THE RELEVANCE OF CULTURAL CONDITIONING FOR SOCIAL ETHICS

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The world lives in crisis, a crisis of enormous dimensions and of startling diversity. Carl Henry recently has described this malaise in North America poetically and poignantly:

> Appalling social vices thrust us ever nearer a national doomsday. Only a pseu-dotheologian would ignore the emptiness that sweeps much of American life today and the deep social problems and injustices that scar our land. Many persons pursue but bursting bubbles of "vanity," as the writer of Ecclesiastes put it. For multitudes human existence empties into meaninglessness.[1]

Different descriptions, of course, would be used for other parts of the globe. The Church has been challenged constantly through the centuries by socio-political tensions and has produced a variety of ecclesiastical models and theological constructs that have tried to incarnate the Christian witness. Each of these efforts has posited its own Biblical basis and followed a particular hermeneutic. Therein lies the crux of the challenge to the modern Church: What should be the proper hermeneutical guidelines for determining sound, Biblical social ethics?

Evangelicals, as they try to grapple with the world and the crushing pressure of its problems, must try to present Biblical answers grounded in the content of the Word and built on a careful and comprehensive theological method. The amount of evangelical literature addressing social issues has been exploding, but little has focused on the multiple dilemmas in hermeneutics.[2]

One area that merits careful attention and that this article will seek to explore is the impact of certain "pre-understandings"[3] on any attempt to articulate a sound Biblical ethic. Each interpreter (often unconsciously) brings a set of socio-culturally conditioned ideas and perceptions to the Biblical text that can influence in varying degrees his social ethics and also affect his interaction with other perspectives.

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[1]C. F. H. Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society: Promoting Evangelical Renewal and National Righteousness* (Portland: Multnomah, 1984) 12.

[2]E.g. W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 13–48; C. J. H. Wright, *Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983).

[3]For a brief survey of this factor in hermeneutics see A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 103–114.

This article cannot hope to present all the necessary theory, guidelines and procedures to solve the many problems posed by socio-cultural conditioning. Our goal is more modest: to briefly explore this hermeneutical reality and sensitize to its challenges those involved in formulating social ethics. Hopefully this paper will stimulate dialogue and honest reflection within the evangelical community as it strives to allow God's Word to speak to our world.

I. AWARENESS OF CULTURAL CONDITIONING

Culture has been understood and defined in a number of ways. Popularly it is taken to refer to a person (or class of persons) who is refined and educated and who exhibits proper social mores. More technically, however (and more germane to this discussion), "culture" can be said to refer to

> an integrated system of beliefs . . . , of values . . . , of customs . . ., and of insti-
> tutions which express these beliefs, values and customs . . ., which binds a society
> together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity.[4]

Culture, though apparently an abstract concept, includes—indeed, it defines—the total context of man's reality and life. Man, therefore, is a cultural and social creature.[5] For the believer, however, there is the added dimension of a "supraculture," a set of transcendent values posited in God's Word, applied efficaciously through the work of the Holy Spirit, and nurtured in the context of the Christian community.[6]

Even a superficial examination of the nature of culture reveals that it is neither static nor neutral. In a popular vein Os Guinness has recently pointed out that each culture continually shapes the behavior, thought and customs of its members. He sees at least three processes at work in modern western society: (1) secularization, the limiting of the relevance of religion to an increasingly smaller sphere; (2) privatization, the limiting of faith to individual (and eventually selfish) concerns; and (3) pluralization, the redefining of the Chris-

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[4]This is but a working definition drawn from *Lausanne Occasional Papers No. 2—The Willowbank Report: Gospel and Culture* (Wheaton: Lausanne Council for World Evangelization, 1978) 7. The term "culture" is a notoriously difficult one to define. T. Paredes, for example, rejects this definition in favor of what he feels is a more comprehensive approach in "Culture and Socio-Cultural Change" in *The Church in Response to Human Need* (ed. T. Sine; Monrovia: MARC, 1983) 97–132. Our definition admittedly is not definitive but has been chosen because of the representative nature of the report.

[5]"Culture" is broader than "society." But, as P. Berger (*The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1969] 7) points out, "while society appears as but an aspect of culture, it occupies a privileged position among man's cultural formations." Moreover, society "is not only an outcome of culture, but a necessary condition of the latter. Society structures, distributes, and co-ordinates the world-building activities of man." This article will not seek to differentiate the two because of this large overlap.

[6]B. J. Nicholls, *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979) 13–15. In ethical theory discussions, however, some would dispute this claim or would at least desire more elaboration and clarification. That task, though crucial to the social ethics enterprise, lies beyond the scope of his paper.

tian faith as but one of the myriad of options in today's world.[7]

This analysis, however, does not necessarily fit so easily into the nonwestern context of the two-thirds world. In Latin America, for example, the problem is not secularization but a deeply-rooted superstitious faith grounded in centuries of Roman Catholic influence and in a syncretism born out of the wedding of Christianity and native religions.[8] Yet another factor should be added from the perspective of the two-thirds world: dependency. Decades of political, economic and military intervention by more-developed nations have had and continue to have an enormous impact on the structures and lives of these poorer countries. The results of this dependency is readily evident in the socio-economic and political realms. Witness for instance the crisis of Central American countries, who are dwarfed by their powerful northern neighbor and caught between the global concerns of the world's two superpowers. These smaller nations must coordinate their direction in conjunction with the fiscal demands of world monetary systems and the foreign policies of their particular benefactor, whether capitalist or communist.[9]

Latin America is also an incredibly diversified cultural and linguistic complex. It is a melting pot of a large number of races, each of which has its own particular history. Currents different than those that shaped western culture have been at work:

> One must begin by recognizing that, in spite of appearance, Latin America is not like Europe and in many ways unlike the United States. It is a Western society that has missed some of the key influences that shaped Western culture. Latin America was by-passed by the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the "Great Transformation" that incorporated the masses into the political process on the national level. . . . More than that, a considerable part of the people are of Indian or African extraction, neither of which has fully absorbed even that limited repository of European culture which is also Latin American.[10]

A whole set of socio-cultural factors in each of its different settings necessarily influences the Church, its hermeneutics and its theology. Theologizing is never done in a vacuum, but rather in a matrix of life settings and social realities that help define its program and priorities. Working from within his

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[7]O. Guinness, *The Gravedigger File: Papers on the Subversion of the Modern Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983), is a popularization of sociological studies, especially the work of P. Berger.

[8]For brief yet valuable introductions to these phenomena see E. A. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans* (South Pasadena: William Carey, 1974); M. K. Mayers, *A Look at Latin American Lifestyles* (Dallas: SIL, 1976).

[9]Liberation theologians heavily underscore this theme of dependency. See J. Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 2–37; G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973) 81–118. Many would stress that the political and economic tension is north-south rather that east-west; e.g., P. Lernoux, *Cry of the People: The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America* (Garden City: Penguin, 1980). For a rebuttal see M. Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: AEI, 1982) 298–314. For a more balanced view see J. Stott, *Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1984), 1. 167–187, and the article by T. Paredes in n. 4.

[10]F. Tannenbaum, *The Future of Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Knopf, 1974) 85.

own particular context the interpreter therefore brings his own "pre-under-standings" to the text that can determine, in varying degrees, the social ethics that he constructs from the Bible. Crucial to discussions on ethics is the real-ization that one's "pre-understanding" can be not only psychological, philo-sophical, and theological but ideological and social as well.

This reality could provide some insight into the ongoing debate in the United States regarding the best political option for the Christian. Some evan-gelicals, for example, focus on texts that reflect the right to private property and the sinful nature of man and so champion capitalism as the system that best incorporates these truths.[11] Critics of this ethical agenda claim that this view is too uncomfortably similiar to the "American way" and reflects the values of the middle class.[12] These evangelicals,[13] coming out of different back-grounds and experiences and stressing the Biblical concern for the poor, suggest a new economic order and lean toward what some consider a more socialistic solution. Without at all evaluating the respective merits of each position or questioning the sincerity of their protagonists, one cannot but notice that the "raw data" of the Biblical text have been selectively chosen, variously under-stood, and packaged in different ways.

Prior cultural and ideological conditioning and commitments (both con-scious and unconscious), therefore, can be important initial factors in the shap-ing of evangelical social ethics. Christians in dissimiliar national, racial and class settings will often emphasize different texts and themes because they are naturally reflecting, and trying to respond Biblically to, what they perceive are the concerns and needs of their own context and situation.

What is sorely needed, then, is an awareness of these cultural and ideolog-ical presuppositions. Honestly and humbly recognizing this possible prior ori-entation is an important first step in understanding and thus in being open to expose prejudices and ideologies to the possible correctives of Scripture. It is to be willing to be molded by a thoroughly Biblical perspective on social issues. "For the reflective person," Carson says, "such pre-understanding is a 'func-tional non-negotiable' which, given enough pressure, can be amended into a stance with increased proximity to the text."[14] The interpreter's pre-under-standing is "non-negotiable" in the sense that it is part and parcel of his per-sonal and his cultural make-up. But he must accept it as only an initial form-

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[11]E.g. H. Lindsell, *Free Enterprise: A Judeo-Christian Defense* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1982). From a Roman Catholic perspective see Novak, *Spirit* 333–360.

[12]J. Wallis, *The Call to Conversion: Recovering the Gospel for These Times* (San Francisco: Harper, 1981) 18–37.

[13]E.g. R. J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977). He receives harsh treatment throughout F. Schaeffer's *Bad News for Modern Man* (Westchester: Cross-way, 1984).

[14]D. A. Carson, "A Sketch of Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate in Cross-Cultural Contexts," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* (ed. Carson; Exeter: Paternos-ter, 1984) 12. This is in line with Article 19 of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics; see *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (ed. E. D. Radmacher and R. D. Preus; Grand Rapids: Zon-dervan, 1984) 901.

ative influence of his perspective. That is, it must be "functional"—it should only continue to be used when either it has been changed or is in the process of being shaped by a dynamic interaction with the demands of God's Word.[15] Thus evangelicals across the political and social spectrum must recognize their particular and relative pre-understanding through which they read the Biblical text. They must submit that initial understanding to the Word's hard questioning and then change it according to the mandates of Scripture's absolute authority.

This awareness and admission of the key role of culture in hermeneutics leads to at least three implications. First, to better comprehend his own social framework the interpreter should realize his need to utilize the social sciences. These studies can not only help him analyze more cogently the context into which he must present the Biblical message and in which he must live but also assist him in the vital task of grasping the various factors that have molded his pre-understanding and defined the social matrix from which he studies the Word.

Unfortunately most textbooks on hermeneutics have ignored the formative influences of culture (really the whole problem of pre-understanding in general) on the interpretive task. There is no consciousness of the role of one's own culture that precedes the study of the text. Rather, any discussion usually focuses on the need to investigate the culture within the text or on the problem of trying to bridge the cultural gap in the move from the text to the modern world.[16]

Second, the interpreter should recognize the contribution that the social sciences can also make to the study of the Biblical text itself.[17] Sociological approaches to the Bible are of four basic types:[18] (1) a general description of the

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[15]This pressure should primarily come from the Word, yet one's context also raises tensions as it raises new questions. The process of reshaping one's pre-understanding then involves active interaction between text and context: Fresh perspectives from the Scriptures lead to new solutions for the context, out of which still other questions might arise to force the interpreter back to the text again. Ideally this interaction is never-ending.

[16]E.g. culture within the text: B. Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (3d rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970) 149–161; W. M. Dunnett, *The Interpretation of Holy Scripture: An Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 125–140; bridging the cultural gap: Dunnett, ibid., pp. 4–8; H. A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 211–232. This last tension is particularly acute, naturally, for the cross-cultural missionary; see D. J. Hesselgrave, "Contextualization and Revelational Epistemology," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* 693–738.

[17]Caution and balance are required, of course. See B. J. Malina, "The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (ed. H. K. Gottwald; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983) 11–25. Insightful also are G. A. Herion's critique of the work of Gottwald and R. R. Wilson in "The Impact of Modern and Social Science Assumptions on the Reconstruction of Israelite History," *JSOT* 34 (1986) 3–33, and J. W. Rogerson's evaluation of the use of the social sciences (*Anthropology and the Old Testament* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1984]).

[18]These are R. N. Soulen's categories in "Sociological Interpretation" in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (2d ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) 179–180. For fuller introductions see R. R. Wilson, *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); D. Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983). E. Yamauchi provides a survey and an evangelical evaluation in "Sociology, Scripture and the Supernatural," *JETS* 27 (1984) 169–192.

daily life and culture of a given society, (2) a development and historical presentation of religion according to a certain social theory, (3) a focus on the social organization within a religious movement, and (4) a study of the social world structured by a particular faith. Traditional hermeneutics has usually concentrated its energy at the descriptive level (1), gleaning illustrative material to illuminate particulars within a text.[19]

Until recently, relatively little has been done in analyzing the dynamics of Israel as a culture and as a society within which the Lord defined and demanded an ethic.[20] For example, what precisely was the prophet's social relationship to the king and to the wealthy of Israelite society? Did the ethical preaching of the prophets in any way affect the social framework of the nation? If so, how? What were the legal problems and economic inequalities that the poor suffered and that the prophets denounced? Socio-historical studies are also beginning to investigate such issues as the shape of the social system outlined by God to Moses at Sinai and the various socio-economic changes in that society throughout the history of the nation. The kind of approach, therefore, that seeks to investigate the impact of the Word on the socio-cultural realities of the Biblical world could provide new insights and raise new and important questions to help develop sharper techniques in the formation of Biblical ethics today.

A third implication, which occupies the attention of the second half of this paper, remains: The student of the Scriptures should not only be aware of the various possible cultural factors that have influenced his own thinking and of the social tensions within the Biblical text but should also appreciate the value of dialogue and reflection within the multi-cultural community that is the Church.

II. APPRECIATION OF CULTURAL VARIETY

Each believer, group and congregation has a positive and fresh contribution to make to the understanding and present application of Scripture because of unique social backgrounds and experiences. The interpreter should listen carefully and sensitively to how others are attempting to bring the Word to bear upon the problems of modern life. What, for example, are the solutions that various Christian organizations are bringing to the debates about the threat of nuclear war and the tragedy of world hunger? Can not the Christian layperson offer fresh insights into business ethics and into the difficulties of daily trying to maintain a sound witness in a pressure-filled society? Should not the theoreticians lend a keen ear to the voices of pastors who struggle to counsel and nurture those wrestling with drugs, divorce, abortion, child abuse and homosexuality? An open yet Biblically-discerning dialogue, aimed at searching out together and submitting to the divine imperatives, can be a broadening and learning experience.

[19]E.g. L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950) 113–132.

[20]C. J. H. Wright, "The Ethical Relevance of Israel as a Society," *Transformation* 1 (1984) 11–21. For a more radical ideological and theological view see N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Liberated Israel 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979). Studies in the prophetic literature would include the contributions of M. Cohen, R. R. Wilson, D. L. Peterson and B. Lang.

In addition, within the body of Christ there is a large variety of ecclesiastical traditions. Each has its own particular history as well as theological starting point and emphasis. The result is a broad spectrum of Christian ethical theories and positions on ethical issues. Each of the two great theological streams, Calvinism and Lutheranism, that flow from the Reformation has a distinctive conceptual framework and focus that has molded its ethical vision and shaped the societies it has undergirded.[21] Each in very different manners has understood the ethical implications of foundational theological issues such as the relationship between law and grace, history and eschatology, and Church and state. Earlier in this century well-known theologians such as Barth, Brunner, Bonhoeffer and Bultmann worked within the broad stream of one of these confessions—a reality that can go a long way in explaining the ethical views that they championed. An awareness and appreciation of these ecclesiastical subcultures is also helpful for interacting with, for example, recent evangelical efforts by the neo-Lutheran Helmut Thielicke,[22] the neo-Calvinist Nicholas Wolterstorff, and the Mennonite John H. Yoder.[23]

The body of Christ, moreover, is worldwide. This dialogue regarding social ethics then must be extended to interact with the work of evangelical theologians from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Frustration at not being heard or not being allowed to fully theologize from within their own context has led several leaders in the two-thirds world to even call for a moratorium on western aid and personnel.[24] The African John Mbiti voices the aspirations of those clamoring for authentic participation in theological inquiry:

> Theologians from the new (or younger) churches have made their pilgrimages to the thological learning of older churches. We had no alternative. We have eaten theology with you; we have drunk theology with you; we have dreamed theology with you. But it has all been one-sided; it has all been, in a sense, your theology.[25]

[21]The classic study of course is E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: MacMillan, 1931), vol. 2. Briefer comparisons with proposals for new approaches can be found in J. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); N. Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 3–22.

[22]H. Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969). Among other things he posits the Lutheran basis of justification by faith as the proper point of departure, refines the doctrine of the two kingdoms, and utilizes Luther's insights into the role of law and the nature of man. Throughout his work he interacts not only with the Calvinistic perspective but also with the Roman Catholic one.

[23]J. H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972). He works from well-known Mennonite emphases on community and nonviolence.

[24]P. Wakatama, *Independence for the Third World Church: An African's Perspective on Missionary Work* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1976). Cf. J. Herbert Kane, *The Christian World Mission: Today and Tomorrow* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 173–184.

[25]J. S. Mbiti, "Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church," in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies* (ed. G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky; New York: Paulist, 1976) 16–17. Note for instance the oversight of not including any scholars from the two-thirds world in *Liberation Theology* (ed. R. H. Nash; Milford: Mott Media, 1984). Examples of this frustration could be multiplied (especially if untranslated material is included). From a Latin American perspective see C. R. Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 83–109, and the less charitable view of O. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982) 59–70.

What is needed is not a moratorium but creative interaction within a context of mutual respect. Studies regarding the manner of making the Biblical message relevant are being carried out throughout the world.[26] To ignore the rich contribution that each area of the worldwide body of Christ is making to the ethical debate would be a tragedy.

Not only appreciating these different perspectives and solutions to ethical issues but also accepting them is part of the challenge facing the body of Christ worldwide. Though extreme and mistaken in many of their formulations, liberation theologies can be viewed as having performed a service by highlighting the fact that disparate socio-cultural starting points and contexts yield distinct theological constructions.[27] "Doing theology in a revolutionary situation,"[28] from the "underside of history,"[29] cannot but bring forth new and different and difficult questions. Evangelicals speaking from within those same socio-cultural realities, yet with a more proper methodology, are lending very fresh insights into the task of the Church. A possible danger lies in reacting inadequately to unfamiliar ideas from primarily (though unwittingly) personal cultural biases and ideological convictions. Richard J. Neuhaus in his critique of Latin American liberation theology makes a perceptive comment that is also applicable to this dialogue with other evangelical theologians from different parts of the globe:

> As Sartre had observed that there are no privileged observers, so it might be said that there are no privileged believers. Critics of liberation theology should be pressed as to which adjectives—equally conditioned by culture and political perspective—are appropriate to their own theologies. It is more a boast than a description to say that one is doing simply "theology" or "Christian theology." Such a boast reflects a certain superficiality, a lack of modesty about one's placement within history. To be sure, we aspire toward the universal and catholic, but our grasp falls far short of our reach.[30]

So the discussion has come full circle—that is, to the necessity of self-examination and the struggle to come to grips with one's own socio-cultural con-

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[26]E.g. in English *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology* (ed. B. R. Ro and R. Eshenaur; Taiwan: ATA, 1984); *Sharing Jesus in the Two-Thirds World* (ed. V. Samuel and C. Sugden; Bangalore: Partnership in Mission-Asia, 1983); the new journal *Transformation*. Journals in Spanish such as the *Boletín Teológico* and the more popular *Misión* are wrestling with contemporary problems in Latin America.

[27]For liberation theology hermeneutics see J. L. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976); J. S. Croatto, *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981). For an evangelical evaluation see J. A. Kirk, *Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), and a definitive work by my colleague E. A. Nunez soon to be published by Moody Press.

[28]The title of the book by J. Miguez Bonino (see n. 9).

[29]See G. Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983) 169–221. He provides a case study in his discussion of the preparatory documents circulated prior to the Bishops Conference in Puebla in 1979 (pp. 111–124), and Bonhoeffer is presented as a pioneer in trying to begin to ask theological questions from this point of departure (pp. 222–234).

[30]R. J. Neuhaus, "Liberation Theology and Cultural Captivity," in *Liberation Theology* 221–222.

ditioning. The effort might require a difficult pilgrimage,[31] but the process is a necessary one that cannot but bear fruit.

III. CONCLUSION

Culture, therefore, plays an important function in hermeneutics and consequently in social ethics. While never wavering in the conviction of the absolute priority of the Scriptures, each interpreter must be aware of the influences of his own particular cultural formation. As a theologian desiring to explore Biblical ethics he must also develop an awareness of social problems, relationships and structures. With this kind of orientation the social sciences, if properly utilized, can prove to be valuable tools to better comprehend the Biblical context and message as well as the modern world in which the Church must demonstrate her social ethic.

Each aspect of this social ethic should ideally be developed and articulated within a context of open and sensitive interchange within the broader body of Christ. Ultimately all cultural factors and perspectives must be evaluated and be brought into submission to Biblical truth.

In the midst of such a babel of culturally influenced voices speaking from both outside and inside the Church to the crises of our age, the theologian must above all else make his goal the discerning and living out of the Biblical mandate in all its richness and breadth. He must do so with an appreciative ear to brethren from all over the globe who are struggling with similiar issues. The world, which has fed on so many words from different perspectives, needs a clear but informed message from the one true God.

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[31]E.g. contrast T. D. Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World: The Bible, the Reformation and Liberation Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983) ix–xiii; C. Pinnock in "A Pilgrimage in Political Theology" in *Liberation Theology* 101–120. Interestingly, the journeys leave each of them at opposite poles of the political spectrum.