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Putting it even more dramatically, has a cultural pattern made it impossible for brothers to love one another, to fellowship in the gospel? Could it be that, hidden behind missions' present methodology, still lurks an incipient paternalism that is not yet aware of the riches of "Macedonia's" gifts?

Ultimately, I have no illusions that, economically, a shift in policy, at this point may end financial crunch. Paul's comptroller would not have seen the gift of the Macedonians in his ledger account as very substantial giving. But, in terms of what it may mean for the relationships of the world church, the gift may be significant indeed. It might mean a singular concrete expression of the fellowship in love, the fostering of reciprocal ministry that Green Lake '71 urgently wanted. It might mean a new pressure on the old structures mission boards have so much difficulty in discarding, the mission scaffolding they keep saying is only temporary, but never seems to go down.

It might mean a new degree of self-examination as to the disparity between missionary life style and national life style. It would be increasingly hard to open salary checks from the little church across the street from the missionary's compound in the p. 69 living room of a house twice as big as the church building. It might mean a new inquiry into the meaning of the Pauline identification with the poor as a confirmation of apostolic ministry. Is the missionary's calling to that same apostolic message confirmed in that same way? The pressures of the initiative of free love in Christ freely shared impose hard questions and no easy answers.

(abridged)

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Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger

Ronald J. Sider

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This article is a synopsis of Ronald Sider's book, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger. David Watson in the foreword of the British edition says, "I profoundly believe that this book contains the most vital challenge which faces the Church of today. It is one of the most searching and disquieting books I have ever read".

CHRISTIANS in the industrialized nations face an agonizing choice. By the lifestyles we live, the church buildings we construct and the politicians we elect, we demonstrate clearly that we are on the side of the rich. The Bible makes it painfully clear that God is on the side of the poor. We must choose. It is impossible to worship both God and mammon. Of course, the choice will be painful, but that should not surprise us. Long ago Jesus warned that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom. Or, as C.S. Lewis put it:

*All things (e.g. a camel's journey through
A needle's eye) are possible, it's true*

*But picture how the camel feels squeezed out
In one long bloody thread from tail to snout.*

A WORLD OF INCREASING HUNGER

That we are the rich in a hungry world is distressingly clear. Last year the United States National Academy of Science published a study which noted that “750 million people in the poorest nations live in extreme poverty with annual incomes of less than \$75.” The report went on to say that there were hundreds of millions more in desperate poverty in middle-income, developing countries. In 1974, the United Nations reported that “at least 462 million are actually starving.” That figure represents more than two starving people for every man, woman and child in the United States. There are at least that many who are malnourished because they do not have enough protein even though they have a minimally adequate calorie intake. A good estimate would suggest **P. 71** that one billion of our sisters and brothers alive today are starving or seriously malnourished.

How does our situation compare with theirs? After massive comparison of living standards around the world an economist at the University of Pennsylvania has recently reported that the average person in the United States is fourteen times as rich as the average person in India. We consume five times as much grain as the average person in Asia. Our energy consumption is so high that the 210 million persons in the United States consume as much energy on air conditioners alone as the more than 800 million Chinese use on everything.

Most astonishing of all is the fact that we still think we are poor. In October, 1977, *Newsweek* did a story on the “Middle Class Poor” pointing out that millions of Americans think they can barely survive on the \$15,000, \$18,000 or even \$25,000 they make each year. If the 750 million people who earn less than \$75 per year were to read that story (they will not, of course, because they are illiterate and the magazine would cost them a week’s supply of food), they would be both perplexed and angry. North Americans are an incredibly wealthy aristocracy in a poor world where the poorest billion are starving and malnourished.

Moreover, we have contributed to their poverty. The industrialized nations have carefully shaped the patterns of international trade for their own economic advantage. For instance, the United States charges the highest tariffs on processed and manufactured goods from poor countries. The less manufacturing and processing done by the poor country, the lower the tariff we charge. The reason for this is simple. Processing and manufacturing interests in this country, both labor and business, want us to buy cheap raw materials and profit from processing them here. But the result, unfortunately, is to deprive poor countries of millions of extra jobs and billions of extra dollars in export earnings.

Another example is what we call “voluntary” quotas on manufactured goods from poor countries. They have become more common recently. We threaten new tariff barriers unless they “voluntarily” put restrictions on what they send to us.

Third and even more serious is the fact that for decades the prices of primary products sold by developing countries to rich nations have been declining relative to the prices of manufactured products and other high technology items that poor countries have to buy from us. Example: The government of Tanzania **p. 72** reports that one tractor cost five tons of sisal (used to make rope) in 1963. In 1970 essentially the same tractor cost twice as much, ten tons of sisal.

We also contribute to the poverty of the poorer nations by our inordinate consumption of nonrenewable natural resources. Is it just for 5 percent of the world’s

people (living in the United States) to consume 33 percent of the world's limited, nonrenewable natural resources every year? If the supply were unlimited and others could enjoy the same benefits, then the situation would be different. But that is not the case. International development specialist Lester Brown, confesses, "It has long been part of conventional wisdom within the international development community that the two billion people living in the poor countries could not aspire to the life style enjoyed by the average North American because there was not (enough) iron ore, petroleum and protein in the world to provide it." Knowing that, it is just not right for us to demand an ever-expanding economy from our legislators in Washington every year.

Finally, food consumption. Our eating patterns may seem like private parts of our lives, but in fact they are interlocked with very complex international economic patterns. Every year the United States imports more food from poor countries than we export to hungry lands. The United States alone imports about twice as much fish, primarily in the form of feed for livestock, as do all the poor countries combined. Two-thirds of the total world catch of tuna comes to the United States, and we feed one-third of that to cats.

Cowboys and beef cattle are part of our national self-identity. "Surely our beef at least is grown at home," we think. But it is not. The United States is the world's largest importer of beef. Imported beef comes not just from Australia and New Zealand but also from many poor countries in Latin America. The Mexican border is the scene of the world's largest transfer of meat. We import about a million cattle from Mexico every year. And that is half as much as Mexico has left for itself totally.

Again, it is not merely that we consume beef which hungry Mexicans need. Our demand for beef also encourages unjust structures in many places. Take the case of the little country of Honduras in Central America. Honduras is a poor country where one-third of the people earn less than \$30 a year. In spite of widespread poverty that little country exports 35 million pounds of beef to the United States annually. Moreover, that beef is [p. 73](#) grown by a tiny wealthy elite of about 670 families. They represent three-tenths of one percent of the total population of Honduras, but they own over 25 percent of all the good land. In the past few years there has been an intense struggle going on in Honduras. The peasants want more land. The powerful Honduran Cattle Farmers Federation, which represents the wealthy farmers, does not want to give them land. A group of cattle farmers recently attacked a peasant training center and killed a number of people, including several priests. Do we want to be a part of that kind of injustice?

The infant mortality rate in Honduras is six times that of the United States. Probably 60 percent of the children in Honduras die before they reach the age of five. Three-quarters of them die from malnutrition. Who is responsible for those dying children? The wealthy Hondurans who want to protect their affluence? The American companies and the United States government who work closely with the Honduran elite? You and I who eat the beef that hungry Honduran children need?

We dare not make the simplistic assumption that if we merely stopped eating beef, hungry Mexicans or Hondurans promptly would have their share. Complex economic and political changes here and abroad are essential. But what I am trying to say is that our eating patterns are interlocked with destructive social and economic structures that leave millions hungry and starving. You and I are implicated in this sin, for we all profit from this kind of structural injustice.

BIBLE TEACHING ON THE OPPRESSION OF THE POOR

What should be our response to such a situation? For biblical people the answer is clear. Unless we want to fall into theological liberalism and allow our attitude toward the poor

and oppressed to be shaped by our affluent neighbors rather than Scripture, we will look to God's revelation for our sense of direction.

Two central biblical themes relate to our problem:

1. *God is on the side of the poor and works in history to bring justice to the oppressed.*
2. *Participating in institutionalized evil or structural sin is just as sinful as personal sinful acts like lying or committing adultery.*

First, God is on the side of the poor. Think about the pivotal points of revelation history: the Exodus, the destruction of Israel, the Incarnation. At the crucial moments when God displayed his [p. 74](#) mighty acts in history to reveal his nature and will, God also intervened to liberate the poor and the oppressed. God displayed his power at the Exodus in order to free oppressed slaves. When he called Moses at the burning bush God said his intention was to end suffering and injustice: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians" ([Ex. 3:7](#)). The God of the Bible cares when people enslave and oppress others, and at the Exodus he acted to end economic oppression and bring freedom.

The same was true of the destruction of Israel and Judah. The explosive message of the prophets is that God destroyed Israel not just because of idolatry but also because of their economic exploitation of the poor.

There is also the Incarnation. Jesus defines his mission like this: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" ([Luke 4:18, 19](#)). After reading those words he informed his audience that scripture was fulfilled in himself. The mission of God in the flesh was to free the oppressed and heal the blind. (It was also to preach the gospel, though that is not our immediate subject in this article.)

The poor are the only group specifically singled out as recipients of Jesus' gospel. Certainly the gospel was for everyone. But Jesus was concerned that the poor especially should realize that his good news was for them. Moreover, Jesus' actual ministry corresponded to his words. He healed the sick and blind; he fed the hungry; he warned his followers in the strongest possible terms that those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners will experience damnation.

At the supreme moment of history, then, when God himself took on human flesh, we see the God of Israel still at work liberating the oppressed and summoning his people to do the same.

The second element of the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor is that the Bible says that God acts in history to exalt the poor and cast down the rich. Mary's Magnificat puts it bluntly: "My soul praises the Lord.... He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled [p. 75](#) the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty" ([Luke 1:46, 52, 53](#)). James says: "Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you" ([James 5:11](#)).

IS GOD A MARXIST?

Why does Scripture declare that God regularly reverses the good fortunes of the rich? Is God a Marxist? Is God engaged in class warfare? I do not think so. Actually our texts never say that God *loves* the poor more than the rich. They say rather that God lifts up the poor and disadvantaged and casts down the wealthy and powerful. Why? Precisely because the wealthy have become rich very often by oppressing the poor, or because they have failed

to aid the needy! Why did James warn the rich to weep and wail? it was because they had oppressed their workers. James says, “You have hoarded wealth. The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter” ([James 5:3-5](#)). God does not have class enemies. But he hates and punishes injustice and the neglect of the poor. The rich are frequently guilty of both.

Long before the days of James, Jeremiah also knew that the rich were often rich because of oppression. He wrote, “Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch men. Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?” declares the Lord ...” ([Jer. 5:26-29](#)). Through the prophets God announced destruction both for rich individuals and rich nations who oppressed the poor. Isaiah also says this: “The Lord takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people. The Lord enters into judgement against the elders and leaders of his people: ‘It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?’ declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty” ([Isa. 3:13-15](#)). Because the rich oppress the poor and weak, the Lord of history will put down their houses and societies. p. 76

THE SIN OF NEGLECT OF THE NEEDY

Sometimes Scripture does not accuse the rich of direct oppression of the poor; it simply accuses them of failure to aid and share with the needy.

The biblical explanation of Sodom’s destruction is one example. Through the prophet Ezekiel God says that one important reason he destroyed Sodom was that she stubbornly refused to share with the poor. “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.... Therefore I did away with them as you have seen” ([Ezek. 16:29, 50](#)). The text does not say that they oppressed the poor, although perhaps they did. It simply says that they failed to aid the needy. Today affluent Christians remember Sodom’s sexual misconduct but forget her sinful unconcern for the poor. Is it because the former is less upsetting? Have we allowed our economic self-interest to distort our interpretation of Scripture? Undoubtedly we have. But precisely to the extent that our affirmation of scriptural authority is sincere, to that extent we must permit painful texts to correct our thinking. As we do, we will acknowledge in fear and trembling that the God of the Bible wreaks horrendous havoc on the rich because they often get rich by oppressing the poor or by failing to aid the needy.

BRINGING THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO THE TEST

The third part of the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor is that the people of God, if they really are the people of God, are also on the side of the poor. God’s Word clearly teaches that those who neglect the poor are really not God’s people at all, no matter how frequent their religious rituals or how orthodox their creeds and confessions. God thundered through the prophets again and again that worship in the context of mistreatment of the poor and the disadvantaged is an outrage against him.

One of many examples is Amos. "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them ... But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" ([Amos 5:21-24](#)). Earlier in this chapter the prophet had condemned the powerful for oppressing the poor. They had bribed the judges to prevent redress in the courts. He says that God wants justice from such people and not merely religious p. 77 rituals. Such worship is a mockery of the God of Scripture (Cf. [Isa. 58:3-7](#)).

God has not changed. Jesus repeated the same thing. He warned the people about those who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. Their pious garments and frequent visits to the synagogue are a sham, he said.

The warning of Jesus and the prophets against religious hypocrites raises an extremely difficult question for us. Are the people of God really the people of God at all if they oppress the poor? Is the church really the church at all if it does not work to free the oppressed? Through the prophets God declared that the people of Israel were actually Sodom and Gomorrah rather than his people because of their exploitation of the poor and weak. Jesus was even more blunt. He said that to those who do not feed the hungry and clothe the naked he will speak the terrifying word at the final judgement: "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" ([Matt. 25:41](#)). The meaning is clear. Jesus intends his disciples to imitate his own special concern for the poor and the oppressed. Those who disobey are not his and will therefore experience damnation.

Lest we forget this warning, God repeats it in 1 John. "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" ([1 John 3:17](#)). What do these words mean for western Christians who demand increasing affluence every year while fellow Christians and others in the Third World suffer malnutrition, even starvation? The text clearly says that if we fail to aid the needy, we do not have God's love, no matter what we say. It is deeds that count, not pious phrases or saintly speeches. Regardless of what creeds we confess or what religious experience we claim, affluent people who neglect the poor are not the people of God at all. That is what Scripture seems to say.

Still the question haunts me. Are professing believers no longer Christians because of continuing sin? Well, obviously not. The Christian knows that even the most saintly are still, as Luther said, "Just stinking sinners." We are members of the people of God, not because of our own good works and righteousness, but solely because of Christ's death for us on the cross. That is true and crucial. But we have to say more. All the texts that we have explored surely mean more than that the people of God are disobedient (but justified all the same) when they neglect the poor. p. 78 The verses we have looked at pointedly assert that some people so disobey God that they are not his people at all, in spite of their pious profession. Neglect of the poor is one oft-repeated sign of that kind of disobedience.

To summarize: Scripture says at the pivotal points of revelation history that God was at work liberating the oppressed. His passion for justice compels him to wipe out rich societies and individuals that oppress the poor or neglect to help them. Consequently, God's people, if they are indeed his people, follow in the footsteps of the God of the poor.

GUILT AND INSTITUTIONALISED EVIL

The second biblical theme is the teaching that sin is both personal and structural. There is an important difference between consciously willed individual acts like, say, lying to a friend or committing an act of adultery, and participation in evil social structures. But both are bad. Slavery is an example of an institutionalized evil. So is the Victorian factory

system where ten-year-old children worked twelve to sixteen hours a day. Both slavery and the factory system were legal, but they destroyed millions of people.

In the twentieth century, although not in the eighteenth or nineteenth, evangelical Christians have been mostly concerned with personal sins. Yet the Bible cares about both. Speaking through his prophet Amos the Lord declares, “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.” Why? Because “they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed (thus far the text is talking about oppression of the poor, but it goes on): Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name” ([Amos 2:6, 7](#)).

Biblical scholars have shown that some kind of legal fiction underlies the phrase “selling the needy for a pair of shoes.” This mistreatment of the poor was therefore legal, but nonetheless wrong, according to Amos. Moreover, God condemns sexual misconduct and legalized oppression of the poor together. So sexual sins and economic injustice are equally displeasing to him.

One of the tragedies of our own time is that some young activists have supposed that so long as they were fighting for the rights of minorities and opposing militarism they were morally [p. 79](#) righteous regardless of how often they shacked up for the night with a guy or a girl in the movement. Some of their parents, on the other hand, supposed that because they did not steal, lie or fornicate, they were therefore morally upright even though they lived in segregated communities and owned stock in companies that oppressed the poor of the earth. What Scripture says is that both those things are equally serious to God.

God also shows that laws themselves are sometimes an abomination to him. “Can a corrupt throne be allied with you—one that brings on misery by its decrees? They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But the Lord has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge. He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the Lord our God will destroy them” ([Ps. 94:20–23](#)). The Jerusalem Bible has an excellent rendition of verse [20](#)—“You never consent (that is, you never should consent) to that corrupt tribunal that imposes disorder as law.” God wants his people to know that wicked governments sometimes frame mischief by statute. Or as the English Bible puts it: “They contrive evil under cover of law.”

There is one other side to social or institutionalized evil which makes it especially pernicious. Social evil is so subtle that one can be caught in it without realizing it.

For example, God inspired his prophet Amos to utter some of the harshest words in Scripture against the cultured, kind, upper-class women of his day. “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, ‘Bring us some drinks!’ The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness: ‘The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks’ ” ([Amos 4:1, 2](#)). The women involved probably had very little contact with the impoverished peasants. They may never have realized clearly that their gorgeous clothes and spirited parties were possible only because of the sweat and tears of the poor. They may even have been kind to the individual peasants they met. But God called these privileged women “cows” because they profited from social evil. Hence, they were personally and individually guilty before God.

If one is a member of a privileged class, profits from social evil and does nothing to try to change it, then one stands guilty before God. For structural evil is just as sinful as personal sin. Besides, it hurts more people and is much more subtle. [p. 80](#)

PROBLEMS IN THEOLOGY SHAPED BY ECONOMIC PREFERENCES

In light of this quick sketch of the biblical teaching about God being on the side of the poor and against both individual and institutionalized or structural sin, let us ask the question: Are we trapped in structural evil on the whole question of world hunger and the underlying causes?

We have seen that the Bible teaches that God is on the side of the poor and that he cares as much about structural evil as about personal sins. Well then, how does the evangelical community in North America measure up to this teaching? Certainly there are some encouraging new developments. But if we are honest we must confess that most evangelicals are on the side of the rich, not the poor. And most evangelicals are not very much concerned about these injustices.

What has gone wrong? Obviously many things. But at the heart it is a theological problem.

We have fallen into the unbiblical view that orthodoxy is more important than orthopraxis, that is, that correct doctrine is more significant than obedient living. Surely that is wrong. John says bluntly that any claim to know and love God which is divorced from active love for the hungry neighbor is hypocrisy ([1 John 3:17](#)). and the converse is also true, for it is precisely 1 John that insists just as strongly that anyone who does not confess that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God is anti-Christ. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis are both important.

Yet the problem goes deeper. It is not just that we have adopted the unbiblical view that orthodoxy is more important than orthopraxis. At some very important points, even our theology has not been orthodox. The fact that God is on the side of the poor, that it is an essential aspect of the very nature of God to work to liberate the oppressed, is one of the central biblical doctrines. The bible has just as much—in fact a good deal more—to say about this doctrine than it does about Jesus' resurrection. Yet evangelicals insist on the Resurrection as a criterion of orthodoxy and largely ignore the other.

Do not misunderstand. I am not saying that the Resurrection is unimportant. The bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is absolutely central to Christian faith, and anyone who denies it or says it is unimportant has fallen into heresy. But if centrality in Scripture is any criterion of doctrinal importance, then the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor ought to be an equally important doctrine for evangelicals. [p. 81](#)

Many of us have fallen into theological liberalism. We usually think of theological liberalism in terms of classical nineteenth-century liberals who denied the deity, atonement and bodily resurrection of Christ, and they were liberals. People who abandon those central biblical doctrines have fallen into heresy. But notice that the essence of theological liberalism is not so much in the specific error of the liberal thinker but rather in allowing our thinking and living to be shaped by the views and values of the surrounding society rather than by biblical revelation.

Liberal theologians thought that belief in the deity of Jesus Christ was incompatible with a modern, scientific world view. So they followed the surrounding scientific society rather than Scripture. Evangelicals rightly called attention to this heresy. But they tragically made exactly the same mistake, though in another area. They allowed the values of our affluent materialistic society to shape thinking and acting toward the poor. It is much easier in our society to insist on an orthodox Christology than to insist on the biblical teaching that God is on the side of the poor or that we sin when we participate in unjust economic structures. So we have allowed our theology to be shaped by the economic preference of our materialistic contemporaries rather than by Scripture.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Evangelicals have been insufficiently concerned with social justice because their theology has been unbiblical at important points. We have not been nearly as orthodox as we have claimed. But many really do want to follow Scripture wherever it leads. There are millions of evangelicals who are not yet very concerned about poverty and injustice but who truly love Jesus more than anything else. So for these we ask: What should we do? What should the response of Christian people be?

First, we should *repent* of this sin. What I have described is sin, and for Christians the only response to sin is repentance. Sin is not just an inconvenience or a terrible tragedy to our neighbors. It is an outrage against the Lord of the universe. If God's Word is true, then all who dwell in affluent nations are trapped in sin. We have profited from systemic injustice, sometimes only half-knowing, sometimes only half-caring, always half-hoping not to know. We are guilty of an outrageous offense against God and our neighbor.

But thank God, that is not his last word to us. If there were no [p.82](#) hope of forgiveness, then admission of our sinful complicity in evil of this magnitude would be an act of despair. But there is hope. The One who writes our indictment is the One who died for us sinners.

John Newton was captain of a slave ship in the eighteenth century. A brutal, callous man, he played a central role in an horrendous system which fed tens of thousands of people to the sharks and delivered millions to terrible oppression. But one day he saw his sin. He repented, and his familiar hymn overflows with joy and gratitude for God's forgiveness.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind ...*

For a while he did not understand his involvement in man's structural evil, and then he did.

*... but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.*

We are participants, I think, in a system that dooms even more people to agony and death than did slavery. But if we have eyes to see, God's grace will also teach our hearts to fear and tremble, and then also to repent and begin a whole new life style of concern and involvement with the oppressed.

Second, we must become *models* of a better way. We live at one of the great turning points in human history. The present division of the world's resources dare not continue, and it will not. Either courageous pioneers will persuade reluctant nations to share the good earth's bounty, or we will enter an era of catastrophic conflict.

Christians should be in the vanguard. The church of Jesus Christ is the most universal body in the world today. She needs only to obey the One whom we rightly worship. But to obey means to follow; and Jesus, whom we follow, lives among the poor and oppressed and seeks justice for those in agony. In our time, following in his steps will mean simple personal life styles. It will mean transformed churches with a corporate life style consistent with worship of the God of the poor. It will mean costly [p.83](#) commitment to structural change in secular society.