

For My Neighbor's Good

*World Hunger and Structural Change
based on a report prepared for*

Christian Reformed Church Synod 1979

by

Task Force on World Hunger

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Preface

For My Neighbor's Good was prepared by the Education Department of the Christian Reformed Church in response to a recommendation of the 1979 Synod. That recommendation authorized the publication, in popular, study format, of the second report of the Task Force on World Hunger. The subject of that report is world hunger and structural change. Members of the task force were Paul G. Schrottenboer, chairperson; Eugene Rubingh, recording secretary; John De Haan, Calvin B. De Witt, Vernon Ehlers, Joel Huyser, Louis Van Ess, and Jacob Vos. The Synod of 1979 adopted the report of the task force, commending its members for "treating a very complex subject in a concise and compact report."

For My Neighbor's Good should be read as a supplement to the first report of the task force, *And He Had Compassion on Them*. This earlier report, adopted by the Synod of 1978, sought to "articulate a biblical perspective on the problem (of hunger), to probe some basic causes. . . to motivate and enable the people of God to assume their full responsibility to give the

hungry people of the world something to eat” The 1978 task force requested that they be given an additional year to “prepare a biblically directed statement on the structural and systemic problems causing world hunger and to develop appropriate responses to these problems.” *For My Neighbor’s Good* is that statement, reorganized and edited so that it might better serve as a resource text for study and for planning action within the church. The contents of the actual report to synod have not been substantially altered. The recommendations of the 1979 Synod regarding this report are printed in the Appendix.

The task force concluded their report to the Synod of 1979 with these words:

The task force found the two-year study on world hunger to be challenging, compelling, and gratifying. We have been challenged by the Word of our Lord who in his compassion on the multitude told his disciples to give them food to eat and himself gave them food for both body and soul. We have been compelled to seek for appropriate responses to the urgent global problem of world hunger. We have been gratified by the response of so many of God’s people as they seek to alleviate the hunger of teeming millions in the world.

We are gratified also with the many responses to the call for observance of a Day of Prayer and Fasting, and would remind both synod and the churches that the decision of the Synod of 1978 was that this be an annual observance.

In the preparation of the report on structural change that follows, we have been greatly helped by a large number of knowledgeable persons in the academic, pastoral, political, economic, and business fields. Without their help, we could not have carried out our task. For their assistance we express our hearty appreciation.

How To Use This Book

For My Neighbor’s Good should be used as a supplement to a broader study on hunger, *And He Had Compassion on Them*. That first study was intended to raise awareness of the hunger problem, to give individuals a deeper sense of their own responsibility toward the hungry of the world, and to help congregations organize to meet this problem. *For My Neighbor’s Good* seeks to create an awareness of structural and systemic problems which cause world hunger and to develop ways that individuals and congregations can respond to these structural problems.

Although based on a report to the Christian Reformed Synod of 1979, *For My Neighbor’s Good* can be profitably used by study groups from other churches, especially those within the Reformed tradition. In any case this book is designed not merely for study, but also for action. The sessions after each chapter are intended not only to increase the readers’ understanding of the problems of structures and systems, but also to lead to a deeper sense of

personal responsibility and finally to action that will someday result in changed structures—and a more equitable distribution of the world's food.

The work of the study-action group will be most effective if the majority of the group's members were also involved in the *And He Had Compassion on Them* program. Those who were will be familiar with the recommendations of that first group; they will know what actions the congregation has already taken to alleviate world hunger; and they will know how to effectively translate new recommendations into specific actions. This is not to say that new study group members should be discouraged; but such persons should read *And He Had Compassion on Them* and familiarize themselves with both the recommendations and the actions which came from the study.

For good discussion, the group should not exceed twenty persons. A larger group may deprive members of opportunities to express their views. Best would be a special diverse group of those in the congregation concerned about the hunger question and intent on taking concrete action. Business men and women are especially important to this group since much of the material deals with policies and practices of North American corporations. Members should be willing to commit themselves to reading the appropriate chapter before each session, including the study session suggestions. At least one hour will be needed for each session; ideally up to two hours should be available.

The group which studies this book should organize itself with the intention of eventually reporting its findings and recommendations for action. Chapter 5 is an action session, especially designed to help the group formulate specific recommendations. These recommendations should be reported, in the same manner as those made by the earlier study group, either directly to the larger body of the church or to a responsible ruling body such as the consistory/session or diaconate. Ideally, there should be a maximum of diaconal involvement both in the organization and leadership of this group, and in the action program that develops from it.

If your congregation has appointed a hunger-coordinator or someone in a similar position, we recommend he or she be the leader of the study sessions. The leader should guide the study sessions, selecting from the material at the end of each chapter as time, interest, and purpose dictate. One of the first tasks of the leader should be clarifying the relationship between this study and *And He Had Compassion on Them*; he or she should also make group members aware of the action nature of the present study. He or she should appoint a secretary to prepare the final report for the designated church body.

The leader is well-advised to note the sensitivity of his or her position. Discussion must not be allowed to deteriorate into expressions of personal prejudice and/or judgment. This book—like its predecessor—is not intended to encourage people to point an accusing finger at others in the church; it is intended, instead, to help the church reform those structures which contribute to world hunger.

Important note to leaders: Session four calls for reports from group members on the Christian organizations listed at the back of this book. Members should write to the various groups for any additional information which may be of interest to the study group. To make

sure such information arrives in time, assignments should be made before or during the first session.

1. A Cup of Cold Water

In his book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* Ronald J. Sider tells this story:

A group of devout Christians once lived in a small village at the foot of a mountain. A winding, slippery road with hairpin curves and steep precipices without guard rails wound its way up one side of the mountain and down the other. There were frequent fatal accidents. Deeply saddened by the injured people who were pulled from the wrecked cars, the Christians in the village's three churches decided to act. They pooled their resources and purchased an ambulance so that they could rush the injured to the hospital in the next town.

Then one day a visitor came to town. Puzzled, he asked why they did not close the road over the mountain and build a tunnel instead. Startled at first, the ambulance volunteers quickly pointed out that this approach (although technically quite possible) was not realistic or advisable. After all, the narrow mountain road had been there for a long time. Besides, the mayor would bitterly oppose the idea (He owned a large restaurant and service station halfway up the mountain).

The visitor was shocked that the mayor's economic interests mattered more to these Christians than the many human casualties. Somewhat hesitantly, he suggested that perhaps the churches ought to speak to the mayor. After all, he was an elder in the oldest church in town. Perhaps they should even elect a different mayor **if** he proved stubborn and unconcerned. Now the Christians were shocked. With rising indignation and righteous conviction they informed the visitor that the church dare not become involved in politics. The church is called to preach the gospel and give a cup of cold water. Its mission is not to dabble in worldly things like social and political structures.

Perplexed and bitter, the visitor left. As he wandered out of the village, one question churned round and round in his mind. Is **it** really more spiritual, he wondered, to operate the ambulances which pick up the bloody victims of destructive social structures than to try to change the structures themselves?

Like the Christians in that village, all of us are involved in structures. Many of these structures are not far-off institutions or systems, but everyday realities. Think, for example, of the ways in which we introduce ourselves: "I'm a student at Dordt College. . . I live in Alberta. . . I am a welder. . . I own stock in General Motors. . . I belong to the First Christian Reformed Church." It is with structures such as these that this study is concerned. Although "systems and structures" have many different meanings, we will use them nonscientifically and interchangeably to describe those processes which govern the interaction of people, and

those institutions and patterns through which people deal with each other. As we've used the terms, *systems* has a dynamic quality, while *structures* suggests stability.

Origin and Purpose

Structures are a basic component of life. They shape us as we shape them. The family is a good example. Through it we have life and a place in the world and through it we give life and make a place for others. We cannot define ourselves apart from that structure. All of us are sons or daughters; many of us are wives or husbands, fathers or mothers. This structure shapes our days: when we come home, how we spend our resources, and what we do for recreation. Just as structures define individuals, individuals define structures. In the family, for example, the parents define where the family will live, what they will eat, and how they will be transported. The children may define where the family goes on vacation.

In addition to the family, a host of other structures shape our lives, such as schools, governments, businesses, trade systems, health care programs, and taxation systems. Particularly relevant for poverty and world hunger are the structures of international trade, food production and distribution, foreign aid, development of mineral resources, and the like. Some of these will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

But first, where do all these structures come from? They are human creations that have been developed to meet human needs and desires. A man and a woman decide to form a family, and in so doing, they follow the models of their culture. People in a certain geographical area form a national government. A group of adults organize a school. People who have something to sell and those who wish to buy set up certain patterns of trade. Structures do not exist apart from people. People create them and people shape them. Also, all the systems mentioned in these examples—family, government, school, and trade—have not sprung up overnight. They have come about as the result of many small acts by people over an extended period of time.

There is more to systems and structures, however, than human activity. By creating structures, people are responding to the order God has placed in creation. God's own evaluation, "...behold, it was very good," suggests that his creation expressed order and harmony. Everything conformed to God's wise and loving design. Thus Genesis 2 presents the picture of Adam classifying his environment, naming the animals, and rejoicing in the wholeness and interaction of God's creation.

Structures, therefore, are not only human creations, designed to meet certain needs and desires, but also a human response to God's design. The more clearly people understand and appreciate God's design, the more wholesome their structures can be. At the same time, people who do not understand often pervert God's design and create an evil structure.

The purpose of a structure is to give order and stability to human life and its processes. No human act is performed in a vacuum, without precedent or history; people develop patterns of acting and of dealing with each other, patterns that have a certain consistency and that conform to an agreed-upon standard. Structures that are patterned after God's design enable people to effectively relate to each other as husband and wife, employer and employee,

citizen and government, church member and consistory, buyer and seller, and so on. Ideally, each such structure provides the experience of freedom and the acceptance of responsibility as people carry out their tasks.

Influence

Structures are influential beyond measure, powerful beyond description. They organize and often control our society and even the values we cherish. The systems of food production, processing, distribution, trade, and even food-aid govern what we eat and what we do not eat, who will be well-fed and who will go hungry. It is important to take a close look at the often subtle influence of systems before we can begin to transform them. Samuel Escobar in *Christian Mission and Social Justice* vividly illustrates the enormous influence systems have on human life. He tells the story of how, early in this century, a mission society bought some land in Bolivia on which to build a school and a hospital for Aymara peasants. The land came with two hundred-fifty Aymara serfs. For some thirty years a many-sided ministry yielded so little fruit that the missionaries were driven to despair. Then they realized that their position as landowners and serf masters was exerting a greater influence than their ministry of Christian love. They decided to change the “system” They abolished serfdom, giving each serf family their own plot of land. After the land reform (the structural change), the missionary work really began to blossom.

Most systems are not inherently good or evil, but they do have tremendous power for good or evil. A system rooted in and expressive of God’s love can provide freedom, encouragement, and security to its members as they follow God’s calling. But the same system, nurtured by motives other than love for God and neighbor, encourages the growth of evil. The Old Testament monarchy is a good example. Under kings who were committed to the Lord, the monarchy flourished and was characterized by wisdom and justice. But under kings who were not committed to the Lord, the whole system turned bad. Priests and prophets began working for their own personal benefit; judges took bribes; and “the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites” (I Kings 14:24, NIV).

Bad systems encourage people to misuse power and to confuse the system with the will of God. For example, Christians endorsed such evils as the slave trade, child labor, and racism as manifestations of a larger system to which they were committed. Such systems can be powerful barriers which drive Christians to despair. As the poet of Psalm 11 cries out, “if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

The power of systems for either good or evil is underscored by their resistance to change. This resistance is so strong that some people believe most basic systems can be changed only by violence. Two characteristics of systems account for this strong resistance. First, most systems have originated as a result of many acts over a long period of time, and, second, they were formed to give *stability* to human dealings and relationships. Because systems are not formed overnight, they can hardly be changed overnight. Because they function to give stability, they hardly welcome change. This resistance to change can become devilishly strong if the structure functions to the advantage of the stronger. Witness the resistance to the

abolishment of the slave trade, child labor, and racism. Witness also the opposition of suburbanites to aid for those who live in the inner city.

The Food System

Before we consider the structures involved in world hunger, it will be useful to look at the various parts of the system through which food is produced and consumed. There is more than one type of food system operating in the world. Subsistence agriculture, for example, is a system designed to provide all the goods required by the farm family, usually without any significant surplus for sale. We will focus, however, on the system with which we are most familiar, the one in which some people produce food and sell it to others in exchange for valuable items (such as money), unprocessed natural resources (such as wood or metals), handcrafted goods, and so on. Although the medium of exchange can vary, we will, for ease of discussion, refer to it as money.

The diagram which follows identifies some major components of the food system. The two most obvious components are *production* and *consumption*. The *means of production* include labor, capital, and favorable growing conditions. Other important components link those who produce with those who consume. The first of these is *processing*, which prepares food for *distribution*. The distribution component of the system, such as donkey, wagon, truck, or train, brings the food to the marketplace. Here it is sold and bought (a process usually referred to as *marketing*) before it is ready for consumption.

A CUP OF COLD WATER

Structures are necessary for the effective operation of this food system. They link the producer of food with its consumer. For example, at the outset a bank, or some other financial institution, provides farmers with capital to purchase seeds, implements, and fertilizers with which they can produce food. And, after food is produced, some kind of transportation network is needed for distribution. So the question is not whether structure is needed, but rather whether existing structures practice stewardship in their use of agricultural resources.

The next chapter takes a critical look at some of the problems in the structures that affect the food system. Since this must necessarily be a brief and incomplete look, we suggest that you refer to other materials (particularly those of Sider, Mooneyham, and Simon) listed in the Bibliography.

Study Session

First

Begin your first session by reading Exodus 1:8-13 and 3:7-12. Reflect on the awesome power structure (Egypt) which Moses and the slave nation of Israel faced. Changing that system must have seemed as remote as changing the mud of the brickyards into the gold of Pharaoh's palace. Today, when we think of our own part, however small, in changing and using the power structures of our time to aid the poor and the hungry, we may still wonder with Moses: 'are *we* that we should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?'

Like Moses, we may need to hear God’s encouraging reminder and gentle rebuke: “But I will be with you.”

Second

Discussion of the following questions should help launch your study and get you into some of the issues raised in chapter 1:

- a. Does God’s design for the world simply *suggest* certain structures or actually *require* them?
- b. Think of three structures (systems) which have the greatest impact on your daily life. List them in the order of their influence. Compare your list with those of others in your study group. Would you agree that the purpose of these structures is “to give order and stability to human life”?
- c. “Most systems are not inherently good or evil,” says chapter 1. Can you think of a few which *are* inherently evil and therefore in need of drastic reform or removal?
- d. As the opening parable of chapter 1 suggests, has the Christian church in general been content to operate an ambulance service rather than change the structures which do the damage in the first place? Explain.
- e. Looking at the food chain described in chapter 1, can you draw any preliminary conclusions about where the chain would be most susceptible to breakdown in a poverty-stricken country?
- f. Do you agree with the quotation from Simon (see opening question in chapter 1)? If so, how do you account for the Christian’s lack of involvement in public policy, though he/she may privately be *very* involved? Is each individual responsible for the wealth and power God has given to others, or only for responsible stewardship of what God has given to him or her? Explain.

Third

To close today’s session, read the Scripture from which the chapter title is taken (Matt. 25:31-40). The closing prayer could reflect this familiar, but tremendously significant passage.

Reminder to leaders: Have you asked group members to contact Christian organizations as suggested in the material preceding this chapter?

2. Harvest Home

Bringing the harvest home—or shipping it abroad—simply cannot be done these days without the “food system” we looked at in the previous chapter. Like it or not, the food system is an economic fact of life; without it, we would all be starving. Like all systems, it can be abused, and it is. In some not so mysterious ways, the harvest seems to pour from the

fields of the world into the mouths and pockets of the rich. This chapter will explain how this happens. We'll take a close look at the problems associated with the food system—in North America, in low-income countries, and internationally.

North America

One million acres—that's how much land is lost for agricultural purposes each year in the United States, according to the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Increasingly, agricultural lands in North America are being purchased, not by those primarily interested in farming, but by those seeking capital gains. Such owners, operating under existing tax structures and in the absence of soil conservation regulations exploit the land for its highest short term yield at the expense of its long term agricultural productivity. They eliminate grassy drainage ways, abandon contour farming, with a view toward more production per unit of effort. And when erosion intensifies, the land becomes suitable only for its owners' intent: urban development. Present tax structures, regulations, and economic incentives allow and even encourage this deterioration of farmland.

Present structures also, with a few notable exceptions, fail to channel residential, commercial, and industrial development to nonagricultural land. The result is a continuing and largely unnecessary loss in land suitable for agriculture.

Another food system problem in North America is the outpricing of cereal grains.

Cereal grains are some of the least expensive foods produced in North America. The farmer knows this all too well. And yet it seems that by the time they reach the kitchen table, they have become very expensive. The present structures of advertising and selling colorfully packaged and highly processed cereal grains to both children and adults produce such an expensive product that the price we pay for one box of cereal is nearly enough to buy a whole bushel of grain.

Still another food system problem in North America is the way in which donated grain is sometimes hindered from shipment abroad. This problem is not limited to the United States or Canada; our illustration, however, deals with the Canadian Wheat Board, a quasi-governmental organization, which governs the production and sale of wheat. The Wheat Board, which itself ships grain to poor countries, stood in the way of Christians who were working to get donated grain to hungry people overseas. The Mennonite Central Committee, after arranging for donations of large quantities of wheat, found they were unable to ship the wheat from Ontario to the seaports because the Canadian Wheat Board had jurisdiction over all rail cars. None were available for grain shipment except for the Wheat Board itself. In this case other structures—the Mennonite Central Committee and the Christian Farmers' Organization of Ontario—succeeded in changing the Canadian Wheat Board policy so that their shipments could go through. But this is only one example of how our attempts to feed the hungry can get bogged down in red tape.

Low-income Countries

Labor, capital, and favorable growing conditions are all necessary to produce food for market. But farmers in the poorer countries have difficulty obtaining these means. Structures

which provide capital, such as banks, cooperatives, and governmental agencies, may not exist in these low-income countries, making it possible only for those who already have capital to produce for the marketplace. Or, if such structures do exist, they may, as in North America, provide loans only to those farmers who have sufficient collateral. Thus the farmers with larger operations, including more land, more buildings, and more machinery, obtain loans which are denied to the small farmer. (This problem has recently been recognized, and the World Bank is taking some initial steps to provide credit for the small farmer.)

Even in areas where credit is available, many farmers lack the knowledge to get it. Basic to producing crops for market are the knowledge and skill necessary for procurement of credit, for selection of crop varieties, for crop management, and for marketing food products. In some countries University Extension Services have served these needs. But in the low-income countries these services are either not available or they primarily serve large farms that are limited to cash crops for export. Structural change in systems that provide knowledge and develop skills for the smaller farmers is seriously needed. Field workers, such as CRWRC (Christian Reformed World Relief Committee) agriculturalists, have recognized the need for these agricultural extension services, as have some international agencies. These agencies are taking some initial steps to solve this problem.

These first two structural problems, lack of credit and lack of information, lead to a third. When the small farmers in low-income countries either can't or don't know how to borrow capital, they frequently sell their land to large corporate farms. Such farms develop sufficient collateral for substantial loans and thus frequently prosper. But with increased size and sophistication of operations comes the recognition that more money can be made on cash crops for export to the richer nations than on food crops for the local poor people. Thus the large farms continue to expand and convert land into producing crops for export. This lessens the local food production base. To make matters more complicated for the local poor, large farms frequently mechanize their operations, causing increased unemployment and migration into already overcrowded cities. Ironically, the national government often welcomes such growth in export crop production since export taxes often provide a major part of their operating revenues.

The low wage agricultural workers earn is still another problem which plagues the food system in low-income countries. Obviously, money is needed to purchase land to raise food or to simply purchase the food outright. Money is available through employment, but in low-income countries that employment is typically in low-paying agricultural jobs. Although many employers maintain that wages paid are fair by local standards, they do not even begin to compare with what we in North America consider to be minimal. More seriously, wages that are reasonable by local standards sometimes do not even buy enough food to feed a family. Mooneyham (*What Do You Say to a Hungry World?*) illustrates the low wage situation for Juan Diaz, a coffee worker in El Salvador. Here is his story:

[Juan] and three of his five daughters spend long, hard days in the coffee fields of Montenegro. On a good day, Juan picks enough coffee to earn \$1.44; his daughters make a total of \$3.35. With \$1.24 of these wages, Juan and his wife, Paula, are able to feed their

family for one day. In bad times, Juan and his daughters make as little as \$56 a day—less than half the money they need just to eat.

At the end of the six-week coffee season, Juan does odd jobs around the hacienda—provided there is work to be done. He can earn about \$90 there for an eight-hour day. Paula de Diaz supplements her husband's earnings by working in the market. When people have enough money to purchase the tomatoes, cabbages and other homegrown vegetables she sells, Paula can make about \$.40 a day.

The hacienda provides a simple dwelling for the Diaz family, but no modern facilities. Candles are used for light, water has to be hauled from a well and furnishings consist of little more than a table and chairs. Aside from a dress and shoes for each of the girls during the coffee season, the family has not been able to buy much else in the last five years. Whatever money doesn't go for food is spent for visits to the health clinic (\$.40 each time), the high interest on bills at the company store, expenses for the children in school, and for the burial of Juan's father, who died last year.

"You know, I look forward to a better life for my children," Juan says. "I dream that if it is possible—if I can possibly afford it—my children will not follow in my footsteps, that they will break out of this terrible way of life. But the money problems we face every day blot out those dreams. I feel bad, nervous, I don't sleep nights worrying about how I'll get something for them to eat. I think and think but don't find any answers. I work hard: my wife and daughters do, too. We all do. But still we suffer. Why?"

The problem of low wages, such as the Diaz family faces, is compounded by another problem: land tenure. In low-income countries a person needs either land or money to gain access to food. Since wages are so low, wouldn't it be better for people to raise their own food? Probably. But in many areas of the low-income world, land simply is not available because land ownership patterns have kept land in the hands of an upper class. Or, in more modern times, corporate farming operations own all the land available for cultivation. To combat these problems, land reform programs have been implemented with varying degrees of success. For further information on this topic, refer to the publications of the Land Tenure Center, of which the anthology by Frykenburg is an example (Robert E. Frykenburg, ed., *Land Tenure and Peasants in South Asia Anthology of Recent Research*, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisc. 1976).

Finally, low-income countries face this problem of lack of incentive for food production. As the diagram in chapter 1 clearly shows, the means of production (labor, capital, and favorable growing conditions) are necessary to produce food. But of equal importance is the *incentive* to produce. Without this, even farmers who have the means will not produce. And, in a market economy, this incentive is largely economic. If there is little or no likelihood that farming will pay for the costs of production and provide at least a narrow margin of profit, there is no reason to even make the attempt to produce food for the market.

At this point structures again enter the picture. Governments of the poorer nations must deal not only with the problem of production by the local farmer, but also with the very immediate problem of providing its people with affordable food. If food prices exceed

affordable levels, the government must do one of two things to maintain stability: raise incomes or hold food prices down. For obvious practical reasons they often do the latter by establishing price controls. But while holding food prices down provides affordable food for the poor, it also takes away the local farmers' incentive to produce food. Due to the conflict between providing incentives to produce and achieving other national goals, such as maintaining political stability, most developing countries have one or more disincentives to agricultural production by their own farmers. These disincentives, as categorized by the U.S. General Accounting Office, are listed below:

1. *Low producer prices* discourage farmers from using more productive methods or otherwise expanding production.
2. *Export taxes* restrict production for export.
3. *Monetary and trade policies* make food imports attractive and discriminate against food and agricultural exports.
4. *Restrictions on moving food* from surplus to deficit areas discourage increased production in the producing areas.
5. *Institutional credit* generally is not available to small farmers, producers for export are favored over producers for domestic consumption, and problems in obtaining institutional credit force farmers to use more expensive forms of credit.
6. *Extension services* are generally inadequate, do not reach small farmers, and are applied to export crops rather than domestic consumption crops.
7. *Extreme disparities in farm sizes and forms of land tenure* deter increased production.

International

The food system is affected at the international level mainly by transnational corporations whose operations are conducted in two or more nation-states, and by national governments in their international relations. Trade, tariffs, and various aid programs are all involved. Although most of the problems with the international food system are recent, some, such as colonialism, are rooted deep in the past.

Many low-income countries were for a time colonies of Western nations. As colonies their economies and agriculture were reshaped to serve not the local needs for food, but rather the colonial interest in cash crops, such as tea, coffee, and spices. Although no longer political colonies, many of these nations have not been able to restructure themselves adequately to produce the food they need for local use. Land ownership patterns from colonial days persist, and knowledge of methods for growing simple food crops has been lost or severely altered. Reestablishment of precolonial land tenure patterns and regaining the lost arts of local food production may be difficult or impossible without outside help. Economic and social structures imposed upon colonies by Western colonial powers were not always consistent with the professed Christian beliefs of those powers. And, while the church did not explicitly endorse colonialism, it often tacitly approved. What the church once condoned emerges today in the form of hungry people often inequitably treated by their own governments and separated by a lapse of a century or more in the generation-to-generation transfer of the know-how of local food production. Thus the results of past structures remain with us today, and present the church with an opportunity for an appropriate and caring response.

A more recent problem concerns the exporting of food and aid from North America to needy countries. The major agricultural products in international trade are cereal grains, due apparently to their long-term storage and ideal transfer properties. And North America is their major exporter. This continent's role is possible because of its unusually favorable climatic and soil conditions as well as the conscientious efforts of the Canadian Wheat Board and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It appears that the United States and Canada will continue to have major roles in the world grain trade.

But Canadian and United States policies do not seem to reflect the need of low-income countries to produce their own basic food requirements. Various governmental agencies of both countries have often failed to recognize how their policies contribute to and encourage the disincentives to local agricultural production in low-income countries.

Stated briefly, current aid and trade programs often provide governments of poorer countries with cheap food during periods of *surplus production*. In the past, for example, in order to keep a market for United States farm products, the United States government has subsidized grain sales abroad at a loss when world supplies were high and prices low. This cheap food in turn often has made it unprofitable for farmers in poor countries to produce food for local consumption and has encouraged them to stop farming food crops altogether. To make matters worse, the United States has also reduced the amounts of food and subsidized sales of food when world supplies were low and prices high thus compelling these low-income nations to purchase grain in the world market when prices are highest.

Such programs, which serve to create markets for North American grain, are no doubt in the best short-term economic interest of Canada and the United States. But creating such markets is far too shortsighted a goal and one that is detrimental to the food production and financial status of poorer countries.

This is not to say, of course, that Canada and the United States cannot play an important role in alleviating hunger. During years of surplus production we promote and contribute toward buffer stocks of grains to be used during lean years. While we fall far short of being able to supply all the food needs of the world, we can use our remarkably favored conditions of good soil and stable climate to ease nations over periods of food shortage.

Of increasing importance and concern in the international food trade are the transnational corporations (TNC's)—firms which have operations in two or more countries. Transnational corporations typically have a number of subsidiaries in various countries throughout the world, each of which is incorporated under the rules and regulations of the country in which it is based. Thus within a given nation, a subsidiary looks very much like any other corporation at the national level. It frequently employs nationals in the day-to-day operations of its business and abides by the rules of the nation-state in which it is located.

The management of the TNC, however, is located elsewhere and consists of citizens of some developed country, such as the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, or France. Management decisions in the TNC's are made on the basis of the corporation as a whole, not on the subsidiary's performance. In other words, decisions on the use of labor, the investment

of capital, and the allocation of resources are made to advance the output of the corporation on a global scale.

Global objectives and national objectives are rarely consistent. Each nation-state, of course, prides itself on establishing its own national goals for its government, its land, and its people. And restrictions on corporations located within its territorial boundaries apply equally to national corporations and the subsidiaries of transnational corporations. However, the effects of such regulations can be dramatically different on the subsidiary than they are on the national corporation.

For example, suppose a nation-state increases interest rates on capital. This increase may deter the national corporations from investing capital, but it need not deter the subsidiary of a transnational corporation. The subsidiary can receive capital from its parent company at going global interest rates, thereby achieving a competitive advantage over the local corporation. Also in the pricing of items produced by subsidiaries and sold to other subsidiaries within the same corporation, transnational corporations can avoid some of the tax burden they would have to meet if they were only national in scope. For example, a TNC producing tractor engines in one of its subsidiaries might find that it is to its advantage to under-price that engine when selling it to another subsidiary in another nation-state, since by doing so it would avoid a major part of the import taxes in that nation-state. In addition, it might then show little or no profit in the production of that engine and thus avoid paying taxes on profits in the nation-state where it is produced.

We are not saying that transnational corporations are any more wicked than national ones. But while national laws or codes control national corporations to the benefit of society, no such laws or codes exist at the international level. The problem can only be met by cooperation among the nation-states of the world in developing an international code for the conduct of TNC's. Both the Organization of American States and the U.N. Center on TNC's are working to develop such a code in hopes of bringing TNC policy more in accord with the welfare of all nation-states. It appears a real possibility that such a code will become a reality in the near future. Its effectiveness in providing a base for the development of law governing TNC's in the various nation-states remains to be seen. Meanwhile, the power of TNC's in the world economic system is tremendous. Many TNC's have at their command more finances than most of the developing nations. Since the ultimate goal of these corporations is higher profit, they find it desirable and even necessary to control their pricing and marketing to take advantage of tax laws. Not to do so may be fatal to a corporation, since it would make it less competitive with other corporations. And since subsidiaries of TNC's are not set up in foreign countries for the purpose of philanthropy or for improving social welfare, there is no reason to expect these corporations to make profit-losing decisions for the benefit of the respective nation-states in which they are located.

Many TNC executives may find themselves caught in a situation in which they cannot, for reasons of corporate survival in the midst of less-enlightened competitors, act on their own beliefs in justice. These TNC executives might well support a fair code of conduct—one which would allow them to deal more justly with the people and nations they affect—if they weren't concerned that doing so would place them at a competitive disadvantage. And they

might also welcome pressure brought to bear on TNC's by Christian individuals and organizations concerned with justice and hunger.

Study Session

First

For your opening devotions read two contrasting passages on handling an abundant harvest. First, read the story of the rich fool (Luke 12:18-21) who stored the harvest for himself in bigger and bigger barns so that he could "eat, drink, and be merry," without a thought for others or for his God. Then read the story of Joseph (Gen. 41:29-36, 46-49, 53-57) who wisely stored the abundant harvest, not for himself, but so that "all the earth" could come and buy grain during times of famine.

Second

If the data in the chapter seemed a bit technical or overwhelming, you might first think of the "food system" in local, rather than global terms. Perhaps members of your group could search local papers for articles which deal with some aspect of the food system (e.g., difficulties the poor might have obtaining food at reasonable prices in your area, low wages paid to migrant workers, difficulty of obtaining working capital, etc.). Those who are unable to find articles might simply tell about instances with which they're familiar. In your discussion, try to isolate precisely where in the food chain the difficulty occurs, as well as what measures, if any, were taken to counteract the problem.

Keep the diagram of the food system (chapter 1) available for reference during your discussion today. A larger, homemade version of the chart would be useful in today's session.

Third

Discussion of the following questions should lead you to a deeper understanding of the issues raised in this chapter.

- a. Chapter 2 gives several examples of attempts to correct injustices in the food system—in North America, in low-income countries, and internationally. Review these attempts, discussing where in the food system they intervened and why they had at least a measure of success.
- b. Do some parts of the food system seem to be more of a hindrance to the equitable distribution of food than others? How important do you think food system problems are as compared to other causes of hunger, such as lack of education and overpopulation?
- c. Do you agree with Sider's statement (see opening quote) that "unless you have retreated to some isolated valley and grow or make everything you use, you participate in unjust structures which contribute directly to the hunger of a billion unhappy neighbors"? What do you think of Sider's conclusion that biblical Christians must "dare to call such structures sinful"?
- d. How would you respond to a Christian who, after reading chapter 2, said something like this:
"You know, I've got to believe the whole, complex food system is somehow stacked against the poor and the hungry. No doubt about it whatsoever. But what am I

supposed to do about it? I'm not about to take on some giant TNC and I really can't do a thing about grain shipments or the wages of that desperate coffee worker in El Salvador. If you're honest with me, you'll admit that you can't do much either. Not really. So I say, why not help the poor and hungry around here, locally. Leave that other complex and distant stuff to the politicians and big shots who *can* do something about it. It's stupid for any one person to get involved in every aspect of this hunger thing."

Fourth

To close the session, pray these verses from Psalm 82:

Almighty God,

'Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;

maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy;

deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Arise, O God, judge the earth;

for to thee belong all the nations!

Amen.

3. God's Gospel and the Gospel of Wealth

Systems and structures can be profoundly influenced by sin. Unless we are prepared to ignore the effects of mistrust and selfishness, anxiety and greed, we cannot blindly accept or continue any of our social structures; instead, we must test them for good or evil. A basic question we must ask of all systems is whether they allow love for God or one's neighbor to come to open expression. Systems which hinder or forbid that love are evil.

Both the Old and New Testaments give us specific criteria for evaluating structures which influence world hunger. The socio-economic life of Israel provides interesting examples To recognize the true intent of that nation's structures and to sense their liberating power, we must see them in the larger biblical setting of God ushering in the kingdom of love and righteousness John Stek, in a *Calvin Theological Journal* article, sums up this important context

In the Old Testament, salvation has to do with the redemption of man and the earth from the guilt, bondage, alienation, defilement and disorder that issue from man's rebellion and sin. It is God's act whereby he reconciles man with himself and restores the creation to its pristine goodness He covers man's guilt, he renews man as image-bearer; he breaks every bondage that holds men in thrall, thus freeing man once more to be his servant; he heals all alienation so that man's happy relationship with God, with man and with the creation is restored; he cleanses the earth of all defilement; and he puts an end to all disorder by renewing his perfect shalom Although God's act, it is not done in a moment but is worked out in history. It spans the whole course of history; as the vital nerve of history it gives history its inner dynamic, coherence and meaning And God takes man up into this mission as his servant and co-worker.

This summary accurately reflects the context in which God demanded that Israel establish structures to help the poor and hungry. The laws for gleaning, for interest-free loans, and for

the family's access to the land are good illustrations. The law of gleaning provided the poor with both the leftovers from the grainfields and the second pickings of fruit-bearing trees and plants (Lev. 19:9,10). Poor people who were willing to put forth the effort to harvest their own food would not go hungry.

The laws for interest-free loans guaranteed the needy access to money (Ex. 22:25-27). If someone without the basic necessities of life was forced to borrow money at interest—and gouging the poor is not new under the sun—Ms situation went from bad to impossible. But the Lord of grace commanded his people to be generous and to make loans available which would enable the poor both to satisfy their basic needs and to escape poverty. Instead of taking advantage of the poor, God's system helped them out of their distress.

The third law, which provided for a family's access to their land, was remarkable. It was designed to prevent any segment of the people from becoming permanently dispossessed. When Israel entered Canaan, the Lord gave each family a piece of land as their inheritance. That land represented both a God-given place to live and a livelihood. The only sale of the land permitted was actually a sale of the lease of the land for a number of years. The land could be redeemed at any time. If it was not redeemed, then in the year of jubilee it had to be returned to the family without cost (Lev. 25). This law, when obeyed, created a structure that made provision for two basic needs: security for the family and a periodic opportunity to make a new, debt-free beginning. At the same time, it restrained the accumulation of property in the hands of a few, with all the potential for evil which results from a radically uneven distribution of wealth. Thus the structure was clearly designed to assist the poor and to open up life again for them when they had fallen upon hard times.

Such social-economic systems as gleaning, interest-free loans, and family land access clearly indicate the manner and spirit in which God wants people to deal with each other. To quote Stek again,

“As regards man's relationship to his fellowman his vocation is justice. And justice is man's right dealing with his neighbor— image-bearer with image-bearer, servant of God with servant of God, one assigned dominion with one assigned dominion, one having a vocation with one having a vocation, one given a place in the earth with one given a place in the earth, one appointed provisions from the earth with one appointed provisions from the earth, one created for blessing with one created for blessing, one whose divinely intended destiny is life with one whose divinely intended destiny is life. This, according to the Old Testament, is the “justice” of the kingdom of God. “

The New Testament builds upon and fulfills the Old. Christ came not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. However, unlike the Old, the New Testament contains no specific laws about harvest, interest rates, return of ancestral property, and the like. Why were these important socio-economic regulations omitted in the new covenant? After Pentecost the church became a body of many peoples living in many different and changing cultures. Some Christians became urbanized and dispersed, living often as a minority in a hostile land. For that reason specific social laws were no longer practical. They also were no longer needed. When Christ blessed his people with the gift of the Holy Spirit, he enabled

them to take God's concern for love and justice and apply it to a great variety of situations in which they lived.

The New Testament, therefore, does not give detailed regulations for a multitude of different cultures, but instead shows how God's spirit-filled people developed new institutions embodying love and justice for the less fortunate. The New Testament also reveals how the grace of God in Christ laid a new foundation for the institution of marriage (Eph. 5) and injected into the master/slave relationship the ideas of mutual subordination to Christ, which in time would destroy the institution of slavery itself.

The Biblical Criteria

After considering these examples from the Old and New Testaments, we conclude that criteria for evaluating systems in society should be based on these principles:

1. All people should be able to obtain the basic necessities of life.
 2. All people who have sunk to the level of poverty are to be helped not only with the basic necessities of life, but also with opportunity to make a new beginning.
 3. All people should have sufficient freedom to exercise the stewardship that God has assigned to humanity (Gen. 1, Ps. 8).
 4. All people are entitled to a fair and equitable utilization of the world's resources.
- We submit that all valid political, economic, and social systems ought to allow these principles to function,

Specific criteria for evaluating systems should include these three: (1) stewardship, (2) righteousness, and (3) respect. These three are not the only criteria that can be applied. Furthermore, they overlap. But they do call attention to three aspects that should characterize the functioning of every system.

The concept of *stewardship* extends beyond managing the money one has earned. All people are stewards of human life and talents, of time, and of the earth's resources. Focusing on these resources, therefore, we must ask the following questions about any given system:

- Does the system promote the proper use of human resources? Or does it foster employment that is degrading to people? Does it foster unemployment? Does such technological development occur at the expense of the well-being and needs of human beings?
- Does the system express respect for God's creation and its wholeness? Does it care for the earth's resources? Does it preserve the earth's fruit-bearing potential for present *and* future generations? Or does it consume and waste resources and endanger the prospects of a future generation for the sake of material abundance today?
- In the use of resources, human and other, what priorities does the system have? Does it give priority to those things people need to fulfill their calling before God as stewards? Or is the focus on producing and satisfying artificially-created needs? Stewardship is an important criterion in any age. But with 500 million starving people on this globe, this criterion needs to be applied with the greatest urgency.

People's relationships to each other should also be characterized by *righteousness*. Righteousness is more than observing the letter of an abstract law. It is people dealing with each other according to God's commandment of selfless love. Systems made by people and run by people also deal with people. Focusing on the "rightness" and "wrongness" of these dealings, we should ask the following questions of a given system:

- Does the system recognize the right of people to freedom, to work, and to the basic necessities of life? Or does it discriminate against certain ethnic or racial groups or against the poor, the young, the female, or the old?
- Does the system give a person, a community, or a nation who has fallen on hard times the opportunity to make a new beginning? Or does it allow the stronger party to perpetuate the distress and dependence of the weaker party? For example, are the present trade relationships between the rich and the poor countries such that the poor will be helped truly to develop, or are they geared to add to the wealth of the rich?
- God's demand for righteousness, which includes liberation for the oppressed and disadvantaged, must be applied to all systems today. Without it, the hungry world will stay hungry.

Finally, people's relationships to each other should be characterized by *respect*. Decisive here is that all people are image-bearers of God. Since people are God's creatures and bear his image, they are full members of the human family and should be treated with respect. They are people with responsibility and should be accorded the opportunity to exercise that responsibility. Focusing on respect, we should ask the following questions about a given system:

- Does the system convey respect for people as God's image-bearers? Does it communicate due respect for the culture they have formed? Does it recognize the right of people to participate in decisions that have a direct bearing on their life now and in the future? Or does the system make some people the dumb objects of unilateral actions taken by others? Does it encourage one culture to dominate another?
- Does the system promote a spirit of mutual dependence and cooperation between people? Or does it promote a spirit of exclusivism and domination by one group or nation?
The world, including our society, is torn by deep divisions, estrangement, pride, disrespect, and by the anger of people who are treated as inferior weak or unnecessary. Social, economic, and political systems have made an enormous contribution to this tragedy. If healing is to occur—and that includes restoring the poor and hungry to a respectable place in the human family—systems will have to treat people as image-bearers of God.

Critique of the Gospel of Wealth

Earlier in this report we identified some of the key structures that shape or have shaped the world. Now we will evaluate these structures based on the criteria we discovered in God's Word:

stewardship, righteousness, and respect. Obviously there are other systems besides the one mentioned above that have had a disastrous impact on the world's hunger situation. There are wealthy elites in poor countries. Ancient social patterns, inherited values, and cherished philosophical perspectives in developing countries also contribute in an important way to present poverty. Referring to these other structures, Ronald J. Sider states: "It would be naive to simplify complex realities and isolate one scapegoat. But surely our first responsibility is to pluck the beam from our own eye. Our most desperate need is to understand and change what we are doing wrong. How then are we part of sinful structures that contribute to world hunger?" (*Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, p. 139)

It's for that reason that our focus will be on North American structures, and more particularly, on what needs to be changed in these structures. North American structures are the ones most relevant to the majority of our readers and it is these structures our readers will be in a position to change.

As soon as we focus on what is undesirable in North American structures, we risk being misinterpreted. Therefore, we will begin by making clear what we are *not* saying. We are not saying that Marxism is the solution to world hunger. Marxism, with its atheistic, materialistic philosophy and its suppression of individual rights and initiative, is exactly what the hungry do not need. Nor are we saying that structures in the poor countries do not need reform. To the contrary, structures in the poor countries are sometimes characterized by corruption, greed, elitism, or apathy, and Christians in those countries must be as diligent in applying the criteria of God's Word to those structures as we must be in applying it to ours. Finally, we are *not* saying that North American structures are all bad. As a matter of fact, there is much good in North American structures, especially in so far as they promote individual initiative coupled with responsibility.

Evaluation of what is undesirable in our structures must begin with a biblically-based critique of the "Gospel of Wealth," a creed that pervades North America. We call this creed the Gospel of Wealth because it is indeed a "gospel" and because that was the name Andrew Carnegie gave in his classic justification of it. The creed runs something like this: "When buying and selling one must seek only one's own self-interest. Profit is the name of the game. From the interaction of competing individuals, all seeking their own self-interest, the common good will emerge and the most efficient use will be made of goods and resources. On the national level, the pursuit of economic growth will at times mean that social and environmental goals must be sacrificed. The golden rule makes good sense in one's private life, but in business one must be practical."

What is wrong with the Gospel of Wealth from the perspective of the biblical criteria of stewardship, righteousness, and respect? Several things. First, this type of creed denies that

our economic decisions are spiritual choices that we make in response to the creator God. Business is viewed as a neutral, amoral area of life. If the common good naturally emerges from the interaction of our competing self-interest (what Adam Smith called “the invisible hand”), then we need only follow our sinful inclinations in the economic area of life. Economic life becomes a technical matter of finding the most practical and efficient method of increasing profit, rather than a spiritual response to God and neighbor. There is no room for talk of obedience or disobedience, sin and redemption.

Some Christians profess a variation of this creed. They regard the business world as essentially amoral, except that one must be fair and honest, yet they take quite seriously the stewardship command as it applies to wealth once it is accumulated. But the Bible doesn't limit the stewardship command to wealth after it has been gained. Biblical stewardship also speaks to the way in which wealth is acquired: “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty” (Jas. 5:4, NIV). Likewise, the criteria of righteousness cannot be limited to being “fair and honest,” at least in the sense in which we normally use these words. Biblical righteousness includes sharing property and possessions with the poor and disadvantaged so that they too can experience life as God intended it. Biblical righteousness is taking positive steps to see that the rights of the poor are recognized.

A second problem with the Gospel of Wealth is that it gives the illusion that more is always or generally better, in the service of maximum profit or economic growth, material values often take precedence over other ones. Thus, in the name of profit, sugar-coated breakfast cereal is peddled to North American toddlers, and caramel-colored sugar water is peddled to the poor so that they can join the “Now Generation.” Economic growth and profit become ends in themselves instead of means to a larger end. Rather than serving the development of people as image-bearers of God, economic growth reduces them to consumers of material goods. Profit, rather than being an instrument in service of God and neighbor, becomes a false god for whose sake people are induced to satisfy artificial needs at the expense of real ones.

A third problem with the Gospel of Wealth is that it replaces service to neighbor with competition against neighbor. While competition may, within limits, serve a useful purpose between equals, between unequals unrestrained competition can only lead to injustice. An ethic of competition reserves no place for the special rights of the poor. When the poor are forced to compete with the rich, most often the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The increasing concentrations of wealth and power in the hands of the rich, and the growing dependence of the poor on charity denies the poor their share of God's creation. It also denies the poor freedom to develop as responsible image-bearers of God, exercising stewardship in their own right and participating in decisions which will affect their lives. Andrew Carnegie gave the classic justification of the Gospel of Wealth in his essay by that title:

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still than its cost— for it is to this law that

we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But, whether the law be benign or not, we must say of it as we say of the change in the conditions of men to which we have referred: It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department.

Compare the gospel according to Carnegie with the gospel according to our Lord Jesus Christ. Is competition a law which, like it or not, we must observe or is it a human response to the commands of our God? Does Carnegie have any good news about a God that breaks through the darkness of human selfishness to liberate us once again to live in service to God and neighbor? Does God's blessing follow in the "train" of those who obey the law of competition or does it fall on those who practice justice toward the poor and hungry? And what about the "survival of the fittest"? How does that stack up against the biblical injunction to show deference to the "fatherless, widow, and orphan"? Have we so ardently opposed evolution in the biological realm, only to have it catch us through the back door in the social and economic realms?

A final shortcoming of the Gospel of Wealth is that it does not point to the glory of God, service of neighbor, or care of creation as essential to the proper functioning of economic life. Consider the use of *efficient* and *practical*. The criteria of efficiency is that which will earn a profit. In computing the bottom line, the only elements that are factored into "income" and "costs" are those to which a dollar figure can be attached. Profit is market profit, just as income and costs are market costs. But many of the resources over which God has given us stewardship such as water, or clean air, do not have a market value. Is a business enterprise efficient if it makes a handsome profit, but at the same time pollutes the air and water for future generations? Is it efficient to use a scarce natural resource to meet artificial needs because there is great economic profit in manufacturing such goods? Or is a business efficient when it relocates in Taiwan to take advantage of cheap labor, but leaves displaced workers and broken homes in its wake in North America? Likewise, our definition of *practical* is too narrow. Practical becomes what is "good business." But what about practicality as defined by the last judgment described in Matthew 25? Isn't what is really practical only that which glorifies God and serves our neighbor?

When the purpose of a business enterprise is narrowly circumscribed as making the maximum profit, the environment and other people can easily become mere means toward that end rather than objects of stewardly care and service. The rental property becomes an investment rather than the home of the tenant family. The person in the supermarket is a consumer rather than a parent providing for the needs of his or her family. The fruit-bearing potential of the land is exploited for maximum profit of its present owner rather than conserved for future generations.

We have been harsh in our critique of the Gospel of Wealth because we are convinced it is a false gospel. But the Gospel of Wealth is not the only influence on North American structures. There are also Christian influences. One need only think of the opportunity for

participation and individual responsibility that have, traditionally at least, characterized North American structures as opposed to those in Marxist countries; or of the growing concern for the environment on the part of both government and business; or of the many ways through which social security is provided for the elderly and other disadvantaged. Obviously, there is much for which we can be grateful.

We must point out that, in our consideration of North American structures, we are not thinking of the structures of even a few years ago. The “ma and pa” store and the small family farm are no longer typical. They have been replaced by agribusiness and the global supermarket. While big is not always bad and may sometimes be good, the potential for exploitative structures based on a Gospel of Wealth has become much greater now.

Consider the small Midwestern town of a decade or two ago. Many structural restraints prevented one from practicing the Gospel of Wealth. For one thing, buyers and sellers were relatives, friends, members of the same church, or, at the minimum, acquaintances. It is quite natural that business people would consider the interests of such neighbors in any business dealings; the reputation of one who considered only his or her own self-interest would spread rapidly. In addition to the social restraints on self-interest, there were economic restraints.

When bargaining partners are equal, as they frequently are in small towns, each has an effective means of making sure the other takes his or her interests into account— simply by exercising his or her power to buy or not to buy, or to sell or not to sell.

Now consider the global supermarket of today. Many of the social restraints have disappeared. More often than not the sellers are anonymous members of some large corporation who have never had personal contact with those who are buying from them. Many of the economic restraints have also vanished. Bargaining is often between unequals and those who are poor; because bargaining power is based on cash, they lack any effective means through which they can bring their legitimate demands to bear on the powerful. In the global supermarket, it is not just the poor, but often the middle class, who feel they are denied opportunity to exercise meaningful stewardship and to participate in decisions which will affect their lives. When economic life is dominated by powerful transnational corporations, along with their counterparts of big government and big labor, Christians must double their vigilance against exploitative structures based on a Gospel of Wealth.

When the Gospel of Wealth is allowed to shape our economy, bad structures result. Such structures make it easy for us to seek only our own self-interest and to ignore the rights of the poor. Conversely, such structures make the poor fatalistic about their lot in life so that they seem lazy to us. It is because we of all people recognize the power of evil and sin in human life that we should be so thankful for the good that does exist in our structures and so zealous about rooting out the bad.

Study Session

First

Begin by reading together the four principles for evaluating systems (see the first paragraph under “The Biblical Criteria” in this chapter). For your opening devotions, we suggest two passages which clearly support these principles. The first passage, Leviticus 25:8-19,

describes the joyous keeping of the Year of Jubilee, a leveling structure commanded by God so that *all* of his people could “dwell in the land securely.” The second passage, Luke 4:14-21, beautifully complements the first; in it we hear Christ proclaiming “the acceptable year of the Lord,” as he announces release for the captives and liberty for the oppressed.

Group members are encouraged to cite other passages which offer strong support for the four principles. Perhaps each group member could take a minute or two to find one such passage and either read it aloud or summarize it for the group. Since our entire chapter—and our very reasons for being involved in this study—derives from these key biblical principles, all group members should feel certain the principles are biblical.

Second

The following discussion questions are based on chapter 3:

- a. Which of the four principles for evaluating systems would be most difficult for individuals to accept and honor? For North American structures to accept and honor?
- b. Three specific criteria (stewardship, righteousness, and respect) are listed in chapter 3, along with the comment that “these are not the only criteria which can be applied.” Are there any other criteria you can think of that incorporate the four biblical principles?
- c. Do you agree that the Gospel of Wealth pervades North America? Why is this gospel so popular? What role does the media have in promoting it? Do Christians sometimes promote this gospel? How?
- d. If you were among the poor living in North America, what impact might the Gospel of Wealth have on you personally—on your attitude and life-style?
- e. The Gospel of Wealth is not itself a structure, but a value system that influences other structures. Can you think of any other value systems which deserve a critique from the biblical perspective?

Third

Think of one specific thing you can do this week to combat the Gospel of Wealth. Share your idea with others in your group, and resolve to put it into effect—soon.

A reminder to group leaders: In the section called “How To Use This Book,” we suggested that you ask group members to contact various Christian organizations involved in structural change. If you made this assignment, group members should share their findings at the next study session. A list of Christian organizations is given at the back of this book.

5. The Christian Response

When the subject of change in social systems is introduced, we are often tempted to ignore the challenge. The issue is so awesome that we feel like throwing our hands up in despair. Furthermore, as members of the rich, Western, industrialized nations, some of us are the beneficiaries of the present structures, and it is not pleasant to think about surrendering our benefits. We are also geared to a certain type of result. When we do help people in the Third World, we like that help to take the shape of visible programs with immediate results. The

thought of a long, wearisome struggle against entrenched powers and systems is much less exciting.

Christian agencies working in the Third World also have reasons for avoiding the issue of change in systems and structures. To raise money for feeding a hungry child, digging a well in a remote Indian village, or distributing Bibles is comparatively easy. Such projects have a lot of appeal. But raising money to help people develop systems that are filled with God's love and justice, or to change existing systems, is a nightmare. Therefore, agencies—which cannot function without a direct supporting community—develop an inbuilt tendency to avoid the issue.

In the institutional church the reaction is much the same. Many people's instinctive response is that the church has no business working for change in socioeconomic structures; the church, these people say, should limit itself to the proclamation of "the simple gospel" and to the administration of mercy.

Because the temptation to avoid the issue of structural change is very strong indeed, we need to ask, personally and communally, what the consequences would be if we yielded to this temptation. The consequences can be simply stated: First, we would then decide to tolerate systems in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. During the period 1965-74, for 49 low-income countries (all with a per capita GNP below \$300 and consisting of one-third of the world's population), the average growth rate in GNP per capita was 1.7 percent, or about \$2.50 per year, while for 37 high-income countries (all with per capita GNP above \$2,000), it was 4 percent, or about \$150 per year (*The United States and World Development Agenda 1977*). If Christians refuse to consider change in systems, the kind of structures they decide to tolerate may become increasingly unjust.

Secondly, by avoiding the issue of structural change, Christians would consign themselves forever to fighting the symptoms instead of getting at the disease itself. We all accept the wisdom of the Chinese proverb, "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach him how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime." But systems in the Third World often fail to give the poor access to the resources. These systems need to be changed before people can provide food for themselves. While the church is unable to feed all the hungry masses of the world, it can certainly call for changes in systems that may significantly improve the lot of millions.

A third, even more significant, consequence of the church's decision not to address itself to changes in systems is that it then would be guilty of proclaiming a truncated gospel. The Bible preaches liberation from sin through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He has come to deliver from sin in its every configuration. That includes sin that tears humans loose from fellowship with God and that destroys love and justice between people. A message that fails to proclaim this radical liberation and to claim all of human life, including societal systems, for the service of God and humanity, greatly limits the stature of the One celebrated as the Deliverer in the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55).

A fourth and final consequence should be mentioned. People in the Third World learn more every day about how people in the First and Second Worlds live. The more they hear, the

more they begin to sense the inequality in human relationships and the more they begin to demand justice. Marxism, which is always alert to inject its ideas where social problems present themselves, knows how to appeal to the poor, hungry, and oppressed. If Christians do not address themselves to evil structures and do not work with vigor at promoting wholesome ones, they place the Christian mission in the world at a severe disadvantage over against the gospel of Marxism.

Consequences like these indicate that the church cannot afford to ignore the issue of change in social structures and systems.

The Tenor and Spirit of Christian Response

Scripture seems to have two contradictory themes with respect to Christian response to evil structures. On the one hand, numerous passages contain prophetic declarations of God's impending judgment on evil structures and upon those who maintain and profit from them. And, on the other hand, many pastoral injunctions tell those who are oppressed to wait patiently on the Lord.

We read: The prophetic denunciations of those who oppress the poor and the Pauline injunction that slaves should obey their masters; Christ's characterization of the religious leaders as "whited sepulchres" and his willing submission to death on the cross; Christ's casting the money-changers out of the temple and his invitation to Zacchaeus to be his dinner guest; the admonition to the rich oppressors to weep and wail (Jas. 5:1-6) followed by the exhortation to those who are opposed to wait patiently until the coming of the Lord (Jas. 5:7-11). What should we make of this?

The first set of passages makes it clear that Christians cannot sit passively in the face of evil. God hates all evil and his judgment is against it. God's people must speak out against evil, and inasmuch as they are in a position to change it, they are responsible for taking action. Implicit in the second set of passages is the assumption that God's people are victims of oppression and not the perpetrators of it. In no place does Scripture condone evil, whether it be personal or corporate.

The positive teaching of the second set of passages is vividly illustrated by the story of David and Saul. Despite all the evil done in Israel because of Saul's sins, and despite David's knowing that God had chosen Mm to replace Saul, David spared Saul's life when he had opportunity to kill him. Why? David knew God would exact justice from Saul (I Sam. 24:12).

Because God's people know that "though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet," their perspective on evil in society is radically different from that of the unbeliever. Christians cannot be passive in the face of evil, but because they know God is in control, the *manner* in which they go about changing evil structures is vastly different from that of unbelievers.

First of all, Christians do not go about changing structures in a manner that disrespects other people and their offices. They neither use people as the means to achieve the end of social change nor sacrifice people for the goal of some future, more desirable society. Just as the

lives of the poor cannot be laid at the altar of an increasing gross national product, neither can the lives of the rich be sacrificed at the altar of revolutionary violence. For example, a “mudslinging” campaign is not justified by getting a Christian into political office. For Christians who would combat structural evil, the means is as significant as the end. Because judgment is of the Lord, Christians need not choose means that violate other people or their offices. The truth must be spoken, but always in love. The Lord desires healing for all those caught in unjust structures, be they victims or oppressors.

Second, Christians are neither defenders of the status quo nor revolutionaries. They are not defenders of the status quo because they realize that sin has radically affected all human institutions. But neither are they revolutionaries. Unlike the revolutionary, the Christian does not see the removal of evil structures as the answer to injustice in the world. Christians are rather reformers, reformers who make not merely superficial changes but who go to the spiritual heart of the matter. Christians are reformers like the Apostle Paul, who did not tell slaves to rebel against their masters, but nevertheless lit the torch that would eventually spell the end of slavery.

Third, Christians do not fall into either utopian or “doomsday” thinking. While the kingdom of God is “not yet,” there is also a real sense in which it is “already present.” In fact, the very reality of the future, full revelation of the Son of Man allows Christians to labor in the present with both hope and realism.

Fourth, Christians are supportive of rather than judgmental toward other Christians who are struggling within unjust structures. Appreciating the difficulty faced by those who must work within large, unresponsive systems, but knowing that labor for the Lord is never in vain, Christians are able to encourage brothers and sisters and grow with them in understanding the Lord’s will.

Fifth, Christians avoid guilt over what cannot be changed. They realize that God holds each person responsible for the wealth, positions, and power he or she possesses, not that which belongs to others. By responsible stewardship of that which they have been given, be that great or small, Christians are made partners with God himself in the bringing of his kingdom.

Evaluation of Our Involvement in Structures

We are stewards of the world’s resources for the hungry. However, we exercise very little of that stewardship as isolated individuals. Rather, we work through the different institutions and structures of which we are members.

When the Word of God comes to us and directs us to be stewards of the earth’s resources for the poor and hungry, it is not telling us something abstract. It is a Word for us to obey in each of the institutions or structures of which we are a part. It is a call for us to use whatever authority we may possess within those structures to witness by word and deed to Christ’s lordship over all of life. It is a call for us to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth within those structures.

The ministry to which we are called in the institutions of which we are a part is both a word and deed ministry. It is also both an individual and a corporate ministry. Individual Christian ministries within structures are valid and at times the only possible ministry. But there is no substitute for Christians working together over a long period of time. At a very minimum we need to study, reflect, and pray together if we are serious about getting at the spiritual foundations upon which existing structures are based and upon which Christian alternatives can be built. Beyond this point of study and reflection we can both make decisions for individual actions and also work together toward more fundamental changes. The organizations that already exist for communal Christian reflection and action toward structural change—among others, the InterFaith Center of Corporate Responsibility, the Association for Public Justice, the Committee for Justice and Liberty, Bread for the World, and the Christian Farmers' Organization—are impressive and Christians should become involved in them and support them.

If we are to be responsible in a world of global interdependence, we need to ask hard questions of each of the structures in which we participate and then to devise concrete ministries of word and deed. The following are a few of those questions:

Family. How does our family exercise stewardship over its financial resources? Are we open to the rights of the poor and oppressed? What about our stewardship of time and talents? Are we discerning about the values projected by advertising?

Church. What stewardship does our local congregation exercise over its budget? What percentage is devoted to missions, both word and deed, and what percentage is spent on our church building? Does our institutional life-style witness to Christ's lordship through openness to the poor and through conservation of the earth's resources? Are we addressing those in positions of authority in our community with a witness of word and deed? Do our preaching and educational ministries confront people with all the claims of the gospel?

School Are students being trained for their stewardship responsibilities in a world of global interdependence? Does our institutional life-style witness to Christ's lordship through openness to the poor and conservation of the earth's resources? Are the research capacities of our institutions of higher learning available for the battle against hunger and poverty?

Business and labor. Are we wise in the use of creational resources? Are we responsible in the treatment of the environment? Are we careful in the use of technology? Are we frugal in the consumption of energy? Are we vigilant in the disposal of potentially harmful waste materials? Are we fair in the determination of price? Are we honest in the promotion of sales? Are we equitable in the earning of profit?

Government. What percentage of our government budget is devoted to helping the poor and hungry? Does the aid we give the poor enable them to develop a holistic way as image-bearers of God? Does our governmental life-style reflect our age of limited resources? How does our government punish doers of economic evil and reward doers of economic good? How well do we do as Christians in the stewardship of our citizenship?

The Challenge for the Christian Community

The challenge for the Christian community to work for change in systems and structures is twofold. First, God calls his people to shape their lives and the systems of their society in harmony with his will. This implies that they face the challenge of developing systems that meet the criteria of stewardship, righteousness, and respect. Secondly, they must measure the systems of our day with a biblical standard. If these are found wanting, they must seek to change and correct them. Just as God found unacceptable the tyrant kings, greedy landowners, and corrupt judges in Old Testament times, so today he disapproves of systems through which people exploit their fellow human beings, misuse the earth's resources, and consign millions to starvation.

Many of God's people today long for systems through which God's liberating love and justice flow but they despair. They see the twofold challenge as so big an undertaking (since the systems of our day are numerous, complex, and often deeply corrupt) that they resign themselves to doing their Christian best *within* the given systems. The challenge is immense, but that should not lead us to despair. God gives his people hope. We have many resources in his Word and in each other. Significant changes for good usually come about not through the heroic act of one person who impresses millions, but by many small acts done in obedience to God.

Christians may set out to evaluate existing systems and to form wholesome ones in the hope that is based on Christ's resurrection:

“For though we live in the world, we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (II Cor, 10:3-5). That belief gave the Apostle Paul the courage to tackle the structure of the Roman Empire and the spiritual powers that controlled it. For those Christians doing the work of the Lord in the world, the promise holds: “. . . in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” Though a minority in the world, Christians, in the name of none other than Christ, set out to do battle with the unjust, satanic principalities and powers that often dominate people, for the sake of bringing the liberation of Christ from sin and oppression. Despair can change to hope also when Christians become aware of the resources Christ has given to his church. We face the challenge as part of a body which has many gifts. In our denomination alone are thousands of businessmen and professionals who confess Christ's name, several institutions of higher learning, and a widespread system for elementary and secondary education. There are local churches preaching the good news and providing church education for all ages. There are voluntary associations, active in various areas of life, who analyze both the powers at work and the proper Christian response.

Recognizing these resources and putting them to work together will surely yield significant results. The immensity of the task will not discourage us if we but keep in mind that the systems we face today have come into being as the result of many small actions over many decades. No one has either the wisdom or the power to change them overnight. But Bread for the World as a Christian citizens' movement has effectively lobbied for legislation to help the hungry. The Mennonite Central Committee persuaded the Canadian Wheat Board to ship

donated grain. The governments of the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia were persuaded of the justice of public tax support for Christian schools. And, looking back in history, slavery and child labor, once rampant in the Western world, are now largely things of the past. Each change came about by people, often relatively unknown, setting about doing righteousness. When viewing systems that produce and perpetuate world hunger, such action is also what God asks of us. As children of the King and stewards of his creation, we can do no less.

Sending food begins the process of feeding the hungry, but it is only a beginning. Behind the specter of the starving peoples lie the structures and systems which cause their poverty and hunger. It is on this basic plane that the issue must finally be met in God's name and for his sake. It is for this purpose that we have worked together, and we now call the church officially to join in this godly and pressing task.

Study Session

First

This chapter opened with a sobering description of how we may be tempted to avoid working for change in social systems and structures. As you think about this, would you share your own, personal concerns/fears/worries about working for change in structures? If your group is too large to do this conveniently, divide into smaller groups of three or four persons. This is not an exercise in pessimism, but an attempt to bring our natural anxieties into the open, before each other and the Lord.

After each person has had opportunity to speak, let God's Word challenge and reassure you. We suggest a reading from Isaiah 58:6-11, but group members may want to suggest other passages as well. (See, for example, Psalm 46, II Corinthians 9:6-15, 10:35, etc.) Read the passages aloud.

Conclude your devotions with silent prayer, each person asking God for help to overcome his/her own fears and anxieties about working for change. Close by reading in unison these words from the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil":

Dear Lord,

"By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.

And our sworn enemies—
the devil, the world, and our own flesh—
never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord,
uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat
in this spiritual struggle,
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory."

Second

As part of your progression from discussion into action, have various group members present additional information on the Christian organizations listed on the back of this book. We trust the presenters had time to obtain the necessary information; if they didn't, the group may still want to quickly review the organizations, using the brief guide which accompanies our list. Our purpose is, of course, to encourage membership in these organizations, among both members of the group and the rest of the congregation. Perhaps, in its final report, the group will want to recommend membership.

Third

Discussion of chapter 4 should be kept relatively short for this session since the previous reports and the subsequent organizing for action will take a good deal of class time. If you have time, after discussing questions group members raise, you might use one or two of the following:

- a. Read the quotation from Lappe (see opening quotation) and James 5:7 on being patient. What does this advice mean to you as Christians who are surely eager to see at least some fairly rapid change in the structures that cause world hunger?
- b. Chapter 4 makes the point that Christians ought to be reformers rather than revolutionaries. Do you agree? Are there situations in which Christians might actually support an armed revolution? Explain.
- c. Turn to the Appendix and read the observations of the advisory committee. After working through this book (essentially the same report approved by synod), do you agree that it "might present to some a one-sided picture of the problem" because it is limited to Western business structures? Discuss.
- d. Is there anything in the synodical recommendations which suggests some directions for your group recommendations? Perhaps some tentative directions or areas for future group action can be identified here, remembering of course that full discussion and final recommendations will come in next week's session.

Fourth

Two things need to be done before this session concludes: First, the group should clarify the relationship between its study and recommendations and those of the first study group, *And He Had Compassion on Them*. Review the basic distinctions between the two studies (see Preface) and what, specifically, the first study group recommended in its report to council and congregation. Members should be brought up-to-date on the current status of the recommendations: Have they been adopted? Implemented? Will your group follow the same general procedure with its recommendations?

The second item is planning next week's agenda for the "action session." If you follow the plan suggested for this session, you will need small groups; each group should study one of the structures listed in chapter 4: family, church, school, business and labor, or government. Next week each group will formulate recommendations for action in its assigned area. For now, we suggest having people volunteer for one of the five areas mentioned above, so that they can begin thinking about possible recommendations.

Because of the length and completeness of the opening devotions, no closing activities are suggested for this session.

6. Doing What We Can

AN ACTION SESSION

First

Question and Answer 111 of the Heidelberg Catechism is the basis for the title of this study and of this chapter. We suggest using it for your opening devotions; point out that even though we are studying abstract structures, our ultimate goal is the well being of our neighbors

Q: What does God require of you in this [eighth] commandment?

A: That I do whatever I can
for my neighbor's good
that I treat him
as I would like others to treat me,
and that I work faithfully
so that I may share with those in need

Second

Before dividing into five small groups as suggested in the previous session, it might be necessary to review once again what actions have already been recommended by the first study group (*And He Had Compassion on Them*) If possible each person should be given a list of these earlier recommendations.

Each of the five groups (family, church, school, business and labor, government) should be given as long as necessary (at least forty five minutes) to formulate specific recommendations for action in their area Groups may want to refer to the list of questions about each structure in chapter 4, the questions are specific enough to suggest many potential areas of action Groups may also want to refer to actions of the Synod of 1979 (found in the Appendix to this book). Finally, when making their recommendations for actions, groups should consider these guidelines from *And He Had Compassion on Them*:

- a. Will this action get the support of almost/some/a few of your church members?
- b. Will any special age or vocational group in your church strongly oppose this action or find it offensive?
- c. Can this action be completed in a reasonable length of time?
- d. Will this action require funding? If so, where will the money come from?
- e. Can the impact/success of this action be evaluated in any way?

Each group should select a temporary chairperson and secretary, then proceed to formulate some ideas for action. Once the group has determined what actions to recommend, it should also consider:

- a. Who should perform this action? (If possible, the person or persons chosen should be from the study group.)
- b. To whom should they report, make recommendations, or from whom should they receive permission to proceed with a certain program?
- c. When should they report, make recommendations, receive permission, or proceed with a certain program?

If groups are having difficulty getting started, here is a sample recommendation in each of the five areas:

Family

We recommend that each family continue giving 1 percent of its gross income to the cause of world hunger. (name) will present this proposal at the next deacons' meeting, asking the deacons to send a letter to each family regarding this. No report required.

Church

We recommend that the education committee plan for hunger awareness/stewardship topics in the curriculum for young adults and adults. name, who is on the education committee, will bring this up at their next meeting and follow through on its implementation. She will report back to the hunger coordinator on (date)

Business and Labor

We recommend that church members be urged to write a letter of protest to (a corporation for their promotion of "junk food" in underdeveloped countries, name) will contact the consistory for permission. If given permission, she will address a letter to each church member, indicating the problem and a possible response. The hunger coordinator will assist as necessary.

Government

We recommend that our adult education class invite (name) a Christian representative, to speak to us on the topic "The Christian and Politics." (name) will contact the education committee and report their response to the hunger coordinator.

Third

After each of the groups have completed their recommendations and answered the three questions on each recommendation, reassemble in a plenary group. Each small group should now report, in turn, to the entire group.

Spend enough time to reach a general consensus about which actions should and can be carried out in your church. Give opportunity for doubts, questions, and negative reactions to be expressed. If a true consensus has been reached, the recommendations will have greater support and a better chance of working in your church. Check to be sure the "who, to (from)

whom, and when” matters are clearly understood and agreed upon. Also make sure that each recommendation is precisely recorded by the group secretary.

Fourth

Before disbanding, determine who will be coordinating these various projects and receiving the reports of various responsible persons or committees. If a hunger coordinator has been selected, he/she would probably be the person best suited. If there is no hunger coordinator or no diaconal representative who can act as coordinator, it would be advisable to arrange a meeting, at a later date, of the entire group, to receive reports on what progress has been made.

Fifth

Close the meeting with a prayer round, thanking God for his presence with the study group and asking his blessing on the work to come.

APPENDIX

Decisions by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1979 OBSERVATIONS

The Task Force on World Hunger is to be commended for treating a very complex subject in a concise and compact report of 30 pages.

Many good things can be said about this report. However, since the mandate speaks of the structure and systemic problems causing world hunger, it is the opinion of the committee that the report with its focus on the business structures in the West could have called attention to other structures as well, such as labor, education and government in the West, and ancient social patterns, inherited values, and cherished philosophical perspectives in the developing countries.

The advisory committee has no intention to minimize the guilt of the West, but feels that the report by limiting itself to business structures and their detrimental effects on third-world countries might present to some a one-sided picture of the problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That synod call upon the ministers and missionaries of the Christian Reformed Church to proclaim God’s command to practice stewardship and righteousness in opposition to a secular gospel of wealth.

Grounds:

- a. Prophetic preaching in the areas of stewardship and righteousness is essential to the attack on the root causes of hunger.

- b. The ministers and missionaries of the Christian Reformed Church are in effective positions to preach and demonstrate God's command to do justice.
 - c. This is their solemn obligation before God.
2. That synod request the educational institutions related to our denomination to research the structural causes of world hunger, and further request Calvin College to coordinate this research and share its findings with the academic and broader Christian community.

Grounds:

- a. The analysis of the complex structural causes of world hunger requires careful and continuing study of complex systems, study which recognizes the inadequacy of piecemeal evaluation and piecemeal responses to problems of justice and world hunger.
 - b. We cannot simply rely on humanitarian assessments of these causes of hunger but must carefully research the issues in the light of scriptural demands for justice and stewardship.
 - c. Our institutions have the capability for this important task.
3. That synod request the educational agencies related to our denomination, such as the colleges, the seminary, the Education Department of the Board of Publications, Christian day schools, and Christian

Schools International, to provide instruction on the fundamental and far-reaching influence of structures on the issues of hunger and injustice and to provide ongoing information on what Christians are doing individually and collectively to work for better structures, and further request the CRWRC to coordinate this educational program.

Grounds:

- a. In order for Christian people to respond to the scriptural demands for justice, they must have information on which to act as they carry out their calling in the world.
 - b. There will be need to translate and interpret the findings of those Christians and Christian institutions researching the issues of structural causes of world hunger into terms and methods that can be effectively used by Christians as they carry out their calling in the world.
 - c. The educational agencies related to our denomination and the CRWRC have the capabilities for this important task.

4. That synod encourage the formation of a coalition of Christian agencies, groups, and persons of Reformed persuasion to bring the Word of God to bear on structural problems. The aim of this coalition would be (*inter alia*) to share information and resources and to coordinate efforts in order to transform societal structures according to the Word of God.
5. That synod designate the CRWRC to convene a meeting of all potential members of such a coalition with the goal of establishing a permanent group (with the clear understanding that it will not be a denominationally funded group).
6. That synod call upon members of the Christian Reformed Church to be alert to their responsibility to influence public policy and business and political structures as representatives of the King of kings. This includes vigorous support for justice in public policy and concrete opposition to unjust and oppressive structures, as well as instruction and example in the home on these issues.
7. That synod encourage members of the Christian Reformed Church to form and join organizations whose purpose includes communal Christian action for political or vocational justice.
8. That synod call upon individual members of the Christian Reformed Church to consider their vocational responsibility as it relates to hunger-causing structural problems, and that it encourage individuals to enter vocations (or use their existing vocations in a fashion) which will enable them to influence the formation of public and corporate policy.

Grounds: (for Recommendations 4-8)

- a. It is necessary to apply the scriptural demands for justice both to our individual lives and to the structures which man creates to organize his activities and achieve his objectives.
- b. Whereas individual action can be effective in applying biblical commands for justice in our individual lives, corporate action is necessary to apply biblical commands for justice to the correction of corporate structures.
- c. Many avenues for corporate Christian action are actually or potentially available and should be used in pressing for application of the biblical claims for justice.

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II. FILMS AND FILMSTRIPS

Bread for the World 20 mm. Color. Filmstrip with cassette. 1975. Solid introduction to hunger as a public policy issue and to the Christian citizens' movement, Bread for the World. Free from Bread for the World, 207 E. 16th St., New York, New York 10003.

Bottle Babies. 26 nun. Color. Film. 1976. Examination of advertising campaign by multinational corporations to convince mothers in poor countries to switch from breast- to bottle-feeding. Questions effect of "business as usual" on the poor. Available from Tn-Continental Film Center, P.O. Box 4430, Berkeley, California 94704.

Charlie Cheddar's Choice. 15 mm. Color. Filmstrip with cassette. 1977. Story of a mouse, Charlie, who lives in a cheese barrel. After learning about world hunger, Charlie simplifies his life-style, decides to study the issue in-depth, writes his representatives in government, and gives of his own financial resources. Delightfully done, but theologically weak. Available from the Hunger Office of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1268 InterChurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York 10027.

The Edge of Hope. 24 mm, Color. Film. 1974. Depicts lives of the poor in Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, and Paraguay. Roman Catholic. Free from Maryknoll Library of Third World Films, 7838 San Fernando Road, Sun

Valley, California 91352.

Give Us Daily Bread. 23 mm. Color. Film. Comparison of needs of people in poor countries with North American patterns of living and food production. Tactfully done and solidly biblical. Highly recommended. Free from Mennonite Central Committee, Audio-Visual Library, 21 S. 12th St., Akron, Pennsylvania 17501.

Glass House. 12 mm. Color. Film. 1974. A provocative modern "rich man and Lazarus" parable about world hunger. Excellent as a discussion starter. Roman Catholic. Available from TeleKetics, Franciscan Communications Center, 1229 S. Santee St., Los Angeles, California 90015.

Keep the People Alive: Malnutrition. 27 mm. Color. Film. 1975. Second in the three-part series *One Planet—Two Worlds*. Graphic picture of malnutrition and its meaning for people in poor countries contrasted with the materialism of the rich. Secular, one-world emphasis, but penetrating presentation of the moral choices. Available from Films, Inc., 1144 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, Illinois 60091.

Tilt. 19 mm. Color. Film. 1972. This animated film by the National Film Board of Canada is built around a series of vignettes, each of which presents a different element of the hunger problem. Good discussion starter. Available from CRM Educational Films, Del Mar, California 92014.

A World Hungry. Series of five filmstrips, each approximately 10 mm., with cassettes. Color. 1974. The first three filmstrips deal respectively with myths about hunger, the real causes of hunger, and our responsibility toward the hungry. The last two filmstrips present positive responses Christians can make. Can be used as part of a five-week church school course. Comes with teaching aids. Roman Catholic. Available from TeleKetics, Franciscan Communications Center, 1229 S. Santee St., Los Angeles, California 90015.

III. SIMULATION GAMES

Baldicer. Simulation on world food problems. John Knox Press, Box 1175, Richmond, Virginia 23209.

Starpower. Simulates consequences of concentration of wealth and power. Simile II, P.O. Box 1023, La Jolla, California 92037.

IV. CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Bread for the World

Bread for the World is an ecumenical Christian citizens' movement to influence United States public policy on issues relating to hunger. Members of the Board of Directors of Bread for the World include Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, and such evangelicals as Paul Rees, Frank Gaebelein, and Senator Mark Hatfield. Executive Director of Bread for the World is Arthur Simon, a Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor.

Individuals join Bread for the World for a \$10 membership fee and receive a monthly newsletter which keeps them informed on hunger issues before the United States Congress. Members then write letters, send delegations to visit their congressional representatives, bring the hunger issue before the media, and take other political actions on behalf of the hungry. In many localities, Bread for the World has local chapters in which members can participate in addition to the national organization.

During its short four-year history, Bread for the World has successfully introduced a number of public policy initiatives into the United States Congress, including passage of a Right to Food Resolution and the creation of a national grain reserve. Members of the Christian Reformed Church are urged to become active in Bread for the World as an effective Christian organization involved in structural change around the hunger issue

Address: Bread for the World
207 E. 16th St
New York, New York 10003

The Association for Public Justice

The Association for Public Justice (APJ), formerly National Association for Christian Political Action (NACPA), is an association of Christian citizens whose aim is to nurture responsible, active citizenship in accord with Christian principles. Working for justice in the public domain, APJ is guided by the biblical revelation of the restoration of the creation in Jesus Christ through whom justice is promised to all, especially to the poor and oppressed. APJ is convinced that good citizenship requires active, principled, and organized political service that is oriented to the entire range of governmental responsibilities.

Address: The Association for Public Justice
Box 5769
Washington, D.C. 20014

The CJL Foundation

The CJL is an independent Canadian people's movement which seeks to develop political, economic, educational, and social policies and action programs from a Christian life perspective. It does so via research, publications, and education in the conviction that there should be justice and liberty for all.

Address: The CJL Foundation
229 College Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1R4

The Christian Farmers' Federations

The Christian Farmers' Federations are organizations of Christian farmers whose purpose is to research various issues associated with agriculture, such as production and distribution of food, land use, stewardly use of our resources, and the preservation of the family farm. They seek to encourage each other in personal and communal responsibility in developing a Christian life-style and in being a witness to the community and to other organizations, including the governments of the states and provinces and of Canada and the United States.

Addresses: Christian Farmers' Federation of Alberta

RR 6. Box 168A

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5B 4K3

Christian Farmers' Federation of Ontario

Box 47

Drayton, Ontario, Canada NOG 1P0

Christian Farmers' Association of Iowa

Box 37

Orange City, Iowa 51041