

POVERTY AS A CONSTRAINT TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:
A STUDY OF AJOGUN KRISTI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION OGBOMOSO

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ABSTRACT

This study is set to examine in particular the poverty as a constraint posed to Christian growth and development with a view to suggest corresponding, rational, calculated, organized and verifiable strategy for evolving ways for churches to alleviate it. The method applied in carrying out this assignment is empirical. Combine the use of questionnaire with interview questions. In administering the questionnaires, ten Churches were selected randomly, to represent the whole Association. Ten questionnaires were administered in each Church and the Pastor of the ten Churches were interviewed

The study was carried out in a rural setting of one of the Baptist Associations in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference the Ajogun Kristi Baptist Association. The association is located in Surulere Local Government Area of Oyo State. Included in the questionnaires were questions through which social, economic and demographic information were obtained. Respondents indicated what the causes and the effects of poverty were in their own opinions. Moreover, they indicated whether they were poor or not.

The rural Christians, from the research findings were found not to be significantly different from non-Christian in the area. For example, they engaged in primary production activities, they have large family size; some are polygamists, have poor educational background and very low income. All these are pointers to the basic characteristics of the rural space economy and which are major causes of poverty.

The following recommendations are made to alleviate poverty among the rural Christians. If the rural Christians remain poor as they are, the light and salt which the

Holy Bible calls them cannot be exhibited. This is because there is every tendency that they will engage in vices that make the power of the gospel less effective.

The work further identified that the individual Christian, Church of God and government have parts to play at reducing poverty. In particular, the churches role at ameliorating the poverty, the most important tool is “prayer.”

5.2 CONCLUSION

As would be expected, poverty has a lot of negative affects on economic, social, psychology and spiritual lives of its victims. The rural Christians are not immured from these effects if they are poor. The study revealed that all the twenty-three likely effects of poverty are considered by respondents as real.

The implication of this is that a victim of poverty can experience one or some of these likely effects depending on the level of poverty and spirituality. Poverty can make Christian not to develop and even exhibit some unchristian tendencies. For instance, poverty can induce crime in Christian: Christian matrimonial home can disintegrate and divorce may even occur due to poverty, it may affect the prayer life of Christian, Christian may not be honest as far as tithing and offering are concerned.

Table 4.8 gives the list of the likely effects of poverty on Christians that are located in the rural space like that of the study area. Through the study. We can conclude that a poor Christian is disturbed socially, economically, emotionally and spiritually as well.

The research findings also showed that the individual. The church of God and the government has specific roles to play and responsibilities to discharge in order to ameliorate poverty. Individuals need to pray, work hard, obey God, reduce his family size use modern technology in production activities and restrain from unwise spending if he would be free from poverty.

The Church on the other hand must be visionary in order to ameliorate poverty among her members. This could be achieved as the study revealed through prayer,

pastoral and care and counseling, organizing adult literacy programme, establishing church-based cooperative society and preaching against unwise spending among others.

To achieve all above, it is implied that all churches must be capable of calling a competent and spiritually matured man of God (pastors). One further vivid revelation from the study is the fact that majority of the churches in the rural area cannot however employ pastors because they are financially incapacitated. In essence, it is where pastors are needed most (as far as Baptist denominations is concerned) that cannot pay for the service of one.

The study is also a pointer to the roles of the government that can bring relief to the poor in the rural areas. There is every evidence that church based cooperative society must have to be financially helped by the Government. Such church based society must charge low interest rates in comparison to that of those outside the church. Moreover, the government should provide good roads, accessible and reliable credit facilities to farmer, free education, and free, qualitative and reliable medical services to the rural areas. It is also expected that there must be stable democratic polity which will protect the individual human rights.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to alleviate poverty among the rural Christians. If the rural Christians remain poor as they are, the light and salt which the Holy Bible calls them cannot be exhibited. This is because there is every tendency that they will be engaging in vices that make the power of the gospel less effective.

From the church level, each of the churches in the rural area, no matter how small it may be, needs an experienced and spiritually matured pastor. Since some of these churches do not have economic power to call a pastor, the Association and the Conference must shoulder part of the needed financial commitment to calling pastor. Perhaps, this is where the Convention must have to examine the idea of posting pastors. The havoc done to the gospel in the rural area is enough and it must be stopped. Where the pastor is poor, because his church is poor, some of them are no more pastors but farmers.

One other suggestion in this regard is that, two or more churches that are closer may combine efforts to employ a pastor that would meet the social and spiritual needs of those churches. The present situation where churches are Pastor less calls for concern.

The church, upon calling a pastor, should therefore through symposia, seminars, and workshops, educate its members on the social, economic and most importantly, spiritual advantages of monogamy, moderate manageable family size, in addition to actually presenting the word of God in an undiluted manner.

The Church further needs to establish educational institution especially sound basic primary education. Since knowledge is received through, education and knowledge is power, sound education will stop the extension of poverty to generations yet unborn. It is further advised, that the church pastor and parents would have to monitor the activities of teachers in government schools in their vicinity.

The church should as well encourage their members to be hard working. Moreover, small scale ventures could be embarked upon. Church should send members to workshop organized by Social Ministries Department of the Nigerian

