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Louis Ndekha

IDENTITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

The Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:20-49) and Greco-Roman Panegyrics

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Études sur la Bible en Afrique
Bibel-in-Afrika-Studien

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Bibel-in-Afrika-Studien

Volume 38

edited by
Joachim Kügler,
Kudzai Biri, Ezra Chitando, Rosinah Gabaitse, Kathrin Gies,
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University
of Bamberg
Press
2023

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Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.dnb.de/ abrufbar.

Revised version of *Luke's Gospel and Greco-Roman Panegyrics: The Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:20-49) in its Social Context,* a PhD thesis from the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham, UK.
Successfully defended on 16 June 2020 before Prof. Louise Lawrence (University of Exeter) and Prof. Edward Adams (King's College London).
Supervisor: Prof. Philip Esler.

Herstellung und Druck: docupoint, Magdeburg
Umschlaggestaltung: University of Bamberg Press
Umschlaggraphik: Joachim Kügler
Deco-Graphiken: Joachim Kügler
Text-Formatierung: Irene Loch, Joachim Kügler

https://www.uni-bamberg.de/ubp/

ISSN: 2190-4944 (Print) eISSN: 2750-0179 (Online)
ISBN: 978-3-86309-951-0 (Print) eISBN: 978-3-86309-952-7 (Online)

URN: urn:nbn:de:bvb:473-irb-903770
DOI: https://doi.org/10.20378/irb-90377

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume is a product of my revised PhD thesis from the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham UK, completed and successfully defended in 2020. The original thesis title was *Luke's Gospel and Greco-Roman Panegyric: The Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:20-49) in its Social Context*. The present form of the book is a combination of the thesis and materials that have risen out of my further research in Luke's Gospel. The book, therefore, comprises of a new chapter and a revision of some of the key chapters of the thesis. The aim of revising the major aspects of the thesis and the additional chapter was to make the book accessible to a broader audience.

Special gratitude goes to my wife Olipa and kids Louis jr, Chimwemwe and Philip, who had to bear the long hours of an absent husband and Dad. Special thanks to my wife, who had to work hard to supplement the family budget during my time of study.

Special gratitude also goes to Professor Esler, firstly for accepting to take me as a student. His guidance led me to discover insights into the world of Luke and the whole sweep of the New Testament and Christian origins. In addition, his patience, even in the face of my shortcomings, was inspirational and encouraging. I would also like to thank Dr Adrian Long, my second supervisor, for his insightful perspectives on the project and for the necessary technical support and advice which he gave me.

This study would not have been possible without the support from University of Gloucestershire's Kirby Laing PhD Studentship. The same is true for the Foundation of St Matthias, whose generous grant, supplemented my study's funding. The same gratitude goes to the University of Malawi for granting me study leave and supporting my studies.

Spiritually and socially, I would like to thank St Andrews United Reformed Church in Cheltenham. The church provided a spiritual home for me and family. Their support in many ways also made us to feel at home in Gloucestershire and the United Kingdom as whole.

To be able to revise and give this work its present shape would not have been possible without the support of Prof Joachim Kügler, Chair holder of New Testament Studies at the University of Bamberg. He graciously accepted to host me as a Georg Foster Postdoctoral Fellow under the Alexander Humboldt Foundation.

Finally, I give special gratitude to my Bible College Lecturer Rev A.O. Folayan. His nurture, support, and trust in me, helped me to believe in me. His ability to combine both ministerial and academic rigour in his lectures had a huge influence on what I have become over the years.

THE STUDY CONTEXT

Various approaches have been used to interpret the Sermon on the Plain[1]. Chief among the approaches is the treatment of the Sermon as an addendum to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) and the sometimes-unconscious assumption that the later provides an interpretative framework for the former.[2] This approach has resulted in two unfortunate outcomes in the interpretation of Luke 6:20-49. Firstly, it has resulted in an unbalanced scholarly preoccupation with Matthew's Sermon and the neglect of Luke's Sermon. Although most scholars believe that the Lucan version of the Sermon is more original than that of Matthew, this perception has never translated in any particular scholarly interest in the Lucan Sermon. In fact, Luke's Sermon rarely attracts scholarly attention.[3] A search in New Testament abstracts and databases for studies on Jesus' Sermons conducted in the past twenty years reveals an undue Matthean emphasis. Secondly, the use of Mathews' Sermon on the Mount as the interpretative framework for Luke's Sermon results in an unwarranted spiritualisation and an otherworldly interpretation of the Sermon.[4] This

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1 Here-after referred to as the Sermon.

2 See H.D. Betz, & A.Y. Collins. 1995. The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49), (Minneapolis: Fortress Press); G.T. Meadors. 1985. "The 'poor' in the Beatitudes of Matthew [5:3] and Luke," Grace Theological Journal 6/2, pp. 305-314; M.A. Matson. 2000. "Luke's Rewriting of the Sermon on the Mount", SBL Seminar Paper 39, pp. 1-37.

3 *Biblical World Editorial*. 1903. "The Beatitudes of Jesus", *The Biblical World* 22/2, p. 84; I.H. Marshall. 1978. *The Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Paternoster Press), p. 246; J.H. Nolland. 1989. *Luke 1-9:20*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 280; M.C. McCown. 1927. "The Beatitudes in the Light of Ancient Ideals", *JBL* 46, pp. 50-61. Hoyt argues that the originality of Luke's Sermon is verified by the fact that even the Gnostic version of the Gospel of Thomas never uses Matthew's τῷ πνεύματι, as well it might, had it been known to Thomas. See T. Hoyt Jr. 1980. "The Poor/rich theme in the Beatitudes", *Journal of Religious Thought* 371, pp. 31-41.

4 For scholars concerned with the apparent radical nature of the Sermon, a religious or spiritual interpretation provides the best way to understand the Sermon. See B. Byrne. 2008. "Beatitudes and Poverty of Spirit in the Ignatian Exercises", *The Way* 47/1-2:29-46; Matson, "Luke's Rewriting of Matthew,"

approach overlooks the Third Gospel's apparent preoccupation with material poverty and riches, which several studies also affirm.[5]

The Sermon's reference to the destitute and the rich (Lk 6:20b/ 24a) and the hungry and filled (Lk:21a/ 25a) and the injunction to give (v. 30) and lend (v. 43) demonstrates a flesh and blood perspective and speaks to the proximity of natural riches and absolute destitution among Luke's audience. Such a social outlook significantly differs from the Matthean 'other-worldly' (Mat. 5:3) view of reality. All this underscore a Lucan preoccupation with social-economic relationships. Furthermore, fixation with the Matthean Sermon as an interpretative framework to the Lucan version fails to appreciate that the Third Gospel's primary audience did not have Matthew to compare as the Sermon was read out to them.[6] Luke's

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pp. 623-650; Meadors, "The 'poor' in the Beatitudes of Matthew [5:3] and Luke", pp. 305-314. For Charles Talbert, the religious dimension of the Sermon is the most important because the gospel never canonises the "sociological state" (cf. Lev. 19:15; Sir. 35:15-17). According to him, although the vocabulary of poverty initially had a sociological meaning, it took on a spiritual meaning over the centuries. He further argues that in the history of Israel, the economically poor observed the spirit of Israel's religion more faithfully (Isa. 29:18-19) than did the affluent elite. See C. Talbert. 2002. *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, (Macon: Smith & Helways), p. 73.

5 C. Evans. 1990. *Luke*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), p. 108; J.B. Green. 2014. "Good News to the Poor: A Lucan Leitmotif", *Review and Expositor* 11/2, pp. 173-179.

6 The question of whether Luke knew and used Matthew has for a long time been a contentious issue in Gospel studies. While some scholars deny the existence of Q and consider Luke as a revision Mark, there is growing consensus that Luke had no access to Matthew or if he did, did not use it. See M.C. Tuckett, 1984. "On the Relationship Between Matthew and Luke", *NTS* 30/1, pp. 139-142; D. Garland. 2011. *Luke, ECNT*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 4; J.T. Carrol. 2012. *Luke; A Commentary*, (Kentucky: John Knox Press), p. 8. Luke's independence from Matthew is thought to be confirmed by Luke's apparent ignorance of Matthew in the passages whose themes they both share with Mark. For example, the presence of periscopes in Matthew, and their absence in Luke, advocating for table-fellowship between Jews and gentiles demonstrates Lucan ignorance of Matthew. Granted that Luke used table fellowship as the fulcrum for his reconstruction of new communities in Christ (See H. Moxnes. 1986. "Meals and the New Community in Luke", *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 51, pp. 158-167), the Matthean (8:11) reference to ´people coming from

audience heard the Sermon as it came to them and interpreted it within the framework of their own experiences. Thus, a synoptic approach is not the most plausible perspective to interpreting the original function of the Sermon within the Third Gospel's primary audience.

Secondly, the use of the synoptic problem framework to read the Lucan Sermon, which is evident in the Matthean emphasis in Jesus' Sermon studies, undermines the sharp differences between the Sermon and its Matthean counterpart. A close reading of the two Sermons not only reveals striking differences between them but also that the Lucan version represents a unique representation of Jesus' inaugural speech in the two Gospels. The Sermon's makarisms and woes and its juxtaposition of poverty and riches (Lk 6:20-26) and the exhortation that follows in Luke 6:27-49 place a special emphasis on socio-economic relationships, especially between the rich and the poor. Such a radical stance on poverty and riches resonates more with the Greco-Roman speeches of praise and blame of the time than it does with the Sermon's immediate Matthean counterpart.

The Greco-Roman speeches of praise and blame, also known as panegyrics, were distinguished by their combination of the paradigm of praise and blame with the exhortation of deliberative rhetoric. In their Greco-Roman context, panegyrics served two primary functions: the inculcation of commonly held values and the integration of new members. When the Lucan Sermon's structure of makarisms and woes (vv. 20-26) followed by exhortation (vv. 27-49) is considered against its Greco-Roman context, it offers a new reading of the Sermon from the perspective of Greco-Roman panegyrics. Such a reading discloses a richness of meaning in the Sermon currently overlooked in Lucan scholarship.

Therefore, judging from the juxtaposition of riches and poverty and praise and blame, it is likely that the Sermon reflects the honour and shame setting of a local Greco-Roman community of Christ-followers or a group of similar churches troubled by the co-existence of poverty and wealth amongst its membership. This contradictory social structure,

the east and west and reclining at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven` would likely have been taken up by Luke if he knew Matthew. The absence of this reference in Luke makes it hard to believe that he knew Matthew. It is therefore unlikely that Luke´s primary audience had access to Matthew.

which the Sermon addresses, had potential implications for interpersonal relationships between the rich and the poor within the newly emerging Christ-groups. It is, therefore, likely that underneath the Sermon's makarisms and woes and their corresponding poverty and riches and exhortation (vv. 27-49) is embedded Luke's attempt to construct a new social-economic identity of Christ-followers. The Sermon achieves this aim by supplanting those values deemed honourable and shameful by the dominant culture with a new set of values and identity that defined the ethos of the new communities of Christ-followers. The new values are adopted from the experience of destitution understood through the state of powerlessness, dependency, and by implication, vulnerability (Lk 6:20-23). These values were a striking contrast to the valorised Greco-Roman values of strength or power (physical or social), defined in terms of excellence[7], (ἀρετή) and self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια), which had alienating effects on human relationships, especially between the rich and the poor. Adopting the values associated with destitution would be beneficial for both the rich and poor in the new communities of Christ-followers. It would enable both social groups to depend on the Lord for their daily provisions than on material wealth. Common reliance on the Lord would allow for camaraderie and κοινωνία (fellowship) between the rich and the poor. Green agrees with this conception of intra- personal relationships within Christ-groups but applies it to the whole of Luke's Gospel. He argues that the good news to the destitute summarises Jesus' message in Luke.[8] Although Green does not recognise the panegyric dimensions of the Sermon, he

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7 The original Latin equivalent of ἀρετή (excellence) was *virtus (virtue)*, whose corresponding words *gloria*, *dignitas*, and *honour* were generally understood in terms of good service to the government, army and religion. It was the quality to contribute to public *eudemonism (*happiness*)*. Thus, at the heart of ἀρετή was how much an individual was able to contribute to the body politic, not just his or her intrinsic worth as a human being. This understanding of an individual's worth encouraged the alienation of the poor, who were deemed expendable in society. See K. Papademetriou. 2011. "From the Arete of the Ancient World to the Arete of the NT. A Semantic Investigation" in *Septuagint Vocabulary. Pre-History, Usage, Reception, Septuagint and Cognate Studies,* ed. by E. Bons & J. Joosten, *SBL Studies* 58, pp. 45-63.

8 Green, "Good News to the Poor", pp. 173-179.

argues that by bringing into focus issues of power and wealth, Luke's Gospel touches on the issues of belonging, power and social privilege.[9] In this way, Luke underscores that following Jesus entails the construction of a new identity and a social outlook that would have far-reaching implications for the disciples' conception of belonging, wealth, and privilege in the new community.

In keeping with the integrative function of Greco-Roman speeches of praise and blame, it is also possible to demonstrate the integrative and identity-forming motif of the Sermon. Firstly, the Gospel's depiction of Theophilus as either an inquirer or one who has been under instruction (Lk 1:1-4) offers an integrative perspective to the Sermon. The integration or socialisation of new members was an important aspect of group membership in the Greco-Roman world. For example, it was common practice in Greco-Roman associations to integrate new members into the ways of their guild.[10] Similarly, victors of the games were also integrated through special ceremonies.[11]

The integrative function of the Sermon is also evident from the way the Sermon follows soon after Jesus' formal appointment of his disciples (Lk 6:13-18).[12] The sequence of events in Luke 6:12-49 is appointment on the mountain followed by a reception speech at the level place. In its original Greco-Roman context, this sequence would have resonated with the honour-bestowing and value-inculcating function of victory odes and speeches of praise and blame (panegyrics) associated with festivals. This resonance would have enabled new members or inquirers like Theophilus to identify with the panegyric thrust of the Sermon. Furthermore, in Luke 6:27, the Sermon refers to 'all those who hear'. This reference broadens

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9 Green, "Good News to the Poor", pp. 173-179.

10 See W. Wilson. 2001. "Urban Legends: Acts 10:1-11:18 and the Strategies of Greco-Roman Foundation Narratives", *JBL* 120/1, pp. 77-99; L. Kurke. 1991. *The* Traffic *in Praise: Pindar and the Poetics of Social Economy*, (Ithaca/London: Cornell University), p. 5.

11 Peter Miller. 2015. "From Polis to Oikos: Ideology and Genealogy in Pindar's Olympian 9", *Sillecta Classica* 26, pp. 1-20.

12 It can be argued that the fact that the Third Gospel is founded on the κατήχησις (catechesis) received by Theophilus (Lk 1:4) is a pointer to the presence of new converts or inquirers within in the Lucan churches.

the Sermon's audience beyond the newly appointed disciples. This structure of audience address was also a common phenomenon in Greco-Roman speeches, such that even where narrow audiences were intended (like victory odes), broader audience influence was also in view. Thus, when the Sermon's makarisms and woes (vv. 20-27) are read together with the exhortation in vv. 27b-49, they together underscore the value re-enforcing dimension of the Sermon. Such value re-enforcement would have been necessary for the cohesion of the socially diverse new and old members of the Christ-groups.

Several studies agree that the early Christian movement comprised people from different social backgrounds. The affluent, the labourers and the destitute were part of the structure of the early Christian movement. From excellent Theophilus, 'propertied' individuals like Barnabas (Acts 4:36) to the destitute widows (Acts 6:1), a whole array of social stations in life made the composition of the early church.[13] To forge a unified movement among such social classes was not only a formidable task but also one on whose success the movement's objective of turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6) depended. The task before the movement, which the author of the Third Gospel, among other things takes up, was to forge a unified economic identity that would regulate social relations within the movement and ensure its success. In this book, we demonstrate that in Luke 6:20 'the blessedness of the poor' provides an interpretative clue to understanding the Sermon's controlling values and its identity-forming motif. We argue that in the Sermon, Luke presents Jesus as a Greco-Roman orator who adopts the panegyric (praise and blame) as a pedagogical

[13] There are also several indicators in the Gospel that point to the presence of the rich in Lucan communities. In fact, most of Luke's parables dealing with wealth, such as that of the rich fool (Lk 12:13-21) and the parable of the lost coins and sheep (Lk 15:1-10), would make sense to a community with a significant number of the rich. The presence of the women from Herod's household (Lk 8:3) and property owners like Barnabas (Acts 4:37) suggests the presence of individuals above the level of subsistence within Lucan churches. Luke's favourable reference to ἑκατόνταρχοι (centurions) (Lk 7:2; 23:27; Acts 10:22; 27:43) who were often seen as benefactors, demonstrates the presence of the rich in Lucan communities. See J.R. Howell, 2008. "The Imperial Authority and Benefaction of Centurions and Acts 10.34-43: A Response to C. Kavin Rowe", *JSNT* 31/1, pp. 25-51.

technique to both integrate new members into the community and reinforce the commonly held values of κοινωνία (fellowship) within the rest of the community. The valorisation of the status of destitution was meant to interrogate and relativise the conventional Greco-Roman conception of status and identity among Christ-followers. The relativisation would lead the Christ-followers' to search for a new identity in Christ. Grounding their identity in Christ would result in new conceptions of social-economic relations between the rich and poor within the Christ-groups.

The presentation of Jesus' Sermon using the panegyric framework would have been necessary with the spread of the Jesus movement from its initial Palestinian environment into the Greco-Roman metropolitan contexts. The polytheistic, multi-ethnic, and socially differentiated Greco-Roman world would have created new questions and realities for Christ-groups from which they needed ἀσφάλεια, assurance. Among such questions would have been how to relate with the socially and economically different others within the new movement. In his preface (Lk 1:1-4), Luke sets out as his objective to ensure that Theophilus knows the certainty of what he has been taught. The reference to κατηχέω (v. 4) (to instruct), which has the sense of introducing the rudiments of a new teaching, mirrors the integration of new members into the community and their introduction into a lifestyle commensurate with their new reality.

There are two complementary ways of understanding the exact nature of the ἀσφάλεια that Luke wanted Theophilus to attain. Fitzmyer argues that this certainty is historical assurance.[14] He posits that writing the Gospel during a later period of the church, Luke aims to assure Theophilus and other readers that the teaching of the church of his day and its practices were rooted in the period of Jesus. The Third Gospel, therefore, aimed to strengthen them in their fidelity to that teaching and practice.[15] However, Fitzmyer does not mention the content of the church's teaching and practice. It is likely that the ἀσφάλεια (assurances) that Theophilus needed was more than assurance of the historical veracity of the church's

14 J. Fitzmyer. 1981. *The Gospel According to Luke, I-IX,* (New York: Double Day), p. 9.
15 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke,* p. 9.

teaching. In socially diverse communities and their effect on social relations, the ἀσφάλεια would also have been about the implications of Jesus' ethical and practical directives on interpersonal relationships and identity within the community of Christ-followers for whom Luke was writing.[16] Luke's penchant for depicting different dimensions of power relations among socially differentiated groups is evident across the Gospel (Lk 10:25-37; 12:16-21; 14:15-24; 16;1-10; 18:18-24; 21:1-4). For Luke, the question of socio-economic relations, encapsulated in the Sermon, form the overarching framework that shapes his Gospel's presentation of Jesus' message of salvation. Given the social-economic emphasis of the Gospel and indeed of the Sermon, this book demonstrates that reading Luke's Sermon as a panegyric provides a plausible alternative for understanding its uniqueness and function within its original Greco-Roman milieu. Although the relationship between Luke and Greco-Roman literature has recently attracted significant interest, no study has examined Luke's Gospel or the Sermon from the perspective of Greco-Roman panegyrics.[17]

In dealing with the material at hand, this book takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Sermon and Luke's Gospel. It employs redaction criticism as a dimension of the historical-critical approach which is enhanced by social-scientific perspectives.[18] As Norman Perrin puts it, redaction criticism is concerned with exploring an author's theological motivation as revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing and modification of traditional material and the composition of new material or the creation of new forms within the traditions of early Christianity.[19] Similarly, the present book examines how Luke presents Jesus' Sermon

16 J. Topel. 2001. *Children of a Compassionate God,* (Collegeville/Minn.: Liturgical Press), p. 7.

17 Some of the representative works on the relationship between Luke and Greco-Roman literature are: D. Macdonald. (2015). *Luke and Virgil, Imitation of Classical Greek Literature,* (London: Rowan & Littlefield); O. Umurhan & T. Penner. 2013. "Luke and Juvenal at the Cross Roads" in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture,* ed. by S. Porter & A. Pitt, (Leiden/Boston: Brill), pp. 165-193.2; T. Penner & C.V. Stichele. 2003. *Contextualising Acts: Lucan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse,* (Atlanta: SBL); G.A. Kennedy. 1984. *NT Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

18 J. Barton. 1998. *Biblical Interpretation,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), p. 10.

19 N. Perrin. 1969. *What is Redaction Criticism,* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock), p. 1.

to his audience and the social, economic and theological issues behind the Sermon's text. The use of social science techniques in the study of the New Testament is part of the development of interdisciplinary approaches in biblical studies. The practice represents the continuing recognition of the need to interpret the Bible from the context of the culture that produced it. Bruce Malina's *New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* demonstrates how New Testament studies can benefit from anthropology.[20] All this reveals the valuable insights the application of social-science findings can bring to the study of the Christian religion in general and biblical studies in particular. This book adopts the Greco-Roman anthropological paradigm of the panegyric and the social identity theory to examine the Sermon in its original context. The panegyric paradigm's pedagogical import, its basis in the Greco-Roman honour and shame culture, including its adaptability to different contexts, makes it relevant for examining the function of Jesus' Sermon in Luke's Gospel. In addition, recently the social identity theory has been adopted as a useful tool for understanding intra-group processes in biblical studies and many other social sciences.[21] All this provides a plausible methodological context for examining socio-economic relations in Luke's Gospel.

The book has seven chapters. The first chapter examines Greco-Roman panegyrics, their social function and how they relate to the Sermon. The aim is to set a methodological framework for a new reading of the Sermon in its Greco-Roman context. The second chapter explores identity, the politics of poverty and riches in the Greco-Roman world and the identity-forming motif of the Sermon. It argues that when the Sermon is read against its Greco-Roman context, it shares characteristic themes and nuances that have implications for the identity of its original audience.

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20 See also J.B. Malina. 2001. *The NT World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press).

21 Cf. P.F. Esler. 2003. *Conflict and identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter*, (Minneapolis/MN: Fortress 1998); P.F. Esler. 1996. "Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians: A New Reading of Gal. 5:13–6:10" in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. by Mark Brett, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill) pp. 215-240; P.F. Esler & R.A. Piper. 2006. *Lazarus, Mary and Martha: Social-Scientific Approaches to the Gospel of John*, (Minneapolis/MN: Fortress); Coleman Baker. 2012. "Social Identity and Biblical Interpretation", *Biblical Theology: Journal of Bible and Culture* 42/3, pp. 129-138.

The third chapter analyses Luke 6:20-26 from a panegyric perspective. It argues that the Sermon's juxtaposition of makarisms and woes and poverty and riches is critical to understanding the function of the Sermon within its primary audience. The juxtaposition demonstrates Luke's interest in inculcating a spirit of *koinonia* and camaraderie among the Greco-Roman followers of Jesus. The achievement of social- economic camaraderie required the redefinition of what it means to be rich or poor among those who follow Jesus. The fourth chapter examines the second section of the Sermon (Lk 6:27-49). It establishes how the section captures Luke's vision of the community of Christ-follower and the practical steps the Christ-followers can take to achieve the same. The fifth chapter shows how the paradigm of praise and blame in the Sermon is not only demonstrable across the whole spectrum of the Third Gospel but also reveals the Gospel's overall purpose. The sixth chapter places the panegyric reading of the Sermon within the gospel community debate. It argues that a panegyric reading of the Sermon not only raises the contentious issue of the Gospel community debate but also confirms the continuing relevance of the local audience thesis as the most relevant paradigm for understanding the origins of the Gospels and their audiences. The last chapter provides the conclusion of the book.

Chapter 1
Why Greco-Roman Panegyrics?

Introduction

Reading the Sermon as a Greco-Roman panegyric is a novel task that requires a plausible justification. However, this task becomes lighter when it is understood that speeches were essential to the Greco-Roman culture in which the Sermon was first performed. In that world, speeches represented the best mode of communication. Thus, although by the time the early Christian movement emerged onto the Greco-Roman scene the written text represented significant progress in the transmission of information, the living voice, as it was known then, remained the most valuable means of mediating and re-enforcing values.[1] A text copy was acquired with the intent of having it performed.[2] As Alexander argues, for a long time, the living voice continued to preserve the conventions of oral discourse and sustain the conviction that a speech should be delivered in person and at least give the impression of extempore composition. [3] All this suggests that speeches, like those of ancient rhetors, Jesus and the Apostles, enjoyed a significant oral existence even after they were written down. They were thus usually performed orally to their audiences. This oral presentation gave their message an immediacy which could not be felt by just reading the text.

This chapter examines the nature and function of the Greco-Roman panegyric in all its myriad forms. The rationale behind this exercise is to establish the resonance between the language of the panegyric and that of the Sermon. Linguistic anthropologists argue that for a speaker to acquire and use language skills, he or she must be a member of a community

1 Fragments of Papias, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/papias.html, 22/08/2022; See also L. Alexander. 1990. "The Living Voice: Scepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Greco-Roman Texts" in *The Bible in Three Dimensions*, ed. by D.J.A. Clines, S.E. Fowl, S.E. Porter, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), pp. 221-247.

2 G.F. Downing, 1997. "Word Processing in the Ancient World: Social Production and Performance of Q", *JSNT* 19/64, p. 30.

3 Alexander, "The Living Voice", pp. 221-247.

within which those skills are transmitted and valued.[4] As Gumperz has argued, understanding the role of language in people's lives requires going beyond the study of grammar and venturing into the world of social action where words are embedded in and constitutive of specific cultural activities such as asking for a favour, insulting or praising.[5] The above anthropological observation suggests that examining the nature and function of Greco-Roman panegyrics and their relationship with the Lucan Sermon can shed light on the latter's meaning and function in its community context. Structurally, the chapter examines the context, structure, and general characteristics of Greco-Roman panegyrics and their implications for a panegyric reading of the Sermon. The last two sections of the chapter examine the question of Luke's audience and its implications for a panegyric reading of the Sermon.

The Greco-Roman Panegyric: Speeches of Praise and Blame

The panegyric was a Greco-Roman speech of praise and blame. The word panegyric is a Latinised form of the Greek word *panegurikos* (πανηγυρικός). The word had several related nuances, from an assembly of the entire people, a solemn gathering at a festival, to a festive convocation. The speeches of these gatherings, whether prose or verse, in which praise was inherent, came to be known as panegyric or *encomium*.[6] Panegyrics have their roots in village (κώμη) festivals where poets sang hymns to gods and praised victors of the games.[7] Thus, the relationship between praise and blame and panegyrics goes far back into the history of classical antiquity. Before the genre of *encomium* was developed as an epideictic discipline, praise had always been part of the Greco-Roman world.[8] As Hilary Mackie

4 A. Duranti. 2001. *Linguistic Anthropology, A Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), p. 39.

5 Gumperz, quoted in Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology*, p. 39.

6 From the Greek ἐγκώμιον – celebration.

7 G.A. Kennedy. 2003. *Progymnasmata, Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, (Atlanta/GA: SBL Press), p. 81.

8 The poetic praise (or blame) such as that of Pindar and Bacchylides' victory odes had long been part of Greek language and culture (See L. Pernot. 2014. *Epideictic Rhetoric, Questioning the Stakes of Ancient Praise*, (Austin: University

demonstrates, as far back in antiquity as possible, the importance of public praising and blaming was evident in the Homeric depiction of Achaean and Trojan societies.[9] For example, it is said that Agamemnon often used νεῖκος (reproof or taunt) as the linguistic medium to stir the slackers among his warriors to action.[10] Thus, as a cultural paradigm, (praise and) blame acted as the language of social control in everyday life.[11] The long-standing historical importance of praise in Greek culture is re-enforced by Pindar's assertion that:

> ἦν γε μὰν επικώμιος ὕμνος
> δή παλαι καὶ πρὶν γενέσθαι
> τὰν Ἀδράστου τάν τε Καδμείων ἔριν.[12]

The *encomium* has existed **for a long time**, even before the ἔρις **(strife)** between Adrastos and the race of Cadmus (Thebans) ever happened.

By referring to the legendary Adrastos and his wars with the Thebans, which are mythological, Pindar attempts to recognise both the time-honoured and the profoundly traditional nature of *encomium* as a primordial genre. The reference also underscores the highly entrenched nature of

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of Texas Press), p. 1. It is also noteworthy that both the poetic and prose panegyrics which Pindar wrote were called *encomia*. For example, in *Pyth*. 10:53 he recites "The choicest hymns of praise (ἐνκώμὶος) flits from theme to theme like a bee." See S. Hornblower & A. Spawforth. 1996. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 18; See also F. Budelmann. 2012. "Epinician and the symposion: A comparison with the encomia" in *Reading the Victory Ode*, ed. by P. Agócs, C. Carey, & R. Rawles, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP.), pp. 173-190.

9 H. Mackie. 1996. *Talking Trojan: Speech and Community in the Iliad*, (Lanham/MD: Rowan & Littlefield), pp. 127, 136.

10 For example, Homer reports: Μενέλαος ἀνίστατο καὶ μετέειπε νείκει ὀνειδίζων…ὤ μοι ἀπειλητῆρες Ἀχαιΐδες οὐκέτ᾽ Ἀχαιοί. Menelaus arose among them and spake, chiding them with words of reviling, 'Ah me, Ye braggarts, ye women of Achaea, men no more!' Homer, *Ili*. 7.94-95. (Cf. Mackie, *Talking Trojan*, p. 83.)

11 When these speeches were given in praise of individuals or things they were called *encomium (encomia, plu.)*. See A. Gallia. 2012. "Book Review of Paul Roche, Pliny's Praise: the Panegyricus in the Roman World. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge UP, 2011", *BMW Classical Review*, 44; P.J. Miller. 2018. "In the Shadow of Praise: Epinician Losers and Epinician Poetics", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 61/1, pp. 21-41.

12 Modified translation of Pindar, *Nem*. 8.50–51. Cf. Perseus Program.

praise in Greek society. It suggests that as a cultural phenomenon, knowledge and application of the panegyric did not require the systematic analysis of subject matter and arrangement of demonstrative (epideictic) oratory, which became characteristic of the later phase in the history of *encomium*. It is, therefore, likely that, as a Hellenistic author, Luke would have been conversant with the practices of praise and blame. This viewpoint is supported by several studies, who, building on the axiomatic influence of Greco-Roman literature on the development of the New Testament, have demonstrated the likelihood of Luke's acquaintance with Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions. [13] For example, Aune has argued that the presence of cultural codes such as the *chrea*, the diatribe, the style of ancient Greek letters, the writing of biographies and the Greek novel have resonance with the way the New Testament was written.[14] It implies significant convergence between Greco-Roman literature and New Testament texts, and by implication, Luke's possible knowledge of rhetorical conventions

Beyond the New Testament generally, the relationship between Luke and Greco-Roman literature has recently received significant scholarly attention. Among major questions have been the extent to which Luke employed Greco-Roman sources and whether his use of rhetorical devices is evidence of his knowledge of the Progymnasmata or other Greek or Roman rhetorical handbooks. Denis Macdonald is representative of the scholarly interest in this area. In his comparative study of Acts and *Bacchae*, Macdonald argues that, while Luke (Lk 1:1-4) acknowledges his sources, it is by no means clear whether he had the same sources for his composition of the Book of Acts. He, however, further argues that although it is possible that Luke had literary models from the Septuagint, most of his sources must have come from classical Greek literature, in-

13 See D.E. Aune. 1998. *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press), p. 74; D.R. MacDonald. 2013. "Classical Greek Poetry and the Acts of the Apostles: Imitations of Euripides' Bacchae" in *Christian Origins and Greco*-Roman *Culture*, (Leiden: Brill), pp. 463-496; Umurhan & Penner, 'Luke and Juvenal at the Cross Roads', pp. 165-193.

14 Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, p. 74.

cluding Socrates' dialogues, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the Euripidean tragedies.[15] In another of his studies, *Luke and Virgil*, MacDonald further outlines the profound connections between Luke and classical Greek poetry, particularly Pindar's praise poetry. For example, MacDonald establishes a special connection between the experience of Jason in Pindar's Fourth Pythian Ode and that of Jason in Acts 17:1-9.[16] Other earlier studies corroborate Macdonald's conclusions on the relationship between Luke and Greco-Roman literature. For example, Outi Lehtipuu demonstrated that Luke's reference to the after-life in the parable of Lazarus and Jesus' Gethsemane prayer in which he asks to be spared the cup of suffering echoes Pindar's idea of the metempsychosis and Pindar's *Nemean Ode* 9:28ff respectively.[17] The above literary echoes suggest a shared context between Luke and his Greco-Roman literary sources. It also demonstrates that Luke had access to the cultural resources of his time, including those related to poetic and prose panegyrics.

Beyond the above discussion, the question of how far Luke was conversant with the Progymnasmata, which could determine the extent of his use of rhetorical conventions, remains a contested area. Some scholars acknowledge Luke's awareness of the progymnastic exercises.[18] Others have, however, demonstrated Luke's facility with progymnastic exercises through the critical application of progymnastic exercises on Lucan texts.[19] For example, in his analysis of Luke 11:1-13, Vernon Robins estab-

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15 Macdonald, "Classical Greek Poetry and the Acts of the Apostles", pp. 463-496.

16 Macdonald, *Luke and Virgil*, p. 48.

17 O. Lehtipuu. 2007. The Afterlife in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, (Leiden: Brill), p. 75.

18 C.M. Parsons. 2003. "Luke and the Progymnasmata: Preliminary Investigations in the Preliminary Exercises" in *Contextualising Acts - Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. by T. Penner & C.V. Stichele, (Atlanta: SBL), pp. 43-64; M.W. Martin. 2008. "Progymnastic Topic Lists: A Compositional Template for Luke and Other Bioi?" *NTS* 54, pp. 18-41.

19 A.G. van Aarde. 2019. "Syncrisis as Literary Motif in the Story about the Grown-Up Child Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52 and the Thomas Tradition)", *HTS: Theological Studies* 75/3, pp. 1-9; P. Rice. 2013. "The Rhetoric of Luke's Passion: Luke's Use of Common-Place to Amplify the Guilt of Jerusalem's Leaders in Jesus' Death", *Biblical Interpretation* 21/ 3, pp. 355-376; S.J. Stegman & D. Thomas. 2007. "Reading Luke 12:13-34 as an Elaboration of a

lishes Luke's probable acquaintance with the progymnasmatic enthymeme.[20] Mikeal Parsons has also demonstrated the relationship between Luke and the Progymnasmata. He argues that the existence of rhetorical devices in Luke, such as the *chreia*, the *fable* and *inflexion*, among others, demonstrates Luke's knowledge of the Progymnasmata and its influence on his writing.[21] However, other scholars like Adams, although acknowledging Luke's exposure to basic rhetorical training, are cautious of the third evangelist's sophistication in rhetorical devices.[22]

Although Luke's level of education and the extent to which he acquired some rhetorical education remain contested by such scholars as Adam, the fact that he had some basic knowledge of rhetorical conventions cannot be ignored. Evidence from other studies and the Gospel itself demonstrates Luke's sufficient facility in rhetorical practices. For example, Kennedy has rightly argued that in the Third Gospel, Luke maintains a persistent polarisation starting from the *proem* and continuing throughout the epilogue: some are blessed and some cursed, some will harken, and some not, some built on a rock and some without a foundation yet why this should be so, no explanation is given.[23] Kennedy's argument finds support in Luke's use of conditional particles between the protasis and apodosis of the makarisms and woes, which creates enthymemes. An enthymeme is an argument used in oratorical practice in which one premise is not explicitly stated.[24] By presuming the premise, for example, 'blessed are the poor' (v. 20b) as self-explanatory or leaving the conclusion such as

Chreia: How Hermogenes of Tarsus Sheds Light on Luke's Gospel", *Novum Testamentum* 49/4, pp. 328-352.

20 V. Robbins. 1989. "From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1-13" in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honour of Joseph B. Tyson*, ed. by R.P. Thomson & T.E. Phillips, (Macon/GA: Mercer UP), pp. 191-214.

21 Parsons, "Luke and the Progymnasmata", pp. 43-64.

22 Cf. S.A. Adams, 2016. "Luke and Progymnasmata: Rhetorical Handbooks, Rhetorical Sophistication and Genre Selection" in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity, LNTS Series* 533, ed. by A.W. Pitts & M.R. Hauge (Eds), (London; Bloomsbury T&T Clark), pp. 137-154.

23 Kennedy, *NT Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 66.

24 V.K. Robbins provides a helpful discussion of Luke's use of enthymemes. See Robbins, "From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1-13", pp. 191-214.

'to you belong the kingdom of God' unexpressed, the Sermon demonstrates enthymemic rhetoric. Eric Franklin also notes how Jesus directly addresses his disciples as the poor, hungry, weepers and excluded. Yet, although many within the community were destitute, not all the disciples were of this status.[25] Kennedy and Franklin do not provide answers to their observations. Yet there are implications behind their remarks. One such implication is that the matters Jesus raised were more than literal. The issues raised symbolise something profound and reflect the book's rhetorical style. The above rhetorical sophistry in the Gospel places Luke among the best of his time who were conversant with Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions.

It is, therefore, likely that due to the significance of speeches in the Greco-Roman world, the rudiments of this practice could have been transferable and adaptable to new conditions, especially with the development of new voluntary associations among which were the early Christ groups that became widespread across the Greco-Roman world.[26] Some scholars have demonstrated Luke's use of rhetorical conventions such as *chrea*, maxims and fables, thereby confirming the transferability and adaptability of rhetorical conventions to new situations.[27] Similarly, it can also be observed that Luke's depiction of Paul's use of rhetorical conventions in

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25 E. Franklin. 2001. "Luke" in *Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. by John Barton & John Muddiman, (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 934.

26 See R.S. Ascough. 2002. "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations" in *Community Formation in the Early Church and the Church Today*, ed. by R.N. Longenecker, (Peabody/MA: Hendrickson), pp. 4-19; J.S. Kloppenborg. 1996. "Collegia and Thiasoi: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership" in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. by J.S. Kloppenborg & G. Stephen, (New York/London: Routledge), pp. 16-30.

27 F.R. Hock. 2003. "The Parable of the Foolish Rich Man (Luke 12:16-20) and Graeco-Roman Conventions of Thought and Behaviour" in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honour of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. by J.T. Fitzgerald, T.H. Olbricht, & L. Michael White, (Leiden: Brill), pp. 181-196; N. Klyne. 2008. "Prophets, Parables and Theologians", B*ulletin for Biblical Research* 18/1, pp. 45-77; T. Penner, 2012. "The Progymnasmata and Characterization in Luke's Parables: The Parable of the Rich Fool as a Test Case", *PRS* 39, pp. 349-360; Y. Yan. 2012. "The Rich Ruler (Luke 18:18-30) and *Chreia* Rhetorical Practice in Roman Empire – Luke's Strategy to Exhort the Rich Ordo in Roman Society", *Asia Journal of Theology* 26, pp. 3-28.

the Areopagus speech (Acts 17:16-34) demonstrates his facility with rhetorical conventions. Beyond the Greek East, praise and blame were also an inseparable component of the Roman West's culture, both in the political arena and everyday life.[28] Therefore, as a gentile author living under a Roman political system and a hellenistically influenced culture, Luke could likely have acquired basic working knowledge of rhetoric and the conventions of public praising and blaming.

Makarism as Epideictic *Topos*

Proposing a panegyric reading of the Sermon on the Plain also demands demonstrating how the Sermon's makarisms fit into the Greco-Roman panegyric framework and their contribution to the function of the Sermon in its original social context. To begin with, makarisms (Gk. Μακαρισμόί or Latin *beatitudines*) were part of the language of Greco-Roman culture.[29] They represented the broader form of congratulation or compliment for good behaviour.[30] Several adjectives such ὄλβιος, εὐδαίμων, μακάριος and their cognates were used in makarisms construction.[31] The corresponding Latin adjectives were *felix*, *beatus*, *fortunatus*, and their cognates.[32] The makarism extolled the good fortunes of a person or exalted the person

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28 It is said that the competitive mind-set of upper classes in such arenas as the senate and the court, provides further evidence for the independent development of Latin oratory and epideictic. The most outspoken Latin orators, whose contribution took Latin oratory to another level were Cicero and Quintilian. See William J. Dominik & Christopher Smith, 'Introduction: Praise and Blame in Roman Oratory', in *Praise and Blame in Roman Oratory*, ed. by C. Smith & R. Covino, (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales 2011), pp. 1-15.

29 The word *beātitās/ beatitūdo* refers to supreme happiness. See James Morwood. 1994. *Oxford Latin*, (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 22.

30 Hornblower & Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 914.

31 A basic makarism was constructed from an adjective or verbal noun followed by relative or an indefinite pronoun. Occasionally this was also followed by the reason for attaining that status. E.g. μακάριος, ὃς ἔχεις καὶ πεδὰ μέγαν κάματον λόγων φερτάτων μναμήϊ' - 'blessed are you, who have, even after great hardship, a memorial of the best words.' Pindar, *Pythian*, 5.60., tr. D.A. Svarlien, Perseus Program, URL.

32 Typical Latin *beatitudines* started with the formula *felix qui*, *beati qui*, and *fortunatus qui*, e.g. *Felix, qui potest rerum cognoscere causas*, "blessed is he who knows the cause of things", Vergil, *Georgics*, 2.490-494, tr. J.B. Greenough.

(themselves) for the good fortune that they have had.[33] Makarisms also had a myriad of settings. They were used in the family in connection with happy occurrences, and the school in which the happiness of the observant was praised. [34] In every context the makarisms constituted the affirmation of values the community wished to validate.[35] Makarisms were also a significant feature of the victory odes. For example, Pindar's *Olympian,* a collection of Pindar's *epinicia,* effectively used makarisms.[36] Makarisms were also used in cultic settings. For instance, Eulesian mysteries used makarisms to encourage participation in their rites.[37] Sullivan argues that as used by poets, the makarisms referred to earthly felicity, but when the mysteries came, they took on sacred meanings and became ἱερόί λόγοί (sacred words) with promises of future bliss based on present religious experience.[38] It can be observed that in all their various settings makarisms had their context in praise.

Similarly, the Greco-Roman woe had its context in blame. The Greek οὐαί and the Latin *vae* or hue were the indeclinable interjections used in

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33 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 632.

34 See F. Bovon. 2002. *Luke,* A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), p.222.

35 See Bovon, *Luke*, p. 222.

36 For example, in his praise of Arcesilas of Cyrene's 462 BC Chariot race victory, Pindar says: μακάριος, ὃς ἔχεις καὶ πεδὰ μέγαν κάματον λόγων φερτάτων μναμήϊ (Pindar, *Pyt*. 5.60)·blessed are you, who have, even after great hardship, a memorial of the best words (Pindar, *Pyt*. 5.60). Similarly, in *Olympian* 7 he says: ὁ δ᾽ ὄλβιος, ὃν φᾶμα ι κατέχοντ᾽ ἀγαθαί. ἄλλοτε δ᾽ ἄλλον ἐποπτεύει Χάρις ζωθάλμιος (Pindar, *Pyt*. 7.10) 'That man is prosperous who is encompassed by good reports. Grace, which causes life to flourish, looks with favour now on one man.'

37 For examples, one of Sophocles''s fragment declares: ὡς τρισόλβιοι κεῖνοι βροτῶν, οἳ ταῦτα [δερχθέντες] τέλη μόλωσ᾽ ἐς Ἅιδου· τοῖσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεῖ ζῆν ἔστι, τοῖς δ᾽ ἄλλοισι πάντ᾽ ἔχειν κακά (TGF *Frag*. 837). Three times happy are those mortals who have seen these rites and then descended into Hades, for there life is only for them, and all others experience everything bad. Similarly, Pindar argues: ὄλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν κεῖν᾽ εἶσ᾽ ὑπὸ χθόν᾽· οἶδε μὲν βίου τελευτάν, οἶδεν δὲ διόσδοτον ἀρχάν (Pindar, *Frag*. 137a, tr. William H. Race) Blessed is he who sees them (or those things) and goes beneath the earth; he knows the end of life and knows its Zeus-given beginning.

38 F.A. Sullivan. 1961. "Some Virgilian Beatitudes", *The American Journal of Philology* 82/4, pp. 394-405.

the woe construction.[39] Other negative adjectives such as δειλος, ἄθλιος or κακᾷ were also used in woe construction. They represented the antithesis of happiness.[40] The word οὐαί signified the experience of Greek κακία (badness), which had a sense of ill-fatedness and misery.[41] The woe was qualitatively measured as the opposite of ἀρετή and therefore associated with cowardice, sloth, moral badness, wickedness and vice.[42] Such a life was associated with shame and, therefore, to be pitied. Thus, Epictetus' declaration, οὐαί μοι διὰ τὸ παιδάριον, διὰ τὸν ἀδελφόν, οὐαὶ διὰ τὸν πατέρα,[43] 'woe unto me for my child, for my brother, for my father,' represents a typical Greco-Roman expression of shame.

It was also not uncommon to have a makarism and woe in the same expression. An example of a Greco-Roman antithetical makarism can be gleaned from the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles. In one of his fragments, he says:

> ὄλβιος ὁς θιεῶν πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον δειλός δ' ὧ σκότοεσα θεῶν περί δόξα μὲμηλεν.[44]
> Blessed is the man who has gained the riches of divine wisdom; wretched he who has a dim opinion of the gods in his heart.

It is evident from the example that makarisms and woes had their contexts in praise and blame, respectively. Like praise and blame, the makarism and woe were vehicles for transmitting honour and shame in the Greco-Roman world. The relationship between makarisms and woes and honour and shame are also confirmed by K.C. Hanson's cultural analysis of the Matthean makarisms. Hanson successfully demonstrated that makarisms and woes belong to a word-field and value system of honour and shame. From this, he translated Matthews's μακαριός and οὐαί as 'how honourable' or 'how shameful', reflecting the honour and shame culture to which

39 BDAG. 2000. p.734; Morwood, *Oxford Latin*, p. 182.
40 In the LXX they were used as a rendering of the Hebrew hoi and were therefore associated with indictment, condemnation or lament. See E. Gerstenberger. 1962. "The Woe Oracle of the Prophets," *JBL* 81, pp. 249-263.
41 BDAG, p.500.
42 LSJ, κακία, κακός, Perseus Program, URL.
43 Epictetus, *Discourses* 3:19, tr. G. Long.
44 Empedocles, *Frag*. 132, tr. Hellenic Library, URL.

they correspond.[45] Hanson's reference to the honour and shame value system, like the other studies above, places makarisms and woes not just within the word field of honour and shame but also in the context of praise and blame.

With the development of the epideictic genre, the congratulatory or complimentary forms of makarisms became useful as a form of *topos* in an *encomium*. In the Progymnasmata, a *topos* was the language that ampliflied something acknowledged as either at fault or a brave deed.[46] It is related to the proemium (proem), a series of statements made at the beginning of a speech as felicitations.[47] Aristotle underscores the relationship between makarisms and the epideictic *topos* when he says:

> μακαρισμὸς δὲ καὶ εὐδαιμονισμὸς αὐτοῖς μὲν ταὐτά, [τούτοις] δ᾽ οὐ ταὐτά, ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ ἡ εὐδαιμονία τὴν ἀρετήν, καὶ ὁ εὐδαιμονισμὸς περιέχει ταῦτα.[48]
> Blessing and felicitation are identical with each other, but are not the same as praise and *encomium*, which, as virtue is contained in happiness, are contained in felicitation.

Aristotle's reference above suggests that although makarisms have their context in praise, they do not constitute praise. Yet, as he postulates, makarisms could also be used as felicitation or as a *topos* in an *encomium*. There is literary evidence of the use of makarisms as either epideictic *topos* or felicitation in Greco-Roman panegyric, which supports the above analysis. For example, Aristotle refers to Gorgias's encomium to the people of Elis starts with Ἦλις, πόλις εὐδαίμων, 'Elis, blessed city.'[49] Further, the *encomium* of Doscoros starts with Ὄλβιε, πανόλβιε τῷ γένει, 'Blessed, and truly blessed for your birth.'[50] A mere felicitation or *topos* that is virtually identical to the one above but without a makarism is found in Gorgias'

45 K.C. Hanson, 1996. "How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew's Makarisms and Reproaches", *Semeia* 68, pp. 81-111.
46 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, p. 206.
47 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, p. 80.
48 Aristotle, *Rh*. 9.34, tr. by J.H. Freese.
49 Aristotle, *Rhe*. 3.14.12 - modified translation.
50 Quoted in R. Cribiore. 2008. "Menander the Poet or Menander Rhetor? An *Encomium* of Dioscoros Again", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 48/1, p. 96.

Olympic oration, which starts with the statement, 'ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἄξιοι θαυμάζεσθαι, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες', 'worthy of being admired by many people, o men of Greece!'[51] The above examples of makarisms as *topos* demonstrate the relationship between makarisms and felicitation. On a broader scale, they also reveal the relationship between makarisms and woes and praise and blame. Such connections provide insight into the nature of the makarisms and woes in Luke 6:20-26 and their overall function in the Sermon.

The Theory of Encomia

Beyond the above traditional poetic panegyrics, Aristotle is credited with theorising and turning praise and blame into a full-fledged epideictic genre. Aristotle classified rhetoric into three different branches: deliberative, forensic and epideictic. The audience of deliberative rhetoric were the *demos*, forensic rhetoric, the judges, and epideictic the observer (θεωρός).[52] The subject matter of deliberative rhetoric is exhortation and advice, and that of forensic rhetoric is accusation and defence, while that of epideictic is praise and blame.[53] Each of the different branches of rhetoric also has its time and *telos*. Deliberative rhetoric deals with the future, and its *telos* is the expedient and the inexpedient. Forensic rhetoric deals with the past, and its *telos* is the just and the unjust. Finally, epideictic rhetoric deals with the present (although it may include the past and future), and its *telos* is the honourable and the shameful.[54] The above differences in the telos of each branch of rhetoric imply the presence of different contexts in which each branch was exercised. Although allowing for some overlaps in content and context, the assembly, law court and Forum represented the respective contexts of the three branches of rhetoric.

Among the three branches of rhetoric, epideictic rhetoric never occupied a place of significance. There were some reservations about the use

51 Aristotle, *Rhe*. 3.14.

52 The word θεωρός has several meanings from emissary, spectator and in plural (*theōros*) those present at the festival, LSJ at Pereus, θεωρός, ὁ, Perseus Program, URL.

53 A.W. Nightingale. 1995. *Genres in Dialogue, Plato and the Construction of Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), p. 94.

54 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, p. 94.

of this genre of rhetoric. Epideictic rhetoric was thought to represent 'mere rhetoric' directed at spectators or observers, the θεωροί, who were only concerned with the speaker's skills.[55] Others regarded it as showy, ostentatious, declamatory and of no practical purpose in view.[56] Aristotle held that the genre's fixation with praise made it susceptible to mixing truth and falsehood, and this, therefore, rendered it unable to distinguish the good men and the base men.[57] This concern relegated epideictic rhetoric to a third category for everything not understood to be an explicitly pragmatic or instrumental argument.[58] As a result, in Athens, the genre was for a long time understood as the province of the non-citizen who did not enjoy the privilege of speaking in the assembly or the democratic court but only spoke at festivals or in the private homes of citizens.[59] With changing times, epideictic or praise and blame, became useful in several Athenian contexts, from the assembly, the Forum, to the festival.

In the Roman West, the influence of epideictic rhetoric was facilitated by the collapse of the Roman Republic. With the death of democracy, the role of both deliberative and forensic rhetoric became significantly eclipsed. With the declining influence of the Senate, all affairs pertaining to the community were no longer the subject of democratic debate. This change altered the place of deliberation rhetoric in public affairs.[60] The epideictic genre, therefore, survived as a repertoire of theoretical processes that could be applied to almost any topic.[61] Within the empire, epideictic rhetoric became politically important for the eulogies of rulers.

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55 C.M. Sheard. 1996. "The Public Value of Epideictic Rhetoric", *College English* 58/7, p. 766.

56 M. Carter. 1991. "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric: The Case of Socrates Funeral Oration", *Rhetorica* 9/3, p. 209.

57 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, p. 107.

58 Cf. J.R Chase. 1961. "The Classical Conception of Epideictic", *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 47/3, pp. 293-300.

59 B.K. Duffy. 1983. "The Platonic Functions of Epideictic Rhetoric", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 16/2, p. 80.

60 B. Vickers. 1983. "Epideictic and Epic in the Renaissance", *New Literary History* 14/3, p. 500.

61 Vickers, "Epideictic and Epic in the Renaissance", p. 500.

These eulogies comprised both advice and statements of policy.[62] The approaches to panegyrics of Cicero, and later Quintilian, became the standard practice for the use of epideictic rhetoric in late Republican and imperial Rome.[63] The inclusion of advice in epideictic rhetoric suggests that although the other branches of rhetoric had waned in significance, some of their elements, such as advice, exhortation, and accusation, found their way into the epideictic genre.

The influence of praise and blame in ancient Greece and Rome led to the development of the theory of *encomium* and *psogos,* or their Latin equivalent[64], *laudatio* and *vituperation*. The theory, initially developed by Aristotle, was meant to be part of training in effective speaking and focussed on providing a framework for highlighting the good qualities of a person based on clearly defined criteria.[65] The criteria was later developed into the preliminary exercises of the schools, the *Progymnasmata*.[66] Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* became the standard Latin text for orations on the Roman side. The resulting *encomium* or *laudatio* (praise) developed around the topics of origin, nurture or training, accomplishments, comparison and noble death or posthumous honours.[67] Under accomplishments, the theory defined (1) deeds of the body: beauty, strength, agility, might and health; (2) deeds of the Soul: justice, wisdom, temperance, courage and piety; (3) deeds of fortune; wealth, fame, and friends.[68] On the other hand, the *psogos* or invective used the same criteria to highlight the negative aspects of an individual. The different criteria for *encomia*

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62 According to Vickers (p. 500), the importance of epideictic rhetoric is underscored by the fact that, during the empire, by Roman law, orators were chosen at Athen to teach and people were invited to listen to public lectures.

63 Cicero's *For Marcellus, For Ligarius,* and *For King Dieotarius* provide models of the influence of epideictic rhetoric in Imperial Rome.

64 The Greek ἐγκώ μ ιον means celebration.

65 G. Kennedy. 2001. "Historical Survey of Rhetoric" in *Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330BC-AD400,* ed. by Stanley E. Porter, (Boston/Leiden: Brill), p. 7; See also the work of J.L. Petersen. 2010. *Praise, Blame, and Oracle: The Rhetorical Tropes of Political Economy.* (PhD Thesis, Washington State University).

66 Vickers, "Epideictic and Epic in the Renaissance", p. 500.

67 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata,* p. 155.

68 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata,* p. 156.

were applied through four methods; the exaggeration or amplification of meritorious features, suppression of undesirable ones, favourable contrast with something else and the clever turning of an unpleasant fact into a pleasant one.[69] It is inevitable here that the method of *encomia* created the unavoidable combination of praise and blame. Praising someone's virtues created a contrast that potentially blamed or denigrated those devoid of such virtues. [70]

The use of both genres of praise and blame was common, although some orators like Polybius frowned at it.[71] For example, Cicero reports how Gorgias composed *encomia* and speeches of blame on the same subject.[72] Dio Chrysostom was also known for inserting both praise and blame into his panegyrics.[73] These examples underscore the integral relationship of praise and blame in *encomia* or panegyrics. However, as Polybius argues, although blame was a significant part of the epideictic genre and was taught as a subject of the school exercises, its significance could not be compared with that of encomia.[74] This relegated the blame genre to a second-class tier, only used at the service of praise.

Beyond orthodox *encomia*, another form of praise was the paradoxical *encomium* or adoxography. This was a unique type of *encomia* whose primary emphasis was the praise of unworthy, unexpected and trifling objects.[75] The genre applied all the legitimate methods of *encomia*. Its focus was on humbler topics such as lower animals, plants, inanimate objects

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69 A.S. Pease. 1926. "Things without Honour", *Classical Philology* 21/1, p. 27; L. Miguélez-Cavero. 2010. "Invective at the Service of *Encomium* in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus of Panopolis", *Mnemosyne* 63, p. 31.

70 Polybius, Hist. 12.26b.5.

71 Polybius called the blame genre as useless and paradoxical verbiage. See Polybius, *Hist*. 12.26b.5.

72 Cicero, *Bru*. 47.

73 Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric,* p. 65.

74 Polybius, *Hist*. 12.26b.5.

75 K.H. Miller. 1956. "The Paradoxical *Encomia* with Special Reference to Its Vogue in England, 1600-1800", *Modern Philology* 103/3, p. 145; According to Moore, the genre's name is derived from the Greek root *paradoxon,* paradox, and describes the unusual or the enigmatic. M. Moore. 1988. "Rhetoric and Paradox: Seeking Knowledge from the 'Container and Thing Contained", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 18/1, p. 15.

or topics not worthy of praise.[76] The function of paradoxical *encomia* was two-fold: refuting common *doxa* and reinforcing commonly held values. Concerning the refutation of common *doxa,* Blank argues that *adoxology* deliberately takes up positions that contradict the common sense of *doxa*.[77] The word δόξα from the root δοχός means, among other things, belief. Therefore, in an epideictic context, paradoxical *encomium* challenges commonly held beliefs about things and reality. For example, during its time, Gorgias' *encomium* of Helen provided a new conception of Helen. Most classical literature presented Helen as the leading cause of suffering in the Greek world.[78] In the *encomia* to Helen, Gorgias attempts to show that the beautiful Helen of Troy, whose adultery and flight with Paris were the proximate cause of the Trojan War, should suffer no unjust blame for the war. She is blameless if fate, the gods, logos, or *eros* (love) compelled her.[79]

Another example of paradoxical *encomia* is Libanius' *encomia* on poverty and a *psogos* on wealth in which he outlines the advantages of being poor and the disadvantages of riches. In this he challenges the conventional conceptions of poverty and wealth.[80] Beyond this, it is also said that in some cases, as part of the exercises in the schools, orators could praise the life of the beggar and the exile as ideal stations of life for all mankind.[81] In choosing the praise of the most abhorred statuses of life, orators challenged conventional thinking. The praise of unworthy objects created a

[76] The methods are (1) the exaggeration or amplification of meritorious features, (2) suppression of undesirable one, (3) favourable contrast with something else and (3) the clever turning of an unpleasant fact to a pleasant one, See, Pease, "Things without Honour", p. 27.

[77] T.G.M. Blank. 2013. "Isocrates on Paradoxical Discourse: An Analysis of Helen and Busiris", *A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 31/1, pp. 1-33.

[78] Isocrates also gave an *encomium* to Helen. See Isocrates, *Hel.* Perseus Program, URL.

[79] R. Barney. 2016. "Gorgias's *Encomium* of Helen" in *Ten Neglected Classics of Philosophy*, ed. by Eric Schliesser, (New York, online edn., Oxford Academic, 20 Oct. 2016).

[80] Libanius. 2008. Progymnasmata Models, Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric, tr. by A. Gibson, (Atlanta: SBL), pp. 277-298.

[81] Miller, "The Paradoxical *Encomia* with Special Reference to its Vogue in England", p. 146.

krisis among the audience and potentially led them to thoughtfully reconsider the value of the things they held as dear.

The other function of adoxography is to reinforce values. Hawhee argues that adoxography reinforces the importance of novelty, surprise, and revelation, which according to her, are the very stuff of wonder.[82] How did adoxography accomplish this feat? The praise of the unworthy forces the reader and listener to consider something other than, or contrary to, commonly held beliefs, attitudes, and values; it forces an audience to contemplate new knowledge and a different reality.[83] It allows for seeing things anew, bringing them up close and engaging the senses with a disposition of amazement and wonder.[84] To use Sheard's words, the new perceptions of reality move its audience toward a process of self-reflection and the creation of alternative realities and possible worlds.[85] For example, in the Sermon, or in Libanius' work, the exaltation of poverty as an ideal status could have had several identity implications for the rich and the poor, respectively. Firstly, it potentially relativised the concept of riches and in turn challenged the rich to wean themselves from an unhealthy fixation on wealth. On the other hand, it also had the potential to dissuade the poor from self-pity and enabled them not to see themselves as helpless souls.

The above analysis of traditional and paradoxical *encomium* is vital for this study. It helps put into perspective the importance of speeches in the Greco-Roman world. Such perspective highlights the function of Luke's Sermon within its original context. Also particularly significant is the existence of paradoxical *encomia* and traditional *encomia*. This double-pronged approach to praise suggests that it was possible to produce new themes and ways of praising individuals suited to a particular context. Luke's use of poverty as a topic of praise and wealth as a topic of reproach, which resonates with Libanius' rhetorical practice, demonstrates Luke's access to a rich and flexible Greco-Roman tradition of *encomium*. Luke likely adopted the approach in contextualising Jesus' message to his Greco-Roman audience (Lk 6:20-27).

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82 D. Hawheee. 2017. "Looking Beyond Belief: Paradoxical *Encomia* and Visual Inquiry", *Chicago Scholarship Online*, p. 27.
83 Moore, "Rhetoric and Paradox", p. 15.
84 Hawheee, "Looking Beyond Belief'", p. 27.
85 Sheard, "The Public Value of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 770.

The Social Settings and Function of Greco-Roman Panegyrics

The panegyrics were performed in several social contexts as speeches of praise and blame. The most traditional settings were the assembly, the forum and the festival. These social settings provided contexts in which rhetors, poets and leaders communicated important community values through praise and blame.

The Assembly

In ancient Greece and the early Roman Republic, the assembly was a gathering of citizens of the *polis*. Constituted by male citizens over eighteen, the assembly was the city's policy-making body with powers to make and execute laws. The importance of the speeches of praise and blame in the assembly is strongly tied to the development of participatory democracy in Athens and the early Roman Republic. Rooted in the tradition of contestation of ideas, democracy in Athens and Rome entailed public evaluation and choice of policies to ensure the common good for the citizens. In such settings, the praise and blame of public acts and actors became helpful as a vehicle for social criticism. Praising and blaming enabled communities to evaluate the fundamental values and beliefs that made collective political action within the democracy possible.[86] At the assembly, orators like Demosthenes, Cicero and Isocrates offered their famous Philippics (speeches of blame) and panegyrics. In their speeches, they critically analysed the status of their communities and helped their audiences to make proper judgement concerning their situations. Therefore, the rhetors provided the vocabulary capable of expressing public issues and experiences of publicness in Athenian and Roman contexts.[87] For example, Isocrates, in his call for Athens to return to rule by the *Areopagus*, argues:

> But let no one think that this eulogy is appropriate to those who compose the present government—far from it; for such words are a tribute to those who show themselves worthy of the valour of their forefathers,

[86] G. Hauser. 1999. "Aristotle on Epideictic: The Formation of Public Morality", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29/1, pp. 5-23.
[87] G. Hauser, "Aristotle on Epideictic", p. 6.

> but a reproach to those who disgrace their noble origin by their slackness and their cowardice.[88]

Isocrates's designation of his eulogy as both a praise and a reproach provides an insightful perspective to understanding the role of praise and blame as a tool for political and social analysis. Particularly striking is Isocrates' reference to 'slackness and cowardice' in relation to Athenian political action. For Isocrates, the two attitudes represented a significant departure from the traditional values of Athenian politics. Thus, through public praising and blaming, Isocrates highlighted the status of the Areopagus and its shortfalls.

The Forum

The Forum was another vital context where panegyrics were performed. The forum comprised the theatres, camps, or any other public gathering of a crowd. Within the Roman Republic and later Empire, the Forum was the site of triumphal processions and elections.[89] It was also a place where orators gave public speeches, and criminal trials and gladiatorial matches were held. Later the Forum became the seat of the Roman Senate, where important political decisions were made.[90] Apart from all the general civic activities associated with it, the Forum was a venue for fostering the common good in the Greek polis. Plato referred to the Forum as the context for the education of the citizenry.[91]

In both the Greek and Roman forum, public praising and blaming were the means through which the *polis* defined honourable and dishonourable behaviour. The determination of what was honourable or dishonourable was often contextual and reflected the social and political setting of the polis. For example, in 4th century Athens, a city emerging from the ravages of the Peloponnesian Wars, dishonourable behaviour included, among other things, the citizens' shunning of their civic duties and the

88 Isocrates, *Are.* 7.76, tr. G. Norlin.

89 D. Watkin. 2009. *The Roman Forum*, (Cambridge/MA: Harvard UP), p. 22.

90 N. Young. 1908. *Handbook for Rome and the Campagna*, (London: John Murray), p. 95.

91 Plato, *Rep.* 6.492b.

proliferation of usury.[92] For Aristotle, the practice of ὀβολοστατικὴ, usury, was not only a shameful deed (αἰσχρᾷ ἔργα) but also dishonourable and needed censure.[93] These vices presented practical civic challenges that could not efficiently be dealt with through the city's legal and administrative institutions.[94] Therefore, public praising and blaming in the forums through oratory and drama addressed to large Athenian audiences became the means through which the *Polis* attempted to limit the scope for bad citizenship in Athens.[95] Funeral ceremonies in the forum were also significant contexts for developing responsible citizens. The praise of the deceased not only inspired admiration and emulation but also appealed to the agonistic mindset of the citizens. As the deceased was praised, listeners were encouraged to compete with him for the love of the common good in the hope of meriting for themselves comparable *encomia*.[96] Thus, in the forum, rhetors used the paradigm of praise and blame as a medium of cultural self-reflection. Plato's *Menexenus* best summarises the above educational and inspiring role of *encomia*. Speaking of funeral orations, he says:

> Indeed, Menexenus, to die in battle appears to be a fine thing in many ways. For the dead man gets a noble and magnificent funeral even though he happens to be poor. And when they eulogise the city in every possible way and praise those who have died in battle and all of the ancestors who lived before us and we ourselves who are living, I myself I am greatly ennobled by their praise, Menexenus, and on each occasion I am transfixed as I listen and am charmed, so that I instantly come to believe that I have become greater and nobler and more beautiful. [97]

Although Plato's statement above was made within the broader context of his disapproval of the Sophistic abuse of *encomia*, it underscores praise's

92 M. Christ. 2006. *The Bad Citizen in Classical Athens*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), p. 19; Aristotle, *Pol*. 1258b.
93 Aristotle, *Pol*. 1258b.
94 Christ, *The Bad Citizen in Classical Athens*, p. 19; Aristotle, *Pol*. 1258b.
95 Christ, *The Bad Citizen in Classical Athens*, p. 19.
96 Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric*, p. 95.
97 Plato, *Men*. 235, tr. W.R.M. Lamb.

psychological and educational impact on its audience.[98] Plato demonstrates that the funeral oration could ennoble, charm and inspire confidence in individuals. All this suggests that the funeral orations, in which praising and blaming were integral, enabled communities to transmit virtues and honourable behaviours.

Similarly, praising and blaming were integral to Rome's political life both in the Roman Republic and later imperial Rome.[99] Cicero's *Philippics* and panegyrics embodied the critical role of the panegyric in the civic life of the early Roman Republic. In addition, like in the Greek East, the Roman *laudatio funebris* also provided a means for the re-enforcement of commonly held values. Unlike the Greek ἐπιτάφιος, which was collective, the Roman *laudatio funebris* essentially involved the celebration of a man or family and their virtues.[100] The praise, usually delivered by a young boy, included the praise of the deceased himself and an account of the careers of all his office-holding ancestors.[101] A family member or professional actor dressed in a beeswax mask and costume represented the deceased, while others in the procession wore beeswax masks of famous ancestors of the deceased.[102] In the speech, the deceased was portrayed as the moral exemplar. The moral representation helped to inspire personal devotion to virtues espoused by the dead. The virtues of the departed person culminated into what could be regarded as 'the honourable' in the community and worthy of emulation.

It can be argued that the question of what was honourable and dishonourable in Athens and Rome, as discussed above, was not unique to the two *metropoles*. The question also pointed to the broader challenges of aligning group interest with individual interest in any Greco-Roman com-

98 Plato, *Men*. 235.
99 Dominik & Smith, "Praise and Blame in Roman Oratory", p. 3.
100 I.H. Flower. 1996. *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 43.
101 I.H. Flower. 2013. "Laudation Funebris" in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History,* ed. by Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine & Sabine R. Huebner, DOI: 10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah08099, p. 3927.
102 Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture*, p. 37.

munity, including the Christian communities in which Luke would writing centuries later. Some of the vexing social questions in the Greco-Roman world involved the relationship between the rich and the poor.[103] This perennial social question is also brought up in Luke's makarisms and woes and mirrored across the Third Gospel. The stories of the rich fool (Lk 12:16-21), the Rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), the rich ruler (Lk 18:18-23) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) demonstrate the social question and the problem of the rich and the poor in early Christianity in particular, and the Greco-Roman world in general. For example, in Acts 4:36-37 and Acts 5:1-11, Luke presents Barnabas' generosity vis-à-vis Ananias and Sapphira's penny-pinching. This Lucan depiction offers valuable perspectives for understanding the social dynamics within the early Christian movement. It portrays the ambiguous co-existence of community patriotism and selfish interests, and the attempts to align individual and group interest within the early Christian community. In the Greco-Roman world, these issues were dealt with through the cultural medium of the time. The early Christian movement was also likely to adopt similar cultural mediums to deal with similar internal social problems.

The Festival

Festivals were an essential aspect of the social and religious life in the Greco-Roman world. They not only expressed the religious dimension of life but also provided the context for the re-enforcement of commonly held values. In his *Panegyricus*, Isocrates argues:

> Having proclaimed a truce and resolved our pending quarrels, we come together in one place, where, as we make our prayers and sacrifices in common, we are reminded of the kinship which exists among us and are made to feel more kindly towards each other for the future, reviving our old friendships and establishing new ties.[104]

Isocrates underpins the social-religious function of Geek festivals and their community-building implications. In the Greek context, one crucial

[103] Fuks, A. 1984. *Social Conflict in Ancient Greece,* (Jerusalem: Magness Press), p. 40; Dionysius 80:1-4 in Dionysius of Halicarnassus. 2017. *Complete Works* (Sussex: Delphi Publishing).

[104] Isocrates, *Pan.* 4.43, tr. G. Norlin.

role of the panegyric was to stir the citizens to emulate the glorious deeds of their forefathers.[105]

The structure and organisation of the festival in ancient Greece and Rome slightly differed. Greek festivals were either Pan Hellenic involving several Greek cities or festivals for single cities.[106] In classical Rome, festivals were either state-funded or sponsored by magistrates.[107] However, the primary contents of the festivals were similar across the board. A typical Greco-Roman festival featured speeches and contests. These speeches were either general festival panegyrics or the *epinicia (victory odes)*.

The Festival Speech (the Panegyric)

The festival speech, technically known as the panegyric, was an essential aspect of the Greco-Roman festival or any public assembly. It is worth recognising that the other speeches of the Greco-Roman world, such as the funeral oration or *epinician,* also fell within the bracket of panegyrics. Yet the festival speech was the most conventional panegyric. Even the etymology of the panegyric, *pan* (together) and *agyros* (assembly) demonstrates the genre's connection with the gathering of people. Thematically, most Greco-Roman panegyrics emphasised concord between the citizens of the *polis* or among Greek cities.[108] In fostering concord the panegycs focused on several issues. For example, they encouraged friendliness and discouraged hostile feelings that the Greeks from different *poleis* had for each other.[109] This emphasis was against the background of perennial conflicting visions among the Greek citizens both in the *polis* and at the Pan-Hellenic level.[110] They also dealt with the perennial question of the

105 H. Chisholm. 1911. "Panegyric" in *Encyclopædia Britannica,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), pp. 676-677.
106 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue,* p. 97.
107 Clifford Ando. 2010. "Imperial Identities" in *Local Knowledge and Micro-Identities in the Imperial Greek World,* ed. by Tim Whitmarshed, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press), pp. 17-45.
108 Lysias, *Oly. Ora.* 33.4; Xenophon, *Ana.* 1.4.4.15-16; Isocrates, *Pan.* 4.3.
109 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue,* p. 97.
110 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue,* p. 97.

problematic relationship between the rich and the poor and how to address it.[111] Using the panegyric praise and blame framework, the rhetors encouraged unity among the citizens.[112] In the Roman West, the panegyric emphasised public reflection on the identity of the host city. The emphasis involved the celebration of the founder and the city's accomplishments in war and peace.[113] Where the panegyric was given in the assembly and the forum, it emphasised public policy at the service of the *polis* or empire.

Studies have identified two functions of festival speeches: educational and ritual functions. Many epideictic theorists ascribe educational functions to festival speeches. One significant aspect of this educational value was related to epideictic rhetoric's telos. According to Hauser, the goal of rhetoric and the function of the audience were the same, *krisis* or judgement. In an epideictic context, such *krisis* eventuates from thoughtful consideration of affairs to achieve the common good of εὐδαιμονία or happiness.[114] In other words, by highlighting virtue (ἀρετή) and vice (κακία) and the honourable (καλὸν) and shameful (αἰσχρόν) within the community, the festival speeches not only afforded some insight into truth but also allowed the citizens to experience the story of the golden mean as it is lived in the community.[115] This suggests that through praising and blaming, the speeches educated the audience in the vocabulary of civic virtues.[116] The speeches communicated the principles of responsible citizenship and how a vibrant public sphere could thrive.[117] According to Dale Sullivan, by praising people, actions, and ideals that embody a culture's concept of virtue, the epideictic rhetor built an image of 'who we are.' Conversely, by blaming actions and ideas, the rhetor creates an image of 'what we are not.'[118] Thus, according to him, the image of orthodoxy is a

111 Isocrates, *Are*. 7.83, Perseus Program, URL.
112 Chisholm, "Panegyric", pp. 676–677.
113 Ando, "Imperial Identities", p. 44.
114 Hauser, "Aristotle on Epideictic", p. 12.
115 Hauser, "Aristotle on Epideictic", p. 16.
116 L.S. Villadsen, 2008. "Speaking on Behalf of Others: Rhetorical Agency and Epideictic Functions in Official Apologies", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38/1, p. 32.
117 Villadsen, "Speaking on Behalf of Others", p. 32.
118 D. Sullivan. 1999. "Identification and Disassociation in Rhetorical Expose: An

reified display of what it takes to be an insider, whereas the image of heterodoxy is a display of the excluded other.[119] Sullivan's analysis above demonstrates not only the community nature of praise and blame but also its role in forming and maintaining community values. It can also be argued that the educational function of the festival speeches provides a helpful perspective for understanding the possible role of the makarisms and woes in the Sermon. It underscores how the makarisms and woes, as aspects of praise and blame, helped define community ethos in Luke's churches. They helped the members to highlight the values that characterised the identity of members of the Christ-groups (Lk 6:20-23) and those that did not (Lk 6:24-26). In this way, the festival speech provides a plausible framework for understanding the function of the Lucan Sermon in its original social context.

Beyond its educational function, the Greco-Roman epideictic or panegyric also served a ritual function. As Carter observes, in the ancient world, the ritual was an essential part of prayers, sacrificial acts, public and family occasions and the oracles.[120] The historical relationship between the epideictic genre and ritual activities has already been established.[121] Both have their foundation in the ritual *topoi* of praise of the festival god, the city, the festival official and the local rulers.[122] It can also be observed that the ritual function of epideictic rhetoric went beyond the festival speeches. Even the funeral orations and the eulogies had elements of ritual. They both represented contexts where the community came together to celebrate their shared values. For example, concerning funeral speeches, K.R. Walters has argued that:

> The speeches shared with the locale of burial, the Kerameikos, and with the burial ceremony an important function as a boundary zone between the living and the dead, a sacred zone in which, typically, the normal and well-defined were replaced by the abnormal and the ambiguous. Indeed, for every culture, such transition areas whether geographic, social, biological or status, are deeply ambiguous, the focus of ritual,

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Analysis of St Irenaeus Against Heresy", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29/1, p. 53.

119 Sullivan, "Identification and Disassociation in Rhetorical Expose", p. 53.

120 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 211.

121 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 211.

122 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 211.

> magic or taboo where cultural oppositions are (sic) both delimited and mediated.[123]

Although Walter's reference is concerned with the funeral orations, the ritual context of the latter also holds for the festival speeches where, according to Isocrates, common prayers and sacrifices accompanied the speeches.[124] This suggests that the epideictic contexts of both funeral and festival speeches created for its participants a liminal context in which the individual came into contact with what is foreign, different or other.[125] Nightingale has this to say about the rhetorical effect of festivals within the Greek context:

> At PanHellenic festivals, people from different cities could affirm a single Greek identity based on a shared religion, language, and culture. While the traditional *theōros* (sic) (θεωρός) at a PanHellenic festival did not abandon his political identity, he participated in a religious gathering which operated above and beyond any single political ideology. [126]

Nightingle's statement demonstrates that the experience of hearing or seeing together within the context of θεωρία (contemplation) created a symbolic universe and meaning for the participants whose influence went beyond the cultic context. Kenneth Burke suggests that a significant function of epideictic speeches within a ritual context was to achieve symbolic transcendence of the sense of division among men (sic).[127] He observes that identification is affirmed by the presence of division. For Burke, identification is compensatory to division, and if men (sic) were not apart from one another, there is no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. Burke's suggestion implies that division in the community provides the

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123 K.R. Walters. 1980. "Rhetoric as Ritual: The Semiotics of the Attic Funeral Oration", *Florilegium* 2, p. 17.

124 Isocrates, *Pan*. 4.43.

125 A.W. Nightingale. 2007. "The Philosopher at the Festival: Plato's Transformation of Traditional Theōria" in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, ed. by Jas Elsner & Ian Rutherford, (Oxford, 2007; online edn., *Oxford Academic*, 1 Feb. 2010), p. 163.

126 Nightingale, "The Philosopher at the Festival", p. 164.

127 See Burke Kenneth. 1969. *A Grammar of Motives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press).

context for the ritual function of praise and blame. Understood within the Greco-Roman context, such divisions were either factional, as Lysia argued, or neglect of the vulnerable members of the community, as Isocrates and Democritus alleged.[128] Burke's argument is supported by Carter, who offers three ways the epideictic genre achieves its ritual function.

Firstly, Carter argues that epideictic through praise and blame connects its participants to the cosmos by establishing some intelligible order by connecting the participants to the ongoing creation of their culture. It shows the audience how they fit in the cosmos by establishing a transcendent principle that gives cosmic sanction to their own social order. Epideictic also engages the audience in the act of creation itself by joining them together in the founding act, the beginnings of their identity as a culture.[129] The second way praise and blame generates extraordinary knowledge is by taking its hearers out of ordinary time, by making time, in a way, sacred. Ritual theory suggests that this special conception of time creates an awareness of immortality, a sense of being outside the temporal. In doing so, it also offers its participants a different foundation of order beyond everyday perceptions.[130] The third way epideictic generates extraordinary knowledge is by creating harmony among the antinomies that characterise our lives. It has the power to transfigure the world by reuniting it. Ritual knowledge is based in part on the idea that life is a mystery, a confusing array of contraries whose unity defies logic. One of the functions of ritual, then, is to address the mystery, the contraries of life, by helping its participants discover harmony therein, an awareness of both opposition and unity that logic cannot offer.[131]

Arguably, the ritual understanding of epideictic speeches provides a unique perspective on the ceremonial function of praise and blame in the Greco-Roman context. Understood within the broader context of early Christian rituals, it sheds significant light on the function of Jesus' Sermon in the life of the early communities of Christ-followers. Three decades ago, Thomas Finn, using Hyppolytus' Apostolic tradition, examined

[128] Lysias, *Oly. Ora.* 33.4; Democritus, *Frag.* 250; Isocrates, *Are.* 7.83.
[129] Carter, 'The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", pp. 220-221.
[130] Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 223.
[131] Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 224.

the role of ritual in the survival of the early Christian movement.[132] His main contention was that Christians survived in Rome because they developed a dynamic ritual process for 'making Christians'. This process was technically called the *catechumenate*. It consisted of a condition of liminality in which elaborate rites of passage involving both action and words refashioned the very being of the *catechumen*. According to Finn, at the heart of this ritual life in Rome was the *catechumen*'s journey from the Roman society to the Christian community-a journey from the centre of the city, so to speak, to its fringes, where the Roman Christian dwelled-both literally and figuratively.[133] At the same time, although intended to refashion the very being of the catechumen, the rituals were also intended to reform all the faithfuls. The very presence of the *catechumens* provided, for the rest of the members, the ever-present embodiment of Christian liminality and the impetus to renew it. Although Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* is dated at the end of the second century, around 200 CE, it demonstrates the importance of catechesis in the early Christian movement on which Luke forms the basis of his Gospel (Lk 1:4).

Finn's argument provides a broader perspective for understanding the ritual function of the Sermon both to the new converts or inquirers like Theophilus and the rest of the members of the Lucan community. As the primary addressee of the Third Gospel, Theophilus was probably a Proto-catechumen or an inquirer, attempting to come to terms with the implications of what he was taught (Lk 1:4). The importance of ritual in the integration and formation of identity in the early Christian movement is also underscored by some studies. For example, Michael Penn, analysed the role of the 'ritual kiss' in the early church. He argued that Christian leaders constructed the ritual kiss to shape the church towards their image of an ideal community, and such construction effectively reinforced and modified social boundaries.[134] Penn indicated that the 'Christian kiss', according to Clement of Alexander, was to be 'with a chaste and closed

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132 T.M. Finn. 1989. "Ritual Process and the Survival of Early Christianity: A Study of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 3/1, pp. 69-89.

133 Finn, "Ritual Process and the Survival of Early Christianity", pp. 71-72.

134 M.P. Penn. 2005. *Kissing Christians: Ritual and Community in the Late Ancient Church*, (Philadelphia: University of Penn. Press), p. 9.

mouth.' This ritual specification helped to construct a chaste and closed community, a group that was both cohesive, at the same time, hierarchical and exclusive.[135] Penn's analysis above suggests that the kiss could include certain people in the church, exclude others, and help distinguish Christian behaviour. Similarly, in a recent study of *Ritual and Christian Origins,* Risto Uro analyses the role of ritual in the formation of the Christian movement.[136] Using John's baptism, he argues that ritual has several functions in a religious context. For example, it can generate religious knowledge by evoking exegetical interpretations or aetiological myths. It can also create cooperation in social groups by creating social identity.[137] Therefore, given the ritual importance of speeches, it is likely that the performance of the Sermon within the cultic contexts of the early Christ-groups had significant identity and moral character implications. How the Sermon could have achieved this is discussed in chapter two.

The Victory Ode

The victory ode was another significant component of the Greco-Roman festival convocation. It was performed soon after an athletic victory or in the victor's town. This genre of panegyrics came in the form of poetry or prose. Some of the most famous Greek poets, whose victory odes had long been part of the Greek language and culture, were Pindar and Bacchylides.[138] It is noteworthy that both the poetic and prose panegyric which Pindar wrote were called *encomia*.[139] Felix Budelmann states that an Alexandrian 'standard edition' of Pindar assembled by Aristophanes of Byzantium is known to have comprised one book of *encomia*.[140] In addition, Pindar also used the adjective ἐνκώμὶος for his *epinicia* (Pyth. 10:53;

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135 Penn, *Kissing Christians*, p. 3.
136 R. Uro. 2016. *Ritual and Christian Beginnings*, (Oxford: Oxford UP).
137 Uro, *Ritual and Christian Beginnings,* p. 80.
138 Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric*, p. 1.
139 For example, Simon Hornblower demonstrates that Athenaios (Frag. 573) calls Olympian 13 an *encomium*, though Pindar wrote a separate category of *encomia*. Similarly, of the epinicion odes, Nemean 13 is non-athletic but is nevertheless referred to as *encomium*. See S. Hornblower. 2006. *Thucydides and Pindar*, (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 18.
140 Budelmann, "Epinician and the Symposion", p. 174.

Nem. 1.7).[141] The similar designations for different categories of Pindar's panegyrics demonstrate the relationship between praise poetry and prose *encomium*.

The victory odes served two purposes which are important for understanding the function of the Sermon in its original context. Firstly, they represented the bestowal of honour on the victors. According to Kurke and Poulakos, through praise, the individual's victory was glorified and made to have universal appeal.[142] The praise turned the single instance of victory into a symbol of what it meant to be Greek and the ideal Hellenic citizen.[143] In this way, praise satisfied the persistent Greco-Roman male's quest for honour. The praise of the victors also inspired others to crave for honour at par with or beyond that of the victors of the Panhellenic games.[144] Secondly, the victory odes had an integrative function. As Kurke demonstrates, praise was useful for re-introducing the victor into the κοινωνία (fellowship) of good men that he had left behind to compete at the games.[145] Such re-integration was necessary because to be victorious, the patron divinity of the games had 'hosted' the athlete and bestowed victory on him as a kind of guest-gift, which made him 'other.'[146] Praise served as the victor's re-entry ritual into the community. Furthermore, the feeling of being different, while euphoric, had the potential to make the new victor proud. Thus, in a praise context, blame used as a warning helped admonish the victor against *hubris*, 'not to seek to become Zeus.'[147]

141 Budelmann has also outlined the relationship between epinicia and *encomia*: (1) They both honour an addressee, usually with explicit praise and both are composed in triads and use similar metres and dialect; (2) While *epinicia* are concerned with athletic victory, some *encomia* also mention victory, and; (3) sometimes epinicia and *encomia* were commissioned to mark the same occasion as in Bacchylides Frag. 20C, 175. See Budelmann, "Epinician and the Symposion", p. 174.

142 L. Kurke. 2001. "The Strangeness of 'Song Culture': Archaic Greek Poetry" in *Literature in the Greek World,* ed. by Oliver Taplin, (Oxford: Oxford UP), pp. 58-89; T. Poulakos. 1987. "Isocrates Use of Narrative in the Evagora: Epideictic and Moral Action", *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71, p. 322.

143 Poulakos, "Isocrates Use of Narrative in the Evagora", p. 322.

144 Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise,* p. 6.

145 Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise,* p. 5.

146 Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise,* p. 131.

147 See Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise,* p. 64. The word hubris referred to arrogance

Thirdly, for those athletes with no 'inherited excellences', the praise ceremony helped to integrate them into the continuum of victors in the city and its associated benefits. Miller has demonstrated how in Olympian 9, Pindar integrates Epharmostos of Opous, who had no family history of victories, into the community of victors.[148] For example, contrary to epinician conventions, in Olympian 9, Pindar omits the mention of Epharmosto's family. Instead, he endeavours to establish the mythological connection between the early ethnic and civic history of Lokris and Opous. In the ode, Pindar effectively tries to intricately connect the two poleis with the mythological Deukalion and Pyrrha.[149] Pindar then elevates the athletic victory of Epharmostos to the level of ethnic and civic foundations. Towards the end of the ode, Pindar declares:

> That which is inborn is always the best; but many men strive to win glory with excellence that comes from training. Anything in which a god has no part is none the worse for being quelled in silence ... this man, by the blessing of the gods, was born with deftness of hand and litheness of limb, and with valour in his eyes (sic).[150]

Without mentioning his family connections, Pindar declares Epharmostos as 'born with deftness of hand and litheness of limb, and with valour in his eyes'. Since society conceived citizenship in terms of family, the community understood Epharmostos' victory as based on inherited excellences derived from his connection with the civic history of Lokris and Opous.[151] Therefore, although Epharmostos' victory is contrary to social expectation, the community accepts him as part of the family of victors in the city.[152] Thus, praise helped to integrate the nameless victor into the polis' hall of fame.

The outlined functions of the victory odes closely resonate with the Lucan Sermon. The resonance is evident in the fact that both have their

arising from pride of strength or passion. LSJ, ὕβρις.

148 Peter Miller. 2015. "From Polis to Oikos: Ideology and Genealogy in Pindar's Olympian 9", *Sillecta Classica* 26, pp. 1-20.

149 Pindar, *Oly*. 9.45, Perseus Program, URL.

150 Pindar, *Oly*. 9.100-110, Perseus Program, URL.

151 Millar, "From Polis to Oikos", p. 1.

152 Millar, "From Polis to Oikos", p. 1.

contexts in the celebrations of momentous events. Firstly, while the odes celebrate athletic victories, the Sermon directly follows Jesus' choice of the twelve disciples (v. 13). The parade down the hill in v. 17, which mirrors a victory procession, culminates into Jesus' bestowal of makarisms on his disciples (vv. 20-26). This makes the Sermon's context resemble a praise ceremony in which the disciples' new status is recognised before the community (v. 27). At the same time, the disciples are also integrated into the symbolic family of the Kingdom of God (v. 20). Therefore, if Theophilus and others were new converts or inquirers into the Christ-groups, the Sermon's blessing on the disciples would have had two significant implications. It would have signified the recognition of honour and integration of the new members into the new family of Christ-groups. This approach to analysing the context of the Sermon has so far eluded Lucan scholarship.

By the Roman imperial times, the audience of Olympic festivals had become more diverse. This is evident from the fact that before Emperor Theodosius 1 suppressed the games in 394 CE, the last overall Olympic victor was an Armenian.[153] Many Christ-followers across the Greco-Roman world were likely aware of these festivals and contests and even participated in them before they became Christ-followers. Yonder Gillian demonstrated that Greco-Roman associations often replicated state activities at a private level. As a result of this tendency, numerous groups, particularly cult associations, also observed their private festivals.[154] This practice suggests that Greco-Roman values and modes of thinking often found their way into various associations and cults across the Greco-Roman world. While the Easter Festival in the early church had its roots in the Jewish paschal, the Christian adoption of the festival would have been in tandem with Greco-Roman associations' replication of state festivals.

Characteristics of Panegyrics

Three characteristics of panegyrics provide a framework for establishing the audience of the Sermon and, by implication, that of Luke's Gospel.

153 Tony Perrottet. 2004. *The Naked Olympics, The True Story of Ancient Games*, (New York: Random House), p. 190.

154 Y. Gillihan. 2012. Civic Ideology, Organisation and Law in the Rule Scroll, (Leiden: Brill), p. 295.

Firstly, the distinctive and most pervasive feature of a panegyric was the combination of praise and blame with the advice found in deliberative rhetoric.[155] A few illustrations lend weight to this observation. In his first speech before the Peloponnesian War, Pericles' both blamed the Lacedaemonians and praised of Athenian superiority. He finished the speech with an exhortation to go to war.[156] The same was true of Isocrates' *Panegyricus*, given at a Panhellenic festival. It combined the exhortation to the Greeks to unite against 'the common enemy, the Persians' and an invective against discordant Greek cities such as Sparta.[157] Similarly, in his *Panathenaicus*, although addressed to Athens only, Isocrates devoted himself to the praise of Athenians and the censure of the Spartans.[158] The practice of combining praise and blame was not limited to festival orations. Other orators, such as Cicero, praised or criticised their audience whenever they could or, in some cases, implicated anonymous henchmen whom nobody could identify.[159] Praise and blame are also prevalent in Pindar's and Bacchylides' victory odes.[160]

During the Roman imperial period, the panegyric praise served as admonitory guidance for the emperor and new senators.[161] It was given by senior senators like Cicero and was useful for integrating new senators into the ranks of Roman politics. For example, it is reported that Cicero praised the consuls-designate for 43 BCE, A. Hirtius and C. Vibius Pansa, even before they entered office. He praised them for their apparent concern for the *res Republica*, although he (Cicero) was unaware of the two men's republican attitudes.[162] His praise of the two consuls-designate was

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155 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, p. 97.

156 Thucydides, *Hist.* I.139-146.

157 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, p. 97.

158 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, p. 98.

159 See G. Manuwald. 2011. "The Function of Praise and Blame in Cicero's Philippics" in *Praise and Blame in Roman Republican Rhetoric*, ed. by Christopher Smith & Ralph Covino, (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales), p. 208; A.L.T. Bergren. 1989. "The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: Tradition and Rhetoric, Praise and Blame", *Classical Antiquity* 8/1, pp. 1-41.

160 See Pindar, *Pyth*. 1.95; Bacchylides, *Epi*.1.190.

161 P. Roche. 2011. "Pliny's Thinking: An Introduction to the Panegyricus" in *Pliny's Praise, Panegyricus in the Greco-Roman world*, ed. by P. Roche, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), pp. 6-7.

162 G. Manuwald, "The Function of Praise and Blame in Cicero's Philippics",

meant to commit them to a policy favoured by him.[163] The panegyric helped inculcate the values a newly ennobled member of the senate wished to be seen to endorse.[164] In this case, praise was akin to urging a course of action.[165]

Secondly, panegyrics had specific audiences. They were not random speeches directed at unknown audiences. Their limited audience was defined by the community context of the assembly, the forum and the festival. In some cases, panegyrics were directed at individuals. For example, Isocrates' panegyric of Evagoras was intended for the latter's son Nicocles.[166] Cicero's panegyrics, such as *For Marcellus, For Ligarius* and *For King Deiotarus,* were directed at Julius Caesar.[167] The same was true for Pliny's *Panegyricus* for Emperor Trajan.[168] Thus, the addressees of panegyrics were either a community or an individual. In every case, praise had either an educational or patronal function. It represented a veiled request or demand for a particular social orientation or action. Cicero's panegyrics on Caesar represent the best illustration of the patronal function of praise. In *For Marcellus*, for example, Cicero begins by showering praise on Caesar for demonstrating mercy to Marcellus, who had supported Pompey during the civil war.[169] He brands Caesar's clemency as unbelievable and classifies Caesar's mercy as resembling that of the gods. However, towards the end of the speech, Cicero begins to introduce proposals for the future. In what Braund calls 'from praise to program', he lays a program of action for Caesar, setting up courts of law, restoring confidence, controlling passions, promoting population growth and binding together with stringent laws everything that had disintegrated and been dismantled.[170]

p. 208.

163 S.M. Braundi. 1998. "Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric" in *Propaganda of Power*, ed. by Mary Whitby, (Leiden: Brill), p. 69.

164 Roche, "Pliny's Thinking", pp. 6-7.

165 Sheard, "The Public Value of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 780.

166 Isocrates, *Eva*. 9.1.

167 Z. Crook. 2004. *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), p. 121.

168 Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, p. 121.

169 Braund, "Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric", p. 69.

170 Braund, "Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric", p. 69.

The third characteristic of panegyrics is that their audience and context determined both their content and orientation. As Nightingale notes, the orators tailored their speeches to different audiences at different festivals.[171] Beyond specific audiences, Jehne argues that it was also not uncommon for an orator speaking in front of a large audience to blame only people who were absent or small minorities who were present.[172] The relationship between panegyric and specific audience and audience-determined themes emanates from the fact that epideictic speeches are usually preoccupied with the present. They take their subject and form from present actions or ceremonies in which they are embedded and, therefore, often serve to assess where people are as a community.[173] As Hauser has argued, the epideictic genre displays honourable deeds and asks its audience to witness what appears before them.[174]

The characteristics of panegyrics shed significant light on the nature and function of the Sermon in its original literary context. As already argued, the Sermon displays a structure that combines makarisms and woes in vv. 20-26 and exhortation in vv. 27-49. This structure corresponds with the panegyrics' combination of praise, blame, and exhortation. It underscores the panegyric function of the Sermon in its original social context.

The Question of Lucan Authorship and Audience

The authorship of the Gospel of Luke remains contested. However, this book, like most recent studies, holds that the author is Luke, the companion of Paul (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phil. 24).[175] The same Luke authored the Acts of the Apostles. In addition, the question of Luke's audience (and even of the other Gospels) remains contentious.[176] Yet, the majority view

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171 Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, p. 89.

172 Martin Jehne, 2011. "Blaming the People in Front of the People" in *Praise and Blame in Roman Republican Rhetoric*, ed. by Christopher Smith & Ralph Covino, (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales), pp. 111-125.

173 Villadsen, "Speaking on Behalf of Others", pp. 25-45.

174 Hauser, "Aristotle on Epideictic", p. 15.

175 J.R. Edwards. 2015. *The Gospel According to Luke*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans), pp. 5-8; Carrol, *Luke*, pp. 1-2; Garland, *Luke*, pp. 1-4.

176 Some scholars like W.D. Davis & D.C. Allison Jr hold that the probable existence of at least a Matthean community has somehow achieved some level of

to which this book subscribes holds that Luke's primary audience was a group of homogenous and mixed churches in a Gentile Mediterranean and Hellenistic social setting.[177] It was probably a community of churches composed of individuals from various social statuses and religious backgrounds.[178] From the contrasting tones of Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-36 and Luke 6:20-49, the communities or groups of churches were likely troubled by the co-existence of poverty and wealth amongst the membership. The non-elite would probably have been the dominant group, with some who came from the elite periphery.[179] The Hellenistic context of the audience suggests that they not only had a shared identity and a sense of belonging but also that most were conversant with the pedagogical role of panegyrics in their community. The adoption of the panegyric in Christian discourse later in the history of the early Christian movement demonstrates the influence of the Greco-Roman panegyric. Eusebius' 315 CE panegyric in

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scholarly consensus (See W.D. Davis, & D.C. Allison, Jr. 1998. *The Gospel According to Matthew*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark). See also D.C. Sim. 1998. *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), and J.A. Overman. 1990. *Matthew's Community and Formative Judaism*, (Minneapolis: Fortress). However, there are still some quarters in gospel scholarship who do not see Matthew within Judaism. For example, see Amy-Jill Levine. 2007. "Matthew and Anti-Judaism", *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 34/6, www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-173101727/matthew-and-anti-judaism, viewed on 09/12/2019. All this demonstrates the contested nature of gospel audiences and the different perspectives adopted by different scholars.

177 It needs to be observed that although the question of Luke's audience has over the centuries been a subject of a heated debate, recent trends in Lucan scholarship seem open to the possibility of a specific Lucan audience. For example, while acknowledging the difficulty of establishing a Lucan audience, most scholars agree that the Lucan audience was a mixed church in a Hellenistic context. See Carrol, *Luke*, p. 2; H. Moxnes. 1994. "The Social Context of Luke's Community", *Interpretation* 48, pp. 379-389; J.M. Creamer et al. 2014. "Who Is Theophilus? Discovering the Original Reader of Luke- Acts", in *Die Skriflig* 48/1, p. 7; R. Tannehill. 1996. *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), p. 24.

178 Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 24; P.F. Esler. 1987. *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*, Monograph Series, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), p. 183.

179 Moxnes, "The Social Context of Luke's Community", p. 387.

Tyre and his 335 CE *Tricennial Orations* to Constantine, although far removed from Luke's time, represent the trajectory of Christian adoption of the Greco-Roman panegyric.[180] It demonstrates the continuing relevance of the panegyric in the early Christian movement beyond its adoption by the author of Luke's Gospel.

However, while some convergence exists on the nature of the possible recipient of the Gospel, the identity of Theophilus remains contested. Views range from whether he was a new convert under instruction or he had only expressed interest in Christianity.[181] Some suggest that he was a symbolic (literary) figure representing all those who love God. Evans, Green and Tannehill believe that the word κατηχέω (instruct) could refer to formal instruction and that Theophilus, having undergone instruction, needed additional instruction.[182] It can be argued that the fact that the Third Gospel is founded on the κατήχησις (catechesis) received by Theophilus (Lk 1:4) is a pointer to the presence of new converts, including Theophilus in the Lucan churches. However, the use of the word κατηχέω predates the Lucan usage above. Very early in the first century, Paul uses κατηχέω (Rom. 2.18; 1 Cor. 14:19; 2 Cor. 17:1; Gal.6:6 and διδάσκω or διδάσκαλος (to teach or teachers) (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4.11). Although the word κατηχέω has the general sense of 'telling a story', Paul uses the term as a technical term for Christian instruction.[183] It is, therefore, possible that Paul's language demonstrates the initial development of structured instruction within the early Christian movement. It follows that Luke, writing after Paul, was probably responding to the developing practice of

180 For example, in 315 CE, Eusebius of Caesarea at the request of Bishop Paulinus of Tyre delivered a panegyric to a new church building at Tyre. Similarly, in 335 CE, in the thirtieth year of Constantine's reign Eusebius also delivered a panegyric to Constantine, celebrating the piety and faith of the emperor. The *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini*, as it was popularly known, extolled the virtues of Constantine and his achievements as an ideal Christian emperor. See also other works such as C. Smith. 1989. "Christian Rhetoric in Eusebius' Panegyric at Tyre", *Vigiliac Christianae* 434, pp. 226-246; A.H. Drake. 1976. *In Praise of Constantine, A Historical Study and New Interpretation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations,* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

181 J.B Green. 1997. *The Gospel of Luke,* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans), p. 45; Evans, *Luke,* p. 20; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20,* p. 12; Tannehill, *Luke,* p. 35.

182 Green, *Luke's Gospel,* p. 45; Evans, *Luke,* p. 20; Tannehill, *Luke,* p. 35.

183 Kittel, TDNT, 1965, p. 639.

giving instructions to new converts as preparation for baptism,[184] an important ritual in the early Christian movement.

However, if κατηχέω can be understood as telling a story, then it is possible to conceive Theophilus as an inquirer who needed more information. J.M. Creamer, A.B. Spencer, and F.P. Vijoen, after a lexical and grammatical analysis of Lk 1:1-4, argued that it is likely that Theophilus had an interest in Christianity but needed more teaching and factual verification.[185] Therefore, whether as a convert or an inquirer, the aorist passive verb, κατηχήθης (having been taught) (Lk 1:4), implies that Theophilus had been or was still under instruction. In the Greco-Roman context, the integration of newcomers into foundation stories involved the presentation of an *encomium* of the founder, the community's succeeding heroes and the community's values.[186] It can also be observed that in Luke 1:1, the authors of the Third Gospel declares his intent to retell the story of Jesus and the values he espoused. This intent to retell echoes Isocrates' admonition of other orators. In the *Panegyricus*, Isocrates urged against shunning the subjects upon which others have spoken before but instead trying to speak better than them.[187] Thus, in the spirit of Isocrates, Luke is determined to retell the story of Jesus, even after others had already written (Lk 1:1-4). This retelling was necessary for integrating Theophilus (including all those interested in the new movement) into the founding myth of the early Christian movement.

184 Kittel, TDNT, p. 639.
185 Creamer, Spencer & Vijoen, "Who Is Theophilus?", p. 7.
186 See Wilson, "Urban Legends", pp. 77-99.
187 Although Luke does not intend to surpass the other written traditions, the similarity in thought between Isocrates' statements in 4.8 and Luke 1:1-3 suggests the Greco-Roman context of the Third Gospel and the Sermon in particular (Isocrates, *Pan*. 4.8).

CHAPTER 2
IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF POVERTY AND RICHNESS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD AND THE SERMON

Introduction

The Greco-Roman context in which the early Christian movement emerged was a highly structured society where social identity was an important factor in social relationships. Individuals were either Roman citizens or Barbarians, Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor (cf. Gal. 3:28; Acts 22:25-28). All these social classifications had important identity implications for those who belonged to these social groups. Such implications included their self-understanding and how they related with those belonging to the other social groups. This chapter examines the relationship between poverty and riches within the context of identity politics. It argues that when the Sermon is read against its Greco-Roman context, it shares characteristic themes and nuances that have implications for the identity of its original audience. After a brief discussion of social identity theory and group processes in the Greco-Roman context, the chapter examines the identity dimensions of poverty and riches in the Greco-Roman world and how they resonate with the value system inculcated in the Sermon. Secondly, the chapter analyses the symbolic function of Jesus' appointment of the disciples on the mountain (Lk 6:13), the identity-forming motifs that underlie the central thrust of the Sermon, and their implications on the identity of poor and rich disciples among the churches Luke was writing for. All this examination is done within the context of social identity theory and its implications on interpersonal relations in socially diverse groups.

Social Identity and Status in the Greco-Roman World

Identity and status were important social categories in the Greco-Roman world. Not only did they determine individual or group self-understanding, but they also affected people’s interpersonal and intra-group interactions. In examining the relationship between social identity and status in the Greco-Roman world it is essential to explain what is meant by social identity and status. There are several related dimensions in the definitions of identity in literature. At a basic level, identity can be understood as the everyday word for peoples' sense of who they are.[1] It refers to a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some essential character with others.[2] The definitions suggest that self-awareness, an individual's or that of a group is fundamental to identification and, by implication, what it means to be human. This identification can be individual or collective. Where this identification is collective, it becomes a social identity, a dimension of an individual's self-image which emanates from the social category to which he or she perceives to belong.[3] Collective identity entails people's sense of what, who or where they belong.

Social identity is best explained through Henri Tajfel and C.J. Turner's social identity theory.[4] Tajfel and Turner argued that simply recognising that one belongs to a specific group is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favouring the 'in-group.' According to them, people tend to classify themselves into groups to establish a positive sense of value for themselves. One of the ways this classification is accomplished is by distinguishing their group (in-group) from other groups (out-groups).[5] At the heart of the social identity theory is the influence of group membership on an individual's self-image and its impact on his or her relationship with others within the group and with those outside.[6] This act, by implication, results in the generation of 'otherness', the differentiation of people according to specific categories and characteristics. While social identity connotes an individual's sense of belonging to a group, status is the level

1 P. Djite. 2006. "Shifts in Linguistic Identities in a Global World", *Language Problems and Language Planning* 30/1, p. 6.

2 E. Erikson quoted in R. Spears. 2011. "Group Identities: The Social Identity Perspective" in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, ed. by S. Schwartz, K. Luyckx & V. Vignoles, (New York: Springer), p. 265.

3 Baker, "Social Identity and Biblical Interpretation", pp. 129-138.

4 H. Tajfel & J.C. Turner. 1986. "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour" in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. by W.G. Austin & S. Worchel, (Monterey/CA: Brooks/Cole), pp. 33-47.

5 Baker, "Social Identity and Biblical Interpretation", pp. 129-138.

6 M. Bamberg, A. De Fina & D. Schiffrin. 2011. "Discourse and Identity Construction" in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, ed. by S. Schwartz, K. Luyckx & V. Vignoles, (New York: Springer), p. 3.

of social value a person is considered to possess.[7] An individual's conception of their worth influences the social company they keep and, by implication, their relationship with the social 'others'. Although social identity theory is a modern concept, its findings are relevant for understanding inter and intragroup processes in diverse communities across time and space. Because of its ability to explain group behaviour in various contexts, social identity theory has been adopted in several human sciences, including biblical studies.[8] It helps to shed light on group processes in the communities where the biblical texts originated, and which may have influenced their contents.

Particularly important for our study is the role of status in the Greco-Roman world and its influence on social relations. Studies have demonstrated that honour and status were intrinsic aspects of what it meant to be an individual in the Greco-Roman world.[9] For example, concerning status, Pliny argued that the essential factors that make life worth living were 'a good conscience, an excellent reputation, and great influence.'[10] Notably, these qualities, which were a function of origin, nurture or training and accomplishments, were not the privilege of every Greco-Roman individual. [11] Pliny's thinking reflected class and status definition for those who belonged to the higher class of society. All this suggests that those who did not possess the specific group attributes would naturally be defined as the others. Unfortunately, the tendency to differentiate individuals based on status is endemic to humanity. Where different statuses found themselves in a single grouping, like in Christ-followers' communities, this was bound to cause acute intra-group challenges.

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7 Baker, "Social Identity and Biblical Interpretation", pp. 129-138.

8 Cf. Esler, *Conflict and identity in Romans*; Esler, "Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians", p. 10; Esler & Piper, *Lazarus, Mary and Martha*; Baker, "Social Identity and Biblical Interpretation", pp. 129-138.

9 L. Ndekha. 2021. "'I am not Strong to Dig and I am Afraid to Beg': Social Status and Status Concern in the Parable of the Dishonest Steward (Lk 16:1-9)", *HTS* 77/4, pp. 1-9; J.A. Pomeroy. 1991. "Status and Status Concern in Greco-Roman Dream-Books", *Ancient Society* 22, pp. 51-74.

10 Pliny, *Ep*. 1.12: (optimam conscientiam, optimam famam, maximam auctoritatem).

11 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, p. 155.

Social Stratification in the Greco-Roman World

As already demonstrated, the Greco-Roman world was a highly stratified society. However, for a long time, there was no scholarly consensus on the extent of social stratification in the Greco-Roman world and its relationship to early Christianity. An analysis of the Greco-Roman world by such scholars as Friesen and Longenecker provides a comprehensive approximation of the different levels of wealth and poverty in the Greco-Roman world.[12] The approximate distribution of the population on the poverty scale, according to Friesen, is indicated in the Table 2.1.

Table 2.1:
Friesen Poverty Scale[13]

PS1 Imperial elites	0.04%
PS2 Regional elites	1.00%
PS3 Municipal elites	1.76%
PS4 Moderate surplus	7%
PS5 Stable near subsistence	22%?
PS6 At subsistence	40%
PS7 Below subsistence	28%

Underneath this social stratification was the unequal distribution of resources which had implications for economic status and interclass social relations. Notably, Greek vocabulary was inherently able to categorise the different status levels. The primary terms for economic status were πλούσιος (rich) πένης, (from πένομαι, to work or toil), πενιχρός (needy), and the πτωχὸς (destitute). From the economic scale, although the πλούσιοι came in different levels at every level, the rich were the significant few

[12] J.S. Friesen. 2004. "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus", *JSNT* 26/3, pp. 36-59; B. Longenecker. 2009. "Exposing the Economic Middle: A Revised Economy Scale for the Study of Early Urban Christianity", *JSNT* 31/3, pp. 243-278.

[13] Longenecker, "Exposing the Economic Middle", p. 347.

who had more than enough to live on and did not have to work. In some of his parables (Lk 12:19, 16:1-15, 19-31), Jesus presents a picture of what it meant to be rich in the Greco-Roman world. He describes the rich as those able to hire stewards to manage their business (Lk 16:1), who have enough resources to last for years even without working, and who are, therefore, able to enjoy life with significant ease; resting, eating, drinking and making merry (Lk 12:19, 16:19).[14]

There were several ways through which people became rich in the Greco-Roman world. Aristotle mentions hard work, family inheritance, and a good name.[15] Due to abundant resources, the rich had access to many opportunities that provided them with security and power. For example, the rich could afford ἄποινα, compensation for wrongdoing or ransom to save their lives or those of loved ones[16], which in a way, gave them the privilege of relatively safe lives in the turbulent times of classical antiquity. They could also afford the ξενία, the gift of friendship or entertainment to visitors. Through gifts, they created networks of friendships. They maintained those networks by offering expensive funeral gifts[17] or paying vast sums of ἕδνα, the marriage gift (the dowry),[18] to ensure that their daughters were married off to their fellow rich. Lastly, the rich could become the εὐεργέται, benefactors[19] providing money for the games, temples, sacrifices, public dinners or provisions of wheat during a famine.[20]

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14 In order to make more wealth, the rich employed the π ένητες to work for them. See Aristotle, *Ath. Cons*. 2.1-3.

15 Aristotle, *Ath. Const*. 2.1-3; The idea of riches through a good name is alluded to in Pindar's *Oly.* 7.10. ὁ δ᾽ ὄλβιος, ὃν φᾶμαι κατέχοντ᾽ ἀγαθαί. ἄλλοτε δ᾽ ἄλλον ἐποπτεύει Χάρις ζωθάλμιος. "That man is prosperous, who is encompassed by good reports. Grace, which causes life to flourish, looks with favour now on one man." Thus, the experience of Athletic champions and the bestowal of gifts upon them by society partly explains the importance of a good name.

16 See Homer, *Ili.* 1.1-25, where the word ἄποινα is consistently used in relations to the act of saving or the ransom itself.

17 Euripides, *Tro. Wom.* 1249, Perseus Program, URL.

18 Homer, *Ody.* be 1.277 and 2.196 οἱ δὲ γάμον τεύξουσι (will make ready) καὶ ἀρτυνέουσιν (putting in place) ἔεδνα πολλὰ (many marriage gifts).

19 Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* 1122b. 20) argues that only the rich can become benefactors.

20 I.N. Arnaoutoglou. 1998. "Between Koinon and Idion" in *Cosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Athens,* ed. by Paul Cartledge, Paul Millet & Sita von Reden, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press), pp. 68-83.

In exchange, they expected to receive honour through praise, statues or political support when needed.[21]

Being Rich and its Identity Claims

In the Greco-Roman world, like in the modern world, riches were not just material endowments. Being rich had an inherent identity claim to it. As Tannehill has demonstrated, economic status in the ancient world was valued less for its own sake than as a factor in honour status. The rich stood out not because they had possessions but because they had power and honour in society.[22] Owing to their position of power and influence in society, the rich were also called οἱ γνώριμοι,[23] the notables, the οἱ διωνομασμενοι, the distinguished by name,[24] and οί δυνάμενοι,[25] the powerful. These social tags helped classify the rich as separate from the rest, belonging to and primarily responsible for each other.[26] This exclusive culture entrenched the practice of reciprocity in giving, receiving and repayment in a closed circuit of exchange based on kinship or social equality.[27] The practice not only left out the poor but also threatened the community's cohesive force. In some Greek cities like Sparta, the lavish display of wealth within social classes was disliked. For example, Plutarch reports that:

> When Cleomenes became King of Sparta in 241 BCE, he sent 80 rich senators into exile, charging them with subverting the ancient form of government. He wanted to rid Sparta of imported curses namely, luxury and extravagance, debts and usury- and evils older than those namely, poverty and wealth (sic).[28]

Plutarch's reference to the evils of poverty and wealth demonstrates the perplexing irony of the co-existence of poverty and riches within the *polis*

21 Arnaoutoglou, "Between Koinon and Idion", pp. 77-79.
22 Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 115.
23 Aristotle, *Ath. Cons*. 1.
24 Isocrates, *Aga. Loc.s*, 20:19.
25 Democritus, *Frag*. 255.
26 Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise*, p. 89.
27 Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise*, p. 92.
28 Plutarch, *Cleo*. 10.1-4, Perseus Program, URL.

and the interclass challenges it potentially posed. Cleomenes' action demonstrated his understanding of the rich's natural propensity to acquire more wealth at the expense of the poor and their inability to give without expecting anything. This attitude created a connection between wealth and greed. According to William Desmond, this attitude of the rich influenced the Greeks' negative conception of wealth.[29] It made society view wealth not so much as a material fact but far more as an ethical and political phenomenon, with individual greed as the controlling factor.[30] A comparable situation existed in the early Roman Republic between the plebeians and the patricians. Reflecting on this problem, Brutus, on the eve of the humble poor abandoning Rome, has this to say:

> Of this let many Greeks and many barbarians serve us as example, particularly the ancestors of both these men and ourselves; some of whom, leaving Asia with Aeneas, came into Europe and built a city in the country of the Latins, and others, coming as colonists from Alba under the leadership of Romulus, built in these parts of the city we are now leaving. Those who (re) moved from Troy were driven out by enemies, but we are driven hence by friends. But fare you well and lead the life you choose, you who are so unwilling to associate as fellow-citizens and share your possessions with those of humbler estate. [31]

Brutus' language of blame illustrates the problematic relationship between the rich and the poor in the early Roman Republic and the former's reluctance to associate and share with others. By the New Testament times, with the emergence of a landed aristocracy at the service of the empire, the problematic relationship between the rich and the poor increased [32] With their base in the cities, the rich owned a series of land portfolios

[29] W. Desmond. 2006. *The Greek Praise of Poverty,* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame), pp. 4-5.

[30] Desmond, *The Greek Praise of Poverty,* pp. 4-5. Although Hebrew prophets portrayed similar attitudes, their reference point was always the covenant than a general worldview. Also, Hebrew prophets did castigate the rich but not riches per se as the Greek tendency demonstrates. Hebrew prophets also rarely praised the poor. See Cf. Isaiah 5:8-23.

[31] Dionysius, *Complete Works*, 80:1-4.

[32] P. Sarris, 2013. "Integration and Disintegration in the Late Roman Economy: The Role of Markets, Emperors, and Aristocrats", *Late Antique Archaeology* 10/1, p. 177.

where tenants worked. As absentee landlords, they continued to be an exclusive club whose interactions with the poor were exclusively at the level of service, tenancy or beneficence (Lk 16:1-13 cf. Mt 23:33-46).[33] All this suggests that being rich had the identity claim of being powerful, secure and independent. It follows that creating a fictive community of socially diverse personages, including the rich and the poor, would require a new social-economic mentality among the members.

Being Poor and its Identity Claims

The economic scale in Table 2.1 also demonstrates that 40% of the Greco-Roman population were labourers (πένητες sing. πένης), and 28% were destitute (πτωχοί sing. πτωχὸς).[34] The difference between these two social classes was a matter of degree. The Greek rendering of the labourer, πένης, comes from the verb πένομαι, to work or toil. It suggests someone who has to work to live. The annual income of a labourer was 289 grams of silver a year, while the annual cost of maintaining a family was 516.352 grams.[35] This suggests that the labourer did not have enough income for a healthy existence. As Esler has demonstrated, the major problem with the urban poor was that they were employed on a daily basis, and failure to obtain work meant the labourer and his family went hungry the next day.[36] Persistent lack of work (livelihood) would inevitably drive people into debt, which, if they failed to repay, led them into debt-bondage or (slavery).

Where no sustenance was available, a labourer (πένης) descended into destitution (πτωχεία) as he became a beggar (πτωχὸς). Lexically, the word πτωχὸς originally referred to the one who crouches or cringes, suggesting a begging position.[37] The word later came to be associated with beggary,

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33 Jesus' use of tenancy parable (Mk 12: 1-9; Mt 21:33-46; Mt 25:14-30; Lk 9:9-19) reflects the extent of the relationship between the rich and the poor of his time.

34 Longenecker, "Exposing the Economic Middle", p. 245.

35 A. Bowman & A. Wilson. 2009. *Quantifying the Roman Economy: Methods and Problems,* (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 337.

36 Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts,* p. 175.

37 BDAG, πτωχὸς, p. 896.

mendicancy and homelessness, and, by implication, dependence on others for provisions.[38] This made destitution the worst experience that could ever happen to an individual.[39] However, the problem of being πτωχὸς or πένης was not only because of the personal material tragedy it represented. The status also carried an alienating stigma and identity mark towards the poor in society. For example, in his *Against Lochites*, Isocrates protests that despite the equality of the rich and poor before the law in Athens, in the administration of justice, the πένητες were often treated as second class.[40] The treatment would even be deplorable for the destitute. For example, in Euripides' play *Helen*, Menelaus, upon his return from Troy under disguise, recalls ὥσπερ πτωχὸς ἐξηλαυνόμην,[41] 'like a beggar I was driven out...' from the gate. The ostracism of the destitute may have been influenced by the perception of the destitute as hungry and suffering, therefore, in a state of dishonour. For example, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra laments how Apollo had made her bear being called a πτωχὴ (beggar), τάλαινα (suffering), λιμοθνὴς (dying of hunger), and ἠνεσχόμην, (starveling).[42]

The relationship between destitution, hunger, and ostracism in the analysis of poverty helps put into perspective Jesus' designation of his disciples as those who hunger, mourn, and are hated (Lk. 6:20-24). It demonstrates that in specific contexts, hunger, mourning, and ostracism signified different aspects of the experience of πτωχεία.[43] For example, Tannehill (p. 114) associates the status of being hungry and mourning with poverty. He separates ostracism from the rest. On the other hand, Ellis, in his analysis of Luke 6:20-26, argues that the poor, the hungry, and the cast out describe one type of person.[44] Betz also argues that hunger, weeping and ostracism are concrete situations echoed in other New Testament references such as Luke 16:19-31 and James 2:1-7.[45] It can also be argued that the apparent neglect of Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) by the rich man

38 Mounce, πτωχὸς, *TALGNT*, 1993, p. 404.
39 Ndekha, "I am not Strong to Dig and I am Afraid to Beg", pp. 1-9.
40 Isocrates, *Aga. Loch*. 20:19, Perseus Program, URL.
41 Euripides, *Hel*. 790, tr. Gilbert Murray, Perseus Program, URL.
42 Aeschylus, *Aga*. 1270-75, tr. R. Browning, Perseus Program, URL.
43 Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 114.
44 E. Ellis. 1973. *The Gospel According to Luke*, (London: Oliphant), p. 113.
45 Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 572.

and the discrimination of the destitute in James 2:17 support the relationship between poverty and ostracism. This suggests that in the Greco-Roman world, being poor or destitute, whether as a πένης (labourer) or πτωχὸς (destitute), was more than mere statistics. It symbolised powerlessness, insecurity and dependence on others, and therefore vulnerability. Thus, powerlessness arising from poverty and destitution had an identity claim to it. This understanding helps to put into perspective the way Luke uses destitution vis-à-vis riches in the Sermon and its identity implications for his primary audience.

It can therefore be argued from the above discussion that being rich or poor was more than a measure of personal abundance or lack. These economic statuses represented the polar ends of power and powerlessness, independence and dependence, and security and vulnerability. The parable of Lazarus at the rich man's gate (Lk 12:16-31) and the story of the rich ruler failing to part with his wealth (Lk 18:18-30) are symbols of the interclass chasm not just in the Greco-Roman world but also in communities like the ones Luke was writing for. The social-economic differences presented the early Christian movement with the daunting challenge of creating a community out of these polar ends. Achieving social cohesion in a community of the rich and the poor required a radical realignment of identity and social orientation of the members, especially on the part of the rich. This demand for realignment of values, especially concerning social questions, was also, among other things, a major topic in Greco-Roman panegyrics. For example, within the larger context of the problematic relationship between the rich and the poor in Athens, Isocrates highlights the social contradictions of his time. He says:

> But the greatest difference lies in the fact that 'in that day', no one of the citizens lacked the necessities of life nor shamed the city by begging from passers-by, whereas today, those who are destitute of means outnumber those who possess them. And we may well be patient with people in such circumstances if they care nothing for the public welfare but consider only how they may live from day today.[46]

[46] Isocrates, *Are*. 7.83. tr. G. Norlin, Perseus Program, URL.

In this statement, Isocrates expresses nostalgia for an old Athens devoid of the destitute. This reminiscence was, however, certainly an exaggeration, as it is unlikely there was ever a perfect society in Athens. However, by projecting a blissful image of an unverified past, Isocrates generates for himself and his audience the possibility of a future in which the relationship between the poor and the rich could be harmonious. Other rhetors like Democritus imagined the conditions under which the rich and the poor could live amicably. Democritus' proposal was that:

> When the powerful prevail upon themselves to lend to the indigent, and help them, and benefit them, herein at last is pity, and an end to isolation, and friendship, and mutual aid, and harmony among the citizens; and other blessings such as no man could enumerate (sic).[47]

For Democritus, if the rich shared with the poor, the result would be a social camaraderie expressed through numerous good things such as fellowship, friendship, mutual aid, and harmony. Here, while painting a picture of an imperfect present, Democritus projects an image of an ideal community in which the rich and the poor lived in an economic κοινωνία (fellowship) leading to social bliss. Further, Brutus' tirade against those unwilling to associate as fellow citizens and share their possessions with those of humbler estate attests to the barrage of challenges in antiquity and the constant call for a changed mindset.[48]

It is noteworthy how the Sermon echoes the spirit of Isocrates' social diagnosis and Democritus' vision of society. In its juxtaposition of poverty and riches, it is apparent that in the Sermon, Luke, like Isocrates, mulls over his community's lost paradise of Acts 2:42-47 and, like Democritus, he provides solutions on how to restore it. The near-perfect image of the community in Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-36 is a sharp contrast to the socially broken community of Christ-followers in Luke 6:20-49. The exhortation to love (v. 27) to bless (v. 28) and the imperative construction μὴ κρίνετε, 'do not judge' (Lk 6:37) point to a community which is a far cry from the ideal community in Acts chapters 2 and 4. It would, therefore, have been thought-provoking when Jesus extolled poverty over riches in

[47] Democritus, *Frag.* 255, tr. Hellenic Library, URL.
[48] Dionysius, 80:1-4.

the Sermon. Through his apparent reversal of the status of wealth vis-à-vis poverty, Jesus interrogates and relativises the conventional understanding of power and security as a source of identity for Christ-followers. Instead, he proposes weakness, vulnerability, and dependency (Lk 6:20-23), which were the hallmarks of destitution, as the guiding principles of the Christ-followers. Adopting this identity would have had far-reaching implications for the socially diverse communities of early Christ-followers. It would have made loving, giving, and not judging others the defining values of the community of Christ-followers. Besides allowing for internal social cohesion, adopting these values would have challenged the conventional ways of thinking and living in their Greco-Roman context. In this way, if put into practice, the disciples would have transformed the world around them.

The Sermon and Identity Formation

As is evident from Acts 4:36 and Acts 6:1, Jesus' movement created new relationships between different social groups. In keeping with the social identity theory, this was bound to trigger real or imagined intergroup discrimination favouring the in–group over the out-group. This tendency was bound to result in inherent sociological problems. As in every socially-diverse group, very early in the history of the movement, we notice an 'in-group' and 'outgroup' syndrome emerging in the form of Hebraic and Hellenistic identities (Acts 6:1). While the Apostles swiftly patched up the problem through representational leadership within the community (Acts 6:3), as the movement transitioned from its Jewish milieu into the heartland of the Greco-Roman communities, these social identity problems were likely to intensify and negatively impact the mission of the early Christian movement. Meeks rightly observes that while the conservatism of the Palestinian villages had preserved their diversity, as the movement spread into the cities, changes, which included manners, attitudes, and status, influenced by the Greco-Roman culture, became apparent.[49] Inherent in the common Greco-Roman culture was the kinship system, wherein the practice of reciprocity in giving, receiving and repayment in

[49] W. Meeks. 1983. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, (New Haven: Yale UP), p. 16.

a closed circuit of exchange based on kinship or social equality determined social relations.[50] It is likely that the spiritual bonds that held the early Jewish Christ-followers together in Jerusalem (primarily of Jewish ethnicity) would sag under the influence of the Greco-Roman kinship system. This challenge would be compounded by Jewish exclusivism, whose snippets and their implications on the social relations within the early Christian movement are evident in Peter's turncoat behaviour in Galatians 2:11.

The early Christian movement, cognisant of the above challenges of intra-group identities, devised ways to deal with them. Meeks argues that to maintain fellowship and its boundaries, the early church, through its catechesis, churned out fictive kinship terms with the strong language of affection and re-unification patterns, such as *brothers and sisters* (1 Cor. 2:1; Rom. 8:29), *holy people* (2 Cor. 1.1), and the *elect* (1 The. 1:2-4).[51] The aim, which Paul worked very hard to achieve, was to forge a new collective identity of the members of the Christ-groups and, in the process, underplay their old and divisive identities. For Paul, being 'in Christ' represented a new spiritual and social identity that surpassed being a Jew or Gentile, a slave or free, male or female (Gal. 3:28). Penner also argues that the narrative of the early chapters of Acts, which depicts the lack of *philia* and *philanthropy* and its resolutions, served as the basis for comparison and syncrisis in the community Luke was writing for.[52] Thus, by praising the past, the narratives provided models of how to live the Christian life in Luke's time and place. Meeks and Penner's observations highlight the New Testament texts' pedagogical role in shaping the identity questions within the early Christian movement. The texts provided the avenues through which the Christian movement ensured the integration of its diverse membership into the new family of God. As Joel Marcus puts it, the Gospels were not necessarily written as a substitute for presence. [53] According to him, they must have served the function of preserving the tradition in the face of potential death. More so, they were meant to shape

50 Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise*, p. 92.
51 Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, p. 85.
52 T. Penner. 2004. *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography, Emory Studies in early Christianity*, (New York: T&T Clark), p. 264.
53 J. Marcus, 2009. *Mark 8-16*, (New Haven/London: Yale University), p. 9.

their audiences through repeated performance of the story in the hope that its deeper secrets of structure and meaning may be revealed.[54] This would have been achieved through public reading of the texts to the Christ-followers in worship contexts. For Luke's audience, the public performance of Jesus' inaugural speech cast within the Greco-Roman framework of praise and blame would have had an important role in the re-enforcement of a common identity and shared community values.

The relationship between Jesus' appointment of his disciples on the mountain and the ensuing Sermon in Luke 6:20-49, when understood within the Greco-Roman context, offers insightful perspectives on the Sermon's identity-forming motif. Here we argue that the sequence of events leading up to the Sermon is vital for understanding the theological import of Luke 6:20-49 and its implications for the identity of Luke's primary audience. The sequence reflects the symbolic and ritual significance the author of the Gospel attached to the disciples' appointment. The symbolism would have had implications on the self-understanding of Jesus' disciples, Luke's audience, and any other subsequent group of disciples of Jesus who had access to the Sermon's text.

Following the Nazareth Proclamation, Jesus appoints only four disciples: Simon, John, James (Lk 5:1-11), and Levi (Lk 6:27-32). The final list of the disciples is generated on the mountain after Jesus' night vigil in Luke 6:13-16 and immediately before the Sermon. This presentation is unique to Luke. Inversely, in Matthew's Gospel, by the time of the Sermon, Jesus had only chosen four disciples; Peter, John, James, and Andrew (Mat. 4:18-22). Matthew's final list of the disciples comes in chapters 10:2-4. Luke's presentation of the complete list of the disciples just before the Sermon is interesting. Some scholars think that by this arrangement, Luke ensures that the thrust of the Sermon is entrusted to the whole post-Easter church, not just the inner core of selected members.[55] However, by emphasising a broader audience for the Sermon, Luke underscores the

[54] Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, p. 9.

[55] J.A. Draper. 1999. "The Genesis and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount", *JSNT* 17, p. 26.

identity-forming importance of Jesus' inaugural speech and its community-building significance, unlike Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5).

The uniqueness and significance of the Lucan sequence are apparent from the way it differs from Matthews's order of events. In Matthew (5:1), Jesus goes onto the mountain when he sees the crowds, and from there, he delivers the Sermon on the Mount. In Luke, Jesus goes to the mountain, designates his disciples, and chooses his apostles among them. Immediately after this, Jesus descends from the mountain with the disciples, where in a praise-like ceremony, he introduces them to the crowds (Lk 6:20). Luke's account of the choosing of the Twelve is likely based on Mark 13:13-19. In contrast, his healing on the level playing field is based loosely on Mark 3:7-12. According to Evans, Luke reverses the order of the Markan units to accommodate the Sermon that follows in Lk 6:20-49.[56] The above Lucan redaction makes a compelling case for understanding the Greco-Roman context of the Sermon and its identity-forming motif. It makes the whole scene akin to the Greco-Roman victory ceremonies.[57]

Two striking parallels exist between Greco-Roman victory ceremonies and the literary context of the Sermon in Luke 6:13-30. The first one is Jesus' choice of his disciples on the mountain. The conventional Greco-Roman or Rabbinic practice was that the mentored or the *talmidin* chose their mentors and Rabbis, respectively.[58] An example of philosophers' relationship with their disciples is Plotinus' search for a teacher. It is said that Plotinus searched for a philosopher mentor until he was depressed by his failure to find one. A friend of his referred him to one Ammonius. When he went to hear him, Plotinus returned to his friend and said: 'This

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56 Evans, *Luke,* p. 103.

57 When seen from the combination of the disciples and the large crowds (Lk 6:17-18) from Judea, Jerusalem and the coastal religions of Tyre and Sidon the whole scene resembles a panegyric convocation.

58 B. Scharfstein. 1980. *The Philosophers: Their Lives and the Nature of their Thought,* (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 7; Ray van der Laan. 2006. *In the Dust of the Rabbi Discovery Guide: Learning to Live as Jesus Lived,* (Grand Rapids/MI: Zondervan), p. 41.

is the man I was looking for.' [59] However, contrary to the traditional approach, in Luke 6:13, Jesus chose his disciples.[60]

Obviously, given Jesus's fame as a Rabbi (Mk 4:36-37), being his disciple was most likely to have been a sought-after status. Although many people followed him, they were not his disciples or *talmidim*.[61] One had to be chosen among many. The process resembled an ἀγών, a contest in which several individuals participated, but only a few emerged as victors. The importance of this line of thought is confirmed by the meaning of the words προσεφώνησεν (from προσφωνέω) and ἐκλεξάμενος (from ἐκλέγω (LSJ) or ἐκλέγομαι (NT Gk) in Luke 6:13. The word προσφωνέω has the sense of dedicating or addressing, as in Luke addressing or dedicating Luke-Acts to Theophilus (Lk 1:1-4; Acts 1:1). On the other hand, ἐκλέγομαι means to pick from among others or to pick something for oneself from several options.[62] In its Greco-Roman usage, ἐκλέγομαι was also used with the sense of singling out, especially of best oarsmen or leaders.[63] This understanding suggests that on the mount, the disciples won Jesus' heart

59 See Scharfstein, *The Philosophers*, p. 7. An example of philosophers' relationship with their disciples is Plotinus' search for a teacher. It is said that Plotinus searched for a philosopher mentor until he was depressed by his failure to find one. A friend of his referred him to one Ammonius. When he went to hear him, Plotinus returned to his friend and said: 'This is the man I was looking for."

60 Kittel, *TDNT,* 1967, p. 444.

61 Cf. van der Laan, In the Dust of the Rabbi Discovery Guide, p. 41.

62 LSJ at Perseus, ἐκλέγω; BDAG, ἐκλέγω, p. 305; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 616; Green, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 258; L.T. Johnson. 1991. *The Gospel of Luke,* Vol. 3, (Collegeville/MN: Liturgical Press), p. 102; Kittel, TDNT, ἐκλέγω, 1964, p. 169.

63 Xenophon, *Hel.* 1.6.19, ἐκλέξας; Plato, *Rep.* 535a. For example, in his *Hellenica*, Xenophon, reports how, when the Athenian General Conon found himself blockaded by land and sea and could not get help from Athens, he:

> ... launched two of his fastest ships and manned them before daybreak, picking out (ἐκλέξας) the best oarsmen from his whole fleet, shifting the marines to the hold of the ships, and setting up the side screens (Xenophon, *Hel.* 1.6.19).

Secondly, an excerpt from Plato's *Republic* on the selection of leaders demonstrates the contextual meaning of ἐκλεξάμενος in Luke 6:13.

and became the special ones. Understood within an honour and shame culture, the appointment of the disciples and apostles placed them within the realm of victors of a Greco-Roman contest. Although they did not physically participate in a contest, being appointed from among many as a disciple of Jesus would have been akin to victors who received praise. Part of Pindar's praise of Arcesilas of Cyrene's 462 BC Chariot race victory exemplifies the experience of the disciples.

> μακάριος,
> ὃς ἔχεις καὶ πεδὰ μέγαν κάματον λόγων φερτάτων μναμήϊ[64]
> Blessed are you, who have, even after great hardship, have a memorial of the best words.

The memorial of the best words, λόγων φερτάτων μναμήϊ, represents Pindar's eulogy of Arcesilas' victory. To achieve such a feat and thus claim the honour of such praise represented the greatest state of achievement to which any Greek aspired. This also suggests that those who were defeated experienced the opposite of honour: dishonour and its resulting loss of face. Similarly, as victors, soon after their appointment (Lk 6:13), the disciples become candidates for the celebration of honour (Lk 6:20).

The second parallel between the appointment of the disciples and Greco-Roman victory ceremonies is in Jesus' procession downhill and the ensuing praise laden-Sermon in Luke 6:20-26. In v. 17, Jesus and the newly designated and appointed disciples/apostles come down to meet the waiting crowd below.[65] The picture is that of a victory procession from the mountainside to the level place where the disciples, as the chosen victors, are recognised and integrated into the community. A. Farrer finds in v. 17 a priestly symbolism and an allusion to Moses's giving of the law.[66]

μέμνησαι οὖν τὴν προτέραν ἐκλογὴν τῶν ἀρχόντων, οἵους *ἐξελέξαμεν*.... τούς τε γὰρ βεβαιοτάτους καὶ τοὺς ἀνδρειοτάτους προαιρετέον, καὶ κατὰ δύναμιν τοὺς εὐειδεστάτους

Do you remember, then, the kind of man we chose in our former selection (ἐξελέξαμεν) of rulers?... The most stable, the most brave and enterprising are to be preferred, and, so far as practicable, the most comely. Plato, *Rep*. 535a, tr. John Burnet.

64 Pindar, *Pyt*. 5.60.

65 Nolland, *Luke* 1-9:20, p. 275.

66 Cited in E. Ellis, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 112.

Farrer's observation would make meaningful sense within a Jewish context. However, for Luke's Hellenistic audience, the picture of a victory procession would be the most immediate impression. In the Greek context, victory parades or *eiselasis* (Gk. εἰσελαστικός*)* constituted momentous occasions after agonistic competitions.[67] As the athlete arrived home, he was met by his family and fellow citizens and given a hero's welcome.[68] The welcome included a banquet and a symposium. To ensure that the news of the Olympic victory travelled far and wide, the family or the city would commission a victory ode from a poet to extol the virtues of the athlete and his city.[69] In these *epinicia*, while the athletes were the centre of the praise ceremonies, the poets also endeavoured to demonstrate that the victors' victories were also their cities' victory. For instance, in the course of his praise of Theron, Pindar writes, 'no city for a hundred years has given birth to a man more beneficent in his mind or more generous with his hand than Theron.'[70] By shifting between the private and the public, the poet engaged in a kind of identity negotiation that essentially blurred the difference between the athlete as an individual and his community. The athlete became the city, and the city became the athlete. This identity negotiation enabled Pindar to go beyond praising to giving the victor advice. As a member of the city, the victor was also encouraged to be generous to his community. For example, in the middle of his praise of Khromios of Aetna for his victory in the four-horse chariot race, Pindar has this to say:

> Son of Hagesidamus, your way of life grants you the enjoyment of many things. I take no pleasure in keeping great wealth hidden away in

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67 The ἀγῶνες εἰσελαστικός or triumphal entry (LSJ at Perseus) represented the victor's triumphant entry into their city where their victory was celebrated and they were rewarded for putting their cities on the map. See J.W. Slater. 2013. "The Victor's Return, and the Category of the Games" in *Epigraphical Approaches to the Post-classical Polis: Fourth Century BC to Second Century AD*, ed. by P. Martzavou & N. Papazarkadas, (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 139; See also Spawforth, "Agonistic Festivals in Roman Greece", pp. 193-197; D. Prichard. 2012. "What Was the Point of Olympic Victory?", *Teaching History* 36/3, p. 21.

68 Some odes were also sung at the place of victory. See Christopher, "The Performance of the Victory Ode", pp. 545-565.

69 See Spawforth, "Agonistic Festivals in Roman Greece", pp. 193-197.

70 Pindar, *Oly*. 2.90-95.

> my hall, but in using what I have to be successful and to win a good name by helping my friends.[71]

In another instance, Bacchylides offers a vilification of wealth while praising his victor. He argues:

> Wealth keeps company with worthless men as well, and it tends to swell a man's thoughts;
> but he who does well to the gods cheers his heart with a more glorious hope.[72]

In both excerpts above, the bestowing of honour on the athlete has an integrative function. Each of them is praised for his victory and initiated into a values system that had the community at heart. For example, by drawing attention to the corrupting power of wealth, which his host should avoid, Bacchylides underscores the importance of blame in a praise context. Furthermore, Bacchylides also indirectly urges his host to do well to the gods, which in the Greek context implied loving the gods and treating other human beings kindly.[73] Thus, the question of identity and its implications on how the athlete would relate with his community was also intrinsic to the victory odes.

Furthermore, Morrison has demonstrated that Pindar's praise songs were often re-performed after their first performance.[74] The odes were performed at later family victory ceremonies of the victor. The re-performance aimed to reactivate and preserve the prestige of the earlier victories. According to Morrison, regularly performed songs would continue to be present in the victor's city, and perhaps beyond. It is also inevitable that the change of context would enlarge the ode's audience from the primary audience for which it was composed to other new audiences beyond the original city.

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71 Pindar, *Nem*. 1:30-31, tr. D.A. Svarlien, Perseus Program, URL.

72 Bacchylides, *Epi*. 1:190, tr. D.A. Svarlien, Perseus Program, URL.

73 Menander, 1.361; Crates, *Eleg. and Iam*. II, 2.15.2, Perseus Program, URL.

74 Cf. A.D. Morrison. 2012. "Performance, Re-performance and Pindar's Audiences" in *Reading the Victory Ode'*, ed. by P. Agocs, C. Christ & R. Rawles, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), pp. 111-133.

In Luke's context, the disciples' feeling of being chosen among many and the ensuing ceremony of praise would have paralleled the victor's experience after the Greco-Roman games. Jesus' declaration of the disciples as μακάριος (blessed) (Lk 6:20-24) would have been akin to a re-performance of an earlier victory in Jesus' time but re-enacted at a new victory celebration, their entry into the community of Christ-followers. The re-performance helped to reactivate and preserve the prestige of earlier victories and create and maintain a family's symbolic capital as a family of victors.[75] Thus, for Luke's churches, the continued re-enactment of the triumphalism with which the first disciples had been appointed (whether in a baptismal context or any other cultic context where the Sermon is read) would have helped to integrate the new members and inquirers into the values of the early Christian movement. The same re-performance would have helped to rekindle the values associated with the ceremony for the rest of the members of Luke's communities.

However, unlike the victory odes, in Luke 6:13-20, Jesus takes the role of both the divine-host and praise poet. By appointing the disciples, he is the divine host responsible for the disciples' victory. Beyond divine-hosting, Jesus is also the praise poet who, before the multitudes (Lk 6:17), showers special honours of praise onto the new victors and recipients of the Kingdom of God. However, like in the Greco-Roman contexts, such ceremonies, among other things, involved the inculcation of a new set of values. For Jesus, these values are couched in economic and social terms, with destitution and its attendant status of powerlessness, dependence, and vulnerability as the controlling values.

Symbolism and Identity-Forming Motif in the Sermon

An essential aspect of examining the Sermon's identity-forming motif is to appreciate its ritual function within its original literary context. Such contexts, where the community read and heard the Sermon, could have been diverse. They would have been the regular Sunday context, the Easter Festival, or the baptismal context.[76] Apostolic preaching was an integral

75 See Morrison, "Performance, Re-performance and Pindar's Audiences", pp. 113-114.

76 P.F. Bradshaw. 1995. "Diem Baptismo Sollemniorem: Initiation and Easter in

part of the gathering in each of these cultic contexts.[77] It is therefore likely that the re-performance of Jesus' teaching would have featured in these cultic gatherings. The relationship between ritual and epideictic genre, is established by several studies.[78] As Carter observed, festival orations and panegyrics had their foundation in the ritual *topoi* of praise of the festival god, the city, the festival official, and the local rulers.[79] As the epideictic genre evolved with time, its ritual contexts widened from the village festival to the forum, assembly, PanHellenic festival, and the Roman Senate. Most studies also agree that an epideictic oratory's purpose in a ritual context was to transmit cultural values rather than mere persuasion.[80] Panegyric oratory helped generate socio-religious knowledge by evoking exegetical interpretations or aetiological myths. That knowledge instead helped to engender cooperation in social groups by creating group identity.[81] The values were transmitted in the context of θεωρία (contemplation). Due to the religious nature of the ancient festivals, in a festival or cultic setting, the audience entered into the presence of the sacred. This implied that the festival audience entered into a state of θεωρία. Walters has shown that in a ritual context, speeches shared in the sacred zone in

Christian Antiquity" in *Living Water*, ed. by Maxwell Johnson, (Collegeville/MN: Liturgical Press), pp. 137-147; T.M. Finn. 1967. 'The Liturgy of Baptism in the Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom', *Studies in Christian Antiquity* 15, pp. 50-54.

77 Kittel, *TDNT*, 902; Bradshaw, "Diem Baptismo Sollemniorem, pp. 139-140; Finn, "The Liturgy of Baptism in the Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom", pp. 50-54.

78 Carter, "Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 211; Samuel R. Johnson. 1970. "The Non-Aristotelian Nature of Samoan Ceremonial Oratory", *Western Speech* 34, p. 265.

79 Carter, "Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 211.

80 Among the most pioneering works are: Johnson, "The Non-Aristotelian Nature of Samoan Ceremonial Oratory", pp. 262-273; C. Gibson. 2014. "Better Living through Prose Composition? Moral and Compositional Pedagogy in Ancient Greek and Roman Progymnasmata", *Rhetorica* 32/1, pp. 1-30; C. Oravec. 1976. "Observation in Aristotle's Theory of Epideictic", *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 9/3, pp. 162-174; Carter, "Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", pp. 209-223; Villadsen, "Speaking on Behalf of Others", pp. 25-45; W. Beale. 1978. "Rhetorical Performative Discourse: A New Theory of Epideictic", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 11/4, pp. 221-246.

81 Penn, *Kissing Christians*, p. 80.

which the normal and the well-defined were replaced by the abnormal and ambiguous.[82] In this liminal state, individuality, including social status, disappeared, giving way to a cult-generated identity.[83]

Carter offers a three-fold paradigm in which epideictic genre reinforces commonly held values. Carter's paradigm provides a framework for understanding the ritual function of the Sermon.[84] Firstly, Carter argues that epideictic rhetoric connects its participants to the cosmos by establishing some intelligible order and by connecting the participants to the ongoing creation of their culture. It shows the audience how they fit in the *cosmos* by establishing a transcendent principle that gives cosmic sanction to their own social order. Moreover, it engages the audience in the act of creation itself by joining them together in the founding act, the beginnings of their identity as a culture.[85] It can be argued that concerning the Sermon, the connection of πτωχεία and βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (destitution and the Kingdom of God) in Luke 6:20 provides a framework for understanding how Jesus connects his audience to a new cosmos and the values that were either associated with (vv. 20-24) or antagonistic (vv. 25-26) to it. The importance of the Kingdom of God as an overarching cosmos is a characteristic Lucan emphasis. The concept is mentioned 42 times in Luke and 50 times across Luke-Acts. This frequency makes the concept a central motif in the Gospel. The reference to the Kingdom of God in v. 20b represents Jesus' second reference to the Kingdom of God directly from his mouth. The first instance is in Luke 4:43, where Jesus, crowded out by the multitudes, announced that he must preach the "good news of the Kingdom" to other places. As Squires argues, the Kingdom of God provides the providential dimension to Luke's understanding of the Sovereignty of God.[86] This providential understanding of the Kingdom of God is demonstrable in two ways across the Third Gospel: through the use of familial

82 Walters, "Rhetoric as Ritual", p. 18.
83 See G. Petridou. 2013. "Blessed Is He Who Has Seen: The Power of Ritual Viewing and Ritual Framing in Eleusia", *Helios* 40/1-2, p. 310.
84 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", pp. 220-221.
85 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", pp. 220-221.
86 J. Squires. 1993. *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts, SNTS Monograph series* 76, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), p. 25.

relations and the pervasiveness of hospitality as a key feature of the Kingdom. John Elliot, for example, argues that Luke uses familial relations, domestic crises, and responsibilities of household management (Lk 9:46-48; 11:14-23; 12:22-34, 35-48; 13:20-21; 18:15-17) as the basis for illuminating significant features of life in the Kingdom of God.[87] In this Kingdom/Household, God is experienced as a merciful, generous, and forgiving 'father' (Lk 2:49; 6:36; 9:36; 10:21-22; 11:1, 13; 12:30, 32; 33:29, 42; 23:34, 46; 24:49; Act 1:4, 7; 2:33).[88] Further, Danaux, Moxnes and Elliot argue that Luke uses hospitality as a metaphor for the Kingdom of God.[89] Elliot, for example, demonstrates how Luke contrasts the Temple's exclusivist purity and legalistic system with the inclusive nature of Jesus' ministry.[90] According to Elliot, Luke uses domestic dining and hospitality occasions to depict an inclusive form of social relations. These occasions transcended previous Jewish purity regulations and gave concrete social expression to the inclusive character of the gospel, the Kingdom of God, and the Christian community.[91] Moxnes argues that throughout the Gospel, Luke demonstrates that those disciples who are ostracized from their households find alternative sources of support in the Kingdom. Snippets of the Kingdom as a new imagined space for the displaced followers of Jesus are discernible in texts such as Q 10:2-10; Q 11:11-13; Q 12:22-31 and Luke 8:1-3.[92] The examples of the providential dimensions of the Kingdom of God underscore its over-arching symbolism in the Sermon and the whole Gospel.

Therefore, understood sequentially, the good news to the poor that Jesus promised in Luke 4:48 eventuates in the possession of the Kingdom of God by the poor in Lk 6:20. It can, therefore, be argued that Luke's concern with the Kingdom of God makes it the "transcendent order" in Luke's story world. Its values of powerlessness and dependency associated

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87 J.H. Elliott. 1991. "Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions", *HTS* 47/1, p. 104.

88 Elliot, "The Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts", p. 105.

89 H. Moxnes. 2003. *Putting Jesus in his Place*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), p. 114; Danaux cited in J. Verheyden. 1999. "Unity of Luke Acts", *HTS* 55/4, p. 974.

90 Elliot, "The Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts", pp. 102-108.

91 Elliot, "The Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts", pp. 102-108.

92 Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in his Place*, pp. 116-117.

with the destitute are celebrated in vv. 20-23. The idea of hunger, mourning, and ostracism as expressions of destitution represent the Kingdom values of dependence on and, therefore, security in God. The values not only promote dependence on God but also, by implication, create the possibility of κοινωνία (fellowship) within the Lucan churches.

Inversely, in vv. 24-26, the values of power and independence associated with being rich are denigrated as incompatible with the Kingdom of God. The presentation of antithetical values makes the Sermon the site for the contestation of the social order. Yet this contestation is meant to help the communities become aware of the reality of division among them and engage them in creating a culture that challenges the disturbing practices and loyalties that endangered their communal co-existence. As Michael Wilcock argues, in vv. 20-26, the values taken for granted by other men are questioned by them and considered in the searching light of spiritual truth, hidden reality and future life.[93] Such questioning of old values suggests a quest for an alternative identity and, by implication, a new conception of reality in the communities of Christ-followers.

As Carter argued, one of the epideictic genre's functions is engaging the audience in the act of creating their world. In vv. 27-29, both the rich and the poor are called to participate in the creation of their identity as a culture in which friendship, kinship, and κοινωνία are no longer based on reciprocity. The use of subjunctive verbs with a conditional particle in vv. 32-34, followed by the question ποία ὑμῖν χάρις ἐστίν, "What good is it to you?" represents Jesus' direct attack on the Greco-Roman system of reciprocity. The exhortation to love enemies, to give and lend freely without expecting a return (vv. 35-36) is a call to members of the Christ-groups to live their life in counter-cultural ways and therefore demonstrate the identity of their new community. As Wilcock argues, God's people are to see as God sees, and they are to act as God acts. They will, therefore, not follow the sense of duty but the call of love (vv. 27-38).[94] Thus, in the Sermon, Luke's audience is made aware of its situation and empowered to participate in remedying it. Such awareness would affect the disciples'

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93 M. Wilcock. 1979. *The Message of Luke,* (Nottingham: IVP), p. 86.

94 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", pp. 220-221.

self-understanding and their relationship with others within and without Christ-followers' communities.

The second way the epideictic genre reinforces community values is by taking its hearers out of ordinary time, by making time, in a way, sacred. According to Carter, ritual theory suggests that this special conception of time creates an awareness of immortality and a sense of being outside the temporal reality. In doing so, it also offers its participants a different foundation of order beyond everyday perceptions.[95] Walters also argues that in ritual settings, epideictic speeches make normal timeless social zones abnormal and ambiguous.[96] Similarly, there are some ways in which the Sermon takes its audience out of ordinary time and creates a foundation of order beyond everyday perceptions. Firstly, in the makarisms and woes in vv. 20-26, Jesus interweaves the present and the future and, in the process, reconceptualises reality for both the poor and the rich. Table 2:2 below demonstrates the Lucan reconceptualisation of time.

Table 2.2: ***Lucan Reconceptualisation of Time***

Makarisms	Woes
Blessed are you who are poor, **for yours is the kingdom of God**.	Woe to you who are rich, **for you have already received your comfort**.
Blessed are you who **hunger *now***, for you will be satisfied.	Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you **will go hungry**.
Blessed are you **who weep *now***, for you will laugh.	Woe to you who laugh now, for you **will mourn and weep**

In the above sample of makarisms and woes, two aspects of time, '*the now*' and '*the future*', are juxtaposed as either *bleak* and *bliss* or vice-versa for the destitute and the rich. In juxtaposing the present and the future with their implications on the fate of the individual, Jesus takes his hearers out of ordinary time. Like all participants in a ritual context, the Sermon's audience enters a liminal context in which time becomes ambiguous.[97] Yet by introducing the Kingdom of God in the 'the now' and 'the future,' the

95 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 223.
96 Walters, "Rhetoric as Ritual", p. 18.
97 Walters, "Rhetoric as Ritual", p. 18.

Sermon redefines both time and space. It not only reconceptualises time as 'now' but also, within the Kingdom of God, as limitless. Thus, the audience of the Sermon either enters or re-enacts their entry into this boundless reign of God which is both physical and spiritual. Through this transposition of time, Jesus demonstrates that the rich and destitute belong to a community bigger and beyond their temporal experience and, therefore, beyond their control. This inherent reversal in the makarisms and woes had significant implications for understanding the function of the Sermon. At most, the reversal provides a mystery to the meaning of life and challenges the community's perception of reality.

The mystery of life is further compounded in Jesus' call on the community to live out the values of the kingdom in vv. 27-49. In the new order of reality, both the poor and the rich are called to live counter-cultural to conventional reality. For example, understood within the Greco-Roman context, the exhortations to love your enemies, to do good to those who hate you, to bless those who curse you, to pray for those who mistreat you, to turn the other cheek and to give to everyone who asks you (vv. 27-30) represent a life lived with total indifference to every day human conventions and reality. Thus, the Sermon proposes an 'out-of-this-world existence' or what Moxnes calls the 'not-yet places' whose practice would represent the realised aspects of the Kingdom of God.[98] An example of this 'out-of-this-world existence' is later demanded of the rich ruler (Lk 18:18-30), which he rejects, and happily accepted by Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). The poor widow (Lk 21:1-4) can live it while the rich miserably fail (Lk 21:4 cf. Lk 18:18-30).

The third way in which praise and blame reinforce community values is by creating harmony among the antinomies that characterize people's lives. According to Carter, the epideictic genre has the power to 'transfigure the world by reuniting it.' For him, one function of ritual is to address the mystery, the contraries of life, by helping its participants discover harmony therein, an awareness of both opposition and unity that logic cannot offer.[99] It can be said that the juxtaposition of riches and poverty in vv. 20-

98 See Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in his Place*, p. 53.
99 Carter, "The Ritual Function of Epideictic Rhetoric", p. 224.

26 demonstrates Luke's attempt to displays life's contrariness in the audiences' communities and all communities of all time. The bestowal of blessings on the poor and denigration of the rich, therefore, signified the recognition of the deep chasm between the two social groups in the Lucan communities. As a painful reminder of the challenges in the communities, the statuses of πτωχεία and πλοῦτος (poverty and riches) portrayed the deep divisions and brokenness in the Lucan communities. That image of contrariness is also represented in Jesus' contrasting images of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31). The same is also apparent in Priest/Levite vis-à-vis the robbed man/Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-35) and the poor widow's generosity versus the rich's giving (Lk 21:1-4).

Beyond demonstrating opposition and contradiction within the Lucan communities, the Sermon also works toward uniting the communities. To reinforce the community values, Jesus employs two types of imagery; the tree and its fruits (vv. 43-45) and the building on the rock and sand (vv. 46-49). Firstly, in the imagery of the tree and its fruit, Jesus compares the failure of the community members to live out the commonly held values of κοινωνία (fellowship) among them to a tree that fails to produce fruit. Johnson posits that the tree imagery expresses the universal conviction in the ancient world that character precedes action.[100] It underscored the relationship between being and doing, character and disposition, and how the former influences the latter.[101] Therefore, since values drive behaviour, the adoption of Kingdom values by individuals would lead to their adherence to the spirit of κοινωνία (fellowship). This would, in turn, result in a community of care commensurate with the ideal community in Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-36.

In the imagery of the two houses built on the rock and sand (vv. 46-49), Jesus underscored the impact of failure to adhere to his words on the community's well-being. The failure of the disciples or the communities of Christ to comply with the values propounded in the Sermon was compared to building a house on the sand, with disastrous consequences. Byrne argues that the paradox of the two houses makes sense in the light of the expected reversal central to the Sermon. According to him, if God's

[100] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 114.
[101] Green, *Luke's Gospel*, p. 279.

intervention is coming, which will be like a flood, the disciples' adopting the vulnerable life Jesus commends is sensible.[102] Thus, to heed Jesus' words implied the disciples grounding their buildings (in other words, their communities) in an actual acceptance of Jesus as Lord (Lk 6:46), with all that implied; the adoption of powerlessness, dependency, and vulnerability as their identity.[103] It implied the community of Christ-followers being dependent upon the 'rock' of divine power and faithfulness.[104] Such a spirit of dependence is naturally found among the οἱ πτωχοί (the destitute), whose values the Sermon advocates. The next chapter analyses how the makarisms and woes in Luke 6:20-26 serve to redefine the disciples' social identity and its implication for their understanding of socio-economic relations within their communities.

102 Byrne. 2000. *The Hospitality of God*, (Collegeville/MN: Liturgical Press), p. 80.
103 Wilcock, *The Message of Luke*, p. 86.
104 Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, p. 80.

CHAPTER 3
'BLESSED ARE THE DESTITUTE' (LK 6:20-26): IN SEARCH OF A NEW SOCIO-ECONOMIC IDENTITY

Introduction

One of the reasons for which Luke wrote the Gospel was to help Theophilus understand the things he had been taught (Lk 1:4). As already demonstrated in the previous chapter, such ἀσφάλεια (certainty) constituted, among other things, understanding who Jesus was as the Christ (Lk 9:20) including how to live out the implications of his ethical directives. It is remarkable that by the time of Luke's writing, the designation μαθητής (disciple) was no longer tied to the twelve or seventy-two but to all believers. In Acts 14: 20,22; 15:10;19:30, μαθητής broadly referred to the followers of Jesus. This broader meaning enabled the new converts and other believers in Luke's time to identify directly with and appropriate the triumphalism latent in Jesus' appointment (Lk 6:13) and value-laden reception of his disciples in Luke 6:20-49.

It is noteworthy that in transmitting the new identity and its values in vv. 20-26, Jesus does not make a direct reference to his disciples. Instead, he re-designates them as the destitute, hungry, mourning and ostracised (vv. 20-23).

Looking at his disciples, he said:

> "Blessed are **you who are poor**,
> for yours is the kingdom of God.
> Blessed are **you who hunger** now,
> for you will be satisfied.
> Blessed are **you who weep now**,
> for you will laugh.
> Blessed are **you when people hate you**,
> when they exclude you and insult you
> and reject your name as evil,
> because of the Son of Man. (NIV)

The disciples' corresponding opposites are the rich, filled, laughing and praised (vv. 24-26). The re-designation and juxtaposition of poverty and riches sharply highlight the contradictory values of power and powerlessness in the Greco-Roman world. By Luke's time, these two contradictory social statuses were likely available within Christ-followers' communities. Given the social status of the destitute in the Greco-Roman world, the substitution augments the humble state of the disciples. It also provides a framework through which, both in Jesus' and Luke's time, the disciples would identify themselves: powerless, dependent and vulnerable. Such identity had the potential to transform the socio-economic relationships within the community of Christ-followers.

This chapter offers an exegesis of Luke 6:20-26 from the perspective of Greco-Roman panegyrics. It demonstrates how Luke depicts Jesus as drawing upon the panegyric's praise and blame *topos* to inculcate a new socio-economic identity among the socially variegated members of the early Jesus movement. Portraying Jesus as a Greco-Roman orator who employs the agency of praise and blame as a pedagogical tool to re-enforce commonly held values in the community would have been in keeping with the rhetorical conventions of the time. In the Sermon (vv. 20-26), Jesus calls for the adoption of the values of weakness, dependence, and vulnerability as the identity of the Christ-followers. The adoption of these values would be vital to the community's realignment of their identity and conventional understanding of kinship, friendship, and κοινωνία (fellowship).

The Structure of the Sermon

There is no scholarly unanimity on the structure of the Sermon (Lk 6:20-49). The lack of consensus probably arises from the Sermon's variety of themes. All scholars, however, agree that vv. 20-26 form the initial unit of the Sermon.[1] Yet even then, there is no unanimity on the structure of the Sermon's second part. Some scholars divide it into the life of love (vv. 27-38) and a collection of parables (vv. 39-49).[2] Others give it a three-

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1 Topel, *Children of a Compassionate God*, p. 58.

2 Garland, *Luke*, p. 271; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 263-280; Marshall, *The*

fold structure: love of enemies vv. 27-36, not judging, vv. 37-42, and concluding exhortation vv. 43-49.[3] Despite the above differences, the general structure of the Sermon is two-fold: makarisms and woes vv. 20-26 and exhortation vv. 27-49. Topel calls vv. 20-26 the exordium and vv. 27-49 the Love Command.[4] Similarly, Fitzmyer observes that the Sermon comprises dominical sayings and other unstructured sayings that include parables.[5] However, a Greco-Roman panegyric perspective reveals a two-fold structure of the Sermon: praise and blame (vv. 20-26) plus paraenesis (vv. 27-49). Such a paradigm echoes the Ciceronian panegyric paradigm of 'from praise to program.'[6]

Praising the Destitute (Lk 6:20)

Most commentators emphasise the prophetic nature of Luke's makarisms and woes, with reversal as the central thrust of the Sermon.[7] However, while the theme of reversal is evident in the Sermon's makarisms and woes and across the Gospel, in the Hellenistic context of Lucan communities, the aural experience of Jesus' first words (v. 20b) to his disciples would have been understood as celebratory. The flow of the narrative from Jesus' appointment of the disciples (Lk 6:13) to his inaugural speech in Luke 6:20-26), primarily directed at his disciples, in the Greek context, would have been understood as a declaration of honour which, among other things, was reserved for the athletic victors. To a Greco-Roman ear, the first makarism would have thus sounded like:

> How happy (lucky) like the gods you are, you who are destitute![8] Yours is the Kingdom of God, or

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Gospel According to Luke, p. 243; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 628.

3 Tannehill, *Luke*, pp. 114-122.

4 Topel, *Children of a Compassionate God*, p. 58.

5 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 629.

6 Braundi, "Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric", p. 69. See also Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric*, p. 93; Poulakos, "Isocrates Use of Narrative in the Evagoras", p. 317-328.

7 L.T. Johnson. 2010. *The Writings of the NT*, (London: SCM), p. 202; Ellis, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 112; Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, p. 77.

8 Sullivan, "Some Virgilian Beatitudes", p. 395.

> How honourable (or praised) are you who are destitute. [9] For the Kingdom of God belongs to you.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, in the Greco-Roman world, praise was bestowed as a result of achievement of ‘ἀρετή (excellence). The notion of excellence was defined in terms of strength, agility, bravery, wealth, wisdom, or magnanimity.[10] It was a product of acts of valour in battle, triumph at the games, or a special endowment of divine favour.[11] Thus, honour belonged to those who had distinguished themselves and were recognised as exceptional. Given this context of honour, what had Jesus’ disciples, and by implication all believers, done to deserve the honour of praise? Apparently, for Jesus’ disciples, their honour emanated from their appointment and designation as Jesus’ disciples on the mountain. In the Greco-Roman world, athletic victory was usually attributed to divine ξενία by the patron divinity. The athlete was bestowed victory as a kind of guest-gift.[12] The victory enabled them access into their city’s hall of fame and all its benefits.[13] Similarly, on the mountain (vv. 12-17), Jesus' disciples experience something analogous to divine ξενία. They were honoured with the guest-gift of being a disciple and for others as Apostles.

The implications of the disciples’ appointment into Jesus' circle would have resonated with the life-changing privileges associated with Greco-Roman honour. For many in the Greco-Roman world, to be blessed implied immeasurable favour from the gods. This would usually be in the form of wealth[14] or a flourishing life.[15] However, for Jesus' disciples, their blessedness is associated with their possession of an element of infinite value, the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (the Kingdom of God) (v. 20b). The present construction ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘for (because) to you is the Kingdom of God’ (v. 20b) highlights the new life-changing status of the Christ-followers following their appointment. However, the disciples’

9 Hanson, “How Honourable!”, p. 104.
10 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata,* pp. 51-52.
11 *Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 485-9.
12 Kurke, *Traffic in Praise,* p. 131.
13 S.B. Pomeroy et al. 1999. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History,* (Oxford: Oxford UP), p. 61.
14 *Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 485-9.
15 Pindar, *Oly.* 7.10.

experience of divine hosting surpasses that of Hellenistic victors. By possessing the Kingdom of God, they are assured of continuous 'divine hosting.' Their triumphalism emerges from the fact that because they have God himself, they will have a constant flow of support from the structures of life in the Kingdom of God.[16] Byond that, with the ultimate divine victory over all obstacles, they will continue to enjoy the divine presence and all it entails (Lk 22:29-30). Later in Luke 22:29-30, Jesus expands the privileges of belonging to the Kingdom when he says:

> And I confer on you a Kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (NIV)

The context of this text is the disciples' dispute over greatness (Lk 22:24). In Luke 22:25-27 Jesus uses his own life example to redefine the Greco-Roman notion of greatness in terms of humility and service (Lk 22:27). As his co-partners special privileges of the Kingdom are accorded to the disciples. Most of these privileges are the aspects of life the destitute presently lack: the daily provisions of life such as food and drink and power. However, as Jesus' co-heirs, the disciples will now eat at the royal table and judge Israel (Lk 22:20 cf. 1 Cor. 6:2-3).

It is essential to recognise that for Jesus' disciples and Luke's audience, destitution was not the criterion for membership in the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. The designation is more of an invitation into values associated with destitution, namely weakness, dependence and vulnerability and therefore into a life of total dependence on the system of the new kinship in Jesus. Their membership is derived from their appointment into Jesus' discipleship on the mountain and, for Luke's audience, from believing in Jesus. This conception of membership into the Kingdom parallels Peter Brown's description of the Greco-Roman understanding of the 'civic community' and its implications for civic privileges for the rich and the poor.[17] Brown demonstrates that during the Roman imperial era, with its free distribution of food in Rome under challenging times, the poor received bread, not because they were poor but because they could produce a token

[16] Talbert, *Reading Luke*, p. 72.

[17] P. Brown. 2002. *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, (Hanover: UP of New England), p. 5.

called *tessera*. This token proved that they were citizens of the city of Rome. Even the rich who possessed identical *tesserae* and received the same amount of bread as the more impoverished citizens.[18] The image of the Roman civic community helps to bring into focus that the significant issue in the Sermon is not the salvation of the poor vis-à-vis that of the rich, but about their relationship to Jesus and the values associated with it. This imagery suggests that regardless of one's status, being appointed Jesus' disciples (for the first disciples) or believing in Jesus (for Luke's audience) automatically qualified one to belong to the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom (Lk 6: 20b) creates for the new converts a fictive community broader than the present imperfect community to which they belong. In addition, due to its association with God, this new community is also eternal. The idea of a fictive community for the recent converts echoes how through praise, Pindar constructs a fictive family for Epharmostos, a man with no family history of victors but one who through victory at the games enters his city's hall of fame.[19]

For the new Christ-followers within the Lucan communities, many of whom would be destitute, the bestowal of the Kingdom would have far-reaching implications.[20] It assured them that despite their status, they had a special place and value within the community of which the Lord God himself was the guardian (cf. Acts 2:42-47). For the wealthy convert or inquirer, like Theophilus, the association would have been shocking and, therefore, identity-transforming. It revealed to them the socially egalitarian dimension of the community they had come to be part of, and through, that challenged their entrenched conception of privilege and reciprocal social relations.

The idea of the Kingdom of God as the gift for the poor (Lk 6:20) must be put in a proper theological perspective. Theologically, the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ was a Jewish religious concept.[21] As Mary Beavis has argued, together with Matthew's βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Kingdom of Heaven), the

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18 Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, p. 5.
19 Pindar, *Oly.* 9.
20 Friesen suggests that most people were poor. This structure would also have been replicated within the Christ-groups. See Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies", pp. 36-59.
21 Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, p. 25.

Kingdom of God reflects the development of the notion that God is King over Israel and the world and that in the eschaton he will ultimately reign over all and judge every soul accordingly.[22] The Jewish context of the term suggests that, except for those Gentiles formerly associated with the Synagogue, the concept of the Kingdom of God would have been foreign to many Gentile inquirers and converts. Yet, simultaneously, the idea could not have been entirely foreign to Luke's Gentile audience. Some Greco-Roman religious metaphors had significant affinities with the idea of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. These were the concepts of 'being-God-loved' (θεοφιλής) and 'god-loving' (θεόφιλος).[23] Menander Rhetor summarises the idea of 'being god-loved and god-loving:

> Piety to the gods consists of two elements: being god-loved and god-loving. The former means being loved by the gods and receiving many blessings from them, and the latter consists of loving the gods and having a relationship of friendship with them.[24]

Menander's statement underscores the relationship between piety and 'being god loved', and how the same piety expressed the idea of 'loving the gods'. The emphasis on the three concepts of piety, relationship, and friendship with the gods and their physical and spiritual benefits resonates with the attributes of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, although the meaning of βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in Jewish theology had a deeper nuance beyond just being 'god-loved', a Hellenistic audience would easily connect the first makarism with the idea of θεοφιλής (God-loving) and its implications on the god-loved. The *Hymn to Demeter* provides an example of a makarism that resonates with the implications of the blessedness of the destitute in Luke 6:20. The Hymn says:

> ... μέγ᾽ ὄλβιος, ὅν τιν᾽ ἐκεῖναι
> προφρονέως φίλωνται ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων:
> αἶψα δέ οἱ πέμπουσιν ἐφέστιον ἐς μέγα δῶμα
> Πλοῦτον, ὃς ἀνθρώποις ἄφενος θνητοῖσι δίδωσιν.

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22 M. Beavis. 2004. "The Kingdom of God, 'Utopia' and Theocracy", *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 2/1, p. 93.

23 Isocrates, *Pan.* 4.29; Plato, *Alc.* 1.134d.

24 Menander, *Rhetor*, I.361.17-25.

> Right blessed is he among men on earth whom they (the gods) freely love: soon they do send Plutus as a guest to his great house, Plutus who gives wealth to mortal men.[25]

Conspicuous in the above makarism are the material benefits that result from being loved by the gods. The word used for wealth in the hymn is ἄφενος. In its classical usage, ἄφενος referred to riches, wealth or abundance.[26] The makarism, therefore, underscores the fact that being a θεοφιλής had materially life-changing implications. It is also noteworthy that the material benefits in the hymn accruing from 'being god-loved' resonate with the privileges the poor would enjoy in the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (Lk 6:20), such as being filled and laughing (vv. 20b-21). Therefore, for Luke's audience, the Kingdom of God provided the framework through which they understood not only their new status but also the values associated with it.

Praising the Hungry (Lk 6:21a)

In continuing to praise the experience of vulnerability as the identity of his disciples, in v. 21a, Jesus turns to the praise of the οἱ πεινῶντες, those who are hungry. The participle πεινῶντες from the verb πεινάω means to be hungry. According to Liddell and Scott, the cognate of πεινάω, πίνακες, when used for household goods, implies empty dishes.[27] In Aristophanes' *Prometheus,* when humans stop offering sacrifices, the gods are described as οἱ θεοὶ πεινῶντες, 'the gods who are dying of hunger.'[28] Plato, who combines πτωχοὶ with πεινῶντες, also uses the latter with the sense of starving.[29] Thus, both lexically and in its classical usage, the word πεινάω not only means those who hunger but those who suffer hunger, those who are starving and famished.[30] In the OT, the term also indicated a desire for spiritual satisfaction (Isa. 55:1; Amos 8:11; cf. Sir. 24. 21). According

25 *Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 485-9.
26 LSJ, ἄφενος, εος, τό.
27 Liddell & Scott, πεινάω, πινακες, IGEL, 1996, p. 1168.
28 Aristophanes, *Bir.* 1520, tr. E. O'Neill, Perseus Program, URL.
29 Plato, *Rep.* 7.521a, tr. John Burnet.
30 Liddell & Scott, πεινάωp. 1168.

to Marshall, this spiritual sense cannot be excluded here.[31] However, in the Greco-Roman context, the physical meaning of the word would have been the most immediate sense. The status of starvation, which was a function of destitution, represented not only the worst expression of destitution in the Greco-Roman world but also the most extreme condition in which any human could find themselves. Thus, to Jesus' and Luke's primary audience, and indeed any age hearing the makarism, making hungry individuals objects of honour was paradoxical.[32] Here Jesus enters the realm of adoxography, whose object is to challenge conventional thinking.

It is, however, important to note that, like the destitute, the οἱ πεινῶντες are not honourable because they are hungry. They are honoured because they are θεοφιλής (god-loved).[33] They are, therefore, uniquely favoured to be recipients of good news in Luke 4:16-18, whose practical outworking becomes evident in their being chosen as disciples of Jesus from among many. They had experienced divine ξενία (v. 13) on the mountain and, therefore, like Greco-Roman victors, they were being recognised and received into the community. This honour, which is satisfaction (v. 21), not only changes their status but also defines the nature of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. The verb used for satisfaction in Luke 6:21a is χορτασθήσεσθε (verb 2nd pl. fut. ind. pass.) from χορτάζω, which means to feed or fatten.[34] In a few of its classical contexts, the word was used with the sense of feeding animals,[35] which suggests the privilege of not toiling for daily existence but having everything provided for. The use of the passive, χορτασθήσεσθε, 'you will be fed' (satisfied) conveys a sense of provision without toil, similar to the experience of Greek professional athletes. On account of their victory in the games, the victors received special honours from their cities, the highest of which was σίτησις or 'free dining' in the

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31 Marshall, *Gospel According to Luke*, p. 250.
32 Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, p. 76.
33 This can be understood as in *Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 485-9, tr. Hugh G. Evelyn-White.
34 LSJ, χορτάζω, Perseus Program, URL.
35 Liddel & Scott, IGEL, p. 1735. Hesiod also uses the word with the sense of feeding oxen. Hesiod, *Work and Days*, 452; Plato uses the ἐχόρταζες to refer to the feeding of pigs. Plato, *Rep.* 372d.

Prytaneion.[36] This was a life-long grant of maintenance from the city for gaining an athletic or equestrian victory in the games.[37] Pindar exemplifies the blessedness accruing from winning in the games as resulting in Χάρις ζωθάλμιος,[38] 'grace, which causes life to flourish.'

Similarly, in v. 21a, Jesus announces satisfaction to the disciples as a direct result of their appointment as his disciples and subsequent possession of the Kingdom of God. The disciples will no longer toil in this new relationship as their basic needs will be provided for (cf. Lk 4:18-19). Most scholars project this satisfaction into the eschaton.[39] Although the eschatological banquet cannot be ruled out (Lk 14:7-24), a realised this-worldly dimension is also possible when v. 21a is understood in the light of Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto (Lk 4: 18-19).[40] The immediate future dimension of the disciples' satisfaction (v. 21) can also be explained using a Greco-Roman parallel. Hilary Mackie has demonstrated that one general function of the victory ode was to locate and interpret the significance of the victory not only with regard to the present concerns and events of long ago but also in the light of the future.[41] Praise mapped out a possible future course for the victors arising from their victory.[42] The fame and corresponding benefits from their cities became part of the graceful trajectory of the victors' life. Correspondingly, for the new Christ-followers, Jesus' bestowal of satisfaction on the disciples paints a positive picture of their destiny; 'they will be filled'.

However, Jesus does not explain how this satisfaction will be achieved. This 'deliberate failure' to outline how the hungry are to be fed had rhetorical significance in the Christ-followers' community. By leaving the audience wondering how this will be possible, Jesus creates suspense that

36 C. Salazar, σίτησις, *Brill online*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/sitesis-e1114400; LSJ, σίτησις, σι τέω, (eating) at public maintenance, Perseus Program, URL.

37 Prichard, 'What Was the Point of Olympic Victory?', pp. 19-22.

38 Pindar, *Oly.* 7.10.

39 Marshall, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 251; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 267; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 634.

40 Nolland, *Luke*, p. 285; Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 116.

41 See H. Mackie. 2003. *Graceful Errors: Pindar and the Performance of Praise*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press), p. 77.

42 Mackie, *Graceful Errors*, p. 77.

challenges and stretches his audience's imagination. It helps the audience to ponder on the possibility of inclusive and harmonious communities beyond the present broken ones, where the hungry would be fed and satisfied. Jesus' later imperative to the disciples to feed the hungry (Lk 9:13) underscores for Christ-followers', the practical dimensions of belonging to the Kingdom. It highlights the role of communities of Christ-followers in ensuring the welfare of their members.

It is also possible that in the makarism (v. 21a) Luke projects back a nostalgic image of the ideal community of Christ-followers in Acts where, through κοινωνία, everyone's needs were supplied (Acts 4:34-35). From the tone of the Sermon (Lk 6:20-49), it is likely that by Luke's time, the communities of Christ-followers had been marred by a lack of philanthropy. Evidence of chaos and lack of camaraderie within the Lucan churches is already latent in Acts 5:1-10 and 6:1. Therefore, in v. 21a, Jesus looks beyond the present material suffering of the disciples to a time of their restoration. Since the Kingdom of God, to which the disciples now belonged, was both temporal and eschatological, the provision of satisfaction will take the present and future dimensions. Jesus' generosity in Luke 9:17 in which the people were 'fed and satisfied' mirrors the manifestation of the makarisms whose ultimate consummation lies in the future. Thus, the imagery of hunger and satisfaction in the makarism makes the audience aware of penury and hunger among them as products of dysfunctional relationships and of the need to address the problem. How these dysfunctional relationships can be mended is captured in Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto (Lk 4:14-21) and demonstrated across the rest of the Third Gospel (Lk 9:10-19; 14:15-23).

This understanding of v. 21a is supported by Witetschek's comparative analysis of social fasting to help others in the Gospel of Thomas 69.2 and its parallel in Origen. Witetschek effectively demonstrated that the Logion 69.2 of the Gospel of Thomas has parallels in Matthew 5:6 and Luke 6:21a. From this parallel, Witetschek then argued that Luke 6:21a encourages the need for social support for the poor within the community. Thus, the hungry will be filled not sometime in the future but by the help of others who, if need be, may even make a genuine sacrifice for that purpose.[43]

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[43] S. Witetschek. 2010. "Going Hungry for a Purpose: On Gospel of Thomas 69.2

Witetschek's argument underscores the underlying motif of the Sermon: communion and social camaraderie between the rich and the destitute. However, the problem with Witetschek's argument is that it makes it difficult to establish the recipients of the second makarism; who is blessed? Is it the actual hungry/destitute or those who are fasting (hungry) in order to help the poor? Nevertheless, although the recipients of the blessing are not easy to establish, Witetschek's point underscores the fact that whenever the rich, such as Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37), made sacrifices on behalf of the destitute, they conformed to the values of the new community: weakness, dependency, vulnerability and its corresponding freedom to give. Through voluntary dissipation of their economic power on those who cannot repay them, the rich become materially weak and, therefore, vulnerable. Yet through this practice, they become the ideal disciples that Jesus envisages in Luke 6:20-49. In the latter part of the Sermon (Lk 6:27-49), these values become part of the bigger strategy for building a harmonious community.

Praising those who mourn (Lk 6:21b)

In v. 21b, Jesus designates his disciples as the κλαίοντες 'those who cry.' The word κλαίω means 'to cry, wail, lament' and is related to any loud expression of pain or sorrow.[44] It could also refer to any expression of sadness, care, anxiety[45] or mourning the dead. Weeping can also arise from rejection, ridicule, and loss.[46] As Brown has shown, the *plebs* of Rome included many who were chronically malnourished and vulnerable to disease.[47] Thus, apart from lamenting the dead, crying, wailing, and lamenting were the physical expressions of the destitute and the labourers who had to endure daily physical exhaustion, hunger, and disease.[48] Brown's position finds support in Nolland, who notes that hunger and weeping are

and a Neglected Parallel in Origen", *JSNT* 32/4, p. 390.

44 LSJ, κλαίω, Perseus Program, URL; Marshall, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 251.

45 BDAG, κλαίω, p. 545.

46 Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 268.

47 Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, p. 5.

48 Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, p. 5. It could also refer to the act of lamenting of the dead (cf. Rom. 12:15).

both expressions of poverty.[49] Yet even in their deplorable condition, Jesus announces honour to the weepers. The good news to the weepers is that they will no longer cry, but instead, they will laugh, γελάσετε (fut. plu. of γελάω). It is noteworthy that, except in Luke 6:21, 25, the New Testament has minimal reference to laughter. The only other reference to laughter is in the triple tradition on the raising of Jairus' daughter in Luke 8:53, Mark 5:40 and Matthew 9:23. Here, like in the LXX, laughing is either superficial or scornful.[50]

Halliwell offers an insightful analysis of the types and general uses of γελάω (laugh) in Greek culture. The first was playful laughter which was indicated by the language of παιδιά, (childhood) παίζειν (to play a sport like a child) or παιγνία, (playful), and the other was consequential laughter which was associated with scorn or ridicule.[51] A close study of playful laughter in Greek literature reveals an intriguing association between laughter and meals or banquets. For example, in Aristophanes' play, *Frogs,* the context of παίζων (playfulness) suggests the state of being ἐξαρκούντως (indecl. adv.), 'sufficiently filled.'[52] In another play, the *Birds,* Aristophanes further connects laughter with youthfulness, choruses, banquets, and feasts as the gift of the gods.[53] The relationship between laughter and banqueting is also evident in the *Iliad*, wherein, after a long period of strained divine relationships, a great γέλως (laughter) emerges at Mount Olympus as the gods feast together again.[54] All this suggests that the laughter of those who mourn in v. 21b arises from their possession of the Kingdom of God and its implications for their provisions. It echoes athletic victors laughing and banqueting with the leaders of the *polis* and

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49 Nolland, *Luke,* p. 283.

50 Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 267; Marshall, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 251.

51 S. Halliwell. 1991. "The Uses of Laughter in Greek Culture", *Classical Quarterly* 41/2, pp. 279-296. Halliwell's findings are supported by Mary Beard's recent book; M. Beard. 2014. *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up*, (California: University of California Press).

52 Aristophanes, *Fro.* 375.

53 Aristophanes, *Bir.* 732, πλουθυγιεία (wealth/health) εὐδαιμονία βίος (long life) εἰρήνη (peace) νεότης (youth) γέλως (laughter) χορόι (dance) θαλία (good cheer/feast).

54 Homer*, Ili.* 1.595-600.

Athenian ambassadors in the Prytaneion.[55] Later in his table fellowships with sinners (Lk 5:29-32) and the poor (Lk 9:10-17), Jesus manifests the immediate aspect to the fulfilment of makarism in v. 21a. Beyond its realised aspects, the laughter of those who mourn also foretells the eschatological, δεῖπνον, banquet (Lk 14:16) in which τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ἀναπείρους καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ χωλοὺς (the poor, crippled, blind and the lame) partake by invitation (Lk 14: 21).[56]

Praising the Ostracised (Lk 6: 22-23)

In the last makarism (v. 22), Jesus pronounces honour on those who, on account of the son of man, are hated, excluded, insulted and will have their names rejected as evil. This makarism, like v. 21b, describes the disciples' experience in the future. Most scholars regard the makarism in v. 22 as significantly separate from the previous makarisms.[57] The general scholarly consensus is that this makarism reflects a different context from that of the first three makarisms, which suggests that this makarism was never part of the original three. However, separating the fourth makarism from the rest is unnecessary when all the makarisms are examined from the broader historical and social context of the Lucan corpus, where ostracism was an inherent dimension of destitution.[58] Therefore, as Marshall also argues, there is nothing strange about ostracism being coupled with the other makarisms.[59] In fact, as it comes to us, the makarism reflects a

55 Christine F. Salazar. 2019. “Classical Tradition”, *Brill Online* <http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1163/1574> [viewed, 20.4.19.9347.Salazar].

56 The word מִשְׁתֶּה (feast/banquet) appears 43 times in the Hebrew Bible. Although the word is not mentioned in Ex. 24:11, the context of the covenant meal with God at Sinai (Ex. 24.11) conveys the idea of a banquet. In Isaiah 25:6 the eschatological banquet is envisaged.

57 Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 2, 25; Marshall, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 247; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke,* p. 634; Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 115; J.H. Neyrey. 1995, “Loss of Wealth, Family and Honour” in *Modelling Early Christianity*, ed. by Philip Esler, (London: Routledge), pp. 139-157; Nolland, *Luke*, p. 284.

58 See Euripides, *Helen* 790, tr. Gilbert Murray.

59 Marshall, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 252.

logical social response to the experience of poverty in the Greco-Roman world.

Secondly, the reference to the υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 'the son of man', as the basis for the social ostracism of the disciples has led to the problems of understanding the direction of the persecution. Who is persecuting the poor? Many scholars think of the οἱ ἄνθρωποι (men, people) in v. 22 as outsiders.[60] This understanding is possible when v. 22 is understood from the larger context of the historical persecution of the early Christian movement.[61] However, a lexical and contextual analysis of vv. 22-23 vis-a-vis vv. 27-49 also reveals that the envisaged persecution could also be probably internal. A group of four lexically related verbs describe the future experience of the disciples. The first verb used is μισέω which means 'to become detestable to' or 'to dislike.'[62] The second verb is ἀφορίσωσιν (fut. Indic. Plur.) from ἀφορίζω, meaning 'to mark off by boundaries.'[63] The verb can also mean to distinguish, determine, define and, therefore, exclude.[64] The third verb is ὀνειδίσωσιν from ὀνειδίζω, which means to throw a reproach or an insult upon one.[65] Lastly, the disciples are described as those who are subject to being cast out (ἐκβάλλω), removed or getten rid of as πονηρὸς, evil (v. 22). In an honour and shame culture, the

[60] F. Danker. 1988. *Jesus and the New Age,* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), p. 141; Nolland, *Luke,* p. 284; Topel, *Children of a Compassionate God,* pp. 103-104.

[61] From the perspective of external persecution, Neyrey thinks that all the makarisms describe the composite fate of a disciple who has been ostracised as a rebellious son for his loyalty to Jesus. Thus, loss of livelihood resulting from disinheritance has led to their present desperate situation (Neyrey, "Loss of Wealth, Family and Honour", pp. 139-157). In addition, Braun argues that such ostracism could have been the experience of a wealthy patron who invited destitute Christians for table fellowship and was consequently ostracised for it. Thus, the makarism in question, among other things, probably prepares Theophilus for what he might face for choosing to become a follower of Jesus and associating with those outside his class, within the Christ-groups. The parable of the banquet therefore reinforces interclass association relations (Lk 14:12-24) and their implications for those of the rich who took such a bold step (Braun in D. Balch. 2003. "Luke" in *ECB*, ed. by James D.G. Dunn & John W. Rogerson, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans), p. 1116.

[62] Mounce, μισέω TALGNT, 1993, p. 321; See also Homer, *Ili.* 17.272.

[63] LSJ, ἀφορ-ίζω, Perseus Program, URL.

[64] LSJ, ἀφορ-ίζω, Perseus Program, URL.

[65] LSJ ὀνειδίζω, Perseus Program, URL.

experiences described by these four verbs would have been among the most demeaning for the disciples.

It is interesting to note that when v. 22 is read against vv. 27-30, where the disciples' ideal attitude and practice are outlined, an internal perspective of the undercurrents in v. 22 emerges. Four positive verbs in vv. 27-30, love, bless, pray and give, correspond with the four negative words in v. 22, hate, exclude, insult and reject. While it is 'people' who hate, exclude, insult and reject in v. 22, it is the 'enemy' in vv. 27-30 who has to be loved, blessed, prayed for and accorded generosity. As will be demonstrated later, if the lexical meaning of enemy assumes the existence of hostilities between individuals who know each other, [66] then we cannot rule out internal ostracism in the communities, especially arising out of sharp social differences.

Within the early Christian movement, the problem of marginalisation or a perception of it is also noticeable very early in Acts 6:1-5.[67] It is, therefore, probable that some of the Christ-followers in Luke's churches were experiencing internal ostracism. That some had their names cast out as evil could be related to the idea of judging (κρίνω, to judge, Lk 6:37), from which the Christ-followers are advised to desist. The word κρίνω has the sense of separating, putting asunder, and distinguishing,[68] which makes it close in meaning to ἀφορίζω. Paul uses the word κρίνω extensively in his discourse against his detractors (1 Cor. 3), where he urges them not to

66 BDAG, p. 419.

67 The existence social marginalisation would not have been unique to the Christ movement. There is also evidence of marginalisation within voluntary associations, groupings which were significantly similar to the Christ-groups (Arnaoutoglou, "Between Koinon and Idion", p. 82.). Among similarities between associations and Christ-groups were common writing practices whose goal was the groups' self-preservation and re-enforcement of values (Last, Richard. (2012). "Communities That Write: Christ-Groups, Associations, and Gospel Communities", *NTS* 58, p. 180). The two groups also had some marked differences. The associations' lacked trans-local links as opposed to the Christ-groups. Further, in terms of composition, the associations were generally homogeneous in nature while Christ groups crossed social boundaries. W.O. McCready. 1996. "Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations" in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. by J.S. Kloppenborg & S. Wilson, (New York/London: Routledge), p. 63.

68 LSJ, κρίνω, Perseus Program, URL.

judge him but to let God be the judge (1 Cor. 4:3-5). The detractors' attitude towards Paul took the same pattern of social ostracism as that of Luke 6:22. They undermined Paul's person (2 Cor. 10:1,10) and, by implication, his style of ministry. The aim was to demonise him and his ministry, making him irrelevant to the Corinthians. Incidentally, those committed to putting Paul's person and ministry (2 Cor. 10:7) into disrepute were not outsiders but fellow Christ-followers. Paul's example provides a community context in which one's name could be 'cast out as evil'.

The challenge at this stage would perhaps be to explain how the υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 'the son of man,' forms the basis of the ostracism in v. 22-23. How can fellow Christ-followers ostracise each other on account of the son of man? One way around this issue is to understand the question from the perspective of Luke's reference to διασπαρέντες, (being scattered) of the disciples in Acts 8:4. The reference suggests social displacement and possible loss of livelihood for those believers whose means of maintenance, unlike Paul's was tied to their native homeland. Fishermen, whose livelihood was intricately tied to the Sea, would be a perfect example. The lack of income in the diaspora could have resulted in the disciples' destitution and their dependence on other Christians' charity. Like any human situation, social and economic differences could lead to marginalisation (Act 6:1ff). The poverty of the Christ-followers, in this case, would not necessarily arise out of their laziness but from their association with the Son of man and their subsequent exile. A close parallel can be drawn from the problem of idleness in Paul's Thessalonian correspondence (1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-16). We do not know whether all members of the church were foreigners or were indigenous to Thessalonica. We also do not know why some were idle. However, it is also likely that foreigners without a trade like Paul's would have struggled to find work in their new contexts. Given the eschatological urgency of the time, it is probable that some of them had given up work in order to preach the gospel. These individuals could have become a burden to their fellow Christians[69] resulting in the latter's resentment and possible marginalisation

[69] L. Morris. 1984. *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians,* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 87; V. Furnish. 2007. *1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians,* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), p. 97.

of the former (cf. Acts 6:1). In this case, the marginalisation could indirectly be attributed to the name of Jesus for whom these disciples had given up everything.

It is also noteworthy that in Luke 6:22, although Jesus extols the ostracism of the disciples, it is not just their suffering that is at issue here but also their ability to endure these experiences (Lk 21:16-19; cf. Mt 24:13). It is this endurance to follow Jesus, despite social exclusion, which makes the disciples victors comparable to Greco-Roman heroes. The theme of endurance and perseverance is further developed in the parables of persistence in prayer (Lk 11:5-13), the parable of the persistent widow (Lk 18:1-8) and the parable of the shrewd steward (Lk 16:1-8a). In Luke 6:23a, the importance of endurance is underlined by the promise of μισθός (reward), which lies ahead (Lk 6:23). In its Greco-Roman context, the word μισθός had a physical and spiritual meaning.[70] In its lexical sense, μισθός basically meant 'hire' and referred to recompense or reward for work done.[71] It could also mean recognition by the gods for the moral quality of an action.[72] Plato mentions μισθός together with ἆθλον, as the prize of a contest and δῶρον as both the gift of honour, one which the just man will receive from both gods and men even before his death.[73] In the Greco-Roman world, the reward for the victor of games included, among other things, a seat of honour, an extra share of meat at the festival, and land.[74]

Against the Greco-Roman reward system, Jesus promises a much greater reward in heaven for those who endure suffering for his name's

70 The basic NT designation for a prize is βραβεῖον, cf 1 Cor. 9.24; Phil. 3:14, or στέφανος, a crown of victory in 2 Tim. 4:8.

71 BDAG, μισθός, οῦ, ὁ, p. 653.

72 Plato, *Rep*. 10.614a.

73 Plato says: "While he lives, the just man receives from god and men the prizes, (ἆθλα) the wages, (μισθοί) and the gifts, (δῶρα) in addition to those blessings which justice herself bestowed." For the winners of the athletic games, the grand ἆθλον was usually a wreath made from a sacred olive branch. The wreath whose value was symbolic, not monetary, represented honour. Plato, *Rep*. 10. 614 a, tr. John Burnet. See also Herodotus (*Hist*. 8.26) who reports that 'they fight οὐ περὶ χρημάτων … ἀλλὰ περὶ ἀρετῆς.' 'not for money but for honour (excellence)."

74 Pomeroy, *Ancient Greece*, p. 61.

sake (v. 23). While the location of the reward in heaven makes the disciples' triumph futuristic, a realised dimension is also conspicuous behind the text. The present construction γὰρ ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, 'for your reward is great in heaven', contemporises the reward. It offers a picture of the prize as already won by virtue of the disciples' relationship with Jesus but whose final consummation would be at the end of the battle. The Greek noun οὐρανός denoted the skies above and beyond the αἰθήρ (ether) penetrated by the peaks of Mount Olympus, the home of the gods.[75] It is from there that the gods sent blessings to mortals.[76] To Luke's Greco-Roman audience, Jesus' promise of a final triumph for the persecuted disciples would have had significant implications on how they would face their social challenges. It depicts their daily physical existence as the arena or stadia in which to play out the heroic agonistic feats that would qualify them for the great heavenly prize, this time, not from Mount Olympus but from God (the father of Jesus Christ?) who dwells beyond the Olympus (Acts 7: 48-49).

In the last part of the final makarisms (v. 23b), Jesus compares the experience of the persecuted disciples with that of ancient prophets. From Luke's reference to the killing of Zechariah (Lk 11:51), the πατέρες and προφῆται (fathers and prophets) refer to Judean ancestors and OT prophets, respectively.[77] Admittedly, Luke's audience would not have had advanced knowledge of Israelite tradition.[78] However, in a Hellenistic context, the reference to γὰρ ἐποίουν τοῖς προφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν (v. 26) 'for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets', could also evoke reminiscences of the suffering of some classical prophets.[79] It would have

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75 Homer, *Ili.* 2.455-58.

76 *Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 485-9.

77 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 636.

78 According to Esler (*Community and Gospel*, p. 45) this would probably come from their previous association with the synagogue and Septuagintal Greek.

79 See Homer, *Ili.* 4.405, *Ody.* 8.245. In classical texts, the word πατέρες referred to fathers, or forefathers, or ancestors. In this case, the terms οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν, 'their fathers' in v. 23 could refer to either Judean or Greco-Roman ancestry of the audience in question. The word προφήτης was the standard NT designation for prophets, seers and diviners. In the Greek world, the word μ άντις was another common designation for prophets. See, Aeschylus, *Aga.* 195-200; Aeschylus, *Eum.* 25-30, (ἔπειτα μάντις ἐς θρόνους καθιζάνω, 'I take my seat on the

aroused the memory of the blind seer Tiresias who was thrown out by Oedipus when he revealed that he (Oedipus) was the one who had killed King Laius of Thebes, only for Oedipus to learn the truth later.[80] It reminded them of *Bacchus*, a prophet and a god who was rejected by his family.[81] The verse would also have evoked the memory of prophetess Cassandra, daughter of Priam of Troy, known as a prophetess whose prophecies, albeit accurate, none believed in them.[82] Cassandra was eventually carried off to Greece as a captive and slain by Clytaemnestra.[83] By relating the disciples' experience to those of the old 'authentic' prophets, v. 23 joined the disciples to the continuum of great ancient personalities. Thus, like Greco-Roman victors, the disciples had entered the family of honourable victors across time. For the new converts or the inquirers, Jesus' appeal to the social-cultural categories of honour would have created a valuable context for their understanding of the dynamics within the Christian faith and its implications on their everyday life. Apart from depicting the Christ-followers as Greco-Roman victors who deserved praise and honour, the notion of the reward from heaven also served to emphasize that the new life in Christ represented an ἀγών, a contest. It signified the Christian life as not only a struggle fought in the daily exigencies of life but also one wherein victory was assured (Lk 21:19; Mt 24:23).

The integrative power of the imagery of praising the unpraisable (vv. 20-23) could have had far-reaching implications for the new Gentile Christ-followers, whether poor or rich and the rest of the community. Firstly, by starting with the praise of those least regarded in the community and associating them with the Kingdom of God, the Sermon reinforced weakness, powerlessness, and vulnerability as the new identity of those coming into the community. The Sermon, therefore, challenged the popular perception of and attitude towards destitution in the community,

throne as a prophetess'; Aristophanes, *Plut*. 10-15 ἰατρὸς ὢν καὶ μάντις, prophet and diviner.

80 Sophocles, *Oed. Tyr.* 430. οὐκ εἰς ὄλεθρον; οὐχὶ θᾶσσον; οὐ πάλιν ἄψορρος οἴκων τῶνδ᾽ ἀποστραφεὶς ἄπει, 'Begone, to your ruin; be gone this instant! Will you not turn your back and leave this house?' tr. F. Storr, Perseus Program, URL.

81 But this god is also prophet-for Bacchic, revelry and madness have in them much prophetic skill. See Euripides, *Bacc*. 298.

82 Virgil, *Aen*. 2.46-48.

83 Homer, *Ili*. 13.366, 24.699; *Ody*. 11.422.

characteristic of the rich. For the destitute new Christ-followers, the association with the Kingdom of God conferred value on their individual lives. It inspired them to not waver despite the physical and social challenges affecting their daily lives.

Secondly, Jesus' praise of the poor, hungry and socially ostracised connected him with most of his audience, both at the mountainside and those within Luke's communities. The declaration enabled them to understand that Jesus was not only aware of their situation of hunger, mourning, and ostracism (vv. 20-24) but was also able to correct their situation. Jesus' ability to correct social wrongs becomes manifest across the Gospel. In his feeding of the multitudes (Lk 9:12-17), healings and exorcisms (Lk 4:31-37; 4:38-41; 5:12-15; 5:17-26; 6:6-11; 7:11-16; 8:40-53; 9:37-42; 13:10-17; 14:1-5; 17:11-19; 18:35-42), and in the unconditional acceptance of tax collectors (Lk 5:27-23; 19:1-10) and sinners (Lk 7:36-50) Jesus announced the realisation of the blessedness of the poor, hungry and the ostracised referred to in the Sermon. The use of the adverb νῦν (now) concerning those who hunger, mourn, are filled, and laugh (Lk 6:21, 25) demonstrates Jesus' first-hand knowledge of the audience's present situation, both rich and poor. Later, through parables and teaching, Jesus challenged the prevailing socio-economic arrangements that placed the majority of the population at the bottom of the economic pyramid. He then offered an alternative worldview of social-economic relations based on the Kingdom of God (vv. 27-49). For the wealthy converts or inquirers, the praise of destitution represented symbolic integration into the kingdom's values of weakness, vulnerability, and dependency on the Lord. This integration would have been akin to the practice of symbolic violence in Greco-Roman associations.

Anatouglou has demonstrated how Greco-Roman religious associations integrated new members through a process which might be called symbolic violence.[84] He argues that symbolic violence was an imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon a group in such a way that they were experienced as legitimate. The values promoted in cult associations were excellence (ἀρετή), righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), piety

[84] Arnaoutoglou, "Between Koinon and Idion", p. 79.

(ευσέβεια), and love of honour (φιλοτιμία).[85] Similarly, it can be argued that through epideictic symbolism, in the Sermon, Jesus integrates the new converts into the Kingdom values of weakness, vulnerability, and dependency. Although these values portray an inherent weakness repugnant to Greco-Roman sensitivities, a measure of triumphalism also accompanies the disciples' new identity. The values qualified the Christ-followers for the privileges of the Kingdom of God, which were satisfaction, laughter, acceptance and rewards.

Thirdly, the praise of destitution also shook the conventional understanding of kinship for both the poor and the rich. As Esler and Byrne have demonstrated, by questioning the propriety and, therefore, the legitimacy of the entire system of social stratification in Hellenistic cities, Luke relativises what most people hold as advantages and disadvantages.[86] This relativisation provided a starting point for the conception of an inclusive community among Christ-followers. Within the context of the above understanding, Jesus' latter call on the rich to sell their possessions and share with the destitute (Lk 18:22; 19:2) was not to be understood as a call to destitution. It was instead a call to the rich to repudiate their notion of kinship and friendship, which confined their practice of κοινωνία within their immediate circles. It was a call to find security, not in transient wealth but in their relationship with God. Understanding Jesus' demand in this way gave the rich the freedom to give without expecting to receive (Lk 6:32-36; 14:12-14), believing that their security lies not in material wealth. Unlike the rich fool (Lk 12:16-21), their safety was no longer in transient wealth but in their being part of the Kingdom of God.

The Woes (vv. 24-26) and the Transformation of Social Reality

The woes section in Luke 6:24-26 presents a surprising contrast to the blessedness of the disciples in Luke 6:20-23. Due to their different tone, some scholars think that the woes were not originally part of Q; that the

85 Arnaoutoglou, "Between Koinon and Idion", p. 79.
86 Esler, *Community and Gospel*, p. 189; Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, p. 77.

church composed them as a commentary on the makarisms.[87] However, as we have already demonstrated, the makarisms as praise and woes as blame form the essential constituents of the Sermon's panegyric function. In victory odes, blame was vital; it helped admonish the victor against *hubris,* 'not to seek to become Zeus.'[88] The use of blame as a counterpart of praise was necessary because, due to the personal honour acquired as a result of the victory, the Νικητές (victors), like the rich, were often prone to pride. As Nolland observes, riches ensnare those who possess them into a false set of values and loyalties (Lk 12:13-12).[89] It makes them 'sated with the good things of this life.'[90] In a community context, preoccupation with personal satisfaction could lead to condescending attitudes, arrogance, and the neglect of other members. Thus, because of the victors' propensity for *hubris,* praise poets often warned their victors. That is why in the middle of praise, the poets would also blame their victors, and through this, they highlighted the importance of sharing and avoidance of pride.[91]

It can, therefore, be argued that just as praise poets both praised and blamed their victors, in vv. 20-26, Jesus both praises and warns the new Christ-followers and the rest of the other Christians to be vigilant and to know the limits of their privileges in the Kingdom of God. The use of the blame *topos* in vv. 24-26 presents a two-dimensional picture of reality for

87 Nolland (*Luke,* p. 118) thinks vv. 25-38 were not part of Luke's first edition; that they lack strong links with vv. 22-24 and, therefore, probably came as a separate tradition.

88 See Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise,* p. 64. The word hubris referred to arrogance arising from pride of strength or passion. LSJ, ὕβρις, Perseus Program, URL.

89 Nolland, *Luke,* p. 287.

90 A. Plummer. 1989. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke,* (Edinburg: T&T Clark), p. 182. The participle ἐμπεπλησμένοι (v. 25) means 'to fill to the full'.

91 For example, in the middle of his praise of Khromios of Aetna for his victory in the four-horse chariot race Pindar has this to say:
'Son of Hagesidamus, our way of life grants you the enjoyment of many things. I take no pleasure in keeping great wealth hidden away in my hall, but in using what I have to be successful and to win a good name by helping my friends.' Similarly, Bacchylides offers a tirade of wealth in the middle of praising his victor. He argues: 'Wealth keeps company with worthless men as well, and it tends to swell a man's thoughts; but he who does well to the gods cheers his heart with a more glorious hope.'

the new Christ-followers. Firstly, by pronouncing woes on the rich, after praising the destitute, Jesus reveals not only the transitory nature of material wealth and social prestige but also the final *telos* of worldly riches. The phrase 'they have received their παράκλησις' (comfort) (v. 24) demonstrates the finite nature of material wealth, which contrasts with the fortune of the destitute in v. 20, whose inheritance is the eternal Kingdom of God.[92] Jesus' denigration of the rich, therefore, serves to discourage exclusive dependence on riches at the expense of κοινωνία. It is an encouragement for the rich to use their wealth responsibly. The parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:13-21), Lazarus and the rich man (16:19-31), and the post-conversion generosity of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) demonstrate the importance of responsible use of wealth.[93]

Secondly, by blaming the rich, Jesus offered an alternative way to live a fulfilled life besides just wealth. He demonstrated that it was possible for the Christ-followers to be satisfied, to laugh, and be accepted without being rich (Lk 6:20-26).[94] In this way, the Sermon relativised the unique status of the rich. The relativisation of status understood in the light of the reversal in (vv. 24-26) created 'status dissonance' for the Greco-Roman rich and which they had to deal with to maintain their status. Bodel defines status dissonance as the discrepancy that occurs when a person is ranked higher in one or more categories but low in others.[95] Failure to maintain social prestige was one of the most shameful things for any Greco-Roman male. Status discrepancy was also a significant catalyst for mobility in highly stratified societies. Martial gives an example of impoverished equestrian poets living on the charity of friends who maintained their status by wearing their toga.[96] Since the toga was a status symbol,

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92 LSJ, παρακαλέω, "to call to one's side ... summon to one's aid, or call upon for help", Perseus Program, URL.

93 See also Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, p. 284.

94 The promises accorded the poor, satisfaction, laughter and rewards, echo the Lucan conception of the fate of the poor and the rich in the afterlife, where everyone will be equal. See Lucian, *Mor. Dia*. 1.4, Perseus Program, URL.

95 See J. Bodel. 2015. "Status Dissonance and Status Dissidents in the Equestrian Order" in *Social Status and Prestige in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. by Annika B. Kuhn, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag), pp. 29-44.

96 A. Kuhn. 2015a. "The dynamics of Social status and Prestige in Pliny, Juvenal and Martial" in *Social Status and Prestige in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. by A.

wearing it despite their apparent poverty, the poets struck up an appearance of nobility and the associated status.[97] Therefore, the praise of the destitute and a tirade against the rich (vv. 24-26) signified a low rating for the latter in the community.[98] Within the context of Greco-Roman quest for honour, the fear of status loss and prestige would have given the rich the impetus to work for an inclusive understanding of kinship and friendship and the motivation to strive for a more responsible and pragmatic use of wealth.[99]

Kuhn, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag), p. 23.

97 Ndekha, "I am not Strong to Dig and I am Afraid to Beg", p. 3.

98 Status dissonance is a branch of Cognitive Dissonance Theory in Psychology which has also been used in the social-scientific analysis of NT texts and other extra-biblical texts. Cognitive consistency theories assume that the preferred state of an individual's cognitive universe is that of consistency or non-contradiction between cognitions. Dissonance reduction can be achieved in several ways, one of which is changing behaviour to accord with environmental cognition. See D. Aune 2007 "Christian Beginning and Cognitive Dissonance Theory" in *Other Words; Essays on Social Science Method and the NT in Honour of Jerome H. Neyrey*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press), pp. 12-13; P.F. Esler. 1994, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to NT Interpretation*, (London: Routledge), pp. 110-130.

99 The new attitude to wealth would reflect Pindar's statement "I take no pleasure in keeping great wealth hidden away in my hall, but in using what I have to be successful and to win a good name by helping my friends." Pindar, *Nem.* 1:30-31, tr. D. Svarlien.

CHAPTER 4
FROM PRAISE TO PROGRAM: TOWARDS A LUCAN VISION OF COMMUNITY (VV. 27-49)

Introduction

This chapter offers an exegesis of vv. 27-49 from the perspective of panegyric exhortation, its implied vision, and implications for the social ethos of the communities of Christ-followers associated with the Third Gospel. Most scholars recognise the hortatory nature of vv. 27-49. However, they do not adequately explain the Sermon's dramatic transition from the praise and blame paradigm of the makarisms and woes (vv. 20-26) to the paraenesis of vv. 27-49. From Luke 6:27, Jesus shifts his focus from his disciples to the rest of the audience. This dramatic shift in the audience is absent in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-2, 13). Matthew presents a seamless transition from the beatitudes (Mt. 5.1-12) into the exhortation (Mt 5:13ff.), suggesting a unitary audience.[1] A panegyric reading of the Sermon sufficiently exhibits this dramatic transition. It demonstrates that the shift in Luke 6:27a from the disciples (v. 20) to 'all those who are hearing' (v. 27a) is a shift from analysing the social contradictions in the community (vv. 20-26) to exhortation and advice in vv. 27-49. Closely reading Luke 6:20-49 demonstrates that the Sermon echoes the Ciceronian panegyric structure of 'from praise to program.' In a Ciceronian fashion, in vv. 27-49 Jesus sets out a program of action that describes his conception of an ideal community of Christ-followers. The program takes on an approach that clarifies human relationships and the meaning of fundamental issues affecting everyday life of his disciples. Its vision involves, among other things, setting out the proper behaviours and attitudes among Christ-followers that would generate a conducive atmosphere for social-economic and spiritual camaraderie.

1 L. Ndekha, "Loving the Enemy and Mob Justice in Malawi: A Contextual Reading of Luke 6:27-29" in *Global Perspectives on the Bible and Violence*, ed. by Helen Paynter & Michael Spalione, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2023), p. 53.

The Love of Enemies vv. 27-36

The text in vv. 27-36 is usually referred to as the love command. In v. 27, Jesus shifts his focus from his disciples to the rest of the audience. Unlike Matthew (Mt 5:1-2, 13) this transition is purely Lucan. At a basic level, it demonstrates Jesus' interest beyond the disciples he had just commissioned in v. 13. It reveals that Sermon's message was not just relevant to Jesus' immediate disciples. It was also equally relevant for the immediate multitudes before him, including any other communities with access to the Third Gospel's text.[2] In its historical context, 'all those who are hearing' (v. 27) constituted the multitudes that came to hear Jesus and to be healed of their ailments from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon (vv. 17-18). Although Jesus' focus was on his disciples, much of the content of vv. 20-26 would have struck a chord with the crowds' realities of life. However, for Luke's primary audience, comprising the rich and the poor, the Sermon's shift to 'all those who are hearing' would have had a significant immediacy. It brought home the realisation that the social questions highlighted in the Sermon's makarisms and woes had far-reaching implications for any community hearing the message, including their communities. This understanding would have ruffled the feathers of some of the rich in the community, especially those with a complicated relationship with the poor.

The first part of v. 27a emphasises the importance of loving the enemy. The use of ἀγαπάω (to love, v. 27) concerning enemies than the conventional φιλέω (regard with affection) presents a revolutionary understanding of interpersonal relationships in the community. Ordinarily, φιλίᾳ (friendship) and ἔρος[3] (desire) were the standard terms used to conceptualise interpersonal relationships in the Greek world. The word αγάπη had several nuances and contextual applications. It could refer to warm regard for or interest in another person.[4] It also meant to be well pleased with.[5] In some instances, it had the sense of tolerating or putting up with.[6] The

2 Cf. L. Ndekha, "Loving the Enemy and Mob Justice in Malawi", p. 60.
3 LSJ, ἀγαπάω, Perseus Program, URL.
4 BDAG, ἀγάπ-η, ἡ, p. 5.
5 LSJ, ἀγαπάω, Perseus Program, URL.
6 Cf. Isocrates. 4.140; Aristotle, *Rhet*. 1398a23.

word, however, had its definitive expression in the unconditional affection of transcendent beings for mortals.[7] There were, however, instances when the relationship between the words αγάπη/αγάπά(ν) and φιλειν/φιλίᾳ (to love/living and to regard with affection/friendship) as expressions of personal friendship was ambiguous and, therefore, interchangeable. For example, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle posits that 'a (true) benefactor feels friendship and agape (φιλοῦσι καὶ ἀγαπῶσι) for the recipient of his bounty even though he is not getting anything out of him and is never likely to do so.'[8] By using the two terms together in defining unconditional generosity, Aristotle underscores the affinity between αγάπη and φιλίᾳ. This understanding agrees with Vogel's observation that in Socratic dialogue, the two terms were initially interchangeable until in the 4th Century BCE when φιλειν fell out of use and αγάπά(ν) gained everyday use.[9] However, although the two terms find common ground in their focus on personal friendship, their lexical meaning, motivation, and goal separate them.

Aristotle defined φιλίᾳ as mutual goodwill, which is also mutually recognised (*Nic. Eth.* 1156a4). According to him, the motive of φιλίᾳ is threefold: the utility of the object of goodwill, its pleasantness, and inherent goodness (NE. viii.3). This motivation makes φιλίᾳ conditional on the usefulness and goodness of the object of its love. On the other hand, three characteristics of αγάπη set it apart from φιλίᾳ; (1) it is uncaused and spontaneous,[10] (2) it is indifferent to human merit, and (3) it is creative in that it creates value in its object.[11] Aristotle's analysis of αγάπη has implications for understanding the word's meaning and relationship with

7 BDAG, ἀγάπ-η, ἡ, p. 5.

8 Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 1167b; (similarly, Rhetor. 1385a 17). The word ἀγα π άω means to treat with affection, to show affection to a person or to caress.

9 C.J. Vogel. 1981. "Greek Cosmic Love and the Christian Love of God: Boethius, Dionysius the Areopagite and the Author of the Fourth Gospel", *Vigiliae Christianae* 35/1, p. 60.

10 In αγάπη, the subject wishes well to and cares for the objects within the scope of its concern not because of the object's properties (except for those which place it within the scope of concern) but because of the subject's own character, which as it were, overflows with goodwill for any object within the scope of its concern.

11 W. Harrelson. 1951. "The Idea of Agape in the NT", *The Journal of Religion*

φιλίᾳ. It makes αγάπη not only an intensification of the concept of φιλίᾳ but also the highest and noblest expression of human relationships, which, except for the gods, was not easily attainable in everyday human interactions. It can also be argued that αγάπη's basic meaning as toleration and the ability to put up with, when applied in everyday life, gave it a unique nuance. It allowed for the possibility of a positive relationship with enemies. Inversely, in its raw sense as unconditional generosity, αγάπη ran counter to and, therefore, challenged the Greco-Roman system of kinship and reciprocity. Since the system of kinship and reciprocity was built on two-way exchange in social relations, it made applying unconditional generosity in everyday life a real challenge.

The classical meaning of αγάπη discussed above helps to put into perspective the use of the word in Luke 6:27 (cf. Mt 5:44) and its 145 appearances across the New Testament. Some scholars attribute the popularisation of the term to its adoption by early Christianity as an expression of the love of God for humanity and of humanity for God. In Classical Christian understanding, αγάπη was the demonstration of unconditional empathy for someone, regardless of whether they could reciprocate the generosity or not.[12] This definition, which echoes Aristotle's definition, suggests that the use of αγάπη within the early Christian movement was not a Christian innovation. It was the domestication and internalisation of a familiar Greco-Roman concept. This domestication would have been vital for the socially differentiated communities of Christ-followers of the early Jesus movement. It made possible the transformation of the general act of loving into an attitude and mode of action rather than an emotion.[13] Thus, αγάπη enabled total strangers to call each other ἀδελφός, brothers in Christ (1 Cor. 2:1; Rom. 8:29), a practice that would have been strange to conventional Greco-Roman world sensibilities.

In 27a, Jesus makes enemies the object of love for the disciples. The reference to the enemy, ἐχθρός (v. 27), as the object of loving action resonates with the magnanimity associated with αγάπη.[14] However, in the

31/3, p. 169.

12 W.L. Liefeld. 1984. *Luke: The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 Vls., ed. by F.E. Gaebelein, (Grand Rapids/MN: Zondervan Pub. House), p. 893.

13 Cf. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 108.

14 The importance of making the love of the enemy as an attitude and a mode of

Greco-Roman world, where kinship and friendship defined social relations, the prescription to love the enemy would ordinarily have been a surprising order. In both Judaism and Greco-Roman contexts, the extent of compassion towards the enemy was an unresolved question. While the fair treatment of enemies (especially those in a position of weakness, like the hungry and the captured) was entrenched in individual ethical practice, the actual love of an enemy was non-existent.[15] The regular treatment of the enemy was often guided by the challenge and riposte characteristic of honour and shame cultures. In addition, the cultural conventions of the time prescribed the philosophy of helping one's friends and harming one's enemies.[16] Therefore, by prescribing the love of the enemy, the Sermon takes conventional fair play with the enemies to new extremes. Some scholars think the love of one's neighbour was already a contentious issue within Judaism. Bovon, for example, holds that the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) demonstrates that Jews and Christians of that time were arguing over the correct interpretation of the love of neighbour.[17] In the context of the lack of historical evidence, this position remains a conjecture. However, in the event that such a Jewish-Christian disagreement occurred, the love of the enemy took the controversy to another level. For the Christ-followers, it not only established αγάπη as the ultimate guiding principle in all social relations but would also have been a vital element of Christian identity. [18] It helped to differentiate the Christ-followers from the adherents of the other philosophies of the time. For *Theophilus* and his fellow new converts or inquirers, the exhortation in

action is further defined in the series of prescriptions on actions and attitudes that follow after the use of ἀγαπάω in v. 27a.

15 Prov. 25.21 argues that if your enemies are hungry, feed them with bread, and if thirsty, give them a drink. In the Greco-Roman context, slaves were encouraged not to hate their masters, also stressed were the need for rulers to rule over their captured enemies with compassion, and the need to avoid blind rage for the educated master (Bovon, *Luke*, p. 235).

16 For understanding some Greco-Roman references to the principle of helping a friend and harming the enemy see M.W. Blundell. 1989. *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP); Isocrates, *Pan.* 1.26; Euripides, *Ele.* 66.

17 Bovon, *Luke*, p. 243.

18 Cf. Bovon, *Luke*, p. 243.

v.27a was part of the socialisation of the new members into the ethos of the Jesus movement that was taking the Greco-Roman world by storm.

The reference to the ἐχθρός (enemy) as the object of love in v. 27a presents the challenge of whether the enemy is a close adversary or an external one. Richard Horsley argues that understanding Jesus' 'love your enemy' (Lk 6:27 cf. Mt 5:43-48) sayings in relation to a foreign enemy is a failure to appreciate the contextual nature of the sayings and their significance in their original contexts.[19] His position is that the sayings were contextual and meant to address internal social issues within the Christian communities of the Gospel writers. This means that the love command was not a general instruction to all Christians but reflected internal and contextual issues within the communities of the Lucan churches. Horsley's position is supported by the lexical nuances of the word ἐχθρός, which offers the possibility of conceiving the idea of the enemy as reflecting internal hostilities. Although generally translated as 'enemy', lexically, the term ἐχθρός refers to the existence of hostilities between individuals who know each other. In some cases, an ἐχθρός was someone who had been a φίλος (friend) but had become alienated.[20] It was the opposite of the word πολέμιος, (enemy), which was often used for conflict with an external enemy.[21] In this case, ἐχθρός was more related to the term δυσμενής or 'one who has long been alienated and refuses to be reconciled.'[22] This suggests that the enemy in question is not a total stranger but someone known to the disciples; it could be someone they have fallen out with or an estranged brother. Thus, the enemy is a close adversary, like the one who sabotages a farmer's crop by sowing weeds among the grain (Mt 13:25).[23]

Given the lexical meaning of ἐχθρός presented above, we can conclude that the use of 'enemy' in the Sermon pointed to, among other things, the

19 See Richard A. Horsley. 1986. "Ethics and Exegesis: 'Love Your Enemies' and the Doctrine of Non-Violence", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54/1, pp. 3-31.

20 LSJ, ἐχθρός, ά, όν, Perseus Program, URL.

21 Aeschines, *Aga. Cte.* 3.172, Perseus Program, URL.

22 LSJ, ἐχθρός, ά, όν, Perseus Program, URL.

23 Horsley, "Ethics and Exegesis", p. 17.

presence of substantial levels of hostilities among Christ-followers. It denoted deteriorating standards in interpersonal relationships among members of the Christ-groups, which the Gospel potentially addresses. The social classification of the audience into the 'poor' and the 'rich' latent in the makarisms and woes (vv. 20-26), and the pronouncement of the expected destiny of each group within the Kingdom, suggest an acute polarisation that required redress. It pointed to the possible existence of group boundaries and their resulting 'in-group' and 'out-group' conceptions of social relations, which undermined the unity of the groupings. In advocating for the love of the enemy, the Sermon erases the boundary between family and stranger (Lk 10:30-35) (Q LK 6:32-36.).[24] In the community of Christ-followers, the stranger or the socially different other was declared the fictive kin. This kinship was created out of their common calling as the disciples of Jesus. Jesus, therefore, envisaged a community that was both counter-cultural to its Greco-Roman context and one that conformed to the standards of the Kingdom. It would be a community as imagined by Plutarch's Cleomenes in Sparta, where there would be neither destitution nor riches and the interpersonal challenges associated with them. [25]

Between vv. 27b and v. 31, Jesus provides the interpersonal attitudes that clarify the practical ways of loving the enemy. These ways can be classified into two categories; attitudes and actions. The terms 'hate' (v. 27b) and 'curse' (v. 28) describe attitudes that characterise hostility, which, by the nature of the human condition, the disciples will experience but which they must not replicate. On the other hand, striking and taking away (v. 29) characterise the actions from which the disciples should desist.

Verbal Response to Hostility

In v. 27b doing good to those who hate you provides the practical application of the command to love the enemy. For Jesus' Jewish audience and those Gentiles conversant with Jewish Scripture, the injunction in v. 27b echoed Prov. 25:21, where the individual is instructed to give bread and

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[24] Robert Bellar cited in D.E. Oakman. 2014. *Jesus, Debt and the Lord's Prayer*, (Eugene: Cascade Books), p. 121.

[25] For Cleomenes, poverty and wealth were the older evils of society. See Plutarch, *Cle*. 10.1-4, Perseus Program, URL.

water to hungry and thirsty enemies. Levine and Witherington III think the instruction to do good to those antagonistic to you is an intensification of the Jewish material found in Prov. 25:21.[26] In v. 28, the disciples are exhorted to bless and pray for those who mistreat them. The word used for blessing is εὐλογέω means to speak well of, to praise, honour or to deliver a panegyric to.[27] Speaking well of and praying for hostile members is equivalent to taking the moral higher ground. Such a stance has the potential to disarm the aggressive party and win them over. The injunction echoes Pericles' exhortation to overcome enemies by generosity and virtue.[28] However, Jesus presents this ethical standpoint not as a mere encouragement but as a direct command εὐλογεῖτε, 'you bless (them)' (v. 28a). That type of response to hostility is not only an embodiment of αγάπη, which Jesus advocates in v. 27a, but is also an identify cypher of the disciples as followers of Jesus. Later in the Gospel, Jesus exemplifies the love of the enemy when he prohibits his disciples from fighting back against those arresting him (Lk 22:47-51) and forgiving those crucifying him (Lk 23:34).

Active Response to Hostility

In v. 29, Jesus provides the practical framework for how the disciples can actively respond to outright violence. Two levels of responses are prescribed in v. 29. The first in v. 29a is the response to physical attack; they are to turn the other cheek. The second part is the disciples' response to property seizure (v. 29b); they are to allow those taking their tunic to take their shirt also. Fitzmyer thinks this 'taking' alludes to a thief, a person in need, or a property seizure arising from a lawsuit.[29] All these options suggest a community context where the parties know each other. Giving the other cheek to physical attack emphasises the extent of patience and long-suffering the disciples are to demonstrate. The reference in v. 29b to what can be given up, from 'a tunic' (outer covering) 'to a shirt' (inner garment), showed the ultra-pacifist orientation of the early Christian movement and

26 A. Levine & B. Witherington. 2018. *The Gospel of Luke,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), p. 180.
27 LSJ, εὐλογέω, Perseus Program, URL.
28 Thucydides, *Hist.* 4.19, 1-4.
29 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke,* p. 639.

how far they could allow the aggressor more than they bargained for. As Tannehill points out, not striking back or giving up one's tunic are examples of 'surprising actions.'[30] These actions were surprising because they were contrary to conventional Greco-Roman challenge and riposte that characterised social relations in that world.

In the community of Christ-followers, not fighting back and tolerating the seizure of one's property had pedagogical import. Firstly, the admonition offered them a new conception of power dynamics in interpersonal relationships. It confirmed that having a soft heart was not a sign of weakness. It was instead a sign of strength and a demonstration of the resolve to go against the widespread expectations that drove individuals to relentlessly fight back for lost honour. Secondly, a passive response to physical hostilities would represent an indictment of the Greco-Roman practice of challenge, riposte, and endless squabbling. Thus, not fighting back would have echoed Plato's interpretation of Socrates' death as an act of 'accepting their (of the persecutors) blows without resisting in order to proclaim the rottenness of society not only in word but also in body (sic).[31] Such a response would shame the aggressor and mortify the observer. Where the aggression was external, it would have significant missiological implications for the Jesus movement. Tertullian's alleged reference to the blood of the martyrs as the seed of the church confirms this. Thirdly, not fighting back would have had community-building implications. It would have ensured that the disciples were not responsible for the endless spate of conflict and malignant interpersonal relations endemic in the honour and shame culture. The injunction in v. 29 presented an alternative way of maintaining honour in the Greco-Roman world, not by fighting back but by stopping the spirals of violence through non-violent responses. Such an approach offered the potential for building communities of love, which v. 27 reinforced.

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[30] Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 117.

[31] Quoted in Nolland, *Luke*, p. 295.

Active Communal Generosity

In v. 30, like Barnabas in Acts 4:36-37, the disciples are advised to be willing to put their personal belongings at other people's disposal. This recommendation partly echoes the communitarian ethos of early Christian communities in Acts 4:34, where no one lacked anything because some made their possessions available for communal use. However, in v. 30, the instruction is not about outright collective use of private property evident in Acts 4:34. It is about a liberal spirit that responds to specific individual needs of 'those who ask.' The imperative force of the phrase παντὶ αἰτοῦντί σε, δίδου, 'give to everyone who asks you' (v. 30a) presupposes material differences among the members of the community and the need for sharing. This spirit echoes John the Baptist's call for generosity in a community context; 'anyone who has two shirts to share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same' (Lk 3:7). Both John and Jesus envisage a community where those who are materially well-off demonstrate concern for those materially less so. In a world where social exchange was based on reciprocity, this injunction would have presented significant challenges for the wealthy believers in the community of Christ-followers (cf. Lk 12:16-21; 16:19-31). Here Jesus addresses the fundamental mindset and practical difficulties which would hamper the formation of Christian communities as fictive kinships built around loyalty to him.

Even more difficult would have been the instruction not to take back goods that had been taken away without the owners' consent in v. 30b. Some commentators think that this text refers to street robbery or seizure of one's cloth in a court action (cf. Mt 5:40). The latter interpretation makes sense when the instruction is understood within the context of persecution, which, around the date of the Third Gospel (80-90 CE), was full-fledged. However, it is also possible to interpret v. 30b from the communitarian perspective of Acts 4:34-35, where no one lacked anything. A close examination of Acts chapters 2-6 demonstrates two characteristics of the early Christian movement which are important for understanding v. 30b. The first characteristic was the presence of social differences. While some were propertied individuals (Acts 4:34-36), others like widows (Lk 6:1) were ultra-poor. The second one was a household understanding of community where brothers and sisters made their possessions available for community use (Acts 2:42-45; 4:34-35). This community image is latent in most Greco-Roman foundation stories, such as Plato's *Critias*, the *Habura*, and Ovidius' *Metamorphoses*, where communal property ownership was the main feature.[32]

A household understanding of possessions in the community would create the possibility of those materially less fortunate taking from those with possessions without their formal consent. Like Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, the action of the less fortunate would have been akin to taking what belonged to brothers in a community context.[33] However, in v. 30, the fact that one was required 'to give' or 'not ask back' suggests that private property was still sacrosanct. Thus, to give or not to take back possessions was to be volitional. The practice of generosity would have been a mark of their identity as disciples of Jesus.

In v. 30, Jesus also emphasises that in a community context, giving need not only be volitional or based on request. In the new fictive community of brothers and sisters forged from their common following of Jesus, giving could also be driven by those in need. The verb ἀπαιτέω (v. 30b) can mean to demand back or require to be returned.[34] The emphasis here is to give to everyone regardless of whoever initiates the process, whether those with possessions or those who do not have but have a need. This instruction would only make sense in a community where individuals know each other's possessions and needs. The instructions in v. 30 rightly identify some in Jesus' and Luke's audience as persons of some means – with shirts and coats – goods that can be stolen or loaned to others.[35] The call was that in the new community of Christ-followers, the rich needed to change their attitude towards possession and generosity. The exhortation recognises the complex relationship between wealth

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32 See F.F. Bruce. 1998. *Acts of the Apostles*, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans), p. 74; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 62; Ovidius, *Met.* 1:88-111.

33 Such an understanding has a strong echo with Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, where Praxagora, asks what would happen in a communitarian society, if someone stole your tunic. She answers, "Besides, if anyone wanted to steal your cloak, you would give it to him yourself. Why not? You will only have to go to the common store and be given a better one." Aristophanes, *Ecc.* 670, tr. E. O'Neill.

34 LSJ, ἀπαιτ-έω, Perseus Program, URL.

35 Green, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 271.

and power in a community and its implications for the social relations between the rich and the poor.

In v. 31, Jesus summarises the instruction to love the enemy with the golden rule. The disciples are to treat others as they would like to be treated themselves. The literal translation of this text is ‘as you desire men (ἄνθρωποι) should do to you (ὑμῖν).’ The reference to ἄνθρωποι (plu.) as the generic human underscores the non-discriminatory attitude that the Christ-followers are to demonstrate to everyone regardless of their social status. By prescribing oneself (ὑμῖν ‘to you’) as a standard for the treatment of others, Jesus challenges the discriminatory Greco-Roman conception of compassion. Philosophers like Epictetus summarise the Greco-Roman selective conception of compassion when he argues:

> Beware that you be not carried away by the impression (φαντασία) that the (suffering) person (in front of you) is in the midst of external ills (ἐν κακοῖς … τοῖς ἐκτός) ... Do not hesitate to sympathize with him (συμπεριφέρεσθαι; to go about with him) so far as words go, and, if occasion offers, even to groan (συνεπιστενάξαι) with him, but be careful not to groan also in the center of your being (πρόσεχε μέντοι μὴ καὶ ἔσωθεν στενάξῃς).[36]

For Epictetus, compassion, while a necessary part of being a responsible citizen, should nevertheless be demonstrated with some control. According to him, generosity to others should not affect you too much.[37] Contrary to this popular perception, Jesus’ injunction takes the measure of compassion for others to the self; how you would like to be treated by others (cf. Mt 7:12). This understanding had the potential to transform the dynamics of interpersonal relationships both among the Jesus’ disciples and their relationship with other people.

It is also noteworthy that although Jesus’ golden rule in v. 31 had its counterparts within the Greco-Roman world, it had a unique twist that separated it from the rest. Most classical versions of the golden rule were

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36 Epictetus, *Enc*. 16, Perseus Program, URL.

37 Cf. L.W. Ndekha. 2022. "Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Rhetorical Syncrisis in the Parable of the Magnanimous Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)", *Neotestamentica* 56/2, pp. 301-316.

set in the negative.[38] Jesus, however, set his golden rule in the positive. The problem with negative rules is that they can potentially lead to passivity; as long as one is not doing anything wrong, that is okay.[39] Silence in the face of evil is equivalent to complicity. Jesus' positive formulation was meant to emphasise that being his follower was not just about avoiding bad attitudes and practices. It involved actively demonstrating good attitudes and actions, not just towards kin and kith, but towards all people. Thus, although the golden rule appears universal, Jesus frames it in a way that uniquely sets higher standards for his followers of all generations. It calls for the highest form of sacrificial love demonstrable in using the self to measure one's love for the other. This makes Jesus' golden rule not only counter-cultural but also revolutionary.

The revolutionary spirit of the golden rule is further delineated across the Gospel. It is evident in the more than expected generosity of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) towards the victim of the roadside robbery. It is also exemplified in Zacchaeus' new-found freedom to no longer steal from others, paying back four-fold, and sharing what he had with the poor (Lk 19:1-10). The widow's giving away of all her livelihood (Lk 21:4), even in the face of severe lack, demonstrates unselfish generosity. Finally, towards the end of the Gospel, Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross demonstrates his commitment to using the self as a measure for treating others (Lk 19:10). In a community context, the sacrificial approach to ethics latent in the golden rule would enable the Christ-followers to establish a moral claim to appropriate behaviour.[40] The golden rule was, therefore, a larger-

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38 The Judean golden rule was captured as "Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and discipline yourself in all your conduct. And what you hate, do not do to anyone. Do not drink wine to excess or let drunkenness go with you on your way." (Tobit 4:14-15, NRSV). There were several versions of the golden rule in the Greco-Roman world. For example, Herodotus (c. 484-425 BC) quotes Maeandrius as saying: "But, so far as it lies in me, I will not myself do that which I account blameworthy in my neighbour" (Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.142.3). Isocrates (436-338 BC) also says, 'Do not do to others that which angers you when they do it to you.' (Isocrates, *Nico.* or the *Cyp.* 3.61). Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BC-AD 65) also says, 'Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters.' (Seneca, *Epi.* 47.11).

39 Levine & Witherington, *Gospel of Luke,* p. 182.

40 Nolland, *Luke,* p. 298.

than-life expression of αγάπη (agape). It made possible the co-existence of ethnically and socially different groups, which the early Christian movement was recruiting into its fold. Athenagoras' *Legatio* provides a further example of the spirit of αγάπη which was expected of Christ-followers. Concerning the poor of his time, he posits:

> But among us you find uneducated persons and artisans, and old women, who, if they are unable to prove the benefits of doctrine, yet their deeds exhibit the benefits arising from the benefits of its truth; they do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again, when robbed, they -do not go to the law; they give to those that ask of them, and love their neighbours as themselves.[41]

Athenagoras' poor Christians can probably be dated from the late second century CE and, therefore, significantly removed from Luke's time. Yet their description, though reflecting the language of the Gospel, partly resonates with the community application of the Sermon's teaching. This approach to interpersonal relationships would have not only been missiologically significant but also critical to the building of the communities of Christ-followers.

Reciprocity Reviewed (Lk 6:32-36)

The challenge to treat everyone equally outlined in v. 31 dovetails into a polemic against the prevailing system of kinship and reciprocity in vv. 32-36. Sahlin describes three types of reciprocity in the ancient world. Firstly, there was generalised reciprocity, which was altruistic and primarily understood in terms of kinship. The second form was balanced reciprocity. This was defined as mutual helpfulness characterised by the inability to tolerate one-way-flows of the benefit and a strong inclination towards instant repayment of favour. The third form was negative reciprocity, which involved the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity, usually from those outside the kinship group.[42] Balanced reciprocity

41 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 11:4.

42 M. Sahlins. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*, (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton Inc.), pp. 176, 177, 310.

was the most prevalent social exchange in the Greco-Roman world. It placed a burden on the recipient and allowed for the immediate return of a favour given to them. Thus, generosity was strongly tied to reciprocity as a system of social exchange aimed at satisfying a need.[43]

There were three parts to reciprocity; the benefactor, the beneficiary, and the χάρις, benefit. The benefit was the cement that united the beneficiary and the benefactor. It was the axis on which the Greco-Roman reciprocity system was built. The benefit operated as a framework that directed the bestowal of favour or benefit to the right person.[44] The rightful beneficiaries of generosity were usually those in a position to pay back or those who stood in a special relationship with the benefactor, making it obligatory for the latter to provide the necessary benefit.[45] Within the grand scheme of things, those who received a favour had an obligation to give back, no matter how long it took them. This system of social exchange would have been incompatible with the socially differentiated communities of Christ-followers. Any giving arrangement that anticipated a return was bound to create skewed relationships within the community. It would make other members of the Christ-followers perpetually obligated towards their privileged counterparts.

In vv. 32-34 Jesus reappraises this entrenched Greco-Roman system. Unique to this re-assessment is the three-fold use of subjunctive verbs with conditional particles in vv. 32-36, followed by the question ποία ὑμῖν χάρις ἐστίν, 'What good is it to you?' This semantic structure represents a direct attack on the Greco-Roman system of reciprocity. The repetition of the question 'what credit (benefit) is that to you?' exposes the deficiency of an ethic that does not extend love beyond the circle of those already doing good to one another.[46] It is, however, important to note that the

43 S. von Reden. 1998."Commodification of Symbols: Reciprocity and its Perversion in Menander" in *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece,* ed. by Christopher Gill, Norman Postlethwaite & Richard Seaford (eds), (Oxford: University of Oxford Press), pp. 180-197.

44 Quoted in A. Kirk. 2003. "'Love Your Enemies,' The Golden Rule, and Ancient Reciprocity (Luke 6:27-35)", *JBL* 122/4, p. 678.

45 Kirk, "Love Your Enemies", p. 678.

46 A. Culpepper. 1995. "Luke" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IX, (Nashville: Abingdon Press), pp. 146-147.

polemic in vv. 32-36 is not a rejection of the Greco-Roman reciprocity system in its entirety. Such a rejection would not be possible, given the entrenched nature of the system of reciprocity in that world. In fact, elements of reciprocity exist in the Sermon's treatment of particular human actions and attitudes vis-à-vis divine action (Lk 6:23, 35, 37-38). The polemic is instead meant to reappraise the system of reciprocity and modify it to suit the fictive communities of Christ-followers.

To align the system of reciprocity to the new communities of Christ-followers, Jesus redefines the traditional understanding of the benefit (credit, χάρις vv. 32, 33, 34). Jesus starts by demonstrating the foolhardiness of using benefit (credit, χάρις) as the basis of social exchange (vv. 32-34). He argues that if the relationship among Christ-followers is determined by reciprocity, then their community is not different from the world of the οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ, the sinners (v. 32) around them. The term οἱ ἁμαρτωλος (sinner) can have both religious and secular meanings. Religiously, it could mean the sinner. In its general meaning, it referred to the offender or criminal. [47] The religious meaning defines Gentiles from a Jewish perspective, suggesting that the disciples addressed by the Sermon should separate themselves from the behaviour characteristic of non-Christians.[48] The contrast with the practice of the οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ (sinners) demonstrates the counter-cultural and identity bending nature of the communities envisaged by Jesus. The three-fold reference to sinners in vv. 32, 33, and 35 underscores the need for the disciples to be identified differently from their surrounding communities.

In v. 35a, Jesus makes the love command the remedy for dealing with systemic reciprocity challenges within the community. Here, the expression of the love of the enemy is given many forms. Firstly, the disciples are commanded to do good (ἀγαθοποιεῖν). The idea of doing good to others echoes the spirit of the ἀνήρ ἀγαθός (the good man) of Greek social and moral thought, whose attributes were, among other things, honour and justice.[49] He is the man (1) who achieves the good for man;[50] (2) who encompasses the virtues of justice, wisdom, temperance, courage, and piety;

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[47] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 601.

[48] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 601.

[49] Plato, *Pol*. 309c.

[50] Ps. Plato, *Def*. 415d6-7. Cf. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 630.

(3) his deeds of fortune are; wealth, fame, friends, and fortune.[51] However, the good person imagined in v. 35 is not the conceitedly courageous alpha male of the Greco-Roman *encomia*. He is the merciful and humble type, willing to win over his opponent with kindness. He is one who, as a demonstration of Christ-like character, deflects hostility by offering no resistance.[52]

Secondly, the disciples are also instructed to lend without expecting anything (v. 35b). The idea of lending also suggests a community of those who know each other. It similarly implies a context where others have more than they need while others are needy. The Greek word for lending, δανείζω, has the sense of putting out money at usury, a practice which Aristotle called shameful deeds (αἰσχρᾷ ἔργα).[53] In the Sermon, Jesus proposes the practice of lending without the debtor paying back what they owe. This type of socio-economic relationship in which the benefit was non-existent would have had substantial negative economic implications for the Christ-follower in business. It is axiomatic that where lending expects to receive nothing, it ceases to be lending but outright generosity. The question is whether the disciples are to get back their money without interest or forfeit both principal and interest. Since the context of the discussion is generosity, it is possible that the disciples were encouraged to generously give loans without expecting any payment back. This understanding conforms to Aristotle's conception of the relationship between debt and friendship. Aristotle argues that when a debt is involved, there is no friend, for if a man is a friend, he does not lend but gives.[54] By their unity in Christ, the disciples are more than friends. They are family. Therefore, there would be no usury among them but pure generosity. The Aristotelian principle of benevolence involved 'service to a person in a situation of need offered not in return for something nor in the interest of him who renders it but in that of the recipient.'[55] The prescription of no usury assumes conventional economic activities among individuals who share their lives in a community context. In that case, lending without

51 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata,* p. 156.
52 Culpepper, "Luke", p. 147.
53 LSJ, δανείζω, δάνος, Perseus Program, URL.
54 Aristotle, *Rh.* 2.7.5.
55 Aristotle, *Rh.* 2.7.5.

expecting a return would not constitute a business risk. It would be an act of generosity for fellow Christ-followers. The instruction in v. 35 also assumes that those able to lend out without expecting a return have the disposable income to maintain both their livelihood and the needs of others.

Minimal benefit can be derived from lending without expecting anything (v. 35a-c). Not only would this work against the principles of reciprocity, but it would also make the rich vulnerable to endless unrewarded beneficence. However, for the benevolent Christ-followers, the apparent loss in immediate return is not without its spiritual benefit. In v. 35c, Jesus redirects the reward element in the reciprocity from the beneficiary onto a third party. While the destitute Christ-followers would not return the favour, a reward due to the benefactor would nevertheless still be payable. The statement 'your reward will be great' apparently locates the reward for benevolence in heaven (cf. v. 23). This process transforms reciprocity from the immediate reward expected of strangers to delayed reciprocity prevalent among family members. Although the reward is seemingly delayed, by its association with heaven, it is made greater (cf. v. 23). By associating the reward with heaven, v. 35 introduces God as the third party in the economic relationship between the benefactor and beneficiary.[56] In real terms, the giver gives to God, and the receiver receives from God. Thus, in the Kingdom, the rich and the poor become responsible to God for their rewards and provision. This understanding of reciprocity would have significantly undercut the patronage system associated with Greco-Roman benefactor-beneficiary relationships among Christ-followers.

In v. 35b, the reference to 'you will be children of the Most High' demonstrates the identity implications of putting aside the element of benefit in social relations. Generosity and positive economic relations with those materially poor would enable the disciples to confirm that they are the Children of the Most High. The reference to the χρηστός (kindness) of God in the last part of v. 35 provides a unique perspective on the expected relationship between the well-to-do and the less privileged in the

56 Thus, here, as elsewhere else, Jesus does not intend to discard the whole system of reciprocity but aims to customise it to the new community that his message and teaching were bringing into existence.

community. When used of the gods, the word χρηστός, which resonates with ἔλεος (cf. Lk 1:65) or οἰκτίρμονες (mercy), (v. 36) meant being propitious, merciful, bestowing health or wealth.[57] In its Greco-Roman context, the ἔλεος (mercy) of God was an expression of divine benevolence. It reflected the character of God as the bringer of fruitfulness, abundance, and hospitality.[58] The disciples are called to reflect this character of God in the daily exigencies of life, even in the context of (ἀχαρίστος) ungrateful beneficiaries. For those entrenched in the culture of benefaction and reciprocity, continuing with generosity in the face of ungratefulness would require a changed mindset towards wealth, status, and power. It would require them to be merciful like their father in heaven. This radical identification of the self with the character of God defines the heart of the Sermon. It is the fulcrum on which positive economic and social relations between the rich and the poor are possible.

Judgment and Leading by Example in Community Context (vv. 37-42)

After the re-assessment of the system of reciprocity in vv. 32-36, Jesus sets out the community guidelines for the disciples' response to one another's shortcomings in vv. 37-42. This section has two parts. The first part (vv. 37-38) outlines the behaviours and attitudes expected of the disciples in a community context. The second part (vv. 39-42) raises the question of leading by example in a mentor-mentee relationship. The first injunction is related to the question of judgement (v. 37). The conditional sentence 'do not judge, and you will not be judged' resonates with the question of reciprocity already dealt with above. The nature of this judgement remains debatable in scholarship. Topel rightly notes that the meaning of the phrase 'do not judge' is too wide to define what is being prohibited.[59]

[57] LSJ, χρηστός, ή, όν, Perseus Program, URL.

[58] Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 1:39, 41. In Herodotus' *Hist.* (8.111, Perseus Program) in response to Themistocles' demand for a tribute from the Andrians, the latter is said to have responded, 'It is then but reasonable that Athens is great and prosperous, being blessed with θεῶν χρηστῶν, serviceable (fruitful) gods.'

[59] Topel, *Children of a Compassionate God*, p. 186.

Scholars such as Topel and Fitzmyer understand the meaning of judgement in relation to moral evaluation. According to them, the text refers to the prohibition against fault-finding and condemnatory judgement.[60] Using the ethical perspective to understand the question of judging others represents a plausible option for reading the text of v. 37. This position is also supported by the Gospel's original social context, where injunctions against fault-finding were prevalent.[61] The immediate literary context of vv. 41-42, where personal weakness is emphasised, also supports the above reading of v. 37. Using this framework, we can conclude that the disciples are, therefore, admonished to refrain from over-emphasis on the mistakes of others over and above their own. The problem with fault-finding is that it is self-destructive. It stops one from self-evaluation (vv. 41-42). In a mentor-mentee relationship, which the text envisages, fault-finding puts off the protégé and prevents the mentor from modelling the expected values.

However, besides the moral interpretation, the issue of judgement in v. 37 can also be viewed from the perspective of a community where significant social differences exist. This understanding is plausible when the idea of judging is seen against the lexical meaning of κρίνω, which means to separate, to put asunder, and to distinguish.[62] In a socially differentiated community, like that of the Christ-groups envisaged in Luke-Acts, the natural inclination among the rich would be to engage in selective generosity, giving only to the kin, the friend or the fellow rich over and against the stranger or the poor. Such a practice would be equivalent to separating, putting asunder, and distinguishing friends from non-friends or the rich from the poor.[63] The idea of judging could, therefore, deter-

60 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 641.

61 The above admonition was also prevalent in Greek society. For example, Ps-Isocrates admonishes Demonicus "not be given to fault-finding, which is irksome, nor be censorious, which is exasperating (*Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 31).

62 LSJ, κρίνω, Perseus Program,URL.

63 The idea of judging presumes people who not only know each other but also those whose lives are socially interwoven. Such a relationship can give rise to negative reactions arising out of misunderstanding and misperceptions of each other. Forgiveness would have been very important among members of

mine who got the attention for help and who did not. This type of judgement could not only be based on economic status. It could also be based on other group characteristics, such as language and community members' lifestyles. For example, the perceived neglect of the Hellenistic widows in Acts 6:1 was probably a result of differences in socialisation between the Hebraic and Hellenistic groups. It is also likely that language barrier exacerbated the differences in perceptions and possible judgement and misjudgement within the community. Similarly, in Galatians 2:11, Peter's action of separating (the word used in Galatians 2.11 is ἀφορίζω) himself from the Gentiles also demonstrates the effect of judgement on social relations. It is, therefore, probable that, given the socio-economic thrust of the Sermon, this judging was more related to social segregation based on social status than it was to moral evaluation.

The fact that the question of judgment is immediately followed by the command to forgive and give generously (v. 38) re-inforces the social segregation perspective to v. 37. The lexical meaning of ἀπολύω is to set free or to acquit.[64] This meaning does not confine ἀπολύω to the practice of foregoing claims of justice in the context of wrong-doing (cf. ἀφήσω Mt 18:21). Its meaning is also applicable to contexts of obligatory exchange such as debt cancellation.[65] For example, in Matthew 18:21-25, Jesus turns the meaning of forgiveness from 'the mere letting of a wrongdoing' (Mt 18: 21-22) to forgiveness of commercial debts (Mt 18: 23-25). It can therefore be argued that the juxtaposition of ἀπολύω with δίδωμι, giving (v. 38) implies the forgiveness (setting free) of material debts. The setting suggests a call to two types of generosity; to forgive where one is wronged and

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the Christ-groups. The reference to ἀπολύω reflects the challenge of forgiveness within the Jewish communities. The same significance is echoed in Mt 18:21 where, in his answer to Peter's question on the extent of forgiveness, Jesus pushes the boundaries of the conventional understanding of forgiveness of the time. He challenges both the Jewish thinking on the limits and extent of forgiveness and the prevailing Greco-Roman thinking of the time, which confined ἄφεσις to unequal parties and for a limited period of time. For Jesus, forgiveness is not just an attitude and action; it is a lifestyle. Those that follow Jesus are always to forgive others as a lifestyle. Such an attitude to interpersonal relationships would be characteristic of Jesus' own life (Lk 23:34).

64 Liddel & Scott, ἀπολύω, LSGEL, p. 89.

65 Liddel & Scott, ἀπολύω, LSGEL, p. 89.

to give to others regardless of social status. Such an attitude would demonstrate unconditional compassion and generosity within the community of Christ-followers. The nature of this generosity is further illustrated in the statement 'to give in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over' (v. 38). Bovon notes that the statement originates in business practice where the customer stuffed away the bought or lent item in the fold of their garment (their lap). The merchant is, therefore, called upon to be so generous that he firsts fill the grain in a measuring cup, press it down, shakes it, and finally lets it flow over the rim.[66] The picture is that of a village market where local demand meets local supply, where the buyers and the sellers not only know each other but also know each other's economic standing. They are, therefore, willing to sell their merchandise, not at exorbitant prices but as if they are selling to their selves (Lk 6:31). According to Jesus, this local generosity is not without its benefit. As some scholars indicate, the passive 'it will be given you' suggests divine repayment for the merchants' generosity to fellow Christ-followers or those in need. The generous act by the merchant will be repaid to him in due course (Lk 6:23, 35).

In v. 39-40, Jesus underscores the importance of model leadership and its significance for educating new members and the rest of the community (v. 39). However, whether the statement in v. 39 is a parable, as the text alludes, remains contested.[67] It is nevertheless generally accepted that the concept of the ὁδηγός τυφλός (the blind guide) was a well-known expression in antiquity. It was a literary device primarily used in education to expose incompetent teachers.[68] However, the meaning of v. 39 remains contentious among New Testament scholars. This is because, understood from an educational perspective, the specific nature of the addressees of the proverb remains unclear. Is the reference directed at the students (or the new members of the Christ-groups), those being led, the teachers (or old members) or the community as a whole? Levine, Witherington, and Nolland concur that the addressees are those being led. However, they differ in their explanation of the implications of the text's meaning for

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66 Bovon, *Luke*, p. 242.
67 Schrage quoted in Nolland, *Luke*, p. 307.
68 Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 620.

those being led. Levine and Witherington suggest that the reference to the blind leading the blind urges the disciples to refrain from attempting to lead before receiving adequate instructions.[69] Levine's and Witherington's position finds support in v. 40, where the relationship between the student and his master is highlighted. The letter of James also admonishes against hastily becoming teachers (Jam. 3:1-2). The text in v. 39, therefore, emphasises that immature and incompetent teachers or role models can do more damage than good. This understanding underscores the unique role the Sermon played in the education of new members within Luke's churches. The text demonstrates that while the instruction of catechumens or inquirers like Theophilus was necessary, unless it was properly done, it had the potential to do more damage than good. The question, however, is, what type of education are we talking about here? Understood from the immediate context of v. 38, where generosity is emphasised, this education is likely about the value of fellowship and camaraderie among the Christ-followers, which the older members of the Christ-groups are to inculcate in the new converts.

Nolland, however, has a slightly different perspective on the meaning of v. 39. He agrees with the view that v. 39 is addressed to those being led rather than the leaders.[70] However, unlike Levine and Witherington, he argues that the text underscores that one should not accept inadequate teachers. This is because, as a matter of principle, one is constrained by the limitations of one's teachers. In this case, understood in the context of the Sermon's whole paraenesis (vv. 27-49), a teacher who does not call for the love of enemies and is constantly fault-finding (judgemental) leaves his disciples in their blindness. Nolland's position reinforces the importance of model leadership with regard to the character of teachers, which is underscored by the close relationship between the teacher and the pupil in antiquity. As Bock points out, in the ancient world, since one learned by oral instruction rather than by books, the teacher-pupil relationship was personal. Teachers were authorities. Not only did students literally live alongside the teacher, but they also endeavoured to become

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69 Levine & Witherington, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 184.
70 Nolland, *Luke*, p. 307.

the teacher (cf. v. 40).[71] It, therefore, follows that the teaching and character of the teacher were critical to the knowledge and character formation of the student. If the teachers (older Christians) failed to live up to the commonly held values of the community encapsulated in the love command (v. 27), the new members would follow suit.

Beyond Nolland, Levine and Witherington's observations, it is also possible to see the addressees of v. 39 as the whole community of Christ-followers, both new and old (or inquirers); those leading and those being led. The text would, however, have had a unique meaning and implications for each group. For new members like *Theophilus* and his fellow new believers (represented by the newly appointed disciples in Lk 6:13), v. 39 represented a caution to watch how their teachers taught and lived. The statement also implies that those being introduced to the values of the new community had to maintain alertness on what lessons and values they adopted from the rest of the membership. In essence, the new members were to measure every teaching and lifestyle in the community based on love of the enemy and generosity to those in need (vv. 27-38; 1 Jn. 4:1). The text, therefore, provided an opportunity for new converts or inquirers to evaluate not only the behaviours of their leaders (order members) but also their own values and practices in the light of Jesus' teaching. Further, it is also possible that as future leaders themselves, Theophilus and his fellow converts or inquirers were being warned against joining the ranks of those who had led others astray because of their blindness, ignorance, and stupidity.[72]

On the other hand, for the older members of the community, the reference to the blind leading the blind (v. 39) was both an indictment and a call to action. It was an indictment in that, seen from the epideictic preoccupation with the present, the tone of vv. 39-40 exhibits community interpersonal challenges arising from a colossal leadership failure. Beyond indictment, the reference was a call to the community members as a whole group to re-evaluate their practice of fellowship (or its absence) against the standards set by Jesus in vv. 27-38. Such evaluation would enable them to

[71] D. Bock. 1994. *Luke, vol. 1:1-950,* (Grand Rapids/MI: Baker Book), p. 612.
[72] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 620.

know if their lifestyle and teaching had a positive influence on the socialisation of the new members into the values expected of the disciples of Jesus.

In v. 40, Jesus brings the relationship between teachers and their students into sharp focus. In its immediate literary context, v. 40 appears to be inadvertent and, therefore, not well connected with the preceding statement on the blind leading the blind. Yet when vv. 39-40 are seen together, the ὁδηγός τυφλός (blind guide) of v. 39 becomes the διδάσκαλος (teacher) of v. 40b. The extent of a teacher's competence is measured through his students' knowledge and behaviour. Levine and Witherington argue that v. 40 encourages those under instructions to believe that it is possible for them to become like their teachers. According to them, it suggests that a period of instruction is required for the student (s), understood as a community, to reach acceptable maturity and meet the expectations of the master. This understanding begs the question of who the master is. Is it Jesus or the teachers and leaders in the community?

There are two ways of understanding v. 40 in a community context. Firstly, it is probable that the text acknowledges the shortfalls inherent in those under instruction, especially at the early stages of their membership in the learning community. Such shortfalls would have been reflected in the community interactions so far outlined. Secondly, when v. 40 is understood in the context of v. 39, it underscores the implications of negative modelling on the part of those who lead. If the teacher is a bad guide, the implication on the quality of the student would be phenomenal. This is because such teachers will reproduce themselves in their students' knowledge and attitudes.

In vv. 41-42, Jesus returns to the theme of non-judgmental attitudes towards others. This time the warning not to judge stresses the significance of self-criticism before fault-finding.[73] The disciples are called upon to refrain from over-emphasising the mistakes of others over and above their own[74] because such an attitude prevents one from engaging in self-

[73] The above admonition was also prevalent in Greek society. For example, Ps-Isocrates admonishes Demonicus "not be given to fault-finding, which is irksome, nor be censorious, which is exasperating" (*Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 31).

[74] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 625.

criticism and, by implication, retards personal, moral, and social development. At a personal level, fault-finding without self-examination is equivalent to hypocrisy, a habit characteristic of Pharisees (cf. Mt 23).[75] The use of αδελφός (brother) in v. 42 offers a unique perspective on the understanding of interpersonal relationships within the community. It intensifies the disclosure of hypocrisy[76] and, by implication, underscores the community context of the Sermon. Brotherhood assumes proximity and the ability to both know someone's lifestyle and also experience it. The reference to δόκος, log or beam, may be hyperbolical, but it could refer to the magnitude of a fault-finder's personal failings. The individual disciple has the responsibility to self-correct and be in line with the teaching of Jesus before pointing at other people's mistakes. A lack of self-correction can render one's counsel to others (new believers) obsolete.[77] This reference is, therefore, a sobering testimony to general human vulnerability and the need to tone down the judgement and evaluation of others.

The challenge with the above analysis of judgement is that it raises the question of the place of corrective judgement in a community context. It must be noted that in its original context, this caution was not a universal condemnation of corrective criticism of others. If that were the case, the Sermon would fall under similar judgement. Given the human propensity to moral failure, a blanket ban on individual moral censure would result in broken communities where personal failures are treated as purely private affairs. Such a situation is not envisaged in vv. 41-42. The context of vv. 41-42 underscores the importance of guarding against selective criticism in a community context. It underscores the fact that those tasked with the responsibility of making moral assessments of others need to be wary of their failures, lest their counsel would lack credibility on account of their failed public standing.

75 Cf. Levine & Witherington, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 185.

76 Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 627.

77 Isocrates summarises the need for self-correction and compassion in dealing with other people's weaknesses:
"When you purpose to consult with anyone about your affairs, first observe how he has managed his own; for he who has shown poor judgment in conducting his own business will never give wise counsel about the business of others" (*Hom. Hym. 2 to Dem.* 34-35).

From the importance of self-criticism in vv. 41-42, Jesus turns to another parable (vv. 43-45). This time the parable utilises peasant wisdom from the field to drive home the importance of consistency in the disciples' conduct towards each other. In v. 43, Jesus indicates that a good and a bad tree each bears good fruits and bad fruits, respectively. The relationship between the tree and its fruits stresses the significance of a piece of merchandise's conformity to the nature of its source. The imagery echoes the relationship between the blind guide and his student in v. 40. This understanding implies that if anyone (or the community) self-identifies as Jesus' disciple, they should ensure that their deeds were reflective of their identification (v. 45). To re-enforce this point, Jesus gives the example of the intrinsic nature of human goodness; that human goodness originates from the θησαυροῦ τῆς καρδίας, 'treasure of the heart'. The Greek word for treasure, θησαυρός, can mean any receptacle for valuables.[78] The καρδίας (heart) is the seat of emotion and constitutes the centre of human passions which drive human actions. Therefore, unless the values stored in their hearts conform to the teaching of Jesus in this Sermon, the disciples will remain contradictions to what they claim, as a tree is known for its fruits (v. 44). Here, like in vv. 35-36, being children of God has an identity claim that the disciples cannot afford to disregard.

Building the Community on Jesus' Teaching (vv. 46-49)

In the last section of the Sermon (vv. 46-49), Jesus uses a building image to warn against offering lip service to his Sermon's teaching. The juxtaposition of lip service and Lordship in v. 46 echoes the power relations between the master (Κυριος) and slave (δοῦλος) in antiquity. In the Greco-Roman context, the term Κυριος had the literal meaning of 'having power', as in legal power. In its noun form (neuter) Κυρος, the term meant strength, both physical and legal.[79] It entailed supreme power or authority over someone or something. In a master-slave context, Lordship entailed saying yes to the master's demands.[80] Thus, to regard Jesus as the Κυριος

78 LSJ, θησαυρός, ὁ, Perseus Program, URL.

79 J.G. Panjikaran. 2009. *Paul's Concept of Mission: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 10:8-17*, (Delhi: ISPCK), p. 149.

80 LSJ, κῦρος, εος, τό, Perseus Program, URL.

of the disciples had significant implications. Understood in the context of v. 46, it involved, among other things, the recognition of his significance in the life of the disciples. As Nolland puts it, this relationship implied a deep level of engagement with him,[81] which, inter-alia, entailed not only recognising Jesus' authority over them but also, as his slaves, living out the values he stood for in their everyday community life. Simply put, those who call Jesus Lord must do what he says.

It is also telling how the Sermon places significant emphasis on doing 'what I (Jesus) say'. This is unlike its Matthean counterpart's (Mt 7:21) 'doing the will of my Father'. Theologically, what Jesus says is equivalent to the will of the Father. However, the Lucan emphasis on Jesus' absolute authority over his disciples resonates with the Sermon's pedagogical setting within Luke's Greco-Roman audience. It reflects the practice of master-slave relations within the Sermon's larger Greco-Roman context. Jesus demands that, without fail, his followers do what he has commanded thus far in this Sermon.

In vv. 47-49, Jesus uses the illustrations of a building foundation to underscore the implications of doing his words vis-à-vis not doing them. R.J. Peter notes that, unlike Matthew (Mt 7:24), who emphasises the building, Luke emphasises the preparation of the foundation:[82] 'who dug down deep and laid the foundation on the rock.' Among Luke's Greco-Roman audience, the reference to θεμέλιος, foundation, would have resonated with the significance that was placed on foundations not just in building construction but also in the creation of discourses or meta-narratives. The word θεμέλιος (sometimes translated as a premise) was also used in the construction of systems or philosophical presuppositions. In his *Discourses* (2.15), Epictetus calls on the need to build a strong θεμέλιος for a

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81 J. Nolland. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew, A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co.), p. 339.

82 R.J. Peter. 2012. "On Rock or Sand? The Two Foundations (Matthew 7:24-27, Luke 6:46-49)", *Review & Expositor* 109/2, p. 235. Cf. Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who 'built' his house on the rock". Compare this with Luke 6:48, "they are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on the rock."

credible philosophical system or a meta-narrative.[83] Similarly, in Rom. 15:20, Paul avoids building his gospel upon someone else's foundation (θεμέλιον).

Given this understanding of θεμέλιος, it is likely that the foundation on which the community of Christ-followers is to be built is none other than Jesus' teaching. The importance of laying the community's foundation on Jesus' words is further underscored by Paul's use of the building imagery in 1 Cor. 3:10-15. In this text, Paul argues that the basic foundation on which the gospel was built, which the Corinthian community must also adhere to, is Jesus Christ himself. That Paul makes the above argument in the context of community interpersonal challenges re-enforces the importance of Jesus' teaching as a foundation for community living in Luke 6:48. This understanding provides a basis for a community reading of both the idea of laying the building foundation on the rock and sand (vv. 47-49) and the Sermon as a whole. In this case, the call to lay the foundation on the rock (v. 48) implied building the community on Jesus' words as taught both in the Sermon and across the Gospel (Lk 7:36-50; 14:7-24; 19:1-10). It meant living out the precepts of the love command and all its implications on positive interpersonal relationships within a community context. The advantage of building the community on Jesus' teaching is underscored in v. 48b. Like the house whose foundation is hewn in the rock, adherence to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon would result in stable communities where love determines all interpersonal relationships. Any external pressures, such as persecution or the lure of Greco-Roman cultural ethos, that put the self above all others (Lk 12:13-21; 16:19-31), would not break the bonds of lasting love amongst its members.

Inversely, laying the foundation on the sand (v. 49) was equivalent to building the community without 'Jesus' teaching', which would result in all those attitudes and behaviours that Jesus denounces in the Sermon; hatred, fighting back, failing to lend at no profit, not forgiving (vv. 27-32),

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83 Epictetus says, "Why do you not begin by first laying the foundation (τὸς θεμέλιος) inquiring whether your determination is a sound one or not, and then build your firmness and constancy upon it? For if you lay a rotten and crazy foundation (τόν θεμέλιον), you must not build; since the greater and weightier the superstructure, the sooner will it fall." Epictetus, *Disc.* 2.15.

and judging (v. 37). All the negative practices outlined in the Sermon constitute destructive tendencies that represent the opposite of community building. The community implied in v. 49 is a striking contrast to Christ-followers' nascent community in Acts 2:42-47, whose members devoted themselves to the Apostle’s teaching and, by implication, Jesus’ teaching. As a result, the community became one where all had sincere hearts and were willing to present their possessions for public use (Acts 4:32-35).

The imagery of the house on the sand and rock was not only confined to the Greco-Roman context. The imagery had parallels in Jewish settings. However, in its Jewish context, the imagery was understood from the perspective of wisdom. In *Avot*. 3.22, Eliazar ben Azariah says:

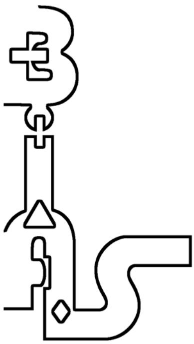
> Everyone whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are many and its roots, few; and the wind comes and roots it up and turns it over on its face... But everyone whose deeds are more than his wisdom, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are few and its roots many, which if all the winds that are in the world come and blow upon it, they move it not from its place (sic).[84]

The above imagery, which is echoed in Luke 6:46-49, demonstrates the importance of balancing knowledge and action in a community context. It underscores the fact that mere knowledge of the mysteries of life without practical application results in a social imbalance that has implications on an individual's or community's ability to withstand negative external pressures. The correlative balance between wisdom and deeds resembles the need to balance the acts of hearing and doing (cf. Jam 1:22), which Jesus advocates as foundational to building exemplary communities of Christ-followers.

Thus far, it can be argued that in vv. 27-49 Jesus offers a vision of an ideal community for his disciples and those to follow after them. Such a vision is rooted in the love command, and its application touches on many aspects of interpersonal relationships within a community context. It is also clear from the above discussion that, unlike the poverty-riches emphases in vv. 20-26, the hortatory section of the Sermon (vv. 27-49) constitutes more issues than just mere poverty and riches. Yet, for Luke, as is

[84] Quoted in Evans, *Luke*, p. 140.

evident from the Gospel's emphases, wealth and poverty provide a starting point for discussing interpersonal relationships in a community context. This is because riches and poverty have a symbolic connection with the question of power and powerlessness in interpersonal relationships. This understanding suggests that power relations rooted in poverty and riches have implications for social relations in any community, including that of Christ-followers. Thus, in the Sermon, Jesus outlines the nature of the community he is bringing into being as one where teachers, leaders or older members of the community not only teach or speak love, acceptance and compassion but also model these values through their lives. Jesus advocates for a community rooted in the love of the enemy whose implications would be social-economic camaraderie within and without Christ-followers' membership.



Chapter 5
From the Sermon to the Whole Gospel: Encomia to Generosity in Luke's Gospel

Introduction

Luke's attempt to construct a novel socio-economic paradigm for the Christ-followers of his time through the Sermon would have been insufficient if the same did influence the overall ethos of the Third Gospel (Lk 6:1-49). A paradigm can be defined as a worldview or an aggregate system of values about how to perceive reality.[1] It is a frame of reference that potentially influences how its adherents see and experience reality. However, for a paradigm to be valid and attract devotees, it must be theoretical and practical.[2] Theoretically, it has to set out the fundamental conceptions, assumptions and parameters that define the ideal within that world. It also has to demonstrate the practical aspects of that ideal (or its antithesis) in real-life settings. This chapter examines the panegyric framework of praise and blame across the Third Gospel. The chapter demonstrates that the values set out in the Sermon are explained and contextualised across the Gospel and serve the Gospel's overall purpose. The chapter has three sections. The first section examines how Luke presents God as the first giver in the infancy narratives and sets the moral basis for socio-economic κοινωνία among Christ-followers. Secondly, the chapter explores Luke's representation of Jesus' magnanimity as a model of economic and social relations among the Gospel's primary audience. In the third and last section, the chapter explores Jesus' praise of generosity, interspersed with the reproach of greed, and its implications for Theophilus and his fellow converts or inquirers' socio-economic identity.

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1 L. L'Abate. 2012. *Paradigms in Theory Construction*, (New York: Springer), p. 7.
2 L'Abate, *Paradigms in Theory Construction*, p. 4.

God as the First Giver: The Infancy Narratives and the Celebration of Divine Magnanimity

One of the unique features of Luke's infancy narratives is the noticeable presence of hymns to God. The Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55), the Benedictus (Lk 1:68-79), the angel's Gloria (Lk 2:14) and the Nunc Dimittis (Lk 2:29-32) provide a unique hymnal introduction to the story of Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

Scholarly disagreement over whether the hymns originated in Jewish or Greco-Roman context remains unresolved. However, it is clear that although they are uniquely steeped in Jewish tradition, the hymns also share striking resemblances with the structure and content of the Greco-Roman hymnody. This aspect would have resonated with the Gospel's predominantly Gentile audience.[3] One critical aspect of the Greco-Roman hymns was the celebration of divine magnanimity.[4] In this section, we examine

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[3] The structure of Greco-Roman hymnody was largely influenced by Quintilian's theory of hymns to the gods. The ancient hymn had three topoi (1) finding the ἀρχή; (2) establishing χάρις; and (3) elements of the request. In the ἀρχή, all the poets posited a god as the starting point or subject of the hymn with his/her name usually mentioned in the vocative. In the χάρις, the poet seeks divine goodwill through the proper narration of the god/goddess' powers and exploits. Lastly, the hymn finishes with a petition. The petition is often consonant with the god's powers as established in the body of the hymn, and follows naturally from the goodwill established between the god and man. Furthermore, Gordley, after an analysis of the thirty-three Homeric Hymns, asserts that the hymns typically contain an introduction (praising the name of the god, as well as a series of epithets relating to qualities of the deity), and end with a conclusion, often a parting salutation, sometimes linked with a petition. (See H.W. Race. 1982. "Aspects of Rhetoric and Form in Greek Hymns", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 23/1, pp. 5-14; E.M. Gordley. 2007. *The Colossian Hymn in Context* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck), p. 134. Recently, Pernot, closely following the structure of the Progymnasmata, has presented a five-fold structure to Greco-Roman hymns namely: (1) nature; (2) birth; (3) honours or cult; (4) power; inventions, actions and kind deeds; and (5) relations with other gods (Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric*, p. 46). It can be argued that although some variations in the proposed structure of hymns above are apparent, there is a common thread that runs through them all demonstrating the pervasive influence of Quintilian's structure. In every proposed structure, the praise and description of the deeds of the gods represent the core ingredients.

[4] The word magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία) has its root in the Greek word-pair

two of Luke's longer hymns to God, the Magnificat and the Benedictus, and how they characterise God as the first giver and the implications of this divine depiction for the socio-economic relationships among the Gospel's primary audience.

The Magnificat (Lk 1:47-55)

The Magnificat (Lk 1:47-55) is the first hymn in Luke's Gospel. The song has two strophes: vv. 47-50, what God has done to Mary and vv. 51-55, God's action in society.[5] The hymn starts with Mary praising the Lord (v. 46). The verb used, μεγαλύνει (to exalt, to make great by word),[6] sets the tone of the whole hymn as the praise of the Lord. That tone echoes

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μεγαλο- great, ψυχία, soul. Its Latin equivalent was *magnanimitās* formed from *magnus* (great) and *animus* (soul). The word, therefore, means greatness of soul, high-mindedness, and lordliness (LSJ, μεγαλοψυχία, ιη, ἡ, Perseus Program, URL.). On the other hand, the word ἐλευθεριότης (generosity) means liberality or giving freely (See, LSJ, ἐλευθέριος (free) and ἐλευθεριότης (generosity) see also P. Lampe. 2016. "Social Welfare in the Greco-Roman World as the Background for Early Christianity", *Acta Theologica, Supp*. 23, p. 2). The semantic relationship between greatness of soul, high-mindedness and liberality demonstrates the affinity between magnanimity and generosity. In the *Progymnasmata*, magnanimity falls under the deeds of the Soul together with justice, wisdom, temperance, courage and piety (Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, p. 206). Also related to the terms magnanimity and generosity is the word beneficence (εὐεργεσία, Lat. *beneficentia*). In the Greco-Roman world, beneficence was primarily the privilege of the gods, the emperor and the οἱ πλούσιοι (See Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, p. 5; R.A. Horsley. 2004. *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, (London: Trinity International Press), p. 16). The first line of beneficence was that of the gods; they provided material goods to mortals. The second level was imperial beneficence. This was practiced through the provision of food to the poor and protection from enemies. Beneficence was also expected of the rich and local *archons* across the empire. For example, Herod's lavish beneficence to Antioch in paving the main street with marble and building the beautiful Temple in Jerusalem was part of the local ruler's display of beneficence (Jew. Ant. 16:148, Jew. War 1.425). The public beneficence of local magnates included building temples to gods or emperors in return for which they received public or religious office (Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, p. 16).

5 Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 54; Nolland, *Luke*, p. 64.

6 LSJ, μεγαλύνω, Perseus Program, *URL*.

Greco-Roman aretalogical discourses (except for the third-person designation in the Magnificat) that highlighted the virtues of the gods.[7] In what follows, Mary presents a portrait of the Lord God as a paragon of magnanimity. Firstly, using the possessive Σωτῆρί μου, (my Saviour) Mary characterises God as her personal saviour (v. 47). The salvation that God has bestowed on her fundamentally changes Mary´s status. God has elevated Mary from ταπείνωσις, humble estate, to boundless honour (v. 48). The implications of this divine intervention are far-reaching for Mary. From now all people will call her μακάριος (blessed). The reference to Mary's blessedness, from a position of weakness and vulnerability, foreshadows Jesus' pronouncement of makarisms on the destitute in Luke 6:20. Like Mary, the blessedness of the destitute in Luke 6:20 eventuates into their possession of the Kingdom. Luke's tendency for foreshadowing by demonstration or prophetic prediction finds support in other studies.[8] The hymn also identifies God as long-suffering (v. 50) and capable of being merciful to generations of those who fear him. The idea of long-suffering presents an interesting dimension to divine accommodation. It demonstrates how God himself was able to identify with the attributes of powerlessness and weakness. All this attest to God's magnanimity.

In the second strophe (vv. 51-55), the image of God becomes one of an active and mighty warrior on behalf of Mary's community. He scatters the pride in their plans and brings down the mighty δυνάσται (plural) from their thrones (v. 51). The plural may be an allusion to the historical rise and fall of dynasties and rulers, especially those who were hostile to God's covenant people. The contrast with the uplifting of the ταπεινός, the humble and abased in power, not only attests to divine magnanimity but is also paradigmatic. In a society where social status determined an individual's fortunes, divine beneficence on the humble would have been archetypical. In v. 53, the emphasis on the divine provisions for the poor, while the rich

7 Aretalogies were exaltations of the great deeds of the gods, usually in the first person 'I am'. See D. Papanikolaou. 2009. "The Aretalogy of Isis from Maroneia and the Question of Hellenistic Asianism", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 168, pp. 59-70.

8 R.L. Brawley. 1990. *Centering on God: Method and Message in Luke-Acts,* (Westminster: John Knox Press), pp. 34-43; C.H. Talbert. 2003. *Reading Luke-Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu,* (Leiden/Boston: Brill), pp. 190-193.

and the powerful are left empty, demonstrates Luke's interest in poverty and riches. This contrast is reinforced later in Luke 6:20-23 when the poor, hungry, and the ostracised become the recipients of the Kingdom, banquet, and laughter, and the rich have no inheritance before the Lord (Lk 6:24-26).

In v. 54, the reference to God's steadfast commitment to his promises for Israel underscores the Jewish context of the Magnificat. Tannehill argues that Luke's alleged fixation with Jewishness portrays God exclusively as a Jewish God, leaving out his Gentile audience.[9] However, on the contrary, the Magnificat's concentration on Israel serves two crucial purposes. Firstly, it provides Theophilus (Lk 1:4) the context for understanding the Jewish origins of the Christian movement. Secondly, the fixation with Israel helps Theophilus to envisage the promise-keeping character of the God with whom he is now associated or intends to be associated with. This undeviating divine commitment to his people becomes manifest in Jesus, who, while he could make friends of the rich (Lk 8:3; 19:1-10) and banquet with Pharisees (Lk 14:1; 19:1-10), he was at the same time firmly committed to the welfare of the poor (Lk 4:18-19). If Theophilus represented a social class with a complicated relationship with the poor, the life-changing implications of being a follower of Jesus would have become apparent to him at the earliest stage of hearing the Gospel. Therefore, in keeping with the major interest in Luke's Gospel, the magnanimity of the Lord God forms the major thrust of the Magnificat.

The Benedictus (Lk 1:68-79)

Zechariah's Benedictus (Lk 1:68-79) represents another celebration of divine magnanimity in the infancy narratives. It is noteworthy that Zechariah and Elizabeth are graciously referred to as δίκαιος and ἄμεμπτος (righteous and blameless) (Lk 1:6), a picture which is blighted by their childlessness. Any possibility of remedying the situation is further barred by their advanced years (v. 7). Yet in this hopeless situation, God manifests his beneficence to this family and, by implication, to the nation of Israel.[10] Divine magnanimity is severally displayed in the Benedictus.

9 Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 63.

10 Another impossible situation in which God's beneficence is also manifested

Firstly, v. 25 refers to Elizabeth's conception as God taking away her shame of childlessness.[11] The cultural stigma associated with childlessness that Elizabeth experienced is encapsulated in Hannah's life (1 Sam 1-2). Secondly, the baby's birth brings this insignificant priestly family into the public spotlight across Judea (v. 65). All their neighbours are filled with awe, and their story is told across the whole hill country of Judea. Yet all this was not by their efforts but by the ἔλεος (mercy) of the Lord. In the Jewish setting, the mercies of the Lord were understood within the context of the covenant. Within the Greco-Roman world, the mercies of the Lord were an expression of divine beneficence. For example, Dio Chrysostom calls God 'the many-named', some of which names are 'father of hospitality' and the 'bringer of fruitfulness.'[12] Both aspects of divine beneficence manifest in the priestly family's life. God had visited them, bringing fruitfulness and social grace to their family and they became a public spectacle of divine magnanimity.

Lastly, Zechariah's prayer (Lk 1:68-79) becomes the culmination of Luke's interest in demonstrating the praise of God's magnanimity.[13] The hymn can be roughly divided into two sections; vv. 68-75 as Zechariah's praise of divine beneficence and vv. 76-79 as the priestly commissioning of John the Baptizer. In v. 68, Zechariah identifies God as the κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, 'Lord God of Israel'. This identification not only identifies God as the Adonai of Israel but also demonstrates his distinctiveness from other gods.[14] What follows is a delineation of God's magnanimity in fulfilment of the promises he made to David and Abraham (v. 70). He has visited and redeemed them (v. 68); he has raised for them a horn-a saviour (v. 69).

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is Mary's virginal conception (vv. 26-38).

11 This was more important in the context where a woman's value and honour were tied to her having children. See P.F. Esler, 2012. *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading OT Narrative with its Ancient Audience,* (Cambridge: James Clarke), p. 121.

12 Dio Chrysostom, *Ora*. 1:39, 41.

13 Some scholars believe the poem originated from either among the followers of John the Baptist or in early Jewish Christianity, which explains its politically charged tone. See Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 60.

14 Marshall (*The Gospel of Luke,* p. 90) thinks the reference reflects a Jewish outlook which does not take the Gentiles into account.

In vv. 74-75, the reference to God's plan to rescue Israel from the hands of their enemies also demonstrates another clear interest in the destiny of Israel. This interest would have received different reactions from the different sections of Luke's audience. Tannehill notes that while Christian Jews would be sympathetic to this divine plan, it would ruffle the feathers of Gentile Christians like Cornelius, who served in the army of Israel's 'enemies' (vv. 74-75), the Roman army. He also notes that after the Jewish-Roman war, it would be challenging to serve the Roman government while being sympathetic to Jews.[15] Yet when this concern with Israel is understood within the larger context of Luke's praise of God's mighty deeds and his commitment to his promises, a different perspective on the political tone of the Benedictus emerges. The reference to providential protection of Israel in v. 74 offers assurance to Theophilus and his Gentile compatriots that the God they have accepted to believe in is both able and willing to protect them, especially given the fact that the promises made to Israel now belong to those who believe in Jesus and their children (Acts 2:39).

The last section of the Benedictus (vv. 76-79) combines John's commissioning and a description of the nature of his work. Yet even the description of the Baptizer's work is presented in a way that depicts him as a harbinger of God's beneficence. John is to be a prophet of the Most High God who is to κυρίου ἑτοιμάσαι ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ, 'prepare the ways of the Lord' (v. 76). The word ὁδός has several lexical nuances. It could mean the literal way, path or road or the moral sense of 'the right ways'[16] or straight courses as opposed to crooked ones[17] or customs.[18] In this case, John the Baptizer is to go ahead of the Lord and to prepare and ensure that the values, traditions and ethics associated with the Lord God are adhered to among God's people (v. 76). It is noteworthy that John's message to Israel, the centre of which was generosity, epitomises the very values that God

15 Tannehill, *Luke,* p. 63.
16 LSJ, ὁδός, ὁδή, Perseus Program, URL
17 Aeschylus in *Eum.* 770 also uses the word ὁδός with the moral sense of straight course as opposed to the crooked way (associated with breaking oaths).
18 Aristophanes, *Fro.* 110 uses ὁδός in relation to custom. Aristotle used the word with reference to the function of city controllers in the Athenian constitution, which was to stay 'keeping watch' or "to ensure" (Aristotle, *Ath. Const.* 50).

wants his people to espouse. In Luke 3:10-14, the Baptizer aptly exhorts his auditors:

> Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same. Even tax collectors came to be baptized. 'Teacher', they asked, 'what should we do?' 'Don't collect any more than you are required to', he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?' He replied, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay. (NIV)

This excerpt demonstrates that John's work of preparing the way of the Lord involved the revival of magnanimity and general morality in Israel's national spirit. His message emphasised sharing among the ordinary people, tax justice by the tax collectors, and a stop to the soldiers' extortion practices. Underneath the Baptizer's moral demands was the need to express the meaning and implications of divine salvation for the people of Israel (v. 77). An understanding and practice of the ways of the Lord will be the basis of and expression of divine forgiveness, which will itself be fully realised when the Lord himself finally comes (v. 77).[19] It is also striking that for Zechariah, even the Lord's coming will be a result of his tender mercies and therefore a reflection of his magnanimity (v. 78). Further, this coming of the Lord, according to Zechariah, will culminate in complete enlightenment and divine guidance (v. 79) of his people 'into the way of peace'. The ideas of harmony and camaraderie latent in the concept of 'peace' are further recapitulated in Jesus' inaugural mission statement in the Nazareth manifesto (Lk 4:18-19), further clarified in the Sermon (Lk 6:17-49) and across the whole Gospel (Lk 19:10).[20]

It can, therefore, be concluded that the magnanimity of God to the lowly Zechariah and Elizabeth, and by implication the nation of Israel, was symbolic of God's plan for the destitute. The emphasis on divine magnanimity in the Magnificat and Benedictus would have had significant

19 Cf. L. Ndekha, 2018. "Zechariah the Model Priest: Luke and the Characterisation of Ordinary Priests in Luke-Acts", *HTS* 74/1, 4916. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts. v74i1.4916.

20 See C.R. Holladay. 2008. "The Beatitudes: Jesus' Recipe for Happiness" in *Between Experience and Interpretation*, ed. by M.F. Foskett, O.W. Allen & L.T. Johnson, (Nashville: Abingdon), p. 86.

implications on the socio-economic relationships within Luke's socially diverse churches.

Jesus and the Concretisation of Divine Magnanimity

The divine magnanimity celebrated in the infancy narratives, although containing public aspects (Lk 1:65-66), was either primarily private or confined to individual beneficiaries. The beginning of Jesus' ministry in chapter 4 profoundly changes the nature and process of divine magnanimity. From now, the beneficiaries of divine magnanimity became numerous. The news of what God was doing among his people also became widespread (Lk 5:15).[21] The widening geographical reach of God's work is evident in the Jewish-Gentile mix of Jesus' audience during the Sermon (Lk 6:17): from Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon.[22] Jesus' extension and concretisation of divine magnanimity are first set out in his Nazareth Manifesto (Lk 4:18-19), in which he announces the content of the good news and proclaims its recipients as the destitute. This radical message went against the popular assumption of the time[23] and led to Jesus' first showdown with the Jewish religious establishment. The physical and spiritual implications of Jesus' mission are evident in the way Luke uses ἄφεσις, which has several lexical nuances such as release from debt, disease (v. 18) or forgiveness from sin (v. 19).[24] By positioning the destitute as the recipients of the good news, the Nazareth proclamation becomes programmatic for the blessedness of the destitute in the Sermon and across Luke-Acts.[25] It emphasises Luke's interest in salvation

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[21] or *spread abroad* as the NIV renders it. However, the word διέρχομαι can also mean to pass through, to shoot through, to be complete, or go through in detail without referring to cross-border diffusion or influx of Jesus' hearers. LSJ, Διέρχομαι.

[22] The Gospel of Matthew 4.24 adds Galilee, the Decapolis. The reference to 'the region across the Jordan' seen as opposite to the Decapolis could refer to Phoenician Coast. All this confirms the diversity of Jesus' audience.

[23] See Evans, *Luke*, p. 70.

[24] Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 91; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, p. 58; C.C. Broyles. 1992. "Gospel" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by J.B. Green, S. McKnight & I.H. Marshall, (Leicester: Intervarsity Press), p. 284.

[25] Marshall, *Luke*, p. 178.

as a holistic phenomenon, encompassing physical healing and the individuals' inclusion into the Kingdom of God and all its benefits.[26]

In concretising divine magnanimity among the masses, Jesus took an approach that ultimately departed from the conventional Greco-Roman conception and practice of generosity. Jesus' depiction of Gentile generosity (Lk 10:25-37), his magnanimity to the masses (Lk 9:1-17), and his association with the rich outcasts (Lk 19:1-10) and the sinful (ἁμαρτωλός) woman (Lk 7:36) demonstrated his refusal to operate in a mono-ethnic, kinship-oriented structure of his time. He, instead, depicted a model of generosity that went across social boundaries. Through inclusive practices, Jesus was essentially creating a fictive kinship of ethnically and socially differentiated individuals. Through this approach, he envisaged his followers as a new community of kin and fictive kin, where social relations would be intimate, inclusive, and governed by the reciprocity characteristic of family and friends.[27]

Jesus' representation of magnanimity, although unconventional within the general Greco-Roman context, resonated with the type of generosity espoused by some philosophers and moralists such as Aristotle and Plutarch. For example, contrary to conventional thinking, Aristotle advises that it is noble to render a service, not with an eye to receiving one in return[28] and that every free man, ἐλεύθερος, should give liberally (NE. 1119b, 22ff). Plutarch also argues that:

> First, then, let the gifts be made without anything in return (γιγνέσθωσαν οὖν αἱ μεταδόσεις πρῶτον μὲν ἀντὶ μηδενός) because in this way they surprise and overcome the recipients more completely. [29]

The philosophers' conception of generosity above was a plea for generalised reciprocity in social relations. Jesus not only agreed with the values espoused by the philosophers, but he also embodied the approach in his

26 Talbert, *Reading Luke*, p. 58.
27 Elliott, "Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts", p. 104.
28 Aristotle, *Nic. Eth*. 1162b.
29 See Lampe's (*Social Welfare in the Greco-Roman World*, p. 3), tr. of *Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae*, 822ab.

everyday life. For example, contrary to the practice of the medical profession of his time, Jesus healed the masses' ailments without expecting anything. Table 5.1 below summarises Jesus' healing miracles.

Table 5.1.
Jesus' Miracles in the Third Gospel

	Healing Miracle	Text	Tradition
1	The demon-possessed man	4:31-37	Double Tradition with Matthew
2	Peter's mother-in-law and others	4:38-41	Triple Tradition
3	The Man with Leprosy	5:12-15	Triple Tradition
4	The paralysed man	5:17-26	Triple Tradition
5	The man with the withered hand	6:6-11	Triple Tradition
6	The raising of the son of the widow of Nain	7:11-16	**L** (Purely Lucan Tradition)
7	The bleeding woman and the dead girl	8:40-53	Triple Tradition
8	The demon-possessed boy	9:37-42	Triple Tradition
9	The disabled woman	13:10-17	**L** (Purely Lucan Tradition)
10	A man with dropsy	14:1-5	**L** (Purely Lucan Tradition)
11	Ten men with leprosy	17:11-19	**L** (Purely Lucan Tradition)
12	The Blind Beggar	18:35-42	Triple Tradition

We can observe from Table 5.1 that out of the twelve healing miracles recorded by Luke, four miracles are purely Lucan. These four miracles represent 25% of Jesus' total healing miracles in the Third Gospel. The statistic demonstrates how Luke goes the extra mile to provide evidence for Jesus' magnanimity and how he fulfilled his Nazareth manifesto. The first man liberated from oppression is the man with an unclean spirit in Luke 3:31-37. The historical connection between spirit possession and epileptic seizures (v. 35) demonstrates the deplorable condition from which

Jesus liberated the healed man.[30] The healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law and others follows in Luke 4:38-44. These formative acts of magnanimity fuse into the general character of Jesus' ministry as the Gospel's narrative unfolds.

A typical case scenario of Jesus' magnanimity can be gleaned from the story of the bleeding woman (Lk 8:40-48). Although Luke only says, 'no one would heal her' (8:43), Mark records that the woman spent huge sums of money on doctors (Mk 5:26). Yet Jesus heals her and lets her go without payment.[31] The medical profession in classical antiquity was usually associated with unsavoury gain.[32] However, after spending all her fortunes, Jesus unconventionally heals her. He also demonstrates the same generosity to the disabled woman (Lk 13:10-17), the man with dropsy (Lk 14:1-5) and the ten men with leprosy (Lk 17:12-19).

Particularly striking in Luke's Gospel was Jesus' fellowship with the insignificant others in the community. Table 5.2 below summarises his interaction with ordinary individuals and his provision for their daily needs.

Table 5.2.
Jesus' Interaction with insignificant others

	Feeding/Fellowship	**Text**	**Tradition**
1	The miraculous catch of fish	5:1-11	**L** (Purely Lucan Tradition)
2	Eats with sinners	5:27-31	Triple Tradition
3	Sinful Woman's anointing	7:36-50	**L** (Purely Lucan Tradition)
4	Feeding the five thousand	9:10-17	Triple Tradition

30 See A.E Cavanna, S. Cavanna & A. Cavanna. 2010. "Epileptic Seizures and Spirit Possession in Haitian Culture", *Epilepsy & Behaviour* 19/1, pp. 89-91.

31 From Simon Magnus' story in Acts 8:9-25, it is possible that he benefited from his practice of magic. This is possible when seen against the background of the story of the fortune-telling slave girl in Acts 16:16-24, who used to make money for her masters.

32 See N. Underwood. 2018. "Medicine, Money, and Christian Rhetoric: The Socio-Economic Dimensions of Healthcare in Late Antiquity", *Studies in Late Antiquity* 2/3, pp. 342-384.

It can again be observed that, like the healing miracles, in Table 5.2, Luke goes beyond the Triple tradition to demonstrate Jesus' magnanimity. Particularly significant for Luke's Greco-Roman audience would have been Jesus' fellowship with sinners such as tax collectors and prostitutes. Studies in Greco-Roman commensality demonstrate that meals had a putative aim of 'making-friends' and determined who was included or excluded from the social group.[33] Eating and drinking together was a confirmation of fellowship and mutual social obligation.[34]' Yet, while the average person dined with kith and kin, contrary to conventional practice, Jesus dined with sinners, the poor, and interacted with prostitutes (Lk 7:36-50). He also provided for the masses in extreme need (Lk 9:10-17) and even guided poor fishermen who had toiled all night into a huge fish catch (Lk 5:1-11). Through all this, Jesus emerges as the lover of the poor, a person who embodied public virtue in antiquity.[35] Quintilian emphasized that praise must be given not for the mere possession of external and accidental advantages but for their honourable employment.[36] Thus Jesus' magnanimity to the poor encapsulated as 'going about doing good' (Acts 10:38) would have been both revelatory and identity-transforming for his followers. Understood within the context of the persuasive character of narrative, the demonstration of Jesus' magnanimity would have been a call upon those who had more than others within the fictive community of Christ-followers to learn from Jesus' magnanimity and replicate it in their everyday life (Lk 9:1-6; 18:22; Acts 3:1-10).

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33 W. Braun. 2007. "Our Religion Compels us to Make a Distinction: Prolegomena on Meals" in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others: Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson*, ed. by Zeba A. Crook & Philip A. Harland, (Sheffield/England: Sheffield Phoenix Press), p. 52.

34 A Pompeian graffiti announcement that 'the man with whom I do not dine is a barbarian to me.' See Braun, "Our Religion Compels us to Make a Distinction", p. 47.

35 This is also called *humanitas*, the benevolent style of rule associated with a Roman emperor in the classical period. See Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, p. 1.

36 Vickers, "Epideictic and Epic in the Renaissance", p. 505.

Jesus and the Praise of Generosity

Besides depicting Jesus' direct acts of generosity, Luke also records Jesus' outright praise of the spirit of generosity and disdain for stinginess. Most of Jesus' praise of generosity and blame of 'close-fistedness' come to us through parables, and in a few cases, through Luke's record of Jesus' encounters with specific individuals. The relationship between parables and progymnasmatic exercises of *chrea*, maxims and fables and their didactic function confirms the importance of Jesus' use of parables.[37] This relationship suggests that Jesus' use of parables resonated with the convention of Greco-Roman rhetorical pedagogy. Thus, for Luke's audience, the didactic and paraenetic function of the fable and *chrea* would have been evident in Jesus' teaching through parables.

An interesting characteristic of Lucan parables is that, except for the parable of the Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), they all appear in the travel narratives (Lk 9:51-19:48). In this section Jesus focuses his teaching on his disciples. Most scholars acknowledge the discipleship thrust of Jesus' travel narratives (Lk 9:51-19:48) and their pedagogical implications for both Jesus' audience and that of Luke.[38] The Gospel has twelve parables that are unique to it: *The* Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), the Friend at Midnight (Lk 11:5-8), the Rich Fool (Lk 12:13-21), the Barren Fig Tree (Lk 13:6-9), the Great Feast (Lk 14:15-24), the Parables of the Lost Sheep, Coin and Son (Lk 15:1-32), the Dishonest Manager (Lk 16:1-13), the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), the Judge and the Widow (Lk 18:1-8) and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:9-14). Eight of the parables contain an element of giving and its commendation (Lk 10:25-37; 11:5-8; 12:13-21; 13:6-9; 14:15-24; 15:11-32; 16:1-13; 16:19-31). *A* close examination of these eight parables reveals a recurring structure that points to their pedagogical motif. This structure is fourfold: (1) a situation of need, (2) an opportunity

37 Hock. 2003. "The Parable of the Foolish Rich Man", pp. 181-196; Klyne. "Prophets, Parables, and Theologians", pp. 45-77; Penner, "The Progymnasmata and Characterization in Luke's Parables", pp. 349-360; Yan, "The Rich Ruler" (Luke 18:18-30), pp. 3-28.

38 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 826; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 397; Levine & Witherington, *The Gospel of Luke,* p. 268.

to demonstrate magnanimity, (3) an action of generosity or failure to act, and finally, praise of the act of generosity or disdain for its absence.

The parable of the Good Samaritan provides a standard structure of the pedagogical motif of Lucan parables. In the parable, we see a robbed man and the need to help him (Lk 10:30). In a typical comparative fashion characteristic of Greco-Roman syncrisis, the robbed man becomes a challenge to the Priest, the Levite and the Samaritan. The Priest and Levite, who are the best in society, fail to demonstrate magnanimity, while the lowly Samaritan triumphs in magnanimity. By pitting the action of the Priest and Levite (failure to act) vis-a-vis that of the Samaritan (unconditional generosity), Jesus creates the image of the latter as the Greco-Roman moral exemplar (ὁ ἀνήρ ἀγαθός, the good man), one of whose virtues was magnanimity. The reification of magnanimity as a virtue to be emulated would have been critical to Luke's socially and ethnically differentiated communities. The imperative phrase ποίει ὁμοίως, 'do likewise' (v. 37), re-enforces the image of the Samaritan as a moral exemplar.[39] The lawyer, and indeed, all auditors of the parable in Luke's churches, were encouraged to emulate the magnanimous spirit of the Samaritan. Therefore, in a society where all social intercourse was determined to a greater or lesser degree by the perception of participants' position in society,[40] the parable represented a revolutionary attempt to reinforce commonly held values in the Lucan churches. It challenged the communities of Christ-groups to redefine their concept of friendship and kinship and the nature of reciprocity they practised. The challenge to emulate the lowly Samaritan who was prepared to go to the aid of those who despised him challenged not only privilege and status but also exclusiveness within the community of Luke's churches.[41]

This spirit of magnanimity is further re-emphasised in the parable of the Friend at Mid-Night (Lk 11:5-13). While persistence in prayer provides the major thrust of the parable, the idea of generosity, even in the context of discomfort, pervades the parable's storyline. The shamelessness (ἀναίδεια, v. 8) apparent in the continuous knocking of the needy friend,

39 Cf. Ndekha, "Go and Do Likewise", p. 302.
40 Pomeroy, "Status and Status Concern in Greco-Roman Dream-Books", p. 51.
41 Franklin, "Luke", p. 942.

which his sleepy friend cannot ignore, underscores the potential shame they would both experience if the latter does not get up and assist with the bread. Ultimately, they both avoid the shame of failing to show hospitality to a guest-friend, and their honour is thus maintained.[42] In v. 13, God is presented as a magnanimous giver whose father-son relationship with the disciples confirms his readiness to provide for the disciples' needs. This representation of divine magnanimity would have had significant pedagogical implications for the disciples. It gave the disciples, both rich and poor, the freedom to share liberally, knowing that God is their ultimate provider.

The parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:13-21) and the Unfruitful Fig Tree (Lk 13:6-9) contrast the expected magnanimous behaviour commended in the last two parables. Firstly, the parable of the Rich Fool has its background in a family feud over inheritance (vv. 13-15). Although Jesus refuses to arbitrate, he nevertheless diagnoses the problem as a product of greed, whose living example is the rich fool (Lk 16:21). A cursory reading of the parable demonstrates that it is simply about investment, windfall gain, and the amassing of profits. What is wrong with good business and windfall profits? While what is wrong is not clear, it can, however, be understood from Jesus' reference to 'farming and high yields' in v. 13. The reference indicates that the rich man was not a local subsistence farmer (v. 16). He was rather one of the absentee landlords who held several property portfolios across the region. Their lands were worked by poor peasants who lived on a meagre wage and, therefore, perpetually indebted to them. Thus, behind the bumper yield was the drudgery of the Greco-Roman tenancy system. Yet when this man's field produced abundance on the back of poor tenants, all he thought about was himself and his enjoyment (vv. 17-19). What Jesus, and by implication, Luke, said to the rich of his day was that with life as finite as it is, it is better to be rich for God and his people. Thus, by the end of the parable, Jesus had transformed a family feud (between brothers over inheritance) into a socio-economic problem relevant to socially diverse communities like those of Christ-followers.

42 Ndekha, "I am not Strong to Dig and I am Afraid to Beg", p. 4.

The theme of being rich for God (Lk 12:21) is continued in the parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree in Luke 13:6-9, but it is here transformed into the question of ποιήσας καρπος, 'bearing fruit'. The parable proceeds from Jesus' call on his audience to repent in Luke 13:5. It is noteworthy that John also raises the relationship between repentance, fruit-bearing, and interpersonal economics in Luke 3:8. John the Baptizer, however, expresses the ideas of καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας (bearing fruit in keeping with repentance) in terms of interpersonal ethics and generosity (Lk 3:8ff). In both cases, the results of the failure to produce fruit are disastrous. They all get cut off and, by implication, destroyed (Lk 3:9; cf. 13:9).

In the parables of the Banquet (Lk 14:12-24), the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32) and the Unfaithful Steward (Lk 16:1-9), Jesus takes the praise of generosity further. The three parables capture the theme of generosity at three levels of society; (1) at the interclass level, (2) at the family level and (3) in the business context. This three-fold approach guides the expression of magnanimity in multiple social contexts. The parable of the Banquet (Lk 14:12-24) raises the question of inter-class relations. At the heart of the parable of the Banquet is the idea of social inclusion across economic and social boundaries. Firstly, the parable depicts the rich man as a victim of rejection by his peers (Lk 14:18). He, therefore, shares the experience of the poor and understands what it means to be ostracised. Secondly, by including everyone, especially the poor, as his table guests (Lk 14:21-23), the rich man becomes an exemplar of elites who extend hospitality to those generally defined by their dishonourable status and are therefore excluded from the circles of power and privilege.[43] His action requires not only a change of mind-set to make a clean break from his past but also the radical discipleship that Jesus demands (Lk 14:25-35).[44] By the end of the parable, the rich host has embraced a new identity and a way of life that resonates with the spirit of Jesus' magnanimity. He becomes not only a friend of the destitute but also, through his experience of rejection by his peers, the one who identifies with their experiences. This new identity of destitution enables him to freely share with those with whom he would

[43] Green, *Gospel of Luke*, p. 561.
[44] Tannehill, *Luke*, p. 234.

not normally socialise at the same level. In this way, he demonstrates what the rich, the recipients of the woes in Luke 6:24-26, should actually do.

The parable of the Prodigal Son further continues the theme of magnanimity, but this time, the theme is set in a family context. At the heart of the parable is the God-like image of the father who gives an inheritance to a rebellious son (Lk 15:12) and goes on to accept him back (v. 20) after he squanders his legacy (vv. 21-24). The father's behaviour toward the younger son both before and after his prodigality demonstrates a model of magnanimity and generosity that transcended the conventional social norms of the Greco-Roman world. Those who squandered their inheritance were not usually accepted back into the family business.[45] The God-like image that the father portrays in the parable would have had significant implications in Luke's communities. It provided a model of generosity even among the rich, especially where one of their own had fallen from grace.[46] In the socially differentiated communities of Christ-followers, it symbolised the acceptance of 'the different other' not just by verbal assent but with active social acceptance and where possible, with material support. Such a picture represented Luke's commitment to demonstrating the cross-cutting nature of Jesus' message of salvation and its implications for social relations.

In the parable of the Unfaith Steward, Jesus takes the question of magnanimity beyond the family into the business world. From the larger literary context of the parable (Lk 9:51-19:48), it can be observed that the theme of discipleship, particularly in relation to eschatological preparedness, forms the internal frame of the parable. Part of that pragmatic eschatological preparedness lies in being generous. However, the generosity demonstrated in the parable, although containing some traditional elements of reciprocity – for the Steward to be received into people's homes (v. 4) – has an interesting twist. The centre of the parable portrays a debt-reduction element (vv. 5-7), which, understood in the context of the problems of debts in the Greco-Roman world, has liberating overtones mirrored not only in Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto (Lk 4:18-19) but also in the

45 J.S. Kloppenborg. 2008. "The Parable of the Prodigal Son and Deeds of Gift", *Novum Testamentum Supplements* 130, pp. 169-194.
46 Balch, "Luke", p. 1138.

unconventional forgiveness of the loving father in Luke 10:11-32.[47] Jesus' commendation of the Steward' s shrewdness presents interesting paradigms of status concern and the tenacity to remain committed to Jesus even in the face of persecution.[48] Yet such commitment to Jesus is not just through verbal assent to his Lordship. It involves positive engagement with others in daily contingencies of life such as the marketplace. In this way, the parable offers its auditors an alternative way of being generous in the community beyond inviting the poor into their homes (Lk 14:12-24), renouncing everything (Lk 14:33; 18:22) and giving part of their wealth or all of it to the poor (Lk 8:3). For Jesus, debt reduction or relief (cf. Lk 6:35) was another way of demonstrating interpersonal communion within the community of Christ-followers.[49] By the end of the parable, the Steward emerges not as a negative figure but as an example of how to be an eschatologically conscious disciple of Jesus, one who lives out the mission of Jesus with its political and economic implications.[50] Within the early Christian movement, where riches and poverty may have co-existed, such generosity would be commendable, as Jesus says asserts in Luke 16:9. The attitude would also provide an opportunity for internal unity and camaraderie among Christ-followers.

In Luke 16:19-31, the Rich man's relationship with Lazarus is the antithesis of the Shrewd Steward and, therefore, an example to be avoided by Luke's auditors. The parable's context is Jesus' response to the Pharisees, whom he referred to as the lovers of money after they had ridiculed him in Luke 16:14. In v. 19, the reference to the Rich man as 'dressed in purple and eating sumptuous meals' (v. 19) serves to highlight his life of leisure which is a striking contrast with the image of the destitute Lazarus (v. 20). The reference also underscores the benevolent responsibilities associated with the status of being rich. However, the fact that Lazarus desired to have crumbs from the Rich man's table suggests that Lazarus

[47] Douglas Oakman notes how the problem of debt exacerbated the negative relationship between the rich and the poor. Because of the entrenched burden of debts, during the Judean Insurgency, the first action of the insurgents was the burning of the office where debt-records were kept. Oakman, *Jesus, Debt and the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 18, 24.

[48] Cf. Ndekha, "I am not Strong to Dig and I am Afraid to Beg", pp. 1-9.

[49] See also Balch, "Luke", p. 1138.

[50] Cf. Ndekha, "I am not Strong to Dig and I am Afraid to Beg", pp. 1-9.

never got his fill.[51] Lazarus was starving amid plenty, and the Rich man was oblivious to the destitute Lazarus' plight. He failed to be a responsible benefactor to the beggar Lazarus and probably many destitute others. The eschatological reversal, which happens in vv. 22-31 warns the rich, like Theophilus, to responsibly use their wealth to benefit their fellow members and beyond. Abraham's reference to the Rich man having received 'good things in life' against Lazarus' 'bad things' (v. 25) echoes the apodosis of the first woe in Luke 6:24, where the rich are said to have received their consolation. Abraham's statement is, however, not an indictment of wealth. It underscores the need for responsible use of wealth for those who follow Jesus.

Jesus' encounters with the rich young ruler (Lk 18:18-30), Zacchaeus the publican (Lk 19:1-10) and the poor widow (Lk 21:1-4) provide real-life situations that exemplify the relationship between salvation and responsible use of wealth and Jesus' commendation of generosity. The first example is the Rich ruler in Luke 18:18-30. He represents a model of finding identity and security in possessions, which the community of Christ-followers should avoid. To demonstrate the relationship between salvation and dependence on God and its implications for liberality, Jesus advises the rich ruler to sell everything and give it to the poor and follow Jesus (v. 21). The act would have been essentially symbolic of his willingness to exchange security in his wealth for the treasure in heaven (Lk 12:33-34).[52] The rich ruler's sadness at Jesus' suggestion demonstrated that, for the rich, sharing with the poor was equivalent to letting go of the very thing that defined their identity. Jesus condemned such an attitude along with stinginess. In vv. 24-25, he warned the rich to transform their attitude to wealth so that unless they find their security and identity in God and become generous to the poor, their place in the Kingdom of God was untenable.

Inversely, Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-9 offered a classic example of the transformed mind-set of the rich emanating from their relationship with Jesus. Through his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus transformed from an infamous tax collector who stole from the

51 Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, p. 283.
52 Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, p. 162.

public to a personal benefactor of many (v. 8). The story provided a model of what conversion meant.[53] It demonstrated that conversion results in a personal transformation that affects all aspects of an individual's life, including one's attitude to wealth. In a community rocked by the challenge of the proximity of riches and poverty, the story offered a framework for non-reciprocal generosity from the rich towards their poor fellow members within the Christ-groups.[54]

The widow's offering in Luke 21:1-4 is Jesus' last real-life commendation of generosity. It also presents an all-encompassing picture of the generosity for all members of the community of Christ-followers, including the poor. According to Jesus, the widow, out of her ὑστερήμα, need or deficiency, gave all her βίος, livelihood. She had been a πενιχρά (needy) upon her arrival, and after her offering everything, she essentially goes away a πτωχή (destitute). Jesus' claim that the widow gave all she had was probably hyperbolical as the widow could not live on two lepta. It took 128 lepta to make a denarius, a day's wage, and the woman only offered two lepta. In a Jewish context, it took 132 lepta to make a day's wage. The widow's action, however, demonstrates her willingness to give despite her need. Although the contribution of the rich provided the financial backbone of the maintenance and functioning of the Temple,[55] the woman's type of giving was unconventional and confirmed her total trust in the efficacy of the Jewish religious establishment.[56] Within Luke's churches, the story would have challenged the comfortable piety of the rich and encouraged

53 Tannehill, *Luke,* p. 277.

54 Balch rightly argues that Luke has transformed a story of a conversion of a rich man's household into an apology for legitimating Christian patrons. He thinks Luke is defending Christian households like that of Lydia, Aquila, and Priscilla; that if they give half of their property to the poor, then salvation has come to their household in spite of what Jesus says in 18:25. See Balch, "Luke", p. 1145.

55 Nolland, *Luke,* p. 978.

56 The offering box was part of the temple treasury which was in the court of women. It had 13 shofar-chests (ram's horns) through which individuals contributed to the functioning of the Temple and its processes. Some of these shofar chests were for new shekel dues, Old shekel dues, bird offerings, young birds for the whole offering, wood, gold for the mercy seat, and six shofar chests for a free-will offering. See Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 588. Nolland, *Luke*, p. 978.

them to give generously as a demonstration of their commitment to the Lord.[57] Yet such encouragement could not be confined to only the rich. The story also demonstrated that giving did not depend on how much one had but on understanding one's responsibility to give in a community context. The poor widow demonstrated that poverty is not a deterrence to generosity. Elsewhere, in 2 Cor. 8:2, Paul commended the Macedonian churches who, despite their abject poverty, demonstrated their commitment by giving generously. Thus, for Jesus in Luke's Gospel, generosity is the hallmark of the community of Christ-followers, regardless of their status. However, attaining such a feat required a new identity that involved a redefinition of one's socio-economic orientation, which the Sermon offered.

57 Culpepper ("Luke", p. 1149) holds that the widow is a model of giving, possibly even as a model for rich Christians who mostly supplied the domestic space in which the church worshipped.

Chapter 6
Local Audience for Luke's Gospel

Introduction

The book has so far demonstrated that the original meaning of the Sermon is best explained from the perspective of praise and blame, which are expressions of the Greco-Roman honour and shame culture. As a panegyric, the Sermon served as a pedagogical tool to both integrate new members into the community and reinforce the values of κοινωνία within the rest of the community. However, locating the Sermon in a community setting pushes this study into the contentious gospel community debate, which has been raging for more than two decades. It is, therefore, necessary to establish the conceptual and methodological assumptions with which this study has been undertaken and how it is to be understood and evaluated. The position of this study is that the gospels have their origins in local audiences. In these local contexts, the evangelists not only developed their theology and understanding of who Jesus was but also in response to whose issues they wrote their Gospels. This chapter argues that in keeping with the community orientation of the panegyric, the local audience thesis remains the most plausible framework for understanding gospel origins and audiences. The chapter reassesses the Gospel community debate and reaffirms the continuing validity of the local audience thesis. After reassessing the Gospel community debate, the chapter examines the question of literacy, writing, and audiences in the Greco-Roman world and the issue of communication and diversity in that world. Toward the end, the Third Gospel's genre and audiences are re-examined. The last section offers the internal evidence for a local audience thesis from Luke's Gospel.

The Gospel Community Debate

The relationship between the Gospels and their audiences has been a topic of lively debate in Gospel scholarship over the past two decades. At the centre of the discussion has been the question of whether the Gospels were written for local communities or more general audiences. The local audience thesis, which remains the dominant paradigm in Gospel scholarship, represents the traditional reading of the Gospels as community documents, that they were written in response to issues affecting particular local audiences. The alternative view, advanced by Richard Bauckham and others after him, argues that the Gospels were written not for specific communities but for general audiences.[1] Bauckham's argument is based on four central premises. Firstly, he argues that the close similarity between the Gospels and the Greco-Roman βιοῖ (lives), where the latter were tailored for more general audiences or any competent readers,[2] suggests that the Gospels were also written for general audiences. Secondly, Bauckham argues that writing in the Greco-Roman world was a replacement for presence. Therefore, if the function of writing was to communicate widely with readers unable to be present at the author's oral teaching, unlike Paul's letters which were occasional, the Gospels must have been written for broader audiences with whom the evangelists had no contact.[3] Thirdly, based on high mobility and communication between Christian communities and leaders in the first century, Bauckham postulates the possibility of a significant amount of Christian social interaction that enabled them to think of themselves more as members of wider communities than small groups.[4] According to Bauckham, with wider Christian social consciousness, the possibility that the evangelists had greater audiences in mind in writing their Gospels becomes more probable. Fourthly, Bauckham argues that the presence of conflict and diversity in early Christianity supports the picture of early Christianity as a network of communities in

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1 Richard Bauckham. 1998. "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking Gospel Audiences,* ed. by Richard Bauckham, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans), p. 11.

2 Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?", pp. 9-48. See also Richard Burridge. 1998. "The Gospel Genre and Audiences" in *The Gospel for all Christians: Rethinking Gospel Audiences,* ed. by Richard Bauckham, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans), pp. 113-145.

3 Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written?", p. 28.

4 Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written?", p. 32. See also M.B. Thomson. 1998. "Holy Internet: Communication between Churches in the First Christian Generation" in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking Gospel Audiences,* ed. by Richard Bauckham, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans), pp. 49-70.

constant communion and communication, which supports wider audiences for the Gospels.[5] Bauckham's argument is supported by the relative ease of book production and circulation in the Greco-Roman world, which allowed for the efficient diffusion of books and therefore enabled the Gospel authors to envisage a wider audience for their books.[6]

Significant scholarly criticism of Bauckham's thesis has been advanced by several scholars such as Philip Esler (1998), Joel Marcus (1999), David Sim (2001) and Margaret Mitchell (2005).[7] Despite the criticism, the continuing influence of the Gospel for all Christians thesis is evident from its continuing support in the works of scholars whose studies we will later evaluate, such as Edward Klink (2007, 2010), Justin Smith (2011) and Cedric Vine (2014).[8] At the heart of the Gospel for all Christians thesis is an interrogation of what is assumed to be an untested scholarly hypothesis that regards Gospels as windows into the communities that produced them. Although the problems of the local audience thesis have, over the years, been raised by several scholars such as E.A. Lavardiere and W.G. Thompson (1976), R.F. O'Toole (1983), Graham H. Stanton (1985), Dale Allison (1988), Harry Y. Gamble (1995) and Luke Timothy Johnson (2013),[9] the importance of Bauckham's thesis is evident from the way it

5 Bauckham, "For Whom Were Gospels Written?", p. 43.

6 L. Alexander. 1998. "Ancient Book Production and Circulation of the Gospels" in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking Gospel Audiences*, ed. by Richard Bauckham, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans), pp. 71-112.

7 Philip Francis Esler. 1998. "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard Bauckham's Gospels for All Christians", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51, pp. 235-248; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*; David C. Sim. 2001. "The Gospels for All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham", *JSNT* 84, pp. 3-27; M. Mitchell. 2005. "Patristic Counter-Evidence to the Claim that 'the Gospels Were Written for All Christians", *NTS* 51, pp. 36-79.

8 M.F. Bird. 2006. "The Markan Community, Myth or Maze? Bauckham's the Gospel for All Christians Revisited", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 57, pp. 474-486; C. Vine. 2014. *The Audience of Matthew: An Appraisal of the Local Audience Thesis*, LNTS, (London: T&T Clark); J. Smith. 2011. Why Bíos? On the Relationship between Gospel Genre and Implied Audience, PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews.

9 E.A. Laverdiere & William G. Thompson. 1976. "NT Communities in Transition: A Study of Matthew and Luke", *Theological Studies* 37, pp. 567-597; R.F. O'Toole. 1983. "Luke's Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts" in *Political issues in Luke-Acts,* ed. by R.J. Cassidy & P.J. Scharper, (NY: Orbis), pp. 1-17;

has polarised Gospel scholarship. At its best, it has helped raise salient issues in the relationship between the Gospels and their audience(s) in the first century CE and, therefore, stimulated significant scholarly research in the Greco-Roman context of the New Testament. At its worst, resulting from the continued scholarly stalemate, it creates methodological and hermeneutical challenges to Gospel studies. This is because the debate has implications for the choice of the primary cultural context in which to interpret the texts and the perception of the documents.[10] Deciding to approach the Gospels either as community documents or as general documents impinges on how we can explain the cultural dynamics that motivated their literary productions. Admittedly, many Gospel studies have been beleaguered with hermeneutical and methodological challenges concerning audiences. Nevertheless, over the decades studies have effectively demonstrated the possible audiences of Matthew, Mark and John based on context-specific expressions, implicit ecclesiastical and theological disputes, and major thematic overtones.[11] However, the question of Luke's audience remains a topic of lively debate. Three clear scholarly trends have characterized the approach to Luke's audience; (1) the rejection of the existence of a Lucan community on account of Luke's presupposed OT/Jewish orientation on the one hand, and a universal perspective on the other,[12] (2) the acceptance of the existence of a Lucan audience consisting of a community or ensemble of communities of similar types,[13] and (3) a cautionary approach to Luke's audience due to the diffi-

G. Stanton. 1993. *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew, (*Louisville/KY: Westminster John Knox Press); H.Y. Gamble. 1995. *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, (New Haven: Yale University), p. 102; L.T. Johnson. 2013. "Jesus and the Philosophers" in *Contested Issues in Christian Origins and the NT*, ed. by L.T. Johnson, (Boston: Brill), pp. 93-110.

10 A.Y. Collins. 1995. "Review: Genre and Gospel: What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography by Richard A. Burridge", *Journal of Religion* 75, p. 239.

11 G. Theissen. 2004. *Gospel in Context: The Social and Political History of the Synoptic Tradition*, (London/New York: T&T Clark), p. 26. See also studies by Overmann, *Matthew's Community and Formative Judaism* and Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*.

12 D.C. Allison. 1988. "Was There a Lucan Community?", *IBS* 10, p. 62.

13 Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, p. 12.

culties of the mirror reading of the Gospels and the ambiguous relationship between the terms audience and community.[14] Consequently, the Gospel for all Christians thesis not only pushes the boundaries of the debate on Gospel audiences but also further complicates the conceptualisation of a possible Lucan audience.

Literacy, Writing, and Audiences in the Greco-Roman World

Literary Documents and their Audiences

The best starting point for understanding the Gospels' origins and their audiences is to examine the interrelationship between literacy, writing, and audiences in the Greco-Roman world. Studies of the Greco-Roman context of the New Testament by scholars such as Richard Last (2012) and Pieter Botha (2012) provide valuable insights into literacy and writing in the Greco-Roman world. Pieter Botha's work is particularly significant in understanding the process of communication and writing in the Greco-Roman world.[15] Firstly, Botha argues that a proper understanding of the process of authoring books in antiquity must be based on a history of everyday life, informed by routines, habits and phenomena associated with writing and reading in those times.[16] According to Botha, writing was a collective venture in the Greco-Roman world. This process created an author-audience relationship which significantly distinguishes ancient conceptions of author and authorship from their modern understanding. It made literary works primarily collective, traditional and cultural enterprises, which, according to Botha, was evident in the anonymity characteristic of most ancient documents.[17] In addition, Botha argues that the critical role of an audience in the production of literary works is best understood through the meaning of the term ἔκδοσις, which did not mean

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14 Moxnes, "The Social Context of Luke's Community", pp. 129-134.

15 P.J.J. Botha. 2012. *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, (Eugene: Cascade Books), pp. 123-130.

16 Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, p. 130.

17 The anonymity of the Gospel documents provides further support to Botha's claim.

publication in the modern sense of the word, but mainly was understood as indicating the making public of a work by means of an oral presentation of the text.[18] Botha's work represents the most sustained cultural analysis of Greco-Roman writing and reading habits. Its basis on primary sources makes its conclusion plausible and insightful in understanding the Gospel origins.

In addition, some eminent classists and New Testament scholars such as Kurke, Dowing, and Alexander support Botha's observations. The eminent classist Leslie Kurke, in her book *The Traffic in Praise,* demonstrates the specific social function that poetry played in its original cultural milieu. She argues that in the Greek world, audience expectations shaped and constrained each individual poetic composition.[19] Kurke's observation implies that, although works such as Pindar's panegyrics and victory odes reflected universal structures, their contents were determined by the situation of their audiences.[20] Pindar's praise of Theron of Acragas, whose audience was Theron and the fellow citizens of Acragas, illustrates audience influence on literary production. Even though the pattern of the ode follows the generic epinician structure, its contents were particular and contextual. The introduction and the closing of the poem ensure that Theron's victory and the significance of his city, the citizens of which constitute his audience, are the main subjects of the praise. For example, Theron's name and that of his city are mentioned four times and two times, respectively.[21] At one point in the ode, the poet extols Acragas as the only city in a hundred that has given birth to a man more beneficent in his mind or more generous with his hand than Theron.'[22] The fact that victory odes like those of Pindar were often re-performed in other contexts after

18 Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, p. 123.
19 Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise*, p. 1.
20 Gordley has provided a structure of Pindar's poetic as mainly three-fold: 1) Specific details about the victor, his background and exploits. 2) The use myth in one or two ways (a) telling of a mythological story of ornament or b) providing brief mythological parallels to illustrate moral truths, and 3) Moralising or proverbial reflections arising mostly from the consideration of athletic success. See Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, pp. 135-137.
21 Pindar, *Oly*. 2.1-5, 95-100.
22 Pindar, *Oly*. 2.90-95.

their first performance suggests that their later audience(s) eventually became wider than the original audience.[23] In this case, the essence of the odes to Theron would always reflect the Acragas context.

Beyond victory odes, studies have also demonstrated that Greek comedies and tragedies also reflected the experiences of their audiences and communities. Greek drama represented a social critique of the values and norms of the communities in which they were produced and performed. As Jean Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet have argued, although Greek tragedies did not reflect all of reality, they reflected the entire problematic of reality in the *polis*.[24] In other words, the tragedies allowed the polis to put itself and its values on trial. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet's assertion was also true of Greek comedy. For example, Aristophanes' play, the *Wasps*, illustrates the influence of context and audience in ancient composition.[25] In the play, Philocleon, who has a pronounced obsession for voluntary jury membership at the Athenian law court, is put under house arrest by his son Bdelycleon. Philocleon's reasons for his obsession with working as a juror are an interesting reflection of Athenian society of Aristophane's time: the bribes from the rich (550-555), the jurors' freedom to interpret the law the way they liked (560-565) (with no option for appeal for litigants) (576-600), and the little fee that the jurors received (605-620). Philocleon's motivations reflected the major problems affecting Athenian society at the time. The play portrays Athens under General Cleon (429-422 BC) as a highly litigious society, ridden with corruption, highly under-resourced of professional judges and, therefore, dependent on the arbitrary judgements by the citizen jury. Several classical studies confirm the political context in which the *Wasps* was produced.[26] However, although the play was conceived and had its context in Athens, this did not preclude its performance in other Greek cities. Nevertheless,

23 Morrison, "Performance, Re-performance and Pindar's Audiences", pp. 113-114.

24 Quoted by Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise*, p. 2.

25 Aristophanes, *Wasp*, tr. E. O'Neill, Jr.

26 L. Edmunds. 1987. "The Aristophanic Cleon's Disturbance of Athens", *The American Journal of Philology* 108/2, pp. 233-263.; D. Konstan. 1985. "The Politics of Aristophanes' Wasps", *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-2014)* 115, pp. 27-46; T. Dorey. 1956. "Aristophanes and Cleon", *Greece and Rome* 3/2, pp. 132-139.

wherever it was performed, its Athenian background provided the context for understanding its meaning and message. All this underscores the influence of local audience and context on the production of literary works in the ancient world.

Audience influence on literary production was not only confined to Greek drama. Downing also draws attention to an audience's role in a text’s performance. He argues that in antiquity, a text copy was acquired to have it performed.[27] Since performance required an audience, the influence of the audience was, therefore, significant in the production process. Downing, similar to Botha, provides an example of how authors like Pliny, the Elder, tended to give readings of their work before invited audiences to gather helpful criticism and be able to insert corrections before the final version was issued.[28] Also, Loveday Alexander, in her analysis of the role of the living voice in the early church and Greco-Roman world, validates the author/audience relationship in literary production. She argues that as rhetoric was obviously the first and most important part of Greek culture, loyalty to the oral tradition persisted even after the dissemination of the written text. The living voice continued to preserve not only the conventions of oral discourse but also the conviction that a speech should be delivered in person and should at least give the impression of extempore composition.[29]

The above discussion presents three significant implications for conceptualising the author-audience relationship in the Greco-Roman world. Firstly, as Dowling and Alexander put it, it suggests that writing was secondary to the oral presentation of a work, which implies a strong connection between an author and his immediate audience, of which he or she was also supposedly a part. The example of Pliny, the Elder, well demonstrates this author-audience relationship and the role of the community in shaping the final form of literary productions. Secondly, perhaps as a corollary to the first implication, the readings of one’s work before an invited audience prior to the final publication of a literary work suggests that the immediate audience had a significant influence over the content of

[27] Downing, “Word Processing in the Ancient World”, p. 30.
[28] Downing, “Word Processing in the Ancient World”, p. 32.
[29] Alexander, “The Living Voice”, p. 226.

what was performed. This influence could be more meaningful if the story, as in the case of the Gospel of Luke, was part of the retelling of a community's origins. From a redactional perspective, an imaginary Empire-wide audience, which is one implication of Bauckham's thesis, would be too remote to have any impact on the ethos of such a story. In this case, even an itinerant missionary like Luke, who, as Allison argues, probably collected stories from different Christian groups,[30] would have had a home church, in which his understanding of Jesus was primarily developed, and which also constituted his primary audience.[31] This church or region would also influence how he organized the stories he collected from across the Christian world of his time. This understanding is evident in the way, as it will be pointed out later in the chapter, Luke redacted the common material he shared with other Gospels. Thirdly, there is a general scholarly consensus that the Gospels circulated anonymously until the second century CE.[32] This understanding supports Botha's viewpoint and underscores the fact that the text's authority did not solely rest in the authors but also in the faith communities in which the texts were produced.[33] Further, from a historical point of view, the established criteria for a book's acceptance into the canon confirm the importance of the primary audience in the production and preservation of a text. Apart from orthodoxy, apostolicity and consensus,[34] place of origin also had a significant role in establishing the authenticity of a Gospel text. [35] Although politics and power dynamics in the early church may have been at the heart of the provenance questions, the provenance criteria underscored the role and influence of the local audience in shaping their particular Gospel

30 Allison, "Was there a Lucan Community?" p. 64.

31 As a Garland (*Luke*, p. 21) argues, Luke was not Paul's constant companion but a "sometime" companion. Thus, whenever he was not with Paul, he belonged to a community of Christ-followers in a particular area. This is probably what the 'we' passages in the Book of Acts suggest.

32 Marshall, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 33; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 20; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 35.

33 A.D. Baum. 2008. "The Anonymity of the NT History Books: A Stylistic Device in the Context of Greco-Roman and Ancient Near Eastern Literature", *Novum Testamentum* 50/2, pp. 120-142.

34 B. Metzger. 1997. *The Canon of the NT*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 36.

35 E.R. Brown. 1997. *Introduction to the NT*, (New York: Double Day), p. 11.

story. All this suggests that the later importance of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome as possible Gospel provenances is not just deeply rooted in the political role of these cities as 'holy sees' in early Christianity but also in the role of their Christian communities or their circumstances in shaping the structure and content of the Gospel story. However, as some scholars have shown,[36] such origins and contexts of Gospel documents did not in any way limit the works' further spread beyond their geographical origins. Granted the trans-local nature of Christian communities, literary diffusion was a natural outcome.

Communities that Write?

Secondly, the communal nature of Greco-Roman writings is further highlighted by Richard Last's study of the writing practices of Greco-Roman associations.[37] In his analysis of the writing practices of Greco-Roman Associations, he compares them with those of Christ-groups. Last makes two significant observations that lend considerable weight to the local audience thesis. Firstly, he found that Greco-Roman associations wrote everything regardless of genre and that all writing was done in the interest of the group's preservation and values. Secondly, he found that associations required the approval of their members before a piece of writing could become authoritative within the community. These observations made him conclude that the Greco-Roman associations' writings had narrow audiences.[38] Last's findings and conclusions have significant implications for understanding the audiences of the Gospels. Admittedly, the relationship between Christ-groups and Greco-Roman associations remains subtle. The associations lacked trans-local links as opposed to the Christ-groups. Unlike Christ-groups, they also had their chief interest in the pursuit of honour.[39] Finally, the association were largely homogeneous, while Christ groups crossed social boundaries.[40] However, even with such differences, Last's observations and conclusions provide helpful insight into

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36 Esler, "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity", pp. 235-248.
37 Last, "Communities that Write", p. 180.
38 Last, "Communities that Write", p. 180.
39 Kloppenborg, "Collegia and Thiasoi", p. 19.
40 McCready, "Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations", p. 63.

the communal nature of Greco-Roman writings and the potential development of the Gospels in communal settings. All this demonstrates, as Marcus argues, that the Gospels were not necessarily written as a substitute for presence.[41] As communal writings with the same value as those of Greco-Roman associations, the Gospels were the instruments through which the community preserved the things that had been fulfilled among them (Lk 1:1).

However, the Gospels' communal nature does not suggest that the evangelists were passive collectors of Jesus' traditions. Following redaction critics before him, Robert Stein argued that while the evangelists collected Gospel traditions and were limited by them, each had a theological purpose in writing his Gospel.[42] Their theological purpose would inform and be informed by the evangelist's immediate context. This would, therefore, have made it possible for the evangelists to respond to issues within their communities and, where possible, challenge the communities' values and norms. Joel Green provided a typical example of how Luke's Gospel would have both responded to and challenged community norms and values. He argued that although Luke's narrative contained contemporary issues with which his readers could identify, it also presented a vision of the world which cannot be equated with the first-century context insofar as it can be reconstructed via historical inquiry. [43] For example, in addition to contemporary issues, the Gospel also presented a world in which God intervenes through miraculous conceptions and many other idealized phenomena. This, according to Green, suggested that Luke's narrative was both a response to contemporary issues and an invitation to auditors and readers to embrace an alternative worldview and to live as if the reign of God had already revolutionized this age.[44] Therefore, given the nature of the writing process in antiquity and the writing practices of ancient groups, it makes scholarly sense to see the Gospels as originating in local settings.

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41 Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, p. 26.

42 R.H. Stein. 1991. *Gospel and Tradition: Studies on Redaction Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels*, (New York: Baker Books), p. 22.

43 Green, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 11.

44 Green, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 11.

Communication and Diversity in the Greco-Roman World

One of the foundational bases for the Gospel for all Christians thesis is the level of communication in the Greco-Roman world, which allowed for easy access to information. The argument is that high mobility and communication between Christian communities and leaders in the first century enabled them to think of themselves more as members of broader communities than small groups.[45] Wider Christian social consciousness created the possibility of the conception of a wider audience for Gospel writers. Indeed, the level of communication and travel in the Greco-Roman world has been well-researched and documented. Most studies agree that the Roman imperial administration ensured that there was relatively easy communication in the empire.[46] This allowed for easy access to communication and significant broad cultural exchanges in the empire and a resultant widening of different peoples' social and religious horizons.[47] Paul's travels across the spin and span of the Greco-Roman world and how his letters travelled to the various parts of the empire are significant New Testament evidence of the level of communication in the Greco-Roman world. However, as argued below, the Greco-Roman world was not a homogenous unit despite the developing communication across the empire. Greco-Roman communities remained distinct from each other, therefore, allowing for independent theological developments as the church spread across the empire. The practice of migration in the Greco-Roman world and the missionary experiences of St Paul provide evidence of the non-homogenous nature of the Greco-Roman world.

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45 Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?", p. 32. See Thomson, "Holy Internet", pp. 49-70.

46 I. Roll. 1995. "Roads and Transportation in the Holy Land in the Early Christian and Byzantine Times" in *Akten des XII Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie*, pp. 1166-1170; Peregrine Horden & Nicholas Purcell. 2000. *The Corrupting Sea*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 28; Umurhan & Penner. 2013. "Luke and Juvenal at the Cross Roads", p. 168.

47 D.A. DeSilva. 2004. *An Introduction to the NT: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*, (Downers Grove/IL: InterVarsity Press), p. 44; Johnson, *The Writings of the NT*, p. 46.

Migration Control in the Greco-Roman World

The restricted migration practices in the Greco-Roman world are another indicator of diversity in that world. Classical studies demonstrate that the Pax Romana and a good road system allowed for easy communication in the empire. However, the extent to which such communication was possible for most of the Greco-Roman population and its capacity to make individuals or groups consciously aware of belonging to a wider world, remains an open question. Firstly, concerning communication, Claudia Moatti has showed that while travelling was relatively easy for some people in the Greco-Roman world, it was not necessarily the same for the larger population.[48] According to Moatti, this difficulty arose from the Roman regulation of immigration and emigration to control people's identities.[49] According to Suetonius, one reason for this imperial control of people's identities was to keep the barbarians at bay.[50] For example, inside the empire, a person who wanted to leave the province from a port had to send a request to the prefect; his application would then be signed by the prefect and sent to the procurator at the exit port.[51] This systematic control of identities suggests that many classes of people remained distinctive and culturally untouched by the imperial culture. This may have also been partly heightened by the Roman governance of subject peoples through local elites.[52]

Furthermore, Horden and Purcell, whose book challenged *mediterraneanism*, the notion of a homogenous Greco-Roman world, also demonstrate that the Roman system allowed for movement within distinctive cultural groups. According to Horden and Purcell, such groups included

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48 C. Moatti. 2006. "Translation, Migration and Communication in the Roman Empire; Three Aspects of the Movement in History", *Classical Antiquity* 25, p. 120.

49 Moatti, "Translation, Migration and Communication in the Roman Empire", p. 120.

50 Suetonius, *Dom*. 12.2.

51 Moatti, "Translation, Migration and Communication in the Roman Empire", p. 125.

52 J. Choi. 2013. "Models of Local Control within the Roman World" in Jewish Leadership in *Roman Palestine from 70CE to 135 CE*, (Leiden/Boston: Brill), pp. 117-152; O.D. Lordkipanidze. 1983. "The Greco-Roman World and Ancient Georgia (Colchis and Iberia)", *Actes du Colloque de Cortone* 67, pp. 123-144.

landless peasants, unemployed artisans, casual agricultural labourers, outcasts of the city, beggars, travelling preachers and gyrovagues such as vagabonds, street musicians, and shepherds with their flocks.[53] Although this indicates significant social mobility, the fact that mobility was tied to social and cultural groupings militates against the conception of the Greco-Roman world as a highly homogenous world. Therefore, to suggest, as Bauckham does, that wider social consciousness enabled the evangelists to conceive of an initial wider audience for their Gospels is problematic. From these observations, it can be concluded that in the Greco-Roman world, people existed in distinctive cultural groups. That is why Apostle Paul's reference to there being no Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος, ('no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free' Col. 3:11) both reflected and responded to the presence of different classes of people who made up the diverse groups of the Roman Empire. Paul's statement in Colossians 3:11 demonstrates that the diversity in the Greco-Roman world found its way into the early Christian communities.

Paul's Diverse Missionary Experiences

Paul's unique missionary experiences across the Greco-Roman world also confirm the cultural diversity in classical antiquity and the likelihood of separate developments within the early Christian movement. For example, in Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas are received as gods and sacrifices are nearly made to them (Acts 14:8-13). Inversely, in Athens, among the Areopagites (Acts 17), the Apostles receive a mixed reception; they are given a hearing, sneered at, and summarily dismissed (Acts 17:32). On the other hand, in Ephesus (Acts 20), Paul's preaching caused a riot that led to his arrest. The multiple experiences of these pioneering evangelists in Lystra and Derbe, Athens and Ephesus not only provide evidence for the diversity of the Greco-Roman world but also reflect the different cultural dynamics in the early reception of Christianity. Granted that small communities formed the Greco-Roman world, it suggests that,

[53] Horden & Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 383. Guy Halsaw demonstrates how wholesale migration into Rome took its significance between 378-568 CE and was a result of the decline of the Roman empire. See G. Halsaw. 2007. *Barbarian Migration and Roman West,* pp. 376-568, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP).

as the Christian faith found fertile soil in these diverse social and cultural groups, the expression of the faith and its mushrooming theologies were bound to be culturally distinctive.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the communities' cultural horizons and group dynamics would have led to a unique appropriation and domestication of the faith.[54] Inevitably, the kind of natural divisions detectable in the body politic were likely to leave their imprint on the literary works emanating from these communities.[55] In this case, Luke, writing his Gospel after Mark and Matthew, would have been aware of the peculiarity of his theology and that of his community. He would, therefore, have written his Gospel according to the ethos of his community, so that, as E.A. Laverdiere and W.G. Thompson argue, his readers could find their own experiences reflected in the narrative.[56] Such diversity explains why any attempt to create a theologically uniform trans-local Christian movement within the Greco-Roman world was a recipe for theological-cultural conflict and rivalry, as the history of the early Christian movement demonstrates.[57] However, the literary works emanating from these local contexts would not have been useful only in their only original contexts. Their significance went beyond their original provenance and was appreciated in other contexts. Parallels can be drawn from foundation myths in ancient societies whose major characteristic was a plurality. Several versions of the same myth of origin existed alongside each other. Yet, as Sweeney has

[54] Esler, "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity", pp. 237-238.

[55] J.F. Strange.1983. "Diversity in Early Palestinian Christianity, Some Archaeological Evidences", *Anglican Theological Review* 65, p. 21.

[56] See Laverdiere & Thompson, "NT Communities in Transition", pp. 567-597; J. Dunn also argues that the kerygmatic traditions, especially, the passion narratives (which was shaped early) and other traditions served as unifying strands linking early Christian churches together. Yet the shapes of these traditions reflect the variety of different theologies and contextual issues within the communities the texts were produced. J. Dunn. 1990. *Unity and Diversity in the NT: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity,* (London: SCM Press), p. 70.

[57] The theological controversies that rocked the church and the succeeding church councils from Jerusalem Council, (Acts 15), Quartodeciman controversy (2nd century CE), Nicaea (325 CE), Constantinople (381 CE) and Chalcedon (451) demonstrates the separate literary and theological developments within the early church movement.

argued, the choice to tell one story entailed not only the selection of the story told but also a rejection of the story not told.[58] In the context of the Gospel story, the basis for the 'rejection' or not telling a particular Jesus tradition could not be individuality driven, given the community nature of the Gospel story. Sweeney further argues that, although different, each foundation myth had significance when approached individually as a foundation myth.[59] Similarly, with the broader context of the reception of the Gospel texts within the wider early Christian movement, each Gospel added to the mosaic of testimonies to Christian origins. Therefore, to use communication and easy access to information in the Greco-Roman world as evidence of wider audiences for the gospels is a failure to appreciate the complexity of the cultural dynamics that were at work in that world.

The Genre and Audience of Luke's Gospel

The Genre of the Gospels

The question of the genre of the Gospels has been a contentious issue in Gospel scholarship since the rise of biblical criticism during the Enlightenment. Although Hellenistic legends and aretalogies have been compared with the Gospels, the debate on the Gospel genre has mainly centred on whether the Gospels are historiography or Greco-Roman βίος. The works of such scholars as Charles H. Talbert (1977) and Richard Burridge (1995) represent significant watersheds in designating the Gospel's genre as βίος. This designation of the Gospels is now taken for granted by some scholars.[60] In the following section, we evaluate three recent studies that represent continuing support for Bauckham's Gospel for all Christians thesis.

58 Naoise Mac Sweeney. 2015. *Foundation Myths in Ancient Societies*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 3.

59 Sweeney, *Foundation Myths in Ancient Societies*, p. 3.

60 R. Burridge. 1995. *What are the Gospels: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP); C.H. Talbert. 1977. *What Is a Gospel? The Genre of the Canonical Gospels*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press).

Edward Klink

In his book, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origins of John's Gospel* (2007), Klink sets out to support the Gospel for all Christians thesis.[61] His arguments are based on two assumptions: (1) a critique of the local audience thesis' conception of community (2) and a defence of the Gospel genre as βιοῖ. Firstly, Klink rejects the notion of an accessible, geographically specific community associated with the Gospels, particularly John's Gospel. The rejection is because, as he alleges, we do not know what New Testament communities looked like. Again, for Klink, community construction does not consider the exclusive nature of a community's territorial and relational dimensions, which in social science are contentious issues. Therefore, for Klink, the term 'community' is both too vague and diverse to be helpful. Secondly, following Burridge and Bauckham, Klink argues that the Gospels are βιοῖ and, therefore, must have been written with wider audiences in mind.

The strength of Klink's argument is its recognition of the continuing scholarly debate on the Gospel community question. However, his presuppositions and conclusions are open to serious objections. Firstly, concerning the question of community, it is interesting to note that while rejecting the idea of community, Klink also acknowledges the existence of communities in the New Testament (p. 48). Furthermore, Klink fails to recognise that most New Testament communities mentioned in the letters and the Book of Acts are verifiable through history and archaeology.[62] For example, recent excavations in Thessalonica have been helpful in the reconstruction of the religious and political history of ancient Thessalonica, and provide insight into the life of its communities.[63] Therefore, to

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61 E. Klink. 2007. *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origins of John's Audience,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP).

62 Nearly forty years ago Jack Finegan traced the 15,000-mile travels of Paul. Using existing histories, literary accounts, and Archaeological information, he brought out new discoveries of the world of Peter, John, and many other early Christians. See J. Finegan. 1992. *NT Archaeology: The Life of Jesus and the Birth of the Church,* (Princeton: Princeton UP).

63 For a discussion of recent contributions of Archaeology to the understanding of the Thessalonian correspondence and its Christian community, Cf. Karl Donfried, 2002. *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).

claim that we do not know the communities from which the Gospels arose is to disregard the combined efforts of history and archaeological science on which the modern historical-critical method is based.

Secondly, Klink raises the question of the contentious nature of the relational and territorial dimensions of the conception of community in social science and the disregard for the exclusiveness of these two dimensions in New Testament community construction. In response to this, we argue that the conception of community in the Greek world assumed the relationship between the two dimensions of community. It entailed both the concept of place in which a group of people subsisted and the active communion of those individuals as part of their normal lives. More than one word was used to denote the notion of community, such κοινόν or κοινότης. Lexically, the word κοινόν referred to society, community, and to government.[64] In this case, the Lucan reference to the disciples as 'together and having everything in common' (κοινά) suggests both territorial and relational dimensions. On the other hand, the word κοινότης, which does not appear in the New Testament, means sharing in common or a community.[65] In some cases, it is used with reference to a physical place. For example, Mazis, in his analysis of Greek associations outside Greece, refers to them as examples of Ελληνική Κοινότης, Greek communities. In particular, the Greek community in Edessa was called Ελληνική Κοινότης έν Έδεσσα.[66] The above designation suggests both territorial and relational dimensions for the Greeks in Russia. It can be argued that in the New Testament conception of community as a gathering or ἐκκλησία, both relational and territorial dimensions of the term are inferred. For the early Christian movement, a community could be singular as in a city (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2) or encompass several territories as in 1 Peter 1:1. Nevertheless, this general description also considered relational factors. For example, for Paul, the salutation 'to all in Rome' (Rom. 1:7) had both territorial and relational dimensions. This is because, like the Odessian Greeks, Rome's Christ-followers shared territorial space and cultural-social ideals. For instance, Ambrosiaster wrote that, 'the Romans embraced

64 DBAD, p. 551.

65 LSJ, κοινότης, Perseus Program, URL.

66 J.A. Mazis. 2001. "The Greek Association of Odessa: Nationalist Politics on two Fronts", *Balkan Studies*, pp. 200-224. ojs.lib.uom.gr.

the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite, although they saw no sign of mighty works, nor any apostles.'[67] Thus, the synagogue origins of their faith can be understood as the defining factor for the relational elements among the Christ-followers in Rome. The same could also have been true for the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Territorially, the provinces around the Black Sea were the areas where Paul was forbidden to evangelise in Acts 16:6-10.[68] We do not know who evangelised the region, although a questionable tradition ascribes the area's evangelisation to Peter.[69] The tradition, in a way, provides a relational dimension to the community in the region. Alternatively, even if Peter did not physically go to evangelise the region, it is also possible that the Christian communities of the region originated from Peter's Pentecost Sermon, among whose audience were people from Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia (Acts 2:9). If these people took and spread the Christian faith to North Galatia and Bithynia, such a Petrine connection would have provided the relational basis for the province. It can, therefore, be argued that at a conceptual level, the idea of a community might indeed be complex and not easily reducible to one way of understanding. However, the New Testament data above provides one perspective on community construction. Such a view found its way into the local audience community construction. Therefore, Klink's denial of the concept of community from the local audience thesis is problematic and a failure to appreciate the logic of New Testament data, which is also historically verifiable.

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67 Cited in J. Edwards. 1992. *Romans*, (Peabody/Mass.: Hendricksen), p. 8.

68 F.T.A Hort cited by Hemer (p. 239) once argued that, as the early churches were concerned with communication, the sequence of the names represented the likely route of the messenger who carried the letter. Thus, the providences' shared communication routes entailed a common dimension that created the possibility of their being looked at as one community. See Hemer. 1978. "The Addressees of 1 Peter", *Expository Times* 89/8, p. 239.

69 Eusebius claims that Peter evangelised the region among the Jews. His claim is, however, deemed questionable given the Gentile orientation of 1 Peter. See J.R. Michaels. 1988. *1 Peter*, WBC, vol. 49, (Waco/Texas: Word Books), p. xlvi; P.H. Davids. 1990. *The First Epistle of Peter*, (Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans Publishing), pp. 7-8.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that Klink's insistence that the genre of the Gospel is βιοῖ and, therefore, the Gospels were written for a general audience is significantly fraught with contradictions. To begin with, Klink argues that Greco-Roman βιοῖ did not originate from closed groups but included people from outside (pp. 113-114). However, in his review of Klink's work, Warren Carter argues that Klink also concedes that βιοῖ can derive from a limited group like philosophical schools.[70] If there were limited groups like philosophical schools which produced writings, one wonders if there were no other limited groups to which Christ-groups corresponded, which also produced writings for internal use. As discussed above, Richard Last's findings of community writing practices within Greco-Roman voluntary associations significantly undermine Klink's challenge of the local audience thesis. Further, as Carter notes in relation to Klink's argument, while βιοῖ in philosophical groups were sometimes written to promote one's group over another, Klink does not give cognisance to the fact that, given the mass illiteracy, βιοῖ were usually written by and for a limited group of elites. This understanding takes us back to the same principle of initial focused audiences. Klink also fails to contemplate what might happen when a genre that derives from a controlling group in a dominant society which exemplifies elite values is adopted by a minority movement.[71] All this suggests that given βιοῖ 's multiple relationships with its audience(s), to use it as a basis for arguing for a local or general audience for the Gospels, is significantly problematic.

In his 2010 edited book, *The Audience of the Gospels*: *The Origins and Functions of the Gospels in Early Christianity*, Klink allegedly brings together scholars from the two sides of the Gospel community debate into a symposium. It is, however, interesting to note that five of the seven essays in the book represent the gospel all Christians thesis.[72] Of the remaining two, Craig Blomberg's essay stands on the fence, while only Adele Reinhart's essay represents the local audience thesis. It is also remarkable that all five essays, from Klink, Bird, Smith, and Bauckham, bring

70 W. Carter. 2009. "The Sheep of the Fold by Edward Klink, Book Review", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71/2, pp. 403-405.

71 Carter, "The Sheep of the Fold", pp. 403-405.

72 The five essays are from Edward Klink (two from him), Michael F. Bird, Justin Smith & Richard Bauckham.

nothing new to the table but a restatement of their authors' entrenched positions in the debate already outlined in their other works. Beyond that, the argument in Craig Blomberg's essay (pp. 111-133) that the Gospels were written for 'specific communities and all Christians' does not represent a new insight into the debate. It is what the local audience thesis has always stood for, as Esler argued (as soon as Bauckham's *Gospel for All Christians* appeared), that while the Gospels originate in local audiences, this does not preclude their use beyond the community. Lastly, Adele Reinhartz's essay, while faulting the Gospel for all Christians thesis, supports the local audience thesis.[73] Her use of the closed communities of the Dead Sea Scrolls as a pointer to the local audience contexts of the Gospels represents further evidence for the plausibility of the local audience thesis. However, like, Lavardiere and W.G. Thompson, R.F. O'Toole, Allison, Stanton, Gamble, and Johnson before her, Reinhartz raises the necessary caution on the inherent methodological and sometimes contradictory challenges in community reconstructions and the way the Gospels are read as reflections of their communities. Overall, Adele finds the local audience thesis to be the most hermeneutically viable and one that Bauckham's proposal will not replace.

Cedric Vine

Cedric Vine's book, *The Audience of Matthew: An Appraisal of the Local Audience Thesis* (2014) represents another continuing support for the Gospel for all Christians thesis. Vine bases his argument on two premises: a charge that the local audience thesis is selective in its treatment of the Gospel narrative and the use of aural experience of the Gospel as a basis for determining the audience of the Gospels. Initially, Vine argues that the local audience thesis tends to be selective in its treatment of Gospel narrative in that it overlooks the question of plot and characterisation, and therefore fails to appreciate how the Gospel text might have been experienced aurally by the early Christian audience. Vine also argues that the concept of 'audience' is very ambiguous and makes it difficult to establish whether the text should be read in relation to the implied or the real

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73 Adele Reinharts, 2010. "Gospel Audiences: Variations on a Theme" in *The Audience of the Gospels: Origin and Function of the Gospels in Early Christianity*, LNTS, ed. by Edward Klink (London: T&T Clark), pp. 134-152.

reader, at the time of Jesus or Matthew's composition. He suggests that since early Christian audiences were mixed in terms of ethnicity, age, sex and commitment to the Christian tradition, the aural reception of the Gospels was varied, as was its impact. This, therefore, makes it difficult to determine the audience of the Gospels.

It can be argued that Vine's book, while sincere in its attempt to support the Gospel for all Christians thesis, makes two grave category mistakes. Firstly, Vine's argument that the local audience thesis creates an ambiguity on whether the word audience can be understood as implied/historical reader, is a category mistake. It results from a failure to recognise that the implied reader is a product of narrative criticism. Narrative criticism does not wrestle with issues of time, place and circumstances. It is more concerned with the text of the Gospel as a finished product. Secondly, Vine's use of aural experience as a basis for determining the audience of the Gospels is significantly problematic. Aural experience belongs to the field of orality criticism, which focuses on the aural reception of literature in oral cultures.[74] Therefore, Vine fails to recognise that the audience's auditory experience arose from their dealing with the text of the Gospel as a finished product. It has to do with the performance of the finished product of the Gospel to an audience. It, therefore, has nothing to do with the genesis of a text within an audience. This category flaw makes Vine's argument the weakest link in the continuing support for the Gospel for all Christians thesis.

Justin Smith

Another proponent of the Gospel for all Christians thesis is Justin Smith. In his study, *Why Bíos? On the Relationship between Gospel Genre and Implied Audience (2011),* Smith argues that Greco-Roman βιός had multiple relationships with its audiences. He arrives at this conclusion through categorisation and sub-categorisation of the Greco-Roman genre of βιός and uses the results as evidence for the Gospel genre and its implied audience. Smith, following Burridge, categorises Greco-Roman βιοῖ as (1) Non-Con-

[74] D.M. Rhoads. 2004. *Reading Mark: Engaging the Gospel, (*Minneapolis/Minn.: Augsburg Fortress), p. ix.

temporary-Focused; (2) Non-Contemporary-Open; (3) Contemporary-Focused, and; (4) Contemporary-Open).[75] He argues that the Gospels belong to a group of biographies (Contemporary-Focused) that have a focused primary audience with the subject contemporary to the authors. For him, the focus does not suggest an audience that is so focused that it represents a specific Christian community or even a group of like-minded Christian communities. He envisions a Christian audience, in general, as the primary audience for the Gospels, with the potential for some emphasis on Jewish (Hebrew) Christians and/or Gentile Christians in some texts. To buttress his point, Smith also refers to the early interpreters of the Gospels. He argues that the early church fathers conceived of the Gospels as general authoritative documents in the whole church and not as sectarian documents.

It can, however, be argued that while the idea of an audience that is focused and general at the same time appears ambiguous, a strict comparison of the Greco-Roman βιός with the Gospels is an oversimplification. As the history of canonisation demonstrates, Jesus' story was a community story. Unlike the ordinary βιός, the gospel story was tied to a movement which was both local and trans-local. Any writings about that movement would require some 'sanctioning' as Last's Greco-Roman writing communities suggest.[76] Such sanctioning could only occur in the context from which the story originates.

Secondly, Smith's reference to Origen (c.184-c.253), Eusebius (c.260-c.339), Chrysostom (c.347-c.407) and others as the earliest interpreters of the Gospels is only based on the evidence of the extant interpretations of the Gospels from these historical figures available to us. In chronological terms, these interpreters are by far not the earliest testimonies to the authority of the Gospel texts in their local and wider contexts. For example, Origen stands nearly a century after the authorship of the Gospel of John. This suggests that even our earliest interpreters represent a later stage in the Gospel's reception history. By the time of these alleged official interpreters, the individual Gospel's significance had gone beyond their local

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75 Smith. *Why Bíos?,* p. 241.
76 Last, "Communities that Write", p. 180.

context. This implies that Smith's argument concerning the earliest interpreters of the Gospels misunderstands the difference between the context of a literary work and its later circulation and wider use. A work's genesis in a specific place does not confine it to that place forever. Depending on its quality and relevance, any literary work has the potential to go beyond its original context. Several modern literary works have come from local contexts and risen to global significance. For example, Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel, *Things Fall Apart*, moved from a local Nigerian novel to a global one selling 10 million copies worldwide and being translated into fifty languages. While the book took on a global audience, its metaphors and idioms reflected Chinua Achebe's cultural context. Yet beyond its original context, the book can be studied, within literary theory, like any other novel. Therefore, the wider authority of the Gospels among the second-century church fathers does not invalidate their origin in local settings.

The Genre of Luke's Gospel

Concerning the genre of Luke's Gospel and its implications on its audience, a significant array of scholarly views exists, most of which challenge the conception of the Gospel as βιός, and by implication, the Gospel for all Christians thesis. Scholars such as Joel Green (1997), Paul Maier (2013) and Andrew Pitt (2013) regard the Gospel of Luke as historiography. Joel Green, for example, argues that Luke's preface categorizes itself as διήγησις (narrative), which in the Greco-Roman world lends itself to categories of either Historiography or βιός.[77] Yet for Green, it makes sense to regard Luke's Gospel as historiography on the basis of the primary aim of διήγησις, which is historical, as well as due to the inability of the biographical genre to account for Luke-Acts taken as a whole.[78] Green's analysis of the primary purpose of narrative as historiography not only makes an interesting case for viewing Luke's Gospel as historiography but is also supported by primary sources. For example, Nicolaus the Sophist argues that there are three types of narrative: descriptive, dramatic, and mixed. According to him, the virtues of a narrative are brevity,

77 Green, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 2.
78 Green, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 4-6.

charm, and grandeur, with persuasiveness as its epitome.[79] Nicolaus' reference to persuasiveness as the primary characteristic of narrative is important in understanding the purpose of the Third Gospel, which is to ensure that Theophilus has certainty (ἀσφάλεια) of what he had been taught (Lk 1:4). Yet, it is interesting that for Luke, what Theophilus had been taught is not confined to the Third Gospel alone but goes all the way into the Book of Acts. The seamless transition of the accounts from the Gospel according to Luke into the Acts of the Apostles evident in Act 1:1-3 makes it difficult to designate the Third Gospel as a mere βιός. This view supports Green's position.

Additionally, in a recent study, Paul Maier has also challenged the growing consensus on understanding the Gospels, especially with regard to Luke, as βιός.[80] Maier compares Luke and Greco-Roman historiography in terms of credentials, dedication, methodology, sources, objectivity, literary ability and accuracy. He argues that Luke's qualification for historiography, methodology, use of sources, attempted objectivity, literary ability and accuracy parallel those of the most important Greco-Roman historians of his day and sometimes exceeds them.[81] Maier is supported by Andrew Pitts, who, in his analysis of source citation in Luke-Acts, argues that Luke uses a mimetic model drawn from Greek historiographic theory, primarily when integrating materials based on his sources for Jesus tradition.[82] All these arguments support the historiographic basis of the Third Gospel.

Which Genre: βιοῖ, Historiography or Both?

At this stage, the question is whether looking at the Gospels in general and Luke's Gospel, in particular, as historiography has any implications for understanding the nature of an audience as particular or general. This

79 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, p. 136.

80 P. Maier. 2013. "Luke as a Hellenistic Theologian" in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture*, ed. by Stanley Porter & Andrew Pitt, (Leiden/Boston: Brill), pp. 413-434.

81 Maier, "Luke as a Hellenistic Theologian", p. 413.

82 A. Pitts. 2013. "Source Citation in Greek Historiography in Luke (-Acts)" in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture*, ed. by Stanley Porter & Andrew Pitt, (Leiden/Boston: Brill), pp. 349-388.

is because, as Daniel Tober argues in an important paper, even Greek historiographies had their tensions between local and outside audiences.[83] Tober, using an example from the writings of Athenian historian Philochorus, demonstrates that while a local history was received in many cases by the members of the local community themselves and was intended, at least in part, for them, the packaging of local material for non-locals was itself also typical of local Greek historiography.[84] Yet, according to Tober, even while intended for a wider audience, a local historian frequently intended the local community, which was keenly interested as it was in reading about itself and its collective past, as the principal audience. Tober's observation which is supported by some key classical scholars such as J. Grethlein and L. Kurke has significant implications for the local audience thesis.[85] At most, it suggests that it is unwise to hastily surmise that the Gospels are βιοῖ or historiography and, by extension, the nature of their relationship to their audiences. As Last has observes, it is difficult to imagine if the Gospel writers started writing with genre in mind or whether starting with a genre in mind is a product of modern biblical criticism. Even if genre matters, as Smith argues, it needs to be realized, as Kloppenborg has argued that the function of genre is to mediate between the speaker and the hearer by establishing a common dynamic capable of ruling both the production of discourses as a work of a certain kind and its interpretation according to rules provided by that genre.[86] Kloppenborg further argues that new genres emerge through the transformation of old genres, and the use of a genre in new situations may affect the way that genre is interpreted.[87] Thus, given the process of writing and dissemination of literary works in the Greco-Roman world and the unique nature of the Christian movement, the adoption and adaptation of a contemporary

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83 D. Tober. 2017. "Greek Local Historiography and its Audiences", *The Classical Quarterly* I, pp. 1–25.

84 Tober, "Greek Local Historiography and Its Audiences", pp. 2-3.

85 See J. Grethlein. 2010. "The Rise of Greek Historiography and the Invention of Prose" in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing,* vol. 1, ed. by A. Feldherr & G. Hardy, (Oxford: Oxford UP), pp. 148-170; See also L. Kurke. 2011. *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose,* (Princeton: Princeton UP).

86 J.S. Kloppenborg. 1987. *The Formation of Q,* (Philadelphia: Fortress), p. 13.

87 Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q,* p. 13.

genre for purposes of contextualisation was an inevitable process.[88] Such contextualisation, as Andreas J. Kostenberger has shown, would have resulted in the Gospels taking on features of both βιοῖ and historiography and, therefore, both originating in a local context but also capable of serving wider contexts. This understanding, which John Carrol and David Garland support, is particularly significant for Luke-Acts, whose character traits overlap the two types of genres. For example, Carrol argues that since Luke places himself as a third-generation Christian (Lk 1:1-3) for his readership, he provides a genre-bending narrative that employs conventions of both biography and *historia* widely known in the Hellenistic world.[89] Therefore, to conclude that the Gospels are βιόι and, therefore, were written for broader audiences is a position which fails to appreciate the unique and complex literary context of the world of the Gospels and their audiences. Yet, given both options, the local audience thesis remains the most plausible alternative for understanding the audience of the Gospels.

Internal Evidence of Luke's Local Origins

The Lucan Preface in Scholarship

Besides all the literary and historical evidence presented for the local audience thesis of the Gospels, it is essential to examine how the text of Luke's Gospel itself provides evidence for its community orientation. Firstly, Luke's unique preface in the context of Greco-Roman literary works provides a plausible explanation for the local audience basis of the Gospel. It is common knowledge that H.J. Cadbury's age-old rejection of preface composition as a basis for establishing a text's audience has been influential and has over the decades influenced scholarly perception of the relationship between the Third Gospel and its preface (Lk 1:1-4).[90]However, insufficient attention has been given to Alexander's comparison of

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88 Macdonald, "Classical Greek Poetry and the Acts of the Apostles", pp. 363-396; A.J. Kosternberg. 2013. "The Genre of the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Literary Conventions" in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture*, ed. by Stanley E. Porter & Andrew W. Pitts, (Leiden/Boston: Brill), pp. 435-462.

89 See Carrol, *Luke*, p. 2. See also Garland, *Luke*, pp. 26-31.

90 H.J. Cadbury. 1958. *The Making of Luke-Acts*, (London: SPCK). Cf. L. Alexander.

the Lucan preface with Greco-Roman scientific literary works.[91] Alexander observes that, unlike the Greco-Roman βιός or historiographical prefaces, the Lucan preface is unique in that it is short, does not contain general moral reflections and speaks in the second person.[92] However, according to her, Luke shares some of its characteristics, such as second person reference and the preface's detachment from the main text, with technical or scientific literature, which were not designed to circulate outside the school that produced them.[93] As Alexander acknowledges, a comprehensive understanding of the specific function of scientific prose in the Greco-Roman world remains a significant challenge to the Greco-Roman historian. However, Alexander's ability to isolate the uniqueness of the Lucan preface from the general class of ancient βίος or historiography provides a window into the unique relationship of Luke's Gospel with its audience. Alexander's argument was advanced more than three decades ago. However, although not given enough attention, no plausible challenge to her thesis has been advanced to date.[94] Alexander's ability to relate the Third Gospel to the Greco-Roman scientific documents demonstrates the unique nature of the Gospel and its community orientation.

Lucan Redaction

The text of the Lucan Preface

It can also be argued that a lexical analysis of the Third Gospel's preface provides a compelling case for Luke's familiarity with his audience. For example, Luke's purpose of writing is that Theophilus ἐπιγνῷς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν (Lk 1:4) (so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught). Talbert contends that the way ἀσφάλεια is used in its different forms in Luke-Acts (Lk 5:23; Acts 21:34;

1986. "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing", *Novum Testamentum* 28/1, pp. 48-74; Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, pp. 48-74.

91 Alexander, "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing", pp. 48-74.

92 Alexander, "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing", p. 50.

93 Alexander, "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing", p. 57.

94 Adams only challenges Alexander's comparison of the Gospels with historiography. See S. Adams. 2006. "Luke's Preface and its Relationship to Greek Historiography: A Response to Loveday Alexander", *JGRChJ* 3, pp. 177-191.

22:30; 25:26) needs to be understood in relation to Luke's legitimation strategy but across a wider Christian audience.[95] While legitimation can explain Luke's use of ἀσφάλεια, Talbert's conclusion that such legitimation needs to be understood from a wider audience perspective fails to appreciate the immediate context of the term. When ἀσφάλεια in Luke 1:4 is understood in light of the second person σοι (to you) plus the infinitive γράψαι (to write) (v. 3) and repetitive vocative Θεόφιλε (O'Theophilus) (Lk 1:3; Acts 1:1), it demonstrates both a personal acquaintance with the addressees and an understanding of their circumstances. In addition, the second person aorist indicative passive κατηχήθης 'you have been taught' shows that Luke knows that Theophilus had been instructed about Jesus but needs ἀσφάλεια. Supposing Theophilus needed ἀσφάλεια for what was already available in the other sources whose existence Luke acknowledged (Lk 1:1), it would render Luke's work redundant. In that case, contextual issues unique to Luke's situation or to some of the members of his community may have necessitated a restatement of the church's catechesis of the Jesus event. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the way such a restatement is made throughout the Third Gospel and the Acts, granted that Luke knew and used Mark, reflects the circumstances of the author and his immediate audience. Otherwise, with other sources available to Theophilus, which Luke acknowledges (Lk 1:1), the need to restate the Jesus event would not have been necessary unless there were contextual issues to address. As the Gospel's text spread beyond its original context, its unique materials became its contribution to the development of the Jesus' tradition within the wider early Christian movement.

Personal Acquaintance in the Lucan Text

Beyond the Lucan preface, there is also significant evidence of Lucan redactional intention and community application. Firstly, as Esler has argued, Luke's reference to the Ephesian *ecclesia* as a flock (Acts 20:17-35), of which the elders are the shepherds, and the warning that after his departure, fierce wolves will invade the flock, underscore Luke's use of apostolic history to speak to his audience.[96] Further, according to Esler, the image of separateness and fragility of the Christian congregation in Luke

95 Talbert, *Reading Luke*, p. 3.

96 Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, p. 26.

12:32 suggests that Luke found the idea of the flock appropriate to the circumstance of his audience. It can be further extended from Esler's point that the reference to τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον (little flock) (Lk 12:32) reveals an intimate and personal familiarity with his community, which would be awkward, though not impossible, if Luke were referring to the whole Christian community across the Greco-Roman world. The closeness of this Lucan reference to John's Τεκνία μου (my children) (1 Jn 2:1) reinforces the personal nature of Luke's acquaintance with his audience. This personal acquaintance is further supported by the structure of the Lucan makarisms, whose second person reference ὅτι ὑμετέρα (ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ), 'for to you' (Lk 6:20) has an immediacy that reveals both presence and acquaintance between the performer and the audience. The use of the second person point of view was a prevalent style in the panegyrics, which were themselves local and contextual. For example, in his speeches, which were delivered personally, Isocrates uses the term ὑμεῖς (you) 206 times for every ten thousand words.[97] This shows the extent of the personal reference in the speech, which was itself occasional, local and contextual. Garland argues that the possessive pronoun 'yours' makes it clear that Jesus addresses the beatitudes to a particular audience and not to the poor in the entire world.[98] Given the above arguments, to imagine ὑμετέρα (to you) in the Sermon as referring to an imaginary and distant audience is logically difficult to sustain.

Lucan Sapiential Material and Community Orientation

The presence of uniquely Lucan sapiential material in the Gospel also suggests a unique audience. The special material, reflected in the very structure of the Gospel, is related to Luke's preoccupation with interpersonal issues, especially concerning poverty and wealth. Albert Hogeterp has shown that several sections in the Third Gospel about poverty and wealth are part of Luke's special material (Lk 12:13-21; 14:7-14; 16:9-12; 16:19-31).[99] Kloppenborg, assigned most of these sections as part of the

97 See, Isocrates, *Are*. Perseus Program word statistics.
98 Garland, *Luke*, p. 276.
99 A.L.A. Hogeterp. 2013. "Immaterial Wealth in Luke between Wisdom and Apocalypticism: Luke's Jesus Tradition in Light of 4Q Instruction", *Early Christianity* 4/1, pp. 41-63.

sapiential instruction in the sayings source. An important theme running through these texts is poverty and riches and the benevolent responsibility of the rich towards the poor. This theme strongly resonates with the sapiential instructions on poverty and riches from the Qumran community, a close community by nature.[100] The connection between sapiential material and the school or particular community in Greco-Roman philosophical tradition and Jewish tradition is well attested.[101] This relationship places these Lucan texts (Lk 12:13-21; 14:7-14; 16:9-12; 16:19-31), and by implication, the Gospel of Luke, within a wisdom school or community context. As Alexander has shown, scientific documents derived more from a school context; they were school texts, the distillation of a school's teaching or a craft tradition as it was passed down from one generation to another.[102] Granted that the Lucan preface places itself within the category of scientific documents, which were communal, it becomes plausible to place Lucan origins within a community context.

It can also be observed that, even in those passages which the Third Gospel shares with other Gospels, Luke's redactional intention and community application are conspicuous. For example, in the genealogy section (Lk 3:23-38), Luke reworks the structure of Jesus' genealogy to project an orientation relevant to his audience' needs. By tracing Jesus' genealogy all the way back to Adam, Luke demonstrates not only Jesus' relationship with all humankind but also the relevance of his Jewish ancestry to that relationship. While the genealogy points to a gentile audience, and not a specific gentile audience per se, it demonstrates a way of thinking for the evangelist that significantly differs from Matthew's. As Green has argued, all language is embedded in culture, and therefore Luke's narrative enterprise would have been set within a particular discourse.[103] From a cultural and social perspective, the difference in the thinking of the two evangelists

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100 Cf. 4Q 416 2ii 2-7.

101 Some works that highlight the relationship between wisdom and philosophical schools and communities are Johnson, "Jesus and the Philosophers", pp. 93-110; and Matthew J. Goff. 2007. "Discerning Wisdom: The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls", *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 116, (Leiden: Brill).

102 Alexander, "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing", p. 69.

103 Green, *The Gospel According to Luke*, p. 12.

over Jesus' genealogy suggests community influence. Each evangelist is responding to specific questions in his community.

The Lucan Preoccupation with Poverty

Further evidence of Luke's redactional intention and community application is manifest in the story of the woman's anointing of Jesus in Luke 7:36-48. The story has parallels in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8. John's version is considerably at variance with the Synoptic testimonies. In the other two synoptic traditions, the woman's action receives a general murmuring related to wastefulness (Mt 26:8-9; Mk 14:4-5). However, the Lucan version has a unique nuance that sets it apart from the rest and demonstrates Lucan redaction and community application. Firstly, of all the three traditions, only Luke omits Jesus' statement that 'the poor will always be with you (there)' (cf. Mt 26:11; Mk 17:7). The omission of Jesus' reference to the poor indicates the sensitive nature of the reference to Luke's audience. In a community troubled by the existence of poverty and riches, such a reference would have had significant implications on internal social relations. To avoid exacerbating the already simmering problem of riches and poverty in the community, Luke omitted that controversial saying of Jesus.

Secondly, only in Luke does Jesus respond to the audience' murmuring with a parable on forgiveness (Lk 7:40-50). The connection between the woman's generosity unto Jesus and the forgiveness of her sins mirrors specific community issues in Luke's churches. It demonstrates the relationship between generosity and salvation, which potentially touches on the relationship between the rich and the poor and the role of the former in the community. Beyond that, the parable also uniquely echoes questions of forgiveness, reconciliation, and acceptance, which would have been contentious issues within Lucan churches. These social issues are also conspicuously mirrored in the Sermon (Lk 6: 27-38).

Another example of Lucan redaction and community application is the parable of the Banquet in Luke 14:15-24. This tradition parallels Matthew 22:1-14 and the Gospel of Thomas 64. All three traditions share the basic outline of the parable. The banquet host's snubbing by his potential guests forms the climax of the parable. This similarity suggests a common source for all three Gospels. It demonstrates that the parable may have been part of Jesus' logion to which both evangelists and the author of the Gospel of Thomas had access.[104] However, each Gospel presents a unique emphasis on the host's reaction to his dishonour by fellow peers as indicated in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1

Parable of the Banquet Parallels

Gospel	Text
Thomas 64	Go out to the roads, **bring those whom you find**, that they may dine.
Matthew 22:9-10	So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet **anyone you find**.' So, the servants went out into the streets and gathered **all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good**, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.
Luke 14:23	Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and **bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame**.

In the Gospel of Thomas, the host instructs his servants to invite as many as possible without apparent social designation.[105] In Matthew, the host decides that the alternative guests to the Banquet comprise everyone, whether πονηρούς or ἀγαθούς (evil or good) (Mt 22:9-10). For Luke, the poor, the disabled, the blind and the lame become the alternative guests (Lk 14:23). The significant contrast between Matthew's preoccupation with evil (unrighteousness) and goodness (righteousness) and Luke's emphasis on poverty and riches echo distinctive emphases in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and its Lucan counterpart (Mt 5:3-12 cf. Lk 6:20-23). The different emphases in the two versions of the parable (Lk 14:15-24 and Mt 22:1-14) cannot be easily explained except as indicators of community orientation of the two canonical Gospels.

From the above discussion, we can conclude that the local audience thesis is the most plausible way to explain Gospel origins, particularly Luke's Gospel. A panegyric reading of the Sermon provides a practical

[104] Q 14:16-18, 19-20, 21,23. See also James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, & John S. Kloppenborg. 2002. *The Sayings of the Q Gospel in Greek and English*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), p. 135.

[105] Gos. Thom. (Nag Hammadi II. 2).

case for locating the Gospel in a local setting. Beyond that, the Greco-Roman processes and practices of writing, communication and diversity and their sociolinguistic implications support the local understanding of Gospel origins. However, as Jonathan May, quoting Adele Reinhartz, argues, the Gospel for all Christians hypothesis has value in that it reminds us of the tenuous nature of any historical reconstruction of first-century Jewish and early Christian communities.[106] Yet despite all these difficulties, the local audience thesis remains the most relevant paradigm for understanding the origins of the Gospels and their audiences in general, and that of Luke's Gospel in particular.

106 J.G. May. 2011. "The Audience of the Gospels: The Origin and Function of the Gospels in Early Christianity", *Neotestamentica* 45, pp. 154-157.

CHAPTER 7
THE EPILOGUE

Luke's particular liking for emphasising the relationship between poverty and riches has been a subject of many studies. This specific characteristic of the Gospel has contributed to its unique character among the four Gospels. As Nicolaus, the Sophist argues, beyond charm and grandeur, persuasiveness is an integral virtue of narrative.[1] Given the narrative thrust of Luke's Gospel, what is it that it advocates in its juxtaposition of poverty and riches, and how does the Sermon help the Gospel to achieve its aim? Our starting point in this book was that the Sermon provides the key to understanding Luke's interest in interpersonal relationships. Beyond that, the Sermon also offers a framework through which socially differentiated members of the Christ-followers could achieve the camaraderie that helps define them as Christ-followers. This function of the Sermon is best understood when it is read as a Greco-Roman panegyric. Not only does the approach free the Sermon from its Matthean hermeneutical shackles, it also clarifies the meaning and function of the Sermon among its original auditors.

The importance of the paradigm of praise and blame as a pedagogical tool in the Greco-Roman world re-enforces the Lucan interest in using the panegyric genre to present Jesus' message in the Greco-Roman world. A unique characteristic of the Greco-Roman panegyric was the use of praise and blame, and exhortation. Different forms of the panegyric, whether the victory ode, the funeral oration, festival speeches and other political speeches, displayed a combination of praise and blame. Thus, the praise and blame rhetorical strategy served as a form of social control in its Greco-Roman context. Unlike the modern world, where conformity to public norms is no longer in vogue, in the classical world, honour and shame were normative values and determined human behaviour. Thus, the speeches of praise and blame appealed to the agonistic spirit of that world. They functioned as vehicles for transmitting honour and shame.

1 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, p. 137.

These speeches took advantage of the psychology of praise and consequently helped introduce new values to new members or re-enforce existing community values. Through repeated exposure, they helped in the education of the citizenry. The speeches' re-enforcement of community values took cognizance of the human propensity to slip into selfish modes, especially in community contexts where social differences existed. As epideictic genre, the community nature of the panegyrics enabled them to deal with current issues affecting their audience. Thus, the content of the panegyric was determined by the issues affecting the target audience that it sought to influence.

The Sermon exhibits several characteristics of the Greco-Roman panegyric. Its collocation of the makarisms (vv. 20-23) and woes (vv. 24-26), and poverty and riches followed by a call to action (vv. 27-49) places it at par with Greco-Roman speeches of praise and blame. Such juxtaposition reflected the perennial social questions in the Greco-Roman world, which centred around the relationship between the rich and the poor and its implications on social relations between the two groups. The challenge of poverty and riches was not just tied to the question of having and not having wealth in a community context. It went deeper and reflected the identity claims from these statuses and how the two groups related with each other. Within an entrenched kinship and reciprocity system, the importance of social status implied that the rich maintained an exclusive culture that left the poor out. Such a system of social relations would not have suited the new communities of Christ-followers that emerged from Jesus' work and ministry. Therefore, using contemporary modes of communication, Jesus' Sermon in the Third Gospel adopts the panegyric praise and blame to help integrate new members or inquirers like Theophilus into the community and re-enforce community values for the rest.

In the Sermon, Jesus presents an alternative conception of reality that would allow socially differentiated individuals to positively co-exist in a community context. This conception of reality is connected to the ideal of the Kingdom of God (Lk 6:20). For Jesus, those chosen to be his followers are special individuals comparable to the Greco-Roman victors. Now that they are admitted into his fold and, by implication, into the Kingdom of God, they are to adopt the values associated with destitution, which in the

Greco-Roman world reflected weakness, dependence and, by implication, vulnerability. This adoption would have been easier for the materially poor, whose lives were already embedded in these ideals, than for the rich. Through the praise of destitution and disparagement of riches, the rich are implored to adopt these values, which would free them from a fixation on riches and its associated values of power, independence, and security. Not only would the new identity of powerlessness, dependence and vulnerability enable the rich to find security in God, but it would also make their association with other poor members of the Christ-followers possible.

A critical aspect of the Sermon's identity-transforming nature is its emphasis on the possession of the Kingdom of God by the poor. The Sermon demonstrates that those in the Kingdom can be filled, laugh, and be approved without having to be rich (Lk 6:20-23). Such understanding levels the playing field for both the rich and the poor. It makes the two groups equal heirs to the privileges of the Kingdom, a conception that was alien to the Greco-Roman understanding of the power relations between the rich and the poor. The new understanding would allow the rich to extricate themselves from the status claims associated with riches. Yet the outworking of the identity implication of praise and blame in vv. 20-26 is not left to chance. In vv. 27-49, the Sermon lays out the practical ways through which the new identity of powerlessness, dependence and vulnerability are to be lived in the community. This practical guidance is captured in terms of positive interpersonal relations (vv. 27-38) and moral leadership in building the communities of Christ-followers (vv. 39-49).

The guidance on interpersonal relations, which heavily leans on economic and social ethics, is tagged on the love of the enemy (v. 27). Here, understood from the lexical meaning of the Greek word for enemy, ἐχθρός, as well as from the community dimension of the panegyric, the enemy is not the distant nemesis. The enemy is instead that with whom 'one shares life, who, owing to social-economic differences, had become alienated. Thus, the enemies remain brothers, albeit estranged ones. This is why, despite everything else, the enemy needs to be prayed for, blessed (v. 28), and even allowed to take one's possessions without asking for them back (v. 28) and not judging the supposed enemy (v. 37). The appeal to love others also encompasses business ethics, especially regarding fair dealing in the context of loans (v. 34) and market processes (v. 38).

Beyond interpersonal ethics, the Sermon also deals with the question of leadership and education in a community context (v. 39). Such leadership is to be understood in relation to adherence to the love command (v. 27). It emphasizes that those who came before are to set an excellent example of the love of the different others (the enemies) in the community. Failure to model the values set out in the Sermon (vv. 27-38) would qualify the leaders as blind guides who mislead the new converts or inquirers like Theophilus. However, positive leadership should help build the community of Christ-followers on the foundation (rock) of Jesus' teaching (v. 48). Inversely, the leaders' failure to model or adhere to what Jesus has said in the Sermon is equivalent to building on the sand (v. 49). Such a community will fail to reflect the principles espoused in the Sermon.

The call for positive economic and social relations made in the Sermon is also clarified across the Gospel. Right from the infancy narratives, Luke presents God as the first giver. The providential interventions in the lives of ordinary Israelites like Mary, Elizabeth and Zechariah underscore the importance that God attaches to the hospitality and care of the powerless, dependent, and vulnerable. The pedagogical implications of the narrative on divine benevolence would have been apparent among Luke's primary audience. Beyond the infancy narratives, Luke demonstrates how Jesus concretises divine magnanimity in his interaction with the masses, his praise of generosity, and his blame of the spirit of greed.

Thus, for Luke in the Sermon and across the Gospel, to be a disciple of Jesus, or by implication to be saved, was not just an intellectual assent to his Lordship (Lk 6:46). Salvation is meant to be worked out in the crucible of community encounters in all its diverse forms. In the Greco-Roman communities of Luke's churches, where reciprocity governed human relationships, the Sermon challenged the limited view of social exchange and brotherly love. By emphasising generosity as the basis of community life, the Sermon provided Theophilus and his fellow converts or inquirers a picture of a community to which they had committed themselves to belong. It was a community that required the realignment of their socio-economic values.

All this confirms that reading the Lucan Sermon as a panegyric provides the most plausible way of understanding its original function. This reading also validates the local audience thesis of the Gospels.

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Abbreviations

ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt/ Rise and Death of the Roman World
BCE	Before the Christian Era
BDAG	Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, & F. Wilbur-Gingrich. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature
CE	Christian Era
CMS	Church Missionary Society
ECB	Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible
GRch J	Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism
HTS	Hervormde Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies
IBS	Irish Biblical Studies
IGEL	Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LS	Lewis, Charlton T. & Short Charles, A Latin Dictionary, Perseus Digital
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, Jones Ancient Greek Lexicon, Perseus Library
LSGEL	Liddell & Scott Greek-English Lexicon
LXX	The Septuagint
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NT	New Testament
NTS	New Testament Studies
OT	Old Testament
PDL	Perseus Digital Library
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SNTS	Society of New Testament Studies
TALGNT	The Analytical Lexicon of Greek New Testament
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of New Testament Theology
trans.	translated by
UP	University Press
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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The book's central argument is that the best way to interpret the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6 is to read it as a Greco-Roman panegyric, whose function was the integration of new members and the inculcation of commonly held values. The Sermon's makarisms and woes and their juxtaposition of poverty and richness, and exhortation are Luke's attempt to construct a new socio-economic identity of Christ-followers by supplanting the values of the dominant culture with a new set of values adopted from the status of destitution for both the rich and the poor. This results in their common dependence on the Lord for their daily provisions. Such reliance on the Lord allows for the koinonia between the rich and the poor among the first-century Christ-followers. This socio-economic motif is replicated throughout the Third Gospel and typifies Luke's concept of salvation as a holistic one.

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ISBN: 978-3-86309-952-7

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