

# I Peter

## The challenge of dual citizenship

### *What should we expect when we read this New Testament Letter.*

#### 1. Expect to encounter a "God breathed" document.

a. When reading any New Testament book we must be careful not to neglect either of the two modes of Biblical inspiration?

1. The **Spirit of God** was involved. — II Chron. 15:1; Matt. 22:43; II Pet. 1:21.

**I Corinthians 2:12-13** "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."

2. The **human authors** were involved.

**Hebrews 1:1** "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

a. The personality, style, and cultural context of the human authors is not superseded.

b. The vast cultural diversity among the human authors adds to the universal appeal of the Scriptures.

c. The writings of Scripture were seldom, if ever, the result of mechanical dictation.

d. The cultural and perceptual limitations of the human authors were controlled by God's Spirit.

3. **NOTE:** The analogy of the dual nature of Christ is an illustration of the two modes of inspiration.

b. There was never serious doubt in the early church about the inspiration of this letter.

c. The criteria used by the early church to identify inspired texts was:

1. The identification of the author as an Apostle or close associate of an Apostle was the principle criteria.

2. Wide spread acceptance of a document in the diverse geographical centers of the church – East Asia, Palestine, North Africa, Rome.

3. Consistency with the oral gospel tradition.

#### 2. Expect the message of I Peter to be relevant to our lives.

a. Like Peter's first audience, we live in a spiritual context of dual citizenship. (1:1)

b. One of the major points of confusion among Christians today has to do with our responsibility in a secular society. Peter sees the tension and stress of living in two worlds as a powerful opportunity for personal growth and public impact. For his

readers it is first a challenge to simply survive with our faith in tact and secondly to make a difference for Christ in our world.

- c. Suffering is a universal experience and like submission to authority it presents a major challenge to each of us. Peter addresses both submission and suffering in ways that challenge us to rethink our attitudes. I Peter uses the Greek word PASCHO (paschw) “to endure suffering” 12 times, whereas it is found only 11 times in all the rest of the New Testament epistles.
- d. Some Christians in the early church believed that this letter was a commentary on Psalm 34. (All who are humble should praise God {1-3} for God delivered this poor man from his fears {4-7} and we should therefore all trust and obey Him {8-14} for the humble righteous are in his eye {15-18} and although they suffer, they will always be delivered {19-22}).

**4. Expect the instruction in I Peter to be radical in its demands.**

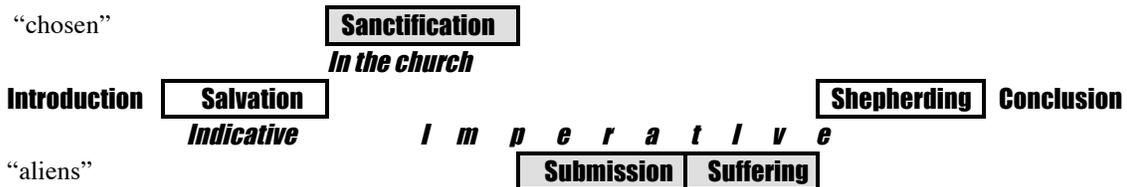
- a. Peter, the Apostle, is identified as the author in verse one. His teaching in this letter seems remarkable , given his natural temperament (impulsive, activistic, head strong, and impatient) and is a testimony to the power of God’s Spirit to transform a life.
- b. The letter was written to Christians during the reign of Nero (54-68) who as an emperor of Rome was notoriously cruel in his treatment of all people, especially Christians. Extra-biblical references suggest that Peter was crucified under Nero. The reference to “Babylon” in 5:13 may be a figurative expression of the spiritual state of Rome at the time.

From Tacitus, ANNALS XV, 44 we read *“Their death was made a matter of sport; they were covered in wild beast’s skins and torn to pieces by dogs; or were fastened to crosses and set on fire in order to serve as torches by night . . . Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle and gave an exhibition in his circus, mingling with the crowd in the guise of a charioteer or mounted on his chariot. Hence, . . . there arose a feeling of pity, because it was felt that they were being sacrificed not for the common good, but to gratify the savagery of one man.”*

- c. This letter is one of the most theological of all the N.T. documents in that it is full of references to God.

**5. Expect I Peter to teach us of the grace of God in Christ.**

- a. **I Pet.1:1** “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen.”
- b. **I Pet.5:12** “I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”
- c. The literary context of I Peter.



*In the world*

<b>1:1-2</b>	<b>1:3-12</b>	<b>1:13-2:10</b>	<b>2:11-3:12</b>	<b>3:13-4:19</b>	<b>5:1-11</b>	<b>5:12-14</b>
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**6. Expect to meet God in I Peter as you tune your ears to hear.** Because the Bible is the Word of God we must be spiritually sensitive to God if we are to have “ears to hear.”

a. The condition of the heart is reflected in the ear and eye of the interpreter.

- **Amos 8:11-12** “Behold, days are coming,’ declares the Lord God, ‘When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. And people will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.’”

The context of Amos 8 indicates that because of disrespect and disregard for the will of God the revelation of God was removed.

- **Rom.1:21-23** “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”
- **II Pet.1:20-21** “But know this first of all. that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
- **I Cor.1:10-16** “<sup>10</sup> For to us God revealed {them} through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the {thoughts} of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the {thoughts} of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, <sup>13</sup> which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.} <sup>14</sup> But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. <sup>15</sup> But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. <sup>16</sup> *For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him?* But we have the mind of Christ.”

b. Laws that relate to the Spirit’s revealing truth to us.

1. The Spirit teaches through the Scripture.

**I Pet.1:10-12** “<sup>10</sup> As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that {would come} to you made careful search and inquiry, <sup>11</sup> seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.”

- a. The Spirit teaches through both the prophet's writing and the preacher's preaching.
  - b. The basic message of the New can be understood in terms of:
    1. The sufferings of Christ,
    2. The glories to follow.
2. The Spirit is a gift from God to help us understand the things of God.
- Jn.16:7-14** "7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. 12 I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear {them} now. 13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose {it} to you."
- a. He is a gift to the believing community.
  - b. The nature of the Spirit's teaching ministry.
    1. "convicting" - It is directed to the inner man.
    2. "guiding" - It is comprehensive.
    3. "glorifying" - It is centered in Christ.
    4. "disclosing" - It is a ministry of clarifying not complicating.
3. The Spirit will not contradict the text.
- Prov.30:5-6** "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar." I Cor.4:6 "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other."
4. The Spirit will enable us to see beyond the letter.
- Jn.5:39-40** "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life."
- c. Laws that relate to our receiving truth from the Spirit.
    1. We can see things at different levels.
      - a. Three Greek words for sight in **Jn.20:1-10**
        1. "and stooping and looking in, he **saw** the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in." vs.5 "Saw" BLEPO means to see in a general (superficial) way.
        2. "Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he **beheld** the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but

rolled up in a place by itself.” vs.6-7 “Beheld” THEOREO means to observe in an attentive way.

3. “Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who had first come to the tomb, and he **saw**, and believed.” vs.8 “Saw” HORAIO means to discern or to grasp the implications of.
- b. Three levels of understanding Scripture.
  1. Historical level - What did the text mean to the original author and readers.
  2. Literary level - What is the timeless message of the text for our generation.
  3. Personal spiritual level - What is the Spirit teaching me through this text. Matt.16:17; Jn.14-16; I Cor.2:14; II Cor.4:3-4
- c. Each level builds upon the previous level. It is our goal to be able to work with each level in interpreting the Bible.
2. We must be willing to obey what we learn.
 

**Jn.7:17** “If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.” Jn.8:47 “He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”
3. We must meditate on the Scripture. **Ps.119:97-104**
4. We must have a hunger to learn.
 

**I Pet.2:2** “like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,”
5. Spiritual maturity is an important factor in understanding God’s Word. **I Cor.2:14-3:3** “Spiritual”, “carnal”, and “babes” in Christ.

# CHURCH - SOCIAL ACTION

## Introduction

1. Secularization (defining reality and making decisions as though God did not exist) has had a powerful and irreversible effect upon the world.
  - It has created a common human history that unites all peoples as they share increasingly a common expectation about the future, about human rights, dignity, technological development, etc.
  - It has directed human hopes away from the next life and centered them on the temporal issues of this life.
  - It has rendered traditional religion (including Christianity) less relevant to the lives and in the minds of many common people.
  - It has influenced the Christian church's understanding and practice of ministry. It has forced the church to ask, How should we address a modern society?
  - In parts of the third world, secularism has produced the kinds of social, economic, and cultural reforms that for years Christian missionaries (committed to social reform) were unsuccessful in bringing about. This has been a challenge to the liberal wing of the church to reassess its methods and reason to exist.
  - The challenge to the evangelical church is not to deplore the process of secularization but rather to understand its power to bring openness to the preaching of the Gospel as well as its power to create deep skepticism toward it.
  - Three positive aspects of secularism.
    1. There is strong historical evidence to suggest that the rot of modern science and technology are in the biblical understanding of man and nature.
    2. As a driving power which is drawing all men into the single world civilization, it is a secularized form of the biblical eschatology.
    3. Secularism's dissolution of traditional culture's attempts to create a unified understanding of the cosmos apart from God (pictured in the tower of Babel) is in the pattern of the biblical prophetic message.
2. Evangelicals have been influenced by two models of Christian ministry.

Understanding of:	Model #1	Model #2
Christian basis	The Incarnation	The Crucifixion
Sphere of application	The World	The Church
Justice and peace	Social, Political	Spiritual, Personal
Emphasis in ministry	Social action (body savers)	Evangelism, Discipleship (soul savers)
Political philosophy	Liberal	Conservative

<b>The Kingdom</b>	Economic justice, Political power sharing, World peace.	Regenerate, mature, church community.
<b>Basic problem</b>	Systemic evil	Personal sin
<b>Scriptural Support</b>	Parts of Gospels and OT Prophets	Epistles
<b>Problems</b>	Biblical social ethics focus on covenant Community infrastructure not the world.	Over reaction to model #1

3. To what extent are these models to be exclusive or inclusive of each other?
  - d. It is clear that both models find supportive material in the New Testament.
  - e. Until the early years of the twentieth century the evangelical church was active in social issues but after the liberal churches adopted an aggressive social action emphasis, evangelicals retreated from that sphere.
  - f. The Biblical emphasis seems to be on that salvation of souls not bodies. But it must be remembered that the love of God can not ignore suffering and injustice in the world and especially in the church.
4. Critical questions evangelicals must face.
  - a. **What is the meaning of Social Justice?**
    1. Is it “to each according to the person’s merit or demerit” (aristocratic)
    2. Or is it “to each according to a standard of equality” (democratic)
  - b. **How does “mercy” relate to “justice?”**
    1. The state has a responsibility to promote justice but does it also have a responsibility to legislate mercy?
    2. Is a loving response going to promote justice or mercy?
  - c. **Are Human Beings Individual or Communal?**
    1. In what sense is Adam both male and female in Gen.1?
    2. Does God covenant with individuals or with communities (Israel, the Body of Christ)?
  - d. **How Should the Church be Involved Politically?**
    1. Anabaptists - political critique and alternative communal modeling.
    2. Reformed - subjugating the institutions of the world to the Lordship of Christ.
  - e. **Are the ethical responsibilities of Christians within the covenant community different from their responsibilities outside?**
    1. Who is my neighbor?
    2. Who is my brother? Is a brother different than a neighbor?
  - f. **What is the relationship between Evangelism and Social Justice?**
    1. **Conservative** - Evangelism of the individual is the only really important issue.
    2. **Moderate** - Social Justice is an important visual aid to evangelism.

3. **Reformists** - Social justice is the mission task of the church in bringing all creation under the Lordship of Christ.
4. **Radical** - Social justice and evangelism are separate but equal mandates for the church.

A. **“Thy Kingdom Come”** — “. . . in, but not of the world.” **Jn. 18:36**

1. H. Richard Niebuhr identified **five ways in which the Christian community has related to secular culture**. I have used the same categories here but with slightly different descriptions.
  - a. **CHRIST AGAINST CULTURE — Don’t get involved in an evil world.**  
**ANABAPTISTS** — The Church is to accept a vulnerable posture of relative noninvolvement in the power structures of the world while building an alternative model society within, but distinct from, the broader world context.
  - b. **CHRIST OF CULTURE — Go with the flow.**  
**LIBERALISM** — Culture is the place where the hand of God is at work in the world, therefore Christ’s Spirit is in the midst of evolutionary change. The culture is the Kingdom of God. Resurrection = renewal, sin = existential alienation, redemption = liberation, ransom = moral influence.
  - c. **CHRIST ABOVE CULTURE — Don’t worry about the mundane world.**  
**ORTHODOX CHURCHES** — The Church as the visible expression of the Kingdom of God, exists pretty much independently of the surrounding culture from which it calls people to God.
  - d. **CHRIST AND CULTURE IN PARADOX — Live with a foot in both worlds.**  
**NEW EVANGELICALS** — The Church is to see the world as a giant benevolence project while it teaches secular society the ways of God’s Kingdom.
  - e. **CHRIST TRANSFORMING CULTURE — Expect to reform society.**  
**RECONSTRUCTIONISTS** (a branch of the Reformed Protestant tradition) — The Church is to work to bring about the total Christianization of every area of society and thereby usher in a golden age of justice, peace, and prosperity.  
**HOLY EMPIRE** — There is to be a State-sanctioned Church. The Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran models in Europe have been examples of this.
2. **The State’s legitimate, but limited role.**
  - a. Promoting **justice and peace**
    1. St Augustine (4<sup>th</sup> cent.) in “The City of God” taught that shalom (peace) is “the tranquillity produced by order” (tranquillitas ordinis).
    2. The primary role of the state is not to chase down criminals after the fact but to nurture the tranquillitas ordinis, using its unique powers of coercion to that end.

- b. Protecting **freedom and opportunity** (majority rule, minority rights)
  - c. Providing **security and order**
3. **The Church's role**
- a. Stay private — **A SPECTATOR**
    - 1. The Church's interest and power is primarily spiritual, not political.
    - 2. "My kingdom is not of this world." Jn.18:36
  - b. Build responsible citizens — **A RESOURCE**
    - 1. The Church's interest and power is personal, not public policy.  
**NOTE:** For the Christian, the goal in politics is not power, but justice. When the Church seeks and gets political power, it not only deserves the disdain that it gets from the broader public, but it runs the risk of the Gospel of Jesus Christ being held hostage to a political agenda.
    - 2. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." Matt. 22:21
  - c. Support the authority of the State — **A CHAPLAIN**
    - 1. The Church's interest and power is in upholding the State's legitimate but limited authority and role.
    - 2. "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." Rom. 13:1 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution: whether to a king as the one in authority; or to governors." I Pet. 2:13-14
  - d. Be a renewing force in the State — **A PROPHET**
    - 1. The Church's interest and power is in being the moral conscience of the State.
    - 2. "I must obey God rather than man." Acts 5:29
  - e. **NOTE:** When one of these aspects is emphasized at the expense of the others, both the Church and the State suffer. Illustration:
    - 1. Anabaptists' radical separation of Church and State
    - 2. Evangelicals' "behind the scenes only" posture
    - 3. Civil religion's support of the status quo
    - 4. Roman Catholic, liberal Protestant, and Reconstructionist wedding of Church and State
4. **What is appropriate moral legislation?**
- a. New Testament ethics are specifically prescribed for the Church, not the State (which is NOT a part of the regenerated community of the Spirit).
    - 1. This means that the Church should discipline false teachers and those who are living in moral rebellion, but the pluralistic State should not necessarily have the same standards.
    - 2. Just because a moral issue is clear in the N.T., does not mean it is appropriate State legislation — drunkenness, divorce, etc.

- b. Moral legislation in a pluralistic secular society should reflect a sensitivity to four questions.
  - 1. What maximizes **individual freedom** and choice?
    - a. It should preserve the maximum individual freedom consonant with the integrity of the social order.
    - b. It should be slow to act, because other restraints are available.
    - c. It should respect privacy as far as possible.
    - d. It should prescribe a minimal morality only.
    - e. It should avoid harmful side effects (like invasion of privacy or blackmail).
  - 2. What protects the **general welfare** of the whole of society?
    - a. Government's mandate in regard to legislating morality is limited to matters of public justice and the social order. NOTE: Grace and mercy are mandates to the Church and not the primary concern of the State.
    - b. Some issues that are related to the general welfare of the State — honesty, sanctity of human life and private property, family values, etc.
  - 3. What reflects the **prevailing consensus** of order and civility?
    - a. To be enforceable, a law must have widespread public support and represent a consensual morality.
    - b. Legislation should not be changed with every changing moral mood, since this undermines respect for the law and public order.
  - 4. What projects a **realistic world and life view**? Respect for transcendent authority is needed.
- c. Some issues that need to be debated
  - 1. Legislation that prohibits or limits abortion.
  - 2. Legislation that prohibits or discourages certain types of sexual expression.
  - 3. Legislation that sanctions a theistic world and life view (prayer in public schools).

## B. **Biblical Teaching On Social Ethics**

### 1. THE OLD TESTAMENT

- a. Three broad categories of social laws are found.
  - 1. **The prohibition of idolatry**
  - 2. **The prohibition of oppression of the poor and the needy**
    - a. **Unlawful usury charges** — Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36
    - b. **Gleaning rights** — Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; 25:5; Deut. 23:24-25
    - c. **Care for the poor:**
      - 1. Giving brings a blessing — Prov. 19:17; Ps. 41:1
      - 2. Oppression brings judgment — Ps. 140:12

3. Cheating, robbing, and coveting are condemned — Hosea 12:7; Micah 2:1-2
  - d. **Care for widows and orphans:**
    1. Warnings concerning affliction — Ex. 22:22-23
    2. Taking a widow's garment in pledge is prohibited — Deut. 24:17
    3. Forgotten sheaves were to be left for them — Deut. 24:19
    4. Third year tithe was to go to them— Deut. 26:12-13
  - e. **Care for sojourners (ger):**
    1. Similar to that of Israelites — Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 10:19; Lev. 24:22; Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21; Num. 35:15; Josh. 20:9; Psalm 94:6; Zech. 7:10
    2. They were not included in the general liberation of slaves in the year of Jubilee — Lev. 25:45-46
    3. They had no inheritance rights in the land — Ex. 12:48
  - f. **Care for foreigners (nokri):**
    1. No intermarriage — Deut. 7:1-6; I Kings 11:1-2
    2. Interest could be charged — Deut. 23:20
    3. They were not offered the benefits of the law as were the sojourners.
  3. **The prohibition of personal conduct that harms society** (lying, killing, stealing, adultery, etc.)
  - b. An important feature of Old Testament teaching is that the unit of society to which social ethics generally applied was the theocracy, the “covenant community,” not outsiders.
2. THE TEACHING OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS
- a. Duties **within** the covenant community:
    1. **Concerning poverty:**
      - a. It is an inevitable social phenomenon — Mk. 14:7.
      - b. Its existence does not necessarily constitute a call to alleviate it.
      - c. Sacrificial (not showy) giving is commanded — Mk. 12:41-44.
      - d. Although the poor are blessed, it is quite desirable to work for self-advancement — Lk. 6:20; 19:11-28.
    2. **Concerning wealth:**
      - a. Possessions are not necessarily or intrinsically wrong.
      - b. Riches make it more difficult for a man to enter the Kingdom of God — Matt. 19:24.
      - c. A person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions — Lk. 12:15.
      - d. Money is to be used to love and serve others — Lk. 16:1-13.
    3. **Concerning general care for others** — Matt. 25:31-46.

- b. Duties to **all** people:
    - 1. **General principles:**
      - a. We are sent into the world as Christ was sent — Jn. 17:15-17; 20:21.
      - b. We are to love our enemies — Lk. 6:35.
    - 2. **Civil responsibilities:**
      - a. We are to render the civil government its due — Matt. 22:21.
      - b. We are to act justly in our personal dealings with the world — Lk. 3:11-14.
    - 3. **Witness responsibilities:**
      - a. Our unity is the basis of our witness — Jn. 17:20-21.
      - b. We are called to be salt and light — Matt. 5:13-14.
      - c. We are commissioned to make disciples — Matt. 28:20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47.

**NOTE:** Luke 10:25-37 (the story of the “good Samaritan”) is a passage that is often misunderstood as a lesson in social ethics. Its more probable purpose is centered in the lawyer’s response to the person of Christ (see the context — vs. 21-24 & 38-42). In the story, the man in the ditch represents the lawyer, the outcast Samaritan is the outcast Jesus (who is the neighbor that the lawyer is called to love). When read in this way, we eliminate the apparent lapse in logic between verse 29 and verse 36.
  - c. **Priorities:**
    - 1. The spiritual over the physical in the personal sphere.
    - 2. Subsistence over justice in the political sphere — Matt. 22:21; Lk. 12:13-21.
    - 3. Ministry over personal rights — Matt. 17:24-27.
  - d. Again we note that Jesus’ ministry and teaching are largely concerned with the **infra-structure of the covenant community** (the Jews). Note the following:
    - 1. The disciples are forbidden to go to the Gentiles — Matt. 10:5-8.
    - 2. Jesus’ reluctance to minister to the Canaanite woman — Matt. 15:21-28.
3. **THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES**
  - a. Again, the vast majority of the material in Acts and the Epistles is directed toward the inner workings of the Christian community. The frequent use of the phrases “one another,” “brethren,” “saints,” etc. illustrates the point.
    - 1. **I Tim.5:1-16** gives instructions in the care of victims within the church.
    - 2. There are two basic principles that are stressed.
      - a. The family has first responsibility.
      - b. The church is to care for those who meet certain criteria.
        - 1. They do not have family to care for them.

2. They cannot help themselves.
3. They show signs of being spiritually responsible.
- c. NOTE: Failure to hold to these standards can lead to:
  1. Encouraging past delinquent behavior.
  2. Tempting people to become irresponsible in the future.
- b. The teaching of the Apostles concerning the believer's relationship with those outside the covenant community tends to follow many of the same patterns seen in the Old Testament and Gospels. Note five basic categories:
  1. **Hospitality to strangers** — Heb. 13:2.
  2. **Submission to secular institutions**
    - a. The general rule — I Pet. 2:13-18; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; James 5:1-11; Rom. 13; Titus 3:1.
    - b. Some exceptions:
      1. Rendering to God what is due Him — Acts 4:19-21.
      2. Appealing to legal rights to further the gospel — Acts 16:36-39; 25:9-10.
  3. **Separation from the world**
    - a. In moral areas — II Thess. 3:6,14-15; I Cor. 5:1-13; I Tim. 5:20.
    - b. In doctrinal areas — Titus 1:1-13; 3:10; I Tim. 1:19-20; II Tim. 1:13; 2:25-26; Gal. 1:6-9.
    - c. In social areas — II Jn. 9-11; II Thess. 3:6.
  4. **Spiritual welfare**
    - a. Prayer — I Tim. 2:1-4.
    - b. Testimony — I Cor. 10:27-29; I Tim. 3:7; I Pet. 2:11; 3:1-2; Titus 2:6-9.
    - c. Witness — II Cor. 5:16-21.
  5. **Physical welfare**
    - a. "Do good to all men . . ." Gal. 6:10.
    - b. "Every consideration to all men . . ." Titus 3:1-3.
    - c. "Love toward all men . . ." I Thess. 3:12.
    - d. "Not to be in need from . . ." I Thess. 4:12.
    - e. "Be patient and seek good . . ." I Thess. 5:14-15.
    - f. "Do what is right in the sight of all . . ." Rom. 12:17.
    - g. "Overcome evil with good." Rom. 12:21.

### C. **An Evangelical Perspective On Social Change**

#### 1. THE NATURE OF MAN'S DILEMMA

- a. Man's nature
  1. **Dignity** — he is made in God's image (spiritual dimension).
  2. **Depravity** — he is separated from God (radically flawed).

- b. Man's problems
  1. Personal spiritual displacement leads to —
  2. Individual delinquency and —
  3. Societal disruption.
- 2. THE NATURE OF MAN'S HOPE
  - a. Salvation or reconciliation within society is dependent upon:
    1. Reconciliation of **INDIVIDUALS TO GOD** through faith in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice and indwelling Spirit.
    2. The proper working of **A COMMUNITY OF SUCH INDIVIDUALS** (the Church) as a microcosm of God's Kingdom on earth (Christ against culture).
    3. The effective **EVANGELIZATION** of the larger society (drawing them into the Christian community).
    4. Promoting and/or preserving the **JUDEO-CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW** in the larger society.

## NOTE:

- a. Full social reform and salvation will come ultimately and only through the establishment of **GOD'S KINGDOM** (in its fullness) on earth at Christ's return.
- b. The **CHURCH OF CHRIST ON EARTH IS TO BE A MICROCOSM** and share the values of that coming Kingdom. But because the Church is imperfect, so is its reflection of God's order.
- c. All attempts at resolving man's problems apart from the above pattern are superficial and futile. Social, political, and economic manipulation is nothing more than a **STOP-GAP MEASURE** and will not succeed (ultimately) without the personal reconciliation of individuals to God in Christ.
- d. Steps to reform or conserve secular policy and values are aimed at accomplishing two things:
  1. **Creating and/or preserving an environment** where the Church of Christ can carry out (with the least interference) its tasks of exemplifying Kingdom values (modeling a new order) and evangelizing the world. This is best done in a society where the government is benevolently neutral with respect to evangelical Christianity and embraces and supports a world and life view (concept of ultimate reality) that is consistent with that of the historical Judeo-Christian traditions.
  2. **Creating and/or preserving a system of law and order** that respects reality (as evangelicals see it):
    - a. A basically pessimistic view of man's ability to completely escape his depravity. (A republic is preferable to a democracy when speaking of morals and values.)

- b. An emphasis upon individual freedom and responsibility. (Any real improvement must start with individuals.)
- c. Necessary stop-gap measures of social manipulation for the sake of social justice, mercy, and protection of minorities.
- d. Basic moral values are derived from a Judeo-Christian base.

### 3. What is the sphere of social action?

- a. The dynamics of **Christian community** — the local church as a family (shared resources, emotional support).
- b. The dynamics of **personal piety** — the individual believer and his neighbors (help pay bills or rent).
- c. The dynamics of the Kingdom of God in **secular society** — organized structural reform (lobby, letter, lecture).

**NOTE:** Evangelicals tend to be committed to social action in the above order of priority for three reasons:

- 1. They believe that real change begins with the spiritual renewal of individuals, not with manipulating social systems.
- 2. They believe that the Church stands as an alternative model over and against secular culture.
- 3. They believe that manipulation of social systems is but a stop-gap measure.

### 4. A philosophy of economic justice

- a. Three principles in the distribution of wealth within the covenant community:
  - 1. To each according to the person's merit or demerit (II Thess. 3:10).
  - 2. To each according to a standard of equality (II Cor. 9:13-15).
  - 3. To each according to a person's need (Acts 4:34-35).
- b. It was the general understanding of the founders of the American Republic that the government was responsible for JUSTICE, not LOVE or MERCY (which sprang from the free choice of individuals and groups in society).
- c. What is difficult to assess is the degree to which JUSTICE includes "1," "2," and "3" (above) and/or the degree to which they are expressions of MERCY and LOVE.

### 5. Modern views of social justice reviewed

- a. The birth of the concept of social justice coincided with:
  - 1. "Death of God" theology with the rise of science and reason.
    - a. In the past, economic inequality could be ascribed to "God's blessing or lack thereof". But there seemed to be little direct correlation between moral merit and economic gain.
    - b. This is one more evidence that God is not a reality.
    - c. The unresolved problem of evil becomes a stumbling block to faith for many.
  - 2. The rise of the ideal of a command economy – scientific socialism.

- a. When God is no longer a factor, the inequalities of life are intolerable and must be viewed as correctable by manipulating the economic and social systems.
- b. There is a deep impulse among intellectuals to explain any difference in “natural God given” ability (which enable the production of personal wealth) as products of nurture and environment (the system).
- c. The result = any inequality in the ultimate distribution of wealth and power is the fault of the system not the result of inborn individual ability or ambition.
- d. Responsibility (in modern views) moves away from the individual (victim) to the corporate system.
- c. Social justice rightly understood is a specific habit of justice that is “social “ in two senses.
  - 1. The means of justice is a community of conscience where individuals work for what is good, fair, consistent with the truth.
  - 2. The goal is the good of the community not just the individual.
 Note: It is ideologically neutral.
- 6. **The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (1974) offered the following guidelines for social responsibility.**
  - a. Share God’s concern for Justice. Isa.1:17 “Seek justice, correct oppression.”
  - b. Share God’s Concern for Reconciliation.
  - c. Share God’s Concern for Liberation of Men from Every Kind of Oppression.
  - d. Respect the Dignity of Every Person.
  - e. Exploit No One.
  - f. Serve Every Person.
  - g. Denounce Evil and Injustice.
  - h. Seek to Exhibit the Righteousness of the Kingdom of Christ.
  - i. Seek to Spread the Righteousness of the Kingdom of Christ.

#### D. **Conclusions**

- 1. Love cares.
  - a. Love is not cost effective.
  - b. Love longs to express itself in tangible ways.
  - c. Love is most dramatic when it is not deserved.
  - d. Love is more than sentimentality.
- 2. Social justice is not the most important objective in my call to follow Christ.
  - a. This world is not our blessed hope.
  - b. Social justice within the context of the covenant community is the Biblical emphasis.
  - c. Much of Jesus’ social service was a sign.

3. Pain and injustice are not always the enemy.
  - a. We reap what we sow and learn from our mistakes.
  - b. We find our hope in God when all the toys are gone.
  - c. We are to welcome and share the suffering of Christ.
4. The danger of government imposed social justice.

“It is one of the greatest weaknesses of our time that we lack the patience and faith to build up voluntary organizations for purposes which we value highly, and immediately ask the government to bring about by coercion (or with means raised by coercion) anything that appears as desirable to large numbers. Yet nothing can have a more deadening effect on real participation by the citizens than if government, instead of merely providing the essential framework of spontaneous growth, becomes monolithic and takes charge of the provision for all needs, which can be provided for only by the common effort of many.” Friedrich Hayek

#### E. **Application**

1. I commit myself to live well below my means so that I have resources to give to others.
  - a. Discipline of appetites is a key to character development.
  - b. I will save for future emergencies but be just as committed to saving for benevolent giving.
  - c. I will set my goal to give at a level that will reduce my taxes to “0”. (Excluding housing expenses.) or to give 50% of my income away each year.
2. I will keep cash on hand for unexpected opportunities to give to people’s needs.
  - a. I will error on the side of being naive rather than stingy.
  - b. I will ask hard questions in deciding where to give.
  - c. I will bear witness to Christ in my giving.
3. I will not judge others for their spending and giving practices.
  - a. I will lead by example.
  - b. I will teach Biblical principles of stewardship.
  - c. I will encourage people to take risks of faith.