



The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World

Lausanne Occasional Paper 20 An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style

The Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) are historically important documents that have emerged from global consultations involving widely recognized evangelical leaders. The LOPs have been placed in the Lausanne Website to make more accessible and understandable the historical context and development of the various aspects of world evangelization.

LOP 20: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style

Exposition and Commentary

by Alan Nichols

The Reverend Alan Nichols, Th. Schol., is Executive Director of the Mission of St. James and St. John, an Anglican family welfare agency in Melbourne, Australia, and secretary of the Social Responsibilities Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia. He is the author of a number of books and reports published in Australia and England.

Prefatory Note

An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style was written and endorsed by the [International Consultation on Simple Life-style](#), held at Hoddesdon, England, from March 17 to 21, 1980. The Consultation was sponsored by the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization's Theology and Education Working Group and the World Evangelical Fellowship's Theological Commission's Unit on Ethics and Society.

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Introduction

"Life" and "life-style" obviously belong together and cannot be separated. All Christians claim to have received a new life from Jesus Christ. What life-style, then, is appropriate for them? If the life is new, the life-style should be new also. But what are to be its characteristics? In particular, how is it to be distinguished from the life-style of those who make no Christian profession? And how should it reflect the challenges of the contemporary world—its alienation both from God and from the earth's resources which he created for the enjoyment of all?

It was such questions as these which led the participants in the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (1974) to include in paragraph 9 of their Covenant these sentences: *"All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism."* These expressions have been much debated, and it became clear that their implications needed to be carefully examined.

So the Theology and Education Group of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the Unit on Ethics and Society of the World Evangelical Fellowship's Theological Commission agreed to co-sponsor a two-year process of study, culminating in an international gathering. Local groups met in 15 countries. Regional conferences were arranged in India, Ireland and the United States. Then from March 17 to 21, 1980, at High Leigh Conference Center (about 17 miles north of London, England) an International Consultation on Simple Life-style was convened. It brought together 85 evangelical leaders from 27 countries.

Our purpose was to study simple living in relation to evangelism, relief and justice, since all three are mentioned in the Lausanne Covenant's sentences on simple life-style. Our perspective was, on the one hand, the teaching of the Bible; and, on the other, the suffering world—that is, the billions of men, women and children who, though made in his image and the objects of his love, are either unevangelized or oppressed or both, being destitute of the gospel of salvation and of the basic necessities of human life.

During the four days of the Consultation we lived, worshipped and prayed together; we studied the Scriptures together; we listened to background papers (to be published in a book) and heard some moving testimonies; we struggled to relate the theological and economic issues to one another; we debated these in both plenary sessions and small groups; we laughed and cried and repented and made resolutions. Although at the beginning we sensed some tension between representatives of the First and Third Worlds, yet by the end the Holy Spirit of unity had brought us into a new solidarity of mutual respect and love.

Above all, we tried to expose ourselves with honesty to the challenges of both the Word of God and the world of need, in order to discern God's will and seek his grace to do it. In this process our minds were stretched, our consciences pricked, our hearts stirred and our wills strengthened.

This Lausanne Occasional Paper deals section by section with the statement, "An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style." Its original text, drafted out of the papers and the discussion, was carefully studied during three exacting hours of plenary debate, and numerous alterations were agreed upon. The revised text was resubmitted at a final plenary session and, with a few further and minor amendments, was approved. None of the participants was asked to subscribe to it by personal signature, but it carries the substantial endorsement of the Consultation. As individuals, too, we all made our own private commitment, in response to its call.

The "Commentary and Exposition" has been written at our request by Alan Nichols, an Australian participant in the Consultation, with a view to making the Consultation's thinking more easily available to church members.

While what he has written is a personal view, we are happy for it to be published in this form, in order to provoke and stimulate the church at large to consider these issues.

We recognise that others have been discussing this topic for several years, and we are ashamed that we have lagged behind them. We have no wish, therefore, to claim too much for our Consultation or commitment. Nor have we any grounds for boasting. Yet for us the week was historic and transforming. So we send this booklet on its way for the study of individuals, groups and churches, with the earnest hope and prayer that large numbers of Christians will be moved, as we have been, to resolve, commitment and action.

John Stott
Chairman
Theology and Education Working Group
Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

Ronald J. Sider
Convenor
Unit on Ethics and Society
Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship

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Quotations are from the New International Version.

Preamble

For four days we have been together, 85 Christians from 27 countries, to consider the resolve expressed in the Lausanne Covenant (1974) to "develop a simple life-style." We have tried to listen to the voice of God, through the pages of the Bible, through the cries of the hungry poor, and through each other. And we believe that God has spoken to us.

We thank God for his great salvation through Jesus Christ, for his revelation in Scripture which is a light for our path, and for the Holy Spirit's power to make us witnesses and servants in the world.

We are disturbed by the injustice of the world, concerned for its victims, and moved to repentance for our complicity in it. We have also been stirred to fresh resolves, which we express in this Commitment.

While many of the participants at the Simple Life-style Consultation had already been together in conference on the theological basis of aid and development, for four days 85 Christians from 27 countries met at High Leigh Conference Center, London (U.K.), from March 17 to 21, 1980, to consider the resolve expressed in the Lausanne Covenant (1974) to "develop a simple life-style." Over half the participants were from the Third World, as was the case at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization; but the purpose was much narrower, much more closely defined, and participants were conscious of a great shift in thinking about world poverty and Christian affluence since 1974. Western Christians at Lausanne had been worried about whether "simple" or "simpler" life-styles should have been advocated. This does not enter into the concerns of 1980. Participants were keen to get straight into the issue, as they tried to listen to the voice of God, through the pages of the Bible, our only infallible rule of faith and practice, for this must be the starting point for any Christian considerations. They heard God through the cries of the hungry poor, though not in the sense that because people are poor they are automatically blessed by God. They heard God speaking through each other as fellowship deepened day by day. And we believe that God has spoken to us, they were able to say at the end. Not that four days together brought about the definitive word on life-style issues, but that participants were sure that at least the important questions were raised, and that some directions for thinking and action ensued.

The unity experienced by participants at the Consultation was because each was grounded in God's great salvation through Jesus Christ and was confident that the Scriptures are his revelation and a light for our path on life-style as on every other question in life. We prayed and sought the Holy Spirit's power to make us witnesses and servants in the world. This put the Consultation foursquare in the tradition of the Lausanne Congress of 1974 in bringing Evangelical Christians together to seek God's will and to recommit themselves to the task of world evangelization. For the Life-style Consultation participants would not permit themselves to be distracted by ethical questions from the very first and primary obligation laid on all God's people: to be a light to the world offering the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is central.

In considering the task of world evangelization at Lausanne, the participants were extremely conscious of and disturbed by the injustice of the world. Many had come from hazardous and personally risky ministries in Third World situations where they are among those who challenge political, social, and economic injustice and cannot help feeling concerned for the victims of the injustices they continually see around them. Where the Lausanne participants expressed penitence and shame for failing in the mission of evangelism, the Life-style participants were moved to repentance for our complicity in world injustice. We deeply felt that world evangelism was stifled and compromised by our complacency about social injustice, and we were stirred to fresh resolves, which were then expressed at the end of the conference in the Commitment to Simple Life-style.

1. Creation

We worship God as the Creator of all things, and we celebrate the goodness of his creation. In his generosity he has given us everything to enjoy, and we receive it from his hands with humble thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4, 6:17). God's creation is marked by rich abundance and diversity, and he intends its resources to be husbanded and shared for the benefit of all.

We therefore denounce environmental destruction, wastefulness and hoarding. We deplore the misery of the poor who suffer as a result of these evils. We also disagree with the drabness of the ascetic. For all these deny the Creator's goodness and reflect the tragedy of the fall. We recognise our own involvement in them and we repent.

The Commitment opens with a paragraph about God as Creator, not just because it is the natural place to start, but because Creation Ethics are becoming an important part of how the church is thinking about mankind's responsibility to the world we live in.

Dr. Donald Hay, Oxford University economist, wrote in a paper presented at the International Consultation:

"The creation story in Genesis emphasises God's sovereign work in creating the earth within the universe and then filling it with life. It is within this abundant environment that man was placed. He is the image or likeness of God, placed there to show God's sovereign possession, but as a vice-regent with full power to use and dispose of the resources at hand. Man is given dominion over nature to care for it, and to provide for his existence. After the flood, God promises that the natural cycle of day and night, seedtime and harvest will be maintained (Genesis 8:22). Noah is enjoined to replenish and subdue the earth. The doctrine of God's provision reappears in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-32). The implications of this teaching are three: First, there can be no pessimism about the ability of the earth to provide adequately for the human race. There is no hint of a niggardly provision, that they may run out. The emphasis is rather on the abundance of the creation. We would not therefore expect to find that world shortages of resources are the source of international inequality. We do not deny that man can and does waste resources, but properly used there should be enough for all.

"Second, although the created order is provided for man's use he is in the position of a trustee. Trusteeship or dominion is extended to all men. So the created order is for men in general, to satisfy our needs. Economic activity is justified in that it provides the goods and services necessary for the continuation of man's social existence.

"Third, man's trusteeship, and the requirement not to waste what God provides, carries with it an obligation to use resources efficiently. The

economist's version of this is that man's wants are unlimited, and the resources available at any one time are limited. Hence efficiency, and production and distribution, is a major preoccupation of much economic analysis. As Christians we may wish to define the satisfaction of needs rather than wants as the objective of economic life, but the goal of efficiency in meeting those needs will again be incumbent upon us."

So the first statement of the Commitment reaffirms the joy with which Christians worship God as the Creator of all things, acknowledging the responsibilities which go along with that. Christians celebrate the goodness of his creation and so do not despise the natural resources and blessings which come to us. Western Christians need to think carefully through any sense of guilt they feel about enjoying life; sometimes guilt may be falsely based on the idea that we deserve nothing and therefore should enjoy nothing. On the contrary, Christians recognise that God in his generosity has given us everything to enjoy, and we receive it from his hands with humble thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4, 6:17).

The Commitment then develops a positive principle by which Christians may test what they suspect may be destruction or wastage of God's natural gifts to mankind: God's creation is marked by rich abundance and diversity, and he intends its resources to be husbanded and shared for the benefit of all. How then can we explain the tragic imbalance of food supplies across the world? How can governments possibly justify the kind of extraction of mineral wealth from a country that leaves it devastated? How can defoliation and destruction of crops during war be tolerated? These were some of the issues troubling participants at the Consultation; they are the issues which are troubling people of goodwill all over the world today.

It was the personal experiences of a political activist in Brazil, an evangelist to peasants in India, and an articulate woman leader from Nigeria which led the Consultation to denounce environmental destruction, wastefulness and hoarding. It was not just theory but daily experience for some participants which led to deploring the misery of the poor who suffer as a result of these evils.

This does not mean that Christians promote dullness: we also disagree with the drabness of the ascetic. For all these-waste, poverty and asceticismâ€deny God's goodness and reflect the tragedy of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden and the involvement of all mankind in the consequences of their fall. But Christians today are conscious not just of involvement in the fall (as a theological idea) but of our own involvement in creating, perpetuating and allowing misery, poverty, destruction and irresponsibility to continue in the world. We are now much more conscious of living in a global village, and because we can no longer separate ourselves because of distance from the poverty of the world, we must take the only other course-we must repent.

2. Stewardship

When God made man, male and female, in His own image, he gave them dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). He made them stewards of its resources, and they became responsible to him as Creator, to the earth which they were to develop, and to their fellow human beings with whom they were to share its riches. So fundamental are these truths that authentic human fulfilment depends on a right relationship to God, neighbour and the earth with all its resources. People's humanity is diminished if they have no just share in those resources.

By unfaithful stewardship, in which we fail to conserve the earth's finite resources, to develop them fully or to distribute them justly, we both disobey God and alienate people from his purpose for them. We are determined, therefore, to honour God as the owner of all things, to remember that we are stewards and not proprietors of any land or property that we may have, to use them in the service of others, and to seek justice with the poor who are exploited and powerless to defend themselves.

We look forward to the restoration of all things at Christ's return (Acts 3:21). At that time our full humanness will be restored, so we must promote human dignity today.

Consideration of the Bible's doctrine of Creation leads naturally to man's responsibility of stewardship. More and more people everywhere are becoming conscious of the possibility that within our own lifetime natural resources may be so crazily exploited to find new energy sources that the earth's limited natural resources may soon be dangerously depleted.

According to the creation narrative, when God made man, male and female, he set them in a world already ordered by him. This harmony and order in creation was a reflection of God's own being. As Genesis 1 indicates, God made them in his own image. And the task he gave them was to act as his representatives by exercising dominion over the earth.

God commanded them: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28). Thus he made mankind stewards of the earth's resources.

Stewardship is also a New Testament idea which is expressed, for example, in Jesus' parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16).

In both Old and New Testaments, man is responsible to God as Creator, and is also responsible to the earth which we are to develop, and to our fellow human beings with whom we are to share its riches.

As Dr. Donald Hay pointed out at the Consultation, there is great abundance in creation, more than enough to provide adequately for the needs of all. This does not mean however that mankind may exploit the created order to satisfy his never-ending greed.

This is where economics comes in, and where many Christians bow out. It seems easier to talk about personal life-style than to consider the macro issues. These truths are so fundamental that authentic human fulfilment depends on a right relationship with God, neighbour and the earth with all its resources. But Western Christians often think of them in purely Western terms, and ignore the fact that half the world is at starvation level. Instead, Western Christians should be asking radical questions from the viewpoint of less developed countries. For example, should the world's economic productive system now register zero growth? Or should mineral and energy resources (still largely untapped) be fully exploited? Will accelerated economic growth place an intolerable burden on the earth's entire ecosystem and cause irreversible damage to the entire human environment?

There seems no doubt that people's humanity is diminished if they have no just share in those resources. But is it fair to call a halt to economic expansion when the West has had plenty of growth to enjoy and some of the less developed world is now looking forward to it? How can these resources be more justly shared?

The least we should agree to is a serious curtailment or redirection of growth in the Western World, which is in any case choking the West with a surfeit of goods, services and waste. What will be the results of unfaithful stewardship? If we fail because of our unlimited exploitation to conserve the earth's finite resources; if we fail to develop them fully in under-developed countries to enable them to enjoy the goods and services we have enjoyed for generations; and if we fail to distribute justly our over-supply; then we will fall under the same judgement as the nations in the early chapters of Amos, because of their unjust and inhumane behaviour, for we shall both disobey God and alienate people from his purpose for them. Can we from the West evangelize people in developing nations if they perceive our own multi-national corporations to be exploiting them? Or if our own wastes would fill their empty bellies? What is the "cup of cold water" Jesus mentioned (Matthew 10:42) if it does not include sharing the abundance which we have?

Mindful of these responsibilities, participants in the Simple Life-style Consultation were determined to honour God as the owner of all things, to remember that we are stewards and not proprietors of any land or property that we may have, and to use them in the service of others. The wording thus far is a fairly normal commitment of Christians, but the next resolve is more radical, for the participants also expressed their determination to seek justice with the poor who are exploited and powerless to defend themselves.

The justice theme became very prominent in the Consultation. We were led into it from the beginning by Dr. Ronald Sider, when he said that relief and development were not enough: "One of the most urgent agenda items for the church in the industrialised nations is to help our people begin honestly to explore to what extent our abundance depends on international economic structures that are unjust. To what extent do current patterns of international trade and the operations of the International Monetary Fund contribute to affluence in some nations and poverty in others? Unless we grapple with that systemic question, our discussion of simple life-style has not gone beyond Christmas baskets and superficial charity which at times can even be, consciously or unconsciously, a philanthropic smoke screen diverting the oppressed from the structural causes of their poverty and our affluence."

We recognise both that international economics is a highly complex and specialised subject, and that we had too few expert economists at our Consultation. Nevertheless, those who were present convinced us that a measure of injustice is built into the present system. The Brandt Commission report North and South (see the bibliography), published shortly before our Consultation convened, adds a distinguished endorsement to this view.

However much we try or even succeed in our responsibility to secure greater economic justice, Christians can look beyond this world, with all its tribulations and inequities, to the restoration of all things at Christ's return (Acts 3:21). Our faith is not pinned or limited to humanity's capacity to share generously; for it is only at the Second Coming that our full humanness will be restored. This does not mean that we cease our efforts to improve this world however. On the contrary, it is because we cherish the vision of completed humanness in the end that we must all the more promote human dignity today.

3. Poverty and Wealth

We affirm that involuntary poverty is an offence against the goodness of God. It is related in the Bible to powerlessness, for the poor cannot protect themselves. God's call to rulers is to use their power to defend the poor, not to exploit them. The church must stand with God and the poor against injustice, suffer with them and call on rulers to fulfill their God-appointed role.

We have struggled to open our minds and hearts to the uncomfortable words of Jesus about wealth. "Beware of covetousness" he said, and "a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). We have listened to his warnings about the danger of riches. For wealth brings worry, vanity and false security, the oppression of the weak and indifference to the sufferings of the needy. So it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23), and the greedy will be excluded from it. The kingdom is a free gift offered to all, but it is especially good news for the poor because they benefit most from the changes it brings.

We believe that Jesus still calls some people (perhaps even us) to follow him in a life-style of total, voluntary poverty. He calls all his followers to an inner freedom from the seduction of riches (for it is impossible to serve God and money) and to sacrificial generosity ("to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share"-] Timothy 6:18). Indeed, the motivation and model for Christian generosity are nothing less than the example of Jesus Christ himself, who, though rich, became poor that through his poverty we might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). It was a costly, purposeful self-sacrifice, - we mean to seek his grace to follow him. We resolve to get to know poor and oppressed people, to learn issues of injustice from them, to seek to relieve their suffering, and to include them regularly in our prayers.

The 1980 Simple Life-style Consultation was one of the many consequences of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization 1974, at the end of which thousands of Evangelicals signed a Covenant which included this statement: "All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism." Thus, a primary motive in the Lausanne Covenant for developing a simple life-style was "the poverty of millions" and "the injustices which cause it." Yet this is sometimes lost in the many discussions going on around the world today about simple life-style. These are often more a "back to earth" and "back to nature" movement than a redirection of resources and power.

This issue was very prominent in the minds of the participants in the Simple Life-style Consultation in March 1980. While starting with the Bible, they were very conscious-especially because of the presence of significant representatives of the poorer parts of the world-of the dramatic contrasts in both material standards of living and access to power which exist in the different countries of the world.

While recognising that God still calls some to voluntary poverty, participants expressed the strong affirmation that involuntary poverty is an offence against the goodness to God, and added that it is related in the Bible to Powerlessness, for the poor cannot protect themselves.

The biblical call to stand with the poor is rooted in the Incarnation.

Ronald Sider's paper at the Consultation put it clearly:

"When God became flesh, he did not come as a wealthy Roman Imperialist or a comfortable Hellenistic intellectual. He was born in an insignificant, oppressed province controlled by Imperialist Rome. Too poor to bring a lamb, the normal offering of purification, his parents brought two pigeons to the temple. Carpenters were presumably not the poorest folk in Galilean society, but they were hardly wealthy either. And when he entered his public ministry, he gave up even a carpenter's comforts. 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head' (Matthew 8:20).

"His identification with the poor and the weak was, he said, a sign that he was the Messiah. When John the Baptist asked if he was the expected Messiah, Jesus simply pointed to what he was doing. 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them' (Luke 7:22). Certainly he preached to the rich, but it was his preaching to the poor that validated his Messiahship. Indeed his identification with the poor went so far that he said his followers would meet him in the lives of the poor. 'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink-truly I say to you, as you did to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:35-40). We begin to fathom that teaching only when we see that it was spoken by the Almighty One who had become flesh in the person of a homeless Galilean evangelist."

Since it is those who have power who are able to redistribute to the poor, God's call to rulers must be to use their power to defend the poor, not to exploit them. The church of God therefore must stand with God and the poor against injustice. The words of Amos 5:11 are appropriate in many countries today: "You trample on the poor and force him to give you corn ... You oppress the righteous and take bribes, and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts." One important way that the church stands with the poor is by evangelizing new Christians who are then taught all that Jesus and the Scriptures say about justice for the poor.

In standing with the poor, the church is finding today in some countries that it must suffer with them, but despite that risk it must call on rulers to fulfil their God-appointed role.

Christians have a lot more thinking to do on what it means that God champions the poor and powerless. But at the very least it means that he opposes injustice, corruption and exploitation, and that he calls on his people to stand with him. As the Lausanne Covenant said: "Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ."

The Consultation did not stop there, however. Many of us might feel helpless to do anything to change the world's distribution of wealth and resources, but we can do something about our own relative wealth and affluence. So the Consultation participants said: "We have struggled to open our minds and hearts to the uncomfortable words of Jesus about wealth. 'Beware of covetousness' he said, and 'a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions' (Luke 12:15)." This saying of Jesus introduces the parable of the rich fool, who pulled down his barns to build bigger ones on the basis of taking life easy, eating, drinking and being merry. It is a typical warning of Jesus about the danger of riches. For wealth nearly always brings worry, vanity and false security; and often leads also to the oppression of the weak, and indifference to the suffering of the needy.

Another of Jesus' sayings which is to use Ronald Sider's phrase is "largely ignored by rich Christians," is Matthew 19:23,24; "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

The corollary is clear, as the Apostle Paul taught (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:10; Ephesians 5:5): namely that the greedy also will be excluded from the kingdom. The reason Paul gives is that greed or covetousness is idolatry. Participants debated a great deal the extent to which the gospel has special relevance, or offers special blessing to the poor. By a wide consensus they agreed that the kingdom is a free gift offered to all, but it is especially good news to the poor because they benefit most from the changes it brings. This wording does not exclude an affluent person from entering the kingdom and receiving God's free gift of salvation; what it stresses is that the poor may benefit more from the gospel because of the social changes as well as the spiritual wealth which it brings them.

While Jesus still calls some people ... to follow him in a life-style of total, voluntary poverty, he calls all his followers to two attitudes which derive from the heart of the gospel: One is an inner freedom from the seduction of riches (for it is impossible to serve God and money), and the other is sacrificial generosity. This last thought is based on 1 Timothy 6:18, which urges God's people "to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share." This paragraph concludes by moving on from the teaching of Jesus to his example. There can be no greater incentive to simplicity of life-style than this. The motivation and model for Christian generosity are nothing less than the example of Jesus Christ himself, who (quoting from 2 Corinthians 8:9) though rich, became poor, that through his

poverty we might become rich.

The example of Jesus was one of a costly, purposeful self-sacrifice; and since we are to imitate him in all things, we should therefore seek his grace to follow him in this also. It is not impossible to do so while still living in middle-class suburbia in Western cities, far removed from the needs of even the relatively poor in our own communities. Even in such an environment as this, Christians can seek freedom from the seduction of riches and become committed to sacrificial generosity. Nevertheless, such a solidarity with the poor would be at a distance, and probably therefore without any passion. So aware of this anomaly, participants at the Consultation resolved to get to know poor and oppressed people by deliberately cultivating friendships with them in order to learn issues of injustice from them, to seek to relieve their suffering, and to include them regularly in our prayers. Prayer for their evangelization and prayer for an end to suffering and injustice are both crucial elements of this resolution to pray for the poor. In this resolution there is an important combination of knowledge, compassion, commitment to action and regular intercessory prayer. Anything less would be an inadequate response by rich Christians to the poverty of much of the world.

Perhaps our motivation could also come from such a passage as Philippians 2:4-8: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross." Ronald Sider comments: "Imagine what would happen if one-tenth of the Christians in the world would really start to follow the model of the Incarnation. They would cast aside self-centered concern for their own affluent way of life and instead focus on the needs of the poor and unevangelized. They would identify as fully with those who need the gospel and those who need food and justice as did Jesus who took the form of a slave. Hundreds of thousands would move physically to contexts of oppression or unevangelized cultures and sub-cultures. Millions more would support those who move, by identifying through radically transformed life-styles that enabled them to share sacrificially in the work of evangelism and justice. Looking not only to our own interests, but also to the needs of others in our kind of world, will mean a costly imitation of the God of the poor who cared so much for us that he became flesh as a homeless Galilean to die for our sins, and gave us a perfect model of incarnational identification with those who yearn for food, justice and reconciliation with God."

4. The New Community

We rejoice that the church is the new community of the new age, whose members enjoy a new life and a new life-style. The earliest Christian church, constituted in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, was characterised by a quality of fellowship unknown before. Those Spirit-filled believers loved one another to such an extent that they sold and shared their possessions. Although their selling and giving were voluntary, and some private property was retained (Acts 5:4), it was made subservient to the needs of the community. "None of them said that anything he had was his own" (Acts 4:32). That is, they were free from the selfish assertion of proprietary rights. And as a result of their transformed economic relationships, "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34).

This principle of generous and sacrificial sharing, expressed in holding ourselves and our goods available for people in need, is an indispensable characteristic of every Spirit-filled church. So those of us who are affluent in any part of the world, are determined to do more to relieve the needs of less privileged believers. Otherwise, we shall be like those rich Christians in Corinth who ate and drank too much while their poor brothers and sisters were left hungry, and we shall deserve the stinging rebuke Paul gave them for despising God's church and desecrating Christ's body (1 Corinthians 11:20-24). Instead, we determine to resemble them at a later stage when Paul urged them out of their abundance to give to the impoverished Christians of Judea "that there may be equality" (2 Corinthians 8:10-15). It was a beautiful demonstration of caring love and of Gentile-Jewish solidarity in Christ.

In the same spirit, we must seek ways to transact the church's corporate business together with minimum expenditure on travel, food and accommodation. We call on churches and para-church agencies in their planning to be acutely aware of the need for integrity in corporate life-style and witness.

Christ calls us to be the world's salt and light, in order to hinder its social decay and illumine its darkness. But our light must shine and our salt must retain its saltiness. It is when the new community is most obviously distinct from the world—in its values, standards and life-style—that it presents the world with a radically attractive alternative and so exercises its greatest influence for Christ. We commit ourselves to pray and work for the renewal of our churches.

Is our response to life-style questions to be only personal and individual, or does the church of God have a corporate responsibility in the matter? Participants in the Life-style Consultation emphasised the responsibility of the church, because of what it is: "We rejoice that the church is the community of the new age, whose members enjoy a new life and a new life-style." The stress on "newness" must not be overlooked. Jesus ushered in a new age, founded a new community and made possible a new life. Inevitably, then, the new life of the new society in the new age will express itself in a new life-style. At the beginning it certainly did. The starting point for looking at how the church should function is the earliest Christian church, constituted in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. This necessitates a close look at the Acts of the Apostles, which these days is sometimes dismissed as providing any example or standard of Christian community life. The Consultation was not willing to treat the Acts in that fashion. It points out that the church in Jerusalem was characterised by a quality of fellowship unknown before. These Spirit-filled believers loved one another to such an extent that they sold and shared their possessions. Most Christian fellowships and local churches today, do not even consider the possibility that this might relate to them today.

Dr. Rene Padilla of Argentina commented on Acts 5: "Neither the Acts of the Apostles nor the New Testament Epistles ever referred to the 'love communism' of the early Jerusalem church as normative for the church throughout the ages. It is quite clear, however, that the concern for the poor was for the early Christians an essential aspect of the life and mission of the church." The Consultation agreed that although their selling and giving were voluntary, and some private property was retained (Acts 5:4), it was made subservient to the needs of the community. "None of them said that anything he had was his own" (Acts 4:32). That is, they were free from the selfish assertion of proprietary rights. And as a result of their transformed economic relationships, "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34).

So the Consultation avoided making the Acts 2, 4 and 5 experience a precise normative standard for today's church, but stressed instead the principle exemplified in it: This principle of generous and sacrificial sharing, expressed in holding ourselves and our goods available for people in need, is an indispensable characteristic of every Spirit-filled church. This challenge cannot be dodged. So those of us who are affluent in any part of the world—and here the Consultation was reminded that even in many poor countries of the Third World there are levels of affluence which some Christians enjoy—are determined to do more to relieve the needs of less privileged believers. To do this in any corporate way, local churches feeling convicted about their affluence would need to search out and establish personal relations with churches in their own or other countries which are experiencing poverty. Bridges need to be built.

Otherwise, if this does not happen in our generation, with the world already shrunk to a global village, and communications satellites bringing us the world's troubles in an instant, we shall be like those rich Christians in Corinth who ate and drank too much while their poor brothers and sisters were left hungry, and we shall deserve the stinging rebuke Paul gave them for despising God's church and desecrating Christ's body (1 Corinthians 11:20-24). Instead, following the church in Corinth through to a later stage reflected in 2 Corinthians 8:10-15, we should seek *to resemble them ... when Paul urged them out of their abundance to give to the impoverished Christians of Judea "that there may be equality."* This was a beautiful demonstration of caring love and of Gentile-Jewish solidarity in Christ.

In the same spirit, bearing in mind the cost of running the church's affairs and even the cost of bringing together the International Consultation on Simple Life-style, participants felt obliged to say something about this area of church life: we must seek ways to transact the church's corporate business together with minimum expenditure on travel, food and accommodation. We call on churches and para-church agencies in their planning to be acutely aware of the need for integrity in corporate life-style witness. The Consultation saw this area as one of increasing accountability.

Returning to the basic imagery of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13-16), this paragraph continues: Christ calls us to be the world's salt and light, in order to hinder its social decay and illumine its darkness. But our light must shine and our salt must retain its saltiness. Must this only be done by individuals acting personally? Or by small Christian communities living in isolation from the main stream of church life, however encouraging it may be that such communities are springing up in Western cities today? The Consultation felt that every local church should be reaching towards the style of life of the New Testament church. For it is only when the new community is most obviously distinct from the world—in its values, standards and life-style—that it behaves most obviously as the church of God and also presents the world with a radically attractive alternative to the greed, covetousness and materialism that are the marks of most world communities today. It is then, too, that the church as God's new community exercises its greatest influence for Christ. In other words, the future is in the hands not so much of individuals committing themselves to a simple life-style, as of the church as a whole. Participants of the Consultation therefore committed themselves to pray and work for the renewal of their churches.

5. Personal Life-style

Jesus our Lord summons us to holiness, humility, simplicity and contentment. He also promises us his rest. We confess, however, that we have often allowed unholy desires to disturb our inner tranquility. So without the constant renewal of Christ's peace in our hearts, our emphasis on simple living will be one-sided.

Our Christian obedience demands a simple life-style, irrespective of the needs of others. Nevertheless, the facts that 800 million people are destitute and that 10,000 die of starvation every day make any other life-style indefensible.

While some of us have been called to live among the poor, and others to open our homes to the needy, all of us are determined to develop a simpler life-style. We intend to reexamine our income and expenditure, in order to manage on less and give away more. We lay down no rules or regulations, for either ourselves or others. Yet we resolve to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing and housing, travel and church buildings. We also accept the distinction between necessities and luxuries, creative hobbies and empty status symbols, modesty and vanity, occasional celebrations and normal routine, and between the service of God and slavery to fashion. Where to draw the line requires conscientious thought and decision by us, together with members of our family. Those of us who belong to the West need the help of our Third World brothers and sisters in evaluating our standards of spending. Those of us who live in the Third World acknowledge that we too are exposed to the temptation to covetousness. So we need each other's understanding, encouragement and prayers.

The Life-style Consultation was a response to the declaration of the Lausanne Covenant that "those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism." In 1974, when these words were framed, the life-style debate was only just beginning. By 1980, there was a much greater consciousness of the underlying biblical mandate for it.

So the Consultation was conscious of Jesus' summons to holiness, humility, simplicity and contentment. It was Gottfried Osei-Mensah who, using the New Testament metaphor of an athlete in a contest, called on us to "admonish and help one another get rid of those things that stand in the way of godly and upright character, behaviour and relationships." And Mark Cerbone, the assistant co-ordinator of the Consultation, pointed out that Christian simplicity embraces much more than our economic life-style. It describes an inner attitude of humble joy and peace.

Dr. Rene Padilla showed us that to be free of an inner drive for riches leads to a deep contentment (Philippians 4:11-13), which Paul went on to commend in church leaders: "There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world" (see 1 Timothy 6:6-8).

So it was necessary for us, in the light of the scriptural teaching on holiness, to confess ... that we have often allowed unholy desires to disturb our inner tranquility. This is not to say that simple life-style is to be pursued only for reasons of inner peace, by reducing the covetousness which breeds worry and tension (Luke 12:15), but rather that without the constant renewal of Christ's peace in our hearts, our emphasis on simple living may be purely a matter of economics and even politics, and so be one-sided.

It was agreed that the Scriptures contain many warnings against greed and materialism (e.g., Luke 1:52-53; Mark 10:23f; Luke 12:13-20,33; Matthew 13:22, 6:24), and therefore that our Christian obedience demands a simple life-style, irrespective of the needs of others. But the other side of the coin was very much in our minds because of the presence with us of some very poor Third World participants. So the statement makes an important addition: the facts that 800 million people are destitute in various countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and that about 10,000 die of starvation every day are appalling statistics which seldom hit the headlines or disturb the affluent but should weigh heavily on the Christian conscience, make any other life-style indefensible. For when the facts of destitution are known, ignorance can no longer be pleaded as an excuse. The cries of the poor can no more be suppressed.

Some of those attending the Consultation knew that they had been called to live among the poor and so to identify with them and to share their poverty. Others did not have this vocation, but knew that they had been rather called to open their homes to the needy, which in the privatised suburban society in which so many Christians live is not always easy to do. Whatever our precise calling-and a diversity of callings was recognized—all of us were determined to develop a simpler life-style. Such a determination has to be related, of course, to our present standard of living, so "simple life-style" is a relative term. Nevertheless, our society in the West is so hooked on rising affluence that any decision to reduce life-style will mark us out from our neighbours and friends, and may be regarded by them as irrational and foolish.

How to begin simplifying our life-style? First, we determined to re-examine our income and expenditure, in order to manage on less, not in order to save more for a "rainy day," but in order to give away more.

The dangers of legalism and regimentation, however, as Ronald Sider rightly warned us, must be avoided. "There is no one life-style that is right for all Christians in one country, or even for all Christians in one congregation. There must be room for the variety and diversity so gorgeously displayed in the creation." So the Consultation declared: we lay down no rules or regulations, for either ourselves or others.

Yet we must be practical and concrete, or the life-style debate will be just "word and speech" rather than actions (1 John 3:18). So we resolved to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living (am I buying it for self-image or status reasons?), clothing (how many outfits do I need?) and housing (will the new setting help make my thinking and living more biblical?), travel (is the journey really necessary?) and church buildings (motives for construction and renovation need to be examined with ruthless honesty).

How is this kind of self-examination going to happen? Why would people sit down and consider changes which may appear to be against their own self-interest? "Only" one participant told the Consultation, "as the Holy Spirit guides individual Christians as they prayerfully seek his will by studying both the Bible and the newspaper, in the context of Christian community." A congregation could decide at an annual business meeting that in the course of the next two years it would try to help each member of the congregation discover what life-style God wills for them. An extended process of Bible study on topics like the biblical perspective on the poor, justice, evangelism, etc., could be initiated. So could in-depth analysis of the facts of evangelistic opportunity and world poverty. As well as sermons and Sunday School classes, people would ideally also be in weekly fellowship groups where each person's or family's expenditure on clothes, housing, transportation, etc., could be examined with gentle thoughtfulness and with the goal of developing a specific budget that each person or family would consider faithful in today's world.

As we do this, we will accept the distinction between necessities and luxuries, for we will not despise the gifts God has given us (1 Timothy 4:4-5) nor the obligation to be responsible for our own family (1 Timothy 5:8). We will learn to discern between creative hobbies and empty status symbols, for we recognise both the legitimacy of recreational activities on the one hand, and on the other the warnings of Jesus about the hunger for honour and deference (Mark 12:38,39), as in the Pharisees who "loved praise from men more than praise from God" (John 12:43). How to discriminate between modesty and vanity and between occasional celebrations and normal routine can be a matter for discussion with people outside the family circle as well as within it. A supportive context for living this kind of life-style is indispensable. Sociologists have discovered that people tend to accept the beliefs and values of the people with whom they live. There was a very strong temptation in the West in the 1970s to keep up with the trends, but Christians should be able to perceive the difference between the service of God and slavery to fashion. These five distinctions deserve to be pondered carefully. They show that the Consultation had no mind to reject the good gifts of a good Creator, and no wish to impose on themselves or others a drab or joyless asceticism.

Not that the distinctions can always be made with ease. Where to draw the line requires conscientious thought and decision by us, together with members of our family. Moreover, we will always need to offer others the option of seeing their obedience in different terms. Legalism is pernicious, and judging others for following a different life-style would be a denial of the body of Christ.

One difficulty is that what may seem to Christians in developed countries a dramatic voluntary reduction in life-style may appear to believers in less developed countries a pathetically small step. So those of us who belong to the West need the help of our Third World brothers and sisters in evaluating our standards of spending. Think of how the discussion would change if your family's discussion of a new car took place in the presence of a Christian family from rural Brazil who not only had never possessed a car but were surrounded by poverty, malnutrition and starvation! During the Consultation, it was suggested that we need processes in the world-wide body of Christ by which poor Christians in the inner city and the Third World can help affluent Christians discuss the question of faithful life-styles. Perhaps missionary agencies could develop structures to enable an individual congregation in an affluent context to become a sister congregation to a local church in a developing country. Sister churches would then exchange information about relative budgets.

Such an arrangement would thus be reciprocal. It could be a challenge to poorer churches too, lest they desire the affluence which Western churches are trying to shed. A person does not have to be rich to be guilty of coveting, which Jesus warned us so clearly against (Luke 12:15). So participants from developing

countries asked for the following sentence to be added: Those of us who live in the Third World acknowledge that we too are exposed to the temptation to covetousness. So then, white and black, North and South, developed and less developed, we need each other's understanding, encouragement and prayers.

6. International Development

We echo the words of the Lausanne Covenant: "We are shocked by the poverty of millions, and disturbed by the injustices which cause it." One quarter of the world's population enjoys unparalleled prosperity, while another quarter endures grinding poverty. This gross disparity is an intolerable injustice, and we refuse to acquiesce in it. The call for a New International Economic Order expresses the justified frustration of the Third World.

We have come to understand more clearly the connection between resources, income and consumption: people often starve because they cannot afford to buy food, because they have no income, because they have no opportunity to produce, and because they have no access to power. We therefore applaud the growing emphasis of Christian agencies on development rather than aid. For the transfer of personnel and appropriate technology can enable people to make good use of their own resources, while at the same time respecting their dignity. We resolve to contribute more generously to human development projects. Where people's lives are at stake, there should never be a shortage of funds.

But the action of governments is essential. Those of us who live in the affluent nations are ashamed that our governments have mostly failed to meet their targets for official development assistance, to maintain emergency food stocks or to liberalise their trade policy.

We have come to believe that in many cases multi-national corporations reduce local initiative in the countries where they work, and tend to oppose any fundamental change in government. We are convinced that they should become more subject to controls and more accountable.

Nothing that has happened in the six years since the Lausanne Congress has lessened the sense of "shock" which poverty and injustice, the Covenant said, gave to the participants. So there is a critical need for Evangelical Christians to take part in the international justice debate. The Third World participants at High Leigh were keen to examine what some regard as the new imperialism, namely some forms of international aid and development, and in particular the role of multi-national corporations in foreign countries. For still one quarter of the world's population enjoys unparalleled prosperity, while another quarter endures grinding poverty. This gross disparity is an intolerable injustice, using that term not in its legal sense but in the sense of distributive justice—an idea very strongly expressed both in the Old Testament (Isaiah 58:6-12) and in the New (2 Corinthians 8:13-15). Christians, knowing the facts, should refuse to acquiesce in this inequality. Though not everybody at the Consultation supported the call for a New International Economic Order, yet all saw that it expresses the justified frustration of the Third World in the face of economic inequality.

British economist Dr. Donald Hay, aided by another economist George Monsma, Jr., of the U.S.A., led the Consultation to a clearer understanding of the macro-economic issues involved in the international development question. Dr. Hay drew from the Bible's principles of creation the concept of sufficient resources for mankind: "We would not expect to find that world shortages of resources are the source of international inequality. We do not deny that man can and does waste resources; but, properly used, there should be enough for all." So all mankind, as trustees of the world's resources, must use them efficiently and equitably. Thus participants at the Consultation came to see and understand more clearly, both in Scripture and in fact, the connection between resources, income and consumption. People often (that is, in some countries) starve because they cannot afford to buy food, (sometimes because the price is fixed at arbitrary or inflated levels for political reasons beyond their control), because they have no income (unemployment is often due to government policies), because they have no opportunity to produce (being powerless to affect the macro-economic policies determined elsewhere), and because they have no access to power (those of us in democratic countries find it hard to appreciate how powerless people feel under other forms of government).

Concern was expressed at the continued "imperialism" not only of Western countries but also of some Western missionary societies. Sometimes there is little attempt to come to grips with the culture and tradition of the country in which missionaries are working; worse, sometimes there is no attempt to hand over decision-making to whatever indigenous church has grown up locally. We therefore applaud the growing emphasis of Christian agencies on development rather than aid. For the transfer of personnel and appropriate technology from a more- to a less-developed country, as happens under a developmental model, can enable people to make good use of their own resources, while at the same time respecting their dignity. This dignity has a biblical base, stemming from mankind's creation in the image of God, and Christian missionaries should be the first to guard and promote it.

The Consultation went on to express a clear resolve to contribute more generously to human development projects. The emphasis here is on the word "human." Far more important even than the development of agriculture and industry, is the development of human potential. One central aspect of human development is the emergence among the poor of a new sense of worth, dignity and power to produce change. Nothing can better create this new sense of self-worth than a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Hence, evangelism and development should be closely related. Nor dare we forget that development requires funds. It is scandalous that development should ever be hampered by lack of money. Where people's lives are at stake, there should never be a shortage of funds.

This emotional appeal should be heard by governments as well as by Christian congregations and individuals. For the action of governments is essential. As George Monsma had pointed out at the U.S. Life-style Consultation the previous April, the net flow of government aid from the high income Western donors was \$13.6 billion in 1975, or an average of .36% of their combined GNPs. Monsma said: "Not only is the level of transfer low, the aid has often not been directed in such a way as to help the poorest of the world's people. Most of the aid goes to middle-income countries rather than to the poorest countries." Consequently, those of us who live in the affluent nations should be ashamed that our governments have mostly failed to meet their targets for official development assistance, to maintain emergency food stocks or to liberalise their trade policy in a way which positively discriminates in favour of the poorest countries. Dr. Hay said: "The explanation of international inequality is to be found in the workings of international economic systems. One suspects that most economic actors in the developed countries are blissfully unaware of the consequences of the system, and find the whole question very puzzling." Dr. Hay saw the move to reduce life-style as useful, but only a palliative. "The real difficulty is the system. . . . * [W]e must be prepared to bring pressure to bear on the system itself to redress the injustices. This means getting involved in the politics of the situation."

Multi-national corporations have come under fire in World Council of Churches circles. Perhaps this is one reason why there has been some reluctance among Evangelicals to criticise them. But the advice of the economists present was clear; and participants felt, in the end, convicted that our voice should be added to those of others. Not that we were blind to the positive benefits which multi-national corporations have brought in some cases (a Christian business man who works for one was at pains to point this out). Nor that we felt it just to make an unqualified or blanket condemnation of them. Our statement was carefully framed: We have come to believe that in many cases multi-national corporations reduce local initiative in the less developed countries where they work. Dr. Hay explained it: "The arrival on the scene of a highly efficient multi-national producer will tend to eliminate indigenous firms. Local firms will be happy to sell out to the multi-national. But inability to compete will stunt the growth of local enterprise, and in particular local savings may diminish as profitable opportunities are not available to national entrepreneurs."

Another major problem caused by multi-nationals is that they tend to oppose any fundamental change in government in countries where they are working. As Dr. Hay said: "It has been well established that such corporations show a distinct preference for stable regimes. In practice, this means economies with strong governments of the political Right. Any hint of a radical government seeking to promote social and economic reform will divert investment to other economies."

It was on account of these deleterious effects of the operation of multinational corporations that participants in the Life-style Consultation became convinced that such corporations should become more subject to controls and more accountable. This is, in fact, widely recognised. Thus Evangelicals joined their voices to other Christian commentators on the international scene. Their conviction arose directly from the concerns of the conference. It lifted the sights of the participants beyond the personal life-style issue to the very serious economic and political questions which are also involved.

7. Justice and Politics

We are also convinced that the present situation of social injustice is so abhorrent to God that a large measure of change is necessary. Not that we believe in an earthly utopia. But neither are we pessimists. Change can come, although not through commitment to simple life-style or human development projects alone.

Poverty and excessive wealth, militarism and the arms industry, and the unjust distribution of capital, land and resources are issues of power and powerlessness. Without a shift of power through structural change, these problems cannot be solved.

The Christian church, along with the rest of society, is inevitably involved in politics which is "the art of living in community." Servants of Christ must express his lordship in their political, social and economic commitments and their love for their neighbours by taking part in the political process. How, then, can we

contribute to change?

First, we will pray for peace and justice, as God commands. Secondly, we will seek to educate Christian people in the moral and political issues involved, and so clarify their vision and raise their expectations. Thirdly, we will take action. Some Christians are called to special tasks in government, economics or development. All Christians must participate in the active struggle to create a just and responsible society. In some situations, obedience to God demands resistance to an unjust established order. Fourthly, we must be ready to suffer. As followers of Jesus, the Suffering Servant, we know that service always involves suffering.

While personal commitment to change our life-style without political action to change systems of injustice lacks effectiveness, political action without personal commitment lacks integrity.

The time spent at the Consultation on international economics, together with the personal experiences of delegates from such countries as Brazil, Zaire, Tanzania and India, led to the conviction that the present situation of international social injustice is so abhorrent to God that a large measure of change is necessary, and that Christians should participate in the move towards change.

Evangelical commitment to socio-political action arouses so much misunderstanding and suspicion, that we felt it necessary to begin with two negative points, for the sake of clarification. First, we were not cherishing that "proud self-confident dream" which the Lausanne Covenant so decisively rejected, namely "the notion that man can ever build a utopia on earth" (para. 15). No, we emphatically do not believe in an earthly utopia. God's kingdom will be consummated as a gift from heaven, not as a human achievement. Nevertheless, if we are not utopians, neither are we pessimists about the place of man in God's world (Psalm 8:5) or about God's power to change him (2 Corinthians 5:17). Apart from such scriptural encouragements, history furnishes many examples of Christians influencing society and securing a greater measure of social justice. Change can come, although not through commitment to simple life-style or human development projects alone. Personal and philanthropic endeavours are not enough; political action is essential to achieve fundamental structural change.

There are several fundamentally different ways of analysing society. The Marxist view emphasises the class struggle, and expects the proletariat to exercise collective power on a massive scale "if necessary, by violence. But the Life-style Consultation saw the issue differently, namely in terms of the biblical concept of power and powerlessness, which also seemed to accord with the facts of international inequality. Poverty and excessive wealth, militarism and the arms industry (inserted here, but not argued at any length), and the unjust distribution of capital, land and resources are issues of power and powerlessness. Sympathy and compassion will not be enough to change the situation. Without a shift of power through structural change these problems cannot be solved.

As Donald Hay reminded us: "Though not necessarily entailing the use of violence, the option of collective power nevertheless offends Western ears which are attuned to hearing of less heroic ways of influencing political decisions and changing social structures. Such people ought to reflect on the fact that Jesus' crucifixion was historically due to the stand he took on behalf of the materially and spiritually dispossessed against the vested self-interests of the controllers of a lucrative theocratic state." This may not be theologically the heart of the Cross, but it reflects an important part of the historical reality.

Quite apart from the search for justice the Christian Church, along with the rest of society, is inevitably involved in politics, which is after all only "the art of living in community." The choice is either involvement or withdrawal. Which was the choice of our Master? The Life-style participants believed that Jesus' life is a model of involvement.

So servants of Christ must express their obedience to his lordship in their political, social and economic commitments by taking part in the political process. This may mean rethinking commitments from the past which were more a family and cultural inheritance than emerging from a Christian perspective. Love and justice meet in this process, for Christians must also express their love for their neighbours by active involvement in politics. Otherwise they cannot be serious about oppressive and alienating social structures which perpetuate poverty and injustice. How then can Christians, who in many countries are a tiny minority and themselves feel powerless, contribute to change?

The starting point for the Christian is to pray for peace and justice, as God commands (Luke 18:1-8 and 1 Timothy 2:1-4). David Wells has written: "Prayer is the refusal of every agenda, every scheme, every interpretation that is at odds with the norm as originally established by God. It is itself an expression of the unbridgeable chasm that separates Good from Evil, the declaration that Evil is not a variation of Good but its antithesis." Is there not a relationship between our lack of prayer for justice and our loss of anger at the level of social witness?

Secondly, we will seek to educate Christian people, and others willing to listen who may well join us, in the moral and political issues involved. Some of this will be unlearning, as well as learning, for we each bring our background and personal prejudice. Just as Jesus refused to have the kingdom of God identified with any political cause of his day, so we will need to keep our political options open and free ourselves from past commitments. The result of this education process will be to clarify Christian people's vision and raise their expectations.

Thirdly, Christians fired with a passion for social justice will take action. But it will not always be of the same kind. The model for all, as David Watson told the Consultation, should be the Incarnate Jesus. He quoted a Korean missionary in Pakistan, who said: "I think it is significant that today's image of the Christian missionary endeavour from the Asian receptor's point of view is an image of comfort and privilege. Hence, Asians tended to reject the missionary and misunderstand his message."

Some Christians "and there were some at the Consultation in significant government posts" are called to special tasks in government, economics or development. Other influential tasks could have been added: the Public Service, the communications industry, and foreign affairs. Those in such positions will need support from Christian friends who understand the pressures they are under and the choices they have to make.

But all Christians must participate in the active struggle to create a just and responsible society. This is the heart of the Life-style Consultation. It is not just a superficial "trimming of the fat" of an affluent life-style in the cause of moderation. It is a deliberate, personal commitment to social and political action towards the creation within our own country, and internationally, of a just and responsible society. Suddenly, the issue has become very serious indeed.

The Consultation was not agreed whether the church as a corporate body should engage in such action, or whether the results are better when Christians act individually. In most Western countries, it now appears that political leaders listen courteously to church spokesmen, while doing little or nothing to modify their policies. There are, of course, some outstanding exceptions in countries today where human rights are curtailed, and where churchmen have raised their voices and their prayers against injustice. In some situations obedience to God demands resistance to an unjust established order, and we would expect that any Christian taking this course of action would think and pray long about it, concluding only reluctantly that Caesar has overstepped the mark (Matthew 22:21). The Consultation avoided supporting violent overthrow of revolution, but recognised that passive resistance to unjust laws is an authentic way for Christians to act in some circumstances. This is not to deny that the emphasis of Scripture is on the duty of submission to rulers. But there are biblical examples of civil disobedience "e.g., Daniel (in Daniel 6) and Peter and John (in Acts 4:19). Such resistance is ethically justifiable only when obedience to God demands it.

The result of such resistance, and in many cases of even raising a voice, will be that we must be ready to suffer. Hunger for righteousness and being persecuted for righteousness' sake commonly go together, as Jesus implied (Matthew 5:6,10). Moreover, if one member suffers, all suffer together (1 Corinthians 12:26), and a sense of this belonging is now beginning to spread around the world as the media quickly tell us what happens to Christians and others in the cause of justice. Our prayer books and our newspapers should be side by side.

It ought not to surprise us when God's people suffer, for as followers of Jesus "the Suffering Servant" we know that service always involves suffering. Gottfried Osei-Mensah called this "a painful and costly penetration of every segment of society with a message that will both hurt and heal, convict and convert; but a message of hope, holding forth a convincing alternative to the life of sin and rebellion against God." This suffering was forecast in the Old Testament as the Messiah's lot (Isaiah 50:6) and it is natural to expect his followers to experience the same.

A Christian penetration into social and political structures calls for balance: for we recognise that personal commitment to change our life-style without political action to change systems of injustice lacks effectiveness. Personal commitment needs social action to authenticate it. But likewise political action without personal commitment lacks integrity; and without that, the Christian is "a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). As John Stott has said: "We become personally culpable when we acquiesce in the status quo by doing nothing." Thus the Consultation pointed in two directions "personal commitment and political action" and urged a balance between the two.

8. Evangelism

We are deeply concerned for the vast millions of unevangelized people in the world. Nothing that has been said about life-style or justice diminishes the urgency of developing evangelistic strategies appropriate to different cultural environments. We must not cease to proclaim Christ as Savior and Lord throughout the world. The church is not yet taking seriously its commission to be his witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

So the call to a responsible life-style must not be divorced from the call to responsible witness. For the credibility of our message is seriously diminished whenever we contradict it by our lives. It is impossible with integrity to proclaim Christ's salvation if he has evidently not saved us from greed, or his lordship if we are not good stewards of our possessions, or his love if we close our hearts against the needy. When Christians care for each other and for the deprived, Jesus Christ becomes more visibly attractive.

In contrast to this, the affluent life-style of some Western evangelists when they visit the Third World is understandably offensive to many.

We believe that simple living by Christians generally would release considerable resources of finance and personnel for evangelism as well as development. So by our commitment to a simple life-style we recommit ourselves wholeheartedly to world evangelization.

The Lausanne Committee's involvement in the Consultation on Simple Life-style arose from the sentences in the Covenant which have already been quoted more than once. They relate the need to develop a simple life-style to three Christian duties—"the quest for justice, the work of relief, and evangelism. Consequently, the second stated goal of the Consultation was "to reflect on the biblical basis and the contemporary need for a simple life-style for evangelism, relief, and justice."

The Consultation has been criticised for concentrating on relief and justice at the expense of evangelism. It has even been suggested that this paragraph of the Commitment headed "Evangelism" was tacked on almost as an appendix. We believe this to be an unjust criticism. In all the preparations for the Consultation, the evangelistic dimension of its goals was repeatedly remembered and emphasised. Dr. Harvie Conn produced pre-Consultation notes for a series of 15 Bible Studies, which were entitled "World Evangelization and the Simple Life-style," each of which specifically related the issues of poverty, justice and life-style to evangelism. Then Dr. Sider's keynote address, whose title was "Living more Simply for Evangelism and Justice," asserted that there were two basic reasons for a simple life-style, namely: "the desperate poverty of hundreds of millions, and the existence of billions who need to hear the Gospel." Throughout the Consultation one sensed the heartthrob of participants for evangelism. Evangelism was no appendix for them.

So, when the Evangelical Commitment came to be drafted and debated, a clear balance was achieved. The first four sections lay a theological foundation, summarising biblical teaching on creation and stewardship, possessions and the church. The next four apply this teaching to four areas of Christian duty, namely: personal life-style, relief and development, justice, and evangelism, before the conclusion looks forward and focuses our attention on the Lord's return. We do not think, therefore, that the Consultation's statement can justly be accused of imbalance. The convictions expressed in Section 8 on "Evangelism" are entirely genuine and an integral part of the Commitment as a whole.

"Imagine what would happen," Ronald Sider dreamed, "if one-tenth of the Christians in the world would really start to follow the model of the Incarnation. They would cast aside self-centred concern for their own affluent way of life and instead focus on the needs of the poor and unevangelized. They would identify as fully with those who need the gospel, and those who need food and justice, as Jesus, who took the form of a slave."

We are deeply concerned for the vast millions of unevangelized people in the world. It would be a terrible distraction if the life-style debate going on in the churches round the world were to turn our attention away from the primary need to proclaim the Good News. And nothing that has been said about life-style or justice diminishes the urgency of developing evangelistic strategies appropriate to different cultural environments. The participants, who were all signatories of the Lausanne Covenant, knew that they were substantially agreed about the contents of the gospel, especially the truths of the Atonement and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the continuing necessity to preach this message throughout the world and call people to Christ. So we did not need to re-debate the substance of the gospel. We were also conscious that at the Willowbank Consultation careful thought had been given to the complexities of cross-cultural evangelism and how to relate the gospel to the setting. Different strategies are suitable in different cultural environments. But whatever the strategy, we must not cease to proclaim Christ as Saviour and Lord throughout the world. In our gathering of First and Third World Christians, conscious both of the many competing responsibilities facing the church and of the somewhat hesitant hold which the church has on its message, it was nevertheless agreed that the church is not yet taking seriously its commission to be Christ's witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

So the call to a responsible life-style must not be divorced from the call to responsible witness. David Watson used the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles as a model of powerful evangelism and as a clue to why our evangelism makes comparatively little impact: "No one can read the first few chapters of Acts without noticing that the amazing sharing of their lives and possessions so demonstrated the love of God amongst them that others were drawn to Jesus Christ almost irresistibly." The credibility of our message is seriously diminished whenever we contradict it by our lives. How many times have we undone the influence of our words by careless living or contradictory standards?

Although the Apostle Paul was able to rejoice whenever Christ was proclaimed, even from ulterior motives (Philippians 1: 18), yet we have no right to use this fact as an excuse for hypocrisy. On the contrary, any dichotomy between what we say and what we are diminishes our credibility in the eyes of our hearers and makes them less willing to listen to us. The Commitment goes on to identify three examples of inconsistency, all of which relate to our economic attitudes and life-style.

First, it is impossible with integrity to proclaim Christ's salvation if he has evidently not saved us from greed. This brings us back to the heart of the gospel we profess and to the biblical doctrine of salvation. Salvation is more than forgiveness; it includes deliverance from sin's slavery, including covetousness. This is a strong challenge to materialist churches in the West, as well as to individuals. How important to us are our clothes, car and house as status symbols?

Secondly, it is impossible with credibility to proclaim Christ's lordship and sovereignty if we are not good stewards of our possessions. To preach Jesus as Lord is a fundamental part of the gospel (e.g., 2 Corinthians 4:5). But if we preach him thus, people have a right to see his lordship in our lives. Do we see our goods as belonging to us, or as on loan from the Lord of the Universe, whose trustees we are? This attitude makes all the difference in the world to our possessiveness, and to our desire to accumulate more things for ourselves.

Thirdly, we cannot proclaim his love with authenticity if we close our hearts against the needy. If we are indifferent to the plight of the destitute, how can we claim to have God's love in us? And if God's love is not in us was our firm belief at the Consultation that when Christians care for each other (John 15:12, Galatians 2:10) and for the deprived (1 John 3:17, Matthew 25:34-36), Jesus Christ becomes more visibly attractive. For then what we offer is not just a message, but a Person, And if the life of that Person is seen in and through our living, how much more will he attract the outsider!

As a result of strong representation from Third World church leaders who have observed for years a series of visiting evangelists, mainly from North America, the Consultation inserted this terse but strong statement: "In contrast to the gospel which is authenticated by consistent living and caring, the affluent life-style of some Western evangelists when they visit the Third World is understandably offensive to many. It should be noted that only "some" culturally and economically insensitive evangelists are thus criticised; it was recognised that there are exceptions.

This section of the Commitment goes on to give another fundamental reason for simpler living: We believe that simple living by Christians generally would release considerable resources of finance and personnel for evangelism as well as development. Tightening our belt in order either to bolster our self-righteousness or to put money in the bank is not what the Consultation was all about. It was about sharing our savings with a needy world. So by our commitment to a simple life-style we recommit ourselves wholeheartedly to world evangelization.

What a difference it would make if affluent churches took world evangelization seriously! Ralph Winter has demonstrated that Christians in the U.S. give \$700 million each year to mission agencies—a figure equal to what Americans spend on chewing gum, and one-seventh of the amount they spend on pet food. Dr. Winter calculates (as an example) that if just the few million American Presbyterians were willing to live on the salary of the average Presbyterian minister in the U.S. (hardly an austere poverty existence!) two billion extra dollars would become available. To our shame, who live in affluence, Christians who are far poorer are also far more generous. Ralph Winter instanced The Friends' Missionary Prayer Band of South India, which has 8,000 members who support 80 full-time missionaries in North India. "If my denomination," he comments, "with its unbelievably greater wealth per person, were to do that well, we would not be sending

500 missionaries but 26,000." The same mathematics can be extended across the developed world, but the impact is the same: a simpler life-style would release new resources for the world-wide evangelistic task, which could double and then redouble the human resources available to take the Good News into all the world.

9. The Lord's Return

The Old Testament prophets both denounced the idolatries and injustices of God's people and warned of his coming judgment. Similar denunciations and warnings are found in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus is coming back soon to judge, to save and to reign. His judgment will fall upon the greedy (who are idolaters) and upon all oppressors. For on that day, the King will sit upon his throne and separate the saved from the lost. Those who have ministered to him by ministering to one of the least of his needy brothers and sisters will be saved, for the reality of saving faith is exhibited in serving love. But those who are persistently indifferent to the plight of the needy, and so to Christ in them, will be irretrievably lost (Matthew 25:31-46). All of us need to hear again this solemn warning of Jesus, and resolve afresh to serve him in the deprived. We therefore call on our fellow Christians everywhere to do the same.

The natural starting point for thinking about God's judgment on exploitation and oppression is the prophets Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. These and other Old Testament prophets both denounced the idolatries and injustices of God's people (e.g., Micah 6:1-8; Isaiah 56:1, 58:6-7) and warned of his coming judgment (e.g., Hosea 9; Amos 6, 9:8). Similar denunciations and warnings are found in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 23:25,26; 1 Corinthians 6:10, Romans 1:29, James 2:1-7, Revelation 18).

Although scientific humanism has eroded the historic faith of the church in the Second Coming of Christ, Evangelical Christians maintain their confidence in this biblical truth: The Lord Jesus is coming back soon to judge, to save and to reign. We do not know the details about the manner of his return, but we are certain about its purpose—salvation and judgment. His judgment will fall on the greedy, who are idolaters (e.g., Colossians 3:5), and upon all oppressors (James 5:1-6). Consequently, although some will welcome his coming, others will have good cause to fear.

For on that day, the King, whose kingly rule is available now to poor and rich, will sit upon his throne and separate the saved from the lost. Here the Commitment draws heavily on both the imagery and principles of Matthew 25:31-46, the classic passage of the sheep and the goats. Those who have ministered to Jesus by ministering to one of the least of his needy brothers and sisters will be saved. There is no avoiding the thrust of Jesus' teaching at this point. He was not, of course, saying that good works of love can earn salvation, but rather that they are the necessary evidence of it, for the reality of saving faith is exhibited in serving love.

It is not only what is said here that is significant; it is also what is avoided. The Commitment does not say that a person finds Christ or finds faith in the process of service. Instead, it carefully says that our Christian profession is made visible by loving acts and relationships which serve the deep needs of other people, and that without these our profession lacks authenticity.

As God is pleased with such service, so we must face the fact of his displeasure with the opposite. Those who are persistently indifferent to the plight of the needy, and so to Christ in them will be irretrievably lost (Matthew 25:31-46). How many exploitive landlords in comfortable pews on Sundays should quake to hear those words! How many industrialists using sweated labour! How many middle-class churchmen who give preference to those with the status wealth brings! How this teaching of Jesus threatens all of us to whom greed is an attraction and covetousness an everyday experience!

Since no one is exempt, rich or poor, in a developed or under-developed country, all of us need to hear again this solemn warning of Jesus, and resolve afresh to serve him in the deprived. We therefore call on our fellow Christians everywhere to do the same.

Our Resolve

So then, having been freed by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, in obedience to his call, in heartfelt compassion for the poor, in concern for evangelism, development and justice, and in solemn anticipation of the Day of Judgement, we humbly commit ourselves to develop a just and simple life-style, to support one another in it and to encourage others to join us in this commitment.

We know that we shall need time to work out its implications and that the task will not be easy. May Almighty God give us his grace to be faithful! Amen.

The statement concludes with a personal resolve which we ourselves (who were participants in the Consultation) felt able to make, although we called on others to join us in it. Our Commitment is not to be viewed as a new and oppressive bondage, however. On the contrary, we could make it only because we knew we had been freed by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we sensed an obligation to make it. This obligation arose partly out of obedience to Christ's call, partly out of heartfelt compassion for the poor, partly out of concern for evangelism, development and justice, and partly out of solemn anticipation of the Day of Judgement. These four incentives combine to make a powerful motivation to develop a just and simple life-style. To be sure, we need time to work out the implications, and we are well aware that the task will not be easy. Yet, however far-reaching the implications and hard the task, our Commitment is now made for the world to see. Only God's grace can keep us faithful.

Appendix A In Attendance

Those attending the Consultation were divided into three categories, "participants," "consultants," and "visitors." The "participants" were those who were either signatories of the Lausanne Covenant or persons fully committed to its framework and understanding of mission. "Consultants" were persons invited because they had some special contribution to make to the meeting. They were in general sympathy with the Lausanne Covenant. The one or two "visitors" were persons who, having read the Covenant, were willing to take part constructively in a Consultation which was committed to it.

In listing them below, however, we have placed them in alphabetical order and have not felt it necessary to indicate to which category each belonged.

Tokunboh Adeyemo, Nigeria/Kenya	Simon Ibrahim, Nigeria	Alan Nichols, Australia
John F. Alexander, U.S.A.	Neuza Itioka, Brazil	Lennart Nordin, Sweden
Pedro Arana, Peru	Arthur Johnston, U.S.A.	Gottfried Osei-Mensah, Ghana/Kenya
Ramez Atallah, Egypt/Canada	L. de Jong, Holland	Rene Padilla, Argentina
Jorge Atencia, Colombia	Pippa Julings, England	Clark Pinnock, Canada
Kwame Bediako, Ghana	Sione Kami, New Guinea	Tacito Pinto, Brazil/Italy
Ulrich Betz, West Germany	Israel Katoke, Tanzania	M.G. Reuben, India
Wayne Bragg, U.S.A.	Graham Kerr, U.S.A.	D. John Richard, India
Robinson Calvalcanti, Brazil	Andrew Kirk, England	Bong Rin Ro, Taiwan
Donald Cameron, Australia	Alan Kreider, England	Colleen Samuel, India
John Capon, England	Daniel Lam, England	Vinay Samuel, India
Mark Cerbone, U.S.A.	Fritz Lampartner, West Germany	Waldron Scott, U.S.A.
Harvie Conn, U.S.A.	Gregorio Landero, Colombia	Ronald Sider, U.S.A.
Donald Dayton, U.S.A.	Daryl LaRusso, U.S.A.	Kevin Smith, Australia
Robert DeMoss, U.S.A.	Barnabas Lee, Korea	John Stott, England
Oeistein de Presno, Norway	Magnus Maim, Sweden	Gordon Strachan, Scotland
Linda Doll, U.S.A.	Vishal Mangalwadi, India	Morris Stuart, England/Australia
Ron Elsdon, Ireland	Ted Martin, Jr., U.S.A.	Chris Sugden, England/India
Leif Engedal, Norway	Tad Maruyama, Japan	Dick Van Halsema, U.S.A.
Rob von Essen, Holland	Charles Massey, U.S.A.	J. A. Emerson Vermaat, Holland
Richard Foster, U.S.A.	Bruce McConchie, Australia	Jim Wardwell, U.S.A.
John Gladwin, England	Peter Meadows, England	David Watson, England
Jorgen Glenthoj, Denmark	Karl-Heinz Michel, West Germany	Dolphus Weary, U.S.A.
J. van der Graff, Holland	Alex, John Mitchell, England	Waldo Werning, U.S.A.
Paul Hampsch, U.S.A.	Mitsubishi, Japan	Derek Williams, England

Donald Hay, England
Horst-Klaus Hofmann, West Germany
Robert Hughes, U.S.A.

George Monsma, Jr., U.S.A.
B. Howard Mudditt, England
Jeremy Mudditt, England

David Wong, Singapore
Florence Yeboah, Ghana
Rolf Zwick, West Germany

Appendix B The Papers and Their Writers

Day 1

- (1) *Living More Simply for Evangelism and Justice* - Ronald J. Sider
- (2) *Simple Life-style and Evangelism* - David Watson

Day 2

- (3) *A Just and Responsible Life-style: An Old Testament Perspective* - Vinay K. Samuel & Christopher Sugden
- (4) *New Testament Perspectives on Simple Life-style* - C. Rene Padilla

Day 3

- (5) *The International Socio-Economic-Political Order and Our Life-styles* - Donald A. Hay

Day 4

- (6) *Simple Life-style from the Perspective of Church History* - Tadataké Maruyama
- (7) *The Church as a New Community Which Fosters a Simple Life-style* - Gottfried Osei-Mensah

The Planning Committee

Co-ordinator

Ronald J. Sider

Assistant Co-ordinator

Mark Cerbone

Ramez Atallah
Saphir Athyal
David J. Bosch
Frederick Catherwood
P. T. Chandapilla
Harvie Conn
Leighton Ford
Donald E. Hoke
Israel Katoke
Andrew Kirk
Festo Kivengere
Barnabas K. Lee
Samuel Moffett
George Monsma, Jr.
Rene Padilla
Russ Reid
John Stott

Appendix C Bibliography

For all the papers and testimonies from the Consultation itself, see Ronald J. Sider, ed., *Life-Style in the Eighties: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-style* (London: Paternoster, 1981.)

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*The original document it read, "The real difficulty is the system. If we are prepared to bring pressure to bear on the system itself to ity, we must be prepared to bring pressure to bear on the system itself to redress the injustices. This means getting involved in the politics of the situation." The LCWE Website editors changed this typographical error to what they considered the most likely intended text.

LCWE | P.O. Box 2404 | South Hamilton, MA 01982 | USA