

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY (USA)

TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

BARTHOLOMEW SENEWO, O.C.D

**“HOW TO BECOME A NEIGHBOUR?”
AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF LUKE 10:25-37
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS**

Supervisor:

Rev. DR. Christopher Owczarek, S.D.B

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DEDICATION

To all who, despite the in human treatment, betrayal of trust, hatred and social injustice they experience in life, still make effort to love all people without discrimination, especially those who neglected them when they were in dire need, and to all who preach vehemently today on the theme, “Good Samaritan,” and all who promote the love of God and love of one’s neighbour.

EPIGRAPH

The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” But... the Good Samaritan reversed the question: “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest to you.”

Mother Teresa

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my original work, through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:.....

Name of Student:

Date:

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college moderator.

Signed:

Name of Supervisor:

Date:

ABBREVIATIONS

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
1Sam	1 Samuel
Ezek	Ezekiel
P(s)	Psalm(s)
Prov	Proverbs
Hos	Hosea
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Sir	Sirach
Dan	Daniel
Macc	Maccabees

New Testament

Matt	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Heb	Hebrews

Others

Cf.	Confer/Compare
i.e.,	Id Est/ That is to say
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
V./ vv.	Verse/ Verses
ed.	edited by
al	alii — other persons

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. The Purpose of the Study

Jesus is often presented in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels as being preoccupied with his encounter with the Pharisees and Scribes. In most of the encounters, the Pharisees and Scribes make conscious effort to prevent Jesus from carrying out his mission of compassion and love. However, Jesus being an obedient Son of God does not relent in doing God's will. Jesus narrates the parable of the Good Samaritan as an invitation for everyone to participate consciously and actively in his mission of showing love and compassion to one another. Sometimes, however, we are so engrossed in our own needs that we even fail to care and help our neighbours who are in dire need.

Thus, the purpose of this work is basically to explore the message of the parable of the Good Samaritan, that is, "how to become a neighbour?" through an exegetical analysis of Luke 10:25-37. By applying the parable to the Nigerian Christians, we change the question, from "who is my neighbour?" to "are we neighbourly?" Are we friendly, kind, helpful, compassionate, charitable, merciful, considerate, caring, cooperating, and amicable? Do we love our fellow human beings as we love ourselves?

2. Motivation of the Study

The motivation for this study sprang from the imperative Christ gave to the lawyer to “go and do likewise”. This motivation prompted the curiosity of going into this research and reading related commentaries and books showing God’s universal love and compassion to everyone, especially those in dire need. Throughout the research one thing became gradually clear. The love of God which is universal and unconditional. This parable is so rich both in meaning and in practical implications that it still influences our contemporary society.

In Nigeria, we see many people living in dehumanizing situations looking and hoping for someone to take the risk like the Good Samaritan to come to their rescue, perhaps by showing them love and mercy. In this sense, the parable of the Good Samaritan has something significant to say to us. This parable describes a compassionate Samaritan, who took the risk out of love and pity for his fellow human being stopped on his journey in order to render help to the half-dead man. In this parable we see the Samaritan, through merciful and compassionate actions, revive and restore the human dignity of the certain man who became victim in the hands of robbers on the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Thus, this parable clearly portrays virtues such as generosity, hospitality, mercy, solidarity, charity, compassion, kindness etc.

3. The Structure of the Study

This work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter covers the introductory matters regarding the expression of Luke 10:25-37. We shall look at the delimitation of the text (Luke 10:25-37). We shall look at the textual criticism, form

criticism, source criticism, the context of the text (remote and immediate), the parallel texts in Mark and Matthew, historical setting and the structure of the text.

The second chapter explores the exegetical analysis of Luke 10:25-37. Thus, we will analyze the key words and phrases in the parable, the preliminary questions to the parable and the concluding dialogue. The third chapter considers the theological message of the parable of the good Samaritan; my neighbour as the one in need; the good Samaritan, an image of authentic neighbourliness; the spirit of good neighbourliness, and love for God and human beings.

The fourth chapter covers the significance of Jesus' message in the parable for Nigerian Christians: the relevance of the parable of the good Samaritan to Nigerian Christians; the attitude of Nigerian Christians towards their neighbour; the attitude of Nigerian Christians towards their Muslim brethren; genuine concern of Nigerian Christians; love without boundaries and the challenge of love of neighbour as the core of Christian life. This is followed by some recommendations and the conclusion of the work with the researcher's observations.

Chapter I

Exegesis of Luke 10:25-37 – Introductory Matters

1. Introduction

This chapter will set the basic and significant introductory matters of this long essay. Considering Luke 10:25-37, which is the pericope of our study, the chapter will begin with the delimitation of the text, textual criticism, form criticism, source criticism, the context of the text (remote and immediate), the parallel texts, the historical setting and the structure of the text. Thus, this chapter will prepare the exegetical analysis of the second chapter.

2. The Text: Luke 10:25-37

25 There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” **26** Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” **27** He said in reply, “You Shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” **28** He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” **29** But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” **30** Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. **31** A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. **32** Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. **33** But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. **34** He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. **35** The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ **36** Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” **37** He

answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”¹

3. Delimitation of the Text

3.1. Terminus a Quo

Reflecting on the change of context, theme and subject matter of Jesus’ teaching, when compared and contrasted with the preceding teaching of Jesus (10:1-24), it is obvious that the theme of neighbourliness begins from 10:25. Also, the exclamation “and behold” (καί ἰδοῦ) in v. 25 sets Luke 10:25-37 apart and indicates the beginning of a new unit.² The change of place and audience shows that Luke 10:25-37 is a separate unit from other units found in this chapter. In Luke 10:1-24, the mission of the seventy-two disciples is presented. In Luke 10:1-12 the disciples were sent by Jesus to preach the Good News; in 10:13-16 the Galilean cities that refused to believe in the gospel were criticised by Jesus, and after the arrival of the seventy-two disciples, Jesus rejoices in the success of their mission (10:17-24). In Luke 10:25, the lawyer who comes to Jesus to test him interrupt the flow of 10:1-24 and begins a new unit. In other words, the presence of the lawyer, his testing of Jesus, and his question about what he must do to inherit eternal life instigates the beginning of a new unit in Luke 10:25.³

Just before this text, there is Jesus’ hymn of praise, he rejoices in Spirit (10:21-22). It is in this context that he speaks about the privileges of the disciples (10:23-24). This theme of discipleship continues with a question put by a lawyer

¹(Luke 10:25-37 NAB)

²The formula καί ἰδοῦ is often used when something new is introduced at the close of a narrative, or at the beginning of a new narrative. It is used to strengthen the vividness of the text by inviting the reader to attend to what is said. According to Joseph A. Fitzmyer (The Gospel according to Luke [AB 28; New York: Doubleday 1981] 1:121) the introductory καί ἰδοῦ may have come from “Q,” but “in most cases it is part of “L” or Lukan redaction.

³Cf. P. BLAJER, “*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*”, 44.

who asks Jesus how salvation is to be achieved (10:25). Jesus gives an answer in the form of a story that indicates what the conduct of a true disciple should be. For Luke, the story illustrates how the wise and prudent miss what babes know.⁴

3.2. *Terminus ad Quem*

The discussion between Jesus and the lawyer ends in Luke 10:37. The answer of the lawyer in v. 37 indicates that being neighbourly means showing mercy. With a certain authority, Jesus instructs the lawyer to emulate the actions of the Good Samaritan “Go and do likewise.”⁵ The drastic change of place and audience in Luke 10:38 (the home of Mary and Martha) indicates that 10:38 marks the beginning of a new unit.⁶

4. Textual Criticism

Our main focus here is to establish whether the text remained the way the author wrote it or it has been altered. Most biblical scholars generally concur that the unit of Luke 10:25-37 is harmonious with the original Greek manuscript. According to B. M. Metzger, “Luke 10:25-37 does not present important variants.”⁷ However, it is possible for one to find some disagreements in the text of our pericope. Thus, the participle *genomenos* (“present”) in v 32 is read by the following manuscripts P A D and most minuscules. The participle *elthon* (“coming”)⁸ is read by the following manuscripts P75 ac B X and many minuscules. Thus, it is difficult to be certain that both concepts are present in the text and which of them is original if one

⁴Cf. F.B. CRADDOCK, *Luke*, 942.

⁵Cf. I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 450.

⁶Cf. P. BLAJER, “*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*”, 45.

⁷B M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 128.

⁸J A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, 887.

is omitted.⁹ According to A. Plummer, both terms cannot be genuine, that is, to use both participles would be unnecessary. But rather, it would enhance a better understanding about the dissimilar actions of the priest and the Levite in verse 32. In this regard A. Plummer says that “the Levite is made to be more heartless than the priest, whom he seems to have been following. The priest saw and passed on; but the Levite came up to him quite close, saw, and passed on.”¹⁰

5. Source Criticism

Most biblical scholars think that Luke may have reworked the Marcan episode to make it the introduction to his story about the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-28). Some other commentators think that Luke has substituted a form of the episode that is found in “Q” and which Matthew used in his reworking of the Marcan form.¹¹ However, J.A. Fitzmyer’s introduces us to some vital elements that give clue to its source. The episode of the Good Samaritan in the Lucan Gospel is so different from the Marcan story that its source should be ascribed to “L.” Luke’s use of lawyer rather than “one of the scribes” and his omission of the first part of the *Shema Prayer* said by every faithful Jew (Deut 6:4; cf. Mark 12:29b) could easily be the result of his redactional concern for the predominantly Gentile audience for whom he wrote his Gospel, if these elements were really part of his inherited story.¹² Nevertheless, it is significant to note that J.A. Fitzmyer and other biblical scholars acknowledge the fact that Luke may have been influenced by “Mark.” According to I.H. Marshall, Luke 10:30-35:

⁹Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke, 9:51-24:53*, 1036.

¹⁰A. PLUMMER, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, 287.

¹¹Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

¹²Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 878.

Shows Lucan vocabulary and style, its motifs are to be understood only against the background of Lucan theology in which the Samaritans as keepers of the law occupy a position between Israel and gentiles and form the link between them in the spread of the gospel. Further, the parable belongs inextricably to its Lucan context; it is incomprehensible without vs. 36f and 29, and the latter verse arises out of the situation in vs. 25-28; it follows that the whole section (vs. 25-37) is a Lucan redactional composition [source "L"].¹³

Luke 10:29-37 is very much connected with the preceding verses, Luke 10:25-28, especially with the introductory question put by the lawyer to Jesus: "But who is my neighbour?" Jesus' answer to it is provided in the story of the Good Samaritan. "Apart from the introductory verses (Luke 10:25-28), which is most likely of Lucan composition and fashioned by him to join this story to the preceding episode, it comes to the evangelist from his private source L."¹⁴ In other words, the story of the Good Samaritan is only told in Luke's Gospel. According to J.A. Fitzmyer, the episode of the Good Samaritan has been joined to the preceding story only in the secondary sense, since it does not really answer the lawyer's second question (But who is my neighbour?).¹⁵ Hence, based on the concluding remark of Jesus in v. 37 use *homoios*, "Likewise, in the same way," we can say that, to a certain extent, the source of this episode is the source that is known to Luke alone "L."¹⁶

6. Form Criticism

If we were to consider Luke 10:25-37 from a form-critical point of view, we would call it a parable. However, J.A. Fitzmyer says "the text lacks this customary appellation (contrast 12:16; 18:19) and would be so understood only in a generic sense of *parabole*".¹⁷ In other words, it cannot be called a parable in the strict sense.

¹³I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 446.

¹⁴Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 882-883.

¹⁵Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 883.

¹⁶Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 883.

¹⁷J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 883.

However, the concluding remark of Jesus in v.37 (*homoios*), “likewise, in the same way,” that suggest a comparison between the lawyer and the Samaritan make this story indirectly a parable. J.A. Fitzmyer holds that the story of the Good Samaritan is better understood as an example than a parable because the story is made without the concluding remark of Jesus. It will make more sense to consider the story as a practical model for Christian conduct with radical demands of certain modes of action than parable.¹⁸ According to J.D. Crossan, the parable of the Good Samaritan when taken on its own is not primarily an example to follow but a means of showing that the coming of the kingdom of God demands the complete upturning attitude such as the impossibility of a Jew bringing himself to converse with an infidel (Samaritan).¹⁹

Etymologically, parable is derived from the Greek concept *parabole*, which translates the Hebrew word “*mashal*”, meaning a comparison or similitude that has a wide range of application.²⁰ J.D. Crossan states that a parable is “an extended metaphor or simile frequently becoming a brief narrative, generally used in biblical time for didactic purpose”.²¹ Thus, the word parable in the Old Testament was basically used to mean a prophetic saying (Num 23:7; Ezek 20:49), a proverb (cf. 1 Sam 10:12; 24:13); and a mysterious saying (Ps 78:2; Prov 1:6). In the NT, the word parable was also to denote proverb (Mark 7:17; Luke 4:23); an allegory, a similitude (Matt 15:15; Mark 3:23; Luke 5:36) or a typical symbol (Heb 9:9; 11:19).²² T. Ryan says that parables were basically used to compare two realities in order to convey meaning in form of explanation, and clarification. He states that the evangelists used

¹⁸Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X- XXIV*, 883.

¹⁹Cf. I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 445.

²⁰Cf. J. D. CROSSAN, “*In Parable*”, 146.

²¹J. D. CROSSAN, “*In Parable*”, 146.

²²Cf. M.G. EASTON, “*Parable*”, 521.

them comprehensively in connection with Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom and its demands.²³ For C.H. Talbert, "a parable may function either to instruct or to provoke, that is, it may be a simile in which the lesser known is clarified by the better known ("the Kingdom of God is like") or a metaphor in which two not entirely comparable elements are juxtaposed resulting in a shock to the imagination".²⁴

Following the various definition of parable, it is worth noting that there is a dualistic interpretation in order to understand the meaning of any given parable. It can be interpreted both in the literary sense and in the real sense, that is, morally and spiritually. Parables in the literary sense are told in accordance with our daily life experiences, but hidden in them are the moral and spiritual lessons they communicate. In line with this clarification, parables can only be truly meaningful if these two meanings are applied in the context of which they were used.²⁵ Therefore, the parable of the Good Samaritan can be grasped in the light of its literary and spiritual sense. The parable of the Good Samaritan according to some biblical scholars is considered as a parable that intended to criticise a wrong but accepted principle so that values of the Kingdom of God can break into a system that is sealed. This it shows by presenting a people often ridiculed and despised by Jews, the Samaritan offering a service which the Jewish religious leaders avoided. The story of the Good Samaritan also casts significant light on the fulfilment of the love

²³Cf. T. RYAN, "Parables of Jesus", 2670.

²⁴C.H. TALBERT, *Reading Luke*, 123.

²⁵Cf. J.D. CROSSAN, "Parables", 146.

commandment in Luke's Christian community.²⁶ Thus, this story aims at showing the nature of true charity and brotherly love.²⁷

7. Context

7.1. Immediate Context

It is significant to note that the immediate context of our pericope (Luke 10:25-37) is set within the travelling account of Jesus to Jerusalem. The return of the seventy-two disciples from their mission (10:17) marks the starting point of the narrative. This is to show that certain amount of time may have lapsed between the time the seventy-two disciples set out on their mission and when they came back. The seventy-two disciples reported the outcome of their mission to Jesus their master who had sent them out for mission. They even narrated that the demons were subjected to their authority (10:17-20). Jesus responds to the seventy-two disciples saying that their mission was successful because of the power given to them.²⁸ Jesus further warns the seventy-two disciples not to take pride in the success of their mission, but their joy should be based on the fact that their names are written in heaven. The outcome of the mission of the seventy-two led Jesus to rejoice in Spirit. Jesus turned to the Father in thanksgiving for having revealed the mysteries of heaven to the childlike (10:21-22). Only the Son reveals the Father to whomever he wishes and the seventy-two disciples were among those who were privileged to see and hear what many kings and prophets craved to hear and see (10:23-24).²⁹

According to P. Blajer:

It may appear that there is no connection between the return of the seventy-two and the parable of the Good Samaritan. However, the reference to the wise

²⁶Cf. J. KODELL, *Luke*, 957.

²⁷Cf. J.C. RYLE, *Luke*, 1036.

²⁸Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 125-126.

²⁹Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 126.

(σοφός) and the learned (συνετός) from whom the mysteries of heaven have been hidden (10:21) anticipates the appearance of the scholar of the law (νομικός) who belongs to the wise and learned. Since the mysteries of heaven have been hidden from him, the scholar of the law turns to Jesus and asks: “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” In other words, the scholar of the law asks what he must do to have his name written in heaven just as the names of the seventy-two have been written in heaven.³⁰

This is to show the interconnectedness between the parable of the Good Samaritan and the preceding verses. There is also a connection between the pericope of our study and the verses that follow (10:38-42), namely, the episode that took place in the house of Mary and Martha. This episode begins with a change of place. In Luke 10:38, Jesus continues his journey and enters a certain village. There is no possibility of knowing where this episode took place because the village cannot be identified. However, the only indication Luke gives is that Jesus was welcomed by Martha and her sister Mary.³¹ The story of Mary and Martha who welcome Jesus in their home match with the story of the Good Samaritan who cares for the man beaten by robbers on the road to Jericho.³² Although, there is no linguistic connections between the story of Mary and Martha and the parable of the Good Samaritan but there are motifs that connect them. It is obvious to note that the account of our pericope did not mention the place or the time in its beginning, however, it goes on narrating the encounter between Jesus and the lawyer. According to Grundman, the encounter between Jesus and the lawyer seem to have taken place in or near Jerusalem.³³

³⁰P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 126-127.

³¹Cf. P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 127.

³²Cf. C.H. TALBERT, *Literary Pattern*, 134-135.

³³I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 441.

7.2. Remote Context

As already mention earlier the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) lies within the Journey to Jerusalem section. B.B. Scott notes that “Luke situates this parable in a debate between a lawyer and Jesus over inheriting eternal life. The lawyer’s question by paralleling that of the ruler in Luke 18:18 causes retrospection on a reader’s part.”³⁴ This is because when the question arises, the answer will be read in the light of the first story. In Luke 18, Jesus challenges the man to “sell all and distribute to the poor” (18:22), just like the Samaritan who gives his resources to care for the half-dead man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. B.B. Scott states that “both the Samaritan and the rich young man are called upon to do the unimaginable.”³⁵ Thus, the rich young man must become poor, and the Jewish fictional audience has to imagine the Samaritan as neighbour, because what is impossible for human beings to comprehend is possible for God (18:27).³⁶ Jerusalem is the place where Jesus is going to fulfil his mission which is passion death and his glorious resurrection so that humankind may be saved. According to M. Black, the purpose of the parable of the Good Samaritan “seems to be the contrast between the care for the needy and oppressed shown by the outcast Samaritan, and the negligence of the leaders of Israel, which is due to their preoccupation with the ceremonial law.”³⁷ Also, the parable draws the audience to empathize with the wounded, half-dead traveller, that is, to identify with his experience.

³⁴B.B. SCOTT, *Hear Then the Parable*, 190.

³⁵B.B. SCOTT, *Hear Then the Parable*, 190.

³⁶B.B. SCOTT, *Hear Then the Parable*, 190.

³⁷G.W.H. LAMPE, *Luke*, 833.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is meaningful to the whole journey of Jesus to Jerusalem because it illustrates clearly virtues such as compassion, mercy, solidarity, generosity and hospitality. These virtues are what we find in the action of the Good Samaritan who stopped on his journey to help a half-dead man because he was moved with compassion toward him. Thus, according to J.B. Green, Jesus' "portrayal of a Samaritan as one who embodies the Law, and whose comportment models the covenant faithfulness of and whose doing so stands in sharp contradistinction to the practices of the temple personnel on the road — serves this wider motif as it obliterates the construction of human existence sanctioned by the religious establishment in Jerusalem."³⁸

8. Parallel Texts

The texts that are considered parallel to our pericope (Luke 10:25-37) are: Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-31, the narrative in Luke 10:25-28 seems to resemble the above mentioned parallel texts in that in both Mark/ Matthew and Luke someone questions Jesus and in the cause of the questioning two verses from the Old Testament (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18) are joined in an answer.³⁹

Some biblical scholars have argued that the parallels in Matthew and Mark are only partial. Meaning that, the both set the event in Jerusalem, in the closing days of Jesus' ministry, and in a series of controversies. In Luke, the question of the lawyer concerns eternal life while in Mark/Matthew the concern is about the greatest commandment. In Mark/Matthew, Jesus answers the lawyer while in Luke, Jesus

³⁸J.B. GREEN, *The Gospel of Luke*, 427.

³⁹Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

has the lawyer answer his own question.⁴⁰ In exploring each of these parallel texts alongside Luke 10:25-37 the main focus of the writer is to expose the variations and the reason for the variations.

8.1. The Text: Mark 12:28-31

28 One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” 29 Jesus replied, “The first is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! 30 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. 31 The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

It is quite significant to note that Mark 12:28-31 is parallel to Luke 10:25-28, however, they vary in different ways such as omission of some verses in each text, difference in wordings etc. The episode in Luke 10:25-28 seems to have the kind of narrative found in Mark 12:28-31 in the sense that in both, Mark and Luke Jesus is questioned by someone and two verses from the OT (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18) are joined in an answer. Again, in the Marcan story a scribe asks Jesus which commandment is the first of all. In Mark, Jesus answered the lawyer by citing Deut 6:5 as the first and Lev 19:18 as the second commandment; in Mark the scribe further commented on Jesus’ answer.⁴¹ “Luke depicts a lawyer asking Jesus about eternal life and Jesus countering with a question which draws forth from the lawyer the double quotation of Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, to which Jesus answers with a confirmation.”⁴²

The parallel between Marcan and Lucan narratives seem to show a clear variation in the sense that one might be dealing with different traditions or perhaps

⁴⁰Cf. F.B. CRADDOCK, *Luke*, 149.

⁴¹Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

⁴²Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

different incidents in the life of Jesus.⁴³ However, most biblical scholars think that Luke might have reworked the Marcan story in order to use it as an introduction to his story about the Good Samaritan. Others are of the view that because of a number of small agreements in the Lucan story with Matthew, for instance, “lawyer,” “teacher,” “in the law,” and the omission of Deut 6:4, that Luke has substituted here a form of the episode that existed in “Q”, which Matthew used in his reworking of the Marcan form.⁴⁴ J.A. Fitzmyer states that the whole form of the episode in Lucan Gospel is so different from the Marcan story that its source should be ascribed specially to “L”. It should be considered so because of the use of “lawyer” in place of “one of the Scribe” and the omission of the first part of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4; cf. 12:29b), could easily be explained by Luke’s redactional concern for the predominantly Gentile audience for whom he was writing.⁴⁵ R. Bultmann also “notes that whereas the Marcan story (12:28-34) takes the form of a school debate, in which the answer is praised at the end, the Lucan story has become a controversy dialogue, in which Jesus’ first answer is really a counter-question and his final comment merely confirms the lawyer’s response.”⁴⁶

8.2. The Text: Matthew 22: 34-40

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gather together, 35 and one of them [a scholar of the law] tested him by asking, 36 “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” 37 He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the greatest and the first commandment. 39 The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

⁴³Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

⁴⁴Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

⁴⁵Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877

⁴⁶Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 878.

When we compare the above text (Matthew 22:34-40) with Luke 10:25-28 we see that it presents an important parallel with the text of our pericope. Most scholars are of the view that this section (Matthew 22:34-40) is derived from Mark 12:28-34 and from the “Q” source, which is highly represented by Luke 10:25-28.⁴⁷ In any case, there are still some variations noticed among the texts. These are in the form of omission of some verses in each text, difference in wordings etc. The Matthean setting is similar to that of Mark where a scribe asks Jesus which commandment is the first of all, but in Luke the scene is more elaborate and the questioner is a “lawyer.”⁴⁸ Unlike Matthew, “Luke depicts a “lawyer” asking Jesus about eternal life and Jesus countering with a question which draws forth from the lawyer the double quotation of Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, to which Jesus answers with a confirmation.”⁴⁹ S.H. Ringe, states that the variation in Mark and Matthew is quite obvious when compare to Luke, because in Mark and Matthew it is Jesus who cites the two Old Testaments verses (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18) in response to the scribe’s question, while in Luke it is the lawyer who cites those verses.⁵⁰ For F.B. Craddock, “the parallels in Mark and Matthew are only partial. Both set the event in Jerusalem, in the closing days of Jesus’ ministry, and in a series of controversies. While in Luke, the question concerns eternal life and not the greatest commandment.”⁵¹

Matthew unlike Mark and Luke started the story by noting that the Pharisees “came together” (22:34) “to test Jesus. For Matthew, it was a lawyer (nomikos) who addressed Jesus as a teacher and asked: “Which is the greatest commandment in the law (nomos)” (22:36)? So in order to respond to the lawyer’s question Jesus quoted

⁴⁷Cf. G.A. BUTTRICK, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 523.

⁴⁸Cf. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

⁴⁹J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 877.

⁵⁰Cf. S.H. RINGE, *Luke*, 156.

⁵¹F.B. CRADDOCK, *Luke*, 149.

Deut 6:5: "You shall love the Lord your God."⁵² Then Jesus went on to say that: "The second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (22:39). In any case, the concluding remark (v.40) is usually included in the quotation as part of Jesus' statement, but this might have been Matthew's redaction, which was basically designed to reflect rabbinical discussion.⁵³ Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke's placement of the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer is clearly before Jesus' last week of ministry. In Luke the response of Jesus to the lawyer's question differs from that of the other synoptic gospels.⁵⁴

9. Historical Setting

In Luke 10:25-37 we are presented with one of the most beautiful and best-loved sections of Luke's Gospel. When considering the faith context from which this text originates, we need to bear in mind that Jews despised Samaritans, the mixed population of the descendants that followed Assyria's conquest of Samaria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17). The Samaritans were known as followers of syncretistic religion, they opposed the efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem in order to re-establish the sanctuary of Yahweh. Moreover, they built a rival temple on Mount Gerazim. This created an enmity between Jews and Samaritans long before the coming of Jesus. As a result of these tensions between Jews and Samaritans, Jews could respond negatively to any reference to Samaritans without a second thought.⁵⁵ The law of cleanness and uncleanness was clear in the mind of Jews who were loyal to the Scriptures. Based on this, the Jews would not want to have anything to do with Samaritans who are consider unclean. Thus, the original setting

⁵²Cf. O.S. BROOKS, *The Function of the Double Love Command in Matthew 22:34-40*, 7.

⁵³Cf. O.S. BROOKS, *The Function of the Double Love Command in Matthew 22:34-40*, 8.

⁵⁴Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1019.

⁵⁵Cf. C.H. TALBERT, *Reading Luke*, 123.

of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Jesus' career aimed not only to teach but rather to provoke, to challenge, to shatter the stereotypes in the mind of his audience.⁵⁶ It will be difficult to imagine the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) without providing its present setting and the context in which it was narrated.

10. Structure of the Text

The systematic organisation and construction of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is what makes it the most beautiful and best-loved sections of the Luke's Gospel. Considering the change of grammar, theme, place, time, scene and main protagonists, this parable has been divided into two main episodes: the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer (10:25-28) and the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:29-37). However, this division does not negate or question the unity of the passage. Luke 10:29-37 continues the same dialogue between the lawyer and Jesus that was initiated in 10:25-28.⁵⁷ The first part of the dialogue deals with the question posed by the lawyer, "Teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life," while the second part deals with the question "And who is my neighbour." Most commentaries say the verb "to do" 10:25 frames the whole passage, while the theme of "life" 10:28 and the "neighbour" 10:29 and 10:37 respectively frame the first and the second part of the passage.⁵⁸

According to P. Blajer, the lawyer's question pertaining to what must I do to inherit eternal life, can be further divided. Especially with the change of subject and verbal forms Luke 10:25-37 could be divided into four units: the first unit (10:25)

⁵⁶Cf. C.H. TALBERT, *Reading Luke*, 124.

⁵⁷Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 58.

⁵⁸J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 425

considers the brief presentation of the main protagonists, followed by a brisk explanation that guides the intention of the lawyer and his question. The second unit (10:26) is Jesus' counter question. In the third unit (10:27) the lawyer is presented as one who is well trained in the Mosaic Law by quoting the "Shema" as means of replying Jesus' counter question. Finally, the fourth unit (10:28) show how Jesus commended the lawyer's knowledge of the law.⁵⁹

The same facts which caused that division of the first part (change of grammar, scene, time and place), led also to the division of the second part of the passage of the Good Samaritan (10:29-37). This second passage, according to some biblical scholars could be divided into five units: the first unit of this part begins with a comment on the lawyer's disposition and the question he posed. The second unit is mainly concern with the parable of the Good Samaritan narrated by Jesus (10:30-35). The third unit (10:36a) consists of the counter question posed by Jesus to the lawyer. In the fourth unit (10:36b) the lawyer indirectly admits that it was the Samaritan who proved to be neighbour to the victim. In the fifth unit (10:37) Jesus invites the lawyer to do the same.⁶⁰ Taking into cognizance the grammatical change of place, scene, time and the literary devices used in composing this passage, the structure of Luke 10:25-37 can be presented in the following manner according to P.

Blajer:

First part: "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life" (10:25-28)

The scholar's question: "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (10:25)

Jesus' counter-question: "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" (10:26)

The scholar's reply from the Shema (10:27)

Jesus' answer and imperative: "Do this and you will live" (10:28)

⁵⁹Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 59.

⁶⁰Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 62.

Second part: “And who is my neighbor” (10:29-37)
 The scholar’s question: “And who is my neighbor” (10:29)
 The proper parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30-35)
 A certain man on his way to Jericho fell into hands of robbers (10:30)
 The priest came, saw, and passed by on the other side (10:31)
 The Levite came, saw, and passed by on the other side (10:32)
 The Samaritan came, saw, and was moved by pity (10:33-35)
 Dressing the man’s wounds (10:34a)
 Taking the man into inn (10:34b)
 Final matters (10:35)
 Jesus’ counter-question: “Which of these three was neighbor” (10:36)
 The scholar’s reply (10:37a)
 Jesus’ answer: “Go and do likewise” (10:37b)⁶¹

From the structure of the parable of the Good Samaritan one might think the both passages are independent, that is, each standing on it’s own as an independent unit. Nevertheless, they are both united and considered as one unit according to most biblical commentaries.⁶²

11. Conclusion

This chapter deals with the preliminary matters surrounding the textual unit of our pericope, Luke 10:25-37. We have discussed the delimitation of the text and in doing this we identified v. 25 as where the unit of the parable of the Good Samaritan begins and ends in v. 37. In this chapter, we looked at textual criticism, source criticism and form criticism. The chapter has also demonstrated the context (immediate and remote) within which the parable is placed. The chapter looked at the parallels which show that the first part of the parable (10:25-28) is parallel to Mark (12:28-34) and Matthew (22:34-40), while the second part of the parable (10:29-37) is coming from a source known only to Luke “L.” In terms of structure the parable is divided into two parts (10:25-28), which might have been derived

⁶¹P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 62-63.

⁶²Cf. P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 63.

from other sources than Luke, while the second part (10:29-37) seems to be solely Lucan redaction. The historical setting of the parable of the Good Samaritan shows that the parable reflects the cultural dynamics of first century Palestine.

Chapter II

Exegetical Analysis Of Luke 10:25-37

1. Introduction

In this second chapter we shall delve into the exegetical analysis of Luke 10:25-37. This will begin by an exposition of some key words in order to have a better understanding of the parable of the Good Samaritan as told by Jesus. We shall also consider some of the verses in Luke 10:25-37 that have a direct link to the lawyer's question in v.25 and v.29 and Jesus' response to the question in v.26 and v.36. This is to enable us have an in depth knowledge of the text and what it entails to love God and one's neighbour.

2. Analysis of Key Words and Phrases in the Parable

2.1. Love

The word for love in Hebrew is "*ahab*," meaning a preferential love. *Ahab* in the OT can be used in different ways depending on the context in which it is being used. It can imply the love for a wife (Gen 24:47), a love for children (Gen 22:2), a love for an intimate friend (1Sam 16:21) etc.⁶³ Another word for love in the OT that is used often is "*hesed*," it means the love of God for his people, God's superabundant goodness and mercy, God's graciousness, favour and kindness. The

⁶³Cf. A.V. BORN, "Love",1377.

word “*rehem*,” means to have compassion and brotherly love.⁶⁴ Thus, the understanding of love in the OT is viewed and directed as God’s deliberate relation with his chosen people (Israel).

The word for love in the NT is *agape*, meaning active and affectionate feeling towards another person.⁶⁵ It is sacrificial love which does not take pride in wrong but act magnanimously towards another (1Cor 13:4-7); love that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1Cor 13:7). This is the kind of love expressed in the parable of the Good Samaritan. We see how the Samaritan showered his “agape” on the half-dead man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, without caring so much of the risk of being attacked by the robbers. In this parable, Jesus illustrates the generous love of God in a practical rather than theoretical sense. Thus, “in all cases, love is the force which both initiates and maintains relationships be it among persons or between God and man.”⁶⁶ “Agape” is the Christian love which Christ encourages all his disciples to possess, especially towards their neighbour.

2.2. Mercy

The word for mercy in Hebrew is “*racham*,” meaning compassionate, merciful, that is, the Lord is full of compassion and merciful. This we find in Ps 85:15, 103:8, 111:4, 145:8. E.R. Achtemeier notes that the word mercy “when applied to God or to Jesus Christ, it can denote an inner feeling of sympathy or love

⁶⁴Cf. A.V. BORN, “Love”,1378.

⁶⁵Cf. G. JOHNSTON, “Love”, 169.

⁶⁶E.M. GOOD, “Love”, 164.

which is expressed outwardly in helping action; it can mean an affection or yearning similar to that of a parent to his child; it can signify simply forgiveness.”⁶⁷

In the NT, Christ is the fulfilment of God’s mercy. This we find both in his life and ministry. Jesus says: “be merciful as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36), a repetition of the ancient commandment: “be holy as I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). Thus, we see the mercy of God portrayed by the Samaritan in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan extended a hand of mercy in order to restore the half-dead man back to life. Mercy is the purest reflection of God in a human life. That is why Matt 5:7 states that: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Mercy, therefore, is essentially that love and forgiveness which Christ reveals’ to sinners. Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus requires both the Lawyer and Pharisees to do the same.⁶⁸

2.3. A Lawyer

A lawyer is a person who is designated as being learned in the Law, one who is identical with the group usually called scribes.⁶⁹ The lawyers in Israel were occupied with the study and exposition of both the written and oral law.⁷⁰ In classical Greek, *nomikos* (lawyer) was always used as an adjectival — “pertaining to the law/corresponding to the law” — but in all other NT occurrences, except Titus 3:13, the term *nomikos* (lawyer) refers to experts in the Law/teachers of the Law.⁷¹ Thus, a lawyer could be identified as an authoritative interpreter of the Mosaic Law.

⁶⁷E.R. ACHEMEIER, “Mercy”, 352.

⁶⁸Cf. I. NOWELL, “Mercy”, 651.

⁶⁹Cf. J.L. MCKENZIE, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 501.

⁷⁰Cf. J.C. LAMBERT, “Lawyer”, 572.

⁷¹Cf. J.C. LAMBERT, “Lawyer”, 573..

R.G. Bratcher indicates that the lawyer was a man qualified to interpret the scripture, especially the Torah.⁷² The term *nomikos* is often used in Matthew and Luke for Jewish leaders who are concerned about the administration and understanding of the Torah (see Matt 22:25; Luke 7:30; 14:3).⁷³

2.4. A Certain Man (10:30)

Jesus chose to tell a parable in order to elucidate a scriptural text, in this case, Lev 19:18. J.B. Green says that “the details of the parable are true to life and therefore may be elucidated in light of the socio-historical context in which the parable is set.”⁷⁴ *A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead* (v 30). The allusion to a “certain man” is a common way that Luke begins one of Jesus’ parables to his audience.⁷⁵ For instance in Luke 12:16: “then he spoke a parable to them, saying: The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully” (for more examples see Luke 14:16; 15:11; 16:1, 19; 19:12). Thus, Jesus’ choice of using the expression “a certain man”, constitute a powerful rhetorical move on Jesus’ part, especially in the light of the debate surrounding the extend of love of one’s neighbour, grounded in one’s understanding of Leviticus 19:18. J.B. Green states that “the impossibility of classifying this person as either friend or foe immediately subverts any interest in questions of this nature. Stripped of his clothes and left half-dead, the man’s anonymity throughout the story is insured; he is simply a human being, a neighbour, in need.”⁷⁶

⁷²Cf. R.G. BRATCHER, *A Translator’s Guide to the Gospel of Luke*, 183.

⁷³Cf. W. GUTBROD, “Nomikos”, 655.

⁷⁴J.B. GREEN. *The Gospel of Luke*, 429.

⁷⁵Cf. D. L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1029.

⁷⁶J.B. GREEN. *The Gospel of Luke*, 429.

The man travelling alone from Jerusalem to Jericho fell into the hands of robbers. Jerusalem is located about 2,500 feet above sea level “on the crest of the central range of the mountains of West Palestine; it is reached by the main road which traverses the watershed of the range and by comparatively easy wadi routes which connect it with coast and the Jordan valley.”⁷⁷ While Jericho in the Jordan rift valley is about 770 feet below sea level.⁷⁸ Those who are familiar with the road from Jerusalem to Jericho say the distance is approximately seventeen miles and it could be covered on foot in several hours within a day. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a dangerous and discomfoting rout because it led through the Judean rocky desert, which provided hiding places for thieves.

2.5 The Priest (10:31)

In the covenant which was made between Yahweh and Israel, the whole people are seen as a kingdom of priests and thus holy people (Exod 19:6). However, priests in the real sense were male descendants of Aaron (Num 3:10). The main functions of the priests were linked to the temple. They were responsible for the ceremonial vessels and performed the sacrifices. They were also known as instructors of the Law, passing on the sacred traditions of the nation. The high priest was also considered the spiritual head of Israel as a nation and he had special functions such as entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).⁷⁹ The priests in conjunction with the high priest were responsible for declaring God’s will to the people. It was also their duty to teach the people God’s Law; they were

⁷⁷J.L. MCKENZIE, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 426.

⁷⁸Cf. T.R. SCHREINER, “Luke”, 820.

⁷⁹Cf. P. TOON, “Priesthood”, 1753.

meant to be the servants of the tabernacle, participating in Israel's sacrifices and worship.

The Priests were highly revered in the Jewish community because of their responsibilities as leaders of the cult. Given the role of the priests in Judaism and their responsibilities towards the Israelites, Luke audience anticipates that the priest would give a helping hand to the half-dead man.⁸⁰ The people expected the priest who instructs people about the ordinances of Yahweh to put what he teaches into practice, especially the commandment of the love of God and one's neighbour. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest is presented as a passerby, who might have been returning from performing his function as a priest in the temple to his home in the country side, since Jericho was one of the principal country residences for priests.⁸¹

Some scholars have tried in various ways to analyse the reason why the priest did not help the half-dead man he met on his way. However, the simplest reason some of them give is that he feared being ambushed by the robbers. Some say that it is possible that the priest avoided to rendered help to the half-dead man because he thought that the man was dead and was unwilling to defile himself by contact with a dead body.⁸² J. Mann points out that "the Pharisees held that a priest would not be defiled by touching a dead body when there was nobody else available to perform the burial, but the Sadducees stated that he would be defiled."⁸³ P. Billerbeck says that there was no possibility of considering the man being dead since

⁸⁰Cf. P.C. CRAIGIE, "Priesthood", 1757.

⁸¹Cf. B.B. SCOTT, *Hear Then the Parable*, 195.

⁸²Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1030.

⁸³I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 448.

the story is concerned with rendering a helping hand to a living man; thus, according to him, it is the priest's heartlessness which is the issue here.⁸⁴

2.6. The Levite (10:32)

The Levites were known as members of the Levi tribe. The Levites and the priests were in charge of offering sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem. The duties of the Levites were mostly carried out in the temple although their duties were lesser in rank and responsibilities as compared to those of the priests. "The Levites often assisted in the maintenance of the temple service (liturgy) and order."⁸⁵ The Levite of the parable was also travelling along the same route which the priest took from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he came across the place where a certain man who was half-dead was lying. His behaviour was similar to that of the priest. He passed by without helping the half-dead man.

Some scholars have suggested that the priest and Levite refrained from helping the half-dead man because they feared ritual defilement. However, J. Jeremias rejects this unsatisfactory explanation based on the fact that ritual purity was only considered significant when carrying out cultic activities. He states that the Levite by implication (v 32) was probably going away from Jerusalem, which implies that he had finished his function in the temple. Thus, there would be no room of talking about fear of defilement because they had finished their function in the temple.⁸⁶ The Levite saw the half-dead man in need of help but he did not show compassion to the helpless man.

⁸⁴Cf. I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 448.

⁸⁵W.L. LIEFELD, *Luke*, 943.

⁸⁶Cf. W.L. LIEFELD, *Luke*, 943.

2.7. A Samaritan (10:33)

Having considered the action of the two Jews (the priest and the Levite) who failed to help the half-dead man in need of help, Luke proceeds to introduce another character known as a Samaritan. The Jews did not regard the Samaritans as true Israelites. For the Jews, the Samaritans were heretical and schismatic group of spurious worshipers of the God of Israel.⁸⁷ For example, for the Jews eating with Samaritans was equated with eating pork. The Samaritans were considered unclean and were to be avoided.⁸⁸ The Samaritan of the parable was travelling along the same route that the priest and Levite had previously passed and came to the place where the wounded man was lying. Ordinarily, no one will expect a Samaritan to extend a helping hand to the half-dead man in need of help, since the priest and the Levite were not moved to show pity to him as it was expected of them.⁸⁹

Unlike the priest and the Levite who saw the half-dead man and passed on the other side of the road, the Samaritan came upon the half-dead man and was moved with pity by his situation. Some scholars say that the Samaritan was moved because he saw the wounded man as someone in need of help, someone who needs care and love. The Samaritan assisted the half-dead man not with a sense of duty, but out of compassion. “Since the Samaritans also accepted the Pentateuch, they were also bound by the Torah and the prescriptions regarding contact with a dead body. Despite the prescriptions prohibiting contact with the dead body, the Samaritan approached the anonymous half-dead man.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷Cf. J.L. MCKENZIE, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 765.

⁸⁸Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1031.

⁸⁹Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*.

⁹⁰P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 179.

The major difference between the priest/Levite and the Samaritan is that the priest/Levite came, saw and passed by on the other side (vv 31-32); while the Samaritan came, saw, was moved with compassion, went to the wounded man and cared for him. The Samaritan, unlike the priest and Levite, extended a hand of compassion and generosity towards the wounded man and this is the turning point of this entire narrative unit (vv 25-37). Judging from the behaviour of the Samaritan towards the wounded man, we can conclude that he participated in the compassion and covenantal faithfulness of God, who often sees and responds with salvific care to the helpless.⁹¹

3. Preliminary Questions

3.1. “What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?” Luke 10:25

What must I do to inherit eternal life? v 25. D.L. Bock notes that v. 25 begins as a broad soteriological discussion, initiated by the lawyer. The lawyer asked question in order to see if Jesus correctly answer the fundamental question: “How can I be sure I’ll be saved in the final resurrection?”⁹² Although, Jesus knew the intention of the lawyer, he did not respond according to the ulterior motive of the question posed by the lawyer, which in a way intend to expose Jesus’ standpoint on the Law so that he can discredit Jesus in the eyes of his disciples, but he responds according to the wisdom and goodness of the question the lawyer had asked.⁹³

This question also implies that the lawyer saw salvation as something that could be obtained based on the observance of the Mosaic Law, that is, through human actions and merits. This question also shows that the lawyer was a disciple of the Pharisees and not a Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. R.G.

⁹¹Cf. J.B. GREEN, *The Gospel of Luke*, 431.

⁹²D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1022-1023.

⁹³Cf. M. HENRY, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1448.

Bratcher indicates that the lawyer's question about eternal life refers to the future life in the Messianic age.⁹⁴ Some scholars opine that the lawyer's question is a practical question regarding the fulfilment of the law and not a theoretical question concerning the Law like in Matthew and Mark. In this sense, A. Plummer, demonstrates that the question "which is the great commandment in the law?" (Mark 12:28-32; Matthew 22:35-40) is precarious but perhaps ought not to be set aside as impossible. There the question is theological and speculative; here [Luke 10:25] it is practical."⁹⁵ Jesus respond to the lawyer's question with a question: "*what is written in the law, and how do you read it?*" (v.26). Jesus will use this opportunity to catechise the lawyer, and make him understand himself better.

3.2 Jesus' Counter Question (10:26)

Jesus does not answer the question of the lawyer directly, something which is contrary to what the lawyer expected Jesus to do. Rather, he makes the lawyer look for the answer based on his knowledge of the Torah. That is why Jesus asks; "*what is written in the law, and how do you read it?*" The answer of Jesus at first sounds frivolous, as if Jesus dismisses the lawyer's question, but, if examined critically the counter-question and its content, it is not the case as some scholars have said.⁹⁶ It is obvious that asking the counter-question Jesus provides room for more discussion and provokes the quest of the lawyer to know more about the love of God and one's neighbour.

The counter-question not only requires an answer from the lawyer, but a commitment on the part of Jesus and if possible further inquiry on the part of the

⁹⁴Cf. R.G. BRATCHER, *A Translator's Guide to the Gospel of Luke*, 183.

⁹⁵A. PLUMMER, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, 283.

⁹⁶Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 142.

lawyer.⁹⁷ If Jesus had not asked the counter-question, it is possible that the dialogue would have ended there. Thus, Jesus' counter-question should not be considered in any way as a dismissal of the lawyer's question. Some scholars believe that Jesus' counter-question allows him to examine the lawyer and check his personal understanding of the Law and what he must do to inherit eternal life.⁹⁸ Jesus' counter-question also unveils any misunderstandings and traps that the lawyer may have intended to set for Jesus.⁹⁹ According to D.L. Bock,

Jesus responds with a question about the law, which is the expression of God's revealed will for that time. By responding this way, Jesus identified himself not as a radical who wishes to deny the teaching of Jewish tradition but as one who wishes to reflect on what God requires. He sends the lawyer to their shared source of authority: the law, God's instruction to his people.¹⁰⁰

In asking the question: "*how do you read it?*" Jesus does not want to know what other scholars of the law had taught, but rather he is solely interested in a personal answer from the lawyer himself. In responding to Jesus' counter-question, the lawyer includes the commandment to love one's neighbour as a basic requirement to inherit eternal life. Thus, the commandment to love one's neighbour presupposes that one should respect and care for others as one would like to be respected and cared for. Caring for one's neighbour also implies equality, that is, a person considers the neighbour as equal by treating him or her with dignity and respect.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 142.

⁹⁸Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 143.

⁹⁹W. J. HARRINGTON, *A Key to the Parables*, 150;

¹⁰⁰D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1023.

¹⁰¹Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 151.

3.3 The Lawyer's Reply (10:27)

In order to give an answer to Jesus' counter-question, the lawyer quotes two Old Testament passages. The first is the commandment to love God (Deut 6:5), which is known as the *Shema* because it begins with "*Hear, O Israel.*" This prayer is said twice a day by a devout Jew and it is a fundamental prayer in Jewish life and worship at home, in the synagogue and in the temple.¹⁰² Deuteronomy presents "heart," "soul" and "might/strength," but Luke adds "mind." These four dimensions embrace the whole human being; it means we are called to love fully and unconditionally as the one being that we are."¹⁰³ The second Old Testament passage in the lawyer's answer is the commandment to love one's neighbour (Lev 19:18), this is derived from the Holiness Code. This shows that a combined reading of the two commandments was the common practice and the love of God and the love of one's neighbour played a significant role in and through the life of every Jew.¹⁰⁴

According to D.L. Bock, this text could be referred to as the "law of love," since one's relationships to God and humans are both covered in the command. Thus, the lawyer answers the question about receiving life in the future in concrete terms of love and devotion, not in an abstract sense in a devotion that places God at the centre of one's spiritual life and responds to others in love.¹⁰⁵ Also, "the love for one's neighbour is often seen as a summary of the law. Judaism also recognized that if humans were created in God's image then to love God, one must love humans."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Cf. J.B. GREEN, *The Gospel of Luke*., 428.

¹⁰³M.A.C. BACA, "Virtue Ethics in the Parable of the Good Samaritan", 15.

¹⁰⁴The two commandments are also closely related in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, *T. Iss.* 5:2,7:6; *T. Dan* 5:3 as well as in manuscripts from the Dead Sea 1QS 1:1-3; 9-10.

¹⁰⁵Cf. D. L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1024.

¹⁰⁶D. L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1026.

3.4 Jesus' Answer (10:28)

Jesus applauds the lawyer's answer and endorses the correctness of his answer, "You have answered correctly." The lawyer's double response which Jesus commends makes the double commandment of love into a *Magna Carta* for the conduct of the Christian disciple.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Jesus answers the original question of the lawyer by saying: "do this and you will live." By saying this Jesus intends to challenge the lawyer to move from being a knowledgeable man to practical man because knowledge alone is not sufficient. One must put what the Torah teaches into practice. One must love God in such a manner that this love is not just on the surface but is translated into action.¹⁰⁸

3.5 "And Who Is My Neighbour?" Luke 10:29

This question shows clearly that the lawyer does not have a clear understanding of the meaning of the term "neighbour" (*plesion*). At this time, the concept *plesion* (neighbour) was a controversial term; the people often understand it in different ways. According to J. Fichtner, "the noun neighbour reflects the range of possible dealings from the friend of the king to stereotyped use in a phrase like "one another." Thus, the term may have a different meaning like the friend, lover, companion, neighbour or fellow human beings."¹⁰⁹ For J. Fichtner, the noun *plesion* (neighbour) in Greek is also related to the Hebrew word *rēa'*. Its original and fundamental meaning has the sense, "to have dealings with someone" (see Prov. 13, 20; 28, 7).¹¹⁰ In the Septuagint, the term *rēa'* (neighbour) strictly speaking refers to

¹⁰⁷Cf. H. HENDRICKX, *The Third Gospel for the Third World*, 95.

¹⁰⁸Cf. P. BLAJER, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", 151.

¹⁰⁹J. FICHTNER, "Plesion," 312.

¹¹⁰Cf. J. FICHTNER, "Plesion," 313.

a person who belongs to the tribe of Israel, who is connected to Yahweh and his commandments.¹¹¹

The term *rēa'* (neighbour) in Leviticus 19:16-18 basically refers to people who belong to Israel. It was a term used for a fellow Jew and not for an outsider. Thus, the term “neighbour” is applied to “fellow members of the covenant or the community who share in the election and the covenant and the implied duties and rights.”¹¹² In Leviticus 19:18, we find that the commandment of love of neighbour does not go beyond the members of Yahweh’s covenant. Other people like Gentiles, Assyrians, Babylonians, Samaritans, foreigners, and resident aliens who are not part of the Israelite’s community within twelve tribes, are excluded. However, in Leviticus 19:34, the commandment of love of neighbour goes beyond the members of Yahweh’s covenant and includes the “aliens who resides with you,” meaning the people who dwell in the land (see Lev 19:34b; Deut 10:19).¹¹³ Hence, the question asked by the lawyer in Luke 10:29: “*who is my neighbour?*” has to be interpreted within a context where the meaning of neighbour was limited to members of Yahweh’s covenant alone. With this in mind, the lawyer’s question refers to a “love of neighbour” that is basically limited to the fellow members of the covenant, within the national community.¹¹⁴ In Luke 10:29, the bone of contention of the lawyer’s question focuses on the object of love of the one who really loves. As regards to object of love, H.I. Marshall says:

Jesus’ answer is that any person is a ‘neighbour’ if he belongs to the circle of those who regard the law as valid and keep it. This was true of the Samaritan in the story; in other words, non-Jews can be ‘neighbours’, and Jews themselves (as

¹¹¹Cf. J. FICHTNER, “Plesion,” 312.

¹¹²J. FICHTNER, “Plesion,” 314-315.

¹¹³Cf. J. FICHTNER, “Plesion,” 315.

¹¹⁴Cf. J. FICHTNER, “Plesion,” 315.

typified by the priest and Levite) must take care that they too qualify as 'neighbours' by keeping the law.¹¹⁵

Thus, the Lucan Jesus gave a new interpretation of the term neighbour, which goes beyond any kind of limitation due to the action of the Samaritan, who became neighbour to the half-dead man by keeping God's Law (Lev 19:18). The Samaritan not only observe the commandment of love of God and the love of one's neighbour, but he put it into action by caring for the half-dead man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.

3.6 The Compassionate Samaritan (10:34)

In this verse Jesus describes six concrete elements of compassionate actions that the Samaritan undertakes for this man. 1) The Samaritan comes up him and 2) binds his wounds. This might have involved the Samaritan's ripping up some of his own clothes for bandages. As he engages in the process of bandaging the wounds he; 3) anoints the cuts with oil wine. Oil soothed the wound, while wine disinfected it.¹¹⁶ J.D.M. Derrett notes that the Samaritan may have deprived himself of refreshment in the midst of his journey to care for the man. In some orthodox Jewish circles, to receive oil or wine from a Samaritan was not allowed.¹¹⁷ 4) The Samaritan loads the man on his own mule, depriving himself from the usual comfort, which probably meant that the Samaritan walk from that place on; 5) then the Samaritan takes the half-dead man to an inn, where he 6) can provide care and comfort to this half-dead man he has just met on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, 7) he offers money to the innkeeper for the subsequent care given to that man.¹¹⁸ J.B. Green says

¹¹⁵H.I. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 445.

¹¹⁶Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1032-1033.

¹¹⁷Cf. I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke*, 445.

¹¹⁸Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1033.

that the Samaritan acts of compassion, participates in the compassion and covenantal faithfulness of God, who sees those in dire need and responds with salvific care.¹¹⁹

Thus, the parable of the Good Samaritan “undermines the determination of status in the community of God’s people on the basis of ascription, substituting in its place a concern with performance, the granting of status on the basis of one’s actions.”¹²⁰

3.7 Final Matters (10:35)

The Samaritan went extra-miles to insure the continued care of the half-dead man by offering two days’ wages to pay for any additional expenses. It was the job of the inn keeper to care for the wounded man until the Samaritan returns. The Samaritan out of love and compassion took care of the bill of the wounded man since the robbers made away with his belongings. The Samaritan has taken care of this problem, as well as aiding the half-dead man’s physical wounds.¹²¹ D.L. Bock states that “this compassionate act, as many compassionate acts do, involves a concrete price that the Samaritan was willing to pay.”¹²² In order to describe the extent of the magnanimity of the Samaritan, J.B. Green says:

the care the Samaritan offers is not a model of moral obligation but of exaggerated action grounded in compassion that risks much more than could ever required. He stops on the Jericho road to assist someone he does not know in spite of the self-evident peril of doing so; he gives of his own goods and money, freely, making no arrangements for reciprocation; in order to obtain care for this strange, he enters an inn, itself a place of potential danger; and he even enters into an open-ended monetary relationship with the innkeeper, a relationship in which the chance of extortion is his.¹²³

¹¹⁹Cf. J.B. GREEN, *The Gospel of Luke*, 431.

¹²⁰J.B. GREEN, *The Gospel of Luke*, 431.

¹²¹Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1033.

¹²²D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1033.

¹²³J.B. GREEN, *The Gospel of Luke*, 432.

4. Concluding Dialogue

4.1 “Which of These Proved Neighbour to the Man?” Luke 10:36

Having ended the story of the half-dead man on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, Jesus turns and ask the lawyer a counter-question: “which of these three, became a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?” (v.36). If love of neighbour is one of the conditions to inherit eternal life, the question one should ask is how can one express that love, rather than defining the limits of love, or restricting the love of neighbour to one group. Jesus’ counter-question invites the lawyer to look at neighbour from the perspective of someone who needs help removing any kind of prejudice.¹²⁴

Some scholars are of the view that Jesus did not answer the question asked by the lawyer, because his answer does not correspond to the lawyer’s question. Some other scholars opine that the content of Jesus’ counter-question sheds light on why Jesus did not answer the lawyer’s question immediately but chose to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan instead. Thus, the content of the counter-question indicates that Jesus is not so much interested in the official prescriptions of the Law. Jesus does not ask the lawyer what the Law states about neighbour. Jesus does not want the lawyer to define the limits of neighbour in an abstract sense; rather Jesus is interested in the lawyer’s opinion based on a concrete case of the half-dead man.¹²⁵

According to D.L. Bock,

Jesus asks the lawyer’s opinion about which character acted as a neighbour. The expression he chooses to ask the question is significant: which of the men “became” an example of a neighbour? Compassion, response, and love make a neighbour, not locale or race. Jesus question shows what a neighbour is. One should not seek to narrowly define who is a neighbour so as to limit one’s

¹²⁴Cf. A.J. HULTGREN, *The Parables of Jesus*, 99.

¹²⁵Cf. P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 191.

responsibility. The obligation is not see what can be avoided, but to render aid when it can be readily supplied.¹²⁶

The end of the parable (v.36) presents an invitation to imitate the generosity and hospitality demonstrated by the heretic, despised Samaritan to attend to the half-dead man in need of help. Thus, it is not a question of where and how far I should draw the borderline or limits of the notion of “neighbour”.¹²⁷

Given an accurate answer to Jesus’ counter-question must have been a thorn on the flesh of the lawyer. It was a challenge for the lawyer because the one least expected to render help, was moved with pity, compassion, love, mercy and stopped in his journey to render help to the man in need. The ethnical, religious and cultural barriers did also not allow the lawyer to admit that the Samaritan could be a positive instrument in the story.¹²⁸ The answer the lawyer gives is: “the one who treated him with mercy.” This kind of answer seems to hide the identity of the Samaritan or rather he understands that it is not ethnicity but our behaviour that are important. Some scholars suggest that it is possible for the lawyer to avoid the name Samaritan because of ethnic barriers. Some are of the opinion that the lawyer did not explicitly mention the Samaritan, because he admits that being a neighbour requires crossing the barriers that separate people from each other.

The lawyer also acknowledges that he understands the message of Jesus, that one cannot define who neighbour is; one can only become a neighbour.¹²⁹ Thus, being neighbour requires acting with compassion. Nobody can consider himself or herself as neighbour unless he or she looks at others with compassion, sees their needs and acts toward them with merciful heart. Thus, the answer given by the

¹²⁶D. L. BOCK *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1034.

¹²⁷Cf. B. BYRNE, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke’s Gospel*, 101.

¹²⁸Cf. P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 192.

¹²⁹Cf. Cf. P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 194.

lawyer to Jesus' counter-question implies that the lawyer understands the need to cross the barriers that separate him as a Jew from the Samaritans. In this light the lawyer understands that seeing someone with mercy requires taking action in order to create the bond of neighbourliness. The lawyer is also able to understand that the term neighbour is not limited to friends, acquaintances, relatives etc. Rather the term neighbour includes all those who are helpless, those who are deprived of basic needs.¹³⁰

4.2 “Go and Do Likewise” Luke 10:37

Having examined the answer of the lawyer, Jesus accepts it and instructs the lawyer to go and do likewise, which literally means to emulate the kind gesture of the Samaritan, to help all those in need. It also means to set aside any barriers that separate people and made them regard as aliens.

Unlike v. 29, where the lawyer gives a profound answer to the question Jesus asked him and even Jesus admits that the lawyer answered correctly, in v. 37 Jesus does not say that the lawyer's answer was correct. He only instructed the lawyer to do likewise, which already indicate that the lawyer's answer was correct. Looking at v. 28 and v. 37b one might say that the instructions given by Jesus to the lawyer are the same. However, when analysed critically we realised that they are not the same. In v. 28, Jesus says: “do this and you will live,” while in v. 37b the order to do likewise is preceded by a dismissal. Jesus says: “go and do likewise.” This expression shows that Jesus finally gives the lawyer the answer he was anticipating. Moreover, the emphatic personal pronoun “you” is another significant element that

¹³⁰Cf. P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 196.

distinguishes the answers in v. 28 and v. 37b.¹³¹ Whereas in v. 28 Jesus simply instructs the lawyer to do what the law prescribed, in v 37b Jesus stresses that the lawyer must put into action the lesson he had learnt from the parable of the Good Samaritan.

P. Blajer indicates that the imperative “do” in v. 37b echoes the lawyer’s question, “Teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life in v. 25, as well as Jesus’ first invitation to do what the law prescribes: “do this and you will live” (v. 28).”¹³² Since the verb to “do” frames the whole passage, Jesus’ invitation to “do” implies that the lawyer should emulate the attitude of the one who acted with mercy in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer is also invited to follow his example in order to do what the law requires, that is, to love of one’s neighbour as himself.¹³³

5. Conclusion

In this chapter we paid attention to some of the key words found in Luke 10:25-37 such as lawyer, a certain man, priest, Levite and a Samaritan, which were used to narrate the parable of the Good Samaritan. A detailed analysis was also carried out of some of the verses that are directly connected to the questions the lawyer asked (*what must I do to inherit eternal life* in v. 25 and in v. 29 and *who is my neighbour?*) as well as Jesus’ counter-question in v. 26 that made the lawyer give a profound answer to the questions he posed to Jesus.

We fathomed that Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan to show the lawyer and his disciples that the only way to inherit eternal life is by loving God and one’s neighbour without any prejudices toward them, by accepting and caring for

¹³¹Cf. J. JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus*, 205.

¹³²P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 197.

¹³³Cf. P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, 198.

one another irrespective of the individuals religion, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, culture, race or colour. This includes everyone; be it a Samaritan, a Gentile or a Jew.

Chapter III

The Spirit of Good Neighbourliness as an Authentic Christian Mission

1. Introduction

If there is any positive input of the parable of the Good Samaritan to our world today, it is the fact that we are all called to become neighbours to those who are in dire need, that is, to live our comfort zones in order to become neighbours to the poor and those whom the society rejects. This chapter focuses on the theological message of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The chapter explores what it really means to love God and one's neighbour in practical terms; we shall also explore the spirit of good neighbourliness as an example of true Christian value, a means for eternal life and as the core of Christian mission.

2. Theological Message of the Parable of the Good Samaritan

We fathomed that Jesus narrated the parable of the Good Samaritan to explicitly show the lawyer and his disciples that the only means to inherit eternal life is by loving God and one's neighbour without any prejudices toward them; by accepting and caring for one another irrespective of the individuals religion, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, culture, race or colour. This includes everyone; be it a Samaritan, a Gentile or a Jew. Thus, in this parable, Jesus teaches explicitly that love for one's neighbour knows no bounds of ethnicity, culture, religion or even

nationality. In this parable, Jesus depicts the Samaritan who notwithstanding the danger on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho helps the robbed and half-dead man wholeheartedly. Thus, the Samaritan really reveals the attitude of love for his neighbour.¹³⁴ The theological message of this parable is not about who deserves to be cared for, but rather about the need to become a person who treats everyone in need with love and compassion.¹³⁵

The parable of the Good Samaritan also shows that foreigners, outcasts, and the poor may all receive God's mercy. If there is any message the parable of the Good Samaritan has for us today in our modern world, it is the fact that people in need certainly require resources to help themselves. The money, however, is never enough. Those in need often require personal help, personal encouragement, friendship and love.

E. E. Ellis states that the parable of the Good Samaritan points out Judaism's failure to fulfil the Law in Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 that the lawyer quotes and to obtain the life of the kingdom of God. Not only that the Jewish legalism fails but the despised Samaritan is nearer than the Jew to a true fulfilment of the law.¹³⁶ E.E. Ellis also underlines that: "neighbour is not an object that one defines but a relationship into which one enters."¹³⁷

The parable of the Good Samaritan "stands pre-eminent as Jesus' answer to all attempts at self-justification, to all efforts to enter the kingdom through obedience, to all legalisms."¹³⁸ To be a neighbour simply means to go beyond

¹³⁴Cf. N. GELDENHUYS, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 311.

¹³⁵Cf. L.T. JOHNSON, *The Gospel of Luke*, 175.

¹³⁶Cf. E.E. ELLIS, *The Gospel of Luke*, 160.

¹³⁷E.E. ELLIS, *The Gospel of Luke*, 160.

¹³⁸E.E. ELLIS, *The Gospel of Luke*, 160.

friends or family and extend welcome and compassion to the outcast and even to one's enemy.¹³⁹ My neighbour is consequently any human person who is in need, and with this in mind, racial prejudice would be dissolved.

In person-to-person relationships, irrespective of his or her race or attitude, the parable points to a Christian value that it is the personal responsibility of a Christian to show compassion. This parable tends to stand against human cold-heartedness towards others.¹⁴⁰ J. Dillersberger notes that this parable of the Good Samaritan demands a complete revolution of thought on more than one point in the human mode of thinking schooled in the Old Testament. The commandment of loving God and one's neighbour is questionable in the behaviour of the priest and Levite.¹⁴¹

3. My Neighbour as the One in Need

My neighbour as someone in need simply goes beyond nationality, religion, race, colour, and ethnicity. It basically has to do with caring for anyone in dire need including my enemy. This point is clearly stated in Lev 19: 9-10, 13, 15-17:

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. 10 And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. 13 You shall not oppress your neighbour or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning. 15 You shall do no injustice in judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour. 16 You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand forth against the life of your neighbour: I am the Lord. 17 you shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbour, lest you bear sin because of him.

¹³⁹Cf. M.F. PATELLA, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 77.

¹⁴⁰Cf. H.H. HOBBS, *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, 184.

¹⁴¹J. DILLERSBERGER, *The Gospel of Saint Luke*, 295.

Thus, for a Christian to regard his or her neighbour as someone in need, the Christian must be just to his or her neighbour. The parable thus makes a renewed invitation to the Christian to love his or her neighbour without prejudice. The Gospel of Matthew 25:34-36, 40 clearly states this aspect of love in concrete terms, that is, what it means to care for one's neighbour:

34 Then the King will say to those at his right hand, Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. 40 Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.

Hence, the aforementioned verses from the Gospel of Matthew are the genuine way of expressing our love and care for our neighbour irrespective of who that person might be in a practical manner. Jesus also encourages us to love the stranger and reach out to those forgotten by the society. M.T. Kelsey notes that reaching out to the stranger has to have a high priority on our list of activities. This value of reaching out to the stranger is presented as a constant attitude that a Christian should have because the need to reach out to the neighbour may come up without warning as indicted in the parable. But the Christian is expected to respond readily in some generous way at each moment.

In considering the stranger, we must be aware enough to look beyond ourselves.¹⁴² Considering the stranger or the certain man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho who was half-dead and was helped by the Good Samaritan, M.T. Kelsey states that “a Christian church which is not organized to reach out to the strangers in its midst is simply not living out the gospel message. Every church needs to develop

¹⁴²Cf. M.T. KELSEY, *Caring: How Can We Love One Another?*, 171.

a lay ministry of outreach to the strangers within it and around it”.¹⁴³ St. Vincent de Paul Society is a good example of such an outreach.

4. The Good Samaritan: An Image of Authentic Neighbourliness

My neighbour as a creature of God is a human being whose being originates with and is owed to God. Thus, to love the neighbour as a creature involves “respectful reverence toward the other in the ways the other is independent of us, and a posture of attention or loving clear-sightedness regarding the other in his or her need.”¹⁴⁴ This attention to the creature in his or her basic reality of otherness and dependence teaches us how real things can be considered and loved without being seized and used, without being appropriated. This implies reaching out to the other in a non-exploitative manner.

The message of the parable was a challenge to the Jews of Jesus’ time. If a non-Jew, a Samaritan for that matter, is as thoughtful and caring, how much more the Jews who have the obligation to do so as stipulated in Lev 19:18? Jesus consequently renews this stipulation of the Old Testament Law, transforming it into a Christian Law. Thus, if in our contemporary world, non-Christian can be as thoughtful and charitable to their neighbour, how much more the Christians who is expected to do so by the stipulation of the new Law? It could thus be argued that the parable of the Good Samaritan is presented by Jesus as a practical image of an authentic neighbourliness.

My neighbour is my brother or sister for whom Christ suffered and died. This implies that all are united to each other as each is bound to Christ, in whom we

¹⁴³M.T. KELSEY, *Caring: How Can We Love One Another?*, 177.

¹⁴⁴E.N. SANTURRI – W WERPEHOWSKI, *The Love Commandments: Essay in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, 148.

may become adopted children of God.¹⁴⁵ Thus, to love my neighbour as my brother or sister is to encounter him or her in a humble spirit, and to witness to common kinship through fidelity to his or her well-being along the manner of God in Jesus Christ. N.S. Edmund and W. William state that “to love the neighbour is to love what God loves, out of love for the one who graciously creates, redeems, and completes.”¹⁴⁶ As St. Ignatius of Loyola would say: “to love our neighbour in charity is to love God in man, and man in God; it is to hold God alone dear for His own sake, and the creatures for the love of Him.” In loving our neighbour we see a soul inhabited by the Holy Spirit, beautified by divine grace, and redeemed at the price of Christ’s blood.¹⁴⁷

The motive for a genuine and all embracing love is to love creatures (our neighbours) because God also loves, sustains and shelters them. A conditional love for humankind is nothing other than self-centred love; in this case we only love those who are attractive to us, those who would reciprocate our love for them like the Pharisees. On the contrary unconditional and genuine love is founded on faith in God and love for God, which is made manifest in one’s love for his/her neighbour. If one truly loves God, he/she will necessarily love the neighbour without looking for his own selfish gain.¹⁴⁸

G. Lawrence and S.V.D. Lovasik St. Catherine of Siena who heard the Heavenly Father in a vision say: “Perfect charity toward the neighbour essentially depends on the perfect charity a soul has for Me. The soul has the same measure of

¹⁴⁵Cf. E.N. SANTURRI – W. WERPEHOWSKI, *The Love Commandments: Essay in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, 150.

¹⁴⁶E.N. SANTURRI – W. WERPEHOWSKI, *The Love Commandments: Essay in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, 152.

¹⁴⁷G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 20.

¹⁴⁸Cf. G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 21.

perfection as is found in its love for Me.”¹⁴⁹ St. Margaret Mary the founder of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, quoted in the book, also said:

When at prayer, I begged our Lord to make known to me by what means I could satisfy the desire that I had to love Him, He gave me to understand, that one cannot better show one’s love for Him than by loving one’s neighbour for love of Him; and that I must work for the salvation of others, forgetting my own interests in order to espouse those of my neighbour, both in my prayers and in all the good I might be able to do by the mercy of God.¹⁵⁰

All these examples are anchored in self-sacrifice for one’s neighbour, as is clearly seen in the action of the Good Samaritan, who gave up his own personal needs in order to attend to the half-dead man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Thus, the love of God only grows and yields spiritual fruits in the lives of those who love their neighbour with a sincere love. The act of not loving God may lead to various attitudes that separate us from our neighbour such as selfishness, conflicting interests, envy, hatred, jealousy.¹⁵¹ Hence, true love of God and of one’s neighbour are the most significant type of motivation in what we do as people made in the image and likeness of God.

As authentic followers of Christ, we are to ask ourselves this question: “whose neighbour am I?” What can I do to become the kind of person who cannot pass by on the other side of the road without showing compassion and love? The parable of the Good Samaritan challenges us to be ready and willing to help the needy people God places on our path. Ephesians 2:10 makes this point clear when it says: “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” God in his infinite goodness has given us the grace to meet the needs of the less-privileged, those suffering and the wounded

¹⁴⁹G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 24.

¹⁵⁰G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 24-25.

¹⁵¹G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 25.

people we encounter. Going to do likewise, as Jesus commands the lawyer in the parable of the Good Samaritan may imply at times an act of forgiveness for the other person, which will make us behave as sons and daughters of a merciful God in whose image and likeness we are made. For our gift of compassion and forgiveness towards our neighbour to be authentic, it must represent the end of blaming, of projecting, of self-defending. It must be rooted in true humility, in the recognition of our own humanness and our own failures. Without these elements of humility and a genuine acceptance of the other person without recrimination, our forgiveness will be incompatible with our faith.¹⁵²

5. The Spirit of Good Neighbourliness: An Example of True Christian Value

The value of the love of God and love of one's neighbour, emphasizes that all human beings made in the image of God count as neighbours to be loved, irrespective of their attitudes. It is not because they can respond in kind but simply because they are members of the human community created by God. Hence, genuine love ought to regard all human beings, irrespective of their weakness, difference from us and limitation, as full-fledged neighbours to be loved.¹⁵³

Some scholars note that love for God is the most profound anyone can ever possess. Our love for God can only be made manifest in our love for our neighbour: "only by loving people can we prove the love we profess toward God".¹⁵⁴ Again, "there can be no true love of God apart from love of our neighbour. While we assuredly experience the love of God in worship and private devotion, we also

¹⁵²Cf. J. PULS, *A Spirituality of Compassion*, 64.

¹⁵³Cf. E.N. SANTURRI – W. WERPEHOWSKI, *The Love Commandments: Essay in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, 132.

¹⁵⁴R.H. RAMEY – B. C. JOHNSON, *Living the Christian Life*, 116.

experience this love in works of compassion.”¹⁵⁵ As people made in God’s image and likeness we are expected to express our love for others through deeds of mercy, just the way God touches our lives through prayer. It is obvious that we cannot love our neighbour without a prior love for God. Without our love for God we are left with a self-centeredness which hinders love of neighbour. Also, without self-denial we cannot love our neighbour. One of the best ways to practice such inward self-denial is to force ourselves to perform the duties of charity. Since we share a common humanity, “we cannot but behold, our own face in those who are poor and despised, who have come to an end of their own power to help themselves, and who groan under their burden, even though they are utter strangers to us.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, to love my neighbour as one in God’s image is to honour God. Through the motivation of love, this honour to God builds up human community.

Furthermore, any Christian who hearkens to the voice of Christ: “go and do likewise”, as the lawyer was directed to do after having listened to the parable of the Good Samaritan, and put it into practice reveals God to humankind; he or she shows that God abides in him or her in a living and tangible way, that “God is Love”; and he or she is a reflection of God. Mercy and charity become the manifestation of God in those who show love to their neighbour.¹⁵⁷ F. Cuttaz notes that “our charity is, therefore, God’s communication to us of his own charity, a participation in his life of love, in his divinity.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵R.H. RAMEY – B. C. JOHNSON, *Living the Christian Life*, 118.

¹⁵⁶R.H. RAMEY – B. C. JOHNSON, *Living the Christian Life*, 121.

¹⁵⁷Cf. F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 26.

¹⁵⁸F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 26.

5.1. The Act of Charity Christianizes us

Our practice of charity like that of the Good Samaritan makes us good followers of Christ, who is the epitome of charity, for it is only through our practicing of the virtue of charity to a stranger in dire need that we can be called followers of Christ (Christians). Thus, in putting the virtue of charity into practice we emulate the merciful and compassionate Christ and we become like him in our acts of charity. This point is clearly stated in John 13:13-15: “you call me teacher and master, and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also.”

This act of charity is what the Good Samaritan put into practice by showing mercy to the half-dead man. Thus, Jesus, a renowned teacher, encourages the lawyer and all Christians to *go and do likewise*. As Christians, we are called to put into practice compassion and love as Christ did. As Christians, we are mostly recognized through our acts of charity. The Gospel of John 13:35 states it clearly: “this is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for another”. Father O. Durand quoted in F. Cuttaz book that “charity among Christians should be so real and so evident, that in itself it singles them out as disciples of Jesus Christ, even in the eyes of those who have no indication that these are Christians.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, to be a disciple of Christ is to walk in the footsteps of Christ, to follow all the examples that Christ has laid down for his disciples. Since the love of one’s neighbour is the principle element in Christ’s moral teaching, one can be his disciple only by the perfect practice of charity, especially to those whom we consider as strangers and enemies. Hence, J. Dillersberger notes that “love of one’s neighbour is set above the

¹⁵⁹F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 30.

love of God, at least in so far as it is made the touchstone for the right attitude of the whole man towards the commandment of love".¹⁶⁰

5.2. Christian Charity is Sanctifying

As Christians, we are sanctified through the practice of charity. It is this act of charity that makes us share in the divine life of God; charity to our neighbour makes us become like God for "God is Love" (1 John 4:8). F. Cuttaz notes that "if one prefers to define holiness as an intense love of God and of Christ, it will also be true to say that holiness consists, by this very act, in an intense love of one's neighbour."¹⁶¹ Thus, the love of one's neighbour is the indispensable condition of our love of God. John 15:10, 12 states it clearly that "if you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love... This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you". Thus, to be holy is to love God with an ardent love and to have the same love for our neighbour which the Good Samaritan displayed towards the wounded man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Our holiness is often measured with our supernatural love for our neighbour. F. Cuttaz also indicates that,

Since our perfection is synonymous with our love of God, and since the love of our neighbour is the sign that we love God, the state of our relations with our neighbour indicates exactly the condition of our spiritual life... Since Charity is demanded at all times, and since the obligation of Charity is never fully discharged but continues from day to day, its practice constantly exercises the soul, keeps it from become sluggish, urges it ceaselessly toward greater perfection, prevents its becoming self-centred, and furnishes it with occasions for unceasing effort.¹⁶²

Thus, charity as a Christian virtue involves sanctifies because it comprises of the practice of all the other virtues such as purity, fortitude, prudence, justice, truth,

¹⁶⁰J. DILLERSBERGER, *The Gospel of Saint Luke*, 296.

¹⁶¹F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 52.

¹⁶²F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 53.

humility, obedience, faith, hope; it strengthens them all and becomes a powerful means of growth in the spirit. Although, charity strengthens all the other virtues, it is difficult in practice: “it imposes many severe sacrifices, self discipline beyond our natural resources, especially in the pardoning of injuries and the love of our enemies.”¹⁶³ To be faithful to the virtue of charity as the Good Samaritan did requires an indispensable assistance from God, that is, the grace of God is needed.

5.3. Charity as Self-Renunciation

The Christian love unlike like other forms of love is self-renouncing love, which means passionate preference for other people. S. Kierkegaard notes that “love of one’s neighbour, is self-renouncing love, and self-renunciation casts out all preferential love just as it casts out all self-love-otherwise self-renunciation would also make distinctions and would nourish preference for preference.”¹⁶⁴ To love one’s neighbour means to go an extra-mile to sacrifice one’s self for the other person. It means to give in your time, energy and resources in order to give hope to the hopeless just like the Good Samaritan did to the half-dead man in the parable. Charity as self-renunciation implies love without self-interest, that is, the kind of love Christ lavished on us by dying on the cross to save humanity.¹⁶⁵

5.4. Charity Brings Happiness

Emulating the attitude of the Good Samaritan who showed compassion to the half-dead man is what we as Christians are called to do. We experience happiness when we contribute towards the happiness of others. “No one would dispute that it is

¹⁶³F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 56.

¹⁶⁴S. KIERKEGAARD, *Works of Love*, 67.

¹⁶⁵Cf. A.O. ACHUNONU, *Poverty and the Church in Igboland, Nigeria*, 27.

more agreeable to live with charitable people, who are patient, amiable, obliging, helpful, indulgent in their judgments, considerate in their words and actions, showing esteem affection,”¹⁶⁶ as opposite to those who have contrary attitudes toward others. F. Cuttaz notes that through charity, we acquire a wonderful likeness to God and participate in the life of love of the triune God. He who participates in God’s charity, shares also in God’s happiness. As S. Nonaud says: “the secret of happiness consists rather in giving it than in winning it for oneself.” “He who loves is himself loved. Even a person who dislikes him will not be able to resist the attraction of his love, and will soon alter his dispositions towards the charitable Christian. We win love by loving, for Charity spread like fire.”¹⁶⁷ Thus when we speak about Christian charity, we do not mean any other charity rather we mean a charity that is natural because it is derived from charity of God who loves humanity unconditionally. Christian charity does not only mean giving when there is surplus; it is also giving in scarcity. Charity does not only reflect in material wealth but also good wishes, advice and one’s time.¹⁶⁸

In fraternal charity, we are given many opportunities to exercise our love for God, which manifest itself in the love we have for our neighbours. All our acts of charity for our neighbours is done for God, for instance, we care because in caring for our neighbour, we help God in helping our neighbours; we serve God in serving our neighbours; we love God in loving our neighbour.¹⁶⁹ This is exactly what we see in the parable of the Good Samaritan, he took care and served the half-dead man because of the love he had for God. Like the Good Samaritan who devoted himself

¹⁶⁶F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 63.

¹⁶⁷F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 65.

¹⁶⁸Cf. A.O. ACHUNONU, *Poverty and the Church in Igboland, Nigeria*, 29.

¹⁶⁹F. CUTTAZ, *Fraternal Charity*, 57.

ceaselessly to the service of the half-dead man, we can do likewise to our neighbours, for the various needs that require constantly our devotions. A. Ple notes that “to love our neighbour with fraternal love is to wish him all the good that God wishes him, and to do all we can to promote the most favourable conditions necessary for his happiness, his complete human happiness, in eternity, yes, but also here and now”.¹⁷⁰

5.5. Charity as a Christian Value is Universal

Christian love must embrace the whole world, not only in thought and feeling but in reality. It must be manifested in the life of every Christian, especially in our love for strangers. Jesus the perfect model of charity made “it is clear that everyone who believes in his obligation to love his neighbour as himself should be willing and ready to be a neighbour to anyone in need. Being a neighbour simply means holding out a helping hand to a fellow man without stopping to figure out the claims he may have on your help.”¹⁷¹ St. Paul encourages us to be kind to all people: “while we have time, let us do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). There should be no restriction to our love for neighbours, we need to show love to strangers, to people of other religions, to those who are naturally repulsive to us, to those who are opposed to our views about reality, to those who sincerely depend on our generosity, to those who love us and to those whom we love.¹⁷² God is the source of charity, but love of God manifests itself in the love of our fellow human beings. Charity as a gift of the Holy Spirit excludes no one, for Christ died for all and all are invited to belong to his kingdom. Love does

¹⁷⁰A. PLE, *Love of our Neighbour*, 161.

¹⁷¹G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 32.

¹⁷²Cf. G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 32.

not discriminate; it even embraces enemies and sinners, because they are still able to become living members of Christ's body. Thus, opportunities of neighbourliness are limitless.¹⁷³

6.0 The Spirit of Good Neighbourliness: A Means for Eternal Life

If love for one's neighbour implies love for God, then to love one's neighbour is to inherit eternal life. This is clearly said in 1 John 3:14-15: "we know that we have passed from death to life, because we our brothers. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." In 1 John 4:20-21 we also read: "if anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar; for he does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also." The love of one's brother in these verses implies the love of neighbour.

If I don't show mercy or compassion to my neighbour who is in dire need, then the love of God is not in me and eternal life does not abide in me. According to St. Paul (1Cor. 13:7): "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Love is the greatest among all the Christian virtues. Love is the eternal element in the Christian life; it abides forever. One who loves, lives in God, and God in him. If to love God implies to love one's neighbour, then to love one's neighbour will imply to have eternal life. Also, C. Owczarek notes that "in order to inherit eternal life one should be merciful (have mercy) on those in need and, thus, 'become a neighbour' to them."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³Cf. G. LAWRENCE – S.V.D. LOVASIK, *Kindness*, 34.

¹⁷⁴C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 206-207.

It is essential to note that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' recommendation for eternal life is a binding value irrespective of any religious affiliation. He does not say to the lawyer: be a Jew and you will inherit eternal life. Thus, eternal life for Jesus belongs to those who love God and their neighbour in a practical sense. Eternal life is available for everyone who does the will of God irrespective of each one's religious affiliation.

7. The Spirit of Good Neighbourliness as the Christian Mission

In *Deus Caritas Est* Pope Benedict XVI states that the mission of "the Church's charitable activity, in its most fundamental meaning, is a participation in the missionary love of the Son in anticipation of the Holy Spirit." Like the Good Samaritan who showed love and compassion to the wounded man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, Benedict XVI notes that:

The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man: it seeks his evangelization through Word and Sacrament... and it seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life and human activity. Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs.¹⁷⁵

Hence, it is the primary duty of the Church to show love to everyone and to work for the salvation of all humanity. It is the duty of the Church to bring people into communion with God. This is clearly spelt out by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical titled *Deus Caritas Est*, where he says that love of neighbour is first of all "a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level."¹⁷⁶ This missionary dimension of the love of neighbour was made manifest from the inception of the church, for instance, in the early believers' common possession of goods (Acts 2:44-

¹⁷⁵BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25December 2005) 19.

¹⁷⁶BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25December 2005) 20.

45): “all who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

In line with the spirit of neighbourliness Jesus says: “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 discovering 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). These people that Jesus came to give life are still in our midst and it is the duty of the Church as the bride of Christ to reach out to them irrespective of their religion. J. Puls notes that “when we love another, we give that person a power he or she would not otherwise have.”¹⁷⁷ Like the Good Samaritan, Christians are called to immerse themselves in the condition of their neighbour, their pains and potentials, in order to emerge more cognizant of their needs.

As Christians, we are expected to care for those who are in need of help by being present to them, by our encouragement and acceptance, by our willing participation in their lives and burdens, by placing ourselves in their context and by feeling what they are going through with them. This shows that there must be no limit to our love and forgiveness, no matter the numerous wrongs inflicted on us.¹⁷⁸ Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* notes that Christian mission in the light of “morality is not a form of stoicism, or self-denial, or merely a practical philosophy or a catalogue of sins and faults. Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others”.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷J. PAULS, *A Spirituality of Compassion*, 20.

¹⁷⁸Cf. J. PAULS, *A Spirituality of Compassion*, 31.

¹⁷⁹FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 27.

8. Love for God and Human Beings

K. Rahner notes that the love of God and neighbour are one and no member of the Mystical Body of Christ is alive for himself or herself alone. Each of us has a function of service to perform for our neighbours, even for those members who are still merely potential members.¹⁸⁰ The love for God as K. Rahner indicates is the totality of the fulfilment of human existence. This love constitutes the basis and goal of all. The love of God for his own sake is, sometimes, produced and experienced when human beings, without self-seeking, go out of themselves and lend a helping hand to their neighbours, forgetting themselves because of God who has loved us first. Thus, they reach the fulfilment of their human existence. Thus,

love of God and love of neighbour stand in a relationship of mutual conditioning. There is no love for God that is not, in itself, already a love for neighbour; love for God only comes to its own identity through fulfilment in a love for neighbour. Only one who loves his or her neighbour can know who God actually is. Only one who ultimately loves God can manage unconditionally to abandon himself or herself to another person, and not make that person the means of his or her own self-assertion.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, for love of God and love of neighbour to be reasonable, responsible self-sacrifice is required as grounds upon which one feels called to abandon oneself to another as we see in the parable of the Good Samaritan. K. Rahner is of the view that our ordinary love for neighbour is a prerequisite of our love for Jesus. Thus, “our love for neighbour should grow through love for Jesus, for it is only in a loving relationship with Jesus that we conceive the possibilities of love for our neighbour.”¹⁸² Jesus who is the epitome of mercy and compassion encourages us to be compassionate and merciful toward our neighbours in need. He

¹⁸⁰Cf. K. RAHNER, *The Practice of Faith*, 102.

¹⁸¹K. RAHNER, *The Practice of Faith*, 136.

¹⁸²K. RAHNER, *The Practice of Faith*, 142.

not only preached about mercy and compassion, but he also put them into practice. When Jesus saw the people who followed him, he realized that they were exhausted, lost without a guide (Mt 9:36), he had compassion for them. When Jesus came upon the widow of Naim taking her only son out for burial, Jesus was moved with compassion and gave life to the only son of that widow by raising him from the dead (cf. Lk 7:15).

As Christians, our mission is to show mercy and compassion because we have experienced these acts of kindness from God who is merciful and just in all his ways. Just as the Father is merciful so we are also invited to be merciful to each other. As part of Christian mission, we must always keep the motive of the love of neighbour in our consciousness, which is how the divine goodness is manifested, expressed, and reflected in our neighbour. We must make conscious effort to see God in our neighbour.

9. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have endeavoured to explain the theological message of the parable of the Good Samaritan. This we did by considering a neighbour as the one in need; then, the attitude of the Good Samaritan as an authentic image of neighbourliness, an example of true Christian value. We also looked at the Spirit of good neighbourliness as a prerequisite for the Christian mission.

The meaning we can deduce from the parable of the Good Samaritan is that all human beings made in the image and likeness of God, especially Christians are called to love God fully and to manifest that love in their attitude toward our neighbours. This is basically the point of Jesus' reply to the lawyer's question about inheriting eternal life. Thus, the result of that love for God is a response to the needs

of those who are in dire need. This is because neighbourliness is not actually found in a racial bond, colour, nationality, gender, proximity etc.¹⁸³

¹⁸³Cf. D.L. BOCK, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1035.

Chapter IV

Significance of Jesus' Message for Nigerian Christians

1. Introduction

Having explored the theological message of Luke 10:25-37 (the parable of the Good Samaritan) in chapter three, this chapter delves into the significance of the message of Luke 10:25-37 for Nigerian Christians and what it really means to be a neighbour to the other person in dire need of help. In order to achieve this objective, this chapter considers the attitude of Nigerian Christians towards their neighbour, especially towards their Muslim brethren and the concern of Christians for their neighbour.

2. The Relevance of the Parable of the Good Samaritan to Nigerian Christians

This parable could be perceived as a wake-up call for all Nigerians strengthen and intensify their primary responsibility of caring for the destitute, street beggars, the homeless, the unemployed youths, those living in abject poverty etc. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us to have mercy, to have a sparing spirit toward the destitute, especially those who are in dire need of help. As Christians we should have concern for other peoples' problems, make some personal sacrifices by

denying ourselves of certain comfort in order to attend to the needs of our neighbours.

In Nigeria we see some wealthy politicians taking advantage of the poor youths who are in dire need of help by hiring them as assassins, touts and cultists to cause trouble and pave way for them to win elections.¹⁸⁴ Rather than being compassionate towards these youths, they use them to rig election. Nigeria politics since independence has been characterized by thuggery and violence. Nigerian politics manifest in acrimony, assault, assassination, intimidation, harassment, maiming and killing. Politicians recruited, trained and empowered thugs to harass, intimidate and victimize perceived political opponents and opposing views against their political ambition.¹⁸⁵ Often time, many of these youths lose their lives in the process without enjoying the money.¹⁸⁶ If the few wealthy Nigerians can open their hearts like the Good Samaritan did in the parable, they can change the living condition of their neighbours who are crying for help. The poor in Nigeria are not only the materially deprived; there are also those who are socially marginalized and psychologically dejected. The poor in the Nigeria context suffer great dejection, alienation and degradation. This is obvious as C. Achebe puts it in his book, *The Trouble with Nigeria*:

The poor are the real victim of our callous system, the wretched of the earth. They are largely silent and invisible. They do not appear on front pages, they do not initiate industrial actions. They drink bad water and suffer from all kinds of preventable diseases. There are no hospitals within their reach, but even if there were, they could not afford to attend. There may be a school of sorts which their children go to when there is 'free education' and withdraw from when levies are demanded.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴Cf. F. B. OKESHOLA, *Violence and conflict in Nigeria*, 150.

¹⁸⁵Cf. F. B. OKESHOLA, *Violence and conflict in Nigeria*, 151.

¹⁸⁶Cf. E.A. ESEDEKE, *Christians and Nigerian Politics*, 42.

¹⁸⁷C. ACHEBE, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, 24.

Thus, among this group of people described by C. Achebe are the peasant who struggle to earn a living in a deteriorating rural environment, the beggars under the fly-over, the homeless, school leavers, job seekers who roam the streets in search of meaningful employment, the victims of injustice, those dying as a result of starvation and many others who are in dire need of help in different contexts that may not fit the above categories. Poverty and unemployment is one of the factors responsible for insecurity. The majority of youth are jobless, with no means of livelihood, they are impoverished, and mercenary politics becomes the way out.¹⁸⁸ If the few rich people in Nigeria adhered to the command of Jesus to the lawyer to go and do likewise, they would go a long way to transform the lives of the poor in Nigeria and by so doing they would become neighbours to their brothers and sisters who are in dire need of help.¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus extols the virtue of love, compassion and hospitality, to manifest the universal brotherhood of humanity, which is devoid of any form of discrimination. The love of neighbour consists in the fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only manifest itself based on an intimate encounter with God that has become a communion of will, even affecting human feeling in terms how the human person relate with their neighbour.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸Cf. J. A. OTTUH, *Poverty and the Oppression of the Poor in Niger Delta* (Isaiah 10:1-4): A Theological Approach, 256–263.

¹⁸⁹Cf. C. ACHEBE, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, 25.

¹⁹⁰Cf. A.O. ACHUNONU, *Poverty and the Church in Igboland, Nigeria*, 27.

3. The Attitude of Nigerian Christians towards their Neighbours

We cannot speak of Nigerian Christians in isolation of their cultural values, especially that of communality that binds them together. Communality in this context refers to “the awareness which identifies an individual not as an isolated ego, but as an entity whose being and survival is consequent upon its union with other human beings within an identified locality.”¹⁹¹

In Nigeria, as in many other traditional African contexts, religion is very central to the people’s life and culture. It permeates all dimensions of their lives and infuses the economic, social and political aspects with meaning so pervading that it is often said that the cultural people live, breathe and eat religiously.¹⁹² However, there is a distortion of the communality that binds Nigerians together, especially in the area of inter-personal relationship that was common among Nigerians.

This distortion is as a result of bribery, cheating, low in productivity, political instability, communal crises and abuse of power, which have led to negligence of those in dire need (the poor people).¹⁹³ Due to the above distortions there is a big gap between the few wealthy Nigerians and the poor, which has affected the communality that once existed between them. Today, the biggest problems are those of religion and tribe.¹⁹⁴

At the time when the parable of the Good Samaritan was narrated, the Samaritans were one of the religious adversaries of the Jews in a manner similar to the divisions in Nigeria today between some Christians and Muslims.¹⁹⁵ This story

¹⁹¹C. OGBUJAH, *African Cultural Values and Inter-communal Relations*, 209.

¹⁹²Cf. C. OGBUJAH, *African Cultural Values and Inter-communal Relations*, 210.

¹⁹³Cf. C. OGBUJAH, *African Cultural Values and Inter-communal Relations*, 214.

¹⁹⁴B. ISIAKA, “Religion – Nigeria’s Greatest Problem,” 1.

¹⁹⁵N. STREET, “Religion and Conflict in Nigeria: Learning to Play Well With Others,” 2.

is often overlooked by many Christians that by implication portrays a lesson of religious tolerance for both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

Thus, inheriting the Kingdom of God is often determined by the values and precepts of tolerance and compassion for our neighbour.¹⁹⁶ As we are told in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus does not prefer the Samaritans to the Jews. Neither would he prefer Muslims to Christians or Christians to Muslims. For Jesus, the authentic neighbour is the one in the story who shows pity. This Samaritan who shows pity to the half-dead man could be anybody, either Christian or Muslim; he could even be someone who practices *African Traditional Religion*. In order to inherit the Kingdom of God, Christians must learn to be tolerant to their neighbours who are non-Christians, especially Muslims and traditional worshippers. The responsibility of the Nigerian Christians is to love one another as Christ loved us.¹⁹⁷ In the parable, Jesus also instructs the lawyer to go and do likewise. This injunction of Christ, ‘go and do likewise’ could be applied today to Nigerian Christians in the sense that all of God’s people must be our neighbours and we must love them the way the Good Samaritan did, irrespective of their religion (Christians, Muslims, African Traditional Religion) and status (the poor, the homeless, the unattractive people, the handicapped, the mentally ill).

3.1. The attitude of Nigerian Christians towards their Muslim Brethren

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus categorically invited us to be the neighbour to all those in need. He also explained who our neighbour is without

¹⁹⁶Cf. F. ARIBISALA, *Would Jesus’ Good Samaritan be a Muslim in Nigeria Today?* <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/11/would-jesus/>, 31/03/2016.

¹⁹⁷Cf. F. ARIBISALA, *Would Jesus’ Good Samaritan be a Muslim in Nigeria Today?* <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/11/would-jesus/>, 31/03/2016.

mixing words and how love should be extended to the other persons even if the person is considered an enemy.¹⁹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, notes that love is a light which illuminates a world grown dim, a light that gives hope. Moreover, love gives us the needed courage to keep living and working. Humans are able to practice love because God is love, and we are created in the image and likeness of God (39).¹⁹⁹

The Pope also describes God's love (Agape) as understood in the New Testament, which means God's love for his people and invariably the love and care people should have for their fellow human beings. It is a love which seeks the good of the loved one by willingness to sacrifice oneself for the other.²⁰⁰ Thus, W.G. Jeanrod notes that "this is central to the Christian faith and it is a reflection on how God invites all humans to participate in God's creative and reconciling project of love."²⁰¹ The Pope reminds the faithful of their primary vocation, which is the ardent desire to love God and neighbour.²⁰² "The incarnation of Christ manifests that God is love (1 Jn 4:8) through whom we discover our Christian love and life which leads to God who is love" (no. 12-16);²⁰³ Pope Benedict XVI stresses that it is the sole responsibility of Christians to love their neighbour. The Christian is called to love God and neighbour with a mutual love that deepens engagement with the other person. In the visible manifestation of God's love in the other person, we experience being loved; causing us to reach out in a unique way even if the other

¹⁹⁸Cf. J. WELLMAN, "Parable of the Good Samaritan: Meaning, Summary and Commentary", 2014 <<http://www.patheos.com/2014/04/21/blogs/christiancrier/>, 04/04/2016.

¹⁹⁹Cf. D. O'DONNELL, *God is Love: A Simplified and Abridged Version of Deus Caritas Est*, 19.

²⁰⁰Cf. D. O'DONNELL, *God is Love: A Simplified and Abridged Version of Deus Caritas Est*, 6-7.

²⁰¹W. G. JEANROD, *Theology of Love*, 161.

²⁰²Cf. W.G. JEANROD, *Theology of Love*, 161.

²⁰³D. O'DONNELL, *God is Love: A Simplified and Abridged Version of Deus Caritas Est*, 9-10.

person is considered an enemy (no. 17-18).²⁰⁴ One may then ask how the practical implications of the practice of this love of God and love of neighbour could be applied to the situation in Northern part of Nigeria, where tension, mistrust, violence and conflict have continued to affect the relationship between Christians and Muslims?²⁰⁵

3.2. The Current Situation in Nigeria

This is a situation where Christian churches have been burnt and many Christians have lost their lives. How can these two faith communities love and be neighbours to each other? According to E. Griswold, “Scripture provides the guide for social, moral and human interaction, offering the background for both individual and group identity also providing hope for the eschatological reign of God in both faith communities”.²⁰⁶

In the Acts of the Apostles we read: “From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the time of their existence and the boundaries of the place where they would live” (Acts. 17:26). Thus, T. B. Umaru indicates that this scriptural passage acknowledges that both Christians and Muslims come from one common origin, created by God; hence they are neighbours and ought to love and respect each other as people made in the image and likeness of God. He notes that “although mutual love and respect for the other does not deny the

²⁰⁴Cf. D. O’DONNELL, *God is Love: A Simplified and Abridged Version of Deus Caritas Est*, 10-11.

²⁰⁵Cf. B. ISIAKA, “Religion – Nigeria’s Greatest Problem,” 2.

²⁰⁶E. GRISWORLD, *The Tenth Parallel Dispatches from the Faultline between Christianity and Islam*, 71.

possible differences, there is a challenge to see others as human beings and loving and treating them as one would desire to be treated.”²⁰⁷

Thus, being neighbours to each other consists in continuous sensitization to the praxis of love, peace, a spirit of tolerance built on mutual respect, while recognizing the fact that the human family is essentially multicultural in nature, consisting of different individuals and groups who have their rights.²⁰⁸ W.G. Jeanrond also states that Thomas Aquinas “acknowledged the connection between love, forgiveness and peace... Moreover peace follows from the praxis of love, and love requires agreement and self-investment. Peace requires act of sincere forgiveness if it is to flourish.”²⁰⁹

4. Genuine Concern of Nigerians towards Their Neighbours

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a practical example of the love of one’s enemy that Jesus taught in Luke 6:27-36. In Jesus’ teaching, *doing good* to those who despise and hurt you is nothing less than an expression of genuine love toward one’s enemy.²¹⁰ Lamenting on the issue of religion as Nigeria’s greatest problem, B. Isiaka shared the conviction that “if only the Nigerian youths will reject our countries apathy towards ongoing crisis and be the voice of the nation, if every Nigerian will stand upright and challenge what is wrong, things would be a little better.”²¹¹ A good number of Nigerians are Christians and their number is enough to make significant Christian impact in the nation. Thus, as Christians, people walking in the footsteps of Christ, Nigerian Christians are called to emulate Jesus who is an

²⁰⁷T.B. UMARU, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Northern Nigeria*, 160.

²⁰⁸Cf. ‘International Day for Tolerance,’ Tribune (Nigeria), 17 November 2010. <http://tribune.com.ng>

²⁰⁹W. G. JEANROND, *Theology of Love*, 253.

²¹⁰Cf. C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 212.

²¹¹B. ISIAKA, “Religion – Nigeria’s Greatest Problem,” 2.

epitome of compassion, as one who loves his enemies, by doing good to all those who encountered. C. Owczarek notes that “Jesus gives his followers an example of how they should respond when they are hated/persecuted for whatever reason, not only for being Christians.”²¹²

The parable of the Good Samaritan therefore challenges the Nigerian Christians to respond by loving those who hate them with the love of God. Our genuine love for our neighbours as Christians emanates from the absolute love of God, who is the prototype of all created love. It has been noted by many authors that “a revolution doesn’t have to be bloody to be a revolution.”²¹³ This love is “revealed to our faith as a will of achieving communion between persons, a will wishing the same good to the other as to itself in such a way that none of the persons wishes to keep for himself alone the divine good.”²¹⁴ Our love as human beings “is a real participation of love as it is in God, and this singular resemblance gives any value they have to our human affections, for however imperfect it may be, our love remains an authentic communion.”²¹⁵

The call to emulate the virtues of the care and love modeled by the Good Samaritan is not only a challenge posed to the Nigerian Christians but to every Nigerian. In fact, it is a global concern as is corroborated by N. Street, who rightly noted that “whether 170 million Nigerians succeed or fail at learning to play well together will augur the prospects for peace among the broader array of quarrelsome human tribes. That should be a subject of concern for all of us.”²¹⁶ The act of loving

²¹²C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 213.

²¹³O. A. FAWOLE –M. L. BELLO, *The impact of ethno-religious conflict on Nigerian Federalism*, 216 –217.

²¹⁴G. GILLEMAN, *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology*, 135.

²¹⁵G. GILLEMAN, *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology*, 141.

²¹⁶N. STREET, “Religion and Conflict in Nigeria: Learning to Play Well With Others,” 2.

one's neighbour is the characteristic of Christian morality that St. Paul and other authors of the epistles in the New Testament never get tired of persuading their readers to be conscious of. St. Paul is a practical example of this insistence on the love of neighbour. For him, love is the greatest of all human capacities (1 Cor. 13:1-13). In 1 Cor. 10:32, he encourages the Christians at Corinth never to do anything to offend anyone, but to do everything in love (Cf. 1 Cor. 16:14). In Gal 6:3, we also see Paul urging the Christians in Galatia to carry one another's burden.

It was sadly observed by I. Chidi that: "what is even more depressing about the Muslim-Christian conflict in Nigeria is the level of violence that surrounds it. Little children growing up in Nigeria witness violent acts every day and soon become accustomed to it."²¹⁷ This points to the urgency of using the model exemplified by the Good Samaritan to correct the evil of such lack of love of the neighbour in Nigeria. Anger and other hurts need to be healed and the bruises which are consequences of tension and conflict need to be bandaged, but who is the Nigerian Good Samaritan who would do it?

Nigerians, especially the Christians who have been deeply hurt could learn from St. Paul. In his letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 4:25-32), Paul admonishes the Christians in Ephesus not to allow the sun to set on their anger and to give way to one another in love (Eph. 5:21); in Philippians 2:4 Paul categorically states that the Philippians should think always of other people's interests first.²¹⁸ The author of the letter to the Hebrews, urges Christians to love each other like brethren and to welcome strangers into their midst (Heb 13:1). St. James also informs his readers that love for one's neighbour as oneself is the ultimate or supreme law (Jas 2:8-9).

²¹⁷I. CHIDI, *Nigeria's Religious and Cultural Conflict*, 13.

²¹⁸Cf. J.P. HANIGAN, *AS I Have Loved You*, 8.

N. Street described the conviction that “the solutions to the country’s obdurate problems — poverty, widespread political and economic corruption, periodic epidemics of disease and violence and, above all, ethnic rivalry — must inevitably come from allied groups of individuals acting as Christians and Muslims.”²¹⁹ If Nigerian Christians were to play the role modelled by the Good Samaritan and not retaliate, caring for their spiritually and morally struggling neighbours instead of paying back violence with violence to those who hurt them, it would certainly have significant impact in bringing about the joy of good neighbourliness in Nigerian.

The virtue that the Nigerian Christians are being challenged to embrace in the face of the current situation is communicated in 1 Peter 1:22-23, where the author encourages (Nigerian) Christians to love one another and never to pay back wrong with another wrong (Cf. 1 Pet. 3:8-12).²²⁰ 1 John 4:20-21 offer the most explicit and important statement of the love for one’s neighbour in Christian life in: “Anyone who says, I love God, and hates his brother, is a liar, since a man who does not love the brother that he can see cannot love God, whom he has never see. So this is the commandment that he has given us, that anyone who loves God must also love his brother.”

With the above biblical texts, it is obvious that Nigerian Christians in their day to day life have great challenge to understand that love for one another is the most basic, truthful and compelling witness to their faith that they can offer to God their Creator and to their fellow human beings.²²¹ Although Jesus’ injunction to love

²¹⁹N. STREET, “Religion and Conflict in Nigeria: Learning to Play Well With Others,” 2.

²²⁰Cf. J.P. HANIGAN, *AS I Have Loved You*, 8.

²²¹Cf. J.P. HANIGAN, *AS I Have Loved You*, 9.

one's neighbour is the most supreme Law, as he shows in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the love of the enemy remains the greatest practical challenges for Nigerian Christians to the love of neighbour humanly speaking.

4.1. Practical Challenges of Loving One's Neighbour for Nigerian Christians

The demand to love our neighbour in daily life of Nigerian Christians in a practical and concrete sense often times does not appear to be simple at all. Most times it poses real problems to that are practical in nature to the extent that on the practical level, most Nigerian Christians find it hard to put this virtue into practice and would opt to pay back violence for violence, evil for evil. J. P. Hanigan notes that "in our human experience we sometimes discover we have a problem with our motivation, with finding convincing, deeply felt reasons for expending our time and energy to care for others."²²²

For instance, most Nigerian Christians would certainly find it very difficult to put Christ's injunction in the Gospel according to Matthew (Matt 5:44)²²³ into practice, with the new manifestations of complicated mixture of politics, religion and tribalism, that result in the use of weapons of mass destruction which has begun to assume alarming proportion in various parts of the country, where innocent citizens have increasingly become targets of explosive attacks by fanatics. "It has seemingly become a regular trend; multiple blasts rocking the nation, living in their trail tears and blood from victims and their relations. Incidentally, while the

²²²J.P. HANIGAN, *AS I Have Loved You*, 10.

²²³ Matt 5:44: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you".

merchants of death appear to be having their way, no one has so far been tried and convicted on the matter.”²²⁴

Thus, the love of our enemies might well seem to exceed the reach of our hearts; it might appear as if we are given much more than the human flesh can accommodate. This is a great challenge in living out the Christian faith in the current Nigerian context. For instance, love of the neighbour is certainly a great challenge to most Nigerian Christians when they have to deal with neighbours who had betrayed their trust, exploited their friendship, caused them to be physically injured or even killed one of their family members or friends, insulted, degraded or humiliated them in front of others.²²⁵

O.A. Fawole and M.L. Bello pointed out that: “ethnoreligious conflicts in Nigeria have presented many challenges that border on security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of a federal system.” They also observed that “what we are witnessing through this crisis is a transfer of aggression from one grievance to innocent Nigerian.”²²⁶ In the face of such human condition, as Nigerian Christians are urged to act like our saviour Jesus Christ who asked for forgiveness for those who nailed him to the cross (Lk 23:34). As committed Christians the Nigerian Christians are encouraged to see their enemies as Jesus saw his, as unwitting, unaware slaves of sin, blind to the real evil they were doing. To feel also for their neighbours as Christ did to all whom he

²²⁴F. B. OKESHOLA, *Violence And Insecurity In Nigeria : The Bane Of National Development*, 151.

²²⁵Cf. J.P. HANIGAN, *AS I Have Loved You*, 11.

²²⁶O. A. FAWOLE –M. L. BELLO, *The impact of ethno-religious conflict on Nigerian Federalism*, 216

encountered; he was full of compassion, love and mercy, rather than anger and revenge.²²⁷

Loving one another as Jesus has loved us can be challenging especially in the face of certain dilemmas of the human condition. J.P. Hanigan indicates that often times we have the idea of caring for our neighbour, but we are discouraged, especially when we discover that we lack the energy, the time, the skills, the manpower or even the material resources necessary to love our neighbours as we would wish and as they need.²²⁸ Thus, the act of loving one's neighbour is something that each Christian must grow into.

4.2. Love without Boundaries

According to the findings of A.A. Adebimpe and O.S. Ayodeji, they revealed that “as a matter of fact, most Nigerians are religious. They believe in the supremacy of God and that God is the basis of their individual and corporate lives. As ministers and followers of Christ, the Bible spells out numerous requirements as foundations for their faith.”²²⁹ A. A. Adebimpe and O. S. Ayodeji were also convinced about the religious favour in Nigeria as they joyfully expressed their amazement that one could not expect a better religious development more than what is happening already. For instance, they acknowledged that: “Seminaries, Monasteries, Bible Colleges are increasing and they are turning out thousands of preachers, evangelists and prophets. The missionaries are so numerous to the extent that they are now sent

²²⁷Cf. Cf. J.P. HANIGAN, *AS I Have Loved You*, 11

²²⁸Cf. Cf. J.P. HANIGAN, *AS I Have Loved You*, 12.

²²⁹A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 524.

out to various missions in Europe, America, Asia and other countries of the world.”²³⁰

The findings of A. A. Adebimpe and O. S. Ayodeji led to the conclusion that “from all indications and outward manifestations, Nigerians seem to be incurably religious and perhaps the most religious in the world. But in the face of this fervor and religiosity, should order, peace, love, selflessness, charity, humanity to man, and other fruits of the spirit listed in (Galatians 5:22-23) not be clearly visible and manifested in Nigeria?”²³¹ This question seems to point to an affirmation that love of the neighbor forms the core essence of Christianity, and where such love does not exist, that such group should not call themselves Christians at all.

St. Paul, writing on the theological virtues (faith, hope and love) states that love is the greatest and most enduring gift of all. He encourages the Christians in Corinth to persevere in bearing witness to the Christian faith through love (1 Cor. 13:1-13). St. Augustine of Hippo one of the church’s renowned theologian notes that:

Love is the most eminent commandment, since love unites us with God in a stronger way than faith and hope. Through love our likeness to God grows, as love brings us nearer to God. Although we will not become fully like him the greater our likeness to God the more our love will increase and the clearer we will see God. Therefore, the grace of God dwells in us, for only God can lead us to God.²³²

For St. Augustine, the injunction to love God and neighbour calls for a radical commitment on the part of every Christian; a commitment and desire that is sincere to love God above all things, and love our neighbour for the sake of God without prejudice and boundaries. This is because every genuine relationship is an opportunity to build a stronger union with God. Thus, one’s love for God entails

²³⁰A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 525.

²³¹A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 524

²³²Von T.J. BRAVEL, “Love,” 509-515.

ultimately the love of one's neighbour and of course the love for one's self.²³³ All Christians are encouraged to love with the love that the Holy Spirit has bestowed on them.

As Christians, our love must be motivated and inspired by divine love and ought to mirror love to our neighbours, because love as a divine gift enables human beings to strive for divine wisdom, truth, justice and love.²³⁴ Thus, J. McManus indicates that "since God is love, he has endowed humans with the grace and desire to love him and to love the neighbour, imaging love as self-giving, since God's love is unconditional."²³⁵

St. Thomas Aquinas was another influential and renowned theologian who was influenced by Aristotelian philosophy and St. Augustine. He notes that "every form of genuine love must relate to God, who is the ultimate origin and aim of love. Opine that human beings are capable of loving since we are made in the image and like of God."²³⁶ Thomas Aquinas describes love as passion, which is a natural dimension of human life; that is to say that love is in our nature. Human beings are created by God with faculties and desire to love God, which makes us friends of God.

Thus, love often propels the human person to seek union with God.²³⁷ On the practicality of the love of God and love of neighbour, Aquinas notes that the love of God is interconnected with the love of neighbour; they cannot be separated. For him, charity means that one loves God and one's neighbour. In this light he affirms that

²³³Cf. W. G. JEANROND, *Theology of Love*, 53.

²³⁴Von T.J. BRAVEL, "Love," 515.

²³⁵J. MCMANUS, *I Am My Body: Blessed Pope John Paul's Theology of the Body*, 29-34.

²³⁶W. G. JEANROND, *Theology of Love*, 77.

²³⁷Cf. W. G. JEANROND, *Theology of Love*, 77-78.

the scriptures do not command us to love our enemy as an enemy but to love them as human beings created in the image and likeness of God, whose essence is love and who cares for humanity (Matt 5:43-48).²³⁸

4.3. The Challenge of Positive Outlook of Poverty as a Christian Virtue

Some writers have acknowledged that the authentic spiritual meaning of poverty in spirit as proclaimed by Jesus himself in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel according to Matthew (Mat. 5), undeniably do apply to many Christians in the Nigerian context who have remained faithful to the faith in the midst of injustice, corruption, conflict and violence. Consequently, it cannot be denied that there are still some Nigerians Christians who are honest and fair, who refuse to profit by fraud, who stay far away from bribes, who refuse to listen to those who plot murder, who shut their eyes to all enticements to do wrong.²³⁹ However, this spiritual understanding of poverty is certainly a positive outlook of poverty as a Christian virtue which poses serious challenges to greater number of Christians in Nigeria.

The above spiritual understanding of poverty could be seen as further confirmed in the Gospel according to Luke (Lk. 3:13-14) where Christians are warned against fraud, extortion, intimidation and the need to be contented with one's pay. This is in keeping with Jesus preaching against religious practice that was not matched by high moral and ethical standards in private and social life as presented in Sermon on the Mount. It is certainly disconcerting to acknowledge that "in the face of the contradiction and the embarrassment of a booming Christianity in the midst of an environment that stinks with corruption and indiscipline, the conclusion seems to be that what is spreading like wild fire in contemporary Nigeria is not genuine

²³⁸Cf. W. G. JEANROND, *Theology of Love*, 77-78.

²³⁹A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 526.

Christianity at all, but a mass movement of some sort with Christian elements of ritualism; one that is largely shallow, superficial, noisy and devoid of substance and depth.²⁴⁰

It has also been acknowledged by different authors that the spiritual understanding of poverty which offers positive outlook of poverty as a Christian virtue is a great challenge to many Nigerian Christians. For instance, it has been documented that “popular Christianity in Nigeria appears to be largely materialistic, unspiritual and with emphasis on prosperity, success, healing and with little attention on social morality and spirituality of the believers.”²⁴¹ The general impression communicated by this brand of Christianity seems to indicate that they do not have a place for the notion of the cross, suffering and sacrifice which constitute the center of traditional Christian doctrine and life.

The positive outlook of poverty presented in the Gospels as a Christian virtue consequently challenges the Nigerian Christians to use the message of the cross and a modest and austere life to contradict the gross materialism and extreme economic liberalism of the current Nigerian society that are daily crushing the poor. This spiritual understanding of poverty does not condemn wealth or the blessings of a rich person but certainly challenges the contemporary materialism which is oppressive to the poor. The Nigerian Christian Churches are not exempt from this kind of materialism that is oppressive to the poor. It has been documented that in many Nigerian Christian Churches that: “what we see are expensive churches harboring stinking rich pastors whose mark of success are mansions, flashy cars, expensive

²⁴⁰A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 524.

²⁴¹A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 526.

dresses, shoes, wristwatches, jewelries the costs of which can feed thousands of hungry followers.”²⁴²

Poverty is described as the virtue which makes the corporal works of mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless effective in the Christian understanding of charity. It is the virtue which enables us to overcome our possessiveness, our envy and our greed in order to share freely and responsibly what we have been blessed with, so as to receive with our neighbours without taking advantage of their situation to enrich ourselves.²⁴³

The virtue of Christian poverty inclines us to use whatever material goods we have acquired, like the Good Samaritan, to serve people in need, rather than living in our comfort zones, unaware of the poor in dire need. Thus, J. P. Hanigan notes that “what we struggle to learn in our dealings with the material goods of this world is how to love our neighbours and ourselves in ways that are concrete, respectful of human freedom and dignity, and devoid of strings.... Poverty means a glad willingness to share the world’s goods with others, a desire to help other realize their own equal share of these gifts.”²⁴⁴

4.4. The Challenge of Love of Neighbour as the Core of Christianity

The boom in the contemporary Christian churches in Nigeria has been widely criticized by some who lament that “what camouflages as popular Christianity in Nigeria and spreading like wild fire and winning thousands of souls may not really be Christianity at all, to the extent that it has thrived in the midst of corruption and social decay and has not been able to make a difference in the social

²⁴²A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 525.

²⁴³Cf. J.P. HANIGAN, *As I Have Loved You*, 196.

²⁴⁴J.P. HANIGAN, *As I Have Loved You*, 197.

morality and piety of the adherents.”²⁴⁵ The critics are so convinced that the boom in the contemporary Christian churches lacks authentic Gospel understanding of love of neighbor as modeled by the Good Samaritan. On the contrary, “what is being witnessed in Nigeria are mass movements of some sort, preaching messages of convenience, with a few elements such as singing, prayer and so on.”²⁴⁶

This unpleasant situation led such critics to describe some of the Christian churches in Nigeria as social movements largely lacking the understanding of the Christian call to love of neighbor demonstrated by a high level of self-sacrifice, discipline, honesty, truth and justice. The critics lament that the Christian religion seem to have failed in its objective to shape the character of the adherents. They describe the Nigerian Christian churches as representing a society where “religion itself has been thoroughly exploited and manipulated in Nigeria by “smart” men for political and economic gains.”²⁴⁷ The value being underlined by the above lamentation seem to point to the fact that the love of neighbor is the core of Christianity, where the message of the cross as sacrificing one’s self, resources and time to stand for those who cannot stand for themselves and to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, is fundamental and central to the Christian religion. But the challenge remains that popular religion in Nigeria has sidelined this view of the cross and all the spiritual values associated with it. “This religion declares all failure, suffering and pain as of the devil while associating with God only wealth, success, healing and prosperity.”²⁴⁸

The core of Christian love is to be found in the love of God and neighbour which is founded in faith and motivated by hope. The Christian love is beyond

²⁴⁵A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 526.

²⁴⁶N. STREET, “*Religion and Conflict in Nigeria: Learning to Play Well With Others*,” 2.

²⁴⁷A. A. ADEBIMPE – O. S. AYODEJI, *Religious Values and Corruption in Nigeria*, 525.

²⁴⁸N. STREET, “*Religion and Conflict in Nigeria: Learning to Play Well With Others*,” 2.

“eros”(is the sexual love that exist between husband and wife) and *philia* (is the love that exist between friends who share common values and interest, it also means love that exist between siblings) types of love because it is built on the love of God and the love of neighbour (*agape*).²⁴⁹

Thus, there will be no perfect virtue without love, since love is the form and completion of all the virtues (theological virtues and cardinal virtues, 1 Tm 1:5; Rm 13:10).²⁵⁰ The theological virtues are gifts infused in us by the Holy Spirit and these virtues; especially the theological virtue of love enables us to love God with zeal, desire and delight; to love our neighbours, and even our enemies as God’s children made in his image and likeness. B. M. Ashley in his book *Living the Truth in Love* states that “our duty to love our enemies strictly obliges us to love them as human persons cable of salvation, and it is a council to them even as individuals.”²⁵¹

Furthermore, Christian love that is built on the love of God and the love of one’s neighbour is always compassionate, merciful and seeks to build a community where peace, justice and respect for human dignity prevails.²⁵² St. Paul in Rom 13:8 encourages that we should: “owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves the other has fulfilled the law”. In his first Letter to the Corinthians, he says: “let no one seek his own good, but the good of the other” (1 Cor 10:24); “I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as am of Christ” (1 Cor 10:33-11:1). In Phil 2:4, he states: “let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

²⁴⁹Cf. B.M. ASHLEY, *Living the Truth in Love*, 439.

²⁵⁰Cf. B.M. ASHLEY, *Living the Truth in Love*, 439-440.

²⁵¹B.M. ASHLEY, *Living the Truth in Love*, 442.

²⁵²Cf. B. SCHULLER, *Wholly Human*, 147.

In Gal 5:13 he notes: “through love be servants of one another... everyone serve the other”; and in Gal 6:2 he states: “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”. In the above verses, St. Paul admonishes all believers in Christ to love and seek after the interests of their neighbour as a sign of true Christian love for one’s neighbour. B. Schuller notes that the Christian love for one’s neighbour has to do with someone who exercises the responsibility of taken care of others in thought and deed. He says the Good Samaritan becomes the man he ought to be by showing mercy to the half-dead man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Hence, one’s neighbour is the person who fulfils the commandment of neighbourly love. This automatically implies that the neighbour is the model whom we all have to emulate.²⁵³

Hence, every human person made in the image and likeness of God is called to be like the Good Samaritan who practiced an act of charity to the half-dead man. Thus, every human being who stands beside the one who suffers, whatever that suffering may be, he or she represents the Good Samaritan. Anyone who is overwhelmed by the sufferings of others, one stirred to compassion by the misfortunes which befall the neighbour is regarded as a Good Samaritan. Anyone who can make the donation of himself/herself and walk towards the relief of people living in abject poverty is a Good Samaritan. Thus, the spirit of the Good Samaritan stimulates love in our heart as human beings toward that gift of self on behalf of others who are suffering, without counting the cost.²⁵⁴

²⁵³Cf. B. SCHULLER, *Wholly Human*, 148.

²⁵⁴Cf. J. WALSH – P.G. WALSH, *Divine Providence & Human Suffering*, 258-259.

5. Recommendations

Having explored the situation of the Christian churches in Nigeria and measures to some extent, how these churches respond to the value of love of neighbor as modeled by the Good Samaritan, one cannot but ask which is the way forward for Christianity in Nigeria? This work is of the view that the Nigerian Christian churches need to re-evaluate what has gone wrong to the extent that Christianity seems to have failed in its objective to spiritually shape the lives of its adherents.

As one of the ways forward for the Nigerian Christian churches, this work recommends a re-catechesis of the faithful at a deeper level that would touch on the current cultural, political, economic and social values of the contemporary Nigerian Christians. This work thus recommends that the Nigerian Christian churches need to initiate a new holistic approach to catechesis which should be done at different levels, involving children at their own level, shaping the concerns and aspirations of the youth and remolding the thinking of the elderly to be in tune with the true Christian values and to practice them in authentic ways that are made manifest in true love of the neighbor in action.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we considered the significance of the parable of the Good Samaritan for Nigerian Christians and what it really means to be a neighbour to those in dire need, those living in pitiable conditions. We also explained what it means to have genuine concern for one's neighbour. Nigerian Christians are called to love their neighbours, by extending helping hands to those living in abject poverty. Nigerians are encouraged by the parable of the Good Samaritan to give hope to the

hopeless, to care for those crying out for justice, to be the mouthpiece of those whose condition are nothing to write home about. There is a common saying which says that *Nigeria is rich but Nigerians are poor*. This saying affirms the poor state of many Nigerians who are living in abject poverty. Thus, like the Good Samaritan who gave hope to the half-dead man, Nigerians are invited to emulate the attitude of the Good Samaritan by caring for their neighbours.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

We began this work by having an exegesis of the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel according to Luke (Luke. 10:25-37). This parable describes a compassionate Samaritan, who took the risk out of love and pity for his fellow human being stopped his on journey in order to render help to the half-dead man. In this parable we see the Samaritan who, through his merciful and compassionate actions, revives and restores the human dignity of the certain man who became victim in the hands of robbers on the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Thus, this parable clearly portrays virtues such as generosity, hospitality, mercy, solidarity, charity, compassion, kindness etc. In the fourth chapter, we explored the significance of Jesus' message in the parable of the Good Samaritan for Nigerian Christians. The work examined the relevance of the parable of the good Samaritan to Nigerian Christians.

Having identified some areas of challenge in fulfilling Jesus's message communicated through the narrative of the parable of the Good Samaritan, the work recommends some possible solutions to some of the challenges. For instance in dealing with the issue of lack of sensitivity of some Nigerian Christians to the situation of the poor and needy, the work recommends a new form of catechesis that would help the Nigerian Christians to gain a new awakening and will harmonize private and public expressions of faith. This new awakening will help the Nigerian Christians to curb the danger of fundamentalist and to embrace the value of love of

neighbor communicated through the parable of the Good Samaritan in a way that reaches out to both Christians and non-Christians in need.

The work also recommends that the challenges of tension and violence due to religious conflict between Islam and Christianity should be addressed through mature inter-faith dialogue. The study further recommends that avenues for such dialogue should be created and programmed towards regular activities that would take place at specified times in the year and at strategic places that would best benefit from the fruits of such dialogues. It is recommended that this move should be made even before there is any crisis at all. This is because meeting only in response to a crisis seems counterproductive

The study also recommends the solicitation of non-governmental organizations for sponsorship of the transformative programs for maintaining peace and care for good neighborliness in Nigeria. This recommendation is prompted by the danger that government or state sponsored programs may not enjoy the required level of objectivity and freedom from political interests.

National building is a challenge in Nigeria which has its religious component as well as the multiethnic and multicultural dimensions. In recognition of the fact that it is almost close to impossible for Nigerian as a nation to have such visionary and transformative leaders who will guarantee that the multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious identities in Nigeria coexist underneath a single, sacred canopy of the nation-state, the study recommends national campaign about religion and national building. Such campaign could be disseminated through the social media, television and radio.

In keeping with the message of the parable which unites us to love our neighbor as ourselves, Jesus urges the contemporary Nigerian Christians to "go and

do likewise." In concrete terms, this implies helping the needy without asking first what religion, tribe or culture the needy person belongs to. The Good Samaritan proves himself a neighbor by his unprejudiced mercy and compassion. Without distinction of race, nationality, or religion, the Nigerian Christians are urged, through the imitation of the Good Samaritan to show mercy to those who are in need.

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