

THE MEANING OF THE MANDATE "DO GOOD"

IN GALATIANS 6:9-10

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Divinity in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1983

Title: THE MEANING OF THE MANDATE "DO GOOD" IN GALATIANS 6:9-10
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Degree: Master of Divinity
Date: May 1983
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Clearly, there are differences of opinion regarding the place of material good works in the lives of believers. Galatians 6:9-10 provides a biblical mandate that clarifies the answer to these differences. Therefore, the meaning of the mandate is important.

The statement, "Do good to all men especially those of the household of faith" is exhorting believers to do material good works. The fact that these good works are especially material is supported by the immediate context of Galatians 6, the greater context of the whole letter to the Galatians, and the exegesis of the Greek grammar in Galatians 6:4-10.

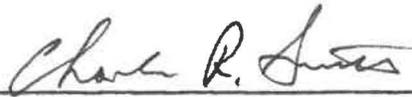
Additional support for the responsibility to do material good works to all people is found in the historical sketch. People through the centuries have illustrated the importance of material good works by means of their obedience and disobedience to God. Material good works were important in the Old Testament economy, the days of the Lord Jesus, the times of the Apostles, and then through the history of the Church to the twentieth century.

The context of the entire Bible includes passages which state the social responsibility of God's people for others. Selected Scriptures are given in the text of the thesis.

Views of certain twentieth century movements are then shown to be lacking in regard to the biblical basis for material good works to other people.

The balanced position is as follows. Believers should be more concerned to do material good works to all men based upon the mandate of Galatians 6:9-10. The priority of the works is to other believers first, then all people. These material good works do not replace the primary position of telling the gospel message to all mankind nor do these works equal the gospel message.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Charles R. Jones". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Adviser

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INTRODUCTION

A misunderstanding concerning the relationship of material good works and the believer reoccurs regularly. Should the believer practice material good works toward other people? Is it commanded by the Scriptures? If so, how often should he do them and toward whom? Will it distract him from the priority of the gospel message and the Word of God? Is the immaterial good work the only important one?

The error occurs when people react toward extremes within movements, respond toward others' opinions of them, or develop a principle in response to anything other than the Word of God. The balanced response is based upon the Word of God. There are various directives in the Scriptures in regard to material good works done by the Christian to other people.

According to the Word of God, the primary duty of the Christian is to declare the gospel message. However, the Word of God also commands all Christians to do material good works toward all mankind as found in Galatians 6:9 and 10.

Therefore, it is the proposition of this study that based upon the biblical mandate of Galatians 6:9 and 10, Christians (individually and corporately) must be much more concerned with the actual doing of material good works toward all mankind, keeping the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ the first priority of the Christian mission.

The need for this study is evident with extremes at every turn of Church history. Examples of two extreme views are found in a recent

Grace Seminary Spire article. In Sproule's article he gives evidences of the heresy of liberation theologians who make good works (social action) equal to the salvation message. Yet an agreement to Sproule's emphasis could cause some to minimize or even avoid the biblical importance of material good works toward people.¹

In order to support this meaning of the mandate, "Do good to all men" (Gal. 6:9-10), the following method is used. A historical overview of material good works toward other people will be made. The grammatical and contextual aspects of Galatians 6:9 and 10 are handled. Scriptural texts regarding material good works are cited and briefly explained. Finally the view of the writer is compared and contrasted to current movements in regard to material good works.

¹John A. Sproule, "The Social Gospel Invades Evangelicalism," Spire, 8:2 (Summer 1981), 10-11.

CHAPTER I

TOWARD AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In order to examine the mandate in Galatians 6:9 and 10, a historical sketch will be helpful. The historical sketch will illustrate the obedience or lack of obedience of God's people to the mandate, "Let us do good to all men."

It will be insightful to note that a backdrop for these exhortative words can be found in the practices of Israel during Old Testament history. Jesus exemplified these words before they were penned. Throughout Church history, evidence is given for consistency of many Church saints in carrying out these words.

Old Testament History

A part of Jewish life was almsgiving. However, as Furness notes in The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, this "is not merely almsgiving, but an act of justice and righteousness that is ethical as well as religious and social."¹

The thoughts of the Israelites on care for others and their concept of God were interrelated. They worshipped God through certain works of service and they helped people by means of other works of service. Porteous asserts this unique combination of principles of

¹The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 3, s.v. "Charity," cited by Charles Y. Furness, "Historical Study: Helping Ministries in the Local Church" (D. Min. independent study #3, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1977), p. 6.

God for Israel to practice.

God . . . would not allow Himself to be worshipped in isolation from the relations which men ought to have to one another. . . . The Old Testament . . . bears witness to a God to whom the welfare of even the humblest of His creatures cannot be a matter of indifference and who rejects worship which leaves that out of account.¹

One specific Old Testament practice was obedience to a particular law of God which had the special needs of people in mind. A summary of this law is that the Israelites were not to harvest the corners of the fields or cleanly pick the gleanings that were dropped in the fields. The purpose of this law was to help provide for the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.² The biblical passages revealing this fact are Leviticus 19:9; 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19.

A negative illustration from Old Testament history is seen in the writings of the prophets. God's expectations of His people included justice and help toward the poor, orphans, widows and oppressed. When the people sinned against God and His standards it resulted in spiritual sins and social sins. Judgment is pronounced by the prophets upon the people for these sins. A call for repentance is also made. Isaiah 1:16-20, Hosea 12:2-11 and Amos 8:1-10 exemplify God's indictments, calls for repentance, and offers of forgiveness.

Period of Jesus and His Disciples

It is stated in Acts 10:32b, "He went about doing good. . ."

¹ N. W. Porteous, "The Care of the Poor in the Old Testament," in Service in Christ, eds. James I. McCord and T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 28, 33, quoted in Charles Y. Furness, "Historical Study: Helping Ministries in the Local Church" (D. Min. independent study #3, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1977), p. 7.

² J. Vernon McGee, Ruth, The Romance of Redemption (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1981), p. 73.

The lifestyle of Jesus displayed an example of good works long before the receipt of Paul's letter by the Galatian Church.

Jesus and His disciples preached, healed, and helped people. They were examples of making it a priority to help people. Yet Jesus and His disciples preached as well as served (Luke 4:18; 7:22; 9:6).

Although Christ did the good deeds to people primarily to authenticate Himself as Messiah, there were other purposes. These purposes are secondary yet they are important. Christ was dealing with people, not mere objects. He personally loved people. He wanted to benefit people. Christ desired to be known not only as God but as God who did good for people (Acts 10:38). He aimed to teach His disciples love for people by means of action. The Lord Jesus was committed to giving witness to a balanced lifestyle; a lifestyle of both spiritual service and helping people in physical ways, not just one or the other.

In Matthew 15:32 Jesus is "moved with compassion" and feeds the people after teaching them. Another example is in Mark 1:41. After preaching (verse 39) Jesus is moved with compassion and heals a leper. Both exemplify a balance of spiritual and physical service by Jesus Christ.

Apostolic Church

The period of time immediately after the inception of the Church is most revealing. In the young Church the Jerusalem congregation had all material goods in common (Acts 2:43-46). Because of sharing their possessions, the people's needs (such as the poor) were being met by one another. This was not a requirement by the Lord or the Apostles in the Church. A choice was made by the people to handle the

tangible needs of the people in the Jerusalem Church in this manner.¹

The congregations had a choice on how to handle the material needs of individuals. Support for this view is found by citing a different Scripture passage. In James 2 another group of believers in the early apostolic period allowed for poor and rich groups of people. These groups are mentioned in the text in James without any command for sharing possessions with one another. Therefore no apostolic requirement in regard to material goods existed in the Church at this early period.²

An important note is that the historical settings of Acts 2 and James 2 are similar with reference to the dates (33-40 A. D.).

Another example of sensitivity to the needs of poor people in the local church is found in Acts 6:1. The seven men were chosen to especially care for the poor in the Jerusalem congregation.³

Not much later in time the Antioch church was tangibly aiding the stricken Christians in Judea. The Antioch believers sent an offering to the church in Jerusalem suffering from famine and distressing times.⁴

Other New Testament Churches exemplifying kindness to other people in tangible ways are the Corinthian Church, cited in 2 Corinthians 9, and the Church at Philippi as cited in Philippians 4.

¹Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1968), p. 41.

²Ibid.

³Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, p. 41.

⁴Ibid, p. 42.

Each Church is noted as giving offerings, the Corinthians to a group of needy saints and the Philippians to one needy saint, Paul. These are two of many other apostolic Church examples of tangible means of support for needy persons.

Post-New Testament Church

In the first two centuries a common practice in the worship services illustrated the continuing aid of believers in the local Church to other people. The practice was that after the preaching and singing people brought food, money, clothes and other goods as a part of the worship service. The poor who were present would receive what they needed. Then the remaining goods and money were distributed to other poor people by deacons and other members of the local Church.¹

The fourth century found the Church people still helping others in tangible ways during times of great hardship. However, this aid of clothes, shoes, food, and ransom payments was more and more controlled and appropriated by the bishops and deacons.² Lay people were still involved but in a more distant way. In these times it is implied that help was given to all people both within and out of the local Church.

Church of the Middle Ages

Gradually changes occurred in regard to the care for one another's material needs. It "became more a Church-related way of

¹Thomas M. Lindsay, The Church and Ministry in the Early Church (New York: George H. Doran Co., n.d.), pp. 254-256.

²M. A. Smith, The Church Under Seige (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), p. 19.

getting saving merit and less of a practical helping ministry."¹

By the beginning of the twelfth century, the organization of relief had become just one item on the general agenda of the church. . . . Medieval religious orders and hospitals were thought of as the major religious dispensers of works of mercy rather than the church members, who were too much focused upon self-gain from doing good deeds - - and of course, those in the orders and hospitals were looking out for personal gain in their good works also.²

Even during this bleak period of Church history there were some "missionaries" and certain "Church groups" who were appropriately helping individuals in need.

Reformation Period

Along with a much needed change regarding doctrines of ecclesiology, soteriology, hamartiology, bibliology and theology proper came other changes. Practical theology, although not termed that at the time, was also reformed. The works of doing good to one another were "lowered" in regard to meriting one's salvation by them. Yet they were "elevated" in regard to every one having the responsibility to do them under the emphasis of the priesthood of the believer.

Revival Years

Each of the revivals or great awakenings during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had effects on higher moral and social life.³ With the thrust of holy living for every Christian came a renewed emphasis on personal good works. Societies in England and North

¹ Charles Y. Furness, "Historical Study: Helping Ministries in the Local Church" (Independent study #3, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1977), p. 21.

² Ibid, pp. 21 and 22.

³ Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, p. 433.

America were affected as people individually were converted by means of personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Then these individuals were consistently involved in an outworking of their personal Christianity and they were doing good deeds in material and social ways for one another.¹

Twentieth Century

At the turn of this century the modernist-fundamentalist controversy was in full battle. Included in the modernist position was the fact that good works were the actual witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The fundamentalist position included a reaction to the modernists. Therefore fundamentalists avoided connections with many socially oriented organizations and programs. They feared that social action would be misconstrued as agreeing with the modernist position of the "social gospel" being the means and essence of the true gospel. (See discussion on Fundamentalism in Chapter IV.)

A subtle and sometimes not so subtle uneasiness has remained among fundamentalists through the current century in regard to this issue. Various reactions and trends have occurred within and without the fundamentalist camp during the last several decades. These movements have included the debate of the place of doing good works within one's doctrines and theology. Also, involved in the debate is the discussion of the meaning of doing good.

This writer's understanding of the meaning of doing good as found in Galatians 6:9 and 10 will be found in the following chapter. Further study on the aforementioned movements, reactions to the

¹Furness, "Historical Study," pp. 46, 50, 52-55.

fundamentalists and fundamentalism's position will be covered in Chapter Four of this study.

Conclusion to the Historical Overview

Evidences from various periods of history point toward groups of God's people and churches doing good works. These good works relate to tangibly helping one another and giving material goods to people outside one's own group. The quality and quantity of the good deeds varies according to the theology and motives of the people in each time period.

The occurrence of good works through the centuries among the saints of God does not validate the text of Galatians 6:9 and 10. History never proves Scripture. It merely supports an interpretation of Scripture or challenges toward further study of the meaning of a passage with which it is in conflict. Scripture stands firmly. History grows and adjusts around it.

The historical overview of this paper supports the mandate of Galatians 6:9 and 10 according to the view of this writer. God has perpetuated the practical ministry of "doing good to all men" through times of persecution, transition, obedience and rebellion of His people.

CHAPTER II

TOWARD A GRAMMATICAL AND CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Background To The Passage

The theme of the Epistle to the Galatians is salvation (justification) through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (ultimately the grace of God). The letter was written by the Apostle Paul. Dating of the Epistle comes in the range of years from A. D. 49-54. It is directed to the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:2).

A report came to Paul to mark the necessity of communicating to the believers in the province of Galatia. He had learned that Judaizers were influencing these Christians with practices to which they were already yielding. Circumcision and other Jewish customs were being added to the Christian faith. These practices were to aid the believer toward maturity in his personal walk.

Paul states clearly his credentials, calling, and authority as an apostle. He reaffirms the true nature of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Based upon his apostolic authority he boldly and firmly corrects the Galatians. Paul proclaims salvation as by grace through faith plus nothing. Christian maturity is declared to be the result of the sanctifying work of God, the Holy Spirit, and of yielding one's self completely and totally to Him (Gal 5). The summary of the letter to the Galatians could be, "The righteous

man shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11).¹

Larger Context

The larger context stresses personal salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ alone. Yet there are specifics within the overall perspective. Salvation is neither earned nor kept by good works (Gal. 1-4). The Law is meant to point one to his need of Christ. Works of the Law cannot bring one to salvation. However, people are "created unto good works" (Gal. 5:1-15 cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Believers are to put off old deeds and practices and not use their freedom as license to sin (Gal. 5:13-24). Also, though there is the grace of God plus nothing to become a Christian, there is an obligation. That obligation is to live an ethical lifestyle directed by God's standards. These standards, as laid down by the Apostle Paul, are the application of justification by faith. This application is found in Galatians 5:25 through Galatians 6:10.

Immediate Context

The passage of the immediate context is therefore narrowed to Galatians 5:25 through 6:10. There is a reference to "walk" in Galatians 5:25 and "one another" in Galatians 5:26 and 6:2. These terms mark the social responsibility within the emphasis of Christian liberty for the believer. God, the Holy Spirit, is the source of strength in obeying these social and ethical responsibilities (Gal. 5:16-6:10). One is to "walk by means of the Holy Spirit."

These social responsibilities include spiritual service to

¹The New Testament in Modern English, translated by Helen Barrett Montgomery (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1924), p. 498.

one another (Gal. 6:1) and demand bearing one another's burden (Gal. 6:2). Delineated further in this list of social responsibilities is the proper view of one's self along with a test of self and one's works (Gal. 6:3-5).

In the immediate paragraph the social responsibilities are expanded to include the material and financial support of one's spiritual teachers. This is then further expanded to include the principle on giving, in general. Lessons on this giving of material goods principle are taught through the picture of sowing and reaping a crop. One gleans from the harvest exactly what one sows (Gal. 6:7 and 8). From this scope it can also be seen toward what area of life one's giving should go. If one invests in fleshly things having to do with self then he will reap corruption (things that do not have permanence). However, if one gives toward things of the Spirit then he reaps lasting (eternal) things (Gal. 6:8).

The climax of this point comes in Galatians 6:9 and 10. Giving material goods is expanded to include the scope of all men, especially believers. Also, in the doing of good works one is challenged not to grow tired. In the following grammatical picture it will be seen why the above conclusions were made in regard to the immediate context.

Grammatical Picture

In Galatians 6:2-5 the verb forms of βαρῶν "to bear" definitely have more of a spiritual thrust to them within the context. Then how does the emphasis change to a tangible thrust in Galatians 6:6-10? Verse five with the use of ἑαυτοῦ is emphasizing "one's own (and nobody else's) burden to be carried" with regard to examination of himself. Then a shift takes place from looking inwardly to

looking outwardly to another in verse six. Therefore the connective $\delta\epsilon$ in verse six would be better translated "but" rather than "and," showing slight contrast without a complete change or contrast of subjects. The use of $\delta\epsilon$ for a slight contrast can be found earlier in verse four. However $\phiορτίον$ in verse five may also mean a physical object (cf. Acts 27:10). Therefore it may already be pointing toward material support in verse six but this is questionable.

The need for the contrast between verses five and six is because of the use of the verb $κοινωνεῖτω$ which means to make another's necessities one's own so as to relieve them.¹ Combining the meaning of the verb with the dative prepositional phrase $\epsilonν\ πᾶσιν\ ἀγαθοῖς$ shows what necessities the one taught shares in with his teacher. Those necessities are "in all things." That alone would cause it to include material support. However, there is an additional point to be noted. This same verb, $κοινωνεῖτω$ is used in Philippians 4:13 in regard to a tangible gift, which was an offering.

The metaphor of "sowing and reaping," $σπεῖρω$ and $θερίζω$ " found in verses seven and eight continues with the meaning of material support even though it includes terms believed by some scholars to be referring to spiritual things. This metaphor often refers to tangible things such as money or offerings even though it is in a context also dealing with spiritual terms. Examples of this are Luke 12:22-34 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Luke 12:22-34 refers to the "sowing and reaping" metaphor combining lessons on tangible possessions and the kingdom of God. Paul was talking about offerings in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 when he used the terms $σπεῖρω$ and $θερίζω$ along with the teaching on

¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, The New Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Wheaton: Evangel Publishing Co., 1974), p. 352.

righteousness (verse 10). Paul, here in Galatians 6, also used the terms σπείρω and θερίξω about tangible offerings either sown and reaped with regard to things that are temporal, εἰς τὴν σάρκα or with regard to things of the spirit (things of eternal value), εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα . . . ζῶν αἰώνιον.

The Apostle Paul continues with this metaphor in verses nine and ten with the use of the following terms. He uses θερίσομεν which means "we shall reap," connecting the verse with the previous metaphor in verses seven and eight. The term καιρὸν in verse ten means "seasonable time" which implies a continuation of the sowing and reaping metaphor.

With the natural continuation of the flow of metaphoric thought from verse eight to verses nine and ten the word δέ is translated as a simple connective in verse nine.

Another thought ties these verses (9 and 10) together. The term καιρῷ modified by ἰδίῳ means "a fixed but suitable (appropriate) time." This refers to the time of the reaping. It connects with the "seasonable time" in the first part of verse ten.

The main exhortation of verse nine is τὸ δέ καλὸν ποιῶντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν which means "And let us not lose heart in doing good." The verb ἐγκακῶμεν is present tense, active voice and indicative mood and with μὴ a strong negative can mean "let us continually not become tired in the inner man. In fact, don't even allow the idea to come up."

τὸ δέ καλὸν ποιῶντες is a participial clause with the plural participle serving as a verbal. It means "in doing good." "The good" includes both an inherent meaning of καλός having to do with moral quality as well as a physical quality of good. Also, the

word is articulated thus giving it a specific quality within the good to be done. In addition, it is used with the verb, **ποιούντες** . Stout says that this indicates a specific physical good work.¹

The explanatory **γὰρ** in verse nine is yet another key term. This sets up the explanation why believers are exhorted not to grow tired in doing good. Why? Believers shall reap in a suitable, fixed time. This reaping is possibly both immaterial at the judgment seat of Christ and material here on earth via some blessing of God. With the strong negative used with the next participle, **ἔκλυόμενοι** which is adverbial thus modifying the verb **θερίσομεν** , the promise of reaping here is conditional. What is the condition? If we do not grow weary through exhaustion, we will reap from doing good.

Verse 10 begins with an important connective unique to Paul's style at the beginning of sentences, **ἄρα οὖν** . It has both logical implications and serves as a continuative. The expanded meaning is "therefore based on what was just written (and continuing on to the next thought) here comes something important."

The important thrust is this. "Do good to all men." Because **ἐργαζόμεθα** is present tense, middle voice, (deponent and therefore translated in the active voice) and subjunctive in mood, the meaning can be "let us be continually working (or do)." The direct object, **τὸ ἀγαθόν** , reveals what kind of things we should do. "The good," since articulated, refers to specific acts of benevolence, kindness, or service. With the New Testament articulated usage of **ἀγαθός** it

¹ Stephen O. Stout, "The Pauline Conception of Ethical **ΕΡΓΑ** Legalistic Works of Law and Evidential Good Works" (M.Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary) pp. 22, 30 and 105.

implies a moral and physical deed.¹ It is true that ἀγαθός and καλός can be and are used interchangeably regarding their implied meaning of physical good and moral good. Notice should be given that in this context of verses 9 and 10 the Apostle Paul used both ἀγαθός (v. 10) and καλός (v. 9). Therefore along with the other grammatical features it appears that the Apostle Paul wanted to have "the good" especially refer to a material doing good since he used it with verbs, ἐργάζομαι and ποιέω.²

Three qualifications to this mandate, "let us do good" are given in the text. First, the good works are to all men (πρὸς πάντας). This signifies the direction of the good and the fact that one gives oneself toward the others when one gives. (The direction is to all men or people.) There is no limit in the text or context to merely those of Galatia or to only believers. (Therefore it is acceptable to mean all of mankind in the world.) It can especially mean all of mankind since another qualification is given.

The second qualification is μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως. This means "chiefly those who are of the household of the faith." Since the letter of Galatians is to more than one church in Galatia it cannot mean one household church in Galatia. Since the term faith is articulated it is referring to the whole body of Christian truth, "the faith," as in 2 Timothy 4:7 where Paul says, "I have kept 'the faith'."

The whole body of Christian truth connected with a household or family probably means "the family of God." Also, the only other

¹ Stout, "Ethical ΕΡΓΑ," pp. 25, 30, 96 and 132.

² Ibid., pp. 105 and 132-134.

similar use in the New Testament of οἰκεῖος , connects the household with a reference to God (Eph. 2:19). There it means "household of God" referring to all of Christianity. Therefore, the good material works are to especially be directed toward all true believers.

The third qualification was mentioned previously in this study. Believers are to "do good to all" in God's "seasonable time" (καιρὸν). However, note the conjunction ὡς . This means "when, as or while." Believers must always be prepared to seize the opportunity.

Commentators

There are commentators who take the meaning of doing good in Galatians 6:9 and 10 to be primarily moral (non-physical) deeds. These are H. A. Ironside, William Kelly, Merrill C. Tenney, R. C. H. Lenski, Gray and Adams and H. A. W. Meyer. Other commentators such as Ryrie, Luther, A. C. Gaebelain, C. I. Scofield, and Wuest take the meaning to include immaterial and material (or physical) good works. The writer joins the company of the second group of commentators. The reasons have previously been given in the grammatical study.

Conclusion to the Grammatical and Contextual Understanding

This writer believes that summarizing the studies of the grammatical and contextual section brings one to the position that "the good works" of Galatians 6:6-10 are especially material works but include immaterial works as well.

CHAPTER III

TOWARD A GREATER BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The context of the whole Bible includes the social responsibility of God's people for others. Cited are selected Scriptures with a brief explanation of their meaning.

Deuteronomy 16:17

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.

All Israelites were obligated to give to God a portion of their possessions. From the context it appears as if it was proportionate giving as God had enabled them through the products of their fields. The time framework was during the special feasts. From Old Testament history it is known that tithed gifts of produce went to help the priestly families, the alien, the orphan and the widow as seen in Deuteronomy 14:22 and 29.

Proverbs 3:27-28

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it," when you have it with you.

This illustrates the obligation of God's people to give to others when they have the ability and it is appropriate. One should especially never turn away his neighbor.

Job 31:13-23

"If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves
 When they filed a complaint against me,
 What then could I do when God arises,
 And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him?
 "Did not He who made me in the womb make him,
 And the same one fashion us in the womb?
 "If I have kept the poor from their desire,
 Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
 Or have eaten my morsel alone,
 And the orphan has not shared it
 (But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father,
 And from infancy I guided her),
 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
 Or that the needy had no covering,
 If his loins have not thanked me,
 And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep,
 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan,
 Because I saw I had support in the gate,
 Let my shoulder fall from the socket,
 And my arm be broken off at the elbow.
 "For calamity from God is a terror to me,
 And because of His majesty I can do nothing.

Job, the blameless, upright, God-fearing man makes a series of assertions. These cursory statements show his intense desire to help with the needs of other people. He even adds a firm warning to himself if he mistreats the orphan (verses 21-23).

Isaiah 58:6-12

"Is this not the fast which I chose,
 To loosen the bonds of wickedness,
 To undo the bands of the yoke,
 And to let the oppressed go free,
 And break every yoke?
 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry,
 And bring the homeless poor into the house;
 When you see the naked, to cover him;
 And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?
 "Then your light will break out like the dawn,
 And your recovery will speedily spring forth;
 And your righteousness will go before you;
 The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
 You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'
 If you remove the yoke from your midst,
 The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

And if you give yourself to the hungry,
 And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
 Then your light will rise in darkness,
 And your gloom will become like midday.
 "And the Lord will continually guide you,
 And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
 And give strength to your bones;
 And you will be like a watered garden,
 And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.
 "And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;
 You will raise up the age-old foundations;
 And you will be called the repairer of the breach,
 The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

The setting definitely has eschatological implications. The true fasting practices and their results will probably only occur in the millennium by God's choice people. Yet the principles apply beyond Israel in regard to God's provision for the hungry, oppressed, poor and naked. This provision is through people to others.

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come to the Lord
 And bow myself before the God on high?
 Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
 With yearling calves?
 Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
 In ten thousand rivers of oil?
 Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts,
 The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul:
 He has told you, O man, what is good;
 And what does the Lord require of you
 But to do justice, to love kindness,
 And to walk humbly with your God?

Within God's indictment of the people of Israel and Judah, He includes these revealing words. In these three verses we see that along with correct worship practices God expects justice and kindness to be included in the consequences. Their fellow men would be directly affected by the consequences.

Matthew 25:31-46

31. "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.
32. "And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;
33. and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.
34. "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
35. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;
36. naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'
37. "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink:
38. 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?
39. 'And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'
40. "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'
41. "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;
42. for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;
43. I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'
44. "Then they themselves also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'
45. "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'
46. "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The context is the judgment of tribulation saints. However, the principles to be caring to the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner apply to each age.

Luke 10:25-37

25. And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
26. And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"
27. And he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."
28. And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; Do this and you will live."
29. But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
30. Jesus replied and said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead.
31. "And by chance a certain priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
32. "And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
33. "But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion,
34. and came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.
35. "And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.'
36. "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"
37. And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him!" And Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

Jesus' reply to a lawyer's searching questions illustrates various truths. Interrelated with one's love for God is that same person's love for his neighbor. The actions toward anyone constitute love toward a neighbor.

Titus 2:11-14; 3:1-8, 14

11. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,
12. instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,
13. looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;
14. who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself, a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

1. Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed,
 2. to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.
 3. For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.
 4. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,
 5. He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,
 6. whom He poured out upon us rightly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
 7. that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
 8. This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.
14. And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

The results of personal salvation include the purpose that the saved one does good deeds. In the context we see the good deeds inclusive of material and social help to other people. Illustrated here is the import of good works of a physical nature. They are referred to in the same context as teaching with regard to soteriology and eschatology.

James 2:14-26

14. What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?
15. If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,
16. and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?
17. Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.
18. But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."
19. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder.
20. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?
21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

22. You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;
23. and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.
24. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.
25. And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?
26. For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Illustrated here is that the believer demonstrates his personal faith by means of good works. The benefactor of these good works happens to be a brother or sister without food or clothing.

1 John 3:16-18

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

The passage teaches that believers are obligated by godly love to materially assist a brother with a real need. It is a demonstration outwardly of the love that we say we have for God.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARD A CONTRAST WITH CURRENT MOVEMENTS

Certain groups exist within Christendom today which have reacted to the issue of the Church's responsibility to do material good works. These reactions have varied according to the group or movement. This chapter will summarize the view of each movement with regard to the Christian's concern and action toward people's material and social needs. It will not provide an overview of all beliefs of each of these groups.

The writer's view will be stated in comparison and contrast with these movements. The movements addressed in this chapter are neoevangelicalism, liberalism, liberation theology, postmillennialism, and fundamentalism. It is not the intent here to merely point out any failures of these groups. Nor will it be profitable to develop a sense of superiority from the results of the comparisons and contrasts with the movements.

Neoevangelicalism

The new evangelicalism has an intense desire to obey the social implications of the Bible. One of their leading voices, Carl F. H. Henry, delineates their social strategy in his "Perspective for Social Action."

1. Christian social leaders set their cultural objectives in the larger framework of the Christian mission, and do not regard themselves primarily as social reformers. . .

2. Evangelical social action throbs with the evangelistic invitation to new life in Jesus Christ. . . .
3. Reliance on the Holy Spirit to sunder the shackles of sin requires a regard for social evils first in the light of personal wickedness. . . .
4. Evangelicals insist that social justice is a divine requirement for the whole human race, not for the Church alone. . . .
5. Despite their insistence on the spiritual and moral roots of social evil, evangelicals are aware that personal sin often finds its occasion in the prevailing community situation. . . .
6. The fellowship within the churches is a mirror of the realities of a new social order. The new order is therefore not simply a distant dream; it exists already in an anticipative way in the regenerate fellowship of the Church. . . .
7. By maintaining the connection between social reform and the law of love, evangelicals face the organized evils of society with the power of sanctified compassion. . . .
8. The pulpit is to proclaim the revealed will of God, including the ethical principles of the Bible. . . .
9. The Christian influence upon society is registered most intimately through family and immediate neighbor relations, and then more broadly in the sphere of vocation or daily work in which the believer's service of God and man is elaborated in terms of a labor of love, and then politically as a citizen of two worlds. . . .
10. Concern for righteousness and justice throughout the social order requires the believer as an individual to range himself¹ for or against specific options for social reform and change.

The list of ten principles is acceptable and biblical. However there are potential dangers in some of the statements as is true with many positional statements.

The statements that could more easily be taken out of context are numbers four, five, six, and seven. These, if carried to extreme, could mislead the Church toward majoring in social reform.

¹"Perspective for Social Action," quoted in Robert P. Lightner, Neevangelicalism Today (Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1965), pp. 138-139.

It appears that neoevangelical leaders are making conscious efforts to not slip into the pitfalls of the liberal social gospel. In June 1982 over fifty evangelical theologians gathered to consider the relationship between social responsibility and evangelism.

Christianity Today quoted the following conclusions from Stott's and Wells' consultation report:

Seldom if ever should we have to choose between satisfying physical and spiritual hunger, or between healing bodies and saving souls, since an authentic love for our neighbor will lead us to serve him or her as a whole person. Nevertheless, if we must choose, then we have to say that the supreme and ultimate need of all mankind is the saving grace of Jesus Christ and therefore a person's eternal spiritual salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal and material well-being.

. . . although social action should not be called evangelism nor identified with it (since central to evangelism is the verbal proclamation of the gospel), nevertheless it has an evangelistic dimension in the sense that good works of love, done in the name of Christ, are a silent but visible demonstration of the gospel.¹

This writer agrees with the social thrust of neoevangelicalism. Social concern is neither new nor wrong. However, it is wrong when it "takes precedence over the need of individual redemption, when the application of the message takes priority over the gospel itself."² It appears that this unbiblical extreme may be the case with Ronald J. Sider, another leading voice of neoevangelicalism.

Sider asserts various convictions in an address to the Evangelical Theological Society at its thirtieth annual meeting in December of 1978. Sider claims that God is on the side of the poor

¹ Arthur Williamson, "Evangelicals Study the Link Between Social Action and Gospel," Christianity Today, 26:13 (August 6, 1982), 56.

² Robert P. Lightner, Neoevangelicalism Today (Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1965), p. 143.

and oppressed people in a special manner.¹ This manner appears to be vague in its description. To say that God is on the side of any one group in the sense of man assigning God to a given side is faulty theology.

Sider indicates that the exodus and period of the prophets illustrate God's intervening on behalf of the poor and oppressed people.² He tends to forget the other motives for God's intervention—His covenants (promises), His offended standards, and His sovereign will.

In the New Testament Sider again stresses God's consistent help for the poor and oppressed. He claims that to know God is to seek justice for the poor. In addition he equates taking the side of the poor on the same plane as faith in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact those evangelicals who are not consistent in supporting the poor have fallen into theological liberalism. In the opinion of Sider, since those theologians have thus disobeyed a central biblical doctrine, they have fallen into heresy. He implies that they are not saved.³

This correlates to another assertion of Sider. "Evangelism and social action are intricately interrelated. They are inseparable . . . distinct, equally important parts of the total mission of the Church."⁴ Although he tries to disclaim it, Sider is implying in both

¹Ronald J. Sider, "An Evangelical Theology of Liberation," Perspectives on Evangelical Theology, ed. by Stanley N. Gundry and Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 120.

²Ibid., p. 121.

³Ibid., pp. 126-133.

⁴Ronald J. Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice," International Review of Missions, 64 (July, 1975), 266-67.

articles that one has not thoroughly evangelized unless he has performed social action especially to the poor. The author's view is that the message is primary and the social action or material help is secondary; similar to the view of Stott and Wells.

Also, it is important to recall that the application of the mandate "Do good to all men," in Galatians 6:9-10 clarifies that the material or social help goes to "all men" not only to the poor or oppressed people.

This writer opposes the unfortunate trend within neoevangeli- calism. Furness similarly opposes this trend and offers clarity on the issue.

While the church may be concerned for people so as to minister to their needs, the church takes care that methods of such ministry do not hinder the transmission of the message of God. Any social action called Christian which in any way is likely to obscure or replace the outflow of the good news of God is properly suspect. Truly Christian social action flows out from preaching the Word as a proper sequel to the ministry of the Word.¹

Ecumenical Liberalism

In this movement there is a view that social action brings salvation to mankind through the restructuring of political and economic structures and that this results in social justice.² Therefore, along with the conversion of individuals, peace, political freedom and economic justice are all of equal importance; they are considered "salvation" experiences. The World Council of Churches at its 1973 Bangkok Assembly affirmed this view.³

¹Charles Y. Furness, The Christian and Social Action (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1972), p. 214.

²Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice," 253.

³Ibid.

People as a group are made to appear greater than the individual. Social sins are then manifested by a group of people, not especially by individuals. Social regeneration would solve the problem of sin. The "Christlikeness" (quotes mine) would come from the inner goodness of man and gradually influence others as a group.¹ This movement appears to have redefined biblical terms to fit its usage. Within ecumenical liberalism is none other than the trend of social gospel.

The "father of the social gospel," Walter Rauschenbusch, began with a belief in individual sin and a need for personal salvation. He went through gradual changes within his intense desire for social application of the gospel. In his later years after 1910, Rauschenbusch increasingly seemed to emphasize collective sin and its resolution through the conversion of the group.² It appears that the current group of liberals has maintained this belief regarding social action and salvation.

Evidence points to the fact that within liberalism is a more extreme view on social action and good works. Seemingly they are agreeing or coming close to agreement with secular theologians such as Gibson Winter and Harvey Cox.

A preparatory statement for the WCC's 4th Assembly at Uppsala (1968) came dangerously close, at least, to this secularized understanding of salvation: 'We have lifted up humanization as the goal of mission.' Evangelism is politics and salvation is social justice.³

This writer's belief does not support the view that social

¹Furness, The Christian, pp. 168-169.

²Lightner, Neoevangelicalism Today, pp. 139-140.

³Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice," 255.

justice is salvation or equal to it. Good works are a means to social justice but the doing good is not the message of evangelism. Nor is the doing good as ultimately important as evangelism.

People who are within these trends of ecumenical liberalism should heed the principle set forth in a warning by Whitcomb. "Unless the Holy Spirit of God and the written Word have priority in every phase of our witness for Christ, nothing of lasting value can be accomplished for God (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)."¹

Liberation Theology

The origin of this movement was with a Catholic priest, Gustavo Gutierrez. His teachings include (numbered for convenience):

1. Understanding the faith . . . can be undertaken only from within historical praxis, from within the place where people struggle to be able to live like human beings.
2. The radical challenging of a social order and of its ideology and the breaking of old ways of knowing.
3. To struggle against all injustice, despoliation and exploitation. . . .²

Another proponent of liberation theology, Samuel Escobar, is quoted by Beaver.

Jesus takes seriously the problems of property and power relationships. . . . Jesus says, 'I care for your oppression. . . . I can help you also to find a better way out of your social and political oppression.'³

¹ John C. Whitcomb, "Christian Evidences and Apologetics" (class syllabus at Grace Theological Seminary, 1980), p. 61.

² S. Wayne Beaver, "Philosophy of Christian Missions" (class syllabus at Grace Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 38.

³ Ibid.

Black professor, James H. Cone is also among the liberation theologians. He is the key leader behind the Black Theology Movement. The main hermeneutical principle to Scripture, according to him and others in liberation theology, is God's liberating of the oppressed.¹

Some evangelicals such as Latin American Orlando E. Costas are adopting the beliefs of liberation theology.² These evangelicals desire to maintain the biblical terms within the context of their liberation theology. However, eventually the terms of the Scriptures may lose their meaning. Scripture communication must be "with careful attention so that the unchangeable content will determine the language, not the fashionable language the content communicated."³

The thrust of this thesis is not in agreement with liberation theology. Believers ought to do more material good works to all people. However, material social action is not to be equated with the message of the gospel. Also, it is not correct to say that the Church is responsible to change social structures so that there is economic, social and political equality for all people. The Church simply spreads the gospel by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ even if it has no opportunity to do a material or social good work.

Postmillennialism

The following summarizes the movement of postmillennialism.

Postmillennialism is that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through

¹Sider, "An Evangelical Theology," pp. 119-120.

²Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice," 254.

³Harold O. J. Brown, "True and False Liberation in the Light of Scripture," Perspectives on Evangelical Theology, ed. by Stanley N. Gundry and Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 141.

the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the millennium.¹

Lorraine Boettner continues with his concise description.

The millennium to which the postmillennialist looks forward is thus a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the Church Age. This is to be brought about through forces now active in the world. It is to last an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps much longer than a literal one thousand years. The changed character of individuals will be reflected in an uplifted social, economic, political and cultural life of mankind. The world at large will then enjoy a state of righteousness which up until now has been seen only in relatively small and isolated groups: for example, some family circles, and some local church groups and kindred organizations.²

Boettner clarifies some of the aspects of this view because of some criticism.

This does not mean that there will be a time on this earth when every person will be a Christian or that all sin will be abolished. But it does mean that evil in all its many forms eventually will be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception, and that Christ will return to a truly Christianized world.³

A criticism about this group is that they will not Christianize the world by working to help change social and political structures. The world will not gradually get better through the efforts of man. However, it appears that the postmillennialist expects to be able to accomplish this goal before Christ returns to the earth. Even if this is not a fair criticism the postmillennialists allow an opening for it by the statement of their view, "Society will be Christianized."

¹Lorraine Boettner, "Postmillennialism," The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views ed. by Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1977), p. 117.

²Ibid., pp. 117-118.

³Ibid., p. 118.

There is to be no confusion. Even though this thesis emphasizes that because of biblical mandates believers must be more concerned and involved with material good works, the writer does not agree with the postmillennial position. Believers will not be used to Christianize the majority of society. God will solely perform that in the literal millennial reign of Christ and finally in the new heaven and the new earth.

Fundamentalism

Fundamentalists in the twentieth century have been involved to some extent with helping people materially and socially. However, there has been a hesitation to get involved with social action. Furness explains the reaction.

As it became more clear that the American culture was becoming pluralistic and not more but less subservient to the Scripture standard of faith and life, a frequent first reaction was to retreat in defense and keep the nucleus pure and safe from contamination. There was also the refusal of the evangelical to identify himself with theologically liberal programs of good works which did not insist upon the centrality of the Bible and of Jesus as God's eternal Son and the only Savior of men.

Some extent of the above aversion is understandable. But there was an unnecessary degree of reaction against good works. Even Lightner, a staunch fundamentalist, states that "fundamentalism reacted to such an extent that it became socially indifferent . . . "2

Another warning for fundamentalism to heed is to not say:

. . . the only hope for humanity is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This discourages involvement in social action and fosters a supernatural social ethic which supports the status quo. Many evangelicals, heavily influenced by premillennialism, do not wish

¹Furness, The Christian, p. 167.

²Lightner, Neoevangelicalism Today, p. 138.

to see social change which would improve the lot of their fellow men. Despite the clear teaching of the Bible that believers are to love their neighbors and help them physically and spiritually (Mt. 25; Rom. 12:20), far too many Christians narrow their mission to an attempt to win souls for Christ.¹

This criticism may seem unfair or too harsh. However, some fundamentalists appear to neglect involvement with social action based upon their doctrinal position.

It is important to beware of undue criticism upon fundamentalism. Acknowledgement must be given to fundamentalists for much involvement in social action. However, in view of Clouse's statement, fundamentalists cannot stand on their record. All believers must be more concerned about doing material good works to all people.

Along with social concern must come the balance of doctrinal purity. John R. W. Stott appears to have switched to the position of equating social action with evangelism according to Meadors. Arthur Johnston of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School supports the criticism of Stott as well.² Therefore Stott has compromised doctrinal purity. However, Meadors in his criticism appears to minimize the social responsibility of believers.³ This also is an imbalanced position.

Justified steps by fundamentalists such as Meadors to protect doctrinal purity do not also justify the lack of development or action toward a social ethic. A balance must be maintained with regard to doctrinal purity that includes biblically mandated social action.

¹Robert G. Clouse, ed., "Postscript," The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1977), p. 210.

²Gary T. Meadors, "John R. W. Stott on Social Action," Grace Theological Journal 1 (Fall 1980): 130-131.

³Ibid., pp. 131-132.

CONCLUSION

This writer believes that the verses of Galatians 6:9 and 10 are a mandate. The exhortation of the mandate means that we as believers have the biblical responsibility to do physical, social and moral acts of service to all people everywhere whether saved or unsaved. Believers are to have a priority system for these good works—to all people the world over, but especially to those who are believers the world over. The mandate includes doing these good deeds as we have opportunity, as we are able to do so—nothing more, nothing less.

The words of Pastor Robert Spicer are timely.

Since personal salvation is the only real answer to the problem of sin in society, it must always have first claim to our efforts. At the same time we must recognize that if our priority system enables us to abdicate other Scriptural responsibilities, something is wrong with our use of the system. Although God places our love for Him above our love for members of our family, He still condemns as sinful the neglect of family needs. One who says he loves God while ignoring his family needs is lying. By the same token, personal evangelism is our first responsibility to unsaved people, but if we forsake social responsibility while so doing, something is wrong with our system. If the response be heard that there is only a limited amount of time available and it should be given to strictly spiritual pursuits, the writer would like to make an observation. In his three and one half years as a pastor of a local church he has seen men devote all available time to church work to the neglect of their families, and he has seen the results in alienated youth, resentful and bitter toward a parent who was always preaching about Jesus' love but never loved enough to listen. Obviously, there is only a limited amount of time, but the writer is very suspicious of those who only have time for what they want. A system of priorities should be just that, not a system of eliminations.¹

¹Robert M. Spicer, "The Pertinency of the Prophetic Preaching on Social Responsibility to the Church" (Th.M. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1974), pp. 61 and 62.

The writer is not saying that the mandate to do good is part of the gospel message. Our first priority is to tell the good news about Jesus Christ and that can be done without doing a material good work. However, if the opportunity arises to do a physical or material good deed, by all means, obey the Scriptures and do it.

In conclusion, fundamentalist Christians have been too hesitant to do material good works toward all men. At times they have condemned it. This writer asserts that believers (based upon the biblical mandate of this study) must make a greater emphasis upon doing material good works toward all mankind.

APPENDIX

Presented here are select Bible translations and paraphrases of the Galatians 6:9 and 10 passage including the writer's personal literal translation.

The Amplified New Testament:

And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint.

So then, as occasion and opportunity open to us, let us do good (morally) to all people not only being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith -- those who belong to God's family with you, the believers.

The Living Bible:

And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up.

That's why whenever we can we should always be kind to everyone, and especially to our Christian brothers.

Montgomery (Centenary Translation):

And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Appendix ContinuedNew American Standard Bible:

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

New International Version of The Bible:

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

J. B. Phillips (Modern English):

Let us not grow tired of doing good, for, unless we throw in our hand, the ultimate harvest is assured.

Let us then do good to all men as opportunity offers, especially to those who belong to the Christian household.

The Scofield Reference Bible:

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Writer's Literal Translation:

And let us not become tired (in the inner man) in doing the (qualitative) good, for in a suitable time we shall reap if we do not grow weary (through exhaustion).

Therefore (so then) as we have the opportune (seasonable) time, let us do (work) the (quantitative) good to all (people), chiefly to the household of the faith (all true believers).

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