



Poverty and African Mission: A Wholistic Ministry of Social Security Service for Restoration to Shalom

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Abstract: *The situation of extreme poverty in Africa is obvious. So many people on the continent have been living in abject poverty for so many decades up to now, there are no solutions to their numerous problems of hardships and death. There are many visible reasons that are responsible for the Africans to still remain in such sorrowful state in life. The African land is very rich. Rich in natural mineral and human resources. Yet some countries that are depending only on human resources are doing better than the African people. The African people are very hard working. But due to some bad political and traditional leaders that are highly corrupt. Very unfortunately, the bad leaders are in the majority who are making the masses to suffer, instead of making them to rejoice. They are always in the habit of looting government monies and other resources that are meant for the masses are forcefully taken by these leaders for their personal use and their family members. There is urgent need to salvage these poor masses who are dying every day starvation, sickness, insecurity and so on, due to lack of care, hence there is need for a ministry of social security service that will pay strict attention to the plights of the poor and the needy, as well as the vulnerable in Church and Society. I have deep concern and burden that whereas the African people are living on a rich land, but they are living a miserable life due to poverty.*

Keywords: *Poverty, Africa, wholistic, Ministry, Social, Security, service, Restoration and Shalom.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The words poverty and mission are often used in different ways for several reasons. Therefore, there will be need for definition of terms for the sake of clarity on how I want to use them in this paper. Poverty will be seen in a general sense, while mission will be used in Christian world view, in the context of evangelism. Many people wrestle every day with grinding poverty, most especially in the African continent. The issue of poverty has resulted to suffering, rejection, hopelessness and even death in some cases. Lack of food shelter, health and quality education, are affected by poverty negatively in most countries within the African continent. Morphed (2011:310), asserts that:

The contemporary global impact of poverty, wealth and development on Africa probably needs little or no demonstration. Poverty, wealth and development thus need to be seen as issues which either frame or else are central to debates on these various topics. Human development report 1997 which bears on the global contemporary impact of poverty amid development.

It is then necessary to tackle the realities of global poverty in general and Africa in particular. Mission approach to reduce the issue of poverty in Africa is possible. Although poverty itself is a challenge to mission work outreach in Africa. The idea of this paper is to identify poverty and African mission, and to provide some solutions in tackling poverty in Africa through missions.

1.1. Statement of Problems Theology of Humanness in the Context of Care in Creation

When God in creation made Adam and Eve, and he kept them in the garden of Eden. (Gen 2:8). He provided them with what to eat in the garden. (Gen 2:9). He gave authority and dominion to humanity over all things he created. (Gen 1:28). Human beings were given the power and authority by God in creation, and every individual created by God has a share of such divine gift of providence, that should not be denied or corrupted by taking advantage of the less privileged or the vulnerable in Society, to cause untold hardship on them. Therefore, the Church and Society should create social welfare schemes to provide them with basic social needs as a package for restoration to shalom.

(Peace). God revealed his divine spiritual, social and moral plan for man to stay comfortably on the earth that he created and kept him to stay, God provided for Adam and Eve all their basic needs. God gives his people the Biblical criteria for moral reflection on how people can relate and take care of each other in times of need. (Gen 1:29, Luke 18:22, Galatians 2:10). From Genesis to Revelation, God provided permanent traits in its view of the human person and the values that should inform and guide human conduct. In Creation God has special Theology of Humanness to promote human dignity. The Christian Biblical understanding and interpretation of the Theology of Humanness is necessary for humanity to be respected in accordance with the original good handiwork of God in creation, when he made man in his image, and asked man to account to him in strict obedience to his will.

Theology of Humanness is crucial and critical on the ground of practical issues of real experiences of suffering, Poverty, mental illness and disability. It is expedient that leaders in authorities' power both in religion and political circles should take into serious account of some specific step on how to handle mental illness which includes suffering and disabilities. There is need to focus more on the poverty and mental illness because over the centuries and in all continents, it is viewed as a stigma. Theology of Humanness views all human suffering as a result of the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden, however, the Church and society should endeavour to find out what the feelings and the experiences of the victims are, with the purpose of creating a model to help them Holt(2012:122) "People with mental illness around the world experience stigmatization because it affects their brain and thinking faculty. In some cultures, they are accused of demon possession. This leads such individuals into self and sometimes community isolations. They become like "outcast", unloved and unaccepted.

From the account of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, God received pleasure from His creation. Because it is His creation, each entity has worth, not in themselves but because of the One who created them and gave them worth/value. Creation was perfect because God who created it is perfect. Even though He said that one aspect of His creation was not good – that man should be alone. But He immediately rectified this by creating Eve. Because God is God, He does not need the participate of anyone, and at the same time, because God is relational, He seeks out the involvement of others. This is shown as He does His work with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Even though man does not create, God engages the participate of man to maintain what He has created Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:7. Holt (2012:124) God also created human being as man and woman in order to express His social nature. Human being is a product of God's divine and inner consultation with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Humans have been mandated by God into a community relationship with Him and others. I agree with the Writer. This relationship embraces not only the community of believers but also the unbelievers so as to bring them to God through Jesus Christ.

This leads us to the understanding that humankind is made in the image of God – IMAGO DEI. Imago Dei is a doctrine derived from the concept of Genesis chapter one. Three schools of thoughts have doctrinally engaged this topic, namely: Classical Scholars, Biblical Scholars and Practical Scholars. Reinders writes on behalf of the Classical Scholars, he asserts that human beings are created in the image of God because they possess the capacity for reason and will, that human beings are closest to God than any created thing. Holt (2012:125) "By implication, the image of God in human being becomes an injunction of power and responsibility, to be exercised as God would". I agree with Reinders that human being must be creative in the use of power and responsibility. The theological support for this is found in Genesis chapter one. But with the people who have disability, it poses a major concern because by their status, they come under stigmatization and isolation.

The Biblical Scholar Holt(2012:126) on IMAGO DEI both assert that "As the image of God, human beings are to mirror God to the world, to be as God would be to the nonhuman, to be an extension of God's own creative activity in the continuing development of the world." I agree with them that this is truly how human beings ought to function both as an entity and as a community of believers. More so, since God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world by creating human being in His own image. The implication is that it is through the humanness of man that the true nature or image of God is revealed to the world. As Brueggeman states that (2012:126) "Humans are created for community, humans need community, and humans are called to care for the community. It is as a community that humans are able to reflect God to others." I agree with this thought because it is in a setting of community of believers and even non-believers that humans are tested and tried and not in isolation.

The practical Theologian led by David Pailin focusses on the understanding of what it means to be a human being rather than IMAGO DEI. With his theistic view he engaged the case of Alex and a case study. Alex was a child born with multiple health issues who lived a little over a year before he died. In the process of wrestling to understand what it means to be a human being, Holt (2012:127). came to the conclusion that,

“Each person has ultimate worth just because he or she is, and as such is one whom God cherishes. On the other hand, just because there is no one and nothing which is not loved by God and so has no worth, it is justifiable to speak of each person and each object as having ‘intrinsic’ worth. Such a description, however, does not mean that worth is inherent in each person as a solitary existent; it belongs to each person because each is cherished by the divine and thereby given worth.”

I agree with David Pailin on this insight. He reveals the heart of God towards man through the case of Alex and his health condition which God foreknew. God loved Alex irrespective of his condition, so He does towards each human being. God’s love demonstrated by His Son Jesus Christ gives human beings the worth due them irrespective of what befalls them. Douglas John Hall deepens this conviction by stating what he calls “Conditions of Creation. Holt (2012:128)” He uses the subject of Creation, Fall and Redemption to resolve the tension of Conditions of Creation which are loneliness, limits, temptation, and anxiety. Hall believes that suffering is built into the creation intentionally by God even though God is the Redeemer the world. He defines this suffering as “forms of suffering” which belongs to the conditions of creation.” Loneliness is an aspect of God creation which God considered “not good” for man to be alone. I am of the support of this reality that God resolved the issue of loneliness by creating Eve and also for creating human beings and man and woman. Another condition of creation is limits. Limits as to what Adam and Eve should eat and what they should not eat. Hall believes that this brought about frustrations. I disagree with Hall that limits led to frustrations because frustration is man’s choice. If limits were not necessary God would not put them. Limits were for their protection, and the violation of it brought about the exile from the Garden of Eden, followed by despair and hopelessness. On the other hand, I agree with Hall that (2012:127) “Temptation is not sin in itself but yielding to it is sin. I also agree with Hall that to experience anxiety is a part of being human. Lastly Hall described anxiety in two facets: anxiety of ignorance and fear of the future. Anxiety of being dependent. I agree with Hall that” anxiety leads to sin especially as human beings chose to practice anxiety”.

I disagree that the Fall brought about suffering. Suffering, poverty and pain and all negative sides of life still remain the result of man’s exercise of his freewill. God in His mercy did not abandon man and the earth in their fallen state. He provided redemption through His Son Jesus Christ. Hall (2012:130) assures us that, “Redemption is the act of meeting suffering with a greater reality, the suffering love of God. God does not supply an answer to suffering, but God answers suffering.” Interestingly, whatever negative side of life that human beings experience, God in His Son does not only know it but has gone through it and is still in it with His creation today. Halls says that God enters humanity by letting His Son experience conditions of creation. Hall (2012:130) further says that,

“Jesus’ disciples deserted him when he needed them most in another garden in the scriptures, the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus also experiences *loneliness* not only living as a single man in life but on the cross when he cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus “took on” the *limitations* of the human by being born of the human Mary. Jesus started out as a baby and grew through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood like all humans. Jesus experienced *temptation* in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane. At the end of his life, Jesus exhibited *anxiety* in his tears of blood in the garden and in his cry of abandonment from the cross.”

From the about narrative, Jesus experienced the four conditions of creation that humans do experience so that he becomes real in man’s times of struggle. A good reminder for all mankind during the dark hours of life.

In Summary:

- a. In the first creation story, man needs to understand that (in the Bible) creation was said to be very good meaning perfect, because is the work of a Perfect God the Creator. And that it had inherent or innate worth because of the Creator.
- b. God is relational, human beings made in his made need enter into eternal relationship with him and with the community of believers to flesh out his image in them. However, it is not only within the community of believers, but unbelievers inclusive so that the Light of God will shine upon them for their salvation.
- c. Humans are to reflect God in the world and participate in his creative work in the world by maintaining them. Humans are not creative in nature but they are to mirror God in maintaining justice, law and order in and with all creatures.
- d. The second creation story featured the human choice in the Garden of Eden that caused the fall and the exile from the Garden, this led to despair and hopelessness. Life in the Garden of Eden narrates the four conditions of creation, namely: loneliness, limitations, temptations, and anxiety. The experience of one or all of these is a sign of being human and not the result of the Fall since God has redeemed man and the earth from the consequences of the Fall.
- e. God created man with the freewill or freedom to choose. But sometimes, the self-centered exercise of this freedom brings sin. The selfish exercise of the freedom led to the fall. And God in His mercy did not abandon man in his fallen state. Rather He stepped in to redeem man through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ who also experienced the four conditions of creation that humans do experience namely: loneliness, limitations, temptations, and anxiety. Because of this, Jesus through the Holy Spirit indwells every believer as individual and through the community of believers sanctifying the individual and the community thereby revealing the true nature of God in the world.
- f. Man has to accept that pain and suffering are present in creation by God's intention and is a part of being human and in this world. By God's intention because God foreknew that He, through His Son would be in the pain and the suffering with us and for us. God is the answer to this tension and the problem of mental illness and disability of any sort. Pain and suffering lead man to depend on God and to grow in Him especially when pain and suffering are properly utilized. These do not overrule God's love for His creation nor the worth He placed upon His creation. Experiencing conditions of creation is a mark of a being human and it drives man back to God. Man can still go through of all these and still remains of great worth because of the Creator especially when such occasions are placed in proper perspective. Our participation with Holt (2012:131) "God as individuals or as a community of believers reveals God's love to His world. God created the world and all that God made is perfect. Even though man through sin has distorted God created things and order. But God has redeemed the world and so we now live a world that is redeemed".

2. FOCUS ON GOD'S ON DISTINCTIVE BIBLICAL CRITERIA FOR TAKING CARE OF POVERTY

There is a great need to promptly focus on general, distinctive biblical criteria for decision making on how to deal with poverty ravaging the society. A key concept on this, is the clear study on "revealed morality," which is not a set of codes or a listing of virtues to be required and acquired. Primary emphasis is placed on God's initiative and this is presented in terms of his divine 'gift for humanity. 'Moral instruction certainly forms part of the Church's essential mission.

In relation to our appreciation of the gift of God and of a spiritual experience. That morality is very important to what God has done in creation and in conferring the gift of life, of intellect, will, and of a privileged relationship between humans and God and human to human.

Revealed morality is presented in the context of covenant and the idea of the divine- human relationship as covenant or alliance is original to the Bible, the Decalogue proposes values that are applicable to the whole of humanity in any region and in any period of history. The Decalogue focus on God and the homage due to God safeguards against a purely secular ethic. Emphasis is placed on linkage of divine worship with respect for rights and justice which the prophets first intuited. The Biblical Commission's text emphasizes that the legal codes in the Torah pay particular attention to social morality and special regard for the poor, for strangers and for justice.

The Kingdom of God is presented as the central motif in Jesus' preaching and ministry of salvation and care for humanity. It refers to God's very presence overcoming evil and transforming the world, and it is pure grace. In the Hebrew Scriptures God's kingdom is communal, the Acts of the Apostles stress the emphasis on community in the early years of Christianity. At times Jesus refers to the kingdom as a future event for whose coming we are to pray. At other times it is referred to as already present. A time when evil is overcome and justice and peace are enjoyed by all, belongs to the future but we are also being taught what life should be like now and the values we should cultivate even in the difficult, sinful circumstances of the present.

3. BIBLICAL CRITERIA FOR MORAL REFLECTION ON SOCIAL CARE

There should be awareness on major moral problems of our time; the ethics of violence, terrorism, war, immigration, distribution of wealth, respect for natural resources, life itself, work, sexuality, research in the genetic field, the family and community life. Wherein he asserts that Holt (2012:131) "this is a formidable list and one to which some think the Bible is irrelevant. The Commission does not attempt to solve any of these issues which would require input from the human sciences, rational discourse and theological reflection, rather it offers criteria derived from the bible that have much to offer in discussions of solutions to these issues". The BPC's text offers eight principal criteria derived from the whole bible. Two criteria are fundamental: the first requires agreement with the view of the human person found throughout the bible; the second requires adherence to Jesus' example; and together they unify the two parts of the text. The remaining six are more particular, and they are:

4. CONVERGENCE FOR DEALING WITH POVERTY

Convergence requires similarity between many laws and moral values found in the bible and those of neighboring peoples and discussed by their philosophers and moralists. This requires the church to engage in dialogue with modern cultures both secular and religious as quest for moral wisdom in addressing complex problems. Some issues in society are more justly dealt with in secular codes than in the church's canon law, since, communities' members may not necessarily be of the same faith and practice. For example, in Nigeria, Muslims, Christians and traditional worshippers are all living together in communities all over the country. dialogue in these areas is imperative for the sake of peace, unity and development.

Danger of Contrast in Dealing with Poverty

The reference here is to biblical prophetic witness against false values that may exist in persons, groups or societies, the text deals with ideologies, institutions and structures that exclude openness to transcendence and promote life-styles that deny gospel values. Capitalism, materialism, consumerism, individualism and hedonism are mentioned as under mining human dignity by enclosing human life within a this-worldly system which puts God and transcendence aside. Teachings are required for counter witness to destructive ideologies and systems. That is the major problem in Africa, where people have contrast ideologies that are hinderance to peace, unity and development, leading to abject poverty on the continent.

Advance Morality in Dealing with Poverty

The criterion of advance refers to refinement of conscience on certain moral questions. The Bible contains gradual, progressive unfolding of morality not unalterable juridical codes therefore, at the personal and social level the demands of biblically inspired Christian ethics are radical and pedagogies are needed to guide believers along paths already modelled in the bible, especially in the teachings, life-style and ministry of Jesus.

Benefits of Moral Ethics in Dealing with Poverty in the Community

Based on this criterion, the principle of morality should be beneficial to the community. The Bible's rich tradition of seeing persons always as persons-in-community has much to offer; in Biblical ethics love of God and love of neighbours are intrinsically united. God's dialogue partner in the covenant is not individuals but the community in which individuals are inserted. The Israelite community taught love for the foreigner, and love and respect for the widow, the orphan, the day labourer, and those on the margins. Today the church as a community gathered in the name of God has immigrants, the homeless, the elderly, the handicapped, the impoverished and the weak, to challenge its formulation of virtues and work for the creation of just structures modelled on biblical examples.

Finality concept in Dealing with Poverty

According to Paul, looking forward to a future life with God achieved through union with the risen Christ imbues our religious life with hope both as an aspect of belief and as a norm for Behaviour. Policies that degrade the environment and exploit resources destructively are totally unacceptable. We are challenged to make decisions and act in dialogue with our Creator and Saviour and with an eye both on the present and on a future that will not end. That should positively affect the way we relate to one other on society.

Discernment Concept in Dealing with Poverty

In discussing this criterion, all the other criteria are subsumed and illustrated in enlightening ways by which people can implement things that are right and productive. There is no right way of doing a right thing. Current moral issues are complex and Bible interpretation requires painstaking consideration of many factors and so appeal to the people to be careful, prudent and not discriminating. According to the writer, some Biblical principles of right judgments on all moral and spiritual issues should be linked to all cultures. Therefore, literary positioning of texts as well as literary genres and forms may be most significant here. Before norms from the Bible are considered for use today, attention must be paid to their theological basis and how they are justified. Discernment of Biblical meanings are significance is a task of success for the entire community and for the church as it engages in dialogue with contemporary cultures, traditions and norms. When a decision is reached it should be addressed to the community not imposed by threats or punishments.

Poverty

Danfulani and Ayo (2001: 11), define poverty as “The condition of having insufficient resources or income. In its most extreme form, poverty is a lack of basic human needs, such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, housing clean water, and health services “Dictionary of Old Testament theology and Exegesis (1984: 228) defines poverty related to:

Those people who are without their own land and who are oppressed, in need of economic protection. The related word ‘*anaw*’ (oppressed, afflicted), which indicates the frequent connection between those who are poor and those who are oppressed. They are socially dependent on some more of greater prestige (honor) and power, often such dependence is a consequence of oppression, in that the person has been made poor so that someone else might gain wealth and power.

Sulaiman (2001: 11), cited Robert MC Namara, former president of the World Bank, described the poverty in African as absolute poverty, according to him it: “A condition of life so limited by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy.” poverty as related to a person who lacks either material or spiritual procession or both. The poor are indeed insecure and vulnerable in terms of food supply, health care, sanitation, education and clean water. Sulaiman ((2001: 11), indicated the poor regions of the world as “Latin America and the Caribbean, middle East, South Asia, East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa”

5. MISSION OF SOCIOPOLITICAL ENTERPRISE FOR TAKING CARE OF THE POOR

Charles Van Engen in his book mission on the way, (1996: 17), defines mission theology as: “The strategy, practice and agendas in the mission enterprise, relevant economic and sociopolitical action, liberation, evangelism, church growth, relief and development, sharing of church resources, dialogue with people of Bible translation, theological education, other faiths, and the relation of faith and cultures.

Wright the mission of God, (2006:23), defines mission as: “Our committed participation as God’s people at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation. Mission is wholistic engagement of God’s people in his service for the spiritual and physical benefits of others, as directed by him.

Types of Poverty

- i. **Material in Security:** The poor, the widows and the orphans who lack sufficient food, clothing, housing and other necessities of life are regarded as suffering from material poverty. Example of a widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:10)

- ii. **Social Insecurity:** David said out of self-indignation, “I am poor and needy, you are my help and my deliverer, do not delay, O my God (Psalms 40:17). His lamentation was not lack of food or housing. But persecution from his enemies, prison, illness, fear and bodily weakness. That could be described as social poverty.
- iii. **Spiritual/Moral Insecurity:** T. Desmond Alexander, (2000: 687), The supplicants present themselves helpless, poor and broken hearted. That has to do with guilt that makes them lack positive spiritual and moral qualities. That brought out their spiritual and moral poverty laden with iniquity, which results to spiritual and moral poverty (Isaiah 1:4).

6. THE BIBLICAL MODEL OF ADDRESSING POVERTY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Poverty in the Old Testament is seen as distress and suffering. Poverty is regarded as a curse, while stability and prosperity are regarded as blessings. Poverty is seen as something contrary to the will of God. “There will be no poor among you, for the lord will bless you in the land which the lord your God gives you for an inheritance (Deut 15:4).

There are three categories of poverty identified in the Old Testament namely material insecurity, social insecurity and spiritual/moral insecurity Alexander & Rosner (2000: 687), assert that: “The word ‘*Ani*’ has broad meaning including weak, miserable, helpless and suffering. It can refer to the socially and materially poor, who are dependent on support from other people. God made laws to protect the poor, needy, strangers, widows and orphans who were vulnerable to both social and material poverty. The experience of God’s blessings upon those who had both material and social riches should result to generosity to those who were victims of poverty, in one way or the other. Through social injustice, oppression and humiliation or otherwise. Many commandments of God in the law are explicitly intended to help the poor.

- i. During harvest the corner of the field and the gleaning should be left for the poor (Lev 19:9-10)
- ii. The law prohibits a creditor from taking interest or a garment from the indebted poor (Exodus 22:25-27).
- iii. Prescriptions for a special Tithe for the poor (Deut 14:28-29).
- iv. In the sabbatical year, the land was left fallow so that the poor could eat from it (Lev 25:1).
- v. Proclamations of God’s blessing for those who care for the helpless (Proverbs 14:21).

True piety includes care for the poor and real fasting includes sharing bread with the hungry (Isaiah 58:5-10).

7. THE BIBLICAL MODEL OF ADDRESSING POVERTY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Greek word ‘*ptochos*’ as used in the synoptic Gospels refer to those who receive charity, because they lack material resources and those who accept the gospel because they lack the kingdom of God. The example of what Jesus told the young rich man in (Mark 10:21). The young rich man was asked to sell all he had and give it to the poor. The poor are also mentioned as recipients of charity in (Mark 14:3-7) charity and care of the poor, formed part of the commandment of Love your neighbor as yourself in (Mark 12:31).

8. GOD’S WARNING AGAINST OPPRESSING THE POOR

- i. The prophetic books frequently accuse the rich of oppressing the poor in the society (Amos 8:4-6).
- ii. Warning against closing ears and hands to the need of the poor (Proverbs 14:21, 31).
- iii. God is the protector of the poor, he who mocked or oppress them, insult their creator (Proverbs 14: 31, 17: 5). Brian (2000: 688), Say:

These expressions of God’s identification with the poor cannot, however, be interpreted as preferential option for the poor in general. Normally God give the righteous person a prosperous life (Proverbs 15:6) when the righteous are struck with poverty or illness or the wicked prosper, this presents a problem to the pious mind (Psalms 73) the ideal picture of a righteous Israelite is of someone who help the poor and gives freely, not of one who is dependent on others.

9. MISSION STRATEGIES TOWARDS CARING FOR THE POOR AND NEEDY IN AFRICA

Mission work among the poor and the needy, should take a different dimension from the rich people in some aspects of missions. The following are some strategies to adopt while ministering to the poor, most especially in the African continent.

1. **Material Needs:** Evangelism/mission is the proclamation and sharing the good news of the kingdom of God with non-believers. This mission is the demonstration of Christian's presence in the world with the gospel of salvation. Poverty is a big challenge to the proclamation of the gospel, hence there is need to address the physical needs of the people. Like, food, shelter, clothing, and clean water. Centre for Gospel Health and Development (CeGhad) Reports that:

CeGhad (2011:7), exist to continue with the mission of our lord Jesus Christ, which is to bring wholeness to those we serve. We work with the un-reached individuals and communities to improve their health, social and spiritual conditions. A future where individuals and communities are empowered to use their potentials and develop wholistically. We mobilized the human and material resources within and outside the church to improve the lives of individuals and their communities.

10. MEDICAL HEALTH CARE

The health condition of the people is very important. It is therefore necessary for missionaries to provide health care facilities for the poor, which will form part of the gospel preached to them. Lere reported the activities of some missionaries at Panyam, Lantang, Forong, and Kabwir in Plateau State: she (2013: 132), says:

Three main areas come prominently in the missionaries' principles.

1. Ordained men and educationists who were mostly university graduates from different fields of study. These were trained for a period of one year.
2. Medical men who also were graduates from different fields of study we selected.
3. The two categories of professionals mentioned above were trained for one year in the medical field and with also 12 months training in the tropical diseases in medical school at London.

Educational Care

The literacy rate in most African countries is very low, that makes majority of the people ignorant of basic social, economic and religious requirements. Education should be encouraged in mission in the contemporary Africa, as it was done by some missionaries.

Cultural Values

Culture values of the people should be respected, some missionaries in past, could not succeed in mission work in Africa because of cultural differences Andrew Fl Walls (1996:93), asserts that:

The fathers of missionary movement undoubtedly by expected that Christianity would assimilate Africans to a European style of life. Their apologetic was directed to those of theirs. Contemporaries who argued that, this was impossible that Africans did not possess the mental capacities to participate on equal terms in civilization.

There is no need to change people's culture into western culture. African can still practice true Christianity within their culture.

Social Issues

It is true that Africans are contenting with many social issues. Like polygamy divorce, traditional marriages and relationships. People should not be rejected or condemned because of their cultural values and beliefs. What they need is spiritual awareness. They need love and care. That is what the gospel in all about.

11. BIBLICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURAL VALUES FOR THE BETTERMENT OF COMMUNITIES

Cultural Practices in Africa that are in Conflict with the Bible

Although there are some cultural practices in Africa that are in line with the bible, there are some that are in conflict with it however. For instance, female circumcision also known as female genital mutilation (FGM). This is a cultural rite which involves the removal of some sex organs from the female reproductive system. It is practiced differently by different ethnic groups such as excision, removal of the folded skin surrounding the clitoris (prepuce) as well as the tip of the clitoris. Some other ethnic groups practice clitoridectomy, the removal of the whole clitoris and the adjacent labia of a female and stitching together the edges of the vulva across the vagina using thorns, catgut or thread to prevent sexual intercourse until the wedding night of the female after which the small opening earlier left is closed again to secure fidelity to the husband. Other forms of FGM are pricking, piercing or incising of the clitoris or labia, stretching of the clitoris, or cauterization by burning the clitoris and surrounding tissue.

In Africa, FGM is carried out on females between the ages of 3 and 16 years, usually in an unhygienic atmosphere using kitchen knives, razor blade, and piece of glass or sharp nails. More so, no anesthetic is given, as the female is held firmly by some other women for about 10-30 minutes of the operation. Physical effects are infection, internal bleeding and transmission of hepatitis B and HIV. Therefore, the operation can be fatal besides the loss of sexual feelings by the victim thereafter. As such, this cultural practice should stop. Another cultural practice in Africa that is in conflict with the bible is the killing of twins. This act is out rightly against biblical injunction where God kicks against killing of fellow humans (Lev 24:21b, Prov 6:16-17, Exodus 20:13). Twins are not supernatural humans as believed in Africa but are products of cleavage and or double ovulation in mothers. There are 2 types of twins, identical and fraternal twins. Identical twins are formed in the womb of a woman when a fertilized egg divides into 2 fetuses' (babies) in which case they are all of the same sex and usually look alike. But fraternal twins come from 2 ovaries of a woman producing eggs at the same month and getting fertilized by some sperms. This often results into twins that may or may not be of the same sex and may or may not resemble each other. As such, killing of twins should be discouraged in Africa.

Similarly, infants' dedication or children's initiation is yet another cultural practice in Africa that is contrary to the bible. Initiation rites are formal ceremonial rites of passage that mark an individual movement from one stage of life to another, one society to another or one status to another. Diverse kinds of initiation rites are carried out by different groups and communities. As such, secret cults sometimes ask people who aspire for membership to undergo certain rites. Likewise, the Maasai of Kenya have initiation rites for "morans" (community warriors) wishing to be elders.

Infants' dedication entails presenting very young children to the gods of the land for protection and guidance. In fact, "Children's names may reflect the circumstances of their birth, a god they are devoted to, or an ancestor who people believe has been reincarnated in them ... The naming provides the transition of the child from the spirit world to the human community. The child is related to the ancestor and clan and the community at large. In some tribes his hair (ghost hair) is shaved off and he or she is introduced to things and work they will meet in the world.

In some tribes such as Yoruba, the new child may be taken to a diviner to find out what is the proper future for the child. The diviner might reveal, for example, that the child is to worship a certain divinity, observe certain taboos, and follow a certain profession in life. This may be according to the plan made between the child and his *ori* before birth, which the child will not remember but the diviner can reveal. However, Apostle Paul admonishes Timothy and Titus about some of the qualities of church leaders (pastors and deacons) to be monogamous [legally married to only one wife (1 Tim 3:2b, 12; Tit 1:6)].

God intends that man be monogamous that is why he created only Eve for Adam from Adam's rib (Gen 2:21-22). But if God had desired polygamy, he could have created more wives for Adam since Adam had many more ribs left in him. So, monogamy is highly encouraged among Christians instead of polygamy (Mark 10:1-12). Lamech is the first polygamist in the bible but coincidentally with the second case of homicide after Cain (Gen 4:19, 23-24).

Furthermore, another cultural practice that is not in line with the scripture is the belief in ‘supernatural powers’ for healing, success and or protection from harm by juju (charms, amulet, shrines and other sacred objects). Africans believe in many gods and are conscious or suspicious of virtually every situation that they seek for protection from danger by diverse means. But sometimes it initiates the attack on others. Moreover, people sometimes make covenants with some spiritual powers for protection and some other benefits. However, the bible condemns and forbids the use of mystical powers, “good” or “bad”. God warned Israel against divination as well as sorcery (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10-11). People should seek for protection from the Highest God alone.

Meanwhile, sexual immorality which the Bible frowns at, is known to be practiced in some parts of Africa. For instance, among the traditional Tivs culture of Central Nigeria, a man is allowed to offer his wife to a visitor to have sexual intercourse with her as a way of welcome. Although Africans have family units, but communal life is common across the continent. As such, hospitality is very common. (African Bible Commentary 390) points out that,

“In Africa ... hospitality is about welcoming strangers and not just friends ... Interestingly, in most African languages the same word (hospitality) is used for both ‘stranger’ and ‘guest’. Hospitality is rooted so deeply in African societies that meals are not prepared for the exact number of people in the household, for there is always a possibility that someone may drop in to share the meal. It goes without saying that when strangers come into the house, they must be offered something, even if it is only a cup of water”

Perhaps it is in the light of the hospitality of Africans that Tivs derive the culture of giving out their wives to visitors in their homes by way of welcome. However, this is adultery, a

sin which God forbids. This sin comes from the heart (Matt 15:19) as apart from mere entertaining their visitors with their wives, the Tivs are thought to benefit some biological traits such as height and intelligence in their children, if the wives happen to be impregnated by the visitors. The bible also cautions that the human body is not made for sexual immorality but for God (1 Cor 6:13b). More so, the bible also warns us that Christians run away from sexual sin as sex should only be for married couples (1 Cor 7:2). And God is going to destroy people who indulge in such sexual perversion (Jude 1:7). The sin of sexual immorality is due to sinful human nature (Gal 5:19).

Meanwhile, all Africans believe that people continue to live after they die. They believe that the dead still have some relationship with their people and are linked to the very family, clan and tribe they were born into here on earth. It is believed that a person progresses into the spirit world as soon as he dies where he acquires more powers than when he was alive. And since he still maintains his link with his people (family, clan or tribe) he can utilize his new spiritual status to help or harm the people. Moreover, the range of his spiritual authority is determined by his status while still in the world of the living. His former status also determines the quantum of his influence, whether it extends to only the family, whole clan or tribe. But the bible forbids consulting the dead for any reason except the only living God (Deut 18:11; Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27 and Isa 8:19-20). Hence, Christians should desist from consulting the dead in any way and by any means. Despite the huge conflicts between the cultural practices in Africa and the biblical principles, wisdom is required under the auspices of the Holy Spirit for Christians to reach others for Christ using diverse contexts. Consequently, African Christians shall culturally flourish under Christ in order to influence other people positively.

12. CONCLUSION

So many African Citizens are extremely poor on the African continent. Some cannot afford to provide themselves with basic social amenities them to live comfortable with their families in society, Such as, accommodations, food, cloth, medical bills, school, fees and so on

Paul, commented the work of charity and care as a model of how scholarship can serve the church both its teaching students in schools, workers in offices and the whole people in society on the Theology care and charity (1 Cor 12:25, 2 Th 1:3). He stated that the Commission has done excellent work in The Bible and Morality and they have placed all who wrestle with the bible's moral teaching greatly in their debt not least for their unfailingly civil tone and a total absence of polemics. The conclusion also contains some reflections of the writer as it concerns the social-justice oriented lifestyle of Jesus, and

the threat this presented to power both religious and secular. The Bible is essentially is the story of God, the earth and humanity. It is the story of what has gone wrong, what God has done to put it right and what the future holds under the sovereign plan of God. The Bible's story is the story of the mission of God. The Bible demand is for the appropriate response from human beings. God's mission calls for and includes human response and our mission certainly includes the ethical dimensions of that response by the people for reality in carrying out good spiritual and moral mandate on taking care of the poor and the needy, and in doing that which is right and just before God and humanity in the context of fairness and justice to all, both the rich and the poor, big or small in Church and Society.

The Bible has come to be a source of inspiration and guidance for Christians including Jews who practice Judaism in decision making especially, on issues of interests that have to do with morality. Either any group of individuals or on communal basis, irrespective of religious or social backgrounds should come in dealing issues of common in communities as a way to progress within the community for peace and development. There is no alternative to unity and peace. Without unity, there will be no peace. Without peace, there will be no development. Lack of these will be tantamount to poverty, suffering and death, which the African society is confronted with all these circumstances.

There are different ways of studying the bible. But the message in it is the same. No part of it should be isolated during interpretation or in practice. Advance Bible study should be Hermeneutically taught at all levels to the people, both young and old.

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