Biblical Idea of Caring for the Poor: Implications for the Church in Nigeria

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Abstract

There is ample evidence both in the Bible that the poor were cared for. Also, the history of the early Church shows that she was a caring community. However, in recent times, the emphasis on care for the poor seems to be waning in favour of the maintenance of expensive and, sometimes, ostentatious administrative and welfare structures that favour the ecclesiastical elites. It also seems that some of the markers of the contemporary Church's compassionate disposition towards the poor such as subsidized education are soon becoming less fashionable. As a result, many within the Church are grumbling under what appears to be a burden of financial expectation from the leadership of their denominations without commensurate empowerment and concern from the latter. To make matters worse, some preachers demonize poverty, making it more difficult for those who are struggling economically to

preserve their dignity and see themselves as part of God's creation. The researchers made use of hermeneutical and historical survey methods, through which the disposition of the Christian community of faith towards the poor was surveyed and relevant interpretation sought. The study affirms that genuine care for the poor has been, more or less, part of the identity of the Christian faith, and the Twenty First Century Church cannot, especially with all her unique endowments, afford to do less.

Key Words/Expressions: Bible, Church, care for the poor, poverty.

1.0 Introduction

Faith Based Organizations, churches, and congregations have always been engaged in a variety of ways in poverty reduction and the provision of social and health services and assistance (Schweiger, 2019:2). Most religions encourage their adherents to live an austere life. Being a rich man who abstains from the practice of "giving" is not acceptable in most religious traditions (Manouchehrifar, 2015:20). For instance, from Judaism came the idea of justice, basically a religious concept which held that every human being, as a child of God, had the right to some small part of God's provision. The entire concept was wider than this. It included the use of just weights and measures and the prohibition against using one's superior status or power to take advantage of the poor (Keith-Lucas, n.d.:6).

In Christianity, the support of the poor by wealthy individuals, monasteries and the church is widespread and can be traced back to the faith's origins (Schweiger, 2019:2).The Christian faith, itself a direct offspring of Judaism, has also been at the forefront of caring for the poor, joining other religions to see the poor as those who are in need, whose sustenance depends on others, and who lack the minimum satisfaction necessary for subsistence and therefore cannot attain fully the basic necessities in life towards human fulfilment (Gwamna, 2014:17). . It has also been observed by Blomberg (1998:99) that almost all the efforts ever made to assuage "poverty" and "suffering" originate from a Christian heritage in one way or the other.

In recent times, the role of Christianity in caring for the poor in the society seems to be overrated, as it is taken for granted by some that religion is doing just enough

in that direction. A close look at the trend towards the end of the twentieth century, however, reveals that the point of emphasis has moved from care for the poor and the vulnerable in the Christian community to care for the figures that have emerged as powerful men of God and their ecclesiastical structures which are expensive to maintain (Adeyanju & Babalola, 2017: 27). Although many denominations put up structures to extend a hand of fellowship to the poor in their midst and in the larger society, many of those plans get frustrated due to misplaced priorities in favour of maintenance of sometimes flamboyant ecclesiastical structures. Moreover, there are other denominations who do not have well-tailored plans for the poor. The difficulty in identifying the poor in the Church due to the growing tendency to view poverty as a curse or a sin, has also made it difficult for some denominations to identify with the poor in their midst. This paper, a call to the Christian Church in Nigeria to remember her forebears' concern for the poor and return to it, is necessitated by the above problems. This is even more necessary as poverty has become a serious situation in Nigeria (Onah *et al*, 2018:2). The economic situation of many Nigerians is taking a downturn due to the incessant devaluation of the Naira, the effects of removal of fuel subsidy by the Tinubu administration, post-Covid '19 economic imbalances and the augmenting tide of corruption and insecurity in the land.

2.0 The Concept of Poverty

Historically, poverty has been defined in monetary terms, using income or consumption levels. In order to be able to compare poverty levels across countries and over time, those that live below a given level of income – the poverty line – are classified as poor. Most analyses follow the conventional view of poverty as a result of insufficient income for securing basic goods and services. Others view poverty, in part, as a function of education, health, life expectancy, child mortality etc. (Olowa, 2012:25). However, according to Handley et al in Ludi et al (n.d.: 1), over the last decades, this economic definition of poverty has been complemented by other approaches to conceptualise poverty: basic needs approach, capabilities approach, human development approach and multidimensional poverty approach.

The UN (1995:57) has defined poverty as: "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation

facilities, health, shelter, education and information; it depends not only on income but also on access to services". Bradshaw (2006: 5) claims that political agendas are the overriding factors in poverty that not only influence the choice of theory of poverty but the very definition of poverty to be explained by each theory. Powerful interests manage how poverty is discussed and what is being done about it.

There are many classifications of poverty, but that of Olowa (2012:26) is simple and comprehensive. According to him, poverty can be structural (chronic) or transient. The former is defined as persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivations and is linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-political and cultural factors and gender. The latter, on the other hand, is defined as transitory/temporary and is linked to natural and man -made disasters. Transient poverty is more reversible but can become structural if it persists.

Mollat (1986:26) views the latter category as "those for whom poverty or need arises under specific, intermittent circumstances, the result of what the Annalistes call a "conjuncture.". Cohen (2005:35) adds that poverty in these cases results from a particular convergence of circumstances that changes their economic situation for the worse. Gutierrez (1973:289, 296, 298), however, distinguishes between material and spiritual poverty. While material poverty is the lack of economic goods necessary for human life, spiritual poverty is often seen as an interior attitude of non-attachment to the goods of this world. The spiritually poor person is one who is detached from the things of this world, but who is rich at heart. The poor is described as "the Christ of Yahweh", one who has openness to God, willingness to be used by God and humility before God. He is the "blessed one" of the beatitude in Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor (*ptochos*) in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". The poor in this sense is one that is totally at the disposition of the Lord. To Guiterrez, therefore, this verse does not mean that the poor should accept his poverty, as his injustice will be later compensated for in the kingdom of God. Rather, he sees the kingdom of God as an eschatological reality in this life which is ushered in through Jesus Christ in love and justice. In this paper, the materialistic understanding of poverty shall be the focus.

3.0 Care for the Poor in the Old Testament

Since Old Testament Theology is the rock from which New Testament Theology was hewn, it is necessary to do a brief survey of care for the poor in the former, in order to understand better that of Christianity (New Testament). Poverty in itself was not a moral problem to Israel (it was simply part of the way things are in this world). The problems for Israelites were rather the loss of status and the shame that poverty entailed. Poverty was a misfortune, not a moral problem (Wright, 2004:168). While that is a fair assessment, Wright argues that, that does not remove poverty from the realm of authentic Old Testament ethics. According to him, Old Testament ethics are characteristically relational, not just abstract or quantifiable. It is indeed what poverty implies for human relationships (their abuse, distortion, exploitation etc.) that constitutes the ethical problem. Poverty cannot therefore be addressed merely as an economic or material issue without at the same time addressing the relational issues of social injustice and exploitation (2004:168).

Certain factors were responsible for poverty in the Old Testament. According to Wright (2004: 54), first, there are what we would call natural causes, the result of living in a fallen world in which things go wrong for no reason apparent to humans. Such things as blight on crops and invasions of locusts can devastate a local economy. Sometimes such events may be attributed to divine judgment (e.g. Joel), but at other times they are simply recorded without any explanation. Secondly, the Old Testament recognizes that some poverty may be the direct result of laziness. This is particularly the observation of the world of the wise in the book of Proverbs. Thirdly, however, oppression is by far the major recognized cause of poverty. The Old Testament asserts, as all modern analyses demonstrate, that only a tiny fraction of poverty is 'accidental'. Mostly, people are made poor by the actions of others – directly or indirectly.

The question of how the problem of poverty was dealt with in the Old Testament then arises. In the Old Testament, care for the poor was not an option. It was a normal thing to do. In fact, it was an obligation. To this end, Gwamna (2014:18) avers that the obligation to care for the poor and the weak, which dominated Israelite legislation and the preaching of the prophets, was therefore not just a humanitarian reflex or a simple reaction to social justice and human goodness. It was more of relating, at the human level, the mercy of God towards the weak and

the oppressed, which further was a reflection of Yahweh's attitude towards Israel. This motif of care for the poor permeates the Old Testament; it is clearly portrayed in the Law, the Narratives, the Prophets, the Psalms, and Wisdom Literature. It is clear, then, that Old Testament laws on giving favoured every member of God's community (*Qahal Yahweh*), including the poor, the stranger, the disabled, the widow and the orphan (Asanga, 2019:71).

4.0 Concept of the Poor in the New Testament

Before looking at scholarly views on the New Testament's concept of care for the poor, it is important to consider the New Testament's vision of the poor. Ling (2006:99) gives ample insight into this. Three distinct strategies for identifying the 'poor' are presented in his review. The first is an economic approach, which views the 'poor' quantitatively, asking whether they constituted a minority within an otherwise prosperous society or whether a majority of the population were 'poor'. The second is a more exclusively social approach, which views the 'poor' qualitatively, subordinating economic considerations to kinship and politics in an attempt to understand the nature of the status designation. The final strategy discussed combines elements of both these quantitative and qualitative approaches with a more inclusive socio-economic reading. Given the strong connection between caring for the poor and divine recompense in numerous Jewish scriptural and apocryphal texts, it might seem likely that these traditions would have shaped reflection on the relationship between charity and reward in the New Testament (Downs, 2016:103).

However, it seems economic consideration is not the only way New Testament conceptualize poverty

5.0 The Compassionate Jesus

The New Testament puts Jesus face to face with the issue of poverty and portrays him as one who cried out against economic injustice and political oppression (Theuri, 1992:43). Right from his time and place of birth, Jesus identified himself with the poor. He is reported to have been born in a cow-shed where his mother "wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn...." (Luke 2:6-8). The first people to set eyes upon the new born Jesus, apart from his parents, were shepherds "....who lived in the fields

and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night" (Luke 2:8-9). These were obviously people from a poor class. This took place in Bethlehem, a small town about five miles to the south of Jerusalem. Jesus' parents (Mary and Joseph) were poor rural dwellers who lived in Nazareth, a small town about eighty miles north of Jerusalem, where they brought up their son. Jesus later spent most of his youth in the rural areas in the province of Galilee. Most of the time of his public ministry was also devoted to rural society in a country where the population was predominantly rural and poor (Mugambi, 1989:91).

A passage of great significance in the Synoptics which deals with Jesus' teaching about poverty is Luke 4:18-21. The significance of this passage is "perhaps the greatest in Luke's gospel, where the poor are specially mentioned" (Brewer, 2009:7). In the passage, Jesus had returned to his home town, Nazareth, after being in the wilderness for forty days. He quotes Isaiah 61:1-2, from the scroll of Isaiah, which states: "The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". And Jesus tells the listeners, "today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing", (v.20). This statement is the reader's first clue that God gives the poor the priority of the gospel message. It shows God's care and special interest in the poor. Notably, none of the teachings of Jesus related to poverty directly or indirectly implied that "since it is abnormal for a child of God to experience poverty, anyone found to be poor was under a satanic influence, and needs to be delivered of it." Jesus' teaching about poverty was mainly built on the idea that poverty is the lack of sufficient resources for human living, and this makes the poor to be needy and worthy of help and support. One who has enough resources to give to this group of people, therefore, should not hesitate to do so, as it is an expression of goodwill and goodness. It is the unwise man who cares not about his spiritual state or fate, who does not give to the poor in the case of the availability of the resources required to do so. He who then does the opposite is wise, for he builds for himself treasures in heaven and not on earth, where the treasures cannot be eternal (Ononogbu et al, 2016:383-4).

The bible describes Jesus' activities among the poor of Galilee. He does not stop at preaching the gospel to them, but goes further to cure the sick of their ailments.

Thus, Jesus was concerned about both the spiritual and physical comfort of his people. Jesus castigates the wealthy whose riches are a result of oppression: "But alas for you who are rich; you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have your fill now; you shall go hungry..." (Luke 6:24). He warns them that they stood a very slim chance of entering God's kingdom. Jesus commands those who wish to be identified with him to share their riches with the poor. He makes it clear that no matter how well one observes the commandments of God, if he or she does not give alms, then he/she cannot become a true follower of Christ (Mk 10:17 - 22, Matt. 19:16ff, Luke 18:22). The kind of giving that Jesus demands of his followers is that which does not anticipate reciprocation from the receiver (Luke 14; 13-14). Any giving to the poor should be done in secret and not in a manner to suggest pride (Matt. 6: Iff).

In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus condemns those who hoard their possessions and warns against avarice of any kind. In the parable of the rich fool, he demonstrates how riches can confuse a person (Luke 12:13-21). Jesus explains how one can use his wealth wisely (Luke 16: 9-13). Through the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19), he demonstrates how God will treat those who refuse to share their possessions with the poor. Jesus wishes to see a situation in which those endowed with material wealth share it freely and willingly with those less wealthy; while those with other endowments also share it out with the rest. In this way, a "harmonious society is created in which economic, social, cultural, religious and racial distinctions exist but are rendered insignificant by the strong bond of Universal brotherhood" (Mugambi, 1989, 99). This theme is also used as the climax of Jesus' eschatological parables/discourses towards the end of Matthew's account. He (Jesus) announces that when he (the King), returns in his glory, surrounded by angels, people from all the nations of the earth will be separated to his left and his right on the basis of how they responded to the poor whom he names as "the least of these my brethren". Those at the right hand are called 'righteous', while those at the left hand are termed 'wicked'. Their fate in eternity is there and then, decided: failure to treat the poor and the disadvantaged according to the requirements of the kingdom of God will lead to eternal condemnation on the day of final judgement (Matt. 25:3Iff).

6.0 Care for the Poor in the Early Church

Besides the gospels, other sections of the New Testament teach on and about the poor. The early Christian community demonstrated the love of Christ by living together and sharing amongst themselves all their possessions: The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common.

The early church's attitude towards poverty and the poor was perhaps built on the understanding that poverty was a state which puts one in need of support. Hence, it encouraged concern, support and care for the poor brethren in the church. The first obvious instance in Acts of the Apostles that relates to the church's practical attitude towards the poor is in chapter two. "At the end of the chapter", Luke "describes the new believing church- a familial type of community full of giving and sharing" (Brewer, 2009: 11). Chapter 2, verses 44 and 45 state that "all the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. The early church did not neglect the poor and needy, and benefactors looked for ways to accommodate those in need, including the selling of property. This is further expressed in Acts 4:32-37, which says thus:

> All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them, for from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Along with the above passages, Acts 6:1 affirms a common fund of the Jerusalem community with the sole purpose of distributing money or food to the poor and widows. It is expressed in the three passages that the motive of charity is highly prevalent in the story of the early church (Kim, 1993:24). Below is a lengthy group of words in St. Justin the Martyr's first Apology for the Christian faith, containing

not just the church's attitude towards the poor brethren, but implying how it was a part of their living to care for the needy in the second century.

> …the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things. Wherewith we are supplied, we bless the maker of all through His son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day named after the sun, all, whether they live in the city or the country side, are gathered together in unity. Then the records of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as there is time. When the reader has concluded, the presider in a discourse admonishes and invites us into the pattern of these good things. Then we all stand together and offer prayer. And, as we said before, when we have concluded our prayer, bread is set out to eat, together with wine and water. The presider likewise, offers up prayer and thanksgiving as much as he can, and the people sing out their assent by saying the amen. There is a distribution of the things over which thanks have been said and each person participates, and these things are sent by the deacons to those who are not present. Those who are prosperous and who desire to do so give what they wish, according to each one's choice, and the collection is deposited with the presider. He aids orphans and widows, those who are in want through disease or through another cause, those who are in prison, and foreigners who are sojourning here. In short, the presider is a guardian to all those who are in need (Satoshi, 2010:22).

It is shown here that the key component of the disposition of the early church towards the poor is grant of support.

7.0 Paul's Concern for the Poor

Loader (2009:31-32), in his understanding of Pauline epistles, argues that there is no handy evidence within Pauline letters that it possesses any 'good news for the poor' as a significant feature compared to Jesus' ministry in the gospel. However, there is ample evidence that Paul did not only preach about the need to care for the poor; he modelled it. An outstanding fundraising done by Paul was the one

raised from the Gentile churches in support of the poor Jews in Jerusalem. Concerning this, he instructs the Corinthian Church in1 Cor 16:1-4:

> Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

The initiative for this collection came from the conference described in Gal. 2:1-10, at which Paul undertook to continue to remember the poor (Watson, 1992:182). He had so demonstrated this in his ministry that in his valedictory message to the Ephesian Elders, he was confident enough to boast in this regard. He said: "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:34-35).

Apostle Paul urges the Romans to exercise charity to everyone, including enemies (Rom. 12:14-21). To the Corinthians, Paul urges cheerful giving (2 Cor: 7-8). Such a giver will earn God's blessings even if the amount given is minute - the openness of heart is what matters as opposed to the amount given. Paul advises Timothy to "be considerate to the widows" (1 Tim. 5:3) and to warn the rich not to look down on the poor, and not to set their hopes on money but on God: "Tell them that they are to do good, to be generous and to be willing to share" (1 Tim 6:17-19).

8.0 The Poor in the General Epistles

The epistle of James is the most vocal about the treatment of the poor among the General Epistles. James begins in 1:27 by elevating the activity of caring for widows and orphans as the very essence of pure and undefiled religion (David, 2013:948). Although the poor are not mentioned in that verse, in biblical times, the term for "widow" sometimes acquired the connotation of a person living in extreme poverty (Jibromah, 2020:2). Of course, when orphans and separated

children are left without family they become hungry, thirsty and in need of clothing. Street dwelling youth become sick from abuse, neglect and addictions. Children in orphanages become strangers within their own society as they are closed in and unable to find freedom (Stiver, n.d.:2). These categories fit squarely into the needs met by the righteous (the 'sheep') at the right hand of the King in Jesus' eschatological discourse in Matthew 25:31-46. James condemns the making of distinction between classes of people. He describes as corrupt judges those who judge people on the basis of their appearances, treating the poor with contempt while the rich are given special treatment. According to James, "It is those who are poor according to the world that God chose to be rich in faith and to be the heirs to the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him." (Js 2:1-5) James is convinced that faith without works is unjustified. Charity and service to the needy is part of what James calls work and will lead to salvation.

James further reminds his readers that, in effect, the rich have been responsible for many of the hardships that the community has endured: they oppress the members of the community, they drag them into court, they even blaspheme the name of Jesus (2:6-7). He tells his readers that their actions of discrimination not only dishonour the poor, but they do something worse: they side with those who are persecuting the poor (Hartin, 1997:150). When James declared the woeful state of the wealthy in chapter 5:1-6, it was the poor he was taking sides with. The imagery created in that pericope is quite necessary given that the wealthy of the time were usually notorious in buying off the court of their day and so denied the poor justice and the natural resolve on the part of God was to inspire his servant to declare their doom (Nwanguma, 2020:55).

9.0 The Church in Nigeria and Care for the Poor

There are Christian denominations in Nigeria that care for the poor. There are programmes run by churches and non-government organizations that play important roles in helping the poor. They have provided education and medical care and have improved agricultural production so that the farmers are able to take care of themselves and their families. Jegede (2020:140) lists some of them thus:

1. The Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN), which has the goal of promoting "Christian holistic

development by enabling the Church in Nigeria to empower the poor in the name of Jesus Christ"; and

2. People Oriented Development (POD) of ECWA which aims to promote and improve sustainable living conditions through effective community mobilization and capacity building of the underprivileged communities in Nigeria. It has provided sustainable water supplies, encouraged sustainable agricultural practices, improved community healthcare and sanitation, and focused on the economic empowerment of women and young people.

One of the denominations at the forefront of caring for the poor in Nigeria is the Roman Catholic Church. In its teachings, the Catholic Church states clearly that poverty is a threat to humanity; hence, it does not direct its teachings to only Catholics or Christians, but to every human being. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, the organ that unites the Catholic Church across Nigeria, helps to spearhead the teachings of the church and the pastoral care of the faithful. The promotion of human dignity, freedom, justice and equity, the defence of the poor, the weak, the marginalized and the oppressed have been the sole aim of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (Olubitan, 2014:177).

Furthermore, the Catholic Church in Nigeria has established many schools and scholarship schemes to provide education to the masses and has built hospitals, orphanages, old peoples' homes and motherless babies' homes, among others. In Nsukka Diocese, for example, there is a scholarship scheme for indigent students. It has also continued to empower rural women by providing loans at a very low interest rate through its microcredit scheme. Through the agricultural department of the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JPDC), farm produce is shared with the poor. There are women cooperatives and such groups are equipped with garri processing machines (Onah et al., 2018:5).

Also, in most Catholic dioceses in Nigeria are found sodalities that work assiduously to alleviate poverty in the society. Among these sodalities are Legion of Mary, Saint Vincent de Porres Associations and Caritas, which are found in all Catholic dioceses. There are also other organizations like the Kolping Society in Umuahia Diocese and the Eu-Care Apostolate in Owerri Archdiocese that render selfless service to the people (Onah et al., 2018:5).

There are many other denominations in Nigeria that have schemes that are geared towards alleviating poverty in the nation. All these show that the Church in Nigeria has an understanding of her mission to the poor and downtrodden of the society. However, there is room for more to be done by the Church, especially as Nigerians bear the brunt of the removal of fuel subsidy. The Niger Delta is worse hit. The activities of the multinational companies, long-time neglect and the indifferent attitude of government and many Niger Delta political elites towards the development of the region, have plunged the region especially the rural dwellers into untold hardship, underdevelopment and poverty (Olusakin, 2019a:235).

10.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, the New Testament speaks widely about the poor. The Gospels portray Jesus as the messiah who is sensitive to the physical suffering and spiritual needs of the poor. He helped everyone who approached him out of any difficulty. He was concerned to bring both liberation and salvation to the poor and the oppressed. The Church is therefore called to undertake this same task. As the body of Christ on earth, the church has not only been at the fore front of fighting injustice, it has also actively involved in tackling society problems like HIV/AIDS, global warming and others (Olusakin, 2019b:76). The church is therefore called upon to use her comparative advantage not to fight for the poor only, but to also care for the poor. The church is a priestly, prophetic. pastoral, therapeutic and eschatological community. So, it has a lot of responsibility in showing love and affection to the poor (Olusakin, 2020a:3, Olusakin, 2020b:12). In the words of Oborji (2012: 169), the Church's care of the poor is not a mere social service which others would as well do, but it is rooted on the very nature of the Church in continuing the redeeming work of Christ of bringing integral salvation to men and women. It is founded on the divine command of love of neighbour.

The following recommendations are therefore made:

1. Denominations that do not have care for the poor as a priority should see this as a wake-up call, as this is one of the primary reasons for the existence of the Church;
2. Denominations that own schools should consider the poor and indigent when considering bills;

3. Denominations that already have workable policies for caring for the poor should endeavour to translate such policies into reality;
4. Denominational structures that are expensive to maintain should be reconsidered in favour of simplicity in order to enhance missionary work and care for the poor;
5. Preachers should desist from demonizing poverty, as it worsens the situation of those who are still struggling with it, psychologically;
6. The dignity of labour should be upheld in the pulpits;
7. Beyond preaching or directly caring for the poor, the clergy should create networks that enhance wealth creation in their churches;
8. More denominations should embark on entrepreneurship programmes to boost wealth creation in their churches.

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