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**POVERTY AND WEALTH IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE:
A Model and Challenge for the Conventual Franciscan Friars
in Kenya Today.**

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology

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STUDENTS DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology. It has never been submitted to any College or University for academic credit. I also declare that all sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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This Long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

Special dedication to my parents, Boniface Kabata and Veronica Muthoni who I love for being my first teachers in Christian faith and my models in their love and care for the poor. I also dedicate this work to my brothers and sisters, confreres and all my friends who have accompanied me in my Christian Journey.



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I express my gratitude to the Almighty God for granting me the gift of Faith and all the other graces which accompanies me all through my Christian life. I express my gratitude to him for the gift of life, care and protection.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| AB | Anchor Bible |
| <i>ABD</i> | <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> |
| al | <i>Alii</i> —other persons |
| Cf. | Confer, Compare |
| Deut | Deuteronomy |
| ed | Edited by |
| e.g | <i>exempli gratia</i> ; for example |
| Exod | Exodus |
| Gen | Genesis |
| Isa | Isaiah |
| Jer | Jeremiah |
| Lev | Leviticus |
| Matt | Matthew |
| N/b | Nota bene, (Note well) |
| NJBC | Brown, R.E. – Fitzmyer, J. A. – Murphy R.E., ed. (1990) <i>New Jerome Biblical Commentary</i> , New Jersey |
| NT | NOVUM Testamentum |
| NTMes | New Testament Message |
| Pg | Page |
| Ps | Psalms |
| OFMConv | Order of Friars Minor Conventual |
| OFM Capuchin | Order of Friars Minor Capuchin |
| OFM | Order of Friars Minor |
| SacP | Sacra Pagina |
| Sir | Sirach |
| St | Saint |
| RSV | Revised Standard Version |
| Zeph | Zephaniah |

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

There has been a lot of striving among the Christians to comprehend the real meaning and value of poverty and wealth. Conventual Franciscans Friars and other consecrated men and women are also struggling to understand the meaning and value of poverty in their lives. We realize that on the one hand, there are several people in our societies who suffer from poverty¹ while on the other hand there are rich people who are able to sustain themselves and even have more than they need. In the same category of the rich there are consecrated men and women who have professed publicly the vow of poverty as one of the three evangelical counsels. Some of these religious men and women place a lot of value on the vow of poverty although they have most of their basic needs and wants catered for.

This research is aimed at helping us realize the meaning and value of poverty and wealth in the context of the paradox that we have cited above. Our main responsibility shall be seeking to comprehend the value of poverty and wealth under the guidance of the Gospel of Luke and the Franciscan tradition.

¹ We are familiar of people living in deplorable and unimaginable situations. There are several people living in the poorest parts of Kenya. Some lives in the semi arid parts and others in places like *Kibera*, *Mukuru kwa Njenga* and *Korogocho* Slums. These three slums are among the biggest slums in the City of Nairobi in Kenya.

Method, Structure and Content of My Study

This essay is divided into three main chapters. In the first chapter we shall give a background of poverty and wealth in the Old Testament. We shall discuss different lines of thought about poverty and wealth and observe how the people of Israel viewed poverty and wealth. We will also explore the Exodus story, which is portrayed as a prototype of God's concern for the poor and then analyze the provision of the law for the poor. We shall wind up the first chapter by evaluating the general understanding of poverty among the prophets.

The second chapter will be the main basis for this study. In this chapter we shall discuss poverty and wealth in the Gospel of Luke. We shall commence by presenting the social and economic status of Jesus and his disciples from the infancy narratives. Then we shall discuss his teaching by analyzing various aspects such as his mission statement (Luke 4:18-19) and the sermon on the plain found in Luke 6:20-49. Finally we shall analyze Jesus' attitude towards poverty and wealth and his instructions concerning the dangers of wealth and the right use of possession.

With a concrete background of poverty and wealth derived from the Old Testament and an elaborate meaning of poverty and wealth resulting from the Gospel of Luke, we shall be in a position to apply our knowledge to the Conventual Franciscan Friars in chapter three. We shall briefly explain the general meaning of Franciscan poverty and demonstrate how the teaching of Jesus on poverty and wealth is an actual model for the Conventual Franciscans in Kenya and at the same time a genuine challenge for them.

Chapter I

The Background of Poverty and Wealth in the Old Testament

1.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is essentially to lay a background for the theme of poverty and wealth in the Old Testament. We shall commence the chapter by taking into account the different lines of thought about poverty and wealth in the Old Testament.² We shall then discuss the Exodus story. We shall see that the Exodus story is portrayed as an archetype or a prototype of Gods concern for the poor. We shall observe how God delivered the Israelites from the land of slavery to a land where they would be free. In doing this he dealt with the slavery which was the source of poverty among Israelites and not just with the symptoms of poverty. We shall also reflect on the provisions of the Mosaic Law for the poor. We shall do this by discussing the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year. Then we shall discuss the meaning of the poor among the prophets and the solutions presented by the prophets.

The Old Testament provides a vital background to any person making any serious study of whichever topic in the New Testament. The Old Testament is therefore an indispensable part of the Bible that has an everlasting value. This value is not only associated with the prophecies that the Old Testament made about the coming of Christ

² There are different lines of thought about poverty and wealth in the Old Testament. Poverty is sometimes viewed as a scandal while wealth is seen as a sign of God's blessing to an individual. Later a spiritual conception of poverty was adopted.

but because the New Testament is itself viewed as a tree that is nurtured from the roots of the Old Testament.³

It is therefore important for us to explore the Old Testament so that we can be acquainted with the background that Jesus had in his ministry. In this chapter we shall recognize that the theme of Poverty and wealth have many references in the Old Testament such that Gelin points out that, “No other ancient literature contains such detailed descriptions, nor so considerable a judgment. Poverty was obviously something that shocked thoughtful Israelites.”⁴

1.1. Different Lines of Thought about Poverty and Wealth in the Old Testament⁵

1.1.1 Poverty as a Scandal

It is apparent from an examination of the Old Testament that poverty was in most cases viewed as a scandal. It was a scandal that was so lamentable and unfortunate to have existed among the chosen sons of Israel.⁶ The Israelites could not entertain the thought that God could have willed poverty among his chosen ones.⁷

The notion of poverty as a scandal finds its background in the Mosaic religion. We know that God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians and fashioned out of them a nation. They lived in solidarity sharing what they had in common including their joys and frustrations. God’s gifts were not designed to individuals but were supposed to

³ Cf. C. OWZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 33.

⁴ A. GELIN, *The Poor of Yahweh*, 17. The author notes that these descriptions of poverty vary a lot because they were raised in different situations in the history of Israel.

⁵ Although there are many references to poverty and wealth in the books of the Old Testament we shall find that there are a lot of discrepancies in these references.

⁶ Cf. A. GELIN; *The Poor of Yahweh*, 17.

⁷ There are several evangelical Churches today preaching something close to this line of thought. They have adopted what we call in modern terms, ‘the Gospel of Prosperity.’

be communal.⁸ The Israelites had a special favor because God chose them and made them his own possession, a privileged kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Cf. Exod 19: 5- 6).⁹ Their call to be a holy nation meant that they were to act in a manner different from the other Nations. Their form of government was not supposed to be a democracy as we know it today or aristocratic but a theocratic government.¹⁰

However, this collective way of life did not go a long way. They were aware of this great privilege but they had to struggle against the temptation to become like the other nations. When they settled in the land of Canaan they adopted an agricultural way of life with its principles. At the beginning they lived a semi-nomadic style of life in the deserts of Kadesh and Sinai. When they adopted the agricultural ideals there emerged competition for large land holdings as each person tried to maximize his production.¹¹ This competitive way of life reached its peak at the time of the Israel's Monarchy when the economy favored the town dwellers. The farmers became dependent on townsmen who exploited them in many ways.¹²

Nonetheless, they remembered the poor on the Sabbath and the Jubilee year when the products of the soil were made available to all. They also freed the Hebrew slaves. This is why we find in Exodus such lessons as, "but the seventh year you shall

⁸ Cf. A. GELIN; *The Poor of Yahweh*, 18.

⁹ Unless indicate otherwise the Biblical quotations in this work are quoted from the Revised Standard Version (1952).

¹⁰ Cf. C. GARETH., *The Old Testament Explained*, 88.

¹¹ Cf. A. GELIN; *The Poor of Yahweh*, 18.

¹² The prophetic warnings testify to this exploitation. The prophet Amos has many warnings for the rich exploiters of the poor (Cf. Amos 2:7, 4:1, 5:11, 8:4).

let it (i.e. the land) rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild beasts may eat” (Exod 23:11).¹³

1.1.2. Wealth as a Sign of God’s Blessing

Another tradition in the Scriptures attests that wealth was viewed as a sign of God’s blessing. The people who found favor in the eyes of God in the Scriptures are characterized by enormous wealth. In the book of Genesis we know of great men like Abraham of whom we read; “Now Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Gen 13:2). The same applies to Isaac, “And Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him, and the man became rich and gained more and more until he became very wealthy” (Gen 26:12-13).¹⁴

Wealth was a clear sign of God’s care for an individual. Jacob and his son Joseph were friends of God and they had a lot of wealth too. The Lord blessed Jacob with large flocks, maidservants and menservants, and camels and asses. (Cf. Gen 30:43).¹⁵ This belief is also found in the wisdom literature where although wealth is criticized, it is also portrayed as a clear indication of God’s blessing. For example, in the book of Sirach we realize that the immense wealth of Solomon was accredited to God (Cf. Sir 47; 13ff). In the book of Job, we encounter a faithful person who suffers

¹³ This verse is also an indication that poverty already existed in Israel. This is a fact that shows that the Israelites did not keep the ideal that there were to be no poor among them (Cf. Deut 15:4, Lev 25:10ff).

¹⁴ Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 19.

¹⁵ Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 19.

loss of all his property. After enduring all the suffering his wealth is finally restored in double portion (Cf. Job 42:10).¹⁶

In the New Testament we have a good example of the struggle of Jesus with the Pharisees who strongly believed that wealth was a sign of Gods blessings. Luke 16: 14 refer to these Pharisees as lovers of money, “Ἦκουον δὲ ταῦτα πάντα οἱ Φαρισαῖοι φιλάργυροι ὑπάρχοντες καὶ ἐξεμυκτήριζον αὐτόν” The word Used in this Greek text is, φιλάργυροι which means lovers of money.¹⁷ The Pharisees had by the time of Jesus constructed a whole theology that placed God and wealth side by side.¹⁸

1.1.3. The Spiritual Conception of Poverty- The Anawim

We shall see that God delivered the Israelites from an oppressive regime in Egypt and made out of them a Nation. He willed that the Israelites would be his own possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Cf. Exod 19:4-6). The will of God was clear in the legislation that there were to be no poor in Israel (Cf. Deut 15:4).

However, we recognize that the understanding of *anawim* or the poor of Yahweh developed from the fact that they were unable to live the ideal of a just society highlighted above. They could not live up to the expectations that God had for them

¹⁶ The restoration of Jobs property was accredited to God. “And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.” (Job 42:10). Cf. D. BERGANT., *Job, Ecclesiastes*, 212.

¹⁷ Cf. L. T JOHNSON., *The Gospel of Luke*, 249. This Greek text and all other Greek texts cited in this essay are from ALAND, K. al., ed., *The Greek New Testament. Dictionary*, 3rd Corrected ED., Stuttgart United Bible Societies 1966, 1983.

¹⁸ This theology had its roots in Deuteronomy 28 where it is clearly indicated that Israel had to either obey God and be blessed or disobey and be cursed. With this theory riches and prosperity remained a clear sign of God’s special favor upon a person.

namely, a Holy Nation (Cf. Exod 19:4), his first fruits (Cf. Jer 2:3), his first born (Cf. Exod 4:22).¹⁹

The emergence of prophets in Israel history was a clear sign of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. After the eighth century sin thrived in Israel and the rich oppressed and did a lot of injustice towards the poor. The prophets Amos, Isaiah and Zephaniah rebuked this state of injustice as we shall see in detail later in this chapter. It reached a point that Jeremiah doubted whether conversion was possible (Jer 13: 23).²⁰

In this state of sin a genuine idea of punishment thrived but a little hope was beginning to emerge. There was among the prophets an idea of a small group of humble and faithful people. These people would practice justice and would renew their covenant with Yahweh. This was how the word 'remnant' appeared. The remnant of Israel was a small group of faithful people who would be saved by God. This phrase first appeared in the prophet Zephaniah²¹ whereby all the promises, which were destined, to the whole of Israel were now destined to the remnant. That is, the *anawim*. Prophet Zephaniah speaks of the *anawim* as he foretells of a complete verdict at which only small group of humble people will be saved.²² He declares, "seek the LORD, all you humble of the land who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the wrath of the LORD" (Cf. Zeph 2:3).

¹⁹ Cf. A. GELIN, *The Poor of Yahweh*, 32.

²⁰ Cf. A. GELIN, *The Poor of Yahweh*, 33. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil?"

²¹ Prophet Zephaniah also foretells in chapter 3:13 of a universal Judgment whereby only a very small group of humble people will be saved. Cf. C. Gareth., *The Old Testament Explained*, 760.

²² Cf. A. GELIN, *The Poor of Yahweh*, 33.

1.2. The Story of Exodus; a Prototype of God's Concern for the Poor

God delivered the Israelites from Egypt where they were marginalized and powerless and hence exposed to poverty. Marginalization of certain groups of people is still the main cause of poverty in the world today. The Exodus story gives us an excellent example of God's concern for the poor. This story shows us the model that God decided to use in order to deliver the Hebrews from a very desperate situation. In the book of Exodus the Israelites praise God who is a redeemer and not just a historical episode. Exodus 1: 8-14 narrates the commencement of the planned oppression, which was caused by an emergence of a new king who did not know Joseph.²³ This new king using his human reasoning perceived the Israelites as a threat to the political stability of his nation. Boadt highlights the fact that this deliverance was all God's doing. He says that, "Israel narrates the story of Exodus to glorify God who saves."²⁴

The most essential thing to note here is that God did not just liberate the Israelites within the land of Egypt but he removed them out of Egypt to a land where they were totally free from slavery. We realize that slavery was the root cause of their misery and thus something contrary to God's divine promise. By eliminating slavery, God dealt with the cause and not just the symptoms of poverty. Instead of helping them

²³ The quotation is as follows, [...] and he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them [...] if war befall us, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." Exod 1:8-10.

²⁴ L. BOADT, Reading the Old Testament, 164.

within the corrupt and cruel system God delivered them out of that system.²⁵ This is a good model for us to emulate whenever we embark on the project of helping the poor.²⁶

1.3. The Provision of the Law for the Poor

We have seen that God delivered the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. He continued standing as their God and mainly as the defender and protector of the poor. Amongst those considered to be poor in Israel were the widows, the strangers and the orphans (Cf. Exod 22: 21-23, 27).²⁷ The law gave a particular protection to these categories of people. It was clear that if someone oppressed these people, God would definitely hear their cry (Cf. Exod 22: 23).

The prerequisite of the law for the poor is very important. This understanding will facilitate our comprehension of poverty among the prophets and in addition, the instructions of Jesus on poverty. We shall tackle this section by discussing two regular observances, described by the law. These observances were the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year.²⁸ The Sabbatical year occurred every seventh year when the soil was to enjoy a rest. Planting, cultivating and harvesting were forbidden. The seventh sabbatical was called the year of Jubilee.²⁹

These regular observances had a special importance for proper agricultural practices. It is good to leave the land to rest for a while to allow it recover its fertility as

²⁵ Cf. C. OWCZAREK, 'Empowering the Poor', 68

²⁶ The scheme of supplying fish to the poor is a good idea but it is important to give them both the fish and the fishing net to enable them to fish on their own and make them independent.

²⁷ Cf. T. FRETHEIM., *Exodus; Interpretation*, 246.

²⁸ It is also important to note that each seventh day of the week was also kept holy. It was called the Sabbath and was a day of rest. (Cf. Exod 31:12-17). However, the implications of the sabbatical year and Jubilee year were more enriching to the poor.

²⁹ Cf. L. HOPPE., *The Torah Responds to the Poor*, 278.

is frequently done in most African communities. Probably this was the basic meaning of letting the land lie fallow among the religious customs of the Canaanites. However, the Hebrew people adopted this practice and the Scripture attached a new spiritual meaning to it.³⁰

1.3.1. The Sabbatical Year (Exod 23: 10-11)

We have seen that the Canaanite farmers had a custom of leaving their land fallow from time to time for agricultural practices and also as a thanksgiving to the gods of the soil.³¹ The Israelites also began letting their land fallow on the seventh year and named this the Sabbatical year (Cf. Exod 23:10). This practice had a significant religious meaning since it was a time set apart for the purpose of providing food for the poor among the Israelites (Cf. Exod 23:11). Clifford says that letting the land fallow on the seventh year was not merely an agricultural observance but a humanitarian practice.³² This practice guaranteed that the poor had something to sustain them.

The book of Deuteronomy broadened the Israelites' adherence of the Sabbatical year beyond the practice of leaving the land fallow³³. The Sabbatical year was a time for forgiving debts and releasing the slaves.³⁴ In ancient times the Israelites could borrow money because of poverty which was caused by various circumstances.

It is important to note that the kind of borrowing in antiquity was different from the borrowing today. We recognize that today it is generally the rich who take loans

³⁰ Cf. L. HOPPE, *The Torah Responds to the Poor*, 278. N/b we notice that this new meaning adopted by the Israelites had an advantage to the poor and all those who lacked means of self sustenance.

³¹ Cf. L. HOPPE, *The Torah Responds to the Poor*, 278.

³² Cf. R. CLIFFORD., "Exodus," in *N.J.B.C.*, 44-60 (3:43).

³³ Cf. *The Book of Deuteronomy*, chapter, 15: 1-18.

³⁴ Cf. L. HOPPE., *The Torah Responds to the Poor*, 278.

with a view to expanding their businesses while in the Old Testament period most borrowers were the poor who lacked the means of self-sustenance. This is the reason why the law emphasized the correct way of dealing with debtors.³⁵

If these laws were followed strictly various blessings and promises were given to the Israelites. These laws were also supposed to make sure that there were to be no poor among the people of Israel. This practice was an ideal that shows the kind of society that God wanted his people to be, “but there will be no poor among you (for the Lord will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess)” (Cf. Deut 15:4).

1.3.2. The Jubilee Year

The second significant observance that we shall discuss in this section is the Jubilee year. The word Jubilee derives its name from the trumpet which was sounded to launch the year. The Hebrew word *Yoreb* means the ram horn, which was blown at the inauguration as we read in the book of Leviticus (Cf. Lev 25: 9). The central feature of the Jubilee year was an overall cancellation of debts and freedom of the slaves and allowing the land to rest by halting cultivation. This was also done in the sabbatical year but in addition to this all the land acquired through loans was handed back to its original owners (Lev 25:8ff).

A lot of spiritual prominence was placed on the meaning of land ownership in order to make sure that the poor did not suffer exploitation from the rich. The Israelites were not permitted to sell the land because all the land belonged to God and they were

³⁵ This emphasis avoided creating a society where there were permanent creditors and debtors in Israel. Cf. L. HOPPE., *The Torah Responds to the Poor*, 278.

only Stewards (Cf. Lev 25:23).³⁶ Handing back the land to the original owners was very significant especially in a society where land was the basic source of sustenance.

There were various ways through which a poor person could reacquire the land lost because of poverty (Cf. Lev 25:25). The first way was whereby the brother or a relative would redeem what his brother sold.³⁷ The second possibility was whereby the person who sold his land eventually became prosperous and was able to recover the land (Cf. Lev 25:26-27). The last method happened when one had no one to redeem him or had no means of redeeming himself. In such a case the land belonged to the person who had bought it until the year of Jubilee (Cf. Lev 25:28).

If these legislations were followed, all the people of Israel would have means of production. We cannot be one hundred percent sure whether the Israelites observed these laws to the letter. Our special concern is the fact that these laws remind us that God had an exceptional concern for the poor. The legislations done in his name made sure that poverty never became a permanent condition of any person in Israel. God's concern for the poor was in a way that on the one hand charity was recommended as a virtue and requirement (Cf. Deut 10:18, 14:29) while on the other hand economic schemes that eliminated poverty completely were generally stressed.³⁸ However, in the prophetic literature we are able to recognize that the Israelites did not pay much

³⁶ Cf. R. FALEY, "Leviticus," in *N.J.B.C.*, 61-79 (4:52).

³⁷ The relative acted as a *goel*. Cf. J. SCHNEIDER-- C. BROWN "Redemption," *In the Dictionary of the New Testament Theology* Vol 3, 190.

³⁸ If these practices were followed there would be no poverty in Israel as we have highlighted time and again and as we read in the book of Deuteronomy that there was to be no poor among the people of Israel (Cf. Deut 15:4).

concentration on the teaching of Torah. That is the reason why the ideal that there shall be no poor among them did not work (Cf. Deut 15:4).

1.5. The Meaning of the Poor Israel among the Prophets

The term *prophetes* in Greek προφήτης stand for Hebrew word *Nabi* and translate in English as prophet or a proclaimer of some message. Prophets were people called to be the conscience of the people.³⁹ The main job of the prophets was to call people back to their covenant with God.⁴⁰ The prophets therefore spoke not in their own name but in the name of God who sent them. Such was the case of Jeremiah when he says that, “the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth,” (Cf. Jer 1:9). This points to the fact that what Jeremiah was to say was God’s own word. There is a general misconception that the essence of prophecy lies in forecasting of the future events. This thinking is to a certain extent correct but on the other hand a prophet should chiefly be understood as a mediator and an interpreter of the divine mind and will of God to the people.⁴¹

The theme of poverty is clearly seen in the prophetic literature. This subject emerges for the most part among the warnings and judgments that were addressed to the rich and the most powerful members of the society.⁴² The prophets spoke against unjust courts especially those who demanded bribes when judging the poor (Cf. Amos 5:12).

³⁹ Cf. B. VAWTER, , “Introduction to Prophetic Literature,” NJBC, 186-200 (11,4).

⁴⁰ Cf. A. GELIN; *The Poor of Yahweh*, 19. According to B. Vawter, A prophet is a person who acted as a translator of another. Cf, “Introduction to Prophetic Literature,” *N.J.B.C*, 11, 4.

⁴¹ Cf. B. VAWTER, , “Introduction to Prophetic Literature,” NJBC, 186-200 (11,4).

⁴² Cf. W. PILGRIM., *Good News to the Poor*, 24.

They also condemned oppressive trade against the poor. Amos was the most vocal in this regard.

Hear this, you who trample upon the needy, and bring the poor of the land to an end, saying, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great, and deal deceitfully with false balances, (Amos 8: 4-5).

The Old Testament Prophets attacked the various forms of unjust taxation and all kinds of violence against the poor. They continually attacked the wide gap between the rich people in the society and the poor.⁴³ We are all conscious of the damage, which is usually caused by this gap. The key characteristics of this gap are increased oppression and exploitation of the poor. It is in this kind of circumstance that prophets rose up and defended the poor and the humble of the society.

The poor were usually the hungry and the thirsty in society. They also comprised of the people who suffered various kinds of mistreatment in society. They were people who suffered from the domination of the rich, the strong and other evildoers in the society. Most of the prophets denounced these forms of oppression against the poor. The prophet Amos delivered very strong words to the rich businesswomen of Samaria. "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are in the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy" (Amos 4: 1).⁴⁴

The prophets advocated mercy and charity towards the poor and the oppressed. They firmly condemned all forms of greed and selfishness⁴⁵ among the rich since these are the vices that aggravate oppression of the poor. According to Isaiah the best type of

⁴³ Cf. W. PILGRIM., *Good News to the Poor*, 24.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jeremiah 2:34 and Ezekiel 8:12.

⁴⁵ The prophet Amos wished that instead of oppressing the poor, the rich should allow justice to roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

fasting should involve loosing the bonds of wickedness, undoing the thongs of the yoke, and letting the oppressed go free, and also breaking the yoke (Isa 58:6).

Other prophets like Jeremiah advocated love for one another as a solution to the problem involving the rich and the poor in the society. Jeremiah defined religion as love for one another. He gave an example of King Josiah who cared for the poor. "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me?" (Jer 22: 6). The prophets did not romanticize poverty or supported the poor blindly since they also challenged them whenever it was deemed necessary. For example, the prophet Jeremiah attacked the quality of faith of the poor as well as that of the rich. (Jer 5:4) while prophet Isaiah also condemned both the rich and the poor to the anger of God.

Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men, and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows; for every one is godless and an evildoer and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still. For wickedness burns like a fire, it consumes briars and thorns; it kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke. (Isa 9:17-18).

We cannot treat all the prophetic teachings on poverty and wealth in such a small subsection. However, it is important to note that the prophets agreed that the social injustices and all other forms of exploitation of the poor were a clear indication that the people had diverted from God's will which was articulated in the covenant. They delivered God's warnings and judgments. They also called people to repentance and to return to the covenant. On the optimistic side, they called people to the love of one another. In all their teachings, the prophets were clear that God was forever on the side of the poor.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Cf. W. PILGRIM., *Good News to the Poor*, 27.

1.6. Conclusion

We have endeavored to analyze the background to poverty and wealth in the Old Testament with a focus on the book of Exodus and prophetic literature. We have realized that there were various lines of thought about poverty and wealth.⁴⁷ These conceptions varied in different times and circumstances. With the discrepancies in the Israelites' line of thought about poverty and wealth we constructed our foundation of poverty and wealth from the book of Exodus where we illustrated a comprehensive model of the way in which God dealt with the poor by liberating the Israelites out of the enslaving society to a free land where there was no more marginalization.

We also analyzed what the law articulated concerning the poor. In the later centuries, the prophets emerged echoing the Law of Moses because the Israelites did not keep to the ideal that there were to be no poor among them (Cf. Deut 5:4). With this background we are now in a better position of investigating poverty and wealth in the Gospel of Luke since the background we have given is principally the background in which Jesus Christ existed and operated.

⁴⁷ The Israelites conceived poverty as a scandalous circumstance while wealth was viewed as a sign of God's blessings. Later they adopted a spiritual conception of poverty and wealth.

Chapter II

Poverty and Wealth in the Gospel of Luke

2.0. Introduction

The Gospel of Luke places a very unique interest in the subject of poverty and wealth. In fact many Lucan scholars agree that the main focus of Jesus in Luke is preaching of the good news to the poor.⁴⁸ This Gospel has influenced other authors into arguing that in modern times the Gospel of Luke is considered as a social Gospel.⁴⁹ For example, in the sermon on the plain Luke writes that “blessed are you poor” (Cf. Luke 6:20ff) while Mathew uses the same phrase but adds blessed are the poor in spirit.⁵⁰ Luke is not against wealth as such although he maintains that it should be used for a higher goal of bringing people closer to God and neighbor.

In this chapter we shall discuss the social and economic status of Jesus and his disciples as portrayed in Luke’s Gospel. We shall begin with a brief analysis of the infancy narratives and see whether there are indicators pointing to the poverty of Jesus. Then we shall analyze the ministry of Jesus highlighting his life and teaching. We shall then discuss his attitude towards the poor and possessions and his teaching on the dangers of wealth.

Jesus lived in first century Palestine. In his society, there were wealthy people who included the ruling class and the business class like Zacchaeus. Down the pyramid

⁴⁸ Cf. R. O’TOOLE., *The Unity of Luke Theology*, 129.

⁴⁹ W. HARRINGTON., *The Gospel According to Luke*, 26.

⁵⁰ Cf. R. O’TOOLE., *The Unity of Luke Theology*, 129, W. HARRINGTON., *Gospel According to Luke*, 26.

were poor peasants. Though the Gospel of Luke has a universal divine plan there is also a strong signal that Jesus Christ gave a specific concern for the less privileged in the society. He defined his mission to the men sent to him by John by stating categorically that “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them” (Luke 7:22).⁵¹

There were basically two groups of the poor in Palestine during the time of Jesus. There were the peasants who earned their own income by working for the landowners and there were the poor beggars who lived on the goodwill of others. These usually stayed in the cities or near the temple gates begging for charity.⁵² Some were materially poor and others were spiritually poor like the sinners, the publicans and the Samaritans (Luke 15:1). According to Jeremias, if we consider the sermon on the plain, “the Lucan tradition has in mind those who are really poor [...], really hungry, who really weep and are really persecuted (Luke 6:21-23).”⁵³

2.1. The Social and Economic Status of Jesus and His Disciples

2.1.1. In the Infancy Narratives

A lot of exegesis has been done with an aim of verifying the historicity and the accuracy of the infancy narratives. We shall concern ourselves only with what pertains to the topic of poverty and wealth. We shall highlight various sections in the infancy narratives and show how they elaborate our theme of poverty and wealth.

⁵¹ Cf. J. JEREMIAS, *New Testament Theology*, 109; D. MCBRIDE., *The Gospel of Luke*, 11.

⁵² Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 14. We saw in the Old Testament that the poor were mainly the slaves, the widows, the orphans and the strangers.

⁵³ Cf. J. JEREMIAS, *New Testament Theology*, Vol 1, 109.

2.1.1a. Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55),

If we begin with the hymn of Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), we realize that it is a hymn of joy and gladness. It is a song that gives an account of what God has done for Mary and for the whole community of Israel. In Luke chapter one verse 48 Mary is personified as the spokesperson for all the poor and the lowly (ταπεινώσιν) in the society, “[...] for he has regarded the lowly estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:48). This hymn is above all a wonderful petition for the underprivileged of God as they express their joy that God has blessed their littleness.⁵⁴

This hymn reflects the traditions of Israel faith in their Gods concern for the poor (Cf. 1 Sam 2) and the faith of the society in which Jesus was born. The proud mentioned here consist of the rich who have the means of self sustenance. In the Magnificat we learn that the coming of Jesus will bring a reversal of circumstances whereby the hungry will have their fill while the rich will go empty handed (Cf. Luke 1:52).⁵⁵

2.1.1b. The birth of Jesus

The birth of Jesus in a manger (Cf. Luke 2:1-7) cannot also be overlooked despite the fact that there are various Bible scholars who doubt the historical accuracy of Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus.⁵⁶ It is clear that the account of the census and

⁵⁴ D. MCBRIDE., *The Gospel of Luke*, 30.

⁵⁵ H. MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 84.

⁵⁶ However, Most of them agree that there is no affirmation that there was a universal census at the time that Luke recounts the birth of Jesus Cf. F. CRADDOCK ., *Interpretation Luke*, 34, see also MCBRIDE, *The Gospel of Luke*, 36 and MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 99.

taxation serve a major purpose in the theology of Luke because they highlight Luke's concern that Jesus was born in Bethlehem,⁵⁷ the place prophesied for the beginning of the Messiah.⁵⁸ From the drama of the birth of Jesus, we discover that the Messiah was born like any other child and was laid in a manger (φάτινη).⁵⁹

When we analyze the fact that Jesus first visitors were the shepherds (Cf. Luke 2:8-20), we become acquainted with the fact that Jesus Christ was born in humble circumstances whereby the shepherds were the first to receive the good news (Luke 2:8-10). it is important to note that in the Jewish culture the shepherds were considered as ordinary people whose purity the Pharisees suspected and often accused of being ignorant of the law.⁶⁰

Though they were a low class group of people, they were the first to see the child Jesus. Luke prepares us to grasp that when this child grows, he will search out for those who are detested.⁶¹ Using the shepherds, Luke demonstrates that Jesus comes to the world with a special preference for the poor the outcasts and the exploited.⁶²

⁵⁷ Bethlehem is where King David was brought up and according to Micah 5:2, the place that the Messiah would be born. See H. Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 105.

⁵⁸ The infancy narratives also situate the birth of Jesus in an international framework while still showing that the parents of Jesus were obedient to the Roman authority. There is also an irony because Caesar Augustus is reckoned in history as the one that brought peace to the Romans (*Pax Romana*) Luke's account contains an irony whereby Jesus is portrayed as the perfect bearer of peace to the world. Luke also puts it clearly that emperors, government and laws serve the purpose of God, often without knowing it. Cf. F. CRADDOCK., *Interpretation*, 62 and Cf. E. LAVERDRIE, *Luke*, NTMes 5, 31.

⁵⁹ Cf. B. REID, "Reading Luke With the Poor," *In The Bible Today*, 283. "A manger is feeding trough for domesticated animals. It could have been in a barn or in some feeding place under the open sky in contrast with "lodge" in the rest of the verse would suggest." Cf. J. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According To Luke I-IX*, 408.

⁶⁰ The shepherds were accused of purity because they used to wander with their sheep to foreign lands selling wool and cheese. Cf. C. STUHMUELLER, *The Gospel of Saint Luke*, 33. The shepherds were accused of purity because they used to wander with their sheep to foreign lands selling wool and cheese.

⁶¹ H. MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 84.

⁶² J. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According To Luke I-IX*, 396.

The Sacrifice (Cf. Luke 2: 21-40) helps us recognize that the parents of Jesus were good followers of the Mosaic Law. The word “law” (νομός) is repeated five times in this passage (Cf. Luke 2:22, 23, 24, 27, and verse 39).⁶³ We also note that Mary took a pair of turtledoves or two pigeons. According to the book of Leviticus 12:2-8, a person was required to offer a one-year-old lamb for a whole burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. However, the law stipulated that a person who could not manage to offer a lamb could offer a pair of turtledoves or a pair of pigeons and according to Luke this is what Mary and Joseph offered (Luke 2:24).⁶⁴ Therefore, the sacrifice that the parents of Jesus offered was the sacrifice that was supposed to be offered by the poor.⁶⁵

2.1.2. In his Ministry and Teaching

We have seen a number of clues with reference to the poverty of Jesus from Luke’s infancy narratives. Jesus began his ministry with a note that he had been anointed by the Holy Spirit to intervene for the poor and the oppressed in the society (Cf. Luke 4:16-18). By this public statement Jesus assured the poor that they all had a share in God’s salvation.

Most of Jesus’ listeners were likely members of the lower class in the society. The Gospel of Luke uses the term ‘people’ or crowd or ‘tax collectors (Cf. Luke 2:28). Among those who benefited from the healing miracles of Jesus were the blind, (Cf. Luke 18:35), the lame, the crippled and the paralyzed (Cf. Luke 7:22). Besides, there

⁶³ Cf. D. MCBRIDE., *The Gospel of Luke*, 42, see also Sp, 54 and CRADDOCK, 38.

⁶⁴ J. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According To Luke I-IX*, 426.

⁶⁵ Cf. B. REID, “Reading Luke With the Poor,” *In The Bible Today*, 283.

were also some wealthy people who benefited from Jesus' miracles. Some of these include the centurion's servant and the daughter of Jairus (Cf. Luke 8:41).⁶⁶

In the following section we want to see how Jesus intervened in the cause of the poor to such an extent that in Mark 14:2 we are told that the authorities feared to arrest him. We shall analyze his mission statement, then the sermon in the plain before discussing the other aspects found in his public ministry and teaching.

2.1.2a. The Mission Statement of Jesus (Luke. 4:18-19)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke. 4:18-19)

Generally, political parties have a document called a manifesto which underlines the principles and policies made by that party before an election. A manifesto is also called a mission statement. It is also found in other areas such as major companies and associations.

Most scholars consider Luke 4 and principally verses 18-19 as one of the most important texts in understanding the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. It is thus considered as the mission statement of Jesus. This passage affirms the centrality of the theme of poverty and wealth in Luke's Gospel. It is a declaration that shows the

⁶⁶ Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 50.

priority of Jesus in his ministry and not just his priority but also his preference.⁶⁷ The passage is derived from Isaiah 61:1-2 and Isaiah 58:6.⁶⁸

By reading Isaiah 61:1-2 Jesus is not merely announcing the fulfillment of the prophecy but his messianic role. By reading this passage of Isaiah which is one of the servant songs we now appreciate that Jesus Christ is the anointed Messiah.⁶⁹ This quotation acts as a measuring stick which is supposed to help us understand the ministry of Jesus. The phrase, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke 4:18) is connected with the descent of the Spirit that we find in Luke 3:22.⁷⁰

This passage enumerates the mission of Jesus. It is clear that Jesus came to preach good news to the poor. He used the passage where Isaiah was announcing the consolation of Sion to various groups in postexilic Jerusalem community.⁷¹ Jesus also came to release the captives.⁷² He also came to restore sight to the blind. The last verse highlights that Jesus also came to set at liberty those who were oppressed⁷³ and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, which is the Jubilee year.

⁶⁷ This passage is also found in Mark 6:1-6 where Jesus faces rejection while Luke places this passage in the inaugural speech of Jesus.

⁶⁸ Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 reflects the hope of the poor in captivity of Babylon. Isaiah gives the hope of deliverance by a servant of Yaweh. In a new way Luke depicts Jesus' mission statement of a servant of God who gives the poor a better alternative world of liberty, freedom and joy.

⁶⁹ Cf. F. CRADDOCK., *Interpretation*, 62.

⁷⁰ It is the same Holy Spirit that took Jesus to the desert where he conquers the devil and the same Spirit that is upon him when he moves him to his own country 4:14. The Spirit has anointed him to do all the works that he later enumerates.

⁷¹ J. FITZMYER, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, 532.

⁷² W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 68. The word (ἀφροισις) is used as a technical term for the year of Jubilee of the Sabbath year that we discussed in chapter one.

⁷³ This verse is taken from Isaiah 58:6, "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, [...] to let the oppressed go free?"

These words must have had a great impact on the poor and dejected. Jesus proclaimed that these words were fulfilled in their hearing. Jeremias states that the poor were assured that God's intervention on behalf of the poor was not to wait for an indefinite future. The time of salvation was manifested, realized, actualized with the coming of Jesus.⁷⁴ All the promises highlighted above were to wait no longer but were supposed to be fulfilled without any delay.⁷⁵

The preaching of the good news to the poor must have sounded strange to any pious Jew. It was a struggle for them to understand this New Theology since all along they relied on the deuteronomist theology of retribution whereby the faithful were always blessed and the unfaithful were destined to suffer from sickness, misfortune and poverty.

2.1.2b. The Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49)

The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke contains one discourse derived from one source 'Q' but each redacts it for his own agenda. The Matthean version is referred to as the Sermon on the Mount, (Cf. Matt. 5:1) while the Lucan version is described as the sermon on the level place or the sermon on the plain. In Matthew Jesus conveyed it on the mountain whereas in Luke he delivered it after coming down from a mountain where he had chosen the twelve disciples (Cf. Luke 6:17).

⁷⁴ Cf. J. JEREMIAS, *New Testament Theology*, Vol 1, 113.

⁷⁵ In fact Jesus told the messengers sent by John merely to report what they had seen and heard, namely, "the blind now see, those who had no power in their legs are walking, lepers are made clean, those who had no hearing now have their ears open, dead men come to life again, and the poor have the good news given to them." (Lk 7:22). This means that Jesus fulfilled his mission in action. Cf. F. CRADDOCK., *Interpretation*, 62.

There are few discrepancies between the two versions. For example, the Matthean sermon has a sum of 107 verses while the Lucan account contains between 30 and 32 verses. Nevertheless, much of the Matthew's excess material comes out on Luke's journey narratives.⁷⁶ Matthew's discourse is clearly intended for Jesus' disciples although there is an indication of a much larger gathering.⁷⁷

Luke presents four beatitudes directed to the poor corresponding with four woes which are directed to the rich. The Matthean discourse contains no woes and has spiritualized poverty. Matthean version has attracted more numerous Bible scholars than the one of Luke. It is on this account that Owczarek refers to the Lucan sermon as a neglected discourse. He notes that Matthean sermon has enjoyed a larger share amongst the exegetes than Luke's discourse.⁷⁸ Let us now make a brief analysis of the sermon on the plain.

Luke 6:20 begins with the phrase, "and he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said [...]." Can we conclude that Lucan sermon was intended for Christ's disciples only? It is true that they were poor since we are told that upon the call of most disciples, they left everything and followed him (Cf. Luke 5:11). In fact, Mark simply says that they left the nets while Luke adds the expression πάντα "everything" to underline the totality of what they left.⁷⁹ In the call of Levi (Luke 5:28) we read that he left πάντα, everything and followed Jesus whereas in Mark 2:14 and Matthew. 9:9 he simply rose and followed Jesus.

⁷⁶ C. STUHLMUELLER "The Gospel according to Luke," in NJBC 44, 68.

⁷⁷ J. LAMBRECHT, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Delaware, 19.

⁷⁸ Cf. C. OWCZARECK, *Sons of The Most High*, 68.

⁷⁹ . Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 87.

McBride suggests that the discourse is directed to the disciples,⁸⁰ while Fitzmyer argues that the great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the Coast of Tyre and Sidon found in Luke 6:17 are incorporated in this sermon.⁸¹ Tannenhill concurs with Fitzmyer adding that even though the disciples were poor they were in addition called to take care of the other poor and also argue that in reality the ministry of Jesus was all-inclusive.⁸² It is however generally agreed that Jesus directed these beatitudes to the entire people especially to those who are economically poor.⁸³

For example, in the first beatitude found in Luke 6:20 Jesus asserts that, “blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” This beatitude corresponds with the first woe which is found in Luke 6:24 where Jesus says, “but woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.” The initial words are similar like in Matthew 5:3, “Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ,” but Luke is categorical that the poor are happy now. He refers to them as “you’, blessed are you poor. Luke does not spiritualize his poor (πτωχοὶ). For him the poor are the people who were marginalized and economically deprived.⁸⁴

In the second beatitude which is found in Luke 6:21a, Jesus declares that, “blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.” This beatitude corresponds with the second woe which is found in Luke 6:25a, where Jesus pronounces to the rich that, “Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.” The theme of Luke’s reversal

⁸⁰ D. MCBRIDE., *The Gospel of Luke*, 86.

⁸¹ J. FITZMYER, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 632.

⁸² Cf. R. C TANNENHILL.,, *The Narrative Unity in Luke*, 114-115, He notes that Lazarus was comforted not because he was a disciple but because he was poor

⁸³ We shall see why Mathew adds the poor in spirit.

⁸⁴ H. MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 249.

of values becomes visible at this juncture as it was already highlighted in the Magnificat.

The second beatitude corresponds with the fourth beatitudes in Matthew 5:6 with the exception that Matthew draws attention to the fact that the blessed are the poor who hunger for righteousness. But we realize that Luke refers to those who hunger at the moment that Jesus was speaking, “hunger now” thus stressing an emphasis on the immediacy and actuality of the hunger.⁸⁵ In the third beatitude we observe that blessed are those who weep at the moment, for they shall laugh (Cf. Luke 6:21b). The woe that corresponds with this beatitude is the one that is addressed to those who laugh for they shall mourn and weep (Cf. Luke 6:25b).⁸⁶

2.2 The Attitude of Jesus towards the Poor and Property

2.2.1. The teaching of Jesus on the dangers of wealth

We have observed so far that being rich is not bad in itself. Jesus’ instructions on wealth are directed to those people who accumulate and yearn for wealth forgetting that, “a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”(Luke 12:15). We shall perceive in this section that the main danger of wealth actualizes when wealth becomes a hindrance to the kingdom of God.

We shall highlight two parables of Jesus in order to underline his teaching on the dangers of wealth. We shall begin with the parable of the rich fool (Cf. Luke 12:13-21)

⁸⁵ Therefore Matthew spiritualizes the condition of poverty while Luke is still emphasizing that happy were those who hungered in actuality.

⁸⁶ The fourth beatitude is in Luke 6:22. This beatitude is different from the others in style. We are told that blessed are those who are hated, ostracized, and insulted for the sake of the Son of Man. They are promised a reward but unlike in the other beatitudes their reward is in heaven. On the other hand, those who all men speak well of receive their woe in Luke 6:26.

and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Cf. Luke 16:14-31). These parables will just be used as examples since there are many other lessons on the dangers of wealth in the Gospel of Luke but bearing the length and scope of this essay we cannot exhaust all of them.

2.2.1a. The parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21)

The parable of the rich fool is only found in the gospel of Luke and thus classified under L tradition.⁸⁷ It can also be found in the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas where we find the conversation of Luke's verses 13-14 and the parable of the rich fool in a separate place.⁸⁸

The background of this parable is when a man from the multitude asks Jesus to intervene on their inheritance (Cf. Luke 12:13). This looks like a good opportunity for Jesus to get involved against the oppression of the poor but he does not get concerned. He instead remarks that a person is not measured with what he owns or how rich he is (Cf. verse 15) Jesus perceived the covetous attitude in the request of the young man.⁸⁹ The exterior problem may seem as injustice but the interior problem is the attitude of the young man towards wealth. Both brothers were therefore greedy and it was not for Jesus to judge whose greed was more right than the other.⁹⁰

The main parable is on verses 16-20. Reading these four verses we wonder what sin that the rich man committed. He only got a huge harvest and wondered how to store

⁸⁷ Cf. J. FITZMYER., *The Gospel According to Luke*, (X-XXIV), 971.

⁸⁸ Cf. F. CRADDOCK F., *Interpretation Luke*, 163.

⁸⁹ H. MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 523.

⁹⁰ Cf. F. CRADDOCK F., *Interpretation Luke*, 163.

it. There is no mention of any corruption in the way he got his wealth.⁹¹ Some commentators like Pilgrim hints that most of the rich usually acquired their land by cheating the poor although this is not mentioned in this parable. The problem of this rich person is selfishness. Perhaps he wanted to store his crops waiting for the time of scarcity so that he could sell them at huge profits.⁹² The egocentric word “I” dominate Verse 18 and 19, a fact that suggest that this was a very egoistic person. Nevertheless, he gets his verdict on verse 20 where God calls him a, ‘fool’. We know that foolishness in the Bible is characterized by living as if God does not exist (Cf. Ps 14:1) The man was rich in his earthly possessions but was foolish in his relationship with God. His foolishness consisted in thinking that riches can secure his life.⁹³ He failed to store his treasure in the sight of God and forgot that appropriate use of wealth in helping the neighbors is actually the meaning of storing treasure in the sight of God.⁹⁴

2.2.1b. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (LUKE 16:14-31)

Just like the parable of the rich fool the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is exclusive from the L tradition. It appears in the context of the reaction of some Pharisees who were lovers of money (Cf. Luke16:14) who made fun of Jesus at his teaching on wealth. These Pharisees justified their refusal to share their wealth by

⁹¹ Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 111.

⁹² Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 111.

⁹³ L.T., JOHNSON, *The Gospel of Luke*, SacP3, 102.

⁹⁴ Cf. J. FITZMYER., *The Gospel According To Luke*, (X-XXIV), 971. See also, L.T., JOHNSON, *The Gospel of Luke*, SacP3, 199.

holding on to the theology of retribution whereby the righteous are blessed with riches while sinners are cursed with poverty.⁹⁵

Reading through the parable we can listen to the echo of the first beatitude and the first woe which we discussed earlier in this chapter (Cf. Luke 6:20, 24). We have on the one hand Lazarus who experiences poverty and sickness and on the other hand the rich person who lived in extravagance. He dressed in purple and feasted everyday. It is worth noting that this poor man is the only person to whom Jesus gave a name in all his parables. The word Lazarus means God help. In the parable we know that Lazarus was poor but we are not told whether he was virtuous or not.⁹⁶

The rich man enjoyed nice meals while Lazarus ate the crumbs⁹⁷ that fell from his table.⁹⁸ However, after their passing away, a proper reversal of fortunes occurred between the two. The rich man is taken to Hades while the angels took Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:22-23).⁹⁹ Jeremias warns us against thinking that wealth takes people to hell and poverty takes people to paradise.¹⁰⁰

Abraham refused to send Lazarus to the brothers of the rich man to beseech them to repent (verse 27) because according to Abraham they had Moses and the prophets (verse 29). This is true because the law signifies Moses and the writings of the prophet were there. There is a connection with what we saw in chapter one that the Old

⁹⁵ Cf. J. FITZMYER., *The Gospel According To Luke*, (X-XXIV), 1126.

⁹⁶ H. MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 523.

⁹⁷ The crumbs were the pieces of bread that the guests dipped in the dish and wiped their hands with them and threw them under the table. Cf. J. JEREMIAS., *The Parables of Jesus*, 184

⁹⁸ J. JEREMIAS., *The Parables of Jesus*, 184.

⁹⁹ H. MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 632. See also Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News*, 115.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. J. JEREMIAS., *The Parables of Jesus*, 185. According to this author it was impiety and lack of love for the poor that are punished in the rich man while in the case of Lazarus it is the piety and humility which were rewarded.

Testament highlights that God gave a special preference for the poor and always asked the rich to share what they had with the poor so that there would be no poor among the people of Israel (Deut 15:4).¹⁰¹ However it is probable that the rich person knew¹⁰² from his personal experience that his family had no serious regard for what the law and the prophets stipulated concerning the care for the poor.¹⁰³

2.2.2. The Right Use of Possessions

In a nutshell we have examined the poverty of Jesus as portrayed in his infancy narratives. We have also investigated his requirement for his disciples whom he asked to live everything (πάντα) and follow him. He also taught them concerning the dangers of wealth not with a view of branding wealth as evil but with a call to a right use of possessions. In this section we shall scrutinize some examples from the Gospel of Luke which brings to light Jesus' teaching on the right use of wealth.

It is true that Jesus and his disciples had no income generating occupation. How did they survive? What did they eat and who provided for them in their mission? In Luke 8:1-3 we read that there were some women who provided for them from their own means. These women must have been prosperous and wealthy for them to be capable of providing for Jesus and the apostles.¹⁰⁴ We notice that the rich can assist the mission of spreading the Gospel as well as helping the poor. While evangelizing the poor we should not forget to give the rich an opportunity to do charity with their wealth.

¹⁰¹ Cf. JOHNSON, L. T., *The Gospel of Luke*, SacP3, 256.

¹⁰² This is a lesson for us today; we must assist the poor before it is too late. We are invited to spot the poor Lazarus who stands at our gates before it is too late.

¹⁰³ Cf. H. MARSHALL., *Commentary on Luke*, 639.

¹⁰⁴ Cf E. LAVERDRIE, *Luke*, NTMes 5, 112.

By associating with both the poor and the rich Jesus affirmed that possessions are a gift from God.¹⁰⁵ There are several occasions where he visited the rich and dined with them (Cf. Luke 7:34, 7:1-10, 19:1.¹⁰⁶

It is above all in Luke's Gospel where we find a wealthy chief tax collector called Zacchaeus responding to the call of salvation by being generous to the poor (Cf. Luke 19:1-10).¹⁰⁷ Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector in Jericho, a very prosperous town, which was known for its balsam wood, its fruits and figs. It was a busy toll station leading to Arabia, a fact that shows that Zacchaeus was able to make much money from corrupt deals.¹⁰⁸

Despite the fact that he was very rich Zacchaeus was socially and religiously alienated. However, his encounter with Christ made him promise to give half of his property to the poor and to repay what he had defrauded fourfold. Repaying four fold fell within the Old Testament and the Rabbinic law (Exod 22:1). However, giving half of one's property was a real sign of acceptance of salvation. Pilgrim says that, this was a "radically new standard, a new paradigm for the Godly person."¹⁰⁹ The story of Zacchaeus demonstrates that the rich can be transformed by an encounter with Jesus. Such a transformation makes them not only pay what they had stolen according to the law, but exercise charity by sharing their possession with the poor.

¹⁰⁵ These associations also show that Jesus was open to encounter both the poor and the rich alike.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 284, Cf. B. REID, "Reading Luke With the Poor, "In The Bible Today, 124.

¹⁰⁷ Cf P. LINDEN, *The Gospel of Luke and Acts*, 83.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 131.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. W. PILGRIM, *Good News to the Poor*, 133.

It is God who bestows property and wealth on the people. The rich are only stewards of what God has given them. The Gospel of Luke enunciates this fact from the very beginning where John the Baptist invited those who have two coats to share with those who did not have (Cf. Luke 3:11). The Gospel of Luke recommends almsgiving as a form of sharing one's property with the poor. Jesus asks his followers to give to everyone who begs (Cf. Luke 6:30). It is in connection with almsgiving that in Luke 7:4-6 the elders implored Jesus to be generous to the centurion. They told Jesus that the Centurion deserved assistance because he built a Synagogue for them.

2.3. Conclusion

We have discussed the social and economic status of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke by analyzing the infancy narratives and his ministry. We highlighted his mission statement (Cf. Luke 4:18-19) and the sermon on the plain (Cf. Luke 6:20-49). In these passages we realized that Jesus had a specific concern for the poor. We also investigated the attitude of Jesus towards the poor and property by examining his teachings on the dangers of wealth and the right use of possessions.

We shall apply the knowledge that we have gathered in the background to poverty and wealth in chapter one and in poverty and wealth in Luke's Gospel and see whether this Biblical poverty is our model for the Franciscans and also how it acts as a challenge. St. Francis of Assisi was categorical that the life and rule of the friars minor was to live the Gospel.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Cf. L. SERRINI, *Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual* 1. Conventuals follow the rule of 1223 issued in the bull of Honorius III's *Solet annuelle*.

Chapter III

Poverty and Wealth in the Conventual Franciscan Order Today

3.0. Introduction

In this chapter we shall deal basically with the application of what we have gathered so far from the discussion on poverty and wealth both in the Old Testament and in the Gospel of Luke. We analyzed the background to poverty and wealth in the Old Testament in the first chapter and came to the conclusion that God gave special care to the poor. We also observed that the Mosaic Legislation advocated a better deal for the poor, a position that was later echoed by the prophets.

In the second chapter we explored poverty and wealth in the Gospel of Luke where we understood the teaching of Jesus on poverty and wealth. At this moment we wish to understand poverty and wealth in the Conventual Franciscan Order. After explaining who the Conventual Franciscans are and what is the Franciscan poverty, we shall endeavor to know how the Lucan poverty operates as a model and a challenge to the Conventual Franciscan Friars living in Kenya today.¹¹¹

3.1. Conventual Franciscan Order

The order of Friars minor Conventual is one of the three orders, which were founded by St. Francis of Assisi under the name of Friars Minor. These three families

¹¹¹ In this chapter we shall bring to light some examples of how the Franciscans are dealing with the poor in Kenya today. After that, we shall be able to wind up our essay and propose a way forward.

are OFMconv, OFM, and OFMcap and they all comprise the first order of the Friars Minor. Conventual Franciscan order is defined as a religious community acknowledged by the Church as such.¹¹²

St. Francis of Assisi is one of the most venerated saints in the world. He was born of a rich Merchant called Peter Bernadone and lady Pica in 1181/1182. His mother named him John although when his father came from one of his business trips in France, he decided to call him Francesco a name which means, little French man showing how Peter Bernadone loved France.¹¹³

Francis was a high spirited youth who lived his youth in song and dances. His parents wanted him to join the family business and also be a knight. Francis also treasured the idea of being a knight though both Francis and his parents came to realize later that God had better plans for him. From the very beginning, Francis developed a compassion for the poor who occasionally begged in his Fathers business.

The moment of conversion of St. Francis occurred when he met a leper. Before then, he had abhorrence and dreads of lepers but on this particular occasion he got courage, dismounted from his horse, kissed the leper and gave him a coin. This action gave him an increased grace to mortify himself in solidarity with the poor.¹¹⁴ The next incident illustrating his conversion took place at the feast on St. Mathew in 1209 when during the mass the Gospel on the mission of the disciples was proclaimed (Cf. Matt 10, Luke 10:1-12). After the celebration of the Holy Eucharist Francis asked the priest to

¹¹² Cf. L. SERRINI, *Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual*, 1. It is worth noting that from the earliest times the word Conventual was added to the name OFM in order to distinguish the Friars of the community and the Observants.

¹¹³ Cf. L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History, The Three Orders of St. Francis*, 5.

¹¹⁴ Cf. N DE ROBECK – P. HERMANN trans., *St. Francis of Assisi*, 35.

explain the meaning of “take nothing for the journey.” After the explanation Francis cried out, “This is what I want!”¹¹⁵

Later on, some brothers joined him and as the number increased Francis was forced by circumstances to write his first rule which comprised barely of some passages from the Gospel.¹¹⁶ Francis summed up the whole rule in very few words stating that, “the rule and the life of the Friar Minor is to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁷ This vision of Francis compels one to study poverty and wealth in the Gospel of Luke because Francis did not wish the friars to live poverty for its own sake but rather for the Gospel in imitation of Jesus Christ both in his life and his teaching.

St. Francis established the order of Friar Minor on a solid rock of poverty. At the beginning it was uncomplicated for the few friars surrounding him to live this ideal but when the number increased circumstances started changing. This is common for any movement which is in the process of development. The state of affairs became worse after his death¹¹⁸ when different friars embarked on diverse interpretations of the rule.

The followers of Francis started asking themselves many questions concerning what Francis really meant by poverty. For example, could the friars own the newly built Basilica of St. Francis? Could they own some property in common? Could they receive some money for self-sustenance? Could they receive payment for work done? Bit by bit

¹¹⁵ The third incident which we can include here took place at the moment when the crucifix spoke to Francis in the little Church of San Damiano. He heard the message of Jesus telling him, “Francis go and repair my church, which as you can see is in ruins.” Immediately he began repairing the physical Churches before realizing that it was a spiritual Church that Christ was talking about.

¹¹⁶ Francis wrote the first rule in 1209 and the second rule which was approved by Pope Honorius III in 1223.

¹¹⁷ L. SERRINI, *Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual* 1.

¹¹⁸ St. Francis welcomed sister death in 1228.

a group of friars known as the friars of the community¹¹⁹ and another group comprising of the friars of the regular observance emerged not out of a need for division but in the name of fidelity to the rule and a search for the essence of poverty. This state of affairs continued until the year 1517 when Pope Leo X issued a bull called *Ite Vos* which permitted the separation of the Friars of the community and the Observants.¹²⁰

3.2. The General meaning of Franciscan Poverty

Francis lived in the 13th century Italy where there was a huge gap existing between the class of the rich Merchants and the class of the poor peasants. Francis was born of a wealthy family but he resolved to join the poor and the underprivileged class of his society. There were other movements advocating poverty in the time of Francis. Some of these were the Waldenses who were approved by Pope Alexander III in 1179. The others were the Albigesians and a third group was called the Humiliati of Lombardy founded in 1178. Most of these went into heresy, thus some died on their own while others were dismissed by the Ecclesiastical authorities.¹²¹

Franciscan poverty does not simply mean being affectionate with the poor and helping them. This is only a single aspect of poverty but real Franciscan poverty denotes becoming poor with those who are poor. Poverty is hence not a matter of doing but a matter of being. We realize that Francis did not just give some of the surplus material

¹¹⁹ The Friars of the community came to be called the Conventual Franciscans (OFMConv), while the Observants became the Friars Minor OFM. The Capuchin came to exist from the OFM in 1525 when they came to be recognized as a canonically recognized order.

¹²⁰ Cf. L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History, The Three Orders of St. Francis*, 189.

¹²¹ Cf. L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History, The Three Orders of St. Francis*, 2.

possessions which he owned but everything that he owned. Francis could give the entire money he had including his own clothing's.¹²²

We observed in the second chapter that there are various indications of the poverty of Jesus from the Lucan infancy narratives. In 1223, Francis dramatized the events surrounding the birth of Jesus at a place called Greccio (Cf. Luke 2:1-7). This is where Francis developed the idea of the Christmas crib which we always organize in most of our Churches on the Christmas season. For Francis the crib exemplifies the environment surrounding, the birth of Christ at the manger. The tradition of Christmas crib demonstrates St. Francis' way of celebrating the humility and poverty of Christ.¹²³

Francis was a man who knew wealth before his conversion but he chose to give it away in preference for a higher good. He had essentially used wealth even before his conversion for devout purposes like helping the poor but he realized that it was not sufficient to offer money to the poor. He became conscious of the fact that the real danger of wealth was in its bad use and selfishness. Francis esteemed poverty because he realized that life without possessions was more desirable and fulfilling for him. Poverty was a matter of style and he loved it because with it he could trust God wholeheartedly.¹²⁴ Francis also left everything as the Disciples of Christ did (Cf. Luke 5:11, 28).¹²⁵

¹²² Cf. O. ENGBERT, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 30. However, Francis was not merely a fantastic almsgiver but a person who had a great love for the poor, a love that found its meaning only in the poverty of Christ.

¹²³ Cf. O. ENGBERT, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 232-233.

¹²⁴ Cf. M. V. GALLI, *Living our Future*, 88.

¹²⁵ In the History of St. Francis we learn that Francis gave all he owned back to his Father including the clothes which he was wearing in the presence of the bishop of Assisi.

Poverty for Francis was wholly rooted in the humility of Jesus. We learn this from his attitude and manner of life because Francis never defined poverty. According to him, Poverty is a combination of the poverty of Jesus Christ and his humility. This is what is referred to as Kenosis or in other words the self-emptying of Jesus Christ as explained by the Apostle Paul (Phil 2:6-11).¹²⁶

If the poverty which Francis adopted for his Friars was similar to the poverty of Jesus who was rich but chose to be poor, then it is no wonder why Francis was never embarrassed at begging. This is also the fact that enabled Francis to recognize Jesus Christ in each and every poor person. This is also the reason that Francis could not stand seeing any person offending the poor.

Let us also endeavor to clarify what the Franciscan poverty was not. First of all, it was not merely a program of reforming the Catholic Church. It was also not a call to an ascetical manner of life. We also realize that Franciscan poverty was not supposed to be a source of pride. His poverty was as a fruit of love and a mystery of the presence of Christ in the poor.

3.3. The Commitment of the Conventual Franciscans to the Poor Today

3.3.1. At the Level of Dealing with the Symptoms of Poverty

Let us now apply the models we have discussed so far concerning the way that the society in the Old Testament and in the New Testament dealt with the poor. We have realized that there is a way of helping the poor in a pyramidal society. This is a society, which have the rich people on top of the pyramid. At the middle of the pyramid

¹²⁶ Cf. L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History, The Three Orders of St. Francis*, 82.

we have the middle class people who are neither very poor nor very rich. Down the pyramid we have the poor peasants.

In this kind of society we find that the rich in the society make an option for the poor where they help to the poor out of the excesses of their wealth. They only give handouts to the poor and remain quiet and disinterested with the social system that brings poverty into existence thus not making a firm step of eradicating poverty. In this model we realize that those who are rich usually remain rich while those who are poor remain poor.¹²⁷ The problem with this system is that it only deals with the symptoms without touching the causes or the roots of poverty. The help given to the poor is similar to a stabilizer or a tranquilizer, which only relieve the pain of poverty without healing the disease.

The Conventual Franciscans in Kenya have at times been involved in this kind of situation. For example, when we get people begging at the gates of our friaries we usually give them some work and pay them one hundred and fifty shillings, which is equivalent to two dollars. After the payment the poor person goes home very happy because she can buy some food for that day though she will have nothing left for educating the children or saving for their future. As a result this poor person will have to come once more the following day and ask for some work again. Therefore this poor person will either remain for the rest of her life taking the little work given by the Franciscans or she may remain a beggar. By giving the one hundred fifty shillings we only deal with the symptoms of poverty but we do not eradicate any poverty in such a

¹²⁷ In this system we realize that the help given to the poor is sometimes not genuine. The rich assist the poor to keep them out of their gates or to maintain peace because the poor may revolt if they are hungry.

person.¹²⁸ It is actually not bad to give some foodstuff and some money at the gate because we need also to cater for the basic needs before we eradicate the whole problem.

3.3.2. At the Level of Dealing with the Causes of Poverty

We observed in the first chapter how God delivered the Israelites from Egypt where they were marginalized and powerless. The story of Exodus gave us an excellent example of God's concern for the poor. We found that God did not just liberate the Israelites within the land of Egypt but he took them out of Egypt to a land where they were free. If slavery was the root cause of their misery and poverty, God eradicated it thus dealing with the cause of their poverty. This model is different and better than the model we have just discussed above.

Jesus announced that his mission was to proclaim the good news to the poor (Luke 4:18). He fulfilled this mission by healing the sick (Cf. Luke 10:9, 7:2, 5:35), curing the blind (Cf. Luke 7:21, 18:35) and curing the lame (Cf. Luke 7:22). It is mandatory for us to know the root of poverty of the people whom we are sent to work with in our apostolate.¹²⁹ It is God who bestows property and wealth to the people and it is the duty of all pastors to remind the rich that they are only stewards of what God

¹²⁸ This is only one example that shows how inadequate we are. Most of the people who are underpaid here in Kenya live in the type of situation that I have highlighted above. It is actually not bad to give some foodstuff and little money at the gate because we need also to cater for the basic needs before we eradicate the whole problem. We saw in the first chapter that this is not actually a bad model of helping the poor. The positive point to note here is the fact that many people are aware of the need of helping the poor from general humanitarian or ethical grounds. This means that as Christians and Franciscans we can collaborate with other people in helping the poor because majority of the people including Muslims, Hindus and people of other religions know that helping the poor is important.

¹²⁹ The elimination of the causes of poverty is also an eradication of poverty itself. However we are not supposed to be very optimistic thinking that we can eradicate poverty in the society all together. We eradicate one cause and another cause appears which means that it is a long-term process.

have given them. The Gospel of Luke calls the rich to share with those who are poor (Cf. Luke 3:11). From the Gospel of Luke we also found that almsgiving is recommended as a manner of sharing ones property with the poor (Cf. Luke 6:30).

3.3.3. The Actual Commitment of the OFMConv Friars to the Poor in Kenya

The Conventual Franciscans in Kenya have tried in their individual way to deal with some roots and causes of poverty in the society at present. For instance, having realized that deficiency in education is one of the factors that causes poverty among the Kenyans, the Conventual Franciscan Friars in Kenya have endeavored to help some families to pay the school fees for their children. We have educated some young people beginning from grade one up to the university level. When these people educated by Franciscan finish their school, they become self-reliant and in turn manage to pay school fees for their young brothers and sisters and their families.

An additional thing that we have done in Kenya is open a Health Center in Meru Rural at our parish called Ruiru¹³⁰ Catholic Mission. In this Health Center we collaborate with the Felician Sisters whereby we help the poor to access medical facilities at a very low fee and sometimes free of charge for the majority of the poor. We know that when a person is sick he may not be able to sustain the family but when the person is healthy he/she can go back to his/her working place and help fight poverty. By treating the people of Ruiru in this health Center we are able to eradicate poverty because illness is a major cause of poverty particularly in third world Countries where

¹³⁰ Our Parish is situated in a small town called Ruiru that is in the outskirts of Meru town. The parish is sixteen Kilometers North of Meru town. Most of the people are farmers and the area suffers from low rainfall from time to time.

access to the proper health care is difficult. Jesus also gave the ministry of healing a priority in his ministry (Cf. Luke 6:17, 7:22, and 8:43-48).

In our Parish of St. Francis of Assisi, Limuru¹³¹ we started a home for the former street Girls. This home is registered as St. Anthony's Women Centre. The foremost aim of this home was to work in collaboration with the Good Shepherd Sisters in taking care of the physically abused women and former commercial sexual workers. However, due to community demand the Conventual Franciscans included into this home a program for rehabilitation of young girls, as this seemed to be an actual problem in Limuru. We know that there are people who are alienated by the society because of who they are. For example, commercial sex workers are abhorred in many societies but Jesus gave such people a chance to experience love which led to repentance (Cf. Luke 7:36-50.).

In Limuru we collaborate with the Sisters of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart in taking care of these girls that poverty has made them end up in the street. The majority have come from broken families and others from very poor families. At St. Anthony children home the girls receive motherly care which is necessary for their growth and are also provided with their basic necessities. Once this is accomplished we pay for their education until they become independent. This gesture is a good way of dealing with these girls because most of them end up as responsible and reliable citizens.

¹³¹ St. Francis Limuru Parish is located in Central Province in Kiambu District. Limuru is on the War to Nakuru and it is only forty kilometers from Nairobi City.

Our most recent Parish in Kenya is called St. Catherine of Alexandria in the Nairobi Estate of South C. In this parish the Conventual Franciscans work in partnership with the Assumption Sister in helping the young street boys get rehabilitation at Kwetu Home of Peace. The Parish Priest of South C. Parish who is always a Conventual Franciscan is the director of this home where boys are given special care. Most of the Boys at Kwetu Home of Peace are from Nairobi streets and a number of of them are more often than not addicted to drugs. At Kwetu Home of Peace the boys are helped to stop drug dependency and are given the opportunity to live comfortably. It is important to note that some of the current workers at Kwetu Home of Peace are former street boys who were rehabilitated at the same centre.

The last but not least way in which the Conventual Franciscans influence the situation of poverty eradication is by catechizing through mass media. We have a modern printing press in Limuru called St. Maximillian Kolbe Press. Some of the books printed by Kolbe Press facilitate in empowerment of the people. We also publish a magazine called the Messenger of Mary Immaculate¹³², which reaches various Christians in Kenya. The Messenger of Mary Immaculate magazine makes an effort to spread devotion to Mary Immaculate but we always dedicate a section called “Living Today” where we enlighten the people on the human rights. For example, from January 2006 to March 2006 we published an article entitled, “How does the Church Defend the

¹³² The Messenger of Mary Immaculate is a Marian Magazine published by the Conventual Franciscan friars with the approval of their superiors. It is registered at General Post Office as a Newspaper.

Rights of Christian workers?"¹³³ The author of this article highlighted the teaching of the Church on the right of workers using the Vatican Council documents such as *Gaudium et Spes*, and others like *Populorum Progression*, *Laborem Exercens* and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights of 1948.¹³⁴

3.3.4. Conclusions

We have managed to explain in this chapter the humble origins of the Franciscan Order and the divisions which occurred. We have also elucidated the general meaning of the Franciscan poverty. We have seen that according to St. Francis of Assisi poverty was totally rooted in the humility of Jesus Christ. Francis emulated the poverty of Jesus Christ who was rich but chose to be poor. He also wanted his followers to live as Pilgrims in this world. Francis was able to recognize Jesus Christ in each and every poor person. We have also expounded on the ways in which the Conventual Franciscans have dealt with the poor in the Kenyan situations. The whole study is both a challenge and a model for the Conventual Franciscans and for all the people of goodwill.

¹³³ This article was published in January/ February issue and March April Issue. The author of this article is Fr. Wieslaw Wroblewski. He is currently the director of the Printing Press at Limuru.

¹³⁴ We cannot underestimate the influence of written word to the people. It is so far one of the best forums for teaching the people. The friars are also using the pulpit in the parishes to educate the people on ways of eradication of poverty. The homilies can also be used for catechizing the people and also empowering them.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the first chapter of this paper we established the background of poverty and wealth in the Old Testament, where we found that there were various lines of thought about poverty and wealth. We recognized that these conceptions varied in different times and circumstances. From the book of Exodus we pointed out a comprehensive model of the way in which God dealt with the poor. We examined how he liberated the Israelites out of the enslaving society to a free land where there was no more marginalization. We also analyzed what the law articulated concerning the poor and how later, the prophets echoed the Law of Moses a fact that showed that the Israelites did not keep to the ideal that there were to be no poor among them (Cf. Deut 5:4).

In chapter two we established the social and economic status of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of Luke by analyzing the infancy narratives and his ministry. In this chapter we endeavored to highlight the mission statement of Jesus (Cf. Luke 4:18-19) and on the sermon in the plain (Cf. Luke 6:20-49). In these passages we realized that Jesus had a specific concern for the poor. In the same chapter we also investigated the attitude that Jesus had towards the poor and towards possession. We examined his teachings on the dangers of wealth and his teaching on the right use of possessions. According to Jesus the rich people can access salvation by putting their wealthy in proper use and sharing with the poor.¹³⁵ Therefore, the Gospel of Luke is very clear that Jesus had a message for both the rich and the poor. In conclusion we found that in the

¹³⁵ The story of Zacchaeus (Cf. Luke 19:1-10) demonstrated to us that the rich can enter the Kingdom of God by paying back what they got through corrupt means and by being ready to share their possessions with the poor

Gospel of Luke the kingdom of God belongs to the poor although the rich can also share in this kingdom by virtue of their treatment for the poor.

In the third chapter we recognized that Francis of Assisi was uncompromising that the life and rule of the friars minor was to live the Gospel. He emphasized the importance of poverty. Poverty for Francis was wholly rooted in the humility of Jesus Christ. He emulated the poverty of Jesus Christ who was rich but chose to be poor. This is also the fact that enabled Francis to recognize Jesus Christ in each and every poor person. We also analyzed the various ways that the Conventual Franciscans Friars have adopted in dealing with the poor in Kenya. The Friars have adopted methods that deal with the poor in a manner that they tackle both the root causes of poverty and the symptoms.

Our elucidation on Poverty and Wealth in Luke's Gospel is both a model for us to pursue and a challenge. It is a model that should encourage us to care for the poor in our society and a challenge for us especially for the times that we have failed in our mission to the poor. We can commence our action by becoming more generous in sharing with the poor. We can also simplify our manner of living. We are called to be advocates on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. In this way we shall have begun living the teaching that Jesus in the Gospel of Luke proclaimed and what St. Francis of Assisi emulated.

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