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The Church and Poverty in Africa: Ethical Analysis and Homiletical Implication

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the perennial challenge of poverty in Africa and the role of the church in providing lasting solutions for this challenge. In the pursuance of the thesis of this study, which is that the church has an ethical role to play in ameliorating, if not eradicating the problem of poverty in Africa, the writer considers conceptualizing poverty in Africa, Biblical understanding of poverty, ethical analysis of the responsibility of the church in combating poverty in Africa, and homiletical implications of the church's role in the challenge of poverty in Africa as objectives. The writer approaches the concept of poverty from the perspective of the Bible and argues that the perspective of scripture is that poverty exists and the rich should care for the poor. The writer also argues that while both the Old and The New Testaments encourage a benevolent attitude from the rich towards the poor, the poor should not be lazy in terms of work and personal efforts. The paper examines the ethical responsibilities of the church, concluding that the responsibilities of the church are sectioned into theological, educational, and pastoral responsibilities. The writer argues that these responsibilities have homiletical implications. The implications are that the church should have more prophetic preaching. This prophetic preaching should be biblical, and church's preachers should have lives that agree with their messages. There is a connection between the pulpit and the growing rate of poverty in Africa; the writer, therefore, recommends that the church does more in the war against poverty on the African continent.

Introduction

Contemporary African society is bedevilled by a myriad of social, political, environmental, economic, and religious challenges. Political rascality and ethnic clashes, armed robbery and kidnapping, Islamic fundamentalism and insurgency, corruption and economic austerity are palpable landmarks on the African landscape. It is bewildering to note that a continent blessed with such enormous human and natural resources can be in a precarious state as marked by contemporary African realities. The African public considers the culprit: political leaders, traditional rulers and a host of historic and contemporary cabals that have held captive the socio-economic destiny of the African people.

In the book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney blames European Slave traders for the contemporary predicament of Africa. Rodney notes that through the use of warfare, trickery, banditry, and kidnapping, the western world syphoned the destiny of Africa during the slave trade (1973:83). Diverse opinions exist on parties to be blamed for the predicament of the African continent. Some scholars opine that some blame should also come to the church. Comparable to the biblical “*mene mene tekel upharsin*” the church in Africa is adjudged to have fallen short of societal expectations. The thesis of this paper is that the church has an ethical role to play in ameliorating, if not eradicating the problem of poverty in Africa. This is besides the fact that other factors are jointly responsible and other solutions are probable for the menace of poverty in Africa. This paper will specifically consider how the church in African contributes to the problem and how the church ought to provide some solutions.

In the pursuance of the above thesis, the writer will consider the following: conceptualizing poverty in Africa, biblical understanding of poverty, ethical analysis of the responsibility of the church in combating poverty in Africa, and homiletical implications of the church’s role in the challenge of poverty in Africa.

Conceptualizing poverty

The term poverty has been defined in several ways and within diverse contexts. Ruth Lister avers that proffering a definition for the concept of

poverty may be controversial because of the nebulous nature of the concept. Lister explains that there are several approaches to the definition of the concept. According to Lister all definitions of poverty would be correct once they are considered within the context of the author, whether social, political or historical context. Lister concludes that two approaches to the definition of poverty exist. These approaches Lister refers to as the narrow and broad approach, explained in terms of whether the definition considers poverty in terms of the material core, the nature of the material core, or the symbolism that are normative of the concept (2004:13). Sofo C.A. Ali-Akpajiak and Toni Pyke in their book *Measuring Poverty in Nigeria* agree that the multidimensional nature of poverty makes the concept difficult to define. They succinctly note that because the poor are not a homogeneous group, developing a generally accepted definition would be difficult (2003:5).

The possibility of a universally acceptable definition of poverty may seem improbable. However, a definition of poverty is essential because the perspective used in defining the concept determines to a large extent, how the eradication or alleviation is approached (Ghafoor 2010:1). Ghafoor recommends three approaches to the definition of poverty. The *monetary* approach, which deals with defining poverty in terms of ratings according to financial expenditure per day. This is exemplified in the World Bank's definition of poverty as living on or below \$1.90 per day (2018). Similarly, Lusted defines poverty as earning below \$1.25 a day, and extreme poverty is earning below half of the above amount (2010:10). The monetary approach to defining poverty is more common than other approaches. This is so because it is easier to measure the material substance of individuals based on their monetary value.

The second approach is a *capability* approach. This approach considers beyond the financial capacity of individuals; it cogitates the deprivation of certain natural capacities which could make poverty possible even in a rich country. This approach considers the individual's capacity for wealth creation and resources available for such wealth creation on an individual basis. Illustrating this definition is a United Nations description that conceives poverty basically as denying an individual the right to choices and opportunities, the violation of such an individual's human dignity, making him/her unable to effectively participate in society (2017). This definition accentuates the basic

understanding that poverty is more than lacking finance. It explains that once people are not able to make choices or take advantage of opportunities within their context, such people can be regarded as poor.

The third approach is the *multidisciplinary* approach which is a deviation from the quantitative methodologies and indices of measuring poverty and concentrates on the social relations that are responsible for the production of poverty. The social interactions responsible for poverty is the focus of this approach (Lusted 2010:2). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Developments (OECD) caps this approach by defining poverty as “interlinked forms of deprivation in the economic, human, political, socio-cultural, and protective spheres” (Handley et al. 2009:1). This definition accentuates the interplay between economic, human, political and socio-cultural factors concerning poverty.

These three approaches can be said to be the umbrella ideologies under which perspectives of poverty can be grouped. In defining poverty, it is either viewed from the perspective of how much an individual has available in meeting his/her essential needs or an individual’s lack of capacity to possess a choice among the various options available which also relates to the individual’s inability to take advantage of the variety of opportunity available to him/her. The last perspective is the view that poverty is deprivation in terms of the human, economic, social, cultural, and protective domains.

Scholars like Robert Chambers concurs with the monetary, capability, and multidisciplinary approaches as the overarching ideologies to the definition of poverty. However, Chambers includes two other approaches to the views through which poverty can be defined. According to Chambers, the monetary approach should be split in two, income-poverty and material lack poverty. Also, Chambers explains that the above approaches are all opinions for researchers, some of whom have never experienced first-hand poverty. Therefore, Chambers suggests another approach, which is cantered on a definition of poverty by the poor. About 2000 poor people from different parts of the world were brought together to consider how poverty would be defined. The synthesis of the contributions suggests that poor people consider poverty in terms of the distance between ill-being and wellbeing. Concluding from the opinion of Chambers, a valid definition of poverty would depend on who is

giving the definition (Chambers 2006). In the context of this paper, poverty is defined as the lack of basic amenities, whether personal or public, insufficient financial capability and capacity in relation to available resources within a particular context.

Regardless of how the concept is viewed, poverty remains one phenomenon with devastating repercussions for the African continent. Africa houses 75% of the poorest countries of the world, and approximately 414 million people live in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan. In Africa alone, an estimated 589 million Africans live without electricity, over 700 million people live their lives without access to clean water, and not less than 20% of women live without access to education; there is an increase in the death rate due to malaria, the global hunger challenger has greater propensity to increase in poor Africa (The World Bank 2018). The results of poverty in Africa are not hidden. The continent has evidence of the effects of this monster concept that Africa grappled with since its foundation.

The causes of poverty in Africa may be grouped under different classes according to Howard White and Tony Killick. White and Killick suggest that the causes of poverty may be classified under social classes which deal specifically with the political, economic, and social causes of poverty; the second class has to do with the level which addresses international, national, or household level of poverty; and the third classification of the causes of poverty in terms of being primary or proximate (2001:xvii). This paper does not intend to focus on the cause and effects of poverty; therefore, the writer considers White and Killick's classification of the causes of poverty in Africa as sufficient.

A biblical understanding of poverty

The word of God is fundamental in the life of the church. It is generally considered relevant in matters related to life and practice. This writer considers it important to survey poverty in light of the biblical text. This is considered necessary because the paper deals with the role of the church concerning poverty. This section will excavate the position of the Bible on poverty.

Poverty in the Old Testament

The Old Testament is replete with examples of all forms of poverty. Poverty is often considered a socio-economic issue, and rightly so. However, Ayiemba, Theuri, and Mungai (2015) allude to the connection between involuntary poverty and the fall of man. Involuntary poverty, according to these authors, is a situation where lack occurs because of a natural disaster, or situations completely beyond the control of a human being. They illustrate involuntary poverty with the great famine referred to in Genesis 41:54 (Ayiemba, Theuri, and Mungai 2015:43). Similarly, Jeffrey Palmer opines that myriad forms of poverty exist in the Bible and concurs that there can be involuntary poverty, illustrating it with the case of slaves who are poor basically because they are slaves (2005:16). In addition, he notes that natural disasters, social upheavals, oppression and war can be other sources of involuntary poverty which is common in the Old Testament. Palmer however alludes to the concept of the bound slave as an example of involuntary poverty in the Old Testament (Palmer 2005:17).¹

He identifies five levels of poverty in the Old Testament. Loss of things; loss of influence; loss of identity; loss of hope; and complete dependence on God. The loss of things refers to the loss of possession. This can occur through natural disasters, war, and a range of other factors. Genesis 42:1-2 depicts a situation where Jacob sent his sons in search of food because of a long drought. This kind of situation could bring about poverty because of the loss of possession and wealth. The loss of possession and wealth directly leads to a loss of influence. Wealth makes an individual a part of the influence in society. The rich control power in any setting. Palmer explains that once possession and wealth are lost, individuals involved also lose connection with the people in power. This loss of connection with power results in the loss of influence (2005:16).

The next level of poverty is the loss of identity. Palmer's opinion is that once people lose wealth and possession, and they also lose influence, then, there is the tendency to lose identity. This idea is depicted by the story of the Israelite

¹ Exodus 21:5-6

spies in Numbers 13:33, where the spies considered themselves as grasshoppers before the people of the land.

According to Palmer, this grasshopper mentality is a result of the poverty of resources and influence that Israel had to pass through for hundreds of years. The fourth level of poverty recognised by Palmer is the loss of hope. At this stage of poverty, social services experience a breakdown and unethical practices begin to take place because of abject poverty. Cannibalism, ritual murder, and a high rate of robbery and other social vices begin to take place, all as evidence of the lack of hope. Palmer provides biblical examples of such loss of hope as a result of poverty from II Kings 6:24; 31 and Job 6:11-13.

The last level of poverty as described by Palmer is a complete and total dependence on God. For Palmer, when people resign to the hands of God alone without any other opportunity for intervention, it is the last stage of poverty (2005:16). I consider this last state an unnecessary inclusion. This is because the Bible is unequivocal on the expectation for believers in Christ to put all their hope in Christ and nothing else. The rich are no exception to this expectation.

William Ondari (2001:356) points out that God has a special affection towards the poor. In Deuteronomy 15:11, God commanded the Israelites to relate generously with the poor, knowing that the poor will always be in the land. Similarly, Leviticus 19:9-10 encourages wealthy farmers to deliberately leave some leftovers during harvest for the poor to glean. Verse 15 of the same text provides that rich people be impartial in their dealings with the poor. The land purchased from the poor should be safeguarded and be returned during the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:25-28). The Old Testament Prophets were vehement against the oppression of the poor and other vices that related to the rich taking advantage of the situation of the poor (Ondari 2001:357).² Proverbs 14:31 is instructive on the relationship between the rich and the poor. The verse provides a conception that the poor must be treated in such a way that God is honoured, as the oppression of the poor is contempt of God.

² Isaiah 58:6-7; Amos 2:7; 8:5-6

Terry Lockyer adds that a perusal of Proverbs proves that poverty can also sometimes be a result of laziness, indiscipline, and irresponsibility, and prosperity a product of hard work and diligence. Lockyer however notes that a larger portion of the book of proverbs presents poverty as a product of socio-economic injustice (2012:4). Samuel Waje Kunhiyop concludes that an assessment of poverty in the Old Testament reveals the compassionate interest of God for the poor, and the laws provided for the defence of the poor against oppression. According to Kunhiyop, the Old Testament is unequivocal on the expected benevolent threat of the poor by the rich, and the oppression of the poor is considered a dishonour to God.

Poverty in the New Testament

Daniel Bitrus suggests that the benevolent treatment of the poor replete in the Old Testament is carried forward into the New Testament. He explains that the charge of Jesus to the rich young ruler is typical of the New Testament teachings on the treatment of the poor (2003:141). Terry Lockyer avers that Luke 6:17ff represents the general ideology of Jesus about wealth and poverty. He warns however that the verse may not be taken as absolute for all individuals (2012:5). Kunhiyop holds that, though the New Testament does not contain elaborate instructions concerning the treatment of the poor as in the Old Testament, the New Testament gives much attention to the needs of the poor (2001:12). He specifies that the parables of Jesus identify the centrality of care for the poor and needy. Parables of the rich man and Lazarus, the Great Supper, the Widow's Mite, and other New Testament passages like the discussion between Jesus and the rich young ruler, and the conversion of Zacchaeus illustrate this (2001:12).

Olusola Igabri notes that the New Testament has three dimensions of relationships with the poor: *Concern* for the poor as in Matt. 26:11, *ministering* to the poor as in Mark 10:21, and the *relationship* between the rich and the poor as in Luke 16:20 (Igabri 2016:4). It is important to recognise that Jesus Christ himself took part in caring for the poor. A succinct example would be food in Mark 6:33-44 where Jesus feeds the crowd (Kunhiyop 2001:12). Aside from the ministry of Jesus to the poor, other parts of the New Testament bear the same understanding. For instance, the church's leadership encouraged Paul and Barnabas not to neglect the poor in their newly endorsed ministry in Galatians 2:10, similar to Jesus' injunction in Matthew 19:21 (Bitrus 2003:141).

In sum, poverty in the New Testament is not differently perceived from the Old Testament. The same ideology of the phenomenon of the poor and how they should benevolently care for them are found throughout the Bible.

Ethical analysis of the church's role in combating poverty

It is common knowledge that Africa is tremendously religious. Obaji M Agbiji and Ignatius Swart consider religion as an inseparable part of life in Africa (2014:1). The African is a religious person, almost every part of African life is submerged in religiosity. Aside from a very few dissenting scholastic opinions, most African scholars agree that Africa is incurably religious (Platvoet and Van Rinsum 2003:123). The pervasive nature of African religiosity may not be contestable. The widespread presences of Churches, Mosques and African traditional religious shrines illustrate this very reality. Despite Africa's ubiquitous religiosity, the continent is still rated the poorest in the world. Jaco Beyers opines that the prevalence of religion and the almost tangible presence of poverty appears to be paradoxical. He expounds that religion and poverty may be referred to as strange bird fellows (2014:1). This section deals with understanding what role the church has to play in the eradication or reduction of poverty using the Divine Command Theory as the basis for the analysis.

John Stott opines that the church has over the years neglected its role in global social concerns. This, according to Stott, accounts for the increase in global social vices. The church can no longer continue to stand hands folded, while contemporary social concerns go 'south.' The church can respond to these towering challenges such as war, creation, care, human rights, ethnic diversity, same-sex relationships, and poverty that have become major global issues in one of two ways: escape or engage. Escape is for the church to separate itself from the world, rejecting it completely. This approach translates to shorting the ears against the cry for help. The 'engage' approach is rather different as here the church takes up the responsibility of stepping in, and stepping out. The church raises as help as the cry of the world is heard. The church for centuries has taken the escapist attitude as an approach to dealing with the challenges of the world (Stott 2006:24). The foregoing therefore implies that a more deliberate response must be made by the church to help solve the challenges the world finds itself in.

The church in Africa is a part of the African continent. It is within the continent that the church carries out its functions. The church should therefore see the continent as one to cherish and preserve, despite the challenges it faces. Since poverty is the focus of this paper, it is imperative therefore to consider the role of the church in addressing this global menace, with a specific focus on Africa. Ayiemba, Theuri and Mungai opine that it is the divine mandate of the church to participate in poverty alleviation. The trio base their thesis on the idea that the creation story bequests man the responsibility to care for all that God has created, therefore continuing the creation. The writers explain that the account in Genesis 1:27-28 reveals man's spiritual, social, economic, and political responsibility in caring for all that God had created. The church must therefore see itself in the light of this responsibility as it responds to poverty (2015:43).

A myriad of opinions exists on the ethical role of the church concerning poverty alleviation/eradication in Africa. John Stott opines that the church has the following ethical roles in response to the problem of HIV/AIDS, a major offshoot of the problem of poverty in Africa: Theological response, pastoral response, educational response, and prophetic response. These responses are hereby adopted as the major ethical responsibilities of the church to the problem of poverty in Africa. These responsibilities are discussed as:

Theological Responsibility:

It is the responsibility of the church to provide the right perspective on poverty. Over the years, some churches have taught parishioners that poverty is a sign of proper spirituality; some even believe that the poorer one is, the closer such a person is to God. There is the other extreme that poverty is a sign of satanic affliction and curse. These two extremes admit other views that are theological blunders that the church has the ethical obligation to address. It is the moral responsibility of the church to provide a sound theological understanding of what poverty is and how it should be responded to. Kunhiyop insists that some approaches to poverty are inconsistent with scriptural truth and must be adjudged so (2001:14). Beyers (2014) opines that a worldview of poverty determines how poverty is perceived. The Christian church should make a deliberate effort to present the Christian worldview of poverty.

The church's theology of poverty should be biblical. Bitrus (2003) mentions that the Bible deals extensively on a variety of subjects, and there are models on the subject of poverty that the church can draw theology from. The Bible should therefore form the nucleus for the church's theology. The church should not condemn a world it has not taught. The general idea is to condemn the world when they take an approach that is unbiblical, non-theological, and contrary to the Christian worldview. It is the responsibility of the church to shine the light of knowledge and teach the right theology for the development of congregants on matters relating to poverty (Stott 2006:49).

Pastoral Responsibility:

Stott laments the ideology that the church does not have social responsibility. Proponents of this ideology hold that the only responsibility of the church is to evangelise the world. It is further argued that any act of social responsibility by the church would be tantamount to worldliness (Stott 2006:50). Conversely, Hans Haselbarth avers that the church in Africa is strategically located to be a catalyst for rural development. The close contact of the church with the people is foundational and informs the moral basis for a pastoral role for the church (1976:37). Stott notes that the church cannot continue with its irresponsible escapist attitude, but as the Lord Jesus Christ, the church should show an attitude of care and compassion (2006:24). The church cannot continue to abandon the world around them in the current chaotic condition. The church should be compassionate towards the poor and needy.

James Ndyabahika explains that part of the pastoral role of the church is the responsibility to care for the poor. The challenge of poverty is not something to simply lip sing, but the church must be deliberate in addressing it. Part of the response of the church to poverty is taking proper care of the poor (2004:208). Julius Oladapo notes that the African context is appreciative of the church's capacity in running institutional social services. The church should be involved in providing healthcare and educational services for the poor. He noted that the church has participated in these areas for centuries. The writer however noted that more deliberate efforts should be added as an ameliorative measure for the challenge of poverty (2000). Similarly, Asea Wilson and Rantsoa Letsosa explain that the Old and New Testament reflect generosity to the poor. These authors insist that this generosity is a contemporary ethical responsibility of today's church. The church should

provide avenues through which the poor can be assisted generously (Wilson and Letsosa 2014). They further recommend that the church should be involved in the global fight against poverty by generously giving and providing avenues through which the poor can be assisted to become self-sufficient and properly equipped to handle poverty themselves.

Educational Responsibility:

According to M.B.I Omoniyi, education affords individuals the groundwork for poverty eradication. It also provides a foundation for promoting economic development. Omoniyi opines that education is also foundational for the economic and social welfare of the citizens of a country. Omoniyi argues that education is key to growing economic effectiveness and social consistency, the maximization of the value and proficiency of the workforce and consequently raises the poor from poverty. Omoniyi noted that education improves the overall productivity and intellectual flexibility of the workforce and guarantees that a nation is competitive in the world market now characterized by changing technologies and production methods (2013:178).

Stott agrees that education is a powerful weapon in the hands of the church. According to Stott, this is because poverty and powerlessness in Africa are largely due to ignorance amidst other causes (Stott 2006:43). Paul Gifford succinctly records that the old missions brought literacy as an instrument for Christianizing Africa, the effect of the literacy program resulted in political and economic value for the then Christians. Contemporary churches in Africa must borrow a leaf from the western mission enterprise of the colonial period and make deliberate efforts in meeting the educational needs of the poor (1998).

Homiletical implications

An analysis of the ethical responsibility of the church raises implications for the 'pulpit'. The church's homiletical enterprise is directly implicated by the moral misgivings of the African continent. The pulpit is responsible for the declaration of the mind of God to the pew, therefore this writer assumes that the growth of poverty in Africa is an apparent indictment on the homiletical enterprise of the church in Africa. This section deals with the implications of widespread poverty in the African continent on the homiletical enterprise of the church in Africa. The following implications are considered germane:

Implications for Prophetic Preaching:

Stott insists that it is the responsibility of the church to hold African leaders accountable for their actions (2006:172). Prophetic preaching is a good homiletical tool for accomplishing this responsibility. Marvin McMickle purports that prophetic preaching sermonic communication shifts attention from what is happening in a congregation to what is happening in society. Prophetic preaching challenges leaders and followers on the fulfilment of responsibility. It is a method of sermonic communication that addresses the ills of society and the response and responsibilities of leaders and followers concerning societal ills. According to McMickle, prophetic preaching is necessary to turn the attention of leaders to their failures in society (2008:408). Similarly, Oladapo explains that since the church is not in competition with political and traditional authority, and there is no tendency for the church to take over the political or traditional authority, the church should therefore serve as a conscience to political and traditional leaders (2000:146). The church should address political corruption, ungodliness among political and traditional leaders, as well as members of the church contributing to the breakdown of law and order in the nation. Christians involved in political corruption should be rebuked and the evil they perpetuate should be deliberately addressed without prejudice.

Implication for True Biblical Proclamation:

Complex homiletical issues have risen in contemporary times; many have questioned the viability of preaching as a means of communicating God's word. Several suggestions have been put forward with regards to whether other means of communication can be used as a replacement for preaching. The contemporary sermonic climate is rigged with homiletical dynamites that tend to work against congregational persuasion. Several means and methods are recommended to curb the increasing negative persuasions against preaching that continues to pervade the preaching atmosphere in Africa generally. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his discussion of the primacy of preaching, stated that preaching is the furthestmost imperative of the church (1971:9). This statement made five decades ago still forms an existential reality for today's church. David Larsen alleged that there is the view in some quarters that the days when the church was moved by the persuasiveness of its frontrunners are now relics (1989:11). Larsen's observation accentuates the idea that preaching in the 21st century has antagonists. Due to poverty in

Africa, Africans are in search of greener pastures and many turn to the church for a message of hope to succour them.

One phenomenon that has invaded the African preaching landscape due to the poverty of Africa is prosperity preaching. This concept of preaching tends to spiritualise success, insisting that getting comes by giving. Those who have been enslaved by this fast-growing teaching believe all things are theirs and whether such believers work hard or not, grace will provide all they need. Parishioners who attend prosperity preaching churches are taught to name it and claim it. Whatever congregants can claim by faith will become theirs on earth (Kitause 2014:31). Prosperity preachers explain that prosperity is a reward of prayer and faith and poverty is the evidence of the lack of faith (Koch 2009:3).

This concept represents the ideological mindset of lazy people. Many fold their hands expecting miracles to fall from heaven without putting their hands and minds to work. Preachers in the African context should teach biblical methods of prosperity to congregants. The preacher in Africa should teach sound theology of work. The African preacher should encourage parishioners to do excellently with their hands and pay attention to business. African preachers should preach God's kind of prosperity. Biblically, prosperity is beyond material wealth and physical abundance. The Bible recommends all-rounded prosperity. Biblical prosperity addresses the spiritual as well as the material wellbeing of believers. This kind of holistic prosperity that is expressed in 3 John 2, which involves the prosperity of the spirit, soul, and body, should be preached by preachers in the African context.

Implications for Homiletical Ethos:

It is no longer strange on social media, television, newspapers, magazines, and other media-related outlets to find headlines describing the unethical, and sometimes outright immoral behaviour of clergymen. This kind of news, sometimes pebbled by ignorant and non-religious people, goes a long way to portray the clergy in a very bad light. Much can be said of financial misappropriation, sexual immorality, and sometimes to the shock of many, the use of diabolic powers to perform signs and wonders. Kehinde Olusanya argues that the effect of these kinds of practices and their rumours on the preacher's persuasion of the congregation can be devastating. Homiletic ethos

in the context of this paper is the ethos relating exclusively to preaching (2018:131). It is the power of honesty of the preacher as perceived by the congregation. Homiletic ethos relates to how well the preacher convinces the audience that he or she is qualified to represent God in the preaching of the word. This concept addresses the personal life and personal ethics of preachers, which forms a basis for the preacher to obtain the right to speak to others on God's behalf. According to Paige Patterson quoting Paul S. Wilson, ethos about homiletics has to do with the manner listeners perceive the character of the preacher in the course of the sermon delivery. Aristotelian artistic means of persuasion take three forms, which are popularly known as ethos, pathos, and logos (Patterson 2010:29). Ethos is referred to as the character, appeal of the speaker, or in more practical terms, it relates to the audience's question to wonder who's talking (Leith 2011:47). Ethos in Greek is used to mean "character". The Greeks use the word to designate the guiding principles or standards that are characteristic of particular communities, nations, or specific ideologies. The concept is also used to refer to the power of music to influence the emotions, behaviours, and morals of hearers (Weiss and Taruskin 2008:1). Similarly, Nan Johnson refers to ethos as persuasion through the character of the speaker (1984).

John Broadus, quoting Phillips Brooks, suggests that preaching is "the communication of truth by man to man. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality..." (1944). The person of the preacher going by the above definition definitely affects the potency of the message. Preachers must therefore consider their lives and their doctrine closely. A.P. Gibbs concludes that the preacher is to do more than preach the doctrine of the Word of God. The preacher must also wear that doctrine on him/her so the world can see the doctrine exemplified (2013:47). According to Kehinde Olusanya (2018), the life of the African preacher should exemplify all that he/she preaches; this is because in the African context the effectiveness of the message is determined to a large extent by the life of the messenger.

The African preacher can overcome the shadow of doubt cast on the clergy in Africa by living a life beyond reproach, a life that preaches the message again and again. African preachers cannot afford to live contrary to what their sermons teach, as this will continue to affect the image of the clergy in Africa. Gibbs alluded to this when he stated that "more damage has been brought to

the cause of Christ through the inconsistent lives of those who profess his Name and preach his Word than anything else” (2013:47). The African preacher must rise above materialism, sexual impurities, ungodly competition in ministry, ecclesiastical corruption, and other vices that work against the promotion of the preaching ministry in Africa.

Conclusion

In the context of this work, poverty is not only evident in Africa, it is widespread. Several definitions are proposed by different authors for the concept. The writer discoursed the concept of poverty from the perspective of the Bible, arguing that the perspective of scripture is that poverty exists and the rich should care for the poor. The writer also argued that while both the Old and The New Testaments encourage a benevolent attitude from the rich to the poor, the poor should not be laid back and lazy in terms of work and personal efforts. The paper examined the ethical responsibilities of the church, concluding that the responsibilities of the church are sectioned into theological, educational, and pastoral responsibilities. The writer argues that these responsibilities have homiletical implications. The need for the church to have more prophetic preaching, the need for Biblical preaching, and the need for the church’s preachers to have lives that align with their messages are the implications deduced by this writer. There is a connection between the pulpit and the growing rate of poverty in Africa. The church should do more in the war against poverty on the African continent.

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