

CSBQ Discussion paper

Approved for website, May 2002

(see also [CSBQ Statement on Poverty](#))

POVERTY: A BLIGHT OF MANY, THE PLIGHT OF ALL

Poverty is the daily reality of two-thirds of the people in our world. Two-thirds of all human beings have insufficient food, shelter, clothing, and education to meet their basic human needs. Disease, hunger, exploitation, inequality, and early death is the guaranteed lot of over half of our world neighbours.

Why does such endemic poverty happen? The prime causes are not natural disasters such as famine and flood, or poor people's ignorance or laziness, or lack of world resources. Our world has ample resources for the basic necessities for **all** people, if these resources are distributed wisely. **The main cause of poverty is human greed.** The leaders of many poor countries spend their national funds on waging war and ignore the needs of their people. Rich and powerful individuals, companies, and countries use their privileged positions to increase their productivity and wealth at the expense of the poorer people and poorer nations. Much of our affluence in a relatively rich country like Australia can be seen as occurring at the expense of our poor neighbours.

In such a worldwide and longstanding system of injustice, how can we as Christians help to create any significant positive change? Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is our impetus for participating in the struggle against all forms of poverty. His Holy Spirit works to reveal more about ourselves than we wish to know. In the Spirit's mirror we see that we often blame the poor for their poverty. We are also shown that we are part of the systemic problem of poverty, as we continually distance ourselves from our neighbour's plight and rush daily to support our own 'I've-never-got-enough' lifestyles.

The risen Lord Jesus still works today, to free people who are enslaved by the hopelessness and despair of poverty, as he works to free us from our false gods of affluence and greed. Christ himself empowers us to expose and struggle against our own selfish desires and against evil systems which entrap and impoverish others.

As Spirit-led people, we will generously support charity programs which provide needed (though temporary) relief. We will also do what we can to understand what is happening in the world, to expose any exploitative policies and programs, and to reform any social system which perpetuates poverty.

Our Lord calls us to stand together with the poor of the world in our common battle against poverty. This struggle will always be blessed as we continually meet our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in the people whom we seek to serve.

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