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BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AS A FOUNDATION
FOR SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

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ADEMOLA ADEYI

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CONCLUSION

The imperative task of today is the rebuilding of the social relationships in our society. Towards this, the social principles of the Scripture provide a basic foundation for an harmonious social relationship. The churches today, to a large extent, are yet to fully appropriate the social principles of the Scriptures in their ministry in the society. One of the vital roles of the Church and her members is to mediate social succour wherever there is need. Therefore, "should the Church together with her members minister to total human needs - spiritual, physical, mental and social? The answer from the biblical point of view is a clear 'yes'. Should we care for the whole person? Again, the answer is 'yes'.¹ From the scriptural purview presented in the preceding chapters, the Bible is thorough with explicit commands to help people who hurt or who are in difficulty and have needs. Outstanding church man of admirable testimonies, such as John Wesley, General William Booth and others, were aware of the biblical mandate to minister and they did minister to the needs of the needy. Therefore, the churches today and individual Christians should follow the clear call from God to care for all aspects of human need in the society.

The ministry to the need, apart from being a biblical injunction, should be driven by a Christian love and compassion for the people who are the recipients of such charity. It should be a constructive charity for the constructive change and not mere remedy of change. The symptoms and root causes of the social ills/vices should be dealt with.

Churches and individual Christians should develop ministry programmes to meet the whole person in their different levels of social interaction. And this will bear Christ's love for people. Church ministry then should go beyond preaching, Bible study and spiritual piety. The Church should look out on her surrounding neighbourhood and community for needs - all kinds of need. The Body of Christ and the people of God should set up a ministry or mission to meet the needs. William M. Pinson, Jr. offers suggestions for church social ministry and resources in fifty-eight areas of needs, and more than one hundred examples of actual Christian social services.² This gave a resource guideline for churches and individuals in expanding their ministry to persons. If the ministry is effectively applied, it will spark off the Christian compassion and increase the capacity of care among the people of God. And the total ministry which will result will bring new life to the churches. Pinson rightly observed that, "Multiple is a key for church growth in the future. It is certainly a means of bearing witness for Christ"³ in our society.

Apparently, this will hasten the institution of the kingdom of God, which Jesus taught us to ask in the Lord's prayer: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The kingdom of God that Jesus preached is both for now and in the future. It is a lifestyle to be lived out from the hearts of men among men on earth. This will only be possible by men whose lives had been transformed by the salvation experience in Jesus Christ. And who make concrete efforts to learn to teach and to practise the social ethical teachings of Jesus Christ. In the same dimension, they will consciously take side with those who preach the conscience of men to make the society a better place to live. They will go beyond relieving the suffering of individuals to treat the real symptoms of the suffering. They will not undermine treating social ills by proper (non-violent) use of socio-political power and economic pressures.

Coupled with the above is the need of a biblical theology which takes seriously God's personal involvement in history. It should also have an adequate doctrine of man. Sinful human nature together with his potentiality and inclination toward evil and vices should be given a proper recognition. Closely knitted to this will then be the redemptive grace through faith in Jesus Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit to mortify the actualization or manifestation of human's evil inclination. The theology should deal with the doctrine of

creation and presents the world in its proper perspective. It should also have a doctrine of revelation which makes it possible for the Bible to speak clearly to the present generation. This will to a large extent answer the probing social questions in the society.

The question, "What would Jesus have done in this societal situation?" is no longer relevant in applying the scriptural message to the needs of the society. The basic question that we should ask of the Bible is: "What does the Act of God in Christ say to us as we act today?"⁴ We can no longer use the Bible as a step by step blueprint for our actions. But the Bible does give us the theological basis for the commitment upon which our social relationships and actions must be based. The theological framework of our questionings rest on the incarnation, the divine grace, and the divine love of God in our historical society.

In the incarnation, God entered personally and completely into human history. He involved Himself directly and fully in the problems of human society through the act of Jesus Christ via the Christ Event. The Church as the Body of Christ can hardly afford to do less. It might be natural for the Church to show some reluctance to get involved in such issues as crimes, alcoholism, divorce, poverty, economic depravity, racial prejudice, etc, which impair smooth social relationship. But the incarnation challenges us in a way we cannot avoid. In the incarnation, God got His

hands dirty in human history. If God has will to become involved in the problem of the world, the Church can hardly afford to be more holy than God. If the churches and her members are truly the Body of Christ, they have no choice but to become involved in the problems of humanity, no matter how sordid they may be.

Divine grace and divine love are akin in concept. Belief in the grace of God is that no human life or relationship is beyond redemption. No matter how far a man may have strayed from God, no matter how bad a social relationship may be, the grace of God can heal and redeem. Divine love was expressed with concrete evidence in the Christ Event. Hence, biblical definition of love could be called "concerned involvement." A vital part of love will then be the concern for another and to become involved in his/her problems, even to the point of self-sacrificing one's interest to help. Christian love for fellow folks as God loves must lead to one's involvement in the problems of the society and to work towards a better social relationship. By so doing, the seemingly abstract concept of love will become an active reality of love that meets the needs of the people.

Nonetheless, the basic approach should be the care of the total person and the application of biblical principles for a better social order. The approach should be unapologetically Christian and biblically proven. It should focus on people more than the designed programme. It should be emphasized at this juncture that,

this runs contrary to the famous "Social Gospel Movement" which is over-optimistic and idealistic of an utopian society without considering the ill expression of human nature which apparently mars social relationships. However, this is a call to re-examine the principles of the Scripture in the light of its proper application to the present social problems.

In the application, the church and individual Christians should be motivated by love and compassion. The goal is to bring men to wholeness through Christ Jesus and to invariably effect a better social relation. A plan could be designed so as to realize the goal. The plan should follow biblical guidelines. Undoubtedly, the ethics of Jesus Christ remains still as the hope of the world's social order. Societal ills, vices, and disorder cannot be resolved without the proper application of the morality of the Scripture expounded in the previous chapters. The envisage Christ-like attitude of love, care, and compassion will create the best family life, the best economic system and a better harmonious social relationship. Churches and ~~Individual Christians~~ should now be more involved in the effort to make the society a better place to live. There should be a continuous re-appraisal of the biblical principles as solvent to problems of social relationship. Hopefully if the Church and individual efforts of applying biblical principles for a better social relationship is not silence by disillusionment

and frustration, the society will mark a positive era of a better society than the one we have not.