as "Saul was David's enemy continually" (I Samuel 18:29), the pastor of a church will have enemies continually.

When Jesus told his disciples to "be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:15), maybe he had pastors in the back of his mind. To keep from being pinned to the wall, church leaders must not only have good theology, but must also be adept at David's fancy footwork and possess the wisdom and innocence of our Lord.

McKibbens is pastor of First Baptist Church, Bristol, Virginia.



Ethics Materials Updated

The Christian Life Commission has just completed a major updating of their applied Christianity literature and products. A new "Critical Issues" pamphlet series has been added as well as new video tapes and audio cassette tape libraries on "Strengthening Families" and "Applying the Gospel."

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ON THE ETHICS FRONT

Bob Parker Serves Arkansas Baptists

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” That portion of Matthew 25:40 is a one sentence statement of Bob Parker’s philosophy of applied Christianity.

Parker has had ample opportunity to flesh out that philosophy in the last several years. Before beginning his work as director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention’s Christian Life Council, he served four years as the executive secretary treasurer of Florida’s United Christian Action. That agency is supported primarily, but not wholly, by Florida Baptists.

As Director of the Christian Life Council, Parker coordinates preventative education programs for Arkansas Baptists particularly in the area of alcohol and other drugs, pornography/obscenity, and gambling.

He also gives heavy emphasis to Christian citizenship concerns as he works with the Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

As one of his duties in promoting responsible Christian citizenship, Bob Parker serves as a liaison between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and the Arkansas Christian Civic Foundation. The Christian Civic Foundation, an independent, interfaith agency, is charged with working with state and federal agencies where public policy affects social issues.

A native of Morrilton, Arkansas, Parker earned his BA from Ouachita Baptist College (now Ouachita Baptist University) in 1948. Going on to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary he obtained his BD (1950) and ThM (1951) degrees.

Fresh out of Morrilton High School, Bob served three years active duty through the United States Navy Reserve in World War II. He continued his involvement in the Reserve until 1971. Twenty-one of those years he was a reserve chaplain. Presently he is in the re-



Bob Parker

tired reserve, USNR.

Denominational service marks Bob Parker’s career. He served three years on the Annuity Board, SBC; six years on the Stewardship Commission, SBC; and nine years on Ouachita Baptist University Board of Trustees. Also, he has been on the Executive Committee of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention as well as the Arkansas Baptist Student Union Advisory Committee. While in Florida, Bob served on the Jacksonville Baptist Association Campus Ministries Committee and the association’s Public Affairs Committee.

Arkansas pastors find empathy in Bob Parker. “From personal experience of approximately twenty-seven years in the pastoral ministry I know how ‘tough’ such work is when one’s best is put into it,” he reflects. Those years were spent in student pastorates in Kentucky; First Baptist Church, Decatur, Arkansas; Baring Cross Baptist Church, North Little Rock, Arkansas; Calvary Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Arkansas; Cullendale First Baptist Church, Camden, Arkansas; and First Baptist Church, Batesville, Arkansas.

Bob and his wife, Thelma, have five children: Robert, David, Kathryn, Suzanne, and Ellis.

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