It is in the local church between laborers and lawyers, pastors and lawyers, concerning ethical decisions and the use of material wealth. We need to remind one another, pray for one another and admonish one another to be truly Christian in all our endeavors. This cannot be done in isolation; it must be done in the fellowship of believers.

It is both biblical and practical to emphasize that social action begins in the church, but it is most important that we also recognize that social action must be informed by the Word of God. Social action guided by the Word of God is first of all realistic. It will not fall prey to utopian idealism. It will not identify existing or would-be sociopolitical structures with the kingdom of God. It will face man's sin nature squarely. Guided by the Word of God, we shall understand that man is alienated from God and needs redemption. Even though many men do not accept the goodness of Jesus Christ, we realize that under the authority of God's Word we are not excused from acting in behalf of their social well-being. Biblical realism is essential to fulfilling our social responsibility.

Second, social action guided by the Word of God is consistent. The biblical teaching on the dignity of man rests on the fact that man was not only made in God's image but that he was made to find fulfillment in God's moral order, which is clearly expressed in the Bible. Consequently, those who are guided by God's Word often contradict the contemporary humanitarian spirit. Objections to liberalized abortion laws, heterosexual immorality, and homosexual practice may appear anachronistic to many people, but to the Christian they are consistent with a position that upholds man's moral and spiritual nature. Facing societal sin does not mean the believer can ignore personal sin.

Third, social action guided by the Word of God subjects the means as well as the end to the scrutiny of God's judgment. The manner in which we engage in social action should be characterized by love and sincerity. We may be angry and distraught frequently over given injustices, but our manner of confronting sin should not degenerate into bitterness and blind rage.

Social action begins in the church informed by God's Word and empowered by God's Spirit. We are dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit to move us to action and to fill us with wisdom. At times we forget that God's Spirit enables us for a life-long task. Social action is not tied to a certain program of limited duration. It is an ongoing task, always pressing for the attention of the church. When it comes to both evangelism and social action we must act as if Christ were coming today and plan as if he were not coming for a thousand years (II Peter 3:8).

Even as Jesus hung on the cross he fulfilled the charge he entrusted to the church. To the repentant thief he spoke words of redemption and forgiveness. Today you will be with me in Paradise. To his mother he spoke words of comfort and concern, committing her into the care of his disciple. Wherever the church of Jesus Christ is vital, an abiding concern will be manifested for the eternal destiny and temporal care of men.

The Finitude of Man

I understand that matter can be changed
To energy; that maths can integrate
The complex quantum jumps that must relate
The fusion of the stars to history's page.
I understand that God in every age
Is Lord of all; that matter can't dictate;
That stars and quarks and all things intricate
Perform his word—including fool and sage.

But knowing God is not to know like God;
And science is a quest in infancy.
Still more: transcendence took on flesh and blood:
I do not understand how this can be.
The more my mind is stretched to understand,
The more it learns the finitude of man.
D. A. CARSON