

THE CARE OF THE POOR IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AS A PARADIGM FOR CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN CHURCH

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Abstract

The response of the church to the cry of the poor in the contemporary Nigerian society is far below the expectation. In the church today, it seems that God's concern for the poor and marginalized is often overlooked. The church gives necessary attention to spiritual matter but often completely neglect the physical. However, in the Old Testament (OT) corpuses most especially, the Pentateuch (Law), the Poetry and the Prophets, the care, provision and redemption of the poor and the marginalized are of the utmost concern to God. God instructed His people, the Israelites in form of legislation to actively care for the poor while discouraging any mistreatment of or indifference toward the needy (Exodus 22:21-23; Leviticus 23:22; 25:39-43; Deut. 15:7; Proverbs 14:21,31; Isaiah 10:1-3; Malachi 3:5). Thus, this paper, using social-historical and textual approaches examines the OT stipulations for the care of the poor in ancient Israelite society with a view to challenging the contemporary church in Nigeria to rise to her social responsibility by advocating for the poor, caring for their needs and pursuing justice on their behalf. This paper revealed that many Christian denominations/churches in Nigeria have neglected or care less about the social needs of their members for those needs that are spiritual as against Christ's spirit of empathy and sympathy with the poor and marginalized. The paper recommends that the present day church in Nigeria should practically emulate the step of Jesus Christ and that of the early church by making the care of the body and spirit a priority in their evangelical programmes. The church should not allow bad theology and poor excuses to keep them from responding to the cry of the poor and marginalized in their communities.

Keywords: Care, Poor, Ancient Israel, Paradigm, Contemporary Nigerian Church

Introduction

When it comes to the poor and afflicted of this world, the Church at large has generally abandoned its duty as the caretaker of the needy, the afflicted, and the destitute.¹ (Pine 1999). Specifically, the situation in Africa shows that the church has not done enough as most churches do not have adequate programme for their poor masses.² The Israelite, however, at the settlement in the land of Canaan accepted that poverty had come to stay.³ Thus, the Bible in Deuteronomy 15: 11 says: *"There will always be the poor in the land.*

Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your kindred and toward the poor and needy in your land." Therefore, the concern for the poor within and outside Israel's covenant community, the requirement to do justice and give alms, the many parables of Jesus concerning care for the poor, his identification with the poor, and the long history of charity in the Christian church (beginning with Paul's gathering of money for the poor of the Jerusalem church in Acts 20:1-5) leave little doubt about Christian obligation to care for the poor. In the Old Testament, the care, for the poor and the marginalized are of the utmost concern to God. Thus, God instructed His people, the Israelites in form of legislation to actively care for the poor while discouraging any mistreatment of the poor or indifference toward them. Since God cares this much for the poor, the church has no reason to default on this obligation of caring for them. If the poor are a heart concern of our Lord's, should they not concern the contemporary church also so much that we are moved to act on their behalf as God does? Contrariwise, the contemporary Nigerian church gives necessary attention to spiritual matters but often completely neglect the physical. This paper, therefore, examines the care of the poor in ancient Israelite society with a view to challenging the contemporary church in Nigeria to rise to the social responsibility of advocating for the poor, caring for their needs and pursuing justice on their behalf.

Review of Literature on the Church's Response to the Plight of the Poor in Nigeria

The African continent is the worst hit by poverty. The victims of injustice and other forms of oppression look to the church for succour.⁴ Unfortunately, the Church has not adequately responded to the plight of the poor. Adewale opines that:

Apart from the Catholic Church, one can dare to say that other Christian denominations have largely turned their eyes to heaven rather than attend to the pains of millions (most of who ironically are members of their various churches). The church continues to build "gigantic structural edifices, colossal business empires and her clergy feeding fat, while the laity is weeping."

Corroborating Adewale, Olatunde⁵ calls for the active involvement of the church in caring for the poor as government alone cannot bear the burden. He suggests capital investment, professional assistance, addressing laziness, addressing corruption and sharing of resources as some of the practical ways by which the church could help the poor. Thus, he condemns the non-challant attitude of some churches building 'cathedrals' and sponsoring expensive programmes on media while the people being ministered to are dying of hunger.⁶

According to Abogunrin,⁷ the life and the ministry of Jesus established the model for the church to follow. Jesus denounced the religion and social structures that aided the oppression of the poor. While the Roman society was heartless towards the poor, the Jewish scriptures urged charity and care for the poor. Abogunrin opines that: "The church has led in giving the world schools and colleges, hospitals, orphanages, welfare centers, and progressive agricultural methods. But the situation in Africa shows clearly that the church has not done enough as most churches do not have adequate programme for the poor masses."⁸

Moreover, the church the opinion of Theuri has the divine mandate to participate in solving the problem of the poor.⁹ He opines that poverty is a religious issue and if the church is not to lose its credibility and relevance; it must involved in the promotion of justice which covers all aspects of life. He says that, one of the roles of the church is to urge government to meet the concerns and needs of the poor through good policies and education.¹⁰ Similarly, the church must be specially and seriously concerned about how to alleviate poverty in Nigeria. The church must not only concentrate on evangelical programmes, but must equally be sensitive to the suffering of the people being evangelised as demonstrated by Jesus Christ while on earth. Christ's Spirit of sympathy, compassion and empathy must be highly demonstrated by the church of God.¹¹

In Dada's opinion, the church, which ought to serve as communal rallying point for its members, is not living up to expectation.¹² He, therefore, calls on the church in Africa to learn from the communal experience and efforts of the traditional Yoruba society who tries to prevent material poverty through 'Aaro', 'Owe', and 'Esusu'.¹³ To address the problem of poverty in Nigeria, the church must be involved as a communal entity, pull resources together to help members and non-members by establishing Christian Cooperative Societies or a bank to be called Christian Development Bank, just to help the poor ones and to help heal the ailing economy of Nigeria.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Church in Africa should move from individualism to institutionalism, a place where the weak, the poor and the dispossessed find succour as demonstrated by the early church (Acts 2:44; 4:34-5:11).¹⁵

Nwaura¹⁶ identifies three types of approach used by the church to engage in poverty alleviation: the rapid relief approach, which is characterised by quick entry and rapid exit, the development approach, which aims at social reform by improving the conditions of the less privileged; and the advocacy or liberation approach, which seeks to overcome the structures of domination and dependence. Each of these approaches is however bedeviled with deficiencies. The relief model has failed to reverse the cycle of poverty, to a greater extent both at the community and individual levels. It functions as palliatives and does not treat the root cause of society's ills. The development approach is constrained by the localization of temporary changes, which does not bring

transformation at national and international levels. The advocacy or liberation approach focuses on global struggle for liberation and forgets that people are hungry, sick and oppressed.¹⁷ For effective response of the church to the cry of the poor in Nigeria, all these approaches should go on simultaneously.

On the other hand, there are few Christian denominations or organisations in Nigeria that are making frantic effort to minister to the poor physically and spiritually but their efforts have only yielded little effect probably because of the increasing population of the poor in the nation and the unrepentant attitude of the rich ones who are amassing national wealth through unethical means. Whatever the case may be, the church at this material time could not afford to let down the poor and the marginalised that turn their eyes largely to the church for assistance. Thus, the church instead of building gigantic places of worship, sponsoring of expensive media programmes, etc should give more attention to the care of the poor masses that are right there in their midst. The church in Nigeria must make frantic efforts to alleviate the suffering of the poor masses if its impact and relevance will continue to be felt. The church should be with the poor and not just for the poor. The church should collaborate with the government to raise the quality of life in Nigeria, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

The Old Testament Stipulations for the Care of the Poor

The plight of the poor was a reality in the Old Testament. Thus, the saying "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your brothers and towards the poor and the needy in the land (Deuteronomy 15:11). Certainly, it was God's concern for the welfare of the poor that led to the institutionalizing of some welfare or poverty alleviation programmes in ancient Israelite society. Some of these pro-poor programmes include the following:

The Gleaning Principle: The Israelites while harvesting their farm products were expected to overlook some sheaves and they should not go back to get it but rather leave them for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord may bless all the works of their hands.¹⁸ The law of gleaning was an established method of preventing debilitating poverty among the people of God and refugees in the land. More than this, the right of each person to take what was needed for food at any time while passing the field or vineyard, was a law that benefited the poor. The poor widows, Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 2: 1ff) were able to survive because of the practice of this law.¹⁹

The Lending Principle: This principle stipulates that the wealthy Israelites should lend freely to their poor brethren whatever they want or need (Deut. 15:7- 8). With this principle, those that have in Israel were encouraged to share with their fellow brothers that were poor and never to be stingy towards them. This same sharing and lending principle should be cultivated today.

The Tithing Principle: This tithing principle called charity or poor tithe was to help the poor, that is, the Levites, the strangers, the fatherless and the widows in ancient Israelite

society (Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-15) . This form of tithe was paid once in three years in ancient Israel to take care of the poor and it is different from Levitical and festival tithes.²⁰

Interest Free Loan to the Poor Israelites: “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien.... Do not take interest of any kind from him but fear your God... You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit and their pledge must be returned before nightfall.”²¹ The prohibition is absolute in case of a widow's garment; it shall not be taken as a pledge. Neither shall a mill or an upper millstone be taken (Deut. 24:17). The same rule probably applied to all indispensable animals or utensils. In the Deuteronomic laws, one is not to refuse to lend to a poor brother, but is to do it willingly, and with the giving is the promise of blessing upon the giver (Deut. 15:7-11). Furthermore, the lender is forbidden to enter the poor man's house to fetch out the pledge, but is to stand outside until the pledge is brought to him (Deut. 24:10-11). The poor man's possessions and personality are thus guarded against the possible insolence of wealth and power. The same instructions are repeated in the Levitical law; with the further injunction that the poor brother is to be permitted to live with the wealthier as a sojourner and as a stranger.²² He is to be accorded the benefit of the laws of oriental hospitality. He is neither slave/hired work-man nor debtor, but the guest of his more fortunate brother.

The Year of Jubilee: The year of Jubilee, which was every 50th year in Israel, was the poor person's right to receive back his inheritance.²³ The Jubilee principle also provided for self help and self development. With the land returned, the poor person could again, earn his own living.

The Sabbatical Law: “For six years, you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year, let the land be unploughed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it.”²⁴ Poverty sometimes forced some Israelites to sell themselves to more prosperous neighbours. The sabbatical law ensures freedom to all slaves in the seventh year. Although, not all Christians are farmers today that one can talk of leaving unploughed land for the benefit of the poor, but several other means of helping the poor are discussed in the later section of this paper.

Daily Payment of Wage for the Hired Servant: Though not mentioned in the book of Exodus, the hireling is the subject of legislation in the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus. References to hired labour are, however, so infrequent that it is difficult to determine the place which the hired workman filled in the life of Israel.²⁵ In the Deuteronomic law it is stipulated that the hired servant is to be paid every evening before sunset (Deut. 24:15). In the Levitical law this rule is continued in full force (Lev. 19:13). And the rule applies whether the labourer is foreign or Hebrew. He was to have a share with the stranger, slaves, and master, in the Sabbath produce of the land. The oppression of the hired workers was vehemently condemned from many passages in the prophets.²⁶ Moreover, as part of the welfare programmes for the poor in ancient Israel, the feasts of weeks and tabernacles were both to be shared with the fatherless and the widows along with the servants and the sojourners.²⁷ Similarly, the poor in the wisdom literature

(Psalms and Proverbs) are presented as God's special people or favourite children. God was always presented as their lover, defender, caretaker and avenger. Oppressing them attracts God's wrath, while helping and identifying with them brings favour and blessings on the individual.²⁸

While these many provisions are made against suffering from poverty, the administration of justice is, furthermore, not to be affected by consideration for the poor. The book of Leviticus says: "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor."²⁹ One of the sins the prophets vehemently preached against was oppression of the poor. The prophets cried against economic exploitation, injustice and oppression of the poor in the land of Israel. Thus, the Israelites were fiercely warned against mistreating the poor. Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zechariah, and the rest see justice to the poor as basis for which Israelites' worship and fasting would be acceptable by God.³⁰ Indeed, the sojourner, the poor, the hired servants find their advocates in the prophets of Israel.³¹

Concern for the Poor in the New Testament

A brief survey of the care for the poor in New Testament (NT) becomes imperative in this paper because it has much to say about the church, which has its root in the NT. In the NT, concern for the poor was taken beyond giving of laws in order to ensure their welfare and survival. Through Jesus Christ, God literally identified with the poor and practically demonstrated how to care for the outcasts of the society. Jesus healed, chatted with, ate with, fed the hungry and restored hope to the hopeless needy and poor scattered all over the land.³² This kind relationship with the poor was clearly defined at Jesus' entrance in public ministry. In what is called 'the manifesto of Jesus' Mission', He declares: "The spirit of the Lord is on me, to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18). Jesus affirms the inevitability of the poor in the society when he says "the poor you will always have with you..." (Matthew 26:11). Furthermore, helping the poor is one of the conditions Jesus sets for entering heaven as declared in Matt. 19:16, 21 cf Lk 18:22. He equally affirmed in Matt. 25:41-46 that negligence of the poor can lead one to hell. In the same vein, He (Jesus) encouraged invitation of the poor rather than the rich to feasts. (Luke 14:12-14).

The early church, following the pattern laid by the master, Jesus Christ, did not take the welfare of the poor members with levity. Those that were economically buoyant willingly shared their possessions with those that lacked so that in essence, there were neither the rich nor the poor among them. It was a kind of communal living as recorded in Acts 2:42, 44 and 4:32-35 that "they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to fellowship... All the believers were together and had everything in common selling their possessions and goods. They distributed to everyone as he had needs ... All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possession was his own, but they shared everything they had." Poverty in the early church was completely

alleviated.³³ The contemporary church should learn from this and rise to the challenge of poverty in our society.

Moreover, Apostle Paul practically raised funds for the poor believers in Jerusalem and commended the Macedonian church for giving generously to the needy in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-26; 2 Cor. 8:1-3.). In fact, in his fund-raising project for the poor, Paul mainly appealed to the Christians responsibility to help those in need, and to do it willingly and generously (2 Cor. 8:1-3). Paul confessed his delight in helping the poor in Galatians 2:9-10. Similarly, James in his epistle declares that caring for the distressed, orphans and widows equals to true Christianity (Jam. 1:27). He (James) condemns preferential treatment to the rich against the poor, and that genuine concern for the poor is practical and not merely theoretical. (Jam 2:1-7).

In view of all the biblical passages cited from both the Old Testament and the New Testaments, there is no doubt that the Bible is strongly advocating for our love and concern for the poor. Christians should, therefore, learn to love and care for the poor rather than discriminating against them.

Ways by which the Contemporary Church can Care for the Poor

The contemporary church in Nigeria can help the poor using any of these methods as practised in ancient Israelite society.

1. Interest Free Loan: One way of assisting the poor in the OT as earlier discussed is an interest-free loan.³⁴ When a person experiences temporary hardship that requires money to solve, access to soft loan may be of immense help to such individual. . There are several important principles that apply.

- No interest should be charged on a loan to the person who is poor (Deut 23:19-20).
- The loan should have a seven-year term (Deut 15:9).
- If the loan has not been repaid at the end of seven years, it should be cancelled (Deut 15:1). This removes part of the burden from the recipient.
- Often the loan should be provided by a family member (Lev 25:25). If no one in the family can help, someone in the church might provide the loan. This was possible in ancient Israel because of the strong familial love that existed in each clan or tribe. The Christians today irrespective of cultural or racial differences can practice similar principle if brotherly love and unity are allowed to rule.
- If the poor person has no family to help and his character is not known to the church, he might be asked to give something of value as a pledge. According to Deut. 24:10-13, if the pledge is something that he needs during the day, it should be returned in the morning. However, in the contemporary Nigerian society where this may not likely be possible due to population and residence, a prominent member of the church or family who knows the poor person and can effectively monitor his activities should be asked to stand as a surety.

- Kindness and respect must always be shown to the person in need. The fact that one is poor does not give anybody the right to charge into his/ her house or tell him/her what to do (Deut 24:10-13).

The problem with charity is that it makes the recipient feel dependent and worthless. Providing a loan says to the person that you are confident in his/her future. You are saying that you have faith in them. This helps build the person's self esteem and self-respect. Loans give an incentive for the person to get back to his/her feet. Most people do not want to be in debt. They will usually work hard to pay back the loan.

Local lenders often charge exorbitant interest rates that enslave people for life. Providing people with an interest free loan to start a business is often the best way to help them. They will often be able to repay the loan quite quickly. An effective business will provide financial support for the entire life time. Those who are successful will be able to help families. Interest free loans are often the best way to help the poor and the cotemporary church in Nigeria could adopt this method by forming and managing interest free cooperative societies or by establishing a Christian development bank as Dada suggests.³⁵

2. Gleaning

Gleaning principle as earlier discussed is another way by which Christians can help the poor. Rural gleaning is not practical for people living in urban cultures as it is in contemporary Nigerian society, so developing modern gleaning methods is a challenge for Christian business owners. However, there are ways to give some of their surplus stock or spare capacity to poor people in ways that will help them to overcome their predicaments. For instance, an internet service provider operator might provide free access to the internet for job searches. Another business might provide training on how to use machines or equipment during the evening. Businesses could give surplus machinery or computing equipment to poor people starting a business.³⁶

3. Sharing Capital

An important part of caring for the poor is to get capital goods into the hands of the poor. This will make their efforts more productive, which should increase their income and wealth. A more equal distribution of capital will be an important step toward the elimination of poverty. Prophet Micah looked forward to a time when every person would own his own capital. "Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken" (Mic. 4:4). If every person owns some capital then it will not be difficult meeting personal and family needs in most circumstances.³⁷

The land laws of the Old Testament were designed to maintain equality of capital in a time when land was the main form of capital. If someone became poor and sold his/her land, it had to be restored to him/her at the time of the Jubilee. This ensured that the distribution of land remained roughly equal. This is unlike what is prevalent today where the means of production are concentrated in the hands of the wealthy bourgeoisies in the society who control lands and other factors of production.³⁸

Jacob and Laban were both shifty operators, but they do provide an example of one person helping another to build up their capital. When Jacob went to live with Laban he owned no capital. Laban capitalised Jacob's wages by paying him with breeding ewes. Jacob was able to build up his own flock, while not neglecting Laban's flock. This was an early win-win situation. Christian business operators could look for ways to help some of their employees build up their own capital. People in business could see themselves as 'business apostles', training up skilled people and sending them out to start new businesses. This is contrary to what is obtainable in the world in which the business owners always try to keep new business ideas to themselves even when they lack money to start such.

4. Bonded Service

The bonded employment option is only used for really serious poverty. Sometimes a person will have a financial problem that is too serious to be dealt with by an interest free loan. This is most likely to occur where a person has to make restitution for a crime and has no credit record to justify the loan and no family member willing to act as guarantor to a lender. The poor person will bond himself/herself to an employer for up to seven years in return for a lump-sum advance of their future wages. The Bible says: "If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free" (Deut 15:12).

The length of the loan will depend on the amount advanced and the productive capacity of the person receiving the loan. During the time that the person being bonded, will not be able to change employers or move to a different place of residence. The employer would give such a person enough to pay for food and shelter, but the rest of what he/she earn would go towards paying back the loan. The employer making the loan is running quite a risk, because he/she would not know how useful the employee will be. He may end up advancing more wages than he can recoup within seven years, especially if he is generous. There is also a risk that the bonded employee might abscond.

The employer is also required to treat the bonded employee well (Ex 21:26-27). When the bonded employee has repaid the amount of the bond, he/she are to be set free and the employer must be generous to the departing servant.³⁹ The employer's help allow the departing employee to get started in his/her new life. The employer should be generous, because they will receive God's blessing for providing help in this way. In the same manner, with little adjustment or modification, the contemporary church in Nigeria can help locate and recommend reliable Christian employers/professionals among its numerous well to do members who will be ready to help the poor through this principle. Churches that have companies/industries can also be of help to the poor using this model.

5. Establishing Justice

A key aspect of caring for the poor is assisting them to obtain justice. The Bible says "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits" (Ex 23:6). Poverty is often the consequence of illegal activity by powerful people and companies. Poor people often do not have the resources to do battle against those who would deny them justice before the courts. They often give up, when faced by a rich adversary. The justice system often does not help them, because it often favours the rich ones most especially in country like Nigeria.⁴⁰

Churches should be prepared to get involved whenever the legal rights of the poor are being trampled upon. The Bible says "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly" (Lev 19:15). Thus, the cotemporary church in Nigeria should be the first to assist poor people to obtain justice. Christian lawyers should take up some of these cases and take on the people who are using their legal skills or smartness to walk over the poor. Other Christians might provide legal support for lawyers who assist the poor.

6. Job Creation

Sometimes the greatest need of a person who is poor is for a well-paid job. Churches can help the poor by becoming employers through the establishment of small/ cottage industries where priority will be given to the trained poor people as employees. Being an employer is costly and more risky than being an employee. This is often the reason for unemployment. Not enough people are willing to be employers but the government alone cannot create jobs. More employers that will create jobs are needed. So, the best solution to unemployment is more employers. In this regard, Christians can also help the poor by becoming employers. They have the wisdom of God and the confidence of faith, so they are well placed to start a business. If they already operate a business, they can look for ways to expand opportunities to employ other people. Often the best thing that a Christian can do to help a poor person is to start a business and provide them with an opportunity for employment.

7. Daily Food Distribution

During the times of crisis as being presently experienced in Nigeria due to Boko Haram insurgency that has displaced many families, churches can organise daily distribution of food to those who are poor as seen in the example of the early church that organised a "daily distribution of food" in Jerusalem (Acts 6:2). Although, regular distributions of food may not be necessary during more normal times, thus, focus should be shifted to caring of the widows and others who have fallen into hardships.

Conclusion

The Bible is clear that the church is to advocate for the poor and the marginalized; caring for their needs and pursuing justice on their behalf. The Nigerian church should borrow a leaf from the ancient Israelite society that did not neglect spiritual needs for social ones,

or social needs for those that are spiritual. The two areas of need are not in opposition. The care of the poor in ancient Israel through various welfare programmes as discussed above provide the church in Nigeria a model to follow in caring for the whole person, body and spirit. Likewise, contemporary Christians in Nigeria should emulate ancient Israelites whose priority was to address the social needs of their communities and fellow Jews. Care for the poor is not a burden; it is a gateway to vibrant Christian faith and robust congregational and or egalitarian life. The picture painted in Isaiah 58:10-12 is beautiful in concluding this paper.

If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this paper, the following recommendations are hereby made.

- * Caring for the poor is central to the teaching and life of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the church should emulate practically the teaching of Jesus Christ by making the care of the *body* and *spirit* a priority in their evangelical programmes.
- * The church should regularly educate their members on the importance of loving their neighbours with actions not just words.
- * Care for the poor should be made a spiritual discipline by the church alongside with fasting, evangelism, prayer, Bible study and church attendance.
- * Churches should avoid building of gigantic place of worship and sponsoring of expensive media programmes at the detriment of the poor masses.
- * Functional and effective social-welfare committee should be established in every local church to take care of the less-privileged ones.
- * Caring must take place within strong relationship. Therefore, all assistance to the poor should function at the local level where the people are known.
- * Christians should adopt simple life style and be ready to give willingly to support the poor and the needy.

Endnotes

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2. S. O. Abogunrin, "The Community of Goods in the Early Church and the Distribution of National Wealth," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 1, no. 2 (1986): 79 – 81.
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4. O. A. Adewale, "Christological Bases for Social Praxis," in *Biblical Studies Series 2*, edited by S. O. Abogunrin, 361-373. Ibadan: National Association for Biblical Studies, 2003.
5. D. Olatunde, (2006). *Deliverance from Poverty: Religious Approach to Managing Poverty in Nigeria*. Osogbo: Bewas Printing Company, 2006, p. 76
6. *ibid.*
7. S. O. Abogunrin, "The Community of Goods in the Early Church and the Distribution of National Wealth," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 1, no. 2 (1986): 79 – 81.
8. *ibid.*
9. M. Theuri, "Poverty in Africa: Theology of Reconstruction," in *Exploratory Essays*, edited by E.A. Obeng, 230-242. Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1999.
10. *ibid.*
11. G. Oniya, *Poverty Alleviation: A Role for the Church*. Osogbo: Christian Religious Publications, 2004, pp. 1-15.
12. K. O. Dada, "Communal Effort and Poverty Alleviation in Traditional Yoruba Society: Lesson for Contemporary African Church," *Castlia* 3, no.1 (2000): 100-107.
13. *Aaro* is a situation where a farmer asked other able bodied members of the community to assist him on land clearing for sowing, or harvest and he provided food and drinks for the people in return as remunerations. *Owe* is also the same situation as *Aaro* but the difference is that while it is compulsory to repay *Aaro*, it is not compulsory to repay an *Owe*. *Esusu* is a traditional way of cooperative capital formation where a group of people, say five or ten, gather together and agree to contribute the same amount of money on every market day and the total contributed shall be given to one of them until every member of the group receives his own share.
14. K. O. Dada, "Communal Effort and Poverty Alleviation in Traditional Yoruba Society: Lesson for Contemporary African Church," *Castlia* 3, no.1 (2000): 100-107.
15. *ibid.*
16. P. N. Nwaura, "A Spirituality of Resistance and Hope: African Instituted Churches Response to Poverty," *Orita* xxxvii (June and December, 2005): 63 – 75.
17. *ibid.*
18. Leviticus 19: 9-10; Deut. 24: 19-22.
19. C. Adarigho-Oriako, *God's Concern for the Poor*. Lagos: Nehemiah Projects International, 2008, p. 77.
20. Levitical is a type of tithe whether the produce of land or that of the herd/flock that solely belonged to the Levites in ancient Israel while Festival tithe consists of the yearly increase of the land to be eaten by the offerer, his household and the Levite with firstlings of the herd and flock at Jerusalem, the capital for sacrifices and feasting.
21. Leviticus 25: 25:35-37; Exod. 22:25
22. Lev. 25:35-37
23. Leviticus 25: 10-11.
24. Exodus 23: 10-11
25. O. J. Price, "The Biblical Teaching Concerning the Hireling and the Pauper," *The Biblical World* 29, no. 4 (1907): 269 – 283. url: www.jstor.org/stable3140886. Accessed December 31, 2012.
26. For examples, see Mal. 3:5; Jer. 22:13; Isa. 10:2; Ez. 22:29.

27. The feasts of weeks and tabernacles were special annual festivals in ancient Israel. See Deuteronomy 16:11-16 for more details on these festivals.
28. See Psalms 12:5; 34:6; 35:10; 37:14; 70:5; 112:9; Prov. 22:9; 14:20-21; 21:13; 26:16; 28:27; 29:7, 14 and Exod. 23:10.
29. Lev. 19: 5b.
30. See Isaiah 1:11-18; 3:14; 10:1-13; 41:17; 58:6-9; Jer. 5:23; 7:5-7; Ezek. 16:49-50; 29:29; Amos 2:6-7; 6:1-7; 5:12; Zech. 7:9-11; Mal. 3:5.
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