

Statement for Consultation of Religious Leaders on Poverty

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The Issue of poverty is as old as humanity itself. When Jesus observed that ‘the poor are always with you’ he was perhaps regarding to the referring and perpetual nature of global poverty. Indeed the Old Testament in its three divisions makes reference to the ‘poor’.

One of the major achievements of our age is that we now use the term ‘poverty’ not merely as a social adjective, but as a statically reality we have been able to construct measurable definition of poverty in terms of living under \$ 1 per day, or having so many square feet of living space per person, or so many calories of nutrition per person, or the ratio of educational, medical, recreational and sanitation facilities to the number of persons in a population. The religious sector can contribute to the fight against Global poverty in a number of ways.

First it can add a moral touch to the current statistical definition of poverty. Poverty is not merely about lack of money’s it is also about being happy. (man shall not live by bread alone)

Second the religious sector can redefine the causes of poverty. Is poverty God-ordained (fate theory) or man-made? Does it have a direct correlation with the symptoms of wealth distribution and wealth creation? In other words are there poor people in this world because there are rich people?

Third the religious sector can explore a divine basis for the fight against global poverty. Why should we fight against poverty anyway? Is it because it is a fashionable thing on the donor/ NGO world? Or is it because God expects us to fight against poverty?

Finally the religious sector can critically apprise its own role. How far and to what extent has the Church compromised the Divine commission and joined hands with such forces as perpetuate global poverty?

What about the so called prosperity gospel movement of our times where tele- evangelists continue to get rich from the tithes of millions of hapless and helpless followers.

Indeed if the religious sector looks seriously at the above-mentioned issues, it can mark a watershed in the contemporary fight against global poverty.