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CHRISTIAN CONCERNS FOR THE POOR: A CASE STUDY OF OGBOMOSO  
SOUTH - EAST BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

AN ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST  
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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE MASTER OF DIVINITY

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## ABSTRACT

In the introductory part of this essay which the writer took as the first Chapter, he treated the background to the study of Christian concerns for the poor. He realized that the poor in and outside the church have been neglected, the purpose of the essay therefore is an attempt to gear up the church to help the poor in our midst to survive and be saved.

In Chapter Two, Christian concerns for the poor were treated more fully by examining the Old and New Testament views of the poor. Chapter Three of the essay took us to the study of the nature of the poor; attributes of the poor, causes of poverty and types of poverty alleviation schemes and programmes presently in operation. Chapter Four tells us about the background history of Ogbomoso South-East Baptist Association churches and OSEBA concerns for the poor in and outside the church. Identification, care and evaluation strategies were expatiated in this chapter.

Chapter Five is the conclusion of this essay, recommendations and suggestions were stated out for the churches in the association. It was concluded that the followers of Christ should follow the golden rule of Jesus Christ which says "Love your neighbors as yourself."

## RECOMMENDATION

In view of all discussed above the following suggestions are highly recommended.

1. Praying with and for the poor.
2. Visitation should also be a point of duty.
3. Regular encouragement should be given to the poor.
4. Hospital bills of those who are unable to settle it themselves should be paid.
5. Providing assistance in whatever form to alleviate the fears of the poor.
6. Bible study is highly recommended for poverty alleviation of the poor in our midst.
7. The Church needs to work with integrity to support the stand against evil forces without abandoning the Pastoral sensitivity and community support that frees persons to change.
8. The education of the people of God must be taken into consideration so that the commitment of the poor to the Church will be highly progressive.
9. The Churches should develop and support active study among those who share the struggles of the poor.
10. The Church should search out groups of the poor for frequent visitation and fellowship.

Therefore, if you want to assist someone, you must do it completely, "When a suit is made for a lazy man, it must be dyed into dark colour."<sup>1</sup>

## CONCLUSION:

Having known the meaning of Christian concern for the poor; having looked at the Biblical bases for the Church concern for the poor from the Old Testament and the New Testament and having considered the nature of poverty in contemporary Baptist Church in Ogbomoso South – East Baptist Association, the writer wants to conclude that there are still problems concerning caring for the poor in our Churches.

Based on the interviews conducted by the writer with Rev. M. O. Oyeboode, the adviser to Ogbomoso South East Baptist Association, the Pastors of the Churches, the Church Secretaries, the Chairman of the Welfare Committee of each Church and some members the writer discovered that the attitude of members toward giving is not encouraging at all though there are some of the members that depend on relatives for their living. It was also discovered that their giving to the poor is not in response to God's grace but to ward off evils from themselves. The interview shows that the people only have sympathy and not action

*"We must take care of the disabled in our society. Sympathy is not a help to these people. They need actions from you to be able to fit in the society. Look for a handicapped person and make friendship with him or her"*<sup>2</sup>

There are not enough biblical teachings on having great concern for the poor according to the interview conducted with the pastors and the members. It is evident that teaching and preaching about the situation is done only occasionally. In addition, members do not reciprocate the love of God. The golden law is "Love your neighbor as yourself". With all these observations, the writer concludes that members attitude towards the poor is cold. The writer,

1. Ajibola, J. O. Yoruba Proverbs. Ibadan, OUP 1947, p. 42
2. Prof. T. A. Adedaja, Lecture on Disability, Destitution and the Nigerian Society, Ogbomoso South Local Government, October, 16 1997.

therefore, gives the owing suggestions in addition to what the pastors and church can do to have concern for the poor. The pastors and the church should be consistent in caring for the poor. It is established that churches do care but not adequate. There are inconsistencies because if 'A' is cared for, "B" may be neglected. As a result there are a lot of misunderstandings in the church as it was in the early church in Jerusalem.

The pastor and the church should set up welfare committees. The committees should consist of gifted and loyal members in the area of caring. They must also poses and display the fruits of the spirit<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, the church should have a yearly budget for the poor. By having a budget for the welfare committee, the church will be more involved in caring for the poor. The issue of non availability of funds will not occur since it is included in the budget. In addition, the pastor and the church should organize a meaningful follow up programme for the poor. The pastor should organize an enlightenment programme for the members of the church, such programme will educate both the literate and illiterate members

It has been emphasized that helping the unfortunate is the Christian's business. The Christian should know for sure that they hold possessions chiefly for the service they may render or the good they can accomplish. The Christian faith calls for a special concerns for other people. According to T. A. Kantonnen, 'God's call comes to us in our neighbor's needs'. When a man runs away from his fellow man to cultivate his own relations to God, he does not find God, but only his own worthless self<sup>4</sup>. The story of the good Samaritan is Jesus' way of saying that helping others is the Christian's business. Christian mercy is to reach across all barriers. Ones' service to others shows that God's love dwells in his heart. Christian love is expressed in sharing necessities with the needy. The man of God cares for the poor. All what Paul was saying was "Remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10). Some Christians become aware of the needs of others but does nothing to help because they lack genuine faith

3. Galatians 5: 22

4. Ray A. Cecil, *Living The Responsible Life*, Ibadan, 1994, p. 61

*"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him 'Go I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?'"*

Christian giving is a way of life learned from God through Jesus Christ. The only way to measure our giving is by how much one is willing to submit to Christ's lordship and the needs of the poor neighbors around him or her.

In conclusion, the followers of Christ should follow these guides to understand the grace of giving:

Give to care for the poor (Matt. 6:1-4); 19: 16-29; Lk. 11: 41; 12: 33)

Give to show loving care to those who have been wronged (Lk. 19 1-9)

Give to lay up treasures in heaven (Matt 6: 19-20)

Give as one who is right with fellow Christians (Matt 5:23)

Give to support the ministry of the gospel (Lk. 10: 7-8)

Give to show concern for human needs (2 Cor. 8: 14).

Above all, also God desires man's voluntary love,