

CRITICAL ISSUES AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Introduction

Let us look at some of the special problems that have emerged in recent years to challenge man's intelligence and ability. These problems are not new; rather, they have become the focus of attention and concern because of their impending magnitude.

The Christian is a member of a society; he cannot live in isolation. Some who have mystical tendencies try to isolate themselves from the world and experience a constant communion with God. This effort is an escape strategy, for it is much more difficult to live the Christian life when one is involved in the daily struggles of economic, political, and family life than to isolate oneself and experience communion with God.

Living in today's world involves practicing the principles of brotherhood, equality, and justice towards all who form a part of one's environment. The Christian life involves relating to those of different social classes, nationalities, races, and customs.

Today we are appalled because of the radical changes which have taken place in our way of life. The industrial revolution has brought dramatic changes during the past two centuries, but it is still getting under way in many countries of the Third World. The cybernetic age is now upon man. *Cybernetics* is the automatic control of various processes in life by mechanico-electrical devices, such as thermostats, computers, and remote-controlled devices. We have lived to see man develop machines which can do calculations and other operations quickly and more accurately than the human brain. Many are experiencing the anxiety of possible displacement as they contemplate the future.

The phenomenon of urbanization is taking place with increasing rapidity. Once we spoke of *metropolis* but now the term has become *megalopolis*. There is constant extension of the cities in an uncontrollable sprawl, with resulting chaos, dehumanization, and increasing violence. It is estimated that, by the year 2000, over half of the earth's inhabitants will live in urban areas. This condition will further complicate every aspect of life, including food and water, clothing, housing, human relations, and family life.

Current trends are creating an increasing interest in the conservation of natural resources. Man has become aware of the threat of pollution of the air and streams and its extending consequences. Man is reaching out for extreme solutions to his problems. Abortion, genetic determination through cell manipulation, and euthanasia (the act of bringing about easy and gentle death for people in cases of incurable and painful diseases) are just a few of the options that man is considering.

In our age, Christians must be informed and influential as these choices are made. This chapter will seek to help you to become better informed. The system of values emphasized in previous chapters must be our underpinnings as we make decisions that will affect us and our posterity.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

One problem confronting man as we come to the turn of the century is i _____ . Part of industrialization is c _____ , or the use of m _____ -e _____ devices.

(*industrialization, cybernetics, mechanico-electrical*)

Another problem confronting man now is u _____ .

(*urbanization*)

LIST SOME OTHER PROBLEMS FACING MAN AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

(*Compare your answers with the text.*)

Christianity and Social Classes

Class consciousness in the Bible

Social distinctions result from different value systems. In the first chapters of Genesis, Cain brought his offering of the produce of the fields to God, and Abel brought an animal sacrifice. Their different gifts show that the two were involved in different pursuits of life. This difference between them brought enmity and ultimately the violent act on the part of Cain against Abel. There was usually strife between the agricultural and the nomadic people in ancient times. Such strife continued even through the time of the settling of the West in the United States.

Although Jacob and his sons had been of a higher class in Palestine, they became slaves in Egypt when they were forced to go there because of the famine. As slaves, they submitted to work and treatment which were denigrating. Their treatment resulted in acts of violence, such as Moses' slaying of the Egyptian because of his mistreatment of a Hebrew (Exod. 2:11-12). Eventually Moses became the liberator of the Hebrews and brought them once more into the Promised Land.

After becoming established in the Promised Land, the Israelites had frequent conflicts with the Canaanites, the native inhabitants. God had given them the commandment to conquer the land and annihilate the inhabitants. The reason for this commandment was the danger of the Israelites' being corrupted spiritually by the religion of Baal. They did not destroy all the Canaanites or the centres of Baal worship, and this false religion became a threat to the true religion of Jehovah worship.

This brief history shows that when there is a nationalistic or religious emphasis given by any group, the result is a natural feeling of difference towards others. The Hebrew people developed resentment towards the Egyptians, and surely the Egyptians had a feeling of superiority over their slaves. The same prejudice developed on the part of the Israelites towards the inhabitants of Canaan and their neighbours.

The prophetic books contain messages condemning neighbouring countries. The Book of Obadiah has been called a 'hymn of hate' because of the extreme feeling that is expressed by the prophet towards the Edomites. Jonah refused at first to go and preach to the Ninevites because of his strong feelings against them. Amos, a countryman, spoke a message of judgement against the rich city dwellers.

Jesus was born into a world which was torn asunder by national, racial, and social distinctions. The Greeks had been in control of Palestine before the Romans, and they left the imprint of class distinctions of aristocrats, military men, and working classes. The religious leaders of the Jewish faith were divided into various groups. The Jewish leaders distinguished their class from the majority class of publicans and sinners. Although He was criticized for doing so, Jesus associated freely with these people (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). Jesus could also feel at ease among the educated, like Nicodemus, and the tax collectors, like Zacchaeus.

Paul faced a world that was divided religiously, politically, economically, and socially. He boldly stated that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). The estimate has been made that of every six men who walked the streets of the

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Social distinctions result from different _____ systems. There was usually strife between _____ and _____ people in ancient times.

(value, agricultural, nomadic)

AS YOU READ, LIST SOME EXAMPLES OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE BIBLE.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Jesus was born into a world of _____, _____, and _____ distinctions.

(national, racial, social)

Paul's world was divided _____, _____, _____, and _____.

(religiously, politically, economically, socially)

Roman Empire, four were slaves.¹ Paul was able to move among these people and use his varied background to a good advantage as he ministered to different people. He set the pace for us as Christians today in this respect.

Contemporary class distinctions

In most societies, there are class distinctions. Even in countries dominated by communism, which professes to build a classless society, different classes still exist. In spite of the mixing of nationalities, races, and classes through immigration in the United States, different social classes still exist. Most countries have a rich or aristocratic class, a professional and middle class, and a lower class, which may be divided into sub-groups. In most cases the vast majority of the population is found in the lower half of the imaginary triangle which is used to illustrate class divisions.

The gospel knows no boundaries. A person can be transformed by the gospel regardless of his nationality, race, sex, or social and economic class. Though most of the early Christians were from the lower class in society, there are evidences that rich and educated people were also won to Christ. Even today, one can see in most churches a wide variety of social, economic, and cultural differences among the members. This is a good testimony to the power of the gospel to dissolve these distinctions.

When the message of the gospel is applied to the human heart, one is able to accept others as being created in the image of God and of intrinsic value before Him; therefore, Christians respect the dignity of common labourers whose work is dirty and difficult. Because of the image of God, a Christian recognizes the value of the poor man as well as that of the sick, the educated, and the influential. At the same time the gospel gives the poor a sense of dignity which they did not have before coming to know Christ.

The Changing Social Status of Women

Christianity has done much to elevate the status of women and to give them more recognition and freedom. In Old Testament times, the woman was the property of the man. When a man decided that he wanted to marry, the union was contracted by him or his family without much consultation between the man and the one he married (Gen. 24:1-67; 29:9-30). Women recognized that their position was to bear children, rear them, take care of domestic chores, and not be too forward in speaking on any issue in the presence of men.

Jesus shocked the world in His day by not adhering to these customs. He surprised the Samaritan woman by engaging in conversation with her at the well (John 4:1-30). He refused to let the woman in adultery be stoned by showing her accusers that they were sinful also (John 8:1-11).

Although Paul taught that in Christ there is to be no social distinction between man and woman, in practice he still seemed to be bound by tradition. He emphasized the importance of submission for the wife towards her husband (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18). Paul insisted that the women should learn in silence in their churches (1 Tim. 2:11). He stressed that Christian women be clothed according to the social customs of

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The gospel has the power to dissolve d _____ and b _____.

(distinctions, boundaries)

The gospel makes it possible to accept others as created in the _____ of God and of _____ to God whether they are poor, sick, educated, or influential.

(image, value)

Christianity has helped elevate the status of women and give them more _____ and _____.

(freedom, recognition)

LIST TWO EXAMPLES OF JESUS' BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO WOMEN IN HIS DAY.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

¹Archibald B. D. Alexander, *The Ethics of St. Paul* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1910), p. 300.

for much oppression in various parts of the world and has brought much suffering to humanity.

Many use the Bible to defend their racism. Some refer to the mark of punishment that God placed upon Cain (Gen. 4:11-16). But it needs to be recognized that the sign that God placed upon him was to protect him, 'And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him' (Gen. 4:15b). In Genesis 9:24-27, there was a curse placed upon Canaan, younger son of Noah, which said that 'a servant of servants shall he be' through the generations. Some see in this curse the basis for saying that the black man is to serve the white man, and, thereby, they defend the use of African descendants as slaves in various parts of the world. This curse was pronounced by Noah, but the Scripture does not say that it came from God. Nor can it be said with certainty that the descendants of Canaan are black (Gen. 10:15-19).

The descendants of Abraham developed a sense of superiority because of the Covenant between Abraham and God that was handed down to them from generation to generation. When they established themselves in Canaan after their slavery in Egypt, they constantly fought against neighbouring countries. The Law prohibited their marrying foreigners, although this prohibition was not enforced. A kind of particularism developed, especially as a result of the captivity in Babylon, at which time a greater emphasis was placed by Nehemiah and Ezra upon marrying within one's own nationality. Malachi criticized those who had foreign spouses.

Jesus was born into a world which was very conscious of racial and national differences. The inhabitants of Judaea were prejudiced against Samaritans. Jesus was able to relate to the people with whom He came in contact without making racial, social, or economic distinctions. The fact that He went first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel has been used to accuse Him of racism (Matt. 10:5-6). This strategy was a temporary emphasis, and Jesus commissioned His disciples to go everywhere and to everyone.

The early Christians found difficulty in understanding fully that the gospel was not limited to the Jews. When Cornelius sent for Peter to come and help him find the Way, Peter was slow to recognize that God's grace was being experienced by Cornelius, a Gentile (Acts 10:21-33). Peter made a great admission when he said, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons' (Acts 10:34).

Although Paul always went to the synagogue first with the gospel as he entered into a new city, he also preached to the Gentiles. He hoped to find a more receptive audience among the Jews because they had the Old Testament tradition which Paul believed to be a good preparation for the gospel. But he has been called the 'Apostle to the Gentiles' and did an effective work in the Gentile world. Paul declared the gospel to be the power that breaks down all barriers. 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:13).

The development of racial prejudice

Racism is a relatively recent phenomena. The ancient world's prejudice was not based so much on racial differences as on cultural differences.³ The Greeks had slaves, but they

³Edmund Soper, *Racism: A World Issue* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947), p. 32.

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. The mark placed upon Cain was to make him inferior. ____
2. God placed a mark on Cain to protect him. ____
3. The curse on Canaan was pronounced by Noah and was not necessarily from God. ____
4. There is no evidence that Canaan's descendants were black. ____

(1. False, 2. True, 3. True, 4. True)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

1. Abraham's descendants developed an attitude of superiority because of the C ____.
2. Because the law prohibited foreign marriages, a kind of p ____ developed.

(1. Covenant, 2. particularism)

Early Christians had difficulty understanding the gospel was not limited to the _____. Peter came to realize that the _____.

(Jews, gospel is for all people)

Although Paul went first to the _____, he did not limit his ministry to them. He became known as the '_____ to the _____'. He declared the gospel to be the _____ that breaks down all _____.

(Jews, Apostle, Gentiles, power, barrier)

FINISH READING THIS PARAGRAPH ON THE NEXT PAGE AND DO THE EXERCISE THERE.

were not people of only one colour. Toynbee indicates that the attitude of superiority came into being in the fifteenth century with the discovery of new lands.⁴ New lands to be cultivated and new commercial opportunities created the need to find new sources of labour. From Africa, people were first imported to Europe. After Europeans found slavery to be profitable, the institution was then transported to the New World. Since most of the Africans had not been educated, white men came to feel superior to them. Europeans recognized that Africans could withstand the heat and other unfavourable conditions better than white men and so more and more were imported.

When the Spaniards came to Latin America, they exploited the natives. These people, chiefly of Indian blood, came to live in serfdom because they were always indebted to the owners of the land. The priest Bartolomé de las Casas is famous for his efforts to improve the lot of the Indians. Rycroft quotes José A. Saco, a Cuban writer of the nineteenth century, who says that the king of Spain, and not Casas, was largely responsible for the importation of Africans to do the hard work because the Indians were not physically strong enough to resist the severe climate and disease that prevailed.⁵

The colonists in North America invaded the territory which had been occupied previously by Indian tribes. The history of the early years reveals a series of battles and bloodshed as the natives defended their rights against the invaders. Most of the Indians were killed or driven westward. We cannot be proud of these pages in American history.

Even though slavery was abolished in the last century, prejudice has continued to exist in many countries. Discrimination has been practised against certain races and groups. This situation is slowly changing in many parts, and we look forward to the day when all men will be treated as brothers.

The causes of racism

Is prejudice inherited? Definitely not! One is taught to look down upon others because of some basic difference. Social conditions lend themselves to one group's feeling superior to others. The impulse to exert power and control over others capitalizes on situations which give advantage to some as superior to others.

Much prejudice is based upon ignorance. Count Govineau, a Frenchman who wrote a book entitled *The Inequality of the Human Race*, said that the colour of the skin determines the differences in intelligence and spiritual perception. He also said that the mixture of the blood of different races produces degeneration. But today anthropologists have rejected this concept. In 1938 the American Psychological Association declared that there are no innate mental differences among people of different races. Differences are due rather to unequal opportunities and application. The American Anthropological Association has said that there is no basis for teaching that cultural characteristics can be inherited.⁶ Modern medicine has proven that there is no difference between the blood of people

⁴Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 223.

⁵Stanley W. Rycroft, *Religion and Faith in Latin America* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 98.

⁶Quoted by Georgia Harkness, *Christian Ethics* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 169.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The ancient world's prejudice was based more on _____ differences than on racial _____. According to Toynbee, the attitude of superiority developed with the discovery of new _____ and the need for new sources of _____.

(cultural, differences, land, labour)

UNDERLINE THE CORRECT WORD OR WORDS.

1. Prejudice (*is, is not*) inherited.
2. One (*is taught to look, naturally looks*) down on others because of some basic difference.
3. Social conditions tend to make one group feel (*inferior, superior*) to another.

(1. *is not*, 2. *is taught to look*, 3. *superior*)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Two basic causes of differences are unequal _____ and _____.

(*opportunities, application*)

of different colours, and transfusions of blood can be given without regard for the colour of the person from whom it comes.

In some countries, prejudice is based upon social, cultural, or economic differences as much as upon racial differences. Differences do exist in Latin America where people in the past were classified as Spanish, Indian, mestizo (a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood), Negro, and zambo (a mixture of Indian and Negro blood). There seems to be a tendency to look down upon the Indian. Some have changed this by moving from rural areas to the cities and adopting the western mode of dress, language, and other cultural practices.⁷

Solutions to prejudice

One of the goals of Christianity is to promote brotherhood among people of all races. Paul declared that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation' (Acts 17:26). The process of education will contribute to the lessening of racial and other forms of prejudice. Most children enjoy playing together without noticing colour distinctions, but they begin to have conflict when they are taught to discriminate.

We can do much to provide equal opportunities for people of all races by preparing them for jobs and giving them opportunities to acquire positions of responsibility in their work. The example of Christians in not practicing discrimination will be contagious. If we teach our children not to be prejudiced, they can pass these teachings on to the next generation.

In some countries the labour unions have exerted pressure to do away with discrimination. Refusing to hire a person because of his nationality or colour is illegal now in some places. More legislation of this nature will gradually help to do away with prejudice.

Some churches practiced segregation in the past. With the ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States in 1954 that segregation in the schools was illegal, a continuing battle was begun. However, progress has been made towards desegregation. Most churches now admit people into their membership regardless of their race. Where segregation still continues, Christians should recognize that this is short of God's ideal. The Christian Church should be the leader in the movement to accept all people on the same basis.

Each Christian should follow the example of Christ in accepting others in love regardless of their race, social position, or nationality. Milton Eisenhower made a trip through Latin America some years ago. He later stated that Latin America offers two alternatives in many areas: either justice or injustice, liberty or slavery, plenty or poverty, and a peaceful revolution or a violent one.⁸ According to him, the result of a violent revolution would be tyranny.

The proclamation and application of the message of Christ will ultimately guarantee justice, liberty, and spiritual peace. Acceptance and respect of every person should be promoted because he is a creature with God's image. The Christian

⁷Robert J. Alexander, *Today's Latin America* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 49.

⁸Milton Eisenhower, *The Wine is Bitter* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), p. 330.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

In some countries prejudice is based upon _____, _____, or _____ differences as much as upon racial differences.

(social, cultural, economic)

Lessening of racial and other forms of prejudice will be helped through _____.

(education)

Provision of equal _____ help overcome prejudice. Christians should set an example in not practising _____.

(opportunities, discrimination)

The Christian Church should lead out in acceptance of _____ people on the same _____.

(all, basis)

gospel gives every person the opportunity to have a personal experience with Jesus Christ and, thereby, enrich his life. The message of Christ will bring to fruition the Kingdom of God.

Ecology

Conservation of plant life

God created the heavens and the earth; creation includes all that is in the earth and on the earth. He created the plant and animal kingdoms and the minerals in such ways that they are mutually dependent and supportive. *Ecology* is the study of the interaction of man with the rest of creation. For centuries, man has freely used the fruit of the land, domestic and wild animals, and vast mineral resources. There is a delicate balance in this creation which, if upset, can have extensive and serious repercussions. Storer illustrates this situation by referring to a catastrophic windstorm which struck a great spruce forest.⁹ The trees were not damaged greatly by the windstorm, but the woodpeckers disappeared. Since there were no woodpeckers to eat the insects, the bark beetles killed the forest. The dry, dead forest became a prey to fire, which destroyed vegetation from the watershed. Resulting floods damaged the soil, ruined the farms in that area, and thereby created a scarcity of food which affected the lives of millions of people in cities thousands of miles away.

Some destruction takes place, as has been illustrated, because of natural forces that are beyond man's control. Other destruction results from man's ignorance, lack of concern, or deliberate waste. Many areas that were previously dense forests of excellent timber have been stripped and made desolate by man's greed and his lack of concern for future generations. There remains now only one-eighth of the virgin timber that covered the United States in colonial times.¹⁰ It takes from three hundred to a thousand years to create a one-inch layer of soil. But through ignorance or waste people can burn the foliage off of that topsoil and thereby expose it to erosion that causes it to be washed away in a few moments during a rainstorm. We must be better stewards of what God has given us for our own benefit.

Without the soil, plant life is impossible. Without plants, human and animal life cannot exist. The topsoil is the only part that can produce plants, although there are valuable mineral deposits in the subsoil. This topsoil can be removed by erosion, either by water or wind. Man needs to take the necessary steps to preserve the topsoil by helping it to retain all the water possible and thus avoid its being removed. Grass and other plants can be planted on slopes in order to hold the soil intact and retain the water during rainfall. Trees should not be cut and removed from the land unless they are really needed and measures are taken to replace them. Land should be farmed in such a way as to return to the soil the minerals that are taken from it. This kind of farming involves rotation of crops, use of fertilizers, turning under crops to restore organic matter, and contour farming. Grazing the land to the point of depletion should be avoided. Many deserts have been created because livestock were permitted to graze pastures too closely.

⁹John H. Storer, *The Web of Life* (New York: The New American Library, 1953), p. xi.

¹⁰Francis D. Curtis and George Mallinson, *Science in Daily Life* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1955), p. 465.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

E_____ is the study of the interaction of persons with their environment. One aspect of ecology is conservation of p_____ l_____.

(*Ecology, plant life*)

Man exhausts the natural resources because he is _____ and is not concerned about future _____.

(*greedy, generations*)

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. It takes three hundred or more years to create an inch of top soil. _____
2. We are not responsible as stewards of our world. _____
3. Water can be retained by the plants on a slope. _____

(*1. True, 2. False, 3. True*)

LIST FOUR PARTS OF ECOLOGICALLY SOUND FARMING.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(*Compare your answers with the text.*)

Animal and wild life

Man has been directly and indirectly responsible for the destruction of most of the wild life. In some places, the areas for grazing and reproduction were reduced by advancing civilization. The American Indians and the wild animals were killed ruthlessly. Hunting and fishing have further depleted the number of animals and fish in the streams. Pollution by industries has made many streams unfit to support fish. Many wild animals that were plentiful in the past have become almost extinct.

What steps can be taken to halt this destructive trend? Hunting and fishing laws have helped in many areas. There are only a few days in the year in which certain animals and birds can be hunted. And there are limits on the number of fish that the fisherman can take home. Also there are other restrictions on the ways that fish can be caught. The Christian has the responsibility to be obedient to these laws and to promote their observance on the part of others.

Mineral resources and their conservation

The fertility of the soil can be restored. Water supplies may be restored and preserved. Plant and animal life can be renewed. But metals, coal, natural gas, and oil cannot be renewed once these resources have been exhausted. They must either be conserved or other substances substituted for them. There are some basic principles which man must follow if he is to conserve the mineral resources. First, he should take no more of these resources than is absolutely necessary. Second, he should use frugally what is taken. And third, he should cooperate to preserve as much as possible the resources which remain unused.

Iron is one of the minerals most used by man. We are told that the amount of iron ore available to man is diminishing. Authorities say that coal resources are nearing exhaustion. In recent times the entire world has felt the effects of the oil shortage. We have become aware of how dependent we are on this resource and how much international relations affect the distribution of oil. Natural gas has been wasted, but in recent years we have become aware of the need to preserve it. We are now discovering how to extract minerals from the earth in ways which do not waste so much and which take advantage of the maximum amount of the resources.

Man can do much to reduce his consumption of minerals. Many minerals can be recycled and used again. New discoveries are being made which provide substitutes for some minerals. Man can reduce the speed limit and thereby conserve thousands of gallons of gasoline annually. He can use more concrete and less steel in construction projects. Plastics have been developed which have taken the place of many metals. And more progress will be made in the future.

Population Explosion

The problem

Although some may question whether or not there is a crisis in the world because of over-population, statistics convince most people. Those who have dedicated themselves to a serious study of population trends say that there is cause to be alarmed and that steps must be taken to curb population growth.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Another aspect of ecology has to do with _____ and _____ life.

(animal, wild)

What responsibility does a Christian have concerning hunting and fishing laws?

(To obey them and promote their observance by others)

FILL IN THE BLANK.

Another aspect of ecology is conservation of _____ resources.

(mineral)

LIST SOME MEASURES FOR CONSERVING MINERAL RESOURCES.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Statisticians and historians tell us that in the time of Christ there were from 210 to 250 million inhabitants in the world. By the year 1650, this number had increased to 470 million. Two hundred years later, in 1850, world population had reached the first billion mark. World population, therefore, doubled in the two hundred years between 1650 and 1850. However, during the next one hundred years, 1850 to 1950, the population tripled to three billion. We were then told that by the year 2000, a span of fifty years, there would be some six to seven billion people in the world.

Students of population trends in various countries say that the threat of over-population is even more alarming because the greatest increases are in the countries with the least resources to support these people. The prosperous countries of the world which could provide food for more people have a minimal rate of population growth. Thus, misery will increase in the countries that have the greatest difficulty supporting the people who already live there.

While people recognize the truth of these statements and the probability of the predictions of the future, they say that the basic problem is not an increasing population. Rather, they insist that the problem is inadequate distribution of the people which does not permit maximum use of the land. Also they insist that, with economic and political systems that guarantee more equitable distribution of the land, food, and other goods, these people could live in health and comfort. Thus, they contend that the problem is related more to man's unwise use of available resources and failure to distribute the population in areas which can sustain it adequately than to his failure to curb population growth.

Food supply and population

The majority of the people who live in the Third World get their nourishment almost exclusively from cereals because they cannot afford to buy meat and other foods that are high in protein. Also, because of ignorance, much of the nutritional value of food is lost in the process of its preparation. Thus, many people suffer and die from diseases that have different names but have their origins in malnutrition. This condition is called *the hidden hunger*. Cumulative malnutrition makes people susceptible to such diseases as measles, meningitis, pneumonia, and endemic diarrhea. If babies do not get enough protein during the early stages of their development, their mental ability will be impaired. This damage will limit many to the kinds of work which require less intelligence. This impediment in a high percentage of the people of a country will inevitably affect that country's capacity to progress.

Some have suggested that famine and disease will be the two main forces that curb population explosion. For example, some time ago one of the leading news magazines carried an article about the famine that was extending in Africa because of drought.¹¹ The article stated that, during the previous two years, an estimated quarter of a million people had died from the effects. The drought had swept across the mid-section of Africa and was moving eastward to threaten the states extending from Ethiopia and Somalia, on the Horn of Africa, to Kenya and Tanzania.

To depend on these solutions to curb population explosion

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

1. In the **200** years between 1650 and 1850, the world population had _____.
2. In the next **100** years, from 1850 to 1950, the population _____.
3. It has been estimated that in the next **50** years the population will _____.

(1. doubled, 2. tripled, 3. double)

The threat of over-population is so alarming because the greatest increases are in countries with the least _____ to support the people.

(resources)

Some say the problem is not over-population but unwise use of _____ and inadequate _____ of the people.

(resources, distribution)

'Hidden hunger' is unrecognized m_____.

(malnutrition)

This condition makes people susceptible to diseases such as _____, _____, _____, and _____.

(measles, meningitis, pneumonia, endemic diarrhea)

¹¹Time, April 21, 1975, p. 25.

is immoral in the opinion of the writer. Is it moral to let people be born into a world in which they are going to experience such intense suffering and will eventually die? Would it not be better to prevent their being born into that kind of misery? It is appalling to look at the pictures of hungry children which appear frequently in newspapers and magazines. Their muscles have wasted away because of starvation, and their bones look as if they will break through the thin layer of diseased skin. Is this what God intended that life should be for these people? Within every man there must be something that rebels against this subhuman existence.

Increased food production has been suggested as a solution to the problem of population explosion. Many contend that the land potentially could produce an abundance of food for the present and the anticipated population of the world. They say that if there could be the right kind of world organization and legislation about food supplies, then food could be distributed without becoming embroiled in national and international controversies, excise taxes, import taxes, and other barriers to adequate distribution.

Many developments have taken place in recent years which have increased both quality and quantity of production. New strains of rice have been developed which are able to increase the amount of yield per acre and thus feed more people. Also, special varieties of grains have been developed that have increased the nutritional value of these foods. More progress will be made in these areas in the future. Studies are under way which eventually will make it possible to use what previously has been considered waste. Foods can be recycled, and their nutritional values can contribute greatly to solving the problem of hunger.

Man is increasingly looking to bodies of water to provide food. Although man has eaten fish for centuries, there are additional varieties of fish and sea plants which promise to help feed the inhabitants of the earth. There is a possibility of using algae and other plants as food and of extracting artificial milk from the oceans. As these plans become realities, famine may be reduced in the world.

Responsible parenthood and population

Christianity teaches the need to be responsible parents. Responsible parenthood means that couples will decide how many children they can afford to have, taking into account their economic situation and the physical and emotional health of both parents. They will determine the amount of time that should elapse between the birth of each child. They will inform themselves concerning acceptable means of preventing the conception of children for whom they cannot make adequate provision. There are family planning centres in most urban areas of the world which will provide this information and also assist in giving needed medical attention for birth control. This attention includes conception prevention for the couple. Medical assistance will recommend the most effective and least harmful methods for couples. There are several methods available and new ones are constantly being developed.

Christian moral principles should dictate to the couple that steps taken to prevent conception are permissible, just as it is not only permissible but recommended that people take precautionary steps to prevent many of the diseases that previ-

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

To consider famine and disease as adequate curbs of overpopulation is _____.

(immoral)

One suggested solution for population explosion is increased _____ production.

(food)

One aspect of being responsible parents is to decide how many children they can afford to have, considering e _____ and h _____ factors.

(economic, health)

ously have been dangerous, painful, and threatening to life. Since the children are the ones to suffer when birth control is not practised, it is morally wrong not to control the number of children that a couple could potentially have. If every couple had all the children that they biologically could reproduce during a normal married life, the problem of population explosion would be compounded geometrically. God has given to man the responsibility of using his intelligence and will to make decisions in this and all other areas. A family is wise to have only the number of children that they can support.

In addition to practising conception control, the Christian can be a force for educating others to do the same. Many religions have no official position about the question of conception control. When this is true, educational programmes may be promoted without serious difficulties. In countries which have predominating religions that oppose conception control, the task will be more difficult and progress will come more slowly. Many nations in the Third World have accepted and are now accepting aid in the forms of instruction, subsidy to provide personnel for birth control centres, and the means to make birth control devices more accessible to those who otherwise could not afford them.

Abortion as a means of curbing population

Some have suggested that abortion is a viable solution to the problem of population explosion. In Japan and Sweden, this solution has been legalized and used widely for years. In recent years, other countries have legalized abortion. Many are saying more vociferously than before that a woman who does not want a child should not be forced by law to give birth to one.

Abortion is not new. It has been practised since ancient times and in widely different cultures. Infanticide is a similar problem, except that the mother and father wait until the child is born to decide whether to let it live or die.

Since abortion has been illegal in most countries, serious problems have arisen because people have resorted to secret abortions and have encountered extortion and unsanitary conditions in doing away with the unwanted *foetus* (an unborn, developing embryo from three months after conception until birth). Numerous women are brought annually to hospitals with either tetanus or haemorrhaging resulting from voluntary and secret abortions. Because of the prevalence of clandestine (secret or concealed) centres which perform these abortions, the laws have been relaxed in some countries to permit a woman to have an abortion under more sanitary conditions.

The arguments which have been used to pressure for the legalizing of abortions are weighty:

1. It will do away with the evils of illegal abortions.
2. It is better for a child not to be born than to be born into a home where he is not wanted.
3. Making abortions difficult has not made people moral.
4. Women have the right to determine the use of their bodies.

Also many argue that the foetus cannot be considered a human being until the latter stage of pregnancy. Most physicians insist that an abortion should not be performed after the third month of pregnancy.

Most medical doctors have been strongly opposed to abortions except in certain unusual circumstances. Many have

REREAD THIS PARAGRAPH BEGINNING ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE AND ANSWER TRUE OR FALSE.

1. Christian moral principles have nothing to do with the decision to prevent conception. _____
2. God has given people the responsibility of using his intelligence and will in making decisions in all areas of life. _____

(1. False, 2. True)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Some suggest abortion as another means of curbing the p _____ explosion. Many say that a woman should not be f _____ to bear an unwanted c _____.

(population, forced, child)

F _____ refers to an unborn, developing human embryo from three months after conception to birth.

(Foetus)

LIST SOME ARGUMENTS WHICH ARE GIVEN FOR ABORTION.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Many people think the foetus should not be considered a human being until the latter stage of pregnancy. _____
2. All doctors would agree to abortion after the third month of pregnancy. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

argued that a therapeutic abortion is justifiable and legally permissible, if three physicians agree that a pregnancy will endanger the physical or emotional life of the mother or if the child will be deformed. Others broaden the conditions to include cases of rape or mental illness which incapacitates the couple as responsible parents. We now know that if the mother has rubella (German measles) during the first weeks of pregnancy the resulting child will almost surely be deformed. In cases of this nature, many people would not question the wisdom and morality of abortion.

What about an abortion for the young girl who is unmarried and finds herself pregnant? In the past, she was forced into a marriage that usually ended in divorce within a few years and two or three more children later. In cases where the father of the child disappeared or where it was not wise to marry, the young girl would go to a special home for unwed mothers, give birth to the child, and let it be adopted without seeing it or knowing by whom it was adopted. In some countries, no stigma is attached to giving birth to a child out of wedlock. The new baby is accepted into the home of the grandparents and reared as a regular member of the family.

With the passing of laws permitting abortion there has been a radical decline in the number of children that are available for adoption. This decline would indicate that an increasing number of young women are resorting to abortion instead of giving birth to the child. But what appears to be the easiest solution may have some built-in hazards that will appear later. Guilt may be one of those hazards. Studies show that a woman who believes that human life begins with conception is not a good candidate for an abortion. She will later be plagued with guilt, which may collect more wages than having dealt more openly with her problem.

The Christian faith holds up the sanctity of life as a determinative in moral decisions. Although there may be differences of opinion about the moment of the beginning of life, or when a foetus becomes a soul, we need to recognize and respect this basic principle. At the same time, Christian faith proclaims that God's forgiveness is adequate to cover any sin. We need to be able to appropriate that forgiveness in our own lives and also to communicate the promise of forgiveness to others.

It is wise to follow the counsel of responsible medical advice in the matter of an abortion. A couple should consult with a physician in cases which appear to be problematic in order that he can give the best medical attention from the beginning of the pregnancy. When an abortion is advised, the couple should give the advice of the physician deep consideration. They should consult with their pastor and pray for divine guidance. Then they should make their decision and be at peace about the matter.

In conclusion, we cannot approve abortion as a means of curbing population explosion. Couples should be informed about effective means of conception prevention, and they will then not have to face the question of an abortion. The other cases would be so few that abortion could not be considered as a viable solution to this problem. We will discuss this subject further in the next chapter.

TRUE OR FALSE?

All doctors consider therapeutic abortion is justifiable and legally permissible. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

FILL IN THE BLANK.

In some countries there is no stigma attached to having a child born out of _____.

(wedlock)

One of the built-in hazards of abortion is _____.

(guilt)

For Christians, the critical issue in abortion is the s_____ of l_____.

(sanctity, life)

A couple should consult with their p_____ and their p_____. then p_____ for d_____ g_____ before making any decision about abortion.

(physician, pastor, pray, divine guidance)

What is the author's conclusion on abortion and a possible alternative for curbing over the population explosion?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Migration as a solution

Migration has been suggested as another solution to the problem of population explosion. Many argue that there is plenty of land for all the people who will be born in the next quarter century. All that is needed, they contend, is to distribute the people in the uninhabited sections of the interior of many countries like Brazil, Colombia, the western United States, and the underpopulated areas of Asia and Africa. But the tremendous problems of lack of transportation, communication, and modern conveniences in these areas must be recognized. Jungles, mountains, swamps, deserts, and other inconveniences are barriers to the development of these areas.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw migration from Europe, from Africa, and, in a more limited degree, from Asia to the new continents of North and South America. Now national laws have restricted migration in most countries of the world. The people who are needed in the countries of the Third World are the engineers, technologists, and skilled workmen, but these people usually do not want to leave the wealthier countries.

In some countries, the land is owned by a wealthy few. When ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few people, the results are high social stratification, little vertical mobility, few educational opportunities for the masses, restricted personality development, work that is menial, and little incentive to try to get ahead. When the land is distributed among the masses, the opposite situation prevails. There is a great deal of upward movement from poverty to middle-class living, increased educational opportunities with resulting advantages, and optimism towards the future.

While distribution of the people may be desirable, the reverse is actually taking place. Urbanization is the trend of our day. The estimate is made that by the year 2000 forty-five per cent of the five and one-fourth billion people in the developing nations will be living in urban areas, while eighty per cent of the one and three-fourths billion in the developed nations will be living in urban areas.¹² Each day thousands of people abandon plots of land in rural areas and move into cities which are already overcrowded. Problems of poverty, crime, drug addiction, and sickness are compounded. A visit to the slum areas of any one of the major cities of the world will reveal that land reform, settlement of new areas, and migration are not adequate solutions to the problem of population explosion.

Just as problems related to population explosion are multiple, the solutions must also be many and varied. Additional progress must be made in food production to provide for the additional millions that will inevitably be born in the next quarter century. Also steps must be taken to encourage people not to procreate more than their income will support adequately. Some migration of people from the more densely populated areas may be encouraged, but too much faith cannot be placed in migration as a solution to population explosion. Much needs to be done to make new areas attractive, practical, and advantageous. A combination of these solutions will help us to face more adequately the challenge of the future additional population.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Another possible solution to population explosion is _____ . But problems such as _____ of _____ , _____ , and _____ conveniences are barriers.

(migration, lack, transportation, communication, modern)

While migration to underpopulated areas may be a solution, actually the reverse, _____ , is taking place. The shift of population to the cities make problems such as _____ and _____ worse.

(urbanization, poverty, crime, drug addiction, sickness)

NOW THAT YOU HAVE FINISHED READING POPULATION EXPLOSION, BRIEFLY LIST SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

¹²See Britannica Book of the Year, 1973, p. 176.

Conclusion

Space will not permit further discussion of urbanization, pollution, and other contemporary problems with ethical and moral implications, though we will discuss bioethical problems in the next chapter. We must point out here that the Christian is being challenged on every hand by the age in which he lives. First, he must maintain the desire to be constantly informed about his world. Then he must do what he can in his own area to make the world as Christian as possible. He must pray for pardon when thrust into situations which force him to choose the lesser of two evils. But he must be willing to face up to his world and his place in it. As Carothers says, men and women must decide—

1. how to relate sex to procreation. . . .
2. whether to put vast quantities of new technologies into war and armaments or to use the same powers for health, education and increased opportunities for all.
3. whether, as they watch the world's petroleum supplies run out, to consume less energy, to scar the landscape with strip mining, or to build nuclear power plants that may endanger cities.
4. whether to abort fetuses they do not want to come to birth.
5. whether to strangle cities with more and more automobiles or to design other modes of transportation.
6. whether to permit increasing starvation.
7. whether to apply increased taxation and other expenditures to cleansing the atmosphere or to paying the medical costs of poisoned air.
8. whether more sophisticated media of communication will enable a few to propagandize the many or will enable the many to communicate with each other. . . .
9. who will pay the costs of change.
10. who will control the computers used in managing the changes.
11. who will exercise the vast new powers now available to mankind.
12. how the agents of power will be held accountable for their actions.¹³

¹³J. Edward Carothers, Margaret Mead, Daniel D. McCracken, and Roger L. Shinn, eds., *To Love or to Perish* (New York: Friendship Press, 1972), pp. 11-2.

LIST FOUR MEASURES A CHRISTIAN CAN TAKE TO HELP SOLVE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic assignment (*Levels 1, 2, and 3*). Do the following exercise.

1. List some problems that are confronting man at the turn of this century.

2. What causes social distinctions?

3. List biblical examples of class consciousness given in this study guide.

4. What evidence is there of the gospel's power to dissolve class or social distinctions?

5. List some examples of Jesus' attitude towards women.

6. What contribution has Christianity made to the status of women?

7. Define *race* and *racism*.

8. Explain the significance of the mark placed upon Cain (Gen. 4:11-16) and the curse on Canaan (Gen. 9:24-27).

9. What is the significance of decisions made in Acts 10 and 11 by Peter and the Church?

10. What were the bases of prejudice in the ancient world?

11. According to Toynbee, what caused the rise of the attitude of superiority?

12. What factors, other than race, help form prejudices?

13. What do some people feel is more of a problem than increasing population?

14. What causes man to exhaust the natural environment deliberately?

15. What difference is there in the exploitation of minerals and the exploitation of animals and plants?

16. What principles should man follow in order to conserve natural resources?

17. Why is the threat of over-population so alarming?

18. Why does the author feel it is immoral to depend on famine and disease to curb population explosion?

19. What does the author include in responsible parenthood?

20. What is the crucial issue in the abortion question for Christians?

21. What is the author's position concerning abortion?

22. What kind of solutions are needed for the problems created by population explosion?

Supplementary assignment (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read pages 128-43 in *Introducing Christian Ethics*, and do the following exercise.

1. Define *prejudice*.
2. What conclusions have scientists reached about race?
3. List some possible causes of prejudice and racial tension.
4. What teachings of the Bible are relevant to the contemporary problems of racial tension?
5. Write a strategy for dealing with one of the following problems that exist in your country: population explosion, pollution, birth control, abortion, waste of natural resources. Include the following steps in your plan:
 1. Analyse the problem according to its cause and the effect it has on your country.
 2. Outline a plan for informing your congregation about the problem and involving them in ministering to this problem.
 - (1) The plan for informing the people should include ways of informing them about the nature of the problem, extent of the problem, possible solutions to the problem, and biblical solutions to the problem.
 - (2) The plan for involving the people should include things your church will actually do in ministering to the problem.

Note: Pastors should write their paper from the pastoral perspective. Other church leaders should write from their perspective.

Advanced assignment (*Level 3*). Do the following additional exercise based on the above reading assignment.

1. State the problems caused by prejudice and explain their solutions.
2. What can the minister do in helping to solve the problem of racism?
3. Prepare a lesson to be used in a service or some other appropriate time to teach your congregation about the problem you selected in the supplementary assignment above. The lesson should deal with the following:
 1. The nature and extent of the problem in the world and in your country.
 2. Biblical and Christian solutions.
 3. Ways to solve the problem.

Seminar Discussion

1. Name the prejudices that exist in the group. Are these prejudices consistent with the practice of Christian living? How do they affect Christian testimony? Discuss what should be done about the prejudices.
2. What racial problems or class distinctions exist in your country? Apply the principles of the Christian ethic to them.
3. What can you do to stay informed on world problems? What can you do to relate this information to your ministry?
4. What is the attitude to pollution and waste and exploitation of the environment in your country? What kinds of waste, pollution and exploitation are occurring in your country? What can you do to bring about changes in the practices that threaten the ecology of your country?
5. What are the attitudes in your culture to birth control, family planning, contraceptives, and abortion? Compare and contrast them with biblical and Christian ethical principles.
6. Share the strategies and lessons prepared by level 2 and 3 students.