

## **Wealth and Poverty in Luke's Gospel and Acts: A Challenge to the Christian Church**

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*In April of 2004, the Bible and Theology Department of AGTS voted to present the Stanley M. Horton Award annually at graduation for excellence in the writing of the paper for the Theological Studies Seminar. The professor of record for the course makes recommendations to the Department for their decision on potential recipients, and the award is announced during graduation exercises.*

*On April 15, 2009, the faculty ratified Samantha R. Brewer as the recipient of this award. Her paper follows.*

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## Introduction

This seminar paper's purpose is to examine an identifiable Lukan theology to the poor in the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Luke consistently maintains a theology to the poor; therefore, this paper seeks to determine the implications for the modern Church and apply it to contemporary theology by determining ways in which Christians should respond to the financial state of others, as well as how one should maintain his or her individual economic policies according to Luke and his understanding of the teachings of Christ regarding the poor.

Luke's social consciousness is generally supported in five significant emphases: (1) his considerable focus on the rich and the poor, (2) prominent inclusion of women, (3) acceptance of religious and social outcasts, (4) healing as a noteworthy part of Jesus' ministry and that of His followers, and (5) exhortations to and examples of almsgiving.

John Roth asserts that Luke has "proportionally more material than the other Gospels dealing with the rich and the poor"<sup>1</sup> and is "particularly fond of exhortations to and examples of almsgiving."<sup>2</sup> Walter Pilgrim also emphasizes a Lukan theology to the poor by stating that the subject of wealth and poverty is of greater importance to Luke than any other evangelist as part of both the tradition of Jesus and as a message for the Christian communities to whom he is writing.<sup>3</sup> The subject of wealth and poverty seems to be regarded by Luke as a "practical test-case in the Christian realization of good news to the poor."<sup>4</sup> Luke offers a vast amount of information involving economics for the Christian community.

While this topic is essential to the Christian community regarding both the believer's

common life and the responsibilities of the Church, a conclusive theology has yet to be determined. Kyoung-Jin Kim states that many attempts have been made by Lukan scholars in recent decades to define and solve the problem regarding the Church's theology to the poor. However, Kim asserts that an adequate solution to this problem has not been offered.<sup>5</sup> In the past, the Church has debated the controversial topic of how much responsibility rests on the Christian community in this arena. Denominational boundaries have often created friction because of differing beliefs on obligation to the poor. The Catholic Church has largely maintained a specific accountability to the poor, while some Pentecostal theologians have depended on the prosperity gospel to support their reasons for not aiding those living in poverty. Other concepts such as liberation theology have shaped the way the Christian world perceives those living in poverty. Examples of these denominational concepts will receive greater attention and documentation in another section of the paper.

Many people in the Church, even within recent years, have debated the Church's responsibility of responding to the poor and how that responsibility should affect the individual believer's economic policy. Due to the immense controversy in Christian theology regarding the poor, seeking a solution through Lukan theology is vital to the Church. The current economic crisis has encouraged interest in the Christian response to financial responsibility as well. Analysis of Luke's heavy emphasis on economics and financial status in relation to Christ and His followers could significantly aid the individual believer and the Church in understanding the roles each should play in this realm.

In his article, “Why Has the Church Ignored the Poor?” Shane Clifton quotes Karl Marx who states:

The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it. The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable. The social principles of Christianity transfer the consistorial councilor’s adjustment of all infamies to heaven and thus justify the further existence of those infamies on earth. The social principles of Christianity declare all vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either the just punishment of original sin and other sins or trials that the Lord in his infinite wisdom imposes on those redeemed.<sup>6</sup>

While Marx does not adequately grasp Christian theology, he rightly identifies the Church’s obvious neglect of the poor throughout history.<sup>7</sup> This neglect must be addressed. Clifton proposes that religion, and Christianity in particular, has been described as a significant part of the problem in aiding the poor—even something that should be put aside if the challenge of poverty is to be adequately addressed.<sup>8</sup> Clifton provides an interesting example in which a woman named Sarah Jane Lancaster was condemned for establishing a soup kitchen for the unemployed and told that “the money spent in feeding the unemployed would be better spent in evangelizing and building up the church.”<sup>9</sup> The author states that many reasons might exist as to why the

Church has not taken the condition of the poor seriously.<sup>10</sup> “Perhaps the main reason, however,” he states, “is that we have misread the message of the gospel of Jesus, and failed to follow His model and pursue His mission.”<sup>11</sup> While attempts have been made to settle the issue and identify a Lukan theology from which the universal Church can practically apply its message, one could conclude that a fresher look is needed due to the current economic crisis and the effect this devastation is having upon so many people. Christians must not only understand this Lukan theology to the poor, but practically apply the message in the life of the Church and the individual believer.

This writer’s method and approach involves specific emphasis on differing theological conclusions regarding Luke’s writings about the poor by incorporating the views of theologians from differing denominational backgrounds. To discover an answer regarding the Church’s perception of the poor, the process involves the utilization of various commentaries, dictionaries, articles, and books surrounding Lukan theology specifically. Methodology will also include a brief discussion of the Church’s historical response to the poor and the implications upon the modern day Christian community. Looking to the universal Church in light of its history will better inform the reader on how scholars in differing denominations have often interpreted Luke’s concepts in this area and what it has meant for the Christian body. Combining the data from the Church’s historical response to the poor with an exegetical breakdown of Luke’s theology to the poor in both his Gospel and in Acts will provide a basis for an understanding of how the Church and individual Christians should respond to the poor in the modern world. This methodology will also reveal the way in which one should handle his or her own financial state.

The evidence of research supports the view that Luke does in fact possess a consistent theology regarding the poor in both his Gospel and in Acts based on the teachings of Christ. A solution regarding the effect Lukan theology to the poor has on moral obligations for the Church will be provided. Based on this evidence, this seminar paper includes the presentation of an historical and exegetical overview of Luke's economic theology and practical application for the universal Church's current state in the modern world as it relates to the poor. This information will also include an overview of the economic and financial obligations of the individual believer.

### **Inductive Literary and Exegetical Analysis**

#### **The Identity of the Poor**

When discussing a biblical theology to the poor, it is essential that one understand who exactly the poor were and the conditions of the ones to whom Luke was writing or speaking in his works. In order to understand Lukan theology regarding the poor, one must be aware of the Old Testament idea of the poor in Israel according to God's commands. Jesus was, after all, a Jew, and the Scripture He used was the Old Testament. Although poverty was often identified in the Old Testament as a result of sin (Prov. 10:4; 13:18; 21:17; 24:30-34; 19:15), the concept is most often pointed out in reference with those who were not considered poor and their failure to live up to their obligations.<sup>12</sup> In his article on the poor in the Old Testament, Allen Myers asserts that the issue of poverty did not significantly arise until Israel settled into Canaan, due to their earlier equality as slaves in Egypt.<sup>13</sup> God made special provisions for specific groups of poor people within the giving of the law (Exod. 23:6;

Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 15:11; 24:19-22; Prov. 22:22-23; Isa. 25:4).<sup>14</sup> God kept the plight of the poor in mind when giving instruction for sacrifices.<sup>15</sup> The regulations regarding the Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee were meant to keep any individual or group from oppressing another group.<sup>16</sup> The issue of poverty was addressed to the people as a whole rather than to individuals, and unified Israel was promised to avoid poverty if they were obedient to God.<sup>17</sup>

Myers states that poverty increased with the rise of the monarchy, as changes in social structure occurred.<sup>18</sup> The oppressed and poor came to be seen as God's righteous people (Ps. 9:9-10; 14:4-6; 37:14-15; 69:33; Isa. 3:15; Hab. 3:13-14).<sup>19</sup> Myers also affirms that the hope of the coming age holds special significance for the poor in Old Testament understanding (Isa. 11:4; 29:19; 41:17).<sup>20</sup> This Old Testament consideration of the identity of the poor would directly influence the teachings of Christ, and, therefore, Luke.

Peter Davids suggests that the material in the Gospels regarding the rich and the poor was set against a background of the society in Jesus' day and the way in which Judaism was responding to the world.<sup>21</sup> First-century Judaism differed significantly from the modern world, and was not made up of the social classes of today's understanding. In fact, the majority of the first-century Palestinian world was made up of two people groups: the rich and the poor.<sup>22</sup> The religiously and socially wealthy could be categorized into two main groups: the observant Jewish leaders and those associated with the Herodians and Romans who were accepted for their power but made outcasts for their lack of morality.<sup>23</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, significantly poor minorities existed in the larger part of society. In fact, it seems that fairly large

segments of the population lived in or on the edge of poverty.<sup>24</sup> Although a very small middle class made up of skilled artisans, medium land-owning farmers, and merchants existed, almost everyone outside the two major groups of wealthy people were considered poor.<sup>25</sup> The poor would include everyone from small land-owners, tenant farmers, and traders such as fishermen and carpenters down to those who owned no land, did not possess artistic skills, or were even slaves or beggars.<sup>26</sup>

### The Plight and Status of the Poor

Interestingly, the poor obtained their classification through both economic and religious standards. Davids asserts, “The observant group justified their oppression through legal interpretation, which in the eyes of Jesus was viewed as more culpable, for it appeared to put God on the side of injustice.”<sup>27</sup> Because they continually lived on the edge of existence, the financially poor were often unable to observe the Jewish standards as the Law required.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, poor peasants of the land, or the “masses,” were looked down upon by the religious elite as lax in their observance of the Law and were given their title of status as a religious rather than socio-economic classification.<sup>29</sup> In Old Testament literature, the “people of the land” were considered those who were not aristocrats or were not Jewish and living in traditional Jewish land. In rabbinic times, the classification of “the masses” often referred to those who were not observant of the Law in comparison with the Pharisees.<sup>30</sup> If those living on the edge of poverty did pay their temple taxes as well as the taxes required of Roman and Herodian rule, it is even more likely that they lived on the brink of poverty.<sup>31</sup>

A modern-day understanding of poverty is significantly different than the first-century

Judaic comprehension of the poor where the vast majority of the population was considered of poor status from both an economic and religious standpoint. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of “the poor” it is likely that He not only refers to one’s financial state, but to the oppression by the religious elite for one’s standing in regard to Jewish law.

The perception of possessions as evil in Jewish tradition creates a common misconception.<sup>32</sup> Many significant biblical examples of wealthy followers of God can be found throughout Scripture. However, the response of the people with financial means served as the important factor. Their relationship with God and the way in which they used their wealth determined their status in the eyes of God. For instance, Davids asserts that Abraham, Solomon, and Job illustrate the connection between wealth and the blessing of God (the “piety-prosperity equation”), but a wealthy person could only be considered as such in the eyes of God if he or she demonstrated righteousness and honor through charity.<sup>33</sup> Davids states, “Thus in Jewish tradition Abraham and Job were singled out as being wealthy persons who were righteous because they excelled in generosity.”<sup>34</sup> For example, Abraham’s possessions increased after he was called (Gen. 12:16).<sup>35</sup> Re-emphasizing the point, Pilgrim asserts:

There is a continuous tradition running throughout the Old Testament that regards possessions as a sign of God’s blessings. In this view, wealth and poverty are regarded as good gifts of God and the fact of possessing wealth, even great wealth, is interpreted as a sign of God’s favor. This is true already in

the patriarchal narratives of Genesis, which describe, often in great detail, the considerable wealth of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 13:2; 26:13; 30:43; 41:40). With their large flocks and families and numerous servants and slaves, the patriarchs bear the covenant promise of God without any hint of God's displeasure over their wealth. Along with this, goes an emphasis upon their generosity and hospitality to friends and foes alike.<sup>36</sup>

Many Christians falsely perceive the biblical text as stating that wealth and money are evil and that having possessions is wrong. However, one must not misunderstand the message of Luke or any other biblical writer. These biblical examples of righteous and devout followers of God who lived in the abundance of wealth reveal that one can enjoy the blessings of God if done in a correct manner. In support of this concept, Deuteronomy 15:4-5 states: "However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today." This Judaic understanding is important for the modern-day comprehension of how the Jewish people perceived wealth. According to Davids, during the time of Christ many people lived in extreme poverty, and confusion had taken over the Judaic understanding of how to deal with the large gap between the religious elite and the "people of the land" living in poverty.

Jesus needed to reinforce the correct Judaic understanding of how the wealthy should

handle themselves financially and the way in which the poor should view their own economic and religious state. While the Pharisees and wealthy classes often viewed the poor as religiously and spiritually poor, Jesus' sayings contrast the poor with the rich, instead of the greedy or wicked as in the Old Testament.<sup>37</sup> This perception reveals that economic issues were of great importance in His day.<sup>38</sup>

Luke's Gospel heavily focuses on the presence and condition of the poor, the way in which God viewed those living in poverty, Jesus' attitudes, actions, and teachings involving the poor, and His warnings regarding their abuse and neglect. Mel Shoemaker concludes that Luke's Gospel is primarily addressed to those who are actually far from poverty and categorized as wise, influential, and of noble birth, all of which are considered wealthy in most cases.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps Luke's intent is to proclaim to those of wealthy status the need to care for those who did not share their financial state. Throughout his article, the primary passages Davids refers to in Luke's Gospel that convey the idea of the "rich and poor," whether mentioned or implied, are: 4:18-21, 6:20 and 24, 12:16-21 and 33-34, 14:14 and 21, 16:9 and 19-31, and 16:19-3.<sup>40</sup> Bock also provides a list of texts in which the poor or rejected are mentioned, including Luke 1:46-55 and 21:1-4.<sup>41</sup>

### **Wealth and Poverty in Luke's Gospel**

#### God's Perception of the Poor

At the beginning of Luke's Gospel, Mary rejoices in God through song after receiving the announcement of her pregnancy with the Son of God. Record of her song, the Magnificat, is found in 1:46-55, and she specifically emphasizes the status of the humble and lowly. Mary praises God for choosing to use her as an instrument of

blessing in her lowly state (v. 48), exalting those of inferior status (v. 51-56), and filling the hungry with good things along with sending the rich away empty (v. 51-53).<sup>42</sup> In the first chapter of Luke, the reader is already given a clear indication through Mary's song that the poor are chosen of God and are promised His rewards.

Perhaps the passage of greatest significance in Luke's Gospel where the poor are specifically mentioned is in 4:18-21. In this particular passage, Jesus has just returned to His hometown of Nazareth after being in the wilderness for forty days during His temptation. He reads from the scroll of Isaiah and quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 which states, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus then tells those listening, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v.20). This statement is the reader's first clue that God gives the poor the priority of the gospel message. This same passage, also found in Matthew's Gospel, confirms that God's special interest in the poor stems from the Old Testament idea of God's care for the poor.<sup>43</sup> This specific passage is extremely significant because it provides the four major emphases of the programmatic text for Luke's writings: (1) the announcement of Christ's ministry as the fulfillment of God's salvation-time, (2) a statement giving the content of Jesus' ministry based on the Isaiah quotation, (3) the foreshadowing of Jesus' suffering and rejection, and (4) the foreshadowing of the gospel movement from Jew to Gentile.<sup>44</sup>

Pilgrim states that the phrase "good news to the poor" in this particular passage might be understood as introducing and directing the

following lines in which the concept of the "poor" categorizes the captives, blind, and oppressed.<sup>45</sup> As previously stated, the first-century concept of the poor may not necessarily be limited to those of low economic standards. Davids confirms that the poor referred to in this passage, however, are the "people of the land" (*am hā āres*) to whom He also sends His disciples in Matthew 10:6-7.<sup>46</sup> One scholar concludes that the poor in Luke's context are put in Old Testament terms as those of both social and religious humility, and that Jesus' programmatic proclamation confirms His fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy for the deliverance of the spiritually, physically, socio-politically, and psychologically oppressed.<sup>47</sup> Although this passage does not specifically address the economically poor, one can conclude that people burdened financially were of high priority in Jesus' message of freedom and deliverance.

#### Contrast between the Rich and the Poor

Luke 6:20 and 24 provides an excellent example of Jesus' contrast between the rich and the poor during the giving of "the Beatitudes." He first admonishes the poor by stating in verse 20, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God..." while specifically looking at His disciples. A few verses later (6:24), He contrasts this statement with His warning to the rich, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort..." Due to God's overarching love for all people, one cannot conclude that Christ despises the rich; however, one can see His displeasure with the oppression of those who base their status on riches and squander their wealth on personal gain.

Jesus expresses obvious concern for the salvation of the economically rich as well as the poor. However, in Luke, He seems to

have a special interest directed toward the marginalized and wants to make sure they are cared for. Frank Thielman concludes, “God’s saving purposes involve, to some extent, an economic leveling so that the disparity between rich and poor is not as great among God’s people as it is among those outside his people.”<sup>48</sup> These saving purposes can be accomplished through the giving of wealth to the poor as seen later in Luke’s Gospel.<sup>49</sup> Equality and the discouragement of favoritism toward the rich seem to be the key issues. Salvation through Christ is not dependent on the economic status of an individual. Giving to the poor and to the causes of Christ rather than living a life of greed will accomplish Christ’s purposes in significant ways.

Luke provides an excellent example of this concept in the “parable of the rich fool”:

And he told them this parable: The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not

rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21)

This parable clearly reveals Jesus’ assessment of greed. This “fool” had not given to the poor, which hindered him from becoming “rich towards God.”<sup>50</sup> He instead stored up for himself.<sup>51</sup> The parable is taught in relation to the earlier matter of dealing with possessions in verses 13-15 in the same chapter.<sup>52</sup> In verse 33, Jesus states, “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” This verse might confirm Luke’s particular emphasis on almsgiving, especially when seen in relation to the counterpart in Matthew 6:19-21.<sup>53</sup> By giving to the poor rather than hoarding one’s wealth, the believer can further the cause of the kingdom and become “rich toward God.”

Jesus, while at the home of a Pharisee, emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself (Luke 14). Jesus implores the host to invite the poor to dinner rather than the “rich neighbors” who are fully capable of repayment (vs. 12-14). Jesus states, “...and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Jesus clearly confirms that blessing the poor results in heavenly blessings. Pilgrim asserts that the inclusion of “rich neighbors” at the beginning of the parable perhaps alludes to certain actions directed at creating relations in order to gain selfish favors or advantages.<sup>54</sup> Although this behavior would be considered normal, Jesus “turns the norm upside down” by defining the normalcy of the Kingdom: inviting those who cannot repay, give no advantage, and would ultimately be a constant burden.<sup>55</sup> The reward of exhibiting this agape-love to the

poor results in the eschatological reward of salvation and doing the will of God.<sup>56</sup>

### Eschatological Implications in Jesus' Teachings Regarding the Poor

Luke 14 continues with a further admonition regarding this same concept with "the parable of the great banquet" in verses 15-24. Jesus tells the story of a man who threw a great feast but was turned down by many guests who made excuses as to why they could not come. The excuses all center on circumstances involving wealth: the purchase of a field, the purchase of an ox, and marriage.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the host ordered his servants to bring in the "poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (v. 21b). When these did not fill up the room, the owner called for all to come in, saying that not one of the men who were originally invited will have a taste of the banquet (14:24).

This parable again indicates a high concern for the poor and confirms the obedience exhibited by the marginalized. Luke seems to interpret this parable as confirming that the wealthy reject God's generous offer while the poor become grateful guests at the banquet, displaying the eschatological reversal of the poor and rich.<sup>58</sup> This parable signifies that wealth can impede the rich and prevent them from heavenly reward and entering into God's kingdom. This hindrance is created by selfish greed instead of unselfish, agape love that is essential to the gospel.<sup>59</sup> As Pilgrim concludes, "Thus the parable as a whole serves to warn the rich to accept God's invitation. And that means to invite the poor and maimed and blind and lame to their tables, lest God leave them out of the heavenly banquet."<sup>60</sup> Luke emphasizes the renouncement of one's possessions, again confirming that the concern of wealth and poverty is at the forefront of his priority:<sup>61</sup> "In the same way,

any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

In Luke 16:19-31, the author records another story that emphasizes the importance of taking care of the poor. In the story of "the rich man and Lazarus," the beggar, Lazarus, receives no help from the rich man after lying outside of his gate every day. When both die, the rich man finds eternal torment in hell while Lazarus resides in heaven at Abraham's side. The rich man attempts to beg for water from Lazarus, "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony'" (v. 25).

This story provides one of the greatest examples of Jesus' emphasis on giving to the poor and the difference one's generosity on earth makes in eternity. According to the biblical text, the rich man does not deserve the torment in hell based on what he did on earth, but rather on what he failed to do.<sup>62</sup> He does not show love to God and his neighbor, a commandment to all Jews as seen in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. The appearance of Abraham is of significance because the patriarch could stand as representation of the spiritual ties from which the rich man has severed himself by ignoring the needs of others.<sup>63</sup> The rich man is unable to receive any help as seen in Abraham's words: "And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us" (Luke 16:26). This clearly indicates that the way in which one deals with worldly finances significantly impacts the afterlife. The truths exhibited in the story of "the rich man and Lazarus" concerning neglect of the poor essentially

relate to the integrity with which one handles his or her finances.

A significant relationship exists between this story and the parable of “the unjust steward” found in Luke 16:1-15. In this story, the steward fails to manage his master’s funds with honesty. In the end, he finally attempts to use his entrusted wealth for the welfare of poor debtors by decreasing their debt.<sup>64</sup> In verse 9, Jesus states, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” Kim concludes, “According to 16:9 he would have been received into the eternal habitations by the help of his witnesses, that is, the recipients of his benevolence on earth.”<sup>65</sup> This concept contrasts with the latter parable of the rich ruler in 16:19-31, in which the rich ruler uses his wealth for the interest of selfish ends.<sup>66</sup> “If we apply 16:9 to this case, he is not received into the eternal habitations, because no friend would witness to his benevolence on earth, and he eventually falls into hell, as described in 16:23. In this sense, 16:9 can be regarded as a theme verse which plays an important role in unfolding the implication of both parables.”<sup>67</sup>

Luke’s Gospel emphasizes particular concern for the poor in the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Jesus welcomes Zacchaeus, a tax collector, despite his wayward lifestyle of manipulation and selfish greed. Zacchaeus shocks the crowd by standing up and proclaiming, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount” (v. 8). Jesus responds by stating, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (vv. 9-10). One could conclude that Jesus, in part,

associates salvation with the desire to give to the poor and aid others who are in need. Luke utilizes Zacchaeus as an example to be emulated by anyone who comes to experience the salvation of God and give generously to the poor.<sup>68</sup> If the “chief tax collector” (v. 1) willingly provided for the needy, surely the wealthy elite could learn to generously care for others.

While many possible examples regarding care for the poor exist in Luke’s writing, the previous stories stand as sufficient witnesses to establish Lukan concern for ministry to the marginalized. Luke obviously desired to emphasize care for the poor and downtrodden, especially from an economic standpoint. He records much of Jesus’ sayings regarding this thought process, and he carefully includes many instances that exemplify concern for the poor. Luke not only focuses on concern for the poor in the teachings of Christ in his Gospel, but he continues this theme in Acts as well. Throughout Acts, one can see concern for the poor exemplified in the Early Church and in the lifestyle of the apostles.

### **Church’s Historical Response in the Book of Acts**

#### **Historical Examples of Communal Benevolence Commended**

Because the book of Acts is often revered as an historical account rather than a theological treatise, one can conclude that Luke sought to exemplify the theological principles found in his Gospel with the circumstances and responses of the Early Church. As Stanley Horton notes, “What we find in Acts is the outworking of the Gospel as recorded by Luke,”<sup>69</sup> clearly demonstrating Luke’s message of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection throughout the Church’s first generation. The book of Acts does not present any clear exhortations

encouraging the rich to give alms to the poor, but passages exist in which the motif of almsgiving is clearly observed. Other instances are also recorded in which almsgiving and charity are performed by individuals and the Church.<sup>70</sup>

The first obvious instance in which Luke refers to giving to the poor occurs in Acts 2. At the end of the chapter, he describes the fellowship of the new believing Church—a familial type of community full of giving and sharing. In 2:44-45, Luke states, “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.” Horton concludes that this idea of Christian sharing and generosity was neither communism in the modern sense, nor communal living.<sup>71</sup> “It was just Christian sharing.”<sup>72</sup> These early Christians did not neglect the poor and needy, and benefactors looked for ways to accommodate those in need, including the selling of property.<sup>73</sup> This same idea is reaffirmed in Acts 4:32-37:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

In Acts 6:1, Luke indicates that the Grecian Jewish widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food; therefore, the apostles added more servers to their number so that they would be able to tend to all of their duties and responsibilities. This story confirms that taking care of the needy was of upmost priority in the minds of the apostles. Kim asserts that the passage in 6:1, along with that of 2:45 and 4:35, affirm a common fund of the Jerusalem community in Acts with the sole purpose of distributing money or food to the poor and widows.<sup>74</sup> As specifically confirmed in these three passages, the motive of charity is highly prevalent in the story of the Early Church.<sup>75</sup>

A communal understanding of benevolence is also exemplified in Acts 11:27-30 with the story of the Antioch Church. After a prophet from Jerusalem named Agabus prophesied that a severe famine would come over the Roman world (11:27-28), the disciples decided to aid those in need by sending gifts to those in Judea (11:29-30). Once again, Luke includes an account which reveals the importance of caring for those in need within the Early Church. Responding to the famine could be seen as a form of almsgiving in which benevolence is provided from an institution with wealth towards an institution in need.<sup>76</sup> This instance is later echoed in Galatians 2:8-10, which states:

For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we

should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Antioch became Paul's home base during his missionary journeys from which he gathered the Jerusalem collection.<sup>77</sup>

### Historical Examples of Individual Benevolence Commended

While Luke illustrates the idea of almsgiving and caring for the poor in communal fashion, he also includes some individual examples. For instance, Luke gives an account of Tabitha, a disciple “who was always doing good and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36). In the story, Tabitha died, and the other disciples rushed to Peter, asking him to come and pray for her (v. 38). Through the prayers of Peter, the Holy Spirit raised Tabitha from the dead (v. 40). One of the highly important points of this story, however, is the fact that the widows stood weeping at Tabitha's death showing Peter the robes and clothing that Tabitha had previously made them (v. 39). Kim concludes that Luke may have recorded this story in order to emphasize the significance of benevolence, “such that Tabitha got her life back because of her good works and alms she had contributed towards the poor.”<sup>78</sup>

Another significant example of an individual display of generosity and care for the poor is Cornelius, as seen in Acts 10:2. Cornelius, a “God-fearing” man “gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.” According to Kim, this verse is significant for several reasons. When Cornelius had a vision from God, the angel told him that his prayers and gifts to the poor had “come up

as a memorial offering before God” (v. 4). Later on in the account of Cornelius' conversion, the reader is told that Cornelius was “respected by all the Jewish people” (v. 22). These details reveal that Cornelius earned recognition by God and his neighbors for his faith, as well as his benevolent acts towards those in need.<sup>79</sup> This passage confirms God's acknowledgment of Cornelius' prayers and generosity to the poor resulting in the Jerusalem church's approval of evangelism to the Gentiles.<sup>80</sup>

The reader can clearly identify Luke's emphasis on caring for the poor and needy when he includes Jesus' command quoted by Paul in Acts 20:35: “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Kim asserts that the context of the word “weak” in this passage implies those lacking wealth due to the use of the Greek word οἱ ἀσθενοῦντες.<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, this particular saying of Jesus is not found in any of the four Gospels.<sup>82</sup> These words of Christ were of such importance that Paul spoke them in his final testimony. As Pilgrim states, “We find this word from the Lord, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive,’ to be a most fitting conclusion to Luke's presentation of the theme of wealth and poverty and the proclamation of good news to the poor.”<sup>83</sup> Luke obviously encouraged care for the poor as a significant part of the Christian lifestyle, revealed in the words of Jesus himself. A final example of concern for the poor in Acts is the statement in 24:17 in which Paul reveals that he came to Jerusalem “to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.”

While Luke's Gospel certainly confirms that believers should aid the physically and economically weak and welcome them into

the community, “this actually happens in Luke’s second volume.”<sup>84</sup> Acts of the Apostles provides testimony to the ideas proclaimed in Luke’s Gospel and exemplifies the true nature of Christian benevolence. The Early Church in Acts maintained a definite ministry to the poor and was concerned for the overall well-being of those in need. In fact, they often sacrificed their own financial status in order to aid others.

### **Church’s Priority of Benevolence from Acts to Modern Times**

Throughout history, the Church has responded to the poor and economically deprived in various ways. Some of the Early Church Fathers followed the example of the Early Church in Acts through their economic assistance and concern for the poor. For instance, John Chrysostom considered almsgiving an act of worship and an expression of love commanded by Christ.<sup>85</sup>

In the Protestant tradition, shifts have occurred relating to care for the poor. While the Protestant Church has based its theological principles on justification by faith, the relationship between caring for those in need and the Christians’ spiritual well-being has created conflict at times, specifically when attempting to discern between those genuinely in need of help and others who seek to take advantage of an organization based on love and care.<sup>86</sup> The Christian lifestyle in its walk of faith calls for care toward others and examines the affect this has on one’s personal spirituality. For example, Matthew 25:40 states, “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’” This concept became difficult to maintain and understand after the Middle Ages when

urbanization in Europe brought about a large number of genuinely impoverished people due to economic conditions as well as those who made their way into a system of voluntary poverty under false pretenses.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, questions arose regarding the distinction between what Casey calls the “deserving” and “undeserving poor.”<sup>88</sup> This fact, along with Martin Luther’s concern for a “piety of achievement” created a debate when discussing the length at which the Church should concern itself with the issue of poverty.<sup>89</sup>

Reformation theologians, however, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, sought to affirm good works as the fruit of justification by grace through faith in Christ, not as a cause of salvation.<sup>90</sup> Calvin believed that the Church should properly respond to poverty by assuming responsibility for its alleviation.<sup>91</sup> Calvin saw an indifference to the poor on the part of the rich as a highly dangerous error because of a unity between aiding the poor and its spiritual connection.<sup>92</sup> Matthew 25:44-46 concludes:

They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

These verses adequately support Calvin’s concern for the poor and the spiritual connotations this has on an individual’s Christian life. Calvin also saw spiritual connection between the poor and the wealthy.<sup>93</sup> Protestant Pietism in the

seventeenth century brought about a renewed emphasis on “love for the poor,” as well as the “Evangelical Revival” and the rise of Methodism through John Wesley in the eighteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Wesley supported an egalitarian understanding of the gospel message that advocated weekly visitation to the poor, as well as personal relationship and hospitality toward those living in poverty.<sup>95</sup> This type of care for the poor was “an ‘absolute duty’ of the Christian, the neglect of which could endanger one’s ‘everlasting salvation.’”<sup>96</sup>

One might observe that the Church’s concern for the poor became a dividing issue primarily in the nineteenth century. The idea of “pew renting” as a means of supporting churches in maintenance and building led to embarrassment of the poor who had to sit in the “free pews” and disadvantaged section.<sup>97</sup> “Free churches,” opposing these practices and attempting to create a sense of equality in their congregations, opened the doors for the poor to worship with the wealthy.<sup>98</sup>

In the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement tended to minister to the poor as a result of its heavy emphasis on responding to the needs of the “whole person,” whether physical, spiritual, emotional, or material.<sup>99</sup> However, the debates between fundamentalist and liberal churches regarding salvation and the “social gospel” created a significant amount of conflict.<sup>100</sup> While liberals often concerned themselves with the social needs of humanity, many fundamentalists heavily focused on the spreading of the gospel message to the neglect of reaching out to meet other needs of humanity.

The rise of liberation theology created a significant amount of debate and conflict regarding poverty and the oppressed. Liberation theology, primarily expressed

within the Roman Catholic Church, emphasizes the Christian mission to the poor and oppressed through political activism.<sup>101</sup> Sin and injustice is seen in capitalism and class war.<sup>102</sup> This type of theology is often found in Latin America and among the Jesuits, and is a form of Christian socialism that arose after the Second Vatican Council.<sup>103</sup> Liberation theology is extremely controversial due to its justification for revolutionary action.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the conflict over liberation theology, the Catholic Church has often exhibited a strong mission to the poor throughout its history. Such groups as the Jesuits set out to aid the poor and give to the needy. Catholicism stresses the need for the church to give to the poor through the building of schools and hospitals for the under-privileged and through other forms of benevolence ministry.<sup>105</sup> The option for the poor has often become part of the Catholic social teaching, especially in the experience of the Latin American Church.<sup>106</sup> In their 1987 statement entitled *Economic Justice for All*, the Catholic bishops in the United States articulated five primary principles regarding wealth and poverty:

1. Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person.
2. Human dignity can be realized and protected only in community.
3. All people have a right to participate in the economic life of society.
4. All members of society have a special obligation to the poor and vulnerable.

5. Human rights are the minimum condition for life in community.<sup>107</sup>

The rise of the “prosperity gospel” in present-day Pentecostalism has also sparked debate in the Christian Church regarding concern for the poor. Because this type of theology primarily regards oppression as the result of a lack of faith or sin in one’s personal life, no easy response to the issue of widespread poverty exists. If prosperity is understood as an overarching promise to all Christians with God’s blessing viewed as the result of faith, then one assumes that those suffering in extreme conditions of poverty do not have faith or are under a type of judgment.<sup>108</sup> Clifton states, “At the very least, faith preachers are forced to ignore the situation of the poor in the presentation of their message, since the fact of extreme and widespread poverty completely undermines their message.”<sup>109</sup> While many people in the Pentecostal tradition do not adhere to this type of theology, such extreme views often cause people in the Pentecostal tradition who hold to the “prosperity gospel” to practically ignore the needy and economically deprived because of confusion regarding how to respond.

While the Christian Church has responded in various ways regarding concern for the poor, many denominations remain confused regarding this issue. Luke’s writings, however, seem to indicate the answer in a clear and definite manner—offering significant insight regarding the Church’s responsibility to the economically oppressed. Through Luke’s theology, one can gain an overall understanding of Christ’s message to the poor and oppressed, as well as the obligations of the Church and the individual believer when responding to those in need of financial assistance and benevolence ministry.

## **A Challenge to the Christian Church**

After thoroughly analyzing the Lukan writings in both his Gospel and Acts, one must determine that Luke emphasizes the idea of “good news to the poor.” Jesus’ ministry, announced with the utilization of the Isaiah quotation in Luke 4:16-21, is personified in the Gospel in social, economic, moral, and spiritual dimensions.<sup>110</sup> The embodiment of such is found throughout Jesus’ redemptive ministry to the poor and hungry, sick and afflicted, oppressed and captivated, and outcasts and sinners.<sup>111</sup> As Pilgrim asserts, “For Luke’s gospel, these include hard social realities, as well as deep spiritual needs.”<sup>112</sup> The reader is provided with obvious confirmation of Jesus’ anointing to bring good news to the poor in Luke 4, and this concept is affirmed repeatedly in parables, stories, and explanations throughout the biblical text in Luke’s Gospel. While Christ’s “good news to the poor” certainly refers to the spiritual connotation of the salvation of their souls, for Luke, this “good news” also includes provision and care for physical and material needs as well.

As previously discussed, determining who might be placed under the actual category of “poor” is questionable. The concept of the poor in Lukan writing does not necessarily refer simply, or even primarily, to the economically deprived, but to those who lived in an inferior status within Jewish society. This would include anyone outside of the religious elite or wealthy land-owners, as well as those who lived in constant oppression through illness or some other condition of lower status. However, in Luke’s writings, Jesus is often shown contrasting the rich with the poor in a large variety of examples through parables and other statements. Luke not only focuses on the poor as inheritors of the gospel message,

but also stresses Jesus' message of how the poor should be cared for and records how this was exemplified in the stories of Acts. From a Lukan perspective, this information alludes to the idea that Jesus' understanding of the poor and their oppression was largely through economic standards. Previously mentioned texts, such as "The Rich Fool," "The Rich Man and Lazarus," "The Dishonest Steward," the story of Zacchaeus, and the text regarding sharing within the primitive community confirm that "the poor for Luke are the socially and economically poor."<sup>113</sup> Luke does not allow a mere spiritualization of the concept of the poor but requires a literal understanding; therefore, implications must exist<sup>114</sup>

Pilgrim asserts that Luke's message to the poor results in three major themes in his writings regarding wealth and poverty: (1) the call to total surrender of one's possessions, (2) warnings about the dangers of wealth, and (3) instructions and exhortations on the right use of one's wealth.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, since a Lukan theology to the poor is clearly confirmed, the Christian Church must understand its responsibility regarding such theology.

### Surrendering Possessions

First, one must ask how the Church should respond to the idea of "surrendering one's possessions." As previously stated, Judaic understanding of wealth did not perceive all possessions as evil. One cannot necessarily conclude that Jesus was against all things pertaining to wealth considering the promises of God throughout the biblical text regarding the blessings of God and the material results as illustrated by many Old Testament patriarchs. Numerous examples exist throughout Scripture in which heroes of God were those of high and wealthy status. In fact, the Gospels, in general, identify possessions as both necessary and

good gifts of God, a view seen in the Lukan portrait of Jesus as well.<sup>116</sup>

Jesus lived a life of itinerant poverty but did not advocate or live a completely ascetic lifestyle, as revealed in His participation in banquets and fellowship with those of means.<sup>117</sup> Many have suggested that the answer to this problem in Lukan theology rests in the biblical context. For instance, Pilgrim suggests that the call to complete poverty and abandonment is temporarily limited to Christ's earthly disciples in His time.<sup>118</sup> This idea might be confirmed by Jesus' statement in Luke 22:35-38:

Then Jesus asked them, 'When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?' 'Nothing,' they answered. He said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.' The disciples said, 'See, Lord, here are two swords.' 'That is enough,' he replied.

This particular passage might suggest that a new form of discipleship is called for after the resurrection/ascension.<sup>119</sup> While one must be careful in separating the biblical world from the present world, the thesis supports the idea that Luke's portrayal of the first followers as those who abandoned all they had for the sake of Christ was intended as a message for the wealthier Christians of that day. Those of greater means were

challenged with the need to struggle more deeply with their own personal use of possessions as Christ's followers.<sup>120</sup> Luke's understanding of this concept seems to encourage an introspective look on the sacrifice made for the sake of Christ and how this affects one's own possessions.

This message is certainly applicable to the Christian Church today. While some rare cases exist in which one is asked to give up every possession, in most cases, it is uncommon when God asks Christians to sell everything they own. However, the Lukan text does force the believer to examine his or her own emphasis on possessions and what each has truly sacrificed for the sake of Christ and His message. The Church must acknowledge this perspective as essential to its foundation and existence.

### Dangers of Wealth

Luke spends a vast amount of time portraying the dangers of wealth through the use of parables and other explanations. He obviously recognizes the corruption resulting from the greed of those who look to their wealth as a source of identity and pride. Jesus recognizes the significant danger of wealth, particularly in the example of the religious elite. Many of Jesus' sayings personify the love of wealth as Mammon, meaning "possessions," and equate such love as idolatry, as seen by the ancient Hebrew prophets as the means of drawing people away from dependence and commitment to God.<sup>121</sup> In fact, in the story of the Rich Ruler (Luke 18:24-30), the man becomes disheartened over the idea of giving up his wealth. The result: "Jesus looked at him and said, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'" (vv. 24-25).

This idea is difficult to combat, especially when such a large number of these types of texts exist in Luke's writings. Luke consistently encourages the idea that wealth is a significant roadblock in the road to the kingdom, specifically in doing the will of God.<sup>122</sup> "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God" sounds the theme, which is then relentlessly carried through. Only those who have left their goods behind are offered the promise of the kingdom."<sup>123</sup>

The ideas of wealth and discipleship appear conflicting in Luke's writing.<sup>124</sup> While Luke obviously desires to reveal the danger of wealth, the believer can conclude that those in possession of material means must maintain a constant awareness regarding their status. As previously discussed, one cannot necessarily conclude that wealth equates with sin or God's blessings. However, Christians must recognize the ease with which material temptations might overtake a person who finds dependence on his or her own ability regarding finances.

Luke's consistent reminders regarding the danger of wealth obviously reveal his emphasis on the importance of guarding one's heart from the spirit of Mammon. While wealth is not necessarily wrong, believers must constantly recognize God as the provider behind every possession. Members of the body of Christ should always regard themselves as under the sovereignty of God and His purposes when approaching financial obligations. This will affect the way the Christian lives and the way he or she uses money, especially regarding those in need.

### Instruction in Use of Wealth

Finally, Luke heavily focuses on Jesus' exhortations regarding the right use of possessions. In Luke

3:11-14, John the Baptist commands the crowds: John answered, 'The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.' Tax collectors also came to be baptized. 'Teacher,' they asked, 'what should we do?' 'Don't collect any more than you are required to,' he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?' He replied, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.'

John's first answer to the crowds seems to confirm the principle of almsgiving, though the second and third answers relate to individual financial circumstances.<sup>125</sup> In this instance, Luke is concerned with including a clear statement of how one should treat those of lesser means regarding both aiding those in need and in handling one's own finances in a way that does not abuse others. As Pilgrim states, throughout Luke's writings, he "attempts to define and encourage a *discipleship* of one's material gifts in the service of love."<sup>126</sup>

Stories such as the ones previously discussed in Luke 14, 16, and 19 and evidence of the Church following these examples in Acts exist as specific confirmations regarding the obligation of providing for people in need. Luke reveals that possessions are blessings from God and good gifts when used correctly.<sup>127</sup> Proper use of possessions occurs in the service of Christian discipleship and "agape-love" when "caring for the poor, sharing with those in need, and doing good even to one's enemies receive the highest priority."<sup>128</sup> Basically, Luke challenges believers to change their selfish ways by sharing their wealth with others.<sup>129</sup>

## Conclusion

Analysis of the Lukan text in both his Gospel and in Acts reveals a clear message regarding the poor. Not only does the author confirm that Jesus brings the good news of the gospel message specifically to the poor in order to save their souls, but He also comes to aid them in economic and social ways. Luke also emphasizes the responsibility of believers to handle their own wealth correctly, while warning them of the vast dangers associated with riches. He consistently encourages giving to those in need. The Church has a heavy responsibility to aid those living in poverty, as well as making sure that its own finances are being handled wisely. While economic crisis might instill a sense of fear, discouraging one from Christian financial duties, recognizing the importance of Jesus' emphasis on the poor and what it means for the modern-day Christian remains essential.

Applying the Lukan concepts to the present day, one must conclude that the Church has an obligation to recognize the issue of poverty and address it in an effective way through outreach. A correct understanding of Lukan theology indicates that the Christian community is not only responsible for the salvation of souls, but also for participating in the social and economic aspects of those in need. While the Church must obviously beware of those who might try to take advantage of this concept, it should not neglect the poor as burdens or outcasts.

Handling one's own finances, in light of a Lukan understanding, involves recognizing God as the provider of all possessions; it also involves recognizing the correct utilization of these possessions and caring for those in need. As the National Council of the Churches of Christ states, "Thus, the

expression of our love for God is inextricably linked to the quality of our relation with others. Care for the neighbor is a means by which we testify to the power of the resurrection of the Lord among us.”<sup>130</sup>

According to Luke’s teaching, the believing community’s responsibility rests in its ability to handle finances in a manner pleasing to God while exhibiting care for others.

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<sup>1</sup>S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Walter E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor: Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 85.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Kyoung-Jin Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 13.

<sup>6</sup>Karl Marx, *On Religion* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 83, quoted in Shane Clifton, "Why has the Church Ignored the Poor?" Pentecostal Discussions, [http://scc.typepad.com/scc\\_faculty\\_pentecostal\\_d/2006/09/why\\_has\\_church\\_.html](http://scc.typepad.com/scc_faculty_pentecostal_d/2006/09/why_has_church_.html) (accessed January 22, 2009), 1.

<sup>7</sup>Clifton, 1.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Allen C. Myers et. al, "Poor," in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 341.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Myers, 341.

<sup>15</sup>Lev. 5:7; 12:8; 14:21.

<sup>16</sup>Myers, 341.

<sup>17</sup>Deut. 15:4-5.

<sup>18</sup>Myers, 341.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Peter H. Davids, "Rich and Poor," in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL/Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 701.

<sup>22</sup>Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 17.

<sup>23</sup>Davids, 702.

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<sup>24</sup>C. McCown, "Palestine, Geography of," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 3:637, cited in Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 101.

<sup>25</sup>Dauids, 702.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 703.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>H. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 79, cited in Cassidy, 110.

<sup>32</sup>Dauids, 703.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Luke T. Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: Mandate and Symbol of Faith* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981), 60.

<sup>36</sup>Pilgrim, 19.

<sup>37</sup>Dauids, 703.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Mel Shoemaker, "Good News to the Poor in Luke's Gospel," Wesley Center Online, [http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan\\_theology/theojrnl/26-30/27-1-08.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/26-30/27-1-08.htm) (accessed January 15, 2009), 4.

<sup>40</sup>Dauids, 701- 709.

<sup>41</sup>Darrell L. Bock, "Luke, Gospel of," in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

<sup>42</sup>Pilgrim, 79.

<sup>43</sup>Dauids, 706.

<sup>44</sup>Pilgrim, 64-65.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Dauids, 706.

<sup>47</sup>P. Hertig, "The Jubilee Mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: Reversals of Fortunes," in *Missiology: An International Review* XXVI, No. 2 (April 1998) quoted in Steve Wickham, "Jesus' Focus on the Poor and

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<sup>48</sup>Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 142.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Dauids, 705.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Kim, 136.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Pilgrim, 140.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 140.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Kim, 189.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 190.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Shoemaker, 6.

<sup>69</sup>Stanley Horton, *The Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 11 and 15.

<sup>70</sup>Kim, 218.

<sup>71</sup>Horton, 49.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

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<sup>73</sup>I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson, *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998), 487.

<sup>74</sup>Kim, 246.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>77</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41 of *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publishers, 1990), 70.

<sup>78</sup>Kim, 219-220.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>82</sup>Horton, 242.

<sup>83</sup>Pilgrim, 159.

<sup>84</sup>Thielman, 137.

<sup>85</sup>Shaun Casey et al., "Love for the Poor: God's Love for the Poor and the Church's Witness to It," National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America 2005, <http://www.nccusa.org/pdfs/LFP-final.pdf> (accessed January 22, 2009), 7.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>87</sup>Lee Palmer Wandel, "Social Welfare," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hildebrand (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 77-83, cited in Casey, 8.

<sup>88</sup>Casey, 8.

<sup>89</sup>Carter Lindberg, "The Liturgy After the Liturgy: Welfare in the Early Reformation," in Emily Albu Hanawalt and Carter Lindberg, *Through the Eye of a Needle, Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare* (Kirksville, MO: The Thomas Jefferson UP at Northeast Missouri State University, 1994,) 177ff, cited in Casey, 8.

<sup>90</sup>Casey, 8.

<sup>91</sup>John Calvin, quoted by C. F. Dummerth, "The Holy Spirit, Calvin and the Poor," in *Asia Journal of Theology* 8.2 (1994): 408-409, cited in Casey, 9.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup>Casey, 10-11.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>96</sup>John Wesley, "On Visiting the Sick," Sermon 98. Quoted in Casey, 11.

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<sup>97</sup>Casey, 11.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>100</sup>Clifton, 1.

<sup>101</sup>“What is Liberation Theology?” Got Questions Ministries, <http://www.gotquestions.org/liberation-theology.html> (accessed April 1, 2009), 1.

<sup>102</sup>Ron Rhodes, “Christian Revolution in Latin America: The Changing Faces of Liberation Theology,” Part 1, Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries, <http://home.earthlink.net/~ronrhodes/Liberation.html> (accessed April 1, 2009), 1.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Daniel Hartnett, “Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutiérrez,” America: The National Catholic Weekly, entry posted February 3, 2003, [http://www.americanmagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=2755](http://www.americanmagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2755) (accessed January 22, 2009), 1.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Casey, 19.

<sup>108</sup>Clifton, 2.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Pilgrim, 83.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid. 85.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid, 124.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>121</sup>Davids, 705.

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<sup>122</sup>Pilgrim, 124.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid. 122.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>Kim, 170.

<sup>126</sup>Pilgrim, 123.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Casey, 26.