

"REMEMBER THE POOR"

Paul said in Galatians 2:10, "*only they* (James, Cephas and John - verse 9 --dt) *would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*" Just as Paul was forward to remember the poor, so we as Christians today must be forward to remember the poor. Brother S. H. Hall, in volume III of Scripture Studies, page 50, makes this observation: "Much of the service done through charitable institutions and drives for the poor is a pretense. Many who so give would shun the poor on the streets, give them a back seat in our churches, and are strangers to one thought of love, pity, and compassion for the poor." I think brother S. H. Hall wrote a vital truth. Many today who attend "institutional" churches of Christ cry long and loud about helping the poor, and say that "those antis won't help anybody", when in reality all their gloating is over a few dollars that has been sent to some charitable institution. Sometimes a big congregation of three or four hundred members will send \$50 a month to a charitable institution and then gloat about how they are helping the poor, when actually they are not even giving the price of a cup of coffee a week to help the poor! After it is broken down to what each individual is really doing, it is just like brother Hall said, -- "Much of the service done through charitable institutions. . . is a pretense."

Charles A. Shelton said in a guest editorial in Boles Home News, July 25, 1965: "That the church of 1964 is noted for her good deeds is more fiction than real." Charles Shelton had taken a random sampling of one hundred churches reporting in "Churches of Today" and found they were giving "the grand average of \$3.66 per year per member." "The average church member contributes seven cents per week to benevolent work of all kinds or less than the cost of a cup of coffee." Brother Shelton is a "liberal", not a "conservative", and these one hundred churches sampled were liberal churches.

Dear "liberal" brother or sister, before you charge someone who is against doing benevolence through charitable institutions with being against helping the poor, ask yourself the question, "Is my benevolence more pretense and fiction than the real thing?"

Brethren, let us all really help the poor and not shut up our "bowels of compassion" to them (I John 3:17). Let us not be ashamed of a poor brother or sister when they come into our assemblies and show respect of persons (James 2: 1- 5). I personally find it somewhat amusing (if it were not so serious) when I am charged with being "anti" helping the poor. By most standards which we are measured in this country I have always been on the poor side myself. As a boy, some of my "Sunday best" on some occasions were "hand-me-downs" (and sometimes they had to be altered a little to fit), and I have never been a stranger to beans, potatoes and cornbread. Through the years some of the best friends I have had have been poor. In any community where we have lived during the twenty-two years I have preached the gospel, I have been forward to remember the poor. My good wife has canned much more than we have needed year after year because we knew in the hard part of the winter the poor would need food. I have a lot of faults and short-comings, but one thing I know in my own heart is that I am not ashamed of the poor, nor am I without feeling for their needs. And, as I have ability and opportunity I intend to continue to meet the needs of the poor. So, dear reader, the question of who has compassion for the poor and orphans is not the issue that divides churches of Christ in this community as some would have you believe!

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