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ROBERT J. WERBERIG

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The Christian and Social Responsibility

ROBERT J. WERBERIG

What is the Christian's role in the many-faceted, restless, and paradoxical society of the 60s? Should his function as a Christian citizen include more than merely "holding a private opinion" on the issues of our times? Does his commitment to Christ imply something more than "contributing to welfare" in face of the fact that over two-thirds of his generation lives out life under starvation conditions? Is there a valid place for the voice *and* action of Christianity within the vortex of change, which today upsets whole cultures, often with crushing and dehumanizing effects to people? Is it the duty of Christ's church to be involved in the "secular" process of change—to act as initiator, accelerator, or inhibitor of social change—and thereby to seek to influence the motions of historical development along lines it feels are in keeping with the will of God for His creation? Are these times in which our church and other denominations of American and worldwide Christendom must feel

compelled to unite their efforts as well as their voices in demonstration to "the powers that be" of the judgment and blessing that the Lord of history levels on the affairs of men and nations? These are some of the questions to which 13 graduate students addressed themselves at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis as they studied the role of the responsible Christian in 20th-century society during the past school year. What follows is a statement of their findings.

I. THE BIBLICAL BASIS

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein; for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers" (Ps. 24:1-2). Far from spinning out their existence in absurd and accidental fashion, the universe, life, and human society have purpose and meaning. Their roots go back to the creative wisdom and power of the living God. Because He made it, this is His world, His mankind; and the original perfection of His total creation (Gen. 1:31) was a reflection of His own divine perfection.

Crowning God's visible creation, and made in His own image, is man. Under God, he is accorded a place of partnership with his Creator as custodian over creation (Ps. 8:5-8). He shares in the processes of furthering basic order in the structure of things (Gen. 2:19-23) and is given the role of lord over nature. It is at this point that man's continuing responsibility for the conditions of his environment can be

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clearly seen. He has been commissioned by his Creator to share in the work of controlling nature for his own comfort and good and to the glory of the God he serves.

But the male of the human species was not to rule alone. The scope of his responsibility and privilege was not limited solely to "things." The creation of woman signaled the beginning of human interdependence in society, an interdependence inherent in the Biblical directives to be fruitful and multiply and to subdue the earth in a joint cooperation with one another and with the Lord Himself (Gen. 1:27-30). Man's existence, function, and purpose were enriched by human association.

In the Biblical account the disruption of this perfect relation of man with nature and his fellowman in the presence of God occurs with man's transgression of the limitations God had set to his use of things created (Gen. 2:16 f.). A basic disorder is introduced into the natural realm. Nature rebels against human rule. The ground withholds fruit, and man's toil is complicated by hardship and obstacle (Gen. 3:17b-19a). Animals fear man and avoid his presence (Gen. 9:2). The whole creation begins to suffer a tortured yearning as it languishes under the bondage of a sin-fostered disharmony. (Rom. 8:19-21)

A basic change has likewise taken place at the very core of the human being. In consequence of his transgression, man becomes both victim and servant of the rebellious forces of sin and death (Rom. 5:17a). These demonic powers also invade the domain of his relations with his fellowman. The primeval oneness of man, once native to his being and his fundamental

mission of continued creation, is now interrupted by dislocation, isolation, suspicion, fear, and self-concern, crippling the potential for human fulfillment. The results are clear. Nature both is and is not subject to mankind. Man is simultaneously slave and spoiler of the world. Toward the other man he is both helpmeet and hindrance, friend and enemy, promise of help and threat of destruction. Nonetheless, man still continues as object of God's loving concern. The Biblical record makes it plain that it is fallen man to whom the assurance is given: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). Even in the post-diluvian world man receives the commission from his Creator-God: "Be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it" (Gen. 9:7). Natural and social orders continue as witnesses of the fundamental concern of God for the well-being of His creatures, and by these man is invited to seek that Lord "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 14:17; 17:26-28). Despite the presence of renegade elements in them, God still controls the arena of nature and history. Within this arena He reveals His righteous will and effects His gracious purpose of reconciling mankind to Himself and of restoring to mankind all that sin's presence in the world has alienated from Him and/or subjected to limitations not in keeping with His original intentions.

God's plan of restoration is implemented in His calling of Abraham and Israel for the working out of His purposes. At the Exodus He graciously enters into covenant relationship with Israel, constituting that nation as His special people (Ex. 19:5-6)

and calling it to live under His rule and to be the instrument of His purposes for all mankind. (Deut. 7:6-10)

But Israel would be God's covenant nation only as it kept His law and exhibited His righteousness (Lev. 26:3-45). In this it failed, breaking its bond with God and losing all that this bond involved. Although God's judgment could have been total destruction, a faithful remnant remained to inherit the promises (Is. 7:3; 10:20-23) and to become the people through whom He would accomplish His universal work.

The consummation of God's purpose, the dynamic of His determination, and the establishment of His rulership come to their fullest fruition in *the* Israelite, Jesus of Nazareth. His advent is the perfect fulfillment of the Old Testament expectation that God would act decisively for the salvation of His people. (Is. 42:1-4; 44:1-4; 49; 52:13—53:12; Luke 4:18-20)

In what Jesus of Nazareth both is and does certain implications for the Christian and his social concern can be seen. Jesus sounds the call: "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel!" (Mark 1:15). His ministry also evidences the nature of that Kingdom as:

. . . the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them. (Matt. 11:5)

The coming of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ is the inauguration of a new *αἰών*, a new rule that comes as a transforming, redeeming, renewing energy (see the Kingdom parables, especially Matt. 13:31-33). Jesus' ministry is both the announcement and the demonstration to mankind of the

restoration of all those pristine attributes whose loss was effected by man's self-estrangement from God. Jesus' miracles witness to the ultimate peace toward which His kingdom moves (Mark 4:35-41; 5:1-13; 5:25-34; 8:1-10; 10:46-52, etc.) and which He already gives. Healing, restoration, the mitigation of suffering and handicap, reconciliation, wholeness, and enrichment—these are the coefficients of His witness to the presence of the kingly rule of God among men.

The proclamation of the kingdom of God presses the hearer for a decision. It challenges him to judge himself and his own position in the light of the Kingdom's revelation. With its summons to repentance, it provokes a radical reorientation, a 180-degree change of mind (*μετάνοια*), that begins a relationship with God similar to that which He established with His people on the Sinai plain (Ex. 19:6; see 1 Peter 2:9-10). The Kingdom's subjects are immediately thereafter sent into the world to be His ambassadors. (John 17:18)

Permeating this entire calling to serve in the world as God's "royal priests" (1 Peter 2:9) is an atmosphere of assurance and victory. The death of Jesus Christ is the paradoxical element by which God brings about conquest over the forces opposing His rule (see John 12:24). In the cross and resurrection of Christ, He dealt the decisive blow to the forces of evil (Col. 2:13-15). Subsequently, with all authority in heaven and on earth given to Him, Christ, the Servant-Victor, sends His apostles into the world as agents of His kingship, with the confidence that the very powers of death shall not prevail against it.

His apostles are to confess Him as the

Christ, the revealed Messiah, and to point men to Him as sole access into the presence of God (John 14:6). Under Christ's kingly rule men are united into an organic involvement with Him and other members of the body of Christ. Thereafter the mission of this mutually interactive community of believers is to carry on Christ's mission until the Last Day.

Key characteristics of the body of Christ as it performs this task are *κοινωνία* and *διακονία*. The fundamental meaning of *κοινωνία*, cognate of the verb *κοινωνέω*, is "having something in common with someone." The common participation of many joins them into a unity (1 Cor. 10:1-17). "Being of one heart and soul," the primitive Christian community possesses all things in common (Acts 4:32; 2:44 f.). Paul can apply the term *κοινωνία* to the collection raised by the Macedonians in behalf of the Christians in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13). Having become partakers (*κοινωνοί*) of the spiritual blessings of the people of God, the Gentile churches now "serve" the Jerusalem believers with material goods. (Rom. 15:28)

The term *κοινωνία*, reflecting as it does a relationship of Christians to Christ and also to one another, is also closely related to *διακονία* (Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12 f.) and *λειτουργία* (Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 9:12; see also Rom. 13:4-6). *Κοινωνία* describes the church's logistic orientation, while *διακονία* reflects its tactical method. If one remembers that care for the poor was a constant of Paul's ministry (Gal. 2:10), it becomes impossible to say that social responsibility was a minor concern of the apostle or that a dichotomy was maintained between "spiritual" ministry and "Christian charity."

Jesus said quite explicitly that He did not come to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27). The "greatest" among His followers is the one who becomes and is a servant like his Master (Matt. 23:11 and parallels; see also John 13:15-17). St. Paul sees his whole life and work as an apostle in the light and perspective of *διακονία* (Acts 20:24; Rom. 11:13; 2 Cor. 6:3; 1 Tim. 1:12), the issue and expression of his fundamental connection with Christ and His body. (2 Cor. 3:6; 3:9)

It is then within the arena of Christian fellowship, the empirical church, that the resources of those committed to the fulfillment of God's purpose on earth are marshaled for expenditure in service to and for the good of all men. And it is also through the obedient devotion of the body of Christ to its Lord that the Christian community in the world duplicates and continues the content of that essential ministry of Jesus Christ which results in the extension of the kingly rule into every level and dimension of contemporary life.

The church partakes of the natures both of the world and of the kingdom of God. With respect to her relation to the world, the church is a group among other groups; her members are citizens of the nations of the world. But our Lord's followers are not "of the world" (John 17:15-16). Thus every Christian is paradoxically a "world man" along with all other men, but one who functions within the structures of society under the rule of God. The members of the church are a pilgrim people, constantly on the move, having no lasting city here. Within this context they live primarily to confront men with the crisis of the Kingdom.

This confrontation includes the declaration that the Son of God came into the world to save it, not to condemn it (John 3:17-18). Depending on their hearers' response, the messengers of the Kingdom are "to one a fragrance of death to death, to the other the fragrance from life to life" (2 Cor. 2:16; cf. 1 Cor. 1:18). As the church proclaims its message and carries on its ministry to men, it inevitably confronts society with words of judgment and exhortation over its sins, while at the same time speaking words of loving grace to men as they live under Christ's kingly rule. (John 3; 2 Cor. 2:15)

This dual emphasis is the church's constant. To retain its integrity the church must act as the body of Christ on earth. Salt is useful only in food. If light becomes darkness, it is no longer light. Hence the empirical church may forfeit her mission both through withdrawal *from* the world, and through identification *with* it. The church remains the church only as it remains the embodiment of the kingly rule of Christ in the world.

No area of life is removed from the lordship of Christ (Eph. 1:19-20; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). No aspect of individual or corporate experience of people living in this world is beyond the scope of the rule of that One who is "all in all," the "Alpha and Omega," the "Beginning and the End." The body of Christ in the world should never let factionalism or fear make it retreat from responsible involvement on *any* level of its corporateness. It should never limit its conception of itself to "interested laymen," thereby creating a dichotomy in that which is in fact the joint responsibility of all church members, clergy and laity alike. Nor should the church, especially in

our day, relax the ecumenical concern to achieve, with the Spirit's help, a fuller expression of its oneness and thereby remove a deterrent to the belief that the church does in actual fact embody Christ's kingly rule. (See John 17:21, 23.)

The church partakes of the serving nature of its King, and she approaches the world with a readiness to suffer, be rejected, despised, and even to die. Its *ὑπομονή* in suffering is grounded in the living hope that the full victory of her Lord will ultimately be manifested. (2 Cor. 4:7-12)

"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy." (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

II. LUTHER

Luther was not a political philosopher. He was primarily a man of the Gospel who spoke to the conditions of his day. Like that of the first Christians, his view of history was eschatologically oriented in that he looked expectantly to God to create a new heaven and a new earth (WA II, 261, 20; LW 13, 221). Nevertheless, he still saw the world, and addressed himself fearlessly to it, in terms of the meaning of the Word of God, in, to, and for the concrete and human issues of his day. His doctrine of the two kingdoms led him to assume definite positions over against prevailing social and economic ills. Although Luther's political judgments are historically conditioned and although his teaching about the "two kingdoms" has been faulted as a dichotomy, the concept still has pertinent implications for 20th-century Christian social ethics.

In the theology of Luther, God's "king-

dom of the right hand" functions to make men Christian. God employs His Word and the sacraments to bring men under the lordship of Christ. To the extent that a person is in this kingdom and under Christ's lordship, law loses its primary relevance, for it is the Holy Spirit who teaches Christians to do justice and to manifest it toward all men. A good tree needs no law to bear its fruit (WA XI, 250, 13; LW 45, 89), and in the freedom of faith the Christian serves God and man out of the spontaneous, Spirit-given motions of a newly created self.

Since, however, true believers in the world are few and fewer still those who lead a Christian life, more than the Gospel alone is needed to rule the earth. According to Luther, the kingdom of the world and its government constitutes the necessary essential for the maintenance of external peace and the checking of the demonic (WA XI, 251, 1—252, 23; LW 45, 90—92). Hence the purpose of worldly power is to thwart the destructive work of the devil and thereby to provide an adequate quality of environment for the orderly and productive pursuit of life and happiness in the world. It is given to "the power of the sword" to proclaim and execute law, to compel righteousness, to preserve justice, peace, and order, and to keep all men subject in things pertaining to body, property, and the external things of the creation. On the other hand, earthly rulers exercising such authority on God's behalf are obliged to acknowledge His pre-eminence, and to recognize their station as responsible mediators of His preserving will (WA XXXI I, 193, 7—202, 28; LW 13, 45—56). In the light of some of our observations of government in our generation, some of Luther's comments seem al-

most incredible. With reference to contemporary rulers he wrote, for example:

God's Word appoints them. . . . Therefore they are not to despise it, for it is their institutor and appointer; but they are to be subject to it and allow themselves to be judged, rebuked, made, and corrected by it. (WA XXXI I, 196, 1; LW 13, 48)

Luther is unquestionably clear in his maintenance of a *distinction* between spheres of state and church. It is not the business of the earthly government to govern the heart. Nor is it the business of the spiritual ministry to bear the sword. But it is important to note that one of the *functions* of the Christian community is to *demonstrate the Christian manner of bearing the sword*. It is to remind authorities of God's law to which they are subject. It is to chastise the vices of authorities, condemn the misuse of political power, and denounce injustice and tyranny (WA XXXII, 398, 1—399, 2; LW 21, 120; also WA XXXI I, 196, 4—198, 18; LW 13, 49—51). It is to speak with a prophetic voice, raising those questions which are both unique to itself and necessary to the growth and flourishing of those institutions which are ordained for the well-being of men.

Since all the structures and forms of societal relationships in which men find themselves are the instruments through which God administers His blessings and beneficial restraints, the Christian submits to and even assists the function of these orders (WA X I, 1, 308 f.; X I, 2, 41 f.). Hence, he is concerned and sensitive to his neighbor's needs with respect to justice, protection, and help, and is involved to accomplish as much as he can to achieve it. Especially because of the motivating factor of loving service, which characterizes his

life among men (WA X I, 1, 308 f.; X I, 2, 41 f.), the Christian is found *in active engagement* with all of life both through direct participation (WA XI, 254, 27—255, 30; 260, 16—261, 24; LW 45, 95—96, 103—104) and intercessory prayer (LW 21, 31). It is practically axiomatic to the thinking of Luther that, since the Christian is more knowledgeable with respect to the demands and purposes of the Law, he will therefore be in the forefront of the quest for justice and well-being in behalf of his fellowmen. Although Luther repeatedly enjoins the Christian to obey his government (even when he feels unjustly treated), there is a point at which he ought to disobey (WA XI, 261, 1—13; 277, 28—278, 12; LW 45, 111—112, 125; WA XXXII, 474, 32—483, 3; LW 21, 212—222). When a government is godless and demonic, that is, when it commands us to transgress God's will or when it hinders or threatens our love and service to God, it should be resisted rather than obeyed. Acts 5:29 sets the limits to Romans 13:1-7.

Since Luther's stress on the distinction of the two kingdoms was designed to prevent the encroachment of government on the area of conscience, and not to discourage the church from acting responsibly and effectively as church upon the secular, it would follow that the church in any age has the specific responsibility to define and interpret the will of God to earth's rulers as it relates to the various policies, decisions, and activities of government. In a democratic nation such as ours, which is built on "religious" foundations and in which the church moves with a freedom borne of governmental toleration and respect, this obligation of the church becomes even more pertinent.

Again, the doctrine of the two kingdoms does not call Christians out of the world but sends them into it. Past complacency behind the safety of an abused two-kingdom doctrine in no way limits the doctrine; rather, such complacency limits that hide-and-seek brand of Christian who satisfies himself with a selective response to the total set of responsibilities to which his Lord has called him in his generation. The church is concerned not merely about the spiritual welfare of men. It is rather concerned about the *total* man, about the structures of life within which he moves, about the condition of his inner and outer self, of his welfare and good in all the interchanges and dimensions of his existence. And since the fabric and progress of almost all of life in the 20th century is shaped and directed by forces other than the individual himself, the Christian, under the terms of his place in the two kingdoms, cannot escape the political responsibilities that both vocation and opportunity impose on him.

"The commandments are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Rom. 13:9). "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). (Small Catechism, Table of Duties, 14)

This summary in Luther's Small Catechism may very well serve the modern Christian who is in doubt about his role with respect to responsible involvement in and for the world of the 20th century.

III. THE LUTHERAN SYMBOLS

It must be remembered that the cultural and historical context of the Lutheran Symbolical Books are quite different from those of our time, but an initial survey of the

Lutheran Symbols suggests several things to the modern Christian concerned about his role and the role of the church in society. Civil government is described in the symbols as an institution of God and as worthy of respect (A[ugsburg] C[onfession] XVI 1, 6; see also L[arge] C[atechism], Decalog, 141, 150; S[mall] C[atechism], Table of Duties; Ap[ology] XVI 5, 8). The role of the clergy is clearly defined in the terms of the office of the keys as "a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments" (AC XXVIII 5). This means that church and state have separate roles and God-given duties; the church should not preempt the authority of the state.

Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Hence it should not invade the function of the other, should not set up and depose kings, and should not annul temporal laws or undermine obedience to the government, should not make or prescribe to the temporal powers laws concerning worldly matters. (AC XXVIII 12, 13; see also Ap XVI 2, 3, 6, 7)

While the Lutheran Symbolical Books urge obedience within the bounds that conscience allows, they clearly do not rule out Christian participation in the so-called "secular" kingdom. On the contrary, they both deem it permissible and, by implication, offer encouragement to Christians, according to their vocation and opportunity, to hold public office and actively seek to use for their own betterment all that the government of man has to offer. (See Ap XVI 2; also AC XVI 2.)

According to the Augsburg Confession,

the church "is the assembly of all the believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" (VII 1 [German]). The Apology says: "The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. . . . This church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews, consecrates, and governs by His Spirit" (VII 5). The Smalcald Articles also say that "a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd." (SA-III XII 2)

When the church is so understood as the assembly of believers and as the sheep who hear the voice of their divine Shepherd, it is natural and right to apply what the Lutheran Symbolical Books say about Christians to the corporate ecclesiastical entities that comprise these Christians. In the specific question of social responsibility, corporate ecclesiastical entities, as well as the individuals they comprise, must be in obedience to their Lord. Just as the ministry of Jesus Himself was directed toward the whole man and not only to his "spiritual aspect," so the Christian community must be actively concerned for the whole man.

The exposition of the Fifth Commandment in the Large Catechism, although addressed—like the commandment that it explicates—to the individual, has implications for believers in their corporateness. This commandment is violated . . .

not only when a person actually does evil, but also when he fails to do good to his neighbor, or, though he has the oppor-

tunity, fails to prevent, protect, and save him from bodily harm or injury. If you send a person away naked when you could clothe him, you have let him freeze to death. If you see anyone suffer hunger and do not feed him, you have let him starve. Likewise, if you see anyone condemned to death or in similar peril and do not save him although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him. It will do you no good to plead that you did not contribute to his death by word or deed, for you have withheld your love from him and robbed him of the service by which his life might have been saved. (LC, Decalog, 181, 182)

IV. CHANGE: OUR BURDEN AND BLESSING

When satellite and electronic surveillance or other intelligence estimates record a shift in the disposition of military power in the communist domain, it is not long before the change is reflected in the Western world. Millions of dollars may be spent. Local economies may falter or boom. Families may be temporarily separated, uprooted, and then rejoined. Homes may be sold and bought, children removed and reenrolled in schools. Taxes may be levied. Prices may change. Commercial, domestic, and industrial buildings may be erected. Towns, cities, countrysides, and the people in them react to all this and change.

Scientific research, feeding on a worldwide knowledge explosion, joining hands with a wildcatting technology, and fed by continually increasing resources of funds, extends the potential life expectancy of millions of people. As a result, whole communities of retirees sprint into existence, bringing with them the joys as well as the only partially answered questions of "how to live in the senior years."

With incredulous awe we behold the computer—compounding our vast stores of information at incomprehensible speeds, anticipating our needs, dictating our wants, analyzing our research, predicting our markets, and converting our huge complexes of national industry into automated marvels. Change, for better and for worse, ensues.

No vital thing in the entire range of American productivity escapes the label of "Abundance." The warehouses are glutted. The question at the average American supper table is not "what" but "which"—not a question of the presence of food but that of a choice of desserts.

In the light of our national prosperity, we have no recourse other than to confess with utter frankness that God has blessed our age and our land out of all proportion to our deserving. Yet, it is precisely at this point that we discern the "mixed good" of the man-handled blessing.

It is the function of the theologian to formulate commentary on both the speaking of God in the Scriptures and the condition of his contemporary world and then to join these two to form a single application of theological-anthropological truth. For today's theologian this means that he must come to grips with questions such as:

What precisely is the church's role in a fast-flying world that simultaneously blesses and crushes the people living in it?

Is the possession of abundance under all circumstances *moral*? As it begins to witness the pressures of change on family, education, recreation, leisure, etc., is the organized empirical church's mission a ministry to effects alone, or is it responsible for a ministry also at the points of cause?

Is the organized empirical church called to "drift" with the current of history, or

is it also committed to an active ministry in the shaping and directing of that current? What place, if any, ought the organized empirical church assume in a world in which the affairs of nations have become world affairs and in which the problems of nations have become the problems of the community of mankind?

The Bible offers no ready-made solutions to the social dilemmas of our day. But it is evident to the Christian that God has made His will normative for every human situation. Primary to the organized empirical church's judgments is the confession that it is God who ever stands as Lord of the universe and of history. God's creation was not a single event, but it is ongoing, and man in creation—accorded the relational "givens" of family, society, and government—is a social being with social responsibility. Despite the fact that men everywhere react with selfish exploitation toward God, fellowman, and nature, Christians are confident that God did not hand over the control of the world to darkness but that He desires the reconciliation of the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19), "to unite all things in Him [Jesus Christ], things in heaven and things on earth." (Eph. 1:10)

The dynamic of this reconciling action is *ἀγάπη*. Because Christ, the Demonstration and Epitome of God's love, is the center of all Christianity, the Christian community derives its form, its being, and its function from the person of Jesus Christ. The Christian community is God's means or instrument of declaring and manifesting the radical obedience, active in love, that the coming of the Kingdom demands. *Ἀγάπη* is the theological function for Christian *διακονία*.

Seen in this light, service is not an option of the Christian community but an indis-

pensable office. The life in Christ is summed up in Christian service (Gal. 6:2), acting out of a love that is rooted in God's own *ἀγάπη* for all mankind, placing the neighbor's welfare above considerations of self. Since the potential scope for Christian service is as limitless as the measure of God's *ἀγάπη* for the world of men, Christian love on principle accepts and moves toward all men in a spirit of forgiveness and intelligent helpfulness, rejoicing in the full development of the other's potential for a full life and seeking his freedom from any forces that might impede that development.

Following the example of Jesus Christ, Christians bring the love of God to the whole man. Called to serve on every level of human existence, and in their effort to be "all things to all men," they are perpetually occupied with the quest for understanding people undergoing the stresses of change provided by their changing environments. Serpent-like in their wisdom, but gentle in their motion toward all men, they seek points of meeting with their age. If they are to be "in the world" in a real sense, the understandings of "secular" disciplines—behavioral, psychological, sociological, medical—will in their own way and in their own sphere be as important to Christians as the Scriptures from which they shape their understandings, by which their attitudes are enriched, and through which they are enabled to marshal their resources for the intelligent and effective implementation of their love. Hence, it becomes part of Christian love to learn how, when, and where to plant wheat, rice, and hydroelectric plants. It becomes part of Christian love to know the meanings that "wars of national liberation," "planned

subversion," "brainwashing," "government by terror," "controlled response," "massive retaliation," and "nuclear overkill" have for human beings. Just as Jesus Christ taught and dramatized the principles underlying positive and productive human relationships by feeding the hungry, healing the sick, driving out demons, so the Christian community seeks to return men to wholeness by reaching them in the concrete situation where they are, being open and sensitive to the many ramifications of their difficulties and lovingly sharing everything in its resource that it has to offer.

Christians must be informed in order to serve. Beyond knowing merely what to do, an awareness of what other church and governmental agencies are already doing is essential to prevent haphazard project designs and wasteful overlapping. In addition, prior information and common sense would alert church agencies to social action already begun by private institutions, local, state, and federal governments, and world agencies, many of which have greater fund reserves, experienced manpower, management, and structural capabilities than the average ecclesiastical unit. But the Christian commitment to service and sacrifice should be seen in its willingness to offer for use toward the general good its physical, financial, and human powers as it both independently creates and pursues avenues of service or as it donates these to the common resources of existing social efforts.

By virtue of their institutional nature, as well as because of their humanitarian concerns, the churches are obliged to be involved *with* other "institutions" in the dynamics of social action and change. In a very "secular" sense, churches take their

place among the institutions of a culture in order to participate in the process of social change *as a responsible political entity of that society*. To be sure, churches run a risk in this connection. But this is their calling. The stance of churches in society is one of unremitting tension, as they stand in judgment on society and simultaneously move with it, under the power of a Christ-motivated love and for the sake of the world He died to save. It is for this very reason that the churches must ever be conscious of their Biblical rootage, their servant role, their faithfulness to their confession. The churches struggle in life, to serve—as listeners anxious to learn the true plight of men and to administer to their condition and as witnesses to enact and describe to all men the Christ whom the churches represent. Thus in any given conflict arising out of efforts toward social change, the churches maintain their integrity as churches by exercising a pastoral role over against both sides of the dispute. The churches work to maintain and to deepen their dialogical and constructively interactive relationship to whatever individuals or groups they have to do with, and at the same time they assume their necessary position as initiators, contributors, and inhibitors within the ongoing context and processes of social change. This in turn keeps the churches flexible, responsive to change, and leads them to search for an appropriate use of those forms of service that in the contemporary world will meet the real needs and challenges of people and will express concern for all sorts and conditions of men.

Of late, a negative reaction is frequently encountered to what is termed "the ulterior motives of Christian service." One can

validly object to some efforts that Christians have made to buy external allegiance to Christianity. Yet it is overcompensation of a sort when some insist that the churches should serve exclusively for the sake of serving without even an expectation of results beyond the service itself. This position maintains that to include in the motives for service any benefit to the church completely cancels true *διακονία* and distorts it to self-serving. It is our position, however, that the humanitarian enterprise of the churches serves as the means by which the churches fulfill their total calling in that it opens the ears of men to God's message. As the miracles of Jesus of Nazareth were His visible *σημεῖα*, demonstrations of God's intent, by which men were attracted to Him and to faith in Him, so the churches through similar works of love and restoration invite the eyes of the world to behold these works and the institution that performs them and then to ask the question "Why?" If men are to glorify our Father in heaven *forever*, then the *whole* man must be reached. To do so, and to fulfill their calling, the churches must *speak* as well as act. It is their prayer and watchfulness, their self-discernment and integrity in evaluating their motives and actions under God's Word, by which the churches maintain a sensitivity to the "drift" from true service and witness to, or from, motives of self-perpetuation and self-aggrandizement.

In summary, then, the following theological observations may be made:

1. Christians are a leaven. If they are to be true to their nature, they will be *present*, institutionally as well as individually, at those points in society where social change can be influenced by their presence, voice, and action.

2. The church does not identify itself with society in the sense that it loses its uniqueness as the church, but in its empirical and organized forms it takes its place among the various institutions of a culture in order to participate in the processes of social change as responsible entities of that society.

3. As active participants in the motions of change, the churches have the responsibility to remind society of the "humanizing" universal laws of God and in this way to help society to distinguish between true and false social purposes. The churches thereby help society to establish and maintain its true creative functions.

4. If the churches are to participate with other elements in society as initiators, contributors, and inhibitors of social change, then the churches must search for new forms and structures through which they may express their concerns for all sorts and conditions of men and must struggle to maintain and deepen their dialogical and constructively interactive relationship with secular agencies of power and of change.

5. This means that Christian service, whether interdenominational, denominational, congregational, or individual, cannot be confined to single or static modes of expression. Rather, it must meet the dynamic character of today's society with a readiness both to effect change as well as to be affected by changing conditions and challenges.

6. In any given conflict arising out of efforts toward social change, churches may adopt and promote their own points of view, but they maintain their integrity as churches by exercising a pastoral role over against *both* factions of the dispute.

7. By virtue of their institutional nature,

as well as because of their humanitarian concerns, the churches are *obliged* to be involved, along with other "secular" institutions, in the dynamics of social change. If such involvement is to be effective, certain measures and conditions will demand attention:

a) The churches must recapture this primitive sense of mission and look to the Holy Spirit for the grace and power to fulfill it.

b) The churches must accept the risks of engagement and conflict present in changing conditions in the world and enter the arena at whatever time and place they discern a vocation and an opportunity to do so.

c) The Christian commitment to sacrifice should be seen both in the willingness of the churches to offer their physical, financial, and human powers for use toward the general good and in this independent creation of avenues of service.

V. THE CASE OF WORLD HUNGER

Today hunger stalks the earth. Over two-thirds of the world's population is starving or undernourished. Sixty percent of its population survives on an income of less than \$100 a year, while 80 percent of the total secures the necessities of life out of a per capita wage of less than \$500 a year.

The nature of the problem becomes clearer when we observe that undernourished people have a much smaller capacity for work than those properly fed. Consequently those who need most to produce food are the least capable of increasing food production. A man whose total energies are given to scratching out only the barest minimum toward his own subsis-

tence can hardly be expected to contribute in any significant way to the need or assistance of those around him. He cannot help because he himself is in dire need of help.

There are other facets. While the economies of wealthy nations are rapidly expanding, those of nations in need show decline or only slight gain. Concurrently, in those nations in which famine and want are common, population growth continues at a rate of acceleration far in excess of that of food production and distribution. Hand in hand with such conditions are attendant problems of illiteracy and ignorance, the lack of productive skills, irrigation deficiencies, and natural and cultural roadblocks to progress.

For the 20th-century Christian the basic issue is quite clear. When a neighbor is hungry, the Christian seeks first to feed him out of his own stores, and thereafter he strives as far as he can to create those conditions for the neighbor under which he need never hunger again. When well-fed American Christians know, for example, that African babies die for want of the milk not even their mothers can supply, or when they become aware that groups of Indians huddle in the yards of city restaurants and wait to fight, animal-like, over the garbage brought through the back doors of kitchens, then the whole question of contemporary world hunger moves into the province of Christian responsibility.

For Christians the ethical principle of the New Testament is seen in terms of an expression of love toward the neighbor deriving out of the Christians' relationship with God. God's law demands and structures this regard for the neighbor, and the Gospel motivates Christian concern. Furthermore, the principle is restated in

Christ's command to love our neighbor as ourselves as well as in apostolic exhortations addressed to similar specific situations (see, for example, Gal. 6:9-10 and James 2:14-17). What then, as responsible Christians, as members of the body of Christ obediently fulfilling our servant calling, and as faithful stewards of our abundance, should be our course?

The nature of the problem itself suggests a logical division. The first requirement is to satisfy the immediate need of the hungry to be fed by whatever means are directly at our disposal. Secondly, long-range help is needed to create the environmental conditions in starving countries that will ultimately eliminate, or at least offset, the possibility of future and ongoing want. But how?

Since the churches are sociological groups in their own right, they share with other American and world institutions in the function of mediating power. Such political influence in a modern, complex world is essential to an approach to solution of so vast and intricate a problem as world hunger. This influence is a profound gift of God, entrusted to Christians (especially in a democracy) for responsible stewardship. Its use is directly related to the responsibility of the churches for the created order. The influence of the churches grows as the churches grow. In a general way the sheer numerical strength (depending, of course, on the unity of that strength) of a church determines how attentively the voice of that church is likely to be listened to. In any event, for adequate solutions to a problem of such vast proportions and numerous ramifications, strength is needed — both political as well as material and human.

Because of the Biblical injunctions to

obedience under government and because of the nature of representative democracy in the United States, we American Christians, *both* corporately and individually, should speak to our government on the moral elements related to world hunger. Simultaneously the churches will engage in whatever methods they are able to adopt alone and with other agencies of aid to transport foodstuffs for the direct alleviation of foreign needs.*

Beyond direct witness and immediate assistance, however, is the concern of the churches over the long-range aspect of the problem. Past patterns of "recruitment" for church work have often been limited largely to vocational guidance and encouragement toward ministerial and educational fields of service. Is it not also theologically proper for the church to call on the skills and gifts of believers to serve in a ministry that seeks "to help and befriend [the neighbor] in every bodily need"? Full and far-reaching solutions to world problems, as our Peace Corps and other voluntary service organizations consistently indicate, rest in the function of people in whom are joined the elements of specific skill and sacrificial dedication to the welfare of people, factors which are present in Christians in unique and effective combination.

In researching the dilemma of the starving nation, the following needs were found to be among the most pressing:

* In the opinion of the compilers of this study, one of the best efforts to date in this respect has been the Food for Peace Program, which is responsible for passage of Public Law 480. The program is divided into four basic areas. Title III of the law involves churches and other voluntary organizations. These include CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, UNICEF, and Lutheran World Relief. About one-fifth of the food distributed under Public Law 480 is through voluntary agencies.

1. Intensive research in the areas of agricultural problems, water problems, and population growth is necessary. In the area of agriculture, suitable crops for specific growing conditions must be found, yields improved, and new hybrids developed. Needs in the area of water problems concern conservation, irrigation, power, desalinization. Concerning population problems, it is imperative that suitable means are found to relate the number of people to the available resources. This problem must receive top priority.

2. Knowledge is already available that could be applied to food production. Better techniques are needed to acquaint farmers with approved farming methods. Agricultural vocational schools could be established to teach farmers to use fertilizers and equipment. Intensified use and distribution of fertilizers could double and triple yields. Of land under current cultivation, the greater part has never been methodically fertilized. Some 41 percent of the world's jungle and desert areas could be made productive. Yields could be improved by means of disease control and by the use of insecticides.

3. The oceans contain a potential harvest of seafood especially rich in protein. Fish can be successfully used as fertilizer. With modern techniques, small fish and formerly unusable portions can be ground into high-protein products that can be used for fertilizer, livestock consumption, or human consumption. Various types of sea vegetation also hold promise as potential sources of food for general consumption.

4. New trade and commerce methods must be explored to solve the problem of maintaining a balance of trade.

5. Food reserves in food-deficient countries would make food readily available in other parts of the world in the event of emergency or famine.

6. Transportation arteries are needed to move food from the producing regions to centers of consumption.

VI. WAR AND THE CHURCH

In addition to the problem of world hunger, another perplexity confronting the 20th-century church is that of war. War is one of the most diabolical and destructive manifestations of sin. In addition to its destructive aspects, the dehumanization of man must also be indicted as one of its severe evils. All too often war so blunts man's sensibilities that the enemy comes to be seen not as a human being with the right to be loved, but merely as a subhuman object to be used or destroyed in pursuit of a particular goal. Thus in war, loss of life and bloodshed can easily come to be construed as virtues rather than tragedy.

War cannot be considered a part of God's original plan for men, for under His creation men are brothers, and creation is intended to serve them, not to destroy them. In our world, however, it is possible that the demonic forces of evil may run unrestrained unless, as a last resort, they are met by counterforces and coercion. For this reason, participation in a war is viewed by many as being, at certain times, the lesser of two evils.

Throughout its history, representatives of Christianity have taken differing positions on the subject of war. In the first three centuries of the Christian era, the idolatrous concomitants of military service tended to move the church not to permit soldiers to receive Baptism as long as they

were in the military. At the individual level not even self-defense was regarded as ordinarily permissible, since it was held to be better for the Christian to allow his own life to be taken rather than to take the life of another. Underlying this whole concept was the belief that human life was a precious gift of God and that no man had the right to take this gift from another.

With the incipient christianization of the Roman Empire in the fourth century the situation began to change. St. Augustine, for instance, defended participation in war if it was undertaken for the good of society and when the purpose of the war was the establishment of peace. In the Middle Ages the almost ceaseless warfare led Christian moralists to distinguish between "unjust" and "just" wars, that is, wars in which Christians could not or could engage with a good conscience.

According to this perpetuated concept, a war is regarded as permissible if both goals and means are just. Cause for embarking on a war must be moral. It must definitely be a war of self-defense, a war of aggression being indefensible; and all available means of peaceful arbitration must be exhausted before the waging of war is begun. The concept of a just war limits combat to armed participants and rules out any direct and deliberate military attacks on helpless civilians.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that with the advent of thermonuclear weapons, and as a result of current worldwide nuclear stockpiling, the traditional concepts of "just" and "permissible" war are no longer applicable. In the first place, it is argued, the very nature of the nuclear weapon is such that its use would involve helpless civilians on both sides. In addition to this aspect of inadequate con-

trol, the compactness of countries and the close interrelationship of populations makes it difficult to carry out a nuclear war that would be limited to two or only to a few countries. Third, because of the threat of world destruction a war of defense involving the use of thermonuclear weaponry has become infeasible. A nuclear war could well destroy a majority of the population of both sides, thus making defense irrelevant. Furthermore, retaliation cannot be equated with defense. Finally, there is the ever-present possibility that an initially limited nuclear exchange might mushroom into a nuclear holocaust in which all life on this planet could be destroyed. In view of this, there are some who believe that from the Christian point of view, any alternative would be better than running the risk of committing mass suicide and destroying all of God's created world.

In evaluating these two positions it should be noted that, by example and teaching, our Lord counseled Christians as individuals and as members of His body to love all men and work for peace. Because war militates against both mutual fraternal love and peace, Christians must seek every possible alternative to it at any level. Thus where these alternatives exist, they must be affirmed and encouraged, and warlike action on the part of *any* nation condemned.

On the other hand, it remains possible that in extreme circumstances Christians may be forced to the support of and participation in war as the lesser of two evils. It must be noted that here, too, the ultimate well-being of all men, including the enemy, must remain a primary concern. In this connection, there are several guidelines that Christians must consider in order to

judge whether they can or cannot conscientiously support or participate in a war.

1. While under normal conditions Christians must respect and obey governmental authorities in accord with the teachings of St. Paul in Romans 13, neither this nor any other passage can be cited to support blind obedience to the government (Acts 5:29). This means that when a Christian cannot consider a given war "just" he is compelled to refuse to participate in it, and, in given circumstances, to condemn the participation of others as well.

2. Christians must be careful not to identify the cause of any one nation with God's cause. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Christian church is international and that the church in one nation cannot be isolated from the church in the rest of the world.

3. Christians throughout the world need to try to turn the focus of their national psychologies away from a type of national narcissism toward the needs and wants of the whole family of man and seek to create a world atmosphere in which the resort to armed combat is finally conceived as wasteful and dehumanizing.

4. Christians in any given country need to help that country in times of tension and conflict. Such help may, for example, take the form of urging nations in times of international tension and conflict to appeal to recognized international agencies of mediation, where effective mediation is possible.

5. Christians should be certain that the war is one of defense of the legitimate interests of that nation, and not simply the result of a conscious or subconscious paranoia about the enemy. While it is true that the church can never force society to love,

Christians individually and collectively, by word and example, can help in a measure to free society from a manic paranoia about the enemy, a paranoia that causes men to set aside universal moral standards, permits a justification of ends by the means employed, and dehumanizes people on both sides of the dispute.

6. If there is a distinct possibility that weapons of mass destruction will be used indiscriminately against the masses of non-combatants, then Christians must condemn such an action. Christians must actively oppose indiscriminate destruction of God's creation. In any event, international diplomatic conditions that contribute to tensions between nations and which bear the earmarks of those forces which history has shown result in armed conflict ought to be closely scrutinized and evaluated by contemporary Christians everywhere. As in every other field of Christian social concern, a basic and initial requirement is that the Christian citizen be well-informed. Thereafter, alone and with his brothers and sisters in the faith, he has the duty to test current national and international developments against his moral and ethical convictions as a Christian and, according to his vocation and opportunity, to let his findings be known to the body of powers that be. It is part of his faithfulness to his calling that he perseveres in his task throughout the fluid and often frustrating successions of national and international action and counteraction, motive and counter-motive, and overt and covert cause and effect, for he sees his role as peacemaker in the secular world linked with his task to proclaim the ultimate peace of God in Christ Jesus to all men.

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