

Theological Implications of Nazareth Mission Manifesto (Good News to the Poor) in Luke 4:16-18 to Contemporary Nigerian Society

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Abstract

There is increased level of poverty in Nigeria caused by socio-economic malady and instability. This affects every aspect of human endeavour. The level of poverty in Nigeria could be parallel to the situation in Nazareth during the life and ministry of Jesus that necessitated the Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4:16-18. The construction of socio-economic society of the Mediterranean world in which Jesus lived and worked for a better understanding as well as addressing poverty in Nigeria forms the focus of this paper. The methodology is purely expository with critical look on the inter-Testamental citation of Isaiah 61:1-2, 58:6. The location, rejection, and the audience give the insight of the background. It is a society which is a replica of Nigeria marked by social polarization and a huge gulf between the rich and poor. Very few of the population were rich, while the majority of the population lived below the poverty line, and lived mostly by begging. In defining who the poor are and the beneficiaries of Jesus' ministry in Luke's gospel, we evaluated the programmatic character of the Nazareth sermon (4:16-30) and argued that 'the good news to the poor' casts light on the meaning of 'the poor' in terms of possessions and poverty throughout Luke's gospel. The good news to the poor in Luke 4.16-30 involves relationship between the haves and have-nots and if this relationship is maintained, it will automatically bring turn around in the contemporary Nigerian society.

Keywords: Theological Implication; Nazareth Mission Manifesto; Good News to the Poor

Introduction

One of the greatest problems facing the contemporary Nigerian society is socio-economic challenges. The escalated fuel pump prize, high cost of food stuff and other essential commodities are serious matters. Consequent upon that, the rate of poverty is rising in geometrical dimension. The cry of the masses is 'which way Nigeria, which way to go.' How can God act in a situation like this? To attempt this, the following questions form the backdrop of this article: Why is the use of possession and wealth more prominent in the Gospel of Luke than in other gospels? Is Luke's Gospel addressed to the rich or poor, or to both? Who are the poor and the rich in Luke's Gospel? Does Luke present materials that

privilege the poor and castigate the rich? Can we deduce Luke's theology regarding possessions from sermon at Nazareth? Is the message of 'good news to the poor' literally the release from social and economic oppression, or is it purely religious? Is there any material(s) that refer(s) to the difficulty and even to the impossibility for the rich to be saved?

To achieve the above, this work will critically inquire into the centrality given to the poor by Luke in Jesus' mission and argue whether 'the good news to the poor' in Luke 4:18-19 can be taken literally to limit the promise of blessedness and salvation to a particular group of people, the poor who are economically deprived, as given much attention by Luke in Jesus' mission. Green (1995), argues that the equation of Jesus' primary agenda of good news to the poor, if taken narrowly to be economic poor, and his repeatedly frequenting the homes of the wealthy strike a great attention. Schottroff and Stegemann (1986) also argue that "though Jesus speaks so often of good news to the poor, he knows much less about their lives than the rich. He takes description of the life of the poor to the earliest tradition but does not further visualize it from the view of the poor themselves; He has a much better acquaintance with the life of the prosperous and respected, shown vividly in the banquet meals" (p. 62). The above discrepancies are source of concern among New Testament scholars.

Who are the Poor?

The precise definition of whom the poor are and the question of possessions, riches and poverty in Luke has been the focus of New Testament scholarship for long. Secombe (1983) surveys a long history of engagements of scholars on the issues of possessions and poor in Luke: 1. Dunpont (1973) argues that beatitudes and woes envisage two quite distinct groups- the persecuted church of Luke's day, and the persecuting Jewish unbelievers. Luke writes to encourage the persecuted Christians. To encourage the poor and persecuted church, woes are directed against those that persecuted them. 2. Degenhardt (1965) affirms that the poor are those who renounced their possessions for the sake of the kingdom. He thinks Jesus demands renunciation of possessions only of band of travelling companions (mathetai- the disciples). 3. Burkett (1906) appears to support the idea that the two tendencies which are really characteristic of the writing of Luke are a tendency towards voluntary poverty and a tendency towards asceticism. 4. Schmithals (1975) defines the problem in terms of the apparent internal contradiction. Luke is addressed to a persecuted community in which Christians had to be prepared for loss of all -family, possessions and even life- if they were to confess Jesus. 5. Johnson (1977) sees the poor as the outcasts, to whom the prophets came and they receive them. The rich are those who are accepted by men, they reject the

word of the prophet. However, Seccombe (1983) denies Luke's use of socio-economic and socio-religious terminologies and concludes that the poor are metaphorically the Israel in need of salvation.

The issue of defining the paradigm of possessions economically, socially, and religiously has been, of course, a great issue among the scholars. It is noteworthy that the predominant interpretations of Luke give emphasis to a motif of divine blessedness and royal justice in favour of the poor in the economic sense of it, (Shoemaker, 2007). However, Roth (1997) states that "while Luke's gospel may be a gospel of the poor, serious disagreement exists among scholars over whom the poor are, for whom Luke advocates" (p. 19). The diverse proposals of the meaning of "poor" in Luke as proposed by Seccombe (1983) and Schottroff and Stegemann (1986) include: the poor as the "pious" - a religious self-description for certain groups of messianic pietists; the poor as a "particular group"- to the established religious order, but are looking for the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to the poor. It is not to be taken in terms of economic deprived class for there were some rich among the above pious group; the poor as those who have voluntarily abandoned their possessions; the poor as the poor disciples who abandoned everything and followed Jesus; the poor as those afflicted with literal economic poverty; the poor in the light of the Old Testament, as designated heirs of salvation.

Christians by the characterizations of Luke are poor whom Jesus comes to offer salvation; the poor as metaphor as a characterization of the nation of Israel. Here Seccombe (1983) sees Luke as establishing a special consciousness of the relationship between the ministry of Jesus and the theological patterns of Isaiah from pre-exile to the post-exilic periods, "the prophets not only protesting against the social injustice by the wealthy and upper class but the disruption of theocratic structure and organization of the society" (p. 25). To him, book of Isaiah presents three pictures of the poor: 1. the peasants of the pre-exilic period squeezed of their lands by the powerful; 2. the captives of exile; and 3. the dispirited nation of restoration. In each case the people are in some sense under attack, and the conviction is that God will execute a great salvation for the poor in the latter days and make them the heirs of his blessing. Luke carried this understanding into the gospel. Nevertheless, the "poor" to Luke are more than a particular group mentioned above, rather it embraces all: economic, social, religious and political. With the connection of the 'anointing of the Holy Spirit' in 4:18-19, Luke is defining the character of the new community of people of God.

In most cases, New Testament scholars like Green (1994) arrive at "linking the words poor and poverty with the concept of economic marginality, persons who lack the essential means of livelihood" (p.63). Though there are very few who refer to poor metaphorically, like Seccombe (1983), who are emphatic that poor is the deprived nation of Israel in need of

God's salvation. He draws his arguments from Psalms and the Isaianic pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic periods of Israel suffering as a nation, who were in great need of God. Pobee's (1987) studies of the Old Testament vocabulary on poverty supports the above idea thus, "the poor came to be the faithful Israelites who relied only on the Lord The poor know their need and, therefore can rely on God" (p. 18). And more elaborately he defines poor as religious, social and economic deprivation. He further asserts that "material deprivation is proto-typical or paradigmatic for all kinds of deprivation, helpless, oppression and suffering" (p.18). Pobee's (1987) argument depends much on the dependency on God, but he did not clarify whether the dependency is for Israel alone or includes all nations.

Green (1995) rejects the tendency of defining Lucan poor "economically, on a scale of annual household income or with reference to an established, national or international poverty line" (p. 80). To Green (1995), poor or rich are not simply economic terms, but relate to social status and social position, the outsiders or the insiders. He further argues that, "in fact, seven out of the ten occurrences of the word poor 'πτωχος' in Luke appear in lists of this nature: poor, captive, blind, oppressed (4:18); poor, hungry, mournful, persecuted –(6:20); blind, lame, leper, deaf, dead, poor (7:22); poor, maimed, lame, blind (14:13); poor, maimed, blind and lame (14:21); poor, ulcerated, hungry (16:20,22)"pg 81 These represent poor in a wider sense, rather than narrowly economical. Green (1997) further maintains that for Luke, "people are not to be predetermined as insider or outsider by their sex, family heritage, financial position, location in the city or rural environs, or religious purity. Such status markers are no longer binding. Anyone may join the community of Jesus' followers; all are welcome" (p. 82).

Luke's choice of words for poor as Green (1997) and Bammel (1968) state are as follow: 'ἐνδεής' - needy (Acts 4. 34), 'πενιχρος'- the poor widow in the temple treasury (Luke 21.2), and 'πτωχος' - the complete destitution which forces the poor to seek the help form others by begging. The material economic connotations of these terms are clear in the contexts they were used. On the other hand, the mention of three major public arenas: "the market place", the "synagogue", and "the banquet room", depict that the term poor is not simply a term economically defined, it is related to issues of power and privilege, and social location as insider (Green, 1997). Poobee (1987), like Green (1997), puts it this way, "the material poor, while paradigmatic of all kinds of deprivation, oppression and suffering, are also paradigmatic of those who are radically humble" (p. 19). From the above analysis, several undefined issues concerning who the poor are emerge; however, the sociological framework of Luke will offer us a lens to view the poor and their privileged position in Jesus' ministry in Luke-Acts.

The Socio-Economic World

Though the issue of politics and power contributed significantly to the social strata in the Lucan world of Jesus, yet it is generally acknowledged that economic factor also plays some role in defining the social polarization of the Greco-Roman world. It can be characterized as a period of extreme inequality in terms of its socio-economic conditions. Schmidt (1987) puts it thus, “there was widespread oppression of the overpopulated mass of the lower classes, high taxation, natural disasters, and societal polarization aggravated the situation” (p. 9). For the details of the effect of taxation, both the civic and temple, to economic crisis and decline, Schmidt (1987) has this to say, “The total taxation of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus, civil and religious combined, must have approximated the intolerable proportion of between 30 and 40 per cent” (p. 25). The significance of this inequality is not simply that one man has more while others are hungry and naked and homeless; the depth and reality of the problem is that those who were rich had power over those who were poor. But more importantly the socio-economic system supports and constantly increases them, so that the rich get deliberately richer while the poor get poorer and have less control of their future. Stambaugh and Balch (1986) put it thus:

in terms of power, influence, money, and the perceptions of the time, we can divide the population of the Roman world into two main categories, those with influence and those without it, the honourable and the humble, those who govern and those who were governed, those who had property and those who did not, the upper category was very small, the lower, very large. (p. 110).

Such society was marked with exploitation of the poor, and ostentation, the conspicuous or vulgar display of wealth and success, especially designed to impress people. Kim (1974), describe thus, the “Greco-Roman world is to be considered as one which was designed particularly for the elite group of the society, while the rest of the society just existed for helping those privileged to enjoy their lives conveniently” (p. 237).

Other contributing factors to poverty in Greco-Roman antiquity, apart from unbalanced social structure, as Schmidt (1987) had mentioned, were natural phenomena, the frequent famine, and droughts. In such a socio-economically tough society, unless the wealthy took action to help the poor survive; they might on a daily basis face starvation and even death. Though there were some benefaction programmes both in the government and private sectors, this occurred on an irregular basis, not from altruism or municipal spirit, but from the interest of the wealthy for reward.

Though the merchants and artisans have some degree of wealth, and to some extent control of financial markets, there was still dichotomy between them and the aristocrats. The

aristocrats treat them as poor on the ground of having deficiency in political power. They totally isolated themselves from political power, and were not allowed to entertain themselves in a social atmosphere like the nobility. Initially as comradeship, those who engaged in the same professions began to gather in certain places in order to have social events, for entertainment and for burials. So, the have-nots in the Greco-Roman world suffered discrimination and unfair dichotomous treatment from the hands of both the political juggernauts and the affluent merchants.

The Narrative of Nazareth Message- ‘Good to the Poor’

It is universally agreed that “Jesus’ sermon at Nazareth (4: 16-30) is programmatic for the understanding of the mission of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. As Luke puts it, He came to his home town, on the Sabbath went to the Synagogue and announced his mission manifesto by reading and teaching the scripture reading from prophet Isaiah: The spirit of God is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour (4:18-19, NRSV). Its commanding position at the beginning of Jesus ministry prior to lengthy anticipations and preparations in 1:5-4:13 is also acknowledged to give significance to the poor in Luke’s Gospel. Bock (1994) writes, “Luke 4:16-30 has received much attention because of its location in the Gospel, in comparison to its synoptic parallels: Mark 6:1-6a and Matt. 13:53-58”pg 394. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the incident of Jesus' public ministry in his home town, while Luke, many scholars suggest, transposed the same incident, which Matthew and Mark put later in their gospels, to the beginning of his gospel. Fitzmyer (1990) asserts that, the “Lucan story transposed to this point has a definite programmatic character; he has deliberately put his story at the beginning of the public ministry to encapsulate the entire ministry of Jesus and the reaction to it” (p. 529). For Green (1995), “Luke has tied 4.16-30 together with the preaching material, from 3.21 onward, by the common concern with the activity of the Spirit and the consequent identification of Jesus and the nature of his mission” (p. 207).

Some scholars argue that since Mark and Matthew did not include the citation in Isaiah, it suggests that the message to the poor is purely Luke’s not really Jesus’. He probably copied from Mark and transposed Isaiah 61:1-2, 58:6 and make it his. Others assert that there is no clear evidence to attribute Jesus’ reading to Luke. Secombe (1983) argues that the issue of similarities and dissimilarities with other synoptic gospels will lead into endless arguments, though he supports Luke’s independence and suggests that the story should stand as it is. For Luke, Jesus emerged from the desert into the Galilee in the power of the ‘Holy Spirit’ which shows that Luke does not imagine the Nazareth sermon to be the chronological start

of Jesus' ministry. The inclusion of the release of the captives, blind, and oppressed depicts that Luke's portrayal of Jesus' mission does not literally mean the economic poor, but rather the inclusion of the socially depressed and marginalized. Though Esler (1996) and Bammel (1968) argue that the use of 'πτωχοι' depicts socio-economic depression rather than social stratification.

The Significance of Location of the Text to the Understanding of 'the Good News to the Poor' Nazareth of Galilee as the location of Jesus' ministry has a significant role in understanding his 'good news to the poor.' Galilee has a significant Gentile population, hence, 'the Galilee of the Gentiles' (Isa. 9.1, Matt. 4.15). According to Luke, Galilee where Nazareth is situated, had a peasant population and was the locus of Jesus' ministry before his long journey to Jerusalem. Galilee, together with Jericho, was the heart of agricultural production in Palestine. Historically the story here is one of stubborn resistance to alien cultural influence and foreign domination. Some scholars claim that Galilee was relatively isolated, the people living together in small villages detached from the scattered urbanized communities, in which class distinction has no place.

However, the location of the mission manifesto of Jesus in the Nazareth of Galilee attracted a lot of criticisms; Elser (1) argues that the picture assumes the normal situation of urban setting in the Hellenistic world. Some argued that within Lukan Galilee, the cities are not characterized as the elites who trouble Jesus, as portrayed in 4:16-30. The crowd's anger and rejection create a problem, since the sayings favour the poor and Gentiles, who constitute the greater percentage of Nazarenes. Some also argue that Jesus transposed the incident which happened in Jerusalem to be in Nazareth.

Luke 4.16-18 Interface - Isaiah 61:1-2, 58.6

Marshall (1978) asserts that "the quotation is also found in Barn.14:9; 1QH 18:14; 11 Qumran 6-9" (p. 18). Luke 4:16-30 depicts a picture of first century synagogue worship which includes: standing to read, sitting down to teach, handing over the scroll, reading from Torah or Prophets, and the skipping of and adding a verse. The reading from Isaiah 61:1-2 skipping "to bind the brokenhearted" and adding a verse from 58.6 suggests the elements of earliest synagogue worship. Repetition of 'me' in the emphatic position, underscores the inexorable relation of the spirit anointing and the statement of the primary mission, "to proclaim good news to the poor." Another emphatic reading is 'release', "a word generally used in the sense of forgiveness (of sins), which is for him the essence of the gospel. Release here has some spiritual undertones with social connotations in connection with 'release of the captives and the oppressed,' or in connection with the jubilee or the year of favour. Esler (1996) argues that the release is literally the release of the Jewish slaves held captive

following the Roman Conquest in 70 AD, and blind also to people afflicted with physical blindness in the Roman Empire, where begging was their only form of livelihood. Green (1995) argues that blind include both literally physical healing and also metaphorically for receiving of revelation and experience of salvation, and the inclusion of those at the edge in God's family Luke 1.78-79; 2.9,29-32; 3.6.

Literally Year of Jubilee

Some scholars argue that in his sermon Jesus was proclaiming a literal jubilee, from which much of his ethics, particularly those relating to possessions and poor, can be explained. The argument is based on the idea that the year when Jesus began his ministry was a jubilee year, in connection with 490 years of the prophecy of Daniel. Others argue that the jubilee year was used metaphorically to evoke the idea of jubilee in the Palestinian realm. However, Green (1994) pointed out that the 'Todayness' signifies that "with the onset of Jesus' ministry, the long-awaited epoch of salvation had been inaugurated ... rooted in his person: He is one anointed by the Spirit, the herald of good news, the one who brings a new era." (p. 214). The coming of Jesus is pictured both economically, the cancellation of debts, and socially, the redemption from exile. Luke develops the mission of Jesus as freeing from the economic oppression, captivity of sins, and that of social marginalization. It is the time of God's salvation. Jesus has come to announce the Great Jubilee of God's final deliverance of his people and, the time of God's intervention to save people, from social polarization.

Poor as the Special Objects of His Proclamation

Seccombe (1983) sees the poor as Israel waiting for God's salvation. He traces the history back to the pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic periods, and concludes that in the New Testament period, captives are more likely to have been seen in terms of the overall spiritual-political oppression of Israel, rather than as literal prisoners or exiles. He summaries thus in the Nazareth story Luke wishes to tell his readers that Jesus the Messiah proclaimed salvation freely to all Israel from the very beginning, but his ministry encountered refusal. He further argues that the inclusion of the captives, the blind, and the oppressed as the objects of proclamation are the three alternative descriptions of Israel's captivity in need of redemption. That is to say that Seccombe (1983) is emphatic that the proclamation of good news to the poor is strictly the nation of Israel. He supports his argument with his work on the etymology of the captives, the blind and the oppressed as relate to Old Testament especially Isaiah and Qumran.

In contrast to Seccombe's view, Green, Marshall, Nolland, Esler, and Roth argue that the citation of Gentile figures underscores that the poor are not confined to the nation Israel

rather “the good news to the poor” embraces the widow, the unclean, the Gentiles, those of the lowest status” and those outside the boundaries. Another flaw in Seccombe’s view is that he fails to indicate the importance of the role of citation of the of Old Testament Gentiles, the widow of Zarephath and the Naaman, who were favoured by the ministry of social reformers, Elijah and Elisha. Though Seccombe argues that the rejection was based on imposing on himself the eschatological messiahship. Under this prearranged social setting, that Luke has Jesus refer to the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian as examples of non-Jews who had in time past experienced the loving kindness of God of Israel, gives added significance. The widow represents the urban poor on the brink of death by famine. 1Kings17.12 Naaman, the rich and powerful army commander of the king Aram and a leper (2 kings 5.1-5). His selection of the characters is related to his desire to present the gospel as open to not only to the Jews but to the Gentiles and those outside the traditionally recognized religious boundaries.

The Theology of Poor and Possessions in Gospel of Luke

Luke, more than the other gospels, contains the most explicit accounts of possessions, poverty and wealth in relation to social reformation. Schottroff and Stegemann (1986) assert, “to a much greater extent than Matthew and Mark ...Luke transmits traditional materials in which the problem created by the social distinction of poor and rich plays a part” (p. 67). The view of Schotroff and Stegemann agrees with my ongoing argument that Luke’s descriptions of being poor in Mediterranean culture goes with socio-economic deprivations, socio-political powerlessness, socio-religious impurity and all kind of social marginalization. Luke portrays the world of Jesus as a society of elites where the political, social, religious, and economic systems favour a very few elites of the upper class, while the majority of the populace suffer. It is a world of inequality in which it is truly an understatement to say that the whole of Luke’s gospel is almost every piece of social interaction and should be viewed through the lens of honour and shame. The present socio-politico-economic and religious structures acted as catalysts to a high degree of hope for eschatological social reversal.

Luke’s approach on possessions and social concerns has attracted wide interest of New Testament scholars, and of economic and social thinkers. Roth (1997) for example, cited five points to support the consensus of New Testament scholars regarding Luke’s social consciousness, possessions and wealth: 1. Luke has proportionally more material than the other gospels dealing with the rich and the poor. 2. Women play more prominent roles in Luke-Acts. 3. Particularly in Luke’s gospel, Jesus befriends or makes positive examples of religious and social outcasts. 4. Healing the sick and infirm is a leading component of the

ministries of Jesus and his followers. 5. Luke is particularly fond of exhortations to and examples of almsgiving. Roth (1987) further asserts that, "Luke forged a vision of community in which both rich and poor are spiritual equals, and the social and economic inequities between them can be vigorously and conscientiously addressed" (p. 18). The consensus, nevertheless, is plagued by problems: Beavis (1994) asserts, "virtually all of Luke's direct warnings concerning the wealth and riches occur in Luke alone and are absent from Acts"pg357. Rather, in Acts the Christian movement is portrayed as making its way among socially and economically advantaged people, for example, Cornelius (Acts 10:1ff), and Dorcas (Acts 9:36ff). The rich are in the forefront of the Christian mission to Gentiles. Elser (1996) also asserts that taking Luke-Acts together, the good news has favoured even the rich: the centurion (Luke 7:1-10), Joanna (Acts 8:3), the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), Greek women and men of noble birth from Beroa (Acts 17:12). these were favoured in Luke-Acts.

The point which Beavis and Elser are making is that the membership of the influential and the rich in Luke's community cannot be denied; neither does the gospel favour only the poor on the ground of strictly economic deprivation. Consequently, there is debate concerning those whom Luke actually addressed. Is it addressed to the poor or rich or to the both? Bammel (1968) denies that, "Luke neither thinks from the standpoint of the poor nor seeks to address them"pg907. Seccombe (1983) put this way, "There are many indications that Luke is a work addressed, not as often is said, to the poor, but to wealthy about the poor" pg 4. Schottroff and Stegemann (1986) also comment, "is Luke then, really a 'pastor to the wealthy' since precisely in Luke, Jesus, and especially the Apostles and the preachers, meet frequently at homes of the rich and important individuals" pg 68. In contrast, Nickelsburg (1978), who maintains that Luke has compassion on the poor, says, "sympathy for the poor is general concern for outcasts, aliens, and second-class citizens: tax collectors and sinners; the Samaritans; women" (p. 341). However, Esler and Green assert that Luke's theology of the poor is grounded on: 1. Jesus is not against possessions, but that possessions and wealth should not make one to lose sight of the pure religious views. 2. Salvation for Luke, within the Christian community, begins now which involves both physical and spiritual salvation. 3. Salvation is for all. 4. A Radical challenge to the prevailing social arrangements.

Theological Implication to Contemporary Nigerian Society

Jesus' statement shows that Jesus came to inaugurate a new kingdom and Jesus' choice of text acts as a declaration of purpose for His ministry. For Jesus, poverty and wealth are always about political, cultural, and economic relationships. And in this new kingdom which Jesus came to establish will bring with it a new relationship with the rich and the poor. The

poor whose life has placed outside the kingdom is now place in the inside. When individuals live in poverty, their lives are influenced by a host of political, cultural and economic relationships. Poverty always reflects the power and domination systems that people have upon other individuals, a kind of power and domination that removes life choice. When Jesus stands before the synagogue and announces He will bring good news to the poor, he is effectively saying that He will give them the opportunity to make choices with their lives. The live they live will now have the option of relationship and participation in the kingdom of God. Furthermore, this proclamation has enormous potential power: the marginalized move into the centre of relationship with God. The silence receives the voice of prayer. The ignored have God's attention. The good news should be proclaimed to people that, they now have the identity in the kingdom. It comes with the attitude of a new jubilee year in which all will receive freedom from all manner of dominions.

The government and church should put effective and functional poverty alleviation programmes in place to curb poverty in the society. The church will collaborate with the government in finding lasting solution to the problem of poverty in Nigeria and borrow a leaf from the experience of the ancient Israelite society in its attempt to respond to the cry of the poor in Nigeria. The paper recommends that the church should actively involve in the poverty alleviation struggles of the government, as the government alone could not do it, through effective and functional poverty alleviation programmes as practiced in ancient Israelite society. This requires embracing the needs of the poor and looking for every means possible to engage them at the source of their poverty, whether it is political, cultural or economic and to be a part of a solution to offer them choice in their lives. The poor need Jesus. The poor also need Jobs and food. The poor need health care and dignity. The poor need education and hope. All these things rightly come in the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

We have shown in this work Luke's concern for the use of possessions and wealth, more than any other gospel writers. We have also inquired into the centrality Luke gives to the poor in his portrayal of Jesus' mission, "the good news to the poor" (4:18-19). We also gave answers to questions regarding the meaning of poor, and found out that poor is a wider word than just the economic sense of it, which also includes, the destitute, beggars and those who barely live above the hunger line. We argued that citation of Isaiah 61:1-2, 58.6 gives us clue that Luke has good knowledge of other materials which help him to expound each point on possessions and poor. We also argued that the inclusion of blind, captives and the oppressed in Jesus' Nazareth sermon embraces not only the economically oppressed, but all who are disadvantaged by the socio-political, economic, religious strata of the

Mediterranean world of Luke. Jesus' association with the tax collectors, those who were economically rich, as well as social outcasts, defines the poor in a broader sense to include all who are in need of God's salvation. This salvation is now, as Green (1995) asserts that salvation is neither ethereal nor merely future, but embraces life in the present, restoring the integrity of human life, revitalizing human communities, setting the cosmos in order, and commissioning the community of God's people to put God's grace into practice among themselves and towards ever-widening circles of others. This salvation for all also is pictured in the inclusion of: the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed in his mission agenda. Luke also offers God's salvation to: sinners, tax collectors, Samaritans and Gentiles. The rich are not excluded in the Lucan universal salvation per se, rather it demands the proper stewardship of money among the rich. In proclaiming the blissfulness of the kingdom of God, Luke is not only interested in the spiritual, but also the material liberations which involve socio-economic, political, and religious systems. This holistic salvation to Luke is eschatological, which begins now within the new people of God.

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