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not the numerical growth but the new type of ministry that the pastor and his church are carrying out.

Without a doubt many of our churches in Latin America have to be freed from their chains in order to serve other social segments. We must add that the challenge goes beyond the merely spiritual. It also includes the millions who cry out for social justice. The church cannot become deaf to that cry. We are told that we should see not only the effects of our social problems but also their causes, and then do something about them, in order to be consistent with our Christian faith.

This great challenge is unavoidable, and it has resulted in an awakening of social consciousness among evangelicals at the level of world consultations and congresses. The proof of that statement is seen in documents such as the Wheaton Declaration (1966), the Lausanne Covenant (1974), the Declaration on Evangelism and Social Responsibility (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), and the Documents of Group III, Wheaton Conference (1983). It appears that the process of reflection and conscientization on the social responsibility of the p. 119 evangelical church is irreversible. It has been a good step to begin with biblical and theological reflection on so controversial an issue. What many of us Latin American evangelicals hope is that those who are the most serene and stable in the biblical faith will participate, so that the evangelical church may fully assume its social responsibility without straying from the path marked out by the written revelation of God. May our *action* be motivated and directed, always and everywhere, by that *revelation*.

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Christian Witness Amidst Asian Poverty

Herman Moldez

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(It is said that just as the theology of mission occupied world christendom for the last three quarters of the century, the theme of poverty would occupy Christians world over for the next quarter at least. Doing theology in the Two-thirds World in general and Asia in particular, is impossible without a basic consideration of poverty as a theological category. For only by speaking to contemporary issues relevantly can theology be called theology. Though somewhat older in comparison with other articles (this was written before the revolution in Philippines) yet it is published here because it still speaks to the burning issues in the Philippines. Meant primarily for the youth, the article may lack theological as well as sociological precision but coming from the pen of a Two-thirds World evangelical, it needs to be read. Some of the examples given would also find a counterpart in other situations of poverty. This of course is one view. For other views, readers are directed to either Ron Sider's or Brian Griffiths writings.)

Ed.

Poverty affects a human person created in the image of God. And it dehumanizes man. To millions of people poverty means hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, injustice, disease, brain damage and agonizing death. To many people, to die may even be better than to live and suffer. Poverty demands a concrete response, not empty words.

We live in a world of extreme poverty and affluence, There are now more than 4 billion people living on this planet Earth. One fifth of them (about 800 million) are destitute. All over the world, more than 80,000 people suffer from malnutrition and contract some related disease due to hunger every 48 hours. Every day about 10,000 of them starve to death. Meanwhile more than one fifth live in affluence—consuming four-fifths of the world’s income. While millions succumb to hunger and death, the affluent minority spend \$10 billion a year on cosmetics alone!¹ What is the Christian response?

GOD AND THE POOR

As we ponder the creation account in Genesis, we conclude that poverty is not God’s original plan for man. God placed man in a **P. 121** paradise—abundant in food. The garden was planted with all kinds of trees, both ‘pleasing to the eye and *good for food*’ ([Gen. 2:9](#))—all for man’s sustenance. God said: ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden’ ([Gen. 2:16](#), [1:29b](#)). But there was one prohibition: ‘You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die’ ([Gen. 2:17](#)).

Man failed the test! He rebelled. In defiance he ate the fruit and surely he died—spiritually, physically.

Because man rebelled against God, he was banished from the garden ([Gen. 3:23](#)). His disobedience made him a sinner and cut him off from a living relationship with a holy God. Also as a consequence life became hard, for God cursed the ground. Thorns and thistles would grow from it. Food would be difficult to produce. In order to eat, man would struggle in painful *toil*² all the days of his life ([Gen. 3:17–18](#)). It is to the Fall that we can ultimately trace back human misery and related poverty.

While poverty is related to man’s disobedience, God still longs to liberate man from it. God shows a deep concern for the poor. One primary reason that prompted God to act for the redemption of Israel was this: ‘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 and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey ...’ ([Ex. 3:7–8](#)). God was not only aware of the suffering and poverty of His people—seeing their misery and hearing their cry; He was concerned; so He acted in power to liberate them from bondage and provide them with a land flowing in milk and honey.

From the Psalms we again read these words: ‘Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he sits them with princes, with the princes of their people ...’ ([Ps. 113:5–9](#)). What makes God unique according to the psalmist is this: He does not only reign on high and look down from there on human misery, but from above God condescends with deep compassion to raise up the poor below. The Lord is a compassionate God, especially to the poor and outcast. He transforms the pauper to a prince (v.[8](#)) and the barren woman (regarded with disgrace) to a happy mother of children (v.[9](#)). Indeed God cares for the poor and destitute. **p. 122**

¹ Time Magazine, 11 December 1978: *Cosmetics: Kiss and Sell*.

² Work is God’s mandate in paradise ([Gen. 2:15](#)). After the Fall, work became *toil*.

To safeguard His command to be concerned for the poor, God instituted laws that secure material benefits for those living in poverty. Since the poor will always be around, God commanded His people to be openhanded and generous to the poor and needy ([Deut. 15:7-11](#)). When they lend money, no interest must be charged. When they sell food to the poor, no profit must be gained ([Ex. 22:25](#) and [Lev. 25:36-37](#)). Employers on the other hand must pay their workers' wages promptly, on the very day that they are earned ([Lev. 19:13](#); [Deut 24:14-15](#)). So God's concern is that the poor must be treated with kindness and fairness. The rich must not take advantage of the poor in their dealings with them.

Consequently the whole agricultural society of Israel was structured to maintain economic assistance to the needy and to prevent further perpetuation of poverty among God's people. The farmers must *tithe* all the produce of their lands ([Lev. 27:30-33](#); [Deut. 12:17-18](#), [14:22-29](#); [Num. 18:21-32](#)). One tenth of their harvests must be set aside to build some kind of economic reserve—for the Levites who don't have any material inheritance and for the widows and fatherless who have no one to support them. When harvesting they should always leave something for the poor and sojourners. They must not reap their fields to the very borders and they must not strip bare their vineyards—this is called the law of *gleaning* (see [Lev. 19:9-10](#); [Deut. 24: 19-21](#)). Every seventh year all lands in Israel must lie unploughed and unused ([Ex. 23:1-10](#); [Lev. 25:2-7](#)). Agriculturally it preserves the fertility of the land. But more than that, it is 'for the poor ... who may get food from it' ([Ex. 23:11b](#)). At this time also slaves who have served for six years are liberated and sent away with enough capital to start a decent life. Lastly, all debts incurred during the past years are cancelled. This is presumably to restrict the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor for as God said, 'there should be no poor among you ...' Furthermore, to equalize land ownership, properties are returned to their respective owners every 50th year—the year of *Jubilee* ([Lev. 25](#)). This is because God owns the land ([Lev. 25:23](#)). So He demands that those who have lost their property right will regain it to be able to start their own way of life.

From the above discussion we take note that concern for the poor is not just an individual responsibility but must be structured in the life of the whole society. The state's economic policies must be designed to eliminate poverty, not to perpetuate it. Now if God's principles of concern for the poor are reflected in the legislation of government policies, then the needy will be protected, not exploited, and poverty will be alleviated, not perpetuated. p. 123

Of course Old Testament Israel was different. It was a theocracy. But still God's laws are for all mankind. While it is true that God's laws are primarily for the people of God—Israel and the Church—they have a universal character and application. Long before Israel became a nation, God's laws were already in effect which all men were to obey (see [Gen. 2:17](#), [2:2](#), [9:6](#) cf. [Ex. 20:11](#); [Deut. 5:16](#)). And these laws are now written in man's conscience ([Rom. 2:14-16](#)). Thus the laws given directly to Israel were meant to be applied even to strangers ([Ex. 22:21-23](#)). This must be so because God is the Lord and Creator of all mankind.

But for God's laws to influence government policies, Christians must get involved in political affairs as part of showing concern for the poor. Political involvement to work for reforms so that the state will be more responsive to human misery should be part of the Christian calling and vocation. An example from history is William Wilberforce who was a member of the British Parliament and a committed Christian. Through his persistent campaign for political reforms and intelligent propaganda with the Clapham Sect, he was able to get a law passed banning Englishmen from getting involved in the slave trade. What happened in England must not remain history. We in Asia must be able to pursue it once again in our own generation.

JUSTICE AND POVERTY

Poverty is not just an economic misfortune that befalls people. It is also caused by social injustice committed by those in power—the rich and the rulers—or by unjust structures. But God takes the side of the poor and helps them to fight for justice. God ‘stands at the right hand of the needy’ ([Ps. 109:31](#)). ‘The Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted and executes justice for the needy’ ([Ps. 140:12](#)). Indeed God demands justice for the poor.

The law of Moses forcefully emphasized the need for impartiality in the law courts: ‘You shall not pervert the justice due to the poor in his suit.’ ‘You shall take no bribe.’ ‘You shall not oppress an alien, orphan or widow.’ ([Ex. 23:6ff](#); [Lev. 19:15](#); [Deut. 24:17, 27:19](#).) Why? Because they themselves had been oppressed and the Lord had liberated them—giving them justice ([Deut. 15:15](#)).

The Psalms, on the other hand, exhorted the judges to ‘give justice to the weak and fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute’ ([Ps. 82](#); see also [Prov. 22:22ff](#)).

During the monarchical period, there arose a widespread injustice committed against the poor masses. But God opposed it, sending His [p. 124](#) prophets to denounce it and to warn the perverters of justice of the impending anger of the Lord. Amos’ words can summarize the prophets’ plea: ‘Let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream’ ([5:24](#)); while Isaiah echoed the prophets’ warning: ‘Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and rob my oppressed people of justice ... What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster from afar ...?’ ([10:1-4](#)).

The prophets revealed too that the affluence of some was directly related to a perversion of justice. Amos had pointed out that the affluent lifestyle of Israel ([6:1-7](#)) was a result of trampling on the poor and denying justice to the oppressed ([2:7, 4:1, 5:11](#)). Similarly, the prophet Jeremiah exposed and rebuked king Jehoiakim for building a luxurious palace ‘by injustice’, by forced labour ([22:13ff](#)). In the New Testament, James made the same denunciation to the rich who have hoarded wealth and lived in luxury by not paying the wages of their workers ([James 5:1-6](#)).

The direct relationship of affluence to poverty that the prophets condemned is significant in our own time and situation. Many of those in the Third World are now convinced that the affluence of the elite minority is the factor for the worsening poverty of the masses in most underdeveloped countries. The late President Allende of Chile expressed this conviction in his famous speech to the United Nations: ‘Underdevelopment exists because imperialism exists, and imperialism exists because underdevelopment exists.’³ The same expression was used by Dennis Goulet: ‘Buried deep in the consciousness of the third world masses is the conviction that poverty is the by-product of wealth, the fruit of exploitation and injustice.’⁴ For example, the US Department of Commerce has revealed that between 1950 and 1965 American companies invested \$3,800 million in Latin America alone and received back a profit of \$11,300 million.⁵ In 1975, Third World countries had to pay \$20,800 millions just to service their overseas loans.⁶ This great wealth, says Waldron Scott is ‘accumulated through ... brutal and often bloody process,’ institutionalized and operated through international economic order.

³ Quoted by Samuel Escobar, *Christian Mission and Social Justice*, p. 37.

⁴ Ibid, p. 37.

⁵ New Internationalist, October 1978.

⁶ Ibid.

'The chief actors in the modern global economic system are those business enterprises known as multinational corporations or MNCs.'⁷ p. 125

While it is true that MNCs somehow help create new jobs and contribute aid for 'development', their operation undermines justice and is basically to the disadvantage of the underdeveloped nations. And those who suffer most are the poor, not the rich. In the Philippines, a new Western sandal factory was erected which provided work for 40 people but destroyed the local industry and consequently displaced its 5,000 workers, most of whom are poor.⁸ Another case in point was the building of a sintering plant in Northern Mindanao, Philippines by Kawatetsu, Kawasaki Steel, a Japanese-owned corporation. Because of its polluting effect the residents of Chiba Prefecture, where Kawasaki Steel has its mill, filed a lawsuit against the corporation to suspend construction of its sintering plant. Under the guise of giving economic help to the Filipino people, a sintering plant was transferred instead to the Philippines. But what has the consequence been of 'Japan's economic aid' to my countrymen? Some Filipino workers in the sintering plant are now suffering from asthma as a result of pollution. Dead fish have been found in the canal near the plant. Fishermen near the area have reported a sizeable decrease in the volume of their catch. To give way to the space needed for the plant, 110 households were evicted. In return, Kawasaki Steel employed only 75 persons from those households.⁹ As a consequence the already affluent Japanese benefited, but more of the Filipino people became ill and destitute.

Of course there are other ways in which injustice—social injustice that oppresses the poor—is committed in our respective countries. As concerned and committed Christian citizens, it will be our duty to pinpoint these social evils and boldly denounce them. Our God is on the side of the poor, so must we be.

What does it mean to take sides with the poor? How are we to promote justice in our society? To what extent can we be involved in denouncing social injustice? Is the prophetic ministry for the Church as well? If so, how?

In the Philippines, taking sides with the poor can be a life and death situation. It is to take the risk of being labelled guilty of subversive activities to win the confidence of the poor masses for a violent overthrow of the government. And indeed there are church leaders (both Protestant and Catholic) who have already opted to support and join the rebel groups to fight injustice and to liberate the poor from oppressive power structures. Others just limit their activities to giving p. 126 material aid and self-help programmes of 'development', but close their eyes to the blatant injustice happening around them.

So far our discussion of poverty and affluence has been set within the context of society in general where there are both believers and unbelievers. For Israel, whose laws were directly derived from God, had a majority who were idolatrous and exploiters. Only a minority remained faithful to the Lord. But the closer a society builds its laws to God's mandate for economic provision for the poor and for preserving justice for the needy and powerless, the healthier and more responsive the relationship between the poor and the affluent will be. Poverty may not be completely eliminated, but at least the poor will be served with compassion and justice. So Christians, as 'salt and light of the world' must get involved in the affairs and shaping of society as part of their calling to care for and to champion the cause of the poor. Not only that, the Christian community must reflect a

⁷ *Bring Forth Justice*, Waldron Scott (Eerdmans), p. 136

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 134.

⁹ *The Nationalist Alternative*, Renato Constantino, pp. 27–28.

model for a godly relationship between the rich and the poor. So now, let's concentrate our study on the Church.

SHARING OF WEALTH IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The relationship between Christians is governed by two principles unity and love. Both love and unity are expressed not only in spiritual terms but also in terms of material and economic sharing.

John poses this question: 'If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of Christ be in him?' ([1 John 3:17](#)). Love must be concrete and practical. It shares with those in need. Although the poor Christians may have no rightful claim to the wealth of their more affluent brethren, nevertheless, the rich Christians have an inescapable moral duty to extend material help to those in great need. And while our responsibility to do good because of love is first to our brethren, we must extend charity all men. As Paul instructed us: 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers' ([Gal. 6:10](#)). To show love by serving those in need is to follow what our Master did, who 'went around doing good' ([Acts 10:38](#)) because of His deep compassion for the people.¹⁰

The Christians in Jerusalem experienced a deep sense of unity: 'All the believers were one n heart and mind' ([Acts 4:32](#)). This unit found concrete expression in the sharing of their wealth and property. 'No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared p. 127 everything they had' ([Acts 4:32b](#)). Indeed among the early disciples, 'there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them ...' ([Acts 4:34](#)). What a vivid description of their strong and deep commitment to one another and sincere love for each other. They viewed their wealth and possessions as being for the benefit of the whole Christian community. This was not a forced collectivization of property. It was voluntary (cf. [Acts 5:4](#)), for others still retained some of their private property (see [Acts 2:46](#); [5:4](#)). But when love and unity are strong, wealth becomes available for the needs of the community.

To be united in Christ is to foster some degree of economic equality. Paul explained this to the Corinthian Christians when trying to stir them up to continue collecting gifts for the famine-stricken Christians in Judea. 'Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality' ([2 Cor. 8:13-14](#)). However, extending help should not create unnecessary burdens and dependence, but should rather lift our brethren from poverty so that they may rise to an equal status with those who have more materially. Such concern arises only from a mature understanding of our spiritual oneness in Christ and of our equal standing before the Lord (see [Gal. 3:28](#)). If we are truly one in Christ then we must not hesitate to share our affluence with our needy brethren so that their poverty may be alleviated. As it is written, 'He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little' ([2 Cor. 8:15](#); [Ex. 16:18](#)).

The Chinese in the Philippines have unwittingly applied this principle of helping one another to foster some degree of economic equality. They started poor. At the beginning they were just small 'sari-sari' store (variety store) owners and street peddlers of meat dumplings and noodles. Now they are owners of the big supermarkets and first class restaurants. One estimate contends that they own 40% of the total resources of banks

¹⁰ For a down-to-earth study of Jesus' compassion for people, John R. W. Stott's book, *Walk in His Shoes* (IVP) is a must.

(excluding government and foreign bank branches) in the Philippines today. At one time they accounted for 45% of the total sales volume of the top 200 Philippine corporations.¹¹ In fact, in the Philippines to be a Chinese is almost synonymous with being moneyed.

What accounts for their sudden rise to affluence?

A key factor is their community spirit and concern to help one another as fellow Chinese to improve economically. They have a strong sense of oneness. Some financial assistance is extended to members of the Chinese community as capital for business to help fellow Chinese become economically productive. A Chinese friend of my family for example was given three chances until he finally got established in business. And in Chinese establishments, fellow Chinese are given first preference for employment. Indeed, their common Chinese heritage is demonstrated by extending help to give each one an equal opportunity to get out of poverty.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS

God's concern is clear: the affluent must help those in extreme want. However, most people today never take the poor seriously. The heartbreaking situation is, while millions suffer in poverty, the rich minority continues to live in luxury. Thousands of people have hardly anything to eat, but others waste food extravagantly.

A major cause of man's self-centred hoarding of wealth and maintaining an ostentatious lifestyle is his basic attitude towards wealth and possessions. It is natural for man to idolize riches. He has an insatiable desire for more and for more and more—even to the extent of violating his neighbour's basic God-given rights. Money and wealth matter more than people who are created in the image of God.

It is important then that we understand what the Bible teaches about wealth and possessions. Is it worldly to be affluent? Are we called to live frugally?

1. God owns everything

'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein' ([Ps. 24:1](#), see also [Job 41:11](#); [Ps. 50:12](#); [Deut. 26:10](#); [1 Chron. 29:14](#)). God is the creator of heaven and earth. Everything belongs to Him. He is the source of all the material blessings we enjoy. Because of His grace 'He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous' ([Mt. 5:45](#)). So God alone has an absolute right over the natural riches of the earth.

Man, on the other hand, is appointed to exercise dominion over the rest of creation. He is appointed a trustee of God's world. Man's trusteeship carries with it an obligation to use God's resources efficiently and productively. He has no right to devour the world wealth for himself alone but must make it available for others as well. God's world is entrusted to all men; so each one must give his fellowmen an opportunity to taste the goodness of the Lord. [p. 129](#)

2. All things richly to enjoy

All things God has created are given to us to enjoy ([1 Tim. 4:4, 6:17b](#)). Therefore we should not feel guilty for enjoying God's rich material gifts. We are not ascetics, denying ourselves God's good blessings.

But we can succumb to another extreme—the danger of materialism, 'the love of money' ([1 Tim. 6:10](#)), of wealth, of possessions, of material things. 'Materialism is not the

¹¹ Renato Constantino, p. 37.

mere possession of material things, but an unhealthy obsession with them.’¹² It is the ‘harmful *desire* that plunges men to ruin and destruction’ ([1 Tim. 6:9](#)). To possess wealth is not wrong, but it is wrong to be possessed by wealth.

How are we to enjoy things without being tyrannized by them? First, we must receive material things ‘with *thanksgiving*’ ([1 Tim. 4:4](#)). We must acknowledge that they are good gifts to praise the Lord for, not things to be coveted and idolized. Second, we must learn to be *content* ([1 Tim. 6:6–8](#)). Contentment is the recognition that ‘we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it’ ([1 Tim. 6:7](#)). It is to be satisfied by simply having the basic necessities of life. ‘If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that’ ([1 Tim. 6:7](#)). It is to say ‘enough is enough’. Thirdly, we must learn to *share*. The rich must be rich, that is: ‘rich in good deeds, generous and willing to share’ ([1 Tim. 6:18](#)). For the richness that God has entrusted to us is for everybody’s enjoyment. And it is when we share generously that we begin to enjoy fully all the things that God has blessed us with. Yes, there is deep joy in sharing with those in need.

3. Laying up treasure in heaven

To share, Paul said, is to ‘lay up treasure for themselves ... for the coming age’ ([1 Tim 6:19](#)). This is an echo of Jesus’ teaching to his disciples to store up heavenly treasure instead of earthly treasure ([Mt. 6:19–21](#)).

This does not mean that Jesus favours poverty and condemns making provision for the future. He is contrasting the value of two treasures: earthly treasure is contemporary and corruptible while heavenly treasure is eternal and incorruptible. Jesus wants his disciples to put their value on eternal things rather than on material possessions. It is also an injunction to develop an eternal perspective while living in this world.

These two values compete with each other, each one demanding our wholehearted commitment. ‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’ ([Mt. 6:21](#)). It is impossible to be loyal to both; we [p.130](#) hate the one and love the other ([Mt. 6:24](#)). Earthly treasure is dangerous. Unless we know our priority and maintain it, it will draw us away from our supreme loyalty to the Master.

Jesus demands our utmost and undivided commitment to put our material concerns in His care. We should not worry about our material needs because our heavenly Father knows them all and promises to provide for them as well. If our priority is right, we will never lack anything. ‘Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you all well’ ([Mt. 6:33](#)), Jesus assures us. So what we need is to live in full submission to our Lord and His will, and in Him to find an inner solitude that transcends the materialistic aspirations of this present evil age.

The Christian view of wealth and possessions is a healthy one. It neither condemns private ownership or possessions nor idolizes material things. It views material prosperity as a good gift from God to be enjoyed unashamedly and to be shared generously. It liberates us from the agony of being consumed by wealth, having placed all our material concern in the loving care of our heavenly Father. By submitting to the lordship of Christ, we find freedom to live untroubled by the world’s materialism and we find joy to help those in great material need.

WHAT CHRISTIANS CAN DO

1. Learn to live simply

¹² John R. W. Stott, *The Christian and the Poor*, All Souls Papers.

Those who are affluent must radically and sacrificially adjust their lifestyle to the basic necessities of life to be able to share with those in need. 'Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple lifestyle in order to contribute to both relief and evangelism,' so states the Lausanne Covenant. Or as aptly stated: 'Live simply so that others may simply live.' It means saying 'no' to many non-essential things being advertised on the consumer market, not because we consider those things as essentially evil, but because we want to be good stewards, generous and kind to the poor.

Simplicity results from godly contentment. To be content is to be satisfied with the basic *needs* of life. It rejects waste and clutter. It enjoys the good things of creation but is not greedy and covetous of them. 'It wants to be free of distraction, in order to love and serve God and others.'

'... we resolve to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing and housing, travel and church buildings. We also accept p. 131 the distinction between necessities and luxuries, creative hobbies and empty status symbols, modesty and vanity, occasional celebrations and normal routine, and between service of God and slavery to fashion. Where to draw the line requires conscientious thought and decision by us, together with members of our family ...'¹³

Whenever developing a simple lifestyle, the temptation is to impose hard rules and regulations upon each other. In doing so we fall into the trap of legalism. But our commitment is not to simplicity but to Jesus. We want to be sacrificial because we want to follow Jesus' example of being compassionate to the poor. We will want to live simply to be obedient disciples of Christ in an age of great poverty and hunger.

2. Exercise our profession to serve the poor

Generally we have emphasized the need to consider our profession as our vocation, and to realize that as Christian doctors, engineers, businessmen, nurses, lawyers etc. we are to seize opportunities to share our faith with our colleagues and strive to wrestle with issues related to our profession and present the Christian alternative or perspective of them. This is a noble vision. But it is still lacking in terms of exercising our profession to serve the poor.

What we need today is more Christian doctors who will be willing to go to rural areas to offer medical assistance to the poor;¹⁴ Christian lawyers who will defend the powerless to secure justice for their cause; Christian businessmen who will not suck the blood of the poor for profit; Christian agriculturalists who will help the farmers improve their farming techniques; Christian politicians who will oppose corruption in government; Christian teachers who will brave the remote corners of the earth to engage in literacy programmes.

To exercise our profession in the service of the underprivileged is to serve others without expecting material gain in return.

It is to give up our 'small ambitions' and to be willing to be regarded as unsuccessful by the world's standard. For many Christian graduates this is where the struggle lies, simply because they have adopted a distorted view of success.

Many view success in terms of material prosperity and career advancement. On the contrary, the Christian must view success in terms of doing the will of God. It does not matter whether we receive p. 132 the world's applause and recognition as long as we are

¹³ *An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle*, held at Hoddesdon, England 17–21 March 1980.

¹⁴ In the Philippines, while 70% of medical needs are in the rural areas, most physicians tend to flock to Metro Manila and urban centres simply because they have better paid clients' there. *Bulletin Today*, 5 December 1982.

faithful in serving the Lord whether it be in the remotest district. To serve the poor as a calling from God with the rest of our life is to be successful in the eyes of God.

3. Seek changes that promote justice on behalf of the poor

We have already pointed out that the situation of social injustice causes the poverty of many; that in our times, it has been established that extreme poverty and excessive wealth are perpetuated through unjust structures.¹⁵ The Lausanne Covenant again states, ‘All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the *injustices which cause it ...*’ Unless there is some degree of structural change the rich will become richer while the poor will become poorer. I don’t suggest the possibility of any earthly utopia nor do I advocate violence as the only way to achieve a more just society. However, the Christian cannot remain a pessimist explaining the unjust order simply as part of the deterioration of the world. To stand by and let the status quo lie undisturbed is to take sides—the side of those in power who deprive the oppressed and powerless of justice. The Christians must get involved, expressing the lordship of Christ ‘in their political, social and economic commitment and their love for their neighbours by taking part in the political process.’ Christians must initiate reforms—in government and in society at large—to bring about changes that will promote fairness towards the poor. In practice, what can we do to contribute to changes in structures?

First, *pray for the rulers of the state* ([1 Tim. 2:1-2](#)). Pray that in the exercise of their power they may be just and kind in dealing with the poor and afflicted (see [Ps. 72:2, 4, 12-13](#)). If those in power are really established by God, our prayers can influence the rulers to function closely to their God-given authority.

Second, *become responsible citizens*—not just in paying our taxes and casting our votes, but also in actively supporting the state’s just and humane policies. It also involves firm insistence on our civil and political rights, demanding that the civil authorities function faithfully and honestly in the performance of their duties. For example we see Paul insisting on his civil rights as a Roman citizen. He insisted that the magistrates should escort him out of jail to demand his rights for just protection by the state ([Acts 16:35-40](#)).

Third, *those who have training and competence must be encouraged to get involved in politics* and to influence government legislation. As [p. 133](#) they do this, we must commit ourselves to backing them up fully and wholeheartedly especially by our prayer and encouragement.

Fourth, *shape public opinion through the available public forums* for example by writing articles in secular magazines or by presenting papers on our position to people of influence—politicians and the media. To do so, we should engage in study and research to be thoroughly conversant with the issues involved. This should include educating the Christian community regarding the prevailing sociopolitical realities to ‘clarify their vision and raise their expectations’.

Fifth, *co-operate with all men of goodwill*. God is Lord of all. So He is not limited to using Christians as His instruments of justice. In the Old Testament, the pagan ruler Cyrus was called to be God’s shepherd ([Is. 44:28](#)). Today, there are men and secular organizations who are equally concerned for the poor and for promoting a more just and humane society. We should be willing and prepared to work with them and to support them.

To work for change in structures will entail great risk. Part of our Christian calling, however, is to be willing to suffer, even to the extent of giving our life to promote justice and righteousness. ‘It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good ...’ ([1 Peter 3:17](#)).

¹⁵ *Bring Forth Justice*, Waldron Scott, pp. 132–143.

The Evangelical Heritage of Australian Protestantism

David Parker

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(This thoroughly documented article by David Parker gives an historical perspective on Australian Evangelicalism up to the early eighties. It traces not only the strength and the growing influence of Evangelicalism in this continent but also honestly faces the question of polarisation among the Australian Christians as well as the need for greater theological creativity. The article also reveals that Australian evangelicalism is closer to its American counterpart than the Asian!)

—Ed.

Australia's oldest Protestant heritage is evangelical. It has persisted as an important force in the religious life of the country for almost two hundred years, even if it has not had the same prominent impact that the 'Born Again' movement and revivalism in general has had in U.S.A.¹ There have been periods, however, when the evangelical strength has been considerable and its influence widespread.² The Graham Crusade of 1959 was perhaps the most notable of these occasions.³

However this was not an isolated occasion; around the turn of the century, for example, the visits of Rev. G. Grubb and evangelists R. A Torrey, J. W. Chapman and C. M. Alexander aroused wide interest and created a deep and lasting impression.⁴

I. THE EXTENT OF EVANGELICALISM IN AUSTRALIA

Evangelicalism in Australia, as in other countries, flourishes within the Protestant denominations and also in a large number of para-church or inter-denominational agencies. P. 135

¹ R. Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals* (New York, Harper and Row, 1978), 3f. *Newsweek*, June 20, 1970, 42-47.

² J. E. Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas* (Minneapolis, Bethany, 1976), chs. 8, 15, 20, 21.

³ C. P. Skinner, 'Australia's 1959 Awakening', *The Australian Evangelical*, vol 5 no 2, Nov-Dec 1977, 7-9. *Current Affairs Bulletin*, June 1959, 'Billy Graham in Australia'. S. B. Babbage and I. Siggins, *Light Beneath the Cross* (Kingswood, The World's Work, 1960), 2f. A. Nichols and W. Olsen, *Crusading Down Under* (Minneapolis, World Wide Publications), 1970, 6.

⁴ E. C. Millard, *What God hath Wrought* (London, E. Marlborough, 1891 (?) C. P. Skinner, 'Giants in the Land', a 10-part series beginning in *The Australian Evangelical*, vol 2 no 4, Jan 1975, 9.