

recommendations emerged:

1. *See that Leon's books are translated into English.* He has written three books dealing with the subject, thus making an important contribution which should be available to a wider segment of the evangelical world. Partly as a result of the participants' encouragement in this regard, Dr. Leon has taken some preliminary steps to publish his works in the United States.

2. *Discourage all methods of evangelism which violate the message of the Gospel.* These would include, among others, the sadistic stimulation of neurotic guilt and brainwashing methods mentioned above.

3. *Promote training programs for pastors and evangelists, which seek to unify theology and counseling.* Theology is needed for the understanding of God's purpose and message. The principles of counseling are necessary for the sensitive and effective communication of this message to man in his real condition.

4. *Pastoral counseling should be considered as a matter of concern in evangelism.* One participant quoted from Eric Berne the fact that in the United States more than 70 percent of those who seek counseling, consult a pastor or priest. This exemplifies the responsibility which Christian workers have in the area of helping troubled people.

Conclusion

The Gospel and its cause can be enhanced or discredited accordingly as it is proclaimed with integrity or for the satisfaction of an unhealthy or selfish need. Our hearers will be healed or harmed by the announcing of the Gospel compassionately or self-seekingly. Therefore we urge that the points contained in this paper, which identify some distinctions between a wholesome evangelism and a sick parody of our redemptive message, be made known on a wide basis so that all who are concerned with the task of evangelism can benefit by them.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS IN RELATION TO RACISM, POVERTY, WAR, AND OTHER PROBLEMS

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This essay is "to evaluate current personal and social ethics in hindering and furthering the proclamation of the Gospel; to show the implications of the Gospel for contemporary social ethics including sex (marriage, divorce, promiscuity, pornography), wealth (capital, property, profit, poverty), race (racism, casteism), political power (bribery and corruption), and war."

Within the imposed space limits we can do little more than project a brief exposition and evaluation of current moral theory and practice in relation to the Gospel, and a similarly brief discussion of the Gospel's implications for five central issues which the assignment subdivides into thirteen specific concerns. It seems best, therefore, simply to offer summary statements suitable for consideration and expansion in group discussion.

1. Introduction

a. Civilization is not merely a product of human aspiration, nor solely a by-product of the Gospel; it springs, rather, from God-given gifts of creation and reflects God's creation-mandate that man subdue the world to the ethical and spiritual purposes of the Creator.

b. Human sinfulness pervades all fallen man's motives, and conditions all his works and goals. Man was made not for civilization and culture but for God; man in sin tends to assimilate revelation to civilization, however, so that civilization becomes the channel through which human life is thought to gain meaning and worth.

c. The truth of revelation ranges itself critically alongside all achievements of civilization, and judges these by the Kingdom of God. God's covenant and commandments, set forth intelligibly in the prophetic-apostolic Scriptures and manifested in Jesus Christ, define the content of Christian morality. The Christian's task is not merely to preserve an inherited civilization or culture but to promote the Kingdom of God; only the divinely-given principles of social morality assure public justice and human welfare. Christian mission in the world includes an open declaration of God's purposes and commandments as they relate to sex and marriage, labor and economics, civil government and public life, since these constitute the criteria by which God wills that all men should live in society, and by which men and nations will finally be judged.

d. Because of his revolt against the God of creation and inordinate desires, fallen man represses and distorts the moral claim universally exerted by God in history and in conscience. Since a morality predicated on human expedients cannot ongoingly sustain civilization, its moral foundations inevitably weaken and crumble. The Christian mission in

fallen society is one of light and salt; that is, it has illuminating and preserving significance. Christians are duty-bound to exemplify and to promote social justice. Only private and public righteousness can exalt a nation; disobedience to God's will marks nations and civilizations for destruction. For all that, Christians do not advance the personal and public righteousness that God demands merely to Christianize the world or to preserve a dated civilization or parochial national culture. Nor do they becloud their mission into modern utopian ideologies by succumbing to fanciful visions of a new man and a new society. Christians know that God's new man has already been historically manifested in Jesus Christ who is risen from the dead and powerfully alive as the publicly identified judge of the human race. They know, moreover, that the new society is not simply a future expectation but is already here in the redeemed community over which the crucified and risen Jesus rules as Head of the Body. Not only are individual believers, dispersed throughout many nations, to be inwardly conformed by the Spirit to the holy image of God's obedient Son, but also the church as a community is to exemplify that public righteousness which God desires in society. Over against all the uninformed and misleading ideological pledges of alien kingdoms, only the regenerate church approximates the Kingdom of God in history.

e. Much of the positive ingredient in modern secular ethics has been inherited at a distance from earlier Christian insights. When worldings, who lack special revelation and redemption, nonetheless devote themselves in part to certain moral concerns stemming from the biblical view of God and man, while many Christians conspicuously neglect these same concerns, the Gospel is understandably disdained as erosive of ethical earnestness, rather than as singularly promotive of it.

2. *How current personal and social ethics hinders or furthers the proclamation of the Gospel*

While we can make only a very limited survey of recent moral theory here, we can nonetheless ascertain certain trends that are likely to gain worldwide attention in the days ahead.

a. Ancient non-biblical religions are being exported to the West today as an antidote to secular materialism. Zen fascinates young people in quest of a transcendent world beyond the sense-sphere of technocratic science; it attracts them also for its amorality. Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, the latter more a moral vision than a religion, offer few ethical hindrances and obstacles to the Gospel markedly different from those attaching to them in the past; in large urban centers, moreover, their own followers are increasingly vulnerable to Western secularization. The fact that Christianity as an ethical religion has already gone through the scientific revolution and survives as a powerful missionary movement and intellectual and moral force gives it an advantage over religions whose followers have yet to undergo the full impact of the scientific age. In mainland China, where Communism has driven Christianity out of church buildings and into homes, the ongoing reformulation and erosion of Confucian teaching could yet become a providential preparation for future evangelical advance; just as modern Chinese scholars praised Confucianism for rejecting religion,

so contemporary Communist scholars are rejecting Confucian ethics as well. Nonetheless new indigenous forms are emerging in which Confucianism retains importance. The weakness of ancient religious vis-a-vis Christianity lies in their failure to overcome doubts about the meaning and worth of human life in the present world alongside the lack of persuasive cognitive support for such doctrines as reincarnation or nirvana, while Christianity promises a new quality of life even now and finds its center in the crucified and risen Lord.

b. In the West, radical secularity claims that man himself defines the time and the good. Man's "coming of age" is said to require his repudiation of transcendent moral law, revealed commandments, and fixed principles, and the elaboration of moral action instead on the basis of personal autonomy and individual creativity. This commitment to all-embracing contingency and relativity follows fast upon a loss of faith in evolutionary utopianism. Atheistic scientism holds that man himself, and not an inherently or divinely patterned nature or history, determines the present and future, and dismisses as mythological any representation of supernatural being, divine revelation, Scriptural rule of right, and transcendent offer of salvation.

c. For a generation, logical positivism sought to reduce moral and theological claims to nonsense on the ground of their non-verifiability by empirical scientific method. Although positivistic theory collapsed through its own internal contradictions, and was itself reducible to nonsense when judged by the criteria it adduced, it helpfully exposed the vast number of contrary and contradictory ethical theories based on philosophical reasoning (logical positivism being another!); it also publicized the impropriety of readily calling "scientific" the flexible morality companioned by modern viewpoints. Logical positivism focused interest on the meaning and verification of ethical statements. Historic Christianity is able to confront these concerns with far less apprehension than can secular alternatives.

d. It will not do to confront current naturalistic views, e.g., radical secularity, with anything less than the equally radical alternative of the biblical revelation of the will of God and its definition of the good life. All intermediary options, whether Western or Eastern, retain mythologies of nature, of history, or of man, and cannot adduce valid moral norms on the basis of philosophical reasoning, mystical experience, sense observation, or any other indicated alternative to transcendent revelation. Even the "new" morality, because it retains only a vestige of Christianity in its appeal to interpersonal love as the only motivation and criterion of conduct, could not escape a decline to moral relativism. By surrendering the objective revelational content of ethics, sacrificing fixed moral principles, and forfeiting the importance of justice alongside love, the "new" morality could not adjudicate between contrary and contradictory courses of action appealing to love as their motivation. The fact that all the speculative alternatives to revelational ethics have now cancelled each other out to the point of radical secularity creates a situation favorable to a fresh examination of revealed morality.

e. Discerning Christian theologians have long pointed out that a culture predicated on technological scientism inevitably undermines

personal values. The church in the twentieth century has not, however, related its preaching effectively to this contemporary phenomenon, nor has it powerfully demonstrated the difference of lifestyle involved in the evangelical alternative. Dramatically and conspicuously the youth counter-culture movement has revolted against a reductive scientific pursuit of quantitative apart from qualitative and personal concerns took expression. Instead of technocratically tapering external reality to impersonal processes and events, counter-culture youth demands a recognition that personal values belong to the real world. The quest for a realm of reality that transcends scientific-empirical data explains in part their growing interest in Oriental mystery religions, hallucinatory drugs, spiritism, and demon phenomena. Such practices are neither truly mind-expanding, nor are they an unambiguous reflection of "moral" concern; indeed, no logically persuasive case whatever for transcendent morality can be mounted in this way.

f. Through theologically unlettered, the Jesus-movement confidently probes the supernatural world in terms of divine revelation in Christ and in the Bible as the Word of God. While vulnerable to all sorts of charismatic excesses, it is not immune to larger possibilities of authentic spiritual dynamism than that manifested today by many evangelicals; and by elevating scriptural authority above personal experience, this movement can be preserved from cultic deviations. The youth counter-culture outside the Jesus-movement tries to confront the technocratic myth of ultimate impersonal reality by emphasizing mystical consciousness; this, however, merely counters one myth of reality with another. The myth of technocratic scientism cannot be eradicated by a simplistic substitution of the myth of superrational mysticism. The only firm transcendent basis for moral values is God as an intelligible religious reality. As far as values are concerned, moreover, the secular counter-culture concentrates on social values to the neglect of personal righteousness, and despite its emphasis on love for neighbor, neglects the first and great commandment, namely, love for God. In these respects the Jesus-movement provides many refreshing contrasts. From the very first the Christian message has emphasized the need of totally new selfhood, has called men to love of God and fellow man, and has stressed concern for public no less than for private righteousness.

g. For many persons in North America and Western Europe the problem of human meaning and worth turns upon psychological emptiness amid affluence; for untold multitudes elsewhere, it turns rather upon dire poverty and the powerlessness to change one's destiny — upon the search for food and shelter to survive another day. When Christians fail to emphasize that it is morally wicked, that human creatures starve and suffer like animals, and that insensitivity of the rich to the physical needs of those around them is ethically culpable; they, as it were, yield to Marxists the privilege of formulating social criticism; they also nourish the propaganda that only communism or socialism can guarantee a just society. In some areas like Latin America with its vast pockets of poverty, the burden of the *status quo* is so heavy that all existing social structures are deplored as oppressive; the underprivileged

and victimized consequently reach for radical alternatives that retrieve hope from some remote nebulous future and insert it into the immediate present and its problems. This is true of both spiritual and social concerns. Roman Catholicism, by far the dominant religion in Latin America, has done little across 400 years to insert hope into the economic plight of the masses; evangelical Protestantism, while inculcating vital personal religion, has similarly done but little to cope with the problem of poverty. To stress that the total human predicament will be solved only if people are personally converted to Christ lacks assurance because even a phenomenal church growth rate of more than five per cent in a single decade would still miss the vast majority, and lacks credibility when one notes the limited reversal of poverty among people even in evangelical churches. In respect of spiritual concerns, the yearning for hope fulfilled in the immediate present accounts for surging interest in charismatic forms of Christianity. In Chile, Pentecostal Christians have outstripped Southern Baptists 60 to one in evangelism, winning many converts among the destitute who are the very targets of the social revolutionaries. Charismatic Christianity promises nothing less than the extension of apostolic gifts into the present and an earnest of the eschatological future right now. But many, notably in Brazil, who seek dynamic relationships to a transcendent world turn as readily to spiritism. The longing for material fulfilment in the face of poverty is widespread among all the masses, however, and the relentless Marxist attack on capitalism promotes socialism as the utopian alternative and revolutionary violence as the way to achieve it. The confiscation and redistribution of wealth becomes more credible as an ideal solution of the human predicament whenever several factors are present:

(i) When Marxists are allowed exclusive rights as a preface to socialist propaganda to fervently indict the moral wrongs of human destitution, suffering, affliction, and oppression.

(ii) When Christian proclamation speaks only of personal spiritual conversion, ignores social criticism attuned to biblical justice, and elaborates no persuasive alternative to a forced redistribution of wealth either in theory or practice.

(iii) When Marxists are allowed to speak of socialism in romantic terms without being asked either to identify which of its many forms they propose or to explain why socialism, despite tyrannical imposition, has nowhere achieved the just society it propagandizes. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973) is highly illuminating of the realities of Soviet life; it indicates that Communist repression in Russia was ten to a thousand times worse than Czarist repression, and that the Soviets destroyed more dissenters than did the Nazis. It is essential to contrast socialist uncertainty about the identity of the ideal man and of the express nature of the new society with Christian certainty about the Second Adam and the regenerate society as a beachhead in history for the coming Kingdom.

(iv) When Christians fail to emphasize that Marxist proposals for utopia do not really, as claimed, overcome human alienation, but in fact perpetuate that alienation by substituting one preferred class for another and deepen it by ignoring man's fundamental spiritual relation-

ships to the living God.

h. If despite utopian promises socialism and materialistic capitalism continue to siphon off the meaning and worth of individual existence for multitudes of moderns, no less is this true of radical secularism which is penetrating the academic centers of the so-called Free World as the theoretical stance of many pseudo-intellectuals. Anyone who tries to live consistently by the creed of atheistic naturalism — to wit, that ultimate reality consists of impersonal processes and events; that the cosmos originated unpurposed and accidentally; that history has no objective pattern or plan; that man is an oddity destined for extinction like the animals, and that distinctions of morality and truth are private preferences only — such a one drains personal existence of everything that makes human survival significant. The secular naturalist lives in fact by strikingly different premises than his vaunted naturalistic creed accommodates. How is one to reconcile his public call for universal human justice, for sensitivity to human welfare, for ecological awareness of the cosmos and a field of ethical responsibility, with the notion that moral distinctions are but autonomous expressions of individual creativity? How is one to square his sense of personal worth, the unyielding desire to guarantee his own individual security and survival, his reluctance to contemplate with tranquility his own ultimate non-being, with the insistence that the cosmic process is wholly purposeless and indifferent to personal concerns? How is one to explain the fact that, when wronged by his neighbor, he refuses to concede that universal ethical obligation is but an adolescent notion happily outgrown by man come of age, and that justice is, rather, a legitimate expectation from others. To the Christian the reason for this refusal to rest in a reductionistic naturalism is clear: it lies in the general revelation of the Creator in the conscience of every man (Rom. 2:14f.), and in the fractured *imago Dei* that survives in the sinner even if he is a radical secularist.

In summary, the hindrances and obstacles to Christian evangelism therefore include:

- (i) The uncritical acceptance of inherited religious traditions and moral philosophies.
- (ii) The prohibition of public evangelism and restrictions on religious freedom by atheistic totalitarian powers.
- (iii) The failure to relate the Christian good news to the material poverty, economic exploitation, and political oppression of masses of people, and the misconception of these same multitudes that the abundant life is assured by material affluence or political panaceas.
- (iv) The pervasive regard for empirical scientific methodology as the omniscient criterion of reliable knowledge and as the guarantee of immunity from adverse consequences of moral transgression.
- (v) The rejection of supernatural reality and revelation by radical secularism, with its relativizing of all claims of truth and morality, and the reduction of all conceptualities of the meaning and worth of human life to cultural mythology.
- (vi) The anti-intellectual trend which probes extra-rational and mystical experiences as the roadway to transcendent personal values.

(vii) The neo-Protestant distortion of Christian revelation, theology, and ethics in a manner that nullifies its biblical character and authority.

(viii) The theological superficiality of much evangelical evangelism in respect to the intellectual barriers to belief, seen in anecdotal preaching and in a hurried call for decision which asks converts to leap in faith over problems that, if not confronted and resolved, will return to haunt their experience.

(ix) The experiential shallowness of evangelistic commitment which substitutes a legalistic formula of Christian personal behavior for a Spirit-surrendered life ruled by scriptural teaching applied in good conscience in one's cultural milieu.

(x) The neglect by evangelical Christianity of a corporate exhibition of the content of biblical morality, as well as of theological and apologetic priorities, in a world committed to alien ideas and ideals.

In brief, Christian evangelism must do far more than speak only to the emotional vacuums in the lives of men; it must also help shape the intellectual mood of the day, deal with cultural idolatries and national priorities, confront the problems which erode a sense of human worth and dignity, cope with the moral paralysis that emboldens multitudes to shameless vices, uncover all the subtle and alluring masks that man wears in an age which believed itself at the gates of Paradise only to discover a desolation and a waste. Evangelists must reject the thought that Christianity in the world survives onesidedly through activist engagement; the truth of the Gospel alone is what establishes evangelistic validity. Evangelism can lay no true claim to success if it obscures or compromises the truth of revelation. In their appeal to the uncommitted masses, cults like Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormonism all point to Christ while they eclipse the truth of the Gospel. Christians make a serious error if spectacular evangelistic results become the prime criterion or proof of the evangelical authenticity and legitimacy of Christian education and social engagement; evangelism, after all, like all Christian activity, is itself wholly answerable to the truth of God.

3. Implications of the Gospel for contemporary social issues

a. Sex — The human need of man and woman for each other springs from an original relationship grounded in God's creative act (Gen. 2:18 ff.). The family is a basic natural order of creation and a microcosm of mankind (Eph. 3:14). Parents find new life together in union; children are divinely given as a sacred trust. In Judeo-Christian ethics the origin and norm of all genuine love is God's love for man, a love proffered to undeserving sinners. Because of the wholeness of human personality, what one thinks and does sexually has consequences for the entire self in this life and the next. For Christians, sex involves considerate gratitude, personal devotion, and welcome responsibility under God.

Respect for constituted authority has its earthly center in the familial unit where the problem of authority constantly arises. But modern society increasingly views sex solely in terms of biological gratification and in a context of autonomianism, license, and irresponsibility.

bility. Much recent psychiatric theory reinforces this misunderstanding. The Gospel is forgiving and renewing. What Christ forgives must be acknowledged to be sin, however; turning to new life involves recognition of a past lived in violation of God's will, and a self now given over to a radically changed future. The Gospel calls the believer to honor the New Testament disclosure of the will of God.

(i) *Marriage* — The Gospel seeks to restore the sex life of mankind to God's purpose in creation. The biblical revelation of man and woman as one flesh through covenant-responsibility calls for steadfast fidelity of one man and one woman to each other in lifelong relationships that death alone can sever. The New Testament relates total sexual satisfaction with the practice of godliness (I Cor. 6:19, 7:7).

Current sexual ethics lack commitment to permanent monogamous marriage. Many regard the marriage contract as only a temporary probation, and this absence of lasting commitment conditions the relationship in psychically adverse ways. The New Testament does not correlate marital intercourse solely with procreation, which nonetheless is the first creation mandate, but rather with the total personal-ity needs of the marital partners (I Cor. 7:3-5). The prospect of over-population is the more awesome because in respect to the creation-mandate, humans have more conspicuously filled the earth than they have subdued it for good ends. Yet, euthanasia has no biblical support but conflicts with the sixth commandment, while abortion poses grave moral problems, except in certain circumstances. Birth control is admissible, the motivation being an important factor. Morally acceptable techniques prevent the ovum and sperm from uniting (as a barrier to fertilization) rather than attacking the product of conception. Christ can forgive ethical perversions of marriage and its intention; indeed, the Gospel summons marriage partners to Christ's love for the Church as an analogy for the marital relationship (Eph. 5:22 f.).

(ii) *Divorce* — The legal dissolution of the marriage bond involving permanent separation of marriage partners and their lawful right to remarry. Tolerated in certain instances in the Old Testament with a notable safeguard of the woman's rights, Jesus condemned it; he stigmatized remarriage as adultery, unless the original marriage was itself eroded by "sexual impurity" (adultery?).

Although casual sexual intercourse does not of itself link two partners as "one flesh" (I Cor. 6:15 f.), the faithful spouse may on this ground legalize the breach of marriage. But he or she may also forgive and the Gospel provides precedent for the forgiveness of sinners that can reinvigorate and sanctify a violated union. The apostle Paul seems to indicate that a believer deserted by an unbelieving spouse may contract another marriage (I Cor. 7:10 ff.), but here, too, grace works an extended season in hope of reconciliation.

The soaring divorce rate in many lands, snarling multitudes of modern lives in marriage and remarriage complications, is often turned into a plea for relaxation of New Testament principles in the name of "love" as a superior criterion. Situational ethics, championed by liberal Protestants, avers that love of God and neighbor may permit in one relationship what it disallows in another. But this overlooks

the importance of permanent interpersonal commitments at the heart of true marriage. The psychological damage done by broken homes to the personalities of parents and children alike is incalculable, since no member of the family can ever again be what he or she alone was before the divorce; nor are the consequences for society, additionally to those of a particular household, to be minimized. Christ and the apostles lived in a time much like our own, when laxity pervaded the whole realm of sex and marriage. Precisely in such a cultural context the New Testament reiterated the revealed purpose of the Creator, namely, to make them "male and female" and to establish the marriage bond.

The Gospel indeed covers a multitude of sins, but it does not do so by disregarding the commands of God or diluting them spuriously under the banner of *agape* (cf. John 14:15). The Gospel does not require two persons whose love has died to live in marital hell, but offers new life and new love that none can scorn in good conscience in a society where even the secular world ventures probationary relationships.

(iii) *Promiscuity* — This involves indiscriminate sexual union in which the responsibilities of intercourse are ignored. Modern notions of liberation often nurture promiscuous sexual attitudes, and the availability of scientific contraceptive techniques and of "abortion on demand" have fostered a sex-centered generation preoccupied with genitals. Women's liberation, on the other hand, has protested the demeaning of women into sex objects. Communal sex seeks to confer social respectability on promiscuity, yet ignores the special interpersonal qualities that define monogamous marriage.

Jesus directed some of his most burning indictments against sexual immorality; the New Testament catalogues of sin repeatedly reproach sexual deviations. Damaging effects upon the personalities of the sexually truant are widely emphasized. Many young people themselves confess that as sex has become free and easy, love has become elusive. No generation needs to hear Jesus' warning against the lustful look more than a sex-oriented mass-media age.

Promiscuity berates and denies the basic Christian concept of sex as a God-given entrustment requiring respectful responsibility, and of sexual misconduct as sin against God. Forcefully and commendably the Jesus-movement has reminded many congregations anew of the need to bring the whole body under the Holy Spirit's control. In a sex-saturated age the Gospel can break the power of temptation and equip the human spirit with new motivation and dynamics. Christ-given freedom liberates sexual deviants for true enjoyment of sex as creative and renewing, rather than enervating and destructive.

(iv) *Pornography* — The term incorporates root words meaning harlotry and writing; originally it designated a treatise on the subject of prostitutes. Modern use refers more broadly to literature, photography, or art that depicts sexual activity, especially illicit acts and perversions. A tide of pornographic materials floods much of the modern world. In the United States alone it is a billion-dollar business. Communist lands ban it as culturally debilitating, but do so in a context of

state absolutism that politically defines the good and restrains freedom of the press, contrasted with a free society where some unregenerates will do almost anything for financial gain. Many courts have held that what is "devoid of redeeming social values" may be legally banned, but on this basis works long excluded are now sometimes widely published, and foot-dragging law enforcement and the difficulty of gaining court convictions have accommodated crude and "hard core" pornography that makes no claim whatever to social utility.

The Roman Catholic emphasis on ecclesiastical censorship is hardly an adequate answer. However, as the criterion has shifted increasingly to prevailing community standards, Christians should publicize their views of the moral wrong of degrading sex into a cheap animal commodity. Stragely enough, socially-active churches were so preoccupied with politico-economic issues, and evangelical churches with changing persons, that neither did much to stem the tide of pornography. Women's liberation movements have protested the pornographic depiction of women as mere sex objects stripped of personality for the sake of male gratification; now the nude male centerfold has made its debut in some women's magazines. Christians should enter the arena of public persuasion, emphasizing not only the adverse effects of pornography on the morals of youth, but also its offense to God. The full answer to the problem lies both in an evangelical changing of unregenerate engrossments and in the production of a creative literature of love. The church has *agape* to combat *eros*. The preaching of the Gospel should not only summon sinners to experience *agape*, but also so compellingly publish it to the world that *eros* will seek the altar rail.

b. Wealth

(i) *Capital* — Both the terms "wealth" and "capital" are used of economically significant elements existing at any given time. While these elements are very diverse, and included many intangibles, they popularly refer to land, buildings, machines, and equipment, and stocks of goods, especially money. Taken in scriptural context, the wealth of nations surely includes spiritual and ethical features and cultural stability, even though such assets are not negotiable. With an eye on industrialization and gross national product, political experts designate the non-communist world — except for the English-speaking nations, Europe, and Japan — as developing or emerging nations. By the GNP standard, Kuwait is ironically now one of the earth's most highly developed countries.

In past centuries, ethical thought focused on the relation of capital and interest, whereas modern thought is more interested in the correlation of capital and income. Medieval scholastics viewed all interest as usury and condemned it; the Church of Rome later altered this view, however. At the time of the Protestant Reformation capitalists still operated under suspicion of the sin of avarice, although the public mood gradually changed. While the Protestant ethic was not the cause of modern capitalism, it exonerated capitalists from the sin of avarice and by its emphasis on hard work, frugality, sobriety, and efficient fulfillment of one's vocational calling gave stimulus to the new economic order.

Personal attitudes toward debt have been liberalized by the concept that credit contributes to economic prosperity; mass production has lowered prices, and young families have enjoyed numerous comforts through installment buying. But government deficit spending doubtlessly exerts adverse influence upon many people. The morality, at least wisdom, of using credit to finance luxuries, vacation travel, and non-essentials is debatable.

The Protestant emphasis was that accumulated wealth should be invested to produce additional wealth, although the allurements of wealth were to be resisted and the rich no less than the poor were to live frugally. The deceitfulness of riches is a recurring New Testament theme.

(ii) *Property* — While Christ did not dispute the right of personal possessions, but viewed them as a divine entrustment acquired through the use of God-given talents, he noted that they could all too easily become one's prime concern (Matt. 6:24). Since all we possess is held as a divine stewardship, the apostles emphasize that one who has more than others has greater opportunity to bless those who have less (I Pet. 4:14 f.). No true Christian can be rich and use wealth merely for self-gratification (Luke 12:24).

Yet distribution to others was voluntary. New Testament Christianity is often erroneously depicted as normatively communistic. There were times when, for a specific objective, believers voluntarily pooled possessions, but this procedure is never declared to be a Christian moral imperative; private property is not scripturally viewed as evil in itself, and a case can even be made biblically that some property is universally necessary to personal fulfillment. The Eight Commandment establishes the principle of private ownership, "Thou shalt not steal" (Exod. 20:15). Scripture sanctions the acquisition of property by legitimate means only (Deut. 25:4, I Cor. 9:9 ff.), however, whether it be by work, purchase, or inheritance.

The biblical representation of private property nonetheless differs profoundly from the view of ancient Roman jurisprudence and modern secular thought. The right to possession is not absolute and unqualified, for God is the ultimate Creator and owner of all (Lev. 25:23); man holds what he has in trusteeship for God, and even then, Scripture provided safeguards lest accumulation of property permanently disadvantage the underprivileged. The year of Jubilee cancelled automatic possession for perpetuity, and the eighth-century prophets inveighed against amassing land to the detriment of common good (Isa. 5:8, Mic. 2:2). Yet the refusal of Naboth to surrender his legitimate property on demand even of the king (I King 21:3) attested the right of possession and ancestral inheritance.

The Bible's main focus is on the use of possessions, and reflects a consistent concern for the poor. Possessions enable one to support and advance evangelical witness in the world, to minister to the needs of the household of faith (James 2:16), neighbors (Lev. 19:18), and others in need (Gal. 6:10).

(iii) *Profit* — The excess of income over expenditure, or gain over and above cost of acquisition or production. Scripture assumes its

legitimacy, using the concept to motivate faithful engagement. Proverbs lays down the principle that labor is properly profitable (14:23). Solomon recognized God as the ultimate source of profit and reward (Prov. 3:9f.) and promoted effort as the road to prosperity (Ecc. 11:6). Yet, illegal acquisition of profit, whether by deceit, false weights, or oppression of usury, is sharply condemned. The Bible repeatedly contrasts the principle of greed with that of gratitude; while it considers fair profit legitimate, the Bible's concern is that riches should not corrupt their possessor by indulgence, misuse, or indifference to the needs of others. A most familiar text is Jesus' classic question, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

(iv) *Poverty* — Scripture focuses on physical, moral, and spiritual poverty. Modern sociology is concerned mainly with the first, whose terrors have been a stark reality for multitudes in all ages. Some basis exists for a distinction between destitution, or lack of bare survival needs, and poverty, or the inability to achieve more than basic daily needs. Poverty is not easily defined (some relate it to minimum income, others to median income, and others to group percentage of national income). The relative condition of the poor in some lands (e.g., America) is vastly superior to that in many others, and the mass media relentlessly accelerates universal aspiration for higher living standards. The blind, lame, and aged poor can hardly escape their poverty by hard work, and the poorly educated often face unrewarding jobs, while race and sex discrimination have impeded opportunity for still others.

The Old Testament prophets and New Testament writers as well thrust the problem of poverty upon the conscience of God's people, although in the Gospels "the poor" becomes also a non-economic designation for a harried remnant of the spiritually faithful. While the concern of Scripture is with spiritual and moral need, it does not gloss over material need. Jesus launched his public ministry with Isaiah's prophecy of good news to the poor, and the Gospel must therefore reach people in need as a message of hope in their total predicament. Jesus unobtrusively gave to the poor (cf. John 13:39) and Paul took up collections for the poor. Distribution to those in need is viewed biblically as evidence of love for God (Lev. 25:55; Matt. 19:21). The first charitable work of the early Christians took the form of gifts to impoverished widows. The classic reminder that "Christ became poor that we might become rich" (II Cor. 8:9) utterly disarms anyone clinging to possessions in the face of need.

Sensitive Christian conscience should support programs responding to needs of the aged, the blind, lame and dying, supplying food for the starving, job-training for adults, and non-discriminatory educational opportunities. Believers should set an example by providing for their own kin and those of the fellowship of faith. Healthy adults should in any event contribute to the well-being of the community; to be temporarily out of work is no necessary mandate for state support (II Thess. 3:10). Christians should resist encouraging parasitism or materialism; poverty should be alleviated as much as possible by self-help. As the Jesus-movement has warned even evangelical believers, the Bible places restraints on consumer-aspirations. It emphasizes the responsibility of

all men (even those who have less) in respect to neighbors in need. It should be interesting in this materialistically-oriented society, moreover, that the Song of Hannah depicted poverty and riches alike as the work of God (I Sam. 2:7); it is also interesting that the Mosaic Law, and its concern for the economically deprived, nonetheless forbade partiality because of poverty (Lev. 19:15). But God has an eye for the poor, and divine blessing is promised those who are charitable toward them (Psa. 41:1), and who advance justice in their behalf.

c. *Race.*

(i) *Racism* — Racial variations are a fact of human existence, but they are subordinate to a common humanity. When racial differences are absolutized, racism occurs, e.g., Hitler's premium on Nordic origin, South African apartheid, and white supremacy in American and other societies. The notion that any single race is the special carrier of human destiny involves a demonic pretense of divine election; it thus becomes a prideful revolt against God's creation-purpose for all mankind and his redemption-purpose in Christ.

The Bible assuredly indicates that Yahweh chose the Jews, not however because of their superiority but because of his election, giving them special advantages as a witness to the world of the blessings of serving the living God. Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Son, manifests God's ideal for all humanity; as the Second Adam, he is the true anti-thesis to racism, breaking down the wall even between Jew and Gentile.

Scripture condemns racism and God judges it in history. The God of grace exalts the humble and topples the proud. The church is a transracial body whose head is known no longer "after the flesh" but as the carrier of a common humanity into the eternal order as first-fruits of a general resurrection. Racism is therefore anti-Christ in spirit, arbitrarily implying an election that Scripture disowns.

Christians should see themselves in the mirror of history whenever any minority is deprived of equal rights before the law, since Christians may themselves always be a minority and may well be the next target of abuse. But more fundamentally, racial injustice to any minority should be considered implicitly a threat not simply to one's own kind but to all humanity. The Christian has double motivation for identifying with the victims of race discrimination; first, he knows that God created all men of one flesh, and second, that Christ died for all and is head of a body transcending racial situations. The evangel is therefore repudiated in principle wherever and whenever the church practices racial exclusion instead of exhibiting the spiritual and moral unity of the whole family of the redeemed.

(ii) *Casteism* — The caste system seems to have arisen among the non-Aryan peoples of India as a means of assimilating different racial, religious, and social groups into Hinduism. Ancient Indian society was divided into four classes: priests and learned (Brahmins), warriors, merchants and peasants, and servants. Through the centuries more than 2,000 castes and subcastes emerged across which or against which no one could marry or even entertain in his home. Although extremes of "untouchability" have been legally abolished, and in larger towns many caste distinctions are being eroded, caste has a religious anchorage

in Hinduism. In view of status evaluations based on the pollution concept, Hinduism considers it possible for persons or groups to be degraded in behavior yet advanced in religious understanding.

Objections to racism apply also to casteism. The New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of all believers strikes a death blow at religious caste systems. The Church of Christ is administratively structured, but not on the basis of personal superiority or ritual purity. The Christian doctrine of creation no less fundamentally precludes casteism.

d. *Political Power.* God is Sovereign Creator and Lord of history; all other power is therefore derivative. Civil government derives its power ultimately not from military capability or from the will of the people but from God (cf. John 19:11). All organs of power can function properly only in obedience to his will. God purposes civil government in a fallen society for the promotion and preservation of justice and order (Rom. 13). Insofar as government arrogates to itself powers and objectives contrary to its divinely intended purpose it becomes anti-God and anti-Christ (Rev. 13). Civil government is God's alternative to anarchy and tyranny alike.

The growing inability of individual nations to assure their own survival in view of economic and military dependence upon allies increasingly raises the question whether the nation-state concept of civil government has outlived its usefulness. Yet the difficulty of common international action in the face of national interests has been repeatedly demonstrated, first by the League of Nations and now by the United Nations (which includes some 130 of the 150 nation-states). The need of transnational commitments is nonetheless simultaneously reflected in the ongoing alignment of nations into power-blocs (Soviet-sphere, NATO, European Common Market, etc.).

The vision of global peace is biblical, and as such is irreducibly messianic (Isa. 9:6). God who judges nations decides their historical fortunes (Acts 17:26). No durable reconciliation of nations in a fallen society is possible without their recognition of the God of the nations and a common commitment to his justice, order, and peace (John 14:27). To substitute instead merely a world government with transcendent political authority and military power obscures the principles by which that body itself is to be judged. In principle the superstate is not inherently more or less superior ethically to a nation-state. But if God is not clearly owned as the source and stipulator of human rights and welfare, why should superstate absolutism be thought to promote these in a legitimate way any more than state absolutism? The book of Revelation notably speaks of world government in the context of antichrist.

Scripture focuses on the Holy Land as a decisive conflict-area for world destiny, although modern political science attributes geopolitical significance to the Near East only for economic and not for meta-political reasons, and one can hardly inject prophecy as a guide for grounding day-to-day political decisions. With the regathering of Israel as a modern nation-state, two centers of political controversy have emerged, one involving Communist, non-Communist, and third-world countries inside the United Nations, and the other, participants in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Through the military involvement of the major powers in the Near East, and the international crisis over energy resources,

virtually all political entities worldwide are now affected and involved through a strip of land where Christ ("the government shall be upon his shoulders") warned of an inescapable final judgment of the nations.

The call for Christian participation in political life is grounded not simply in the moral and spiritual chaos of the modern nations, but in a biblical mandate as well. Christians should be politically active, where they have citizenship, to the limit of their ability and competence. The penalty for failure to lead and to be vocal is that others who misuse and exploit political power for objectionable ends and by objectionable means preempt the field. But Christian witness regarding government also has a transcendent dimension. Christians pray for rulers, knowing that Christ is King of kings. Civil government will pass away, while the rule and reign of Christ in the Kingdom of God remains. The church is to witness to the world of the supremacy of love in the life of the fellowship that endures.

(i) *Bribery* — The general term corruption includes bribery, undue influence, and similar infractions. Bribery is a penal offense involving a gift or receipt of some consideration for official favor. The crime is usually considered a felony, and the guilty official's eligibility to hold office is often forfeited. The law first applied only to officials voting on public matters, and exempted public ("ministerial") servants who could be induced to do their duty more efficiently through tips, fees, or presents. Later bribery legislation in some places covered all public servants. But even here gifts were considered culpable only where they actually secured "any benefit or advantage," and criminal prosecution was rare. Although gifts to civil servants out of friendship or gratitude, and without intent to influence official behavior, are not punishable as bribery, corrupt practices legislation in some places prohibits them.

In many foreign lands, missionaries face the problem on arrival. A ten-dollar bill will expedite in minutes baggage that has been impounded in customs for days. In some Asian lands, after buying property at official prices, missionaries must pay thousands of dollars of additional "key-money" to gain possession. When they subsequently sell the property, are they to charge the buyer for this levy as well? National Christians also face the question of whether to condone and participate in such established bribery routines, especially where public servants expediting customs and mails expect special rewards, or where automobiles may be damaged in public parking lots if one does not tip a self-appointed watchman. Many such practices are not really illegal, but are matters of custom and culture; they would therefore require an enactment of laws if there is to be change for the better. The problem is perhaps best met by encouraging Christians to enter public service and to set higher standards, and to seek political offices with authority to end such questionable practices. Moreover, the Gospel can change lives; in dealing with officials who exact more than they should, one ought never to forget Matthew, the tax collector who learned to give rather than to take.

(ii) *Corruption* — Already in the last century many nations outlawed so-called "corrupt" political practices (such as intimidation and coercion) that interfere with free elections. The secret ballot was

introduced to reduce infractions, and soon restrictions were applied on the amount, sources, and uses of money in political campaigns; finally adequate accounting and full public disclosure became law.

In the United States, both state and federal regulations govern campaign practices. Although legislation sometimes was poorly drafted and casually enforced, Americans were proud, at a time when democratic processes were promoted almost worldwide as politically utopian, that political reform had accomplished more in their country than in other nations. The effort to regulate corrupt practices in Britain was widely approved, but considered modest alongside achievements in the United States.

In many lands, entrenched regimes flagrantly violate professedly democratic commitments, and the Christian community experiences a sense of futility in any desire for improvement. In some cases, where Christians have entered government service, their lives have been imperiled when resisting the corrupt goals of superiors. In these circumstances the feeling is widespread that political engagement is necessarily corrupt.

Since the United States had championed democratic processes wherever its world influence extended, the Watergate scandals have had a debilitating effect. The Nixon administration had maintained a posture of law-and-order in a world beset by revolutionary violence. But word that the Democratic and Republican parties may have raised \$100 million in contributions for the 1972 campaign without adequate accounting; that the Committee to Re-elect the President had rigged a newspaper poll and advertising in order to influence public opinion; and that the president's leading aides had resorted to illegal acts, using even the danger of domestic subversion as a cover, had costily repercussions throughout the Free World and especially in Third World countries. In many Third World countries the tendency was to laugh at American consternation over Watergate, since for the most part they consider politics inherently corrupt. This has been a serious blow to the ideals of democratic government at a time when the fortunes of democracies were already declining worldwide.

The effect of Watergate and related scandals has been to call for more stringent election reforms. But it also has gradually focused attention on the many office-holders of political integrity, and has stimulated competent evangelicals to increased and more aggressive engagement in political matters. When the Christian Church has been strong in society she has no less an interest in law and jurisprudence than in Grace and theology. That fact does not by any means demand a Christian political party, but it does demand Christian political responsibility. In the absence of a will to do the good, no law, however desirable, can assuredly achieve its public objectives. Evangelism can bring to multitudes the good will and moral dynamic necessary to make good laws work.

e. *War* — War is a monstrous evil. The only miscalculation worse than its acceptance as perpetually necessary is the failure to deal with the wickedness of man as the datum that makes war sometimes morally unavoidable in fallen human history.

Civil government is divinely projected as an instrument of justice and order. But because of the recalcitrance of the human will, government cannot be wholly protected against a tyrannical deployment of its power to aggressive warfare. It is not governments that cause war but the lists and imperial ambitions of leaders and privileged groups (James 4:2).

The early Church during the first three centuries was rather clearly pacifist, in contrast with the relative militarism of the Church in the modern world. The pacifist response has the merit of trying to escape the sad compromises of mainline churches with the armed conflicts of the nations on which they have conferred holy baptism and confirmation almost without exception, and which should stir Christian conscience to critical self-examination. Counter-cultural youth today rightly protest the readiness of nations to sacrifice their young as the best way to achieve international objectives and to settle international grievances.

But, as Reinhold Niebuhr noted, the effort of pacifism to make the peace of the Kingdom of God a present historical possibility places a premium on surrender to evil. It glosses over Christianity's profound insights into the universal sinfulness of man and the fallen nature of human history, and oversimplifies the ethic of Jesus. The New Testament ethic of political justice and peace relies on coercion — the power of the state — to restrain the selfish and sinful impulses of humans. Yet it repudiates militarism, with its exaltation of military virtues to cultural priority, as promotive of war.

Terrible and terrifying as war is — in an atomic age approaching international insanity — its moral necessity derives from the fact that the refusal to challenge an unjust aggressor is an immoral response to wanton injustice, and invites the enslavement and dehumanization of the victims of tyrannical aggression, and the risk of annihilation as the alternative to subjugation. The ever increasing escalation of nuclear destructive potential heightens the criminality of the aggressor, but it does not eliminate the moral duty of potential victims to deny tyrants an unimpeded victory in history.

Against the initiation of war all energies of moral suasion must now be exerted since war, for whatever reason, in a nuclear age may involve such massive disorder that it imperils some goals of civil government as much as it advances others. Christianity is on the side of peace; both its social ethic and its redemptive evangel put the highest premium on peace. But peace among the nations often means little more than the mere cessation of hostilities or "cold war," something not to be belittled in the atomic era; worse yet, in our time, it not infrequently consists of public verbal assurances alongside ongoing covert warfare. For the regenerate church, peace is positive reconciliation between once-alienated man and his God and fellow-man.

The Old Testament prophets warned that trust in military might rather than in God invites national calamity. For Israel as a theocracy, holy war was always a response to the threat and aggression of her foes. The New Testament has no concept of holy war in behalf of the Messianic King (Jesus avoided identification with the Zealots and their revolutionary movement) except in apocalyptic texts centering in the

Lord's return in judgment and glory. But the New Testament, like the Old, takes war for granted as an evil brought on by sin, yet incorporated into God's plan and deployed to his purposes. Nowhere does the New Testament suggest that a soldier should leave military service upon becoming a believer.

In Christian ethics just war criteria aim more to limit the evils of war than to justify it. But the complexities of modern warfare increasingly complicate evaluation by earlier standards, due to the destruction of the lives of non-combatants — whether by guerilla warfare in jungle villages, by conventional warfare in industrial society, or by nuclear warfare. Yet conscientious objectors to all military involvement have their right of non-participation today only because others in the past were willing to bear arms to preserve personal freedom.

The Gospel transforms believers for life in a new society ruled by love and, as such, anticipative of the Kingdom of Heaven. But it does not remove men from the world and the struggle for justice. In the Church, love of God and man is the only adequate norm of human conduct, for it mirrors God's own love. The Church knows the value of human life as a creation of God and as an object of Christ's redemption, and it can and ought fervently to plead the cause of peace and the merit of universal disarmament.

But it is not alone the egoism of others outside the Church that alerts the believer to an awareness that love needs still to be correlated with something that sets itself against selfish and arrogant human ambition. The believer's own struggle against self-regarding impulse, and against that of fellow-believers, tells him that the Kingdom of Heaven has not yet fully dawned. The Gospel can rescue men from the guilt and penalty of sin, and in a remarkable degree from its power. But it does not wholly transform the world into the church, nor wholly transform the church into the Kingdom of God. Only on that day when the King of kings appears will the tyrant and the pacifist lie down together. When the government is upon his shoulders it will confidently be said that war shall be no more, and the counterforce of ungodly powers and the coercive ministry of civil government will fade into oblivion.

CHRISTIAN PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS IN RELATION TO RACISM, POVERTY, WAR, AND OTHER PROBLEMS REPORT

Chairman: J. Court

Secretary: K. Bockmuhl

The church, under Christ's Lordship is sent into the world to proclaim personal and social righteousness and redemption. We affirm the validity of the Ten Commandments for our time. Personal conversion is of primary importance for the building up of the Body of Christ.

We evangelicals, with all other Christians, are duty bound to exemplify and to promote social justice, both as individuals and in community. It is the very nature of righteousness to act justly. God wills justice and God wills justification.

No man or woman needs to accept as normative oppressive, wicked, and exploitative forces which rob human existence of its God-given worth. Because the crucified Jesus in his resurrection triumphed over the forces of iniquity, they all are now dated and doomed.

We are called to affirm and to exemplify love and justice. There is a need to stand against that which is sinful and corrupt in order to show the good and the creative. Both on the negative and positive side, we should be willing to proclaim and to act within the bounds of fair play and legality.

Evangelism serves as a root in effecting the valid ministry of the church, producing compassionate acts of charity, righteousness, and justice, worship and fellowship and the knowledge of God, and educating people about his will for men. Constructive social reform according to biblical principles is as legitimate an area for Christian action as the compassionate acts of charity, and just as urgent.

We believe that Christian affirmation and exemplification must be within the God-given spheres of family, state, church, economy, and the sphere of free association. There are some areas where it is appropriate for the church to act, but there are many areas where individual Christians or groups coming together for a special purpose may express a Christian conscience in society.

The prophetic voice of the church must always speak creatively to human power structures. It will not use the language of force, but will use the force of language. Regenerate men and women are creative catalysts for social betterment. This is what Christ meant when he spoke of illuminating and preserving elements in the world.

Law is necessary to outlaw evil, but true brotherly love can only be achieved through personal regeneration, not through mere legal obligation.

While we recognize that there are certain immutable structures, there are, nonetheless, some subsidiary structures which need to change in the course of time. Christian social involvement includes not only