

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

Article 15

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.

In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography.

We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.

In order to promote these ends
Christians should be ready to work
with all men of good will in any good
cause, always being careful to act in
the spirit of love without
compromising their loyalty to Christ
and His truth.

*Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5;
Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5;
Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-
16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34;
2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37;
20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14;
1Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-
11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9;
Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12;
Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.*

Though we are “under obligation to make the will of Christ supreme in our lives and in human society,” there are significant limitations to this responsibility.

What are those limitations?

Our statement of faith reminds us that “the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.” (emphasis added)

In other words, we do not hope to reverse the curse of sin by mere human effort. The real change starts with the regenerated heart. That in turn leads to change in the actions and environment of the individual.

Yet, at the same time, regenerate individuals will act for righteousness and for the good of the society in which they live.

The good that is done in society is temporary, but it is still good, if it clearly shows the grace of God.

The caution is that Christians must be aware that good deeds are not the same as the Gospel.

Good deeds are evidences of the Gospel, but they are not a replacement for the Gospel!

There are two public institutions that God has established to bring order to human existence.

One is government (Romans 13).

The other is the local church (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Christians are called to be cooperative with and submissive to government authority.

However, our primary allegiance is to the embassy of the eternal Kingdom. That embassy is the local church.

The local church is the visible, tangible, organized illustration of the government that lasts forever.

Our final allegiance is to our church family, even if it contradicts the government law or rules of other institutions.

How does the local church influence the society and illustrate the power of the Gospel?

Let's read Matthew 5:13-16.

Note:

- The plural use of “you.” No Lone Ranger Christianity here.
- Two metaphors. Salt and Light.
(cf. p. 149 in your workbook)

What are examples of vice and corruption we are to oppose according to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000?

Is this an exhaustive list?

- Racism—Acts 17:26
- Sexual Immorality—1 Corinthians 6:12-20
- Homosexuality—Romans 1:18-27

Our Philosophy of Working with Others

“ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause”

“without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth”

Can Non-Christians Do Good Works?

1. They lack the right motive: Hebrews 11:4
2. They lack the right standard: 1 John 3:4
3. They lack the right goal: 1 Corinthians 10:31

Why learn doctrine (what we believe)?

Because your doctrine will determine
your deeds! Beliefs → Behavior