

Kingsley Ikechukwu Uwaegbute

MATERIAL POSSESSIONS IN LUKE 12 AND IN NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS' PRACTISE



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DEDICATION

*This work is dedicated to
my loving wife, Mrs. Ngozi Mary Uwaegbute
for her love and encouragement all through my trying times
and my parents Mr. U.A. and Mrs. R.U. Uwaegbute,
who struggled to put me through school.*



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Material possessions are necessary for human existence. The very nature of human existence sometimes makes acquisition of material possessions necessary since they aid human existence in general. This is why human beings of different ages and times have sought material possessions through various ways and means. Likewise, people of different times in history, have varying conceptions of material possessions and how they can be sought and made use of. However, within Christianity, there is a call extended to Christians on how material possessions should be sought, acquired and used (see Johnson 1981). In the New Testament, especially in the gospels, there are teachings by Jesus on issues relating to Christians and material possessions.

In line with the above, the gospel traditionally ascribed to Luke is well-known to have preserved a lot of important teachings of Jesus on material possessions that are not contained in the other gospels. The term material possessions, in Greek, is a present participle neuter plural active noun written as ὑπαρχόντα (*huparchonta*). In terms of usage for example, the Greek word *huparchonta*, whereas it occurs three times in the Gospel according to Matthew¹ and not at all in the gospel according to Mark and John, it is used eight times in the gospel according to Luke.² In all its occurrences in the gospel according to Luke,³ *huparchonta* denotes possessions. However, in the context of this study, *huparchonta* for the sake of emphasis, is translated as material possessions.

It is mostly the view of scholars that discipleship and the proper use of material possessions constitute an important theme in the gospel according to Luke. De Silva for example, argues strongly that issues relating to Christians and material possessions are a dominant theme in the gospel of Luke (De Silva 2004: 324). Esler pushes this idea further by arguing that the constant de-emphasis of material possessions by Luke has given rise to a “theology of the poor” (Esler 1987: 87) in the Gospel. Stein equally toes this line of thought when he says that “no other books

¹ These occurrences are seen in Matt 19:21; 24:47 & 24:14.

² See Lk 8:3; 11:21; 12:15,33,44; 14:33; 16:1; 19:8.

³ In this work, I will use the terms gospel of Luke and Luke’s gospel interchangeably while referring to the gospel according to Luke.

in the NT are as concerned about the Christian's relationship to material possessions" (Stein 1992: 45-56). Also Fitzmyer is right in saying that "no other New Testament writer, save perhaps the author of Epistle of James, speaks out as forthrightly as does Luke about the use of material possessions by Christian disciples" (Fitzmyer 1989: 137). Equally, according to Chambo "Many Bible scholars, theologians and historians have been attracted to the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to investigate appropriate Christian responses to material possession" (Chambo 2008: 29).

However, of more interest to the research is how Luke understood material possessions especially in the discourses Jesus teaches about the subject (material possessions). I am aware of Johnson's famous dictum that "although Luke consistently talks about possessions, he does not talk about possessions consistently" (Johnson 1977). This dictum means that issues relating to material possessions in Luke must be studied in the contexts they appear, and should not be generally treated. That having been said, Brown believes Luke's presentation of Jesus' teaching on material possessions shows "the damming effect of wealth" (Brown 2014: 250). For Isaak (2006: 1255), Jesus' teaching on material possessions shows the peril of wealth. In the context of this research, it will be attempted to see whether such a presentation were meant to condemn wealth totally. An understanding of the context of the prevailing economic and social conditions of Palestine where Jesus preached, and the ethnically mixed community from which Luke wrote, would help our understanding of Jesus' teaching on material possessions. This becomes important since both contexts, for example, were replete with poverty, neglect and exploitation of both the poor and the downtrodden, and injustice by the wealthy and the ruling class.

All these were products of a socially stratified Palestinian environment and the Roman Empire. Within Luke's community, there is a belief that there were tensions regarding the proper use of wealth. According to Schnelle (2005), towards the end of the first-century AD, people with wealth and popularity became a part of the community of Luke. These people, according to him, had developed access to material possessions and money. In addition, Schnelle pointed out that these wealthy members of the community were avaricious and also insulted other poor members which were against the love character of the ancient Christian community in which material possessions were denounced through sharing the 'little' they had among their members. This was the central

problem of Luke's ethics. For Schnelle, therefore, Luke responded to this problem by having Jesus make material possessions a problem to discipleship as seen in his teachings on the subject in some prominent pericopes in the gospel of Luke.⁴

Understood from this background, this research pegs its fulcrum within the pericope of the parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:13-21) and the related teaching of Jesus on material possessions in Lk 12:22-30. These texts, to a reasonable extent, embody important aspects of the teachings on material possessions by Jesus in Luke. In other words, in these texts, Luke carefully wove Jesus' teaching around a de-emphasis of the materialistic way of life for Christians. Being therefore a gospel that deals with issues of Christians and material possessions, this research, establishing Luke's understanding of the place of material possessions in the lives of Christians, seeks to draw their implications for contemporary Christians in Nigeria who are part of a materialistic Christianity holding sway in the country in present times.

1.2 Locating the Problem of the Study

That the gospel according to Luke contains a lot of material, which deals with Christians and the ideal pursuit and use of material possessions, is a fact. However, of more importance is how the teachings of Lukan passages (Lk 12:13-22 and Lk 12:22-30) that form the core of the study on material possessions, have resonated with the practice of Christianity in Nigeria generally. The answer to this, of course, is on the negative since it is a practical fact that Jesus' teachings on the dangers that material possessions have for Christians as seen in Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:21-33 have been greatly ignored by Christians in Nigeria. Put differently, the teachings of Jesus on material possessions in these Lukan texts no longer resonate with contemporary Christians in Nigeria. This manifest itself in the problem of materialism, which has plagued Nigerian Christianity for a long time now. As argued by Eze Nwafor (Oral interview May 10, 2018) "the problem of materialism has engulfed the entire practise of Christianity in Nigeria and most Christians in the country are not im-

⁴ For a survey of the purposes of material possessions in Luke and the different readings of why material possessions dominate in the gospel of Luke, see Philips (2003: 231–269) and King (2019: 1–35).

mune from such.” This is true with regard to the problem of materialism seen among Christians in the country.

Of course, there is no doubt that Christianity has grown over the years in Nigeria. According to Ngele, Uwagbute, Odo & Agbo (2017: 285-300), if one uses numeric strength and proliferation of churches and church buildings as matrices for measuring the growth of present-day Nigerian Christianity, then it is safe to say that contemporary Nigerian Christianity has indeed grown. Commenting on this, Aweda (2009) writes “every street and corner of all our big cities, villages and hamlets are full of churches, services are full [*sic*] to capacity, some running three or more sessions.” In line with the above, Egbujo (2015) has called attention to the fact that “materialism, opportunism and vain glories have taken front piers and chased spirituality to back benches and this is trouble. Preoccupation with prosperity and instantaneous gratification has left no air for the church to breath.” The same goes for Arinze who has strongly bemoaned the high-level of materialism seen in contemporary Nigerian Christianity (Ugwuanyi 2014).

The above articulated scenario, which is more or less an everyday experience, shows a variance when juxtaposed with the teachings of Lk 12:12-21 and Lk 12:21-30. This scenario also shows that materialism has become a ‘sham’ in present day Christian practice in Nigeria, and is indicative of how Nigerian Christians care less about the teachings of Jesus on material possessions in Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30. In this regard therefore, the task before this research is to address the problem of materialism among contemporary Christians in Nigeria from the optic of the Gospel according to Luke on material possessions with emphasis on the texts indicated above.

1.3 Aims of the Study

The general aim of the study is to critically study the theme of material possessions in the gospel according to Luke and the implications this has for contemporary Christians in Nigeria. The specific aims of the study include:

- A critical discussion on the socio-historical context of the Gospel according to Luke.
- To study, critically, the parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:13-21) and the related teaching of Jesus on material possessions in Lk 12:22-30.

- To discuss variables that fan the embers of materialism in the practice of Christianity in Nigeria in contemporary times.
- To relate the implications Jesus' teachings on material possessions in Luke have for contemporary Christians in Nigeria.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study broadly covers:

- A study of the social world of both Palestine and Eastern Roman Empire in which Jesus lived, and in which Luke's community may have been centered.
- Exegesis of Lukan text of the parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:13-21) and Jesus' teaching in Lk 12:22-30 which centered on material possessions.
- The purpose of material possessions in the gospel according to Luke.
- Issues that are associated with the rise of materialism in the practice of Christianity in Nigeria.
- The implications of material possessions in the gospel according to Luke for Christians in Nigeria.

This stated scope of the study also gives a direction to its limitations. Firstly, the exegesis of the study will be strictly limited to Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30 which I find to be very important aspects of the teaching of Jesus on material possessions in the gospel according to Luke. The limitation to these texts is because, as had been pointed out, the gospel according to Luke does not have a unified theology of material possessions. As such, delving into other Lukan passages on material possessions in the study may lead to interpreting the texts out of context. It is also to be stated that the discussion on the socio-historical context of the gospel according to Luke will not touch much on the political context of Palestine and that of Rome generally. This is because such a discussion will take the focus of the study away from the main social issues that relate with understanding material possessions in the gospel according to Luke. Equally, the implications of material possession to be discussed in the study are driven by the exegesis done in the Lukan texts as pointed out above. Hence, the study does not include a 'secularist' approach to the problem of materialism as seen presently in the practise of Christianity in Nigeria.

1.5 Why the Study?

As a contextual study, this research will be of significance in the following ways:

- Christians in Nigeria will benefit from the findings of the study on the ideal Christian attitude to material possessions.
- Christian leaders in Nigeria will also find the study's findings on Jesus' teaching on material possessions beneficial since they will be guided in their teaching on issues relating to wealth especially from the Lukan gospel.
- Researchers in the field of the New Testament will benefit from the findings of the study as a worthy contribution to scholarly discussion on the issues of material possessions in the gospel according to Luke.
- Discussion of the study will contribute to an understanding material possessions from the Lukan gospel and their hermeneutical implications for Christians in Nigeria as well for future researchers on the subject.

1.6 Methodological Considerations

The study adopted the Historical-Critical method otherwise called the diachronic method of exegesis. According to Gorman (2006: 15) the Historical-Critical approach to exegesis "focuses on the origin and development of a text, employing methods designed to uncover these aspects of it." By implication, in adopting this methodology in the study, I tend to pursue a holistic study of the texts of Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-33 in the context of oral histories, source (s), literary criticism, *Sitz im Leben*, setting, among other related issues that will help our understanding of these texts. Complementing the Historical-Critical approach, is Social-Scientific Criticism (SSC) with an emphasis on "social description"⁵ of the world of Palestine in which Jesus lived, and that of the community of

⁵ The Social-Scientific approach to exegesis is mostly divided into the social-scientific analysis that makes use of theories and models from the Social Sciences and the social description, which, more or less, may not make use of theories and models from the social sciences. Social description is also concerned with understanding the social contexts of Biblical pericopes and how these help in interpreting them. For more on social-scientific criticism and social description, see Elliot (2010), (2008: 26–38), Martin (1993), Gorman (2006).

Luke. The description of these socio-historical contexts is deemed important to the development of the study because there is a strong connection between the socio-historical contexts of the first-century AD Palestine and that of the community of Luke, and an understanding of the presentation of material possessions in the gospel according to Luke. Since this is an exegetical work, the main source of data collection is the New Testament Greek Bible. This is backed up by Bible Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries and Concordances, textbooks, journal articles, relevant newspaper material, and materials from the internet. Oral interview⁶ is also employed in the study in order to gain a better perception of the variables associated with the causes of materialism among Christians in Nigeria. Data from this source will be presented descriptively in the study.

1.7 Clarification of Terms

Materialism

In the context of this study, materialism refers to so much attachment to material possessions or wealth. This understanding differs greatly from the use of materialism in philosophical circles, especially among the monists, which hold that nothing exists beyond the material (physical) world.

⁶ The semi-structured interview was adopted in the course of the study. The semi-structured interview is usually open and allows new set of ideas to be brought in during the interview as determined by the responses of the interviewees. I adopted this method of interview to enable him explore related ideas to the general themes of the eight interview questions that guided the interview based on the responses of the interviewers. For a discussion on the semi-structured interview, see Edwards & Holland (2013:2–3). It is important to note that the interviewees were Christians drawn from different church denominations, which included the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, the AICs and the Pentecostal Churches. These are all dominant church denominations in Nigeria. I used pseudonyms for the interviewees to ensure anonymity. Familiarity with the practise of Christianity in the country and the increased materialistic tendencies among Christians in the Nigeria in modern time all informed my application of the texts to the Nigerian Christian context.

Nigerian Christianity

Nigerian Christianity is a term that will I use in this study to denote a type of Christianity practised in Nigeria. Generally speaking, Nigerian Christianity is part of what is holistically described as African Christianity which, in itself, is a type of Christianity practised in Africa which adapts and incorporates African “life and cultures.”⁷ Nigerian Christianity, although a part of African Christianity, has its own peculiarities based on the different cultures in which it is practised in Nigeria. These peculiarities include that Nigerian Christianity is a type that local worldviews still influence. It is also a type of Christianity, in which Pentecostalism/charismatism has influenced, which leads to competition and rivalries among different strands of Christianity in the country. Equally, Nigerian Christianity is a type, which the socio-economic problems in Nigeria have also largely influenced. Also, and most related to the study, Nigerian Christianity is a type in which materialism has influenced to a very large extent.

Worldview

Although defining worldview can be challenging, I agree with Kraft (1995) that worldview is “the cultural lens through which human experience is viewed.” Kalu (2002: 117) goes on to add that “worldview is a picture that points to the deep-level assumptions and values, on the basis of which people generate deep-level behaviour; it provides the motivation for behaviour and gives meaning to the environment.” Understood from the above picture, worldview is therefore defined in the study as a mirror through which a group of people interprets “life events” and the world around them.

Poverty

The term poverty is very difficult to define. In fact, it is very multifaceted, and has both economic, social and political nuances. In the context of this study, poverty is defined as the lack of basic human needs which include material possessions (money), social amenities and access to opportunities, especially education and employment.⁸

⁷ In his work “African Christianity”. Oladipo (2016: 85–98) describes African Christianity, its history and features. See also, Ukah (2007).

⁸ For a study and definition of poverty see Haughton & Khandker (2009: 1-3).

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 The Social-Historical Context of the Gospel according to Luke

The review, in this section, begins with a critical review of the social life of Palestine and the Roman Empire during the time of Jesus. This is to enable me to throw more light on the nature of the environment that Jesus' operated in, and connect it with some social issues evident within the gospel according to Luke.

2.1.1 The Social World of Palestine and Roman Empire during Jesus' ministry

Although, in this section of the review, importance is placed on social aspects of life during the time of Jesus, it does not mean that political issues, when deemed necessary, will not be reviewed since political issues are sometimes intertwined with social life. Sources on the birth date of Jesus are speculative; most times, Jesus' date of birth is based on some calculations from sources from the New Testament (especially Luke and Matthew's infancy narratives). Although, Luke has sometimes been accused of incorrectly representing historical records, his infancy narrative has been a good source of calculation of Jesus year of birth. According to Wright, Murphy & Fitzmyer (2014: 1249), Jesus was born during the reign of Herod in Judea and Augustus as the emperor of Rome which would place Jesus' birth around 3 BC. This was some years after the Roman Empire had become an imperialist power in BC 27 according to Rowdon (1988). As such, these early years of Roman rule in Palestine and Judea in particular were sure to have produced a lot of social adjustments needed for the survival of an imperial/colonising power of Rome.

Beginning with Herod the Great as the ruler of Judea, Uwaegbute (2013: 143) has shown that his reign lasted for about 33 years. According to Uwaegbute, these were years marked with political intrigues and high taxation on Judeans who mostly depended on agriculture for survival. This is also brought to bear by Carter (2006) who argues, that taxation was an integral part of Herod's administration. The Jewish historian of Roman royalty, Flavius otherwise known in history as Josephus, had recorded this high taxation in his work *The Antiquities of the Jews*. Carter

(2006) noted that at the demise of Herod the Great, and at the inception of Quirinius as a legate over Syria and Coponius as the procurator of Judea, new forms of taxes were introduced. Such taxes included poll tax on each individual including women and slaves, an income tax – a percentage of the herds by those who kept cattle, and tax on land to be paid from the produce of harvests. Carter also observed that these forms of taxes weighed heavily on the people of Palestine who were mostly agrarians.

Horsley's (2008) edited work also presents some effects of these taxes on the populace of Palestine. According to this source these new forms of taxes brought economic pressures on peasant producers, especially village families in Judea who were mostly forced into debts and the possibilities of losing their families inheritance.

Beside the issues of taxes in Palestine, the rise of social studies/sociological studies of Palestine during the birth and ministry of Jesus, has indeed opened vistas of knowledge with regard to the social world of Palestine. The pioneer of these studies may have been Grant (1974) who published a work detailing the socio-economic issues behind the gospels to show what social aspects of life in Palestine these gospels grew out of. Grant's work introduced readers to issues relating to the agriculture-based economy of Palestine where tenant farming, semi-commercial agriculture and small-scale businesses held sway.

Although not much sociological, Jeremias (1969) work on the economic and social conditions of Jerusalem during the time of Jesus offers readers an understanding of the social aspects of a Palestinian city like Jerusalem. One fact that Jeremias uncovered in his work was that Jerusalem during the first-century AD was heavily stratified along the lines of the rich, the middle class, the court (priestly and religious class) and the poor who were at the wrong social strata of Jerusalem. What was life like for the poor of Jerusalem, especially among the daily labourers and slaves? Jeremias painted a grim picture of the everyday lives of the poor. While slave labour drove the economy of Jerusalem, life was indeed very tough for a large percentage of the daily labourers whose daily pay averaged a denarius as Jeremias tell his readers.

From a purely sociological optic, Theissen's work did study, critically, the sociology of Palestine, especially with regard to the first-century AD

Christian movement.¹ Theissen's (1978) work portrayed grim social conditions of Palestine in the first-century AD where rural poverty and dependence on agriculture were all everyday realities. This, according to Theissen, was made worst by the choking elites' hold on the economy. Although observing some important sociological aspects of Palestine in the first-century, Theissen reached a somewhat controversial conclusion in saying that because of these social conditions, Jesus and the early Christian movement turned into "wandering charismatics" who denounced family life and material possessions. I agree with Theissen on the fact that the social conditions of Palestine at the time of Jesus and his movement were grim, but strongly fault the idea that Jesus and his followers denounced family life and possessions because of these grim conditions. It may also be pertinent to point out that even though Jesus may have belonged to a low strata of the society of his day, he may not be categorised among the extremely poor. At least, he had a craft since he was identified as a *tekton* in Mk 6:3. Also, it is evident that some of his disciples came from a relatively rich background as seen in the case of the calling of Zebedee's sons, James and John. According to the narrative in Mk 1:19-20, it is seen that Zebedee was prosperous enough to have had hired servants who helped out with his fishing business. Equally, following Elliott's (2009: 173-210) study, it has been argued that both Jesus and his earliest followers were not wandering charismatics *per se* but formed a movement that was family oriented since their focus was mainly on the households. In all this, one then gets the impression that both Jesus and the early Christian movement, as Theissen argued, may not have been wandering charismatics who denounced family life and possessions owing to the grim social conditions in the Palestine of their day.

The same grim observation about life in Palestine and the Roman Empire was made by Esler (1987: 29) whose study has been found helpful to this research. For a fact Esler's study of both rural and urban life, especially in the Eastern Roman empire shows how poverty was a menace in Palestine but mostly in the urban cities of Rome. Esler establishes that in a typical urban Roman Eastern city, social stratification was a reality.

¹ I am aware of the anachronistic use of the word Christian movement/Christianity to refer to the earliest followers of Jesus. By implication, I used the term Christian community in reference to the earliest Jesus' followers in Galilee and beyond, for the sake of convenience. On the correct reference to these earliest Jesus' followers, see McGinn (2014) and Elliot (2009: 119-154).

At the apex of such a socially-stratified setting in the first century AD, Esler tells his readers that the senators and the equestrians or the *decurions* – including all the aristocrats – held sway. At the bottom of the strata, were found the poor who included the slaves, the daily labourers and the beggars who were dependent on the class at the apex.

In Palestine and Roman cities, as Brown (2004: 67) has argued, poverty was a grim phenomenon. He further pointed out that in Palestine of Jesus' time, there was in existence the poor who were "small farmers with inadequate or barren land, or serfs on large estates; in the cities without the assistance of produce from the land the poor were somewhat worse off" (2014: 67). In Roman cities, Brown also revealed that slavery was an issue. Slavery, according to him, was because of abundance of huge Roman estates, which needed abundance of slave labour to manage. This is in agreement with Esler's thoughts above which show that slaves were "drivers" of the urban economies of Rome in the early part of first-century AD.

With regard to the socio-economic situation of Palestine during the first-century, Uwaegbute (2013: 143-144) and Uwaegbute & Odo (2021) have partly investigated the problems of poverty, slavery and injustice that existed in the area during this time. Uwaegbute noted that Palestine of that time was an environment in which life was very tough for the majority of rural farmers who depended heavily on tenant farming. With the introduction of poll taxes as Uwaegbute argues further, a great economic pressure was put on these rural farmers whose sole dependency was on the produce of the land. And to make matters worse, land for farming was scarce for the same rural farmers of Palestine owing to the choking grip the aristocrats and wealthy land owners exerted on agriculture during this period. This affected these farmers' access to land thereby leaving their livelihoods very much threatened.

Horsley's (2010: 99-145) other work on the politics of Roman Palestine during the time of Jesus is also deemed helpful here. Characteristic of his thorough works on the political situation in Palestine of first-century AD, Horsley paints a grim picture of Galilee where Jesus and his earliest followers operated, and which was dominated by all kinds of exploitation. These included high taxation, debts, tenant farming and general oppressive ruling of Herod Antipas, the high priests, the Pharisees among others.

2.1.2 The Place of Composition and the Community of Luke

Although the authors of the gospels were anonymous, it is certain that church tradition did attribute authorship to them. In the case of the gospel of Luke, Porter (1988: 1182) asserts that "... this ascription goes back to the second-century and only a negligible minority of modern scholars would deny the common author of the third gospel and Acts." I agree with this position on the authorship of Luke since there are no sufficient grounds for an opposing view.

However, of paramount interest in this literature review, are issues relating to the date, place of composition and the community of Luke. This becomes very important not only because these issues have not been convincingly settled in scholarship, but understanding them will give a very huge sense of direction to the development of this research with a particular regard to the social make-up of Luke's community. In this sense, a lot of scholarly works have critically dealt with issues like the date and place of composition of the gospel and Luke's community. Karris' (2014: 675) analysis shows that the gospel of Luke was composed around 80-85 AD. He based his conclusion on the assumption that Luke was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as Lk 21:5-38 prefigures and on the fact that Luke's gospel does not reflect "knowledge of the bitter persecution of Christians from the latter part of Domitian's rule (AD 81-96)" (2014: 675). On the place of composition of the gospel of Luke, Karris favoured, strongly, Antioch in Syria. A part of this conclusion rests on Karris' view that Luke must have been a native of Antioch of Syria. Maybe because of the multi-ethnic nature of Antioch of Syria, Karris is more at home with Luke being a native of Antioch, and also, having had the gospel of Luke composed there.

For Porter (1988: 1182), who reached his conclusion on the native city of Luke through the testimony of Eusebius in the second-century AD, Luke was a native of Antioch of Syria where also he had the gospel of Luke composed. On the date of composition of the gospel, Porter favors a time during the 60s AD. Chinwokwu (2015) believes that the possible date of the composition of the gospel of Luke was 80-90 AD. This date covers a decade which gives room for a late composition of the gospels (Chinwokwu 2015).

Ituma (2016) argues otherwise, stating strongly the difficulties involved in determining the actual date of the composition of the gospel of Luke. Ituma opted for an early date for the composition of the gospel of Luke; 68 AD was his favoured date (Ituma 2016: 92). Of interest, is Ituma's

contention regarding the place of composition of the gospel of Luke. Departing radically from the majority view that Antioch was the place of composition of Luke, Ituma prefers discussing the destination of the gospel of Luke. This destination, for him, is the predominant gentile Christians of Roman Empire as deduced from the content of the gospel (Ituma 2016: 92).

Ituma's idea is in consonance with the analysis of Brown (2014: 269-70) on the composition of Luke although not in agreement with Brown's favoured date of composition of the gospel of Luke. Brown, offers some interesting assumptions regarding the date of composition of Luke. Having dealt critically on certain issues within the gospel of Luke, Brown contends that the possible date of writing of Luke was 85 AD. Particularly interesting, is the method through which Brown arrived at his conclusion. His method involved the belief in the symbolic place of Jerusalem in the gospel of Luke, and Jerusalem being an important aspect of Jesus' ministry. This, for him, knocks off any date for the composition of the gospel being later than 85 AD.

According to Brown, the descriptions of activities of the apostles and the church in Acts of the Apostles reflect a more developed political structure in which there were presbyters. Equally, Brown points out that the letter of Ignatius around 110 AD did not reflect such a well-developed political structure of the churches in Asia Minor where the activities of the Apostles loomed large. In addition, Brown notes that there are no indications of Luke's (the assumed writer of Acts) knowledge of Pauline letters compiled around second-century AD. All of this points to the direction that the gospel of Luke was written early enough before the second-century AD and some years after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

On the place of composition of the gospel of Luke, Brown suggests to his readers, a mixture of gentile communities, directly or indirectly evangelised by Paul or the disciples. Hence, Brown's contention is that it is difficult to point out a particular place from which Luke composed his gospel as seen in his words

“... For rather than thinking of Luke's intended audience as a single house-church or ever as living in one city, perhaps we should think of Christians of the same background over a large region.” (Brown 2014: 270).

For Patella (2009: 216), the possible date of composition of the gospel of Luke was 80–90 AD. On the place or locale of the gospel, Patella only

tells his readers that it seems that Luke was a very prominent and influential member of the early church with interest in dynamism, direction and development of the early Christianity. On his own part, Fitzmyer believes that Luke was of Antiochene origin.² Fitzmyer cites an extra-New Testament tradition which indicates that Luke was from Antioch of Syria based on the statements in Acts 11:19-15:41. Concerning the date of composition of the gospel of Luke, Fitzmyer suggests a date not later than 85AD.

For Esler (1987: 27), one of the renowned scholars in social-scientific study of the gospel of Luke, the date and place of composition of the gospel of Luke cannot be determined accurately. However, he agrees with the belief that the gospel of Luke was written “after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE and before the second century.” On this platform Esler reached his conclusion in agreement with most of the already presented views that “the most likely date for Luke-Acts appears to be in the mid-to late eighties or the early nineties of the first-century CE” (Esler 1987: 29). With regard to the place of composition of the gospel of Luke, Esler also speculates. But one important finding of Esler is his idea that the gospel of Luke was composed in an urban Hellenistic city, certainly, of the Eastern Roman Empire. Relying, heavily on internal evidences in the gospel, especially its manner of writing polished Greek, reliance on the Septuagint and the mentions of the word *polis* (city) in the gospel, Esler is convinced that Luke composed his gospel in an urban Hellenistic city of Eastern Roman Empire. Esler somewhat concluded that his best bet for Luke’s Gospel composition was Antioch-on-the Orontes.³ This therefore means that, to him, the community of Luke was probably centered in Antioch-on-the Orontes. The same goes for Lampe (1976: 820), who believes that the date of composition of the gospel of Luke AD 80–85. This is based on his belief that the gospel of Luke shows no knowledge of Pauline letters which were compiled from the beginning of the Second-century AD. Although this view may have its own merit, it must be borne in mind the fact that Luke did not show any knowledge of Pauline letters does not satisfactorily explain how 80–85 AD is the best bet for Luke’s date of writing his gospel.

² J.A. Fitzmyer cited in Brown (2014: 268).

³ See the note on p. 231 to Esler’s argument on the city in which Luke was composed in chapter 2 of his work cited above.

2.1.3 The Social 'makeup' of Luke's Community

There have been contentions regarding the social makeup of the community of Luke. The expression social makeup refers to the ethnic and economic compositions of the community of Luke. On ethnic compositions of Luke's community, some scholars as will be shown, favour a gentile community. A very few scholars are of the view that since Luke's gospel was apologetic— a gospel designed to defend Christianity as a harmless religion to be accepted by Roman authorities— then one would reckon with the fact that pagans (non-Christians) may have been a part of Luke's targeted audience. Although there may be a sense in this view about the apologetic thrust of Luke's gospel, the idea that Luke's targeted audience were pagans (non-Christians) leaves much to be desired since there is not much evidence that pagans were a part of Luke's community.

For Tyson (2010), the community of Luke and the target audience of the gospel, were primarily the gentiles who were attracted to Judaism. By implication, Tyson sees the God-fearers as constituting, primarily, Luke's community since Luke's purpose of writing was to get them to accept Christianity more than Judaism. Neyrey (1991) stretches the argument that the community of Luke was gentile by studying internal literary evidences in the gospel which were typical of Hellenism.⁴ For example, he contends that Luke's refusal to depict Jesus as suffering in the passion narrative is very much in tune with Hellenistic resistance to portraying emotions. By implication, this argument when stretched, shows that only a gentile community would have understood such Hellenistic literary traits found in Luke more than any other group. For Karris (2014: 676), the community of Luke was primarily gentile in makeup. Based on his position that both Luke and his gospel (Luke) were all products of Antioch, a gentile city, Karris strongly points out that Luke's community was gentile and was "painfully rethinking their missionary thrust in a hostile environment." This concurs with the line of thought that Luke's main purpose of writing was to portray Christianity in a good light before a hostile Roman Empire.

Other scholars like Jervell (1980) and Tiede (1972) argue that Luke's community was primarily Jewish. Drawing his position on the date of Luke's writing which, for Tiede, was after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Luke's community would be naturally made up of Jewish

⁴ See also, Neyrey (1980: 153-171).

Christians mourning and sorrowing about their destiny, especially the loss of the temple. This makes Jervell contend that the gospel's purpose therefore was to explain to this Jewish community that their woe was a result of their failure to keep the teachings of the prophets and Jesus. This position is punctured by the point which Brown has raised that even gentile converts would have also been perplexed by the destruction of the temple including the whole of Jerusalem. I also add that the literary features of Luke (example of the dedication to a gentile called Theophilus, its idealisation of the poor and the socially despised) are indications that gentiles played an important part in his community. On his own part, Fitzmyer (1986), a very prominent scholar of Luke, contends that Luke's community was mainly gentile. Basing his argument on the literary features of Luke, especially the prologue which is a literary feature dominant among Hellenistic scholarly circles and Luke's dependence on the Septuagint as his source, Fitzmyer depicts Luke's community as being made up of gentiles Christians.

On the other side of the divide, are found scholars who contend that Luke's community was mixed. A prominent voice among these scholars is Esler. Adopting mostly a social-scientific study of Luke, Esler (1987: 29) argues that the first point of departure would be if Luke's community was pagan, or Christians. Esler identifies Luke's community as being a "Christian community." On the ethnic compositions of such Christian community, he sees a "mixed community of pious gentiles and Jews" which fits into the "legitimation", the balance and "unity" that Luke sought for his community.

Equally, like Esler, Schottroff and Stegemann (1986: 80-85) believe that the community of Luke was very much a mixed one, comprising of both Jews and gentiles. These scholars drew their conclusion from the fact that the socio-historical situation of Luke is very much different from that of Jesus. While, according to Stegemann and Schottroff, Jesus' earliest followers comprised mostly of the poor drawn from the Jewish society, Luke's community comprised of people that cut across ethnicities and social backgrounds. This therefore means that these scholars believe that both Jews and gentiles of different social backgrounds made up Luke's community. In their words:

Luke has in mind a group that lives as an independent community in a city of the Roman Empire (though not Palestine). It evidently does not have members who belong to the upper class, but neither does it have members among the destitute (beggars, etc.). These are caused, on the

one hand, by economic differences: in addition to rich people there are others who are in need, ordinary folks such as tax collectors, manual workers, and the like. On the other hand, there are also social tensions. Respected and respectable Christians look down on ordinary folk, especially when the latter have a reputation for engaging in illegal dealings (tax collectors, soldiers) (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986: 80-85).

These words above are explanative of the fact which was pointed out above that not only were there, in the community of Luke, rich and poor people who cut across different economic backgrounds, but also members of the community did include people of varying ethnic backgrounds.

With regard to the economic level of Luke's community, a lot of important literature exists on the subject. Karris (2014: 676), for example, thinks that Luke's community was made up of well-to-do members. By implication, Luke's community had many rich members. He did not, however, state the methodology with which he arrived at this conclusion. Similarly, Schnelle (2005), contended that the community of Luke had members who were wealthy and popular and poor members as well. In the same vein, Du Plessis believes that the community of Luke possibly was made up of rich members. As he writes:

It is quite possible that the first reader (s) of the Gospel of Luke were not typical of the Christian community at large. One gets the impression that the recipients of the Gospel are well-educated members of the middle to higher classes of society, whereas Jesus' followers are described in the story itself as poor and relatively uneducated people (du Plessis 2001: 59-60).

For some other scholars of the social-scientific bent on Luke, there was ample evidence that Luke's community was mostly made up of the poor. This was, mostly, contended by Pilgrim (1981) in his epoch-making work. In this work, Pilgrim showed that there is a clear idealisation and glorification of both the poor and poverty in the gospel of Luke, a pointer to the fact that the poor was a huge part of Luke's community. And to Pilgrim, Luke believed, as seen in the ministry of Jesus, that the poor, most especially responded to the gospel and were given a prominent place both in Jesus' teaching and his conceptualisation of the kingdom of God.

For Johnson (1977), the community of Luke was primarily made up of the poor. Although, concerned with the literary functions of Luke's emphasis on material possessions, Johnson conceives of a Lukan commu-

nity made of up of mostly the poor, which served as a criticism of the rich and possessions in being a stumbling block towards prompt response to God's call in the gospel of Luke. Also from a social-scientific perspective, Moxnes (1988) critically studied the economic level of the community of Luke. According to him, Luke's community was mainly made up of the poor. This played out in the idealisation of the poor, denigration of both riches and the rich, and a de-emphasis on material possessions in the gospel of Luke. Park also argues strongly that the majority of Luke's community was poor.⁵ Drawing on the social level of most people in Jesus' and Luke's environments which reflected poverty, oppression and hopelessness for the masses, Park contends that among the people who made up the community of Luke, were found a majority of the poor and the economically disadvantaged. They became disadvantaged the more when the community of Luke began to be joined by more prosperous and wealthy gentiles; this flared up social tensions, Park further contended.

The same belief that Luke's community had a majority of poor members is emphasised by Esler (1987: 29). Drawing on Paul's comment in 1 Cor 1:26 on the Corinthian Christians not being numbered among the powerful, the rich, or the nobility, Esler argues strongly that Luke's community of the 80s AD would not have been greatly different. From what he called internal evidence, Esler further cited the issue regarding the idealisation and glorification of the poor and the socially disadvantaged as seen in the Luke's account of the Great Banquet for example. Even as one may share the convictions of Esler from the internal and external evidences, one may note that the Corinthian parallel may not be totally admitted. The economic situation of Corinth as a commercial city and people around it would differ from the generally accepted place of the Lukan composition, wherever that may have been.

For Brewer (2009: 1-27), it seems likely that the poor made up a large percentage of the community of Luke. Drawing on the ubiquitous nature of poverty and economic disadvantages of the first-century Palestine and some parts of Roman Empire, Brewer argues that Luke's interest in the poor, their poverty and strong statements condemning the rich and wealthy, all point towards the existence of people at the lowest strata of

⁵ Mary Park, "Wealth and Poverty in Luke's Gospel, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus" retrieved from anw.webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archive/pmin-park.fo4.pdf.

society in his (Luke's) community. In fact, to Brewer, the poor was an integral part of Luke's community.

Powell's (1989) analysis of the social level⁶ of the Christians that made up Luke's community shows that both the rich and the poor were found in the community. The same position applies to Pilgrim (1981: 82-84) who argues that the community of Luke was, indeed, made up of both the rich and the poor. But it seems, that while Pilgrim sees a mixed community of the rich and the poor for Luke, his analysis tends to suggest that the poor were on the majority. These poor, Pilgrim further argues, are to be understood in terms of socio-economic status. For these poor in such a community, Pilgrim (1981: 81-82) further argues, the good news means 'physical, social and economic liberation' without necessarily losing the spiritual dimension of the term (poor). From a similar position, Forbes (2000) contends that the community of Luke indeed contained both the rich and the poor as seen in some of Jesus parables in which wealth is criticised and the rich exhorted to share their possessions with the poor and the needy. Some of the parables that actually deal with the poor and the rich in Luke's gospel according to Forbes include the parable of the Great Banquet (14:15-23), the parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21) and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31) among others.⁷

Seccombe (1982), on the other hand, adds another twist to the social makeup of Luke's community, especially with regard to the existence of the poor in Luke's community. Seccombe's analysis seems to deny the existence of the poor in Luke's community judging by his understanding of Luke's use of the poor in his gospel. Seccombe, critically, studied the meaning of the term 'poor' in Old Testament usages, especially as used in the Psalms, Isaiah and the Inter-Testamental literature. From his studies therefore, he connects his understanding of the poor in Luke-Acts to refer neither to the pious ones, any particular social group, nor those who willingly abandoned their wealth. In this regard, he points out that the term 'poor' is a title applied to Israel as a whole nation which is in need of God's salvation. This understanding therefore leads to Seccombe's contention that:

There is nothing socio-economic or socio-religious about the use of poor terminology in the passages we have considered.... The poor are Israel

⁶ I borrowed this term from Meeks (1983: 51)

⁷ See also Reinstorf (2002: 1281-1995).

and the answer to their poverty is the messianic kingdom (Seccombe 1982: 95).

It is, however, worthy to note that Seccombe's understanding of the poor leaves much to be desired in the context of their (the poor's) existence in the community of Luke. If Luke used the term 'poor' to refer to Israel as a whole, then doubts are raised with regard to certain teachings and passages that depict Jesus' encounters with the rich, and his teachings regarding how the rich are to share their material possessions with the poor in the gospel of Luke. Put differently, Luke's constant emphasis on sharing material wealth with the poor is an indication that the poor—that is, the economically disadvantaged, were indeed an integral part of his community.

Seccombe's argument has an affinity with the thesis of Stegemann & Schottroff (1986) which suggests that there were no destitute in Luke's community. The launch off in this argument stems from their view and study of almsgiving in the gospel of Luke. For these scholars, Luke viewed almsgiving in a far more penetrating and comprehensive sense. Luke's idea of almsgiving, according to these scholars, is charity directed to non-Christians who were destitute. To Stegemann & Schottroff, the implication of this Lukan understanding of almsgiving is that there are no destitute in the community of Luke. This position, just like that of Seccombe, is questionable on the ground that even within Luke's gospel, there are indications that the poor made up a sizable percentage of Luke's community. Also if one connects Luke's gospel to that of Acts of the Apostles which was written by Luke, there are strong indications that the early church had destitute among them.

For Kim (1993), there are ample evidences that the community of Luke was made of up of both the rich and the poor. In order to do a better social analysis of the status of members of Luke's community, Kim plunges head-on into a comparison of Luke's community with that of urban churches of Paul. Relying heavily on the analysis of Esler, Kim's comparison of these two communities differed in the sense that while the urban churches of Paul consisted mostly of the poor and people from the lowest strata of the society, Luke's community had ample evidences of the presence of rich people. To prove this, Kim analyses, for example, the parables of the Great Banquet (Lk 14:12-24), the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37), the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31) which are all indications of the presence of rich Christians in Luke's community. As a proof that the poor were also found in Luke's community, Kim argues

that there are clear injunctions and exhortations to almsgiving to the poor as seen in Luke 6:24-25; 12:16ff; 18:23ff; 19:2f and 21:1ff. In this context, Kim also notes that these passages refer to the destitute, which included the cripples, the blind and the lepers who definitely could not have provided for themselves but for donations in form of almsgiving. These classes of the poor, Kim finally argues, were therefore found among the members of Luke's community.

This idea relates to that of Karris (1976: 112–125) who sees a mixture of both the rich and the poor as members of Luke's community. Karris studied the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel of Luke through the theme of the rich and the poor in which he detects elements of persecution. For him, the general Greco-Roman cultural background of Luke-Acts shows elements of persecution, and included some wealthy people whom, to Karris, were asked to give alms to other poorer members of the community. For Degenhardt (1965: 210), who studied the issue of material possessions in the context of Luke, the predominant members of Luke's community were gentile Christians. Drawing his position on the difference between Luke's treatment of wealth both in the contexts of discipleship and wealth from Luke's gospel community, Degenhardt argues that it is certain that Jesus' attitude to wealth, to Luke, is directed to church leaders who were probably gentiles.

In a thoroughgoing study of stewardship and almsgiving in the gospel according to Luke, Kim (1993) has shown that both Jewish and gentile Christians made up Luke's community. Firstly, Kim argues that the community of Luke was an urban one. To Kim, therefore, this community had an urban setting. Such an urban setting Kim argues further, would naturally have drawn Christians of both backgrounds (Jews and gentiles) together to worship as a Christian community. On the gentile side, Kim uses Theophilus, the person to which the gospel according to Luke together with Acts is dedicated to, as case in study with regard to the nature of these gentile Christians in Luke's community. Kim's treatment of the person of Theophilus shows that Theophilus was Luke's patron who may have been a representative of the gentile Christians to whom Luke wrote his two volumes. The belief in Theophilus as a representative gentile character, makes Kim (1993: 49) argue that "this would suggest that the contemporary community of Luke for which the two volumes were written included probably those who were rich and educated Gentiles..."

For McKenna (2018), the members of Luke's community were primarily gentiles who got converted to the Christian faith through the missionary activities of the apostles especially, Paul. On what criteria, McKenna reached this conclusion, he did not tell his readers. Maybe, McKenna connected Luke's association with Paul during his missionary journeys through which some Christian communities were founded by Paul. However, questions that may be raised with regard to this position, include the fact that Paul's theology and letters bear no resemblance with the gospel of Luke, the said beloved physician and writer of the gospel of Luke. Also the prominent issues that surround the law, Jewish rites, faith and grace which all dominate Paul's letters do not feature prominently in the gospel of Luke. A scholar like Powell (2009) thinks that the community of Luke was made up of both Jews and gentiles.⁸ Basing strongly on the information from the Acts of the Apostles especially in pericopes like 2:41; 4:4; 6:7 etc., Powell argues that there were community fellowship between the Jews and the Gentiles as teachings in Acts 15:19-20 suggests.

2.2 Material Possessions in Luke

2.2.1 The Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21)

With regard to the parable of the rich fool, sometimes called the parable of the rich barn-builder, there is a lot of scholarly works detailing the interpretation of the parable and its place in Jesus' view on material possessions in Luke. Briefly, this study reviews few scholarly views on the setting of this parable. On the setting of the parable of the rich fool, Ringe (1995) argues that the parable is set within the context of a society where social position and wealth were definitive of people's positions in society. However, which type of society this was, for example, an advanced agrarian or pre-industrial peasant society, Ringe did not tell her readers. While, for sure, Ringe's reference that the parable is set in a society that places emphasis on people's social status is on point, it is still lacking for her not to have probed a little further to describe the possible type of society the parable was set. Within the framework of Luke's Gospel narrative, Uy (2002) thinks that the parable of the rich fool fits into Jesus' travel discourses especially, during the journey to Jerusa-

⁸ See chapter 7 of this book.

lem. According to Uy, in this journey to Jerusalem, Jesus was destined to be crucified on the cross hence the mood of these travel discourses is usually filled with anxiety. Similarly, Silas (2016) would locate Jesus' parable of the Rich Fool within the context of the travel narrative in which the right attitude to wealth is dealt with.

With regard to the teaching of the parable, Pittman (2010) writes that "Luke alone records this encounter and parable, which together present the pursuit of possessions as an inherently selfish and perhaps isolating endeavour." From this therefore, Pittman argues that the parable denounces material possessions which lead to greed and insensitivity to human needs. Similarly, according to Karris (2014: 706), this parable strongly teaches "the deleterious effects possessions can have on disciples." It is observable from Karris' position the fact which the parable reflects is the damaging effects of material possessions especially, as it relates to serving God and humanity. This corroborates Johnson's (1977: 231) thoughts that in the parable, Jesus strongly warns the disciples about the dangers of material possessions especially in the context of relationship with God and fellow humans. Equally, this is seen in Isaak's (2006: 1255) thesis that the parable of the rich fool centers on the peril of wealth since it teaches Christians that love for earthly possessions separates them from God, humanity and sensitivity to human needs. Isaak's thought on the point since the parable of the rich fool really shows how love for earthly possessions can separate Christians from God and mostly make them insensitive to human needs.

For Brown (2014: 246), the core of the message of the parable of the rich fool lies in understanding the maxim "one's life does not depend on what one possess." This statement for Brown is so important to Luke that it recurs in Acts 2:44 where there is an indication that the early Christians did not trust so much in material possession, but rather on sharing the little they had amongst themselves. This is another theme stressed by Patella (2009: 263-264) who said that the parable warns strongly against "greed and riches" as exhibited by the rich fool who ended up with a total loss of his wealth because of greed and desire to satisfy only his needs.

According to Ngele, Uwaegbute & Odo (2017) in this parable, there is seen a total de-emphasis on wealth/material possessions. The trio went further to explicate the fact that, interest in material possessions runs contrary to interest in God. This is also related to Bloomberg's (1999) thought that the parable of the rich fool reflects the relationships be-

tween material possessions, God and justice. In the analysis offered by Bailey (2008: 302), in the parable of the rich fool, Jesus teaches his listeners that “life is not available in the surpluses that this insatiable desire produces.” Going further on the nature of human desires Bailey notes “Regardless of how much wealth is squirreled away, this gnawing fear presses frail humans to acquire more. There is never quite enough because the insecurity within never dies.” And as Bailey finally stresses, it is the desire for acquisition of material wealth that the parable teaches Christians against. In another study of the parable and with regard to the warning on greed, Bailey would note that:

Jesus’ cryptic answer warns the reader in two ways. First, with these pre-suppositions the desire for material things will prove insatiable. Second, the dreams of the abundant life will never be achieved through such an accumulation of surplus (1983: 63).

This idea concurs with the thought of Henry that its teaching (the rich fool) shows that:

Our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal the wealth of this world. The life of the soul, undoubtedly does not depend on it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suite the nature of the soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires nor last so long as it will last. Even the life of the body and happiness of that do not consist in abundance of these things; for many live very contently and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth... (2006: 1866).

In the above thought, it is seen that happiness and comfort in life do not necessarily depend on the level of wealth one has acquired. Of course, it can be argued rightly that the human soul, which is the more important part of a human, does not need material possessions since it (the soul) outlives them (material possessions). Similarly, the parable according to Vincent (n.p), is about how material wealth can be a huge form of stumbling block to Christians’ recognizing the place of God in their lives. This is seen in the fact that the rich fool trusted so much in his material wealth which led him to abandoning God and the need of humanity at the same time; this, according to Vincent, is the practical effect of material possession in the life of a Christian.

Kim (1993: 211-215; 254-255), studied the parable of the rich fool in the context of stewardship in the gospel of Luke. After a critical analysis of the parable, Kim found out that its teaching denotes improper steward-

ship of wealth in the gospel of Luke. In Kim's analysis, he thinks that the core message of the parable deals with the problem of hoarding of material possessions/wealth which the rich fool is found guilty of. Seen in this perspective, Kim states that:

The evidence which buttresses up this argument can be found in the text in which the words related to hoarding are introduced with three different forms; συναζω (vv. 17, 18), κείμενα (v. 19), and θησαυρίζων (v. 21). That these words related to hoarding are used four times in this story may indicate the significance which this parable has in relation to the theme at issue (Kim 193: 254).

From this perspective, Kim concludes that the main issue at stake in this parable is the hoarding of wealth, especially for personal use and physical pleasure as seen in the case of the rich fool.

Craddock, like the above reviewed scholarly opinion, sees the problem of hoarding of possessions as the main vice that the parable tackles. Although Craddock exonerates the Rich Fool of any sharp practices in the accumulation of his wealth, he nevertheless holds him responsible for hoarding his possessions, and not allowing others benefit from them.

In Craddock's view:

This craving to hoard not only puts goods in the place of God (in Pauline theology, covetousness is idolatry, Rom 1:25; Col 3:5) but is an act of total disregard for the needs of others. There is nothing here of graft or theft; there is no mistreatment of workers or any criminal act. Sun, soil, and rain join to make him wealthy. He is careful and conservative. If he is not unjust, then what is he? He is a fool, says the parable. He lives completely for himself, he talks to himself, he plans for himself, he congratulates himself. His sudden death proves him to have lived as a fool (Craddock 2009).

For Mugabe, the core of the problem addressed in the parable of the Rich Fool is that of the hoarding of wealth. Aligning his thoughts with that of Kruger who holds a similar view, Mugabe argued that the Rich Fool was guilty of the stockpiling of goods which is disastrous to the society especially, to the poor and the needy. To Mugabe therefore, the Rich Fool was heaping more misery on the poor hungry people of his society by his hoarding of his grains which put grains out of circulation in the Rich Fool's society. As seen in Mugabe's words:

Once grain was stockpiled, hunger and shortage followed, allowing the monopolist to earn excess profits. This critical vision of the wealthy

man's criminal schemes is more than a warning about the foolishness of a life based on riches. The vision announces the harmful societal effects of hoarding possessions. For instance, some commercial farmers throw their grain into the ocean in order to promote shortages that increase the price of their produce. Faced with a pleasant problem of what to do with his surplus, the man in the parable does not seem to think of giving anything away. On the contrary, if one judges from the parable, he thinks only of himself, "What shall I do? I will do this and that," not of others. He then looks forward to living off his wealth-eating, drinking, and enjoying himself for many years (2014: 70).

In this, regard Mugabe believes that the parable "teaches against individualism, covetousness, and egocentrism" and:

...plunges the reader into a searching reflection on the meaning of life. We may declare "whoever has the most toys when he dies wins", but the parable exposes the emptiness of such a materialistic lifestyle. "Being rich towards God" is expressed by generosity towards others in need (2014: 72).

From the above expressions, it is clear that Mugabe believes that the Rich Fool's problem is the problem of hoarding of material possessions for self-use.

Northbrook II (n.d), also believes that the problem of the rich fool is his desire to hoard material possessions for his future use. While Northbrook II exonerates the rich fool from any sharp practices that may have led to his amassing of farm produce, he nevertheless holds the rich fool responsible for hoarding the abundant yields of his farm just for future personal use. For Northbrook II therefore

the rich man's sin was hoarding; he was trying to keep all of God's blessings to himself. The wealthy farmer thought that the quality of life was directly proportional to material gain.⁹

Against this idea of hoarding, Northbrook II believes that the parable therefore teaches the need for being rich toward God through sharing one's possessions spontaneously with other people.

A similar thought to the above is expressed by Cranford in his understanding of the parable of the Rich Fool. Cranford believes that at the heart of the parable lies the problem of the accumulation of wealth.

⁹ Warren Heard Northbrook II "Luke's Attitude towards Rich and the Poor' (www.apuritansmind.com/stewardship/northbrookwarrenlukepoor/).

From a thorough study of the pericope and background to understanding both an heir and the usages of inheritance in Jewish setting, Cranford walks his readers through a study of the parable of the Rich Fool through which Jesus teaches about greed and insensitive attitude to the needs of others. According to Cranford (2016), the parable:

... is really a compressed expression of what we find in Matt 6:12-21 (and compare Luke 12:32-33). The farmer was right to the extent that he saw that life is about the accumulation of wealth, but what kind of should we be accumulating? To "become rich with God in view" refers in present context primarily to use in obedience to God one's material wealth for the relief of real needs in the world. The point could be generalized to all acts of compassion.

A scholar like Gillman (1981) understands the parable in the context of problem of greed and false view of security of life which is a distorted way of dealing with material possessions.⁸⁵ In Gillman's words:

In chapter 12 Jesus confronts the crowd with some illusory and distorted ways of dealing with possessions. One theme running through this chapter is the misguided search for life's security. One person tries to find it by getting hold of his inheritance from his brother (Lk 12:13-15); another, a rich farmer, believes that his security can be assured by storing up an abundant harvest (Lk 12:16-21).

Gillman's assertion above tells the fact that in the context of the parable of the rich fool, the desire to secure life through the storing up material possessions, is dominant.

In Galligan's view, the parable of the rich fool deals with the sharing of material possessions which does not deny that Jesus does not condemn the search for personal basic possessions. Coming from this understanding, Galligan (1981) writes that:

It is evident that the tendency to provide unnecessary comfort and security is criticized. Yet there is more, for the motif of a correct use of possessions is also soundly portrayed. The rich man could have used his earthly abundance in a creative and responsible way. His riches could have been a blessing if he had unselfishly given to the poor. He missed having both friends on earth and treasure in heaven!

While it is believed by the researcher that selfish use of wealth is an aspect of material possessions which the parable of the rich fool teaches, it is very much debatable if it forms the core of the teachings of the parable as Galligan concluded. Contextually speaking, Galligan's conclusion

is wrong judging from the fact that the parable is not given in the context of sharing of material possessions, but in the context of how interest in material possession can be inimical to the Christian in the case of greed and desire to always have more at the expense of interest in the things of God and discipleship.

Kealy's analysis of the parable of the rich fools suggests that while the teachings of the parable is a character builder for the Christian, its teachings really warns rich Christians of the futility of seeing material possessions as means of securing life. The parable's teachings, argues Kealy, was firstly directed to the rich in Luke's community who, probably, had belief in their riches. As Kealy puts it:

The parable of the Rich Fool is a brilliant character drawing and vividly told, e.g. the dialogue with himself, God's dramatic intervention. It is an "example" parable giving an illustration of what not to do in life. It is a parable of catastrophe for the foolish rich in Luke's community who think that they are secure (Am 6:1ff). It is a perfect description of a self-centered rich man (a narcissistic monologue with himself of I, I, I, my, my, my) there is not a suggestion that he did not pay his wages etc (1979: 299).

There are other scholars who think that the core of the parable of the Rich Fool is on individual eschatology which may come without warning. The first champion of this idea was Jeremias who contended that the parable is an eschatological warning which Jesus told, and wanted his listeners to apply it in their own situation. As Jeremias wrote:

Luke 12:16-20 is an eschatological parable, whose conclusion Jesus expected his hearers to apply to their situation: we are just as foolish as the rich fool under the threat of death, if we heap up possessions when the deluge is threatening (1955: 130).

It is somewhat contestable if Jeremias is really right in insisting the parable is solely eschatological. His position, for example, has been criticized by Bruner who insists that

Jeremias' reference to "the deluge" gives this interpretation of the Rich Fool's meaning a less obvious impact to one who feels unthreatened by death of eschatological considerations... (1984: 48).

Nolland seemed to believe (although not explicitly stated in his view) that the parable of the Rich Fool deals with individual eschatology in which the life of the rich fool was cut short prematurely when he thought he had secured it with wealth. In Nolland's (1991) words:

The farmer of our story was already rich before his claim to economic sufficiency is sealed by the bounty of one of those very special years when everything has gone right. His barns have no capacity to contain all the produce of this bountiful year, so with clear-sightedness and practical wisdom he upgrades his storage capability so that all his stores can be maintained most efficiently. When the work is done, he will be in a position to relax and enjoy his good fortune. All his responsibilities in life will have now been met, and all the needs of his life will now be satisfied, or so he thinks. But God bursts in upon the self-satisfaction of his life. At this point, with so much wealth at his disposal, this person should rightly have seen that his responsibilities had only begun. This farmer has not reckoned on his answerability to God for his life. The life-force, from which stems all our power to act (see Gen 2:7), one has as a trust from God, and he may ask for its return at any point. As the parable ends, the foolishness of the farmer's narrow aims is highlighted by the contrast between his many years of supply and the few hours that remain to him of life. Did he think that in securing his economic future he had secured the future of his life as well?

So also does Hays (2012: 42) believe that the parable of the Rich Fool "uses personal eschatology to warn against greed and selfishness."

In quite an interesting exegesis of the passage, Rindge also studied the parable of the rich fool in the context of Luke's linkage of possessions with death which, to Rindge, features prominently in some Lukan parables. While not denying that the teachings of parable also touches on dealing with material possessions, Rindge argues that the main teaching of the parable is on how the quest for material possessions leads to death as conceived by Luke. On this, Rindge (2015: 561) writes copiously that:

As with possessions, death is also a significant motif in the parable. It is central element in God's speech to the rich man; "on this night, they are demanding (back) your life from you" (12:20). The imminent nature of the man's death is also applied in the question God asks about who will now obtain his possessions (12:20). Such imminence highlights death's unpredictable timing. The divine announcement of the man's impending demise is a stark contrast to his previously stated intentions of living for many "years" (12:18-19). God's speech reveals these

Babie's study of the parable of the rich fool shows that at the heart of the teaching of the parable lies the inability to secure life through amassing material possessions. Put differently, Babie is of the view that, false security that trust in material wealth gives, is very much highlighted in the parable. In his words, it is seen that:

Building larger grain bins represents an attempt to acquire security for the future and a relaxed life style in the present (12:19). The eating and drinking is a negative symbol of debauchery of 'this age', which will be condemned in the future judgement. The way in which the rich person treats these possessions symbolizes a view of life in which it is hoped that a secure life will be made possible through the storing of excess grain in a secure place (Babie 2004: 3).

Barclay (1981: 63-165) believes that the message of the parable of the rich fool centres on two core issues that are important in the life of man: security in life and life after death. Seen from this perspective, Barclay criticises the rich fool for not seeing beyond himself and also, for never seeing beyond this world. Hence, for Barclay, the rich fool is guilty of self-centeredness and the inability to think about what will be after his death.

For Sweetland (1990: 109-123), the teaching of the parable of the rich fool is closely connected with the teachings on discipleship in the Gospel of Luke. Arguing that the teaching of the parable, just like other Lukan passages on the use of wealth, Sweetland believes that the heart of Luke's view of material possessions in the parable shows that, material possessions in themselves, are not evil. Rather, it is Christians' disposition towards them, especially, the desire to have them (material possessions) in abundance that inhibits Christians' discipleship, the call for detachment to earthly possessions in Luke, and the response to the word of God.

While acknowledging the teaching of the parable on greed and covetousness, Vincent (n.d) believes that the teaching of the parable of the rich fool is on the foolishness of the rich and wealthy in thinking that the true meaning of life is to be conceived from the view point of the abundance of material possessions they have. Similarly, Uy believes, very strongly that at the heart of the parable of the rich fool lies the need to share possessions by the rich and wealthy. For Uy (2003: 21), this teaching is easily deduced from the parable:

The parable is very straight forward and simple. Jesus told the story to illustrate the point He made in verse 15; "What out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions". Jesus, on the surface, dealt with the problem of covetousness, but He had a much deeper message: One cannot find life or hope or security in wealth but rather in God. What, then, are people to do with their money and resources? Jesus' implicit answer through this par-

able (and other related passages and parables in Luke's ...) is to share them with others; give to the needy.

In Snodgrass' (2010: 139-140) understanding of the parable, its teaching can be called 'damming' since it goes at the heart of having enough resources, which in truth, is what most humans want. To Snodgrass, at the heart of the parable lies the shattering illusion that abundance of material possessions guarantees life or is the basis for life.

For Ringe (1995: 177-178) also, the core of the parable of the rich fool lies in its teaching on false security of life through amassing material possessions. As Ringe argues, it is very certain that the protagonist of the parable, the rich fool, operates in an environment where the security of life is measured by the abundance of material possessions one has. This is very much indicated, as Ringe argues, in the rich man's attitude to planning his future life only for himself. This is why God shortened the rich man's illusory trust in his material possession which he had stored up, by demanding his soul from him. This, to Ringe, indicates that to trust in material possessions as the basis for security of life is futile.

In his analysis of the parable, Talbert (1982: 141) understands its teaching in the context of covetousness defined by the desire to amass wealth/material possessions. To Talbert, the parable teaches that such covetousness in the context of the parable shows that when one amasses material wealth and feels that one has secured one's life, one is bound to be disappointed. This is because material possessions cannot provide security of life. Like Talbert, Caird stresses the fact that there is a link between false security of life through amassing material possessions and the true security of life through being rich toward God. According to Caird:

The rich fool in the parable discovered too late that material wealth is not a permanent possession. Because he had devoted all his energy to amassing property, he had nothing he could call his own, and death disclosed his essential poverty. The only possessions worthy of man's striving are those death cannot take away (1974: 163).

The expression 'those that death cannot take away', to Caird, is to be found in being rich towards God.

McGee (n.d), reads, the parable of the rich fool in the context of almsgiving and discipleship in the Gospel of Luke.¹⁰ Firstly, McGee believes that the parable stresses the dangers of wealth especially, the ‘desire for more’ and ‘superfluous possession.’ This is why, certainly Luke to McGee, makes wealth a problem to Christian discipleship – whole hearted response to God’s call is mostly inhabited by pursuit of material possessions. Equally, McGee contends that material possession in the context of the parable of the rich fool, is to be understood as a call to give alms and share material possessions which will have a bearing on one’s heavenly fate.

In Allen’s (2000) study of the parable, the theme of contentment as the core of the message of the parable is revealed. This thesis, put in another perspective, hammers down on trust in God’s providence instead of the pursuit of material possessions as a means of ensuring the security of life; to Allen, this may be a better interpretation of the parable of the rich fool. With this thought in mind, Allen writes that:

The parable of the barn-building fool, a warning to greedy people and an implicit reminder that material resources are not for self-indulgence (Lk 12:13-21), introduces a sustained discussion on the relationship of disciples and material resources. Jesus’ disciples need not worry about building larger and larger barns because God creates structures to mediate providence for the community (2000: 129).

Derrett (1977) studied the parable of the Rich Fool in the context of Jewish inheritance laws. In this work, he made some important observation concerning the nature of the inheritance which one of the members of the crowd-hearers of Jesus sought his intervention in sharing. On who owned the said inheritance, Derrett argued that it belonged to the questioner’s family; probably, as he sees it, it was his (the questioner) father’s property. However, Derrett believed in the certainty that the questioner from the crowd did not fulfill certain dispositions of their father while alive and as such, his father did not give him his share of the inheritance. On why Jesus refused to arbitrate between these brothers, Derrett argues that Jesus detected the problem of greed at play. To Derrett, Jesus knew that greed is a problem which leads people encroach into their neighbour’s property. Therefore, it was the problem of greed which

¹⁰ James J. McGee “Almsgiving in Luke: Implication for Christian Discipleship and Corporate Philanthropy” (www.stthomas.edu/media/catholicstudies/center/ryan/JamesJ.McGee.pdf).

leads to the accumulation of wealth that made Jesus tell the parable of the Rich Fool who stores up grains for self-use. Thus, in Derrett's (1977: 148) words:

Jesus could not, consistently with his teachings about property, have awarded *shares* to the brothers. Judgement of earthly problems is in any case spiritually perilous for the judge. We cannot imagine that Jesus never settled squabbles between his disciples. [sic] that stretches credulity. But Jesus's teaching on property is uniform: it is necessary in order to live (Ps Sal 16:12-13), and one may ask God to provide one's daily living (Lk 1:3). Where one has both the duty and the means to maintain another person one may not escape that duty by subterfuges. But accumulations are owed to no one. If they chance to accrue one must divest oneself in the interest of all, particularly the needy. If what arises as a subject of dispute is what affords or will afford superfluities, no award is conceivable which connives at an unrighteous application of assets.

While Derrett made some important observations in his study of the parable of the Rich Fool, it is doubtful if the primary aim of Luke in preserving this parable is purely in the context of Jewish inheritance laws. Although there may be some possibility in the above regard, it is certain that the request made by the questioner from the crowd smacked of greed and so much interest in material possessions; this led to Jesus' telling of the parable to teach how disastrous such can be. Hence, contextually speaking, the parable was not given primarily on the legislation of Jewish inheritance law as Derrett claims.

2.2.2 Jesus' Teaching in Luke 12:22-30

Before I review scholarly works on this pericope, it is important that it be pointed out that there is a strong connection between the teaching of the parable of the rich fool in Lk 12:13-22 and the sayings of Jesus in Lk 12:22-30. This strong connection, in simple terms, lies in the fact that Lk 12:22-30 is an illustration of the teachings of the parable of the rich fool through comparison of the greater (Patalla 2009: 264). A more detailed discussion on this will be given in the exegesis of this passage in chapter three of the study.

That having been said, it is mostly believed by scholars that, at the heart of the teaching of Jesus in Lk 12:22-30, lays contentment and discouragement on anxiety over material possessions. In Caird's (1974) exegesis of the passage, he believes that:

Wealth is a peril to those who have it but also to those who do not. Jesus denounces anxiety as absurd, pointless, pagan; but his reason for doing so is that it may be insidious threat to disciple's loyalty. Nothing is more likely to distract the disciples from whole-hearted devotion to the Kingdom of God than worry.

Hence, in Caird's view, worry and anxiety over material possessions are exactly the same problem the rich fool faced and which led to his doom. Against this, to Caird, Jesus' therefore teaches his disciples not to be anxious about material possessions.

Similarly, Kim (1993: 214-215) views these teachings of Jesus in Lk 12:22-30 in the context of anxiety about material wealth and the assurance of God's providence. This assurance, it seems to Kim, leads to the discard of material possessions by the disciples, or less worry about material possessions. In a similar vein, Northbrook II sees the core of the teachings of Lk 12:22-30 as wealth and anxiety. According, to Northbrook II, while the parable of the rich fool presents a negative teaching and a warning against greed, Jesus presents a positive teaching and encouragement for true discipleship and generosity in this pericope.¹¹ Northbrook II relates this idea to that of Minear (1976), who notes that the context of these teachings suggest an exhortation that is peculiar to anxiety over material possessions, which, spontaneously, is linked with the decision to follow Jesus. By implication, Northbrook II's thesis is that following Jesus demands a certain level of anxiety about material possessions emanating from worldly hostilities in which the acquisition of material possessions will be naturally threatened. While one may, to some extent, agree with this thesis above, it is very unlikely that in the context that Jesus taught in Lk 12:22-30, that anxiety over material possessions as a direct result of discipleship is envisioned by Jesus or Luke.

For Snodgrass (2010), in Lk 12:22-30, Jesus teaches about care for worldly and mundane possessions just as the Gentile world do. The core of this teaching by Jesus, Snodgrass stresses, is the call on Jesus' disciples to have a higher vision for life than mere trivial sought for material possessions, which is characteristic of the Gentile world. Ringe (1995) equally understands the teachings of Jesus in this pericope in the context of anxiety over worldly possession and the trust in God's providence.

¹¹ Warren Heard Northbrook II, "Luke's Attitude towards Rich and the Poor" (www.apuritansmind.com/stewardship/northbrookwarrenlukepoor/).

Similarly, Talbert sees the core of the teachings of Jesus in this pericope as bothering on anxiety over material possessions. In Talbert's (1982: 142) words:

... the disciples are enjoined not to be anxious about food and clothing, the necessities of life, because those who seek God's Kingdom (in Luke this includes not only the present experience of the Holy Spirit but also the dwelling with Jesus after death and the ultimate rule of God in the New Age) will find God trustworthy to meet all such needs. Do not be anxious. Trust God. He will provide (Ps 23:1).

The exegesis of Gillman (1991) on the teachings of Jesus in Lk 12:22-32 shows that not only do these teachings bother on anxiety and worry about worldly things; they also have a tie in with discipleship. Gillman thinks that, naturally, being Jesus' disciples demands a certain level of anxiety over material possessions especially their basic needs. It is therefore in this context that the disciples may have become anxious about getting their basic needs as Gillman (1991: 76) contends in these words:

Having left all their possessions, their economic situation is the opposite of that of the rich farmer. Over against his superabundance is their need. The disciples are anxious about getting their basic requirements for food and clothing met. To allay their fears, Jesus uses ordinary examples from nature by referring to how God provides for the birds, the lilies, and the grass of the fields.

For Kealy (1979: 300-301), the teaching of Jesus in Lk 12:22-30, deals with the need for absolute trust in God's providence. Kealy, in his exegesis, tries to juxtapose the attitude of the rich fool in the preceding parable and that of the disciples of Jesus. On this, Kealy believes that Jesus wants his disciples not to be anxious about material wealth like the rich fool. Rather, they are to trust in God's providence since God cares about unclean birds like the crows, which are less valuable to humans and Jesus' disciples in particular.

Still coming from a similar perspective, Barbie sees a connection between the teachings of Jesus in Lk 12:22-30 and the message of the parable of the rich fool which all bother on care about material possessions. The situation of Jesus' disciples is a stark contradiction to that of the rich farmer in 12:13-22. Barbie points out that the disciples of Jesus had left their possessions in order to follow Jesus. On the teachings of Jesus in Lk 12:22-30, Barbie (2004: 4) writes that:

These sayings drive home the lessons of the parable and offer further arguments regarding the futility of worrying over material goods. The rich man's superabundance is contrasted with their need for basic necessities, and to allay their fears, Jesus uses examples from nature to show how God will provide for them if only they trust in God.

Barclay (1981: 165), thinks that the teaching of Jesus in Lk 12:22-30 applies to the have-nots, that is, those without material possessions. In Barclay's view, it is to those people who did not have much in Jesus' times that his teaching here is directed to. To this kind of people, Barclay stresses, the teachings of Jesus not to worry and be anxious about worldly possessions clearly applies, since the teachings of the parable which precedes it, are meant for those with abundance of material possessions. However, for Barclay to claim that Jesus' teachings here in Lk 12:22-30 applies only to the have-nots is unsatisfactory. While it cannot be denied that both Jesus and Luke may have envisioned the poor while presenting this teaching, what is contestable is the view that it is only the have-nots that worry about material possessions. On the contrary, both in Luke's world and today's world, those who have riches turn out to be the ones who worry so much about acquiring more riches.

For Pittman (2010), there is a great connection between the teachings of the parable of the rich fool and Jesus' teaching in 12:22-30. Pittman believes that the connection lies in the fact that while the rich fool is dominated by the desire to secure life through storing up material possessions, the crows and the lilies which Jesus used as examples, are not concerned about storing up possessions. For Pittman therefore the core of the teaching in 12:22-30 lay in the advice that the disciples should not be anxious about material possessions, even the basic ones that propel everyday life.

Allen believes that at the heart of the teaching in Lk 12:20-30 lays the need for trust in the security of life that God provides through believing in him. This trust in God therefore helps in reducing anxiety over material possessions on the part of the disciples of Jesus. It is therefore from this perspective that Allen (2000: 129) writes that:

God cares for those who seek the divine realm, just as God cares for the ravens and clothes the lilies. The security of the knowledge that God provides for Jesus' followers frees them to sell their possessions and give alms, that is, to use material resources for the building of the community.

In Patella's understanding of the teaching in Lk 12:20-30, it is centred on the need for 'trust and faith in God.' In this regard, Patella (2009: 264) concludes that:

God's love is so abundant that he looks after every human need. In Luke, this passage provides the proper frame of mind and heart that stands in contrast to the focus of the rich fool...

Johnson (1977), who blazed a new trail in the study of material possessions in Luke, understands the pericope of Lk 12:22-30 in the context of the role of material possession and the response to God's call. Of course, Johnson's famous thesis is that material possessions in Luke are symbolic and perform a literary function. One of such Luke's pericopes whereby material possessions form a hindrance to response to God's call, according to Johnson, is Lk 12:22-30. For Isaak (2006: 1255), the core of the teaching of Lk 12:22-30 is on trust in God's care for the disciples. This is why, to Isaak, the disciples are admonished by Jesus not to worry about material things but, trust in God's providence always. For Porter (1988), the focus of the pericope of Lk 12:22-30 is an anxiety over worldly care. Also Chum believes that at the heart of this teaching of Jesus here is on breaking free material possessions by Christians. Thus, Chum (2011: 82) writes that:

This passage thus encourages people of the kingdom to be more firmly rooted in the kingdom and to bear witness to the reality of the coming kingdom. It is in fact applicable to all Christians to break free of their belongings which captives their minds.

Similarly, in Nyiawung (2010: 147) understanding of teaching in Lk 12:22-30, Jesus stresses the need for the disciples:

to rely on God for providence, and not to set their minds on matters of God and drink... Reliance on God actually means to keep focus on the kingdom of God.

Hays (2012: 43), in a similar vein, believes that Jesus teachings in this periscope revolve around discouragement from anxiety over material possessions, but a focus on the sought for the kingdom of God. Calvarycsd.org also sees the teaching of Jesus in Lk12:22-30 as focusing on discouragement from worry and anxiety over material possessions be-

cause it is harmful to the health of Christians.¹² This is because, God being the father of all believers, is very capable of providing for the needs of the believers especially, the essentials of life.

2.3 The Problem of Materialism in Contemporary Nigerian Christianity

With regard to the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity, there has been a lot of scholarly works done on the subject. Beginning from the 1980s, when Pentecostalism and prosperity gospel began to take centre stage in Nigerian Christianity, literatures and scholarly works addressing this development that emerged in the 1980s came to be seen. Examples of such works in the 1990s include Obiora (1998) and Onu (1998). Although a polemic against the Pentecostals, Obiora's work details the operation of Pentecostalism especially, in the context of its proliferation of churches, commercialisation of the gospel, and materialism as push factors of this. Similarly, Onu offered his readers a thorough-going critique of the Pentecostals in Nigeria and their manipulation of the gospel for material gains.

Nwachukwu's (1991) position on the subject supposed that Pentecostalism, especially with regard its exponents of the prosperity preaching, is part of the reason why the quest for material gains is a problem in Nigerian Christianity. Onwu (2006), for example, calls Nwachukwu's (1991) thesis noted above, a work with a great bias against prosperity preachers probably because he sensed Nwachukwu's denigration of prosperity preaching to the extent of not seeing anything good in it.

Achunike has, in various capacities, decried the materialistic understanding of Christianity in Nigeria. Beginning with his 1995 work, Achunike decried materialism in Nigerian churches. He attributed to the problem of lack of deep-rooted faith among many Nigeria Christians noting as well that the problem of economic hardship leads Christians in Nigeria to misunderstanding Christianity as a commercial venture. In 2004, Achunike went in the same direction in his work where he criticised the Pentecostals and their pastors for their emphasis on prosperity. This is still a stance he reemphasised quiet recently, in his inaugural lecture in 2017. In this work Achunike stressed the impact of Pentecos-

¹² "Faith Factor for the Righteous: Stop Worrying! Luke 12:22-34 (<http://www.calvarycsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Luke-12.22-34.pdf>).

tal prosperity preaching in Nigerian Christianity which is “a shift from ascetism to materialism (2017: 51).”

Still on Pentecostalism and prosperity gospel, Kitause and Achunike (2015: 21-27), critically analyse its theology and operation among the Pentecostals in Nigeria. A part of the reason that the emphasis on prosperity resonates well with most Nigerian Pentecostals, according to Kitause and Achunike, is the problem of prevalent poverty in Nigeria, in addition to other social issues. But what is the effect of prosperity gospel in Nigerian Christianity at large? Kitause and Achunike believe that Pentecostalism and its emphasis on material wealth has created, in the psyche of many Nigerian Christians, the belief in ‘sweetless prosperity’ in which it is believed that God desires all believers who have faith to be rich. This kind of mindset, one would argue, is very problematic since it goes against the very teachings of Jesus and New Testament on wealth and pursuit of wealth.

Similarly, Ukpong studied Pentecostalism and its impact in Nigeria Christianity. Among other impacts of Pentecostalism in Nigerian Christianity as identified by Ukpong is the issue of emphasis on ‘financial and material prosperity’. On this, Ukpong contends that Pentecostalism and its emphasis on prosperity have made material wealth a standard for measuring God’s favour. Poverty, adversities and lack in whichever way therefore are associated with not being a born again and sin. On this Ukpong believes that:

Many Christians now consider their financial status seriously and there is a terrible stigma about bankruptcy (*sic*) or financial brokenness. Nowadays, the popular slogans among Christians include: I can never be poor in Jesus’ name; the God that lifted me up will not let me down!¹³

The problem of this kind of belief among Nigerian Christians according to Ukpong, is the temptation to engage in nefarious, ungodly, and unchristian activities in order to improve their financial status. Truly speaking, this belief has a tie in with why Christian virtues, relating to the acquisition of wealth and material things, are being debased continually by many Nigerian Christians in the quest for material wealth. For Onwu (2006: 1-27), however, there is a connection between the quest for material wealth, prosperity preaching and prevalent poverty in Nigeria. Onwu also observed that part of the materialistic “packaging” of the gospel,

¹³ Donatus Pius Ukpong “The Presence and Impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria” (<https://www.glopent.net/.../presence-and-impact-of-pentecostalism-in-nigeria.pdf>).

especially, among Pentecostals in Nigeria, has a tie in with Nigerian cultures of love and adoration for wealth and achievement.

In Ojeifo's work, he contends that Christianity is "dead" in Nigeria. A part of the problems that lead to the death of Christianity in Nigeria, according to Ojeifo, it is the crave for material wealth which has become the rave of the movement. Partly, blaming the prevalent socio-economic problem in Nigeria for the increase in this quest for material wealth among Christians in Nigeria, Ojeifo juxtaposed Nigerians' religiosity with the level of immorality seen among Christians in Nigeria. In his analysis, it is obvious that Nigerians claim a religiosity that does not translate into concrete moral actions. Ojeifo also believes that Pentecostalism and its prosperity gospel has really done more harm than good since it has created, in the mind of many Nigerian Christians, the belief that Christianity is all about acquiring material wealth. On this, Ojeifo writes:

Through the prosperity gospel, the hawking of miracles, signs and wonders, the advertisement of God induced financial breakthroughs, and the crave and craze for hedonistic materialism, the public face of religion in Nigeria has been so battered and badly disfigured, such that if Jesus Christ were to come back to day on earth, he would be hard pressed to recognize our version of Christianity as what he bequeathed to us. Just a cursory look at the lifestyle of some of today's acclaimed men of God. Their highly materialistic way of life is a brutal affront to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Today, the Christian gospel has become so reduced to financial inducements and promises of wealth and power.¹⁴

Relatedly, Nwadior & Umeanolue (n.d) criticising materialistic gospel in Nigeria Christianity, noted that:

the menace of materialism in contemporary Christian churches in Nigeria has become so fertile that most pastors and ministers of the churches preach prosperity as part of spiritual salvation.

Enlarging the scope of the criticism, Oladipo offers his readers a thoroughgoing critique of the ubiquitous nature of churches in Nigeria, pointing out that they are marred with immorality of many kinds. He identified, one such immorality as the problem of materialism. According to him, in the messages of most modern day Nigerian preachers "the

¹⁴ E. Ojeifo, "The Death of Christianity in Nigeria" Retrieved from <http://timenigeria.com/2570-2/>. (<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/sunday-sermon/the-death-of-christianity-in-nigeria/160470.html> com/2570-2/).

right to possession of materials in abundance in what is referred to as 'prosperity for all Christians...' has erroneously taken center stage.¹⁵ Similarly, in the words of Egbujo (2015) on contemporary Nigerian Christianity and materialism:

Sermons are drained of pungency so that the rich and powerful are not embarrassed. They have to be retained. Churches foist on themselves financial targets they exploit members to meet. And the church in furtherance of materialism embraces commercialism and exhibits the Coca Cola company rather than the humility of Red Cross.

Agang (2011: 47) makes it emphatic that in Nigerian Christianity:

...church has become a lucrative business. Some pastors drive very expensive cars such as limousines or SUVs. They live in mansions like Kings. This is why some government men and women, professionals, and academic professors are leaving their jobs to start churches. Some entrepreneurs are turning their business places into churches for the same economic reasons.

Minchakpu's (1999) article also reveals the fact that Nigerian Christianity has become a materialistic one. His interviewees maintained that materialism has become a problem since "focusing on materialism causes Christian leaders themselves to become worldly." The same is seen in Ugwuweye's survey of churches in Nigeria especially among the Pentecostals. Ugwuweye fingered the commercialisation of the gospel for material gains as part of the problem. According to Ugwuweye (2002: 221):

Must ironically in our society today, some Christians have decided to overlook the moral precepts of the religion to become increasingly corrupt and materialistic in their practice of religion. Religion is now business which borders on commercialization or financial endeavors. The popular slogan now is "prosperity, not poverty in God's own house.

Also Okoli & Uhembe (2014: 14) have shown that materialism has become a problem in Nigeria's Christianity. A part of the variables that fan the embers of the desire and quest for material possessions in Nigeria's Christianity, according to these scholars, are socio-economic problems rampant in Nigeria today. These socio-economic problems identified by Okoli and Uhembe include poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, diseases and life crises. Although these scholars made some important observa-

¹⁵ Dotun Oladipo, "Churches Everywhere but Immorality Abounds" Retrieved from <http://www.theeagleonline.com.ng/churces-everywhere-but-immorality-abounds>.

tions regarding why materialism is plaguing Nigerian Christianity, it is pertinent to note that there are many other variables that are connected to the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity other than these ones noted by these scholars.

Erhuvvwjefe (n.d), decries in serious terms, the problem of materialism in the church in Nigeria today. His study, firstly, shows that there is a remarkable growth of the church in Nigeria. This growth of the church, Erhuvvwjefe, contends should naturally lead to the reduction of immoral acts in Nigeria. But the opposite is the case according to Erhuvvwjefe since it has become evident the church itself has become tinted with corruption/immoral acts. One such area where this immorality rears its head according to Erhuvvwjefe, is materialism. Citing Aderniran, Erhuvvwjefe points out that materialism in form of turning money in to a god has become rampant in Nigerian Christianity today. This is related to Akinola's point that the neo-Christian unabashed identification of God with money has reduced the teaching of Jesus to a harkening after material success, including the acquisition of power and influence often at the expense of the lives and happiness of others.

Fakoya (n.d), holds Pentecostalism squarely responsible for the increase in materialistic appeal of Christianity in Nigeria today. From different aspects of life in Nigeria, to the Christian church itself, Fakoya argues that Pentecostal teachings and the sought for material wealth, has become alarming to the extent that some Pentecostal churches have practically become money making ventures. This relates to an article by Sahara Reporters in which the Pentecostals are held responsible for the spread and spread of quest for material wealth in Nigerian Christianity. In this article, it is contended that:

Our Christian men of God today have contributed in no small ways to the social upheaval the Nigerian nation is going through at this movement. They laid the foundation of greed and social discontent from which the society is yet to come to terms. They departed radically from the preaching of the Lord Jesus which emphasized contentment and instead substitute greed and avarice into the social lexicon. They offer wish-washing holiness and continue to inundate us with the doctrines of prosperity at all costs. They decided to build a temple of materialism from which they hold the befuddled populace in a trance-like grip. They pretend holiness while their every deed and acts spell materialism and nothing but materialism (Sahara Reporters 2008).

From this assertion, it can be deduced that the greed of most church leaders, and in this regard, the Pentecostals are all responsible for the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity today. Iheanacho (2009), offers her readers a thoroughgoing assessment of today's Nigerian Christianity. One area that Iheanacho's work looked at is the problem of materialism. On this problem Iheanacho (2009: 104-117) writes:

The contemporary Nigerian church is engulfed by the quest for materialism (*sic*). Rather than find solace in the Christian hope of eternal life, signs of total submission capitalist tendencies, especially in material acquisition, Looms large in Nigeria churches. Spiritual growth and moral sanctity towards better eternity is fast giving way to material craving, as the 'new idea of fulfillment of life and ultimate reality'. The quest for materialism (*sic*) in religion may not be peculiar to Nigeria. But, it is now alarming and critically challenging. The level of material quest by Nigerian Christians, especially clergy men is radically in deviance, and inimical to the values and life of the early church.

From Ampitan's (2011: 101-113) analysis of the activities of the prosperity preachers in Nigerian Christianity, it is stressed that quest for material gains has become a problem. The Pentecostals, especially their leaders, argued Ampitan, are now immersed in the struggle for material wealth to a very large extent. The overemphasis on "money" through different types of offerings, according to Ampitan, has led the Pentecostals in Nigeria to see Christianity from the perspective of materialism; a situation in which people worship God just for material gains. Although Ampitan is right in his analysis, it is highly doubtful if the problem of materialism is only seen among the Pentecostals in Nigeria. For Alana (2007: 38-57) in his works, materialism has become an issue in Nigerian Christianity. According to Alana, the dispositions of some Nigerian pastors to "money" have given rise to greed, avarice and overemphasis on material wealth. In other words, for Alan, there is an overemphasis on material gains by some Nigerian pastors in today's Nigerian Christianity.

2.4 Summary of Review of Literature

Having reviewed a relevant number of literatures in this chapter of the study, it follows that a summary of these reviewed literatures should be presented. Regarding the date, place of composition and the community of Luke, most scholarly works reviewed agreed with Luke being written after the fall of Jerusalem. The place of composition of the gospel, ac-

According to the reviewed literatures, ranges from the idea that it may have been Antioch or just an urban Roman city of the East. On the social world of Palestine and Rome, interesting facts were revealed by the reviewed literatures. Mostly, the reviewed literatures showed that poverty was a fact both in Palestine and urban centres of Rome during the time of Jesus. Again, on the social make-up of Luke's community, the literature reviewed showed diverging thoughts. While some scholars said that the Gospel of Luke was originally directed to a mainly Gentile Christian community, others argued that Luke's community was mixed community of Christians from varying ethnicities. Equally, on whether Luke's community was made up of mainly poor or rich Christians, the reviewed scholarly opinions were of diverse opinions. On related Lukan pericopes on material possessions, reviewed scholarly opinions agreed that, in Luke, there is radical de-emphasis of material possessions. In the context of the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity reviewed literatures are also in agreement that it (materialism) has also become a problem.

However, the gap opened up in the literature review is that the reviewed literatures on material possessions in Luke were not studied in the context of Nigerian Christianity. By implication, the literatures reviewed were not hermeneutical. In this regard, the present study will fill this gap by conducting a hermeneutical study of material possessions in the gospel of Luke to present its implications for Nigerian Christianity.



3 EXEGESIS OF LUKE 12:13-21 AND 12:22-30

In this chapter of the study, it is important, to discuss some socio-historical issues within the gospel according to Luke. These socio-historical issues are considered so important for discussion since, clarifications on some of them, will help give the textual exegesis a direction especially, on issues of material possessions in the gospel according to Luke.

3.1 The socio-historical Setting of the Gospel according to Luke

3.1.1 The Author

The gospel according to Luke had been, as early the late second-century AD, attributed to Luke who supposedly, was one of the companions of Paul. As Brown has shown, by the later part of the second-century AD, the testimonies of P¹⁵ (this is a papyrus document), Irenaeus, the Muratorian Canon have all identified Luke as the author of the gospel according to Luke.¹ In scholarship, Luke's identity as the author of the third gospel (which also bears his name), has not been questioned. Put differently, there is a general consensus among scholars that Luke, a companion of Paul, wrote the third gospel.

However, what has been hotly contested is the ethnic identity of Luke, the assumed writer of the third gospel. This contention has largely centered on if, he (Luke) was a Jewish or gentile Christian. The voices which speak that Luke must have been a Jewish Christian centre their argument on the fact that there is a thoroughgoing understanding of the Old Testament² by Luke which is evident in his Gospel. Among the staunch believers of the view that Luke was Jewish is Strelan (2016). In his words:

...the writer of the third Gospel was a Jew. The first is his obvious knowledge of the scriptures. He feels at home in them; More than that, he feels so at easy that he can interpret them, allude to them, cite them, string phrases together from them, and construct the significance of his

¹ See Brown (2014: 267).

² Certainly, the Old Testament that Luke made use of was the Septuagint (LXX).

lord Jesus on their basis. He constantly weaves scriptural words, ideas, and epides into his writing. And his interpretative methods are consistent with known contemporary Jewish methods and that includes the rather sophisticated *gezerah shera* technique, as it was later known. The second reason for thinking that Luke was Jewish hangs on his authority. In a comparatively small Christian community (not just a local one but also in the wide spread community) in the first century of the era, the authority of a writer was quite significant, especially, when dealing with foundational myths of the Christians and their interpretations. Understandably, a Jewish teacher would have had his authority more easily accepted than a Gentile teacher (Strelan 2016).

While Strelan may have some convincing arguments, relying heavily on Luke's authority in interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures as a criterion to prove his Jewishness, leaves a lot to be desired. As has been pointed out earlier in the work (chapter 2), Luke's reference to, and interpretation of the Jewish scriptures may not be looked upon as being the best; he showed some lack of thorough understanding of some Jewish practices as was earlier indicated in the study. Even if one overlooked the above issue, comparatively especially speaking with regard to the authors of the gospels, both Matthew and John's Gospels for example, seemed to be more at home with (re)interpreting the Jewish scriptures. Yet, the assumed writers of these gospels have not been proved to have had anything to do with the rabbinical class of Israel during the time they wrote. If one also worked backwards to Jesus himself whose ministry the Gospels recorded, it was clear that Jesus never had a rabbinical training/background. Yet he (re)interpreted the Jewish scriptures with an authority that amazed even his opponents. All these point to the fact that in the Christian movement of the first-century (Hellenistic Christianity for that matter), the criterion for the (re)interpretation of the Jewish scripture did not necessarily hang on one having rabbinical training/background, but on apostolic witness/ association. Hence, Luke's gospel could have been accepted as authoritative by his being associated with the apostles especially, Paul as shall be discussed later in the study.

Like Strelan, Theissen (2001: 86-87) has also questioned Luke's gentile background by pointing out that in Luke's gospel, there is a depiction of good knowledge of the Old Testament by Luke, the author of this gospel. However, Theissen's argument may be punctured by the observation made by Brown that although there is a good understanding of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Luke, it seems that Luke the writer of the gospel, was not, after all, well versed in Judaism (Brown 2014: 268).

Using Luke's mistake with regard to the Jewish purification rite in Lk 2:22, where the pronoun "their" is wrongly attributed to their father that conveys the point that it is their father that was being purified, it is therefore difficult to accept that a writer with a Jewish background would make such a mistake. This view is also aligned with that of Tuckett (1995) which states that it is clear from the gospel of Luke that its writer lacks a good knowledge of Jewish issues. Tuckett cites examples as seen in Lk 2:22-24 and 3:2 to buttress his point. Based on these, he concludes that Luke must have been a God-fearer.³ This is similar to Tyson's (2010) thought that the main target audience of the gospel of Luke was the God-fearers, that is, gentiles who were attracted to Judaism. It seems, as Tyson argues, that Luke wanted these God-fearers to get attracted to the new Christian movement in the Roman Empire.

Besides, it is worthy to note as Etukumana (2016: 160-161) has pointed out, that the provenance of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Luke served the author (Luke) a great deal of purpose. Etukumana cites Wilson as arguing that the use of the Old Testament in Lk 4:25-27; 24:46-47 for example served Luke the purpose of justifying and explaining the coming of the Gospel to the gentiles. Analysing Etukumana's assertion above, one finds a great deal of truth in what he said. The context of Jesus' citing the Old Testament in Lk 4:25-27 for example, truly served Luke the purpose of directing the ministry of Jesus to other people since his people (the Nazarenes) rejected him. This direction came very much early in Luke's arrangement of his material, and would also be found at the end of his gospel in 24:46-47 where it is expressed that the gospel must be preached to all nations. Although I am aware that not all the Old Testament citations in Luke were used in the above related regard, it is likely that with the citations of some Old Testament passages, Luke intended to legitimise Jesus' and (later the apostles') mission to the gentiles.

For those scholars who argue that Luke was a gentile Christian convert,⁴ the great deal of gentile elements in the Gospel of Luke stand as a central point in their argument. In terms of the genre and literary feature of the Gospel of Luke, Powell has pointed out that it is in the same class

³ Brown (2014: 268) also proposes such a conclusion read by Tuckett.

⁴ Old Testament passages in Luke as seen for instance in: 1:17; 2:23-24; 3:4-6,8,11,12,18-19; 7:27; 8:10 etc do not relate with the proclamation of the gentile mission.

with those of ancient Greco-Roman writers like Virgil and Homer.⁵ Further on writing skill, Brown thinks that Luke's style of writing Greek is in tune with the Septuagint's style of Greek (Brown 2014: 268). Of course, the history surrounding the Septuagint shows that it was the work of Ptolemy II based on the need to have a Hellenised (Greek) translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible (Okwueze 2013).

In this study, I align my thought with the view that Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, was likely a gentile Christian convert considering some of the points discussed below:

1) Dedication of his writings to Theophilus, a gentile

Both of Luke's volumes (Luke and Acts) were dedicated to Theophilus (Powell 2009: 151). Allen thinks about the possibility that Luke may have written his works before appending Theophilus' name to it as a way of thanking him for his financial commitment to his (Luke's) works. Some scholars have pointed out that there is no certainty that Theophilus may have sponsored Luke's writings. This means that it may have been that the dedication to Theophilus was in the bid by Luke to get him attracted to the Christian religion. This point also supposes that both Luke and Theophilus may not have even belonged to the same Christian community. One thing that all these positions lead to is that there is no reason for one to believe that Theophilus was a fictitious (imaginary) character. In other words, Theophilus was a real-life character who existed in the time of Luke. While I accept some possibilities in the positions of scholars cited above on the relationship between and Theophilus, I see as implausible, Anderson and Strelan's attempt to connect Theophilus with the Jewish priestly class of about 37 to 41 AD.

Anderson for example, suggests that Luke dedicated his work to Theophilus who was a former high priest, in the anticipation that through this medium, he would put a stop to the opposition to the Jews in the empire, and also get a divided Israel once again united.⁶ Equally unconvincing, is the contention found in *PS-Clementine Recognitions* (10.71) that Theophilus was a Christian from Antioch who later became an Antiochene bishop probably in 180 AD. Also disagreeable, is Strelan's (2016: 109-110) claim that Theophilus was a Jewish Christian just like Luke. A particular point that works against the reasonability of Strelan's position

⁵ Some of these scholars include, among others, Brown (2014: 268), Esler (1987) See chapter 2 of the work most especially; Karris (2014: 675).

⁶ Anderson as cited by Strelan (2016: 109).

above is Luke's address of Theophilus as "κράτιστε (the most excellent)." Evidently, the title "most excellent", as used elsewhere in Acts 23:26, denotes some level of prominence within the Roman government and the ruling class. In this passage, this title was addressed to Felix, the governor of Caesarea. Would Strelan have wanted his readers to believe that a Jew might have risen within the ranks of the Roman government at the time Luke wrote towards the end of the first-century AD, to deserve such an address as the "most excellent"? It is likely that this was not the case with regard to Theophilus being a Jewish Christian/ high priest.

The detailed analysis by Kim (1993: 142) reveals the fact that Theophilus was a gentile patron of Luke who probably sponsored his writings. Patron-benefactor-client relationship during the first century AD. was widely practised in Mediterranean world.⁷ According to Schmithals (1980: 17), it was quite a common writing practice in Greco-Roman societies for writers to dedicate their works to a patron. In the case of Luke, this patron happened to have been Theophilus who probably may have been a high-powered official of the Roman government at that time, or who as Fitzmyer (1989) has pointed out, was of important social standing in Luke's community. This relates to Wijnaards' (1986) thought that Theophilus was a Greek of somewhat high rank in the Empire. In his words "From his name we can see that he was a Greek. The title "most excellent" does not necessarily mean a high dignitary, but books were usually dedicated to people of high rank."

From the discussion so far, I am of the view that Theophilus must have been a gentile Christian who may have been a part of Luke's Christian community, or somehow, connected with the Christian movement of the first-century AD. He may have been Luke's patron who sponsored his writings. This may justify Luke's dedication of his writings to him. Against this gentile practice (of dedicating works to patrons), it was uncommon for a Jewish writer to dedicate his literary works to a patron, let alone a patron of a probable gentile background.

2) Emphasis on writing methodology

Luke's writing (gospel of Luke) contains a preface in which he (Luke) spells out clearly his writing methodology. Quite recently, Fung, Spencer

⁷ There are many works on this patron/client relationship in the Mediterranean world of the first-century AD. See, among other works, Moxnes (1991: 250-267), Uwaegbute & Odo (2021), Simmons (2008) and Malina (2000: 151-155).

& Viljoen (2017) have critically investigated Luke's writing methodology as spelt out in his quest to render an orderly account of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These scholars' investigation, revealed that the practice of stating one's methodology of writing was a common practice by Greco-Roman writers. It is also in tune with the practice of "prefacing" literary works which was also a common practice among Greco-Roman writers. Seen in this light, one may ask: could it have been possible for a Jewish writer to have adopted some of these Greco-Roman writing practices? Possibly not. There is every reason for one to reason that this was not a common practice among the Jews, neither before Luke nor during Luke's time. A typical fact, which may validate this claim here, is the case of Josephus who was a well-known Jewish historian of the Roman Flavian dynasty of first-century AD. There are no evidences that, he dedicated his writings to those who appeared to have been his patron, even though Josephus was of a Roman court.

3) Less emphasis on the Palestinian geography and some Jewish practices

The geography of Palestine which is supposed to have played a role in the life of Jesus whom Luke records his gospel, is not detailed in the Gospel according to Luke. This is a fact seen in the Gospel and also recognised by scholars like Patella (2009: 2016) and Brown (2014: 269). Even when Luke relates to the geography of Palestine, he does so in an inaccurate way. Brown (2014: 269) has pointed out that this is notably seen in Lk 4:44; 17:11 where Luke wrongly represents the synagogues of Galilee. The same goes for Gaventa who argues that Luke was mistaken in his use of the name Judea to refer to the whole of Palestine as seen in in Lk 1:5; 4; 44; Acts 2:7 and 10:37, and the information regarding the Pharisees and Sadducees in Acts 23:8.⁸ Equally, as Tuckett had earlier noted, Luke sometimes betrays some poor knowledge of Jewish practices as seen in Lk 2:22-24; 3:2 (Tuckett 1969: 269). Will a Jew well-bred in Judaism make such a mistake in relating Jewish practices one might ask? Possibly not. This inaccuracy in the geography of Palestine, when compared with the vivid descriptions of gentile cities and places especially in Acts,⁹ punctures any possibility of a Palestinian Jew being the writer of Luke's Gospel.

⁸ Gaventa as cited by Strelan (2016: 110).

⁹ The Christian missionaries in Acts formed a great presence in the urban Hellenistic centres like Antioch in Syria, Damascus, etc and some other Eastern cities that Paul

4) The provenance of the gentiles and people of the lowest strata of the society in the Gospel according to Luke

A cursory look at the Gospel according to Luke shows that both Jesus and Luke had special interest in the gentiles (including Samaritans), the outcasts, the poor, and all those who may be regarded as the 'down and out of the society' (Porter 1986: 1183). When compared with that of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and John, this interest in these classes of people is generally lacking. This interest of Luke in these classes of people, which showed the gospel of Jesus in such a broad light, probably came from his gentile/ Hellenistic background from which he wrote.

Thus, according to Attridge (n.d):

Luke was probably writing in the latter decades of the first century, probably in a thoroughly Hellenistic environment. Scholars speculate on whether the gospel was written in Antioch, which would have been a significant Hellenistic city, or in Asia Minor, in places like Ephesus or Smyrna. In either case, Luke would have been in touch with, and very heavily in dialogue with, Hellenistic culture broadly conceived. It is believed here that there is every likely hood that Luke was a gentile Christian convert.

Like the above assertion, White (n.d) thinks that Luke was actually of the gentile extraction. For him "tradition holds that Luke was actually a travelling companion of Paul. He's (*sic*) often called the physician which means he's (*sic*) portrayed as a kind of educated person of the Greco-Roman world." Similarly, Wijngaards (1986) understands Luke to have been a gentile native of Antioch in Syria who got converted to the Christian religion between 45 and 50 AD owing to the missionary activities of the Antiochene Christians. He later joined the missionary thrusts of Paul, Barnabas and Mark in the Roman East.

From this discussion, I suggest that Luke was probably a gentile. His educational background, profession, association with Paul, and his being at home with Hellenistic towns/centres and all the like, suggest that he must have been of the gentile extraction. By profession, Luke was a physician (Col 4:14) and as has been said, he may have been a fellow companion of Paul (cf. II Tim4:11; Phil 1:24). Equally, he may have been a proselyte Judaizer or a God-fearer who got converted to Christianity

and some other apostles took the Gospel to. It is worthy to know that the author of Acts always took the pains of describing these urban centres.

during the evangelism of Paul and other apostles to the gentile world in the course of the first-century AD.¹⁰ This may as well explain his knowledge of the Hebrew Old Testament.¹¹

3.1.2 The Date of the Gospel

Just like the ethnic identity of Luke, the writer of the third Gospel, the date of the Gospel has also been contested. A wide range of dates, within the first century AD, has been suggested as being the date Luke wrote the third Gospel. Generally, there are some scholars who think that Luke wrote earlier – most probably, 45-68 AD. Scholars who hold on to this early dating of Luke include Ituma (2016), Conte Jr (n.d), and Porter (1986: 1182-1183). However, majority of scholars prefer to date Luke after the fall of Jerusalem – a period between 80 and 90 AD. For LaVerdiere and Thompson, the gospel of Luke was written in the mid-80s AD. As they write:

The approximate dating of Luke-Acts in the eighties is founded on a number of observations. First, the work's use of Mark's Gospel presupposes the existence of that Gospel, as well as a post-Markan course of events of sufficient duration to seriously date this earlier work and to require a new synthesis of the Christian reality (Lk 1:14). Further, Luke's separation of the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Jews (Lk 21:5-24) from his account of the end of the world (Lk 17:22-37; 21:25-28) presupposes that a number of years have passed since the Jewish war and that this event is no longer viewed apocalyptically (cf Lk 17:20-21) (1976: 583).

Scholars who still believe that the Gospel of Luke was written between the 80s and 90s include Brown (2014), Mickenna (n.d), Patella (2009: 216), Karris (2014: 676), Chinwokwu (2015: 122), Schmithals (1973/1974: 153-167) among others.

¹⁰ For a possible bio-data of Luke based on some ancient church traditions, See Wijngaards (1986). However, I have to say that the data provided by Wijngaards is built on non-critical assumptions as received from ancient church traditions.

¹¹ I align my thought here with that of Brown (2014: 268), which shows that Luke's understanding of the Old Testament was due to his Proselyte or God fearer background prior to his conversion to Christianity. This view relates to that of Kim (1993: 41), that it is certain that Luke's audience may have been educated gentiles who possessed good knowledge of the Old Testament. If this was so, then it was likely that Luke, just as some in his community, may have been attracted to Judaism even before his conversion to Christianity.

Deserving some comments is the view of Schmithals on the date of the gospel of Luke. For him, the date of the writing of the gospel was between 81 and 96 AD. As Schmithals believes, Luke's emphasis on the poor is indicative of the persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire under the rulership of Emperor Domitian within the period under study. Schmithals' contention is that for Luke, the first-century Christians suffering from the Domitian persecution, were economically strangled. The persecution, to him, threatened the livelihood of these Christians. Confiscation of property and other forms of economic punishments were also attached to the persecution which was carried out against the Christians. As such, the persecution brought not only economic hardship to the Christians, but also led to loss of homes through banishment and death for the Christians.

Although there may be some sense in the above assertion, its defect lies in the fact that both persecution and economic punishment of the Christians were not new during the time of emperor Domitian. As early as 64 AD, history tells the fact that Nero had started the persecution of Christians in the empire, particularly in Rome. Nero's persecution, of course, was much more severe than that of Domitian. Equally, poverty and other forms of economic hardship had been the lot of the majority of the people at the lowest strata of the Roman Empire even before the time of Jesus and Christianity. Jesus, as seen in the gospels, lived in such a society where poverty and economic deprivations were everyday realities. Thus, it can be argued that both the persecution of Christians and the economic hardship they faced, were nothing new during the latter part of the first-century AD. As such, Schmithals' use of these as the criteria to determine the date of the gospel of Luke may not really yield a positive result.

A few voices like O'Neill,¹² and Townsend (1986: 47-62) even date Luke in the second century AD even as late as 150 AD. It is agreed that each scholar's dating of Luke may be based on some good justifications. In this study, it is however thought what determines the date of Luke would be dependent on internal considerations within the Gospel itself. This will be backed up, when necessary, with some external considerations with regard to the date of the gospel.

First, it is an accepted theory that Luke's Gospel was dependent on the Gospel according to Mark as its source in addition to a body of oral tradi-

¹² O' Neil cited in Brown (2014: 273).

tion that Luke had access to. Presumably, the gospel according to Mark was written in the 60s AD. The Gospel according to Matthew, also, was dependent on the gospel according to Mark as source.¹³ It is also a widely accepted position that Matthew wrote before Luke.¹⁴ Most probably, Matthew wrote 80-90 AD. Therefore, if Mark was a source for both Matthew and Luke and Matthew supposedly wrote earlier, then it is very likely that Luke's gospel must have been of a later date. Having taken this position, some inlook into the gospel will be undertaken for necessary clues that may lead to establishing a probable date for the gospel.

Second, and from the gospel itself, it seems likely that Luke was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. Lukan passages like 13:34-35; 19:41-44, 21:20-24 and 23:28-31, in some senses, suggest the likelihood that Jerusalem had already been destroyed in 70 AD before Luke wrote. However, I agree with the idea of Brown that it cannot be claimed that Jerusalem had been destroyed when Luke wrote, just as it is not clear that Luke wrote before the fall of Jerusalem.¹⁵ Equally, although there may be some sense in Ituma's argument that scholars who date the gospel of Luke after 70AD rely on their disputation of the power of prophecy by Jesus (Ituma 2016), it is to be noted that Matthaean and Lukan parallel to Mk 11:1-19 agree on the destruction of Jerusalem. This agreement therefore justifies the fact that Matthew and Luke wrote after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Otherwise, how can it be justified that Mark, which was used as a source for both Matthew and Luke, omits Jesus' sayings on the destruction of Jerusalem? Is it not obvious that Mark omitted these sayings on the destruction of Jerusalem because he wrote before the city was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD? Likely, the answer to this question is that Mark omitted the sayings on the destruction of Jerusalem because the city was not yet overrun when he wrote while Luke recorded it because the city was already destroyed when he wrote.

Third, and from a social study of the community of Luke,¹⁵ it is probable that Luke wrote after 70AD. The characters, personalities, theology, and the emphasis on urban settings in the gospel, all point towards a com-

¹³ Although no longer a new discovery, Streeter (1924) seems to have lain to rest the question of sources of the gospels.

¹⁴ Most scholars prefer to date the gospel of Matthew before that of Luke, probably from 70-80 AD.

¹⁵ A detailed discussion on this will be undertaken in sub-section 3.1.4.

munity much more developed than those of pre-70s as we see in Jesus and Pauline settings.

From these brief discussions, the question then is how long after the destruction of Jerusalem did Luke write his gospel? Any date from 100 AD upwards is definitely out of the way since there are no traces of the knowledge of the *Corpus Paulinum* (the letters of Paul) which were gathered together in the second-century AD by Luke. Hence, in order to accommodate the view that Luke may have been a companion of Paul (Brown 2014: 274), it is reasonable to date Luke's gospel 80-85 AD. This date also takes into account the fact that the bitter and antagonistic rupture between Christianity and Judaism, which may have been the fallout of the Jewish council of Jamnia 85-90 AD, is not reflected in the Gospel of Luke.¹⁶

3.1.3 The Audience

Who the audience (s) or recipient (s) of Luke's gospel was/were, has/have been a matter of debate among Lukan scholars. However, one thing that most Lukan scholars agree on is the fact that Luke's audience must have been gentile Christians.¹⁷ From their critical study of the community of Luke, LaVerdiere and Thompson (1976), argue that "Luke wrote for Christians who were predominantly of Gentile origin." This is also the point White (n.d) makes when he writes:

In contrast to either Mark or Matthew, Luke's gospel is clearly written more for a gentile audience. Luke is traditionally thought of as one of Paul's travelling companions and it's certainly the case that the author of Luke was from those Greek cities in which Paul had worked. Luke's gospel is a product of a kind of Pauline Christianity. And it tells the story in some slightly different ways than do the other gospels. It has different interests. It probably also has a different self consciousness (*sic*) because it's (*sic*) writing predominantly for gentiles in the Greek cities of Asia Minor or Greece itself.

¹⁶ I remind readers of this work that the Gospel of Luke does not reflect the bitter rift (rupture) between Judaism and Christianity which may have been the fall out of the Council at Jamina around 90 AD.

¹⁷ There is no basis for me to believe that Luke addressed the pagans of Rome Empire since most issues he deals with are Judaistic in nature which he assumes that his audience was already acquainted with. For more on this see Esler (1987: 25).

Still continuing, especially with regard to the political motivation of the writer of the gospel of Luke, White adds:

Luke's audience seems to be predominantly gentile.... when they talk about the story of Jesus there's (*sic*) more of an emphasis on the political situation of Jesus today. Jesus is less of a rabble rouser, and so is Paul, for that matter, in these stories. And this suggests something about the situation of the audience, that they too are concerned about the way that they will be perceived, the way that the church will be perceived by the Roman authorities. It's (*sic*) sometimes suggested that Luke's gospel should be seen as a kind of an apologetic for the beginnings of the Christian movement, trying to make its place in the Roman world, to say, "we're okay (*sic*), don't (*sic*) worry about us, we are just like the rest of you: we keep the peace, we're (*sic*) law abiding citizens, we have high moral values, we're (*sic*) good Romans too.

While White's assertions above just identified Luke's community as gentile, some early popular views among scholars of Luke showed that, such a gentile Christian community could be easily identified. This gentile Christian community, some of these scholars argued, fits that of the Antiochene Church in Syria. This position may have been due to the testimony of an extra- New Testament prologue from the last half of the second century which says that Luke was a native of Syrian Antioch. According to Fitzmyer (1989: 38-39), the same prologue added that Luke died in Boeotia in Greece. However, I agree with the view of Brown (2014: 268) that it is highly doubtful if this Luke identified by the prologue was the same as the author of the gospel of Luke.

Some scholars who posit that the writer of the third Gospel was a native of Antioch of Syria include Karris (2014: 675), Esler (1987), and Wijngaards (1986). These scholars are of the view that he probably addressed his gospel to the Christian church in Antioch of Syria. However, this position may be disagreed with on these considerations. **First**, reliance on the testimony of this extra New Testament prologue, which shows that Luke wrote from the Antiochene Church, may not be correct. The reason for this view is that such a testimony came from an anti-Marcionite prologue of late second to third centuries. The historical reliability of this prologue is questionable. **Second**, and in agreement with the view of Brown, if Matthew's Gospel is accepted as having addressed the church at Antioch, would Luke be addressing such a community again with his gospel? (Brown 2014: 269-270). **Third**, the testimony of Jerome a well-known Biblical scholar of the fourth-fifth century

AD, indicates that Luke even composed his gospel while living in Achaia in Greece. In alignment with the above thought, a scholar like Conte Jr. (n.d) has even strongly favoured the Christian community at Achaia as the recipient of Luke's Gospel. Establishing that there is ample evidence that Luke was neither in Rome, Antioch nor Jerusalem by the time the story in Acts ended, Conte Jr. argues that if he were, he would have included stories of the Christian churches in these areas. This may have been an indication that Luke was living in isolation at the time of Paul's imprisonment in Rome according to Acts 28. Probably, according to Conte Jr's thought, Luke may have been writing the Gospel of Luke at this time. It could have been in the isolated region of Greek Achaia that, in Conte Jr's view, Luke wrote his Gospel and this Christian community formed his targeted audience. This is similar to Wijngaards' claim that Luke certainly wrote his gospel as inspired by the Holy Spirit when he was residing in Achaia, an area close to Athens in Greece. It must, however be noted that, this assumption is based on the testimony of the Anti-Marcionite Prologue earlier referred to above.

However, while there may be some logic in the above thought I still re-emphasise the problem associated with this so-called Achaian Luke with the Luke that wrote the third Gospel as pointed out above. Added to this also, is the probable developed urban setting of the gospel of Luke which may not suite a Greek region/city like that of Achaia.¹⁸ While the difficulty involved in accurately determining the audience of Luke must be noted, attempts have to be made to determine the audience of Luke. The first consideration has to do with the person of Theophilus to whom Luke dedicated his Gospel. The address of Theophilus with the title *κράτιστε/kratiste* which means "most excellent", indicates a person with some form of authority in the Roman Empire. Hence, Moxnes (1994: 385) would be right in arguing that:

Luke's address to Theophilus as "most excellent" is parallel to what subordinates use when they address Roman superiors. Hence, it is probable that Luke writes from a subordinate position, that is, as a client seeking a patron and not as an equal to Theophilus.

As a probable patron of Luke, Theophilus must have been an influential gentile Christian convert judging from his name. With such an exalted position, it is most likely that Theophilus, together with whichever

¹⁸ On the political and social development of Achaia, see Rousset (2008: 303–337).

Christian community he belonged,¹⁹ must have belonged to an urban environment within the Roman Empire.

This position is further strengthened by the fact that Luke, more than any other gospel writer, featured the Greek word *polis* (city) in his gospel narrative. According to Strong²⁰ and Powell (2009) the word *polis* occurs about 82 times in the gospels. Thirty-Nine (39) of these occurrences are found in the gospel of Luke as against the word village (*kōmē*) which occurs 12 times in Luke. This is an indication that Luke was a man with interest in the urban environment. But in which part of the Roman Empire was Luke's community centered? The answer to this is not easily ascertained. Esler (1987: 30) thinks that Luke's community is to be located in a city in the Eastern Roman Empire. While Esler just speculates that Antioch in Syria (on the Orontes) was where this community was centred, Karris (2014: 676), on his part, is sure, that Luke's community was the Christian church in Antioch.

Following the earlier noted line of thought, I argue that there is probability that Luke's community was indeed urban. This community may have been located in the Eastern Roman Empire. If one is to take seriously Luke's association with Paul as seen in the "we passages" of Acts²¹ then there is every likelihood that the community of Luke may have been among the churches born out of Paul's missionary journeys in the Eastern Roman Empire. As I have earlier noted, determining which church and city Luke belonged is very much problematic. From his study of the economic context of the gospel of Luke, Scheffler thinks that the gospel of Luke was composed in Rome and had the Roman church as its targeted audience. For Scheffler (2011: 115-135), the prevalent economic issues described in Luke do fit a Roman socio-economic context and as such, it is fitting for the gospel to be read against such a Roman background.

These notwithstanding, I believe strongly that Luke, although he may have belonged to an unidentified Christian community of Eastern Roman Empire, did envision that his gospel should be read among many Christian communities especially, those of the Gentile bent. Since these Christian communities may have contained Christian Jews also, one has

¹⁹ There is no certainty that both Luke and Theophilus belonged to the same Christian community.

²⁰ "πολις" (polis) Strongs Greek 4172 (<https://biblehub.com/greek/4172.htm>).

²¹ Some of these passages are 16:10-17; 20:5-13; 21:18; 26:16.

to be careful in categorising these intended audiences of Luke as being primarily gentile in makeup.²²

One may surmise that it is while following this line of thought that some scholars of Luke like O'Toole (1983), Brown (2014) and Ituma (2016) believe that Luke did not have a particular community in mind when he wrote but envisioned a wide-range of Christian communities within the Roman Empire as the recipients of his gospel. This is the point LaVerdiere & Thompson (1976: 583) make when they write that "... although the region of Antioch may have been provided a basic stimulus, the author appears to have had in view many communities rather than one single community." Equally, Bauckham (1998) thinks that Luke had a universal vision of the Christian community in the whole Roman Empire when he wrote his gospel. By implication, Bauckham believes that the whole Roman world of the first century AD was envisioned by Luke to read his gospel. In the same vein, Moxnes (1998: 380-381) thinks about 'the communities of Luke' as an objection to the idea that Luke addressed a single Christian community in the Roman Empire of the late first century AD. The position, that Luke envisioned the whole of the Christian communities in the empire to read his work, as Powell (2009) has pointed out, has become the most accepted position as regards the intended audience (s) of Luke. Equally, Carson and Moo believe that the author of the gospel of Luke had in mind a "wider reading public in view, primarily those with a gentile background. Like the other gospels, Luke was not so much written to a specific location as to a specific kind of reader."²³ This position may have taken into account the fact that the gospel of Luke has an inclusive portrayal of Jesus, his work, teachings and ministry generally; such a portrayal, surely, envisioned a wide Christian readership in Roman Empire of first century AD.

Against the view that the Lukan audience (s) was gentile, are found some voices which speak that Luke's audience was Jewish. Scholars like Jervell (1972: 146-175) and Tiede (1980) see the target audience of Luke as being primarily Jewish. Tiede, as has earlier been shown in chapter two of the study, argues that the destruction of the temple must have been perplexing to the Jewish audience of Luke. As such, Luke's aim of writing the gospel would be to explain to them that it was the Jewish inability to

²² As shall be discussed critically in section 3.1.4, the community of Luke, definitely, manifested characteristics of a mixed community.

²³ Carson and Moo as cited by Etukumana (2016: 161).

heed both the prophets and Jesus that led to the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. Stralan is also one the voices which speak that Luke's audience was indeed Jewish. As Stralan (2016: 110) writes:

... Luke is thoroughly immersed in the Scriptures, and it could be argued, as Goulder does, that his Gospel is a *midrash* or an interpretation of those Scriptures. Even if one does not want to go that far, there can be no argument that Luke has seen Jesus as the fulfillment of the Scriptures and of God's plan for Israel and the nations as revealed in those sacred texts. It is theoretically possible that a Gentile by the year 80 CE (assuming the Gospel to have been written around then) might have acquired a depth of scriptural knowledge so as to understand what Luke was getting at: but I think it is more reasonable that a Jewish reader could be assumed to have such a background, and so Christian Jews are the more likely intended audience.

In conclusion, and following the presented lines of argument, I am strongly of the view that with regard to the audience of Luke, he (Luke) did belong to an unidentified Christian community of the Eastern Roman Empire but had envisioned that his gospel would be read by Christians beyond this community. These Christian communities seemed to be more of gentiles without necessarily denying that Christian Jews may have formed parts of these Christian communities in the Eastern Roman Empire of first century AD.

3.1.4 The Community of Luke

I have pointed out that Luke did probably belong to a-not-too- easy-to-be-identified Christian community in the Eastern Roman Empire. Thus, the discussions to be done here is an attempt to describe "life" within that community irrespective of where it may have been located. The discussion will be done along the following lines:

1) Was "life" in the community of Luke similar to that of the Jewish society at the time of Jesus?

In this study, it is understood that Jesus existed between the last 4/5 years of the last century BC and the early three decades of the first century AD. He was born of Galilean parents and spent most of his life there. His home town was Nazareth in Southern Galilee and most prob-

ably, he spent his formative years there working as a *tekton*.²⁴ Nazareth, according to Brown & North (2014: 1195), is a hilly country, marked by a series of basins watered by drainage from surrounding hills. These basins were very much fertile for agriculture; they made good farmlands and lands for grazing of live stocks.

Certainly, the majority of Southern Galileans were farmers, or were engaged in other small-scale businesses and related activities including fishing. Majority of the populace may have been peasants who depended on agriculture for survival. Judging by the depictions in most of Jesus' parables which have something to do with farmlands and pasturing, it seems that the above position was certain. Nevertheless, how was agricultural relation in such countryside like in Galilee?

It is to be observed that such countryside was probably socially stratified. By social stratification, the researcher means a society in which people are defined based on their social status. Oakman's (1991: 151-179) thoroughgoing article shows how the countryside of ancient Palestine and Mediterranean societies were really choked by social stratification. In such a socially stratified society, especially in the case of such an advanced agrarian economy like Galilee, the hub of the society was built on "the plow and agricultural production" (Oakman 1991: 161).

"The chief productive factor" according to Oakman, in such an advanced agrarian economy "is land." This is because of the social stratification of such societies into mainly the elite class (Oakman 1991: 161) and a great majority of village agriculturists who the elite class depended very much on their labour and farm produce. This class, that is the elites or land holders, provided estates on which peasant agriculturists and slaves worked as tenant farmers. Hence, land control and tenure were big issues in such a countryside; whoever that controlled this factor of production, had a great control over the peasants. In the case of Galilee, it was probable that a few Jewish elites²⁵ controlled the land and its resources.

²⁴ The Greek word *tektōn* is used in Mk 6:3 in reference to Jesus' profession in Galilee as a carpenter. However, according to Meier (2014: 1319) the usages of this word have a wide range of meanings which cover "any artisan working or building with hard materials".

²⁵ Oakman (1991: 161), has a pictorial representation of land control during the first-century AD. On the Jewish elites, Oakman includes the priests, elders and the scribes.

Other realities that were found in the peasant societies of Palestine and Mediterranean society were the issues of debts and taxation.²⁶ Because, these societies were usually colonised by stronger powers/empires, taxation was usually a reality. Most times, some harsh taxes, led to debts on the part of the village peasant farmers. In the case of first-century AD Palestine (Judea) where Galilee belonged,²⁷ this was exactly the case prior to, and during the time of Jesus. Beginning with Herod the Great as the ruler of Judea, taxation was indeed greatly imposed on the peasant population of Judea. It became worse after the death of Herod. As Carter (2006) has pointed out, at the inception of Quirinius as a legate over Syria and Copionius as the procurator of Judea, new forms of taxes were introduced. These taxes included poll tax (head tax) including women, children and slaves, animal tax which demanded a percentage of the herds from those who reared cattle, and tax on land to be paid from produce of harvests. These forms of taxes really weighed on the people of Palestine who were mostly peasant agriculturists.

With regard to how taxation and debt functioned in Galilee, Van Eck (2009), says that from 4 BC when Herod Antipas inherited the region of Galilee after his father's death, he ruled as a tetrarch who lived so lavishly and undertook many building projects which were financed through taxes extracted from the peasant population of Galilee.

According to him:

Antipas and the Herodian elite first of all claimed the so-called surplus of the harvest; to this was added tribute and taxes. This left the peasantry in Galilee in a situation where their level subsistence functioned in a very low margin. The only way to survive was to burrow from the elite, and the elite were always willing to invest in these loans (with interest rates of up to 48%) they knew that their debtors would not be able to repay their debts which in turn gave them the opportunity to foreclose and add that peasant's land onto their own estates. Peasants therefore lost their land, and in a downward spiral became tenants, day labourers and beggars (Van Eck 2009: 314).

²⁶ On how debts and taxation worked in the first-century AD, see among other works, Oakman (1991: 151-179), Van Eck (2009: 310-321); Häkennén (2016).

²⁷ Politically, the Romans administered Judea and Galilee differently until its unification under Herod the Great beginning from 47 BC. It seemed that after the death of Herod the Great, Galilee became administered independent of Judea. For more on this see, Mowczko (2017).

After a thoroughgoing assessment of the high rate of poverty in Galilee, Häkkinen points out that life in the Galilee of both pre-Jesus and Jesus' times were characterised by peasantry, dispossessions, banditry, highhanded rulership and elite domination. This is why Häkkinen writes that:

First-century Galilee was mainly agricultural, with little fishing industry, and its population was economically strongly dependent on the wealthy elite, the majority of whom lived in Sepphoris and Tiberias, some even in Jerusalem. The elite lived by depriving the Galilean rural population, with no direct connection to the ordinary people. Their agents collected taxes, and usually the villagers had the opportunity to deal with minor legal things themselves in local assemblies, the synagogues. The poverty in Galilee is also reflected by the fact that almost no remains of storage buildings for grain or other products have been found in archaeological excavations in Galilee and no shops at all. The Galileans seem to have consumed all they produced. Having paid the rents, taxes, loan remissions and interests there simply was nothing left to trade with (Häkkinen 2016).

This relates to Oakman's (1991) findings that Palestine of first century where Jesus belonged was characterised by chronic levels of peasantry which led to indebtedness among the peasant population of the area. Of course, Oakman is right in his argument since there is ample evidence to believe that Palestine was very much a peasant society which was not much different from other agrarian societies of the Mediterranean world of the first-century.²⁸

Commenting on the general life of peasantry in Palestine, just as in most of the Roman Empire, Park states that:

Taxes were overwhelmingly burdensome and compulsory service a requirement so that wealth accumulation was restricted. Famines were frequent, grain shipments were lost, and no programs were in place to ameliorate starvation. Those who were fortunate to be slaves have more assurance of food and shelter, as did those who had trade connections with the wealthy.²⁹

²⁸ For a general treatment of the economic characteristics of the first-century AD Mediterranean world, see Longnecker (2010), Friesen (2005:323–361), Goodman (1987), Silas (2016), Kim (1998).

²⁹ Mary Park "Wealth and poverty in Luke's Gospel". Accessed 10/12/2017.www.webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archieve/pmin-park.fo4.pdf.

From these assertions, one sees clearly the type of environment that the people of Galilee lived in during the first-century. It was therefore from an environment that was characterised by poverty, exploitation and peasantry that Jesus emerged and started his ministry. It was here that what has been referred to as the 'Jesus movement'³⁰ began among the peasant Jewish population of Galilee. One, therefore, has to bear in mind that Jesus carried out his ministry mostly among the peasant Jewish population of Galilee, and that most of his earliest followers probably belonged to the peasant class just as most, also, were of the Jewish stock. Jesus' emergence from such a peasant society dominated by the evil and greedy elite class, certainly had an effect on his teachings and views regarding material possessions (wealth) and the rich's use of their possessions to the service of God through sharing them with the poor. Such a Jesus' society, however, cannot be equated with the Lukan community which was urban, and which operated mostly in a Hellenistic environment. The only connection, one may point out, was the existence of the poor, poverty and social ills and exploitation that were found in both Galilee of Jesus' time and the urban community of Luke.

2) The Community of Luke was urban, with both Jews and Gentiles in its social makeup

Unlike Jesus Christ and his earliest disciples who operated in the countryside of Galilee, Luke's community had a touch with the urban environment. As Moxnes (1994: 380) writes:

It is widely accepted that the location of the author and the addresses is other than Palestine, which is the location of the narrative world of the Gospel. This hypothesis is based partly on specific information in the text. Luke's descriptions of houses appear to be informed by a different landscape and culture from that of Palestine.

In order to do a better analysis of the issues of the urban context of Luke's community and its mixed makeup, I begin with internal considerations from the Gospel of Luke. The first point of call has to do with Luke's reference to and use of the Greek word *polis* (πολις) is the highest when compared to the other Gospels and the rest of the New Testament

³⁰ The 'Jesus Movement' became a common term that was adopted, beginning from the 1970s, to describe the earliest Christian movement as it began from Galilee among Jesus and the earliest disciples.

writings; its occurrence in Luke out-numbers all others (Powell 2009).³¹ This interest in the “city” as against the village (*kōmē*) has been understood by Powell (2009) as showing that Luke’s community was indeed urban. Rohrbaugh’s (1991) social-scientific study of “The pre-industrial city in Luke-Acts” has shown that Luke’s community must have been urban-centred. To prove this, he studied the social relations described in the parable of the great banquet as typical of the “model of the pre-industrial city” relations in first-century AD Roman Empire.

Taking a clue from this parable, I also note some important aspects of Luke’s narration of the events in the parable. The mention of “the streets and lanes of the city” and “the highways and hedges” (14:21 & 14:23) is a typical description of an urban environment which both Luke and his community knew about.

In addition to the description of the missionary thrusts in Acts and my belief that Luke was probably a companion of Paul, it is likely that Luke was a man of the urban missionary thrust. The descriptions of gentile and Hellenistic cities in which both Paul and some early followers of Jesus took the gospel to are testimonies to the fact that Luke knew much about the urban environment.³²

It was also likely that the urban Christian community of Luke included both Jews and gentiles in its fold. As I have earlier pointed out, Jesus’ earliest followers were all of the Jewish stock. However, at a later stage in the life of the Christian movement, people of other ethnic backgrounds began joining the movement. This is why Park would be right to hold that:

Perhaps it is obvious but it is necessary to point out that Jesus’ words were directed to Jews in Israel; the political, economic, social and cultural influences of the Gospel Evangelists and their audiences had shifted from the time of Jesus. After the death of Jesus, the social and economic situation hardly changed. But in time as Jews from the Diaspora joined the church, and later the Gentiles, the mix created tensions within. From a movement within Judaism the early church had moved to a messianic

³¹ See chapter 8 most especially.

³² The missionary journeys of Paul, as has been noted, took place in urban Hellenistic cities.

group outside Judaism and also outside Gentile pagan religions of the day.³³

In a quite similar way, Powell (2009) observes that the socio-historical situation of Luke was clearly different from that of Jesus. According to Powell, in the earliest tradition both Jesus and his movement were made up of the poor of the Jewish stock. However, for Powell, during Luke's time, the situation had changed to include probably, rich people of varying backgrounds.

Although Park's words above are explanative and descriptive of the development of the Jesus movement from a minuscule group within Israel to a community beyond Israel, scholars still debate the ethnic compositions of Luke's community. A scholar like Tyson (2010) suggests that the God-fearers (gentiles attracted to Judaism) formed the community of Luke as well as its audience. While Moxness (1994: 384) does not categorically believe the Jews alone formed the community of Luke, he thinks that the God-fearers were certainly the patrons of Luke's community. Quite recently, Strelan (2016) has argued polemically that both Luke and his community were Jewish.³⁴ Operating on the contention that Luke was a Jewish priest of the late first-century, Strelan holds on staunchly to the position that Jewish Christians made up Luke's community. Against this thought are scholars like Mckenna (n.d), Fitzmyer (1989) and Wellman (2017) who see a Lukan community comprising the gentiles mainly. Majority of the scholars, however, agree that people of varying backgrounds, especially the Jews and gentiles, were found in Luke's community. They include Esler (1987), Powell (2009), Park,³⁵ Karris (2014) Koet (1989/2006) Moxnes (1994) among others.

Of more importance, however, is what clues are there from the Gospel of Luke and possibly Acts, through which one can determine the ethnic background (s) of the Lukan community? The third Gospel, itself offers a few clues in this regard. In Lk 7:1-9, there is a mention of a gentile who was healed by Jesus. This gentile was a Roman centurion whose faith moved Jesus. Similarly, another gentile, a centurion too,³⁶ was men-

³³ Park "Wealth and poverty in Luke's Gospel". Accessed 10/12/2017. www.anw.webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archieve/pmin-park.fo4.pdf.

³⁴ See the whole of chapter 8.

³⁵ Park, "Wealth and poverty in Luke's Gospel". Accessed 10/12/2017. www.anw.webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archieve/pmin-park.fo4.pdf.

³⁶ In Lk 23:47, there is a mention of a centurion who may have been the one already mentioned by Luke in 7:1-10.

tioned when he glorified God at Jesus' death. The Jews were also mentioned very well in the gospel of Luke. Equally, when one turns to Acts, which as has been pointed out is the second volume by the author of Luke, there are indications of a mixed community. In Acts 2:41, 4:41; 6:7; 11:20-21; 13:43 etc, there are records of massive conversions of both Jews and gentiles. The case of the first Christian Council in Acts 15:19-20 suggests clearly that the Jews and gentiles had become a part of the Christian community. Luke, the author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, may have been alluding to scenarios which played out in his community just as it is found in Acts 15. All these suggest that, both Jews and gentiles, made up Luke's community.

3) Luke's Community included both Rich³⁷ and Poor Christians

It has already been noted that the socio-historical situation of Luke was different from that of Jesus and the earliest disciples. Schnelle (2005), earlier referred to in the study, truly noted that at the end of the First-Century AD and at the beginning of second-century AD, the community of Luke began to be joined by people with wealth and influence. This is another fact recognised by Esler who argued that the presence of people with wealth in Luke's community testified to by Luke's Jesus teachings that the rich must mend their ways. On the proof that the poor were also a part of the Lukan community, Esler (1987: 185) contends that there may not have been much difference between Luke's community and that of Paul's Corinthian church of the 50s AD. Based on this Esler argues that the poor were an integral part of Luke's community as reflected in passages like the Lord's prayer (Lk 11:2-4 [emphasis is on v.3]) and the parable of the Great Banquet (Lk 14:15-24). With regard to the parable of the Great Banquet, it must also be added that the narrative, not only depicts the presence of the poor in Luke's community but also, the presence of the rich represented such a character like the rich man who hosted the banquet. From Acts point of view, Burkett (2018) finds in the practice of "community of goods" some justifications to assert that Luke's community was made up of the poor. So also does Moxnes (1994)

³⁷ The term "rich" in First-century Mediterranean world has varied nuances and usages. However, in the context it is used in the study, it refers to well-to-do- people who may not necessarily be members of the elite class. On the distinctions and the varied nuances that the term "rich" carried in the then Greco-Roman society, see Moxnes (1994: 387) and Malina (1987: 354-367).

think that Luke's community may have been a non- elite group with mostly poor people.

Turning to internal considerations within the gospel, especially with regard to its teachings, one finds some important clues that the community of Luke included people of wealth, and those in poverty. In Luke's passages 1:53; 12:13-21,22-34; 14:12-14; 16:19-31; 19:1-10; 21:1-4, one finds teachings relating to God's empathy and identification with the poor, and antagonism of the rich's relationship with the poor, and teachings regarding the negative effects of wealth. This may have influenced Park's position that "most probably there were representatives of both leading group of upper stratum and the lowest of group of lower stratum"³⁸ More so, as Powell (2009) contends, the words "the rich" and "the poor" are mentioned more in Luke's Gospel.

Of importance also, is the question of which group of people (the poor or the rich) dominated in Luke's community? From the discussion so far it is safe to argue that although the poor may have been on the majority, the minority rich dominated in Luke's community. Park, with regard to this idea, notes that:

In the time of Luke's writing some fifty to sixty years after Jesus' death, the audience is a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, a mixture of religions origins, and a mixed social milieu worshipping side-by-side. The tension would have been palpable: difficult for the rich and humbling for the poor. The automatic recoiling of the rich and the automatic difference of the poor would have led to dismal interaction in Christian communities.³⁹

Similarly, Moxnes (1994) believes that "within the city culture of the Eastern Mediterranean, we can envisage Luke's community as a group of nonelite person who are culturally and ethnically mixed but who also include among them some who come from the elite periphery." From the discussion, it is likely that the community of Luke was indeed made up of both poor and rich Christians. However, notwithstanding the poor numeric strength of the rich Christians in the community of Luke, they (the rich) were the most dominant group of the community.

³⁸ Park, "Wealth and poverty in Luke's Gospel". Accessed 10/12/2017.[www. anw.web pages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archieve/pmin-park.fo4.pdf](http://www.anw.webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archieve/pmin-park.fo4.pdf).

³⁹ Park, "Wealth and poverty in Luke's Gospel". Accessed 10/12/2017.[www. anw.web pages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archieve/pmin-park.fo4.pdf](http://www.anw.webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/curse/all/writing/archieve/pmin-park.fo4.pdf).

4) The Community of Luke Certainly had its Own Share of Trouble from “within”

It is certain that such a mix of people from varying backgrounds in the community of Luke did lead to social tensions within the community. From the very earliest beginning of the community of Luke, like those of other Christian communities especially in Jerusalem, table fellowship between the Jews and the gentiles was a problem. Communal meals were at the heart of the ethos of the community of Luke (just like other early Christian communities). According to Moxnes (1994: 383), at the heart of Luke’s community ethos was the issue of communal meals which helped them forge a common identity. Equally, Neyrey (1991: 361-387) said that community meals strengthened a group identity in the first-century AD world; it was commensality which solidified a group’s identity. To Neyrey, communal meals featured prominently in the community of Luke and among the apostles generally. In the case of the community of Luke (and among the apostles) it is doubtful if these communal meals did foster unity and cohesion among the community members.

A scholar like Esler (1987) thinks that the community of Luke had practised communal meals and seemed to have overcome the problem of Jewish-gentile table fellowship which was an issue in Palestinian Christianity of the first-century AD. Of course, as Esler argued, Jewish-gentile table fellowship had for long been prohibited among the Jews prior to the coming of Christianity. Hence, Esler contends that this was why the community of Luke probably did feel the pressure of the Judaising Christians of Jerusalem to desist from encouraging such a Jewish-Gentile table fellowship. It is on this basis that Esler argues that a part of the aim of Luke was therefore to legitimise table fellowship between the Jews and the gentiles before the Judaising Christians as practised in his community.

While one can understand that “legitimation” is the thrust of the whole argument by Esler, it is really disputable if his is right in his argument that the community of Luke was really unperturbed by the issue of table fellowship between the Jews and the gentiles. On the contrary, I argue that table fellowship was indeed a problem in the community of Luke. Even with the decision of the Council at Jerusalem, there is no indication that the Judaising sects of the Christian movement of the first-century did relent in their pursuit of “Judaising” the gentiles who had become Christians. As Meeks (1983) has argued, with regard to the case

of Antioch, it was practically clear that Paul's quest for newly-converted gentile Christians not to be bothered with Jewish rituals, did not succeed to a point. This is practically clear as Paul recounts in Gal 2:11-13 that not only did Peter display his hypocrisy when the (Judaising) people from James came to Antioch, but even Barnabas (Paul's co-missionary partner) and other Jews of the Antiochene church, also displayed hypocritical attitude which made them join the Judaising party in Antioch at that moment. Of course, as the above passage also recounted, Peter did eat freely with the gentiles prior to the coming of the Judaising party from James.

All these are indicative of the fact that the issue of both Jews and gentiles participating together in fellowship meals was a long-running problem in the early Christian movement of the first-century; Luke's community was never an exception to this problem. Thus, Moxnes (1991: 383) is very much correct in writing that in the community of Luke:

A common meal created a focus for a group that drew its members from various segments within the Hellenistic city, but it also fostered tensions in social relationships inside and outside the group. Luke's redaction of the meal narrative illustrated that "food dealings are a delicate barometer, a ritual statement as it were, of social relationships, and food is employed instrumentally as a starting, sustainability, or a destroying mechanism of sociality.

In the case of Luke's community, the coming together of the Jews, the gentiles, the rich and the poor to worship together and practise table fellowship did create social tensions in the community on two levels. On the first level, a part of the social tension was about the Jews and the gentiles eating together during fellowship meals. This was, certainly, a problem not only in Luke's community, but also in the Christian community centred in Jerusalem as has been pointed out. This problem may be what Luke, firstly, addresses in his meal narratives in Lk 5:27-31; 7:36ff and 19:5-10. Secondly, the same problem seemed to have been addressed by Luke in his narrative on the conversion of Cornelius and Peter's vision concerning clean and unclean animals in Acts 10:9-15. Related to the issue also, is the insistence of some Palestinian Jewish Christian sects that the gentile Christians must keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:5) and the Jerusalem decree on dietary laws (Acts 15:20,29).

On the second level of the social tension, was the problem of the few rich (of gentile background) participating in fellowship meals together with the poor of the community. This problem likely came up during the

developed stage of the community of Luke when the gentiles not only became fully accepted in the community, but were the chief stakeholders in the affairs of the community. Hence Luke's narrative on not only inviting one's friends and relations etc for dinners, but also the poor, the lame, the blind etc in Lk 13:13-44, seems to be addressing the problem identified above.

Related to the second level of the problem pointed out above, the other part of the tensions within Luke's community was the relationship between the rich and the poor. As has been pointed out, it was likely that the few rich of Luke's community did not treat the majority poor as equals. With regard to this problem in the community of Luke, Powell (1989: 93) has pointed out that "social tensions still exist and many members of his church have a tendency to look down on others, for a variety of reasons. Economic status is one factor but even the wealthy may be excluded on the basis of professional, ethnic or class distinctions." Added to this, as has been pointed out, is the fact that the few rich of the community was avaricious (greedy), and cared less about the means of acquiring material possessions. Most likely, this scenario played out in Luke's community by the time he wrote his Gospel.

5) Luke's material on material possessions as a critique of the unchristian ideals in his community and the gentile world

What then is the role of Luke's interest in preserving Jesus' teachings on material possessions one may ask? While I have argued that Luke had has no consistent "theology of material possessions", it seems clear that in most of his materials relating to the issues of wealth and poverty, the rich and the poor, both poverty and the poor are given some special attention. Beginning with the Magnificat, Luke showed this very special treatment of the poor by having Mary declare that God had scattered the proud, put down the mighty, exalted the lowly and filled the poor with good things (1:51-53). And, the declaration of Jesus in Nazareth, pictured the poor and the dregs of the society as the recipients of his ministry. Equally, passages like the parables of the Dives and Lazarus (16:19-31), the counsel of Jesus to the rich young ruler (18:18-23) and the Sermon on the Plain (16:14-29), all reflect the special attention that Luke gave the poor and poverty which is his own critique of the unchristian ideas in his community and that of the gentile world.

In the same vein, Luke also addresses the same critique of the dichotomy between the few rich and the majority poor of his community in his

narrative of the Great Banquet in 14:15-24. As has been pointed out, it was likely that the few rich Christians of Luke’s community did not only insult other poor members, but considered them socially unacceptable. Silas (2016: 73) would be correct in his opinion that although the poor and the rich were found in the community of Luke, it was probable that “the rich still conduct themselves according to their contemporary culture, in which the reciprocity system of relationships was the predominant one.” By implication, these rich of Luke’s community did not only watch out for themselves, but exploited the poor members of the community through the reciprocity system which depicts social inequality.⁴⁰ In this regard, Luke’s task was to criticise these unchristian exhibitions found in his community through his special attention to both poverty and the poor in his gospel.

It is also worthy to note that Luke’s response to the problem of avarice among the few rich of his community and the gentile world of his time, was emphasising Jesus’ teachings both on the acquisition of material possessions, and their (material possessions) use in the service of God through sharing them with the poor. In this regard, it is my view that Luke’s teachings on the acquisition of material possessions and their faithful use in the service of God through sharing them with the poor, served him some purpose. First, they seemed to address the tension in the relationship that existed between the poor and the rich in his community. Second, they served him the purpose of critiquing the problem of amassing wealth which was prevalent in Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire where his community was situated.

3.2 The Texts of Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30⁴¹

The Text in Greek	Researcher’s Translation
13 Εἶπεν δὲ τις ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου αὐτῷ Διδάσκαλε, εἰπὲ τῷ ἀδελφῷ μουμερίσασθαι μετ’ ἐμοῦ τὴν κληρονομίαν.	And someone from the crowd said to Him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the [family] inheritance with me.

⁴⁰ Silas (2016: 39) rightfully says that exploitation was characteristic of first-century AD patron/client relationship. Further on this, see Malina (2000: 151-155) and Speckman (2007).

⁴¹ The Greek Text used in the study is from Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini & Metzger (2006). My translation of the Greek text aligns more to the translation of NJKV.

14 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἄνθρωπε, τίς με κατέστησεν κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς;

15 εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς Ὁρᾶτε καὶ φυλάσσετε ἀπὸ πάσης πλεονεξίας, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ περισσεύειν τινὶ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστίν· ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῷ.

16 Εἶπεν δὲ παραβολὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγων Ἄνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου εὐφόρησεν ἡ χώρα.

17 καὶ διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ λέγων Τί ποιήσω, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχω ποῦ συνάξω τοὺς καρποὺς μου;

18 καὶ εἶπεν Τοῦτο ποιήσω· καθελῶ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας καὶ μείζονας οἰκοδομήσω, καὶ συνάξω ἐκεῖ πάντα τὸν σῖτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ μου,

19 καὶ ἐρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου ψυχῇ, ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κείμενα εἰς ἔτη πολλὰ· ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου.

20 εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Θεὸς ἀφρων, ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ τὴν ψυχὴν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ· ἃ δὲ ἡτοίμασας, τίني ἔσται;

21 οὕτως ὁ θησαυρίζων αὐτῷ καὶ μὴ εἰς Θεὸν πλουτῶν.

But He said to him, Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter over you?

And he said to them, beware and be on your guard against all forms of covetousness, for life does not consist of the abundance of the material possessions one has.

Then he told a parable to them saying. The field of a certain man yielded plentifully.

And he reasoned to himself saying, what will I do since I do not have no place to store my fruit?

And he he said, this is what I will do; I will tear down my barn and build a greater (barn) and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, soul you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat! drink! make merry.

But God said to him, fool, this night they are demanding your soul from you; then who will all which you have prepared belong?

So is he who lays treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

The Text of Lk 12:22-30

The Greek Text	Researcher’s translation
22 Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς [αὐτοῦ] διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν· μὴ μερμινᾶτε τῇ ψυχῇ τί φάγητε, μηδὲ τῷ σώματι τί ἐνδύσηθε.	And he said to his disciples, therefore I say to you. Do not worry about your life or what to eat, nor what to put on.
23 ἡ γὰρ ψυχὴ πλεῖον ἐστίν τῆς τροφῆς καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἐνδύματος.	For life is more than food and the body more than what to put on.

24 κατανοήσατε τοὺς κόρακας, οἳ οὔτε σπείρουσιν οὔτε θερίζουσιν, οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν ταμεῖον οὐδὲ ἀποθήκη, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς τρέφει αὐτούς· πόσω μᾶλλον ὑμεῖς διαφέρετε τῶν πετεινῶν.

25 τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν μεριμνῶν δύναται ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ προσθεῖναι πῆχυν;

26 εἰ οὖν οὐδὲ ἐλάχιστον δύνασθε, τί περὶ τῶν λοιπῶν μεριμνᾶτε;

27 κατανοήσατε τὰ κρίνα, πῶς αυξάνει. οὐ κοπία οὐδὲ νήθει λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν, οὐδὲ Σολομὼν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ περιεβάλετο ὡς ἐν τούτων.

28 εἰ δὲ ἐν ἀγρῷ τὸν χόρτον ὄντα σήμερον καὶ αὔριον εἰς κλίβανον βαλλόμενον ὁ Θεὸς οὕτως ἀμφιέξει, πόσω μᾶλλον ὑμεῖς, ὀλιγόπιστοι.

29 καὶ ὑμεῖς μὴ ζητεῖτε τί φάγητε καὶ τί πίνητε, καὶ μὴ μετεωρίζεσθε.

30 ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου ἐπιζητοῦσιν· ὑμῶν δὲ ὁ Πατὴρ οἶδεν ὅτι χρῆζετε τούτων.

Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap nor have storhouses and God feeds them; of how much valuable are you than the birds?

And who among you by worrying can add a cubit to his stature?

If you cannot do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?

Consider the lilies how they grow; they neither work nor spin; And I say to you, neither Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.

If then God clothes the grass which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much will he clothe you, o you of little faith.

And do not seek what to eat, what to drink, and do not have an anxious mind.

For all these the gentiles of the world seek after; For your father knew that you need them.

3.2.1 Setting the Scene: The Source, *Sitz im Leben*, Literary devices/ contexts, setting of Luke and structure of 12:13-21 and 12:22-30

The source of Luke 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30

Among other goals of biblical criticism which gathered momentum from the 19th century upwards, is to find the source (s) behind the gospels and other New Testament writings. The task of determining the sources (oral/written) behind the gospels and other New Testament writings is called source criticism. This is the point Chinwokwu (2015: 31) makes when he avers that source criticism “asks the question: what written sources might the author of a Gospel have used?” Critical studies by scholars over the centuries have actually yielded positive result as

regards the sources behind the gospels, especially, the synoptic gospels. Though there are many hypotheses of the possible sources of the gospels, it seems the most accepted is the four sources theory otherwise called Markan priority.

As contended by Streeter (1924), there are four possible sources behind the synoptic gospels. These include Q (*Quelle*) which is German word for source. It contained the sayings of Jesus presumed lost. There are also Matthew, Luke, 'M' (special Matthean material) and 'L' (special Lukan material). My interest is with the 'L' (special Lukan material/source). The 'L' source as Chinwokwu (2015: 28) has argued 'may have been written down before hand or may be oral stories that the author himself heard.' However, it may be safer to believe that since Luke is assumed to have been a companion of Paul, that the 'L' source may have been a product of the traditions about Jesus which he may have heard in Jerusalem, Antioch or any of the Hellenistic cities where the gospel may have been composed. Agreeing with Bultman (1963) and Chinwokwu (2015), the researcher is of the view that the 'L' source, contains both narratives and teachings. According to Brown (2014), about "40% of the material found in Luke is contained in the 'L' source." Of particular interest to me is the fact that the teachings contained in the 'L' source include fourteen parables that are particularly Lukan.

The pericope of Lk 12:13-21, in a larger context, belongs to parable of the rich fool which is among the fourteen parables which the gospel of Luke alone preserves. With regard to Jesus' teaching in Lk 12:22-30, there is no question that it comes from the Q source. This source is a hypothetical collection of the sayings of Jesus presumably now lost. As source critics have argued, the Q was a basic source for the synoptic gospels. In the case of Luke (12:22-30), one only needs to read its parallel in Matt 6:25-35 to see the connection there is between the two. This, therefore, shows that both Matthew and Luke may have derived this teaching of Jesus from the Q source. This is my position on the issue.

***Sitz im Leben* of the Texts**

The phrase *Sitz im Leben* is of German origin and translates as "situation in life." It denotes the "historical and sociological dimension of form criticism which calls attention to vital connection between literary forms and the structures and institutions which scholars discerned in working with biblical texts and their total cultural background" (2015: 33). In other words, *Sitz im Leben* calls attention to the real-life situation

of the early Christian community (church) which guided the formulation and writing of the gospel tradition and other New Testament writings. Form critics like Schmidt (1919), Debelius (1965), Bultmann (1963) and Taylor (1935) have all contended, in many ways, that the practical needs of the early church were catechetical, liturgical, instructional, apologetic and controversial. These, were, therefore the chief criteria that governed the selection and arrangement of the traditions of Jesus by each synoptic gospel writer for instance. They had existed and were circulated in independent oral forms. The forms that these traditions of Jesus took included pronouncement stories, miracle stories, stories about Christ and the sayings of Jesus. As widely done in form criticism, the first task is usually to identify the form that a gospel tradition took. Then, this form is assigned a *Sitz im Leben* that created such a form (gospel tradition).

In the case of the pericope of Lk 12:13-21, two forms are observed. The first form is the pronouncement stories as seen in Jesus' significant pronouncement in v. 15. This is a pronouncement story because it contains the typical structure of pronouncement stories. For example, there is a setting (the demand for intervention in sharing an inheritance), a brief dialogue (Jesus asks the questioner from the crowd on which ground he is to intervene in such case) and then, there is a pronouncement by Jesus that life is not dependent on material possessions. In vv. 16-20, it is clear that this is a parable which belongs to the sayings of Jesus as seen in the classification below:

- a) *Logia* (wisdom sayings)
- b) Prophetic and apocalyptic sayings
- c) Legal sayings/community rules
- d) The "I" sayings of Jesus and
- e) The parable.⁴²

With regard to Lk 12: 22-30, the teaching can qualify as *logia*. The *logia* class of the sayings of Jesus, are typical of the Old Testament sayings found in the Wisdom literatures⁴³ of the Jews as presented by Old Testament sages and prophets.

Though the task of assigning a particular *Sitz im Leben* to individual forms of the traditions of Jesus has not always been successful, however, there is reason for the researcher to argue that, with regard to the say-

⁴² I adopt the approach of Chinwoku (2015: 40-42) here.

⁴³ Jewish wisdom literatures include Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job (and in some scholarly circles, Wisdom of Solomon).

ings of Jesus, they were arranged to suite the preaching and teaching needs of the early church. I adopt the position, presented by Bultmann in his analysis of the sayings of Jesus. I share the view that the arrangement of these sayings grew out of the early church's need for preaching and teaching. The study's earlier discussion on the issue of material possessions and their abuse as consisting, a problem for the Lukan community/audience, and the view that Luke addressed such issues through his gospel, give some credence to this position.

Luke, more than any other gospel writer, showed more interest in issues concerning Christians and material possessions, the poor, and the use/sharing of wealth (earthly possessions) in service of humanity and God. Through 'Jesus' teachings' on material possessions, Luke found a "means" through which he addressed the prevalent problem of the desire for material possessions and disregard of the poor in the gentile world of the Roman empire. From this perspective therefore, I have reason to argue that the sayings of Jesus were employed by Luke to address the teaching needs of the community to which he belonged.

Literary Devices and Contexts of Lk 12:13-21 and 12:22-30

With regard to the literary devices found in Lk 12:13-21 and 21-30, the most noticeable literary device is the use of the parable. Parable, *παραβολήν* (*parabolē*) in Greek, literally means according to Chinwokwu (2015: 171) means "putting things side by side." According to Gowler, *parabolē* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term *māšāl* (*māšālīm* in plural) which is very difficult to define. Examples of *māšālīm* in the Old Testament dispensation, according to Gowler (2006), include proverbial sayings, bywords, prophetic/figurative oracle, song of derision or taunting etc with all performing a wide range of literary functions. Generally speaking, however, it can be said that a parable is a

simple brief story of an episode that may or may not have actually taken place, which speaks in familiar and lifelike terms to the listener and conveys some specific truth of great significance to life" (Chinwokwu 2015: 171).

Parables were employed by Old Testament sages, prophets and rabbis (teachers). In Jesus' teaching method, parables were very prominent. They were moralising stories aimed at drawing listeners' attention to some important issues of life and morality. In the context of Lk 12:16-21, this is exactly what the parable of the rich fool does. An important feature within the parable and Lk 12:22-30, is the use of rhetorical questions

by Jesus. Rhetorical questions are mostly questions that do not demand answers. In Lk 12:14,17,20 and Lk 12:25,26,28 rhetorical questions are used by Jesus to emphasise points that have already been made in the preceding verses.

In the discussion literary of contexts of these pericopes, attention is paid to both the remote and immediate literary contexts of Jesus' teaching in Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30. By extension, the pericope to which Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30 belong, is Lk12:1-11 which teaches about hypocrisy and the fear of God. In this pericope, Luke sets Jesus' teaching as being directed to a crowd of people. In Lk 12:1, it is made clear that a great multitude came to hear Jesus teach. Hence, the teaching of Jesus in Lk 12:1-12 was a build-up to the one contained in Lk 12:13-21. As such, it forms the remote literary context of the parable.

The immediate literary context of the parable, that is, what immediately prompted Jesus' telling of this parable, was the request made of Jesus by a member of the crowd-hearers. This request, which begins in v. 13, sought Jesus' intervention in the sharing of an inheritance between two brothers. This request therefore prompted Jesus' telling of the parable that has come to be known as the parable of the rich fool. Equally, the parable was a build-up to the saying in Lk 12:22-30 which is specifically directed to the disciples. As such, the parable of the rich fool forms the immediate literary context of the saying in Lk 12:16-21.

Setting of Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30

Beginning with the very first verse of Lk 12:13, one notices the setting in which the pericope (12:13-21) can be located. Beginning with the request of the questioner from the crowd, one sees a background that depicts life in the countryside. The inheritance, which sharing was requested, does not reflect an urban setting. Firstly, it is assumed that both Jesus and his immediate hearers here were in a Galilean setting. This agrees with Miller's (2007: 65-82) thought that all of Jesus' parables were native to Palestine and also, had rural contexts. I agree strongly with Van Eck (2009) that "First-century Palestine, the world in which Jesus told his parables, was an advanced agrarian society..." Advanced agrarian societies, as Van Eck continues (2009) "had two main characteristics: they were aristocratic in nature, and the main 'economic' activity was working the land (agriculture)." In such an advanced agrarian countryside therefore, land and its resources mattered a lot. Although the type of inheritance to be shared is not mentioned in the text (12:13-21), it may

be safe to assume that it has to do with land and its resources. This kind of squabble over family inheritance was common in the countryside of Palestine and Judea in particular during this time. In the context of the parable itself, it becomes more noticeable that it reflects a rural setting where agriculture holds sway. In such a countryside, people were engaged in agriculture especially, farming. In such a setting also, few elites often controlled the land and its resources. The interest of these elites was so much on controlling the resources which the land produced through maintaining a choking hold on land tenure, the practice of tenant farming and the use of slave labour. In such a rural setting, social stratification was a reality; people were put in their place based on their social position in the society. These few elites were very much concerned about maintaining their wealthy status that, in most cases, was at the expense of the poor. Most likely, it was in such above-described society that the parable and its protagonist the rich farmer, were set. Ringe (1995: 177) would then be right in saying that the context of the parable features “a man who is successful in his business, and who operates within an economy where wealth and security are measured in the goods one has accumulated.” This is mostly obtainable in the countryside although such is more obtained in the urban setting in Roman Empire.⁴⁴ Oakman (1991: 152), indeed, pointed out that the parable reflects a typical country estate in the gospel of Luke.

The same countryside setting is depicted in the context of Jesus’ teaching in Lk 12:22-30. This is reflected in certain words used in the pericope. These words include ‘raven’ ‘sow’ ‘reap’ ‘storehouse’ ‘grass’ ‘barn’ ‘flock’ ‘lilies’. These words are related to the everyday peasant way of life in the countryside. They are words that the poor of Luke’s community also related to. Horsley’s (1987: 258) analysis of this saying of Jesus (in 12:22-30), shows that it has a peasant setting since it deals with the release from possessions and worldly cares. This idea of denunciation of possessions, for Horsley, shows that the saying has a peasant setting. Since wealth and its exploitative means were part and parcel of everyday peasant life of Palestine, Horsley’s position can be appreciated.

⁴⁴ It is certain that unlike the countryside of most Mediterranean world of the first-century, the cities which were urban did not run so much on agriculture.

Structures of Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:22-30

From my perspective, the pericope of 12:13-21 could be said to have four components. Vv. 13–14 form a component because it is here that somebody wanted Jesus to intervene in the sharing of an inheritance to which Jesus refused. V. 15 stands on its own as a significant pronouncement of Jesus with regard to the inheritance he was asked to share. Vv. 15-21 which tell a parable about a rich barn-building fool has two components. While verses 13-20 form their own component because they tell the story of the rich fool, v. 21 stands on its own as a significant pronouncement of Jesus with regard to the attitude of the rich fool to material possession in the parable. This pronouncement may be regarded, as Jeremias suggested, as a moralizing verse added to the parable. For me, v. 21 defines the parable more with its conclusive comment on the fate of those who trust in their material possessions and use them wrongly. Lk 12:22-30 have three components. While v. 22 forms a component of its own, vv. 23-29 can be regarded as an illustration of what was said in v. 22. In v. 30, Jesus makes an emphatic comparative statement on how the Gentile world seeks after material things; this statement that can stand on its own.

3.2.2 Solving Textual Problem in vv.14, 21, 22 and 27

The texts of study have textual problems in their original Greek texts. V. 14 of the text reads: ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἄνθρωπε, τίς με κατέστησεν κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς;

The Greek masculine noun κριτὴν (*kritēn*) in v. 14 has variant readings in terms of: i) κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς (Judge or arbiter). The reading adopted in the text is the first ie, the one with κριτὴν (*kritēn*) which is supported by:

(i) P⁷⁵ which is a papyrus document of early 3rd century. It contains only the gospels; being a papyrus document, it is considered closer closely to the original writing.

(ii) Ⲙ and B; these are codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus respectively. They are dated 4th century. Codex Sinaiticus contains the Gospels, Acts, General Epistle, Pauline Epistle and Revelation. Codex Vaticanus contains the Gospels, Acts, General Epistles and Pauline Epistles. In terms of character and date of these manuscripts, they are considered highly reliable. Other support for these readings includes (L) which is Codex

Paris of 8th century. It is also supported by f^1 , f^{13} and minuscules like 33, 205, 579, 700, 892 etc.

(iii) κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν (Judge or arbiter): This reading is supported by; (i) A – Codex Alexandrinus of about 5th century. It contains the gospels, Acts, General Epistles, Pauline Epistles and Revelation. Although Codex Alexandrinus is a good manuscript, its support is not always regarded as being strong in textual criticism.

(ii) W – Washington manuscript of about 4/5th centuries AD. It contains only the Gospels. Perhaps as widely said in textual criticism, Washington codex is more interesting than reliable. This means that its character support is not always strong as far as textual criticism is concerned.

(iii) Δ, Θ, ψ; these are St Gaul, Tbilisi and Athos Codices. But for Athos (ψ) which contains the Gospel, Acts, General Epistles and Pauline Epistles, St. Gaul and Tbilisi contain only the Gospels. They are dated 9th and 10th centuries respectively. Their witness support, based on date and reliability, does not enjoy high reliability.

In v. 21, we meet a different and intricate textual problem in forms of addition and omission from an original Greek text. In other words, v. 21 of the text is omitted in some ancient manuscripts. While P⁴⁵, P⁷⁵ which are Papyrus documents of 3rd century and codices like: (Sinaiticus) A (Alexandrinus), B (Vaticanus), L (Paris) etc adds v. 21 other ancient manuscripts omit it entirely. This is seen in the 3rd variant reading in the footnote of the Greek text of Luke 12:13-21. However, it is only manuscript like D (Bezae Cantabrigiensis) that omits the text entirely. This manuscript is dated 8th century date and does not really provide reliable witness in most cases. The other variant (2) retains the verse with the addition of ταῦτα λεγων εφωνει. This variant is supported by f^{13} and minuscule like 180, 579, 597, 1243, etc. It is however interesting to note that none of the minuscule in existence dates before 9th century. This means that they are of late origin and as such cannot be relied upon as important witnesses.

V. 22 has a textual problem in the form of the addition of the Greek pronoun αὐτου (his) which is enclosed in a brace. This is the reading adopted in the text and is supported by NB, L, D, L, W, Δ, Θ, ψ and Minuscules like, f^{13} , f^1 28, 37, 180, 157, 205, etc. Most of the character of the witnesses support has been commented on above. This reading has a variant in which the αὐτου (his) is omitted leaving μαθητας (disciples) standing on its own. This variant is supported by P⁴⁵ and B with their above noted characteristics.

V. 27 has a textual problem with regard to the addition of ὑφαίνει (weave) to the word νηΘει (spin). The reading that ends with νηΘει is supported by \aleph B, L, W, A, Δ , Θ , ψ and P⁴⁵ P⁷⁵. Minuscules like f^l , f^{l3} 28, 33, 157, etc also support this reading. Other variants of this reading include D (Bezae Cantabrigiensis) which adds ὑφαίνει. Beside the support of D, the Old Latin [it^a], Syriac Bible[syr^c] and the Diatessaron also supports this reading. Their testimonies, however, are not highly regarded in textual criticism neither based on date nor degree of care taken by their copyists. There is, in addition to this variant, a conflated reading which has ου κοπια ουτε νηΘει ουτε ὑφαίνει which is poorly supported by the Old Latin Bible [it^a] that contains only the Gospels.

3.2.3 Adopting Readings for Exegesis

In the case of v. 14, I adopt the first reading seen in the text, that is, the reading that has κριτήν ἢ μεριστήν. Based on date and character support of the witnesses it has, it is deservedly so for the reading to be adopted. In v. 21, I adopt the reading retained in the text. Supported by papyrus documents and heavyweight manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, that whose reliability is highly rated, its adoption becomes justified. In v. 22, I, while acknowledging that the presence of the pronoun αὐτου (his) is disputed in the text, adopt the reading that retains it (his). This is basically on a grammatical consideration since the noun μαθητας can only refer to Jesus' disciples in this context. Hence to make for a more grammatically refined reading, it is possible that the scribes of \aleph , B, L, W, A, Δ , Θ , ψ etc had to retain it for the sake of emphasis.

In the case of v. 7, I adopt the reading that has ου κοπια ουδε νηΘει (neither work nor spin). While its witness supports are impressive based on date and character, I agree with Metzger (2002) that the D reading is a grammatical/stylistic refinement by the D scribes. This refinement was probably motivated by the presence of the word νηΘει (spin) which, for the scribes, must have more sense when it is complemented by the verb ὑφαίνει (weave). The other reading supported by the Old Latin Bible is nothing more than a conflated reading which was a later addition to the text. As such, it is not to be considered as an original reading.

3.2.4 Reading Lk 12:13-21 Closely

V. 13: A Member of the Crowd Asks for Jesus' Intervention in the Sharing of an Inheritance

It has been earlier been noted in the study that the remote literary context of Jesus teaching here is Luke 12:1-12. In this narrative, a multitude had already gathered around Jesus to hear him teach. After his teaching on the fear of God and confessing him (Christ) before men, an unidentified member of the crowd appealed for Jesus' help in sharing an inheritance that he had with his brother. The verse begins with the Greek words: Εἶπεν δέ τις ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου αὐτῷ Διδάσκαλε, εἰπὲ τῷ ἀδελφῷ μου μερίσασθαι μετ' ἐμοῦ τὴν κληρονομίαν.

While δέ (*de*) is a conjunction which means 'and', Εἶπεν (*eipen*) is a Greek verb which is in the aorist third person form of the verb λεγῶ (*legō*) which means 'tell'. τις (*tis*) is an indefinite pronoun which translates as 'someone.' ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου αὐτῷ: ἐκ is a preposition in the genitive form which means 'out from.' τοῦ ὄχλου is a combination of a definite article 'the' and 'crowd' which is in the genitive form. These translate as 'someone from the crowd.' The use of the vocative by the questioner from the crowd διδάσκαλε (*didaskale*) which means 'teacher' is honourific; it is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic *rabbi* which also means teacher. The usage of the third person imperative verb εἰπὲ (tell) by the questioner here, should be understood in alignment with his earlier address of Jesus as a teacher. This denotes the faith of the questioner in Jesus' ability to command the said brother to share their inheritance together.

In typical Palestinian Jewish settings, it must be pointed out that it was never out of place for people to bring cases before rabbis for settlement (arbitration). As Barclay (1961: 164) puts it "it was not uncommon for people in Palestine to take their unsettled disputes to respected Rabbis..." Similarly, Kealy (1979: 298) says that "a rabbi who was expert in the law of Moses was expected to be able to pronounce on all the aspects of life which it dealt with whether religious or secular, civil affairs." Seen from this perspective, the questioner from the crowd was hopeful that as a rabbi, Jesus had the authority to arbitrate in the case between him and his brother. This is why the verb μερίσασθαι (*meristhai*) which translates as 'to share' is used here; it is in the aorist infinitive sense of the verb μερίσασθω (*merisazō*). The noun 'inheritance' is represented here in the sentence as κληρονομίαν, which is a feminine Greek noun, used in the

accusative sense; this is why it is preceded by the accusative definite article τὸν (*tēn*).

The nature of this request by the questioner, generally, betrays the perception of some Jews of Jesus' time on issues of material wealth. It is to be noted, as Malina & Rohrbaugh (1992: 359) have pointed out, that in the Mediterranean societies of this time, rivalry among siblings was common. In this regard, contention over a family inheritance was a good enough source of contention. Squabble over family inheritance in the Mediterranean societies may have been common owing to the fact that these societies were mostly advanced agrarian societies. As I have pointed out earlier, such societies depended so much on the land (agriculture) to survive. Thus, struggle over family inheritance of land and its resources for example, would be common among the peasants of these societies. This may have been so because access to land meant "life" while the loss of it (land) meant starvation, hunger, debt and tenant farming.

Among the Jews, there were inheritance laws which were spelt out in Deut 21:15-17 and Num 27:1-11 and 36:7-9. In these passages, it is understandable that the first born of a family has a double portion of the family inheritance. Other sons of the family are entitled to sharing the remainder of the inheritance. It was a taboo for a family inheritance to be transferred from tribe to tribe among the Jews of this time. Uy (2003: 22) observed in this light that in the case of families (fathers) without male sons, the family inheritance is divided among the daughters; this of course, was to ensure that family inheritances are retained. In the same vein, Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992: 359) noted that it was a practised Jewish custom for a father to share his inheritance among his sons when still alive especially, in a case where a son demands for it. This is exactly what is reflected in Lk 15:11-32 in the passage that is popularly referred to as the parable of the prodigal son.

The request by the questioner from the crowd, is also akin to the incident in 1 Kgs 3:4-28 where King Solomon was asked to be an arbiter on an issue involving two women claiming the ownership of a baby. According to Moorman (1961: 150), Jesus had proclaimed himself a 'better Solomon' and as such, a member of the crowd thought that such a better Solomon must have the power to arbitrate on the issue of dividing the inheritance he had together with his brother. Probably, Jesus must have known about the trouble Moses got himself into in Exod 2:14 when he tried to intervene in the case of two Jewish brothers who were fighting.

Besides, it is clear here that Jesus probably did not know the said inheritance or the brother with whom the inheritance was to be shared. At least, Luke gives his readers no indication of Jesus' knowledge of such inheritance to be shared. Equally, Luke is silent on the background of the questioner from the crowd. However, Green (1997: 448) thinks that this questioner may have been the younger of the two brothers. As such, according to Green, he may have been in need of external assistance which Num 27:1-11,36 and Deut 21:16-17 enjoin. This practice, according to Green, was very much obtainable in the Palestinian setting.

Vv. 14-15: *Jesus Objects to Sharing an Unknown Inheritance and Teaches on Material Possessions*

V. 14: ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἄνθρωπε, τίς με κατέστησεν κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς;

The vocative *ἄνθρωπε* (*anthropē* / man) is a case of direct third person address by Jesus. It is in response to the request for him to be an arbiter over an inheritance. The way it is used here, it is a form of a sharp rebuke from Jesus to the questioner from the crowd. Jesus rhetorically asked the questioner from the crowd: τίς με κατέστησεν κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς; (who made me a judge or an arbiter over you?). The Greek pronoun τίς means “who” in the context of its usage here. κατέστησεν (*katestēsen*) is a verb in the aorist form which means “made”; κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν: These are feminine nouns used in the accusative sense which mean “judge” and “arbiter” respectively. ἐφ' ὑμᾶς: These mean “over” and “you”.

From this sentence, Jesus' objection to the request of a member of the crowd who had wanted him intervene in the division of their inheritance is seen clearly. This shows Jesus' intention not to meddle with issues of dividing an inheritance between two brothers. As Barclay (1981: 1-4) puts it “Jesus refused to be mixed up in anyone's dispute about money.” Similarly, Stacy (1997: 286) argues that “the brother in Luke 12:13 is not a poor, disaffected person whose cause Jesus can step up to champion. The dispute is about money, not persons and Jesus seems to have little interest in money *per se*.” This seems to be a better approach to interpreting Jesus' refusal to the request of the questioner from the crowd here instead of the view that it was because Jesus “did not immediately assume that it was proper for him to be a judge having not been formally recognised by the religious hierarchy as a rabbi.” (Uy 2003: 23). Equally not likely, is the suggestion that of Uy (2003: 23) that Jesus did not see it

as “part of his mission to try and change the structure of the civil laws of Israel as embodied in the Torah.” Added to this also, may have been the fact that Jesus saw that both the questioner from the crowd and his brother who may have cheated him of his due share of the family inheritance had some unpleasant ideal driving them. Could it not be that Jesus read the motive that lay behind the actions of the brothers? What would this have been? Whatever it was, Jesus decided not to rule over such a matter because of the motive that lays behind the request.

V. 15: εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς Ὁρᾶτε καὶ φυλάσσεσθε ἀπὸ πάσης πλεονεξίας, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ περισσεύειν τινὶ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῷ; While the verbs εἶπεν and δὲ have been commented on, πρὸς (*pros*) is a preposition meaning ‘to’; αὐτούς (*autous*) means ‘them.’ Ὁρᾶτε (*orate*) is a verb in the present imperative active of Ὁρᾶω which literally translates as ‘see.’ However, in the context of its usage here it means ‘beware.’ καὶ is a conjunction which connects Ὁρᾶτε with φυλάσσεσθε which is a verb in the present middle imperative second person sense of the noun φυλάκη. When connected with the sense made here it becomes Ὁρᾶτε καὶ φυλάσσεσθε ἀπὸ πάσης πλεονεξίας (‘Be on your guard against all covetousness’). According to Seccombe (1982: 139), this formula is “the strongest warning formula in Luke-Acts.” Covetousness here is represented as πλεονεξίας which connotes greed, fraudulence, haughtiness, and avarice; hence, the idea of covetousness in this sentence is connotative. By implication, the act of sharing an inheritance as requested by the questioner betrays covetous attitude because his interest is only in material possessions. This, most likely, was Jesus’ interpretation of the request made of him by the questioner.

Jesus’ refusal is to be understood in the context of subsequent verse (15) in which he warns, strictly, about covetousness which leads to excessive desire for earthly possessions. Jesus was emphatic in his reply: περισσεύειν τινὶ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῷ/ *perisseuein tini hē zōē autou estin ek tōn huparchoutōn auto* (For life does not consist of abundance of the possessions one has). The key word here is ὑπαρχόντων (*huparchoutōn*) which is the plural genitive form of ὑπαρχόντα (*hupachonta*). According to Thayler (2008: 638), ὑπαρχόντα is a derivative of two Greek words ὑπαρξίς (possession, goods, wealth, property) and the Greek verb ὑπαρχω (to exist /to come forth). Although ὑπαρχω may mean “to exist” or “to come forth”, when written as τα ὑπαρχόντα, it refers to one’s possessions. Similarly, Arndt & Gingrich (1958: 617) say that ὑπαρξίς may mean “existence and property or be-

longing” but when written as τα ὑπαρχόντα, it becomes ‘possessions.’ In all these, it can be said that ὑπαρχόντα means (i) possessions (ii) property (iii) wealth (iv) belongings and (v) goods. In the context of my usage here, it is translated as “material possessions.” Hence, the plural genitive usage here in the verse ὑπαρχόντων refers to the material possessions that someone has. The true meaning of ὑπαρχόντων here must be connected to the preceding noun *perisseuein* which denotes “super abundance” both in quantity and quality. ὑπαρχόντων in its usage here therefore refers to material possessions, especially, in its “super-abundant form.’ This, of course, refers to the earthly/material possessions one has. However, Jesus does not totally condemn material possessions here, but advocates a de-emphasis of the materialistic way of life for his followers. However, Jesus does not totally condemn material possessions here, but advocates a de-emphasis of materialistic way of life for his followers. By this, Jesus’ advocates for his disciples to be contented with God’s provision of their daily needs; hence his teaching that a man’s earthly life does not consist of the abundance of possessions one has. In this regard, Poole (1990) is right by writing that Jesus’ teaching here suggests that:

... whatever it is that hindereth our contentment with the portion God giveth us upon our endeavors, though it amounts to no more than food and raiment... This is what Christ warns his disciples to beware of. Abundance is not necessary to uphold our lives.....

Similarly, Henry (1972: 1866) writes:

Our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world. The life of the soul, undoubtedly, does not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suite the nature of the soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desire nor last so long as it will last. Even the life of the body and happiness of that do not consist in abundance of these things; for many live very contentedly and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth of it.....

This same line of thought is seen in Marshall’s (1986: 523) words that “the real life of a man is not dependent on the abundance... or superfluity of his possessions...” However, the spiritual ‘harm’ caused by desire for material possessions as deduced in Jesus’ teaching here cannot be brushed aside. Most likely, Jesus’ radical de-emphasis of material possessions here in this pericope resonates well with the idea that interest in material possessions sways Christians’ dedication to God. Of course,

it cannot be taken for granted that so much care for material possessions have every tendency to cause 'divided loyalty' in the spiritual life of a Christian. This point is further expressed in Lukan passage like 16:13 in which Jesus declares that "no man can serve both God and Mammon"⁴⁵ as the same time." Hence, so much care for material possessions sways a Christian's dedication to God and godly things.

From this analysis, it is seen why Jesus strongly refused to intervene in the equal division of an inheritance as demanded by the questioner from the crowd. To Jesus, the questioner from the crowd was covetous since his only interest was on material possessions he had jointly with his said brother. Nevertheless, Jesus' mission was not channeled to this effect. Porter (1988: 1208) is indeed very correct in saying that Jesus' "mission was not to settle the differences which brothers, joint-heirs moreover of the covenant, ought easily to have to have composed themselves." In this regard therefore, Jesus did not come to handle a dispute such as the one the questioner from the crowd was requesting of him in which materialism would be glorified. It is this theme of glorification of material wealth that Jesus illustrates in the subsequent parable as it is going to be unveiled.

In order to underscore his position that abundance of material possessions does not define the human life, Jesus sets forth a parable – a parable that deals with a rich farmer and his attitude to material possessions. Typical of Lukan parables, the parable of the rich fool begins with the words: ἀνθρώπου τινός "a certain man" (Marshall 1986: 521) whose ground (farm) yielded (ἐυφόρησεν) plenty of harvest. The quality of the yield is underscored by Luke's use of the Greek word πλουσίου which is the genitive form of the masculine Greek adjective πλουσίους which means "richness". But in its usage in this verse, it does not denote riches in terms of money, but plentitude of agricultural yields. I agree with Marshall (1986: 523) that the word πλουσίου (*plousiou*) as used here denotes super-abundant yields and not more. This makes more sense when connected with Luke's use of the word χώρα (*chora*) which means "ground" denoting the farm of the so-referred certain man. Seen in this light, the parable tells that this farmer is rich right from the onset because of the plentitude of his farm yields. Although this may be a speculation, the farmer may have been one of the few elites in the countryside of Palestine who may have built his estate through the exploitation of the

⁴⁵ *Mammon* is the Aramaic word for money which may also refer to possessions.

peasants. It is worthy to note that although Luke did not give much clues to the background of the farmer, who is the protagonist of the parable, it may not be out of place to contend that he may have been one of the few elites in the countryside of Palestine who built his estate through exploiting the peasants of his world through tenant farming and debt accumulation.⁴⁶

In v. 17, it is seen that this plentitude of yields threw the rich farmer into contemplation; he was a kind of confused about what to do with all his farm yields. This is why Luke pictured him (the rich farmer) engaging in soliloquy (διελογίζετο). Marshall (1986) rightly observed that soliloquy is very prominent in the Gospel of Luke. In Lukan passages like 12:45; 15:17-19; 16:3ff and 20:13 such kind of dialogue with oneself is evidenced. A part of this engagement in soliloquy by the rich-farmer was his lack of large barns to store his crops. As seen in the future verb ποιήσω (*poiēsō*), it is practical that the rich man contemplates a future action.

And in v. 18, it is seen what his next course of action will be! He is set to tear down his old barn and build a much larger one. Because, this rich farmer had the problem of storing his yields, which was backed up with the problem of lack of a larger barn, he intends, tearing down (καθελῶ) his old barn. This word (καθελῶ) is a Greek verb of the future indicative active. It is to be understood in the context of the preceding verb ποιήσω (I will do). Barns are represented here as ἀποθήκας (*apothekas*) which is a noun of the feminine class. The use of barns by this rich farmer reflects what has already been pointed out that this parable is set in a typical countryside of Palestine where agriculture and farming were ways of life.

As Oakman (1991: 165) notes, the story of this parable and the wealth-hoarding farmer who builds barns is very much a familiar practice in the peasant societies of the first-century Mediterranean world. Peasants in the countryside knew about using barns to store crop yields. Hence, this farmer was doing what was a known practice of his world only that unlike those who were peasants, he was well off. In this verse, Luke tells his readers that the farmer had barns but as highlighted above, his problem was lack of larger barns. So, the rich farmer embarks on the act of building larger barns in which he would gather (συνάξω) all his grains and crops, and stores them.

⁴⁶ A similar conclusion is found in Metzger (2007).

Here is the beginning of the rich men's failure and mistake. As Kim (1993: 254-255) has argued, he was hell bent on hoarding all grains and crops without regard for anybody else. This is reflected in his soliloquy of v. 19: ἐρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου ψυχή, ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κείμενα εἰς ἔτη πολλά (I will say to my soul, soul you have many good things for many good years). The soul is represented here as ψυχή (*psuchē*). According to Utley (n.d), it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *nephesh*. It refers, according to Utley, to "our being, our self, our personhood." This is correct as it is seen and used in other passages like Acts 2:41; 3:23 and Rom 13:1. Thus the farmer's self-address "soul" refers to his very being / person. Put in another way, it would read "rich farmer, you have many goods for many years"; this is why all his interest is in storing up his grains and crops. Such an attitude leads him to thinking only of himself as the sole beneficiary of the grains and crops he had stored up.

This is reflected in his self-address again [ψυχῇ] φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου (eat, drink, make merry). This attitude of the rich farmer, as Marshall (1986) contends, is "folly in the eyes of God", who now steps into the story and addresses the man directly as ἀφρων (*aphrōn*) which is the Greek word for a fool. This word occurs elsewhere in in Lk 11:40 and I Cor 15:36. However, there is still another Greek word for fool which is μῶρος *mōros*. This is the word used in Matt 5:22. According to Utley, it corresponds with the sense of the Aramaic *rēqā'*, an understanding also shared by Reid (2009: 25). By this address, the rich farmer's soul (life's) away from him (supposedly by God). I am aware of the use of the plural Greek verb sued here by Luke which may not easily be interpreted. The Greek plural verb "they are demanding" has been understood by Stacy (1997: 228) to be a reference to the material possessions that the farmer had acquired. In this sense, according to Stacy, the farm yields of the farmer are demanding his very life from him. Lexically speaking, there is a lot of sense in this kind of interpretation. However, as Utley (n.d) argues, Luke is known to use such plural form (they) without really understanding it to denote plurality. And if one considers some contexts like Lk 6:38, 12:11; 16; and 23:31, then one can understand the point Utley is making. This is why a scholar like Robinson (1958) argues that Luke's use of the plural pronoun (they) tilted towards the habits of the rabbis avoiding the use of the divine name of God. In this regard, he further says that the "they" as used in this verse corresponds with the Old Testament form of reference to God (plural majesty). For Magil (2008: 239), the "they" in this verse refers to the angels especially when compared

with that of the “they” of Lk 16:22. I align with his understanding of Luke’s use of “they” here as a linguistic style peculiar to Luke in which he uses the pronoun without necessarily denoting its plural function. Since it may have been God who addressed the farmer as a fool, it may have been the same God who took his life away.

In the end, the rich farmer was indeed a fool. However, why did God address him as a fool? In my view, the rich farmer was not a fool because he gathered up his yields and stored them in a barn. Rather, it was his attitude and plans for his stored yields that made him a fool. As Rindge (2015: 562 & 2011) has rightfully argued, the said yields may not have been a product of fraud. After all, one is reminded of the very relationship that this parable bears with the story of Joseph and his hoarding tactic in Egypt (Gen 41:33-36; 42:48) as a future plan against famine. However, while the grains hoarded by Joseph were meant for the benefit of the Egyptian people, that of the rich farmer was just for himself.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, this rich farmer’s attitude to his wealth was what made him a fool. According to Uy (2003: 26), the rich farmer allowed his wealth control him. His attitude and disposition were not only hoarding his grains and crops. Rather the total disregard for others around him was his greatest undoing. Barclay (1981: 164-165) called attention to the danger of such attitude of hoarding – amassing of wealth, by citing the belief of the Romans believed that money was like sea-water; the more a man drank the thirstier he became. Thus, the problem with hoarding, which is the disagreeable attitude of the rich farmer, is that it always drives one desiring to acquire more wealth to the neglect of God and humans around him, these very important things of life.

In v. 21, Jesus makes an emphatic conclusive comment that the fate of the rich fool awaits all those who are not rich towards God. While what ‘being rich toward God’ really means is problematic, it seems that it has something to do with giving and sharing with the poor. Thus, Cyril of Alexandria is right in saying that Jesus’ conclusive comment in v.21 on being rich towards God refers to he who does not treasure possessions above God and the needs of man. As Cyril of Alexandria writes:

⁴⁷ While some scholars have seen a kind of connection between Joseph’s story and his hoarding tactic in Gen 41:33-36,42-46, it is certain that while Joseph hoarding tactic was meant to benefit a whole lot of the Egyptians, it is certain that the rich fool in this parable had envisioned only himself as the sole benefactor of his farm yields.

It is true that a person's life is not from one's possessions or because of having an overabundance. He who is rich toward God is very is very blessed and has glorious hope. Who is he? Evidently, one who does not love wealth but rather loves virtue, and to whom few things are sufficient. It is one whose hand is open to the needs of the poor, comforting the sorrows of those in poverty according to his means and the utmost of his power. He gathers in the storehouses that are above and lays up treasure in heaven. Such a one shall find the interest of his in virtue and the reward of his right and blames life (Just 2001: 208).

Augustine on the meaning of Jesus comment in v. 21 on being rich towards God, Augustine stated that:

The redemption of a man's soul is his richness. This silly fool of a man did not have that kind of riches. Obviously he was not redeeming perishable crops. How will he know where to look, when at that trial he starts hearing the words "I was hungry and you did not give me to eat."? He was planning to fill his soul with excessive and unnecessary feasting and was proudly disregarding all those empty bellies of the poor. He did not realize that the bellies of the poor were much safer storerooms than his barns (Just 2001: 208).

In all this, it can be said that at the heart of this parable is the message that life cannot be defined and secured in the context of the abundance of material wealth one has. Hence, Stacy (1997: 289-291) is indeed right in arguing that at the heart of the parable lies the teaching that "we are not made to "run on" wealth or material possessions but rather to "run on God."

Conclusion of the exegesis and theological thrust of Lk 12:13-21 (The parable of the rich fool)

At the heart of this parable lies an important teaching of Jesus on Christians' attitude to material possessions. In the passage, Jesus made it emphatic that life is more than just amassing material possessions. This is reflected firstly in Jesus' objection to the demand made of him by listener asking him to intervene in sharing a family inheritance to which Jesus objection was because the listener's only interest is in material possessions. To illustrate this further, Jesus tells the story of the rich barn-building fool whose only interest was in hoarding material wealth for self-use. In conclusion, of the exegesis, therefore, the researcher stresses that the core of this passage is a de-emphasis on material possessions since they do not define Christians' life. Hence, it is a call

against amassing material possessions because they have the tendencies to sway Christians' interest in things of God. It is also a call for the rich to be sensitive to human needs especially, by sharing their wealth with the poor and the needy.

3.2.5 A Close reading of Jesus' Teaching in Luke 12:22-30

Vv. 22-28: Warning against anxiety and worry over material possessions

While the parable of the rich fool was directed to the crowd-hearers of Jesus, this teaching preserved in vv. 22-30 is specifically directed at the disciples.⁴⁸ According to Marshall (1986: 526), this teaching is directed to the disciples because they have responded to Jesus' call. This relates to the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:1ff where Jesus called his disciples separately to himself and taught them. This is so because they are the nucleus of his ministry who must have heard Jesus' parable on the rich fool. As such, they needed to be instructed specially on how to relate to material possessions. The connection between the teaching of the parable on material possession and that of these saying of Jesus, is well illustrated with διὰ τοῦτο (therefore). This connection lies in the theme of possession found in both pericopes.

While the connection between the parable's teaching and that of 22-30 has been referred to in this verse, Jesus authoritatively instructs his disciples concerning material things. Typical of his authoritative words, the verb μὴ μεριμνᾶτε (*me merimnate*/do not worry) is an imperative verb in the 2nd person plural form. It is used in the present active tense. It is further reinforced by the adverb μὴ (not) which stresses the negation further. In this, verse μὴ μεριμνᾶτε can be translated as "do not be anxious" Hence Marshall (1986: 526) is right in saying that the core of this saying here lies in not "having an anxious thought." The core of this anxious thought, as this verse indicates, is about "life" represented here

⁴⁸ There is no consensus among scholars on which type of disciples that Jesus addressed here in the verse. For Degenhardt (1965), Jesus' saying in this verse was addressed to the historical professional disciples of Jesus. But later, according to Degenhardt, Luke applied the saying to full-time community servants. A contrary view is held by Seccombe (1982: 148), who sees a wider application of Jesus' address in here to relate to a remnant Israel. According to Seccombe, Luke himself used this address of Jesus in reference to the church as seen in Acts 20:28. Although basing his argument on the mention of little flock in Lk 12:33 by the author of Luke, Seccombe's argument is disagreeable since there is not much evidence that the little flock of Lk 12:33 and that mentioned in Acts 20:28 had similar historical contexts.

as ψυχῇ, what to eat represented as τί φάγητε, and what to put on represented as σώματι τί ἐνδύσῃθε. The injunction not to worry about these things can also be seen in passages like Lk 12:11 and Matt 6:25,27,28,31,34. In these passages, the disciples are advised not to worry about material possessions.

These are necessities of life which may refer to material possessions still. Such necessities, Rindge (2015: 178) has pointed out, “are the concern of the poor because of their immediate survival needs. For the rich, however, these life necessities are plague to them.” While this is an injunction, Jesus cannot interpret material things to mean a clear denunciation of these necessities of life; it is a call against them not diverting the interest of the disciples from their mission. Moreover, it is a call for simple trust in God’s providence.

This is the point Cyril of Alexandria made in his exegesis of this passage when he asked “who then will give us the necessities of life?” Our answer, says Cyril, is thus “The Lord is worthy to be trusted, and he clearly promises it to you and through little things gives you full assurance that he will be true also in that which is great.” (Just 2001: 210).

In v. 23, the reason for not striving after these material possessions is given: “for life is more than food and clothing”. This is also a reference to the striving and interest of the rich fool, in the preceding parable, in material possession alone. Hence, trust in God’s providence is absolutely needed. This is exactly what the following contrasting that illustrations denote in these verses. Here, Jesus uses examples of the raven and lilies in teaching about trust in God’s providence. The ravens represented here as κόρακας (*korakas*) are birds which were common in ancient Palestine. In Jewish dietary laws, the ravens are regarded as unclean animals as seen in Lev 11:15 and Deut 14:14. According to Fitzmyer (1985: 972), the ravens “were known in antiquity as careless creatures that even fail to return to their nests.” These ravens, of course, do not sow or reap. Also, they do not have storehouses (barns) like the wealth-hoarding rich farmer in the preceding parable. Such things are not the concerns of these creatures yet God provides for them. It is certain that this teaching and reference to the ravens relates to an earlier similar saying found in Job 38:41. According to Mackenzie & Murphy (2014: 487), this saying in Job reflects the fact that the birds (ravens) depend on God for their feeding and that of their off springs. This is certainly the point that Jesus’ makes in this verse.

It is therefore in this context that Jesus asks, rhetorically, “if such unclean careless birds are cared about by God, how much more would God care about the disciples?” This is a question that Jesus dealt with in Lk 12:7 and its parallel in Matt 10:31. These passages all indicate that God values human beings far more than the ravens. Jesus goes further to reinforce this position on not being anxious about material things by asking in v. 25: τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν μεριμνῶν δύναται ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ προσθεῖναι πῆχυν; (who among you, by worrying, can add a cubit to his stature?) The Greek word πῆχυν (*pēchun*) according to Utley (n.d), is “the distance between a man’s elbow and his longest finger. It is usually 18 inches.” However, the word can also mean ‘size’ as seen in Jn 21:8, or ‘time’ as seen in Matt 6:27 depending on context in which it is used. Of course, the disciples are aware that such “additions to life are naturally taken care of by God. This is why in v. 26, Jesus makes an emphatic answer to his question. Of course, the disciples, by worrying cannot do the least!

In v. 27, Jesus again turns to examples taken from everyday country life of Palestine: the reference to the lilies (τὰ κρίνα) and they grow without toiling a spinning. The use of the Greek verb κατανοήσατε (*katanoēsate*) which was earlier used in v. 24 deserves some comments. The verb is in the aorist active imperative. It is used by Luke to denote the utmost need for the comprehension and understanding; it therefore denotes absolute consideration of what was being said by Jesus according to Utley (n.d). This verb occurred frequently in Luke’s works as seen in Lk 6:41; 12:24,27; 20; 23; Acts 7:31,32; 11:6; 27:39. Understood from this perspective, Jesus in Luke’s usage of the verb *katanoēsate* was demanding absolute attention and reflections on what he teaches. That having been said, the lilies are full of splendor. Who could have arranged then like this? This probably, was also, what Jesus wanted his disciples to think about. As it is stated in the verse, even Solomon in his great glory and wisdom did not have a beauty equaling that of the lilies.

The saying on the beauty of the lilies denotes the creative work of God. Thus, Utley (n.d) is right in writing that “nature reflects the beauty and designed of its creature. Nature is part of the revelation of God (cf Ps 19:1-6). The beauty, intricacy and power of nature is becoming a way of asserting evidence of the existence of God (cf Rom 1:19; 2:14).” But behind this splendor, lies one great problem of the lilies: their splendor and beauty were just destined to be short-lived. This belief is reflected in the Old Testament aphorism on the nature of grass which lives a very

short life. In Old Testament passages like Isa 40:6-8; Job 8:12; 14:1-2; Ps 37:2,20 among others. As Karris (2014: 704) puts it “the splendor of the lily is extolled in one breath; its ephemeral character in the next breath.” Similarly Marshall (1986: 529) says this about the lilies “for a brief period – ‘today’ the flowers blossom in the field; only a day later they are thrown into the oven...?”

Seen from this perspective, the disciples are to grasp the deeper meaning of what was being said about anxiety over material possessions. Firstly, both the ravens and the lilies do not care about their life which is “on borrowed time.” This means that they live a very short life.

According to Barclay (1981: 165) “the lilies Jesus spoke of were scarlet anemones. After one of the infrequent showers of summer rain, the mountainside would be scarlet with them; they bloomed one day and died. Wood was scarce in Palestine, and it was the dried grasses and wild flowers that were used to feed the oven fire.” Once again, Karris (2014: 704) had it right in saying that by using these images, Jesus was drawing his disciples’ attention to “situations in which their existence seems as helpless and as short-lived as that of ravens and lilies.”

At the heart of these verse lays the fact that worrying over material possessions is very much useless. As Caird (1974: 163) puts it:

Nothing is more likely to distract the disciples from whole-hearted devotion to the kingdom than worry. Yet it is absurd to worry; would God have given man the gift of life with providing the smaller gifts of food and clothing that are necessary for the maintenance of life, or would he lavish so much care and artistry on improvident birds and transient flowers, only to the neglect those whom he has destined to be his children? It is pointless to worry ...

Similarly, Chum (2011: 214) believes that this pericope discourages worry about material possessions because God knows what they need.

An important aspect of the message of this teaching that is not to be brushed aside is the connection between discipleship and anxiety about material possessions. Naturally, the call to follow Jesus will bring about certain anxiety in the disciples about material possessions, which they may have abandoned, and which they are expected not to seek after. Both Minear (1976) and Seccombe (1982: 229, 131, 188) are right in noting that the call to follow Jesus brings hostiles for the disciples in which both lives and material possessions will also be threatened. In their Palestinian setting, both Jesus and his disciples lived a life of itinerancy

because of the need to preach the kingdom of God. Earlier in Lk 10:58, Jesus warned a would-be follower of the nature of discipleship in which one leaves everything behind to follow Jesus and God's call. Also, Jesus may be drawing his disciples' attention to the hostilities that will come in the form of persecutions after he (Jesus) must have gone. Truly, as seen in Acts, which Luke also authored, when the persecutions came, the disciples lost both their possessions and their lives. Hence, it is in this context that disciple's anxiety about material possession is strictly warned against by Jesus.

Truly has Northbrook II (n.d) written that here:

Luke is specifically addressing the anxiety arising over the quality and security of one's life when a decision is made to seek the Kingdom of God. The solution for the disciple's anxiety is simply to gain the proper perspective. The follower of God must see God's gracious provisions for the lesser parts of his creation and conclude, via a *fortiori* argument, that provision will also be made for the citizen of the God's Kingdom.

It is still this line of thought that is seen in the view of Horsley on the meaning of these verses in which both the ravens and the lilies are used as good comparison of release from worldly possessions and anxieties. As Horsley (1987: 256-258) puts it "the saying is to push the disciples and ordinary people to trust in God's care about them as compared with God's care for the ravens."

These points are exactly what the saying in v. 28 emphasizes.

In v. 29, Jesus reemphasises what he had already said in v. 22. This is seen in the reoccurrence of these Greek words τί φάγητε (what to eat), τί πίητε (what to drink). While these words have been commented on earlier, the word μετεωρίζεσθε needs to be commented on. This word is a verb in the present imperative middle/passive 2nd person. It can be translated as "having anxious mind". It relates to μερίμνάτε (worry) which was used by Jesus in v. 22. These two words denote "anxiety" which Jesus forbids the disciples to have about material possessions especially. This understanding, however, cannot be interpreted to mean that Jesus does not understand the place of "food" and "drink", which are symbolic representations of material possessions, in the disciples' lives. Rather as had been pointed out about, by teaching that the disciples should not have "anxious mind" Jesus was drawing their attention to the futility of worry over material possessions in the face the shortness of their lives.

v. 30 *The gentile nations and their quest for material possessions*

It may not be wrong for me to state here that Jesus starkly, here, presents a pure contrast between gentile quest or attitude to material possession and the ideal conception of material possession by the disciples. While the disciples are warned not to be anxious about material possessions, the gentile world are held guilt of the quest for material possessions here by Jesus. The Greek adverb πάντα (all) used in this verse refers to the material things that have been referring to from vv. 22-29. These are things the gentile world seeks after and as such, the disciples are advised against it. In this verse the Greek word ἔθνη is a noun in the famine gender. When it goes with the article τὰ (the), then its translation becomes “the gentiles”, “non-Jews”, “pagans”, “heathens”, “unbelievers”. This is exactly the sense in which Jesus used it here.

The identification of the gentile world here as people who seek after material possessions is very important. It is linked with what has been pointed out that Luke had intended his material on Jesus teaching on material possessions to serve as a critique of the gentile world and its quest for material possessions.⁴⁹ This is exactly the point, which the teaching in v. 30 makes while at the same time, advising that the disciples should not be like the gentiles. However, why should the disciples not seek after these material things? The answer to these lies in these Greek words in the verse (ὁ Πατήρ οἶδεν ὅτι χρῄζετε τούτων). These words are translated to mean, “For your father knows you need them.” The “them” here refers to material possessions.

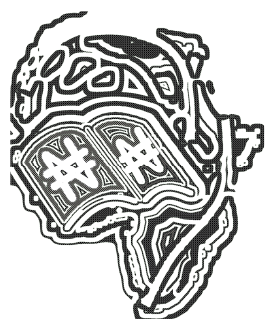
From the above words, Jesus believes it that once the disciples, and by extension all Christian believers, believe that God is aware of their needs, then they will be released from anxiety about material possessions. Conversely, this very knowledge by the disciples is to make them be contented with what they have while at the same being focused on their mission. Hence, Jesus demands simple trust in God’s providence of their earthly needs from his followers.

Conclusion of the exegesis and the theological trust of the pericope

In this pericope, Jesus strongly discourages anxiety over material possessions. He uses practical examples taken from the everyday rural Palestine environment to underscore his point. While the ravens and lilies

⁴⁹ Reference is made here to my discussion on Luke’s material on material possessions as a critique of the gentile world and its acquisitiveness in section 3.1.4.

do not sow, reap, or have barns (store houses), their lives were on borrowed time. That notwithstanding, God cares about them. These creatures are less valuable before God than human beings are. It is therefore from this fact that the disciples and all followers of Jesus are to be contented with “faith” that God will provide for their earthly needs. Such a “belief” and “contentment” therefore releases the followers of Jesus from worry about material possessions, especially with regard to the hoarding of material possessions. This, then, will mark them out as people who have responded to the Gospel and also make them reflect on their non-permanent existence in the world.



4 THE HERMENEUTICS OF MATERIAL POSSESSIONS IN LUKE 12 IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIAN CHRISTIANITY

4.1 Describing Nigerian Christianity

There is a modern scholarly awareness on the diversities that exist in the type of Christianity practised in Africa. In other words, in modern day scholarship, it is observed that there are strands of Christianity practised in Africa, with each having its own peculiar features. As Ukah (2007) did point out, buttressing the diversities in the practice of Christianity in Africa, it is safer to adopt the term “African Christianities” regarding the differences that exist among these strands of Christianity practised in Africa today.¹ I am strongly of the view that in order to be true to the uniqueness of these strands of Christianity practised in Africa, it would be more appropriate to study Christianity in the contexts in which it is practised. The context in question here, is that of Nigeria. This view launches my attempt at describing Nigerian Christianity. The use of the term Nigerian Christianity in this study, seeks to buttress the uniqueness of the type of Christianity practised in Nigeria that may not be the same as that practised in other African contexts/countries. Hence, Nigerian Christianity denotes a peculiar type of Christianity practised in Nigeria. This type of Christianity would include, although not in absolute terms, mainline Christianity represented by Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, etc, the African Independent Churches (AICs)/Aladura Churches in its diverse forms,² and Pentecostalism both in its classical, indigenous and new typologies as Achunike (2004: 11-15), Kalu (2003: 89-92) and Ukah (2007: 9-7) have all shown. Nigerian Christianity, critically speaking, has recognisable features.

¹ There is a current debate on if it is more appropriate to designate some of these strands of Christianity as new “religions” rather than strands of Christianity. For more on this see Asonzeh Ukah (2007).

² The diverse typologies of the African Initiated Churches (AICs), most times makes it very difficult to clearly differentiate some (AICs) from the Pentecostal churches. In fact, some AICs manifest features of Pentecostalism and as such, can vaguely be categorised as such. For a thorough study of typologies of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, see Ukpong (n.d).

First, Nigerian Christianity is an “inculturated Christianity”. The incorporation of Nigeria’s cultural practices, into Nigerian Christianity, is part of the fruit of the agitations of African theologians that for Christianity to make sense to Africans, the people’s ways of life must be incorporated in the practice of Christianity in Africa (Ukah 2007: 9-17). Inculturation in its simplest understanding is Christianity’s efforts to dialogue with non-Christian religions and culture. This is the point that Ezechi (2011: 235) makes when he says that “the basic notion about inculturation is the expression of the dynamic relation between the Christian gospel and world cultures.” The aim of inculturation, of course, is to strengthen the Christian faith in the life of its recipients with different cultural backgrounds to make the gospel more relevant in the everyday struggles of these people (Christians). From the perspective of the Catholic Church for example, the need for inculturation was given official recognition during the Vatican II (1962-1965) and subsequent Papal declarations which were the fallout of the Vatican II. In one of the documents of the Vatican II it was declared:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in those religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which though differing in many aspects from the one she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth (Sourou 2014: 144).

Continuing, this document establishes the consequence of this realisation thus:

The Church, therefore exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognise, preserve, and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men (Sourou 2014: 144).

Thus, it can be said that from the 1960s when the efforts towards inculturating Christianity in Africa generally started, up to the present times, Nigerian Christianity has become an “inculturated Christianity” to a reasonable extent. This is reflected in its liturgies, music/musical instruments and sometimes, arts.³ Among the AICs, it will be stated that inculturation had always been part of their drive, in addition to the de-

³ However, some modern Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria has departed radically from the use of locally made music instruments, local arts and sometimes, local liturgies.

sire to grant more autonomy and control to Africans in the practise of Christianity in the continent. Thus, for the African AICs, inculturation had always been part of their practise of Christianity.

Second, and in alignment with the above, Nigerian Christianity is a type in which local worldview (s) still hold sway among Christians. Although defining worldview can be challenging, I agree with Kraft (1995: 29) that worldview is “the cultural lens through which human experience is viewed.” Kalu (2002: 117) goes on to add “worldview is a picture that points to the deep-level assumptions and values, on the basis of which people generate deep-level behavior; it provides the motivation for behavior and gives meaning to the environment.” Understood from the above picture, worldview can therefore be a mirror through which a people interpret life events and the world around them. In Nigeria, Christianity is still practised in consonance with local worldview (s). In fact, it can be said with certainty that Christianity in Nigeria is practised in line with the worldview (s) of the people. However, among the Pentecostals/Charismatics in Nigeria, as Kalu (2002: 110-137) has correctly pointed out, the place of worldview in the practise of Christianity cannot be overestimated. By implication, Christians in Nigeria still understand and interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ through the lens of their worldview (s).

Third, Nigerian Christianity is the type in which Pentecostalism/ “Charismatism” has influenced (and is still influencing) the practise of Christianity. Beginning from the 1970s, 1980s, up to present times, Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements within the main line churches, continue to be felt. Their impact, both positively and negatively, affect the practise of Christianity in Nigeria. While a detailed discussion on Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements will be given as this study progresses, the point being made here is that Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements remain a big feature of Nigerian Christianity.

Fourth, Nigerian Christianity, to a large extent, is shaped by the ever disturbing socio-economic situation of Nigeria. This means that for a very long time now, the socio-economic situation of Nigeria has played a big role in the interpretation and understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the country. This is a fact that cannot be ignored if one has to grasp the true trajectories of appropriating the gospel in Nigerian Christianity.

Fifth, Nigerian Christianity, especially in modern times, is immersed in competition among the different denominations that make up the Chris-

tian movement in Nigeria. This competition often leads to the “demonisation” of some denominations by some particular denominations.⁴ Hence it is pointed out here that rivalry and competition have become a feature of Nigerian Christianity. In present day Nigerian Christianity, critically speaking, some of these identified features are very much entwined with the problem of materialism and why it is on the increase. As shall be critically discussed in the next section of the study, it will be shown how these features (of Nigerian Christianity) really fan the embers of the materialistic appeal in contemporary Nigerian Christianity.

4.2 The Problem of Materialism in Nigerian Christianity

Practically, Nigerian Christianity has been plagued by the problem of materialism or the excessive desire for material possessions/wealth. This problem, as shall be discussed, began to rear its head during the 1970s and 1980s, but became a noticeable problem in Nigerian Christianity from the 1990s up to this present Christian dispensation. While a whole lot of variables may be blamed for the ever-growing problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity, it is practical that it has become an issue that keeps distorting the true practise of Christianity in Nigeria. Granted, Nigerian Christians are outwardly religious in the sense that adherence to different churches is very high. Equally, public “show of faith” with regard to participation in church activities and programmes is very evident among Nigerian Christians. Nevertheless, it is sad that Christianity in Nigeria today has degenerated to a sort of “business” in which many Christians now see the gospel as a tool for acquiring material wealth.

In alignment with the above, Ojeifo (n.d) writing in the context of the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity, asserts that:

... fall in the human condition seems to have created a fertile environment for the emergence of the kind of deep religiosity that has ironically placed our country on top of both most religious and corrupt nations of the world. Not only has organized religion lost its capacity to help generate a sense of moral revolution and prophetic outrage, against the ills of society, but often what we see is that religion has become an ally and at

⁴ It has become practical that Nigerian Pentecostals demonise each other. Beginning with the new Pentecostals, who demonised the AICs, it became commonplace for Pentecostals to demonise each other. For more on this see Kalu (2003: 89-91).

other times a quilting bystander to the collective oppression of our people.

Writing further on the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity in present times, Ojeifo (n.d) notes:

Some Nigerian Pastors today have emerged among the richest preachers in the world with luxury lifestyles that are totally are (*sic*) variance with the squalor and misery of most members of their churches. Religion has simply been reduced to a business venture that thrives in a vast ocean of poverty. The more things are getting bad, the richer some pastors are becoming. As the people get poorer, to that extent are their pastors getting richer.

My interview with some Nigerian Christians shows the same disposition. As Eze Nwafor (Oral interview March 10, 2018), told me “the quest for material wealth has become a problem among Christians in Nigeria and this has become a big problem.” Similarly, Pat Michael (Oral interview March 19, 2018) points out that “excessive quest for material wealth, which has become noticeable among Christians in Nigeria, has also become problematic among the Christians in Nigeria that cannot be ignored.” These opinions, one can say, aptly capture the problem of Nigerian Christianity in which the gospel of Jesus Christ is being manipulated and exploitatively used in the pursuit of material gains.

Truly, Christianity in Nigeria today has a materialistic appeal and smells of everything that materialism denotes. No wonder an article published by Sahara Reporters (2008) argued that:

The fact that the church business remains one of the most flourishing businesses in Nigeria is openly embraced and flaunted in our faces without apologies. Holiness in their preaching translates to wealth. You can only be holy if you are wealthy and powerful. The ignorant masses are made to witness organized miracles and made to hope on promises of prosperity. After all, “our God is a God of riches and miracles.” The race for material wealth is actively influenced by these supposed men of God.

The materialistic appeal of Christianity in contemporary Nigeria has made Christianity to be perceived as “business.” This therefore motivates the springing up of many churches in every nook and cranny of Nigeria. As early as 1993, Marshall’s work looked into the issue of churches becoming business in Southern Nigeria. As Marshall, citing an observer of the situation affirmed, “church is the biggest growing industry in the country.” (Marshall 1993: 8-39). This observation is true to a

large extent. Looking at the present situation one may not be wrong to assert that the quest for material wealth constitutes one of the reasons behind the multiplication of churches in Nigeria today. Nwadiolor & Umeanolue (n.d) noted in this light that:

There is no doubt that in some churches, the financial motive is moving men of God as much as the spirit is; and however cynical such comments may appear, there is a strong element of truth in them. While it may not be easy to explain why people continue to flock these materialistic preaching churches, and give their money willingly (*sic*). It is simplistic as well as patronizing, to assume, as such an approach would imply, that people are simply duped by clever and unscrupulous men.

According to Ken Daniel (Oral interview, May 25, 2018), the springing up of churches in all nooks and crannies of Nigeria has something to do with some founders of these churches being interested in making money under the guise of practising Christianity. This relates to Ken Okechukwu's (Oral interview May 26, 2018) argument that most of these churches which spring up today in Nigeria are just out to exploit Christians for material gains. "Maybe because of poverty and the economic situation of the populace in the country, founding Churches has become a viable survival strategy for some Christians" Okechukwu added.

This may be why when one walks into the church today in Nigeria, one immediately gets the sense that one of the reasons people go to church is to acquire wealthy.⁵ Thus the "commercialisation" of Christianity in Nigeria, has become noticeable, especially among the Pentecostals and Charismatic ministries that spring up every day in the country. As Ukah (2015: 10-11) has argued:

While Muslims in the predominantly Islamic northern states have consolidated their grip on social, economic and political structure through the expansion of sharia code of law, Christians in the South, particularly those affiliated with Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches have not left anyone in doubt about their real intention in Pentecostalising principal economic formations and practices.

However, it will not be correct to surmise that the problem of materialism is only pronounced among the Pentecostals in Nigeria. On the contrary, although the issue is evident among Pentecostals, the problem of materialism has also become noticeable in the mainline churches in

⁵ See Egbujo (2015).

Nigeria. Thus, most Nigerian Christians have interest in material wealth. This is why Nwadior & Umeanolue (n.d) hold Nigerian Christians responsible, as far as the quest for material wealth, is concerned. In their words:

The problem with the attitude of many contemporary Christians towards material things is that they attach much importance to material things such as money more than their eternal life in heaven. They tend to depart radically from the teachings of Jesus which emphasizes contentment and instead erect the temple of materialism and take their eyes off Jesus and focusing on mammon (riches)...

But what is undeniable is the fact that Pentecostalism, its spread in teachings and doctrines, contributes to the constant desire for material wealth by Christians in mainline churches in Nigeria.

Regarding the above said, Achunike for example, had in 2004 sought to establish the influence of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church, especially among the priests and seminarians in Nigeria. One area of influence of Pentecostalism in the Catholic Church, with regard to priests and seminarians according to Achunike, is in the area of quest for material wealth (2004: 90-95). Equally, as the finding of Ebele (2004) has shown, Roman Catholics in Nigeria today are also guilty of the quest for material wealth just as it is witnessed among the Pentecostals. This tendency, one cannot disagree, also resonates with other main line churches in Nigeria. I agree with Amoda (1997: ix, x) that “the merchandising of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the primary source of all problems enervating the spiritual life of the church.”

This is why many Christians, and many Christian leaders most especially, have become more interested in the material wealth they can get from the practise of Christianity. Hence, some of the Christian leaders in Nigeria today are very interested in amassing material wealth for self-use to the neglect of even the poor members of their church who may have, knowingly or unknowingly, contributed to their riches. This is also a big problem seen in today's Nigerian Christianity where some Christian leaders amass material wealth at the expense and the neglect of the poor Christians. While from the discussion so far, it is evident that materialism has become a problem in Nigerian Christianity, it is also important to discuss some variables that really contribute to the soaring of materialism in Nigerian Christianity today. These variables, form the next task of the study.

4.3 Variables that fan the embers of materialism in Nigerian Christianity

A whole lot of variables can be identified as being tied in with the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity. These include:

4.3.1 African (Nigerian) Traditional Worldview (s) as largely Materialistic Worldview (s)

Worldview has been described in this study as a lens through which a particular people view the world and understand realities around them. Mention has also been made in the study that Nigerian Christianity is heavily influenced by the local worldview(s) of people who practise Christianity in Nigeria. In this regard, to understand the nexus between Nigerian Christians' understanding of the Christian practice and the quest for material wealth, it is important to describe the general African traditional worldview(s) which impinges on the practise of Christianity in Nigeria.

While it is a fact that African Traditional worldview(s) varies,⁶ one undeniable fact is that this worldview(s) is one that is religiously charged. Religion plays an important role in the lives of the people in their worldview(s). Hence, I strongly agree with Ngong (2009: 2) that:

Descriptions of African traditional worldview show some variations, but most scholars acknowledge that the majority of African live in a cosmos that is spiritually charged; a cosmos in which the physical and the spiritual intersect. In this cosmos it is understood that the physical is not the spiritual, nor is it detached from the spiritual.

The African conception of the universe is therefore of two realms; the physical and the spiritual. Beginning with the traditional African understanding of the physical world, it is believed that the world which consists of the sky and the earth,⁷ is the creation of God.⁸ Africans believe that within the world, various creatures have their habitat. Human be-

⁶ African worldviews vary because it is clear that all Africans do not think as one or have a single belief system.

⁷ Land and water, according to Kalu (2002: 119) are all part of the sky and earth in African world view.

⁸ The divinities in most African conceptions are believed to be the messengers of the Supreme Being who oversees the affairs of the creatures in the world consisting of the earth and sky.

ings, however, are regarded among the most supreme after the spirit beings. The physical environment, it must also be added, constitutes a part of the earth in most African concepts of the universe. Most important also, is the African belief that the earth is, dwelt alongside human beings, malevolent spirit-beings of various kinds. These spirit-beings can inhabit the physical environment like trees, hills, caves, valleys, rivers etc and have capacities, according to Ngele, Uwaegbute, Odo & Agbo (2017), to harm human beings.

With regard to the spiritual realm, the African conception of the spiritual realm is diverse as it consists of different types of spiritual beings. At the top of the array of these spiritual beings is the Supreme Being who can be represented with the English name God. God is believed to have created the world and all other spiritual beings. God as the Supreme Being in African worldview is diversely conceived. Hence, Kalu (2002: 119) notes that “the Supreme being as the Creator and the major subaltern *divinities* inhabit the sky. Manifesting as the sun, lightening, thunder, moon, or stars, they serve as oracles, arbiters, in human affairs and agents in ritual dynamics.” Next in rank to the Supreme Being are the divinities,⁹ who are believed to be his (God’s) creations. These divinities are mostly believed to be the Supreme Being’s messengers who, it may be argued, help him oversee the affairs of the things he created.¹⁰ Next to the divinities, are a group of the most loved spiritual beings of the African spiritual world – the ancestral spirits. The ancestors are mostly the spirits of dead African heroes (or heroines) who are believed to live “beneath the earth.” In Igbo language, this world “beneath the earth” is called *ala muo* which translates as the land of the spirits. The primary duty of the ancestors, as mostly argued by scholars, is the assurance of the protection of living families left behind.¹¹ Perhaps, another important category to be classified under the spiritual beings here, are the

⁹ Among the ranks of divinities in African world view, some are believed to be more powerful; than others. Among the Igbo, for example, *Ala*, (earth goddess), is believed to be the most powerful of all divinities. Hence, it is the goddess of morality.

¹⁰ I strongly believe that because most Africans believe that the divinities are god’s creations, they worship God indirectly through these divinities. It has never been a part of the African worldview to worship God directly. This is equally obtainable among the Igbo people of Southern eastern Nigeria.

¹¹ African concept of ancestorship is tribal. By implication, ancestorship varies among Africans. Therefore the ancestors of the Igbo are therefore not the same as those of Yoruba or those Akans of Ghana. African concept of ancestorship always emphasised this fact.

diverse nature spirits of the African universe which are both benevolent and malevolent.¹²

These descriptions can be regarded as a synthesis of the African understanding of the physical and spiritual realms. However, of more importance is the fact that, as Ngong has pointed out, these two realms are detached on the one hand, and are believed to interact greatly on the other hand. It is, therefore, from this understanding of the relationship between these two realms that the place of human beings in maintaining the relationship that should exist between these two realms would be appreciated. Human beings, being one of the most important of all creations of God (after the spirit beings as has been indicated), are expected in African world view (s), to maintain what Ngele, Uwaegbute, Odo & Agbo (2017) have called spiritual and physical relationships. The spiritual relationship is also vertical since it is between humans and the spirit beings, and this is done through sacrifices, payers, libations, and other rituals that are deemed necessary. The physical, which is also a horizontal relationship, is between humans and the physical environment. This is mostly done through the observance of the moral code of conducts as sanctioned by the ancestors. The horizontal relationship is mostly to aid harmonious living among humans and the environment in the community.

The maintenance of these relationships is vital for the survival of humans on earth in African worldview (s). This survival, is understood in the context of material wellbeing of humans here on earth. In this sense, Larbi (2001) is right to note that:

Since the survival of man and his (*sic*) community is dependent upon the help given by the ancestors and the divinities, how man relates to the spirit force is crucial to his well-being. The idea of the cosmic struggle is strong in (this) understanding of the nature of the universe. For one to be able to fulfill (*sic*) his or her aspirations in life requires the 'balance of power' in favor of the suppliant.

It is also not to be forgotten that the fear of cosmic spiritual forces, and that of fellow diabolical human beings who harm through witchcraft and the conjuring of evil powers to destroy human lives, is real in African world view (s).

¹² Among the Igbo for example, Ifesieh (1989: 38-41) has a taxonomy of some of the Igbo nature spirits.

It is therefore from this lens, that the function of religious practices is to be understood among Africans. Religious practices, for the Africans in their worldview (s), are used as a tool for obtaining favours from the spiritual realm that translate into material wellbeing of human beings. Ngong (2009: 3) puts it that “... the goal seems to be to gain favors from the spiritual beings such as ancestors, divinities, and ultimately, God, so that material well-being might be attained.” Material well-being to Africans, is therefore to be understood in the context of material possessions one has. These include large and viable households, many live stocks, houses, lands (either bought or inherited), titles, bumper agricultural harvests, longevity etc.¹³ It is within such a worldview, that the value for material wealth among Africans, may be located. Hence, it is in this regard that among the Igbo, as Achebe (1958) has shown, the people adore wealth, fame and titles. Achebe tells the story of how both success and quest for titles are greatly valued among the Igbo as represented by the people of Umuofia.¹⁴

Nigerian Christianity, critically speaking, seems to be at home with such a materialistic worldview, which is mostly induced by the use of religion to gain material wealth. Because Nigerian cultures in which Christianity is practised are an inseparable part of the African worldview (s), many Nigerian Christians have come to celebrate material wealth as the goal of practising Christianity, and defining salvation.¹⁵ A scholar like Onwu (2006: 1-27) who has investigated the problem of prosperity preaching in Nigeria has used this materialistic African worldview (s) to denote why the quest for material wealth is soaring in contemporary Nigerian Christianity. For a fact, Onwu argued that the Igbo adage which says that “if a young boy is fit to wash his hands, he can dine with his elders” depict the true value Igbo people place on material wealth, and how such a belief encourages the sought for material wealth among the Igbo people

¹³ A good treatment of material wellbeing as the aim of traditional African Religion can be seen in Schmidt (2006).

¹⁴ Achebe (1958: 138) in which the court messengers derided the elders of Umuofia for their love of titles as reflected in the wearing of anklets.

¹⁵ This conclusion is similar to what Ngong (2009: 3), found out on African worldview (s) generally which is believed to be this-worldly. This is why most scholars on the traditional religion of Africans argue that the religion focuses more on a material salvation in the “here and now.” For a general treatment of the idea of salvation as the provision of material possessions in African traditional belief, see Schmidt (2006), Ngele, Uwaegbute, Odo & Agbo (2017), Ngong (2009), Adelakun (2011), Enang (1986), Enang (1979) among other such works on salvation in Africa.

in the traditional and present Christian contexts. Although Eze Nwafor (Oral interview, May 4, 2018) has tried to emphasise the Igbo belief in hard work and Alex Chiemezie (Oral interview, March 3, 2018) has touched on what he called the 'non-consciousness' of wealth among the Igbo people, which to them may puncture the idea that the Igbo people's worldview is largely materialistic,¹⁶ it is practical that the Igbo people place a great deal of value on wealth and achievements. This equally relates to Fakoya (n.d) who sees a connection between the African worldview and materialism in Nigerian Christianity. Hence, it may be argued by a large measure of correctness, that the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity is partly tied in with the materialism of the African/Nigerian worldview (s).

4.3.2 Socio-economic Issues Prevalent in Nigeria

Although "poverty" may have been a problem among the peoples of Nigeria prior to Nigeria's independence, it is however pitiable that since gaining independence in 1960, socio-economic problems like poverty and unemployment keep staring Nigerians in the face. The rise in socio-economic issues may be partly linked to the redefinition of traditional socio-economic systems in line with those of the western ideas of the colonialists in which value is placed on money and what it can buy. Hence, beginning from the time of Nigerian independence, there became an increase in socio-economic problems like poverty and unemployment. It is sad however, that the about 62 years of self-rule in Nigeria have not yet concretely alleviated the problems of poverty and unemployment. Poverty and unemployment therefore remain two tormenting problems that have become chronic in Nigeria. With population explosion in Nigeria that began to be felt seriously from 1970s¹⁷ upwards, these two problems become more tormenting to Nigerians. With regard to poverty, a lot of Nigerians have lived, and are still living in abject poverty, barely eating one meal a day. As of June, 2018, poverty level in Nigeria reached a staggering level which led to Nigeria topping the world's

¹⁶ Further on Igbo materialistic worldview, see Okorocha (1987: 193), Okorocha (1992: 168-82)

¹⁷ According to the estimates of countrystudies.us, Nigerian population increased rapidly from 1973 to 1983 on a growth rate of 2.7% as against a growth rate of 2.5% recorded between 1965 and 1973. For more on this see "Nigeria- Population Growth Rate- Country Studies". Retrieved from: <http://countrystudies.us/Nigeria/36.htm> on September 10, 2018.

extreme poverty ranking according to World Poverty Clock.¹⁸ According to this report, “extreme poverty in Nigeria is growing by six people every minute” (Daily Post 2018) leading to an estimation that “87 million people are in extreme poverty” (Daily Post 2018) in Nigeria. There is no indication that poverty has been reduced in Nigeria since 2018. The fact remains that many Nigerians are still mired in poverty.

When poverty is mixed with the issue of unemployment, the problem becomes more complicated. Like I have pointed out, population explosion and successive bad governments that did not make provisions for the management of unemployment including poor economic policies, and more quests for education on the part of Nigerians as from the 1970s upwards, created Nigerian youths with both secondary and university education that are desperately unemployed, or underemployed. Quite recently, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that the unemployment rate of Nigeria is at 52.65%.¹⁹ If the NBS statistics is to be relied upon, then a staggering number of Nigerians are unemployed and underemployed. This problem, as I pointed out, has been quite phenomenal in Nigeria for a long time now. It needs also to be argued that unemployment causes poverty, and both poverty and unemployment make Nigerians desperate.

It is therefore in the context of the prevailing socio-economic situations of Nigeria that materialism becomes an issue in Nigerian Christianity. Historically, it seems that the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity began to rear its head gradually beginning from the 1970s, and later become phenomenal in the midst of the economic meltdown of the 1980s in Nigeria. It is therefore in this regard that Ukah (2007) has noted that:

The economic crisis of the mid-1980s which resulted in the adoption of World Bank/IMF designed structural adjustment resulted in the re-trenchment of workers, high graduate unemployment, social disorganization and near economic meltdown. This situation fueled the quest for spiritual solution to people’s many problems, but also the ready acceptance of religious answers to social and material questions.

¹⁸ Daily Post (2018)

¹⁹ See www.nigeriastat.gov.ng. Accessed on June 28, 2018. The figure given here is as follows: unemployment 18.8%; underemployment 21.2%. Total 52.65%. This figure is based on the third Quarter (Q3) of 2017.

A part of the answers to what Ukah referred to above as “social and material questions” among Nigerian Christians, especially the Pentecostals, became the belief that Christianity can be used to provide solutions for “walking one’s way out of poverty” and “into riches/wealth.” From this identified time upwards, it can be argued that materialism became a big problem in Nigerian Christianity. Nigerian Christians became more preoccupied with the amassing of wealth through the establishment of churches and charismatic ministries, and the preaching of material salvation to their congregants and involvement in some corrupt practices.

It is therefore in the context of the problems of poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic issues that scholars began to locate, partly, the problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity. According to Amuchezi (1986: 22):

One of the major causes of materialistic gospel in the present day society is the people’s excessive quest for material wealth. Materialism coupled with status consciousness and value orientations that have increased in the modern living have made jobless young men seek means of economic survival through the establishment of churches.

Similarly, Nwadiolor & Umeanolue (n.d) note:

It is clear that the majority of Nigerians have been experiencing abject poverty. The recent socio-economic situation of contemporary Nigeria has been a symptomatic of the endemic plurality of Nigerian’s religious landscape. The country is now a procreant ground for all kinds of religious movements. Reason (*sic*) is because Nigerian economic development is too low. Although some of the founders of these new generation churches always postulate diversified reasons for their emergence and expeditious growth, some say that their call is divine from God, while some claim divine visions and dreams, emphasized deeper biblical interpretation. However, the commercial tendencies of the many independent churches in Nigeria have of late become overtly evident.

This described phenomenon, it must be added, is more pronounced in the urban centres in Nigeria in which rural-urban migration has produced Christian youths with university degrees and other certificates from higher institutions, and some skills and crafts, who are desperate for upward social mobility.²⁰ Armed with university degrees, some un-

²⁰ Marshall-Fratani (1998: 283-284), Inyama (2007). However, contrary to this belief, I contend that Pentecostalism is no longer only an urban phenomenon since it spreads fast among rural dwellers in Nigeria. Hence, young men with (and without) university

employed Christian youths both in the urban and rural areas in Nigeria therefore foray into church business and claim divine mandate for such actions. The result, most often, becomes the teaching of the gospel in a materialistic garb. As regards the discussions here, what has already been said that the socio-economic situation of Nigeria plays a role in the quest for material wealth in Nigerian Christianity, is re-affirmed.

4.3.3 Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements' Explosion in Nigerian Christianity

Pentecostalism in Nigeria, as scholars like Achunike (2004), Kalu (2002) and Ukah (2007) have all shown, have typologies, which can be located within different epochs of the history of Christianity in Nigeria. Some understanding of Pentecostalism and Charismatism will necessarily lead to their discussions at this stage of the study.

As Achunike (2004: 13) has pointed out, defining Pentecostalism can be challenging just as distinguishing between Pentecostalism and Charismatism is difficult. Etymologically, Pentecostalism is derived from the Greek word *pentēkostēs* which denotes the out pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles during the Pentecost celebration presented in Acts 2:1-3. Hence, I agree with Achunike (2004: 16) that Pentecostalism

refers to certain elements of Christian life often associated with the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit which manifested strongly at the feast of the Pentecost in the Bible and the consequent gifts of the spirit by Christ. It also refers to the emphasis on the third person of the Trinity and his manifestations in the individual and corporate lives of Christians.

While the above assertion can be definitive of Pentecostalism, in the context of this study, Pentecostalism is to be seen from a denominational point of view. In this regard, Pentecostalism is generally used to refer to churches/denominations that claim to manifest the above traits Achunike has presented. They are independent churches, and were/are founded and run by individual Christians (Achunike 2004).

With regard to Charismatism, it derives its name from the Greek word *charismata* which denotes the gifts of the Holy Spirit recorded in Pauline Epistles, especially in 1 Cor 12. Thus, Christians may loosely use Char-

degrees and other educational qualifications, are now founding Pentecostal churches in the rural areas in Nigeria proving that the Pentecostal movement is not only an urban phenomenon.

ismatism to denote the belief and exercise of the charismata. However, technically, and as understood in this study, Charismatism refers to a movement/movements of Christians who believe in, and express the *charismata*, but operate within the mainline churches, probably with a revivalist's bent.²¹ The charismatic movement would include, in this regard, various church/ "revivalist" ministries operating within the mainline churches in Nigeria today. These include the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria (CCRN), Evangelical Fellowship of Anglican Communion (EFAC) etc and other Charismatic ministries founded, and operating under the guidance of "spiritual directors." Among the mainline churches, it can be argued that Charismatic ministries have indeed become a phenomenon.

The history of modern Pentecostalism/Charismatism in Nigeria, in this study, could be traced to post Nigerian-Biafra civil war times, that is, the 1970s upwards.²² The events of the war, a scholar like Burgess (2004/2008) and others would argue,²³ had a tie in with Pentecostalism gaining a foothold in Nigerian Christianity, especially in South-Eastern Nigeria. The devastation caused by the war, and the economic hardships experienced, especially in South-Eastern Nigeria, led to rigorous revivalist movements embarked upon by some Nigerian Christians, particularly youths in the universities and other institutions of higher learning. It seemed that the traumatic civil war experiences in eastern Nigeria led to a yearning on the part of youths in the area to know God better. However, while there may have been other causes of Pentecostal explosion in Nigeria as from the 1970s,²⁴ the socio-economic situation of Nigeria from 1970s upwards, equally played a role in the spread of Pentecostalism in the country. In this regard, Ukah (2015: 118) observes that:

²¹ This is also applicable in the case of AICs. However, Pentecostal churches that are individually founded manifest the features, Achunike (2004) enumerated. I believe Ojo's (1995: 114-115) claim that among the Western writers the charismatics are believed to be Christians who believe and practice the charismata but choose to operate within the mainline churches. For a similar definition, see also Inyama (2003). Equally, see Achunike (2009).

²² Most scholars of Pentecostalism in Nigeria believe that the 1970s were the years that the new Pentecostal revolution began to take shape in Nigeria. See for example Ukah (2007: 11). Also see Achunike (2017: 6).

²³ Achunike (2004: 16).

²⁴ See, among other works on the history of Nigerian Pentecostalism, Ojo (1995) has ample variables that led to the Pentecostal explosion in Nigeria during the 1970s and 1980s.

A new form of Pentecostalism emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s to rejuvenate social and economic activities in a country under heavy yoke of economic liberalization and structural adjustment programmes. Particularly, in urban centres, these diverse groups engage in various activities such as crusades, vigils, prayer meetings, retreats, conventions and healing and deliverance services.

Equally, like Pentecostalism, charismatic movements within mainline churches, from this time upwards, began to be seriously felt. Today, in Nigerian Christianity, both Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements within mainline churches have become phenomenal. However, alongside this Pentecostal/charismatic presence in Nigerian Christianity, has arisen one of the problems of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity– the inordinate emphasis on material wealth as a huge factor in the practise of Christianity. This is because, there is a similarity in the teachings of both Pentecostalism and Charismatism on material wealth and wellbeing. Prosperity preaching, also, resonates well among Pentecostal and Charismatic ministries in Nigeria.

However, it cannot go without the saying that Pentecostal/charismatic explosion in Nigerian Christianity has its own good side. Although a detailed discussion of this is beyond the scope of this study, Kalu's (2003: 94) positive evaluation of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria is deemed important in this regard:

It has been said that many people attend Pentecostal churches because a new community is cultivated in which brethren assist others. In urban contexts this bonding is crucial for economic and psychological survival. Contracts, loans, employment and all forms of mutual assistance are cultivated. Some Pentecostal churches own banks, business companies and operate NGOs, health-care facilities and universities. Some preachers emphasize self-help, motivational causes for the upward mobile middle-class.

Similar to Kalu, Marshal-Fratani (1998: 283-284) points out a good aspect of Pentecostalism, especially in its social impact on the lives of people in the urban centres in Nigeria:

Forms of community have grown up in the urban centres which respond to and help resolve the anxiety and uncertainty which have come to mark social relations over the past decades. With increasing economic hardship and zero-sum struggles for survival, great strain is put on the extended family as the basic domestic unit. Relatively successful family members often resent the pressures on them by a variety of near and dis-

tant relations. Pentecostalism's stress on the nuclear family and its exhortations to break with unbelievers accord young people striving for upward mobility not only a certain amount of freedom from such pressures, but also protection from resentment and jealousy in the form of witchcraft, most feared and dangerous in the hands of blood relatives. Pentecostalism provides new networks, both spiritual and material, which extend beyond local, ethnic, regional, and even class considerations.

In terms of efforts towards reviving first-century apostolic Christianity in Nigeria, Pentecostalism should also be given a good credit. The various crusades/revivals in which soul-transforming sermons are preached, have also led to some Nigerian Christians "giving their life to Christ" and a serious quest to know God better.

The above positive evaluations notwithstanding, Pentecostalism's inordinate emphasis on material wealth has become problematic. Through their theology of wealth that centres on what has been mainly described as prosperity preaching, but sometimes called health and wealth gospel (Abogunrin 2007: 274-278), name-it and claim-it (Price 2005), inordinate emphasis on materialism has become a sensation in today's Nigerian Christianity.

The "rise" and "rise" of prosperity preaching in Pentecostal churches in Nigeria is closely related to the materialistic worldview (s) of the Africans, and the socio-economic situation of Nigeria that had been pointed out. However, it seems that other foreign influences may be detected at the roots of prosperity preaching in Nigerian Christianity. Ukah, like a number of scholars,²⁵ stresses the impact of American prosperity televangelists in North America on the rise of prosperity preaching in Nigerian Christianity. Whatever the roots of prosperity preaching may be, Nigerian Christians are seriously buying into its teaching on wealth. Most Pentecostal preachers in Nigeria emphasise prosperity as an end in itself. It has been regarded as a form of fighting against poverty prevalent in Nigeria today. However, as the research of Rotimi, Nwadiolor & Ugwuja (2016) has shown, there is a kind of ambivalence among Nigerians with regard to the effectiveness of prosperity gospel in the fight against poverty in Nigeria. In this regard, these scholars write that:

Those who oppose the prosperity gospel as enunciated by contemporary Pentecostal preachers argue that one of the fundamental teachings of

²⁵ See Achunike (2017: 33-44).

Christianity is detachment from material possessions in lieu of heavenly realities: this means that the vision of Christian life is living this earthly life in a way that will guarantee admittance into the heavenly kingdom (Rotimi, Nwadiakor & Umeanolue 2016: 10-22).

Although the polemics about the effectiveness of prosperity preaching as a fight against poverty is beyond the scope of the present study, the prevalent nature of poverty in Nigeria, even in the Pentecostal folds, faults any argument that Pentecostalism is a viable option in the fight against poverty among Nigeria Christians. Practically, poverty cannot be wished away only through praying and preaching prosperity to Christians. Beyond this is the need for hard work and effective systems of job creation in the churches to supplement the meager efforts of the government towards the alleviation of poverty in Nigeria.

That having been said, some avenues through which prosperity preachers operate and make money include “tithing” “seed sowing” “pledging” and other different forms of “trading with God.”²⁶ All these are considered ways through which prosperity can be tapped from God in Pentecostal theology. It is therefore from this theology of wealth, which leads to an inordinate search for material wealth as an end in itself in Christianity, that has attracted “harsh” criticism of scholars on Pentecostalism in general, and of even some religious figures in Nigeria in particular.

In the above regard, Marshall-Fratani (1998: 302) has written that “... Pentecostal leaders in particular have been portrayed recently as money-grabbing manipulators who dupe the congregations into believing foreign doctrines for their own personal profit and to serve their political ambition.” Although not all Pentecostal leaders can be styled as money grabbers, Marshall-Fratani’s assertion is definitive of the fact that many modern day Pentecostal leaders in Nigeria have become interested in amassing material wealth. In this vein therefore, Magbadelo (2004: 2005) notes:

The urge to accumulate wealth to support high tastes and extra-ordinary sophistication of the pastors has continued to mean that the business of soul winning, which ought to be the primary concern of Christian evangelistic mission, is actually, a profit-making venture. Perhaps, the pastors are desirous of building financial empires here on earth – where moth and rot consume to the detriment of their flocks who had built undue dependence on them.

²⁶ I borrowed this term from Ukah (2005: 251-274).

Maybe, it is an excessive interest in amassing wealth, which has dominated Pentecostalism in Nigeria, that made a pastor to once argue against Pentecostalism because, to him, “the Pentecostal or charismatic church is the only legally and politically accepted movement in the world that is fully and completely based upon systematic fraud, deception and cheating” (Fragell 2005: 200). While, this view leaves much to be desired with regard to the “goods” that Pentecostalism has delivered in Nigeria over the decades, it tells the fact of how deeply immersed in the pursuit of materialistic wealth Pentecostalism is in Nigeria. The pursuit of material wealth, it can be argued to a large point, seems to have overshadowed the good work of the Pentecostal/charismatic movements in Nigerian Christianity.

4.3.4 Christianity’s Negative “Romance” with Politics in Modern Day Nigeria

Properly understood, Christianity has a role to play in politics. Christianity, as rightly noted by some scholars,²⁷ should be involved in politics so as to correct some social ills of societies and the overbearing attitudes of political leaders. However, the involvement of Christianity in the politics of Nigeria in modern times has remained ambivalent.²⁸ The collapse of a political structure which failed to deliver the “goods” of self-rule in Nigeria after independence, is tied in with the initial active involvement of Christians in politics beginning from the 1970s upwards. Studies, within the Pentecostal political theology in Nigeria, always stressed this fact. Marshall’s (2009) seminal work has situated Pentecostal political theology in Nigeria within the political situation of Nigeria during the 1970s when the Pentecostal revolution began. The case of a breakdown of the Nigerian political structure characterised by corruption and the inability to deliver the “goods” expected of self-rule, according to Marshall, helped shape the political theology of Pentecostalism when it began in Nigeria. Within this context of a failed political structure, which proved unable to redeem the people’s trust in the government, Marshall situated the initial foray of the Pentecostals in Nigeria into politics that was built on the desire to redeem the political landscape through, firstly, redeeming the people through conversion to godly living. However, the desire to “sanitise” the political landscape of Nigeria, and deliver the goods expected of

²⁷ See, among other works, Ituma (2008: 18-32) and Musa (2009).

²⁸ See Ukah (2014: 87-114).

politicians, was not the concern of the Pentecostals only in Nigeria as from the 1970s upwards. Other strands of Christianity in Nigeria had this aim also. That is why a Roman Catholic priest in the person of Moses Adasu, emerged the governor of Benue state between 1991-1993. Equally, that of Jolly Nyame, a clergyman of the United Methodist Church of Nigeria (UMCN), who ruled Taraba state from 1991-1993 may relate to the desire of Christians in Nigeria to get involved in politics with the desire to make effective change in the governance of Nigeria as Christians.

With regard to the Pentecostalism, it is clear that its original intent of engaging in politics in Nigeria, was in a bid to replicate “God’s righteous rule here on earth” through using Biblical principles to redeem the political space in Nigeria. Similarly, Kalu (2003: 103-105) would make this claim for Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Also, Wariboko (2014) has made such a claim with regard to the explosion of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.

However, some three decades down the line, the whole basis of Pentecostal theology of redeeming the political space in Nigeria through what Wariboko (2014: 34) has called a “redemptive moral leadership” has not materialised. Hence, Marshall has held the Pentecostals in Nigeria liable for this failure, and also for not delivering the “goods” which it promised Nigerian Christians. As Marshall (2010: 216) writes:

Over the three decades of its dramatic expansion, Pentecostalism has failed to redeem its revolutionary promises. Pastors attempt to monopolize charisma, harnessing supernatural power for the performance of miracles, creating a circular economy in which enchantment and debt reappear in the relationship between the pastor and convert. Pastoral authority itself becomes a form of enchantment, and mirrors in many ways the exercise of power on the part of the political class.

Partly, this failure on the part of Pentecostalism with regard to redeeming the political landscape of Nigeria, may be because of its negative romance with the political leaders in contemporary times as a means of gaining access to wealth and power. In modern day Nigeria, some Pentecostal Christian leaders indirectly get entangled with political corruption in Nigeria so long as material wealth is gained. This is done through “praying” for politicians, “courtesy visits” to politicians, and “invitations” to politicians to attend church programmes. This is vice-versa since the politicians sometimes reach out to some Pentecostal leaders in a bid to legitimise their political cause and achieve political support of Christians in Nigeria. Hence, Omotoye (2010) is right in saying that “many politi-

cians often go to pastors for prayers and counseling when election is fast approaching.”

Ukah (2007: 18) is also right in writing that:

... regional and national politicians pay frequent visit to the camps to demonstrate their religiosity, consult the Pastor and solicit for votes or public sympathy. These camps are a veritable structure of Pentecostal sub-politics; attempts by Pentecostal Pastors and their followers to influence the dynamics of national politicking and to achieve mutually beneficial ends for both Pastors and politicians.

What Ukah described above, has become an everyday occurrence in today's Nigerian Christianity. Once again Fakoya (n.d) writes:

The Latin American countries have demonstrated that it is possible and holy to identify with the oppressed masses. All we see our Pentecostal leaders doing is actively embracing corrupt leaderships, vigorously protecting their establishments, declaring million dollar profits, opening universities and buying jets upon jets.

In all fairness to Pentecostalism in Nigeria, it is clear that Christians from other strands of Christianity in Nigeria are also guilty of the involvement in politics of the country in a bid to acquire material wealth. Among some of the Charismatic ministries in Nigeria, such is also seen. Equally, the individual Christian in Nigeria is guilty of hiding under the cloak of politics to amass wealth. A typical case relates to that of Jolly Nyame, a clergy man and ex-governor of Taraba state, who has been convicted of crimes relating to the misappropriation of Taraba state funds when he was the governor of the state. According to Haruna, on May 30, 2018, Jolly Nyame was convicted by an Abuja High Court of misappropriation of Taraba state funds amounting up to 1.6 billion Naira during his tenure as the governor of the state between 1999 and 2007 (Haruna 2018). Jolly Nyame, Haruna (2018) further reported, was sentenced to fourteen years in prison and asked to refund the misappropriated funds.

The Nigerian political space has for a long time been tainted with corruption and corrupt leadership.²⁹ Thus, even the politicians and the political elites, who some Pentecostal/ charismatic leaders get entangled with, cannot totally claim to be corruption-free, or to have delivered the “goods” required of them by those they represent (ed.). The ubiquitous

²⁹ On corruption in Nigeria see Agiboa (2012: 325-345).

nature of poverty, hunger, unemployment, poor infrastructural development and the like in Nigeria are clear indications of the above said. More problematic is also the issue of embezzlement of public funds by some Nigerian politicians for self-use (Agiboa 2012: 325-345). Nevertheless, all these notwithstanding, so long as some of these politicians give handsome donations, pay tithes, sow handsome seeds of faith, some Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria can look the other way with regard to the certain corrupt sources of wealth of these politicians.

This is exactly what Ojeifo (n.d) alludes to when he writes:

Today, the collusion of religion and politics has robbed some Christian Pastors of credibility, as some of them now openly court the friendship of the political and business elite in hope of eating the crumbs falling from their tables. In a society where an exploitative and greedy crop of leaders has held the citizens under siege, many pastors continue to remain indifferent to the plight of the people.

Maybe, Bakare was right when he quipped that “most treasury looters and robbers sit in the front row of our churches and donate the largest amount and pastors don’t (*sic*) care”³⁰ Similarly, David-West has labelled the leadership of the church in Nigeria corrupt owing to its entanglement with corrupt political leaders. According to Ebhomele & Ateba (2013), David-West pointed out that church leaders no longer tell corrupt Nigerian leaders the truth when they go to the church. In his words “when political leaders go to church, they go with a lot of camera men. They knell with pious faces while deep down their hearts are as dark as the pot. They donate to the church thinking they can bribe God.” While it seems that this unholy romance with politicians is more pronounced among the Pentecostals, the same has become noticeable among some charismatic ministries in the mainline churches in Nigeria. These all exacerbate the problem of materialism in contemporary Nigerian Christianity.

³⁰ *News Magazine* as cited in Omotoye (2010). Recently, ex-governor Ambode of Lagos state accused religious leaders (including Christian leaders) of indirectly encouraging political office holders in Nigeria to steal since religious leaders make higher [monetary] demands from politicians without regard to how they are going to fulfill such demand. For more on this dailypost.ng/2017/11/24/religious-leaders-encouraging-politicians-to-steal-ambode-alleges.

4.3.5 Greed

The problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity can also be located within the context of greed on the part of Nigerian Christians and their leaders most especially. Greed here can be seen as the insatiable desire for wealth. When one looks critically into why most Christians and their leaders have become increasingly materialistic, one is bound to see the problem of greed at work. This can also be called the problem of “hoarding” of wealth that is the product of “always wanting to have more wealth.” Among the Pentecostals for example, this may have been part of the reason why the source of wealth often no longer get questioned by some Pentecostal leaders so long as such wealth makes its way into the church.

Ojiefu (n.d) makes the point that:

There seems to a conspiracy of silence on the part of many pastors. As long as the fat envelopes and donations from these rich patrons continue to come steadily in the tithe boxes, no one seeks any explanation for their new found wealth.

With regard to the above, some Christian leaders in Nigeria have been found guilty of accepting tithes/donations from allegedly corrupt means. As Omotoye (2010), while citing *News Magazine*, observes:

... many pastors do not bother about the money being brought to the church. We believe that this is encouraging bribery and corruption in our nation. There are stories of people stealing money in their place of work and donating millions of naira to some churches. In the month of March, 2003, Lawrence Agada, a Cashier at the Lagos Sheraton Hotel and Towers was arrested for stealing 40 million naira from his employer. During interrogation, he confessed that he gave all the money to Christ Embassy, pastored by Chris Oyakhilome in cash donations. Another case was also reported of Dipo Kehinde of Eko International Bank, who stole 39 million naira from his employer out of which he gave 10 million to Christ Embassy as “seed money”, with the hope that it would yield several millions of money later.

This is a typical example of the problem of greed at work on both the greedy employees who embezzled their employers' funds to donate to churches, and the churches, which accepted such donations without regard to their sources. All these are all in a bid to accumulate and amass wealth which has become the order of the day in contemporary Nigerian Christianity.

4.4 The Implications of Material Possessions in Luke 12 for Nigerian Christianity

In the light of the exegesis done in Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 12:21-30, the following are the implications Lukan view of material possession have for Nigerian Christianity.

4.4.1 Warning against Greed/Covetousness

In the pericope of Lk 12:13-21, which deals with what is popularly referred to as the parable of the rich fool, the study uncovered the problem of *pleonezias* which has been shown to mean greed. Both, the questioner from the crowd who wanted Jesus intervene in the sharing of a family inheritance, and the rich fool in the parable that follows, had greed as their problem. This greed, as it was also shown in the study, manifested in their being only interested in material possessions. Similarly, as regards Nigerian Christianity, the study uncovered the same problem of greed at play as what drives the constant desire for material wealth on the part of Nigerian Christians. Greed, therefore, drives Nigerian Christians' insatiable desire to amass wealth for self/family use, just like the questioner from the crowd and the rich fool in the parable. Lukan view on material possessions denounces, in a strong term, the problem of greed among his audience and then, by extension, the problem of greed in Nigerian Christianity in the face of the overly selfish desire to amass material wealth on the part of Nigerian Christians. This therefore means that greedy attitude on the part of Nigerian Christians amounts to covetousness. This is part of the reason it has become commonplace in Nigerian Christianity that the source of wealth that makes its way to the church not to be questioned. There is also the fact that the problem of greed prevalent today in Nigerian Christianity is covetousness since in most times, some Nigerian Christians do not care whose ox is gored in their greedy pursuit of wealth. In this context, the understanding of material possessions in Luke from the pericopes studied, teaches Nigerian Christians about greed and covetousness which should be denounced in the most strongest terms. As earlier pointed out, Lukan denouncement of greed, has to do with its being incompatible with the Christian life and as such Nigerian Christians are warned to guard against it.

4.4.2 Warning against the Hoarding of Wealth

Greed leads to the hoarding of wealth for self-use. This clearly played out in the context of the parable of the rich fool. The rich fool's greatest undoing in the parable, as seen in the study, was the hoarding of wealth for self-use. This, of course, is tied in with greed on the part of the rich fool as he is being led not to make plans for other people in his scheme of using his wealth. Hence, the rich fool amassed wealth with a view to self-indulgence and gluttony.

Like the rich fool, many Nigerian Christians have become guilty of hoarding of wealth. The constant amassing of wealth, in which only one's families are envisioned to enjoy, has become commonplace in Nigerian Christianity today. The different business interests owned by some church leaders in Nigeria and the desire to add to these business interests by these church leaders, are examples of how the amassing of wealth has become a problem in Nigerian Christianity today.

It is therefore against this attitude of hoarding/amassing of wealth for self (family) use that Lukan view of material possessions becomes relevant in Nigerian Christianity. This is so because, Luke's understanding of the place of material possessions in a Christian's life strongly deemphasises the hoarding of wealth which serves the interests of the hoarders only. In this regard Christians in Nigeria are to internalise this fact which also will help them change the emphasis they place on amassing wealth. Of course, as it has been pointed out, the desire to amass wealth, in Nigerian Christianity today, has a link with greed/covetousness. Thus, as the study emphasised, Luke's understanding of material possessions discourages greed/covetousness which leads to the desire to hoard/amass wealth. In this regard, greed/covetousness is linked to the desire on the part of Nigerian Christians to hoard/amass wealth. This attitude is highly decried from my study of material possessions in the gospel of Luke.

4.4.3 Trust in God's Provisions/ Contentment

The exegesis done in this study strongly encourages absolute trust in God's provision of their material needs on the part of Christians. In the pericope of Lk 12:22-30, this is the thrust of the teaching on material possession. Like the ravens and the lilies which do not work, toil, spin or have barns/storehouses which God provides for, Christians are enjoined by Jesus in this pericope to demonstrate a 'simple' trust in God's provi-

dence. In other words, God demands contentment from Christians according to this pericope. While the teaching of the pericope, as shown in the study, does not in any way encourage laziness on the part of Christians, it does emphasise, strongly, the absolute need for Christians to trust in God's provision of their material needs. This trust therefore will lead Christians to be contented with the "much" God has provided for them knowing full well that they (Christians) are God's ultimate concern.

Practically, in today's Nigerian Christianity, this absolute trust in God's provision of Christians' material needs and contentment therewith are lacking. Thus, too much emphasis on wealth tells the fact that to Nigerian Christians, they are capable of "providing for themselves". This goes against that simple trust in God's provision of Christians' material needs as taught by Jesus in the pericope studied. And, it must be pointed out, that this lack of trust in God's provision, leads many Nigerian Christians to not being contented with the wealth they have; most are always on the lookout for ways to amass more wealth. Thus, Lukan view of material possessions encourages detachment from materialism on the part of Nigerian Christians while at the same time advocates for trust in God as the provider of Christians' material needs on their part. This trust in God (as the provider), will also led them to be contented with what God has provided for their material needs instead of being immersed in the desire for wealth always.

4.4.4 A Call for Almsgiving/ Fair Distribution of Wealth

Another theme discerned from the Lukan passages studied, is that of almsgiving which also relates to redistributing wealth by rich Christians for the benefit of poor Christians. The rich fool in the parable of the rich fool in Luke, was guilty of the above indicated. In all his vision and plans/course of action concerning his hoarded wealth, he never envisioned the poor; he hoarded all his wealth for self-use.

Nigerian Christianity today has become the type in which poor members of the church are seriously neglected. While it may not be argued that there are no programmes designed to help poor Christians in Nigeria, it can be rightly said that the presence of poverty and the poor in today's Nigerian Christianity has remained high. Among the Pentecostals and Charismatic ministries for example, it has been shown that their poor members have become pawns for money making. Through some of the

teachings of the Pentecostals on tithing, seed sowing, free will donations and many other ways of “trading with God”, these poor members in this same Pentecostal churches are impoverished every day in Nigeria. In fact, some of them (the poor) are left poorer than they were before they joined some of these Pentecostal churches. This has become the case in the mainline churches too.

This may be why in today's Nigerian Christianity generally, poverty and the presence of the poor are glaring phenomena which despite the meager efforts of churches, remain a problem. While the deeply entrenched poverty in Nigeria has greatly to do with the failure of the government, in Nigerian Christianity, it also has a link with the exploitation of the poor and lack of proper programmes that aid the lot of the poor. Hence Lukan view of material possessions from my study, calls for almsgiving and the redistribution of wealth by the rich Christians to benefit the poor Christians. While the call for almsgiving may not really solve the problem of poverty in Nigerian Christianity, the call for fair distribution of wealth by Luke is a challenge to Nigerian Christians to adequately care about the needs of their fellow Christians.

The rich Nigerian Christians are therefore, firstly, called to share their wealth with the needy and poor Christians. Secondly, rich Christian leaders in Nigeria, are to institute viable poverty-alleviation oriented programmes³¹ that have the poor members of the church at heart. This validates King Jr.'s claim that “any religion that claims to be concerned about people without addressing their economic conditions that strangle them is dry and useless religion” (Ashimolowo 2003). This goes to show that Lukan view of material possessions also envisions the use of material wealth to reach out to the poor and needy. However, it must be stated that using material wealth to reach out to the poor in the context of Lukan texts studied is not to be defined in the context of seed sowing, tithing or donations for the cause of the church. This applies also to the other ways through which some Nigerian Christian leaders misinform their flock to “trade with God.” Some of these exploit and impoverish the poor in some churches in Nigeria. In this regard, Lukan view of material possessions challenges Christians, and most especially Christian leaders,

³¹ I am aware of various poverty alleviation programmes within the churches in Nigeria. However, that a staggering number of Christians in Nigeria remain poor irrespective of these, show that the churches have not done enough in this regard. This is where I fault the position of A. George (Oral Interview May 13, 2018) that it is not primarily the duty of churches to alleviate poverty within her fold.

to use their wealth in the service of God through caring for the needy and poor Nigerian Christians' welfare.

4.4.5 The Issue of Eschatology and the Unpredictability of Death

Another important aspect of the pericopes studied in Luke is the issue of eschatology in the form of individual judgement in the face of death. Both Lk 12:13-21 and Lk 13:22-30 point to this. Firstly, in the exegesis, it is shown how the rich fool's life was prematurely cut short when he thought he had secured his life with abundant material possessions. In the following pericope, the examples given with the ravens and the lilies all show the shortness of life. Both the ravens and the lilies' lives are short-lived. And, as was also pointed out, Jesus wanted his disciples to think about the shortness of life just as those of the rich fool, the ravens and the lilies. All these point to some aspect of eschatology that features in the context of Luke's view of material possessions and the human life, and the unpredictable nature of death which may be lurking around always.

In the context of Nigerian Christianity and the contemporary crave for wealth, it is hard to believe that the unpredictability of death really bothers some Nigerian Christians. I find Egbujo's (2015) assertion useful in this regard:

For Christianity to make any sense it must emphasize life after death. That is why Christ died. Pastors and members do not think about death sufficiently. And when they do they treat it with disregard usually reserved for something that is too remote, too uncertain.

This assertion truly captures what most Nigerian Christians think about death in the face of the pursuit for wealth. Too much interest in wealth, of course, makes Christians believe falsely in the permanence of their earthly life, and the remoteness of death. This belief in false security that material wealth offers, is exactly what Lukan understanding of material possessions warns Christians against.

Thus, Nigerian Christians are to take a cue from this view and think seriously about the unpredictability of death even in the midst of wealth, affluence, and "easy life" which today's materialistic Christianity seems to offer them. In this regard, the Lukan understanding of material possessions strongly warns Nigerian Christians against the illusory security that wealth provides in the face of death that lurks around and individual judgement that follows.

4.4.6 A Call for Detachment and Non-prioritisation of Wealth

It could be said that all discussions so far in the study lead to the view that Lukan position on material possessions calls for Christians' detachment from wealth. Put differently, the materialistic way of life is highly deemphasised in the Lukan pericopes studied in this work. However, a few comments in line with what have been said in the exegesis of these Lukan passages, needs to be made. These comments are that while the two Lukan pericopes studied, call for detachment from wealth by Christians, they do not, in any way, encourage a life dominated by laziness. Also, these pericopes recognise the dangers and anxieties that go with the Christian life, especially with regard to the loss of one's material possessions through worldly antagonisms.

Thus, while these passages call for detachment from wealth, they by no means discourage hard work and honest means of making wealth by Christians. Nigerian Christians are therefore to learn this fact. Instead of the belief in prosperity preaching which leads Christians to having a whole lot "convulsed views" about the prioritisation of wealth, what is needed to be taught by Christian leaders in Nigeria is a strong emphasis on hard work and honest means of making wealth and contentment. This emphasis (on hard work, honest means of making wealth and contentment),³² will release a whole lot of Nigerian Christians from worldly cares thereby prioritising Christian discipleship. Also this view of Christian discipleship will lead Nigerian Christians to use their wealth in the service of God through reaching out to the poor Christian in Nigeria today.

³² I am aware of the poverty and hard life that confront Nigerians. However, it cannot be denied that Christians can still engage in honest means of making wealth in Nigeria, and also make good with it.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

Material possessions, and how Christians are to acquire and use them, form an important theme in the gospel according to Luke. In fact, they are an indispensable part of discipleship in the gospel according to Luke. Because of their importance in the gospel according to Luke, this work undertook a study of material possessions in the gospel and their implications for Nigerian Christianity. In my study of material possessions in the Lukan gospel, I concentrated on interpreting the pericopes of the parable of the Rich Fool in Lk 12:13-21 and the related Jesus' teaching in Lk 12:22-30 which embody, to a reasonable extent, important teachings on material possessions in the gospel. In these pericopes, I found out that a strict warning against greed and the hoarding of wealth form important teaching of Jesus on material possessions. Similarly, these pericopes stress the need for the redistribution of wealth, non-prioritisation of wealth by Christians, and reflection on the unpredictability of death in the midst of wealth.

Against the teachings of these Lukan pericopes, the study found out that present Nigerian Christianity is marred by materialism/ excessive desire for the accumulation of wealth. While a whole lot of variables were identified in the study as being responsible for the materialistic appeal of contemporary Nigerian Christianity, the study related that the teachings of the pericopes studied, have implications amidst this problem. These implications included a strong warning against greed and its resultant hoarding of wealth by Nigerian Christians. The study also included, in its presentation of the implications of material possessions in the pericopes studied, a call for the redistribution of wealth among the poor Nigerian Christians, a warning that the human life cannot be secured by the abundance of wealth, and a call for non-prioritisation of wealth by Nigerian Christians. A call for trust in God's provision of their material needs and contentment on the part of Nigerian Christians were all part of the implications of material possessions in the gospel according to Luke as found out in the study.

5.2 Concluding Remark

Christians, in the gospel according to Luke, are called to be the disciples of Jesus with certain views regarding the pursuit and use of material possessions or wealth. Thus, in Luke, one finds a whole lot of material dealing with material possessions and Christians' relationships with them. The parable of the Rich Fool in Lk 12:13-22 and the related teaching of Jesus on material possessions in Lk 12:22-30 are an important part of Jesus' teachings on material possessions in the gospel according to Luke. I therefore interpreted these two pericopes in the context of the ever-disturbing problem of materialism in Nigerian Christianity. In the exegesis of these Lukan pericopes, I found a de-emphasis of greed/the hoarding of wealth, the need for the redistribution of wealth and a call for detachment from material possessions at heart of Jesus' teaching. The study argued that the present day Nigerian Christianity manifests all that the teachings of these pericopes warn against. The implications of material possessions in the gospel of Luke for Nigerian Christianity therefore include a warning against greed and its attendant desire to hoard wealth and a call for redistributing wealth through reaching out to the poor and needy Nigerian Christians. Included also among the implications of material possessions in the Gospel according to Luke in my discussions, were a call for detachment from material possessions through having faith in God's provision of Christians' material needs and a call for reflection on the unpredictability of death in the midst of abundant wealth.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND APPENDIX

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acts	Acts of the Apostles
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> (sometimes written CE [Common Era])
AICs	African Independent Churches
BC	Before Common Era (also understood as “Before Christ”)
Cf	Compare
Col	Colossians
Deut	Deuteronomy
Ed. / Ed.s	Editor / Editors
Exod	Exodus
<i>f</i> ¹	Family 1
<i>f</i> ¹³	Family 13
Gal	Galatians
Gen	Genesis
Kgs	Kings
Isa	Isaiah
Lev	Leviticus
Matt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
n.d	No date of publication given
NJKV	<i>New King James Version</i>
Num	Numbers
Ps	Psalms
p ⁴⁴	Papyrus 44
p ⁴⁵	Papyrus 45
Phil	Philippians
Rom	Romans
SU	Scripture Union
Tim	Timothy
v. / vv.	verse / verses

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

N.B: This is a semi-structured interview which allowed the interviewer to introduce new ideas related to the interview questions based on the responses of the interviewees.

1. Denominational affiliation

- i. Of what denomination are you?
- ii. How many years have you been a member of your denomination?

2. Views on materialism in the practice of Christianity in Nigeria

- i. How will you define materialism in the Christian context?
- ii. Do you think that present-day Nigerian Christianity is plagued with the problem of materialism?
- iii. Has materialism become a problem in the practice of Christianity in Nigeria?
- iv. In what forms does materialism manifest itself in the practice of Christianity in Nigeria?
- v. What do you think are the causes of materialism in Nigerian Christianity generally?
- vi. What are the consequences of materialism to the practice of Christianity in Nigeria?



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BIAS 34 is a study of material possessions in the Gospel according to Luke, relating their implications for Christians in Nigeria whose excessive quest for material wealth has become a problem. Adopting the Historical-Critical Method of exegesis and complementing it with the Social-Scientific Criticism, the book focuses on the parable of the Rich Fool in Lk 12:13-21 and the related teaching in Lk 12:22-30. It is argued that a thorough understanding of material possessions in Luke's gospel should take into account the background of severe social tensions among Christians in Luke's community. The hermeneutics of the study shows that contemporary Christianity in Nigeria is marred by an excessive materialism which is against the teachings of the Lukan pericopes – especially, if prosperity is not shared with the poor.



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