

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REPLICATION OF JESUS'  
SOCIAL MINISTRY IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST  
CONVENTION**

By

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## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this thesis was carried out under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies by KRISTILERE, ISRAEL OLUDARE in the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

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## DEDICATION

In total acknowledgement of God's faithfulness and guidance throughout the research period,  
this thesis is hereby dedicated to Him.

And to my beloved wife, Mary Oluwatoyin, who constantly stands by me through the thick  
and thin of life.

And to my wonderful children, Heritage, Jedidiah and Lois.

And to all who are undergoing poverty of any kind believing that they will soon find the way  
to the land of comfort.

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**KRISTILERE, Israel Oludare**  
**June 2014**

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## ABSTRACT

Deep concern for the poor in the society was an integral part of Jesus' earthly ministry especially in the Gospel of Luke. This makes the social ministry an important part of a typical church, as manifested in the programmes of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC). Many scholars have examined the theological basis of Jesus' care and concern for the poor, but adequate attention has not been given to the connection between Jesus' approaches and those of the NBC Social Ministry, devoted to alleviating poverty, following the example of Jesus. This study, therefore, evaluated the activities of Jesus among the poor with those of the Social Ministry Department of NBC (SMDNBC) with a view to establishing the biblical basis and the effectiveness of the activities of the Department.

The study employed a historical-critical design. It adopted Gerald West's "Academy of the poor" framework. A total of 510 copies of a questionnaire were administered to members across 50 Baptist churches in Lagos (30), Ibadan (10) and Ogbomoso (10) selected on purposive and snowball bases. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected five officials of the NBC at its headquarters in Ibadan, 30 pastors, 24 church officers and 33 church members. Church records were also consulted. Data were subjected to exegetical analysis, with reference to selected Lukan passages, and percentages.

Jesus adopted five approaches in caring for the poor: identification, solidarity, education, advocacy and empowerment. Through identification, he properly recognised the authentic poor and differentiated them from other social classes (Luke 4:18,7:20); and through solidarity, he united with them in genuine friendship (Luke 2:1-7, 2:8-20, 9:58). Through education, he instructed them on their rights, status and how they could find peace (Luke 12:33,18:18-25); and through advocacy, he spoke against the oppression of the poor. (Luke 16:19-31, 21:1-4,3:1-14) Through empowerment, he engaged in spiritual, mental and economic uplift of the poor (Luke 16:19-31,6:20, 19:1-10). Contrariwise, only two of the approaches were relatively adopted by the SMDNBC: education in which it provided both formal and informal education though at a relatively high fee, and empowerment in which it provided means of earning a living for widows and prisoners. Little or no attempt was made to identify, establish solidarity and achieve advocacy as Jesus did. The implication of this deficiency was evident in the responses of the respondents in which 50.4% of the respondents were not aware of the SMDNBC, while 70.8% opined that lack of proper care for the poor had resulted in 30.0% loss of membership. Only 5.4% of the respondents had received assistance from SMDNBC.

The Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention adopted only two out of the five approaches used by Jesus Christ in reaching the poor which revealed an inconsistency with the biblical standard. This made the ministry less effective and led to membership shrink. It is, therefore, recommended that the NBC needs to completely adopt the five approaches of Jesus in Luke in order to enhance the effectiveness of its social ministry.

**Key words:** Poverty alleviation, Academy of the poor, Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, Jesus' social ministry, Luke's gospel.

**Word count:** 495

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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

One of the greatest problems facing humanity is poverty. Undoubtedly, more than one third of the world's population is poor.<sup>1</sup> Billions of people are experiencing starvation, hunger and lack of basic necessities of life. Many sleep daily without a meal. Yet our world is said to be rich with resources that can turn poverty to prosperity, and lack to surplus. Poverty is found among all races and in all countries of the world. Many young Africans who wrongly thought that poverty is limited to Africa were astounded when they found evidence of poverty in Europe and America. While some feel that poverty is relative, many admit that it is a great cankerworm which has dangerously affected humanity. It must be checked on time in order for it not to wipe out a large part of humanity. According to Ruby K. Payne, poverty takes diverse forms in the world and it could be financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical or lack of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Poverty is hunger and lack of healthcare services. Poverty which can result from joblessness renders man powerless and is indeed a form of bondage.<sup>3</sup>

Various statistical data point to the fact that poverty is global. Each year, more than eight million people die in the world as a result of poverty.<sup>4</sup> Over one billion people live in extreme poverty, that is they live on less than one hundred and sixty naira (N160:00) daily. About eight hundred million people lack adequate food and over one hundred million children of primary school age cannot afford to go to school.<sup>5</sup> But poverty is more than a game of numbers. It is indeed about people going through unimaginable circumstances that are preventing them from living a meaningful and fulfilled life. In order to control the menace of poverty, the United Nations in 1948 passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that everyone in the world should have the right to education, health, work and

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<sup>1</sup> "Global Poverty." Internet File: [netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty](http://netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty). Retrieved on November 20, 2011.

<sup>2</sup>Ruby K. Payne, 2005. "A Framework For Understanding Poverty." Internet File: [www.homepages.stmartin.edu/students/sdilg/a-framework-for-understanding-po.htm](http://www.homepages.stmartin.edu/students/sdilg/a-framework-for-understanding-po.htm). Retrieved on July 25 2009.

<sup>3</sup>"Understanding Poverty" Internet File: [www.web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/O](http://www.web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/O) Retrieved on November 20, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> "Global Poverty." Internet File: [netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty](http://netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty).

<sup>5</sup>"Global Poverty." Internet File: [netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty](http://netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty).

well being.<sup>6</sup> But millions of declarations and articles cannot curb poverty; something drastic must be done to bring the monster under control.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Poverty is being fought from all angles and at all levels. Poverty eradication has become a popular slogan, yet poverty increases daily. According to World Bank's statistics, the success of the war against poverty in the last few years is very minimal in the world. The table below explains it all.

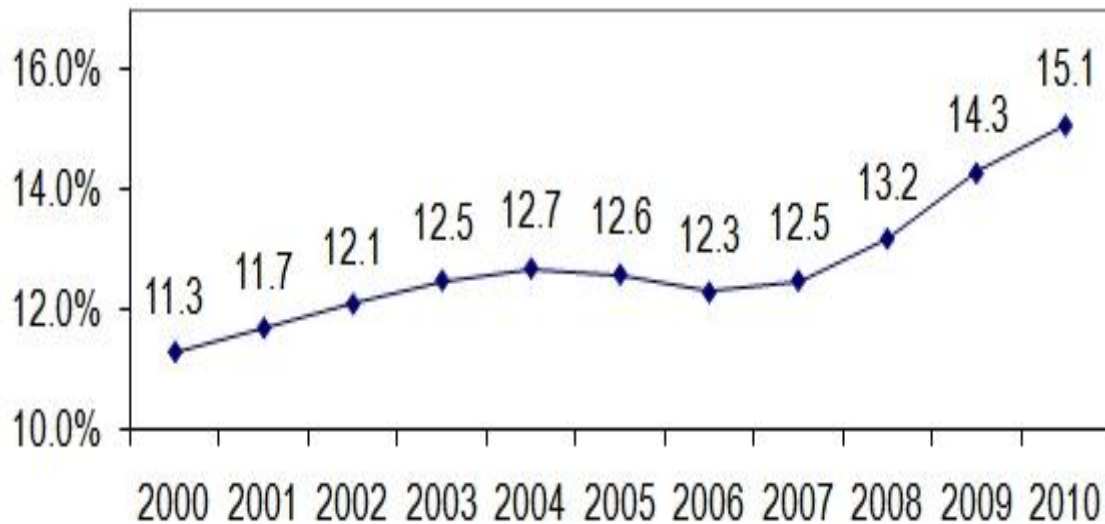
Region	1990	2002	2004
East Asia and Pacific	15.40%	12.33%	9.07%
Europe and Central Asia	3.60%	1.28%	0.95%
Latin America and the Caribbean	9.62%	9.08%	8.64%
Middle East and North Africa	2.08%	1.69%	1.47%
South Asia	35.04%	33.44%	30.84%
Sub-Saharan Africa	46.07%	42.63%	41.09%

The data is based on the number of people who are earning or living on less than one dollar per day.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the statistics currently released by the Census Bureau reveal that poverty is still on the increase. The table below shows that between year 2000 and 2010, poverty level worldwide increased from 11.3% to 15.1%.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "Global Poverty." Internet File: [netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty](http://netaid.org/global-poverty/global-poverty).

<sup>7</sup> "World Bank, 2007, Povcalnet Poverty Data". World Bank.  
<http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/jsp/index.jsp>. Retrieved on December 16, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> "Information on Poverty and Income Statistics: A Summary of 2011 Current Population Survey Data"  
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11/ib.shtml>. Retrieved on 6th March 2013.



The Nigerian experience is even worse, going by the statistics released by the Statistician General of the Federation, Dr Yemi Kale, on February 13, 2012. According to him, the Nigerian poverty profile report shows that the percentage of non poor Nigerians which was 72.8% in 1980 has reduced to 31% in 2010. On the other hand, the percentage of poor Nigerians which was 27.2% in 1980 has increased to 69% in 2010.<sup>9</sup> While these figures could be contested, one fact that is evident here is that poverty is on the increase in spite of the much acclaimed war against it in the country. Though huge funds are being spent on the war against poverty, the poor quality of life is not getting better. Instead of the funds being spent on the poor, the managers of the funds are becoming richer. Today, the rich in most cases are becoming richer while the poor are becoming poorer. It seems one of the quick ways of making money is to set up an NGO and claim to be fighting poverty. Certainly, something different must be done apart from pumping money into the war against poverty.

<sup>9</sup> Yemi Kale, 2012. "The Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010 Report." National Bureau of Statistics Press Briefing at NBS Headquarters, Central Business District, Abuja on February 13.

While many international bodies, governmental and non-governmental agencies are at the forefront of the war against poverty, the church seems to be lagging behind in this important war. The United Nations' resolution on Economic and Social Order stated in 1996 that "the goal of eradicating poverty in the world is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative."<sup>10</sup> From this declaration, the war against poverty is considered to be ethically, socially, politically and economically imperative and not religious. Probably, that is why many religious bodies are less concerned about the war against it. While many religious bodies are indifferent towards the problem of poverty, the efforts of some of them are not yielding much result.

From preliminary studies, it appears that the Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (SMDNBC) has not done much in the area of reducing poverty in the community. Although some individuals and churches are making efforts at reducing poverty where they are located, their efforts do not have much impact on the masses. Some scholars also have contributed to the on-going debate on how poverty can be reduced in the society.<sup>11</sup> However, there is still much to be done, especially by the Social Ministry Department. This study, it is hoped, will contribute to finding solutions to the apathy which is noted from the activities of the Department towards reducing poverty in the society by using Jesus' approach in some selected portions of Lukan Gospel. To guide this research, the following questions are raised. How did Jesus alleviate the suffering of the poor in Luke's Gospel and how can the Social Ministry Department using Jesus' model reduce poverty in the community? What strategy did Jesus use to meet the needs of the poor in Luke's Gospel? To what extent can the Social Ministry Department go in reducing poverty in the community? To what extent should the Department participate or contribute to alleviating poverty in the society? The above constitutes the problem which the thesis has made bold efforts to investigate and proffer solution.

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<sup>10</sup> Annan Koffi, 1990. "Economic and Social Council Resolution 1990". Internet File: [www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huri.doca.nsf/Test\\_Frame](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huri.doca.nsf/Test_Frame). Eradication of poverty. Retrieved on December 16, 2012

<sup>11</sup> Samuel O Abogunrin "Jesus' Sevenfold Programmatic Declaration at Nazareth: An Exegesis of Luke 4:15-30 from an African Perspective" *Black Theology: An International Journal*, Vol. 1 No 2 May 2003. Berger..., Upong, West, Mosala, C.U Manus, "New Testament Perspective on Poverty Eradication in the Nigerian Context; Reflection on Lk 4: 17b-19" in *OJOT Vol XIV (2) 2009: 38-60, Dada....,Atere....*)

### **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to examine the activities of Jesus among the poor through a re-reading of Lukan narratives from African perspective and thereby provide an ecclesio-theological solution to the problem of poverty in Nigeria. It will also examine the activities of the Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention as they replicate that of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. The research examines the importance of and the specific roles of religious bodies, especially the Christian church, in the war against poverty in Nigeria, considering Jesus' deep concern for and identification with the poor. Lastly, it examines the benefits of following Jesus' approach in terms of the growth and wellbeing of the Christian church.

### **1.4 Scope of the Research**

The problem of the poor and poverty is addressed in almost all the books of the Bible. The four Gospels and the book of Acts, extensively discuss the issue of the poor. But among the four Gospels, Luke deals with the poor and the issue of poverty more than any of them. This is why the Gospel is selected for this study, dwelling only on some selected passages which reveal Jesus' teachings and concern for the poor. The selected passages include direct sayings, teachings and parables of Jesus, his identification and interaction with the poor and the rich. The Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is also selected for her activities which to some extent is devoted to alleviating poverty following the examples of Jesus. The research also recognizes the existence of other organizations working among the poor like the government, religious and social groups, but for an in-depth research, the Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention has been selected for study.

## 1.5 Methodology

The method adopted for this study is eclectic in nature. It is a method that combines historical-critical method in an intercultural hermeneutics.<sup>12</sup> Relevant literature were consulted in the libraries of The University of Ibadan, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso and on the internet. In making some selected periscopes in Luke relevant to the context, the researcher administered six hundred (600) copies of questionnaire on some selected Baptist churches in Lagos, Ibadan and Ogbomoso. Only 510 copies were returned. Interviews were conducted at the head office of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in Ibadan and at some selected Baptist Churches. Among those who were interviewed are Rev. Dr. Supo Ayokunle- The President, Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), Mr Marcus Audu (NBC Vice President, Personnel/Administration), Rev. Dr (Mrs) Titi Eniola Director, Social Ministry Department), Rev. Mrs Sarah Oladimeji, Rev. James Falade, Mrs Bosede Lawani,

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<sup>12</sup> The intercultural and or inculturation hermeneutics, is a dynamic on-going process by which people consciously and critically appropriate the Bible and its message from within the perspectives and with the resources of their cultures (Ukpong 2005:35). Ukpong saw inculturation as a process of appropriation, which in the case of Africa is to make specifically African contribute to Biblical interpretation and actualize the creative power of the Bible in African society. Its focus is on Africa's anthropological empowerment and cultural identity (35). It is a methodology that employs the resources of African social or religio-cultural contexts, that is, the African view of reality and African life experiences, to examine the text of a given passage of the Bible and to derive meaning suitable to her/his context (Manus 663). This approach shares with the historical-critical method the dictum that the Bible is a culture's literary property that needs to be understood in its concrete historical and social cultural contexts (Morgan and Barton 1988:174). Contextualization on the other hand means making the bible narratives or messages relevant to the social context of the people in all cultures without changing its core value or essence. Therefore, to avoid error of syncretism and making the Bible to support the cultural practices of the people, there is the need for proper exegesis and unbiased contextualization, whereby the Bible is made to speak to the culture of the people and not the other way round. Since this research is carried out in an African context, it is therefore, necessary to place the bible above the African culture in order to avoid any iota of eisegesis, syncretism or idolatry. Syncretism occurs when Christian leaders accommodate, either consciously or unconsciously, to the prevailing plausibility structures of worldviews of their culture. Syncretism, then, is the conscious or unconscious reshaping of Christian plausibility structures, beliefs and practices through cultural accommodation so that they reflect those of the dominant culture or, stated in other terms, syncretism is the blending of Christian beliefs and practices with those of the dominant culture so that Christianity loses its distinctiveness and speaks with a voice reflective of its culture (Van Rheenen 1997, 173). Van Rheenen noted that "frequently syncretism is birthed out of a desire to make the gospel relevant. The Christian community attempts to make its message and life attractive and appealing to those outside the fellowship. Over the years these accommodations become a routine, integrated into the narrative of the Christian community and inseparable from its life. When major worldview changes occur within the culture, the church struggles to separate the eternal from the temporal. The church, swept along by the ebb and flow of cultural currents over a long period of time, loses her moorings. Thus syncretism occurs when Christianity opts into the major cultural assumptions of a society (173).

Dn. AVM (Rtd.) George Ayo Osho, Rev. Mrs Deborah Gbodimowo and other Church leaders. Church records were also consulted. The data collected were analyzed and interpreted.

The data analysis was done using simple percentage applying this formula:

$$\frac{N}{TN} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

While N stands for respondents, TN represents the total number of respondents per statement. The results were then presented on charts, graphs and frequency tables with cross tabulation.

The theoretical framework for this research is drawn from Gerald West's dialogical discourse which he called "The Academy of the Poor." In his application of sociological method to the study of the Bible, West demonstrated what should be the role of biblical scholars in using hermeneutics to solve the social problems of their communities. To him, the scholar is a subject and thus an active interpreter of the reality which he or she experiences.<sup>13</sup> Using a threefold combination of liberation hermeneutics, inculturation and postmodernism, West called on the scholars to do a re-reading of the biblical texts with the mindset of the ordinary reader within the contextualized experiences of both the scholar and the ordinary reader.<sup>14</sup> It is a call to become socially engaged in the reading of biblical texts.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

While many scholars have drawn from Luke's Gospel the *sitz im leben* of the poor, to prove that the primary motive of Luke is to express Jesus' concern for the poor; this work is significant in the sense that it focuses on drawing out a comprehensive, biblical and ecclesiastical approach to the problem of the poor and poverty in the Nigerian society. It is a sociological approach to biblical interpretation, synthesizing and harmonizing biblical teachings to draw out a pragmatic approach to the problem of poverty. The research has revealed the similarities and the disparities between the approaches of Jesus in Luke and that

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<sup>13</sup> Gerald West, 1999. *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1-15.

<sup>14</sup> In his other works, namely *Reading Other-wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities*(2007) and *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (1995), West had called on biblical scholars to help the ordinary readers of the Bible to articulate their thoughts and equip them with intellectual tools and provide a safe landing in responding to social problems in the communities. Though this is an aspect of liberation theology, West prefer to call this contextualized hermeneutics unlike Justin Ukpogon who called it inculturation hermeneutics.



of the Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. While Jesus adopted five approaches in caring for the poor: identification, solidarity, education, advocacy and empowerment, the Social Ministry Department relatively adopted only two namely education and empowerment.

While the significance of this work is primarily for the Christian church, at the secondary level the conclusions of this research are also significant for both governmental and non-governmental agencies that are engaged in the war against poverty. This research significantly provokes a shift in the church's understanding of poverty, the treatment of the poor, opening the eyes of the church to her actions and inactions that have assisted the surge of poverty in a land of plenty. The five-fold strategic approach of Jesus to the poor in Luke's Gospel is a call for paradigm shift in ecclesiastical approach and re-ordering of action plan in the war against poverty. The research findings will help to strengthen the effectiveness of the activities of the Social Ministry Department and the growth of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

## 1.7 Conclusion

While much is expected from the church as touching her care for the poor, biblical scholars must spearhead the efforts that will ensure that the role of the church is in line with the teachings and actions of Jesus Christ. Simeon Kehinde says, "as more efforts are being expected from the church, theological education which is a means of equipping church leadership needs to be adequately equipped to face the challenge of poverty."<sup>15</sup> The church must maintain a balance between her kerygmatic and paraenetic roles in the war against poverty. This can only be realized if the teachings of the Scripture are followed.<sup>16</sup> Definitely, orthodoxy and orthopraxis must have a meeting place in biblical hermeneutics.

Jesus was not indifferent to the economic problems of His time. He drew many of his followers from the lower class, whose poverty actually contributed to their revolutionary hopes.<sup>17</sup> The sympathy Jesus had for the poor is clearly seen in his teachings especially in the

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<sup>15</sup> Simeon Kehinde, 2009. "Striking A Balance Between Kerygma and Paraenesis in the Efforts Toward Poverty Eradication in Africa." Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Seminary, Ogbomoso: March 26-27: 1

<sup>16</sup> Simeon Kehinde, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Shailer Matthews, 1971: *Jesus on Social Institutions*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 88.

Gospel of Luke. Jesus called upon His followers to share their wealth with the poor. To Jesus, charity was not only to be extended; it must be done with joy. Jesus himself did not only help the poor, He also received material support from rich and devoted women. His real purpose was to set forth the meaning of goodwill.<sup>18</sup> Jesus embraced, identified with, taught and helped the poor. The church today must follow his example.

The church in Africa must return to her peculiar ministry at her inception when she ministered to the spiritual and material needs of the people. As Yusufu Turaki puts it,

Humanitarian ministries included the planting of mission stations and churches; the establishment of educational programmes and institutions; medical work, services and institutions; literature work programmes and institutions and other forms of spiritual, moral and social development of peoples and societies.<sup>19</sup>

But it is painful today that many churches have left this important role in the society. Those who established schools make it so costly that only the rich can send their children there. The church clinic is more costly than public hospitals. The church as a matter of urgency must return to her Christ given assignment to be not only the friend of the poor, but also the help and the voice of the helpless. The church indeed has a ministry to meet the spiritual, physical and social needs of the poor and the hopeless.<sup>20</sup>

It is in the light of this that this researcher offers to present to the church the right and effective way to fight poverty, helping the poor as Jesus did. A good understanding of Jesus concern for the poor in Luke's gospel, no doubt, will help and make stronger the efforts of the Christian church towards reducing poverty and also reducing the number of the poor in the society since the poor cannot be eradicated according to the Scripture. (Deut. 15:11, Matt. 26:11, Mark 14:7, John 12:8).

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<sup>18</sup> Shailer Matthews, 1971: *Jesus on Social Institutions*, 89-9.

<sup>19</sup> Yusufu Turaki, 2000 "Evangelical Missiology from Africa: Strengths and Weakness" in *Global Missiology for the 1<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed by William D. Taylor. Grand Rapids: Baker Academy, 273.

<sup>20</sup> Joshua Bagudu Boyi, 2009. "The Church and Effective Ministry To The Poor in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Africa". Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho: March 26-27: 11.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

A serious challenge facing the African continent is its inability to rescue individuals and communities from the grip of poverty.<sup>1</sup> For instance, available statistics indicate that our country, Nigeria (the most populous African nation), though blessed with many natural resources, is among the 25 poorest countries in the world. Some of the indices include low life expectancy, inadequate infrastructure and low standard of living. The appropriate question is: why should a nation rated among the richest in natural resources be poor? Some attribute this to various reasons such as bad governance, corruption, laziness, or over population.<sup>2</sup> But in the midst of poverty, there are a few people in the country who are rich. Many of these very rich people have their names listed in Forbes List of Millionaires. Does this mean that the resources meant for about 170 million Nigerians are shared among less than 100,000 people? What then should be the relationship between the super rich of the country and the super poor? What can the government of the nation do to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor? What should be the understanding of the Christian church about the problem of poverty and the treatment of both the majority poor and also the minority rich in the society? The Gospel according to Luke certainly has answers to some of these questions.

The Gospel of Luke is an open letter to the rich. Many writers have shown that the book is relevant in solving the problem of the poor. As Dorcas Akintunde puts it, “we have to look into the Bible and reflect on the teachings of Jesus regarding the poor. Our major preoccupation should be tailored towards caring for them and assisting to pull them out of the

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<sup>1</sup> Philomena Mwaura, 2005. “A Spirituality of Resistance and Hope: African Instituted Churches’ Response to Poverty.” *Orita*, Vol.30, December, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Martina I. Atere, 2006. “The Rich Man and Lazarus in the Context of Some Selected Cities in Nigeria.” *Orita*, vol. 38, June & December, 71-72.

shackles in which poverty has placed them.”<sup>3</sup> It is in this respect that some of this literature will be considered.

## 2.2 The Poor and Poverty in the Old Testament.

The need to minister to the poor in the society is a major concern in both the Old and the New Testaments. Right from the Old Testament, God put in place measures to combat poverty in the society.<sup>4</sup> Nicholls believes, " the institutionalizing of Israel in Monarchy, priesthood and prophethood was designed by God for the salvation of the people and the elimination of poverty."<sup>5</sup> The exodus event is generally considered by many scholars as God's way of liberating the Jews from their suffering in Egypt and thereby leading them to the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ( Exo. 3:8,17, Lev. 20:24 ) Among the Old Testament Jews, poverty is largely viewed in terms of material things thereby focusing primarily at the depravity and the alienation of the poor.<sup>6</sup>

According to Martina Atere, the Old Testament perspective of the poor and poverty to a large extent forms the background of the New Testament understanding of the Poor.<sup>7</sup> Oluwafemi Adeyemi states that, " the reason is obvious, Christian teaching on any subject, and poverty is no exclusion, needs Old Testament contribution. The teachings of the Old Testament are unconditional prerequisite for formulating New Testament Theology and any kind of Christian theology."<sup>8</sup> Poverty in the Old Testament is generally described with the Hebrew word **ṾṚ**; and its variants such as **vrey**" ( Pro. 6:11,30:8), **vyrI** ( Pro. 28:19,31:7) and **vr;y** ( Pro. 20:13,23:21) All these words describe a situation of economic insufficiency, a condition of lack and not having enough resources. Simeon Kehinde opines that the Old

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<sup>3</sup>Dorcas Akintunde, 2009. "The Impact of Poverty on Family Life in Africa." Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso: March 26-27: 13.

<sup>4</sup>Joshua B. Boyi, 2009. " The Church and Effective Ministry to the Poor in the 21st Century, Africa." Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso: March 26-27: 3.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Nicholls, 1994. "Priorities in our Common Task: Ministry to and with the Poor." *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol 18, No 2, April:104.

<sup>6</sup>Joshua B. Boyi, 2009. " The Church and Effective Ministry to the Poor in the 21st Century, Africa."

<sup>7</sup> Martina Oguntoyinbo-Atere, 2005. " The Redeemed Christian Church of God's programme for the Poor in Lagos in the Context of Lucan Teaching." PhD Thesis Submitted at Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, July:68.

<sup>8</sup> Oluwafemi Adeyemi, 2009. " Old Testament Perspective on Poverty Eradication in the Nigerian Context." Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso: March 26-27: 3.

Testament never concerns itself much with poverty as a concept, rather much of its concerns has to do with the plight of the poor. That is the reason, the Old Testament speaks so much about taking care of the poor in the society as a way of eradicating poverty. The poor in this respect are those persons of low economic status. Some Hebrew words used to describe the poor in the Old Testament are **ynI [ '**  and **ynI [ '**  which means the poor, humble, afflicted or oppressed. ( Lev. 19:10, Psa. 10:9) These terms describe persons who suffer from poverty due to wrongful impoverishment or dispossession of rights and privileges.<sup>9</sup>

Another word for the poor in the Old Testament is **!Ayb . a ,** which speaks of the needy in the society. (Deut. 15: 4, 11, Job. 31:19) This word describes someone who is a beggar, homeless, weak or low in the society. The major emphasis here is the physical/economic weakness of such persons, i.e. the poorest class of people just like the people King Nebuchadnezzar left behind after his invasion of the Southern kingdom in 586BC. ( 2 Kings 25:12)<sup>10</sup>

According to Abiola Olaniyi, a better Hebrew word describing " the thin, feeble and socially weak " is **lD ;** ( Exo. 30:15). This word explain the situation of persons who are impoverished and reduced in terms of means or property possession.<sup>11</sup> Due to these various Hebrew terms, " in Israel societal class stratification, there were different identities of the poor and poverty. They were determined by the base line, used as demarcating state. This informed the legislations and structures of care and amelioration of circumstances of the poor among the Israelites."<sup>12</sup> The poor in the Old Testament were the humiliated, helpless and the vulnerable in the society. Such persons that could not earn a living, rather became dependants on the rich persons in the society, serving as slaves or hired servants.<sup>13</sup>

According to Enuwosa, the problem of poverty in Israel ought not to have occurred. because God had promised His people wealth in the Old Testament. ( Gen. 17:1-8, Num. 12:3) In

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<sup>9</sup> Simeon Kehinde, 2009. " Striking A Balance Between Kerygma and Paraenesis in the Efforts Towards Poverty Eradication in Africa." Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso: March 26-27: 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> Simeon Kehinde, 2009:2

<sup>11</sup> Abiola Olaniyi, 2010. " The Dal in Exodus 30:15 and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria." *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, vol. xxviii, No.2:20

<sup>12</sup> Abiola Olaniyi, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Abiola Olaniyi, 2010:19.

Deuteronomy 28:1-20, God promised material prosperity to the faithful ones. God expects His people to share resources available and live in the ideal of brotherhood to the extent that there will be no poor among them.<sup>14</sup> This was evident at the formative stage of Israel especially in the period of the Patriarchs when close-tribal or family units of social relations called egalitarianism existed. There was equal rights for every member of the clan or family. The system bridged the gap between the rich and the poor since wealth and hardship, fortune and losses were shared among every member of the family. Also, the twelve tribes were equal as the landed property of Canaan was distributed among the tribes. It was when some Israelites began to settle for sedentary culture instead of nomadic life that the privileged ones began to buy real estates from the masses of the people. The masses of the people then became peasant and slaves in the rich men's land who used them as slaves to improve their resources.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, land possession in Israel were of two categories namely the inherited and purchased estates. Thus, a new social order and new economic conditions were created between the rich and the poor and poverty in terms of depravity manifested among the people of God. The Levites and the Prophets of Israel therefore vehemently protested against this in order to restore the covenant ideal in Israel. The first measure came as a form of legislation. In Exodus Chapters 23:10-11, a law was imposed on land owners to hand over the yield of their harvests every seven years for the benefit of all in the society. This was called the sabbatical year. ( Lev. 25:10-11, Deut. 15:1-6) The purpose of this was well stated in what is called the " Deuteronomic Code." summed up in the phrase, " there shall be no poor among you." ( Deut. 15:4) The "Code of Holiness" (Lev. 1-19) equally gave the command, " you shall love your neighbour as yourself. " (Lev. 19:18) This was a way of calling the people of Israel back to fraternal community in which resources are shared among all. The celebration of Jubilee every 49th year in which the law prescribes that every man must return to his own land, freeing slaves and servants from their masters provides therefore opportunity for purchased land to be returned to their rightful owner. Therefore, any property bought in Israel is rather leased than sold. Among the Jews, God is the true owner of the land and His land must be shared equally by members of His covenant community no matter what circumstance

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<sup>14</sup> J. Enuwosa, 1998. " The Origin of Poverty in Biblical Israel in the Context of Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria." *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol. 13, Nos 1&2, April & October:21.

<sup>15</sup> Abiola Olaniyi, 2010. " The Dal in Exodus 30:15 and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria.":18-19.

forces anyone to lose his possession at any point in time. The sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee reduce inequality among God's people.<sup>16</sup>

As a way of dealing with poverty in Israel, God gave certain rights and privileges to the poor. In the Pentateuch, there are social legislations like the need to pay tithes to meet the material needs of the Levites and the poor ( Deut. 14:28-29); allowing the poor to glean in the fields unhindered ( Lev. 19:9-10 ) and the prohibition of usury when money or food is given as loan to a fellow Jew. ( Lev. 25:35-37)<sup>17</sup> In addition, the Hebrew Judges were required to give full protection to the poor. (Exo. 23:3) while the poor are allowed to pluck from the grainfield what is enough to eat.( Deut. 23:25)<sup>18</sup> It was in line with such acceptable practice that the disciples of Jesus plucked the heads of grain and ate them according to Luke 6:1.

In the historical, poetic and prophetic writings, the poor were considered as people under the special care of God. Kings are warned not to maltreat the poor because God would defend their cause. ( Psa. 72:1-4)<sup>19</sup> Of all prophetic literature, the book of Amos stands out in its denunciation of poverty and its concern for the poor in the society. His stance is appreciated when one considers the fact that during Amos time, Israel was at the height of its prosperity, yet the poor were also at the height of poverty. To Amos, poverty was not just a natural phenomenon, but the result of the gross violation of divine principles for a just society. He accused the rich of trampling on the needy and depriving the poor of the land of justice. He then denounced all forms of oppression, fraud, slavery, injustice and wickedness of the rich. ( Amos 5:12,21-24, 8:4-6)<sup>20</sup> No doubt, the situation of poverty in the midst of plenty in which Amos spoke is similar to that of many countries in Africa especially Nigeria where many people are languishing in poverty in a nation blessed with vast natural and human resources. According to Abogunrin, poverty in Nigeria is " the inevitable consequence of a process in

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<sup>16</sup> J. Enuwosa, 1998. "The Origin of Poverty in Biblical Israel in the Context of Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria.":21-23.

<sup>17</sup> John Ojo, 2007. " A Christian Theological Response to Poverty." *Befra Journal of Ogbomoso Circle*, No.5&6:59-60.

<sup>18</sup> Martina Oguntoyinbo-Atere, 2005. " The Redeemed Christian Church of God's programme for the Poor in Lagos in the Context of Lucan Teaching.":70.

<sup>19</sup> Simeon Kehinde, 2009. " Striking A Balance Between Kerygma and Paraenesis in the Efforts Towards Poverty Eradication in Africa.":3.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Wafawanaka, 2003. " Amos Attitude Toward Poverty: An African Perspective." *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol.19, No. 2:97-107.

which a few economically powerful Nigerians wield political power to control institutions for their own private profit."<sup>21</sup>

In the Old Testament, God pities, comforts and cares for the poor. (Psa. 34:6, Isa. 49:13, Job. 5:15, Jer. 20:13) It must be noted here that the term poor at a stage in the Old Testament has a religious dimension, indicating the pious who trusts in God. (Psa. 35:10, 37:14, 40:17) It was during the post-exilic period that the pious view of the poor began to fully develop. Jerusalem is addressed as "the afflicted one" in Isaiah 51:21 while in Isaiah 49:13, the term "his people" is parallel to "his afflicted." This idea was carried into the New Testament period.<sup>22</sup> This does not mean that the idea of the poor being those who are economically deprived ended in the Pentateuch. Rather, the two concepts of the poor i.e economic and spiritual dimensions were carried over into the New Testament era. It was against this background that the Lukan view of the poor and poverty emerged.

### 2.3 Luke: The Gospel to the Poor.

J. Fitzmyer argues strongly that Luke, the author of the third Gospel, was a Gentile Christian. He was not a Greek but a non-Jewish Semite, a native of Antioch of Syria. Fitzmyer states that Luke had his education in Antioch and this exposed him to Hellenistic culture.<sup>23</sup> According to tradition, Luke was a physician and a companion of Paul. The Luke in question here is the one referred to in Col. 4:14, Philemon 24 and 2 Tim. 4:11.<sup>24</sup> If all these are true, then Luke was probably not a poor man.

T. L. Constable believes that the secondary purpose for which Luke writes his Gospel can be seen in the distinctive features of the Evangelist. He says further that Luke tries to convince his audience of the reliability of what he records in a bid to make them believe and become disciples of Jesus. In addition to historical accuracy, Luke's Gospel is also apologetic.<sup>25</sup> At

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel. O. Abogunrin, 1986. "The Community of Goods in the Early Church and the Distribution of National Wealth." *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol.1, No.2, October:85.

<sup>22</sup> Martina Oguntoyinbo-Atere, 2005. "The Redeemed Christian Church of God's programme for the Poor in Lagos in the Context of Lukan Teaching.":73-74.

<sup>23</sup>Graham N. Stanton, 1986. "The Gospels and Jesus." The Oxford Series, 100. Internet File: [www.mystae.com/restricted/reflections/messiah/luke.html](http://www.mystae.com/restricted/reflections/messiah/luke.html). on April 13, 2010

<sup>24</sup> "The Gospel according to Luke" Internet File: [www.mystae.com/restricted/reflections/mesiah/luke/html](http://www.mystae.com/restricted/reflections/mesiah/luke/html). Retrieved on July 25 2011

<sup>25</sup> Thomas L. Constable, 2008 "Notes on Luke" Internet File: [www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/luke.pdf](http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/luke.pdf). Retrieved on 28 June 2013



the centre of all the gospels is the question, “Who is Jesus?” Luke, more than the other evangelists brings this question into focus both theologically and historically.<sup>26</sup>

Luke stresses that God’s plan for man’s salvation prophesied in the Old Testament came to fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus. Luke is interested in presenting Christianity as a legitimate religion that is capable of meeting the spiritual needs of the Roman Empire. According to Luke, Pilate, the Roman Governor, declared thrice Jesus’ innocence. (Luke 23: 4, 14, 22). In the book of Acts, Luke argues that Christianity deserves to be tolerated like Judaism by the Roman Government.<sup>27</sup> While one cannot but agree with this view, it must be observed that Luke’s presentation of the Gospel is more than that of projecting Christianity as an extension of Judaism. To Luke, Jesus came to bring a new order which will not only benefit the Jews and the Romans, but the entire humankind both rich and poor.

Luke, from the earliest chapters calls upon the followers of Jesus to identify with his Master who is caring and tender toward the poor, the lowly, the sinners, the outcast, the afflicted, the neglected of the society and those who recognize their dependence on God (Luke 4:18, 6:20-23, 7:36-50, 14:12-14, 15:1-32, 16:19-31, 18:9-14, 19:1-10, 21:1-4).<sup>28</sup> To Mark Vincent, “the themes of wealth, materialism and stewardship, and the contrast between rich and poor, are widely recognised as being dominant in Luke vis-à-vis the other Gospels.”<sup>29</sup> He postulated that God is portrayed as the God who turns things upside down. From the famous song of Mary *uniquely* recorded in Luke’s Gospel, Mary characterises her Lord and God as the God of inversion, the One Who turns things upside down. (Luke 1:48,51b-53a) According to her, “ He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away.” (RSV) An example of this inversion is the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. It is not specifically a parable about riches, but the same theme of inversion.<sup>30</sup> This dominant theme as suggested by Mark Vincent proposes the model of poverty now, riches later.

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<sup>26</sup>Kirsten Abbot, 2012, “Themes in Luke’s gospel: introduction to the Luke/Acts package” [www.wn.anglican.org.nz/files/docs/some-themes-introd-to-luke-acts.pdf](http://www.wn.anglican.org.nz/files/docs/some-themes-introd-to-luke-acts.pdf). Retrieved on 28 May 2013.

<sup>27</sup> “Luke: An Introduction”: Internet File: [www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/luke/intro.htm](http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/luke/intro.htm). Retrieved on 20 March 2012.

<sup>28</sup> “Luke: An Introduction”

<sup>29</sup> Mark Vincent, 2007. “Poverty and wealth in Luke’s Gospel.” Internet File: [www.testimony-magazine.org/back/aug2007/vincent2.pdf](http://www.testimony-magazine.org/back/aug2007/vincent2.pdf). Retrieved on November 20, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Vincent, 2007 .

Another dominant theme observed by Vincent in Luke is Jesus' identification with the poor. He was born in a manger (2:7, 8), and he kept company with the poor and the despised.<sup>31</sup> He said "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (9:58). Jesus not only had an affinity with the poor, he saw the preaching of the gospel to them as a priority, and as the fulfillment of Scripture. Jesus experienced poverty and focused on the poor and the despised; his example might implicitly ask us to do the same.

Stewardship is another dominant theme observed by Mark Vincent in the gospel of Luke. The notion of stewardship is one that is core to Luke's Gospel, and is developed in a number of sayings and parables that are unique to him.<sup>32</sup> It is a waste of resources to squander wealth as the Prodigal Son did in his phase of riotous living (chapter 15), and we should not want to be like the Unjust Steward who wasted his master's goods (chapter 16:1). But beyond that, what are the parameters that should govern our stewardship, whether it be of material things, or of things like talents, time, intellect, emotions and heart? There is nothing that we have that we did not receive. God has blessed us with the opportunity and privilege of serving as His stewards. We know what truly matters. Now it is up to us to execute it as we face the day of rendering account.<sup>33</sup>

Olusayo Oladejo observes that one of the prominent characteristics of Luke is his concern for just social dealings. He considers Luke as a theologian of the oppressed.<sup>34</sup> In Luke, the divine agenda of liberating the poor is not only critical but also central.<sup>35</sup> Salvation in Luke is effectively linked to the holistic deliverance of the oppressed. His emphasis on Jesus as the Son of Man points to his humanity and compassion for all men. If salvation is for the lost, it is indeed for all because all are lost in one way or the other. The teachings and activities of Jesus in Luke are aimed at lifting both men and women out of their sins, bringing them to a life of hope.<sup>36</sup> The need to consider the socio-economic context of exegetical work is brought to the limelight by Luke. Luke shows that exegesis must be both theological and contextual.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mark Vincent, 2007 .

<sup>32</sup> Mark Vincent, 2007. "Poverty and wealth in Luke's Gospel."

<sup>33</sup> Mark Vincent, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Olusayo Oladejo, 2010. "Lukan Theology of the Oppressed and its Implications for Contemporary African Context." *Theology in Practice: Essays in Honour of Rev. Dr. David Adegboyega Adeniran*. Ibadan: Scepter Prints, 52.

<sup>35</sup> Olusayo Oladejo, 53.

<sup>36</sup> Olusayo Oladejo, 54-56.

<sup>37</sup> Olusayo Oladejo, 62.

It is clear that Luke's choice of materials was deliberate and purposeful. This is why some scholars regard Luke as a New Testament theologian who has more interest in religious and theological themes than in history.<sup>38</sup> This particular view becomes evident when biblical characterization is considered. According to T. R. Henn, "biblical characterization in Aristotelian terms is inferred and not stated."<sup>39</sup> A. M. Okorie expatiates that biblical characterization is an art and may be seen as portraying through the various biblical characters some ideological points of view.<sup>40</sup> Depending on the periscope, "the words of Jesus come, for example, with rhythmic pulsations such as regret, approval, sorrow, sarcasm, indignation, sympathy, pity, confidence, wonder, admiration and love."<sup>41</sup>

But argument on biblical characterization must not affect Luke's integrity as an historian and theologian. The reality is that religion and theology are practised and formed in history. The Gospel is therefore historical and theological for Luke used history to present religion and theology.(Luke 1:1-3). However, the characterization in Luke does not focus on the poor only, but also on the rich. In Luke, Jesus related also with the rich and made them see their own form of poverty.

Many biblical scholars believe that both Matthew and Luke differ from Mark because of the use of different versions of the source called "Q". A notable scholar, Prof. James M. Robinson has shown that a major theme of Jesus' theology in "Q" is His concern for the poor who are struggling for physical survival.<sup>42</sup> No doubt, the reference to the poor in "Q" speaks of people who are experiencing physical hunger. In Luke, Jesus went about doing something about the poor and poverty. Worthy of note is the Lukan use of the Greek word *πτωχος* for the poor. This word appears in major texts of Luke (Luke 4: 18, 6: 20, 7: 22, 14: 13, and 14: 21, 18: 22, 19: 8 and 21: 3). This word can be interpreted; "a beggar, a pauper, or the poor."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1997. "The Lukan View of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the World From the African Perspective" *Orita*, vol. 29, No 1-2, June and December, 16.

<sup>39</sup> T. R. Henn, 1970. *The Bible as Literature*. London: Lutherworth Press, 183.

<sup>40</sup> A. M. Okorie, 2000. "Characterization of the Tax collectors in the Gospel of Luke." *Orita*, vol.32, No 1-2, June and December:70-71.

<sup>41</sup> A. M. Okorie, 2000: 71-72.

<sup>42</sup> A. M. Okorie, 2000: 71-72.

<sup>43</sup> Michael S. Bushel, 1996. *Bible Works For Windows*. CD Version 3.5. Computer File: Lotus Development Corporation.

Another word for the poor in Greek is **penicro, j** (Luke 21:2). Unlike **πτωχος**, this word refers to someone who engages in manual labour, differentiating him from the rich, **plou, sioj** a member of the class of land owners who is not an employee.<sup>44</sup> The **penicro, j** is the one who had to work in shops, fields and thereby lacked the leisure of the rich.<sup>45</sup> One should not be tempted to think that the **penicro, j** is a member of the middle class for he is also considered poor though partially better than the **πτωχος**. Of the two words, Luke used **πτωχος** more often for the poor.

According to Thomas Hawker, there are various terms connected with the word poor. By character, the poor are persons in indigent circumstances of the body while the scripture also refers to poverty of the soul in respect of its lost and ruined estate. There is also a third sense which is referred to as "being poor in spirit." Matthew says, "blessed are the poor in the spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mat.5:3)<sup>46</sup> There is need therefore to understand the clear distinction between these ideas about physical and spiritual poverty. The word poor in our context refers to the person who is going through material poverty, while the word poverty refers to the situation in which the poor man finds himself.

Abogunrin believes that the linking of the public ministry of Jesus with Nazareth in Galilee is in agreement with Luke's framework. Jesus is the One God anointed to save the whole world and not only the Jews. Luke's aim is to present a Jesus of history, who completed the work of redemption for all human mankind, regardless of language, race, colour, age or sex. That is why the history of salvation according to Luke began with Adam, the father of mankind and not Abraham the ancestor of the Hebrew race.<sup>47</sup>

Jesus in Luke offered salvation, forgiveness and freedom from oppression to all, independent of race, generation or merit. To Luke, admission into the kingdom of God is made open to all and on equal basis without prejudice on race or status in the society. Jesus treated the Jews and non-Jews, rich and poor, sinners and outcasts, respectable men and women equally.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Jerome H. Neyrey. "Who is Poor in the New Testament?" Internet File: [www.americancatholic.org/newsletters/SFS/an/op2](http://www.americancatholic.org/newsletters/SFS/an/op2). Retrieved on July 30, 2012

<sup>45</sup>Jerome H. Neyrey.

<sup>46</sup>Thomas Hawker, 2007. *Poor Man's Concordance*. Computer File: E-Sword version 7.05. by Rick Meyers. Franklin: E-Sword. This Concordance was initially published in 1828.

<sup>47</sup>Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003. "Jesus' Sevenfold Programmatic Declaration At Nazareth: An Exegesis of Luke 4:15-30 From an African Perspective." *Black Theology. An International Journal*, vol. 1, No. 2, May: 226-227.

Luke obviously was reacting to the inescapable realities of life in the then world like suffering, deprivation, inequality, slavery, bondage, disease, and above all, poverty in spite of the prevailing deep religious atmosphere.<sup>49</sup> Since no one can truly deliver humankind without a deep realization of the terrible plight and the need of the human race, Jesus in Luke did not only come to preach the solution, but also brought about deliverance in the practical sense. The good news of Jesus focused on the total man and this is exactly what the church of Christ should emulate.<sup>50</sup>

The sevenfold proclamation of Jesus in Luke 4:15-30 speaks of the full mission of the church as the kingdom of God on earth as she awaits its manifestation from heaven. The church therefore cannot fold her arms and close her eyes to the needs of the poor. The Gospel is not only a matter of proclamation; it must be backed up with action. It is only when our words are matched with actions that the Gospel message can have its impact on our world.<sup>51</sup> Abogunrin says, “ that is what Jesus the Saviour did, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, giving hope to the hopeless, warmly receiving those rejected by the society and making them new people. The message of the Gospel will be more meaningful if the church maintains its prophetic voice in Africa, speaking as the mouth piece of the oppressed, the down-trodden, the poor, the homeless, the hungry and proclaiming peace in war torn areas. The message must be followed by concrete examples in supplying these needs as much as possible. Jesus provides total liberation.”<sup>52</sup>

Justin S. Ukpong similarly states that the Gospel of Luke is a legitimate approach to mission. Using a critical-analytical method of inculturation hermeneutics, Ukpong expatiates on Jesus’ interests in the Gentiles and political figures in Luke. While Jesus fought for the oppressed, Ukpong observes that Christian missionaries failed to critically confront colonial oppression.<sup>53</sup> Today, religious leaders, rather than being the voice of the oppressed by

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<sup>48</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003. “Jesus’ Sevenfold Programmatic Declaration At Nazareth: An Exegesis of Luke 4:15-30 From an African Perspective.”: 231

<sup>49</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1997. “The Lukan View of Jesus Christ As The Saviour of the World From the African Perspective.” *Orita*, Vol. 29, Nos. 1 & 2, June & December: 16-17.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003 . " Jesus’ Sevenfold Programmatic Declaration At Nazareth: An Exegesis of Luke 4:15-30 From an African Perspective" : 234-235.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin,1997. " The Lukan View of Jesus Christ As The Saviour of the World From the African Perspective": 31-33.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1997. " The Lukan View of Jesus Christ As The Saviour of the World From the African Perspective": 33.

speaking and acting against political agenda that are impoverishing the people; simply keep quiet and prefer to pay courtesy calls on our political leaders, praying for them and going back home with their own share of the stolen funds in brown envelopes or suitcases.

Ukpong says further that the early Christian missionaries posed no direct challenge to colonial exploitation, even when they were privileged to do so. A typical example was the demonstration by the coal miners at Enugu in 1949 when the colonial police killed nine people among the workers who were pressing for pay rise. None of the White Roman Catholic and Anglican Church ministers allowed the funeral service organized by the miners to be held in their church premises and they did not take part in the service in spite of the fact that some of the dead were Anglicans and Catholics.<sup>54</sup>

The workers therefore moved to Aba where they conducted the funeral service in an open field, sang traditional religious songs and performed traditional religious rites invoking their ancestral spirits in protest against the attitude of the Christian churches. This event later led to the establishment of 'Goddianism' which is a modernized form of African Traditional Religion.<sup>55</sup> This would have been averted if the church had emulated Jesus by identifying with the poor and the oppressed.

Luke probably writes his Gospel against the backdrop of the first Jewish war (66-70 C.E.), the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues (80C.E.) and the local persecution that Jews and Christians faced. This view largely depends on the period one thinks the gospel was written. Traditional Christian scholarship has dated the composition of the gospel to the early AD 60, while other critics date it to the last decades of the 1st century.<sup>56</sup> Though he is writing for his community, he certainly eyes the upper middle class audience of the empire as well. Luke constantly refers to the political authorities of the empire during the days of Jesus. Herod, King of Judea (Luke 1:5), Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate and Herod, the administrator of Galilee (Luke 3: 1-2, 19-20) were prominent leaders in the Lukan account. Against this background, Luke presents a Christianity that would appeal

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<sup>53</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, 2004. "The Gospel According To Luke and The Mission of the Church". A Global Bible Commentary. Nashville: Internet File: [www.vanderbilt.edu/Aos/religious\\_studies/SNTS/Ukpong2004.htm](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/Aos/religious_studies/SNTS/Ukpong2004.htm) retrieved on July 25 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> "Gospel of Luke." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel\\_of\\_Luke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke) retrieved on 02/10/13.

to both the political authority and the Christian Community as well. Luke presents a Jesus who did not primarily focus on confronting the colonial authorities. But unlike many religious leaders of our days, He criticized them within the circle of his followers and showed more concern and support for the poor. Also, Jesus in Luke was against the wrongful accumulation of wealth by the rich.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, while Mark and Matthew employ the Greek word **ειρηνη** (peace) once (Mark 9:50), and four times (Matthew 10: 13, 34), Luke uses the word fourteen times (Luke 2:13-14, 7:50, 14:32, 19:42). Thus, rather than advocating physical combat with the political authorities who were partly responsible for the plight of the poor, Jesus adopted peaceful means of delivering the oppressed from bondage. Luke indeed presents Jesus as a peace maker from birth.<sup>58</sup>

Robert J. Karris believes that a dominant and continuous theme in Luke is the motif of food and quotes more than forty passages in Luke to illustrate his hypothesis. Luke indeed records about nineteen meals out of which thirteen are peculiar to Luke. A careful textual study of Luke reveals that the last supper in Luke is the last of a sequence of suppers (Luke 22:14-38). According to Karris, Jesus ate so many times that he was wrongly accused of being a glutton. The Pharisees and Scribes complained of him saying, “ this man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:2.) In Luke 5: 30, he was also queried, “ why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners.”<sup>59</sup>

But Karris observation on the food motif is not exclusive to Luke. In both Matthew and Mark, Jesus was also accused of being a glutton, eating with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9: 10-11, Mark 2: 15-16). In addition, there is no evidence that there was any other supper after the last supper in the other Gospels. Moreover, one wonders why Luke only records one occurrence of Jesus feeding the multitude, (Luke 9: 10-17) while the other synoptic Evangelists record two (Matthew 14: 14-20, 15:32-39 Mark 6: 34-44, 8: 1-9). Based on this fact, this researcher believes that Jesus in Luke was more interested in educating and empowering the needy. The motif of food in Luke therefore is not a strong argument for Jesus concern' for the poor whom he fed with both spiritual and physical food.

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<sup>57</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> Robert J. Karris, 2009. “ Jesus’ Table Fellowship and Luke’s Gospel of the Poor.” Internet File: [www.ccky.org/Resources/retteler/vetteler-pat.-3-htm](http://www.ccky.org/Resources/retteler/vetteler-pat.-3-htm) on July 11, 2011.

Unlike the religious leaders of His day, Jesus operated an open fellowship with the poor. He criticized the closed fellowship of Jewish religious leaders and their failure to care for the poor and the outcast. Indeed, Jesus' open table fellowship involved the rich and the poor, the self righteous and sinners. The way Jesus related to the rich and the poor shows the extent of his openness to the needs of those who were poor materially and spiritually.<sup>60</sup>

While many scholars refer to Luke as the "Gospel for the poor," other scholars believe that it was written for a Christian community which was experiencing rapid growth in the conversion of the urban and wealthy Gentiles and therefore call the Gospel the "conscience of the rich." Such scholars believe that Luke is more of an Evangelist to the rich rather than an Evangelist to the poor.<sup>61</sup> In agreement with Olusayo Oladejo, "Jesus should be seen in the light of evidence of Luke as 'the Poor Man' who identifies with the agony and redemption of the oppressed, alongside His other royal Messianic titles as 'Son of Man' and 'Lord'."<sup>62</sup>

#### 2.4 The Poor and Poverty

According to R.A. Akanmidu, between one third and one half of mankind lives below the poverty line. Poverty as defined by him is "the state of lacking the means to exist adequately."<sup>63</sup> To him, hunger, destitution, illness and starvation are evidence of poverty. He speaks about two levels of poverty. They are: (1.) victims who cannot help themselves even if they are willing to do so; these are victims of war and refugees, and (2.) those that are poor but have the means to turn the table around.<sup>64</sup>

Akanmidu's classification of poverty, good as it is, seems not to be broad enough. Undoubtedly, there are those who are poor due to ecological reasons, but not all of them are incapable of doing something about their poverty. In fact, poverty for most of such people is temporary, for they can regain their normal life after the situation that impoverished them has changed. Of course, there are many war victims who were poor before the war but simply

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<sup>60</sup> Robert J. Karris, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Robert J. Karris, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Olusayo Oladejo, 2010. "Lukan Theology of the Oppressed and its Implications for Contemporary African Context", 63.

<sup>63</sup> R. A. Akanmidu, 1995. *Ethics and Poverty. Inquiries in Moral Philosophy*. Lagos. Banfic Education Publishers, 43-44.

<sup>64</sup> R. A. Akanmidu, 1995. *Ethics and Poverty. Inquiries in Moral Philosophy*, 45



blame the war for not being able to do anything to change their condition. This is not to rule out the fact that there are people who were rendered permanently poor due to ecological disasters, war and other situations due to no fault of their own.

Following Kant's opinion, Akanmidu argues that poverty, to a large extent, can affect the character of a man.<sup>65</sup> This idea is supported by Atanda Kuranga who says, "those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive."<sup>66</sup> Some will do many other things inimical to themselves. This is certainly true when one considers a lot of shameful things people do today just to get out of poverty.

For instance, many young ladies who are poor engage in prostitution in school, to raise funds to support themselves. Some young men engage in robbery to see themselves through university education. But some of those whose lives are shaped by poverty actually have the tendency to engage in such shameful acts. There are many other students in the same conditions who will not so debase themselves in order to go to school. Such indigent students seek other means that are godly to finance their education, doing any work possible including menial jobs just to scale through. One must not lose sight of the fact that many of those who engaged in shameful and even dubious acts continue in such after the economic condition has improved.

Furthermore, Akanmidu discusses the ethics of helping others out of poverty. Using the arguments of Aiken and Gerwirth on aid, he examines the morality of giving aids to the poor. He concludes that a rich man or nation has no reason not to help the poor "since there is no distinction between omission and commission to help as far as the well-being and happiness of the individual or nation are concerned."<sup>67</sup> He believes that any individual or nation that receives aid will be less vulnerable to such conditions that encourage further demands for aid.<sup>68</sup> This idea can only work in a situation where political leaders are not corrupt. In a corrupt society like Nigeria, aids meant for the alleviation of the poor often end up in the pockets of rich political leaders and their acquaintances.

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<sup>65</sup> R. A. Akanmidu, 1995: 46-51

<sup>66</sup> Atanda Kuranga, 2005. "ORO Journal of Educational and Technological Studies", vol.3, no1, 10

<sup>67</sup> R. A. Akanmidu, 1995. *Ethics and Poverty. Inquiries in Moral Philosophy*, 84.

<sup>68</sup> R. A. Akanmidu, 1995. *Ethics and Poverty. Inquiries in Moral Philosophy*, 84-85

On the other hand, Akanmidu argues against the giving of aid to the poor. Using the Lifeboat Ethics, the Spaceship Earth Metaphor, the Galleon Metaphor and Triage Ethics, he concludes that those who are against giving aid are simply looking for a system that will make the kind of help the poor receive to be more effective. According to him, “triage is not a system to cut off aid. It is not a system to reduce help. It is a system to make it more effective.”<sup>69</sup>

This latter opinion becomes important because mere giving of aid in form of food, money and clothes will not take away poverty in the life of a man. The activity of the rich among the poor should be more than giving fish to the poor to eat. The poor must also be taught how to fish. The poor must be empowered mentally, socially, financially and spiritually for them to be truly liberated from the dungeon of poverty. No doubt, giving of aid to developing nations has not helped many of such nations. On most occasions, some of the aid the developing nations receive from the rich nations lead them more into poverty in the end. On most occasion, only few influential members of the populace divert such funds to their personal accounts.

Abogunrin observes that “poverty is the ongoing reality of billions of people living in the Third World today. This is endemic in Asia, Latin America and Africa.”<sup>70</sup> The poor to him are the economically disadvantaged, politically impotent and those who are excluded from decision-making process in matters that affect their future and lack access to advanced technology. Poverty is the deprivation of life and non-satisfaction of basic human needs. In Africa, poverty is due to the exploitative, unjust and oppressive economic and social policies of various governments.<sup>71</sup>

He also takes into consideration the misunderstanding many religious teachings have caused. Some teachings based on Old Testament passages which attribute poverty to divine curse are popular among “the health and wealth Gospel” preachers today. To them, poverty is the result of man’s failure to live up to God’s expectations. Therefore, they see poverty as sin or say that it is a sin to be poor.<sup>72</sup> Certainly this cannot be a true and objective teaching of the Bible. While one cannot rule out the fact that some are poor due to their disregard for God’s rules

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<sup>69</sup> R. A. Akanmidu, 1995. *Ethics and Poverty. Inquiries in Moral Philosophy*, 89-125

<sup>70</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003. “Jesus’ Sevenfold Programmatic Declaration at Nazareth: An Exegesis of Luke 4:15-30 From An African Perspective.” *Black Theology: An International Journal*, vol. 1, No. 2, May: 242.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003:242.

<sup>72</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003:243-244.

and regulations, there are lots of pious people who are economically poor and such the Scripture says are spiritually rich.

Timothy Keller notes that the Old Testament community was obligated to give to the poor member until his or her need was met. (Deut. 15:8–10) Part of the tithes went to the poor. (Deut. 14:28–29) The poor were not to be given a handout but rather to be provided with tools, grain (Deut. 15:12–15) and land (Lev. 25) in order to become productive and self-sufficient citizens. Later, the prophets condemned Israel's insensitivity to the poor as covenant breaking. They taught that spending needlessly and ignoring the poor were sins as repugnant as idolatry and adultery. (Amos 2:6–7) Showing mercy to the poor was an evidence of true commitment to God. (Isa. 1:10–17; 58:6–7; Amos 4:1–6; 5:21–24) The seventy-year exile was the result of their failure to observe Sabbath and Jubilee years (2 Chron. 36:20–21), in which the wealthy were to cancel debts. (Deut. 15:12–18) Within the church, wealth is to be shared generously between rich and poor (2 Cor. 8:13–15; cf. Lev. 25). First of all, we are to minister to “the household of faith” and second to “all people” without regard to ethnicity, nationality or belief.<sup>73</sup>

Abogunrin wonders why the church has not been actively participating in the war against poverty. Admitting that the consequences of poverty are great, he asks, “What is the church doing about this?” He posits that there is need for a thorough re-examination of the church's approach to various needs in the society.<sup>74</sup> He believes that Jesus was not indifferent to the economic situation and the plight of the poor and that Jesus did not only use comforting words, He took practical steps to bring relief and succour to them.<sup>75</sup> He further observes that during the time of Jesus, the whole country was reduced to poverty as a result of the huge debts incurred by Herod over his building projects. This demoralized the people and weakened their sense of morality. The population was therefore forced to resign to oppression, misfortune, disease and poverty. Taxes were exorbitantly high and this led to open wide bribery and corruption among government officials. But it was difficult to know

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<sup>73</sup>Timothy Keller, 2012. “The Gospel and the Poor.” Internet File: [www.redeemercitytocity.com/content/com.redeemer.digitalContentArchive.LibraryItem/480/The\\_Gospel\\_and\\_the\\_Poor.pdf](http://www.redeemercitytocity.com/content/com.redeemer.digitalContentArchive.LibraryItem/480/The_Gospel_and_the_Poor.pdf) retrieved on July 10, 2011.

<sup>74</sup>Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003. “Jesus' Sevenfold Programmatic Declaration at Nazareth: An Exegesis of Luke 4:15-30 From An African Perspective”, 246-247.

<sup>75</sup>Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. “Jesus Pronouncements On Wealth In the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria.” Biblical Studies Series. A Publication of the Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies, Ibadan, No. 6:239.

those who were really poor because there was little difference between the authentic beggars and charlatans.<sup>76</sup> As a son of a poor carpenter, who neither had an inherited nor acquired land, Jesus himself was poor. Yet, he was a friend of the poor and the outcasts of the society and frequently associated with them. Essentially, there were two main groups of people in the first century. The first group which was relatively small was the wealthy. The second group that was referred to as “the people of the land” consisted of over 95% of the populace. This second group was made up of the poor, the artisans, the slaves, the hired labourers, the orphans, the widows, the homeless and the jobless.<sup>77</sup>

When one looks at the situation in Nigeria today, it seems that the middle class is being eradicated. There are only two major groups of people in the country today, the rich and the poor. It seems the world has moved back to the situation in the first century. What baffles one is the fact that the rich are becoming super rich at the expense of the poor who are becoming super poor.

The Judaism of Jesus time accepted the social disparity and did not do anything about the situation. The religious leaders only encouraged the wealthy to give alms to the poorest of the poor. Noteworthy is the fact that the priests themselves belonged to the wealthy class. They were involved in the selling of animals for sacrifice and in monetary exchange in the temple. They defrauded the innocent poor worshippers in the name of God.<sup>78</sup> This sad situation still exists in Nigerian churches today where the Bishop or General Overseer sells olive oil, handkerchiefs, candles, pure water and bread at exorbitant prices to worshippers under the guise that the usage or consumption of such will shower blessings on the people.

Due to the contributions of religious leaders to the plight of the poor, the church in Nigeria has become a toothless bulldog. How can a fraudulent religious leader confront a fraudulent political leader? Yet the church is expected to fight corruption, joblessness, homelessness and, above all, poverty. The Church has a big responsibility to fight this menace. But a corrupt church cannot fight corruption. For this purpose, African Bible scholars must

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<sup>76</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007:244-247.

<sup>77</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. "Jesus Pronouncements On Wealth In the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria.": 245-246.

<sup>78</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007: 246.

spearhead the new fight against corruption, not only in Africa, but also in the world at large.<sup>79</sup> The time to sit on the fence and watch is over. It is time for action and not mere words.

Chris Manus affirms that Nigerian has become a world-class poverty-stricken nation. This is more pronounced in the northwest, the southeast especially the areas that share boundary with Cameroun. This shows that the people in the rural areas are more affected than those who are living in the cities. This does not mean that there is no strong presence of poverty in the cities as well. Poverty to him is not just lack of food to eat. It also includes the lack of quality food. This becomes evident in the rural areas where they have a lot to eat, yet many of the inhabitants still suffer malnutrition.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the manifestation of poverty in such places is not the absence of food, but the lack of quality food and most of the time, the lack of knowledge on how to combine the various food items that can result in balanced diets. Today, a man may take pap (made of maize) in the morning; have a bowl of Eba (made of cassava) in the afternoon and, in the night, a bowl of pounded yam. All these are starchy foods that can only give him carbohydrates. Unfortunately, this wrong diet may go on for about seven days unchanged. This might not be the result of lack of nutritious food, but the lack of knowledge on how to combine the various food to achieve balanced diet. In some other occasions, poverty makes the farmers to sell the best of their produce while they and their families eat the left over.

One wonders how our ancestors who lived many years before us were able to survive under the same conditions in the rural areas. They possibly combined the same kind of food with some other items that had more protein without a deep knowledge of its nutritional value. However, the era still recorded strange deaths due to malnutrition and these were often attributed to the activities of witches and wizards that sucked the blood of the sufferers. In our enlightened age, we know that if there is any witch sucking the blood of the poor, its name is poverty.

Anup Shah notes that the Gross Domestic Product (G. D. P.) of the 48 poorest nations which is about a quarter of the world is less than the wealth of the world's first three richest men combined together. One percent of what nations spend on weapons yearly is what is required

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<sup>79</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007: 275-277.

<sup>80</sup> Ukachukwu Chris Manus, 2009. "New Testament Perspective on Poverty Eradication in the Nigerian Context: Reflections on Luke 4: 17b-19." Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho: March 26-27:6-7.

to send millions of children to school. That is why one billion children still live in poverty. While 640 million children lack adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to safe water and 270 million lack adequate healthcare services. Due to this reason, about 29,000 children die on a daily basis all over the world.<sup>81</sup> He says further that it is wrong to blame the poor only for their predicament. The poor are poor today not just because they are lazy or have made bad decisions about their lives; the governments have also greatly contributed to the plight of the poor. While globalization promises increasing interconnectedness, there are global policies, decisions and practices that are formulated to make the rich richer. In the face of these powerful external forces against the poor, what can the poor do to change their lives? As a result of this perpetual global context, the majority continues to struggle while only few continue to be wealthy.<sup>82</sup>

One of the major causes of global poverty identified by Anup Shah is the Structural Adjustment Programme. This programme is often prescribed for developing nations as a condition for loans and repayment by the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) and the World Bank. This brings cutbacks in health, education and other social amenities, thereby increasing rather than reducing the level of poverty in the land.<sup>83</sup>

The Nigerian experience is a typical example. During the Babangida regime, the President informed the nation that there would be better life after the Structural Adjustment Programme (S.A.P.) of the government. But the result was the opposite. The majority of the citizens were worse off than they were before the programme. This is not to say some people did not benefit from the programme. Many of our leaders, their associates and close relations became richer. They formed a small percentage of less than 5% of the Nigerian populace. One therefore would not be wrong to say that the programme was not meant to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich, but to widen it as much as possible.

Ruby K. Payne states that poverty is relative. She cites different types of poverty like financial, emotional, mental, spiritual or physical. Poverty is more than the lack of money, it could mean the lack of anything necessary to make a man live as a man.<sup>84</sup> Unlike in the West,

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<sup>81</sup> Anup Shah "Causes of Poverty." Internet File:[www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/poverty.asp](http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/poverty.asp). Retrieved on July 25 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Anup Shah "Causes of Poverty."

<sup>83</sup> Anup Shah "Causes of Poverty."

a rich man in some parts of Africa is still considered poor if he does not have a child of his own.<sup>85</sup> His poverty therefore is lack of children, though the man who has many children without the means to take care of them is also considered poor. To Payne, economic class is a continuous line, not a clear cut distinction. Differentiating generational poverty from situational poverty, she explains that generational poverty means having been in poverty for at least two generations while situational poverty means lack of resources due to a particular event which may be death, chronic illness or divorce.<sup>86</sup>

But there are millions of people going through situational poverty due to reasons other than death, chronic illness or divorce. War refugees, earthquake, tornado and hurricane victims can be placed under this category. Few years ago, many people in New Orleans and California in U.S.A., Haiti, Myanmar and Wufu in China went through great sufferings because of ecological misadventure. Such poverty was temporary. Many nations responded to their needs via aid and alleviated their situational poverty. Payne believes that one can move from poverty to middle class and from middle class to wealth. For the one intending to make this great move, two things are necessary; education and right relationship. One major reason why the poor must break from poverty is the indescribable pains of it.<sup>87</sup>

One of the current trends in the war against poverty is Poverty Alleviation. Poverty Alleviation is the effort made to bring the level of poverty to the barest minimum. It is a reduction strategy designed to improve the conditions of living of those classified to be poor.<sup>88</sup> G. A. Oshitelu observes that Poverty Alleviation has become a popular phrase in our country. This has led the government to establish various programmes like Better Life Programme, Poverty Reduction Initiative, and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP).<sup>89</sup> On these programmes, billions of Naira had been expended without much result. According to Olaniyi, Poverty Alleviation programmes of Nigerian government have become

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<sup>84</sup> Ruby K. Payne. "A Framework for Understanding Poverty". Internet File: [www.Homepages.stmorton.edu/students/sdilg/a-framework-for-understanding-po.htm](http://www.Homepages.stmorton.edu/students/sdilg/a-framework-for-understanding-po.htm) retrieved on July 25 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Emmanuel Anim, 2009. "The Prosperity Gospel in Ghana and the Primal Imagination." *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, vol. 17, no2, July:38.

<sup>86</sup> Ruby K. Payne. "A Framework for Understanding Poverty". Internet File: [www.Homepages.stmorton.edu/students/sdilg/a-framework-for-understanding-po.htm](http://www.Homepages.stmorton.edu/students/sdilg/a-framework-for-understanding-po.htm).

<sup>87</sup> Ruby K. Payne. "A Framework for Understanding Poverty."

<sup>88</sup> H.M. Molagun, 2009. "Alleviating Poverty in Nigeria Through Dynamic Implementation of the Vocational/Technical Education Component of the National Policy on Education." *Religions' Educator*, vol. 9, no 2, 59.

<sup>89</sup> G.A. Oshitelu 2001. "Religion and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria" *Orita*, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, Vol. 33 Vol. 1&2, June & December , 77.

means of reckless looting of the national treasury.<sup>90</sup> Due to this, the gap between the rich and the poor is still enormous. To Oshitelu, poverty can be viewed in two ways, namely; absolute deprivation and relative deprivation. Absolute deprivation means the lack of basic needs of life while relative deprivation refers to a situation where a person considers himself poor in comparison with those around him. According to him, “people are poor, not only in relation to their needs, but also in relation to other people who are not poor.”<sup>91</sup> He believes that absolute deprivation is the most pitiable condition and this is the common situation in Nigeria.

The unfortunate thing according to Oshitelu is that poverty can be transferred from one generation to another. This is what sociologists and anthropologists have described as a “culture of poverty.” Therefore, poverty can be a personal, family, local, national or even a continental situation.<sup>92</sup> He wonders why the various initiatives of government towards alleviating poverty in Nigeria through the agricultural, health, education, transportation, housing and financial sectors have not yielded much fruits. He posits that programmes alone cannot alleviate poverty, but factors aiding it must be addressed. He cites three major causes of poverty that must be addressed, namely: ignorance, laziness and circumstance.

While examining the roles of religious bodies, Oshitelu states that the traditional way of giving alms to the poor by the rich is no longer relevant. Religious bodies must take determined steps towards alleviating poverty. This he says can be done in three major ways namely; (1.) laying emphasis on the common and beneficial aspects of religion like the love of God, love of oneself, love of one’s neighbour, hard work and dignity of labour, (2.) diminishing the apparent unbridgeable gap between faith and reason, (3.) harmonizing the two aspects of eschatological perspective, that is “this worldly” and the “other worldly.” Christians can no longer be indifferent to things that go on around them.<sup>93</sup> The Christian church can develop a spirituality of hope and resistance as a response to the challenge of poverty.<sup>94</sup> While the opinion of Oshitelu is appreciated here, there is no way the church can fold her arms and not give alms to the poor. The researcher opines that giving of alms to the

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<sup>90</sup> Abiola Olaniyi, 2010. “The Dal in Exodus 30:15 and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria.” *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, vol 28, no2, October, 13.

<sup>91</sup> G.A. Oshitelu 2001. “Religion and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria.”: 79-83

<sup>92</sup> G.A. Oshitelu 2001: 84-85

<sup>93</sup> G.A. Oshitelu 2001: 92-94

<sup>94</sup> Philomena Mwaura, 2005. “A Spirituality of Resistance and Hope: African Instituted Churches’ Response to Poverty.” *Orita*, Vol.30, December, 66.



poor is still relevant, but must be accompanied with other strategies that can go a long way to transform the lives of the poor.

According to Timothy Keller the church has three distinct ministries to the poor which must not be confused with evangelism. The threefold ministry are relief, development and reform. Relief is direct aid to meet physical, material, or social needs. Common relief ministries include temporary shelters for the homeless, food and clothing services, medical services, crisis counseling, and the like. A more active form of relief is advocacy, in which people in need are given active assistance to get legal aid, find housing, and locate other kinds of aid. Development on the other hand is what is needed to bring a person or community to self-sufficiency. In the Old Testament, when a slave's debt was erased and he was released, God directed that his former master empowers him with grain, tools and resources for a new life. (Deut. 15:13–14) Development includes education, job creation, and vocational training. Development for a neighborhood or community involves reinvesting social and financial capital into a social system, such as through housing development, home ownership, and other capital investments. The third ministry which is social reform moves beyond relief of immediate needs and seeks to change social conditions and structures that cause the dependency. In Job 29:16-17, we see that Job not only clothed the naked but also “broke the fangs of the wicked and made them drop their victims.” The prophets denounced unfair wages (Jer. 22:13), corrupt business practices (Amos 8:2, 6), legal systems weighted in favour of the rich (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 24:17), and capital-lending systems that gouged the persons of modest means (Exod. 22:25–27; Lev. 19:35–37; 25:37). These examples prove that Christians should get involved in their particular communities and work for fair and just practices as needed.<sup>95</sup>

Ayodeji Fasoro suggesting the use of a church-based co-operative society to combat poverty says, “the church’s aim must be to provide the gospel in its fullness as it is applied to the needs of people. While the church is to educate on spiritual things, she must not forget that the number of persons in need continues to rise. The Church must try every means to minister to the needs of her members in divers ways; of which church-based co-operative society is one.”<sup>96</sup> John Ojo says that “churches and Christian organizations can set up banks where poor

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<sup>95</sup> Timothy Keller, 2012. “The Gospel and the Poor.”

<sup>96</sup> Ayodeji Fasoro, 2011. *Get Rich or Die Trying: Godly Ways to get out Poverty*. Ogbomoso: Johnny Printing Works, 12.

people can take loans for investments with little or no interest following the example of Spreydon Baptist Church in Christchurch, New Zealand. Under the pastoral leadership of Murray Robertson, the church set up what is called the Kingdom Bank. Loans are given to the poor at no interest.<sup>97</sup>

J. K. Oludahunsi adds to this by saying that it is so evident and scriptural that we cannot but have poor people among us. Though poverty is everywhere, it is more acute and perverse in Africa. Six factors contributing to poverty according to him are uncontrolled population growth, bad leadership, mal-administration, corruption, external influence and laziness.<sup>98</sup> A thorough check on these ills will alleviate poverty in Nigeria. In addition, “an effective economic and social transformation of any country requires enhancing her poverty alleviation scheme because sustainable development can only be achieved when the quality of life is improved upon. When a nation is hungry, meaningful development cannot take place.”<sup>99</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

As the World continues to pay lip services to the war against poverty, it is believed that the understanding and application of the Lukan perspective will awaken the ecclesiastical drive towards fighting the menace in our society. Nigeria, the most populous African country and the sixth largest oil producing country in the world, is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to Akintunde, “a country will remain poor in spite of her resources, if her leaders cannot organize the resources at their disposal for efficient and effective productive purposes.”<sup>100</sup> The need to urgently focus on women and children who are considered the major groups bearing the effects of poverty was emphasized by both Akintunde and Martina Atere. Atere maintained that from various statistics, “poverty has a female face.”<sup>101</sup>

While billions of Naira is received by the government daily from the sale of crude oil, the citizens of the country still eat from hand to mouth. As Abogunrin puts it, “the poor in our

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<sup>97</sup> John Ojo, 2007. “A Christian Theological Response to Poverty.” *Betfa: Journal of the Ogbomosho Circle*: Nos 5 & 6: 65.

<sup>98</sup> J. K. Oludahunsi, 2005. “Poverty in Africa: A Challenge To The Church.” *Ogbomosho Journal of Theology*, No 12, December : 90-94.

<sup>99</sup> J.O. Ojo and C.E. Asah, 2005. “Enhancing National Development Through poverty Alleviation Scheme: A Socio-Religious Perspective.” *Religions’ Educator*, vol.8, no2:43.

<sup>100</sup> Dorcas Akintunde, 2009. “The Impact of Poverty on Family Life in Africa.” Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho: March 26-27:5

<sup>101</sup> MartinaIyabo Atere, 2000. “The Impact of Poverty and Displacement on Women and Children.” *West Africa Association of Theological Institution*, Accra: Presbyterian Press: 56-57.

midst have the right to better life, good education, decent housing and the right to participate in the making of decisions affecting their destiny”<sup>102</sup>. Therefore, the church must be holistic in her approach to the problem of poverty. Policies aiding poverty in the land must be intensely challenged by the church without making the poor to be unduly dependent. It must be noted that the oppressed are not liberated by offering them daily bread, they must be taught the art of self sufficiency. The church must strive to get to the roots of the cause of poverty and hunger.<sup>103</sup>

Since Jesus was an advocate of a new social order,<sup>104</sup> the church must emulate her Lord by standing up for a new social order in our world, where justice, equity and human rights prevail. If Jesus were to live among us in this century, would he just organize prayers and revivals for the economically poor? Would he do more than praying and giving of alms? Would he go to the extent of empowering the poor so that they could be liberated? The church may not have all the material resources needed to fight poverty; nevertheless, she cannot be indifferent to the efforts of governments and non-governmental organizations to bring poverty to its barest minimum.

This researcher agrees with G. A. Oshitelu that the approaches of various religious bodies to poverty have either been wrong or inadequate.<sup>105</sup> This research intends to show that the Lukan perspective can assist the church to form biblically based, yet effective measures, in combating the global monster called poverty. According to Olusayo Oladejo, there is an urgent “need for appropriate biblical education, with the aim of a holistic liberation of the poor from the clutches of poverty.”<sup>106</sup> Adekunle Dada believes that the energy, human and material resources at the disposal of some religious leaders whom he classifies as “prosperity preachers” can be re-channeled for the campaign for social justice and fundamental human rights.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2003. “Jesus Sevenfold Programmatic Declaration at Nazareth. An Exegesis of Luke 4:15-30. From an African Perspective.” *Black Theology: An International Journal*, Vol. 1, Num 2, May , 248.

<sup>103</sup> Olusayo Oladejo, 2010. “Lukan Theology of the Oppressed and its Implications for Contemporary African Context”, 64.

<sup>104</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. “Jesus Pronouncements on wealth in the context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria.” Biblical Studies Series. A publication of *the Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies*. Ibadan No. 6: 239.

<sup>105</sup> G. A. Oshitelu, 2001. “Religion and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria:78

<sup>106</sup> Olusayo Oladejo, 2009. “An Exegesis of Deuteronomy 8:6-20 and Its Implications for Christian Understanding of Wealth in Nigeria.” *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, vol. 17,no.2,Jul:21.

In an age when the poor are ostracized, neglected and abused, this research aims to show how Jesus identified with the poor and encouraged the church to do likewise. Jesus came not just to preach the good news, but also that there may be good news to preach.<sup>108</sup> While this researcher believes that poverty should not be celebrated, undue emphasis on riches and wealth must also be checked. A man who is able to eat three meals daily, wear clothes and have a place to rest in the night should be told that he is not poor. While there is nothing wrong in seeking a better life, the poor of the earth (that is, the poor indeed) really exist and they should be helped out of every situation dehumanizing them. The approach of Jesus in Luke to the problem of poverty can assist the church, the Government and the NGO's in the war against poverty. According to Chris Manus, "the church and her sons and daughters have a duty to bring a passionate urgency to the great moral challenges presented by extreme poverty in a land full of resources."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Adekunle O. Dada, 2004. "Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian Context: A Medium of Social Transformation or an Impetus for Delusion?" *Orita, Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 36, 1-2 June & December:105.

<sup>108</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2008. "St. Matthew: The Gospel for All Nations." *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, vol. 26, No 1, April: 1.

<sup>109</sup> Ukachukwu Chris Manus, 2009. "New Testament Perspective on Poverty Eradication in the Nigerian Context: Reflections on Luke 4: 17b-19." Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho: March 26-27: 14.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE POOR AND POVERTY IN CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE OF LUKE

#### 3.1 Introduction

Right from the early chapters, Luke presents to his readers his concern for the poor, therefore the poor is a recurrent motif in his account. He used the story of the birth of Jesus Christ and the events that followed to show this. In two important respects, Luke differentiates between the birth of Jesus and that of John the Baptist. Firstly, the birth of Jesus is given a setting in world's history with the reference to a census which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.<sup>1</sup> This gives a cosmic significance to the birth of Jesus, foreshadowing the universalism disclosed in Luke 2:32. Abogunrin believes that it was not by accident that Luke linked three names of Gentile rulers to Jesus' birth. As far as he was concerned, Luke is accounting for the greatest and most important event in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the birth of Jesus took place in lowly circumstances. This fact is presented by Lukan reference to the manger and the presence of the shepherds who stood for the humble, meek and lowly, to whom Jesus chose to reveal His salvation.<sup>3</sup> In doing this, Luke clearly presented Jesus as the hope of the hopeless. The Lukan Magnificat shows this: "God fights on behalf of the poor and raises up the downtrodden."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars dispute whether Quirinius was governor of Syria at this time. Quirinius was certainly governor of Syria during the much-remembered later census of A.D. 6 A.D., when Sepphoris and some Galilean patriots revolted against the tax census of that year. This passage seems to refer to an earlier census while Herod the Great was still king (before 4 B.C.) (from IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament by Craig S. Keener Copyright © 1993 by Craig S. Keener. Published by InterVarsity Press.)

<sup>2</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1997. "The Lucan View of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the World From the African Perspective" *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 29, No 1-2, June and December: 20.

<sup>3</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary On the Greek Text*. C. D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1998. *The International Bible Commentary* edited by William R. Farmer. Minnesota: The Liturgical press: 1370.

### 3.2 The Lowly Birth - Luke 2: 1-7

The story of the birth of Jesus which is called the “Nativity” is what many people know of Christianity. Luke described this event in a paragraph of seven verses, although there are over one thousand verses in his Gospel. This does not suggest that his treatment of the birth of Jesus is in any way skimmed. According to Michael Wilcock, “Luke 2: 1-7 is a little jewel of economical storytelling, each of its many facets beautifully cut and showing brilliant depths.”<sup>5</sup> This paragraph (Luke 2: 1-7) can actually be divided into three parts namely,

- (a) The Historical Setting - the Census :1-3
- (b) The Journey to Davidic City :4-5
- (c) The Humble Birth of Jesus: 6-7.<sup>6</sup>

Luke began his account of the birth of Jesus with the phrase “in those days” (**vege,neto de. evn tai/j h`me,raij** ) which might be referring to the events after the conception and the birth of John the Baptist.<sup>7</sup> The date as Luke presents it here is inaccurate and this might be due to his ignorance of the exact date. He tied the birth of Jesus to the edict of Caesar Augustus who ruled until AD14 and was succeeded by Tiberius. (Luke 3:1) Gaius Octavianus who was bestowed with the title Augustus by the Roman Senate in 27 BC issued an imperial edict (**do,gma** ) that all the world should be registered. This census was for taxes and not for military service, since the Jews were exempted from the latter.<sup>8</sup>

A “dogma” here means a decree usually issued by a person whose authority cannot be questioned.<sup>9</sup> Kings or Governors in ancient time commanded such power. Many of them were so powerful that any word that came out of their mouth must be obeyed by their subjects who could not question them. The term governor (**ἡγεμονεύωντος**) here does not necessarily carry the notion of a present day governor of a state in Nigeria, for instance. The rulers of imperial provinces such as Syria at this time were actually called “legates or prefects.” The latter were also called “procurators”. Only more established senatorial

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Wilcock, 1979. *The Message of Luke in The Bible Speaks Today*. John R.W. Stott (ed.) Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On the New Testament*, Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Baker Books, 201.

<sup>7</sup> G. H. P. Thompson, 1979. *The Gospel According To Luke in the Revised Standard Version*. London: Oxford University Press, 64.

<sup>8</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary - Luke*, Vol. 24. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 104.

<sup>9</sup> J. Reiling and J.L. Swellengrebell, 1971. “ *A Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

provinces had “proconsuls.” Therefore, the term governor is not used here in a technical sense, but simply means a ruler.<sup>10</sup> Luke seemed to be referring to an earlier census when Herod the Great was still King that is before 4 BC. Thus, Luke’s first census was under Quirinius. This has led some scholars to think that Luke might have blended the two events or that Quirinus was governor of Syria at an earlier time.<sup>11</sup> This opinion is not fully supported by historical evidence.

There is a crux interpretation here due to historical problems. They are lack of an extra biblical reference to a universal census of the whole Roman Empire and the fact that Joseph together with Mary had to travel to his ancestral home for it, though women were exempted from such census.<sup>12</sup> As Howard Marshall puts it, “the requirement that each person should go to his own native place to be enrolled was contrary to Roman custom (which based tax on residence rather than ancestry) and also would be impractical.”<sup>13</sup> The Jews like the Yoruba people were fond of exaggeration, though Luke was not a Jew, but his informants were Jews. The whole world as expressed by Luke can be likened to the Yoruba usage of the statement, *Gbogbo aiye ti n’duro de o*, meaning *the whole world is waiting for you*. Actually when such a statement is made, it may be less than ten people that are waiting. Therefore, there is the possibility that the whole world in this text merely refers to the whole of the Jewish nation.

To the Jews, just as it is with most Africans, the place where a person is born or lives may not necessarily be his or her home town. One’s home is one’s ancestral town or village where one’s parents come from.<sup>14</sup> For Joseph living in Nazareth, Bethlehem remained the home. In addition, persons however with property in another district other than the one where they live have to go to such places to be registered. This might suggest that Joseph had a property in Bethlehem.<sup>15</sup> But this opinion should not be stretched to mean that Joseph had a house in Bethlehem. If he had, there would be no reason for Mary to be delivered of her baby in a

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<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary - Luke*, vol. 24. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>11</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background. New Testament. Luke*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Bible Version 5, Bible Soft, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*, vol. 24, 104.

<sup>13</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 1978. *The New International Greek New Testament Commentary*. The Gospel of Luke. Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 101.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1998. *The International Bible Commentary* edited by William R. Farmer. Minnesota; The Liturgical press, 1375.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1998. *The International Bible Commentary* edited by William R. Farmer, 1375.

manger. Their search for an inn also buttresses this view. On why Joseph had to go to his home town, an actual government edict from Egypt gives us a clue. One of the documents written on a papyrus discovered in the dust heaps of an Egyptian town in the deserts reads,

Gaius Vibius Maximas, prefect of Egypt orders; seeing that the time has come for the house to house census, it is necessary to compel all those who for any cause whatsoever are residing outside their districts to return to their own homes, that they may both carry out regular order of the census and may also diligently attend to the cultivation of their allotments.<sup>16</sup>

If that was the case in Egypt, it might well be in Judea. This document therefore proves the probable accuracy of Luke on this census.

In response to the edict, Joseph also **went up** (**avne, bh---**), a third person singular indicative aorist of **anabainw** to Bethlehem. This is due to the height of Bethlehem, compared to Nazareth. Bethlehem was 2,565ft above the sea level, while Nazareth was 1,830ft above the sea level.<sup>17</sup> “To be registered with Mary” (v 5) also has a problem of interpretation here. Usually, women were not required to register, although in Syria women had to register for a poll tax.<sup>18</sup> The question here is: did Mary follow Joseph to Bethlehem because she only wanted to accompany him as her husband, or because it was necessary for her to be there as stipulated by the edict? Or, did she travel to Bethlehem because of her desire to fulfil the Scripture (Micah 5: 2) or just to avoid a scandal? Or, was it due to God’s providence? In the opinion of this researcher, it was in accordance with God’s plan that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and whether by edict or personal volition, Mary must be there to deliver her baby.

Bethlehem has a rich historic heritage. It was at Bethlehem that Benjamin was born and Rachel the beloved wife of Jacob died. (Gen. 35:16-20) Bethlehem also has the history of the remarriage of Ruth and the exploits of David.<sup>19</sup> In the Old Testament, the city of David is the hill of Zion in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5: 7, 9) but in the New Testament, the description is used for Bethlehem (Luke 2:4). But some scholars believe that the application is Luke’s and is

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<sup>16</sup> William Barclay, 1975. *The Gospel of Luke*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*, Vol. 24, 104.

<sup>18</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*, Vol. 24, 104.

<sup>19</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 2007. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament- Luke*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.



erroneous since Bethlehem is just about four and a half miles from Jerusalem. The name Bethlehem which is popularly agreed to mean “the house of bread” is linked to David because it was there that he was brought up (1 Samuel 20:6). Therefore, the stage was set for the birth of a child to a descendant of David in the city of David.<sup>20</sup>

That there was no room in the inn might not refer to a lack of a place to lodge in the night, but lack of a suitable place for Mary to give birth to her son. It does not imply any rejection on the part of the popularly maligned innkeeper.<sup>21</sup> The inn/ **katalu,ma** here means a place to lodge, usually after a journey. The word clearly refers to a room, not to a house. But the usual word for inn is not **katalu,ma** but **pandocei/on** (10:34). Therefore, it is possible that **katalu,ma** here is referring to the guest room of a private house. That is why Klostermann thinks it indicates a common lodging place.<sup>22</sup> The inn of Bethlehem that is called “**Khan**” offers to the traveller simply the shelter of its walls and roofs. The Khan of Bethlehem had a memorable history of its own. In Jeremiah 41:17, it was called the inn of “Chimham”, the place of rendezvous from which travelers started out their journey to Egypt.<sup>23</sup>

Since the inns were overcrowded at the time of the census, Luke therefore gave us a description of the birth of Jesus in a manger. The manger was no doubt a feeding trough for animals though one should not see here any allusion to Isaiah 1: 3 and Jeremiah 14: 8. Luke’s presentation is at variance with the Proto Evangelism of James that suggests that Jesus was delivered in a cave in the Bethlehem region. In the latter, the birth is told briefly without any detail as to why the couple stayed in a stable. There is no account of a search for a place, an idea that leaves an impression that the couple later found a place in town. But Luke’s description, though very simple, is very informative. The setting presents a very humble beginning for the future Messianic King. The idea of a painless birth found in the account of some Church fathers cannot be substantiated with this text.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary*- Luke C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary*- Luke.

<sup>22</sup> J. Reiling and J. L Swellengrebel, 1971. *A Handbook On the Gospel of Luke*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington .

<sup>23</sup> H. D. M. Spence- Jones, 2004 *The Pulpit Commentary*: St. Luke vol. 1, C.D. Rom version, Bellingham: Logos Research Systems Inc.

<sup>24</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, Vol. 1: 206-208.

According to Luke, the baby Jesus was laid in a manger (**fa, tnh**), probably a feeding trough normally used for animals since this is the normal meaning of the word. The Lukan text does not specify that the animal room was a cave. Therefore, the idea that the Lukan manger and the cave theory can be linked together cannot be established from this text.<sup>25</sup> According to Warren W. Wiersbe, the Greek word **fa, tnh** in Luke 2:7, 12 and 16 is also translated **stall** in Luke 13:15. The word means more than a feeding trough. It can also mean an enclosure for animals. In the Holy Land today, one can still find ancient troughs similar to the one that probably cradled the infant Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Tasker also opines that it is possible that the birth actually took place in a very poor home where the animals share the same roof with the family. It could also be in the open air (likely in the courtyard of the inn) being a place where a manger would possibly be.<sup>27</sup>

Whether or not the word refers to a feeding trough or a cave, what seems to be paramount on the mind of Luke is the humble birth of Jesus. That is the paradoxical birth of the Messiah in a room reserved for animals. To Luke, the stable was the Messiah's first throne room.<sup>28</sup> Everything here is pointing to poverty, obscurity and rejection.<sup>29</sup> Also the chief concern of Luke in Luke 2:1-7 is to show how Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem. It was not an arrangement of Mary or Joseph, but divine providence ordered it. This story is indeed an example of God's providential government of the world of men.<sup>30</sup>

No doubt the detail given by Luke in verses 6 and 7, which are not found in other Gospels with regards to the lowly birth, builds up an impression of poverty. According to Luke, Joseph and Mary appeared to be in no position to secure suitable accommodation because they lacked the means at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. Today, many pregnant women are still delivered of their babies in their homes due to poverty because not many people can afford to pay the hospital bills.

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<sup>25</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, Vol. 1, 208.

<sup>26</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 2007. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament-Luke*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>27</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, 1974. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries - The Gospel According to St. Luke*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 83.

<sup>28</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, Vol. 1: 209: 83-84

<sup>29</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, 1974:83-84.

<sup>30</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According to Luke; A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*. Leicester: Inter- Varsity, 50-58.

But Tasker suggests that the word “inn” here might mean a room in a house as found in Luke 22:11 and there is also the possibility that Joseph and Mary left for the journey too late to arrive at a time when all the inns were already occupied.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, they could only afford a place in a manger due to poverty. This indeed is not just a creation of Luke but a tool used by the Evangelist to draw home his point that Jesus came to show concern for and his identification with the poor of this world.

### 3.3 The Visit of the Shepherds - Luke 2: 8-20

The story of the shepherds of Bethlehem is another unique material found in Luke. According to Luke, the announcing angel and the other angels appeared to a group of shepherds and heralded the birth of the Saviour. While the story on one hand illustrates Luke’s concern for the poor and the outcast, the shepherds became the first recipients of the good news of Jesus’ birth. This story is a challenge to the values of the religious leaders of Jesus’ time who despised the shepherds just because their work keeps them away from religious activities in the city.<sup>32</sup>

According to Craig S. Keener, that the angel found them watching over their flock in the night points to a warmer season, not a winter (when they would graze more in the day because of cold). This continues to raise doubts as touching December 25 which the Roman Christians adopted as Christmas day. This they did to counter a pagan Roman festival scheduled for that time.<sup>33</sup> The idea of a warmer season suggested here has led many scholars to put the birth of the Saviour at a time later than December that is between January and March. Since flocks were supposed to be kept in the wilderness (Mishrah, Baba Karma 7; 7, Talmud, Baba Karma 79b-80), the rabbinic rules show that the shepherds might have been caring for lambs which were destined for sacrifice during the time of Passover (Mishrah, Shekalm 7:4). The same rule speaks of the need to find a Passover offering within 30 days of

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<sup>31</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, 1974:83-84.

<sup>32</sup> It is opined by some scholars that the rejection the shepherds face in the society made them to choose the night to graze their sheep. But the fact that the Bible says they kept watch over their flock in the night might not mean they were grazing their sheep in the night. Their activities that night might just be a kind of watch care over their sheep to prevent them from attack since they were in an open field. Every wise shepherd will watch over his sheep both in the day and in the night. Moreover, there was always the sheepfold built for the protection of the sheep and goats as found in John 10. Consequently, the angel found them in the night watching over their flock not because they were rejected in the society, but because it was their custom to do so.

<sup>33</sup> Craig S. Keener, 2007. *The IVP Bible Background New Testament*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

the feast that is in February.<sup>34</sup> Probably, these were full time shepherds. Such were despised by Jewish religious leaders because by the nature of their work, they could not observe the Sabbath and other holy days and perform other religious duties.

The angels appeared and the glory of God terrified the shepherds. The Greek phrase, **καὶ ἐν φόβῳ ἰσχυρῷ ἐβόησαν** (v 9<sup>b</sup>) which is interpreted “and they were terrified” in some versions is better interpreted “they feared a great fear”. This is to show the intensity of the fear.<sup>35</sup> The shepherds (**ποιμῆνες**) in Israel according to rabbinic sources were despised and considered unreliable. They were usually described as men who tend the sheep. In some cases, such a rendering found in our text, **Καὶ ποίμῆνες ἦσαν ἐν τῇ κωρυφαίᾳ τῆς αὐθιγῆς ἀβραυλοῦ καὶ φυλάσσοντες τὰ πρόβατα τῆς νυκτὸς ἐπιτῆν ποιμῆνας αὐτῶν** (8) (*and there were men who keep watch over the sheep in that region who were keeping watch over their sheep in the night*) would amount to tautology because the rest of the sentence comes near to a description of a shepherd’s job.<sup>36</sup>

According to Robert Stein, one should not romanticize the occupation of shepherds. In general, shepherds were unclean and also dishonest people according to the standard of the Jewish law. They therefore represented the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came to die. Such were the first recipients of the good news of salvation. It is good news of great joy which is for all people. The birth of “Christ the Lord” is the good news. The combination of **Χριστὸς κύριος** which cannot be found anywhere else in the New Testament might be a deliberate action of Luke to differ from the frequently used **Χριστὸς κυρίου**. Bruce Metzger believes “that copyists, struck by the unusual collocation, should have introduced various modifications, none of which has significant external attestation.”<sup>37</sup>

One cannot but ask, what is the good news about the birth of Jesus? The background information on this text will give us two answers. Firstly, in the Mediterranean world, the birthday of a ruler was sometimes celebrated with a declaration of the blessings of such a

<sup>34</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According to Luke; A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton: Victor Books, C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>36</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1971. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, 1971. *A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

child. An inscription written on the birth of Augustus Caesar reads,

providence has brought into the world Augustus and filled him with a hero's soul for the benefit of mankind. A saviour for us and our descendants, he will make wars to cease and order all things well. The epiphany of Caesar has brought to fulfilment past hopes and dreams. (F. Danker, *Jesus and New Age*, p.24)<sup>38</sup>

According to this inscription, Augustus is celebrated here as one who fulfils ancient hopes and brings peace. These are considered as the blessings of his birth. Secondly, in Revelation, the heavenly choirs sometimes celebrate the future events as if they had already happened (e.g. Rev. 5: 9-10, 11:17-18, 18:2-3, 19: 1-2, 6-8). The songs of the heavenly choirs proclaim the benefits that are to come. What we have in 2:13-14 is a song of the heavenly choir singing glory to God in the highest and announcing peace on men on whom God's favour rests (v.14).<sup>39</sup>

Here Luke envisioned that the Gospel is for all people including the Gentiles and the lowly. It is a Gospel of peace on earth, the goodwill of God towards men. Peace here (**ειρηνη**) refers to the fullness of blessings which Christ brings and this is essentially synonymous with salvation. In Jewish culture from which Christianity came, peace “**שלום**” in Hebrew means basically wholeness, the normal state of life which corresponds to the will of God. Such wholeness would refer to:

1. the relationship of man to God
2. the relationship of man to man
3. the relationship of man with the natural world and
4. the relationship of man to himself.

This wholeness stands for wellbeing in contrast to evil in any form and it is a gift of God. Due to the sin of man, this wholeness was lost and thus became an eschatological hope (Zech. 9:9-10) and the Messiah is figured as the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 1986. *Reading Luke*. New York: Cross Roads, 32.

<sup>39</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 1986. *Reading Luke*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 1986. *Reading Luke*, 32.

According to Wiersbe, the Hebrew word for peace “ ~**Alv'** ” means more than a truce in a battle. The word has more to do with character than circumstances. At the time of the birth of Jesus, life was difficult just as it is with us in Africa today. At that time, taxes were high, unemployment was high, morals were slipping lower and the military men were in control. The philosophy of the Greeks, the Roman law, and even the Jewish way of life could not help the people. Then, God sent His Son to bring peace/wholeness.<sup>41</sup> The Messianic Salvation is described as the way of peace (1:79). The good news that Jesus preached was that of peace. (Acts. 10:36)

The matter of peace within oneself seems to be absent in Luke-Acts. This might be due to the focus of the Evangelist on the visible and external realities of life and also because the sources in which Luke depended have little concern for peace as an inward feeling. Nevertheless, the connection of Jesus' birth to the recovery of peace was a matter of great joy, which signifies the restoration of wholeness to life in every area with God, with other men and the physical world. “And on earth peace” therefore means more than inner or spiritual peace.

The peace of which the angelic host sang here is meant either for “men of goodwill or men of favour.” The expression **avnqrw,poij euvdoki,aj** is better translated “men of favour.” The expression actually means “men upon whom divine favour rests.” Metzger believes that “the difference between the AV,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward  
men,  
and the RSV,  
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with  
whom he is pleased!

is not merely a matter of exegesis of the meaning of the Greek, but is first of all one of text criticism. One question that must be addressed is, does the angelic hymn end with **εὐδοκία** or **εὐδοκίας**? The more difficult reading which is the genitive case has the support of the oldest representatives of the Alexandrian and the Western groups of witnesses. Therefore, the nominative reading can be considered either as “an amelioration of the sense or as a

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<sup>41</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 2007. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament-Luke*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

palaeographical oversight (at the end of a line εὐδοκίας would differ from εὐδοκία only by the presence of the smallest possible lunar sigma, little more than a point, for which it might have been taken.”<sup>42</sup>

While special favour might rest on some people, the good news of salvation is for all people (v.10). The shepherds whose testimonies were not reckoned with were the first recipients of the good news.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the favour/goodwill referred to in verse 14 does not actually belong to men but to God. God’s peace is not given only to those who seem to have good will, but to those who are receivers of God’s favour or good will.<sup>44</sup>

This divine visitation to the poor and the humble of Israel is in line with the Lukan theme in Luke 1: 48 to 53. God’s visitation of salvation comes to the humble and the hungry and not to the proud and the rich.<sup>45</sup> The people that were present at the birth of the Son of God were not the rich, the rulers, the high, the great nor the religious leaders of this world, but the shepherds on the low ebbs of the society. This can only be regarded as a fore-shadow of the subsequent theme of the grace of God shown to sinners and outcasts which runs through the Gospel of Luke. The Messianic Lord is the friend of sinners. This is truly the good news that will bring great joy.<sup>46</sup>

Luke did not mention the visit of the wise men from the East as found in the Gospel of Matthew. Luke might be ignorant of their visit or deliberately omitted the account just to be consistent with his theme. To him, the visit of the shepherds was more significant than that of the rich wise men. But not all scholars agree with this view. To Darrell Bock, the shepherds represent all people. While he agrees that the shepherds are often characterised as the representatives of the downtrodden and the despised of the society, yet he thinks that this view has two problems. In the first instance, the rabbinic evidence which gives us the view of the shepherds as the representatives of the hated is late and emerged from the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.

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<sup>42</sup>Metzger, Bruce Manning , 1994. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)*. London; New York : United Bible Societies, 111.

<sup>43</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 34.

<sup>44</sup>Walvoord, John F., Zuck, Roy B. 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books: 2:208.

<sup>45</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*, vol. 24: 111.

<sup>46</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 34.

Also, shepherds' motifs in the Bible are mostly positive. Psalm 23:1 pictures God as a Shepherd.

The New Testament in Luke 15: 4, Mark 6: 34, Matt. 18: 12, John 10, 1 Peter 2: 25, Heb. 13: 20 and Ephesians 4:11 portray shepherds in a favourable light. Even, the leaders of the church were described as shepherds of the flock of Christ. In the Old Testament, Abraham, Moses and David were all shepherds at one point or the other in their history. Therefore, Bock affirms that the presence of the shepherds cannot be considered as a negative point.<sup>47</sup> While this view cannot be debunked, there is no doubt that most shepherds who keep watch over the flock in the field like the ones that received the angelic visitation were of the poor class of the society. Hence, the Lukan theme of showing God's concern for the poor as presented here remains valid.

The story of the shepherds is not without some other historical problems. One wonders if the shepherds were really out in the field with their sheep. If the answer is yes, did they travel to see the baby Jesus with their sheep? But there is nothing suggesting this in Luke. If they went without their sheep, then may be not all of them actually went to see the baby for it will not be wise for them all to desert their sheep. It might be opined here that they sent representatives to see the baby Jesus.

Wiersbe, agreeing with this view added that the verb "found" **avneu/ran** means to find something after a search. The shepherds knew the signs to look for and where to find the newborn baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.<sup>48</sup> Being wrapped in swaddling clothes mentioned here was important, for this was the way the shepherds would recognize the infant for there could be more than one infant born in Bethlehem that same night (v.12). In addition, some infants were bound up in that way to keep their limbs straight and unharmed.<sup>49</sup> It might also be suggested that the manger was very close and therefore the shepherds needed not to leave their sheep behind or send representatives. If this view is taken, then the Lukan account of the shepherd's visit to the baby Jesus has no historical problem.

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<sup>47</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament, vol. 1: 213.

<sup>48</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 2007. The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament-Luke. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>49</sup> Walvoord, John F. and Zuck, Roy B., 1985. The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, II: Victor Books, S. 2:208.



The shepherds, whose testimonies were not permitted in court,<sup>50</sup> were both the first recipients of the good news and also the first human messengers proclaiming the arrival of the Saviour. Those who heard them according to Luke were amazed (**evqau, masan**). The theme of amazement at the proclamation of the Messiah runs throughout the Gospel of Luke. The Greek word for amazement (**qaumazw**) occurs in Luke 1:21, 63, 2:18, 34, 4:22, 8:25, 9:43, 11:14, 38, 20:26, 24:12 and 41. Two other words for amazement **existhmi** (Luke 2:47) and **ekplhssw** (Luke 2:48) were also used by Luke.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.4 The Humble Temple Dedication - Luke 2: 21-24

According to this text, Jesus' parents obeyed the law first by having the child circumcised when He was eight days old. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant that God made with Abraham, (Gen. 17) and it was required of every Jewish male. The Jews were proud to be God's covenant people and that was why they scornfully called the Gentiles "the uncircumcision." (Eph. 2:11–12) It symbolizes the great work that Jesus did on the cross in dealing with our sins. (Gal. 6:15; Phil. 3:1–3; Col. 2:10–11) In obedience to the commandment of God, Mary and Joseph gave Him the name Jesus, which means "Yahweh is salvation." (Matt. 1:21)<sup>52</sup>

Jesus' parents were presented as pious and law abiding Jews. They journeyed from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to fulfil the law of purification. The law stated that the mother of a new born male child would be unclean for seven days and still would be confined for additional thirty-three days making up a forty day abstinence from temple worship. After the forty days, she would offer a sacrifice of a lamb and a turtle dove as sin offering. If she could not afford a lamb, she was given the option of offering two turtledoves or two pigeons that is one bird as the burnt offering and the other as the sin offering (Leviticus 12:2-8).<sup>53</sup> Following the custom, the mother would lay her hands on the lamb or pigeons, and then a priest would

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<sup>50</sup> Warren, W. Wiersbe, 2007. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament-Luke*.

<sup>51</sup> Walvoord, John F. and Zuck, Roy B., 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, S. 2:208.

<sup>52</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W., 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, Lk. 2:21.

<sup>53</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament*, vol. 1: 234-235.

take them to the southwest corner of the altar as he wrung one bird's neck as a sin offering and burnt the other as a whole burnt offering.<sup>54</sup>

According to Robert H. Stein, the temple purification contains three elements. Mary's purification (Lev. 12: 6-8) which involved a sacrifice being offered at Nicanor's Gate in the court of women, the redemption of the first born son (Exo. 13: 1-2) which involved five shekels (Num. 3: 47-48) (which Luke did not mention) and the first consecration of the first born son (1 Sam. 1: 11, 22, 28).<sup>55</sup> Jesus became the object of the presentation in the temple. (v 27)<sup>56</sup>

Why did Luke specifically mention the sacrifice offered by Joseph and Mary? Was it purely for historical purpose? Was it to show that the parents of Jesus obeyed the law or to demonstrate their humble state? Scholars believe that he described the offerings to show that the young couple were not rich, so they offered a poor man's offering stated in Leviticus 12: 8.<sup>57</sup> Why it is also that Luke was silent on the visit of the wise men recorded by Matthew and the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? The description here suggests that Joseph and Mary were not yet in possession of those rich gifts at the time of the purification of Mary and the presentation of Jesus in the temple.<sup>58</sup>

It is believed that they went for the option of two young pigeons instead of a lamb and a pigeon because they could not afford it. This offering of the poor (Luke 2: 24) identifies Jesus and the couple with the very people whom Christ portrays himself as saving. But this should not lead one to erroneously conclude that Joseph and his wife lived in abject poverty for he had a trade as a carpenter.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, it was into an ordinary home that Jesus was born, a home where there were no luxuries, a place where every coin had to be looked at twice. It was a home where the members of the family knew all about the difficulties of making a living and above all the haunting insecurity of life.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Craig S. Keener, 2007. *The IVP Bible Background New Testament*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>55</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary*- Luke, vol. 24: 114.

<sup>56</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, 1971. *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington .

<sup>57</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary* - Luke, Vol. 24: 114.

<sup>58</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary* - Luke, Vol. 24:114.

<sup>59</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament*, vol. 1: 234-235.

<sup>60</sup> William Barclay, 1975. *The Gospel of Luke*, 19.

### 3.5 The Poor in the Teachings of John the Baptist - Luke 3: 1-14

The teachings of John the Baptist also give us a clue to what Luke considered as the right approach to the problem of the poor. To Luke, the appearance of John was one of the hinges on which history turned. John undoubtedly startled his countrymen with his preaching. Luke therefore used a six fold synchronisation to approximately date John's ministry.<sup>61</sup> He connected the public ministry of John to the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Roman Emperor), Pontius Pilate (Governor of Judea), Herod (Tetrarch of Galilee), Philip (Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis) Lysanias (Tetrarch of Abilene) and Annas and Caiaphas - (High Priests).<sup>62</sup>

It was customary to start historical narratives by dating them according to the years of kings and rulers both in the Old Testament and Greco-Roman era. In the Old Testament, prophetic oracles and books were introduced and dated along with the reigns of Kings (Isa.1:1, 6:1).<sup>63</sup> John's ministry according to Luke began in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar which might be A.D.29. Tiberius ruled over the Roman Empire from A.D. 14 to A.D. 37. <sup>64</sup> It must be noted here that if Luke used the Roman system of calculating rulers' dates, the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius would be between August A.D. 28 and August A.D. 29. But if he had used the Syrian dating, it would be from Autumn A.D. 27 to Autumn A.D. 28.<sup>65</sup> The Pontius Pilate that was mentioned here was appointed Governor of Judea in A.D. 26 and ruled till A.D. 36. He did not really enjoy the support of the Jewish people because he was opposed to them. Herod Antipas who ruled over Galilee from 4 B.C. to A.D. 3 was the one mentioned here. At about the same time, His brother Philip ruled to the east of the Jordan from 4 B.C. to A.D. 34.<sup>66</sup>

According to Tasker, the word "tetrach" means a ruler of a fourth part of a region, but it was also used for any petty prince as Herod the Great divided the region into 3 parts. The reference to Lysanias is a problem here. Tasker opines that Luke was making a mistake here

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<sup>61</sup> F.F. Bruce and H.L. Ellison, 1979. *A Bible Commentary For Today*. London: Pickering & Inglis, 1258.

<sup>62</sup> William Barclay, 26-27.

<sup>63</sup> Craigs Keener, 2007. *The IVP Bible Background New Testament*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>64</sup> John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton: Victor Books, C.D. Rom versions by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>65</sup> Lawrence O. Richards. 1996: *The Bible Readers Companion*. electronic ed. Wheaton : Victor Books, 1991; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, S. 654.

<sup>66</sup> Walvoord, John F. and Zuck, Roy B., 1985: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, S. 2:210.

though there appears to be some inscriptions that refer to a Lysanias who ruled as tetrarch in Abilene at a later time in the northern part of the region.<sup>67</sup>

While the mention of the Emperor, the Governor and Tetrarchs could be understandable, one wonders why there were two High Priests at the same time in Lukan history. This can be explained in the sense that Annas was the high priest from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15, before he was deposed by the Roman authorities. Eventually, his son in law, Caiaphas was placed in his position (AD 18-36). Therefore, Caiaphas functioned in the role of high priest, but the Jews who were not in support of the action of the Romans continued to recognise Annas as the rightful high priest.<sup>68</sup> This is because for the Jews, only death or terrible disease like leprosy could terminate the function of a high priest. According to Barclay, because of the Jewish acceptance of Annas at this period in history, although Caiaphas was the official high priest, Annas was the power behind the throne. That was why Jesus was brought to him after his arrest. Annas was the most influential priestly figure in the land.<sup>69</sup>

The list of the rulers at the time John's ministry began does more than chronology. It also helps us to perceive the status of John the Baptist. As Gooding puts it, "if these men possessed the highest authority in the land, John came with a higher authority."<sup>70</sup> At the time John appeared on the prophetic scene, no prophetic voice had been heard for the past 400 years. With a resemblance of Elijah in dress and manner, John came to the area of Jordan preaching and baptising as he announced the arrival of the kingdom of heaven and urged the people to repent. His voice was like the voice of a man crying in the wilderness, like the herald who went before a royal procession to make sure the roads were ready for the king. At this time, the nation of Israel was in a wilderness of unbelief and the roads to spiritual reality were twisted and in great disrepair. The corruption of the priesthood which led to the rule of two high priests at the time and the legalistic hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the scribes truly weakened the nation spiritually. The people therefore needed a voice from God and John appeared to be the faithful voice.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, 1974. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries-The Gospel According to St. Luke.*,93-94.

<sup>68</sup> John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton: Victor Books, C.D. Rom versions by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>69</sup> William Barclay, 1975. *The Gospel of Luke*, 27.

<sup>70</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According to Luke; A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*, 72.

<sup>71</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W., 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, Lk 3:4-20.

The Phrase “the word of God came to John”, (**evge,neto r`h/ma qeou/ evpi. VIwa,nnhn** ) can be literally translated “the word of God happened to John.” This phrase which occurs frequently in the Septuagint denotes the divine inspiration of a prophet by God who entrusted such man with a divine message or commission. It therefore implies that such a man, to whom the word of God comes, is under the power of God. It means more than the word being communicated to John.<sup>72</sup> Luke observed that the word came to John “in the desert.” (vs.2) This phrase is similar to that of the call of many Old Testament prophets to their specific assignments. Luke also stated earlier that John remained in the desert until his public appearance. (1:80) This might be no other than the Judean desert<sup>73</sup> as a member of the Qumran community.<sup>74</sup>

Darrell Bock wonders on the choice of **r`h/ma** and not **lo,goj** for the word of God that came to John. It was therefore suggested that **r`h/ma** means a particular message of God and not the entire scope of his message as **lo,goj** would do. It must also be noted here that the term **r`h/ma** is Lukan in the sense that nineteen of its twenty six usage in the Synoptic Gospels can be found in Luke. Thirty three out of sixty eight New Testament usage of the word can also be linked to Luke and Acts of the Apostles.<sup>75</sup> Apart from this, Schurmann relates **r`h/ma** to the specific call of God upon John to begin a ministry which is a verbal parallelism to Jeremiah 1: 1-4. God calls John to begin the ministry that was ordained for him and by this call; God’s word again comes to fulfilment.<sup>76</sup>

The preaching of John the Baptist just like that of Jesus and that of the early Church focused on “repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.” The interest of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Luke manifests in the sense that he did not cry out about the nearness of the kingdom. He left the preaching of the Kingdom to Jesus. Nevertheless, the Lukan account is coherent with

<sup>72</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1971. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>73</sup> Walvoord, John F. and Zuck, Roy B., 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL, Victor Books: S. 2: 210.

<sup>74</sup> Some scholars have suggested that John might have been adopted as a boy by the Essenes at Qumran. Because of this, he would have grown up in the wilderness next to the Dead Sea and near the Jordan River. Scholars believe this because the Dead Sea Scrolls describe some similarities between the activities of the Essenes and the activities of John’s later ministry. Both of them practiced a type of self-denial, and they removed themselves from the activities going on in Jerusalem. Both of them practiced baptism, and they associated this act with repentance and acceptance into God’s family. Finally, John and the Essenes were both very focused on God’s return to earth, which would signal the end of time. Even with all of these similarities, however, there are some significant differences between John and the Essenes. (Illumina.)

<sup>75</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament*, Vol. 1: 284-285.

<sup>76</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994, 284-285.

other synoptic Gospels as John called men to repentance.<sup>77</sup> Repentance (**metanoi, a**) (v 3) here literarily means “a change of heart/mind/way”. John declared, “every valley shall be filled and every mountain shall be made low.” (v 5) In John’s message, all mankind will see God’s salvation. (v 6) This is Luke’s emphasis on the universal nature of the Gospel. Worthy of note is the fact that this is not found in the parallel account of Matthew and Mark. The fact that Luke added Isaiah 40:3, Isaiah 40:4, skipped 40: 5<sup>a</sup> and then included 40: 5<sup>b</sup> is a pointer that this latter statement was important for his theological theme.<sup>78</sup>

John’s message for the leaders of the people was harsh and shocking to his listeners. He called them sons of vipers.<sup>79</sup> (v 7) Vipers, especially the Nicander's vipers were generally believed to eat their way out of their mother's womb. Therefore, for John to call the crowd "viper's children" was even nastier than calling them "vipers." The Jewish people believed that they were saved by virtue of their descent from Abraham, which made them the chosen people of God. The idea of raising people from stones in verse 8 also appears in Greek mythology. Some scholars suggested that John simply makes wordplay between the Aramaic words for "children" and "stones" here.<sup>80</sup>

The material in Luke 3: 10-14 is unique to Luke. Though the origin and tradition is uncertain, to regard the material as late because Luke spoke of soldiers in 3: 14 as Bultmann suggests might be incorrect. Luke certainly had access to old materials as found in Luke 3: 7-9 and 3: 10-14. Our periscope reveals to us how John explained the purpose of the baptismal rite. In this text, John did not discuss the mode of baptism, but only the spiritual and ethical response that one is to have as a result of being baptised.<sup>81</sup>

John insisted that those who claim to know God must bear good fruit (Luke 3: 9) (**karpō.n kalo.n**). The Matthean parallel in Matthew 3: 10 also reads **karpō.n kalo.n** though Syriac and Irenaeus omit **karpō.n**. . When this is compared with Jesus’ teaching about good fruit (**karpō.n kalo.n**) in Matthew 7: 19, it can be argued that perhaps the shorter reading is original while most witnesses might have added **karpō.n kalo.n** to accommodate John’s saying to the dominant teaching. On the other hand however, the

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<sup>77</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament*, Vol. 1:300.

<sup>78</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*, vol. 24: 123-134.

<sup>79</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994:309-310.

<sup>80</sup> Craigs Keener, 2007. *The IVP Bible Background New Testament*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>81</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament*, vol. 1: 300.

omission of **kalo.n** will improve the sense (every unfruitful tree) that is not only the one that refuses to bring forth fruit, but the one that bears bad fruit shall also be cut down. The overwhelming weight of the external evidence supports the Lukan rendering which is adopted by major scholars.<sup>82</sup>

With such a touching message “every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire,” the listeners who were cut to their hearts asked, “what shall we do then?” The use of **evphrw,twn** (ask) in verse 10, which is an indicative imperfect tense suggests that this question was asked repeatedly. The **ou=n** in the adjunct phrase **Ti, ou=n poi h,swmen** also implies that the question was asked as a reaction to what John had said. The question, what shall we do ( **Ti, ou=n poi h,swmen** ) is not a rhetorical one expressing despair, but a real one seeking for information on how to bear fruits that are good in God’s eyes. This has led scholars like Manobo and Kekchi to render the phrase. “What is God wants us to do”? And “what good shall we do?” respectively.<sup>83</sup>

In Luke 3: 10-14, the crowd, the tax collectors and the soldiers all wanted to know what should be done to give evidence of genuine repentance. In response to this, he told each group what to do. His response to each group relates to what was happening in the Jewish society. John told the crowd to be generous. A person should show his repentance by providing the necessities of life to his neighbour that is clothing and food. He taught that he who had two tunics ( **citw/naj** ) should give one to he who had none. The tunic was a shirt like garment, often worn next to the skin under the clothes ( **i`ma,tion** ). Often, people wore two if they had them.<sup>84</sup> The wearing of two tunics was sometimes criticized as over indulgence. By a concrete example, John emphasizes the need for generosity in the whole of life. Jesus makes an even more stringent demand from His followers when He called for selfless love.<sup>85</sup>

John’s reference to food (βρῶμα) here does not speak of abundance of it. As Swellengrebel puts it, “ the mere having of food brings with it the duty of sharing with somebody who has

<sup>82</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, 1971. *A Commentary On The Greek New Testament*, C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library, System, Washington.

<sup>83</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1971. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>84</sup> John F. Walrood and Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, C.D. Rom version.

<sup>85</sup> G.H.P. Thompson, 1979. *The Gospel According To Luke in the Revised Standard Version*. London: Oxford University Press, 78.

none and is starving.”<sup>86</sup> But the use of the plural **brw,mata** might suggest that John was speaking of someone who has more than a single meal.<sup>87</sup> Whatever might be the case, John insists that true faith is known in ones display of love and affection for the poor of the earth. According to Matthew Henry,

The gospel requires mercy, and not sacrifice; and the design of it is to engage us to do all the good we can. Food and raiment are the two supports of life; he that hath meat to spare, let him give to him that is destitute of daily food, as well as he that hath clothes to spare: what we have we are but stewards of, and must use it, accordingly, as our Master directs.<sup>88</sup>

John’s answer falls within the sphere of Jewish ideas. The Old Testament command is to love one’s neighbour. This is done by meeting essential needs of the poor (Job 31: 16-20, Isa. 58: 7, Ezekiel 18: 7). This is not the same thing as communism which was practised at Qumran, but a reflection of the Jewish idea of love which goes beyond the works of the law.<sup>89</sup> It is noteworthy today that in Israel, this idea is still in practice and has led to the establishment of communal communities referred to as *kibbutz*. The kibbutz system is a communal farm or factory that is run collectively and dedicated to the principle that production work and domestic work are of equal value.<sup>90</sup>

The second group that also wanted to know what should be done comprised the tax collectors. These were the toll collectors who were located at commercial centres like Capernaum and Jericho with the duty of collecting tolls, customs and tariffs. Because of their profession and actions, they were hated and despised by their fellow Jews. They were dishonest in the discharge of their duties and therefore were associated with sinners and prostitutes. Their witness was not acceptable in a court of law. John did not ask them to resign their job, but charged them to become honest.<sup>91</sup> He told them not to exact more than that which is appointed. They must do justice between the merchant and the government. They must not oppress the people in levying the taxes, nor in any way make them heavier or

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<sup>86</sup>J. Reiling, & J.L. Swellengrebel, 1993. *A Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*. New York : United Bible Societies, 169.

<sup>87</sup>I. Howard Marshal, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Exeter Eng.: Paternoster Press, 142.

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Henry, 1971. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Luke 3:11*. C.D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>89</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 1978. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. The Gospel of Luke, C.D. Rom version.

<sup>90</sup> “Kibbutz” *Encarta English Dictionary*. C.D. Rom version.

<sup>91</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*, vol. 24: 127-134.



more burdensome than the law had made them. Also, public revenues must be applied to the public service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons.<sup>92</sup>

The third group were the soldiers. There are various opinions about who they were. Some scholars believed they were soldiers of Herod Antipas who were on the march to a war in the Arabia Petraea. They appeared to have been caught at the fords of the Jordan by the religious wave that was surging there.<sup>93</sup> Some other scholars believe that they were more likely to be the auxiliary non-Jewish troops that Rome recruited from Syria.<sup>94</sup> Robert H. Stein opines that these soldiers were not Romans, but Jews whom Herod Antipas employed to assist the tax collectors in their duties.<sup>95</sup> Craigs Keener lends his voice to this by saying, “these were probably Jewish soldiers attached to the temple or to the court of one of the Jewish rulers. It was not likely that Roman soldiers would ask a Jewish prophet for counsel.”<sup>96</sup>

Whether the soldiers were Jews or non Jews, the fact remained that they had a privileged position over the general public and thereby used violence or false charges to rob them. John the Baptist told them to stop cheating people and be content with their wages.<sup>97</sup> Today, some governments in Africa are headed by military men mainly as a result of the failure of the civilian leaders.<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, such military men have not really helped in the situation found in their countries. Many of the military rulers by the power of the gun have plundered the resources of their nations far worse than their civilian rulers. As Abogunrin puts it, “the countries under their rule have faired poorly, becoming breeding grounds for multimillionaires who become generals in their thirties. Meanwhile the poor pick garbage in order to survive.”<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, the church seems to be silent about the plight of the people in such countries. As Oyeshile puts it, “religious bodies also have vital roles to play in ensuring that the government plays its role”.<sup>100</sup> The church should sing the praises of good

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<sup>92</sup> Mathew Henry, 2006. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database by Biblesoft, Inc.

<sup>93</sup> H.D.M. Spence-Jones. (Hrsg.), 2004. *The Pulpit Commentary: St. Luke Vol. 1* Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc.: S. 81.

<sup>94</sup> Craigs Keener, 2007. *The IVP Bible Background New Testament*. CD Rom Version, PC Study Bible Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>95</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary-Luke*, vol. 24:127-134.

<sup>96</sup> Craigs Keener, 2007.

<sup>97</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, 1974. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries-The Gospel According to St. Luke*. Leicester:96-97.

<sup>98</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1998. *The International Bible Commentary* edited by William R. Farmer. Minnesota; The Liturgical press:1378.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1998, 1378.

<sup>100</sup> Olatunji Oyeshile, 2009. “Poverty Alleviation and Democratic Government in Africa.” Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso: March 26-27:12

government and be ready to condemn bad government. The church must be the voice of the people.<sup>101</sup>

Unlike many religious leaders of our days, “John was a man of courage and he blended it with his strong voice in condemning evil and corruption of the Jewish society and the excesses of the imperial power which was exemplified in King Herod Antipas’ moral bankruptcy.”<sup>102</sup> According to Barclay, there are three outstanding things about the message of John. Firstly, it began with the demand that man should share with one another. This was a social gospel which laid it down that God is not happy with the man who is content to have much, while his brothers have too little or none. Secondly, John ordered men not to abandon their jobs, but work out their salvation by doing their job as it should be done. To John, the tax collector must be a good tax collector, while the soldier must be a good soldier. Each man should serve God in his daily work whether he is rich or poor. Thirdly, John’s message focused on the fact that he was only a forerunner; the King would still come and with him would come the judgement. Then, the chaff would be separated from the grain. John therefore preached for action and he indeed produced it. John indeed dealt with life, not just in theological subtleties.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the Lukan theme on the poor which is evident from the early chapters of the Gospel considering the lowly birth of Jesus in a manger, the choice of the humble shepherds as the first recipients of the good news, humble temple dedication of Jesus and the teachings of John the Baptist on the need to provide for the poor and not to impoverish them. Luke’s detail description of the place where Jesus was born in Bethlehem was to prove his point that Jesus identified with the poor and the humble right from his birth.

The presence of the shepherds who represent the humble and also the despised people of the land show to us the importance of ordinary, humble and needy people in God’s plan, to whom He chooses to reveal His salvation. This is expressed in the story at the onset and

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<sup>101</sup> Olatunji Olashile, 2009. “Poverty Alleviation and Democratic Government in Africa.”

<sup>102</sup> J.D. Gwamna, 2007. “ John the Baptist on Corruption: Drawing lessons for the Nigerian Context.” *Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies*. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises, 444.

<sup>103</sup> William Barclay, 1975. *The Gospel of Luke*, 29-30.

remains significant throughout the Gospel.<sup>104</sup> Also, the shepherds according to Luke were the first human beings to herald the birth of the Saviour after the angelic host had sang the first noel. The offering of the two pigeons instead of a lamb and a pigeon was the offering of the poor. Luke deliberately used this material to show that Jesus was not only born in a manger, but into an ordinary home where there were no luxuries of life.<sup>105</sup>

The teachings of John the Baptist were also used by Luke to portray his theme. John encouraged behavioural practices that uplift the society, promoting the right social conduct and a call the people to a life of sharing.<sup>106</sup> John the Baptist taught that the repentant should not worry about social separation or sacrifice, but care for the needs of their neighbours. The fundamental ethics here is that of unselfish approach to life which involves meeting the basic needs of the poor which are food and clothing.<sup>107</sup> No doubt, selfishness both at the high and low levels in Nigeria is a major factor aiding the scourge of poverty in Nigeria. As D.B. Usman puts it, “our political appointees and public officers who are drunk with the wine of corruption do not care if they divert money for civil servants’ salaries or money earmarked for rural electrification and road construction to their private use. It does not matter who goes hungry, naked or sick, provided they (public officers) are sumptuously fed, radiantly clothed and ostensibly rich.”<sup>108</sup> This ungodly act of corruption breeds poverty in the land. The church therefore must rise up to confront and expose such wicked leaders.

To John the Baptist, the mere having of food brings with it the responsibility of sharing with those who have none and are starving. According to Luke, a living eschatological hope does not ignore social concerns. It must provide a good ground for such concerns and motivation. Any faith that is pure must include concern for the poor and the unfortunate of the society. John did not demand his listeners to follow his particular “desert life-style” or rather the monastic life-style of the Qumran community. To him, the life of one waiting for the kingdom of God must be lived out in the world.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 1978. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 96-97.

<sup>105</sup> William Barclay, 1975. *The Gospel of Luke*, 19.

<sup>106</sup> Olatundun Oderinde, 2010. “John the Baptist’s Message of Repentance and the Re-branding Nigeria Project: A Re-Branding of Luke 3:7-14.” *African Journal of Biblical Studies*. An International Journal of Biblical Studies. Vol.28, no.2, October, 10-11.

<sup>107</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament*, vol. 1: 310.

<sup>108</sup> D.B. Usman, 2007. “John the Baptist’s Attack on Corruption: An Appraisal of Luke 3:10-14.” *Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies*. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises, 452.

<sup>109</sup> Robert H. Stein. 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*. electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, Logos Library System: 133.

The stories we have considered appeal to human hearts. The shepherds cared for their sheep, Mary and Joseph cared for their new baby and the angelic choir broke into the darkness of the night heralding the long awaited message; all to assure the humble poor that regardless of what the governments of the world might be doing, God cares for them. That was why the Son of God was born in a manger, not in a palace.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Tokunbo Adeyemo (Ed.), 2006. *African Bible Commentary*. Kanye: World Alive Publishers, 1208.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE POOR AND POVERTY IN SOME SELECTED SAYINGS OF JESUS IN LUKE

#### 4.1 Introduction

Jesus gave a new motivation to the prophetic protests against injustice and poverty in Israel. He considered the presence of poverty as the scandal caused by the greedy rich members of the society.<sup>1</sup> At the time Jesus lived; the Roman government had looted the East and established a kind of feverish commercial development. For the first time in history, a single administration was in charge of the vast territory. Also, to a considerable level, there was local self government, though the Roman codes still prevailed among the people. Wherever one turned, the efficiency of Rome could be distinctly seen. The order of Rome was heavy on Palestine just like other States. But while other States were forced into prosperity by accepting the control of Rome, the Jews were restive. Rather than seeing prosperity, they could only find policemen, soldiers, and tax collectors.<sup>2</sup>

The little prosperity that could be seen at the period was not shared by all classes in Palestine. Among the Jews themselves, there was a great economic inequality but the religious leaders were more affluent. At this time, the great mass of those who lived in Jerusalem were poor, without any hope of improvement. Many of the people had little food to eat, few clothes to wear and they lived in poor houses.<sup>3</sup> It was in such a political and economic situation that Jesus made some specific statements about the poor and poverty. Jesus directed how those who truly follow Him should treat those who are less privileged in the society. The selected sayings of Jesus in this chapter reveal His concern for those who through political or social adversity found themselves going through economic pains. Jesus certainly has a message for both the poor and the rich.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Enuwosa, 1998. "The origin of poverty in Biblical Israel in the Context of Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria." *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, vol. 23, nos 1&2, April & October, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Shailer Matthews, 1971. *Jesus on Social Institutions*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> Shailer Matthews, 1971, 17-18.

#### 4.2 “The Gospel to the Poor” (εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς) - Luke 4: 18

This saying of Jesus is lifted from His kerygmatic declaration in the Synagogue at Nazareth. Many have considered this saying as His manifesto at the beginning of His public ministry. Before one can meaningfully discuss it, some background issues that led to the statement must be examined.

Jesus went to a Synagogue in Nazareth where He had been brought up according to Luke 4: 16. It is likely that Jesus lived mainly in Nazareth till He was 30 years old, though when He began His public ministry, the house of Peter in Capernaum became His abode.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Jesus began His public ministry in the Synagogue in His home town. It was during the Babylonian captivity after the destruction of the Temple that the Jews established Synagogues as local centres of worship. Many years after, even when the Temple was rebuilt and Temple worship restored, Synagogue worship continued.<sup>5</sup> Luke noted here that Jesus had made it a custom to attend services in the Synagogue. In the Synagogue, members participated in the service and many of them were frequently asked to read the Scripture and possibly make appropriate remarks. Paul also did some of his preachings in Synagogues.<sup>6</sup>

According to Paschall, “in a Synagogue service any visitor might be invited to read a scripture passage or to bring a sermon.<sup>7</sup> The custom of reading the Scripture publicly according to later Jewish tradition dates from the time of Moses. This is supported by a rabbinic saying: “Moses our Master, ordered the Israelites to read in the law publicly, on the Sabbath, and on the second and fifth days of the week, in the morning; so that they might not be three days without hearing the Law and Ezra ordered, that they should read so at the evening sacrifice, every Sabbath, on account of those that sit in the corners of streets; and also he ordered, that three men should read on the second and fifth days of the week, and that they should not read less than twenty verses.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Adam Clarke, 2007. *Adam Clarke's Commentary*. C.D. Rom version, P.C. Study Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>5</sup> C. F. Pfeiffer and E. F. Harrison. (Eds), 1962. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1036.

<sup>6</sup> C. F. Pfeiffer and E. F. Harrison. (Eds), 1962. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

<sup>7</sup> H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Eds) 1972. *The Teachers Bible Commentary*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 640.

<sup>8</sup> John Gill, 2011. *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*. Internet File. [www.gill.biblecommenter.com/luke/4.htm](http://www.gill.biblecommenter.com/luke/4.htm). Retrieved on March 20, 2011.

The Lukan account here is unique for it says it was Jesus' custom to attend the Synagogue. Many scholars have explained how services were conducted in the Synagogue and shown at what point Luke agrees with their views. But this passage is of critical importance for the study of the Synagogue because it is one of the earliest descriptions of a Synagogue service that we have. As for the custom of the period, Luke becomes an authority.<sup>9</sup>

Usually, after the liturgical statements in the Synagogue, the president would take a scroll of the scripture from an ark, untie the ropes and he call on someone to read. On Sabbath days, seven persons might be called successively to read some portions of the scripture with none of them reading less than three verses. The reading of the law was followed by the reading of a passage from the prophets, another from the writings and a sermon or comment would follow this. Jesus read a portion of Prophet Isaiah and expounded it. The fact that Jesus stood up (*ἀναγνῶναι*) shows us that He was summoned by the Superintendent of the Synagogue to read.<sup>10</sup> It was the custom of the Jews to read while standing, though they might preach while sitting (Matt. 13: 54, Mk 6: 2). It was unlawful for a Jew to lean against anything while reading the Scripture.<sup>11</sup> The Scripture was always read in Hebrew though the reader or someone else would have to translate it into Aramaic.<sup>12</sup> Jesus read from Isaiah 61: 1-2 and also from Isaiah 58: 6. In its textual form, the passage is very close to the Septuagint because it omitted the repeated references to the divine name. The call to preach the good news is very important to Jesus' mission (the 1<sup>st</sup> infinitive) *εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς*. This prophetic statement fits greatly into Luke's emphasis on the nature of Jesus' mission. *Εὐαγγελίσασθαι* recalls Luke 3: 18 and it puts a note of continuity between Jesus and John the Baptist.<sup>13</sup>

The sermon of Jesus at the Synagogue of Nazareth was indeed programmatic. It gives the right introduction to the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Certainly, no responsible person would accept Christ's claim here without examining the evidence. In this sermon, Jesus claimed that He was the Messiah, the anointed Servant of the Lord with the great assignment

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<sup>9</sup> R.V.G. Tasker, 1977. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary*. Leicester-England: Inter-varsity Press, 105-106.

<sup>10</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, 2011. *Vincent's Word Studies*. Internet File. [www.vws.biblecommenter.com/Luke/4.htm](http://www.vws.biblecommenter.com/Luke/4.htm). Retrieved on March 20, 2011

<sup>11</sup> Adam Clarke, 2007. *Adam Clarke's Commentary*.

<sup>12</sup> RVG Tasker, 1977. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary*. Leicester-England: Inter-varsity Press, 106. Aramaic and Hebrew are closely related. Aramaic is a dialect of Hebrew just as Ekiti and Ijesa Yoruba are dialects of Oyo Yoruba language.

<sup>13</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament - Luke 1: 1-9 : 50*. Grand Rapids- Michigan: Baker Books, 404-407.

of preaching the good news to the poor.<sup>14</sup> The passage Jesus read from Isaiah was already quoted at the Qumran community document with reference to the specific work of the one they referred to as the “Teacher of Righteousness.” It was found in Barn 14: 9 and also in Melchizedek document (11Q Melch 6-9). The portion Jesus read from Isaiah 61: 1ff was not without certain changes. A typical example is the omission of **kai. h`me,ran avntapodo,sewj** which means “ the day of vengeance of God.” This was deliberately omitted by the Evangelist probably to stress the grace of God.<sup>15</sup>

In the original context, the passage refers to the self consciousness of the prophet that is called by God to make known the goodness of God’s intervention to help His people. This is expected through the use of various metaphors. In spite of this, the passage uses a language and style common to the earlier Servant of Yahweh passages and it might have been interpreted in that light.<sup>16</sup> But in Luke, the most important thing is not the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, but the functions of the Servant of the Lord which were now being fulfilled in Jesus who was already anointed by the Holy Spirit for that purpose. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, (3: 22) that is anointing. God anointed him (**cri,w**) (Acts 4: 27, 10: 38) and according to Isaiah 61, the anointing was clearly that of the Messianic figure. Schurmann opines that for Luke, the idea of a Messianic figure of Jesus cannot be ruled out of this passage. Marshall also postulates that the concepts of an eschatological prophet and that of the Messiah merge in this passage.<sup>17</sup>

According to Luke, Jesus, the Messiah is the bearer of the good news for the afflicted and the oppressed. The poor, the captives and the blind are words used to describe the spiritual bankruptcy and distress of the people to which Jesus brought the good news.<sup>18</sup> Key to the mission of Jesus is to proclaim the good news to the poor (**εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς**). The reference to the poor here is very significant. The use of the Greek word (**ptwco, j**) here is best described as a *soteriological generalisation*. This means that it refers to those who most often responded to Jesus or those who are open to God (1 Cor. 1: 21-29). The use of

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<sup>14</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According To Luke, A New Exposition Of The Third Gospel*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, p. 81-82.

<sup>15</sup> I. Howard Marshal, 1978. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary. The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids: Michigan: The Paternoster Press, 182-184.

<sup>16</sup> I. Howard Marshal, 1978.

<sup>17</sup> I. Howard Marshal, 1978.

<sup>18</sup> Clifton J. Allen & Others (Eds), 1970. *The Broadman Bible Commentary, volume 9-Luke-John*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 45.



**tapeinou, j**, meaning the humble in Luke 1: 52 is also parallel and significant to this purpose. It reveals that a covenant relationship is part of the background to this description. The significance of the use of **ptwco, j** in Luke is also found in the beatitudes.<sup>19</sup>

It must be noted here that even in Luke 6: 23, the benefits of Jesus' message are not given carte blanche to the poor. The receiving of benefits is tied to their developing a proper response to Him. Luke 6: 32 is therefore worded in such a way that anyone whether rich or poor who comes to Jesus can receive the blessings He offers. Owing to this general invitation, the description of the poor in Luke 4: 18 must be seen as a generalisation, not as an exclusive reference. The poor are the ones who sense their needs in the greatest way and respond directly with all honesty to Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

Joel B. Green answering the question, "who are the poor?" observes that numerous attempts have been made to limit the word to the spiritually poor. He also notes that the materialist-oriented interpretation linking the word to the economically poor cannot be ruled out. To him, both interpretations are derived from the definitions of the poor based on ancient Mediterranean culture and the social world of Luke-Acts. In the culture of the time, the status of a man in the society was not so much a function of economic realities, but it also greatly depended on a number of other elements like education, gender, family, religious purity, vocation and heritage. For Luke, a diminished status based on these other elements might lead to one being designated as poor.<sup>21</sup>

David Gooding stated that there is no reason why the term "poor" among other things should not mean the financially poor.<sup>22</sup> Certainly their material deprivation often results into their spiritual openness, sensitivity, humility and quick response to God's message of hope. It is crucial here therefore that the poor are singled out here as the appropriate audience of the good news.<sup>23</sup> To show the inclusiveness of this term, just as Christ was concluding His sermon, Luke cited two people who received God's grace. One of them was a poor widow in Luke 4: 26. The second person was a commander of the Syrian army, a noble man whose

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<sup>19</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament- Luke 1: 1-9 : 50* , 408-409

<sup>20</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 210-211.

<sup>22</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According to Luke, A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*, 81-82

<sup>23</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994.

poverty was not in terms of lack of money, but his helpless battle against leprosy (Luke 4: 27). In addition, Luke presented the financially rich tax collector as another beneficiary of the Gospel to the poor. His own poverty was not financial, but both moral and spiritual. No doubt, this is the pattern the Lukan Gospel followed as touching the term “poor.” It covers poverty of every kind though above all, spiritual poverty is significant since that is the kind from which all men alike suffer.<sup>24</sup>

It must be noted that Jesus mission is directed to the poor who are defined not in subjective, personal, economic or spiritual terms only, but also in holistic sense of those who are for any socio-religious reasons relegated to any position outside the boundaries of God’s people. By directing His good news to them, Jesus was ignoring and confronting the social boundaries asserting the fact that those outsiders are also the objects of God’s grace. Others might regard them as people beyond the reach of God’s mercy, but Jesus opened the way of salvation to them so that they also can become members of God’s family.<sup>25</sup>

Reasoning along this line, Darrel Bock states that the church of Jesus is also called to minister to such people and must be sensitive to their plight and poverty. It is a major call for Christians to meet the needs of the poor and to love their neighbours. The church is expected to express her love concretely to all (Luke 10: 26-28, 36-37). A typical example is that of the collection for the Jerusalem saints by the churches outside Jerusalem (Rom. 15: 25-29). This shows that this responsibility knows no racial or regional boundaries. The church is the place where such concern must be visible, though other human agencies might also be used of God as additional vehicles of such concern.<sup>26</sup>

A typical example is the collections many churches made for the victims of religious crises in the northern part of Nigeria, especially Jos and Maiduguri. A church even made donations to a Muslim Community. What a show of Christ’s love and concern! During the last earthquake that struck Haiti, many churches all over the world including Nigeria made collections that were sent to that country to relieve the pains of the people there. This is indeed the good news to the poor in their dire time of need.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> David Gooding, 1987.

<sup>25</sup> David Gooding, 1987.

<sup>26</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Rev. Dr. (Mrs.)Titi Eniola on February 26, 2013 at Nigerian Baptist Convention Head Office, Baptist Building, Oke Bola, Ibadan. She is currently the Director, Social Ministries Department.

In what sense did Jesus preach the good news to the poor? The following clauses and phrases in Luke 4: 18 reveal this to us. His message was a message of release to the captives. The Greek word for release/liberty on both occasions in Luke 4: 18 is **α;fesi;j**. The verb of the noun covers a wide range of meaning, i.e. *to send away, discharge, let go, release, allow* and it can also mean *to forgive*. Forgiveness is to release someone from his debts, guilt, obligations and deserved penalties. Therefore, the meaning of the word will largely depend on the sense in which the term is also employed.<sup>28</sup>

The Greek word for captive (**αιvcma, lwtoj**) means in the literal sense a war-captive. It is not the right word for someone who is imprisoned for a crime or political offence. The right word for such is **de,smio;j**. Therefore, Luke here speaks of freedom for those who are under the yoke of the devil, captured by sin and the love of money (7: 41-50, 8: 26-39, 19: 1-10). Another statement in the passage “is the recovery of sight to the blind.” Certainly, this does not speak only of the physically blind, but also of the spiritually blind. Therefore, the two arms of Jesus’ Gospel to the poor according to Luke are the release of the captive and the recovery of sight to the blind.<sup>29</sup>

According to Darrel Bock, the setting of liberty for the oppressed (**ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει**) which is in the third infinitive was copied from Isaiah 58: 6. While a prophet could proclaim the message of liberty for the oppressed, only a deliverer can bring deliverance. Here, the Lukan theology makes the point very clear. That was why John spoke of Jesus as “the stronger one” in Luke 3: 15-18. Jesus is indeed greater than the prophets and His concern for the poor was far more than that of the prophets.<sup>30</sup> Luke through this passage desired to impress on the mind of his readers the true character of the Messiah he knew all Israel were expecting. Jesus in Luke was indeed the friend of the poor, the physician of the sick and the deliverer of those in bondage.<sup>31</sup>

Luke 4: 18 undoubtedly address the grinding social conditions of the Jews in Luke’s days. Jesus is the anointed One to preach the good news to the poor. The people’s condition had

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<sup>28</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According to Luke, A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*, 82.

<sup>29</sup> David Gooding, 1987.

<sup>30</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament*, 409.

<sup>31</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1986. *Expository Thoughts on Luke Volume 1*. Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth, 116-117.

become so degenerated that many were rendered poor, destitute and beggars in their own land. Luke therefore portrayed Jesus as the One sent to deliver the oppressed who were suffering mainly from the hands of the rich and powerful.<sup>32</sup> This is the message the contemporary church in Nigeria must also proclaim. The poor in the country are indeed suffering and are under the oppression by the rich. The church and her members “have a duty to bring a passionate urgency to the great moral challenges presented by extreme poverty in a land full of resources.”<sup>33</sup>

As Abogunrin puts it thus,

the sevenfold declaration shows that the Gospel must be preached not only by word of mouth, but by selfless activity. That is what Jesus the Saviour did, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, giving hope to the hopeless, warmly receiving those rejected by the society and making them new people. The message of the Gospel will be more meaningful if the Church maintains its prophetic voice in Africa, speaking as the mouthpiece of the oppressed, the down-trodden, the poor, the homeless, the hungry and proclaiming peace in war torn areas. The message must be followed by concrete examples in supplying these needs as much as possible. Jesus provides total liberation. This is the only way the message can become meaningful in Africa and in the rest of the world.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4.3 “Blessed Are You Poor” (Maka, ríoi oi` ptwcoi, ) Luke 6: 20

The Sermon on the plain can be seen as the shorter version of the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew from chapter five to seven. Unlike Matthew who said Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw the crowd, Luke here declared that Jesus lifted His eyes and saw His disciples. The use of **evpai, rw** (to lift up) here suggests that what follows was meant for the disciples. The gesture of Jesus here might imply that He was standing like a prophet who is addressing his followers (Luke 6: 17). But there is no reason why He might not have preached this sermon while sitting down. The use of **e;legen** (the indicative imperfect active third person singular of the verb **le, gw** is appropriate at the beginning of a discourse that is lengthy (3:7).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ukachukwu C. Manus, 2009. “New Testament Perspective on Poverty Eradication in the Nigerian Context. Reflections on Luke 4: 17b-19” Paper presented at Theological Education Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary: Ogbomoso: March 26-27: 13-14.

<sup>33</sup> Ukachukwu C. Manus, 2009, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1997. “The Lucan View of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the World From the African Perspective” *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 29, No 1-2, June and December, 33.

Jesus looked at His disciples and He pronounced a blessing on the poor - 'blessed are you poor' (**Maka,rioi oi` ptwcoi,**). This passage is not suggesting that Jesus was blessing poverty, because poverty can be a curse considering Old Testament passages like Proverbs 30: 8-9, Ecclesiastes 2 :26, Proverb 13:18 and Proverbs 23:21. Through this statement, Jesus was not pronouncing blessings on a social class since the gospel he preached did not categorise a social status above another. The poor here might be referring to the disciples themselves who were poor because they were without resources. They relied on God and they must continue to rely on Him since they had nothing of their own. This is the reason why the poor in the Old Testament were often seen as pious and humble contrary to the rich who were always self reliant.<sup>36</sup>

There is no doubt that there are striking resemblances and differences between the Lukan and Matthean account of this incident. This has led many to conclude that both Luke and Matthew reported one and the same event and that Luke simply gave an abridged form of what Matthew chose to report at length. One must note here that there is no sufficient ground for this assertion.<sup>37</sup> Pfeiffer considers both the similarities and differences in the two accounts. He observes that Luke unlike Matthew balanced four beatitudes with four woes instead of giving nine like Matthew. He also states that Luke omitted the discussion of Jesus on the application of the law and some other teachings on prayer. He opines that a few passages in this sermon are paralleled elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke. To him, there are no contradictions in the two accounts. It is just a matter of difference in the arrangement of materials.<sup>38</sup>

Darrel Bock believes that the issue of sources of Luke 6: 20-26 is a complex one and scholars have not been able to resolve it. Plummer (1896:176) agrees with this opinion stating that this is so because there is so little information to work with. This caution is appropriate as there are five differences between the account in Luke and Matthew.

- 1) Luke has four beatitudes while Matthew has eight.

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<sup>35</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 1978. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Paternoster Press, 243-248.

<sup>36</sup> Leon Morris, 1974. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries- Luke*. Leicester, England: Inter-arsity Press, 139-140.

<sup>37</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1986. *Expository Thoughts on Luke Volume 1*. Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 176-177

<sup>38</sup> Charles F. Pfeiffer & Everett F. Harrison (Eds), 1962. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1039.

- 2) The order of the beatitudes common to the two differs, with Luke having Matthew's beatitudes in this order - 1, 4, 2 and 8, that is blessed are the poor, hungry, grieving and persecuted.
- 3) The addressees are also different. Luke uses the second person while Matthew has the third person.
- 4) The character of those that were addressed also differs slightly. A typical example is where Luke simply refers to 'the poor', Matthew mentions 'the poor in spirit'. Where Matthew also has "hunger and thirst for righteousness", Luke speaks of those who "hunger now". These differences have led some scholars to see Matthew's beatitude as that of wisdom teaching while that of Luke is more of eschatological promise.
- 5) The Lukan beatitude includes four woes which are not found in the account of Matthew.

These glaring differences have made some scholars to think that Luke and Matthew might not be referring to the same event or teaching of Jesus.<sup>39</sup>

A critical approach to this problem is to suggest that Q's core sermon contained the four beatitudes. Scholars like Fitzmyer, Bovon and Bultmann are of this school of thought. But Erns argues that both blessings and woes were present in Q. He believes that Matthew added a few more beatitudes while Luke formed the woes as a parallel to his four beatitudes. As for the difference between the second person and the third person, scholars see this in different ways and this is not tied to the source of the two Evangelists. Fitzmyer and Bultmann believe that Luke deliberately changed the third person to a second person which is more direct.<sup>40</sup>

The difference between Matthew's statement about the poor in spirit and that of Luke must be seen in the light of the fact that Luke might have had the original wording or something close to it. Matthew might have paraphrased the reference to make more explicit the intended spiritual force.<sup>41</sup> Luke left it the way it was because it is in line with the theme and motif of his gospel. Luke had a little introduction in 6:20a to show that the main audience of Jesus' teaching were the disciples not the crowd though the sermon does not only relate to them.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 549-550.

<sup>40</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 550.

<sup>41</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 550-552.

<sup>42</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 571.

The first beatitude in Luke 6:20 are to the poor. The idea of beatitude (**maka, rioj**) needs some examination here. According to Clifton J. Allen, beatitudes are common in ancient literatures among the Greeks and Hebrews. However, that of Jesus are characterised by unusual originality and force. In this sermon, the beatitudes are stated in the form of a paradox. The blessed are the poor, the sad, the hungry and the persecuted. This speaks of the non-materialistic eschatological ground for blessedness. According to this beatitude, to be blessed is not to have long life, health, wealth and other benefits, but to inherit the kingdom of God. The first of the four begins with this idea while the remaining three also interpret what it means to inherit the Kingdom of God.<sup>43</sup>

In Luke 6: 20-23, the form of the beatitudes consist of “blessed” (**maka, rioj**) and this was followed by who is blessed and why such a person is blessed. The beatitudes here do not confer a blessing; rather they extol the good fortune coming the way of someone for that particular reason. The beatitude here is not an exhortation to be or not to be, to do or not to do something, but it speaks of an approval of a person on the basis of some good fortune.<sup>44</sup>

The word **maka, rioj** used here expresses the happy, the untroubled state of the gods and then also more generally the happiness of the rich who are free from care. In the Septuagint, the word is " *asre* " which is the plural of " *eser* " which means *luck* or *happiness*. This happiness is the result of the divine salvation and this has made the blessing to be predicated on salvation. Therefore the reference is to the spiritual joy of a person who already has salvation.<sup>45</sup> Another Greek word for “blessed” in the New Testament is **euvloghto, j** (1: 68) which is used to translate the Hebrew word **barak**. This word speaks of God’s favour to men which is shown in material or spiritual blessings. The word is also used of blessing God or praising Him. In the New Testament, the corresponding words are used more in the sense of praising God while **maka, rioj** is rarely used for God, but **euvloghto, j** is often used. In the Old Testament, **barak** and *asre* are synonymous, but the latter tends to replace the former in the course of time.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Clifton J. Allen and Others (Eds), 1970. *The Broadman Bible Commentary - Volume 9- Luke –John*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 58.

<sup>44</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 1982. *Reading Luke. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 69-70.

<sup>45</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Paternoster Press, 248.

<sup>46</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 248.

Declaring someone blessed, happy or fortunate was a common expression in the ancient world. Examples of such are evident in Egyptian, Greek and Jewish cultures. Being blessed here speaks more in the sense of inner happiness for good fortune. H. Betz noted four cultural events that could produce such happiness namely: 1. religious context, 2. exhortations of wisdom, 3. secular fortune and 4. satire. In the Old Testament, the idea is that of a joy a man has when he experiences fortune from the divine. On such occasion, it is always the person that is blessed, not things or state of things. One could find traces of such blessings in the book of Psalms and wisdom literatures. Most of the time, men are exhorted to be of good behaviour which God in turn honours either immediately or later. Most of the time, the promise of blessing comes first, followed by its condition. But the second person beatitude can be seen in Deuteronomy 33: 29, Isaiah 32: 20 and Psalm 128: 1-2.<sup>47</sup>

It remains a matter of great dispute whether the second person beatitude of Luke or the third person beatitude of Matthew is a true representation of Jesus' teaching. Scholars like Dibelius, Manson, Percy and Schweizer are in favour of Luke, while some other scholars like Bultmann, Klostermann and Wrege are in support of Matthew. Schurmann, trying to bridge the gap thinks that the materials from which Luke wrote his Gospel had the second person while Jesus actually preached using third person.<sup>48</sup> One wonders why Luke's material would have the second person beatitude when Jesus actually spoke in third person. If one considers the fact that both Matthew and Luke drew from similar sources, then Schurmann's opinion may not be correct.

Luke's first beatitude "blessed are you poor" goes beyond the second person controversy. It is presented in the present tense and that means that the blessing here is not futuristic, but something that already exists. It also sets the stage for all other statements that follow this which indeed have futuristic ideas. When one takes this into consideration, Jesus brings together the present and the future in the form of the "already and not yet" eschatological language. This speaks of the fact that what a man has now is but a token of his full possession in the future.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 571-572.

<sup>48</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 248.

<sup>49</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 572.



In Luke, those who are declared happy or blessed are the poor **πτωχοι**. The Greek word **πτωχο, j** means “one who is so poor that he or she has to beg.” That is one who is totally destitute. In the LXX, it is used to translate the Hebrew words like **יְנִי [ ' - a dependent, (Exo. 22:25), לְדָ; -lowly weak (Exo. 23:3) and אֶבְיָוֹן . א , - poor man/beggar. (Exo.23:6). In the book of Proverbs, it translates the word נָעִוִּים meaning the needy or famished.<sup>50</sup> (Prov. 10:4, 13:7,8 and 14:20) This Greek word **πτωχο, j** had appeared earlier in the Gospel of Luke (4: 18). In both settings, it speaks not just of a socio-economic sense but also has a spiritual connotation.**

Guelich outlines the Old Testament background and the New Testament meaning of this word with the following expressions.

- 1) Although the word **πτωχο, j** in Greek literature is mainly a socio-economic term, its connection with the Kingdom of God in Luke 6: 20 adds an eschatological flavour which shows that it does not only represent the Greek sense.
- 2) In the LXX, the word was used to translate six Hebrew words the most common being **יְנִי [ ' which has both socio economic and religious senses. This shows that the word speaks of people who are poor, yet pious and who look up to and depend on God.**
- 3) In the Torah, the Psalms and the Prophets, one finds the promises of God in terms of the protection and vindication of the pious poor (Exodus 22: 25-27, Deut. 15: 7-11). In Amos 8: 4 and Zechariah 7: 10, one’s compassion and love for a fellow man can be measured by the way one treats the poor.
- 4) In the LXX and also at Qumran, the poor are often associated with the meek or the humble. This motif is also found in Luke 1: 51-53.
- 5) Against the opinion of many, there was no particular group of people in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism that were called **הַנְּיָוִן [ ; (the poor). The term is therefore best used in the general sense rather than the description of a social class.<sup>51</sup>**

<sup>50</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 248-249.

<sup>51</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 572-574.

The poor in Judaism means those who are in their desperate need (economic element), helplessness driving them to a life of dependence and pious relationship with God (religious element). Such persons look up to God for their supply and vindication.<sup>52</sup> It follows therefore that the Sermon of Jesus offers hopes for the poor. Paul stated that God had chosen the contemptible people of this world to be His precious people. (1 Cor. 1: 26ff) James also cites this beatitude referring to the literally poor (James 2:5) as the people God has chosen to be rich in faith and heirs of His kingdom.<sup>53</sup>

Very important to the understanding of this word are the parallel descriptions of the blessed in Luke 6: 21-23. Luke states that the hungry, those who are weeping and those who suffer persecution are just like the true prophets of old. Since these parallel descriptions are placed next to Luke's first beatitude, no doubt the term poor has much of a spiritual/religious sense. Then Matthew's description of the poor as the poor in spirit becomes understandable. Beyond the personal material position, the poor according to Luke are the persecuted who remained faithful in spite of their sufferings. In spite of their physical condition, Luke said they are blessed because the kingdom of God is for them. The kingdom of God therefore consists of people who can live above their circumstances and put their trust in God.<sup>54</sup>

It must be noted here that it is not material poverty that qualifies one for the kingdom of God. The true happiness/blessing is found in the promise of the kingdom made to the poor. This speaks of the blessing of God's reign and does not mean that the materially poor will suddenly become rich. A simple reversal of economic position is not suggested here though it is believed that those who are deprived now will enjoy greatly in the kingdom of God. At that time, all human needs shall be met by the fullness of total salvation. Already, the kingdom of God has been given to the poor and they will surely enjoy all the blessings that are associated with it. What is significant here is that Jesus who has the authority to declare that the kingdom of God is near is also the one stating those who will enjoy the blessings of the kingdom.<sup>55</sup> As Abogunrin puts it, "this means that in the real sense, the Gospel was addressed to the poor. But it is not poverty as such that qualifies a person for salvation, because poverty itself is not a state of happiness, but the promises made by God and the joy of being in the

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<sup>52</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 574-575.

<sup>53</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 249.

<sup>54</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 574-575.

<sup>55</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 249-250.

kingdom. The rich man who accepts the message of the good news has a place in God's kingdom."<sup>56</sup>

By this teaching, Jesus exhorts the disciples to follow Him in the concern for the poor and recognise them as candidates for the kingdom of God. Therefore, a paraphrase of this beatitude would read, "blessed are you who are materially poor, who nonetheless look to God and His promise, for the Kingdom of God is yours."<sup>57</sup> The association of hunger with poverty in verse 21 also buttresses this point. The Greek word for hunger used here is **peina,w** which means a kind of want, though the idea of physical hunger is uppermost. However, in the Old Testament, hunger can mean a desire for spiritual satisfaction (Isa. 55: 1, Amos 8: 11). Probably, that is why Matthew adds "for righteousness." (Matthew 5: 6) The hungry are men and women who outwardly and inwardly lack the things essential to life as God plans it to be and because they cannot help themselves, turn to God based on the promises He has made.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.4 "To the Poor, the Gospel is preached" (**ptwcoi. euvaggeli,zontai** )- Luke 7: 22

In Luke 7:18-35, John is described as the Baptist (**baptisth,j**) and this summarises how John was seen. The envoys here are portrayed as some faithfuls who upon their arrival asked some key questions as John directed them. **parageno,menoi de. pro.j,,,** "when they had come" is common in the gospel of Luke. Worthy of note is the fact that 28 out of the 37 occurrences in the New Testament can be found in Luke-Acts. Evidently the dramatic description of the events in this passage was the work of Luke. Unlike John who was more interested in who Jesus was, Luke in a parenthetical comment gave the historical setting of Jesus' reply to John. Thus, Luke did not make John's disciples eye witness of the works of Jesus, Luke just made the point to be more explicit.<sup>59</sup> When the disciples of John had finished asking their questions, Jesus answered by directing their attention to what was happening around them. According to Him, He did not have to prove to John that He was the Messiah

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<sup>56</sup> Samuel Abogunrin, 2007. "Jesus' Pronouncements on Wealth in the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria." *Biblical Studies Series: A Publication of the Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies*. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises ,no 6, 250.

<sup>57</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 575.

<sup>58</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 250.

<sup>59</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994, 667-668.

by words of mouth, but by the works that He was doing. According to Luke, help was being given to the blind, the lame, the deaf, the dead and the poor.<sup>60</sup>

The reply of Jesus to John is almost identical in Luke and Matthew. The disciples of John were sent back to their master to inform him of what they had seen and heard (**ei; dete kai. hvkou, sate**). Matthew has these in reverse order and also in the present tense (**avkou, ete kai. ble, pete**). This reversal is probably due to Luke and not necessarily that of Matthew.<sup>61</sup> Luke might have deliberately referred first to what Jesus was doing before referring to what He was said.<sup>62</sup>

The message itself consists of six brief parallel clauses which are followed by a closing comment by Jesus given in poetic forms as in Aramaic (six two beat lines and 3 beat lines). In the Gospel of Luke, there are two groups of three clauses which are joined by **καί**. But Matthew joins all the clauses by **καί**, except the second and third. There is no obvious reason for this variation, but Luke shows the better Greek style. These are namely, healing of the blind, healing of the lame, cleansing of lepers and raising of the dead. Here, there is no specific incident of the preaching of Jesus to the poor, but this mentioned elsewhere in Luke. (4: 18, 6: 20, 14: 13, and 21.).<sup>63</sup>

It should be noted that some of the deeds of Jesus outlined here for John's disciples are in agreement with the programme of Jesus ministry which He publicly declared in Luke 4: 18-19.<sup>64</sup> There is no better way to show that Jesus was following His programme, matching His words with action and this was so evident that anyone who had eyes could see for himself. This indeed should be a lesson for many of our political leaders, especially those who seek elective offices. Many of them list the programmes they plan to execute if they are voted into office, but years after, one cannot see even one of such being executed. Such political leaders are therefore advised to match their words with action to the extent that their works will speak for them. Political leaders should learn from Jesus, especially in the war against poverty by concentrating their efforts more on good works than good or sweet words.

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<sup>60</sup> Leon Morris, 1974: *Tyndale Testament Commentaries*. R. D. Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 156.

<sup>61</sup> It must also be noted that before the actual message for John was reported, "ὅτι" is inserted in the T.R. and Diglot. This is absent in the majority of the MSS which could be due to the assimilation to Matthew.

<sup>62</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 290.

<sup>63</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978, 291.

<sup>64</sup> Clifton J. Allen & Others (Eds) 1970. *The Broadman Bible Commentary - Volume 9- Luke -John*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 67.

John who was then in prison might be disappointed with the message of Jesus. Probably, he expected Jesus to include in His agenda a rescue mission to deliver him from prison or speak with Herod for his release. Probably that was why he asked the question “are you the one or should we look for another?” But Jesus knew that the Messianic programme must be built on priorities.<sup>65</sup> The priorities of Jesus lie with the works of mercy and not in the fight against the Roman authorities.<sup>66</sup> Jesus’ reply in Luke 7: 21-23 was not a denial that he would one day execute divine judgement on evil men, but the Messianic agenda for now is the preaching of the gospel to the poor (7:22) and this must take priority over execution of judgement on the wicked in general. On this, David Gooding says, “Jesus is putting his own reputation at risk, putting the salvation of individual before His own reputation.”<sup>67</sup> This issue of priority is also of great importance when it comes to the real war against poverty. The mere giving of aids or assistance to the poor will not meaningfully reduce poverty. Factors that are making poverty to thrive must be addressed if the battle against poverty will be successfully won. Those who are truly fighting poverty must set the priorities right, doing first things first and last things last.

It must be observed here that the inventory of salvific activity mentioned by Jesus is not meant to limit the Messianic agenda, but actually to amplify and concretize the nature of His mission and a way to suggest the expansive scope of salvation. The poor to whom the Gospel is preached here is not limited to those who are lacking material resources. A typical example of the poor who heard the Gospel preached to him in the same chapter was the centurion (7: 1-10). Certainly, the centurion was not a materially poor person, but spiritually poor. He was wealthy enough to underwrite the building of the Synagogue in Capernaum, yet he was poor enough to beg Jesus for the healing of his servant.<sup>68</sup>

The preaching of the Gospel to the poor is significant in the list of ministerial duties of Jesus in this passage not because it comes last, but for the fact that the other items mentioned are healings of some kind, while this talks about preaching. The phrase, **ptwcoi euvaggeli, zontai** stands out because it functions climactically and also has a distinct

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<sup>65</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According to Luke, A New Exposition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gospel*, 134.

<sup>66</sup> R.V.E. Tasker, 1977. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 142.

<sup>67</sup> David Gooding, 1987, 135.

<sup>68</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 297.

character. It surely adds to Isaiah 61: 1 and also to Luke 6: 20 which give the blessings or happiness of the poor.<sup>69</sup>

**4.5 “The Son of Man Has No Where to Lay His Head” (οὐδεὺς οἶκος τούτου/ avnqrw,pou ouvκ e;cei pou/ th.n kefalh.n kli,nh|Å) – (Luke 9: 57-60)**

A volunteer who wanted to follow Jesus came to enquire what it takes to follow Him. Jesus responded to the question with openness stating specific commitments to such demand. The Matthean parallel (Matthew 8: 18-22) states that the man offered to be a disciple of Jesus and would follow Him anywhere He went. He started by addressing Jesus as a teacher. (**didá, skaloj**) At that time, students of Judaism were required to live with their teachers so that they could learn the *Torah*. But what Jesus offered was a more compelling and challenging course. To become a disciple of Jesus required more than sitting at His feet and learning the *Torah*. It calls for a new orientation of life, involving suffering and perhaps death.<sup>70</sup>

There is nothing wrong in the way the man put his request, for it certainly showed his readiness to follow Jesus to wherever He went. Only that the reply of Jesus revealed that the same man had not totally reckoned with what his request meant.<sup>71</sup> Jesus therefore told the man to count the cost. As the Son of man, He experienced rejection and homelessness and anyone who would follow Him might experience the same.<sup>72</sup>

He expressed this by saying, “foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.” The word ‘**avlw,peke**’ (fox) is of uncertain derivation and in another context can be figuratively mean “a cunning person.” The word “**fwleo,j**” means a den, lair or hole (Matt. 8: 20). It speaks of a burrow or a lurking place. The word “**kataskh,nwsij**” (Luke 13: 19) may refer to a perch where a bird can settle for the night or even a nest where it may rear its young. Here, Jesus was drawing a contrast between homes enjoyed by animals (foxes and birds) and the lack of personal home or building rest

<sup>69</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1994. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament, Volume 1*, 667-668.

<sup>70</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1996. *Baker Exegetical Commentary On The New Testament (Luke 9: 51, 24: 53, Vol. 2.)* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Bakers Books, 977-978.

<sup>71</sup> Leon Morris, 1974. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 197.

<sup>72</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary. The Gospel of Luke*, 410.

for Himself. An allusion could be drawn here to Wisdom which could find no home among men and therefore returned to her place in the heavens. Some scholars have considered this allusion unjustified.<sup>73</sup>

Bultmann argues that a proverbial saying, true of men in general had been secondarily applied to Jesus here. But the parallel which he cites in favour of this does not prove that point. The real problem here is the use of the title 'the Son of Man' for Jesus. The early Church seemed to understand this as a title for Jesus and that it expresses the humiliation and rejection which He must suffer. One wonders why Jesus would contrast Himself, the "Son of Man" with animals. Alternatively, it might mean that the original word there was just man and not the title Son of man which might be the Evangelist's addition. Hoffman seems to favour this. No doubt, this idea is just a conjecture that has no real evidence.<sup>74</sup>

Bultman's view that "the Son of Man" is generic and applies to people in general is also contradictory to the scripture which teaches that God loves and cares for people more than He does for other creatures. Therefore, the reference must be limited to Jesus. Homelessness had been the fate of Jesus right from His birth. This actually depicts His poverty.<sup>75</sup> Worthy of note is the fact that this expression follows immediately the experience in which Jesus was denied lodging in Samaria.<sup>76</sup> As a traveller, Jesus was dependent on the hospitality of friends without whom He could be considered homeless.<sup>77</sup> The homelessness of Jesus means He did not have a settled home where He lodged every night.<sup>78</sup> Abogunrin believes that "his homelessness was not due to poverty, but rather to his missionary work that involved him in sleeping in people's houses and inns without any home base to which he could return."<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, the phrase should not be stressed to mean that Jesus was without a shelter. Houses of friends were opened to Him. This made Paschall and Hobbs to opine that the statement simply means that there was no place in the world where Jesus was safe from humiliation and suffering.<sup>80</sup> According to Darrell Bock, he who wants to follow Jesus must live as a stranger

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<sup>73</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978.

<sup>74</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978: 410

<sup>75</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1996: 978

<sup>76</sup> Clifton J. Allen, 1970. *The Broadman Bible Commentary, volume 9-Luke-John*, 89.

<sup>77</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997: 407

<sup>78</sup> Charles A. Talbert, 1982. *Reading Luke*: 117-118.

<sup>79</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 1998. *The International Bible Commentary* edited by William R. Farmer. Minnesota; The Liturgical press: 1405.

in this world and also be ready for rejection and suffering. He cites some other proverbial sayings or conceptual parallel to this. Plutarch (Lios of Tiberious) and Gaius Gracchus mentioned the hardship of being a soldier; when they said, “ the wild beasts roam over Italy and each one has its own hole or lair, but those who fight and die for Italy have only the light and the air as their portion.”<sup>81</sup>

While it is generally agreed that the statement, “ the Son of man does not have a place to lay his head ” does not mean that Jesus had no place to sleep in the night, it does express the poverty of Jesus and His identification with the poor of the earth. Living at a time when majority of the people had their own houses, being without a personal home was a sign of poverty. Luke’s statement aptly describes the situation of many Nigerians today. There are lots of people who have no place they can call their homes. They simply sleep wherever the night meets up with them. Some sleep under bridges, in Motor Parks, or even in market places. Some have also converted their working places or shops to homes. This undoubtedly is a sign of poverty in the land. This issue of homelessness is common to cities rather than villages. Therefore, one of the specific ways to fight poverty is to provide homes. No doubt, one of the three greatest needs of man is shelter after food and clothing. Any war on poverty that leaves any of the three out is no war against poverty at all.

Today, many government agencies claim to provide houses for the masses. They build estates. One wonders if truly those houses are actually meant for the poor. Each of such houses in Lagos costs nothing less than twenty million naira. Where will a poor man get such money to build such a house? Any man who could afford to pay twenty million naira for a house is not poor and such a man could afford to build such a house by himself. That is the reason why when the government claims to build houses for the poor, only the rich benefit from the scheme and they make themselves richer.

One must admit that there are some private agencies that also build houses to help the poor. Some of the housing units built by private agencies are cheaper than those of the government. Then, one cannot but question the sincerity of the government in tackling the problem of homelessness in the land. Just as it is done in the advanced world, good and affordable houses

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<sup>80</sup> H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Eds) 1972. *The Teachers Bible Commentary*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press: 647.

<sup>81</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1996, 978.



could be provided by the government with a reasonable payment plan that would not cut the throat of the poor. The resources God has blessed the nation with are enough to pursue this course. The problem of homelessness is a serious manifestation of poverty in the land and must be tackled from all angles.

**4.6 “ Sell What You Have and Give Alms” (Pwlh,sate ta. u`pa,rconta u`mw/n kai. do,te evlehmosu,nhn\ ) -Luke 12: 33, cf. Mt. 19:21, Acts 2:45)**

If Luke 12: 29-31 constitutes the climax of Jesus teaching on the need to live a life that is free from worry, then Luke 12: 32-34 can be seen as basis for the teaching. In these three verses, Jesus resolutely taught on the need for His followers to be faithful regarding material possessions. Of importance is the fact that the instructions of Jesus seem subtle, but were very significant for the then Roman world. Normally at that time, anyone with worldly possessions was expected to share in order to place others in his or her debts. Gifts were also given at that time to secure or advance one's position in the society. But the teaching of Jesus here has a different connotation. The purpose of the sharing is the recognition that God is the supreme benefactor who provides for both the giver and the recipient.<sup>82</sup>

Those who receive from the giver are therefore not in debt to the giver. But the giver gives to embrace the needy members and recognises them as members of his own circle. This is the economy of the kingdom of God which is different from the economy of the Roman world. In kingdom economy, those who give without expecting the recipient to pay back in the form of loyalty and service will surely be repaid by God. Heavenly treasures await such persons.<sup>83</sup>

This teaching of Jesus has a parallel in Matthew 6:19-21. But the wording is more rhythmical and the teaching has a poetic parallelism which is not found in the Gospel of Luke. There are different opinions on the sources of this teaching in both Matthew and Luke. Some believe that both drew from different sources while others believe that they drew from the same source. The Lukan form of the teaching is dominated by positive imperatives, while in Matthew; one finds an elaborate contrast between laying of treasures on earth and in heaven.

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<sup>82</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The Gospel of Luke*, 495.

<sup>83</sup> Joel B. Green, 496.

Those who truly belong to the kingdom of God must have new attitude towards earthly possessions.<sup>84</sup>

Another form of this saying can be found at the end of the Gospel of Thomas, “you too must seek for the treasure which does not fail, but which remains, where no moth gets near to eat and no worm destroys.” This cannot be more original than the ones found in the canonical Gospels. No doubt, the saying is *hortatory logia*. Verse 34 is a maxim which could be at home in any secular literature. The teaching is devoid of an eschatological connotation which is present in verse 33<sup>b, c & d</sup>. In verses 33 and 34, Jesus radically taught about the proper stance of His disciples to material possessions. They were to sell them and give the proceeds away as alms. The same theme reappears in 18: 22 in a more direct way.<sup>85</sup>

To understand this command, ‘sell your possessions and give alms’, we must pay attention to its context. The teaching is not directing Christians not to own anything, neither is it stating that it is wrong for Christians to have treasures on earth. Acts 5: 3-4 can be considered as quite the reverse of this.<sup>86</sup> To interpret this command as a direct command to all Christians to renounce their possessions is to produce a class of holy paupers. Such holy paupers would then become a liability to their neighbours. It is relevant here to note that Jesus was entertained in Matthew’s house and that later He commended His mother, Mary, to the beloved disciple who took her into his home. (John 19: 27)<sup>87</sup>

At no time did Jesus rebuke His followers for owning possessions. Jesus and the Apostles themselves had money which they used to buy food and provide for the poor (John 13: 29). Certainly, Jesus was not excluding private ownership through this teaching, but He was emphasizing the fact that His disciples must not be dominated by material things. Trust in material possessions would prevent trust in God and this could become a fatal barrier to eternal life.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, a disciple of Jesus should aim to have as much enduring treasure as he could. This could only be done by transferring as much as he could to heaven where it is safe from loss, devaluation, robbery or decay. According to this teaching, a way of storing treasures in heaven is not about donating billions to the church project, but by giving as much

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<sup>84</sup> Howard I. Marshall, 1978. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary. The Gospel of Luke*, 531.

<sup>85</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 982.

<sup>86</sup> David Gooding, 1987. *According to Luke, A New Exposition of the Third Gospel*, 244

<sup>87</sup> RVG Tasker, 1977. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 215

<sup>88</sup> RVG Tasker, 215-216.

as one could to the poor. Those who are heirs to God's kingdom must not be afraid to give away part of their temporary possessions.<sup>89</sup>

The true disciple of Jesus is expected to pursue the kingdom by caring for others rather than for self. The security that such a person has in God frees him to be generous with his possessions. Alms (*evlehmōsu, nh*) were often regarded as an act of piety both in the Old and New Testaments. To show concern for others has a high place, but to give up possession and give to the poor shows the highest degree of such commitments. The value of such is that its significance can never be taken away or discarded by anyone. The figurative reference to purses that do not grow old alludes to the money (*balla, ntion*) used by business owners only in Luke's Gospel (10: 4, 12: 33, 22: 35, 36). God takes note of where people choose to place their accounts and death cannot change that.<sup>90</sup>

The Jewish practice of almsgiving is echoed in passages like Tobith 4: 7 (*give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly*) and Sir 3: 30 (*almsgiving atones for sin*). In Luke, it was a way of storing treasure in heaven. This is also echoed in 1 Tim. 6:12-19.<sup>91</sup> The early church demonstrated this in Acts 2: 42-47 and 4: 32-37. This was done excellently until it was disturbed by the deception of Ananias and Sapphira. (Acts 5: 1-10)<sup>92</sup> Even though the teaching in itself does not directly address eschatological issues, yet in its context it assumes it. The background is not the eschatological crisis, but the fate of the individual after death. Therefore, Jesus taught that the disciple must guard his heart so as not to be seduced by earthly possessions. He counselled against greed and commanded opening of arms to the poor.<sup>93</sup> Covetousness is an indication that the kingdom of God is not one's prime pursuit. Likewise, anxiety about food and drink is a clear indication that one is not trusting God's power and faithfulness. While Jesus taught that no one can serve God and money, here He called on His disciples to serve God with their possessions.<sup>94</sup>

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

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<sup>89</sup> David Gooding, 244.

<sup>90</sup> Darrel L. Bock, 1996, 1166-1167.

<sup>91</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 1982. *Reading Luke. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, 142

<sup>92</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985, 982.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 982 .

<sup>94</sup> Charles H. Talbert, 142-143.

A careful study of the selected sayings of Jesus truly reveals the concern of Jesus for the poor. Very significant to His Messianic programme is the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. The Lukan Gospel is therefore the Gospel of Jesus to the poor. The poor in Luke are the blessed people of the earth. At a time when blessings are mostly measured in terms of material possessions, Jesus states that the poor are blessed. This is definitely contrary to the teachings of many prosperity preachers who emphasize poverty as a curse. While poverty might be to a certain extent a result of a curse, definitely, the poor according to Jesus are not the accursed of the earth. Rather, they are blessed.

While many preachers and churches today prefer the rich and wealthy to listen to their messages, Jesus ensures that the Gospel is preached to the poor. Jesus Himself identified with the poor by not living an extravagant life. His focus was not on earthly possessions, but heavenly treasure. To the disciples who have a lot of possessions, selling of such and the giving of the proceeds to the poor is a means of storing one's treasure in heaven.

This certainly is a direct teaching to our modern day preachers and members of churches who rather than help the poor, go ahead to raise funds for their gigantic church projects. They cleverly collect the little the poor have to execute such projects. Rather than seeking to add more wealth to their wealth, the followers of Jesus are admonished to sell what they have to meet the needs of the poor. Only when the rich open their arms to the poor can the poor be relieved of their poverty. The church must express her concern for the poor and develop interest in helping the depressed and wretched members of the society.<sup>95</sup> Disciples of Jesus and every church of Jesus Christ must examine how much of their resources are being committed to the assistance of those who are in need. It is the opinion of this researcher that the sayings of Jesus if followed will assist in the war against poverty in our land.

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<sup>95</sup> Deji Ayegboyin, 1997. "Commiserating with the Prisoner: A Charge to the Church in Nigeria." *Orita*, Vol. 29, nos 1 & 2, June & December: 128.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE POOR AND POVERTY IN SOME SELECTED PARABLES OF JESUS IN LUKE

#### 5.1 Introduction

At the time of Jesus, the gap between the rich and the majority poor was quite wide. The number of those who came to Jerusalem for pilgrimage were also on the increase. This led many of the poor of the land to also come around the temple so that they could beg for alms. As Samuel O. Abogunrin puts it, “at the time of Jesus, one could hardly tell an authentic beggar from a charlatan. There were poor people who turned beggars, pretending to be dumb, or blind, or deaf, lame, crippled or otherwise handicapped. Outside, at the city gates were lepers begging.”<sup>1</sup>

The large presence of slaves, the widespread unemployment and the massive exploitation indeed put more pressure on the little available resources of the time.<sup>2</sup> According to I. N. Johnson, the followers of Jesus consisted of over 80% common people of the land. These were the multitudes who came out to hear his teachings. Jesus saw how they were harassed by their leaders.<sup>3</sup> He was aware of the degrading circumstances in which the majority of the populace found themselves and He took time to teach on the poor and their poverty. To understand the predicament of the poor at Jesus’ time, a thorough examination of Jesus’ teaching on the poor is of high importance. It is in this light that some parables of Jesus on the poor and their predicament are hereby considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. *Jesus Pronouncements on Wealth In the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria*. Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises: 245.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin: 2007.

<sup>3</sup> I.N. Johnson, 2012. *The Teachings of Jesus Christ on Materialism and the Prospect of Curbing Political and Social-Economic Violence in Nigeria*. Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises: 337.

## 5.2 The Rich Man and Lazarus – Luke 16: 19-31

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in recent New Testament research has always been used to emphasize the themes of poverty and wealth with varying degrees of scholarly interpretation. The origin of the parable and the argument that it might be considered an allegory or not are issues scholars have grappled with over the years. According to Abogunrin, “many scholars regard it as an allegory rather than a parable. A parable normally has one central truth, but this story appears to have more than one central truth.”<sup>4</sup>

This parable is a fitting conclusion to the theme of Chapter 16. This story is peculiar to Luke. Certainly, there are few traces of Lukan redaction in the story. Some of the Lukan elements are (a) “There was once a rich man” (vs. 19, 16: 1, 10: 3 ( ἄνθρωπος δὲ τις ἦν πλούσιος ) and (b) a beggar named Lazarus (ptwco.j de, tij ovno,mati La,zaroj) (vs. 20, 1: 5, 10: 38, Acts 8: 9, 9: 33, 10: 1, 16: 1). (c) One day the beggar died (vs. 22) (evge,neto de. avpoqanei/n to.n ptwco.n) “happened to die” (d) tormented vs. 23, (in torment) ( evn basa,noij) unstressed and (e) some other elements in verse 25. The amount of non-Lukan formulation in the story can also be noticed. This could have arisen from the pre-Lukan source. Form critics regard the story as one of the parables of Jesus. Cobex Bezae clearly introduces it as such; “ and he uttered another parable.” But this introduction cannot be found in majority of Greek manuscripts. It is therefore opined that the story is “pure narrative without introduction or application. Just as the apropos of the Good Samaritan, the story is better understood as an example.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Howard Marshall, two themes are combined in the parable. The first theme centres on the reversal of fortunes in the next world for the rich and the poor as found in Luke 1: 53, 6: 20-26 and the warning of Jesus against covetousness in Luke 12: 13-21. In this story, the poor man is not stated categorically to be righteous or pious, but this can be detected from his name and from Luke’s equation of poverty and piety. On the other hand, the rich man is intended as an example of those who misuse wealth as against those who properly use their wealth.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. *Jesus Pronouncements on Wealth In the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria.*: 262-263.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv in the Anchor Bible.* New York: Double Day & Co, 1125-1126.

The second theme of the passage is that the law and the prophets are not sufficient to call the rich to repentance, including the return of someone from the realm of the dead. Therefore miracles in themselves cannot break the heart of stone. Considering this, the parable seems to be a warning with regards to human conduct. This story is connected to some teachings of the Old Testament on the poor exemplified in Deuteronomy 24: 6ff.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the authenticity and the unity of the parable are indeed problematic. The fact that this is a two-part parable as Marshall opines suggests that the first part is primary while the second part is secondary. He adds that the second theme can be seen as a Post-Eastern addition by the early church in the light of the failure of the Jews to respond to the message of the resurrection, whether of Jesus or that of Lazarus as found in John Chapter 11. This has made some scholars to place the parable under suspicion of being a Lukan composition along with the other parables peculiar to his Gospel.<sup>8</sup> This view might not be essentially correct in the sense that it makes the parable a mere construction of Luke and not a parable of Jesus. The two-part parable idea is also defective in the sense that it makes the first part meaningless without the second part.

Since this parable is only recorded in the Gospel of Luke, the name Lazarus has made many scholars to look at its relationship with the Lazarus of John Chapter 11 that was raised from the dead. J. Weiss while stating that it cannot be the same person, thinks that the name Lazarus might have been inserted into the parable under the influence of John 11 at the formation of the New Testament canon or that the story of bringing Lazarus back to life was already part of the Gospel tradition at the period Luke was writing his Gospel. Luke therefore might have added the name and adjusted the ending of the parable to reflect the tradition of the Gospel of John. One must admit that all these are speculations since there is no strong evidence to establish any connection between the Lukan parable and the miracle story of John.<sup>9</sup>

The naming of the poor man as Lazarus and the failure to name the rich man might show the level of the concern the Gospel of Luke has for the poor. This makes the rich man a representative figure. This rich man could be any rich man. On the other hand, God cares for

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<sup>6</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan: The Paternoster, 632.

<sup>7</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

<sup>8</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 633-634.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1129.

each poor person and He is fully aware of their plight.<sup>10</sup> But not all scholars agree that the rich man's name was not mentioned because he was a representative figure. J. C. Ryle is of the opinion that "lack of mention of the name of the rich man might be because his name is not in the book of life."<sup>11</sup> He added that, to mention the name of the rich man in such a history would be most invidious and very offensive to members of his family.<sup>12</sup> But this thought can only be considered if the story was a real event and not just a story coined by Jesus or borrowed from the tales of His time.

H. Gressman calls attention to an Egyptian folktale which was copied in Demotic at the back of the Greek manuscript that was dated in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Emperor Claudius (that is AD 47). The said document talks about retribution in the afterlife. A reincarnated Egyptian called Si-Osiris who was born miraculously to Satme Khamuas takes his father on a tour of a place called Amente, the realm of the dead. The intention is to show him what happened to a rich man who had died. Before his death, he was honoured, shrouded in fine linen and sumptuously buried. After his death on the other hand, a poor man who had also died was carried out un-mourned on a straw mat to a common burial ground. At Amente, the rich man was in torment with the axle of the hinge of the hall's door fixed in his right eye socket. In another hall, Osiris, the ruler of Amente enthroned the poor man near himself as he was robed in the rich man's fine linen. Then Si-Osiri said the following words to his father "may it be done to you in Amente as it is done in Amente to this pauper and not as it is done to this rich man in Amente".<sup>13</sup>

Gressman went further to add that Luke 16: 19-31 and seven other tales about retribution in the afterlife came from rabbinic sources of a later date, the earliest of them could be found in two forms in the Talmud of the Palestinians. He also saw the possibility of the Jews in Alexandria bringing Egyptian folktale to Palestine where it was developed into the story of a poor Torah scholar and that of a rich tax collector by the name Ben M'ayan. He believed that Jesus was familiar with the Palestinian tale and even alluded to it in the parable of the great dinner. It is very possible that this story already existed in Palestine at the time of Jesus. But

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<sup>10</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 431.

<sup>11</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth, 217.

<sup>12</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x – xxiv*, 1126. (F.L. Griffith: Stories of the High Priests of Memphis: Oxford: Clarendon, 42-43.)



one must note that there are clear differences in the first part of the story which are not present in the Egyptian folktale. Elements like Abraham's bosom, the dialogue between the rich man and Abraham are not in the story of Ben Ma'yan. Therefore, if the Lukan story is drawn from folktales, then he had refurbished the story and there is no reason to say that the refurbishing was not done by Jesus himself.<sup>14</sup>

Bultmann also draws our attention to another Jewish legend which talks of a rich and godless married couple. When the wife died, a boy who journeyed to Hades and saw her in fiery torment was sent back by the woman to her husband with the following words: "tell my husband to turn over a new leaf for the power of repentance is great" and, according to the legend, the husband repented.<sup>15</sup> To him therefore, a Jewish story lies behind Luke 16: 19-31 or that the eventual conclusion was taken from the Jewish tradition by the church and put into Jesus' mouth.<sup>16</sup> The problem here is that the Jewish legend concludes with the rich man's repentance while the parable in Luke concludes with the declaration that the coming of someone from the dead cannot make the wicked rich to repent.

That Jesus could borrow a motif from such a Jewish legend is certainly possible, but He could have joined it secondarily to the tale about retribution in the afterlife which originated from the Egyptian tradition. There is no doubt about the unity of the two parts of the Lukan parable. In any case, this parable has a double message as it further illustrates the teaching of Jesus about the need for prudence in the use of material possessions. It also gives more meanings to the dwellings that are eternal. (v 9) It can be considered a vivid recapitulation of the beatitudes and woes of Luke 6: 20-24.<sup>17</sup>

The opening phrase of the parable is reminiscent of Luke 16:1, "there was a certain rich man." The only difference here is that the rich man in this context is of importance in his own right. The word *πλούσιος* (the rich) has the doubtless secondary insertion "ὄνοματι Νευης" which ascribed the rich man the names "Finaeus" in Pseudo Cyprian, "Finess" in Priscillian and "Amonofis" in Peter of Rigar. The origin of these names is definitely uncertain. "Amonofis" is a form of "Amenophis" which is a name of several ancient Pharaohs.

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1127.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985, 1127.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985, 1127.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985, 1127.

Finaeus/Finees might be based on Phinehas who appears along with Eleazer in Exo. 6: 25, Num. 25: 7, 11, Joshua 22: 13, 34, 24: 33.<sup>18</sup>

The name Neues on its own is unintelligible and is probably a shortened form of Nineves which can also be found in ancient Sahidic homilies of later centuries in which a rich man is reproached for not having concern for his “neighbour or confrere.” Nineves is a peculiar personal name, though it seems to echo some aspect of the well-known Assyrian Capital called Nineveh. A. Von Harnack believes that Nineveh was a corruption of Phinehas, the name of the rich man preserved in Priscillian. On the other hand, K. Grobel tries to explain that the Coptic "Nineve" comes from two words, namely “nine”- meaning nothing and “one” meaning someone, hence meaning nobody.<sup>19</sup> This is actually a derisive word which was used to describe the status of the rich man in the place of the dead in the Egyptian version of the story.<sup>20</sup> In this parable, the rich man is described in excessive and outrageous terms why Lazarus is categorised among the neglected of the community.<sup>21</sup> Worthy of note is the fact that the rich man’s spiritual life is not mentioned.

According to Luke, it was his custom (*ἐνεδιδύσκετο*) to wear garment of purple and fine underwear. This depicted him to be very rich for a costly mantle of wool could only be afforded by the royalty.<sup>22</sup> The statement, *Καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον* meaning "and he used to dress in purple and fine linen" suggests the habitual conduct of the rich man. The use of *πορφύραν*- purple (i.e. purple garment) here speaks of the upper garment while *βύσσον* (fine linen) refers to the undergarment.<sup>23</sup> The word purple (*πορφύραν*) was originally that of the purple fish from which the colour was obtained and thereby applied to the colour itself. Several kinds of purple fish are found in the Mediterranean Sea which include three distinct colours namely deep violet, deep scarlet or crimson and the deep blue of the Mediterranean. Alexander is said to have found purple garments in the royal palace at Susa, though they had laid there for about two hundred years. The long lasting of this colour is alluded to in Isaiah 1: 18, where the Bible says “though your sins were as scarlet,” which

<sup>18</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan: The Paternoster, 634-635.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x - xxiv*, 1130.

<sup>20</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 634-635.

<sup>21</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The New International Commentary on The New Testament. The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 605.

<sup>22</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 635.

<sup>23</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1971. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. C.D. Rom Version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

denotes darker shades of red. As for fine linen (**βύσσον**), this is yellowish flax and the linen made from it. Herodotus says it was used for enveloping mummies and this statement has been confirmed by microscopic investigations. Some of the Egyptian linen were so fine that they were called women hair. They are comparable to silk and not in any way inferior in texture to the finest fabric. It could be transparent as lawn and later Greek writers used the same word (**βύσσον**) for cotton and silk. The Greek actually used a yellow byssus, a material that grew around Elis that was actually costly.<sup>24</sup> Martina Atere opines that the luxury in which the rich man lived was exhibited in the way he clothed himself in purple and fine linen.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, Lazarus is described as utterly unable to win his bread. He was covered with sores and suffered from an incurable disease. He indeed represents the suffering of many in our world today.<sup>26</sup> The poor man is deliberately contrasted with the rich man and, unlike the rich man whose name was not mentioned, the poor man is called Lazarus. It must be noted that this is the only instance when the name of a character is mentioned in the parables of Jesus.<sup>27</sup> This is one of the reasons why some believe that this might not be a parable conjured by Jesus, but a true life story used by Him to drive home His point. Howard Marshall thinks that the name was included because it facilitates the dialogue in verse 24ff. It also hints at the piety of the poor man since the general use of the poor denotes the pious and recipient of God's grace.<sup>28</sup>

The name Lazarus which also occurs in Josephus is a *grecized* and shortened form of the Hebrew name Eleazar (Exo. 6: 23). This name which was given to the son of Aaron means "God has helped" me or "He who God helps"<sup>29</sup> is a fitting name for the beggar who did not receive help from the rich man, but in his afterlife received consolations from God. Lazarus was not only poor, but he was covered with sores-ulcerated – (**εἰλκωμένος**) that is related to the *helkos*- abscess, ulcer. T. W. Manson suggests that the Greek word **πτωχός** was used at a

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<sup>24</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, 2002. *Word Studies in the New Testament Volume 1*. C. D. Rom version by Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>25</sup> Martina Atere, 2006. The Rich Man and Lazarus in the Context os Some Selected Cities in Nigeria." *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 38, No 1-2, June and December: 72-73.

<sup>26</sup> H. D. M. Spence- Jones, 2004. *The Pulpit Commentary: St. Luke vol. II*. C. D. Rom version Libronix Digital Library System, Washington.

<sup>27</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 635.

<sup>28</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 635.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. *Jesus Pronouncements on Wealth In the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria*: 263.

time as euphemism for "a leper." The poor man squatted at the gate of the rich man.<sup>30</sup> The word ἐβέβλητο suggests the idea that he was laid by friends in a suitable place for begging. But more importantly, it means he was lying on the floor, implying he was ill or crippled.

**pulw, n** (gate) refers to a large, ornamental gateway to a city or a mansion. (Mt. 26: 71, Acts 10: 17, 12: 13ff, 14: 13)<sup>31</sup> That the rich man had a gate and not just a door signifies that he owned an estate or a house compound which was appropriate to his status. On the contrary, Lazarus had no home, but was only thrown at the rich man's gate to beg for alms.<sup>32</sup> Today, there are many people at various streets and markets places begging for alms to sustain themselves on a daily basis. Many of our major cities have these beggars or special members of the society that must be cared for. No doubt, the experience of Lazarus at the rich man's gate is the same with that of many beggars in our society.

The New Testament mentions a number of people who were forced into begging by illness or disability just to maintain their lives. Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46 ) and the lame man at the beautiful gate (Acts. 3:2) are examples. In the first century, and according to Rabbinic Judaism, to give alms to the destitute could be considered a great good deed which has great merit in the sight of God.<sup>33</sup> Just as in Luke 15:16, **εἰς τὸ πειπτοῦν** expressing the desire of Lazarus here may speak of an unfulfilled will in which the beggar would have been contented with whatever fell from the rich man's table, but could not lay hold on such crumbs. This is possibly the reason why the words **καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ** were added from Luke 15: 16. **αὐπο**, is partitive and the noun **τῶν πιπτοῦντων** is added in most MSS from Matthew 15: 27. **πιπτοῦντων** is added here as the passive of **πιπτοῦν** to show that the reference is not to crumbs that fall unwittingly from the table, but to pieces of bread. But no evidence is provided for this idea which is strange and to note that such crumbs were normally eaten by dogs makes the idea unrealistic. But the dogs seem to have aggravated the sores of the poor man by licking them. J. Weiss opines that the dogs treated the beggar as if he were already dead. The main point here is clear, the rich man and his friends did nothing to help the beggar

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x – xxiv*, 1130-1131.

<sup>31</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 635.

<sup>32</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The New International Commentary On The New Testament. The Gospel of Luke*, 606.

<sup>33</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, 1991. *The Bible Readers Companion*. Electronic Ed. Wheaton: Victor Books, Published in Electronic form by Logos Research Systems.

beyond the possibility of throwing some crumbs at him. To claim that the passage does not indicate the rich man's lack of care for the poor man in this story is largely unacceptable.<sup>34</sup>

In the absence of human compassion, the dogs were the poor man's companions licking his sores. The word employed for licking is **avpolei, cw** and it is found only here in the New Testament. Cyril cited by Hobat says the only attention and so to speak, the medical dressing which his sores received was from the dogs.<sup>35</sup> It follows therefore that not all scholars believe that the dogs brought the poor man misery. J. C. Ryle opines that the phrase "*the dogs come and licked his sores*" seems rather to imply that the dogs care more for Lazarus than the rich man did. The licking of sores therefore was an act of kindness.<sup>36</sup> Whether Lazarus made attempt to drive the dogs away or not is not mentioned in the story.<sup>37</sup>

If the Yoruba's belief about dogs licking wounds or sores is anything to go by, the dog might be serving as doctors or providing medical help to Lazarus. The Yoruba people of Nigeria believe that when a dog licks a wound, such a wound will heal quickly.<sup>38</sup> Then, since the poor man could not afford treatment at the hospital, he allowed the dogs to treat him. This is a replica of what goes on in our society today. Many sick people because of poverty failed to go to the hospitals and thereby resulting to other means for their healing. Some visit quack doctors while some rely on prayers alone. Many sick people would have survived if they had received proper medical attention. This researcher believes that providing affordable if not free health care system is a major way to fight the menace of poverty in our society.

What is very clear in the story is that the situation of the poor man is tragic while that of the rich man is sumptuous. This undoubtedly pictures the very clear gap between the poor and the rich in our society today.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, death is the greatest equalizer. The beggar died and was carried into Abraham's bosom while the rich man also died and was buried. The fact that both the rich and poor shall die should make the rich to see to the needs of the poor. No man will take a kobo with him when he dies.

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<sup>34</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 635-636.

<sup>35</sup> Marvin R. Vincent 2002- *Word studies In The New Testament Vol. 1*. Electronic Edition. Bellingham: Logos Research System, Inc.

<sup>36</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*, Edinburg: The Banner of Truth, 217.

<sup>37</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 432.

<sup>38</sup> S. Oyelayo Awolere, 2011. Interview with Sunday Oyelayo Awolere on March 16, 2011. Isale Oyo, Oyo town, Oyo State.

<sup>39</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 432.

Abraham's bosom is a proverbial one stating the place of rest and safety to which all believing Jews were carried after death. Since Abraham was the father of the faithful, all his faithful children were welcome into his bosom. This expression fits into what Jesus said in Matthew 8:11, "to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God."<sup>40</sup> Leon Morris thinks that the expression "Abraham's bosom" is not common, but plainly denotes the felicity that one sees in the relationship of a child to a parent. (John 1: 18) He adds that it is better to see a contrast between the table at the opening of the story and Lazarus at table with Abraham. The blessing of sitting at the table with his head on the bosom of the great Patriarch is great, as the favoured reclines in the manner of Matthew 8:11.<sup>41</sup>

Adding to this opinion, Howard Marshall submits that the metaphor of the bosom (**ko, lpoj**) may suggest (1) a child lying on its parent lap (John 1: 18), (2) the proximity of a guest to the host at a banquet (John 13: 23) or (3) the idea of being gathered to one's fathers at death. (Gen. 15: 15) He proposes the combination of 1 and 2 so that the poor man enjoys close fellowship with Abraham at the Messianic banquet. (13: 29) He adds that Abraham's bosom should not be taken as synonymous with paradise although Abraham may be thought to be in paradise.<sup>42</sup>

As for the rich man, he was buried and found himself in Hades. What is clear here is that there was a separation between Lazarus and the rich man and a gulf made it impossible for anyone to move from one side to the other. It might also be suggested that from Jesus' description, hades had two sections, namely the paradise portion where Abraham's bosom is and a punishment portion where the rich man found himself. This story therefore negates the so-called soul sleep for both the rich and the poor men were conscious in hades. One was enjoying comfort and the other torment. This is something to ponder over as each man thinks about his journey to eternity.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*, 218-219.

<sup>41</sup> Leon Morris, 1999, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Revised Edition. Luke, Leicester, Inter Varsity Press, 277.

<sup>42</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan: The Paternoster, 636.

<sup>43</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

The problem we have in understanding where hades and Abraham's bosom were is due to the fact that Jewish representations of the afterlife were fluid and developing. Therefore a consistent picture is difficult to expect. That the lifted eyes of the rich man could see Lazarus does not necessarily indicate that Abraham's bosom was above while hades was below. The phraseology here is stereotyped. Torment (**ba, sanoj**) (16: 28, Mt. 4: 24) is a feature of the intermediate state between the present and the final state of the unrepentant wicked dead.<sup>44</sup>

The word torment used four times in this account speaks of definite pain. It is the same word used for the doom feared by the evil spirits in Mark 5: 7 and the judgement that God will send upon an unrepentant world. (Rev. 9: 5, 11: 10 and 20: 10) If hell therefore is the permanent prison of the damned, then hades is the temporary jail and suffering in both hell and hades is very real.<sup>45</sup> It is evident from this story that though the wicked and the righteous are separated, shouting as a means of communication from one side to the other is possible. But one must not overstress this for details of the parable should not be literalised.<sup>46</sup>

One thing that is very clear in the story is that Abraham occupied a position of authority in paradise as he maintained his importance as the spiritual father of Israel. The rich man's address of Abraham as "Father Abraham" (**pa, ter VAbraa, m**) echoes and lays claim to his share in his merits. He called on Abraham for mercy. (**evlee, w**) (Luke 17: 13, 18: 38f, Mk 10: 47f) "**evlee, w**" can be interpreted as gracious care in time of need and helplessness. He wanted Abraham to use his vantage position to command Lazarus to help him. Even in hades, the rich man still thought of Lazarus as someone who should serve him even though in life he never tried to help him. The fact that he knew Lazarus' name shows that he recognized him as the beggar at his gate that he never cared to assist.<sup>47</sup>

The rich man's need in hades was thirst probably due to the burning heat of the fire and the lack of water. He wanted Lazarus to dip his finger in water to quench his thirst. The Greek word (**ba, ptw**) means to "dip" (John 13:26, Rev. 19:13) which takes the accusative of the thing that is dipped and the genitive of that into which it is dipped. The word **a; kron** means a high point top or tip (Mk. 13: 27, Mt. 24: 31, Heb. 11: 21) while **katayu, cw** is to cool

<sup>44</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 637.

<sup>45</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>46</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan, 637

<sup>47</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978, 637.

off, refresh and **flō,x** means flame (Acts 7: 30, 2 Thess. 1:8, Heb. 1: 7).<sup>48</sup> All these words express what should be done to alleviate poverty. Poverty is a flame that must be quenched. What is expected of the rich is to quench it. Unfortunately, what the rich man needed in Hades was what he had the power to do on earth for the poor man but he failed to do so. No doubt, as Lazarus had access to water in paradise, every rich man has access to the water that can quench the flame of poverty.

But the request of the rich man for water could not be granted, not because Lazarus would not want to help him, but there was a great gulf, an un-crossable chasm between paradise and Hades which made it impossible for Lazarus to help him. Abraham used the opportunity to remind the rich man that there was a time when he had the power and opportunity to help the poor man. But he failed to do so. One issue some theologians have raised is that there is no record of a time when Lazarus made a request for anything from the rich man; therefore, the rich man should not be blamed.<sup>49</sup> But this idea is not realistic for the mere presence of Lazarus at his gate was enough to arouse a compassionate heart. One truth that must be noted here is that not all the poor in our society would be able to ask the rich in the society for help. So the rich should not wait till the poor come begging for help. The mere presence of the poor in our society is a divine request itself to help them with the abundance that God has provided. As Darrel Bock puts it, “God’s word has made it clear, what God desires. Our devotion to him is seen in our care for others. Jesus calls this the Great Commandment. Love God with your whole heart and love your neighbour as yourself.”(Mk. 12: 26-34)<sup>50</sup>

The rich man having discovered that his initial request could not be granted made another request which he thought could be granted. He wanted Lazarus to prevent his brothers from joining him in Hell. Lazarus to him was still a messenger that could be sent into the world to do the task. No doubt, the rich at all times believe they have control over the poor. One issue that is worthy of examination here is the idea of messages from the next world. This idea is not new for angels were known to visit men and, both in Jewish and pagan thoughts, men could appear from the dead. One can therefore state that the idea is not specifically Christian. Only that this second request was also refused by father Abraham. The request was rejected because it would not achieve anything. The rejection was based on double reasons, the first

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<sup>48</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978, 637.

<sup>49</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 433-434.

<sup>50</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*, 434.



speaks of the present fact (they have the law and the prophets to guide them) and the second is that even if someone rose from the dead, they would not listen.<sup>51</sup>

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus should not be seen as a blanket condemnation of wealth or a glorification of the poor and poverty. Rather, it was used by the Jesus to reprimand the rich, especially the Pharisees who saw wealth as a reward for godliness. No doubt, the Bible does not present wealth itself as vice nor poverty as virtue.<sup>52</sup> The rich man was condemned not because he was rich or that Lazarus was saved not because he was poor. Abraham was rich and he was in paradise. The problem with the rich man was that he trusted in his riches and not in God.<sup>53</sup>

The rich man had no concept of stewardship. If he did, he would have given part of his riches to help the poor. One still wonders why he even allowed the poor man to camp at his gate. May be, some of his wealthy guests occasionally offered alms to Lazarus.<sup>54</sup> The import of this parable centres on the lifestyle and choices we make today, especially the use of our resources. It is necessary to note here that fighting poverty is not limited to giving alms to the poor, though that might help them on the short term. But concerted efforts must be made to empower the poor so that they can come out of their poverty. Lazarus undoubtedly needed more than mere alms to reach restoration. The two questions everyone must be asking are 1. "What am I doing to help the poor?" and 2. "Am I doing enough?"<sup>55</sup>

For the church of God, James 2:14-16 gives an example of what a genuine faith is all about. Our care for the poor, the widows and the orphans must not only be limited to words of mouth or seasonal gifts at Christmas and Easter periods. God expects from us a continual assistance that will change the lives of those in need. If God is gracious to us, we must be gracious to others. If we truly love God, we must respond with compassion and be sensitive to the needs of the poor among us. God expects the rich to share their resources generously with the poor. A compassionate heart is the one that identifies needs of the poor and makes

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<sup>51</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 637.

<sup>52</sup> H. L. Willmington, 1997. *Willmington's Bible Handbook*. Wheaton, III: Tyndale House Publishers. Electronic Edition by Logos Bible Software.

<sup>53</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>54</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*.

<sup>55</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 436.

deliberate efforts to meet them.<sup>56</sup> According to Abogunrin, “this parable reminds us of the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt. 25:32-46 and what ought to be the church’s response to the plight of the poor, as well as why the government and its various agencies should take practical steps, not only in alleviating poverty, but also in ensuring that all the citizens have equal share in the national resources.”<sup>57</sup>

### 5.3 The Rich Young Ruler - Luke 18: 18-25

The story of the rich young ruler which is also found in Mark 10: 17-22 and Matthew 19: 16-22. Luke dropped the Markan introduction which began the episode with Jesus’ making his way along the road. Matthew also removed the same introduction because of his own initial introduction of Matthew 19: 1. Luke introduced the one who asked Jesus the question about eternal life with the word **αρχων** which means magistrate or a ruler.<sup>58</sup> Leon Morris believes that since his office is not specifically stated, he might be the ruler of a synagogue. Moreover, Matthew says he was a young man. He probably belonged to the ruling class.<sup>59</sup> According to Philo, a youth is defined as someone between the age of 21 and 28. The three Gospels agree that the man was rich.<sup>60</sup>

Unlike the Gospel according to Matthew, Luke does not say that the man was young (that is **νεανις**), but maintains he was a ruler which might mean he was a religious leader, a ruler of the synagogue or a member of the Sanhedrin.<sup>61</sup> If this is true, then one wonders where a young man, a ruler of the synagogue could get his great wealth. The question of how he got his wealth may be applied to many religious leaders of our days who are very rich. Some are very rich to the extent that they purchase private jets even though seventy percent of members of their churches cannot afford to buy bicycles.

The story of the rich young ruler can be divided into three parts. In part one, Jesus took up the address used by the rich man (Good Master) and stated that only God can be called good. The

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<sup>56</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*, 435-436.

<sup>57</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. *Jesus Pronouncements on Wealth In the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria*. Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises, 265.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1196.

<sup>59</sup> Leon Morris, 1999. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Revised Edition. Luke*. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 291-292.

<sup>60</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, 2004. *The Pulpit Commentary. St. Luke vol. II*. Bellingham: Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>61</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 684.

second part related Jesus' directive to the man to measure his life with the second part of the ten commandments and the man replied that he had kept all of them. In the third part, Jesus summoned the man to sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. But the man went away very sad and was unwilling to surrender his wealth.<sup>62</sup>

According to Luke, it is very possible that this man might have been listening to Jesus' teachings and had seen Him holding the little children (Luke 18: 15-17). Possibly, all of these prompted the man to call Jesus the Good Teacher which made Jesus to react by ascribing the source of goodness to God. To the man's question, Jesus referred him to the part of the ten commandments that has to do with man's relationship with other men. When the man claimed to have fulfilled all these, Jesus told him to do additional two things namely, "Sell all that you have, distribute it to the poor and come and follow me". The double injunction which Luke copied from Mark characteristically fits into the theme of Luke which demands that believers should take care of the poor.<sup>63</sup>

Bultmann regards this story as an apophthegm and adds that its unity is not under any serious question. The Lukan account omits the detail of the man running to Jesus and kneeling before Him. The man in Luke simply addressed Jesus as "Good Teacher". While the Jews seemed to reserve the attributes of goodness to God, there is evidence that the same term was used for men as well (Prov. 12: 2, 14: 14, Luke 6: 45). While it may not be strange to speak of a man as *good*, it might be flattering and unusual to call a man *good*. It might also cheapen this word that is strictly applied to God.<sup>64</sup>

Jesus responded with another question, "why do you call me good? No one is good, but God alone." (Luke 18:19) RSV. Many scholars have explained Jesus' answer to this man's address over the centuries. Some of the explanations are (1) the question is intended to bring the man to perceive that Jesus was divine so that he might believe in Him as the Son of God, not just as a good teacher/master. He wanted him to know Him as the Good God. (2) Jesus refusal was to correct the ruler's flattery. (3) The adjective good (**avγαγο, j**) should be understood in the sense of *gracious kind*. (4) Jesus was not saying anything about Himself but

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<sup>62</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1197.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1197.

<sup>64</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 683-684.

directing the attention of the man to God and His will as the only condition for pleasing Him.(5) Jesus implicitly acknowledged His own sinfulness and imperfection.<sup>65</sup>

But Howard Marshall believes that there is no reason to see Jesus' refusal of the title as an admission of sinfulness for that would be contrary to the teachings of the rest of the New Testament. Therefore, he believes that Jesus was making the man to see Him beyond a teacher; for the acceptance of the title of a good teacher would mean He was not more than a teacher.<sup>66</sup> It is the opinion of this researcher that Jesus refused this title so that the man might not rate himself good as well. A man who believed he had obeyed all the commandments would see nothing wrong in declaring himself good. With Jesus' refusal, the man could no longer address himself good. It is hereby opined that Jesus' refusal was deliberate and corrective.

But not all scholars agree that the word 'good' here is used in the sense of perfection or divine. They believe that in verse 18, the word 'good' is used in the sense of *kind* generosity but in verse 19, it speaks of moral perfection. While one word covering both ideas is not available, the difficulty remains because Jesus used the same word (**avgagō, j**) in verse 18 and in his refusal in verse 19 but gave it a slightly different meaning. Therefore, one might qualify the word in verse 18 as good of heart or kind and use same word in a moral absolute sense in verse 19. But if this is not acceptable, then the idea of moral perfection is employed in both verses.<sup>67</sup> It is necessary to admit here that this theological difficulty remains unresolved.

To gain eternal life or to enter the kingdom of God, Jesus referred the man to the need to obey the laws of God. Jesus told him to keep the seventh, sixth, eighth, ninth, and fifth commandments. (Exo.20:12-16). All of these pertain to man's behaviour towards fellow men, while the first four commandments relate to man's relationship with God.<sup>68</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer observes that Luke and Matthew differ from Mark on the list of recommended commandments with the exclusion of "you shall not defraud" which is found only in the

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<sup>65</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1199.

<sup>66</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 684.

<sup>67</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1993. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. New York: United Bible Societies. Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>68</sup> John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

Gospel of Mark. (Mark 10: 19) He believes that both Luke and Matthew omitted the latter independently of each other since it is not part of the ten commandments of the Old Testament.<sup>69</sup>

Luke just like Matthew omitted the emotion shown by Jesus when the man claimed that he had observed all the laws from his youth. Luke therefore used the word **avkou, saj** (heard) in verse 22 as a link just as he did in 14: 15 and 19: 11. In Luke, Jesus did not praise the man's obedience to the law; rather He gave him a further commandment. **e;ti** is also added by Matthew in his own account.(19: 20). Instead of the word **u`sterw/** (*lack*), Luke used the word **lei, pw** which also means "to lack or to fall short." He also dropped the command **u[page** (*go*) and he added the antecedent **pa, nta** of which he was fond. Though he said only one thing was lacking, the only one thing was all embracing for it involved the selling of the man's property and giving (**diadi, dwmi**) them to the poor. By so doing, he would have great treasure in heaven.<sup>70</sup> Unlike those who think that this can be called the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment, some scholars believe that the command to sell one's property and give the proceeds to the poor is embedded in the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment. The 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is against covetousness which includes the idea of greed, selfishness and holding onto things which one has as well as trying to take what belongs to others. To them this is not the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment, but an extension of the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment.<sup>71</sup>

Whether it is the extension of the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment or the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment, one thing that is glaring in the episode is that this is the point where the rich man failed the test of the Master. Luke differed from Mark in this command with the rhetorical addition of **pa, nta** in the first position, 'sell all that you have' while Mark simply put it as 'whatever you have sell' (**o[sa e;ceij pw, lhson**). The second aspect was also direct as Jesus told the man to distribute the proceeds to the poor. It seems the reward language, "you shall have treasure in heaven" is derived from Mark 10: 21. It must be noted here that the treasure in heaven cannot simply be equated with eternal life which the man enquired about. It is therefore implied that to gain eternal life, one must keep the commandments. But to have treasure in

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<sup>69</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1196.

<sup>70</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 685.

<sup>71</sup> John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

heaven, the man must give to the poor.<sup>72</sup> In addition to the command to sell and distribute proceeds to the poor is the command to follow Jesus. This is a call to discipleship. The Greek word **deu/ro** used here is equivalent to an imperative “come here.” (Acts 7: 3, 34, John 11: 43, Rev. 17: 1, 21: 9). The plural **deu/te** is employed in Mark 1: 17.<sup>73</sup>

Luke did not mention the emotion of the young man, but he retained the fact of his grief (**peri , lupoj**) (Mark 6: 26, 14: 34) (**lupou , meno j** ).<sup>74</sup> The rich young ruler might be the only man in the four Gospels that came to Jesus and left in a worse condition than when he came. Though he had so much in his favour, (that he is morally upright, religious, sincere and earnest) his inability to follow the command to sell all and give to the poor betrayed him. Such a good man would be qualified for membership and also leadership position in many of our churches today. Yet, he refused to follow Jesus because of his great riches and went his way in great sorrow.<sup>75</sup> As Willmington puts it, “in his wealth and self-righteousness, he didn’t see his spiritual need. Christ grieved over his response and spoke of the perils of wealth and the rewards for those willing to give it up and follow Him.”<sup>76</sup>

No doubt, the call to sell all touched the nerve of the rich young ruler and exposed his lack of total allegiance to God. According to Abogunrin, “ the tragedy of the rich man’s case is not the wealth per se, but that the wealth already had a powerful hold on his heart. He was under the control of the wealth rather than the wealth being under his control. In fact, he was already bewitched and controlled by that goddess, Mammon; this consequently affected his attitude to his possessions. Moreover, Jesus wanted his disciples to realize that salvation from start to finish is not a human achievement; it is strictly through God’s grace.”<sup>77</sup> We must therefore let God direct us to use our resources to help the poor. This kind of generosity shows a heart that is truly turned towards God. This episode implies that we should consider carefully how we use the resources that God has given us. The Evangelist had raise same issue earlier in his Gospel. (Luke 12: 13-21 and 16: 1-13) The peculiarity of this passage is in the fact that it shows glaringly the direction our resources should go.

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<sup>72</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 2000.

<sup>73</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 686.

<sup>74</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.

<sup>75</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>76</sup> H. L. Willmington, 1997. *Willmington’s Bible Handbook*. Wheaton, III: Tyndale House Publishers. Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>77</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, 2007. *Jesus Pronouncements on Wealth In the Context of Health and Wealth Gospel in Nigeria*. Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises, 258.

Using our resources to meet the needs of the poor is a concrete way of expressing our compassion. In a world where only small group of people relatively speaking hold the major resources of the world, the application of this text might not be easy. This is because needs exist everywhere. Nevertheless, a rich man who has turned to God should ensure that he correctly performs his ministry and service to those who are genuinely in need. It must be noted that the follower of Jesus is a stranger and an alien in this world. (1 Peter 2: 11ff) What Jesus was asking the man to become was the citizen of heaven in which his resources ceased to be his, but tools of heaven. Only when we have a sense of heavenly citizenship, that we can give our all to God and which is partly demonstrated in our giving to the poor.<sup>78</sup>

One question that comes to mind on the command of Jesus to the rich young ruler is why he was not commanded to give his possessions directly to the poor. But he must sell them first and give the proceeds to the poor. Does it mean that what the poor need mainly is money? In the opinion of this researcher, the command opens our eyes to the right approach to fight poverty. The war against poverty cannot be won by giving just anything to the poor, but by making available the right resources that can turn around the situations of the poor. Any economy that will survive and prevail against poverty, the financial system must be worked upon. A maladapted financial system like that of Nigeria makes poverty to thrive in the country. As J. A. T. Ojo puts it, “finance affects economic development, either aiding or constraining capital formation, according to the kinds of propositions financiers will entertain. Decisions made by financiers influence the amount and kinds of capital formation which can take place. Capital formation activity in turn, affects economic growth.”<sup>79</sup> While economic growth may not automatically benefit the poor, it surely creates an avenue for the poor to rise above their dehumanising conditions.

It must be noted here that the call to sell all and distribute to the poor cannot be generalised for all Christians. The expression of Peter to Ananias in Acts 5:4 contradicts the idea that all Christians must sell all their possessions. Reason itself shows that if all Christians should sell all, idleness would set in and all Christians would automatically come to poverty.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the command of Jesus here does not prescribe poverty as the qualification for a

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<sup>78</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*, 469-470.

<sup>79</sup> Ade T. Ojo, 2010. *The Nigerian Maladapted Financial System: Reforming Tasks and Development Dilemma*. Lagos: The CIBN Press Ltd, 5-6.

<sup>80</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth, 275.

pious or ascetic life. Rather, it teaches that every Christian should embrace the challenge to assist the poor. Just as the Old Testament teaches on the need to have concern for the poor, (Exo. 23: 11, Lev. 19: 9-10, Deut. 15: 1-18) the ministry of Jesus also embraces the need to have great concern for men and women who live on the margin of the society rioting in economic distress and social degradation.<sup>81</sup>

Another significance of the episode is found in the appended comment of Jesus that riches make it difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. Although Luke's organisation of the material in verse 24 is not the same as that of Mark, Luke retained the interpretation of the story. His presentation here seems to be in wider context of his earlier teachings on how to gain eternal life (10: 25, 12: 15) and the attitude of Christians to riches. (6: 24, 8: 14, 11: 41, 12: 13-34) The purpose here is to re-establish his earlier teachings that the right way to the Kingdom is to love God and to love one's neighbour through limitless generosity.<sup>82</sup>

In verse 25, Luke omitted the disciples' reaction and proceeded further to the confirmatory remark of Jesus about the rich and their predicament. The statement, "for it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" is a hyperbolic expression. It speaks of what is impossible. It has a Rabbinic parallel in a saying about the impossibility of an elephant passing through the eye of a needle. This particular expression was not accepted until the third century A.D. Some theologians suggest that since **ka,mhloj** means camel, the word **trh/ma** means opening or hole which is rare for **belo,nh** that is needle is a more literary word than the word "**r`afi,j**". The MSS shows the assimilation of the parallels. Luke's **eivselqei/n** (go through) differs from the **dieselqei/n** of Mark due to assimilation to the second part of the saying.<sup>83</sup>

To go through the eye of a needle ( **dia. trh,matoj belo,nhj eivselqei/n** ) literally means to enter in through a needle's eye. Both Matthew and Mark used another word for needle (**r`afi,j** ). Luke alone has **belo,nh** which apart from being the older word, it is the peculiar word for the surgical needle.<sup>84</sup> According to this text, one of the key dangers of riches is that wealth comes first; people then begin to slim down the list. Jesus therefore calls

<sup>81</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The New International Commentary On The New Testament*. The Gospel of Luke, 686.

<sup>82</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, p.683.

<sup>83</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 686-688

<sup>84</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, 2002. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Bellingham: Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.



on his disciples to exhibit a character that is not self-serving and such that does not take advantage of others.<sup>85</sup> When the love of money is secretly nourished in the heart, it can bring a man down to the pit of hell,<sup>86</sup> because such a man will find it difficult to detach himself from his wealth and much more so by his inability to give part of his possessions to the poor. Everyone must examine his heart and know whether he is willing to give up his possession to assist those who are in need.

#### 5.4 The Salvation of Zacchaeus - Luke 19: 1-10

The story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1-10 seems to have some resemblances with the call of Levi in Luke 5:27-32. S.M. Gilmour and R. Bultmann consider this episode to be a secondary and latter counterpart of the call of Levi just as some scholars also believe that the healing of the ten lepers is a latter counterpart of that of a leper recorded in Mark 10:40-44. This is considered as a fictive elaboration of a minimal tradition into an ideal scene. The concrete details of this story especially the mentioning of the name Zacchaeus, the climbing of the Sycamore tree, and the localization of the scene in Jericho might not fully support this idea.<sup>87</sup>

The story is from Luke's special source and it might be inserted in juxtaposition with the episode of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Bultmann's view is that it is a developed simpler story of Mark 2:14-17. This can be considered a pure speculation for the name Zacchaeus on its own speaks in favour of the historicity of the episode. The opening verse links up with the story of the blind man who was healed at the border of Jericho. The Greek word employed for "to pass" (*die, rcomai*) may be Lukan (19:4, 2:15). It is also revealing that the story of the blind man is located in Jericho in Luke's source (Mark 10:46). The story of Zacchaeus could be secondarily located in the same place. But the fact that Jericho at that time could be a tax post means that Zacchaeus might be living in that area.<sup>88</sup>

Jericho was an important city, located at the border of Judea, just about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem. At the time of Jesus, the commerce from the East passed through Jericho and the city was also the centre of fertile agricultural activities. It was known for its palms and balsam grooves. Many kings of Judea, especially Herod, used the city as their winter capital because

<sup>85</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 467.

<sup>86</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth, 273.

<sup>87</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1218-1219.

<sup>88</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 696.

of its warmer climate. Many of the big buildings in the city were patterned after Roman architecture.<sup>89</sup>

The name Zacchaeus means the “righteous one”. But this man was not living up to his name. Definitely, the Jewish community in Jericho would not consider him righteous because of his profession. He collected taxes from his own people for the Gentiles rulers that were considered unclean. The publicans were known for collecting more than required. Zacchaeus was considered a renegade in the eyes of the Jews.<sup>90</sup>

The statement in verse 2 is introduced with “and behold.” (**Kai. ivdou.**). The combination of **ovno,mati** (1: 5) and **kalou,menoj** (1:36) seems old and unique. Perhaps it was used to draw the attention of the reader to the name Zacchaeus, a Greek version of the Hebrew name Zachariah. This man was given a title **avrcitelw,nhj** (chief tax collector). This title which is found in the New Testament only in this passage shows that Zacchaeus was probably the head of a group of tax collectors. The group under him was responsible for the collection of dues and customs in the area. He was rich like others in his trade; he was scrupulous in making sure that he made a good profit in his transactions.<sup>91</sup> Certainly, he had a high position and such high positions were obtained by making high bids at the cost of charging the ordinary people exorbitant taxes.<sup>92</sup>

The passage does not tell us why he wanted to see Jesus, but it might be speculated that it was out of curiosity. But when one considers the steps towards redemption that he had taken prior to this incident, it will not be wrong to think that he sought Jesus for more than sheer curiosity. It was to seek salvation or a relationship with Jesus who was already known at that time as friend of tax collectors. The Greek word describing the stature of Zacchaeus (**h`liki,a**) means height and it is clear in the passage that it was Zacchaeus that was short in height and not Jesus. Findlay expresses disagreement with this by saying that it is possible that it was Jesus that was short.<sup>93</sup> His argument does not have much support.

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<sup>89</sup> Clifton J. Allen. Gen. Ed., 1970. *The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 9- Luke-John*. Nashville- Tennessee: Broadman Press, 146.

<sup>90</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>91</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 696.

<sup>92</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, 1991. *The Bible Readers Companion*. Electronic Ed: Victor Books Published in Electronic form by Logos Research System.

The account here seems ludicrous. Zacchaeus, a wealthy and influential man, ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to get a chance to see Jesus.<sup>94</sup> In the East it would be unusual for a man to run especially a wealthy government official. Yet, the story presents Zacchaeus running down the street like a little boy following a parade and to reach its climax climbed a tree.<sup>95</sup> The Greek word employed for his search **ζητεῖ**, **w** is in the imperfect tense and this means he was busy seeking for Jesus.<sup>96</sup>

The tree he climbed is called a sycamore tree, a tree that is mentioned only here in the New Testament.<sup>97</sup> According to Lawrence O. Richards, the sycamore (**συκομορέ**, **a**) is “the Egyptian fig with leaves like mulberry.”<sup>98</sup> Marvin R. Vincent also agrees with this by saying the word sycamore is a combination of two words namely **συκο**—fig tree and **μορέ**—the mulberry that is the fig-mulberry. It resembles the fig in its fruits and the mulberry in its leaves. Some writers state that the name is derived from **μοροσ** -foolish because it produces worthless figs. Dr. Thompson states that it bears several crops on yearly basis. The sycamore tree grows along its trunk and has large branches. The fruits are very insipid, but the poor people find food in them. Therefore, Amos expresses the fact that he belongs to the lowest class of the community by referring to himself as a gatherer of sycamore fruits. (Amos 7: 14) The tree grows with its large branches low down and wide open making it easy for any man to climb it.<sup>99</sup>

But not all scholars agree that Zachaeus climbed a sycamore tree. J. Wellhasen thinks that if Jesus were really passing through Jericho, Zachaeus must have climbed a roof and not a tree. He argues that the scene must be outside of the city of Jericho. But G. Dalman argues that Wellhasen might be thinking of Jesus’ day Jericho like the Old Testament Jericho that was

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<sup>93</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan: The Paternoster, 696.

<sup>94</sup> John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>95</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>96</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, 2002. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Bellingham: Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>97</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1224

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, 1991. *The Bible Readers Companion*. Electronic Ed: Victor Books Published in Electronic form by Logos Research System.

<sup>99</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, 2002. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Bellingham: Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

tight packed with houses where roofs were indeed available for ascent. But the Jericho of the New Testament period was different. It took the pattern of many other Roman cities like Pompeii. Excavators have shown that the Jericho of Jesus' time like many other cities under Roman rule had parks, villas, avenues and public squares. In such places, fine trees were grown.<sup>100</sup> This is also true of the present day Jericho which is under the Palestinians. Therefore, that Zacchaeus could find a tree to climb in Jericho is not debatable.

In verse 5, whether Zacchaeus intended to remain on the tree as Jesus passed by or not was not stated. It may be assumed that he wanted to remain hidden since that would protect his dignity. In any case, Jesus knew he was there and called him by his name. That Jesus knew his name might be a case of supernatural knowledge just as it was in the case of Nathaniel in John 1: 47ff. Jesus therefore told him to waste no time (**speu, dw**) in coming down for He must stay in his house. The Greek word **sh, meron** (today) is to be taken literally although it may convey the idea that the time has come for the fulfilment of God's plan. (19:9) The implication here is that the divine plan of God is being worked out. The Greek word **me, nw** is the usual word used for staying at a person's house. (John 1: 38ff) But the equivalent word used in verse 7 is **katalu, w** which means also to stay for a night. (Luke 19: 7)<sup>101</sup>

Zacchaeus did not waste time; he came down and received Jesus joyfully. The repetition of the words, **speu, dw/katabai, nw** (make haste/come down) in verse 6 is no doubt deliberate.<sup>102</sup> There are some things in the world that demand urgent attention and we must not delay in getting them done. One of such is the war against poverty. Every rich man must come down from his high place and join the non governmental agencies, government and churches in the war against poverty. The time to fight the war against poverty is today, not tomorrow.

In verse 7, it was recorded that "all the people grumbled" (**diagoggu, zw**). This is similar reaction to other previous occasions. (5: 30, 15: 2) To the Jews, staying in the house of a tax collector amount to sharing in his sin.<sup>103</sup> To eat in the house of a man was a significant act. It

<sup>100</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1223-1224.

<sup>101</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 696-697.

<sup>102</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 697.

stood for fellowship and acceptance of each other, the host and the guest.<sup>104</sup> When people grumbled, Zacchaeus stood and announced that he was a changed person that half of his possession he had given to the poor and to those he had defrauded, he restored fourfold. Interestingly, he paid from his wealth something very similar to what Jesus requested the rich young ruler to do in Luke 18: 22.<sup>105</sup>

The statement of Zacchaeus here (v 8) is to be seen as a reaction to the initiative of Jesus and to the objections of the crowd. To free Jesus from their indignation, he made his intent known. In such a situation, a declaration of intent is good enough as a sign of repentance. The use of **ku,rioj** (Lord) indicates Lukan style. **ivdou**, (Behold) may express a sudden resolve while **h`mi,sia**, (half) can be used as an adjective which is followed by a noun in the genitive case. It takes the gender of the noun here though it can be used as a singular neuter noun. (Mk 6: 23, Rev. 11: 9, 11, 12: 14) The very late position of **ku,rie** (Lord) in the statement is due to the heavy emphasis placed on the object. What he intended to give in charity was more than the normal requirement of twenty per cent of one's possession recognised by the Rabbis. Theologians have opined that the present tense, **toi/j ptwcoi/j di,dwmi** (I give to the poor) is futuristic as it only expresses a resolve.<sup>106</sup>

The phrase **ei; tino,j ti evsukofa,nthsa** (if I have extorted anything from anyone) carries the idea of the admonition of John the Baptist to the soldiers in Luke 3: 14. But Zacchaeus spoke of occasions in which he had been involved in any transaction for his own personal gains and thereby extracted from the public kickbacks. While one might be very sure that tax collectors were notorious for such acts, Zacchaeus' presentation here gave the idea that he was willing to mend fences. What he decided to pay back to such persons was fourfold of what was extorted. The fourfold redemption is in accordance with the regulations in the Old Testament as found in Exodus 22: 1 where a thief is asked to restore four sheep in place of one that was stolen. But in Leviticus 6: 5 and Numbers 5: 6-7, only an added fifth is prescribed along with the principal. The restitution law of Palestine mentioned in Mur. 19: 10 on a writ of divorce which was dated A.D. 11 says, "I am repaying (them that is, possessions

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<sup>103</sup>Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan: The Paternoster, 697.

<sup>104</sup>Lawrence O. Richards, 1991. *The Bible Readers Companion*. Electronic Edition.

<sup>105</sup>John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>106</sup>Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 697.

destroyed or damaged in marriage) fourfold.” This fourfold restitution is also common to the Roman law.<sup>107</sup>

The idea of restitution here is a good proof of a change of heart. Without restitution, Zacchaeus’ giving of half of his goods to the poor would be less effective.<sup>108</sup> As one looks at the issue of poverty in Africa, the causes and how to meaningfully combat it, the actions of Zachaeus are very important. People from developed nations many years ago came to Africa and took away various resources (human and natural). Such nations cannot help to fight poverty just by giving aids or charity to African countries. As Zacchaeus made restitution, the developed countries must begin the genuine war against poverty by making **reparations** to the countries which they took their children and natural resources to develop theirs. Only when meaningful **reparations** are combined with **aids** that the war against poverty can be successfully won. It is therefore the opinion of this researcher that the need for reparation is imperative in the war against poverty.

In verse 9, the Greek word **sh,meron** (today) occurs again but in a more emphatic position. It speaks of salvation occurring to the house of Zacchaeus. Salvation here means the restoration of a Jewish man like Zacchaeus to a good relationship with God. The phrase, “Salvation is come to this house,” (**swthri, a tw/| oi;kw| tou,tw|**) also has another connotation in the fact that Jesus, (*Yahweh saves*) the embodiment of God’s salvation visits the house. Worthy of note is the contrast between salvation coming to this house and the grumbling of the critical crowd. This indeed is significant.<sup>109</sup> According to Howard Marshall, salvation comes even to Jews only when Jesus goes after them and brings them home. The story here concludes with the great declaration of the assignment of the Son of Man who as a Shepherd looks for the lost sheep of Israel. This, Marshall considers a fitting epitome of the message of the gospel of Luke. Dibelius looking at the passage calls it a personal legend that is full of anecdotal details that are essential to the narrative. This story is undoubtedly a unified composition<sup>110</sup> though the historicity of the passage cannot be denied.

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<sup>107</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1225.

<sup>108</sup> A. T. Robertson, 1997. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vak Harbor.: Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>109</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*. New York: The Anchor Bible Double, 1125.

<sup>110</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan: The Paternoster, 695.

In a paradoxical way, this story gives a notable illustration of how the good news is reaching the poor. It stresses on the bearer of the good news and the appropriate response to the benevolence of God. The narrative employs ideas fully developed in prior stories, in oxymoronic juxtaposition referring to the beneficiary of the good news as rulers, tax collectors, wealthy men and a sinner. Luke's audience might therefore assume that the wealthy and the rulers were out and sinners and tax collectors were in. But in the story of Zacchaeus, every formula by which men might determine people's status seemed to be unimportant.<sup>111</sup> The good news is for everyone.

The story of Zacchaeus is the case of a spiritually poor man that became spiritually rich through the Gospel. The people around him would consider him rich, but he was actually a spiritually bankrupt sinner who could only survive by the grace of God through the gift of eternal life, the most expensive gift in the world.<sup>112</sup> There is no doubt in the story that Zacchaeus was a changed man. Likewise, when a wealthy Christian begins to give his riches to help the poor, indeed one can say old things have passed away.<sup>113</sup> So for Zacchaeus, the core of his personality and his values had shifted. To him, men are more important than money and honesty more important than profit.<sup>114</sup> Divesting himself half of his property, he represented an example of a wealthy man who understood the ministry of Jesus and his concern for the poor and the cheated.<sup>115</sup> The giving of half of his possessions, not just half of his earnings were thank offerings characteristic of a changed heart.<sup>116</sup> Zacchaeus became an example of whatever it means to sell all and give to the poor in Luke 12:33 and Luke 18:22. He also showed that the command is not obligatory for all believers, but generosity is commanded and commended. (Luke 11:41)<sup>117</sup>

His giving away half of his possessions which received Christ's commendation reveals that the call of Jesus to give to the poor is a rhetorical way of stating that every man should see his

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<sup>111</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The New International Commentary on The New Testament. The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 667-668.

<sup>112</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>113</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth, 292-294.

<sup>114</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, 1987. *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton, 111: Victor Books, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>115</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1222.

<sup>116</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, Electronic Edition by Logos Library System.

<sup>117</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*.

possessions as the stewardship of God. What God gives must be used to help others. To have treasure in heaven is far more important than hoarding resources on earth. Our resources must be placed at the service of God, that is to help the poor around us.<sup>118</sup> The story of Zacchaeus has shown that not all rich people left Jesus sadly. He was an example of what is possible with God, the salvation of a rich man. (18:27).

By way of conclusion, the tax system which made Zacchaeus rich is worthy of examination. At the time of Jesus, the Romans sold the task of collecting taxes in particular areas to the “highest bidders.” Such persons would not receive pay for their work. They would simply collect as much money as they could and whatever was above the bid they had presented, they would keep for themselves.<sup>119</sup> This indeed made poverty to thrive in the land. The case of the highest bidder is also a factor aiding poverty in Africa today. For example, the actions of government surrendering the provision of social amenities to the highest bidders all in the name of privatization makes poverty to increase. It is therefore the opinion of this researcher that while privatization might be necessary in some areas, privatizing the core sectors of the economy like the petroleum industry and Power (PHCN), without proper control would skyrocket poverty in the land.

### **5.5 The Poor Widow’s Offering – Luke 21: 1-4**

The story of the poor widow is a good example of how Luke could considerably change the words of a Markan narrative while still preserving the important element of the discourse. For this episode, there is no trace of another source. According to Bultmann, the original in Mark is the ideal construction. He argues in favour of this because he posits that Jesus could not have seen how much the woman gave nor known how much she was left with and that the story had its parallels in rabbinic and Indian tales and the point was also found in Greek literature. Therefore, the story is considered to be originally a parable or a fable perhaps told by Jesus and this was later changed to be a story of Jesus.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 480.

<sup>119</sup> D. A. Carson & Other, 1994. *New Bible Commentary*. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1009-1010.

<sup>120</sup> John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scripture*. Wheaton: Victor Books, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.



The mention of widows in the preceding verses (Luke 20: 46-47) acts as a catchword joined to this episode about another comment of Jesus on a widow. Luke must have derived his story from Mark 12: 41-44 for Matthew omitted this story. Though he fashioned his own introduction to the story, he followed closely his Markan source on the crucial points especially on the sayings of Jesus. According to M. Dibelius, the narrative could perhaps be traced back to the sayings of Jesus especially to a parable. But this is a mere speculation because the narrative setting is really a secondary addition to what is only a saying of Jesus in earlier tradition. Bultmann also believes that the story might be traced to a similar story in Buddhist tradition in which small sacrifices being made by poor people are considered more acceptable to the gods than the extravagant contributions of the rich.<sup>121</sup>

The episode begins in verse 1 with Jesus looking up. It is possible that Jesus sat down over against the treasury, probably with the intention of seeing what individuals would give. His looking up here is similar to that of Zacchaeus; it wasn't a casual look, but a deliberate one.<sup>122</sup> The Greek word employed here **avnable, pw** could be interpreted 'look up' or 'look closely' with the latter being preferred for it means an attentive look.<sup>123</sup> Luke also used the word **ei=den** for "saw" unlike Mark who used the word **evqew, rei**. The word employed by Mark suggests a sudden glance rather than a conscious look. Luke omitted the reference to the crowd putting money in the treasury but concentrated on the rich people. The word **gazofula, kion** (Mk. 12: 41, 43, John 8: 20) could mean treasury, that is a room for keeping treasures. It could also mean a contribution box or a receptacle. In the temple, there were rooms for keeping valuables and one of these rooms was called the treasury. In addition, there were also 13 trumpet shaped collection boxes meant for offerings of different kinds.<sup>124</sup> According to Fitzmyer, treasure chambers of the Jerusalem temple are mentioned in Nehemiah 12:44. The thirteen receptacles were inscribed with various titles: New Shekel Dues, Old Shekel Dues, Bird Offerings, Young Birds for the Holocausts, Wood, Frankincense, Gold for the Mercy-seat and six of them with Freewill Offerings.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1319-1320.

<sup>122</sup> Robert Jamieson and others, 1997. *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. Oak Harbour: Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>123</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1993. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. New York: United Bible Societies. Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

<sup>124</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Michigan: The Paternoster, 751-752.

<sup>125</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1321-1322.

While Mark described what took place in the temple in a narrative style, Luke described what Jesus saw, a poor (**penicra.n**) which gave an idea of a very poor widow.<sup>126</sup> Worthy of note is the fact that two different Greek words for the poor are employed here. The word **penicro,j** was employed in verse 2 while the word **ptwco,j** was used in verse 3. The difference between **ptwco,j** and **penicro,j** as explained by Aristophanus is that the life of a poor person **ptwco,j** is to live, having nothing at all where the life of a needy person **penicro,j** is to live sparingly and dependant on toil. Fitzmyer states that Luke used both words synonymously in this story. Though nothing was said about the widow being sickly, elderly or without dependants, it implies she had personal needs.<sup>127</sup> It is the opinion of this researcher that the two words were used constructively by Luke to state who the widow was before she came to the temple and what she turned out to be materially after the giving of her offering at the temple. She came as a **penicra.n** and she became a **ptwch.** having giving her all. It's a case of a poor woman becoming poorer. Having dropped all she had, she moved from the level of a needy person to that of a pauper in terms of material things.

What she dropped in the receptacle are two of the smallest coins in use in Palestine at that time.<sup>128</sup> Some commentators say that worshippers were not allowed to give offerings less than two *lepta* as the minimum offering. But some relevant Talmudic passages do not say that a gift of one lepton is forbidden. The passage simply states that no one should put an offering of one lepton in the charity box unless under supervision.<sup>129</sup> It must be noted here that what was being dropped in the receptacle is called **dw/ron** that is gift or offering. To use this same word for alms is not acceptable.<sup>130</sup>

Characteristically, Luke did not tell us that Jesus called his disciples because they were already present to be instructed. He solemnly drew their attention to what he saw. The widow who belonged to the class of the poor, who trusted in God and for whom the good news was especially meant, had given proportionally more than others. The word order (**au[th h`ptwch.**) is inverted in PR & Diglot and this order may be correct, the other reading being

<sup>126</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 752-753.

<sup>127</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1322.

<sup>128</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985.

<sup>129</sup> Leon Morris, 1999. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Revised Edition*. Luke, Leicester, Inter Varsity Press, 322.

<sup>130</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1993. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. New York: United Bible Societies. Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

due to Markan assimilation.<sup>131</sup> The expression “poor widow” has become a proverbial one for anyone who barely or most unlikely to contribute anything to a charitable course.<sup>132</sup>

Jesus’ commendation of the widow in verse 3 has been interpreted in many ways. According to A. G. Wright, the widow’s mite has at least five meanings.

- 1) The true measure of gifts is not how much a person gives but what percentage the person leaves behind. (i.e. the cost of the gift to the giver.)
- 2) It is not the amount that a person gives that is significant, but the spirit with which a person gives is equally important. The spirit of the giver could be that of self offering, self forgetfulness, unquestioning surrender or that of detachment.
- 3) The genuine gift is to give all that one has.
- 4) The alms and offerings a person gives must correspond to ones resources.
- 5) The story reveals the mind of Jesus on almsgiving.

It must be noted here that all these explanations have no basis in this episode except the first one. The passage does not tell us about the inner spirit of the widow unless it is assumed that because she was poor, then she was pious. Also, the contrast between the offerings is that of more and less and not between a false and true gift. Giving according to one’s means has no basis here as well. The widow gave her all, that is giving beyond her means. To limit the meaning of the story to almsgiving is not advisable for what was being offered here are not alms, but offerings.<sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, the passage reveals to us how the poor can find it easy to give all that they have out of their own volition, while the rich find it difficult to do the same even when they are commanded by Jesus. (The Rich Young Ruler) In the story, Jesus singled out a disadvantaged widow as a practical and spiritual example. She stood in contrast to the rich and the affluent who could give only after they had satisfied and gratified their own desires.<sup>134</sup>

In verse 4, Jesus explained His verdict. According to Luke, while the rich gave out of their plenty (**evk tou/ perisseu, ontoj auvtoi/j**), she gave out of her poverty. The use of the Greek word **dw/ra** makes it clear that what they offered were offerings. The

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<sup>131</sup> Howard Marshall, 1978. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 752-753.

<sup>132</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth, 354.

<sup>133</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1320-1321.

<sup>134</sup> Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans Eds, 2002. *The IVP Women’s Bible Commentary*. Nottingham: Intervarsity Press, 580.

words “**tou/ qeou/**” (*of God*) seem to have been appended to make it clearer to the non Jewish reader who might have never seen the receptacle **gazofula, kion** in the Jerusalem temple.<sup>135</sup> The phrase “out of their abundance” might also be interpreted “from the money they did not need.” Therefore, it might be necessary to interpret the statement this way, “*all of these have more than they need and they contributed from that, those others who have given had more than enough.*”<sup>136</sup> The synthetic structure of the latter part of the verse should therefore parallel to that of the first part as closely as possible. On the other hand, the widow gave out of her poverty, giving all she had in spite of the fact that she had less than she needed.<sup>137</sup> A poor person in her case would be someone that lives from hand to mouth and might possess no capital or property except what she receives from one source to another on a daily basis.<sup>138</sup> All her living here must mean all the cash she had on her both in the temple and at home. It is possible she might have some little properties that had not been converted to cash or might not be convertible to cash. At least she had clothes on her. She was not naked in the temple.

Today, many people who are giving what they consider small offerings call it “the widow’s mite.” But anyone who claims he is giving his widow’s mite must ensure that he is giving all he has at his disposal. The widow’s mite means her all.<sup>139</sup> The widow’s mite does not mean the least a person can give, but the most and the very all. According to Warren W. Wiersbe,

When it comes to our giving, God sees more than the portion; He also sees the proportion. Men see what is given, but God sees what is left and by that He measures the gift and the condition of our hearts.<sup>140</sup>

One question that could be raised here is whether or not Jesus commended the widow for giving her all. Gerald West opines that Jesus was not praising her, but was lamenting on what she had done. According to him, the poor widow was not just a faithful giver, but a victim of the oppressive practices of the religious leaders of her days.<sup>141</sup> Those who agree with this

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<sup>135</sup> Bruce Manning Metzger, 1994. *A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament, Second Edition*. New York: United Bible Societies, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>136</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1993. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*. New York: United Bible Societies. Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>137</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, 1993. *A Handbook On The Gospel of Luke*.

<sup>138</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth, 354-355.

<sup>139</sup> J. C. Ryle, 1998. *Expository Thoughts on Luke – Volume 2*, 355.

<sup>140</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, 1989. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, III: Victor Books Electronic Edition by Logos Research System.

school of thought saw a widow who was so indoctrinated by the religious leaders that she brought by her own volition, what could be considered the devouring of the widow's house which Jesus condemned in Luke 20: 47.<sup>142</sup> While this opinion might not be supported by our text, it is in the opinion of this researcher that such acts prevail in our world today especially in some of our Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

In such churches, the poor are so indoctrinated to the extent that they give beyond their means to the projects of the church or most of the time projects of the Bishop or the General Overseer. There are even times during the offering time, the Pastor would announce that everyone should dip their hands into their pocket and bring out all that is in their pocket for blessing. When that is done, he prays and commands that those hands must not go back into their pockets, but all must be poured into the offering bags. He warns against keeping part of the money because whoever does that comes under a curse. While it is not stated in the passage that the widow was cajoled or hypnotised to give her all, it is a reality in our world that the poor in some of our churches are being made poorer by way of hypnotism all in the name of God.

Robert Stein believes that the statement of Jesus on the widow was not a lamentation but indeed a commendation. The widow according to him was an example of someone who is rich towards God (Luke 12: 21), not anxious about life but seeking God's kingdom first (12: 22-31), willing to sell everything (12: 22) and leaving everything in her life for God (5: 11, 28).<sup>143</sup> But Joel Green believes that in no way did Jesus find the widow's action exemplary. He says how could he when the religious system was meant to help the widows and not to render them poorer? The mission of Jesus was to bring the good news to the poor and the widows and was not in any way celebrating a system that rendered them utterly destitute. Probably, Luke was drawing our attention to the religious system and the temple treasury itself.<sup>144</sup> This widow represented the most vulnerable in the society that the pious were expected to care for. Unfortunately, in the management of the affairs of widows, the teachers of law took a large portion for themselves from the widows' fund.<sup>145</sup> The story of the widow

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<sup>141</sup> Gerald West, 2004. "The Bible and Economics: Historical and Hermeneutical Reflections From South Africa." *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol. 20, no. 1, April, 114.

<sup>142</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992. *The New American Commentary- Luke*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, Electronic Edition by Logos Library System.

<sup>143</sup> Robert H. Stein, 1992.

<sup>144</sup> Joel B. Green, 1997. *The New International Commentary on The New Testament. The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 728-729.

points to how the poor are getting poorer. It might therefore be deliberate that in the immediate context of both Mark and Luke, we have the condemnation of the Scribes who devour the houses of widows before this story.<sup>146</sup>

One very clear implication of this story is the fact that no one is too poor to give. The issue here is not the amount given but the need for participation. In one sense, the widow would have missed her commendation if she had kept her two copper coins to herself because they were small. It shows that the poor also have something to give even in the war against poverty. Therefore, the passage encourages us to evaluate needs around us and respond to them appropriately. Sometimes, a gift that is considered small might be as a result of great sacrifice. For those who will give at great cost, this passage shows that God sees everything including their sacrifices.<sup>147</sup>

In Luke, Jesus saw and accepted the charity of the poor in a particular way. In the war against poverty, those who seem to have nothing to contribute may yet do a great deal of charity by canvassing for help or begging for those who cannot help themselves or even beg for themselves. According to Matthew Henry,

here was one that was herself poor and yet gave what little she had to the treasury. It was but two mites, which makes a farthing; but Christ magnified it as a piece of charity exceeding all the rest: She cast in more than they all. Christ does not blame her for indiscretion, in giving what she wanted herself, nor for vanity in giving among the rich to the treasury, but commended her liberality and her willingness to part with what little she had for the glory of God, which proceeded from a belief of and dependence upon God's providence to take care of her.<sup>148</sup>

He also adds that we must have respect for whatever may be called offerings of God and contribute cheerfully to it. Therefore, whatever is given to the support of the ministry, the Gospel, the spread of the good news, the education of youth, the liberation of the oppressed, the relief and welfare of widows, strangers and poor families is an offering to God.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 525.

<sup>146</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 1985. *The Gospel According To Luke x- xxiv*, 1321.

<sup>147</sup> Darrell L. Bock, 1996. *The NIV Application Commentary. Luke*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 529.

<sup>148</sup> Matthew Henry, 1991. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, Electronic Edition by Logos Research Systems.

<sup>149</sup> Matthew Henry, 1991.

According to Taiye Aluko, the poor widow was a symbol of righteousness and dedication. She was honest by giving appropriately and sacrificially.<sup>150</sup> This researcher therefore opines that honesty and sacrificial giving are essentials in the war against poverty.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Whether the stories considered in this chapter are mere parables or real history remains a discourse of great importance among scholars. But one thing that is very important to this research is the teachings of Jesus from the stories as they relate to the poor and their poverty. The historicity is not what is primary here, but the ethical teachings of Jesus in the various episodes.

In the story of the Rich and Lazarus, Jesus in Luke's gospel teaches us to notice, identify and care for the poor around us. We need not wait till they come personally begging for many may not have such access. It is therefore an obligation of every rich man to look for the poor at his gate and assist them to become better in life. It is also observed that mere throwing of alms to the poor cannot help to defeat poverty; concrete actions against poverty must be taken by individuals, churches, governments and NGOs for poverty to be conquered. It is also seen in the story that both poverty and wealth are not permanent. In heaven, there may be a reversal.

In the story of the Rich Young Ruler, one finds a command so direct to partake in the war against poverty, *sell all that you have and give to the poor*. Though it is not a command for all, it certainly appeals to all to be generous to the needy and poor persons around us. The rich must be willing to share their God given wealth with those who are less privileged. As James puts it, *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*. (James 1: 27) It is also by giving to the poor that the rich can store their treasures in heaven, not only by giving to the projects of the church.

As for the story of Zacchaeus' salvation, the need to combine generosity with restitution is clearly seen. To give to the poor is not enough, actions that have contributed to their poverty

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<sup>150</sup> Taiye Aluko, 2007. "Womanhood in a Perversed Setting: The Lessons from Luke 21:1-4 and Matthew 27:19 Respectively and the Need for Women's Empowerment." Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies. Ibadan: M. Alofe Nigeria Enterprises:380-381.

must be addressed and the wrongs must be confessed and put right. This opens our eyes to the issue of *reparation*. If the Western world is serious about fighting poverty in the developing world especially Africa, giving of aids must be accompanied with commensurable reparation for the evil of slavery and colonization which remains a factor that contributed to poverty in the continent. Zacchaeus did not only give half of his possessions to the poor, he restored in four fold whatever he had extorted from people.

The fourth story on the poor widow's offerings is a pointer as to the extent that a poor man can be made poorer in the name of God and also in the house of God. As Taiye Aluko puts it, "the case of the woman as exemplified in Luke's account showed how perverse the society was even within the temple where true holiness and righteousness was supposed to have been demonstrated."<sup>151</sup> It also establishes the pious living of the poor who can easily surrender all to God. At a time when the rich were not willing to give their all (Rich young ruler) or more than half (Zacchaeus); the poor could give their all. The story also presents the fact that no one is left out in the war against poverty. The poorest of the poor has something he can contribute towards the war against poverty. It is therefore opined that the war against poverty cannot be won by the rich alone; it must be a combined effort of all, rich or poor, great or small, high or low.

In conclusion, with these four stories Luke presented Jesus as the friend of the poor, who spoke for the poor, commanded the rich to rise to their aid and condemned the inaction of the rich towards the poor. As Jesus showed concern for the poor, the Christian church and her leaders must not do less if the war against poverty should be won. Non-government agencies must be supported in their war against poverty as well. The government must not be left alone in the war against poverty.

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<sup>151</sup> Taiye Aluko, 2007:387.



## CHAPTER SIX

### SOCIAL MINISTRY OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ISSUE OF THE POOR IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

#### 6.1 Introduction

The need for religious organisations to engage in the war against poverty cannot be over emphasised. The Church of Christ cannot fold her hands to the plight of the poor and the oppressed in the society. Undoubtedly, many churches have taken steps towards the eradication of poverty in the society. Worthy of note is the fact that some actions taken by the foreign missionaries who brought the gospel to Africa were actually directed at combating poverty in the continent. Notable among such actions were the establishment of schools, hospitals, motherless babies homes, leper colonies and many more. All these were meant to better the welfare of the people that they came to preach the gospel to. While some of these institutions are no longer as good as they used to be during the missionaries' days, some Christian missions are still at the fore front of meeting the challenge of the modern day poverty with new strategies without neglecting the methods adopted by the missionaries. One of such denominations is the Nigerian Baptist Convention, an offshoot of the Southern Baptist Convention in United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.2 A Brief History of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

The Nigerian Baptist Convention is the second largest Baptist convention affiliating with the Baptist World Alliance, and the third largest in the world after the Southern Baptist Convention, USA, and National Baptist Convention, USA.<sup>2</sup> The Church in Nigeria began in 1850 through the efforts of Rev. Thomas Jefferson Bowen from the Southern Baptist Convention who explored the Yoruba land and discovered a great opportunity for missionary

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<sup>1</sup> There are many other Baptist bodies in Nigeria that are not relating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Many of them (Gospel Baptist Conference, the Evangelical Baptist, the African Baptist, Upper Room Baptist) broke out of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Others like Mambila Baptist, Pilgrim Baptist and Independent Baptist came from other countries.

<sup>2</sup> "Nigerian Baptist Convention." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian\\_Baptist\\_Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Baptist_Convention), retrieved on January 15, 2013.

activities. The Mission work later extended over the years to the Northern and Eastern parts of Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

Bowen who returned to America in 1852 came back to Nigeria in August 1853 with four other Southern Baptist missionaries namely Rev. & Mrs J. S. Dennard and Rev. & Mrs J. L. Lacy. Within a year, the two missionary couples returned to America invalid. In spite of this, Bowen moved from Lagos to Ijaiye through Abeokuta. He later built a chapel there and another missionary, W. H. Clarke joined him. The Yoruba Baptist Association was formed in 1914 when the mission work had moved to other towns like Ogbomoso, (1855) Abeokuta (1857) and Oyo (1858). Other places where the Baptist missionaries worked were Ijeru, Lanlate, Elelede, Owu, Oke Saje and Ibadan. The Yoruba Baptist Association consisted of thirty-one organised churches with 6,500 total membership. When the Baptist influence reached the Edo- Delta region and parts of the North, the name was then changed to the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1923.<sup>4</sup>

The Nigerian Baptist Convention is now completely self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting. The Convention has over 10,000 Churches with over 3,000,000 baptised believers. The Convention today has thirty-one Conferences (ecclesiastical regions) in Nigeria. The missionary work has spread to several other African nations, including Republic of Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The Nigerian Baptist Convention ministers to the spiritual and physical needs of men through her Churches, Associations, Conferences and her various ministries.<sup>5</sup> The head office of the Convention is located at Baptist Building, Oke Bola, Ibadan, Oyo State; though each local Baptist Church no matter how big or small is considered the headquarter of the Convention. The Association of Churches in the same locality is led by a Moderator while the Conferences which consist of Associations in the same State or region are led by Conference Presidents.

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<sup>3</sup> Sanjo Moronfoye & Sunday Adeleke, "Glimpses Into The Records", *The Nigerian Baptist*, 78, April 2000, p.5-7.

<sup>4</sup> Sanjo Moronfoye & Sunday Adeleke.

<sup>5</sup> "Welcome" <http://nigerianbaptist.org/> retrieved on January 15, 2013.

### **6.3 General Administration and Ministries of the Nigerian Baptist Convention**

The Nigerian Baptist Convention is led by the President who is also the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation. The current President is Rev. Dr. Supo Ayokunle. He is supported by the Convention Chairman, Rev. Dr. B.U. Enyioha who presides over meetings. The Convention President is assisted by three Vice Presidents with each in charge of Ministerial Matters, Personnel/Administration and Finance/Investment. The Convention has various ministries which are under the leadership of Directors. Some of the ministries are:

1. Christian Education
2. Medical Services
3. Youth and Students Ministries
4. Publications
5. Social Ministry and
6. Global Missions

Each of these ministries has various departments or units through which the ministry functions.<sup>6</sup>

### **6.4 The Social Concern of the Nigerian Baptist Convention**

The social concern of the Nigerian Baptist Convention can be dated back to the inception of the Convention. The American Missionaries had in their mind, the social welfare of the people. The primary purpose of the social concerns of the missionaries has been a subject of debate. Some have opined that they used their social actions as baits to win the people to the Christian faith. To what extent they succeeded is also a subject of debate.<sup>7</sup>

The missionaries handed over the institutions for the social welfare of the people to the Convention. The Convention went beyond operating those institutions by establishing new ones. Though Social Concern Ministry is found in most Baptist churches, but as a unit of the Convention the department only began in 1991 through the untiring efforts of Rev. Dr. Amos Omoresemi. The ministry operated as a unit through which the Convention seeks to show the love of God to people, especially the less privileged. The ministry does not only target winning and nurturing people for Christ, it emphasises cares and the need for practical

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Mr. Marcus Audu on February 27, 2013 at The Nigerian Baptist Convention Head Office, Baptist Building Oke Bola, Ibadan. He is currently the vice President, Personnel/Administration.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Rev. Dr. (Mrs.)Titi Eniola on February 26, 2013 at The Nigerian Baptist Convention Head Office, Baptist Building, Oke Bola, Ibadan. She is currently the Director, Social Ministries Department.

demonstration of the faith. It was in the year 2011 that the unit was upgraded to the level of a department of the Convention with Rev. Dr. (Mrs.) Titi Eniola as the Acting Director. Today, she has been confirmed as the first Director of the Social Ministry of the Convention.<sup>8</sup>

According to Rev. Tunde Akinola, a former co-ordinator of the Social Concern Ministry Division, the primary reason for the establishment of the division is for meeting the needs of people. To know these needs and fail to meet them amounts to disobedience to the laws of God. He further says, “ if we claim to be Christ's followers, we must pattern our lives after our Lord who went about doing good. We should help to alleviate the problems of the hurts and insults in the society. For the Church of today to be truly a New Testament church, it must take the social concern ministry seriously. The Early church was a sharing church. The Baptist policy and practices are based on biblical truths. There are many references in the Bible on the need to care for one another. The specific scriptural passage on this is Matthew 25:31 – 46.”<sup>9</sup>

**A. Objectives of The Social Ministry** - The Social Ministry as a need meeting department has the following as her main objectives:

1. To be a co-partner with God in the process of creation and recreation.
2. To develop resources for home, churches and societies at large.
3. To make people experience the love of God in action.
4. To make worship more meaningful.
5. To enable the people of God receive their reward on earth and in the hereafter.
6. To enable Christians be like their heavenly Father who loves all, including the poor and the oppressed.<sup>10</sup>
7. To enable people live a comfortable, decent and fulfilled lives.
8. To enable Christians use their abilities, talents and material resources for the glory of God.
9. To help in building a decent society.
10. To use the ministries as a means of bringing people to Christ.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Titi Eniola.

<sup>9</sup> Tunde Akinola, 2002. “*Social Echo Newsletter*”, Vol. 4, April – December, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Tunde Akinola.

<sup>11</sup> Tunde Akinola.

## **B. Structure and Functions of The Social Ministry**

Social Ministry is the Gospel in action. According to Titi Eniola, “ it is proclaiming Christ not only in words but words backed with action. It is another way of expressing the mission of Christ to humankind. Social Ministries is also about caring and bearing with one another, it is sacrificing one’s comfort for the sake of others. While our Lord was here in the flesh, he was very much at His Father’s work. His desire was to be at work always; even when He was seriously hungry and tired, He would not let any opportunity to slip by. (John 4) However, as busy as He was; serving the people and meeting their physical needs was equally important.”<sup>12</sup>

No doubt, our present day society is full of problems resulting from increase in the poverty level. These problems which could be physical, spiritual, social, financial, psychological, mental or relational cut across all ages, gender and races. Therefore, the Church cannot close her eyes to the plight of men and women. According to Sarah Oladimeji, “our world is filled with many neglected individuals such as the physically challenged, destitute, the prostitutes, drug addicts, psychopathic, inmates and ex-inmates, widows, widowers, waiting couples, singles, fatherless and motherless, jobless, applicants and admission seekers, the groups to which many of our church members belong. Should we just be gathering together each Sunday and preach, pray and tell them all is well?”<sup>13</sup>

The Social Ministry has units and each of these is meant to meet one need or the other. Presently, there are eight units through which the ministry is meeting the needs of people in the society. They are:

1. Prison Ministry
2. Hospital Ministry
3. Orphanage Ministry
4. Home and Family Care Ministry
5. Aged Ministry

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<sup>12</sup> Titi Eniola, 2012. *“The Structure and Functions of Social Ministries in the Church.”* 2012 Social Ministries Seminar, Ibadan: Baptist Press, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Rev. (Mrs.) Sarah Oladimeji on February 26, 2013 at The Nigerian Baptist Convention Head Office, Baptist Building, Oke Bola, Ibadan. She is currently the Head of Home Care and Orphanage Division, Social Ministries Department.

6. Relief Ministry
7. Addicts Ministry
8. Rehabilitations and Vocational Training Ministry.<sup>14</sup>

There are other activities of the Social Ministry that are not listed as a division, but very important in The Nigerian Baptist Convention. They are the Widows Ministry and Ghetto Ministry. The Convention expects all these social actions to be in operation at the Conference, Association and local church levels.<sup>15</sup>

According to Eniola, all these ministries are connected in one way or the other because they all call for service. In a local church, a Director of Social Ministry co-ordinates all these divisions, each of which has a divisional leader. Each division therefore plans and implements actions for the betterment of the people in society.<sup>16</sup>

### **6.5 Assessment of the Activities of Social Ministry Among the Poor**

Over the years, the Social Ministry has spread her tentacles to many people, especially the needy and the poor in the society. Year in, year out, the department has continued with the business of making life more meaningful to the populace.

#### **1. Widows/Widowers Ministry.**

This is a ministry which has ministered to many from all ethnic groups in Nigeria irrespective of their economic status. The lack of a spouse here is considered as a great need in the life of widows and widowers and which must not be neglected. The Social Ministry establishes fellowship for them, and also plan spiritual retreats to cater for their spiritual needs. Apart from making provisions for the less privileged among them, the children of widows are also provided for, either by way of paying their school fees or seeing them through vocational training. Many widows in the Convention have been empowered and this to a great extent has elevated their economic status and put smiles on their faces.<sup>17</sup>

The programme also ensures that they are not forgotten on their day of joy, especially their birthdays. Greeting cards, birthday gifts and visits are ways of encouraging widows. During

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<sup>14</sup> Titi Eniola, 2012. "The Structure and Functions of Social Ministries in the Church", 4.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Oladimeji, 2013. Interview

<sup>16</sup> Titi Eniola, 2003. Interview

<sup>17</sup> Titi Eniola.

festive periods, namely Christmas and Easter, widows/widowers are presented special gifts to make them happy. On many occasions, Christmas parties are organised for them.<sup>18</sup>

The care and the concern of the organization is not limited to Baptist members. On many occasions, non Baptist especially Muslims have benefited from the social welfare packages. This has led some of them to Christ, while the majority still hold to their faith.

## **2. Ministry For The Aged.**

The need to look into the plight of the “aged” began some years back through the untiring efforts of a retired Baptist minister, Rev. Dr. Amos Omoresemi. Through his effort, the Social Ministry of the Convention now has a division for the aged, while many Baptist churches have fellowships for the elderly in their midst.<sup>19</sup>

According to Eniola, governments in Africa are not fair to the elderly as it is in the Western World. The neglect of the elderly in our society is the major reason why the Convention ministers to the aged in our society. Caring for the aged is a collective responsibility of the family, community, church and government.<sup>20</sup> This provides avenues for the elderly to share their wealth of experience in fellowships and meetings. Children who have neglected their parents or are negligent in their duties towards them are reached and encouraged to turn a new leaf. Health programmes are organised for them like checking their blood pressure, providing reading glasses or paying for their surgery. In addition, retreats and excursions are organised for them just to lift up their spirit.<sup>21</sup>

The Convention encourages each local church to plan for them what is called “Elderly Week.” During that week, the elderly in the church are celebrated, allowed to lead church programmes, sing in the choir, serve as ushers and organise programmes that will allow the rest of the church to benefit from their wealth of experience. It is a week in which the aged are appreciated as important members of the church. The goal of the Convention is to make life more meaningful for them. Churches are encouraged to budget yearly for them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Rev. James Falade on February 27, 2013 at The Nigerian Baptist Convention Head Office, Baptist Building, Oke Bola, Ibadan. He is currently the Head of Prison Ministry Division, Social Ministries Department.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Oladimeji: 2013, Interview

<sup>20</sup> Titi Eniola, 2013. Interview

<sup>21</sup> Titi Eniola

<sup>22</sup> Titi Eniola

### 3. Prison Ministry

This is a Ministry that stands out among the rest. This is more than mere visitation to prisoners in prisons yards. The Prison Ministry Department conducts revivals in prisons, organises discipleship programmes for the spiritual reformation of those who are in prison, provide food for them and also assist the prison authorities in the resettling of prisoners in the society. On many occasions, the Convention through her lawyer has called for a retrial of cases of prisoners whose initial trials were thought to have been mishandled. In most cases, such persons have been set free.<sup>23</sup> A typical example is that of Mr Ade. Omotayo who told the ministry officials that he had been in prison for four years without a proper trial though he was only arrested at a bus stop with other persons one morning. The Social Concern Ministry officials then invited a lawyer, paid for his services and ensured that he was tried in a law court. He was later discharged and acquitted and has been reunited with his wife and children.<sup>24</sup>

Also, the Convention on many occasions has solicited for the release of reformed convicts and when such are given clemency, the Social Ministry provides for the relief and the rehabilitation of such persons. A typical example is the case of Mr. Ernest Koyaya who killed his four year old step brother. The young man was deserted and rejected by his entire family. But when the Prison Division of the Social Ministry visited the Ikoyi prison and found him, his case was brought to the attention of the authorities. The leadership of the Social Ministry also pleaded with the father and step mother to forgive him for he was already a changed person. After four years of persuasion, the family allowed the Convention through Shepherdhill Baptist Church, Lagos to seek for his release. Today, the young man is out of prison undergoing a rehabilitation process with Shepherdhill Baptist Church since the family still finds it difficult to welcome him home. His case is just one out of the several the Convention has handled.<sup>25</sup>

The need to reconcile ex-inmates with their families is a major part of their action. Lack of proper rehabilitation of ex-inmates is one of the major reasons why in less than two weeks of their release, they go back to prisons. Since some families may not be interested in them, they have no option but to join their gangs again whose arms are wide open to receive them. The

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<sup>23</sup> Titi Eniola

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mrs Abosede Lawani on March 15, 2013 at Shepherdhill Baptist Church, Obanikoro, Lagos. She is a member of the Prison Ministry of the Church.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Dn. AVM (Rtd.) George Osho on March 10, 2013 at Shepherdhill Baptist Church, Obanikoro, Lagos. He is the Co-ordinator, Prison Ministry of the Church.



Prison Ministry therefore seeks opportunities to link up with their families, even before they are released so as to prepare ground for their rehabilitation. In the event that the family does not want them back in their fold after much persuasion, the Convention in most cases provides for the upkeep and rehabilitation of such for a period of time till they are able to find their feet in the society.<sup>26</sup>

However, the Convention has not been able to establish a rehabilitation centre for ex-inmates in spite of her great rehabilitation programmes for them. Lack of a centre for this purpose is a major impediment to this aspect of the Social Action of the organization. It is hereby opined that rather than sending the ex-inmate to various churches for rehabilitation, the establishment of a viable rehabilitation centre will go a long way in making this work a success.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4. Vocational Training**

Vocational Training is an empowerment programme of the Convention in which the poor are trained in one vocation or the other so as to empower them to earn a living in the society. In this process, the poor through various workshop organised by the Convention learn different trades, technical works, catering, furniture, fashion design and many more. The main targets here are people who are seeking self development for their livelihood or those who want to learn petty trade to alleviate poverty. Through the Vocational Training workshops, many have learned carpentry, soap making and many others.<sup>28</sup>

Many who have languished in poverty have found their way to wealth through the Vocational Trainings. A typical example is a man in Oyo town who now produces a special Mosquito Insecticide called “Wonskito.” The man today is making meaningful living just by producing a locally made mosquito insecticide. Vocational Training indeed is a major action against poverty.<sup>29</sup>

One major problem facing those who learn one vocation or the other is the non availability of capital to establish their own business. The Convention within her limited resources provides capital for some. But this cannot go round. It is believed that if the government and well

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<sup>26</sup> George Osho.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Rev. Dr. (Mrs.) Deborah Gbodimowo on March 10, 2013 at Shepherdhill Baptist Church, Obanikoro, Lagos. She is a member of the Prison Ministry of the Church.

<sup>28</sup> James Falade, 2013. Interview.

<sup>29</sup> Titi Eniola, 2013. Interview.

meaning philanthropists can partner with the Convention in this regard, it will go a long way to reduce to a great extent the effect of poverty in our land.<sup>30</sup>

## **5. Addicts Ministry**

This is a branch under the Social Ministry which caters for drug addicts, alcoholics, touts and commercial sex workers. No doubt, this category of people have become a menace to the society and thereby responsible for a large percent of crimes in the society. The Convention recognises the negative effect of not taking care of these categories of people in our society.<sup>31</sup>

The Social Ministry takes her social action to the drug addicts very seriously. Churches are encouraged to visit them at their joints, under bridges, at bars, hotels, mechanic workshops and motor garages. The Addict Ministry does not only preach to them, but show them love by providing them food, clothes and medication. Counselling is also organised for those who have responded to the gospel. Many of them are also undergoing a rehabilitation programme for proper rehabilitation into the society. Those who are jobless are giving opportunities for vocational training. This action to a large extent has reduced chaos and poverty in the land. Many of them have been engaged in sports and some have turned out to be sportsmen and women earning their living through sports.<sup>32</sup>

## **6. Ghetto Ministry**

This is ministry to slums like Ajegunle and Oko Baba both in Lagos. Basically, the Social Ministry engages in the provision of medical care, adult education and sinking of boreholes in such communities. On some occasions, the community leadership has been sensitized to engage the government in discussing the provision of basic amenities for them.<sup>33</sup>

This effort has yielded little result due to limited resources available to the Social Ministry. The Convention as a matter of priority has also encouraged churches to ensure that they make social impacts in their neighbourhood. The slogan today among many Baptist churches is, “what are you doing to make a difference in your community.” According to Sarah

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<sup>30</sup> James Falade, 2013. Interview.

<sup>31</sup> Titi Eniola, 2013. Interview

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Oladimeji, 2012. “*Church and Community Development.*” 2012 Social Ministries Seminar. Ibadan; Baptist Press, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Titi Eniola, 2013. Interview

Oladimeji , " community development is an aspect of cultural mandate or neo-creation mandate which is a divine injunction found in Genesis 1: 28."<sup>34</sup>

The principles underlying community development are 1. community involvement, 2. development of self esteem and 3.harnessing of community resources. Community development is not just about providing for communities, but using the untapped resources within her reach to develop the community. This process has not yielded much result for many communities will prefer to receive what the Convention can give unto them than to be motivated into action that can develop them. This is a case of preferring to be giving fish to eat rather than being taught how to fish.<sup>35</sup>

The Social Ministry also engages in community action, a process in which those in the community are organised to take action against injustices. This she does in partnership with civil right organisations in terms of road maintenance, maintaining peace, health care services and provision of recreational facilities.<sup>36</sup>

## **7. Disaster Relief Ministry**

Over the years, the Social Ministry has responded to the needs of those who found themselves in need due to sudden disaster. Whether it is a natural disaster or human made disaster, the Social Ministry continues to meet the needs of the victims in the affected areas.

According to Titi Eniola, victims of Jos crisis recently were given Ten million Naira (N10,000,000.00) apart from material gifts just to alleviate the pains of the crisis. Kaduna State was not also left out. All Baptist churches were asked to raise money and this was sent to the affected areas. The relief materials were given to both Christians and non-Christians.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, some States like Bayelsa, Delta, Adamawa, Kogi, Rivers and Taraba which were affected by flood disaster were also visited and appreciable amount was given to these communities. Each of the Conferences, in the affected area received relief worth over Two million Naira (2,000,000.00). The Conference Presidents ensure that the relief materials got to the families that were affected by the disaster.<sup>38</sup> Since the Social Ministry does not have

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<sup>34</sup> Sarah Oladimeji, 2012. "Church and Community Development," 18 – 23.

<sup>35</sup> Titi Eniola, 2013. Interview.

<sup>36</sup> Titi Eniola.

<sup>37</sup> Titi Eniola.

<sup>38</sup> Titi Eniola.

the means to know how many of the families really received relief materials, it only depended on the Conference Presidents. This needs to be looked into. It is hereby suggested that the Social Ministry should network through the Social Ministry of the Conference, Social Ministry of the Association and then the Social Ministry of the churches in the affected areas. This will go a long way in ensuring that materials get into the right hands.

While Disaster Relief Ministry is a spontaneous Ministry (i.e. responding to needs as they arise), the ministry should be so organised that she does not have to wait for churches to collect love offerings before she responds to needs of those cut in the web of one disaster or the other. The Convention should operate a system in which funds are readily available for such. While no one prays for disasters, it is evident that our world is prone to disasters. Only the area where it shall manifest is unknown. So a ready help for disaster victims is necessary for a successful disaster ministry.

#### **6.6 Data Analysis**

For the purpose of this research, a total of 600 copies of questionnaire were distributed among members of 50 Baptist Churches in cities of Lagos (30), Ibadan (10) and Ogbomoso (10). Apart from the few staff of the Social Concern Ministry of the Convention that were given, others who filled the questionnaire were randomly chosen. Out of the 600 copies that were administered, only 510 were successfully filled and returned. The result of the exercise is interpreted below.

**FIGURE 1****Sample profile & Coverage**

<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	281
Female	229
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>
<b>AGE</b>	
Below 18	17
18-40	259
41-65	205
66-80	25
Above 80	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>
<b>Social Economic Class</b>	
Christianity	507
Islam	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>

<b>ECONOMIC STATUS</b>	
Very Rich	14
Rich	94
Middle Class	382
Poor	19
Very Poor	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>

The sample profile and coverage of the respondents show that 281 (55.1%) were men while 229 (44.9%) were women. Those who were below the ages of 18 were 17 (3.3%), between ages 18-40 were 259 (50.8%) while 205 (40.2%) were between the 41 and 65 years old. Also, 25 of the respondents (4.9%) were between ages 66 and 80 while only 4 (0.8) of the respondents were above 80 years old. Majority of the respondents were Christians i.e. 507 or (99.4%) while only 3 (0.6%) were Muslims. As for the economic status of the respondents, 14 of them i.e. 2.7% considered themselves as very rich, while 94 (18.4%) believed they are rich. Also, the middle class represents 75% of the respondents i.e. 382 while 19 (3.7%) say they are poor. Only 1 respondent (0.2 %) claimed to be very poor.

**FIGURE 2**

## Occupation

Base= 510

OCCUPATION	Total	Male	Female
	%	%	%
Teacher	14.9	10.3	20.5
Student	13.5	14.2	12.7
Business Woman/Man	11.4	9.6	13.5
Pensioner	6.7	5.7	7.9
Civil Servant	6.5	6.4	6.6
Accountant	6.3	8.2	3.9
Unemployed	5.9	5.7	6.1
Clergy	4.5	6.8	1.7
Civil Engineer	2.5	3.9	0.9
Self Employed	2.4	2.5	2.2
Medical Practitioner	2.2	2.5	1.7
Administrator	2.0	1.8	2.2
Consultant	2.0	3.2	0.4
Not Mentioned	2.0	2.1	1.7
Nursing	1.8	0.0	3.9

Q What is your Occupation?

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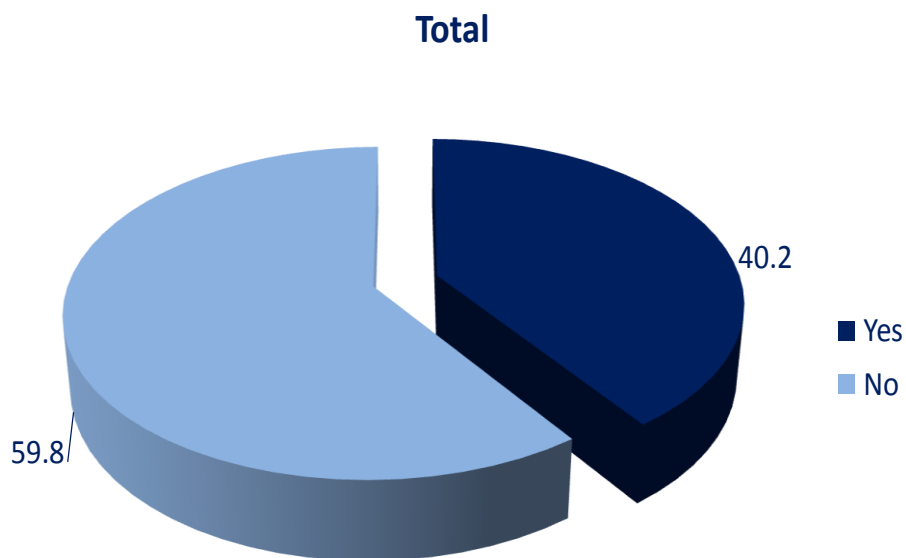
6

From the figure above, 14.9% of the respondents are teachers while 13.5% students. 11.4% are in business while 6.7% are pensioners. Civil servants among the respondents are 6.5% while 5.9% claimed to be unemployed. Only 4.5% were clergy while 6.3% are accountants. Other professions of the respondents are Civil Engineers (2.5%), Medical Practitioners (2.2%), Administrators (2.0), Consultants (2.0) and Nurses (1.8%) while 2.0% did not mention their profession.

**FIGURE 3**

### Aware of Various NGOs fighting the war against poverty?

Base=510



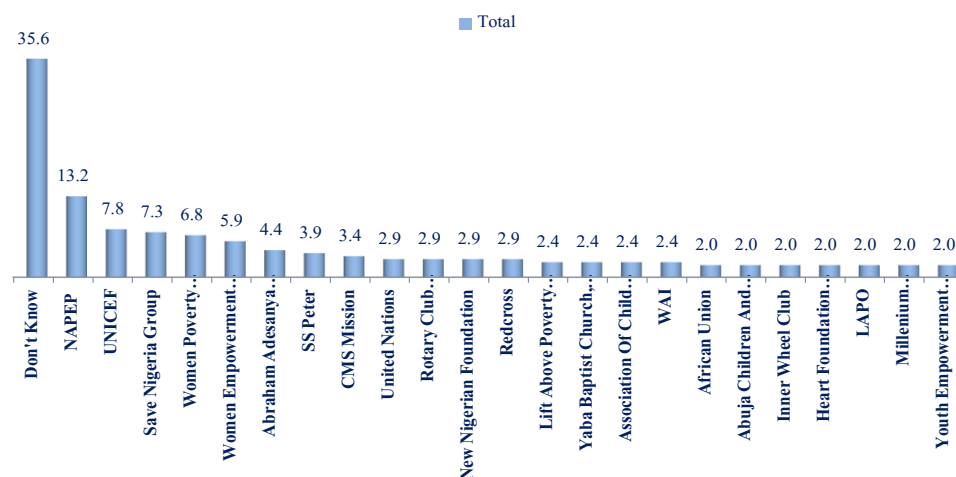
SECB\_2. Are you aware of the various NGO's fighting the war against poverty?  
8

Only 40.2% (205) of the respondents claim to have come across any NGO fighting poverty. 59.8% (i.e. 305) claim not to be aware of any NGO whatever. This is a reflection of the awareness people have towards the numerous organisations claiming to be waging war against poverty.

**FIGURE 4**

### NGOs fighting against poverty you are aware of

Base: All = 205



SECB\_2A. Mention the NGO's fighting against poverty you are aware of

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9

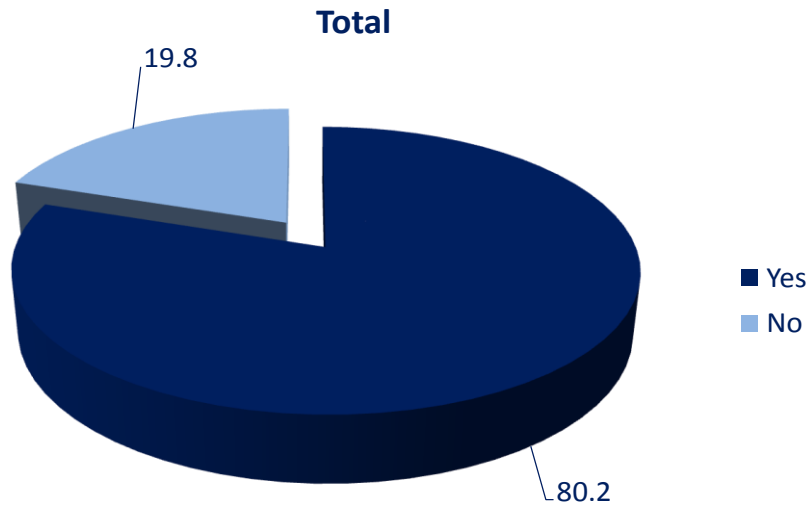
Unfortunately, 73 of the 205 respondents (35.6%) who claim to be aware of any NGO could not mention any. Some of the NGOs mentioned by the rest are UNICEF, Red cross, Heart Foundation, Save Nigeria Group, NAPEP, New Nigeria Foundation, Action Aid International, Lions Club and USAID. Church Organisations mentioned by the respondents include CMS Mission, Catholic Mission and Nigerian Baptist Convention. Though these denominations have social concern agencies, the respondents could not remember their names. Among all the NGOs mentioned, National Poverty Eradication Programme had the highest rating of 13.2%, followed by UNICEF (7.8%) and Save Nigeria Group (7.3)



**FIGURE 5**

Is your church or religious organization fighting poverty

Base=510



SECB\_3. Is your church or religious organization fighting poverty?

10

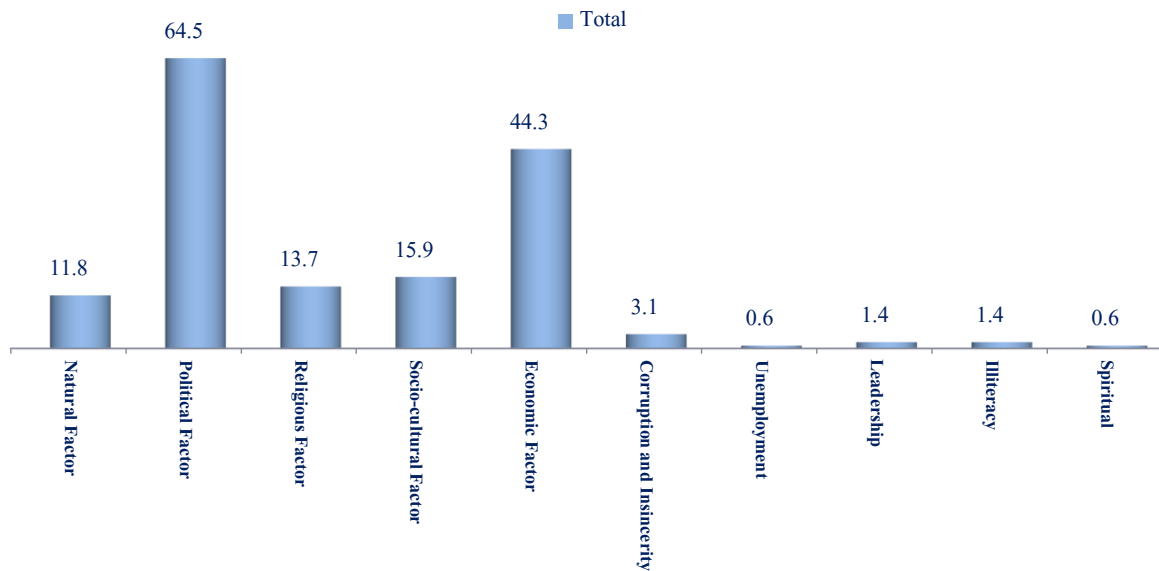
The response here seems to be good. 80.2% of the respondents answered in the affirmative while 19.8% said they are not aware of any religious organisation fighting poverty.

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**FIGURE 6**

## Factors Aiding The Spread Of Poverty

Base: All = 510



SECB\_4. Which of these do you consider as a factor aiding the spread of poverty in Nigeria?

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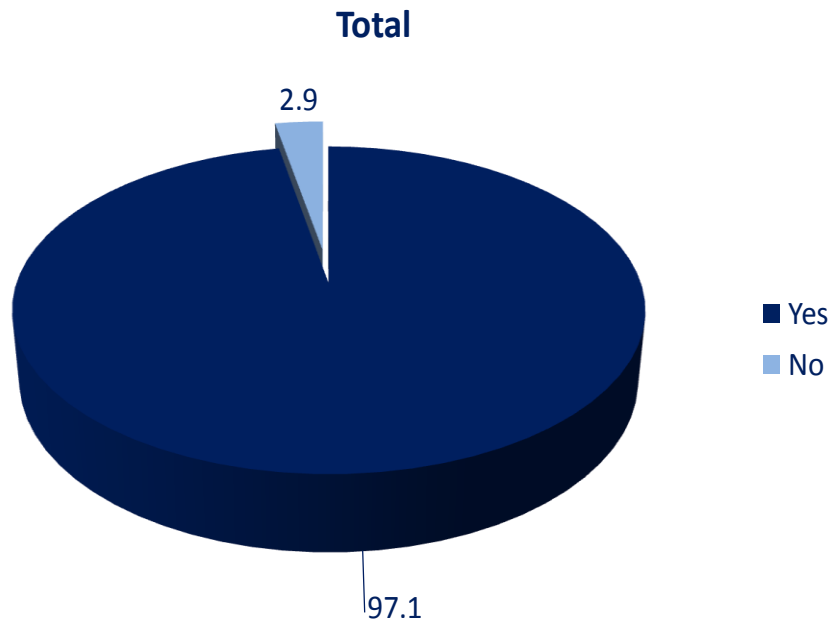
11

Many of the respondents, (64.5%) believe Political Factor is a major promoter of poverty in Nigeria while 44.3% cites Economic Factor. 15.9% of the respondents supports the Socio-Cultural Factor, 13.7% went for Religious Factor, 11.8% chose Natural Factor while others see unemployment (0.6%), corruption (3.1%), bad leadership (1.4%) and illiteracy (1.4) as factors aiding the spread of poverty. 0.6% cites spiritual factor.

**FIGURE 7**

Do you think the Church needs to help the poor?

Base=510



SECB\_5. Do you think the Church needs to help the poor?

12

97.1% of the respondents believe the Church needs to help the poor while only 2.9% says the Church has no business in helping the poor. The inference here is that majority believe the Church should help the poor, while the majority is also aware of some churches helping the poor. The real problem is how effective are the approaches of the churches towards the war against poverty.

**FIGURE 8**

## Kindly give reasons for your answer

Base= 510

REASONS	Total	Yes	No
	%	%	%
It is part of the work of God	25.3	26.1	0.0
It is biblically established passing the message of Christ	61.2	63.0	0.0
Help Spiritually only	1.6	1.4	6.7
It is an act of charity	2.4	2.4	0.0
Due to bad policy from the government	1.8	1.8	0.0
Because Christians are compassionate and because of the love of Christ	2.4	2.4	0.0
To eradicate root of Poverty among the livings	9.2	9.5	0.0
To improve the standard of living among the people	3.9	4.0	0.0
If people don't have job they can't go to church to worship	0.8	0.8	0.0
It is a way of evangelism and winning more souls	11.4	11.7	0.0
It may have a negative effect on the church if the Church fails to do so	0.4	0.4	0.0
The poor are numerous and they have an unstable mind they can commit suicide or other evil after so much frustration	0.4	0.4	0.0
To reduce crime	3.9	4.0	0.0
The Church is closer to the masses	1.2	1.2	0.0
Nothing	15.1	12.7	93.3

Q Reasons for Answers

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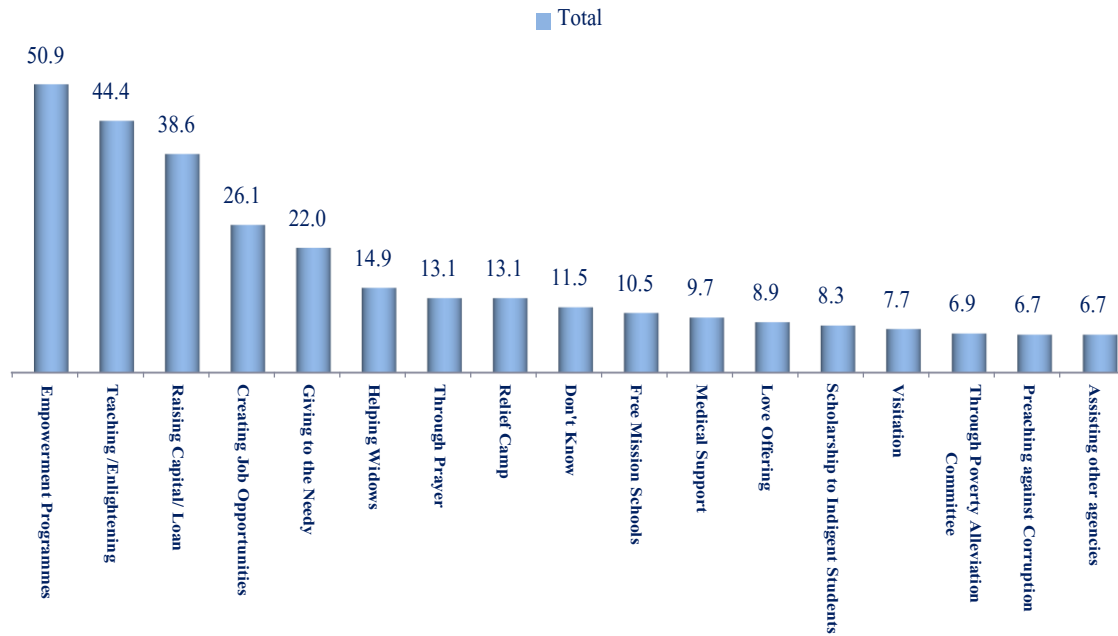
13

Those who said that the church should help the poor opine that it is part of the work of God. Others believe helping the poor is biblical, it an act of charity and it provides for the areas the government has failed the people and will also help to reduce crime in the society. Those who are against the church helping the poor said the church should only focus on spiritual activities and not get involved in physical or material assistance. One wonders if the spiritual assistance of the church to the poor can be effective without a meaningful touch on the physical lives of the people.

**FIGURE 9**

## Ways The Church Can Fight Poverty

Base: All = 495



SECB\_5YES. Kindly mention some of the ways the Church can fight poverty

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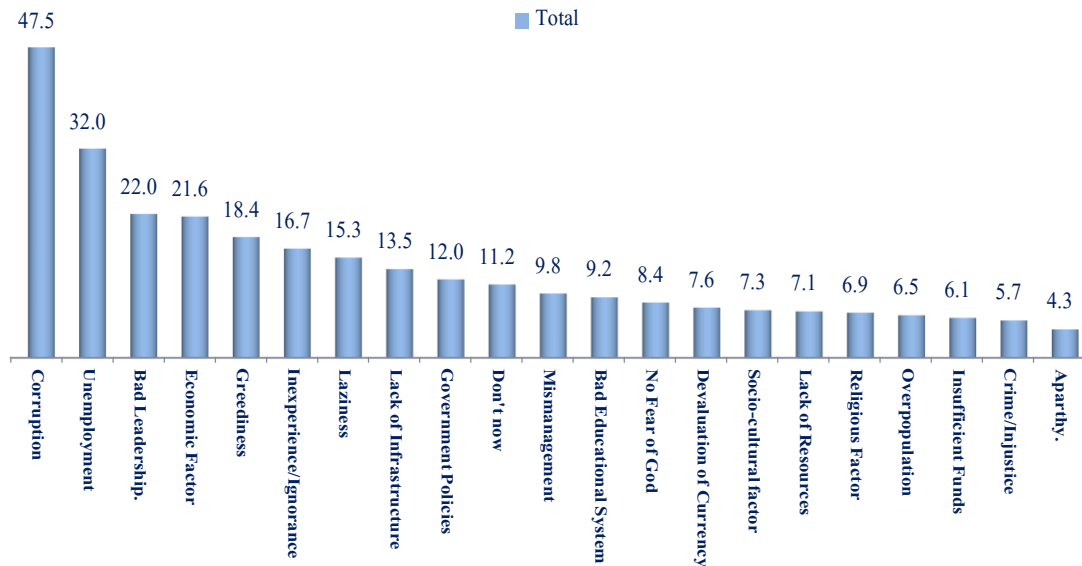
14

On how the church could help the poor, 50.9% of the respondents suggested the introduction of empowerment programmes or vocational training. Teaching/enlightenment was suggested by 44.4% of the respondents while 38.6% mentioned provision of capital or soft loan for business. 26.1% of the respondents suggested creation of jobs while 22% believe the church can fight poverty by giving money to the needy. A sizeable percentage of the respondents (13.1%) opined that the church can fight poverty through praying for the poor while same percentage suggested that the church should set up a relief camp. Those who believe the church should fight poverty by setting up free missionary schools were 10.5% while 9.7% mentioned the need to provide medical support. Other ways suggested by the respondents are collection of love offerings (8.9%), scholarship for indigent students (8.3%), visitation (7.7%), establishment of poverty alleviation committee (6.9), preaching against corruption (6.7%) while those who suggested the need to assist other agencies were 6.7%.

**FIGURE 10**

## Major Causes Of Poverty In Nigeria Today

Base: All = 510



SECB\_6. What do you consider as the major causes of poverty in poverty Nigeria today?

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15

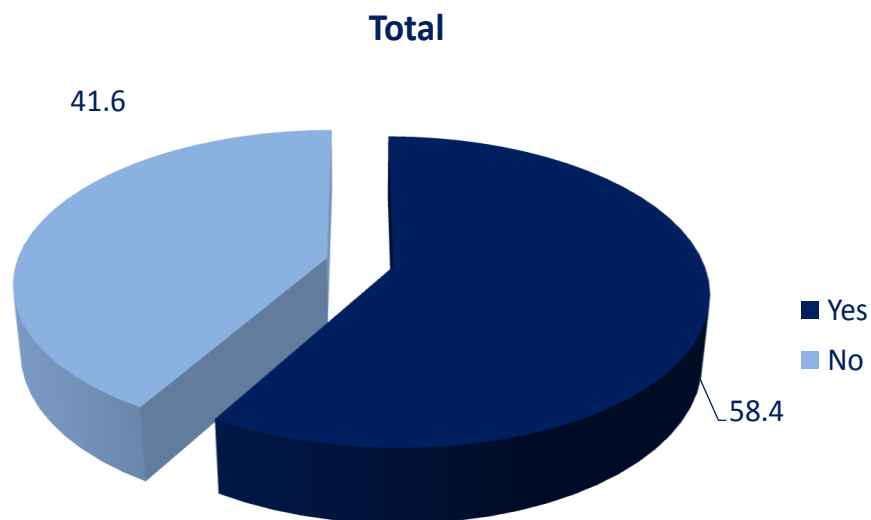
Corruption, according to 47.5% of the respondents is the major cause of poverty in Nigeria while 32% believed unemployment is a cause. 22% of the respondents opined that bad leadership is a major cause of poverty while 21.6% cited economic factor. 18.4% mentioned greediness on the part of our leaders while 15.3% cited laziness on the part of the followership as the cause of poverty. Those who believe that lack of infrastructure is a cause of poverty were 13.5% of the respondents while 12% suggested bad government policies. When 11.2% stated that they do not know the cause of poverty in Nigeria, 9.8% opined that mismanagement of resources is a cause. Bad educational system is a cause of poverty to 9.2% of the respondents while 8.4% cited lack of the fear of God in the lives of the leadership and followership. Devaluation of our currency which took place many years ago was cited by 7.6% of the respondents as the cause of poverty in Nigeria while 7.3% opined that it is due to socio-cultural factor. Among other reasons, 7.1% suggested lack of resources, 6.9% suggested religious factor, 6.5% suggested overpopulation, 6.1% mentioned insufficient

funds, 5.7% suggested crime/injustice while 4.3% cited apathy to things that can bring development.

**FIGURE 11**

### Do you believe poverty can be inherited?

Base=510



SECB\_7. Do you believe poverty can be inherited?

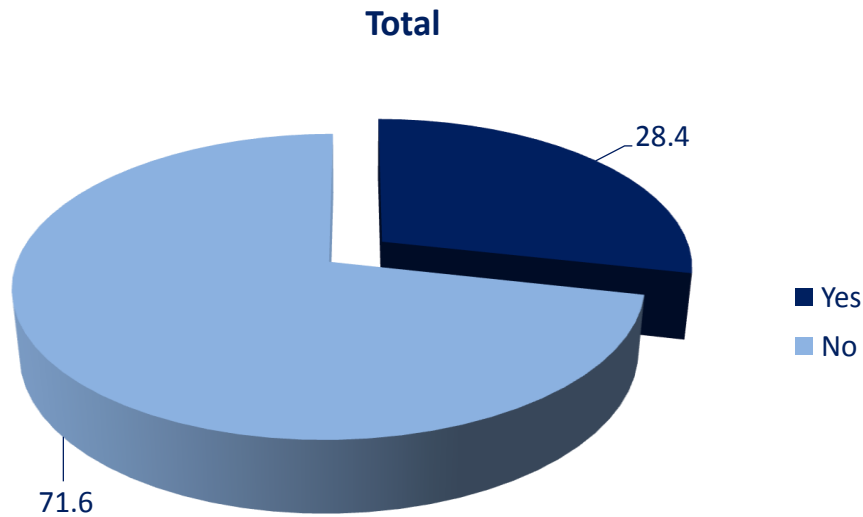
16

When the respondents were asked whether poverty can be inherited or not, 58.4% said yes while 41.6% said no. While the difference seems not to be too high, one notes that majority still believe that poverty can be inherited. But the fact is that while it cannot be ruled out that many found themselves in poverty because their parents were poor, there are many people who have broken through the barrier of poverty to the level of prosperity in spite of the fact that they were born into a culture of poverty. Though a man might be born into poverty, he does not have to remain there. It is hereby opined that though poverty could be inherited, it does not have to be inherited.

**FIGURE 12**

**Is poverty a curse?**

Base=510



SECB\_8. Is poverty a curse?

17

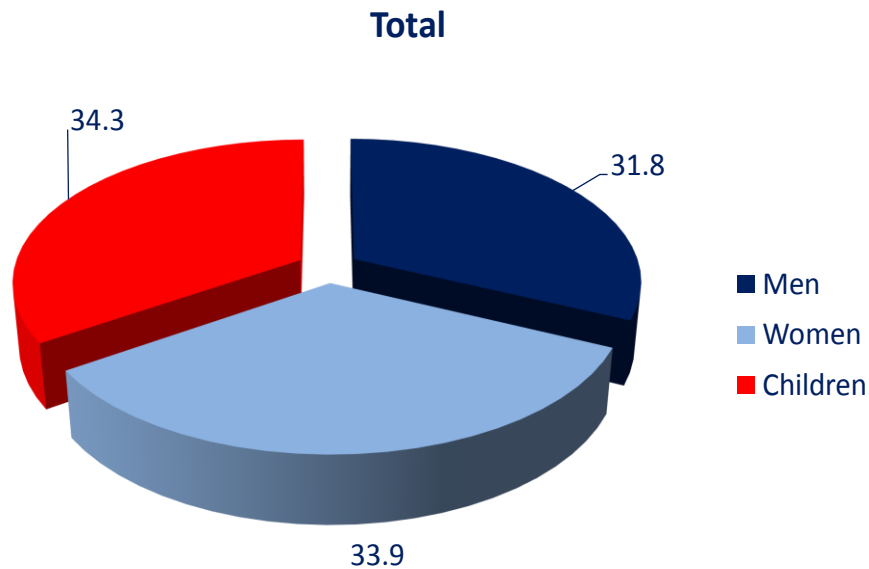
Only 28.4% agree with the assertion that poverty is a curse. 71.6% of the respondents believe that poverty is not a curse. This shows that some teachings of prosperity preachers have not really taken root in the hearts of the respondents or the reality is proving them to be wrong and the people are now identifying with the truth. While some may see it as a curse, the majority of the respondents believe that there is more to poverty than looking at it as a curse. Definitely, if it is a curse that man places on himself, it is a curse that man can revoke by himself.



**FIGURE 13**

## Groups of people mostly affected by poverty in Nigeria

Base=510



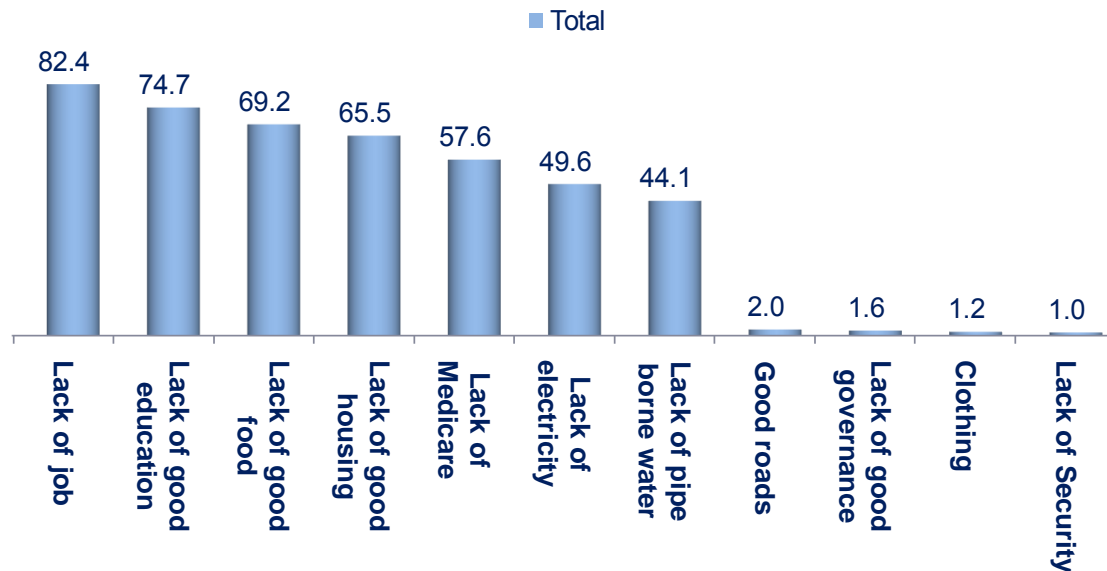
SECB\_9. Which among these groups of people is mostly affected by poverty in Nigeria?  
18

34.3% of the respondents believe that children are the most affected by poverty. 33.9% went for women while 31.8% claim that men are the most affected. It seems in the Nigeria of today, every group feels the plight of poverty. In the war against poverty, no group should be left out whether men, women or children. Nevertheless, women and children rights must be enforced to help them out of the poverty line.

**FIGURE 14**

## Signs of poverty in Nigeria to you

Base: All = 510



SECB\_10. Which of these are signs of poverty in Nigeria to you?

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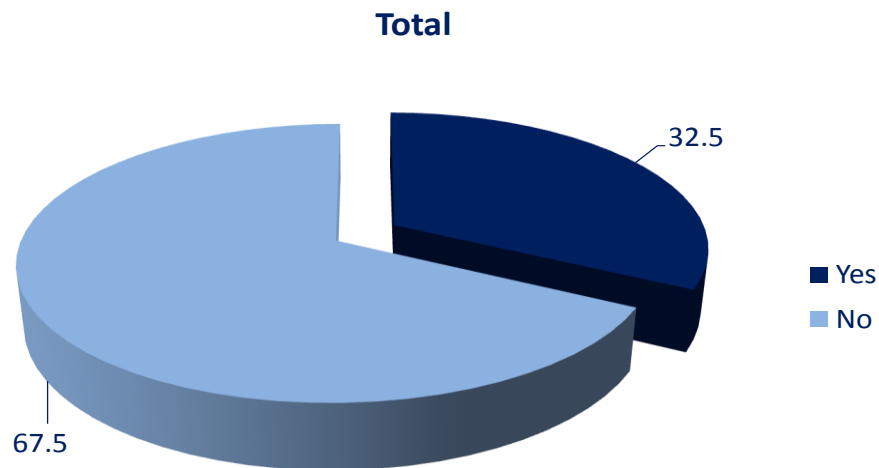
19

To this question, the respondents were allowed to make more than one choice. 82.4% of the respondents mentioned unemployment as the greatest sign of poverty in Nigeria. 74.7% of the respondents opined that lack of good education is a sign of poverty while 69.2% went for lack of good food. 65.5% mentioned lack of good housing. Other signs listed by the respondents are lack of medicare (57.6%), lack of electricity (49.6%) and lack of pipe borne water (44.1%). Lack of good road network, lack of good governance, lack of clothing and lack of security were mentioned by less than 3% of the respondents as signs of poverty in Nigeria. Considering the response of the respondents, it is believed that for poverty to be dealt with, both governments and non governmental agencies should see to the provision of job. A community of many jobless persons definitely will be a poor community. At a time when majority of our University graduates are roaming about the streets due to lack of job, something drastic must be done to turn the tide.

**FIGURE 15**

### Aware that October 17 of every year is the International Day for Poverty Eradication

Base=510



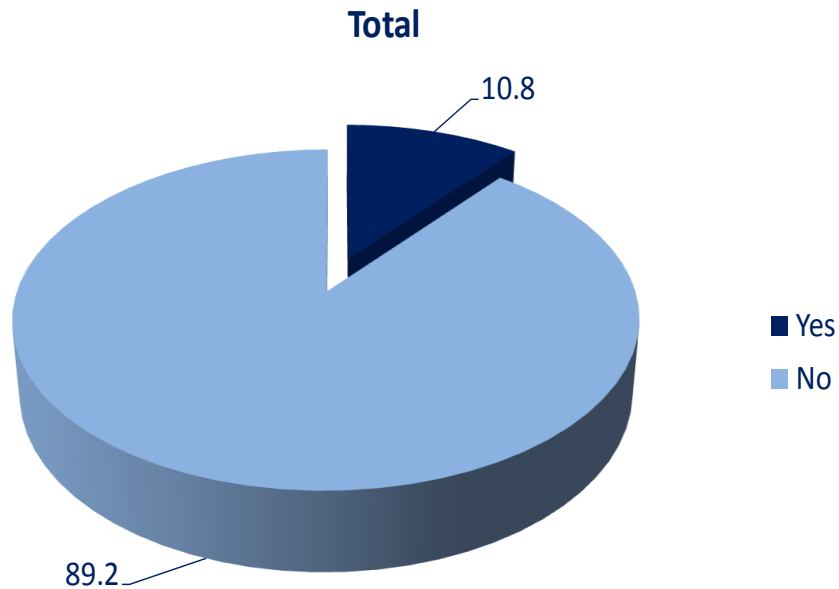
SECB\_11. Are you aware that October 17 of every year is the International Day for Poverty Eradication?  
20

Only 32.5% of the respondents are aware of October 17 as the International Day for poverty Eradication. 67.5% of the respondents are not aware of this. In spite of the numerous Poverty fighting organisations in the country couple with the fact that International Day for Poverty Eradication is observed annually, majority of the populace are not aware of it. Suffice to say that it speaks volume about the activities of the various agencies and the effect of their activities.

**FIGURE 16**

## Have you ever observed it?

Base=166



SECB\_112. Have you ever observed it?

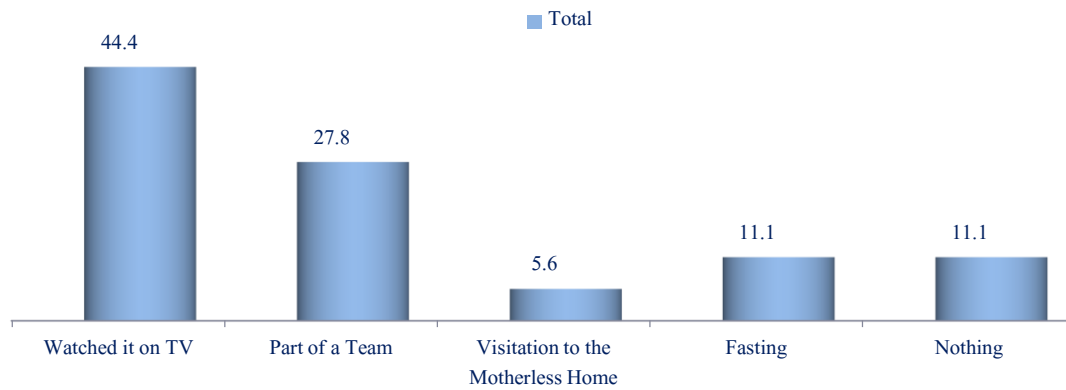
21

Among the 32.5% of the respondents who claim to be aware of the International Day for Poverty Eradication, only 10.8% of them have ever observed it. Considering that this is 10.8% of 32.5%, it is clear that only 18 of the 510 respondents have ever observed it. This number is unacceptable in a country stricken by poverty with many poverty alleviation organisations and initiatives.

**FIGURE 17**

## If yes, How did you observe it?

Base: All = 18



SECB\_12\_1. If yes, How did you observe it?

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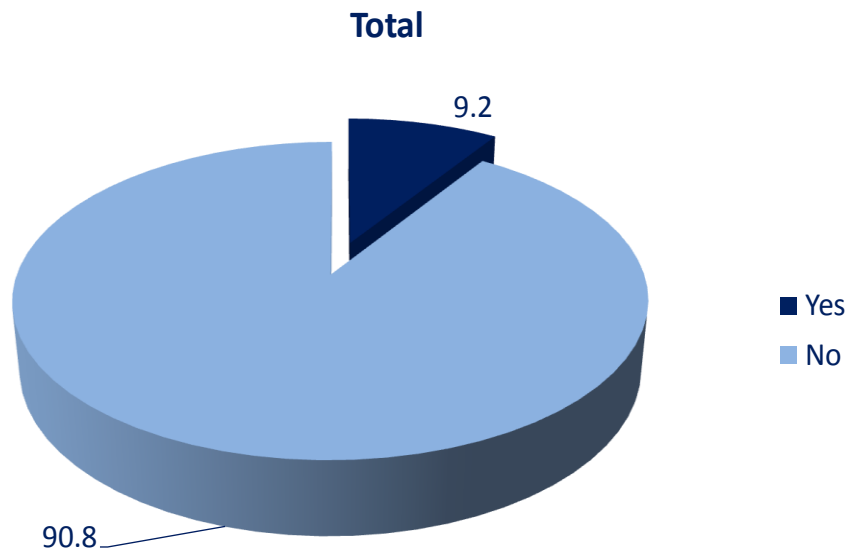
22

Among 18 of the 510 respondents who claim to have ever observed it, 44.4% observed it by watching it on the television while 11.1% can't say how they observed it. Only 27.8% claimed they observed it as part of a team while 5.6% visited the motherless babies' home. 11% claimed they observed it by fasting on that day. It is very clear that many people are not aware of the day in spite of the much acclaimed war against poverty. It is either the observance of the day is not relevant to the war against poverty or the publicity is very poor.

**FIGURE 18**

### Recipient of any poverty eradication/reduction facility?

Base=510



SECB\_13. Have you ever been a recipient of any poverty eradication/reduction facility?

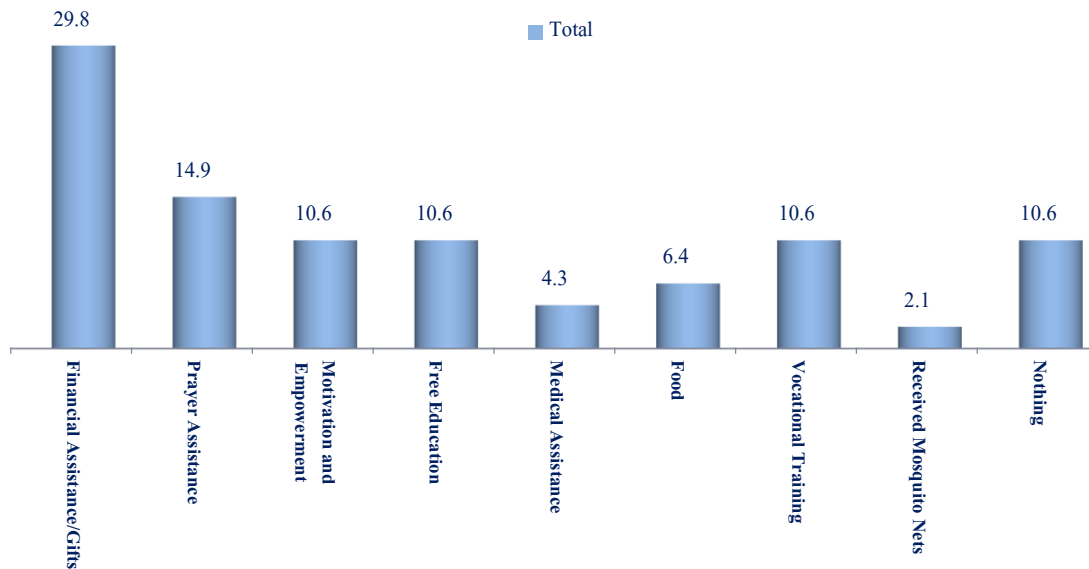
23

Out of 510 respondents, only 9.2% i.e. 47 respondents have ever been a recipient of poverty eradication facility. 90.8% i.e. 463 of the respondents claimed they have never received any poverty eradication facility. One therefore wonders where the billions of naira supposedly being pumped into the war against poverty have gone.

**FIGURE 19**

## If yes, in what form?

Base: All = 47



SECB\_13\_1. If yes, in what form?

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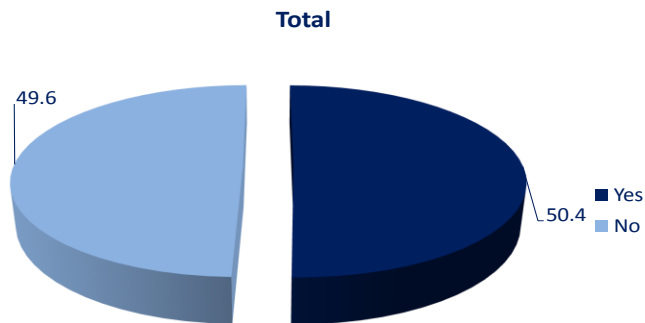
24

Among the 47 respondents, 29.8% claimed to have received financial assistance while 10.6% mentioned motivation and empowerment. 10.6% have benefitted from free education while 14.9% were assisted with prayers. 6.4% stated that they were assisted with medicare, 6.4% claimed they were given food to eat. 10.6 claimed they were assisted through vocational training while 2.1% were given mosquito nets. 10.6% of the respondents can't say what poverty reduction facility they received.

**FIGURE 20**

Are you aware of the activities of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

Base=510



SECB\_14. Are you aware of the activities of the Social Concern Ministry of the Nigeria Baptist Convention?  
25

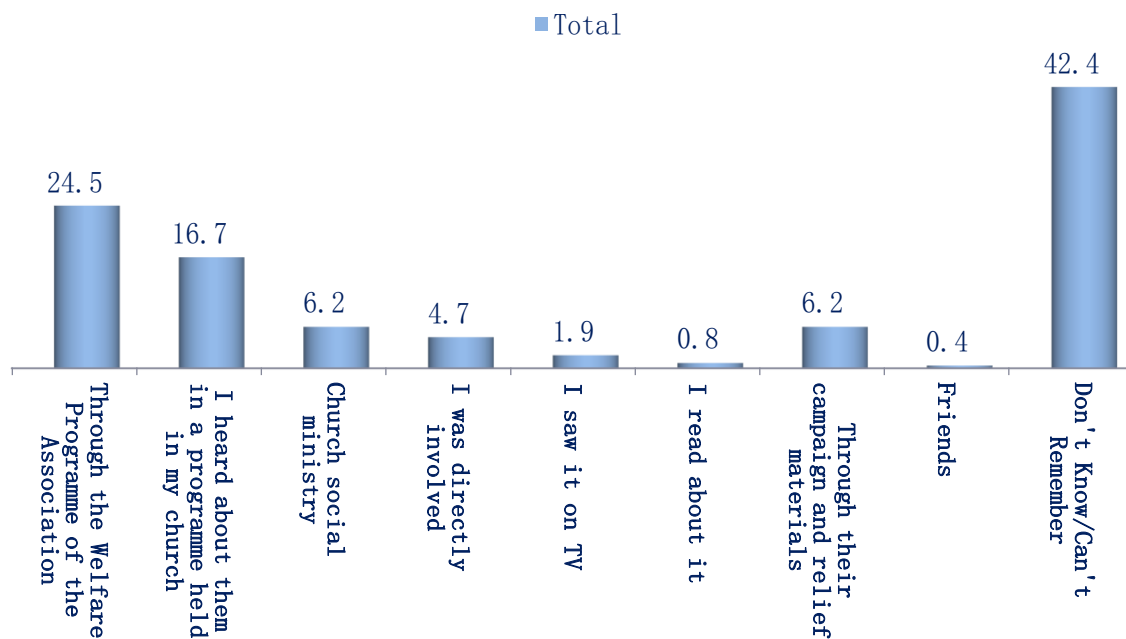
In spite of the fact that over 90% of the copies of the questionnaire were distributed in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, only 50.4% of the respondents (257) are aware of the activities of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. 49.6% are not aware of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. This indeed is a revelation as touching the publicity and the impact of the activities of the ministry. This needs to be looked into.



**FIGURE 21**

## How did you come in contact with the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

Base: All = 257



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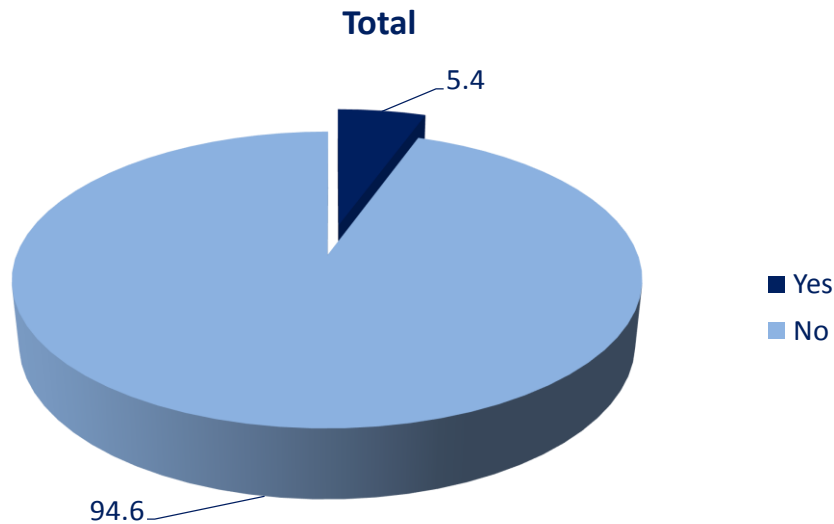
26

According to the figure above, 42.4% of the 257 respondents that are aware of the activities of the Social Ministry cannot say how they come in contact with the ministry. Others cited the Social welfare of their association (24.5%) and their church (16.7%), while 4.7% claimed to be directly involved. 6.2% mentioned the social ministry itself while 1.9% saw information about the ministry on the television. 6.2% came to know about the ministry through their poverty campaign while 0.4% knew about them through their friends. 0.8% claimed to read about the ministry. If almost half of those who claim to be aware of the activities of the organisation cannot say how they come to know about the ministry, it means the organisation has to walk as a matter of importance on her publicity. It also means activities of the Social Ministry is not really making impact among the people.

**FIGURE 22**

Ever received any form of poverty eradication assistance from the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

Base=257



SECB\_16. Have you ever received any form of poverty eradication assistance from the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

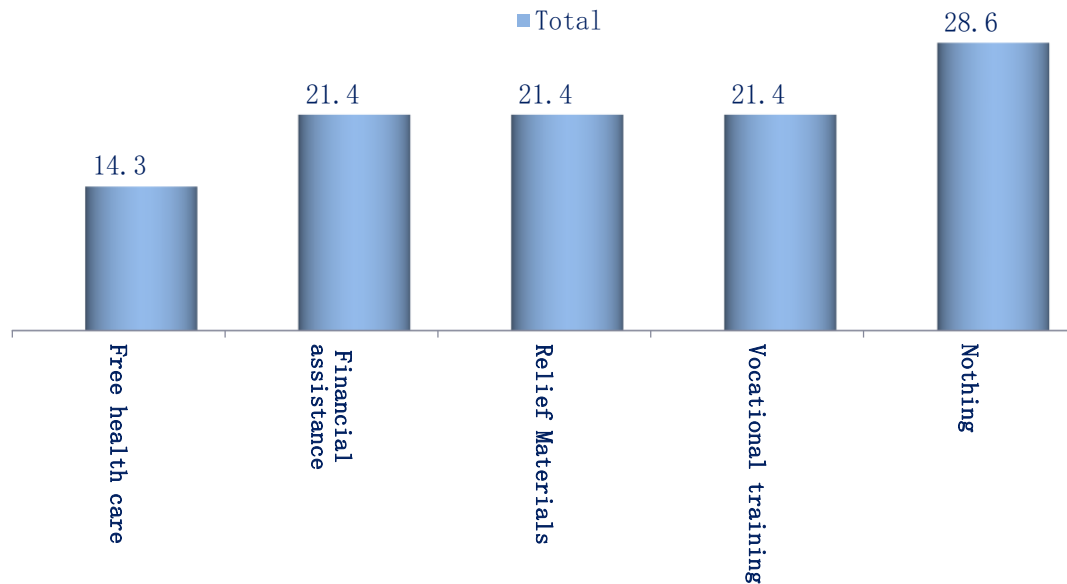
27

Furthermore, only 5.4% of the 257 respondents (i.e. 14 respondents) have ever benefited from the poverty eradication activities of the Convention while 96.4% claimed they have never benefitted. This surely reveal the impact of the ministry among the people. Majority of the people have never received any assistance from the organisation in spite of the fact that the questionnaire was distributed among churches where the leadership of the ministry claimed to have much impact.

**FIGURE 23**

## What kind of assistance have you received?

Base: All = 14



SECB\_16B. What kind of assistance have you received?

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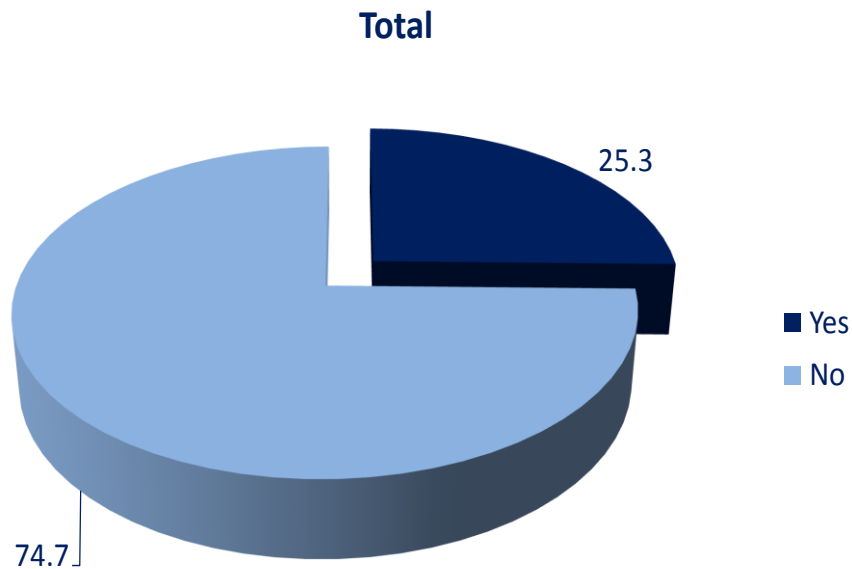
28

Among those who claimed to have ever benefitted from the activities of the Social Ministry, 14.3% claim they received free health care, 21.4% mentioned financial assistance, 21.4% received relief materials while 21.4% also benefitted through vocational training. 28.6% of the respondents could not state exactly what they benefitted. This means that more than 1/4 of the respondents can't state what they have benefitted. This again points to the fact that the effect of the activities of the organisation is not being felt as expected.

**FIGURE 24**

### Other person who had also received assistance from the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

Base=257



SECB\_17. Do you know of any other person who had also received assistance from the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

29

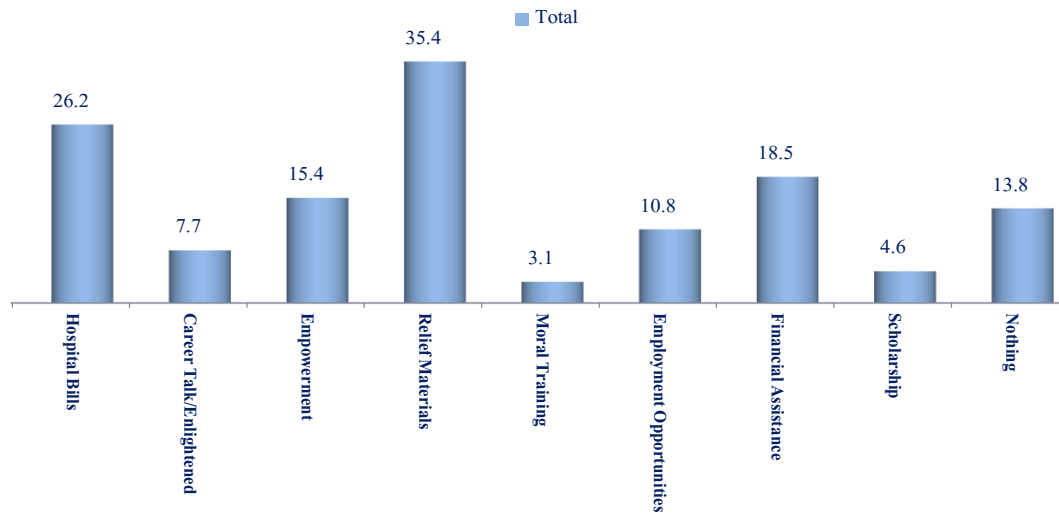
As for the knowledge of other people who have benefitted, only 25.3% of the 257 respondents said yes while 74.7% have no knowledge of persons who have benefited from the poverty reduction programmes of the Convention.

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**FIGURE 25**

### What kind of assistance did such a person receive?

Base: All = 65



SECB\_17B. What kind of assistance did such a person receive?

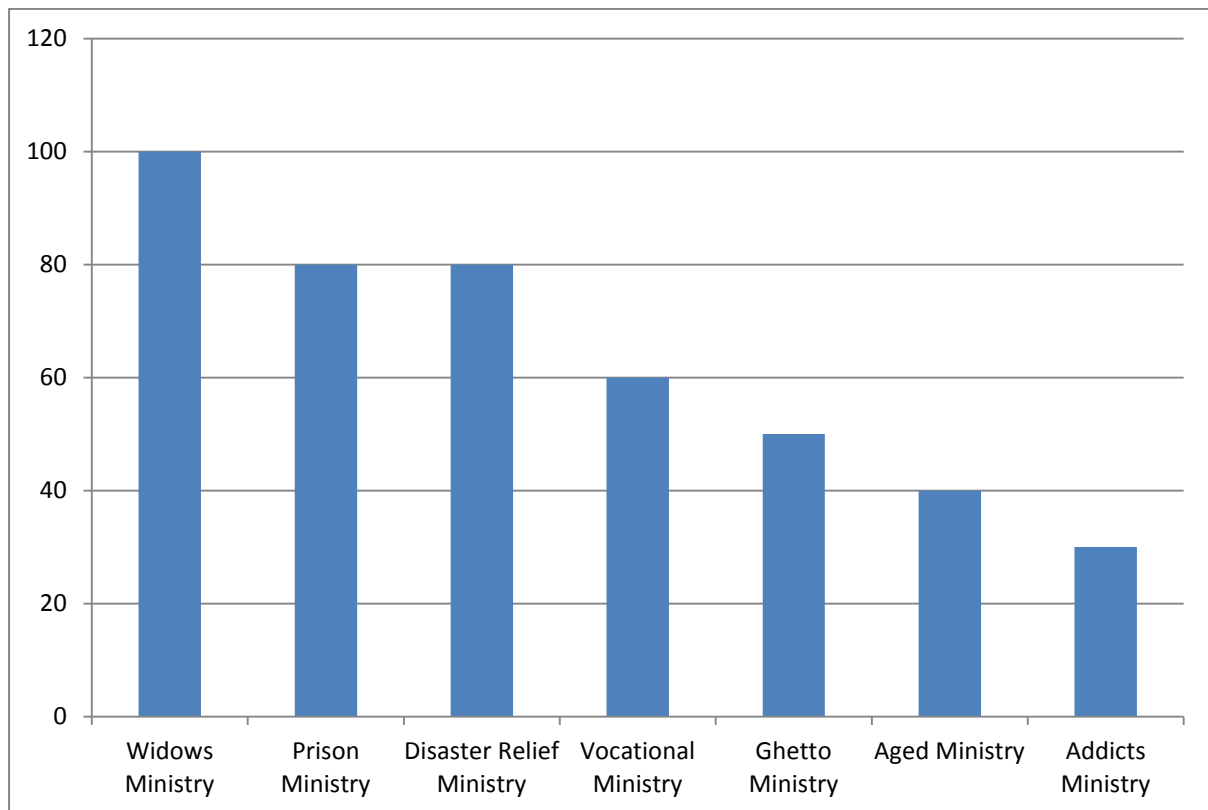
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30

As for the knowledge of other persons who have benefitted from the activities of the Social Ministry, the 25.3% of the 257 respondents that claimed to know those who have benefitted from the Social Ministry stated that the kind of assistance received ranged from free medicare (26.2%), career talk/enlightenment (7.7%), empowerment (15.4%), relief materials (35.4%), moral training (3.1%), employment opportunities (10.8%), financial assistance (18.5%) to scholarship (4.6%). 13.8% of the respondents could not state what their ward actually benefitted.

**FIGURE 26**

Rate the Activities of Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

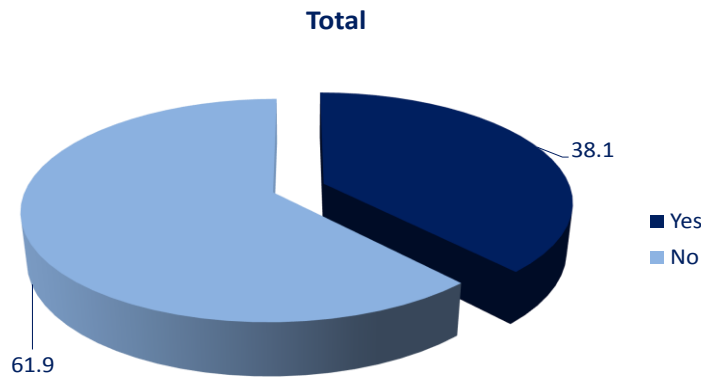


Out of the 7 departments of the Social Ministry listed, Widows ministry was rated highest, followed closely by Prison ministry and Disaster Relief Ministry. Taking the 4<sup>th</sup> position therefore is Vocational Training which was followed by Ghetto ministry in the 5<sup>th</sup> position. Found in the 6<sup>th</sup> position is Aged ministry while Addicts Ministry came last. This therefore shows that Widows ministry is the major focus of the Social Ministry. But this is a ministry to a category of people. For the organisation to be more effective in the war against poverty, the ministry should begin to focus on areas that can touch the lives of the poor in general, not just a selected few.

**FIGURE 27**

Do you think the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is succeeding in the war against poverty?

Base=257



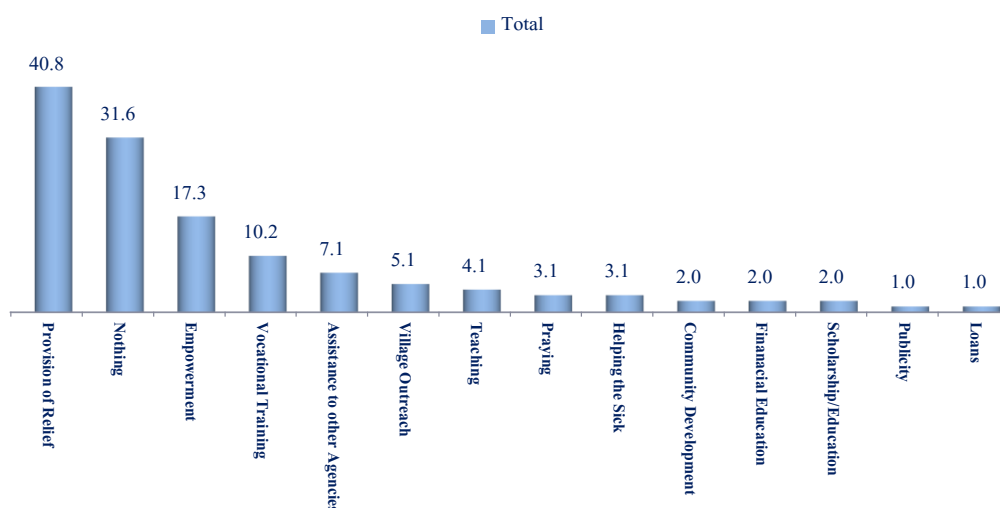
SECB\_19. Do you think the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is succeeding in the war against poverty?  
32

According to figure 27, only 38.1% of those who are aware of the Social Ministry of the Convention believe that the organisation is succeeding in the war against poverty. 61.9% of the respondents said no. This again reveals that the organisation is not making much impact among the people.

**FIGURE 28**

### Areas of success she has recorded in the war against poverty

Base: All =98



SECB\_19B. Mention some of the areas of success she has recorded in the war against poverty?

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35

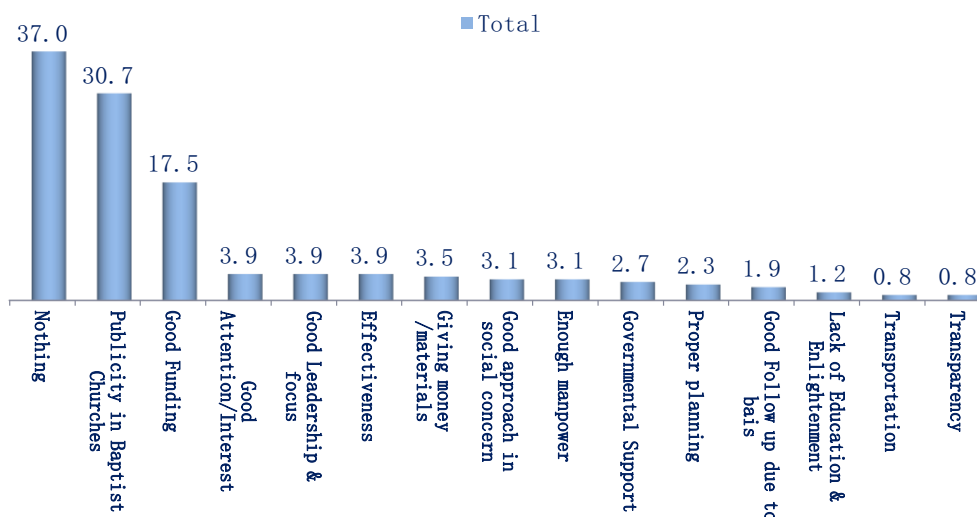
Those who believed the organisation is succeeding in the war against poverty cited the various activities of the ministry as reasons for success. Some of the areas of success mentioned are provision of relief materials (40.8%), empowerment programme (17.3%), vocational training (10.2%), assistance to other agencies (7.1%), village outreach (5.1%), teaching (4.1%), prayer (3.1%), health care services (3.1%), community development (2.0%), financial education (2.0%), scholarship (2.0%), publicity (1.%) and giving of loan (1%). 31.6% of the respondents could not state any area of success of the ministry.



**FIGURE 29**

**What do you think is lacking in the approach of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to the war against poverty?**

Base: All = 257



SECB\_20. What do you think is lacking in the approach of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to the war against poverty?

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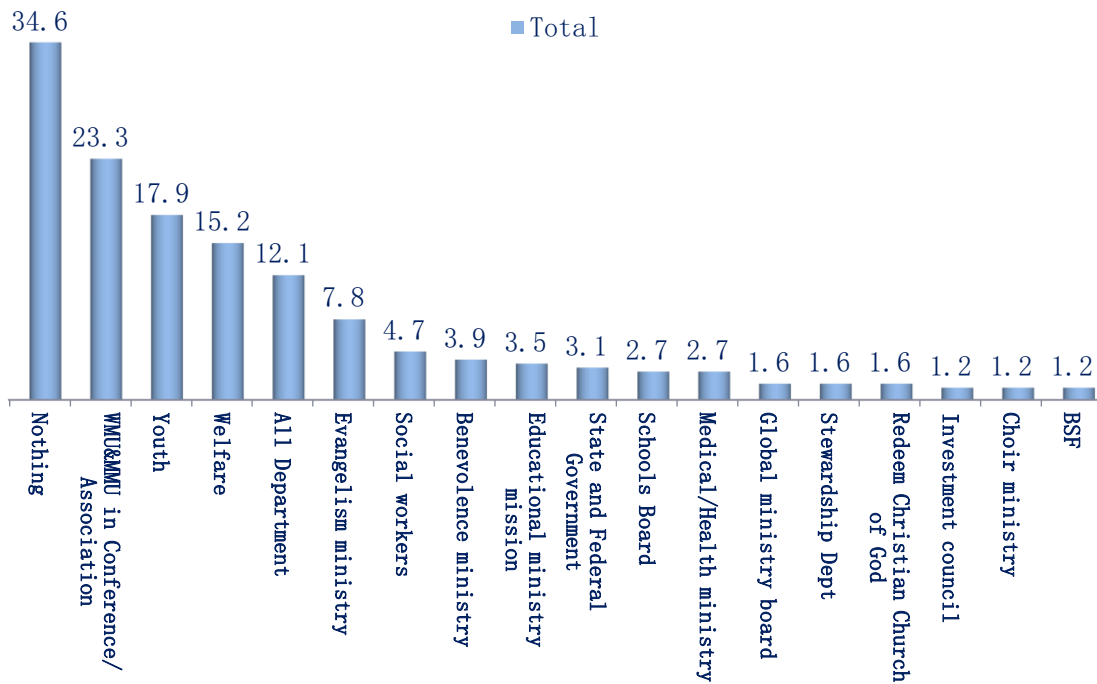
36

30.7% suggested that the ministry lacks good publicity, while 17.5% opined that the organisation lacks good funding. 3.9% believed that the ministry does not receive enough attention. 3.9% of the respondents cited lack of leadership focus as a problem facing the organisation while same percentage believed the ministry lacks effectiveness. The failure of the ministry in giving enough money or material things was cited by 3.5% of the respondents while 3.1% stated that the organisation lacks good approach to social concern. 3.1% of the respondents suggested that the ministry lacks enough manpower while 2.7% suggested lack of assistance from government. Other areas mentioned by the respondents are lack of proper planning (2.3%), lack of good follow up due to bias (1.9%), lack of education and enlightenment (1.2%), lack of transportation (0.8%) and lack of transparent activities (0.8%). Those who believed that the ministry is lacking in some areas but could not state the area were 37% of the respondents.

**FIGURE 30**

**Organs/Agencies / Ministries of the Convention that should join the Social Ministry in the war against poverty**

Base: All = 257



SECB\_22. What other organs, agencies or ministries of the Convention should join the Social Ministry in the war against poverty?

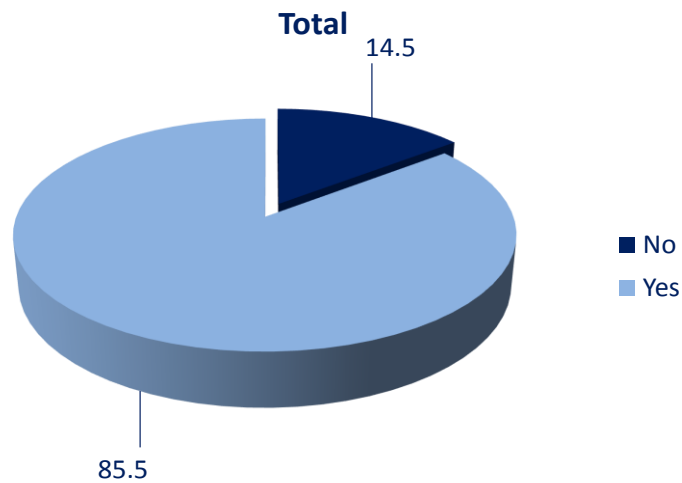
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38

34.6% of the respondents believe no other organ of the Convention should join the Social Ministry in the war against poverty. Others mentioned Women Missionary Union and Men’s Missionary Union (23.3%), Youth Department (17.9%), Evangelism (7.8%) and Education Ministry (3.5%). Baptist Student Fellowship, Investment Council, Stewardship and Health Ministry were also mentioned though with very low percentages.

**FIGURE 31**

Do you think the Nigerian Baptist Convention needs to change her strategy in the war against poverty?



SECB\_21. Do you think the Nigerian Baptist Convention needs to change her strategy in the war against poverty?

37

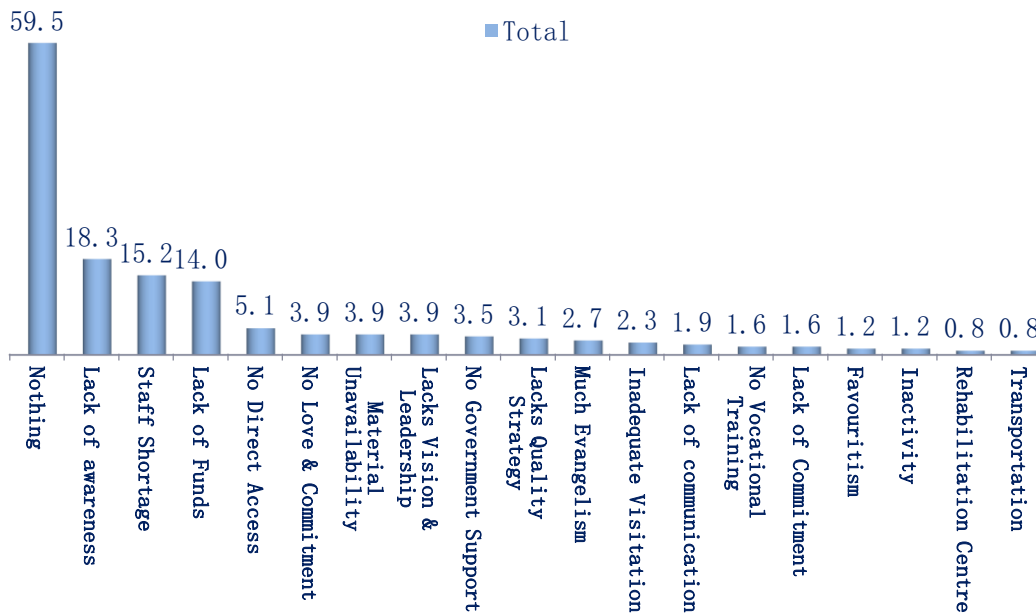
Among all the respondents, 85.5% of the respondents believe that the Nigerian Baptist Convention needs to change her strategy in the war against poverty while 14.5 % opine that the strategy of the Convention against poverty is adequate and needs no change.

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**FIGURE 32**

**Weaknesses of the various methods adopted by Social Ministry of the Convention in the war against poverty**

Base: All = 257



SECB\_23. What are the weaknesses of the various methods adopted by Social Ministry of the Convention in the war against poverty?

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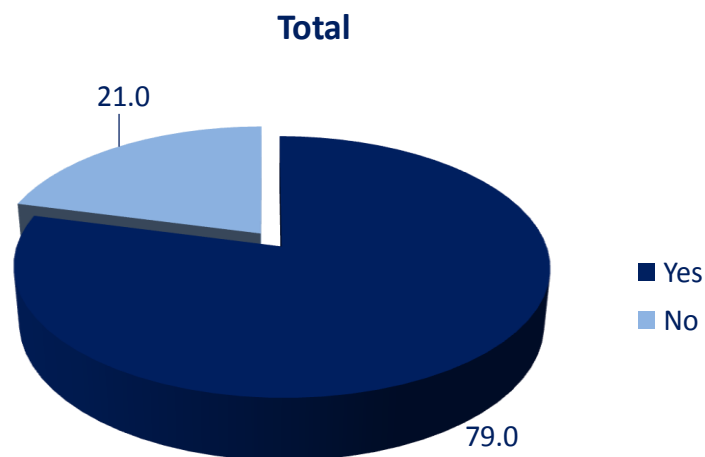
39

59.5% of the respondents could not mention any area of weakness in the approach of the Social Ministry to the war against poverty. Nevertheless, 18.3% suggested lack of awareness while 15.2% opined that the ministry lacks enough personnel/manpower. Lack of adequate funds was cited by 14% of the respondents while 5.1% stated that lack of direct access to the ministry is a weakness. Lack of love and commitment (3.9%), non availability of materials (3.9%), lack of vision and leadership (3.9%), lack of governmental support (3.5%) and lack of quality strategy (3.1%) were other weaknesses mentioned by the respondents. In addition, 2.7% of the respondents stated that the Social Ministry engages in too much evangelism while 2.3% opined that the visitation of the ministry is inadequate. Lack of good communication network was observed by 1.9% of the respondents while lack of quality vocational training was cited by 1.6% of the respondents. 1.6% of the respondents believed that the staff lacks commitment to the work while 1.2% observed favouritism in the approach

of the ministry. 1.2% of the respondents found the staff to be inactive while 0.8% stressed that lack of rehabilitation centres is a weakness in the approach of the ministry. Only 0.8% of the respondents mentioned transportation network as a weakness in the methods of the ministry.

**FIGURE 33**

Will you be willing to join the war against poverty?



SECB\_24. As an individual, will you be willing to join the war against poverty?

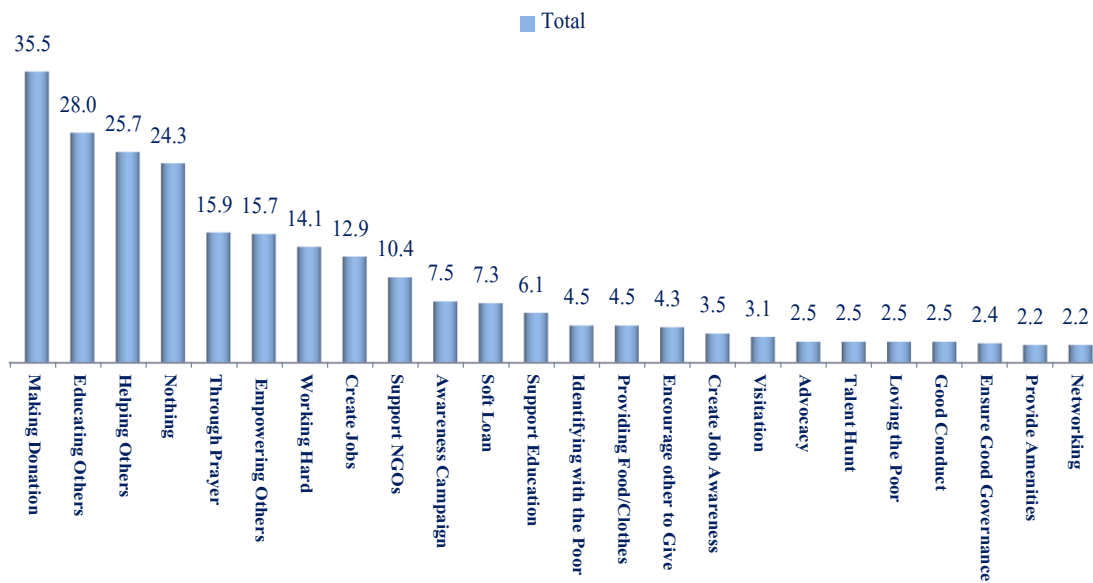
40

According to figure 42, 79% of the respondents said they are willing to join in the war against poverty while 21% said no. While the percentage is appreciable, one needs to observe that there is still a number of Nigerians who are unconcerned with the effect of poverty and the plight of the poor in the society. All and sundry ( rich or poor) must join hands in the war against poverty.

**FIGURE 34**

### In your own little way, what will you do to reduce poverty?

Base: All = 510



SECB\_25. In your own little way, what will you do to reduce poverty?

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41

Worthy of note is the response of the respondents when asked what they will do in their own little way to fight poverty. 35.5% said they will donate to the cause of the poor while 28% said they are willing to educate the poor. 25.7% promised to render help in any way they can while 24.3% said they cannot think of what they can do. 15.9% would assist with prayers while 15.7% said they will empower others. 14.1% of the respondents will fight poverty by working hard while 12.9% mentioned creation of jobs. 10.4% will join hands with Non Governmental Organisations to fight poverty while 7.5% will engage in awareness campaign against poverty. 7.3% will give soft loan, 6.1% will support the education of indigent students, 4.5% will identify with the poor in the society while 4.5% will provide food and clothes for the poor to fight poverty. 4.3% will encourage others to give towards alleviation of poverty while 3.5% will create job awareness to reduce poverty. Visitation to the poor (3.1%), advocacy (2.5%), hunting for talents (2.5%) and expressing love to the poor (2.5%)

were other ways mentioned by the respondents. In addition, 2.5% of the respondents will fight poverty through their good conduct while 2.4% will ensure good governance. 2.2% of the respondents will provide social amenities while 2.2% promised to network with other like minded individuals against poverty.

## 6.6 Conclusion

While there are many Christians bodies helping the poor in the Nigerian Society, undoubtedly the Nigerian Baptist Convention over the years has improved in her care of those in need. This study has shown some of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach of the Convention to the war against poverty. Worthy of note is the fact that based on the information gathered from copies of the questionnaire administered, there is need for more improvement. The strategy adopted by the Convention is yet to be fully identical with that of Jesus. Jesus adopted five approaches in caring for the poor: identification, solidarity, education, advocacy and empowerment. The Social Ministry Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention adopted only two (i.e. education and empowerment) in reaching the poor which revealed an inconsistency with the biblical standard. This made the ministry less effective.

Though the largest percentage of those who filled the questionnaire belongs to the work force, ( i.e. ages 18 – 65 or 91%) only few people considered themselves rich. 75% of the respondents considered themselves as members of the middle class. This shows the position of many in the society today wherein those who are employed are at the middles class level and certainly the unemployed are at the poverty level. In the developing world, the government has a programme for the unemployed to get them out of the poverty level. There is need for the Nigerian government to look into this.

Very worrisome is the fact that among the list of organisations fighting poverty, nongovernmental organisations are more prominent than government establishments. The government needs to wake up to her responsibilities as a provider of amenities for the citizenry. It must also be noted that Faith based NGO's fighting poverty are not as many as the non faith based NGO's in spite of the numerous number of Churches in Nigeria today. There is certainly the need for churches to wake up and help the poor in the society just as the Jesus did.

As stated by the majority of the respondents (97.1%), the church needs to help the poor because it is biblical, a spiritual mandate and above all can be a tool for evangelism though not necessarily used as a bait. Transformation of the society both spiritual and physical should be of great importance to the Nigerian church. The need to partner with other agencies in the war against poverty was also emphasized by the respondents.

As for the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the need to publicise more of her activities among the poor is stressed by the respondents. The Convention might take advantage of the International Day for Poverty Eradication, (October 17) to fix a Sunday following the observance or the one before it to promote her activities in all Nigerian Baptist Convention churches. Members of the churches must also realise that whatever the Social department of their church is doing to help the poor is done on behalf of the Convention. This is revealed in the questionnaire where 80.2% claim their church is fighting poverty and 49.6% of the respondents are not aware of the activities of the Social Ministry of the Convention. The ministry therefore must operate a system that links her activities to that of each local church.

The fact that only a handful claim to have received assistance from the ministry points to the need to revisit the way in which the assistance is being distributed. If only 5.4% of the respondents have ever received assistance from the Convention, it is either majority of the members of the Nigerian Baptist Convention are rich or the aid is finding its way to other destinations.

While Widows and Prison Ministries are the main line approaches of the social concerns of the Convention, the need to focus on other areas that can transform the larger society must be looked into. These two ministries (Widows and Prisons) are for selected categories of people. It is hereby opined that if the Convention is serious about the war against poverty, she must put more effort on ministries that can empower the poor in general i.e. vocational training, job creation and conducting empowerment seminars.

As expressed by 70.8% of Pastors and Directors of Social Ministries of local Churches that were interviewed, 30.0% of members of the Church have left for other churches because they were not economically empowered. All of those who were interviewed believed that a good empowerment programme can assist in the numerical growth of the church. 87.5% of those interviewed rated the activities of the Social Ministry Department of the Convention 40% and below.



Certainly, there is need to re-examine the strategy of the Convention to the war against poverty. Jesus did not only provide for the poor, he first of all identified with them. He also went beyond providing for them. He defended them and spoke on their behalf. The Convention needs to be more involved by speaking constantly, confronting the powers that be in the society that are multiplying the plights of the poor. The social concern of the Convention must include advocacy. A holistic strategy will be suggested in the concluding chapter.

In conclusion, observing that the war against poverty in today's world has become sophisticated, the Convention surely needs strategic planning to make impact in this direction. While appreciating the fact that the Social Concern Ministry of the Convention has been upgraded to Social Ministry Department with many divisions under it, there is need to also upgrade the activities of the department. Provision of sufficient funds and proper management of such will go a long way in redefining the activities of the Social Ministry of the Convention.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Summary of the Study

The problem of poverty in the midst of plenty is a major challenge to the world generally and especially Nigeria as a country. A lot of money has been expended by the government and many NGOs in the country to solve it, but there is virtually no record of success to justify the huge expenses. The various terms adopted in the war against poverty like Poverty Reduction, Poverty Alleviation and Poverty Eradication seem to be mere decorative programmes that have brought no relief to the poor in the country. Something is surely wrong somewhere. Besides, the lackadaisical attitude of many religious bodies is something that meets the eye.

According to Otiye Igbuzor, if the situation of the poor remains the way it is in the nation, then we must seek an alternative strategy to fight the war against poverty in order to record the desired success. In other words the war against poverty in Nigeria must not be fought in the same way the Americans do it; there must be a Nigerian way to deal with this monster.<sup>1</sup> The activities of Jesus among the poor are a pointer to how the war against poverty can be fought without eradicating the poor themselves. Many of the policies being pursued by the government in the name of wiping out poverty further aggravate the plight of the poor. In many instances, the poor are not consulted before such actions are taken and they turn out to be inimical to their interests. Most of those who claim to be fighting against poverty do not associate with the poor in any substantial form. Officials of an NGO in Lagos that claims to be fighting poverty in Ajegunle may not know the name of any street in that area.

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<sup>1</sup> Otiye Igbuzor, 2005. "Alternative Poverty Eradication Strategy for Nigeria" in *Perspectives on Democracy and Development*, Lagos: Joe Tolalu & Associates, 299-280.

Crucial to the war against poverty is the need to first of all identify the poor as Jesus did and defend them from the powers that cause them excruciating pains. The need to defend the right of the poor is very important to the success of the war against poverty. Women must also be given their proper place in the society if the war against poverty must be won.

This research which focuses on Jesus' ministry to the poor in Luke's gospel and its replication in the activities of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention provides a comprehensive ecclesiastical strategy for the war against poverty. In the seven-chapter thesis, the first chapter focuses on the general introduction. The second chapter covers the review of relevant literature on the perspective of the poor and poverty in the Old Testament and the Gospel of Luke. Other writings on the poor, poverty and strategies that various organisations have adopted in the war against poverty were also reviewed.

In chapter three, the research examines the issue of the poor and poverty in the early chapters of Luke. The Gospel according to Luke is indeed the Gospel of the poor for Luke presented Jesus as the friend of the poor. The significance of this theme begins with the lowly birth of Jesus in a manger, the visit of the lowly shepherds and the humble dedication of Jesus wherein Mary and Joseph presented an offering of the poor (that is, two turtle doves) for sacrifice. Also, in the early part of the Gospel, Luke emphasised the theme of the poor through the teachings of John the Baptist who also stressed the need for generosity as one of the signs of genuine repentance. One of the factors responsible for poverty, the abuse of privileges and extortion of the masses were denounced by John the Baptist. Corruption is a major cause of poverty in Nigeria. What should be shared by over 160 million citizens are being hoarded by few individuals. A placard carried by one of the protesters during the fuel hike in January 2012 says “one day, the poor will have nothing to eat but the rich.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This inscription was shown on January 11, 2012 by TV Continental from the Freedom Park, Ojota, Lagos around 2:30pm.

In chapter four, the research examines the poor and poverty in some selected sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. Some of these sayings show His concern for the poor. The Gospel of Jesus is for the poor in spirit and those of humble heart. The programmatic declaration of Jesus at the Synagogue of Nazareth could be considered as an onslaught against poverty, especially spiritual poverty. From Luke's point of view, spiritual poverty that is dearth of the life of God in a man is one of the causes of all other forms of poverty. To be poor in spirit therefore is not the same thing as to be spiritually poor. To be poor in spirit is a blessing, but to be spiritually poor is death.

Unlike those who rely on themselves and became proud, Jesus pronounced blessings on the poor in spirit. Jesus identified with the materially poor when He stated that the Son of man had nowhere to lay his Head. This statement makes one to wonder where the preachers of Health and Wealth Gospel find their reference to Jesus who they claim they are emulating in amassing wealth and ownership of cars, estates, private jets, and so on at the expense of their members. What Jesus expects from the rich Christian is to give to the less privileged. This seems to be more of a religious obligation than a social concern. To the rich young ruler who wanted to inherit eternal life, Jesus commanded, "sell what you have and give alms to the poor." If only the wealthy Christians, including the religious leaders, will give to the cause of the poor, the surge of poverty in the world shall be drastically reduced.

In chapter five, the parables of Jesus on the poor and poverty were examined. How the rich in the society could deliberately ignore the poor around them was exemplified in Luke's parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In spite of his affluence, the rich man could not spare anything for the poor man except what were meant for the dogs to eat. That the poor man was always at the gate of the rich man points to the fact that the poor will always be around us and this is a wakeup call to do something tangible and drastic to break their chains.

Chapter five also examines the role the Western world has played in the rising level of poverty in Africa. The slave trade was just the starting point. Just as Zacchaeus gave

to the poor and also restored back in four fold whatever he had taken by force, the Western world should not only give aids, but pay reparation to African countries if they truly want poverty to be eradicated in the continent. Anything that falls short of this is a sign that they are only paying lip services to the war against poverty in Africa. While one cannot rule out the possibility of misappropriation of such funds, the need to do what is right far outweighs the possibility of the money getting into corrupt hands. In addition, the story of the poor widow speaks of the plight of the poor especially women in the society and also in the community of faith. The widow who gave her all, no doubt went back home poorer at least financially, though Jesus commended her devotion.

In chapter six, the research takes a thorough look at the activities of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Various departments of the ministry examined were the Widows, the Prisons, the Aged, Disaster Relief, Vocational Training, Ghetto and Addict. Questionnaire were administered and interviews were conducted. The process revealed that the Social Ministry of the Convention needs a major overhauling. There is need for a holistic approach, a comprehensive strategy and a re-ordering of priorities and actions. There is need for a paradigm shift from charity to that of advocacy and decisive confrontation of factors that aid poverty. The Ministry among others, surely needs more publicity about her activities, not necessarily through media propaganda.

## **7.2 Contribution to Knowledge**

This research in a great way is an additional voice to the debate on the reasons why the Gospel according to Luke should be considered the Gospel of the poor. It has also joined efforts with the new trend in biblical scholarship, the re-reading of biblical texts to solve social problems and showing that orthodoxy and orthopraxy must have a meeting place. Besides, it has shown the importance of the approach of the Christian church to the war against poverty and the treatment of the poor in the society. The research through a contextualised reading of selected passages in Luke provides a

fivefold Ecclesio-theological approach to the problem of poverty based on Jesus' example.

The fivefold strategic actions of the church as presented by the research are:

- 1) **IDENTIFICATION** – The church must, as a matter of priority, identify those who are truly poor in the society. No doubt, the church can do this better than any other agency because she is closer to the poor and her doors are always open to all and sundry. The interconnectedness of people in and around the church should make this exercise easier. Unless the truly poor are identified, funds will continue to go into the wrong hands as it happens with the government and non-government organisations. There is need for the church to differentiate between those who are looking for better life and the real poor of the earth.
- 2) **SOLIDARITY** –The second action as proposed in the research is the need for the church to show solidarity with the poor. The church cannot stand away from the poor and meaningfully fight the war against poverty. Jesus expressed solidarity with the poor; the Christian church must do the same to combat poverty in the land. Unfortunately, many Christian churches and their leaders would rather identify with the rich. There should be no reservation of seats or positions for any person in the church because of his or her economic status. The church must thus befriend the poor and treat them with dignity.
- 3) **EDUCATION** – A third action of the church against poverty is education. The church must strive to educate the poor in the society on how they can get out of poverty. Knowledge is power. Educating the poor is a necessary weapon against poverty. The church must also educate her members on various biblical approaches to combat the surge of poverty in the land. In doing this the pulpit becomes a powerful place to preach messages that celebrate and promote honesty, integrity and righteousness above affluence, flamboyance, riches and

wealth. The church must educate her members “that the life of a man does not consist in the abundance of his wealth.” (Luke 12:15) As good stewards, the rich members of the church must also be educated on the proper use of their God-giving wealth.

- 4) **ADVOCACY** – The church must speak for and defend the cause of the poor in the society. Unfortunately the church has become a toothless bulldog in this regard because of the greed of many of her leaders. Rather than fighting for the cause of the poor, many Christian leaders are busy fighting for their own pockets. Since the voice of the poor is often neglected in the society, the church must therefore raise her voice against actions that are increasing poverty in the land. The church must preach against corruption, selfishness and harsh economic policies of the government. The church should help the poor to demand for their rights from the government of the day. This action must be decisive, not confrontational. The church must engage government officials in meaningful dialogue that will result to the betterment of the citizenry. The preaching from the pulpit must pull down the strongholds of corruption and poverty in the land.
- 5) **EMPOWERMENT**- With the vast resources at the disposal of many Christian churches, the religious leaders must use such to empower the poor of the land. The church must join the government in making provisions for the needy. Job creation, provision of training and skills among others are ways this could be done. The church must not provide education and health facilities with the aim of making money. While individuals might do that, it will be immoral and unbiblical for the church to establish schools for the purpose of making money. The church can engage in activities that can make the lives of those in her society better. Members of the church can be encouraged to have cooperative societies. Many church leaders have spoken against Islamic Banking calling it a threat to the Christian faith. The church should rather seek

to establish a Kingdom banking system where the poor can be assisted financially.

This fivefold strategic actions of the church (ISEAE) as exemplified by Jesus in this research is an ecclesiastical weapon against poverty. It is about the concern of the church for humanity, not necessarily a bait to draw people to the church. The church must see herself as an agent of change in a poverty-stricken world. The church must combine her resources to fight the scourge of poverty. There is need for pure motive in the war against poverty.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

A research of this magnitude cannot be completed without some recommendations. These will be divided into two major parts namely

- (a) General recommendations to the Nigerian Church.
- (b) Specific recommendations to the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

#### **(a) General Recommendations to the Nigerian Church**

The church should make the war against poverty a serious matter, standing at the forefront. The Church must examine herself to unveil practices that are contributing to poverty and find ways of putting an end to them. Religious leaders must discontinue their undue romance with political leaders so as to be able to confront them when they make policies that are inimical to the lives of the poor and the citizens generally. The Christian church must effectively use her pulpit to preach against corruption which is a major factor contributing to poverty.

As Jesus warned the rich of His day, the church must make it known to the rich in her fold that they have a divine responsibility to cater to the needs of the poor in the society. No doubt, a rich man that is helping the poor is also helping himself indirectly. The church as a matter of urgency must desist from the celebration of wealth. This practice has encouraged more people in the society to seek for more



wealth at the expense of the poor. The flamboyant lifestyle of many religious leaders must be checked. Religious leaders who are rich must not only give to the poor but live a simple lifestyle like that of Jesus. The church must also encourage the poor to do something about their situation. The poor must be educated on how to deliver themselves from the clutches of poverty.

Religious scholars must also correct the many wrong interpretations of the scripture which make it look as if it is only the materially rich that are blessed. Jesus who declared, "blessed are the poor" must be emulated. Each local church must establish a Social Department (that is a poverty reduction ministry) through which she helps and empowers the poor in the society. Such a ministry should be headed by a Deacon and co-ordinated by the Deacons in the church. The church must be willing to join hands with government and non governmental agencies to fight against poverty. Rather than waging war against "Islamic Banking," the church should look into ways by which she also can establish " Christian Banking " where the poor could receive loans for business purposes without interest. The example of Spreydon Baptist Church in New Zealand is hereby recommended.

**(b) Specific Recommendations to the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention**

The Nigerian Baptist Convention must publicise the more the activities of her Social Ministry, not necessarily by way of media propaganda but by focusing more on programmes and activities that promote the cause of the poor. The Convention as a matter of importance needs to increase her budgetary allocation to the Social Ministry Department. A twenty percent (20%) allocation of her yearly budget is hereby recommended for a start.

Each local church in the Nigerian Baptist Convention must be encouraged to have a Social Ministry which links up with that of the Association, the Conference and the Convention. The Social Ministry of the church must therefore be educated that whatever she is doing is on behalf of the Convention. In addition, the Social Ministry

should be more transparent in the administration of funds and resources for the poor. There should be a very clear way of knowing the poor indeed and ensuring that aids and assistance actually get to those they are intended for.

The ministry should focus the more on activities that empower the poor generally, not just a selected group of people. The ministry should also focus on rural areas rather than urban centres like Lagos and Ibadan where her activities are mostly felt. The Social Ministry should seek means to partner with non-governmental agencies that are genuinely involved in the war against poverty. This will bring about exchange of ideas and resources. The aids and assistance given to the needy must not be a bait, but a social concern while evangelism should be done separately without attaching it to an assistance rendered.

The Social Ministry should engage more in empowering churches so that they can in turn empower the poor in their communities. This should be done by way of regular seminars, training, and writing of resource materials and provision of resource personnel. As a matter of urgency, the curriculum of the Seminaries and Bible Colleges should be updated to include Social Ministry. This will prepare the leaders of the churches as touching what should be their treatment of the poor in their communities. The ministry should engage more in community developmental projects. Churches must also be encouraged to do the same.

The Social Ministry should fix either the Sunday before, or the one after October 17 of every year (if it does not fall on a Sunday) as the day of promoting poverty alleviation programmes and Social Concern for the poor. The Convention through the Social Ministry should express solidarity with the poor and defend their cause. Advocacy for the poor before government should be taken seriously. The Convention needs to re-organise the various divisions of the Social Ministry. There is need for a division for advocacy and poverty alleviation campaigns.

The Social Ministry needs more qualified personnel to head each of the divisions under the ministry. Professionals who have undergone courses on humanitarian gestures should be employed. The Disaster Relief Ministry should have funds insured for the purpose. This will go a long way in responding quickly and promptly. The insurance cover will be used to minister to the victims without waiting for churches to collect alms intermittently. The Convention should beef up her efforts on Prison Ministry by establishing a rehabilitation centre. The Centre can also serve as a vocational training centre.

Finally, the schools and hospitals of the Convention must be reorganised to function as needs-meeting agencies and not money-making ventures. The leadership of the Convention should see that charges and fees are not exorbitant while ensuring that the institutions are not run at a loss too. The Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention should develop a strategic policy for her Social Concern. The fivefold strategic action of Jesus namely, identification, solidarity, education, advocacy and empowerment (ISEAE) is hereby recommended.

#### **7.4 Suggestions for future Research**

While the research has shown the poor motif in Luke from selected passages, the selected passages are not exhaustive and future researchers can delve into other passages that confirm same. The research using the story of Zaccheaus pointed to the need for the developed countries not to only give aids to poor countries but emulate Zaccheaus who paid fourfold of what he took from people by paying "REPARATION". The modalities for the calculation and payment of such are recommended for future research. How such funds could be distributed to the poor of Africa can also be a subject of study in the future.

One other major area a future researcher can examine is the rich motif in Luke. While this research focuses on the poor motive in Luke, no doubt, there are evidences of the rich motif also in the gospel. Definitely, if the gospel was written by a rich man (Luke) to a rich man, (Theophilus), the rich motif must be present. While this

research has presented a fivefold action plan for the church against poverty, a future researcher might be able to uncover more strategies through another re-reading of the Gospel of Luke.

## **7.5 General Conclusion**

Deep concern for the poor in the society must be a priority of any Christian church following the example of Jesus Christ. At a time when the poor are ostracized, neglected and abused, just like Jesus, the church as a matter of urgency must wake up to her divine responsibility as the friend, voice, defender and hope of the poor. A fivefold action of the Church against poverty namely; identification, solidarity, education, advocacy and empowerment is a major strategy that will reduce poverty. Poverty must be fought without ulterior motives. The war against poverty must be seen as a divine and social responsibility, not a political, economic or religious avenue to fulfil a hidden agenda.

The church must note that poverty alleviation is not the same thing as evangelism. Keller pointed out that the modernist church of the early twentieth century reduced gospel ministry to social ethics and social action. But this contradicts the Bible's commands to proclaim the Gospel. It denies the Gospel of grace through God's saving acts in history and replaces it with good works and moral improvement. In social gospel, evangelism disappears. In reaction to the Social Gospel Movement, many churches remain deeply suspicious of too much emphasis placed on ministry to the poor. In the light of the biblical revelation, many today seek some sort of balance.

On the one hand, some opine that the church should do mercy and justice only as it helps it bring people to faith in Christ. This does not seem to fit in with Jesus Good Samaritan parable, which calls us to care for those who are in need including the "ungrateful and wicked." (Luke 6:35). The means-to-an-end view opens Christians to the charge of manipulation: instead of truly loving people freely, we are helping them only to help ourselves and increase our own numbers. Therefore, the Church's ministry to the poor makes great sense as a corporate vehicle for Christians to fulfil

their biblical duty to the poor.<sup>3</sup> If Nigeria will be transformed, “there is need for a change of heart, a change of attitude as well as a change in value orientation.”<sup>4</sup> The Christian church must be at the forefront of this required change towards a new and better society. Adopting the approaches of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke completely will go a long way to assisting the Christian Church in the war against poverty.

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Keller, 2012. “The Gospel and the Poor.” Internet File:www [http://redeemercitytocity.com/content/com.redeemer.digitalContentArchive.LibraryItem/480/The\\_Gospel\\_and\\_the\\_Poor.pdf](http://redeemercitytocity.com/content/com.redeemer.digitalContentArchive.LibraryItem/480/The_Gospel_and_the_Poor.pdf) retrieved on July 10, 2011

<sup>4</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, Gen. Ed., 2012. "Biblical Studies and Social Transformation in Africa: General Introduction." Biblical Studies Series, A publication of the *Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies* (NABIS), No 9: x.

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APPENDIXES.

**SAMPLE OF RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear Sir/Ma,

This questionnaire is designed to carry out a research and obtain information on **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REPLICATION OF JESUS' SOCIAL MINISTRY IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION.**

The research which is for academic purpose is to be submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. The information given will be treated as strictly confidential. I therefore solicit your cooperation and honesty in responding to the questions.

Thanks.

Yours faithfully,

**KRISTILERE, ISRAEL OLUDARE**

**SECTION A**

**RESPONDENT'S PERSONAL DATA**

Tick a box as appropriate and give answers in few words to the open ended questions.

(1.) Age: Below 18  18- 40  41-65  66-80  Above 80

(2.) Sex: Male  Female

(3.) Marital Status: Single  Married  Separated  Divorced

Widowed

(4.) Religion: Christianity  Islam  Traditional Religion  Others

(5.) Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

(6.) Level of Education: Primary  Secondary  Graduate  Post graduate

(7.) Your Economic Status: Very Rich  Rich  Middle Class  Poor

Very Poor

### SECTION B

Tick a box as appropriate and give answers in few words to the open ended questions.

(1) What percentage of your family members would you consider as rich? 0%

5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

Others Specify \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Are you aware of the various NGOs fighting the war against poverty? Yes

No  If yes, mention some

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Is your church or religious organization fighting poverty? Yes  No

(4) Which of these do you consider as a factor aiding the spread of poverty in

Nigeria? (a) Natural Factor  (b) Political Factor  (c) Religious Factor

(d) Socio-cultural Factor  (e) Economic Factor  (g) Others

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- (5) Do you think the Church needs to help the poor? Yes  No  Kindly give reasons for your answer.

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If your answer to question 5 is yes, kindly mention some of the ways the Church can fight poverty.

- (a)  
(b)  
(c)  
(d)  
(e)

- (6) What do you consider as the major causes of poverty in poverty Nigerian today?

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_  
d. \_\_\_\_\_  
e. \_\_\_\_\_

- (7) Do you believe poverty can be inherited? Yes  No

- (8) Is poverty a curse? Yes  No

- (9) Which among these groups of people is mostly affected by poverty in Nigeria?

Rate with numbers 1-3 with 3 being the highest? Men  Women

Children

- (10) Which of these are signs of poverty in Nigeria to you?
- (a) Lack of good food
  - (b) Lack of pipe borne water
  - (c) Lack of good education
  - (d) Lack of electricity
  - (e) Lack of job
  - (f) Lack of Medicare
  - (g) Lack of good housing
- Others? \_\_\_\_\_
- (11) Are you aware that October 17 of every year is the International Day for Poverty Eradication? Yes  No
- (12) Have you ever observed it? Yes  No   
If yes, how did you observe it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (13) Have you ever been a recipient of any poverty eradication/ reduction facility?  
Yes  No   
If yes, in what form?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (14) Are you aware of the activities of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention? Yes  No
- (15) If yes, how did you come in contact with the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(16) Have you ever received any form of poverty eradication assistance from the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention? Yes  No  If yes, what kind of assistance have you received?

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(17) Do you know of any other person who had also received assistance from the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention? Yes  No  If yes, what kind of assistance did such a person receive?

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(18) Rate the Activities of Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in the order of prominence /efficiency using 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 considering number 7 as the highest.

- a. Widows Ministry-----
- b. Aged Ministry-----
- c. Prison Ministry-----
- d. Vocational Training Ministry-----
- e. Addict Ministry-----
- f. Ghetto Ministry-----
- g. Disaster Relief Ministry-----

(19) Do you think the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is succeeding in the war against poverty? Yes  No  Give reasons for your answer?

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If yes is your answer to question 19, mention some of the areas of success she has recorded in the war against poverty?

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(20) What do you think is lacking in the approach of the Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to the war against poverty

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(21) What other organs, agencies or ministries of the Convention should join the Social Ministry in the war against poverty?

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(22) Do you think the Nigerian Baptist Convention needs to change her strategy in fight the war against poverty? Yes  No

(23) What are the weaknesses of the various methods adopted by Social Ministry of the Convention in the war against poverty?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

(24) As an individual, will you be willing to join the war against poverty?

Yes  No

(25) In your own little way, what will you do to reduce poverty?

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) \_\_\_\_\_

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**PRESET INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS/DIRECTORS  
OF SOCIAL MINISTRY DEPARTMENT IN THE LOCAL  
CHURCH.**

Dear Sir/Ma,

This questionnaire is designed to carry out a research and obtain information on AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REPLICATION OF JESUS' SOCIAL MINISTRY IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION. The research which is for academic purpose is to be submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. The information given will be treated as strictly confidential. I therefore solicit your cooperation and honesty in responding to the questions.

Thanks.

Yours faithfully,

**KRISTILERE, ISRAEL OLUDARE**

**(A) WIDOWS MINISTRY**

1. How will you rate the ministry of your Church to the widows?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

2. How many widows do you have in your Church? \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Do you have a register for widows in your Church? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_. If yes, How many widows do you have in the register? \_\_\_\_\_.

4. What percentage of the widows have received assistance from your Church?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

5. Mention some of the ways your Church has assisted widows?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

6. What assistance has your Church ever received from the Social Ministry Department of the Convention towards widows ministry?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_



7. How will you rate the assistance of the Social Ministry Department of the Convention to the Widows in your Church?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

**(B) PRISON MINISTRY.**

1. How will you rate the Prison Ministry of your Church?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

2. What assistance have prisoners received from your Church?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What assistance has your Church received from the Social Ministry Department of the Convention with respect to your ministry to the prisoners.

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

4. How will you rate the assistance of the Social Ministry Department of the Convention with respect to your Church's Prison ministry?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

**(C) EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME.**

1. How will you rate the empowerment programme of your Church?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

2. What empowerment programme do you have for the needy including the jobless?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What percentage of the needy in your Church has benefitted from your empowerment programme?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

4. What adverse effect has the lack of adequate empowerment brought to your Church?

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are there members of your Church who have left for other Churches because they were not economically empowered? Yes\_\_\_\_. No\_\_\_\_

6. How will you rate the assistance of the Social Ministry of the Convention with respect to the empowerment programme of your Church?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

7. Do you agree that a good empowerment programme can assist in the numerical growth of your Church? Yes\_\_\_\_. No\_\_\_\_

**(D) EDUCATION MINISTRY.**

1. Does your Church have a ministry to indigent students? Yes\_\_\_\_. No\_\_\_\_.

If yes, what percentage of indigent students have received assistance from your Church?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

2. What Kind of assistance do you give to indigent students?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are there children who have dropped out of School due to lack of funds in your Church? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

4. How will you describe the school fees being charged by the Convention Mission Schools, (Secondary and Tertiary ) compared to Government owned Schools? Tick only one.

a. Too Cheap. \_\_\_\_\_

b. Moderate. \_\_\_\_\_

c. Exorbitant. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you agree that the Convention should create a window for indigent students to study at low cost in her schools? Yes\_\_\_\_. No\_\_\_\_.

**(E) GENERAL**

1. How will you rate the effectiveness of the Social Ministry of your Church in general?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

2 How will you rate the assistance of the Social Ministry Department of the Convention to your Church Social Ministry in general?

0%  5%  10%  20%  40%  50%  70%  80%  100%

3. What do you think the Social Ministry of the Convention should do to make her ministry to the poor more effective?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

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**SAMPLE OF PRESET INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR  
OFFICERS OF THE SOCIAL MINISTRY OF THE  
NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION.**

- (1.) How did you come to work with Social Ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
- (2.) Why did you prefer this Ministry as a place of work?
- (3.) In what ways do you think your work in the Social Ministry of the Convention has affected your world view of poverty and the poor?
- (4.) Does your assignment directly involve you with the poor?
- (5.) What yardstick do you use to identify the poor in the society?
- (6.) Do you always have adequate resources to meet the needs of the poor?
- (7.) What methods do you apply in giving aids or assistance to the poor?
- (8.) What are the challenges you face in meeting the needs of the poor?
- (9.) Can you please tell me some notable activities of the Social Ministry of the Convention among the poor?
- (10.) To what extent do you think the Social Ministry of the Convention has helped in eradicating poverty?
- (11.) Do you believe that the Social Ministry of the Convention can eradicate poverty?
- (12.) In what ways do you think religious organizations can partner with government in the war against poverty?
- (13.) In what ways do you think the Convention as a body can improve her concern for the poor in the society?
- (14.) In what ways do you think a local Baptist Church can partner with the Social Ministry in her activities to help the poor?
- (15.) What other organizations do you think need to join you in the war against poverty?
- (16.) If you get a better employment, will you leave the Social Ministry of the Convention and its war against poverty?

**SAMPLE OF PRESET INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR  
RECIPIENTS OF PROGRAMMES AND FACILITIES OF  
THE SOCIAL MINISTRY OF THE CONVENTION.**

- (1.) When and how did you first come in contact with the Social Ministry of the Convention?
- (2.) What kind of assistance have you personally received from the Social Ministry of the Convention?
- (3.) What kind of assistance has your community received from the Social Ministry of the Convention?
- (4.) What changes have taken place in your life and Community due to the activities of the Social Ministry of the Convention?
- (5.) Being frank, is there any way you think the activities of the Social Ministry of the Convention has affected your Community negatively?
- (6.) What do you think is lacking in the activities of the Social Ministry of the Convention and how do you think this can be corrected?
- (7.) With the various assistance you have received from the Social Ministry of the Convention, do you still think the government needs to join in the war against poverty and if yes how?
- (8.) In what ways do you think religious bodies can contribute to the war against poverty?
- (9.) Do you think the poor has any responsibility in the sustenance of the war against poverty?
- (10.) What can you do to help various organizations fighting poverty to be more effective i.e. your own contribution towards the war against poverty.