

Section I

The Biblical Philosophy of Hunger

Chapter 1 The Welfare State

Since the issue of poverty has been with the human race ever since the fall and the resultant curse on the creation, there have been numerous and varied responses to this problem during the course of history. One solution was to sell the poor off into slavery, and then it would be the master's responsibility to feed and clothe them. The very poor, who could no longer sustain themselves, would simply become slaves. This harsh solution was even practiced by Israel in Nehemiah's day and came under his severe rebuke.

And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live." There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards." And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them. And I said to them, "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?" Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?" "I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! "Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them." So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say." Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise (Nehemiah 5:1-13 NKJV).

The Third Reich had another solution for those whom Hitler termed "useless mouths." His solution was euthanasia. He would eliminate all the old and the infirm; the weak and the handicapped; the sick and the retarded, etc., who form the backbone of the chronically poor. They would be the objects of so called "mercy killing," and only the strong and the healthy, the prosperous and productive, would be allowed to live. This thinking is on the rise in Western civilization. In some European nations euthanasia of the elderly is legal, and in the United States there is the Hemlock Society, Dr. Kevorkian, and Governor Roehmer of Colorado whose response to the Social Security crisis was to state that the "*old people have a duty to die and get out of the way.*"

But far and away the most popular solution throughout history has been to have the government take care of the poor. Taxation would not be limited to raising the necessary funds to support government in its just and scriptural functions, but taxes would be levied in pursuit of social policy, in pursuit of socialist equality, in pursuit of the implementation of the Marxist dictum "*from everyone according to his ability to everyone*

according to his need.” In short, the socialist welfare state has been the solution to the poverty problem most frequently implemented by ungodly cultures. For all its modern apostles it is an ancient practice well established in history. Ancient Babylon was the prototype of the modern socialist welfare state. The nature of the Babylonian kingdom is indicated in the following dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

“Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it” (Daniel 4:10-12)

Daniel’s inspired interpretation of this dream indicated that this great tree was Nebuchadnezzar himself: *“The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth”* (Daniel 4:20-22). Babylon was a top-down hierarchical society with Nebuchadnezzar at the top. As Daniel stated it in his interpretation of another dream of Nebuchadnezzar, *“Thou art this head of gold.”* He was the absolute autocrat. As Daniel later stated it of him to his grandson, *“O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down”* (Daniel 5:18-19).

The whole earth looked to this great king. All flesh looked to him for their daily bread. Even the animals looked to the provision of this ruler for their sustenance. He was the embodiment of providence itself. He was in his very person the embodiment of the modern welfare state. He was an absolute ruler with the power of life and death over all his subjects. Such rulers are normally not a blessing. The myth of the benevolent dictator is just that; a myth. Lord Acton’s saying, *“All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,”* is just good Calvinism, reflecting the depravity of man and his unworthiness to rule. As Jeremiah put it, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9).

Modern would-be Nebuchadnezzar’s are the totalitarian dictators of the twentieth century. They have been a curse. God in his mercy decreed that there should be no more in history like Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was to be unique. After him, autocracy, concentrated absolute political power, was to degenerate. From the head of gold that he represented, successive rulers were characterized by silver, brass, iron, and even clay. When the rich young ruler called Christ “Good Master,” the response was, *“And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God”* (Luke 18:19). Only Jesus, the Christ, the second Adam, is absolutely good. Only Christ is worthy to rule with absolute power. Sinful men are not worthy to rule, and therefore political power must be diffused. Autocracy is a judgment of God. Great pagan Babylon came under such a judgment. Earlier, Egypt had as well. In Joseph’s day, Pharaoh’s power became almost absolute, and he became the source of food for all flesh in his day. As Moses recounts it:

And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and

we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's (Genesis 47:13-26).

Pharaoh, like Nebuchadnezzar, became that great tree that all men looked to for sustenance and deliverance. Pharaoh was supreme. He owned all the land. He owned all the livestock. He owned all the Egyptians. They had become his willing serfs. This slavery was but the logical extension of their idolatry. They had regarded Pharaoh as a god. Now they would have to serve him with all their goods, and their hearts and minds as well. They would have to serve him as a god. A nation's theology has consequences.

But this is the theology of the modern socialist welfare state. The prime example of this genus in the twentieth century has been the Soviet Union. For a professedly atheist state its trappings were distinctly religious. In its revolutionary beginnings it swept away a very religious state, Czarist Russia. The autocratic Czar was worshipped as the Lord's anointed. A monolithic state church taught all men what to believe. Icons of the saints were prominently displayed to assist the people in their worship. But did atheistic Bolshevism significantly change all that? The answer is No. Like the old French proverb, "*Le plus ce change, le plus c'est le meme chose*" (the more it changes, the more it's the same thing). Solomon noted about three thousand years ago that there is no new thing under the sun. Stalin became the new autocrat reverently looked up to as the father of his people, as the Czar once had been. A monolithic religion of Marxism-Leninism was zealously preached to the people, with the same penalties for dissent and heresy as the Czarist police had once enforced. New icons, of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and company, were prominently displayed to receive the people's reverent attention. The religion had changed outwardly, but the system was virtually the same. And the government was exclusively the great tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream enforced with the cold efficiency of modern technology. All men were employees of the state. All men worked for and made their living by the provision of the state. All men lived or died at the behest of the state. The state was god. Much the same can be said for National Socialist Germany. With religious fervor the deluded masses chanted the Nazi slogans. "Eine Reich, eine volk, eine fuhrer" (one nation, one people, one leader). No dissent or heresy was to be allowed here. The Gestapo saw to that. And with messianic zeal Hitler proclaimed the millennium; the Third Reich would last a thousand years, it would be "Het duizend jarige reich" (the thousand-year kingdom). It only lasted twelve years and ended not in paradise, but in national destruction. But it was a religious kingdom from beginning to end. A kingdom of faith—the faith that man can replace god and become the great tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Government is not of human origin. Government is an institution of God. Government does not exist to fulfill man's dreams of power. Government was not intended as a vehicle for men to usurp the prerogatives of God. What is the Biblical function of government? According to the Apostle Paul, it is to be an earthly ministry of justice. The Lord had said, "*Vengeance is mine,*" and government was to act as God's minister, exacting his vengeance on murderers, thieves, etc. So Paul speaks in Romans 13, "*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*" (Romans 13:1-4).

Paul's scriptural vision of civil government knows nothing of an institution that usurps the functions of divine providence and seeks to resurrect the great tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. But that dream is definitely the dream of modern man. Rejecting God, man seeks to be God. Believing himself to be at the apex of an evolutionary chain, man seeks to ride the wave of evolutionary development till his dreams of divinity are realized. These dreams have not been restricted to the "messiahs" of the socialist totalitarian states. They include the social democracies that comprise what was once Western Christian civilization. In all these nations, while Biblical justice languishes, the building of the great tree continues apace. In all these nations, government, representing man in his collective capacity, has become the defacto god.

Historically Americans have distrusted government. Their instinctive Calvinism recognized man's depravity. Jefferson's axiom, to tie men (those in government) down with the chains of the Constitution, reflected their own skepticism concerning would-be political messiahs. They insisted on a Bill of Rights before they would accept the yoke of another federal government. Government was to be limited to its scriptural functions and men were to be free to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. And men were prepared to accept the responsibility of that pursuit and to do so in the hope and in the faith, that with God's blessing, they would prosper. But with the progressive withering away of faith in God came increasing faith in the goodness and abilities of man. During the long dark days of the War of Independence, Americans continued to trust in God rather in the great tree of the Imperial British government. But less than two centuries later there is a totally different faith. During the Great Depression of the thirties, Americans put their trust in government. The New Deal with its social programs would be their salvation. F.D.R. would guide them out of the wilderness into a new promised land. They sold their heritage for a mess of pottage and the great tree was taking root in Washington as never before. The federal government now seeks to be all things to all men. For the hungry there are welfare programs and food stamps. For the homeless there are welfare programs and public housing. For the elderly there is Social Security and Medicare. For farmers there are price supports and subsidized loans. For small businesses there are more subsidized loans. For corporations there are research grants, tariff protections, quasi-monopolies, and tax breaks. There are grants, subsidies and tax breaks for all to the tune of a 17,000-page tax code. The great tree is spreading its branches and there is room for all to nest therein and partake of its benevolence. Of course, this great god must be fed and taxes have reached unprecedented heights, but still for every new problem, for every new affliction, the people dutifully bow to the great tree in Washington and pray for deliverance.

And this is scarcely an American phenomenon. The United States actually lags behind when one compares the degree to which this phenomenon has prevailed in almost all the developed nations of the world. The modern socialist welfare state is everywhere. Indeed the main restriction on its ubiquitous presence seems to be that the poorer nations, although sharing in the apostate dream, simply do not have the resources to build much of a tree. But the real point to be made here is that all this is radically unscriptural. It is God, not government, who is the source of all blessing. Of Him scripture says, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17).

Chapter 2

Christian Copycats

God is not a socialist, and the scriptures do not preach a gospel of “share the wealth.” Rather, the scriptures teach that the righteous and the godly will increase and prosper, and the wicked will progressively come under the righteous judgments of the Lord. This is clearly exemplified in the parable of the talents.

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come...it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him (Luke 19:12-26).

First of all, in this parable we learn that everything we have comes from the Lord. He gives us our talents, and he holds us accountable for how we use them. And the effect of that accountability is that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Those who diligently use their talents and prosper with them are given even more, and those who slothfully neglect their talents are stripped of even the little they they have. God is not a socialist and equality of goods is not the aim of his providence. The world, however, thinks differently. This is reflected in the comments of the other servants who protest his judgments, saying that the diligent servant already has ten talents. The Lord’s response is one that the church ought to ponder in this socialist age. The Lord says, “*That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.*”

Although ultimate justice is something that will not be achieved in this world, but only in the world to come, and through the agency of the judgment throne of Jesus Christ, yet it ought to be our aim even in this life. But socialism and justice are at cross purposes. The latter discriminates and seeks to reward virtue and diligence and punish sloth and wickedness, while the former seeks to equalize and to treat the righteous and the wicked, the slothful and the industrious, as if they were all the same. The Apostle Paul by contrast says, “*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The socialist state wars against the principles of God’s providence and seeks to establish a totally different kind of providence. Under socialism the politics of envy and of guilt replace the politics of righteousness and justice. The have-nots have their envy satiated by the state, and the prosperous are made to feel guilty for having prospered. Under this system the diligent are taxed to subsidize the slothful. Solomon taught as follows:

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:6-8).

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man (Proverbs 24:33-34).

But the socialist state teaches that diligence is not necessary. They teach that “Jiminy Cricket” was right. Just fiddle away your time and live off the industrious when you are in need. The socialist state will tax the productive citizens to provide for the indolent. And that is just the tip of the iceberg; it only gets worse. The law-

abiding citizens are taxed to warehouse criminals in a way that the working poor can only envy. They are kept in air-conditioned cells, with full medical and dental care, excellent food, free college tuition, free legal services, etc., etc., ad nauseum. Such care routinely costs in the order of \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually. Frequently these are vicious murderers, rapists, and child molesters, etc., under a scriptural sentence of death. Those who have destroyed their lives by vice, including alcohol and drugs, similarly receive benefits from the socialist state. Adulterers, whose sinful activities have led to a breakup of a family, can also be assured that the socialist state will not allow them to suffer the full consequences of their folly. In all these cases the virtuous will be taxed to subsidize the wicked. The righteous will share in the consequences of the actions of the depraved.

That this is utterly opposed to all scriptural principles of justice and equity, ought to be manifestly obvious. Mysteriously, to many, it does not seem to be so. We can expect the world to deny God's word and to resist principles of Biblical law. We can expect pagan or atheistic governments to act according to the above scenarios. We may be somewhat disappointed when governments, in what were once professedly Christian nations, succumb to such errors. However, we are totally perplexed when professing Christians diligently espouse the same heresies. But the very crux of our problem, the root of our dilemma with respect to this issue, is that the church has sought to emulate the state in promoting these errors.

As was noted in the last chapter, the United States has not been immune to the allurements of governmental charity. Historically this was not so. At the time of the American War of Independence there was more faith in God than in government. In fact, Americans specifically waged war against the British concept of government—a huge monolithic bureaucracy regulating the economic life of the nation. This is obvious from statements in the Declaration of Independence such as, “*He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of new officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.*” Americans believed in limited government. Americans wanted liberty under God. The United States Constitution was drafted to achieve this end. It severely limited the functions of the federal government. It did not allow for a vast system of governmental charities. As Jefferson stated it, “*Tie them down with the chains of the Constitution,*” referring to those who, once in office, would emulate the overthrown British rule and begin to reconstruct the great tree of governmental providence. At that hour in history the American people were united, and both church and state were agreed that government was not the source of our daily bread.

However, by the time of “The War between the States” things were beginning to change. Faith in government was starting to overcome faith in God. Although God has instituted government as his earthly ministry of justice, we are not to trust in it. The government is not messianic in nature; it was not designed to be our salvation. The nature of government is negative; it was designed to punish, not to bless. It is to bear the sword, not the welfare check. Northern abolitionists, spearheaded by Unitarians and liberal Congregationalists, believed otherwise. They were more concerned with physical bondage than bondage to sin and death and hell. They were impatient of reform by the proclamation of scripture truth. They had another gospel whose power was in the sword of the civil magistrate, not in the operations of the Holy Spirit. As Julia Ward Howe, radical feminist, suffragette, abolitionist, and Unitarian minister, expressed it in her infamous hymn, “*The Battle Hymn of the Republic*”:

*“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword...”*

But what was this advent of the Lord that she was referring to? It was not the advent of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. Neither was it the outpouring of his Spirit. It was the Yankee army. It was a different gospel as she herself confessed, saying, “*I have seen a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel.*”

The abolitionists were not content with defeating the Confederacy and abolishing slavery. They demanded extensive military occupation and “Reconstruction” of the South by naked force. They demanded a national program of enforced federal charity for the newly freed slaves. Every freed Negro would get 40 acres and a mule. This was another gospel, and national salvation would be imposed by Yankee bayonets. Like the Roman Catholic faith of bygone days its agenda would be imposed by the sword. But even the temporary successes of

radical abolitionism only whetted the appetite of those whose faith was in statism, in salvation by the power and decrees of the civil magistrate.

By the time of the Great Depression this new faith was well entrenched. Federal charity fairly exploded with a plethora of aid programs collectively known as the New Deal. The capstone of this new drive for salvation from all earthly ills by government was the new Social Security system. Economic security would henceforth be in the hands of the government rather than in the hands of God.¹ Then came World War II in which the United States played a prominent role in the defeat of both Germany and Japan. Part of that role included a massive program of military aid to the allies known as Lend-Lease. Aid to one's allies in time of war is reasonable. However, none of this aid was ever repaid, and no attempts to collect these debts were ever made. And most of this aid went to a totalitarian dictator, Joseph Stalin, who was just as evil as the one we were fighting and shedding the blood of our sons to suppress. It was a massive exercise in international charity based on the unrealistic assumptions that you can buy friendship and change attitudes with money. It was an attempt to forge a better world order, and usher in a new millennium of peace and progress, without any commitment to God or subjection to his word. The new faith said that money, diplomacy, and politics can usher in the kingdom. Then after the war came the Marshall Plan where America subsidized the rebuilding of the war-torn nations of Western Europe. And after that came an extensive program of permanent foreign aid to a host of disadvantaged nations primarily in the Third World. All this was more of the same, based on the Marxist dictum of economic determinism, that poverty creates communism, and that one can control the hearts and minds, the faith and the ideology, of peoples, by money and massive national bribes. The American version of the great tree was really beginning to blossom.

As the new faith swept the country and was progressively imposed by the state, the churches were also effected. Many saw this governmental aid as a manifestation of Christianity, as an implementation of Biblical ideals of social justice. They forgot the admonition of the Apostle Paul who had taught, "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Paul's confidence was in the power of God, and of his word, and of his Holy Spirit. Paul displayed little confidence in, and did not seek the assistance of, the Roman State. But Paul's faith has not always been the faith of the professing church. The professing church of Jesus Christ has not always walked by faith and not by sight. All too frequently the church has walked by sight, discarded the sword of the Spirit, and sought carnal weapons for her warfare. This was especially true of those churches that felt that the traditional scriptural methodologies weren't working.

The nineteenth century, spearheaded by such missionary stalwarts as Livingstone and Hudson, spawned a massive, worldwide missionary movement. Men became dizzy with optimism. They believed that the world would be Christianized in their generation. It seemed a mere matter of logistics. Schemes were set forth to convert whole nations in a single year by canvassing every soul with an army of tens of thousands of evangelists. However, they didn't reckon on the electing decrees of God, the indispensability of divine grace, and the work of the Holy Spirit. This was Arminianism with a vengeance. When it failed, it wasn't the Arminianism, but historic Christianity that went by the boards.

What arose to replace it was a new apostate form of Christianity. Like traditional Postmillennialists it believed in a millennium of peace and prosperity before the second advent of Jesus Christ; it believed in establishing the Kingdom of God in the here and now. But it no longer believed in the historic means to accomplish this. It had no use for the Great Commission. It had no desire to evangelize the nations to faith in Jesus Christ and to discipline them to walk in God's law. Instead it chose another weapon; it chose the sword of the civil magistrate. Instead of the convicting power of God's word, it would rely on the coercive power of the state to accomplish its ends. It was a new faith. Jesus had taught, "*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,*

4. This is not to imply that Christians are wrong to accept Social Security. Their participation was involuntary and they have paid for their benefits. What is wrong is to trust in these programs rather than in the providence of a gracious and sovereign God.

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19). According to Jesus, man’s problem was with his sinful heart. Thus Christ had told Nicodemus, “*Ye must be born again.*” Men need to be regenerated; men need new hearts; men need to become a new creatures in Christ. But this new faith declared that crime and sin were a result of poverty. If we eliminated poverty we would eliminate crime. If we eliminated imperialism and colonialism; if we shared the world’s resources equitably; if we eliminated the gap between the have’s and the have not’s, between the rich and the poor nations, we would eliminate war. Without crime and war, peace and prosperity would soon bring in the millennium. It was a powerful vision. But it was a vision that didn’t need Christ or the gospel. It didn’t need historic Christianity or the historic Christian Church. All it needed was the state. The kingdom could be built by economics and politics. The main function of the church would be to act as a cheerleader for the socialist welfare state.

This militant apostasy was itself a serious enough challenge to historic Christianity. But at least the enemy was identified and the battle lines were drawn. On the one side was liberalism and modernism. On the other side was evangelicalism. On the one side were the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. On the other side evangelical, fundamentalist, and Reformed churches and church councils. But the vision was contagious and this state of affairs did not last long. Soon Evangelicals were seriously infected with this virus. Liberals, Evangelicals, and Roman Catholics were all advocating massive social action by the state to address problems of poverty and hunger. They were all merrily worshipping at the shrine of state power. They too had come to believe in the “Great Tree.” From Ronald Sider’s *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* to the Christian Reformed Church’s “Task Force on World Hunger,” the tune was remarkably similar and nauseatingly familiar. Poverty and hunger were worldwide problems, and Christians had a responsibility to address them. And this responsibility always included personal redistribution of wealth and resources and a demand for more government programs and action. While old-fashioned missionary efforts were frequently equated with cultural imperialism, the new gospel of “share the wealth” rose to a crescendo. The “Christian” copycats of the socialist welfare state were in high gear.

Chapter 3

Hunger

Jesus said, “*The poor ye have always with you.*” Why is this so? We have come a long way since the simple economies and primitive agriculture of the Mediterranean world of Christ’s day. Why can we not eliminate poverty? Why can we not abolish hunger? Currently in my home state there is a drive by a misguided philanthropist to make Rhode Island “the first hunger free state.” Why is this such folly? The reason is sin. Hunger and poverty are the consequences of sin. They are God’s judgments on sin. When Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden they did not face the prospect of poverty and hunger. All their needs were provided in abundance. But after the fall into the sin, with the creation groaning under the Lord’s righteous curse, things were radically different.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Genesis 3:17-19).

As long as there is sin, and as long as we labor under the curse of sin, there will be struggle, hunger, and death. God gave the children of Israel a land flowing with milk and honey. The fertility and fruitfulness of the land were remarkable. But their tenure on the land was based on their faithful keeping of God’s covenant and the laws and statutes that it contained. If they were faithful Moses promised them,

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep...And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee (Deuteronomy 28:1-4,11).

But Moses also severely warned them of the consequences of forsaking God’s covenant and walking in their own ways and the ways of the heathen.

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep... And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed... Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit... All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume” (Deuteronomy 28:15-18, 23-24, 38-40, 42).

The above quoted judgments are not merely the exclusive sanctions of the Sinaitic Covenant. As we have seen, from Adam through Moses, these are the definitive judgments of God on sin. Hunger and famine are not merely random circumstances, visited by chance on its innocent victims. Rather, they are the continuing sanctions of a Holy God on his sinful creation as He maintains his prerogatives as the Moral Governor of the universe.

We live in a scientific age. This gives us an unprecedented understanding of the secondary causes of many of the events in God's creation. We are treated to detailed scientific dissertations on the causes of floods and famines; on the genesis of tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other so called "natural disasters." Unfortunately, this preoccupation with the means that God's employs to bring his will to pass in history causes us to frequently overlook the elemental fact that the primary cause of all these events is the determinate will and the eternal decrees of God. These events are not accidental; they do not come to pass by chance. Not only are they the deliberate acts of a sovereign and omniscient God, but the scriptures teach that they are the righteous responses of a Holy God to man's sin. Take war as an example. War is not only a destructive event by itself, but is also a chief cause of famine. The history books are full of the debates about the major causes of various wars. But the ultimate cause is not in man's actions but in the judgments of God. Examples are legion and I will cite just one significant case from scripture. "Solomon" means "peace." Solomon was designated to build the Temple in Jerusalem because he was a man of peace rather than David his father, who was a man of war. However in his old age Solomon apostatized and worshipped idols. The result was that God in judgment revoked the peace of the Kingdom and embroiled Solomon in foreign wars.

"For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen. And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom... And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah... And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria" (1 Kings 11:4-14, 23-25).

Solomon was not the only King of Israel that did not always live up to his name. Names in the scriptures are important. Frequently, when a man's situation was radically changed his name was changed to reflect his new status. A few examples are Abraham, Sarah, Israel, and Coniah. Solomon's name may not have been changed, but when he sinned God radically changed his situation. He was no longer the man of peace, the peaceful king. He was now compelled to deal with the curse of war.

Another major cause of famine is drought. Droughts are no more accidental than wars in God's scheme of things. Another example from Israel's history is illustrative. Another apostate King of Israel pushes the envelope of sin and idolatry out another notch. The scriptures record his evil and indicate God's response.

"And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him... And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 16:30-33, 17:1).

God's response was drought and the attendant famine in the land. Drought and famine at least for a season, until God's purposes were fulfilled. In due course God relented and sent rain upon the earth. *"And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria"* (1 Kings 18:1-2).

We are not sure of all God's reasons for delivering Israel from these tribulations. But Ahab had been taught a significant lesson. He had been taught that the God he was rejecting was sovereign over even the rain and the harvest, and was the giver of life and the supplier of food. The rain also sent deliverance to Ahab's godly prime minister, Obadiah, who used his position in the court to protect and to provision scores of Jahweh's faithful prophets throughout Jezebel's persecution and the terrible famine. But most significantly, the rain did not come, and the famine did not end, until Israel as a nation rejected Baal and reaffirmed their faith in Jahweh on Mount Carmel.

"Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain" (1 Kings 18:38-41).

The lessons here are clear. First, it is God that both sends and withholds rain. Secondly, God does not act in a capricious manner when he withholds rain and precipitates famine. Rather He does so in specific response to man's idolatry and wickedness. Thirdly, He sends relief in response to repentance and the acknowledgment of his Lordship. And in the light of all this, it is of course somewhat hard to imagine that a little foreign aid from the Philistines was all that Israel needed to deal with the temporary capriciousness of "Mother Nature"!

Elijah was not the only prophet to confront kings with the claims of Jahweh. Moses, the great prophet of the Old Testament, had a similar commission when God sent him to confront Pharaoh. Pharaoh's response was arrogant and derisive. *"And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go"* (Exodus 5:1-2). The result of Pharaoh's refusal to submit to the Lord and obey God's commandment was the ten plagues. The result of these plagues was not only that God prevailed and Israel was liberated from Egyptian bondage, but also that Egypt was destroyed. As Pharaoh's counselors reminded him, *"And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?"* (Exodus 10:7).

Not only did these plagues destroy Egypt, but a significant number of them would have caused famine conditions in Egypt. Without the Nile, Egypt would be almost a desert. Its annual flooding was absolutely necessary to irrigation and agriculture. The Egyptians were so dependent on the Nile they worshipped it as a source of fertility. The first plague turned it into blood. A subsequent plague killed all the livestock of the Egyptians. Then a plague of hail destroyed all the fruit trees and the crops. What little vegetation that may have survived was destroyed by the plague of locusts. Not only was Egypt destroyed, but she was reduced to famine conditions. Again it is significant to note that the plagues did not end until Pharaoh relented, submitted to Jahweh, and agreed to let his people go.

It is important to recognize that these examples span the time from Adam to Christ. They are by no means unique to Israel or to the Sinaitic Covenant. The relative silence of the New Testament with regard to these matters does not alter this in any way. Silence does not repeal. It only leaves things unchanged. As Christ said, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"* (Matthew 5:17).

Finally, there is abundant testimony in the scriptures to the fact that God is sovereign over his creation and that he is in personal and continual control of what we generally refer to as the forces of nature. To believe otherwise is to be a Deist. The testimony of Job is an abundant one on this issue. When tragedy upon tragedy

struck Job and the Lord stripped him of everything except hope in the life to come Job did not curse “Mother Nature,” or bemoan his bad luck. Rather he testified to his friends, “*Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net*” (Job 19:6). Job knew that all his tribulations came from the Lord, the Lord who is in control of all aspects of his creation—a belief that the book of Job sets forth in great detail.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof? Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth? Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together? (Job 38:4-38)

If we really believe in the God of the scriptures, let us forever be done with the foolish notion that plague, famine, and national calamity are unfortunate happenstances that engulf hosts of innocent victims. Let us instead maintain a belief in the moral government of a Holy God.

If sin is the underlying cause of hunger, how can government be the solution? Only one way, and that is by using the sword of the civil magistrate to restrain sin. But that is not what is being advocated by the apostles of indiscriminate “Christian charity.” Rather than recognizing government as God’s earthly ministry of justice and supporting it in its role of maintaining God’s law, they are lobbying for something totally different. They are asking the government to drop the sword of justice, to cease restraining sin, and to bless people in their sin. Rather than dealing with the sin, they are asking government to deal with the consequences of the sin and to undo the effects of sin. Slothfulness, irresponsibility, drunkenness, drug abuse, illegitimacy, divorce or abandonment, etc. can all be dealt with by a welfare check. Now government at its best can only punish sin, but it cannot cause people to stop sinning. That requires grace. And that is the ministry of the church and not of the state. To deal with the sins already committed, men need to be justified before God through Jesus Christ. To restrain the commission of future sins, men need to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. These are needs that no government can fulfil. It can neither make men holy nor absolve them of their sins. Government is simply not the answer.

Chapter 4

The Lord Our Shield

If hunger and famine are the righteous judgments of a Holy God on his sinful creation, then what can man do? The Apostle Paul tells us that the whole creation labors and groans under the curse of sin. As Job put it, "*Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7). Man is a sinner; he is in bondage to his sin; yet his sin is his undoing and his destruction. What can man do? He has neither the ability to stop sinning, nor can he contend with the Almighty. He is in a desperate dilemma, and he is in desperate need of God's grace. There is only one thing that he can do. As Job went on to express it, "*I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields*" (Job 5:8-10).

Hunger and famine, death and destruction, is all that awaits sinful man from the hand of a righteous, omnipotent, and a Holy God. So it has been from the beginning and so it was with the ante-diluvian world. The testimony of scripture regarding that generation was, "*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5).

The response of God, who is "*of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*" (Habakkuk 1:13), to this sin was predictable. "*And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them*" (Genesis 6:6-7).

There was but one lonely exception to this universal judgment of the Lord. "*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*" (Genesis 6:8). Noah and his family were delivered. They were delivered not by their own merit, but by the grace of God. Man's only hope to escape the universality and omnipotence of God's righteous judgment is to find grace with God as Noah did. Man stands in absolute need of God's grace, God's unmerited favor, God's mercy, if he is to find deliverance from the just consequences of his sin.

The Bible says of Abraham that he was justified by faith. "*And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness*" (Genesis 15:6). And therefore the Lord can say unto Abraham, "*After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*" (Genesis 15:1). In all the perils of this life, through famine and the violence of the wicked, God preserved Abraham. We never read of Abraham being overcome by any evil. On the contrary, Lot, who pitched his tent toward Sodom, was overcome by all manner of evil. Truly the Lord is a shield to the righteous.

And that was David's experience also. Few men have faced as many dangers, trials, and afflictions as David has. But David's testimony is that he had a shield and a deliverer.

"*And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies*" (2 Samuel 22:1-4).

"*For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield*" (Psalm 5:12).

David pursues this thought and specifically applies it to deliverance from famine and hunger.

"*For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous. The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away*" (Psalm 37:17-20).

"*I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread*" (Psalm 37:25).

Truly God is a shield to the righteous. "*For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*" (Psalm 84:11). God is a shield to those who trust in him. "*O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield*" (Psalm 115:9).

Elijah loved the Lord, the God of Israel. When he saw the idolatry that Ahab and his court were instituting in Israel, he wanted God to rise up and punish this wickedness according to the sanctions of the Sinaitic Covenant. He was willing to personally endure famine that Israel might learn that Jahweh is the true God. So Elijah prayed that there might be a drought, and God heard and answered his prayer. He did not pray that Israel might be delivered from this terrible famine. He prayed that Israel might be delivered from her terrible idolatry. But God did not forget his servant. He shielded his servant from his judgments on Israel. He was truly a shield unto Elijah.

"And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook" (1 Kings 17:2-6).

World hunger is not a problem; it is a symptom. The problem is sin. World hunger is simply proof of the holiness of God. World hunger is simply proof that there is a God in heaven judging righteous judgment. It would be a terrible thing if evil could prosper. It would be a terrible thing if wickedness could endure. George Orwell saw the future as a "*boot trampling a human face forever.*" Adolph Hitler shared that vision, but by God's grace the Third Reich only lasted twelve years. We should not complain about world hunger, but give thanks for the providence and justice of a holy God. Instead of complaining we should be grieved by the pervasiveness and wickedness of sin. We should seek a refuge from sin and all its consequences in the grace and mercy of God. We should seek him who alone can be our shield throughout this life and our hope for the life to come. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness they complained to God with dreadful results.

"And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Numbers 21:5-9).

Complaining about hunger only brings further judgment. It is repentance and faith that brings deliverance. As the children of Israel looked on the brazen serpent and were saved from their affliction, so should we point the hungry and suffering of this world to look to Jesus Christ. It is vain to treat the symptoms with human aid when the issue is a controversy with a holy and Almighty God. Teaching the underprivileged in the third world that their problem is the injustice and the exploitation of the prosperous nations, and that the solution is to demand their fair share, can only lead to further judgment.

Chapter 5

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer is important. The Bible is full of examples that "*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16). To that end the Lord Jesus Christ taught his disciples to pray. The prayer he taught them has become known as the Lord's prayer. It was meant to be a model prayer, as Christ himself said, "*After this manner therefore pray ye*" (Matthew 6:9). It was not meant to be repeated endlessly like a mindless mantra. The Lord's Prayer is a practical prayer addressing both our temporal and our eternal needs. As Paul stated it to Timothy, "*Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*" (1 Timothy 4:8).

The Lord's prayer is very instructive. It teaches us that before we can even begin to petition God for our temporal needs, we need to need to be committed to his honor and glory and in submission to his will. We must first worship the true God and be able to say of him, "*Hallowed be thy name,*" before we can ask him to supply our daily bread. We must first pray for the passing away of the kingdoms of this present world and the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God, in that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, beseeching him, "*Thy kingdom come,*" before we can petition him concerning the needs of this world. We need to put both God's glory and his will before our own needs. We need to pray "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,*" before we have the right to pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" This would seem to be somewhat elementary. Yet I am constantly amazed at the number of professing Christians who are prepared to make an industry out of attempting to feed those who cannot, and will not, pray this prayer.

But there is yet more in this prayer that is instructive with respect to this issue. There is a final petition, "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*" The second half of this petition is that we might be delivered from evil. This can be taken two ways. First it can mean that being kept from temptation we might be delivered from committing evil. It could also mean that we are beseeching the Lord to be delivered from all the evils of this present world such as war, famine, and pestilence. Ultimately they are connected anyway, because if we succumb to temptation and commit evil we will sooner or later have to bear the consequences. As the scriptures warn, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Galatians 6:7). If we commit evil, we will reap evil. There are consequences to our actions. Now some of the specific evils that men reap are hunger and famine. As we have seen, they are the consequences of committing such evils as idolatry. Such evils do not come upon us by chance or by ill luck. When such evil befalls us, it is from the hand of God. As God told Isaiah, "*I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things*" (Isaiah 45:5-7).

And as Amos reminded Israel, "*Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*" (Amos 3:6). Amos is saying that if the alarm trumpet is blown at the approach of the enemy army, then this affliction is of the Lord. We need to learn, even in our materialistic and scientific age, that all the evils that befall us are from the Lord. Flood and famine, war and destruction, storm and tempest, earthquakes and tornadoes, they all proceed from the hand of God. As Paul taught the Hebrews, speaking of the Lord, it is "*him with whom we have to do*" (Hebrews 4:13).

Now, if men desire to be delivered from evil, if men desire to be delivered from such evils as hunger and famine, what must they do? According to the teaching of Jesus Christ they must learn to pray. They must direct their petitions unto the true God. They must bow before him in adoration (*Hallowed be thy name*) and submit before him in obedience (*Thy will be done*). And then, and only then, may they ask their petitions of him who alone is the hearer and the answerer of prayer. Then they may petition to receive their daily bread. Then they may beseech to be delivered from evil.

The Bible teaches that such prayer is powerful and effective. James, the brother of our Lord, reminds his listeners of the effective prayer of one of the greatest of God's prophets. "*The effectual fervent prayer of a*

righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:16-18). This particular prayer of Elijah first of all caused a drought, as God's faithful servant prayed that the sanctions of the Sinaitic Covenant might be enforced by God on an apostate and idolatrous Israel. After Israel rejected Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah prayed again and his fervent prayer ended the drought and brought rain to Israel, ending a disastrous famine. If Christians are serious about fighting world hunger and famine, Elijah's example ought to command more attention. It is by national repentance and prayer that these evils can be averted.

It took three and a half years before Elijah's prayers on behalf of Israel were graciously answered according to God's covenant faithfulness and rain fell to end the drought on a repentant Israel. But Elijah's prayer and faith were answered continuously by God on a personal level. While the nation suffered famine, God's faithful servant was spared and preserved in spite of the judgments on Israel's sin. Elijah did not go hungry. In a miraculous way God continued to supply his daily bread. *"And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook" (1 Kings 17:2-6).*

It is interesting to note that the Lord did not spare Elijah all the consequences of the famine that he himself had prayed for. He had prayed that the Lord would uphold his law and judge sin. He was prepared to personally suffer the consequences so that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob might once more be feared in Israel. He was willing to put *"Hallowed be thy name"* before *"Give us this day our daily bread."* And so it was, for the brook dried up. But even then, in the midst of drought and famine, the Lord continued to marvelously provide for his servant.

And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah (1 Kings 17:7-16).

God's faithfulness extended not only to Elijah but to all his faithful prophets. It included many others of the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed his lips. God used his servant Obadiah, situated in the royal palace of Ahab, to feed a hundred of God's prophets through the famine (1 Kings 18:2-5)—a deliverance as remarkable as the ravens at the brook and the widow's flour and oil that did not fail. The lesson is clear that in times of famine, in times of peril by hunger, it is faithfulness to God, not human logistics, that brings deliverance.

Elijah and James are not the only Biblical witnesses to the power of prayer. There are other witnesses not only to the power of prayer in general, but specifically to the power of prayer to deliver from famine. Solomon strongly believed in the power of prayer. The Lord had granted his prayer and given him extraordinary wisdom to rule the nation of Israel. The Lord had appointed Solomon to build the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, which

was to be a house of prayer for all peoples. At the dedication of the Temple Solomon offered up a great prayer in which he himself expressed his faith in the power of prayer to the God of Israel.

"When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers. When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance. If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers" (1 Kings 8:33-40).

Solomon was giving divine and inspired instruction to Israel. The lesson was that in all her national calamities, in war and pestilence, in drought and famine, Israel was to trust in the Lord, and pray to him for their deliverance. They were blessed to have the Lord dwell with them in his temple in Jerusalem. And if they would go to his house of prayer and sincerely beseech him, he would send his salvation forth from his holy hill of Zion. Over a century later another godly king of Israel remembered Solomon's prayer at a time of national calamity and proclaimed a fast and prayed the prayer of Solomon.

Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help (2 Chronicles 20:2-9).

That prayer too was graciously answered as the Lord sent forth his deliverance from Zion. His answer came through his prophet who announced the Lord's response. *"Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you" (2 Chronicles 20:15-17).* The scripture is filled with such examples. And therefore David was led to declare in the psalms, *"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).*

CHAPTER 6

SUBMISSION

What is the proper response when nations or individuals find themselves in dire straits? The first thing that they must recognize is that their affliction is from God. This is what Naomi did when she lost her husband and her two sons in the land of Moab. *"I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"* (Ruth 1:21).

The second thing that they must do is to acknowledge the righteousness and the justice of God's actions. This is what David did when the Lord judged his actions in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba. And although the judgments were severe, including the death of the child and a prophecy relating to the future murder of Amnon and the rebellion of Absalom, yet David could say, *"For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge."* (Psalm 51:3-4 NKJV). Later on, when the Lord executed this sentence in a most grievous way, David humbly accepted his affliction including severe personal abuse from a reprobate named Shimei. For David who had so scrupulously respected Saul as the Lord's anointed this must have been a bitter pill. But David bowed his spirit and submitted to the Lord's will.

And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day (2 Samuel 16:5-12).

David confessed his sin and accepted the righteousness of God's justice and judgment. In a later matter, when David sinned in the matter of the national census of men of military age, again David submitted to the correction of the Lord and to his sentence on his sin.

So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men (2 Samuel 24:13-15).

In all this David is a great example to us of submission to God in times of affliction and tribulation. The opposite of all this, of course, is to rail against the Lord and to complain about his providence. The Apostle Peter warns us against this mind set.

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue

it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil (1 Peter 3:8-12).

This sin is particularly a temptation to those who are poor. Hunger and poverty are twins that frequently come together. Those who are afflicted by them have special temptations. They are tempted to curse God and rail against his providence that has decreed these afflictions upon them. Feeling that God is unjust and that they deserve better, they justify themselves in committing theft. As Solomon puts it in the wisdom of the proverbs, *"Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain"* (Proverbs 30:8-9).

There is of course one other way to react to the providential judgments of God. When hunger and famine strike, men can resort to idolatrous prayer. They can beseech their idols for deliverance. They can bow down to wood and stone and beg for food. They can sacrifice to demons, even sacrificing of the fruit of their bodies, and entreat them for their desperate needs. But that too is all in vain and is merely another way of provoking the Lord. When Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, reacted this way to his tribulations, he came under a withering divine rebuke.

"And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed" (2 Kings 1:2-4).

When we come under trials we ought to follow the path that Christ has shown us when he underwent the ultimate trial for us. When the Lord Jesus Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed, *"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"* (Matthew 26:39). Then he went on to silently stand before the Sanhedrin and before Herod and before Pilate, submitting to the will of God and fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, *"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth"* (Isaiah 53:7).

The Apostle Paul after a life of faithful missionary service likewise submitted to the will of God and accepted bonds and imprisonment. *"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:22-24).

If hunger and famine are from the Lord, then there is only one way to begin to deal with these evils. First, we must acknowledge that they are from the Lord, and secondly, we must humbly submit to his judgments and confess the righteousness and justice of his dealings with us. We must accept it as his will and still be able to pray, *"Thy will be done."* Only when we have learned this kind of submission to his will can we begin to pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread."*

Chapter 7

The Gospel

What is the ultimate solution to the problem of human suffering? What is real answer to the problem of hunger and famine? The time-honored solution, the historic Christian answer, has been the gospel of Jesus Christ. Man is a sinner and has brought these judgments on himself. And the tragedy is that he cannot help himself. Reflecting on Judah's sin and its consequences the prophet declares, "*And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*" (Jeremiah 13:22-23).

If man cannot help himself, then he is in need of divine deliverance. If he has offended God and come under divine censure, then he needs a mediator to restore him to God's favor. When Job was under the afflicting hand of God he called out, "*For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me*" (Job 9:32-34). Job in his anguish cries out for a daysman, a mediator, who could plead his case with God and reconcile him to the Almighty. "Gospel" means good news. The good news is that we have found such a mediator in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. We have found him of whom Paul says, "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*" (1 Timothy 2:5).

The good news is we have found him who is "*able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Hebrews 7:25). We have an intercessor, an advocate, who pleads the merit of his atoning sacrifice and reconciles us to God. And unlike Moses, the mediator of the Sinaitic Covenant, a covenant made exclusively with Israel, this Mediator is available to all from every tongue, and tribe, and nation, who call upon him in faith. As John put it, "*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:1-2).

This is good news indeed. And it is more than just the good news that we can be reconciled to a Holy God who judges sin. It is more than that we can be delivered from the eternal wrath of God in the world to come. It means that we can be delivered from our sins and from the bondage of sin. We can be sanctified by the Spirit of God and received as his children. Through the work of Jesus Christ, God who was once an offended Judge can become our loving Father in Heaven. A Father who will not only bless us in a future eternity in the world to come, but a Father who cares for us and provides for us in this present world also. As Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount:

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:26-33).

If God through Christ has become our Father, and if we can pray the Lord's Prayer, seeking first the glory of God and his kingdom, then all these things, these things that supply our temporal needs, will be added unto us. The progression is clear enough and parallels the Lord's Prayer. Yet there seems to be a perverse obstinacy in men's hearts to attempt to reverse that order. There is a new gospel today. There is a new version of the "good news." The "good news" has become, "Here we are; we are here in the name of Christ, and we are here with a

handout.” The old gospel started off with some bad news. It laid the foundation for the gospel in the law of God. It started off with the bad news, the bad news that was already obvious by God's providential dealings with men, that they were under the condemnation of a just and a holy God. The old gospel first stripped away men's pride and self-righteousness and taught men that their only hope was to cast themselves upon the mercies of God in Jesus Christ. The old gospel confronted men with the moral imperatives of "repent or perish.” This was the offense of the cross for which the Apostle Paul constantly suffered, especially at the hands of the Jews. And this offense is still very much with us today. It is so much easier to skip the bad news. It is easier to start off with "God loves you and wants to feed you.” It is much more acceptable to sinful men to proclaim God's indiscriminate love and hand out tokens of his "love" and worry about faith and repentance later. The gospel has been reduced to "Here is some food and clothing, and would you mind looking at this tract when you get a chance.” The tract has all the moral imperative of an optional afterthought; that is, it has none. The tract is generally Arminian to the core. If the impenitent recipient of this "Christian welfare" should ever get around to reading it, it will probably contain something like the following message. "Poor God loves you so much and is trying so hard to save you, but he needs your help. Please accept his Son and he will save you forever and that's a promise, scout's honor. Just say you believe in Jesus, that's all it takes. It's so eeeeasy. Please!” The offense of the gospel is definitely gone. Unfortunately the real gospel went with it.

But our much maligned tract is still a critical factor in people's thinking. Its use and presence constitutes the difference between an evangelical gospel mission and the social gospel. Liberal Christianity has long since given up any attempts to convert people. They don't need the tract. For them God's love is only manifested in this life anyway. As long as the goodies have been distributed, that is all that counts. The cause of social justice has been advanced and the kingdom of God is being built. Evangelicals require a little more, but not much. They use the tract. But for both parties, the concept of requiring conversion and repentance as a prerequisite for even the temporal blessings of the children of God, has long been cast aside. Ultimately, the ecclesiastical sphere has followed the civil sphere. Originally governmental welfare programs were viewed as offering temporary assistance to some of our more unfortunate citizens. But it was not long before welfare became a right. The National Welfare Rights Organization was born, and liberal activist courts ruled that citizens had a "constitutional" right to governmental largesse. The "temporary" went by the boards as well, as two or three consecutive generations lived on the dole. And so it has been with the church. More and more these charitable outreaches have been viewed as a duty and an obligation of the Lord's people. The poor are viewed as innocent victims in a capricious world. Their status is considered as unjust, and they are deemed to deserve our material support. It is their Biblical right and it is our Biblical duty. The ideology of welfare rights has conquered both church and state!

Under these scenarios the gospel frequently has to play second fiddle. Regardless of how limited the potential is for presenting the gospel, the charitable drive to distribute this world's goods must continue. The poor have their rights. Regardless of what kind of reception the gospel receives, or regardless of how thoroughly the gospel is being rejected, the program must continue. The poor have their rights. The reception of, and the submission to, the gospel is optional. Any meaningful presentation of the gospel is also optional. What is not optional is the necessity of ministering to the temporal needs of the ungodly. The social gospel has conquered not only the liberal church, but evangelicalism as well.

The scriptures declare, "*Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death*" (Proverbs 8:34-36). Jesus Christ, wisdom personified, proclaims, "*all they that hate me love death.*” The rejection of Jesus Christ results in death—physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Hunger and famine are a common first step in the direction of the former. I find it incredible that the professing church can really believe that hunger and famine can be dealt with by foreign aid and welfare programs! The only refuge from the afflicting hand of God is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly all who hate him have chosen death. The church's testimony in the midst of all these earthly ills must be to the hope we have found in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. The church's response to hunger and famine must be to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to direct all men to him who alone can give us our daily bread. If the church stops preaching the gospel and directs its energies to becoming just another welfare agency, then we

are in dire straits. If that is our response, we can look forward to continuing and unremitting epidemics of hunger and famine. Then instead of offering life, we will have chosen death.

Chapter 8

The Great Commission

In the last chapter we saw that the gospel is the real answer to hunger and famine. We also noted the Biblical order that God has ordained. We saw that faith and repentance precede the temporal blessings of God. We have seen the sequence of the petitions in the Lord's prayer. And we have seen the stubborn and perverse attempts of men to reverse that divinely mandated order. We have seen what constitutes no less than a sinful attempt to resist God's moral government and to undo his providence by deliberately insisting on redistributing this world's goods on a different model. The professing church has decreed that God's distribution is unjust and that it is their responsibility to set it right. Many churches have made this a significant priority at the expense of the proclamation of the gospel. In this chapter we will deal with what really is the responsibility of the church.

The final command of Christ to his church is generally called the Great Commission. It is found in some form in all the gospels. The one most commonly quoted is found in Matthew. It states, "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway*" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The commission is clear and explicit and consists of three separate commands. The first is to proclaim the word of God to all men. This first command requires the church, in her collective capacity, to preach the gospel to every creature. The second command is to baptize all the converts in the name of the triune God. All those who profess the faith and believe on the Lord Jesus are to be baptized and brought into the church of Jesus Christ. Finally, the third command requires the church to discipline these new believers. They are to be taught God's holy will and to observe all of God's holy law. Their conversion is to be followed by their sanctification as they are progressively brought into conformity with God's standards of holiness. Nowhere does it say that while we are at this great task we are also to feed the hungry of all nations. Nowhere does it allow that this is even to take precedence over the proclamation of the gospel at times. And nowhere does it begin to say that those who reject are the gospel and refuse to come under the discipline of God's law nonetheless have a claim on the support of the church for all their unmet temporal needs. In fact, simply to state all of this is to show how manifestly absurd that position is. Yet that is the position in which the contemporary church finds herself by her mishandling of the word of God and the corruption of certain texts that deal with Christian charity.

It is important to note that this commission is not given to individuals but is given to the church in its corporate capacity. It was specifically given to the Apostles, the officers of the early Christian Church in their official capacity. It does not require every individual Christian to go forth, but requires that the church see that those that are called of God are sent forth to this task. All Christians are to support this task by their prayers and their tithes. All Christians are to be committed to the fulfillment of this great task. The church at Antioch was prayerfully committed to the fulfillment of this task and their prayers were answered. Their prayers were answered bountifully as the Holy Spirit called Paul to his first missionary journey and consecrated him as the great missionary to the Gentiles.

"*Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus*" (Acts 13:1-4). The church in Antioch understood the requirements of the Great Commission and labored to fulfil them. Nothing has changed in our day. These are still the final commands of Christ to his church. There is no justification for tampering with either its imperatives or its priorities.

Mark's version of the Great Commission is slightly different. Mark quotes Christ as saying, "*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:15-16). Again, the proclamation of the

gospel comes first and receives the greatest priority. What is emphasized is the critical nature of one's response to the gospel. What is emphasized is that those who reject the gospel are condemned. There is no hint here of any requirement to go out into all the world and find the hungry and the materially disadvantaged and to minister to their physical needs. It seems a strange interpretation of this commission that those who do not believe and come under God's condemnation have a right to the temporal blessings of the children of God and that we have a commission to share our blessings with them. Mark wrote under the Apostolic imprimatur of the Apostle Peter. Peter himself received a definitive final commission from the risen Christ. It is recorded in John's gospel, and being directed to the leader of the Apostolic college, may be considered the Apostle John's reference to the final commission of Christ to the Apostles. In it Christ says,

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

What did Jesus mean by this triple command to Peter to feed his sheep? Does anyone really think that this was a command to start a soup kitchen? Is it really credible to interpret this as a command to start a food bank and minister to the hungry? Its meaning is so obvious that no elaboration is required. Christ is commanding Peter to minister the word of God to his church. Peter is being ordered to feed God's people with his word. The word of God is often compared to food in the scriptures. Witness the following quotations from the Apostle Paul.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able (1 Corinthians 3:1-2).

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God (Hebrews 5:12-6:1).

This is the scriptural meaning of Peter's commission. He is to feed the flock of Jesus Christ with the word of God. As Jeremiah stated it centuries earlier in a prophetic statement, *"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15)*. Not only is this undoubtedly what Christ meant, but this command is a serious one. Paul certainly took it seriously and urged the elders of the Ephesian church to do so as he discharged his conscience before them at their final meeting.

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:25-32).

First of all, Paul says that his preaching of the kingdom of God has constituted the feeding of the church of God. Secondly, Paul says that his faithful preaching of all of God's word has constituted the full discharge of his commission, so that he is innocent if his hearers are ultimately condemned before God. He has fed the flock and is beyond reproach. Paul knows nothing of another commission to feed the hungry with physical food. Paul knows nothing of being held accountable for another responsibility, the responsibility to minister to the material

needs of all men. And it would be absurd to think that Paul had anything of the sort in mind as he gave this final report of his ministry to the Ephesian elders and exhorted them to follow his words and example.

Finally, there is the matter of the earthly ministry of Christ. On two occasions Christ fed the multitudes that came to hear him. The gospels record the feeding of the five thousand and the feeding of the four thousand.¹ The following passages set forth the circumstances in which Christ used his miraculous powers to feed the multitudes.

"And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat" (Mark 6:31-37).

"And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way" (Matthew 15:29-32).

It is plain that these people were not charity cases. They were not the poor per se. They may have included prosperous tax gatherers like Zacchaeus and middle class fisherman from the Sea of Galilee. It is also plain that they had come to see Jesus and to hear him. They had not come to receive a welfare handout and were not expecting one. They came to hear him and Christ preached to them and taught them. They couldn't get enough of his ministry and stayed with him days on end without food and refreshment. As the scriptures recorded it, *"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him" (Matthew 7:28-8:1).*

Like Mary these had chosen the better part and were not encumbered about food as they followed the Master. *"And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:39-42).*

Christ's main purpose was to teach and preach. The main purpose of the multitude was to hear him teach the word of God. There is nothing here about any ministry to the poor and disadvantaged. There is nothing here about any scriptural responsibility to address world hunger or to minister to the temporal needs of unbelievers and idolaters. What Christ did is more comparable to providing meals to hungry participants at a Bible conference. This is a far cry from corrupting the Great Commission and transmuting it into a crusade against world hunger.

What is the responsibility of the church with respect to world famine? Well, there is one famine which the church must address and take very seriously. There is a famine that is her responsibility to alleviate with all the resources at her command. That is the famine that was prophesied by the prophet Amos. He warned, *"Behold,*

1. The Christian Reformed Church used these passages as a justification for a major initiative against world hunger. The phrase, "And he had compassion on them" was the title of the report by their Task Force on World Hunger which advocated massive Christian involvement in addressing world hunger.

the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11). Such a famine the church must battle with all the grace and all the resources that the Lord gives her.

Section II

The Biblical Philosophy of Charity

Chapter 9

God's Sociology

There is a persistent tendency to view the victims of world hunger, famines, and other "natural" disasters as innocent victims of natural events. We have already noted that there are strictly speaking no "natural" events. There is only the active providence of a personal God, working all things according to the counsel of his will. This tendency is also exacerbated by the inclination to view people atomistically rather than as part of a larger group or culture. Americans especially are infected with this virus of individualism. It is almost pathological. It is therefore important to see how God looks at people. It is important to study God's sociology.

We are not all simply individuals. We are almost always part of something larger. As scripture puts it, "*God setteth the solitary in families*" (Psalm 68:6). God honors the institutions that he has established and he recognizes them and deals with them as such in his providential transactions with the children of men. And not only has God instituted the family, but he has instituted the church and the state as well. We are not just individuals, but are part of larger organisms such as the family or the nation. And God deals with us as part of these. A few scriptural examples are in order.

Take the life of David the king. Although he was a godly and a righteous man, several times he sinned grievously and brought down God's displeasure. The form God's judgment took depended on the nature of the sin and the capacity David acted in when he committed it. When David sinned in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba he sinned privately. But David was the head of a family and the consequences of his sin were worked out in his family. Nathan pronounced his judgment:

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die (2 Samuel 12:9-14).

David was the one who sinned. And David was severely punished. But the judgment was also borne by David's family. The child of the adulterous union died and the sword never departed from David's house. All the misery of Tamar's rape, Amnon's murder, and Absalom's rebellion were here prophesied. The whole family had to endure the consequences of David's sin. Later David sinned again in the matter of the census. He ordered an unauthorized census of the men of military age so that he might exult in his strength. This was a real fall for him who had written, "*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God*" (Psalm 20:7). This was a public sin that David committed in his capacity as king. The entire nation was aware of it and made it a national sin by its acquiescence. When the judgment came it fell on the whole nation.

And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. So the LORD sent a pestilence

upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men (2 Samuel 24:10-15).

This was a severe judgment. The three choices that the Lord presented to David all represented national judgments that would effect the entire population. David had sinned, but he had sinned in a public act as king. This was a national sin for which the entire nation would be punished, although it had all been instigated by one man, David. The principle is clear. When David sins as a national leader the nation is judged, and when he sins as the head of a family the family is judged. The same principle held when Ahab and Jezebel instituted Baal worship in Israel and the entire land was afflicted with a severe drought for three and a half years. While our tendency is to think of the "innocent" victims of these judgments that neither acquiesced nor participated in the national sin, that is not the Lord's way of thinking. God judges nations as nations, peoples as peoples, cultures as cultures, and families as families. And all his judgments are right and true. His ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts.

Examples of the above principle are legion as we examine the historical record of the scriptures. A clear example is the case of Achan. The scriptures indicate that he sinned. *"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel"* (Joshua 7:1). His confession was a personal confession and did not implicate his family. *"And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it"* (Joshua 7:19-21).

The judgment, when it came, involved the destruction of his entire household, including even the animals. *"And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day"* (Joshua 7:24-26).

Note that in the first statement about Achan's sin, the record states, *"But the children of Israel committed a trespass."* It was Achan who sinned, but he was a member of the people, of the children of Israel. Through his actions, God's holy camp, where he dwelt with his people, had been polluted. And until it had been purged the Lord withdrew his blessing and the entire nation was involved in the consequences of Achan's sin as they suffered their first defeat in battle before Ai. Now these truths are generally hard for Americans to understand, much less accept. But we are commanded to think God's thoughts after him rather than perpetuate our own democratic myths, and notions of fairness and individualism. These incidents reveal to us how God thinks and how God acts. Neither are these principles restricted to Israel, but we see them implemented from the antediluvian world to New Testament times. God does not change.

Let us look at a few more diverse examples. First of all, let us look at the time of the great flood in the days of Noah. The entire culture of the predeluvian world was wicked. The scriptures record, *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth"* (Genesis 6:5, 11-12). This entire generation died. They were wiped out to the last man, woman, and child. A corrupt and wicked generation, an evil and ungodly culture, was forever blotted out from under heaven. This included all the little children and the infants that had not even come to understand or participate in the sins of their elders. They were part of that sinful generation; they were part of that culture; they were part of those corrupt families,

and they too died. God recognizes this and it forms part of his discussion with Jonah concerning the destruction of Nineveh. *"And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"* (Jonah 4:11).

God is acknowledging the principles by which he deals with nations and city-states and declares that it is an extra incentive to spare the city that there are 120,000 children and infants and many innocent animals who will all be spared as a result of the city's repentance. And take the case of Noah. The scriptures say, *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD"* (Genesis 6:8). Noah was the lone exception. Of him the Bible says, *"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God"* (Genesis 6:9). But God delivered his entire family, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. We do not know the spiritual status of these others. Some at least, like Ham, are suspect. About most of them the scriptures are silent. It is not an issue. Noah was the head of the family. Noah was a righteous man. God delivered all of Noah's family for his sake. We see the same thing at the entrance into the land of promise. Again, the scriptures describe a wicked and corrupt culture. Again, God sentences the entire culture to death. Again, man, woman, child, and beast are to be slaughtered. Such are the Lord's righteous judgments. At the fall of Jericho the entire city is dedicated as a burnt offering to the Lord. However, there is one exception, Rahab. Her faith in the God of Israel, her active faith that led to the deliverance of the spies has saved her. But the Lord redeems not only her, but her entire family, from the destruction of Jericho. Her faith has saved her entire family. Such are the ways of the Lord, and it is for us to praise him and the greatness of his ways and not to cling to our own notions of what is right.

Finally, we have one more example from the New Testament, in which the Apostle Peter quotes the following Psalm, *"And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth"* (**Psalm 109:5-15**).

This is one of the imprecatory psalms. It calls down the righteous judgment of God on David's wicked enemies. It is clear that this judgment involves not only his enemies but also their families. Specific judgments are called down upon both their children and parents. The entire families of the wicked are to be condemned. The Apostle Peter quotes this passage as the Apostles and disciples discuss the replacement of the traitor Judas.

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take" (Acts 1:15-20).

Peter applies this passage to Judas and in partial fulfillment of its judgments proposes to give Judas' office to another. David was speaking this passage prophetically, not of his own enemies, but of the enemies of his son, the Greater David, Jesus Christ. And by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David calls for the judgments that should fall on him who betrayed Jesus Christ. And these judgments call for all of Judas' family to partake in God's wrath and condemnation on Judas' sin. Indeed as the scriptures warn, *"for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20:5-6).

This does not mean that God does not love and take care of his faithful believers, but he does not exempt them from general judgments that their families or nations are involved in. Daniel and his three godly friends

went into captivity in Babylon with the rest of the idolatrous Israelites that had brought down this calamity on Judah. They participated in the national judgment, but God took special care of them in Babylon. God's faithfulness is in that he takes care of us in our trials, not that he exempts us from them.

In conclusion then, how should we view people? We should view them as lost sinners who need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We should view them as those who need to come out from under the wrath of God and find refuge in Jesus Christ. Scripturally speaking, we have to avoid two extremes. One extreme is to view them through the lens of self-righteousness as the Pharisee in the temple viewed the publican. The other extreme is to view people in a manner that we disagree with God's righteous judgments on wicked cultures, idolatrous societies, and ungodly nations. It is particularly the latter that causes misguided "Christians" to replace the preaching of the gospel with charitable aid. This error is the basis for a great deal of misplaced "Christian charity."

Chapter 10

Christian Charity

Christian charity can be expressed in two ways, individually and corporately. In this chapter we will look at corporate Christian charity. We will look at Christian charity and the Church of Jesus Christ. It is important to remember that it does not matter what we personally think about this issue. It is not our conceptions of Christian charity or what the church ought to be doing that apply. Christ is the Head of the church. He is sovereign over it and it is his will that must be done. Neither have we any authority for adding to his word. It is as sinful to add to God's word as it is to take away (i.e., deny) portions of it. What has Christ said to his church with respect to this issue? There are primarily two significant passages that deal with the charitable ministry of the church. The first is in the sixth chapter of Acts. The situation was this. Thousands of pilgrims from all over the Mediterranean world had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Many of these heard the gospel and were converted. Three thousand were converted to the faith of Jesus Christ by Peter's sermon on Pentecost alone. The church was growing rapidly and it was an unusual situation. Thousands of new Christians were far from home, but staying on in Jerusalem to worship and learn more about Jesus the Messiah. Their temporal needs were a real concern. Luke tells us how the situation progressed.

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:42-47).

Under these circumstances the Christians shared everything, and those with lands, homes, goods, etc., sold them to contribute to the common needs. *"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:1-6).*

The church was providing for thousands of new converts, many of whom may have been stranded pilgrims far from home. This was an extensive logistical task that the Apostles were neither used to nor trained for. The result was that the widows of the Hellenistic Jews, not having anyone to speak for them and perhaps also having a language problem, were inadvertently neglected. The inspired response of the Apostles to these problems was to institute a new office in the church, the office of deacon. There are several points that need to be noted here. First of all, the reaction of the Apostles needs to be examined. They had personally received the Great Commission from the lips of our Lord. Their task was to preach the gospel. God had marvelously prospered their teaching ministry and thousands were being converted to the faith. Their reaction is important. They said that it would be unreasonable for them to forsake the preaching of God's word to take care of these temporal concerns. Any minister today who has been called and ordained to the gospel ministry ought to reflect on this. If any minister today forsakes, even temporarily or part-time, the preaching and teaching of the word, to run soup kitchens and operate food banks, he is disobeying the example of the Apostles. He has no authority to forsake the word of God to wait on tables. That is not what Christ has called him to do. Secondly, we note a new office has been instituted in the church, the office of a deacon. And what are the functions of a deacon? It is to minister to the temporal necessities of the saints. This is an oft-forgotten but crucial point. They were not

instituted to minister to the poor of Jerusalem. They were not raised up to start a food program for hungry Moabites. Their responsibilities were strictly limited to ministering to the material needs of the saints. They were to feed the hungry among the believers. There is absolutely no authority here for the church to start a food and shelter program for needy unbelievers. There is no authority to, as many churches have done, use the office of deacon to spearhead the local church's task force on world hunger. All who do so are corrupting the office and expanding it to beyond its Biblical limits. As the pastor and elders minister to the spiritual needs of the congregation, so the deacons minister to its physical needs. Both have a ministry to the saints. The church also seeks to reach every creature with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They have no mandate to seek every needy creature with a welfare program. Christian charity as carried out by the church is strictly to the saints.

The second passage dealing with this matter is 1 Timothy 5. It is even more narrow in its definition and stricter in its application of Christian charity. The passage is as follows,

Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day... But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed (1 Timothy 5:3-5, 8-16).

Paul here discusses the diaconal ministry of the church. He lays down a number of guidelines which are far more restrictive than what is generally practiced today. He uses the examples of widows to lay down the principles for the deacons to follow. The first principle is that it is primarily the family's duty to take care of its own, and not the church's responsibility to take care of needy church members. Only those who are desolate, having no relatives to assist them, are candidates for the church's charity. Families who neglect their duty to their needy members are no better than infidels. The implication is clear that such relatives, who are professing members of the church, would be subject to church discipline if they do not carry out their duty to their poor relatives and family members. Also those who are to be candidates for receiving the church's charity are to be godly and responsible saints, who have a history of good works and godly living. Paul seems to have little sympathy for those who have brought their poverty on themselves by worldly living or a sinful lifestyle. Thirdly, Paul recommends that only the elderly widows be accepted. The younger ones ought to marry and be supported by their husbands. The idea of young healthy women sitting around and living on the church's dole while they become gossips and busybodies is entirely repugnant to Paul. He is concerned that wherever possible they be supported through the family, including forming a new family through marriage, and that the church be not charged.²

In all this there is not the slightest thread of Biblical authority for the church to carry on a ministry to the temporal needs of unbelievers. Note, first of all, that Paul says nothing about the state being responsible for indigent citizens. He does not direct the poor of the church to seek governmental aid. Rather he lays the responsibility directly on the family, and that is where he directs the poor among the saints to find relief. He lays down strict conditions for receiving diaconal aid from the church. Finally, he says nothing about any

5. I have only examined this passage in light of the church's aid to these widows. There is another aspect to this passage. These widows themselves engaged in charitable work on behalf of the church. For a thorough study of this order of "Widow-Deaconesses" see Brian Schwertley, *Women Deacons in the Bible and in History*: Reformed Witness, Southfield, MI.

diaconal aid to unbelievers, and in the light of the restrictions of aid to the saints, it is inconceivable that he would have considered such a thing.

Paul's actions were consistent with his principles. Paul founded many churches and a number of them were under active persecution. However, we consistently see the proclamation and the defense of the gospel as Paul's highest priorities. But, although he was totally committed to the commission that the risen Christ had entrusted to him on the Damascus road, he did not forget the earthly needs of many of the afflicted saints. Paul frequently set forth the needs of the persecuted church in Jerusalem to the churches that he founded. He raised money for their support and saw that it was forwarded to Jerusalem for the alleviation of the saints there. The following texts show Paul's commitment to this work.

But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-26).

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-3).

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:.....But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God (2 Corinthians 9:1, 6-12).

The last passage particularly demonstrates not only Paul's concern for the saints in Jerusalem, but also his desire to instruct the churches in their responsibilities to their sister churches. Paul believed in the unity of the body of Christ and its expression in the work of the diaconate. It would be superfluous to again note that all this generosity was exclusively for needy saints. Paul never breathed a hint of the modern notion that the churches should supply the temporal needs of the poor among the unbelievers and idolaters. He seems to have limited it severely, the only object of his ecclesiastical charity being the Jerusalem church that was experiencing dramatic growth and intense persecution. Destitute pagans had to look elsewhere for their daily bread. It is somewhat perplexing that the contemporary church is able to ignore all this and perpetually invent arguments that it is their responsibility to feed the poor of the world.

Chapter 11

Who Is My Brother?

In the previous chapter, we examined Christian charity when it is performed corporately through the deaconate of the church. In this chapter we will examine private or personal Christian charity. We will examine private Christian charity as it is administered to the saints. Private Christian charity can be to both saints and sinners. Church charity is always to the saints. One of the key texts on this subject is the following admonition of Christ.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:34-46).

Not only is this a key passage, but it is probably the most misquoted text in the Bible when it comes to trying to justify the current plethora of programs to feed the ungodly. Of course the text must be corrupted before it can be prostituted to such service. A favorite ploy is to delete "*my brethren*" and replace it with a few dots in "*Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" This is a crude attempt to make the text teach the doctrine that if you have rendered these services to anyone, including the ungodly, you have rendered them to Christ. The thrust of this passage however is so clear that even such adulteration of the text can not hide its true meaning.

That this passage refers exclusively to charity rendered unto the saints is evident and proven by two points. First of all, Christ says that such charity is the same as if rendered unto him personally. How can this be? This can be so for two reasons. The church is the bride of Christ and the scriptures say that man and wife are one flesh. Therefore what has been rendered to the one has been rendered to the other. The scriptures also teach that the church is the body of Christ. As Paul tells the church in Corinth, "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*" (1 Corinthians 12:27). He tells the church in Ephesus that spiritual ministry to the saints constitutes "*the edifying of the body of Christ.*" "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Therefore Christ can say that charity that has been extended to the saints, charity that has been performed for members of the church, is charity that has been performed unto Christ, that has been ministered to his body. The attempt to corrupt this text is therefore a serious matter. We are dealing with the body of Christ, and Paul in his rebuke of the Corinthian church explains the significance of that. "*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit*" (1 Corinthians 6:15-17).

By inferring that the ungodly are the body of Christ these false teachers fall under the Apostle's Paul rebuke. They have taken idolaters and fornicators and treated them as part of the body of Christ. They have taken "*the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot.*" But they are not yet done. Paul continues to instruct the church in Corinth about what it means to be part of the body of Christ.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he? (1 Corinthians 10:18-22).

By this interpretation, which makes idolaters part of the body of Christ, these false teachers are bringing the members of the body of Christ into fellowship with devils. They are provoking the Lord and under the rebuke of the Apostle. Their sham "Christian charity" is an offense to God!

Now, on to our second point. Christ not only repeatedly stated that this charity was performed as unto him, but he explicitly stated that it was done "*unto one of the least of these my brethren.*" What does this mean? Who are those who are the brethren of Jesus Christ? And if we are Christ's body, then who are our brethren? The scriptures give us an emphatically clear answer. We have an answer directly from the lips of our Lord.

Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matthew 12:47-50).

Christ also said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). Those who love him, those who keep his commandments, those who do the will of his Father, these are Christ's brethren. And who are these? They are the saints, the members of Christ's body, those who constitute the church of Jesus Christ. This passage lays a great responsibility on every individual Christian. We have a great obligation to our needy brothers and sisters in Christ. We will be held accountable on the last day if we have failed to minister to the needs of Christ's suffering body. We will also be held accountable if we corrupt this text to make it teach that idolaters and fornicators are members of Christ's body.

In the above passage Christ rebukes the "*cursed*" who failed to minister to his body. The Apostle James has a similar rebuke for the Christians of his day.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (James 2:14-17).

Personal Christian charity to destitute brothers and sisters in Christ is not an option; it is a command. If we are unfeeling and uncaring toward the suffering body of Christ, we are sinning. This sin against the body of Christ is perceived by Christ as sinning against him personally. This does not just apply to members of our own congregation or of our own community. Wherever in the entire world the body of Christ is persecuted, afflicted, destitute, and in need, the Lord's people have an obligation to help. They have an obligation to sacrificially help. After all, they are members of the same body. This was the doctrine of the Apostle Paul as he continually laid the needs of the suffering church in Jerusalem before the churches. Sometimes we may not feel very close to these other Christians. They are far away. They are of a different race and nation. They have a strange culture and even their forms of worship seem somewhat foreign to us. Nonetheless, if they are professing members of a credible church of Jesus Christ, we are called upon, yea we are commanded, to assist them.

But there are some who would maintain that all men are brothers. They contend that since we have a common humanity and since we have a common Creator we are all one; we are all brothers. Malachi seems to refer to this when he says, "*Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?*" (Malachi 2:10).

Actually he is referring to the special fatherhood of God over Israel. It is Israel who by calling and covenant are especially the children of God and he their Father. The context, an argument against mixed marriages with the heathen, and the reference to the Sinaitic Covenant support this interpretation. It is true that all men have God as their Creator. It is not true that all men have God as their Father, at least not since the fall. Christ has come as a second Adam. Those who are the posterity of the first Adam are born in sin and conceived in iniquity and are in enmity towards God. They no longer have God as their Father. Those who are in the second Adam, Jesus Christ, are reconciled to God, have once again become his children, and have God as their Father. As John puts it, "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*" (John 1:11-12).

Since the fall, men have been divided into two classes. Those who are in the first Adam are in one class and those who are in the second Adam are in another. The universal fatherhood of God has been broken by sin. As Christ warned the Pharisees, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*" (John 8:44-47).

There is a great division among the children of men. We are either children of our Father in Heaven or we are children of our father the devil. There is no middle ground. Satan is always trying to obscure and obliterate this distinction. Doctrines of the universal brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God are serious heresies and not scriptural in the least. Yet such doctrines are constantly being preached to urge the saints to extend Christian charity to all men. It is such heresies that are used to bind the consciences of the Lord's people and obligate them to alleviate world hunger no matter how ungodly or idolatrous the recipients. It is a testimony against the apostles of ubiquitous, indiscriminate aid that they need to stoop to the corruption of Bible texts to defend their positions.

Chapter 12

Who Is My Neighbor?

Who is our neighbor? This is a crucial question. In the last chapter we have determined who is our brother. We have seen the scriptural imperatives of extending charity to our brothers in Christ. Now we must wrestle with that question, "Who is our neighbor?" And having determined who he is, we must next determine what charity, if any, the scriptures require us to extend to him. This is not as simple as it might be imagined. The following passage is a good example.

At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release; Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it: Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee. If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land (Deuteronomy 15:1-11).

This passage, besides being instructive of the question at hand, contains an incredible promise. It is a conditional promise. The promise is that shall be no poor among them. The condition is that they observe all of God's commandments. This text alone teaches us most of what we need to know about poverty. The best "War on Poverty" is to have a reformation to bring everything into conformity with the will of God and to have his statutes be the will of the people and the law of the land. Unfortunately, a promise is not always a prophecy, especially when it is conditional. The prophecy at the end of the passage reflects the reality of Israel's ongoing sinfulness. It says, "*The poor shall never cease out of the land.*" Israel's sin will ensure the ongoing presence of the poor. How foolish it is for churches today to think they can combat poverty with foreign aid and welfare without addressing the underlying causes. Only as we address the sin and rebellion, the idolatry and immorality, of the poor and of poor nations, can we begin to deliver them from poverty and hunger.

The passage before us contains three classifications of people. They are one's brother, one's neighbor, and foreigners. The former and the latter are definite classifications. The middle one, "neighbor," is a little more ambiguous. In this particular passage it seems to be synonymous with a brother as opposed to a foreigner. This is typical of its usage in the Old Testament. There are a total of five different Hebrew words used in the scriptures for neighbor. They are *amith* (אִמִּית equal, peer), *qarob* (קָרֹב near one), *rea* and its feminine equivalent *reuth* (רֵעַ friend, companion, neighbor), and *shaken* (שָׂכֵן dweller, inhabitant). Unfortunately the distinctions are not all that helpful. *Qarob* and *shaken* are frequently used of foreigners such as the Egyptians, Gibeonites, Assyrians, etc. *Amith* is exclusively used in the book of Leviticus. It is only used nine times and several times it definitely refers to a fellow Israelite. The main word used for neighbor is *rea*, being used about 75% of the time. It almost never refers to a foreigner. It frequently refers to a fellow Israelite,

a brother. The rest of the time it seems to be generic, referring to any neighbor, irrespective of race or any other classification. It is also the word used in the critical texts of the law such as:

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's (Exodus 20:16-17).

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:17-18).

It is significant that the most important text with respect to the relationship to one's neighbor, "*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*," relates neighbor to "*thy brother*" and to "*the children of thy people*." That, plus the fact that the most common usage of the most prevalent word for neighbor, *rea*, is for a fellow Israelite, it is not hard to understand why the Jews generally interpreted it so. One thing we can probably safely conclude about the use of "neighbor" (*rea*) in the Hebrew scriptures is that it means just that—a neighbor. It means those who dwell next to you or nearby. It includes those who live in your village and community. It includes those with whom you have regular social intercourse—those with whom you talk, buy, and sell, and so on. For the Old Testament Israelite that was almost always a brother, another Israelite. It never included non-resident foreigners or people in far away nations.

The Old Testament Hebrew commonwealth was designed to segregate Israel from all the heathen nations. They were a nation set apart and consecrated to the worship and service of the true God. Their intercourse with foreigners and the heathen was extremely limited. To ensure that it would be limited, Joshua had been commanded to exterminate the resident Canaanites. They were strictly forbidden any intermarriage with the heathen. The dietary laws made it hard for them to socialize with Gentiles at meal times. Sojourners and strangers in the land were discouraged to dwell there for religious reasons. Although they were extended liberty of conscience in their private worship, they faced the death penalty for any public display of idolatry or blasphemy against the God of Israel. It is not hard to imagine that under these conditions, for an Israelite, a neighbor was generally another Israelite.

Now by the time of Christ things had considerably changed. The Hebrew commonwealth was only a shadow of its former self. The Romans were in power. Herod, an Edomite, was on the throne. The central province of Palestine (Samaria) was inhabited by Samaritans, and Bashan was populated by the Greek cities of Decapolis. The Jews yearned for their independence and their ancient glory under David and Solomon. They despised the Samaritans, generally detouring around Samaria through the trans-Jordan to travel between Galilee and Judea. Under these historical circumstances, Christ is asked "*And who is my neighbour?*" The principles remained the same as when Moses first pronounced this law, but its application has considerably changed. Christ teaches that the despised Samaritans, who live in the middle of their land, are their neighbors.

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise (Luke 10:25-37).

I can think of few texts that have been pressed into service so repeatedly and relentlessly to justify foreign aid, and welfare projects by church and state, as this text has been. It is therefore profitable to sit back and think about what does this parable really teach. First of all, this parable deals with personal or private charity. The Good Samaritan acted on his own behalf as he carried out this notable act of private charity. This parable has nothing to do with government aid, be it domestic welfare or foreign aid. Neither does this parable have anything to do with ecclesiastical charity or the work of the deaconate. It strictly deals with private charity. Secondly, Christ updates the definition of neighbor for the Jews of his audience. Their definition had become too restrictive, encompassing exclusively fellow Israelites. Christ expanded the definition of neighbor to include all their neighbors, regardless of race, creed, or religion. But, most importantly, we have to note what did the Good Samaritan really do. Did he give a handout to a poor indigent Jew who was out of work? No. Did he start a travelers' aid society for poor Jewish travelers on the Jericho road? No. What did he do? He saved a man's life! A man was wounded and bleeding and left for dead at the side of the road. Unless he obtained help immediately he probably would have died. The Good Samaritan acted as a neighbor. He assisted him. He dressed his wounds and rescued him from that dangerous locale. He took him to the inn, as we would take such a person to the hospital, and saw that he would be properly cared for. In short, he took the necessary actions to save the man's life. Christ was expounding the law. He was teaching what it meant to love "*thy neighbour as thyself*." What he was teaching was the same as what Paul later taught in the Epistle to the Romans.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:8-10).

Paul reviews the second table of the law, sums it all up under the command to love your neighbour as yourself, and states that love is the fulfilling of the law. The first table of the law teaches us how to love God. The second table of the law teaches us how to love our neighbor. We love our neighbor by obeying the second table of the law. We love our neighbor by respecting his right to life, the sanctity of his marriage and family, his property, and his reputation. We love our neighbor by respecting all his God-given rights in thought as well as in deed. Love is the fulfilling of the law. And this is what Christ taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The sixth commandment requires us to protect and preserve our neighbor's life, and this is exactly what the Good Samaritan did. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism expounds it:

Q. 68 : What is required in the sixth commandment ?

A. The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life and the life of others.

Q. 69 : What is forbidden in the sixth commandment ?

A. The sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tends thereunto.

The sixth commandment not only requires us to abstain from murdering our neighbor, but also commands us to do all we can to preserve his life. That is what the law requires and that is what the Good Samaritan did. That is what the sinful priest and Levite failed to do. They were willing to let the man die. They broke the sixth commandment and failed to love their neighbor. When we see a drowning man, we do not check the color of his skin or question his theology. We simply do whatever we can to bring him safely to shore. That is what the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us. That is what is required of us if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In conclusion let us sum it all up. Who is our neighbor? Our neighbor is all those whom the Lord has placed around us in our community or on our path. It could even be extended to include all our fellow citizens. And what do we owe our neighbor? We owe him all the protections of God's law. As Paul specifically stated it, that is all we owe: "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*" It is not hard to see that this sends the myths of civil and ecclesiastical socialists up in smoke. There is no basis here for foreign aid or welfare programs. There is no requirement here for endless charity to all the poor

and hungry. There is only the command to maintain our relationships with all whom the Lord sets on our path in accordance with his just and holy law as defined in the Decalogue.

Chapter 13

Love

Much of what is written in this book will be dismissed by some as being unloving or legalistic. Let us examine these charges for a moment. First of all, what is legalism? Legalism is the doctrine that we can earn our salvation by keeping the law. The Pharisees were legalists. It should be obvious to all that legalism is not the doctrine of this book. The argument before us is not concerning our salvation by free and sovereign grace through faith in Jesus Christ and by his work on the cross and not our own. The argument before us is that having been saved, and become the children of God, how does God want us to live. What kind of charitable deeds, and to whom, are we to perform in his name? How are we to love God, our brothers and sisters in Christ, our neighbors, and even our enemies? How are we to demonstrate and express this love? Any who would call this legalism are merely demonstrating their antinomianism, their rejection of God's law, and their refusal to regulate their life according to his will. As for being unloving, we need to first ask the question, "*What is love?*"

What is love? There are many answers to this question. There are probably few other subjects so abounding in error and confusion as the subject of love. We have already seen that the scriptures relate law and love saying, "*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*" The popular notion is that love is entirely a matter of subjective feelings and cannot be defined by objective standards. The Hollywood theme of romantic love has pervasively saturated our culture with this error. This has made a mockery of love. Men can define love any way they want. Love is lost in a morass of subjectivity and divorced from the objective standards and actions that give it any real meaning. To say the least, this kind of love is incredibly fickle, as the current divorce rates attest. A young man can redefine his subjective lust as love and so pursue the object of his affections. True "love" cannot be denied and must be consummated in full sexual union. Later on when he has tired of satiating his lust on her, or she has inconveniently become with child, he can dump her. The feelings are gone and that is all that counts. If he now has feelings for another, for a new "love," how can that be denied? This revolting and lawless scenario is reenacted countless times in our culture in the name of "love." A man may be a drunk. He may abuse his wife when he is with her and cheat on her when he is not. But if he maintains some sentimental affection for her, we are told that all is well because he still really "loves" her. Some love! The Lord preserve us from such "love." The gossip columns and the scandal sheets apprise us of the latest fornications and adulteries of the rich and famous. They are reporting on their "love" life. "Love" rules and cannot be denied, certainly not by marriage vows or legal prohibitions. Whether it is homosexual "love" or incestuous "love" it doesn't matter. It is the feelings that count. They are always right. How can "love" be wrong?! Hollywood is not the only culprit. Classical "love" fares little better. It too abounds in lawless notions of romantic "love." The Trojan War is a good example. A long and bloody war is fought because of one man's "love" for a woman. Hundreds or thousands may be killed. Nations or city-states may be destroyed or impoverished. And all because of one man's lawless lust for a woman. Yet these sentiments are raised to mythic proportions as an example of a great romantic "love."

Christians have not been exempt from these influences, and much of what has been written by them on the subject fares little better. There are few attempts to define "love" on a scriptural basis. "Love" is accepted as these warm fuzzy nice feelings that we have for people. And these subjective feelings are again raised to mythic proportions. All the world needs is more "love." If we would just "love" everyone, everywhere, all the time the world would be a wonderful place. Now it is true that "love" scripturally defined would make the world a far better place, but a mass of "Christian" subjective "love" is only adding to the problem. When Christians have made some attempt to reason about "love" from the scriptures, what I have seen has not been very impressive. One has been on the basis of different levels of love, all based on different Greek words for love. Eros is said to mean sensual love, philo is said to mean brotherly love, and agape is said to mean spiritual love. Others simply wax eloquent on this great thing called "agape love," the ultimate in "love." Charismatics are particularly prone to run on with this kind of confusion. The scriptures fortunately do not support such erroneous distinctions. What does the Bible really say? The New Testament predominantly uses two words for love. They are "agapao"

and "phileo." There seems to be no clear distinction in their use except that "agapeo" is used far more frequently. Take the following example,

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (agapao) thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (agapao) thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest (phileo) thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest (phileo) thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

Both words are used repeatedly and interchangeably to refer to Peter's love for Christ. Similarly both words are used to refer to Christ's love for the Apostle John.

"Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved (phileo), and saith unto them" (John 20:2).

"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved (agapao) following; which also leaned on his breast at supper" (John 21:20).

And similarly both words are used to describe a Pharisaical love of vanity.

"And love (phileo) the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues" (Matthew 23:6).

"Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love (agapao) the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets" (Luke 11:43).

Neither is there any scriptural basis for agape representing some kind of magical spiritual super love. It simply means love. It can mean the kind of love that God wants us to exhibit or it can refer to a corrupt and worldly love. In the above example it was used of the Pharisee's love for worldly show and vanity. Here are a few more examples of its use as a sinful and wicked love.

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved (agapao) this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

"Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved (agapao) the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15).

The whole point of this exercise is to demonstrate that we cannot take some word, be it "love" or "agape," and set it on a pedestal and give it some mythical subjective definition. We need to let scripture speak to this subject, to let scripture interpret scripture. We need to let the scriptures define what love is and teach us who we are to love and how we are to love them.

Now this is not intended to be a treatise on love, and therefore our remarks must be limited. The first and most obvious thing we need to say is that the scriptures define love as the keeping of God's law. It is stated repeatedly. We have already examined the Apostle Paul's teaching in this regard. John is often called the "Apostle of Love," whatever that means. But his teaching on this subject is the same as Paul's.

If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me (John 14:21-24).

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:2-3).

As we have seen, the first table of the law teaches us how to love God, even as the second table teaches us how to love our neighbor. How do we love God? God tells us how. We place him first in our lives and have no other gods before him. We worship him his way, as he has commanded, and not according to the doctrines and

inventions of men. We honor him and treat his name with reverence and respect. And we keep his day, the Lord's Day, holy, refraining from secular work and thoughts, and meditate on him and his word, and worship him publicly in the assembly of the saints. If we neglect these things, any claim that we love God is a hollow mockery. People who say they love God and spend Sundays on nature trails or on the golf course so they can "worship" God in nature are frauds. They make better pagans than Christians. Pagans see God in nature and seek to be one with it. Christians see God as the Creator and above nature and seek to be one with God through Jesus Christ, the Mediator.

Paul gives a further definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13. He starts off maintaining the primacy of this grace of the Holy Spirit over works and other gifts. Then he begins to define it.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:1-7).

Paul says that those who envy (*"Thou shalt not covet"*) their friends and neighbors do not really love them. He states that those who display such scripturally condemned vices as selfishness and pride are not exhibiting love. He says that those who treat others with impatience and a hair temper, and are always suspicious, do not really love them. Paul is defining love in terms of certain Christian virtues and the absence of specific vices. In Paul's thinking, love is not subjective but can be objectively defined.

And that is the whole point of this book. Christian charity, the exercise of Christian love, must be defined in terms of God's word. It must be in accordance with God's law. Anything else reduces love to maudlin sentiment that soon becomes a cloak for sin. A couple of prominent examples are in order. Albert Schweitzer was a man who had every prospect of a prosperous life and brilliant career in his native Switzerland. He gave it all up to minister to the unfortunate residents of a leper colony in Africa. This was hailed as a preeminent example of Christian love. But Schweitzer was a theological liberal and a humanist. He wanted to serve mankind and he wanted to serve them his way. In a way he gave his life for this cause, giving in a fashion his body to be burned. But Paul condemns him and says he is nothing. By Paul's definition of love he certainly had no love for God and therefore neither for his fellow man. He was an infidel and devoid of true Biblical love. In our day we have another example of such a universally acclaimed saint, Mother Theresa. Surely she exhibited love going into the slums of Calcutta to minister to the untouchables, the poorest of the poor in a poor country. But she too was a humanist. She too just wanted to help mankind and do it her way. She repeatedly made it clear that her ministry was not an attempt to convert these ignorant idolaters to Christianity. She merely wanted to minister to their temporal needs and was content to leave them in their Hindu faith. Is this love? Is it loving to forbear to warn them to flee the wrath of God to come? Is it love to deny them the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? It would be absurd to think that her ministry could be an expression of Christian love, but millions have hailed it as being so. Such are the current delusions with respect to love.

Finally, one more point. Of all whom I have read on the subject, Rushdoony is the one who has had the most sensible and scriptural remarks concerning love. Not only did he note its relationship to the law, but he made a further point. He said that love and hate are opposite sides of the same coin. What he meant by that is that they are inseparable. That is, a man who cannot hate cannot love. It means that the greater a capacity one has for love, then also for hate. For instance, the more one loves God, the more one will hate Satan. It also means that if you really love God you cannot love Satan too. Universal love is therefore impossible. If you love the good you must hate the evil. You cannot love both righteousness and wickedness at the same time. Christians are all too often exhorted to a promiscuous universal love. This universal love is promoted with the shibboleth, "Hate the sin but love the sinner." This too is unscriptural. Sin is never some abstract thing that exists on its own. Sin is always the personal act of a creature. It is the person that sins. The sinner is not the victim of sin but rather its

author. God makes no such distinction and neither should we. God says, "*As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid*" (Romans 9:13-14).

Yet there are all too many Christians who believe that if God should hate anyone, including Esau, there would indeed be unrighteousness with God. They overlook the scriptures that declare,

God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11).

The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity (Psalm 5:5).

The doctrine of love has serious implications for any doctrine of Christian charity. A doctrine of universal and promiscuous love will lead to programs of universal and promiscuous charitable aid. And a doctrine of love defined by God's law and tempered by his word will lead to a system of charity that is regulated by God's law and administered according to his word. Those are the choices and they cannot be evaded. All attempts to maintain a universal love must ultimately wind up in loving evil. And then we come under the rebuke of the Lord who warns us in his word, "*Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD*" (2 Chronicles 19:2).

Chapter 14

Justice

If universal love is an impossibility, universal justice is a command. The Lord said, "*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" Jacob received of God's love and his mercy. Esau received of God's justice. Not all men are blessed with the love and mercy of God. As scripture says, "*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy*" (Romans 9:15-16).

But even Satan will receive of God's justice. The universality of justice is an important part of our ministry to the poor. When justice languishes, it is often the poor, the weak, and the defenseless who are the first to suffer. Lack of justice results in oppression of the poor. Not only does it crush them economically, but it crushes their hope. It grinds their faces in the prospect of perpetual poverty. This was frequently the case in the old world and the reason that so many risked so much to emigrate to the new world. In America there was hope. They often indentured themselves for up to seven years to pay for their passage. They were willing to become bondservants for a season as long as there was light at the end of the tunnel. They sought hope, if not for themselves, at least for their children. If we are really concerned about the cause of the poor, a good place to start is not with a handout, but with the question of justice. The restoration of justice and the end of oppression are a very good "War on Poverty" by themselves.

There are certain things that the Bible says that we owe all men. One of them is to do good unto them.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

We are to seek to be at peace with all men and give them the honor that they are due.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (Romans 13:7).

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward (1 Peter 2:17-18).

Now one good that we owe all men is justice. Similarly, it is by behaving justly in all our dealings that we seek to remain at peace with all men. And it is only just that we grant to those whom God has providentially placed over us in the state, the church, and our employment, the respect and the obedience that they are due. Justice is something that we truly owe all men. Justice is something that all men will receive from God and that all men should receive from us. Justice is something that God commands us to exercise without deviation at all times. God hates anything less.

"You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:15 NKJV).

"You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice" (Exodus 23:2 NKJV).

He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD (Proverbs 17:15 NKJV).

God is particularly concerned when our injustice is directed towards the poor. This specific manifestation of injustice is a frequent target of the rebukes of the prophets of ancient Israel.

How long will you judge unjustly, And show partiality to the wicked? Selah. Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82:2-4 NKJV).

"Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, Who write misfortune, Which they have prescribed To rob the needy of justice, And to take what is right from the poor of My people, That widows may be their prey, And that they may rob the fatherless. What will you do in the day of punishment, And in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help?" (Isaiah 10:1-3 NKJV).

Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail, Saying: "When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit, That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals; Even sell the bad wheat?" The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall the land not tremble for this, And everyone mourn who dwells in it? (Amos 8:4-8 NKJV).

Christ in his earthly ministry repeated these prophetic calls for justice and reserved for them some of his most withering rebukes for the civil leadership of his day.

"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7 NKJV).

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation... "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matthew 23:14, 23 NKJV).

And it is justice that God wants, and he specifically prohibits tipping the scales of justice in favor of the poor. It is not welfare, but justice that God decrees we grant unto the poor.

"You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute" (Exodus 23:3 NKJV).

"You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:15 NKJV).

Reverse discrimination in favor of the poor is an abomination in the sight of a just God. It is very prevalent in our society where outrageous settlements are routinely awarded by the courts to poor litigants who really did not have a case. When the issue is one of pitting a rich insurance company against the poor victim of some misfortune, the outcome is rarely in dispute. Justice is overruled by sympathy, and the contractual obligations of the insurance company are rendered meaningless by the "charitable" intentions of the courts. This of course is not true charity, but rather injustice and displeasing to God. The "deep pockets" theory is another manifestation of this corruption of justice. A need has to be filled and any rich (i.e., with deep pockets) party that can be remotely associated with the problem, regardless of their actual legal liability or even remote responsibility, are ordered to pay. The problem has been solved, the victim has been compensated, and it is assumed that the rich can afford it. God hates this kind of war on poverty and will judge a society that institutionalizes such injustice.

There are number of ways that justice could significantly help the poor in our society. An obvious one is the frequent Biblical admonition about just weights and measures. This trick is an age-old measure of economic predators. Recently a convenience store chain in my part of the country was caught in a scam. They sold milk under their own label in their own plastic bottles. The bottles turned out to be undersized and not a full gallon. This kind of fraud, although it affects everyone, is especially hard on the poor. They simply cannot afford to go out and buy more if they run out. God's testimony is clear with respect to this particular form of injustice.

"You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:35-36 NKJV).

"Are there yet the treasures of wickedness In the house of the wicked, And the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with the wicked scales, And with the bag of deceitful weights?" (Micah 6:10-11 NKJV).

"Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail...Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit, That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals—Even sell the bad wheat?" (Amos 8:4-6 NKJV)

Amos adds to his rebuke a condemnation of the practice of selling bad merchandise. God holds us to a higher standard than "*caveat emptor*." The poor again are especially susceptible to this kind of fraud and injustice. They are often poorly informed consumers and need to buy things as absolutely inexpensively as possible. This makes them easy marks for scam artists with defective or worthless merchandise being sold remarkably cheap. Worthless products and defective automobiles are generally pawned off on the poor rather than on more upscale consumers. Those who so prey on the poor will discover that the Lord will prey on them with his vengeance.

In the Old Testament Hebrew Republic God also warned about the unjust use of collateral, especially with respect to the poor.

"If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious" (Exodus 22:26-27 NKJV).

"If you have nothing with which to pay, Why should he take away your bed from under you?" (Proverbs 22:27 NKJV).

"No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes one's living in pledge" (Deuteronomy 24:6 NKJV).

"They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; They take the widow's ox as a pledge" (Job 24:3 NKJV).

To take from the poor as collateral those things that are necessities of life or things that are required in order to make a living is prohibited. The poor need to have hope. They need hope of the possibility of working out of their impoverished state. This is impossible if basic necessities and their livelihood are taken away. Beasts of burden that are required to work the land and bring produce to market are forbidden to be seized. This is like repossessing a poor farmer's tractor because he is behind in his loan payments. Now he cannot even plant or harvest his crops. His situation has become completely hopeless. Modern welfare regulations place the poor in similar hopeless situations. Welfare is a trap designed to foster dependency and extinguish hope. Welfare recipients for instance are prohibited to own cars. This severely curtails their ability to even look for work, much less hold down a new job. Minimum wage laws can also perpetrate the same kind of injustice. Many of the chronic poor have absolutely no work skills or even a work ethic. They are a bad risk for an employer who has to invest in training them. They are unlikely to ever find work if they must be paid the full minimum wage. They cannot work their way out of poverty because they cannot even make it to the first rung of the ladder. They may need to be apprenticed out for just grocery money until they develop some skills and good work habits. This option is denied them by the heartless bureaucrats of the welfare state. This too is an injustice.

Another injustice to the poor is that they are excluded from certain lines of work. They are sometimes excluded from specific lines of work that are most conducive to raising them swiftly out of poverty. Being the owner-operator of a taxi is a good example. The capitalization for such a small business is reasonable (any decent used car), and few other businesses can pay off their capital investment so swiftly. Yet the licensing requirements are often so prohibitive that the poor are effectively excluded. I have heard that a taxi license in New York City may be worth as much as one hundred thousand dollars! There are a myriad of other examples that could be used to amplify the issue. But the main point is that to grant the poor their Biblical rights of justice and to end any and all oppression of the poor would significantly improve their lot. It would improve their lot according as they show themselves worthy and strive diligently to improve themselves. And it would improve their lot without dependency-creating handouts and unscriptural welfare programs.

Finally, one more word about dealing justly with the poor. We too often think only of giving to the poor according to our responsibilities, but not of the poor also giving according to theirs. It is somewhat

condescending to think that the poor can only receive. It is certainly not just to fail to instruct them in their responsibilities to also give. Take the Lord's tithe for example. Is it just to leave them in the error of stealing from God? Is it just to deny them the privilege of tithing to the Lord and the blessings that come with it? Is it just to leave them under God's rebuke and censure in place of the blessings that God promises to those who faithfully tithe?

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:10-11 NKJV).

Christ himself remarked on a notable instance of the tithing of the poor and blessed it with his strongest approbation.

"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (Mark 12:41-44).

We should be concerned about instructing the poor in their Biblical responsibilities. The poor will be much better off if we labor to bring them under God's blessing than if we simply strive to see that they get another handout. The scriptures do not tell us how this poor widow fared. But knowing that there is a just God in heaven who sees all things, how can we doubt that she was the better off for her faithfulness?

Chapter 15

The Hebrew Republic

The Old Testament Hebrew Republic is very instructive in regards to the treatment of the poor. There are several points to consider. First is the fact that the nation was structured to minimize poverty. Extremes of poverty and wealth were not the norm, as the nation was organized in a way that encouraged a strong middle class. The second point is that, instructive as much of this may be, it is not binding on us, as we are not under the Sinaitic Covenant. The third point is that there are many specific commands to alleviate the plight of the poor that did exist. These are often quoted by modern poverty warriors in an attempt to bind the consciences of the Lord's people to support modern anti-poverty programs. Finally, it is important to note the nature of the relationship of an Israelite to the poor. We have already noted in our treatment of the parable of the Good Samaritan that for an Israelite the typical neighbor was another Israelite. But whether an Israelite or not, the typical poor neighbor was a member of the Jewish church. This is significant because it colors many of these commands with respect to the poor as being to a brother, rather than to a pagan neighbor or a foreigner.

The Hebrew Republic contained many legal provisions for the support of the poor. The material that is presented here is far from original and has been more thoroughly covered by others such as Rushdoony¹. An Israelite was commanded to make an interest-free emergency loan to a poor brother. If his ox died, or his crop failed, or he needed to reseed his fields, he could count on an emergency interest-free loan from a more prosperous brother. He need not mortgage his land or deal with a profit-minded banker. It was his brother's duty to aid him in his distress. This did not mean that the prosperous brother could not use some discretion and wisdom in heeding this commandment. If the poor brother was a sluggard or a wastrel, he need not subsidize his vices. But he was a brother and his legitimate needs had to be met.

"If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand" (Deuteronomy 15:7-10 NKJV).

"If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest" (Exodus 22:25 NKJV).

Secondly, a brother was not allowed to be crushed by long-term debt. Even in the face of adversity there was always hope. For his debts were fully canceled every seven years in the Sabbatical year of release.

"At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release. Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother" (Deuteronomy 15:1-3 NKJV).

One can see, with this kind of support constitutionally required, a diligent honest man would generally tend to prosper. Only the indolent and those with other crippling vices were likely to be chronically poor. The Amish still observe some of these principles. If a man's barn burns down, they get together and have a barn raising. If his crops fail, the community gets together and supports their brother. This is not welfare and there is no record of them supporting the indolent. But they act as a community and take care of a brother undergoing adversity.

There was also a regular supply of free food for the poor. But this was no handout and they had to work hard for it. This supply came in two forms. One was the regular gleaning of the harvest, and the other was the fruit of the field in the sabbatical year when the fields were required to be left fallow.

1. John Rousas Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, The Craig Press, 1973.

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:9-10).

"Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove" (Exodus 23:10-11).

Gleaning was hard work. When the field was harvested, the reapers could only go through once. Whatever was missed or dropped had to be left for the poor. Gleaning constituted hard work in hot fields to get a little food. There was no encouragement to become a professional gleaner. Neither was gleaning a right. The owner of the field had to leave the gleanings, but he had some say in who could glean his fields. The undeserving poor could be barred from this activity. The owner's prerogative is shown in the example of Ruth and Boaz. *"Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, Whose young woman is this? So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house" (Ruth 2:5-7).*

Gleaning made a lot of sense. It probably did not really cost anybody anything, since most of the gleanings were not economically worth reaping, but it kept the poor from starving. And there was local control to make sure that it was directed to the deserving poor. All this was accomplished without oppressive taxation or a socialist bureaucracy.

Prompt payment for services was also a legal requirement. A poor person cannot operate on "Net 30." The poor cannot afford to extend short-term no-interest loans to their employers or customers. His family might be without food and payment an absolute necessity. Therefore daily payment before sundown was the law. *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you" (Deuteronomy 24:14 NKJV).*

Many other examples could be made, but this is not intended to be a treatise on Old Testament law. But what we have seen is an inspired example of divine legislation instituting a poverty program. And as we have noted, although this legislation is not binding on us and not always even applicable, yet the operating principles deserve our careful attention. Where it is applicable, could we do better than to follow divine wisdom on this subject? And what are some of these principles? First of all, there is no governmental involvement except for enforcing this legislation as necessary. And this would be done by the local "elders of the gate" who would have a personal knowledge of all the parties involved so that they could rule wisely and justly in any disputes. Secondly, there is no ecclesiastical involvement except for instructing the people in these laws so that they might serve God by obeying them. Thirdly, this was all personal charity. Yet it was not just left up to everyone's conscience, but its requirements were spelled out by law. Those who had been materially prospered by the Lord knew exactly what it meant to be a good steward of the bounty the Lord had given them.

Finally, we have to consider who all this charity extended was to. Generally to a neighbor who was, as we have seen, almost always a fellow Israelite. Some of these charitable requirements were specifically directed to a brother. One needs to remember that the nation of Israel was a theocracy. The nation was a special nation, a holy nation, that was in covenant with God. This practically made the nation synonymous with the visible church. This legislated charity was therefore directed to a brother or neighbor who was constitutionally committed to the worship of the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since public idolatry and blasphemy were capital crimes, the donor knew he was not subsidizing ungodliness, at least in those extreme forms. And at any rate, he could exercise his own discretion in that regard. It is important to keep that in mind as we reflect on the Old Testament commands to assist the poor. These laws cannot be mindlessly applied to our society. They can not be used as a rationale for subsidizing idolaters and unrepentant wicked persons in their sin. And it is in that light that we need to understand the following admonitions.

Blessed is he who considers the poor; The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, And he will be blessed on the earth (Psalm 41:1-2 NKJV).

He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted with honor (Psalm 112:9 NKJV).

He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given (Proverbs 19:17 NKJV).

Note how the above proverb exactly parallels the Matthew 25 passage and teaches the same doctrine that what we do for our fellow believers we do us unto the Lord himself.

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard" (Isaiah 58:6-8 NKJV).

Similarly, note how this passage paralleled the passage in James 2:14-16, where James exhorts that true faith requires us to minister to the material needs of poor brothers and sisters in Christ. Nonetheless these texts are constantly being misquoted and misapplied to justify an endless plethora of programs of indiscriminate aid directed at the hosts of the ungodly who have never submitted to the Lord of all the earth.

A study of the Hebrew Republic is very instructive. It can teach us much about poverty and how to deal with it. However, it lends no support to current ideas about church and state involvement in poverty programs. Neither does it give credence to the notion that Christians have an obligation to feed the ungodly. Rather, it renews our convictions about ministering to the material needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Chapter 16

Adoption

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. They were living in the Garden of God. And each day God would come and fellowship with them in the Garden. Truly, they were children of God. Then something happened—SIN. They were expelled from the garden. God drove them from his presence. They were excommunicated from the fellowship of a holy God. In the strict sense they could no longer be called his children. The image of God in them had become corrupted. And this corrupted image they passed on to their posterity so that from then on men were "*born in sin and conceived in iniquity*," as the psalmist stated it. Man, separated from God, grew in sin and wickedness until it reached its logical consequences in the Great Flood and the near extermination of the race. There was, in a sense, a new beginning after the flood with Noah and his family, but nothing had really changed. Sinners had been dealt with, but not the problem of sin. And so it went on for many weary centuries. God graciously reached out to man to call them back to himself in repentance. He sent many prophets and gave men his word. He made covenants with Noah, Abraham, David, and with the nation of Israel at Sinai. But in spite of it all, as Paul said, "*Sin reigned from Adam through Moses*," and on through until the days of Christ. So much so, that Christ rebuked the religious leaders of the day and said:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

The Apostle John also speaks of men in like fashion: "*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother*" (1 John 3:10).

And that is where sin has brought men. From being children of their heavenly father it has reduced them to being children of their father the devil. But by God's grace they have not all been left there. All men are born in sin and iniquity, but not all men are left in that state. Some men by the power of God's Holy Spirit have been born again. They were born as children of the devil and are reborn as the children of God. As Paul under inspiration sums it up:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:1-6).

This transformation of the children of the devil into the children of God includes many steps. It includes regeneration, conversion, repentance, and faith. It also includes adoption, whereby, although we were no longer by nature children of God, we are adopted into the family of God. Paul speaks of this to the saints of Rome: "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*" (Romans 8:14).

To those who are willing to receive Christ and forsake the world, the word promises:

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:11-12).

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Truly God is gracious.

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

Christians being reborn into the image of God are called to be like God. One way that they can do this is to, like God, adopt some of the ungodly. And, like God, they must do it on God's terms. The scriptures give us a number of examples of this. Esther, an orphan, was adopted by Mordecai, and the scriptures record what great good the Lord worked through this. An unusual case was Moses, an infant consigned to death, who was adopted and became the son of Pharaoh's daughter. A well-known case is that of Ruth. Ruth and Orpah, women of Moab, had both married Israelite men. But when their husbands died, they were free again. As Paul puts it, *"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband" (Romans 7:2).* Orpah used her freedom and the scriptures record of her, *"Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law" (Ruth 1:15).* But of Ruth we hear better things:

And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

Significantly, Ruth returned with Naomi to Bethlehem, the "House of Bread." There she was greatly blessed of God and became a progenitor of our Lord Jesus Christ. By her confession she identified with Israel and with Israel's God. She voluntarily came to and submitted to the law and the culture of that nation where the Lord was King and his word was law. Naomi in a sense adopted her, and she returned as her daughter and became a daughter of the Lord. The lesson here is clear. Before you can come to Bethlehem, the "House of Bread," you need to forsake the world and identify with the people of God—a critical lesson for those who would engage in Christian charity.

Another Biblical example is the story of Naaman. Naaman was a Syrian and an idolater. He became afflicted with one of the consequences of sin, leprosy. In fact, in the Old Testament ceremonial economy, leprosy was a type of sin. Naaman is set before us as a sinner. But what does Naaman do? He leaves Syria and his hope in the gods of Syria. He travels to Israel and places his hope of salvation from his leprosy in the God of Israel. He goes to the prophet of Israel's God and seeks from him deliverance. He then reluctantly but obediently submits to the requirements of Israel's God. And then he is marvelously healed of his leprosy. It is important to note that the temporal deliverance from his affliction preceded his repentance and faith in Israel's God. His temporal deliverance preceded his conversion. But he received this blessing because he was willing to forsake Syria and come to Israel. He was willing to submit to the requirements of Israel's God. This is another lesson for the practitioners of Christian charity. We can help the ungodly if they are willing to come at least as far as Naaman did. We can assist them with their afflictions and work and pray for a full conversion to follow. Unfortunately all too many are ready to trot off to Syria and dole out the goodies to the Naamans of this world in between the latter's trips to the pagan temples of their gods. That kind of activity is neither Christian nor charitable. It applies a band-aid while it leaves people in their sins.

Now this Biblical doctrine of adoption has significant implications as a principle of Christian charity. When we forsake the world and submit to Christ, we come into all the blessings of the children of God and become heirs with Christ of the world to come. This is a model for how we should deal with the ungodly. We have seen that there is little or no scriptural support for the concept of charity to the wicked. How then can we reach out to those who groaning under the consequences and burden of sin? How can we minister to those who are under affliction and deprivation? Are we limited to simply preaching the gospel to them, or is there some practical way we can help them without participating in their sin? If there is, the only way that I can see is by modeling the doctrine of divine adoption.

One obvious and common way of doing this is by adopting children. Christians frequently adopt children, not just babies, but children of all ages. Now these children, when they were adopted, were not Christians.

Spiritually speaking they were still children of their father the devil. Yet they are coming into all the temporal blessings of the children of God. They are brought into a Christian home where God is honored and worshipped, where his word is the rule of life, and that is under his protection. They are taught the word of God and the way of salvation not only in the home but also in the church. Indeed they are made members of the visible church. Outwardly they are brought into a covenant relationship with God and as children of believing parents are externally holy as Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 7:14. They have not yet been converted and brought into personal submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, yet they have come into all these blessings. Why? Because they have been removed from the world and brought into a Christian home and under the discipline of God's word.

But the benefits of adoption are not limited to children being brought into a Christian family. There are other extensions and applications of this doctrine. Any adult that is desperate enough under the weight of sin can be treated similarly. If they are willing to forsake the world and submit to Christian discipline, they can be helped. They may not as yet have an understanding of the gospel or be able to give any credible profession of faith. But if they are willing to turn from their wicked lifestyle and submit to Christian discipline they can be helped. Christian homes for unwed mothers are a good example. A man named Lester Roloff operated one of these successfully for many years in the State of Texas. The girls had to commit to giving up their sins and conforming to very strict standards. They had to forsake drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and boyfriends. They had to work hard at productive labor. They had to submit to the regular instruction of God's word. They had to routinely attend church and sit in on the public worship of God. But they were loved and cared for. They were fed and clothed and their babies were provided for. They could not come and go as they pleased, but were committed to staying at the home and living according to the rules of that institution. Other examples could be given. But this kind of charity to the ungodly is in my opinion fully scriptural.

In contrast to the above example, what do we normally encounter? What kind of so called "Christian charity" are we routinely asked to support? Take the typical "Gospel Mission" as an example. Drunks and drug addicts wander in and out. They come in, get fed, and spend a night or so. They take what they can of the free food, clothing, and shelter that is available, but they make no commitment. They do not forsake their wicked lifestyle. They may patiently endure a little sermonette, but they have no intention of changing their way of life. They would probably refuse the aid that they are getting if accepting it meant even limited external conformity to Christian standards. Such institutions are not only held in contempt by those who exploit them, but by the world at large. But our urban landscape, blighted by the consequences of sin, is dotted with these impotent and ineffectual institutions. Many admit that their spiritual impact is negligible. Many measure success in the number of meals they are able to supply at holiday times. One can only wonder what the Apostle Paul would have thought when he surveyed the licentious city of Corinth and someone had suggested he open a "Gospel Mission." Mercifully for the cause of Christianity he did not.

Chapter 17

Private Charity

We have already seen that the civil magistrate is a divinely instituted ministry of earthly justice. It is basically a negative institution, enforcing the divine "Thou shalt not's," and is not authorized to institute itself as a ministry of welfare. It is to allow God's providence to work in the lives of men and is not to seek to become the great tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Similarly, we have seen that the church's charitable work is limited to the divinely instituted deaconate. The deaconate is to minister exclusively to the material needs of the saints and only under limited conditions when the family is unable or unwilling. So the bulk of Christian charity will be private and personal. That is the Biblical pattern. And since that is the case, it deserves our careful attention.

First, we have seen the persistent and consistent commands of scripture to minister to the bodily needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to minister to the body of Christ, and Christ will hold us accountable at the last day. He will view such ministry as being performed as unto himself, or as being denied unto himself. This kind of charity is an imperative. Secondly, we have seen that we are to love our neighbor. We have seen that this is related to the law. If we keep the second table of the law, we have demonstrated scriptural love to our neighbor. We have seen that we are to do good to all men. One good that we owe to all men, that we have examined, is to do them justice. This much is clear. There is more but it is not always as clear, and that is what we will examine in this chapter.

Not only are we commanded to love our brother and our neighbor, but we are even commanded to love our enemy. What does this mean? Well, for starters, we obviously have to love them according to the second table of the law. We are obligated to respect all the God-given rights of even our enemies. This is certainly part of what Christ meant when he corrected the doctrine of the Pharisees. "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies...*" (Matthew 5:43-44). According to their doctrine, neighbors had to be treated fairly but enemies were a different matter. They had forgotten the doctrine of Moses and of Paul that said:

"To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste" (Deuteronomy 32:35).

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:19-20).

But obviously more is called for here than merely restraining oneself from personal vengeance or simply fulfilling the second table of the law. Paul goes on to require much more as he quotes Solomon on the subject. "*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee"* (Proverbs 25:21-22). And Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, as he expounds the Old Testament law, expands on the full significance of this requirement.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:43-45).

There is a notable example of this virtue recorded for us in the life of Elisha. The setting is that the Syrians are Israel's enemies; they are waging war against Israel. The prophet Elisha is frustrating all their plans by constantly warning the Israelites where the Syrians are planning to attack. They therefore decide to capture Elisha.

Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not

such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel (2 Kings 6:8-23).

Now it is important to note that the Syrians were enemies, dangerous enemies. Love here does not mean submission or yielding one's right of self-defense. Elisha therefore prays not for his enemies, but against them. He beseeches the Lord to deliver him and strike the Syrians with blindness. But once they are blind and helpless, he is prepared to be gracious unto them. He is prepared to feed his enemies when they are hungry. He commands the king of Israel to feed them and then release them. The strategy was certainly blessed of God, for we read that the Syrians not only went home, but ceased troubling Israel. Elisha struck them with blindness and won the war. Then he fed them and freed them and won the peace. This is the real lesson of the commandment to love our enemies. Recent history is a good example. After the First World War the allies imposed a punitive peace on Germany. They exacted their vengeance in the Versailles Treaty and imposed an unjust and retributive peace settlement on Germany. She was stripped of all her colonies, lost large portions of her own land so that millions of Germans came to live under foreign governments, and was saddled with an impossible burden of reparations. It is not surprising that the German people rebelled against this and followed the only politician who openly opposed it, Adolph Hitler. The result was another destructive war. In contrast, after the Second World War the proponents of a vindictive peace lost out, and a very generous and equitable peace was imposed on Germany and Japan. The result is that both nations are now strong and prosperous allies rather than enemies. And that is how we ought to deal with our enemies.

However, in all this there is a clear distinction that we ought to always keep in mind. And that is the difference between our enemies and the enemies of the Lord. Elijah had slain all the priests of Baal. Elisha preserves the Syrian soldiers. The former were the Lord's enemies and dedicated to overthrowing the worship of Jahweh and replacing it with the worship of Baal. The latter were now harmless and disarmed soldiers who had been trying to capture Elisha personally. Deborah rejoices in the death of the Lord's enemies in her victory song: "*So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years*" (Judges 5:31).

The Lord warns us against loving his enemies even as he commands us to love our own. "*And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD*" (2 Chronicles 19:2).

And the Apostle John repeats this warning for us in his second epistle: "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the*

Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 1:9-11).

Here we are specifically forbidden to feed the enemies of the Lord. We are not to extend any hospitality to them. And those who do so will be held accountable. God will hold them guilty and count them as accomplices in this wicked opposition against himself. Again, as we have seen, universal love is an impossibility. We cannot love both God and his enemies. Those who attempt to do so God will count as having hated him.

Ultimately, private charity is very much an individual matter. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is instructive in this behalf. A prosperous landowner hires laborers who all work varying portions of the day. The issue comes when it is time for them to be paid.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? (Matthew 20:8-15).

Now paying a man an entire day's wages for one hour of work is an act of charity. It may not even have been a very wise act of charity. Those who showed up in the market place very late, looking for work, may have included some of the more slothful. But the point of the parable is that this is private charity and the master has the right to do what he wills with his own. This is of course true, but only up to a point. We are accountable to the Lord for how we spend our money and are called to be good stewards of all that he blesses us with. And all our private charities must be dispensed in accordance with the principles of God's word. Some of these principles are enumerated below.

1. We are forbidden to assist the enemies of God. Who would these be today? They would include those whom the Apostle John calls an antichrist. *"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).* We might think of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses who come to our doors. We might think of card-carrying members of the ACLU. All these hate Christ and are committed to opposing Christianity. They all deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

2. We are not to subsidize people in their wicked lifestyles. We must obtain a commitment to forsake their worldly vices before we render them assistance.

3. We are not to subsidize sloth or laziness. The following texts make this clear: *"How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man... The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat... The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing" (Proverbs 6:9-11, 13:4, 20:4).*

4. We should always keep in mind God's sociology. Biblically a man and his wife are one flesh. Bringing groceries to the wife and children of a drunk or drug addict is the same as giving them to him. One clear exception to this is if the wife is a professing Christian. She is a sister and part of the body of Christ. But other than that, she has made her bed by marrying the wicked and must sleep in it. This is particularly true if she has Biblical grounds for leaving him but refuses to do so.

5. We must always remember our priorities. We are all human and finite. We have only so much time and so many resources, and consequently our charitable work will always be limited. Therefore we must prioritize and do first things first. Our first priority is to our own family and relatives. If we do not take care of our own, Paul says that we are worse than infidels. Secondly, we are commanded to take care of the temporal necessities of the needy saints, of the afflicted among the body of Christ. Failure to do so will bring us under Christ's

censure. Thirdly we are commanded to love our enemies and feed and clothe them when they are hungry and naked. God requires this testimony as a means of winning over to him those who have personally injured us. Finally, if we have any resources left, we may if we wish engage in more general works of charity but always in accordance with Biblical principles. If we follow these rules, we will be doing real good and most importantly we will be pleasing God with our obedience in our charitable works.

Chapter 18

Bribery

Much of what passes for Christian charity today is actually an exercise in bribery. What is a bribe? A bribe is a payment. It is specifically a payment made to affect the course of justice. Sometimes it is a payment made to see that justice is corrupted. In that case, both the party that offers the bribe and the party that receives it are guilty of injustice. Conversely, sometimes a bribe is extracted to receive justice. Dishonest government officials will hold up a permit, or refuse to approve something that is legitimate and meets code, until they have been paid off. In this case the payment is still a bribe, but the guilt is chiefly on the recipient. The person who pays the bribe is merely trying to obtain the justice that is being denied him. A company that I once worked for ordered critical supplies once a year from Mexico. Months later they would become concerned as the materials had not yet arrived. They would call their supplier in Mexico and be assured that the materials had been shipped long ago. Investigation would show that the materials were being held up at the border. Everything was in order and all the paperwork was correct, but the supplies would not move. The railway box cars would sit there endlessly, ignored by the customs officials seeking a bribe. Until they were paid off, nothing would happen. The company found out that if it wanted to do business in Mexico it had to be prepared to engage in bribery. An employee would be sent down with an appropriate amount of cash to see that the shipment was released. The company did what it felt it had to do. But it is still a bribe.

Either way, the scriptures have nothing good to say about bribes. Most of the admonitions against bribery have to do with the former kind.

And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous (Exodus 23:8).

Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes (Psalm 26:9-10).

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! (Isaiah 5:22-23).

For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right (Amos 5:12).

Similarly, every example of bribery in the scriptures is regarded as an exercise in wickedness. The following are a few examples, starting with Delilah who accepted a bribe to betray Samson, and ending with Judas, whose eternal infamy is that he too accepted a bribe to betray his Lord. In between we see the bribery of Samuel's sons which led to Israel seeking a king as the other nations, and the infamous attempt of Haman to bribe Ahasueras to exterminate the Jews.

And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver (Judges 16:4-5).

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment (1 Samuel 8:1-3).

And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman

the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee (Esther 3:8-11).

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him (Matthew 26:14-16).

The above were examples of bribes that were offered and paid to induce wicked behavior. There are also examples of bribes offered and paid for obtaining assistance. Several times we see the kings of Israel and of Judah resort to bribery to induce foreign military assistance when they were in trouble. They were paying off a foreign government for its cooperation.

"And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Benhadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, and between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. So Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelbethmaachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah" (1 Kings 15:17-21).

"At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin" (2 Kings 16:6-9).

The Bible does not speak well of these efforts either. They constituted a rejection of Jahweh as the true King of Israel and a lack of faith in his deliverance. They led the nation into entanglements with foreign nations that were forbidden. Ultimately, they proved to be not a source of deliverance but only a compounding of their difficulties. These bribes were no more blessed of God than the others.

Now let us apply all this to the contemporary Church of Jesus Christ. There are two kinds of bribery that Christian organizations routinely engage in. The first is a bribe that is given in exchange for the right to preach. The second is given in order to induce people to listen to the gospel. Both of these constitute bribery and are repugnant, but I find the latter the most reprehensible. I can think of little else that is so degrading to the word of God than to stoop to bribing people to listen to it. And it is not just the "Gospel Missions" with their bribe of a free meal for those who will in exchange endure a short sermonette, who are guilty of this travesty. Many churches have descended to the same degrading practice. They too will use bribes as bait to induce people to attend their services, such as entertainment by a well-known "Christian" music group or the appearance of a famous athlete, actor, etc. The high motives of attending the Lord's house to worship the true God and sit under the exposition of his word have been replaced with bribes to make them more acceptable. The former method of bribery is also common. Churches and missionary organizations will as a matter of course negotiate with foreign governments for the right to preach the gospel in their territories. These bribes take various forms. Typically they constitute a commitment for specific amounts of material aid. The missionary organization will be told that they need to establish a mission hospital with a specific number of beds and doctors in exchange for allowing a certain number of missionaries to operate in the area. Or they may be told that they will be required to distribute specific amounts of foodstuffs annually for the privilege of preaching the gospel. Such demands are commonly acceded to. But they are bribes. And it raises the question—should the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ be engaged in bribery?

Then there is the bribe to become or remain “Christians.” A friend of mine, Pastor Richard Bacon, has recently been involved in a missionary outreach in what was formerly Burma. His observations are extremely interesting. He noted that the entire mentality among the professing Christians there was rather disappointing. They think that it is their job to profess Christ, and that it is the job of the American Missionaries to pay them for it. They speak in terms of salaries for their people. They are not referring to just salaries for their pastors, but for all the members of their churches. To them Christianity is a job. Pastor Bacon’s point was not necessarily to fault them for this, but to note both the pervasiveness of the problem and its historic antecedents. He said this is what they have come to expect for the last two hundred years. He noted that a Baptist missionary that he met over there confided to him that this has been a problem from the very inception of missions in Burma. This missionary stated that Adoniram Judson, the missionary pioneer in Burma, had a monthly budget of \$2000 back in the early 1800’s, when that was a small fortune, and basically spent it supporting all those who made a profession of faith in Christianity. Over the centuries, Third World Christians, whose profession of faith has been directly or indirectly tied in with economic support, have been known as “Rice Christians” or “Rice bowl Christians.” This needs to be carefully distinguished from proper and Scriptural aid to our suffering brothers and sisters in Christ. The latter have a definite claim to not only the prayers, but also to the material support of more prosperous members of the body of Christ. However, when a portion of the professing church is permanently on the dole, and expects ongoing aid as a matter of course, as a natural result of their profession of Christianity, then something is radically wrong. What is wrong is that there is a growing, and hard to dispel, suspicion, that they have been bribed to become “Christians,” and are continuing to be bribed to remain “Christians.”

Americans have a history of contending for their rights. They have always believed in the freedom of the seas and took the British Navigation laws with a grain of salt. They fought the War of 1812 over such issues. Before that, American shipping had had to deal with the Barbary Pirates. The pirates could have been bought off and it would have been cheaper to do so. But Americans refused. The national slogan became, "*Millions for defense, not a penny for tribute.*" The Barbary Pirates were defeated and American commerce maintained its freedom on the seas. Such was American foreign policy. American foreign policy also used to believe in the freedom of the gospel. American missionaries could count on the support of their government as they sought to penetrate every nation far and near with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this is certainly no longer the case, and even persecuted Christians get short shrift from the State Department. And it is now common practice to use the bribery of foreign aid to get problem nations to behave. Recently the United States and Japan offered a bribe of several modern nuclear power plants to North Korea in exchange for a little more civilized behavior. The days of standing up to the Barbary Pirates are long gone. And the church is behaving no better. The culture of the bribe has overcome both church and state.

The conduct of the Apostles in this regard is remarkably different. They operated by different principles. Not only did they cleave to higher principles, but they were probably familiar with the history of Israel. They knew therefore that every attempt by the kings of Israel to bribe foreign powers for their support had come under God’s rebuke and led to national disaster. Israel was to trust in the Lord and not in foreign princes. They seemed have operated according to two principles. The first was that they would obey God and preach the word as they were commanded, whether or not they had permission from the authorities. This is evidenced by their reaction to the command of the Sanhedrin to cease and desist from preaching in the name of Jesus.

And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:18-20).

However they would forsake an area and cease to preach there if the people rejected the gospel. "*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet*" (Matthew 10:14).

But if the people were willing to hear, and there was a response to the gospel, they would continue to preach there, even in defiance of the authorities. Such were the principles and the example of the Apostles. There is no indication that they ever negotiated with any governmental powers with respect to permission to preach the

gospel. They underwent far more persecution than the church is generally undergoing today. They lived in an age when bribery was rampant and bribes were expected as a matter of course. Yet it is clear that they refused to take what might have seemed the easy way out. They were ambassadors of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and it would have been a denial of his sovereignty to ask for permission to proclaim his word. Paul endured a long and unjust imprisonment for the cause of the gospel. The scriptures tell us that the Roman governor kept him in prison in the hope of a bribe. Paul could have bribed his way out and been free to preach the gospel. But he refused to submit to such an iniquitous demand. Instead he submitted to the providence of God that ultimately led him to Rome where he preached the gospel from a prison cell. Paul was bound, but as he stated it, the gospel was not bound. God was working his sovereign will and Paul rejoiced even in his bonds. What an inspired example for those who would be ambassadors of Christ in our day.

This whole system of indiscriminate charity has led the church into the culture of bribery. The principles and examples of the Apostles have been forgotten and forsaken. It is high time that the churches review their principles and cleanse their hands from such questionable conduct that can bring only God's displeasure and the world's contempt.

Chapter 19

Guilt Or Liberty

A whole book could be written on this subject. Both liberty and guilt are extensive subjects. There are two aspects of this that concern the theme of this book. The first is the liberty from guilt that the Lord's people have in Christ. The second is the guilt that certain "Judaizers" seek to impose on the Lord's people for exercising their liberty in Christ. Guilt is a powerful weapon. Satan used it to crush Judas as his guilt drove him to self-destruction. Even the antichristian Freud recognized the power of guilt and made it a key of his fraudulent system. The proponents of a bottomless well of "Christian welfare" to the ungodly have chosen guilt as their chief weapon. It is about all that they have to work with, as the scriptures do not support their heretical claims.

What is liberty? What is liberty in Christ? It is numerous things. It includes liberty from the guilt of sin which has been washed away in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. But more specifically, to the issue at hand, it includes liberty from subjection to the doctrines and commandments of men. As the Psalmist stated it, keeping God's law is walking at liberty. "*So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts*" (Psalm 119:44-45). And Paul echoes that sentiment in the New Testament saying, "*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*" (2 Corinthians 3:17). And when the Judaizers sought to compel him to circumcise Titus, a Gentile, he contended for the liberty that we have in Christ. "*But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you*" (Galatians 2:3-5).

Paul was acutely aware of these issues. He fiercely opposed any attempts to bring the Gentile converts under the bondage of the ceremonial law. His converts were not to be bound by the traditions and commandments of men. They had their liberty in Christ. What Christ did not require they were to be free of. And so he instructed the Galatian Christians. "*So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*" (Galatians 4:31-5:1). According to Paul, maintaining this liberty in Christ is not just an option for the Christian, it is a commandment!

It is not just the Judaizers of two millennia ago who are adept at spying out the liberty of the children of God. The preachers of an unscriptural guilt are very much with us today. There has been a continuous campaign over the last few decades to saddle the Lord's people with the guilt for the reality of world hunger. Christians are being made to feel guilty for enjoying the blessings that God has given them as his children. Relentless efforts are made to subject us to a host of new laws and requirements of which the Lord can only say, "*who hath required this at your hand?*"

My first personal confrontation with this "cult" of world hunger took place back in 1981 when my children came home from the local Christian School with the latest edition of the school newsletter. It was dedicated to the issue of world hunger, and it was loaded with guilt for the Lord's people. It started off with a misquote of scripture: "*Truly I say to you, as you did it unto one of the least of these..., you did it to me*" (Matthew 25:40 RSV). An auspicious start. A Bible text has to be adulterated to appear to give support to their program. The corruption of this text then leads right into the catchy title for the program: "SERVE THE HUNGRY—SERVE THE LORD." And of course anything we fail to do to alleviate world hunger now makes us bound to feel guilty as having neglected to serve God. The program had some interesting requirements. The third point was to "pray specifically for the hungry." Now nowhere in the scriptures do I find a single prayer raised up indiscriminately on behalf of all the hungry. The Apostles never prayed like this. Neither did the prophets. Why are we being urged to pray like this? We are to pray that God's name be hallowed. To that end we pray that the Lord would call out his elect, build his church, establish his pure worship, and glorify his name among the children of men. We ought to pray for the conversion of the heathen and their submission to the true God and his Son Jesus Christ. But to pray that God would bless the heathen, not by delivering them from darkness, but by providing

their daily bread? Such a prayer is not to be found in scripture. To pray that God would leave them in their idolatry and just answer their prayers to their idols for their daily bread—such a prayer is incredible. But there was a method to this madness. It wiped out all discrimination between the God's people and the heathen. It failed to distinguish between the children of light and the children of darkness. And if there is no difference, then we can be made to feel that it is unfair that we have so much more. If there is no difference, then our prosperity can become the very source of our guilt—a guilt that they can then use to manipulate people in their drive to end world hunger. Point four was to "surround every purchase decision with prayer." Now by itself this was not bad advice, but in the context it was another guilt trip. People everywhere are hungry and it is our responsibility to feed them. Anything we purchase that is not absolutely necessary is contributing to world hunger. And so the Lord's people are made to feel guilty for enjoying the bounty that he gives them. Point five was to "consider lifestyle changes" including "consuming less meat." There was a time when the gospel taught that we were to change our lifestyles to conform to God's will and to strive for that "*holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.*" But this new gospel says that we need to change our lifestyle so that we can better feed hungry idolaters, blasphemers, fornicators, and other unrepentant heathen. The "consuming less meat" is a standard requirement of this new gospel. It seems that it is inefficient to use grain to feed livestock to feed people. If we would all just become vegetarians and donate the excess to the hungry, it would go a long way towards alleviating world hunger. Not only is this again making Christians feel guilty for enjoying the perfectly legitimate bounty of God's creation, but Paul calls it a doctrine of devils.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

The remainder of the newsletter was mainly taken up with a schedule of taxes we were to pay for everything we enjoyed. The moneys were to be brought to school so they can be donated to organizations fighting world hunger. Of course, we could not really enjoy anything anymore since this sinful excess was unfairly depriving the poor and starving of their fair share. But our guilt could be atoned for by paying the appropriate taxes into the coffers of world hunger. Indulgences were alive and well in this new gospel. Tetzl would have been proud! Luther would have been stunned!

My next encounter with this movement was the report to the 1978 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church on world hunger entitled, "*And He Had Compassion on Them: The Christian and World Hunger.*" In its analysis of world hunger it says, "*The basic cause of hunger, malnutrition, and starvation is simply the inability to obtain food,*"¹ and, "*This brings us to a fundamental reason for hunger throughout the world, namely the lack of money to buy food.*"² On a logical level, the above statements are on par with a statement that "black is black." For a Reformed church confessing the sovereignty of God, to make such statements is incredible. The fundamental reason is no longer sin and God's response to it; it is merely a lack of funds. Therefore, of course, the Christian response should not be the proclamation of the gospel, but merely the raising of the required funds. It contains the usual comments about the affluence of rich Christians with a call to a simpler lifestyles, vegetarianism (that doctrine of devils again), and more sharing with the heathen. This sharing all things equally has become the eleventh commandment. In a section on "Our Consumption Patterns" it states, "*When the rich consume excess amounts for luxury and pleasure, they deprive the poor of the things they need for survival.*"³ When they say sharing they mean it. There is name for this philosophy and it is not Christianity. Substitute capitalists for the rich and proletariat for the poor, and you can guess it—Marxism! And once social justice has been defined as the Marxist, "*From each according to his ability to each according to his need,*" the following statement begins to make sense: "*We, as North American Christians, armed with a Biblical concern for justice,*

1. *And He had Compassion on Them: The Christian and World Hunger*, Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1979, p. 4.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

must take a careful look at the ways in which our consumption patterns involve us in the lives of the world's poor and hungry."⁴ That the goal of this sharing is to lead to full equality is made clear by the following comment: "God made it plain that people should share the fruits of the land with other people; the produce of the earth was not intended for one single individual or family, but for all God's people. One of the few places where the Bible speaks specifically of equality is in the face of poverty and hunger in the early New Testament church. The churches of Macedonia and Achaia were asked to take an offering for the people of God in Jerusalem so 'that there may be equality.'"⁵ A scripture text teaching that we ought to share with our persecuted and impoverished brothers and sisters in Christ is transmuted into the Marxist gospel of worldwide sharing with all peoples until equality is achieved. I will spare the reader further details of this new gospel as proclaimed in the almost one hundred pages of this report.

The magnum opus of this genre is of course Ronald Sider's, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. The very title is enough to make any prosperous Christian, enjoying the blessings of his God, cringe with guilt. It is the most thorough, systematic, and fanatic in its efforts to make Christians feel guilty about enjoying the blessings of godliness, virtue, and diligence. It is the most extreme in demanding and insisting that it is sin not to share everything with the ungodly. It was comprehensively refuted by David Chilton in his response to Sider entitled, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators*. I will not attempt to add anything to what he had to say. Sider, however, was not some strident Marxist harbored by the National Council of Churches. He claimed to be an Evangelical, and his work brought socialism and the social gospel into Evangelicalism with a vengeance. Mainstream Evangelicalism moved considerably to the left, and its emphasis on the historic gospel proportionately declined.

This is indeed a new gospel with a material and worldly salvation as its goal. In Paul's day there was also those who were advocating a new gospel and were attempting to bind the consciences of the saints with an unscriptural guilt. This is what Paul had to say:

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:1-9). Amen!

4. Ibid., p. 15.

5. Ibid., p. 25.

Chapter 20

Conclusion

We live in a secular age. We live in the age of science, of secular science, of "science falsely so called." Our culture is extremely adept at examining secondary causes. Statistically we can analyze all the inequalities on the planet. We can dissect in detail all the inequities and alleged inequities on the face of the globe. Theology has been dethroned as the queen of sciences. The calculator and the computer reign supreme. And for most of this century the nations of the world have fallen into that trap. The century started off with the most brazen experiment in that regard. The Bolshevik Revolution founded a new order—a society, the first society, to be an openly secular, scientific, atheistic state. It waxed eloquent on the inequalities and inequities among men and purposed to bring in a new order with equality and justice for all. But combining the arrogance of Pharaoh with the complaining spirit of the Israelites in the wilderness, all they managed to do was to bring down one plague after another on their society until, like Egypt, it collapsed.

But the Marxists were not the only ones infected with this virus. The National and World Councils of Churches sought to accomplish the same goals by ecclesiastical and theological revolutions. The gospel of faith and repentance was cast aside. The gospel of humbly confessing our unworthiness and patiently awaiting the Lord's deliverance was mocked as inadequate. The church preached equality and social justice; it sought massive redistribution of the world's wealth; it sponsored comprehensive programs of indiscriminate aid. The church had a new gospel; it had redefined salvation. But eventually this virus spread even further and infected the Evangelicals. They sought to have their cake and eat it too. They believed that you could have the old gospel and also have a "social conscience." They proclaimed you could have a foot in both camps. It was no longer the confrontation of the old gospel with the new. Ronald Sider and his ilk were on a roll. We have seen the result. No man can serve two masters, and the old gospel, the faith of the Apostles, suffered correspondingly as the new faith waxed triumphant. This left a few smaller conservative Protestant denominations and churches manning the barricades in defense of the faith once delivered unto the saints.

Unfortunately the virus did not even stop there. It has been over a decade since George Grant started advocating his new "the church can do it better" welfare. He too is adept at quoting contemporary statistics and trumpeting the inequalities they display. He too is skilled at burdening the Lord's people with an unscriptural load of guilt. He too is insistent that it is the church's responsibility to indiscriminately minister to the material needs of all and sundry. And most seriously of all, he too is consistently misquoting and misapplying the scriptures to justify his new crusade. He believes that pastors should spend a considerable amount of their time forsaking the word of God to wait on tables. He believes that the work of the deacons should be expanded to all those who are in need, irrespective of their spiritual state. He believes that the commission of the church is to operate soup kitchens, homeless shelters, food banks, job referral services, etc. His answer to the welfare state is the welfare church. It has been the thesis of this book that the latter is no more scriptural than the former. No one denies that diligent, honest, dedicated Christians can do a far better job of tackling the problems of hunger and homelessness than a discredited socialist bureaucracy. But that is not the issue. Christians are called to do the will of God. And until they have a "thus saith the Lord" for Grant's crusade of ecclesiastical welfare they have no right to engage in it.

There are other issues as well. The church is called to be a transcendental organization. It is called to see the spiritual truths, the eternal realities, that are above and beyond the material and the secular. It is called to operate in terms of the great first cause of all things—Almighty God. To reduce the church to simply another welfare organization, no matter how effective and efficient, is to corrupt its calling and prostitute its purpose. The church has more important things to do and has a greater calling, a more spiritual commission, than to engage in another worldly crusade against hunger.

All these crusades get caught up in the injustices and inequities of this life. But again, that is to be caught up in the externals and fail to see the providence of God. This is a sinful world under divine justice. And

sometimes justice requires injustice. God pays people back in their own coin. "An eye for an eye" can be corrupted into a principle of personal vengeance, but nonetheless it remains a principle of justice. The punishment should fit the crime. God's judgment on the unjust is a taste of injustice. As the Psalmist states of Judas who unjustly betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver and robbed the poor, "*Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour*" (Psalm 109:11).

When it comes to matters of justice, Christians are not to enter into a campaign against the providence and justice of God. Their duties are the following. First of all, Christians are to themselves deal justly with all men. Secondly, in their ministry to the wicked and those who unjustly oppress they are to call them to repentance and to conformity with God's law. Finally, in their ministry to the oppressed they are to call them to a holy acceptance of God's providential will and to pray and seek God's forgiveness and deliverance. Dwelling on the wickedness of their oppressors, such as the Philistines, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, only ensured Israel that such oppression was likely to continue. When they accepted God's judgment, repented, and prayed for deliverance, then only and then, were they liberated. Liberation from sin by God's grace has to come first. That was always the priority of the Apostle Paul, to free men from sin and death and hell. He was not concerned about slavery, and his advice to the slaves in the Corinthian church was, "*Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God*" (1 Corinthians 7:20-24). Today's church needs to relearn those priorities.

The Bible teaches that the church and the world are inherently incompatible. The church is warned that she will be hated by the world even as Christ was. The servant is not greater than his Lord. But the Bible also says that church officers "*must have a good report of them which are without*" (1 Timothy 3:7). They do not have to like us, but they at least ought to respect us. I wonder what there is to respect about much of what passes as "Christian charity" today? Most people I know respect the Amish. They admire their self-reliance and the manner in which they stick together and help each other. They appreciate their sense of community and willingness to share. But what if an irresponsible and immoral person moved into an Amish neighborhood and purchased an old broken-down farm? What if this person sat around drinking and complaining and failed to even plant crops? Then what if this person torched his old barn and tried to con his Amish neighbors into building him a new one? If they did, the world would swiftly lose their respect for the Amish. The world has already long lost any respect for much of contemporary "Christian charity." The church has a long way to go before it can earn it back.

Christians have corrupted the Biblical doctrine of love. Love needs to be defined in scriptural terms and applied according to scriptural example. Not only have Christians manufactured a false doctrine of love, but they have elevated it over justice. The Bible demands that we honor both. Indiscriminate love honors neither. Great is the love of God for his people. But the Bible does not say that God so loved the world that he swept our sins under the rug. The Bible knows nothing of such a lawless love that is exercised at the expense of justice. Rather the Bible says God so loved the world that he sent his only beloved Son to die in our stead for our sins. Christ prayed that if it were possible the cup of suffering might pass from him. It was not possible. The just demands of the law had to be met. The cross, the suffering, the crucifixion, the death, were all necessary for the redemption of God's elect. Such was the love of God. Christians should examine their doctrine of love and bring it into conformity with God's.

Finally, what are the Christian's responsibilities in exercising Biblical charity? I say the Christian's, as opposed to the church's, since Christian charity is preponderantly a personal affair.

1. The Christians are to tithe to the church where they are members. This supports the most important charitable work possible, the preaching of the gospel. The gospel is still the most powerful weapon in the war on poverty. The gospel lifts up entire peoples and nations, not just morally and spiritually, but materially as well. Take the example of the children of Israel. The power of God's word and of his law and the fulness of his blessing transformed them from a band of two million Egyptian slaves to a prosperous nation established in a

land flowing with milk and honey, under one of the most just and equitable governments the world has ever seen. Secondly, it also supports the work of the deaconate in ministering to the needs of the saints.

2. Christians are to provide for their own family and needy relatives. These are not to be a burden to the church or the state. Those who fail to do so are worse than infidels.

3. Christians are to exercise hospitality and generously share to meet all the needs of suffering and destitute brothers and sisters in Christ. Those who fail to do so will be judged by Christ at the last day.

4. Christians are commanded to exercise charity to their personal enemies as a means of shaming them, blunting their enmity, and perhaps even converting them. This is a command, not a suggestion, and we are to obey it, however difficult it may be.

5. Christians are to do good to all men. This includes dealing justly with all men. It includes fulfilling the second table of the law. It may also include works of charity, as long as these are done within the principles of God's word.

6. We are to look to the state as being a ministry of justice, a minister of God, enforcing his law. We are not to look to the state as an institute of temporal redemption meeting our temporal needs. We are not to put our trust in princes. We are not to worship government as a source of law or of our daily bread. We are to call on government to conform to God's standards and we are certainly not to trust in its handouts and its benefits as the ungodly do.

7. We are to look to the church as exercising a ministry of redemption. We are to see it as the ground and pillar of the truth and as a means of grace. We are neither to expect the church to rewrite its commission to become another welfare organization, nor to support it when it does.

We are to exercise charity, but it is to be Christian charity as defined by God's word. When we do that, then and only then, will we really be a blessing to our brothers, and our neighbors, and indeed to all men as far as is possible. Let us strive to that end so that we might please God and ultimately hear those blessed words, "*Well done thou good and faithful servant.*"

Appendix

Review of George Grant's *Bringing in the Sheaves*

This book is both interesting and important. It is interesting because it is a sincere effort to address the issues of Christian charity and the ills of our civilization from a Biblical viewpoint. It is important because it is written by a well-known conservative Protestant Evangelical and will thus be taken seriously by many Christians. My concern is not with the author's integrity, nor his motives, but only with his conclusions. I believe that they are totally unscriptural. He starts off with his explicit refutation of government welfare, and the laudable intent of replacing it with Christian charity as Biblically defined. Unfortunately, he winds up replacing state welfare with ecclesiastical welfare, which is no more scriptural than the former.

Disappointingly, Grant starts off with the typical approach. We are all guilty for the terrible hopeless poverty in America. He opens the book with the suicide of a poor person who has lost all hope. He makes it clear that this suicide represents the church's failure to come to grips with the problems of poverty. That the church has not responded to these needs and that the poor are committing suicide as a result, is the thrust of this guilt trip. And he does not mean that we have not responded to the despair of men with the hope we can find in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He means that we have not responded with a program of "Christian" charity. Now the history of Christianity is replete with tales of poor saints, who being tried of God, faced many afflictions including hunger. However, they never committed suicide, having their faith in Christ and in the world to come. As Paul stated it,

...and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Hebrews 11:35-40).

It is affliction without hope that leads to despair. It is affliction without faith in God, and confidence in his goodness and his purposes, that drives men to suicide. How an evangelical church proclaiming Christ can be responsible for the suicide of unbelievers is past my comprehension. For ultimately as Solomon professed, as he quoted Christ, "*For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death*" (Proverbs 8:35-36). Nonetheless, it makes a powerful and emotional beginning to Grant's appeal and makes the now "guilty" readers ready to be instructed in their duty to the poor. Grant then goes on to swamp the reader with current poverty statistics. This is followed by some graphic descriptions of poverty in America. Having thus reviewed the scope of the problem and established the church's guilt for these circumstances, Grant is ready to get to the specifics, to get to his view of the Christian's Biblical responsibility to the hungry.

There are several serious problems with this book. Grant begins with laying a foundation for his program of "Christian" charity by appealing to a number of scripture passages. These are frequently misapplied or misinterpreted in his zeal to establish his position. Then, having persuaded his readers that they need to do something, he turns elsewhere for his methodologies. Like the rest of the genre, Grant applies the passage of Matthew 25 indiscriminately to all "*the poor and disadvantaged.*"¹ He makes this the test of real faith and asks, "*How will we fare when the Son of Man comes in His glory?*"² And consider his treatment of the homeless.

1. George Grant, *Bringing in the Sheaves*, Third Edition, 1995, Ars Vitae, p. 194.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Grant believes that the whole solution to the housing crisis and the homeless problem is Christian hospitality. He quotes the following texts.³

For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:17-19).

Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless (Exodus 22:21-24).

Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt (Exodus 23:7-9).

The latter two texts deal with granting justice to the weak and helpless, including the stranger. The first text calls us to love the stranger and is also in a context of justice. This is a weak foundation for requiring Christians to open their homes to all and sundry, and practice radical and indiscriminate hospitality. Many of the homeless are drunks, drug addicts, the mentally ill, the sexually immoral, etc. Do Christian families want to bring such into their homes and thus expose their children? And remember we are not talking of the repentant and those who have made a commitment to Christianity and Christian standards of conduct. According to Grant, this hospitality is to be extended to the poor per se as a Biblical duty. To buttress his argument, Grant quotes some more texts⁴, but again to no avail to the discerning:

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality (Romans 12:13).

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging (1 Peter 4:8-9).

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth (3 John 1:5-8).

Now it is clear that all three texts refer exclusively to charity to the saints. The strangers that John is referring to are Christians, who were unknown to their hosts. They are strangers who have gone on their journey for Christ's sake. Extending hospitality to such makes the hosts "*fellowhelpers to the truth.*" Grant is playing a little sleight-of-hand here. A few verses about justice to strangers and hospitality to the saints, and *voila*, a Biblical mandate for universal hospitality. Grant concludes that though the federal government has failed, "*God's people are the solution to the sheltering crisis.*"⁵ Now it is true that Christians are to exercise hospitality. They are specifically commanded to exercise hospitality to the saints. Beyond that, any further hospitality comes under the requirement to "*do good to all men.*" But this falls into a voluntary and case-by-case basis. Our homes are to be Christian homes. God's law is to be the standard there. God commands us to keep the Sabbath holy and says that this includes the stranger within our gates. If our guests refuse to keep the Sabbath, then they cannot remain within our gates. Only brothers and sisters in Christ and those who are willing to submit to Christian standards of conduct are fit to receive the kind of extensive hospitality that Grant is speaking of. The homeless crisis has been solved, but only within the body of Christ. Later on, Grant does state that all applicants should be screened and that those who refuse to abide by scriptural principles are not eligible for aid. But this is confusing. Having made it a duty, a Biblical requirement, to practice hospitality to all, and having stated that the homeless crisis has been solved, he then lays down restrictions that bring him back to square one. He cannot have it both ways.

3. Ibid., p. 178.

4. Ibid., p. 179.

5. Ibid., p. 178.

In his zeal to establish his "theology of poverty," he seems to forget the rest of his theology. Church government is one such casualty. The Biblical deaconate and its limited function is replaced by a church "Poverty Task Force" that is to deal with all the poor.⁶ In fact, the whole function of the church seems to be redirected in its emphasis away from its Biblical priorities of worship, teaching and preaching the word, discipling the saints, and evangelism. The church has become a super welfare agency. No man can serve two masters, and any church and pastor that follow Grant's program will have their time and resources severely challenged. It is not hard to guess what will suffer as this crusade is zealously implemented. Grant has an abundance of zeal for his program, but zeal is a two-edged sword. The past generation of evangelicals allowed their zeal for winning the lost to lead them into cooperative ecumenical evangelism with theological liberals and even Catholics. The results were disastrous. Similarly, in his zeal for serving the poor and fulfilling what he sees as his Biblical mandate,⁷ Grant proposes ecumenical cooperative charity programs with all the other churches in the community. The kind of charity cooperatives he envisions does not only span the entire theological and denominational spectrum, but includes overt unbelievers⁸ as well. He then astoundingly compares these kinds of cooperatives with the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.⁹ What do they have in common? According to Grant, they share a concern for charity.¹⁰ Unfortunately for his thesis, the Jerusalem Council was about legalism and the relationship of the Gentiles to the ceremonial law and does not even mention charity. And what does a church council composed of Apostles and church elders have in common with a cooperative association that includes theological liberals and unbelievers? Grant's ecclesiology is staggering under the weight of his charitable crusade.

But there is more. Grant is prepared to restructure both the mission and the methodologies of the church. He states that the goal is to get the government out of the welfare business and the church into it, stating "*Welfare is our job. It is the job of Christians.*"¹¹ He supports this radical assertion by again quoting a plethora of texts on charity and concern for the poor.¹² However, every scripture he cites is either explicitly referring to aid to the saints or is in the context of the Hebrew Republic. Not one supports his notion of indiscriminate aid to the ungodly and the unchurched. And all this is set forth under the requirement of exercising a "*Good Samaritan Faith*," whatever that is.¹³ Any faith the Good Samaritan may have had was not a Biblical one and ought not to be emulated, seeing he was a Samaritan. The Good Samaritan carried out an act of private charity in conformity with the requirements of the sixth commandment. It is his fulfilling of the law that we are commanded to emulate, not his beliefs. But Grant's book is replete with this kind of confusion. As for methodologies, we have already noted "Hunger Task Forces" and "Community Cooperatives." Grant also proposes a thorough analysis of local poverty conditions and a demographic survey.¹⁴ Once these have been done, the church can get started. This means setting up food banks, homeless shelters, job referral services, etc., etc. There is no end to the activities that he thrusts on the church. It is a full-fledged program of ecclesiastical welfare in competition with the welfare state. His motto is, "The church can do it better." But he fails to definitively answer the question, should the church do it at all?

This review could go on and on, but all disputations must come to an end. This is a dangerous book. It seriously mishandles of the word of God. It directs the Lord's people into activities that were never commanded by the Head of the church. It takes away their liberty in Christ and oppresses them with an unscriptural guilt. It redefines the mission of the church. And to achieve these new goals, it sacrifices scriptural church government and replaces the separation of the Lord's people from apostasy with ecumenism. Those who read it will do well to read it with care and with discernment.

6. Ibid., p. 139.

7. Ibid., p. 141.

8. Ibid., p. 138.

9. Ibid., p. 142.

10. Ibid., p. 142.

11. Ibid., p. 44 .

12. Ibid., pp. 44-46.

13. Ibid., p. 44.

14. Ibid., pp. 130-133.