



**Responsibility to the poor:  
Government or Church? Part II**

By Kevin Kookogey, Guest Columnist

First, the aim to eliminate poverty, especially under sanction of law, results in all sorts of injustice, including taking from one group of people in order to give to another, without the consent of either. That is not charity. It is compulsion, and God admonishes against it. (2 Corin 9:6-8)

Moreover, like all social programs, the lofty goal of eradicating poverty breeds corruption among those who administer the agenda. Emotions are manipulated to loosen the purse strings of well-meaning citizens to contribute to a cause that no human could ignore. Yet very little of the money raised or taxed to address poverty in America or via foreign aid ever gets to those most in need.

In the case of foreign aid, dictators intercept the funds. In our own country, much of the money is skimmed off the top for the manipulators themselves.

Ending poverty, after all, is big business! Like the race business, those who claim to desire its end are, in fact, engaged in the effort to perpetuate it by stroking the heartstrings of the indiscriminating.

There is also the matter of creating dependency. Last year an independent film was released to critical acclaim, and while I do not vouch for the entire film or its creators, its central theme was true and compelling: that our providing of clean water, shoes, and money to foreign countries has created such reliance upon the continuation of

these gifts that the recipient nations are losing the ability and the initiative to provide for themselves.

Are we not chasing things God may never have intended we pursue?

But all of these are secondary concerns. The root of the problem is that compulsory aims to eliminate poverty, or grand emotional appeals by civic and non-profit organizations (including the Church and its affiliates) to produce a society without the poor presuppose that we can be what God called us to be without giving to those in need or without being in the company of the poor.

Go back to the verses in Part I: (Romans 13, Mark 14: 3-7, Proverbs 14:31, Deuteronomy 15:10, Prov. 22:9, Luke 14:13-14, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Ephesians 4:28, 1 John 3:17, Jer. 22:16, Luke 6:33, Proverbs 29:7, Leviticus 19:15, Isaiah 10:1-3, Psalms 140:12, Isaiah 25:4)

Is there anything in them that would suggest God's design is to eliminate poverty? Remember, Jesus said in Mark 14:7, *"The poor you will always have with you."*

Scripture directs our attention to the poor: to needy people whom we are commanded to love. Poverty, on the other hand, is just a useful term describing an object to be conquered.

I digress here for a minute to mention that the Left seems determined to actually eliminate the poor through the vehicle of abortion. The suggestion that taxpayers fund abortions for all of those on Medicaid, an unconscionable and thinly veiled policy, is aimed literally at exterminating the less fortunate. Does this sound like justice for the poor?

In any event, did we ever pause to consider that maybe God's design for us includes giving to the poor? There is no evidence to suggest that our Biblical duty to care for the poor is aimed at eliminating the condition of those to whom we give, at least not universally.

On the contrary, taking into consideration the whole counsel of God in the

above passages, there is support for the view that God is more concerned with the development of our own character than in meeting the needs of the less fortunate.

This is not to suggest that God does not provide for the needy through the acts of other believers. Indeed He does! The Church, in fact, is God's chosen means and manner of securing justice and providing for the poor. The government, however, has no role whatsoever with respect to the poor, notwithstanding the history of kings and authorities playing God by enslaving generations of dependents.

But providing needs and justice for the poor because God commands us to do so is not the same as eliminating poverty, and we must resist equating the two.

Elimination of poverty as a societal objective is powerful in its deception, obviously. But our duty as Christians is to make distinctions between what is true and what is false, always remembering that the fundamental characteristic of evil is its subtlety.

Recall from Genesis 3:1 how God describes the serpent as the most subtle, or shrewd, or cunning (depending on your translation) of all of God's creatures. Remember also how our Lord make a clear distinction between what was to be rendered unto Caesar (government) and what must be reserved to God (duties of the Church) in Mark 12:17.

The capacity of the Church to maintain its moral authority in the culture is directly proportional to its ability to make distinctions between what the Bible really commands versus what the government and culture advance, no matter how superficially appealing or emotionally compelling.

While we may not understand or fully appreciate the purpose of God's plans or His design, we should not presume to be better off as the people of God, or in society as a whole, by eliminating or exterminating those things that make us uncomfortable. Are not euthanasia and abortion the unconscionable tools to dispense with things that impede our so-called

progress or ideas of desirability?

Why are we so determined to abolish that which we do not like, or to terminate the things we do not understand?

When the Church collaborates with the government to eliminate poverty (setting aside for the moment, the impossibility of that task), or when the Church aligns itself with organizations that seek to end poverty or hunger, or even when the Church, in its own mission, adopts the language of the world by replacing God's command that we care for the poor with the world's false (albeit subtle) claim that poverty must or even can be eliminated, the Church in each instance surrenders its authority to speak Truth into culture and ceases to preserve true knowledge of God.

Consequently, the Church denies God, becoming a tool of the State rather than a check against it. And we have already seen what happens in societies where the Church is neutralized.

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