

**Social Transformation from a Biblical Perspective: A Contextual Reading and Interpretation of Luke 18:35-19:10 in Rural Tanzania with reference to Mbinga Catholic Diocese**

by

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I, Quinbert Salvius Kinunda, declare that

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## **Abstract**

This work is an attempt to read Luke 18:35-19:10 in the context of a poor rural community in Mbinga Catholic Diocese in Tanzania. For its theoretical grounding, the study uses both liberation hermeneutics and African contextual approaches to guide and inspire a critical reading of the selected biblical text. Lk 18:35-19:10 consists of two short episodes that mirror two social extremes in most human communities: the poor, represented by a nameless blind beggar (18:35-43), and the affluent, as represented by Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector (19:1-10). The aim of reading these stories in the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) with poor rural people was to invite them to begin considering biblical texts as a lens through which their socio-cultural and economic realities could be examined, reflected upon and, perhaps, addressed at a spiritual and practical level.

When interacting with the poor, one notices that they are endowed with wisdom, knowledge and a perspective unique to them. However, for years in Biblical Scholarship, especially in the Catholic tradition, ‘knowledge from the underside of history’ (in the words of Gutiérrez), was not given an opportunity to express itself. In response to this oversight, the CBS, as propagated by Gerald West, provides ordinary readers with the space they need to examine and articulate, from their own perspective, their concerns and insights in the light of faith and the Word of God. The role of a trained reader remains that of facilitating the CBS process, and of enabling ordinary people to become flesh and blood readers. As the poor closely read Lk 18:35-19:10, they try, to the best of their ability, to retrieve and pay attention to components that focus on their own liberation from oppressive socio-cultural and economic structures.

The story of the blind beggar functions as a metaphor for individuals (or nations) who think that they cannot make ends meet without receiving alms or foreign aid. A change of mindset is recommended in order to begin looking for solutions from within. Blindness also serves as a metaphor in the Zacchaeus episode for unethical leaders, whose reason is clouded by dishonesty and an unhealthy attachment to material wealth that ultimately blinds them to the demands of social justice. The thesis’ main concern, therefore, has been that of seeking to engage the ordinary readers in the struggle against rural poverty.

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I am grateful to Rt. Rev. Bishop John C Ndimbo for his prompt permission that opened doors for the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) sessions to be carried out as requested in five rural parishes of Mbinga Catholic Diocese. On the same note, I am indebted to parish priests and their respective parishes, mentioned in brackets, for helping me to organise the CBS groups: Moses Haule (Maguu), Donatus Komba (Kindimba), Guido Turuka (Mikalanga), Job Chale (Mango) and Orestes Nditi (Mkoha). To each of you, I say thank you.

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## **List of Signs, Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ADS	AMECEA Documentation Service
ADD	Arusha Declaration Document
Afrrev	African Research Review
AJET	Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AIIC	Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference
AFER	African Ecclesiastical Review
AM	Africae Munus
AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
AMP	Africa Muslim Population
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts
BIBAL	Berkley Institute of Bible, Archaeology and Law
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBS	Contextual Bible Study
CCM	Chama cha Mapinduzi
CCT	Christian Council of Tanzania
CD	Christus Dominus
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CHIEA	Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa
CRDB	Cooperative Rural Development Bank
CUEA	Catholic University of Eastern Africa
DAS	Divino Afflante Spiritu
DH	Deuteronomic History
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
EDNT	Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
ESRF	Economic and Social Research Foundation
GS	Gaudium et Spes

HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRA	International Course for development oriented Research in Agriculture
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IEC	Intra Energy Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IVP	InterVarsity Press
IPC	International Poverty Centre
ITQ	Irish Theological Quarterly
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JSNT	Journal of the Study of the New Testament
JSRR	Journal of Scientific Research & Reports
JTSA	Journal of Theology for Southern Africa
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LE	Laborem Exercens
LXX	Septuagint
M.Afr	Missionary of Africa
MFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MAFSAC	Ministry of Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives
MAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MD	Medellín Document
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
MKUKUTA	Mkakati wa Kukuza Uchumi na Kupunguza Umaskini Tanzania
MM	Mater et Magistra
N-A <sup>26</sup>	Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum Graece, Stuttgart: Deutsch Bibelstiftung, 1979, 26 <sup>th</sup> Edition
N-A <sup>27</sup>	Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum Graece, Stuttgart: Deutsch Bibelgesellschaft, 1993, 27 <sup>th</sup> Edition
N-A <sup>28</sup>	Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum Graece, Stuttgart: Deutsch Bibelgesellschaft, 1993, 28 <sup>th</sup> Edition
NAB	New American Bible
NAP	National Agriculture Policy
NAS	New American Standard Bible
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics

NDC	National Development Corporation
Neh	Nehemiah
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJ	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSGRP	National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty
NTS	New Testament Studies
OA	Octogesima Adveniens
OCGS	Office of Chief Government Statistician
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSB	Order of Saint Benedict
PBC	Pontifical Biblical Commission
PCD	Planning Commission Dar es Salaam
PD	Providentissimus Deus
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PP	Populorum Progressio
PREM	Poverty Reduction and Economic Management
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategies Programme
QA	Quadragesimo Anno
RCOR	Regional Commissioner's Office Ruvuma
RDS	Rural Development Strategy
REA	Rural Energy Agency
REB	Revised English Bible
RN	Rerum Novarum
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SACCOS	Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SCC/s	Small Christian Community/Communities
SECAM	Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
SJTI	Saint Joseph's Theological Institute

SRS	Sollicitudo Rei Socialis
TACAIDS	Tanzania Commission for AIDS
TANESCO	Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited
TANROADS	Tanzania National Roads Agency
TANU	Tanganyika National Union
TDHS	Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
THDR	Tanzania Human Development Report
TNRF	Tanzania Natural Resource Forum
TRA	Tanzania Revenue Authority
TS	Theological Studies
TGW	Tanzania Government Website
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
VETA	Vocational Education and Training Authority
VPO	Vice-President's Office
WB	World Bank
WBG	World Bank Group
ZAC	Zanzibar AIDS Commission



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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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Throughout my career as Catholic priest, my preference has always been to work in rural settlements where most poor people in Tanzania reside. My interaction with them motivated us to start a Bible study group mainly composed of poor peasants. The aim was to use the Bible as a resource to nourish the faith of the community. By the end of the initial introductory phase, we had become a group with a common interest and goal. We then gradually began to bring our social reality to the study of biblical texts and to assess how the text could address the realities of our day-to-day life experience. For example, we asked: ‘How can we make the Bible become a text that speaks to the heart of our social reality?’ Or as Éla (1994:145) puts it: ‘How can a person read the Bible and leave a people in a state of poverty and marginalization?’ Taking the path of Éla, one may still ask: ‘What meaning do people give to their reading of the Word of God?’ My stay in South Africa has also provided an opportunity for me to read a number of works of Nolan<sup>1</sup> and those of Gerald West on biblical hermeneutics of liberation and contextual Bible study (hereafter CBS). West takes the context of the poor, the oppressed, and marginalised as a privileged locus of his critical reading and interpretation of the Bible. The phrase ‘contextual Bible study,’ according to West, carries the same meaning as ‘liberation Bible study.’ It replaced the latter to act as camouflage in the context of South Africa when the country was still under the cruel regime of apartheid (West 1999c:51-52; 2000:596). I also came across the works of Philpott and Cochrane that focus on reading the Bible with the poor in Amawoti<sup>2</sup>. The aforementioned socially oriented scholars, as well as other works on liberation hermeneutics and African contextual hermeneutics as presented in Chapter Two, are sourced to support the critical reading and interpretation of Lk 18:35-19:10. In 2010 I had an opportunity to attend a workshop named ‘the Tamar Campaign’ at Saint Joseph’s Theological Institute organised by the Institute’s Gender Committee. Its facilitators came from the Ujamaa Centre of UKZN —

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Nolan is a well known proponent of contextual theology, ‘[i]t would not be out of place,’ writes Kaufmann (2001:17), ‘to say that the name Albert is synonymous with contextual theology in South Africa.’

<sup>2</sup> Philpott in his book entitled *Jesus is tricky and God is undemocratic* (1993) shows how important it is to read biblical texts with the poor and marginalised. The motive for doing so, according to Philpott (1993:15) is ‘to create space for the views and opinions of those usually excluded from the theological enterprise...those [the poor] who “do theology” but seldom write it.’ Cochrane’s book *Circles of Dignity* (1999) exemplifies how local wisdom and religious insights may become a force to reckon with in our attempt to narrow the gap between theology and lived reality of the suffering crowd.



Pietermaritzburg. Their approach to reading and contextualising the Tamar story (2 Sam 13:1-22) was fascinating and an eye-opener. Similar experience was gained from ‘The Eudy Simelane Lecture and Workshop’<sup>3</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> October 2017) at Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) in Pietermaritzburg, again organised by the Ujamaa Centre. In both workshops community reading of a biblical text was given priority.

## **1.2 Location of the Study: Mbinga Diocese**

Since this study, as shown in Chapter Seven, includes a collection of incipient theological insights from ordinary readers, I briefly locate here the context in which the CBS was carried out. A detailed presentation of the social analysis of Mbinga Diocese is reported in Chapter Three. The diocese<sup>4</sup> is located in Ruvuma region in Tanzania. It covers two administrative districts of the Ruvuma region, namely Mbinga and Nyasa<sup>5</sup>. As noted below (3.2), the majority of rural dwellers in the territory of Mbinga Diocese are Catholics. In one way or another, they are familiar with the reading of biblical narratives. Unfortunately, the meanings they give to such biblical texts often remain personal and unexplored. The role of the poor in most churches has been that of submissiveness, attending liturgical activities, listening to homilies and piously trying to implement what these homilies urge them to do. The Bible is read and interpreted for them. This project does the opposite; it aims at creating space for the poor so that they are enabled to name and articulate, with their own voice, the pertinent issues that affect their lives. The poor know their social reality better than any theologian writing about it (Nolan 1988:51; Cochrane 1999:21-22; De Gruchy 1987:99). As a trained reader, I intend to journey with the ordinary readers, to facilitate and enable them to speak for themselves<sup>6</sup> as they read Lk 18:35-19:10 in the light of faith. In this way one hopes to situate and honour wisdom and ‘knowledge from the underside of history’<sup>7</sup> in the wider context of the theological discourse and praxis. The choice to use the CBS theoretical framework and methodologies is motivated by its capacity to offer the ordinary readers an opportunity to

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<sup>3</sup> One of the activities during this workshop was to read Gen 18:1-16.

<sup>4</sup> The noun ‘diocese’ denotes an ecclesiastical region administered by a bishop (Canon 369). Mbinga Diocese, one of the 34 Catholic dioceses in Tanzania, was created on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1986 (Source: Mbinga Bishop’s House). The seat of the diocese is in Mbinga town (Nyenyebe 2012:106). Ruvuma is located in the Southern part of Tanzania — bordered by Mozambique to the South, and Malawi to the West.

<sup>5</sup> Until 2012 Nyasa was part of the Mbinga district. It was established as a separate district in 2013 (ESRF 2014:xiii).

<sup>6</sup> Similar advocacy is put forward by O’Brien (1989:63) who recommends the learned to undergo ‘a genuine intellectual conversion’ so that they may be at the service of the poor, the oppressed and marginalized. In doing so, they will learn to speak with the poor, and empower them in turn to speak for themselves.

<sup>7</sup> The phrase ‘from the underside of history’ is frequent in Gutiérrez’s works (Gutiérrez 1983:169-221; 1990:8; and also Wittenberg 1996:230-233; West 1995a:68; Philpott 1993:17); it signifies the mass of marginalised people who are rendered incapable of making history.

analyse their social context and use it as a point of departure to read, contextualise and appropriate the Word of God in the light of faith. Five parishes<sup>8</sup> of the Mbinga Diocese namely Maguu, Mikalanga, Kindimba, Mkoha and Mango are involved in the CBS project. The first four are located in the Mbinga district where agriculture is the main economic activity, and the fifth parish, Mango, situated along Lake Nyasa, economically relies on small-scale fishing and agriculture.

### 1.3 Literature Review and Contribution of the Current Study

#### 1.3.1 Literature Review

Before situating and highlighting the importance and contribution of the current research, I briefly mention three major studies on which this project is built and developed. The first two, politico-ideological and socioeconomic by nature, have a bearing on the current reality of rural settlements in Tanzania. The third study, which comes from the field of biblical scholarship, underlines the findings and conclusions that some scholars have drawn from the critical reading of Luke 18:35-19:10. The insights gained in these studies provide the current research with tools to introduce its ideo-theological orientation, which is essentially one that is focusing on the biblical hermeneutics of liberation and African contextual hermeneutics.

The first group takes Nyerere's political ideology of Ujamaa<sup>9</sup> as a point of departure for constructing an Ujamaa theology in favour of the underprivileged, the oppressed and marginalised. It urges men and women to free themselves from being at the service of mammon and to commit themselves to serving humanity. Ujamaa ideology is anthropocentric and inclusive in its approach. Even development is defined in terms of its capacity to serve human beings. Thus writes Nyerere (1974:84), '[t]he purpose of development is man (sic). It is the creation of conditions, both material and spiritual, which enable man (sic) the

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<sup>8</sup> Mbinga Diocese consists of 33 parishes of which 10 are located in the Nyasa district and 23 in the Mbinga district. With the exception of two parishes in Mbinga town, the rest are situated in rural areas. Agreeing with Nyumayo (1980:22), the term *rural* in this work refers to 'all settlements which are not gazetted as urban centres' and they are normally geographical areas located far from towns or cities. In the context of Tanzania, rural areas are characterised by peasantry/farming activities, primary production of raw materials, limited market and social services, remoteness and informal small settlements (PMO 2001:1). Oakman (2008:167) gives an interesting description of peasantry and he also lists common elements that characterise the life of the peasants including a lack of 'control over political and economic situation.'

<sup>9</sup> Nyerere (1968a:1) describes Ujamaa (socialism) as 'an attitude of mind ... which is needed to ensure that the people care for each other's welfare.' The attitude of the socialist differs from that of the non-socialist because the attitude of the latter is geared towards selfishness (*ubinafsi*), individualism and exploitation of other human beings. The concept of Ujamaa also connotes anthropological terms like brotherhood, sisterhood or familyhood. The use of such terms is rooted in the notion of *jamaa* (family or community) in which 'care for one another can only be guaranteed if people view each other as brothers and sisters or as members of the same family' (Magoti 2012:24; Magomba 2016:105; Frostin 1988:30-31; Magesa 1986:63-83; Boesen et al 1977:11-12).

individual, and man (sic) the species, to become his best.’ A number of theologians<sup>10</sup> have tried to associate Ujamaa ideologies with Christian values of solidarity, charity, hospitality, community, wholeness, mutual respect, freedom and equality (Mwoleka & Healey 1976:11-12). They consider Nyerere’s political ideology of Ujamaa as being influenced and shaped by Christianity and Catholic social doctrine. There is no social study of rural Tanzania that does not mention Ujamaa villages and the Ujamaa ideology that was authored by Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania. The following are cited as positive consequences of Nyerere’s Ujamaa ideology (Frostin 1988:46): political stability, absence of tribal conflicts, a successful literacy policy and an extensive primary health care. Nyerere’s ideologies on rural development and education are referred to in Chapter Eight. However, these ideologies do not go without criticism. Different opinions about his failure are given, ranging from ‘planning mistakes’ to ‘a misplaced idealism which has violated economic laws’ (Frostin 1988:45). His critics point to the current reality of rural poverty as a sign and proof of the weakness and failure of the Ujamaa ideology. From the socioeconomic point of view, some poverty experts<sup>11</sup> have tried

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<sup>10</sup> Among them were Mwoleka (1976a:15-17; 1976b:18-33; 1976c:34-42), Lymo (1976:134-144), Per Frostin (1988:29-81) and Keshomshahara (2008:56-70). Christopher Mwoleka, Catholic bishop, considered Nyerere’s programme of villagisation as an opportunity for the Church to renew her commitment to serve humanity. To live in Ujamaa villages for Christians also would mean ‘to imitate the life of the Trinity which is a life of sharing’ (Mwoleka 1976a:15-17). Mwoleka (1976a:20) seems to suggest that there is a close link between Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and Ujamaa villages. Both aim at fostering Christian and human values such as sharing and mutual support. Another theologian from this perspective is Lymo (1976:137) whose article ‘Quest for Relevant African Theology: Towards an Ujamaa Theology’ (1976) regards Ujamaa ideology as a way of life that ‘aims at transforming human society in order to escape tangibly the shameful low standards of living.’ Lymo (1976:138) concurs with Nyerere’s initiative to relocate the populace to village settlements because these are an ideal habitation where the spirit of familyhood is enforced. It is in Ujamaa villages that people have opportunities of living and working together to combat poverty, ignorance and disease. Frostin (1988:29-47) on his part classifies Ujamaa ideology as a constructed political system that has as objectives of building a classless nation. At the heart of every human society there is a human being who is to be treated with respect and dignity. I agree with Frostin (1988:81) who, with reference to Tanzania, observes that ‘[t]he experience of the poorest of the poor in the villages and in the factories is not yet reflected in academic African theology. The same is true for the experience of women.’ It is in rural areas that one finds the poorest of poor Tanzanians. Keshomshahara (2008:56) does a thorough critical analysis on the socioeconomic conditions of rural Tanzania under Nyerere’s programme of villagisation, and also under the current policy on liberalism. He mentions a number of factors that continue to impoverish rural people, namely: corruption, mismanagement of resources, irresponsible leadership, illiteracy and serious lack of family planning, especially in rural areas.

<sup>11</sup> Shepherd et al (2013:187-190) see poverty as a chronic phenomenon in rural areas of Tanzania. It is indeed a widespread reality that contradicts the often-propagated claims that the country is recording a reasonable rate of economic growth. According to Mashindano et al (2013:128-139), the mismatch between economic growth and poverty reduction is mainly caused by: first, the demographic factors in the sense that economic growth does not necessarily correspond to population growth; second, less effort has been given to investing in education and agriculture; third, limited growth in agriculture; and fourth, the rising cost of living. Agriculture is the major source of rural employment where almost every family is involved in small-scale farming. Due to low agricultural productivity, many families are hit by the problem of child malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. Other problems that are associated with poverty are listed as follows: illiteracy, alcoholism especially male alcoholism, serial polygamy, and susceptibility to domestic violence. In order to alleviate rural poverty, Kessy et al (2013:209; and also Higgins 2013:77-78) suggest the following measures: to prioritise agricultural development, to empower men and women, to support business development and promote access to credit, support secondary and vocational education, and disseminate legal rights.

to analyse rural poverty and suggest a way forward. Biblical scholars<sup>12</sup> tend to focus on ‘faith and salvation’ rather than on the social context of the narratives we read in Lk 18:35-19:10.

### **1.3.2 The Novelty and Contribution of the Thesis**

The works reviewed above (1.3.1) articulate the reality of rural Tanzania from the political, theological and socioeconomic perspectives. Even those who advocate an Ujamaa theology do not use biblical texts as a point of departure for constructing theological insights. On the contrary, this study has Lk 18:35-19:10 as the starting point of its reflection on socioeconomic conditions of rural Tanzania. A literature review reveals that some biblical scholars, as seen above (1.3.1), propose faith and salvation as unifying theological themes retrieved from Lk 18:35-19:10. They exalt the blind beggar and Zacchaeus as the model of what it means to have faith in God. They seem not to question socioeconomic structures that have created beggars (18:35-43) and wealthy people like Zacchaeus, the chief tax-collector, a member of a group that abuses the political system and its power (19:1-10). This study thus seeks to read Lk 18:35-19:10 with the rural Christian community<sup>13</sup> – as opposed to the common Western approach of objective and uninvolved interpretation – with as aim to raise awareness of social, economic and political issues among poor people. The rural readers are invited and motivated to read this biblical text from their own perspective in order to question socio-cultural and economic structures that tend to oppress and marginalise them. The study agrees with Gooding (1987:312-313) who likens the concept of ‘salvation’ to a state of ‘being saved’ from begging (18:35-43) and dishonesty (19:1-10).

Begging (18:35) as a social problem normally indicates dependency and chronic poverty and is therefore a social evil that needs to be eradicated. Thus the story of the blind beggar cannot

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<sup>12</sup> This group is made up of the following biblical scholars: Loewe (1974:329); Evans (1990:278); Johnson (1991:283-288); Meynet (2005:710-720); Geldenhuys (1950:467); Marshall (1978:691-699); Craddock (1990:218) and Johnson (1991:287). However, Craddock (1990:220) takes a step further to state that Zacchaeus’ salvation is not only for his family or household. It also has some domestic, social and economic implications; those who are poor have become beneficiaries of his conversion. Gooding (1987:312-313) highlights the phrase ‘being saved’ as a point of convergence of the two stories. Each one of them is saved from his ‘way of making a living.’ The blind man is saved from begging (18:35-43) and Zacchaeus from his dishonesty (19:1-10).

<sup>13</sup> Communal involvement in reading the Bible has its important place, and this is due to the fact that ‘the biblical texts were written for communities, it is to communities in the first place that the reading of the Bible has been entrusted’ (PBC 1993:65). The acronym ‘PBC’ stands for the Pontifical Biblical Commission which was established by Pope Leo XIII in 1901 with the intention of defending Sacred Scripture which was faced with the challenges and philosophical thought of rationalism. Thus the PBC was established as a committee of Cardinals and some renowned Catholic biblical scholars to defend and ensure the proper interpretation of the Bible from the Catholic perspective (Boadt 2009:np). In 1988 John Paul II decided to attach PBC to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). The PBC’s document ‘*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*’ referred to in this work was issued in 1993 under the presidency of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) who was by then the Cardinal Prefect of CDF.

just be looked at as something that motivates people to embrace conversion. It must also challenge them to confront the issue of poverty. As a contextually situated committed approach, this study, therefore, questions the begging mentality whether by individuals or in society at large. Through the use of a liberative approach, the study also invites the rural readers of Lk 18:35-19:10 to reflect on the values that need to be enhanced, reinforced and developed for social transformation. The poor in this case are seen as active role players who have been endowed with the power they need for combating and changing oppressive social structures. This is possible to materialise if the poor and socially motivated scholars decisively agree to work together.

Another gap noted in the literature review is that some biblical scholars<sup>14</sup> have interpreted Lk 18:35-19:10 while relying solely on classical biblical methods of interpretation such as historical criticism, literary criticism, narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism. Theirs has been a desk-work-approach. On the contrary, this study considers rural dwellers as partners in the search for liberating alternatives in order to improve rural living conditions. The story of the blind man (Lk 18:35-43) is read with the poor in their immediate context as a means of enabling them to think critically about their reality and draw strength and motivation from this in their fight against poverty, begging, dependency and social injustice. Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10), as a representative of those invested with economic and political powers, has a moral obligation to promote social justice, respect for human dignity, credible leadership, and to combat corruption and poverty. Using the CBS approach this work intends to read and interpret these texts with the poor in rural Tanzania. Their voices and insights will be taken into consideration. There will be a twofold dialogue: the dialogue between ‘context’ and the ‘biblical text’; and between ‘ordinary’ and ‘trained readers.’ The current study while using Lk 18:35-19:10 as a point of departure will make it clear that a biblical text, when read critically, has power to inspire its readers in their struggle ‘for the transformation of all aspects of social reality’ (West 1993a:24; Goba 1988:30; Kalilombe 1999:196).

Though rich in natural and human resources (3.3 & 3.5.1), rural Tanzania is still a very disadvantaged area economically, socially and politically. This is indeed ironic and puzzling. Therefore through this study, we intend to inquire and stimulate serious reflection on how to improve our living conditions using the means and resources that are at our disposal. Social injustices (property grabbing, witchcraft beliefs, abuse of human rights, and so on), as noted

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<sup>14</sup> Marshall (1978:691-699); Talbert (1982:175-177); Fitzmyer (1985:1211-224); Johnson (1991:283-288); Bock (1996:1501-1524); Meynet (2005:710-720); Martin (2011:492-502); and so on.

below (3.5.2 & 3.5.3), are among the causes of our present condition. We want to stimulate critical reading of the Bible so that, in this way, readers may question and critique cultural practices and structures that militate against the basic principles of the human rights. The key argument of this work is hinged on the question: ‘How can poor people’s reading and interpretation of the story of the blind man and that of Zacchaeus the tax collector (Lk 18:35-19:10) become a source of empowerment, self-sustainability and integrity for social transformation in rural Tanzania?’ In preparing to answer this question, Chapter Three will draw on liberative theological theories to analyse the social context of rural Mbinga. To promote this analysis, a set of critical questions is prepared with a view to facilitating a critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 in the CBS as shown below (7.3.1 & 7.3.2). Such questions are meant to be thought-provoking and to invite us to engage with these biblical texts critically and more meaningfully in order to avoid risks of misinterpretation.

## **1.4 Theoretical Grounding and Research Methodology**

### **1.4.1 Ideo-Theological Orientation**

As shown in Chapter Two, the ideo-theological orientation of this study is constructed on the principles of liberation theology (Gutiérrez<sup>15</sup> et al) and African contextual hermeneutics by Magesa<sup>16</sup>, West<sup>17</sup> and Draper<sup>18</sup>. These theories seek to highlight the people’s ‘circumstances and contexts of oppression’ in the here and now (PBC 1993:65). The bottom line of liberation hermeneutics is found in its decisive position of standing against the scandal of massive material poverty, oppression, exploitation, marginalisation, dehumanisation and lack of respect for human dignity.

In the face of such scandal, liberation reacts in vigorous protest and commits itself to the life, the cause, and the struggle of the oppressed and the marginalized, seeking thereby not only to suffer with the poor in their present situation of injustice but also to work with them in order to put an end to such inequity and suffering (Segovia 2003:117).

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<sup>15</sup> A thorough study of some works of Gutiérrez’s as shown below (2.3.1) is done in order to establish the basic principles of liberation theology and show how they serve as interpretive tools in biblical scholarship.

<sup>16</sup> Laurenti Magesa, Catholic priest in Musoma Diocese (Tanzania), is a contemporary liberation theologian whose theological insights are worked out from an African perspective (Wachege 1992:43).

<sup>17</sup> Gerald West is a proponent of Contextual Bible Study approach; he advocates the reading and interpretation of the Bible with ordinary readers. West (1993a:8-9) uses the phrase ‘ordinary readers’ to mean a group of readers, ‘those who have had no formal biblical studies training’ or ‘a particular sector of pre-critical readers, those readers who are poor and oppressed.’ Most of them are either semi-illiterate or illiterate. West himself, remarks Akper (2005:1), cannot be considered as an ordinary reader because he reads biblical texts critically. Ukpog’s description of an ‘ordinary reader’ includes every reader who is not introduced to ‘the science of biblical interpretation even though they may be well trained in other fields’ (Ukpog 2001:189-190).

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Draper proposes tripolar approach to reading and interpreting the Bible. As shown below (2.3.4.3), this approach encompasses three dimensions: contextualisation, distanciation and appropriation.

In employing both liberation hermeneutics and African contextual hermeneutics, I argue that our reading of biblical texts must lead us to a better understanding of our context and refuse to compromise with situations of injustice. In this way I concur with Meenan (2014:269) who argues that ‘the ideo-theological orientation of any particular interpreter’ is always influenced and determined by his/her socioeconomic, cultural and political context. The reality of poverty in rural Mbinga has, without doubts, influenced the choice of liberation hermeneutics as an interpretive tool for this study. Preunderstanding (Schneiders 1999:158), together with the responsible use of liberation hermeneutics, must aim at rendering a valid interpretation. In this work, in line with the spirit of the Gospel, validity is measured in terms of the study’s capacity to put human beings, especially the poor, at the centre, and at its capacity to empower them in their efforts to alleviate poverty that is the reality of their daily lives.

Aware of the fact that liberation theology and African contextual hermeneutics as biblical interpretive tools do not function in isolation, socio-historical critical method as a necessary component for integral interpretation is incorporated in order to situate the Lukan text 18:35-19:10 in its Mediterranean setting. Schneiders (1999:114) considers a text as ‘a *human artifact* produced by real people in remote times and places and under certain historical circumstances.’ Its reading must, therefore, take into account elements that probably influenced the writing of the text, especially ‘the thought, culture and literature of its environment of composition.’ However, this does not ignore theological truths that transcend the historical truth of a text (:115). Reading *in front of the text* allows a CBS participant to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the text and make sense of it in his/her context.

#### **1.4.2 Research Methodology for the Work with the CBS Groups**

The current research opts for a qualitative approach in that it aims at exploring ‘attitudes, behaviour and experiences through such methods as interviews or focus groups. It attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants’ (Dawson 2009:14-15; Bell 1993:6) and perceive their worldview. It also tries to comprehend ordinary readers’ approach to reading and interpreting the Word of God, and how they use it in their day-to-day life.

The research design for the work with the CBS groups as shown in Chapter Seven involves the following components: use of focus groups, questionnaires, data collection, sampling and data analysis. Its implementation focuses on the use of a ‘participatory research approach’<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Philpott (1993:21-22) defines participatory research as a process ‘in which the community participates in the analysis of its own reality in order to promote a social transformation for the benefit of the participants, who are

A combination of both closed and open-ended questions are prepared to motivate the critical reading, interpretation and contextualisation of Lk 18:35-19:10. This is not an interview-based research method, but rather an activity that relies on focus group discussions and on the active participation of every member. My work as a moderator is to motivate and facilitate the discussions and to ensure that ‘no one person dominates the discussion’ (Dawson 2009:79). It is a collective process at which ordinary readers are acknowledged as active partners who ‘have their own contribution to make’ (Decock 2003:39). As the research goes on, qualitative data are analysed, refined and sometimes reorganised ‘in the light of the emerging results’ (Dawson 2009:115). Eventually these findings are studied and analysed for further reconstruction and reworking in order to formulate contextual theological statements that somehow represent the people’s lived reality (7.3.1.5 & 7.3.2.4).

## **1.5 Outline and Structure of the Thesis**

The work is divided into nine chapters including a general introduction and a general conclusion. Thus Chapter One, as shown above, introduces the thesis while indicating and stipulating its motivation and rationale (1.1), location of the study (1.2), importance and place of the study (1.3), and theoretical conception and research methodology (1.4).

Chapter Two, entitled ‘Contextual Paradigms of Biblical Hermeneutics,’ establishes the theoretical grounding for this study. It takes biblical hermeneutics of liberation under the umbrella of contextual approaches as its foundation. Two approaches are employed: first, liberation theology as developed by Gustavo Gutiérrez and his followers such as Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff, and so on. The second approach mainly, as developed by Gerald West and Laurenti Magesa, employs African contextual hermeneutics. To this end, the chapter also incorporates Draper’s tripolar approach, and several aspects of socio-historical criticism.

Chapter Three uses the Mbinga Catholic Diocese as a case study to analyse and give a general overview of the rural reality of Tanzania. It considers cultural, socioeconomic and political realities and their impact on rural lives. It is in this chapter that the research aims at doing social analysis in order to establish the causes of poverty in rural Mbinga. We are in the process of opening our eyes in order to see and experience the people’s social reality. Through observation and interaction with the poor, a number of questions are raised regarding

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the oppressed.’ It considers participation or involvement of the oppressed as a requisite of its functioning. ‘The researcher in this process,’ writes Hammond (1988:22), ‘is an equal participant in the group, who assists others to reflect critically and to work together more productively than might otherwise have been possible.’



the situation of the poor, e.g. why are the poor poor? What is their perception of poverty? What do they perceive as causes of poverty? How do they cope with their rural lives? Most liberation theologians agree that the context of struggle must first be analysed before making any theological statements (Gutiérrez 1990:9; L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:24).

Chapter Four studies and articulates the socio-cultural, economic and political structures that were functioning in the Mediterranean world at the time when Luke wrote his gospel. Thus, writes Esler (1987:180), ‘Luke has shaped the Gospel traditions at his disposal in response to social and political pressures experienced by his community.’ Without underestimating other theological insights present in the Third Gospel, the themes of poverty and inclusiveness are recurring throughout the Gospel. This shows that its author was concerned with the fate of the poor of his community and of those who experienced exclusion on the basis of social status, race, gender, purity laws and religious backgrounds (Esler 1987:184-200; Pilgrim 1981:85-146; Prior 1995:164-182; Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:6-17). It also examines the conceptual perception of sickness and physical disability in Judaism and Jewish society at large, and how these regulated social interactions and interpersonal relationships. Reading ‘behind the text’ provides some background knowledge to our understanding of the situation of the blind beggar (18:35-43) who was left seated by the roadside begging, and Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector (19:1-10), who was classified as a notorious sinner.

Chapter Five considers issues such as delimitation, textual criticism, synoptic comparison, intratextuality and intertextuality, source, form and redaction criticism. It also takes into account lexicographical and grammatical questions of Lk 18:35-19:10. However, it must be acknowledged that with the exception of ‘synoptic comparison’ as shown below (7.3.1.1), most of these literary aspects are rather technical and unfamiliar to ordinary readers. Indeed, they become the trained reader’s contribution and they also facilitate the mastering of the internal movement of the text in relation to some sections of the Third Gospel (intratextuality) as well as the Old Testament both Hebrew Scriptures and Deuterocanonical writings (intertextuality). As trained reader I needed to familiarise myself with these literary components before even embarking on fieldwork.

The exegetical study is done in Chapter Six. The text of Lk 18:35-19:10 is divided into two pericopes — 18:35-43 and 19:1-10, and each is first treated as a separate passage followed by a comparison of the two in order to establish and trace their points of convergence and divergence. The concept of ‘distantiation’ guides this process. It takes place when ‘the

reader/hearer seeks to listen rather than to talk. This stage requires the reader/hearer to let the text be other than her/himself, to be strange, unexpected, even alienating' (Draper 2002:17). However, this process does not encourage passivity; on the contrary, one's reading/listening has always to include engagement and criticality.

Chapter Seven analyses, summarises and reports the results of the workshops that were carried out in rural areas of the Catholic Diocese of Mbinga. In actual fact, as events, these workshops are the heart of this thesis. The fruits of these learning activities are gathered in this chapter to use them as primary information to formulate a theology that speaks to the heart of the poor in rural areas. Literature on liberation theology and African contextual approaches facilitate the reading and interpretation of these findings.

Chapter Eight highlights the need for narrowing the gap that exists between theology and praxis. The two aspects need to intertwine thus making Christian faith a mode of life that always aims at serving humanity and transforming human society. The appropriation of Lk 18:35-19:10 must cause both personal and social transformation. The chapter also incorporates people-centred development theories in order to drive home the concepts of empowerment, participation, self-sustainability and integrity as requisites of social transformation. The chapter now and then uses Nyerere's political and development ideologies because of their impact on the setting up of rural settlements in Tanzania.

Chapter Nine concludes the study as it evaluates and highlights the work's major findings pointing out its achievements, challenges, and contribution to biblical scholarship. It also suggests a way forward as an ongoing effort to engage rural readers in reading biblical texts as means of formulating and constructing a 'transforming discourse' (West 1993a:16). The chapter also shows how, as exemplified by a close and critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 in Chapter Seven, a biblical text can be used as a lens through which social questions and challenges are brought to light. In other words, the main achievement of this thesis is to be measured in terms of its ability to involve the ordinary readers in doing a critical reading of biblical texts from their perspective. The study of Lk 18:35-19:10 also invites further research to address social challenges which rural dwellers in the Mbinga Diocese still continue to face today. In other words, this work does not claim to have exhausted the significance and meaning of Lk 18:35-19:10; it remains open to other future possibilities of interpretation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONTEXTUAL PARADIGMS OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

#### 2.1 Introduction

A contextual approach to reading a biblical text presupposes the presence of a context which is to be used as a point of departure for interpretive work. There is no text without context. The reading of biblical texts is, therefore, useless and probably meaningless if it is divorced from the social, political, historical and cultural contexts of its readers (Hohner 2015:2-3; and also Deist 1991:10; Ukpong 2001:193; Speckman 2007:60-61). As pointed out in Chapter One above (1.4.1), the ideo-theological orientation of this study is constructed on the theories of liberation theology and African contextual hermeneutics. However, aware of the fact that biblical methods and approaches do not function in isolation, a socio-historical critical method is also incorporated in order to analyse the historical elements that possibly played an important role in influencing the writing of Lk 18:35-19:10. The choice of contextual approach is motivated by the visible reality of poverty in rural Tanzania which demands drastic social change. The text consists of two brief stories whose prominent protagonists are opposed to each other in terms of their respective social status and profession. The story of the blind man who begs by the roadside (18:35-43) stands for the poor, the outcast, the oppressed and marginalised; Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector (Lk 19:1-10), represents the rich and affluent, those who either ignore or exploit the poor. Another reason that influenced the selection of Lk 18:35-19:10<sup>20</sup> is Luke's concern for the poor and his interest in calling the rich to repentance and conversion. He often presents the poor as a privileged class who 'have an important place among the oppressed groups to whom Jesus announces God's help' (Tannehill 1986:12; Loubser 1994:62). Thus, Luke's Gospel takes the poor as its preferred audience and seeks to liberate them from the hands of their oppressors. Chapter Two is divided into three parts. The first part situates liberation theology in the context of biblical scholarship showing its origin and development. The second part presents the fundamental principles of the biblical hermeneutics of liberation. The third part describes the components

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<sup>20</sup> In chapter five below (5.2.1) when trying to analyse and establish the external limits of Lk 18:35-19:10 I will show how this text is linked to its lower limit, that is Lk 19:11 which introduces the parable of the pounds. In fact the parable appears as if it is told to favour the rich, the elite and the affluent to the detriment of the poor (Lk 19:12-27). It gives the impression that the writer contradicts himself: on the one hand, he agrees with Zacchaeus who gives half of his possessions to the poor (19:8); and on the other hand, he favours a man of noble birth who condemns his 'lazy servant' for failing to multiply his master's pound (19:20-26).

of the socio-historical critical method and shows their applicability and significance in the study of biblical texts.

## **2.2 Liberation Hermeneutics in Biblical Scholarship**

Though in modern times liberation theology is articulated and presented ‘as one of the strongest theological trends in our contemporary society’ (Wachege 1992:43), the shadows of its existence could be traced back to the days of Leo XIII, the Bishop of Rome (1878-1903). In the context of the Catholic Church, one thus can speak of the growing seeds of liberation hermeneutics before, at and after Vatican II. The works of some prominent liberation theologians from Latin America<sup>21</sup> are incorporated and highlighted here as guiding principles for the establishment and formulation of the ideo-theological orientation of the current study.

### **2.2.1 The Emergence of Liberation Theology**

#### **2.2.1.1 Before Vatican II**

A milestone of liberation theology perhaps has as its rudiments in *Rerum Novarum* (RN) — the encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIII issued in 1891. It was published as an appropriate response to specific concerns and questions that the Church was facing in the wake of the industrial revolution. The opportunities and possibilities that the industrial revolution brought about were expected to improve human life. Unfortunately they ‘have been cornered, monopolized, by a minority of the human race, provoking frustration and exasperation on the part of the dispossessed masses’ (Gutiérrez 1983:48). Human labour was replaced by the machine, and this left many in a situation of desperation and deterioration. And those who continued to work were abandoned and surrendered ‘to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition’ (RN 3). The following themes dominated the thought of RN: ‘care for the poor, rights of workers, role of private property, duties of workers and employers, return to Christian morals and role of public authority’ (Henriot et al 1987:27). It also articulated some guiding principles on how to address the questions concerning human freedom, the common good, the use of reason, and the rights to just ownership of private

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<sup>21</sup> I choose Latin America because, despite geographical and historical divergences with Africa, we trace some areas of convergence which are concerned with the struggle and fight against oppressive, exploitative forces and structural injustices (Magesa 1976:17; Frostin 1988:4). Moreover, the two are classified as being composed of Third World countries and they have more or less similar approaches to doing liberation theology as acknowledged by the EATWOT in some of its writings (Torres & Fabella 1978:259). No doubt, the presence of Gutiérrez, H. Assmann, L. Boff, E. Dussel, J. M. Bonino, P. Richard, Sobrino, E. Tamez and S. Torres at the first conference of EATWOT in Tanzania (1976) did motivate some African theologians to develop their own liberation theology (Frostin 1988:2-3; Ukpong 1984:525).

property (RN 5-12). The destitution and degrading conditions of the poor and workers were at the heart of the Pope's thought. Thus the encyclical aimed at inviting the church to use her prophetic voice to challenge and 'speak out' on 'social matters affecting religion and morality,' to 'help reconcile and unify classes' and to 'educate people to act justly' (Henriot et al 1987:28). The encyclical also urged employers to respect and treat their workers with dignity. It advocated that employers and employees are not to be seen as enemies but as interdependent groups that need each other (RN 19). The public and civil authority was recommended to 'defend and foster the rights of families,' 'safeguard well-being and rights of non-owning workers,' protect the poor, and defend their rights to form associations and uphold people's religious rights (Henriot et al 1987:29). The Pope discouraged, as well, favouritism that irrationally tended to 'neglect one portion of the citizens and favor another' (RN 33). In RN one already notices a mention of the poor as a category of people who deserve special attention. Treating the poor as a privileged group is going to determine the direction of liberation theology, which is indeed the concern and the ideo-theological making of the current research. The poor are human beings who deserve respect for their dignity and right of labour (RN 44). The subsequent encyclicals<sup>22</sup> after RN leading to Vatican II continued to enrich the Church's self-understanding of both her role and mission in society.

### **2.2.1.2 At Vatican II**

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is recorded in the history of the Catholic Church as the most important event that the Church has ever celebrated. Its catchword *aggiornamento* marked the Church with some positive changes and signalled the beginning of the new era in the life of the Church. 'At Vatican II,' writes Gutiérrez (1983:30), 'the church affirmed a desire to render service. The concrete forms that this pledge takes must necessarily be based on the world in which the Christian community is present'. During the Council it was felt that 'a great wind of renewal blew through the churches' (Boff, L & Boff, C 1987:67). The spirit of renewal motivated the Church to update herself in relation to her intrinsic commitment towards social responsibility and promotion of human dignity. As the Council was in progress, John XXIII issued his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (PT) in 1963 which aimed at promoting peace among the nations. On the eve of its closure (1965), the Council itself promulgated *Gaudium et Spes* (hereafter GS) whose influence is still felt today and regarded

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<sup>22</sup> Examples of such encyclicals include: *Quadragesimo Anno* (QA) (1931) on the 'Reconstruction of the Social Order' by Pius XI — published to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of RN; and *Mater et Magistra* (MM) (1961) of John XXIII on 'Christianity and Social Progress' which focused on issues of 'just remuneration, agriculture, economic development, role of the church, international cooperation and socialization' (Henriot et al 1987:35).

‘by many to be the most important document in the Church’s social tradition’ (Henriot et al 1987:45). GS urges the Church to become a visible sign of God’s presence in the modern world and its duty must be to read and ‘scrutinise the “signs of the times” in light of the Gospel’ (Henriot et al 1987:45-46). The document’s opening words already articulate the readiness of the Church to listen to the cry of the men and women of today. Their joys and hopes, grief and anguish become the concern of every follower of Jesus Christ (GS 1). Thus, GS ‘represents the outcome of this shift in the Church’s center of gravity. From a position of ecclesiocentrism, the Church has slowly moved to a “mundocentrism”’ (Boff 1988:3). According to Assmann (in Brown 1990:92), GS signalled ‘a first sign that the secular sciences were being taken seriously as providing data for theological reflection.’ Humanity was no longer seen as a collection of partitions often caught in unnecessary strife with each other, but as one family called to coexist and make the world a better place on which to live. The spirit of renewal was at the heart of the Council, and it made room for dialogue, solidarity, tolerance, unity and mutual understanding.

The spirit of Vatican II was not to end with the closure of the Council or to remain confined in the documents it produced. The Council urged the Church to move forward with an open-minded approach and to be ready to acknowledge and embrace diversity of theological formulations that stem from diverse cultures and traditions. It would have been a disaster if the Council tried once again to reduce theology to a new trend of ‘doctrinal homogeneity in the Church’ (Boff 1988:4). Paul VI (in Boff 1988:4) invites us to take forward the spirit of Vatican II; he considers the Council as ‘*a point of departure* rather the attainment of a goal.’ As criticisms, Vatican II is criticised for its failure to ‘hear the cries of “the wretched of the earth”’ especially those from the Third World countries. Its ‘true interlocutors’ were ‘the nonbelievers rather than the nonpersons<sup>23</sup>’ (Brown 1990:92). Some critics say that the Council paid inadequate attention to social issues such as ‘poverty, injustice, inequality, and class conflict’ (:92). Despite these demerits, Vatican II remains an historic event that has lasting effects in the church and in the world. It is appreciated because of its determination to come out of its ghetto of dogmatism ‘to shake off the imperial dust’ (Brown 1990:92), and enter into a real world where humanity is faced with all sorts of challenges, grievances and hopes. Liberation theology thus serves as an instrument of social transformation.

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<sup>23</sup> The term ‘nonperson’ is not used here in a philosophical sense to define what a human being is, it is rather a sociological noun that denotes poor people who live in slum areas under inhumane conditions; ‘those whose full rights as human beings are not acknowledged’ (Gutiérrez 2003:294; Brown 1990:91). A nonperson does not have the power to influence the socioeconomic structures of the context in which he/she resides.

### 2.2.1.3 After Vatican II

Since the closure of Vatican II, a series of documents dealing with social questions were published, some by the Magisterium and others at both regional and national levels. The Bishops' Conferences worldwide, each according to its needs and challenges, have been issuing documents to guide and foster the idea of social responsibility. In 1967 Paul VI issued an encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (hereafter PP) in which challenges related to peoples' development were raised. The existence of inequality among individuals and nations, according to Paul VI, is largely caused by a group of the 'privileged minority' which 'enjoys the refinements of life' (PP 9). This, in turn, has created masses of impoverished people who barely survive under inhuman conditions. The encyclical also speaks of the authentic development of human beings which is to be inclusive and integral and not just restricted to economic development (PP 14). In other words, Paul VI sees economic injustice as a source of many conflicts and class struggles in our world today. When economic justice is promoted, it becomes the basis of peace. Thus the Pope urges the followers of Christ to avoid the temptation of increasing and amassing wealth and power to the detriment of the poor and oppressed (PP 33). In 1971 Paul VI issued his apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (OA) in which he discusses the new social problems which emerged as a result of urbanisation and which adversely affected many, but especially youth, women, workers and many urban dwellers (OA 8-14). He calls people to stop discrimination (OA 16), and he invites them to recognise the rights of people to emigrate (OA 17). Furthermore, the Pope calls people to action, especially to work for greater justice (OA 43-44) and sharing in responsibility (OA 47). Other significant ideas of liberation theology are traced from the apostolic exhortation of Paul VI on Evangelization in the Modern World *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) (1975). Fifteen paragraphs of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* insist on the need for harmonising and maintaining an inseparable relationship between evangelization and liberation (EN 25-39). Evangelisation demands commitment and engagement in rescuing the whole person from things that risk reducing them to the state of servitude, exploitation and humiliation.

Another encyclical worth mentioning here is *Laborem Exercens* (LE) on 'Human Labour' by John Paul II<sup>24</sup>. It was promulgated in 1981 to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. It 'affirms the dignity of work and places work at the center of the social question' (Henriot et al 1987:69). It is through work that men and women become truly

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<sup>24</sup> A thorough study that presents John Paul II's views on social justice and his preferential option for the poor could be sourced from the work of Twomey (2006:321-368).

human and are considered as ‘the proper subject of work’ (:69). The encyclical *Laborem Exercens* advocates as well that even disabled people be given an opportunity to work in accordance with their abilities (LE 22). However, work calls for just remuneration (LE 19). John Paul II sees socioeconomic poverty as an unjust situation ‘produced by a process of exploitation of labor’ (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:47). Workers are not paid just salary and peasants receive low prices from the sale of their agricultural products. The Pope’s viewpoint in favour of liberation theology can be traced to his letter to the Brazilian bishops in which he considers it as trying to reconnect itself with the apostolic tradition (in Gutiérrez 1988:xliv). His encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS) on ‘Social Concerns of the Church’ (1988) reinforces as well the Church’s teaching on social questions. He challenges the tension between the two existing political ideologies of liberal capitalism of the West and Marxist collectivism of the East, and their negative repercussions on poor countries. None of the blocs proposes concrete lasting solutions to combat poverty. Instead, they harbour cold war mentalities that are of no use for the emancipation of humanity. The encyclical’s use of phrases and terms such as structures of sin (SRS 36), option for the poor (SRS 42), true liberation (SRS 46), and solidarity (SRS 47) plays an important role in the development of liberation theology. The landmark of SRS is noted as well in its initiative to call for developing countries to learn to take responsibility and to correct the errors that contribute to their own state of underdevelopment (SRS 44). That said, John Paul II, as shown below (2.3.3), is also known for his criticisms and reservations with regard to liberation theology.

#### **2.2.1.4 The Medellín Conference: Formalisation of Liberation Theology**

The emergence of liberation theology as a formalised trajectory of critical thinking stems from the conference of Latin American bishops held in 1968 at Medellín<sup>25</sup>, Colombia (Gutiérrez 1983:91; Boff 1988:12; Magesa 1976:13; PBC 1993:64). The poor and oppressed became the focus of the conference’s agenda. It ‘voiced the restlessness of the poor’ in Latin America (Boff 1988:7). The situation of the masses of people had become intolerable and this raised a concern regarding the usefulness of being Christian. According to Gutiérrez (1983:28; and also Segovia 2003:109; Kim 2013:601), the horrible and harsh reality of the poor forced the Medellín conference to condemn ‘the scandal of massive material poverty,’ oppression, structural inequality, humiliation and violence. The Medellín Conference was

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<sup>25</sup> The Medellín conference, according to Kim (2013:601), motivated the following theologians Ernesto Cardenal, Leonardo Boff, Hélder Câmara, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Óscar Romero, among others, to challenge and criticise political and economic structures that perpetuated inequality among men and women.



further reinforced by the Puebla Conference that took place in 1979 at Puebla, Mexico (Pope 1992:1961). The conference re-echoed the statements pronounced at Medellín, and requested that the entire mission of the Church be placed at the service of humanity, especially the poor and marginalised (Gutiérrez 1983:126; 2003:290; Uchegbue 2011:1-2). It was the intolerable living conditions of the poor that influenced the Puebla Conference to declare liberation as being part of the intrinsic mission of the Church (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:76). At the grassroots level in Latin America, the poor began to question the legitimacy of today's pharaohs to oppress and exploit them (Segovia 2003:115). Thus the poor themselves started raising issues that concerned them, they became 'the protagonists of their own liberation' (Gutiérrez 1974:113; McGovern 1983:462; L. Boff & C. Boff 1984:4; Boff 1988:9). The masses of people (the peasants, the proletarians and the poor) in Latin America were tired of the structures of sin and the hegemony of the bourgeoisies that reduced them 'to the status of subhumans' (Boff 1988:10-11; Gutiérrez 1983:33). In this case, liberation theology was born out of the concrete situation of the poor who felt overpowered by poverty, oppression and exploitation. Seen against this historical background it is clear that liberation theology does not begin with ideologies, slogans or toothless theories, but rather with concrete human reality in the light of the Word of God.

The physiognomy and 'the quantum leap' that liberation theology has now taken is widely attributed to its robust Latin American liberation theologians<sup>26</sup> (Wachege 1992:43; Boff 1988:12; Hohner 2015:2-3). Doing liberation theology today means to continue embodying and endorsing the spirit of Vatican II in our search for liberation. The reception of Vatican II is not something that stems from the blind obedience, but rather from the active, conscious and critical mind. The Latin American church critically tried not only to embody the teaching of Vatican II in its context but also to enrich it with the concrete experiences of the poor. The context of the oppressed was then declared as the locus on which the church makes itself as 'sacrament of salvation' (Boff 1988:19; Gutiérrez 2003:291).

Our reading of the Bible must therefore motivate us to commit ourselves to the liberation of the poor. This commitment arises from the conviction that apart from what natural disasters and natural causes can do, poverty remains a human-made phenomenon and its removal calls

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<sup>26</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian theologian who is regarded as the doyen and founder of liberation theology especially through his landmark book *Teología de la Liberación* published in 1971 and its first English-translation version *A Theology of Liberation* in 1973. Others are Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff (Brazil); Juan Luis Segundo (Uruguay); José Míguez Bonino (Argentina), and Jon Sobrino, a Jesuit priest born in Spain currently working in El Salvador.

for our active participation. A liberation theologian is not simply a dreamer of some hope to happen in future, but rather a radical and critical thinker who, together with the poor, is trying to change the current social order because it perpetuates human inequality (Gutiérrez 1983:91). The theologian must work with the poor and use their concrete situation as a repository of his/her theological formulations. Since then, liberation theology has taken different shapes and directions depending on the needs and contexts of its users. The Bible has become the source of diverse liberation reflections. This is to be expected due to the fact that the Bible itself, as a collection of books, is a home for theologies (Bevans 1992:3). We now speak of 'liberation theologies' and not one 'Liberation Theology' (Wachege 1992:49).

#### **2.2.1.5 Insights from *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Africae Munus***

The Church's role in dealing with social issues and questions is no longer a taboo. Most of the regional and national Bishops' Conferences continue to voice their defence of the poor and the oppressed. An option for the poor, and concerns relating to poverty and human rights are articulated in most documents and statements by the local churches in Africa. The African Synod that took place in Rome in 1994, for instance, did analyse the situation of Africa and affirmed that widespread poverty is a sad reality that remarkably characterises the continent. Despite being rich in natural resources, Africa remains the most disadvantaged continent in the world. The continent is overwhelmed by 'abject poverty,' 'mismanagement of resources,' 'political instability and social disorientation' and its people — 'men and women, children and young people — are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned' (EA 40-41).

Although the rich and powerful nations continue to influence the socioeconomic affairs of Africa, most African leaders on their part have failed to adhere to ethical principles and commit themselves to the cause of their respective independent nations. As a result, Africa is seen as a home for 'famine, war, racial and tribal tensions, political instability and the violations of human rights' (EA 51). The civil wars that are still going on in Africa have displaced many people and others have been forced to abandon their countries and take refuge in neighbouring countries or even outside Africa. Poverty is on the increase, and the rural-urban migration has become the pattern of life among the youth. The un-payable international debt is overburdening many independent African nations. Most of the debt has been incurred to import arms and luxury goods for ignorant and unwise leaders. Other problems that the Synod Fathers listed are associated with the spread of HIV/AIDS, oppression of women, the lack of

patriotic spirit, corruption, theft, disastrous political and economic policies, high rate of unemployment, and an alarming increase of population (EA 51). Despite these challenges, the Synod Fathers remained optimistic as they acknowledged that Africa is still rich with natural resources and ‘endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities’ such as a profound religious sense, community, importance of family life, and respect for life and veneration of ancestors (EA 42-43). These qualities, if well inculturated, may become catalysts of effective evangelisation, justice and peace, and critical solidarity.

The Synod Fathers also reminded the church of its vocation to be at the service of humanity as a whole. It is the church’s duty to make sure that evangelisation goes hand in hand with the promotion of human development, ‘especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community’ (EA 68). They insisted, as well, that evangelisation does not only deal with ‘abstract heavenly realities,’ but also with human beings in their concrete situation. The church is, therefore, called to imitate her Master, Jesus Christ, whose commitment to the poor as declared in Lk 4:18-19 means ‘to preach good news to the poor’ and ‘to set at liberty those who are oppressed.’ The church through its programme of evangelisation, is expected to become the voice of the voiceless as she demands the African governments to respect the dignity of every person, and that their socioeconomic projects must have at heart the development of all peoples (EA 70). Having been created in the likeness and image of God (Gen 1:26-27), the church should work hard to conscientise men and women so that they may become aware of their dignity and the role they have as responsible human beings in making and determining their destiny (EA 82, 121). Corruption is singled out as a phenomenon that delays economic development in many African countries (EA 110). The African governments should learn to serve their peoples and take initiative to create opportunities of employment and conducive environment for both micro and macro investments. They must as well strive ‘to ensure an honest and equitable sharing of benefits and burdens’ and combat ‘all forms of waste and embezzlement’ (EA 113; SRS 44).

The same thread of thought in defence of human dignity against inhuman conditions, oppression and exploitation is noted in the post-synodal document *Africae Munus* (AM 81-83). The document calls upon the church to get involved in the affairs of society. In promoting collaboration and working together with government authorities, public and private institutions, and traditional chiefs, the church will be rendering a noble service to society by promoting the safeguarding of the common good (AM 81). Incompetence is noted among politicians and government leaders; the church through its institutions of higher education

could become of help to train and prepare future leaders (AM 82). Many leaders seem to be driven by selfishness; they think only in terms of their rights and they ignore the rights of those who entrusted them with the public office. As a result, this has led to an increase of crime in many developing countries, especially in urban areas. Many prisons are filled with ‘criminals’ and most of them are treated as nonpersons under miserable and deplorable prison conditions. In most cases these prisoners come from poor backgrounds; poverty seems to have caused them to commit crimes, and the chain of poverty takes them to prison where they face more sub-human living conditions. The document *Africae Munus* also appeals to all people of good will to begin treating prisoners ‘with respect and dignity’ (AM 83).

The Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) has been issuing a series of pastoral letters and statements that aimed at raising awareness of social issues and at promoting human development. In the wake of multipartism<sup>27</sup> in the early 90s a few pastoral letters and statements were written to prepare people to become responsible citizens in a democratic nation. In 1992 TEC issued a pastoral letter *Maendeleo ya Kweli ya Mwanadamu* (True Human Development) which focused on two points (TEC 1992:1-3): first, integral human development, and second, ethical principles to guide economic development. The good of the person has always to take an upper hand; this means that economic development has to be at the service of humanity. Accumulation of material possessions should not be considered as the ultimate indicator of economic development if the main section of humanity is condemned to live in sub-human socio-economic conditions. Development projects that overlook ethical, spiritual, cultural and religious values need to be challenged (TEC 1992:6).

### 2.2.2 Poverty as a Catalyst for Liberation Theology

The Greek plural adjective πτωχοί<sup>28</sup>, ‘poor’ (often used as a noun when it takes an article) in this work means all those who are politically, socially, economically disadvantaged and

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<sup>27</sup> The first general elections that involved many political parties took place in 1995. A number of pastoral letters and statements were issued by TEC, Peace and Justice Commission (PJC) and Catholic Professionals of Tanzania (CPT) in the period between 1990-1995. Both PJC and CPT operate their activities under the umbrella of TEC. The following statements were issued by TEC to raise awareness and invite people to choose capable and honest leaders who would work with integrity: *Ukweli Utawapeni Uhuru* (The Truth Will Make You Free) (1993); and *Maelekezo ya Maaskofu Katoliki Tanzania Juu ya Uchaguzi Mkuu wa Octoba 1995* (Guidelines by the Catholic Bishops of Tanzania for the National Elections of October (1995).

<sup>28</sup> In Greek literature two words πένης and πτωχός are often employed to mean ‘poor’ but they do not refer to the same intensity of poverty. πένης simply means ‘one who works for his living, day-labourer’ (Jones 1940:1359-1360; Boff & Pixley 1989:139-140; Speckman 2007:141; Prior 1995:173). He/she cannot be regarded as a poverty-stricken (Esler 1987:180; Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:16; Neyrey 2002:np). In this case, ‘the opposite of *penēs* is *plousios*, wealthy’ (Coenen 1976:820). The former is less wealthy and needs to toil and sweat for survival while the latter is very rich and ‘can live on his income without working’ (Hauck 1968a:37; Esler

culturally oppressed, discriminated, degraded and deprived of the basic needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, adequate health care, good education, regular employment, electricity, and so on) that would have allowed them to live a dignified life (Boff & Pixley 1989:1; Gutiérrez 1974:289; 1988:xxi; 1990:10; Bellagamba 1987:25-26; Segovia 2003:116; O'Brien 1989:59). Those with disfigured faces, pariahs, often 'avoided as "dangerous" people' (Bellagamba 1987:26-27), 'persona non grata' — the sons and daughters of God — who continue to carry the cross of poverty even when colonialism in their country ended some fifty eight years ago. Poverty, 'real poverty' as Gutiérrez (1988:xxv) calls it, is 'a scandalous condition inimical to human dignity and therefore contrary to the will of God' (Gutiérrez 1974:291), an evil that has reduced masses into inhuman conditions where they live in ghettos, shacks or in streets with or without the minimum means of subsistence. The materially poor have no power to influence social and political issues that affect their lives. They have no freedom of expression. 'These are the voiceless people of society, the powerless people of society, the marginalized people of society, the useless people of society, the burden of society' (Bellagamba 1987:26). Liberation theology thus leaves aside spiritual poverty (unless it means to be in solidarity with the afflicted) which is often discussed in other fields of theology. Liberation hermeneutics is concerned with the fate of the poor and it seeks to understand their situation in the light of God's Word (Prior 1995:191). Poverty is incompatible with God's will; and it cannot be regarded as something noble. No religious value is to be attributed to material poverty (Brown 1993:2314).

Although being poor could also mean the state of being 'mentally or morally inferior' (Brown 1993:2290), liberation theology mainly focuses on the social issues and inadequacy of material possessions which often are the result of social sin, the result of an abuse of power. Here we exclude poverty that is caused by natural disasters because this kind of poverty afflicts inclusively — the rich and poor alike. We are interested in the so-called structural poverty — an outcome of socio-economic and political strategies employed by the rich as a means to permanently fix the poor at the bottom of a social ladder (Gutiérrez 1983:44-45). It is rather a paradox to notice that humanity oppresses humanity — a self defeat of humanity indeed. Aristocratic Christians oppressing poor Christians (Gutiérrez 1983:28). The poor are mainly recognised and categorised according to what they lack (Gutiérrez 1974:291; Susin

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1987:173). The severity of poverty is expressed by the use of the term *πτωχός*. It denotes the highest level of poverty (Esser 1976:821; Boff & Pixley 1989:139-140; Prior 1995:165). Jones (1940:1550) equates *πτωχός* to a beggar or destitute whose survival relies on almsgiving/public charity. Beggary or destitution (*πτωχεία*) has no religious value (Hauck 1968b:886; Ojok 1993:6; Haight 1985:16; Hamel 1990:152; Goliama 2013:270-271).

2007:279; Ndekha 2016:48-49). Our reference to poor people is not motivated by the assessment we make about their moral values. It is their destitute conditions that call us to take their context as a locus of biblical and theological reflections (Gutiérrez 1983:116; Boffs 1987:48; Pope 1992:163). In a very cynical way aristocratic Christians are oppressing poor Christians. Liberation theology seeks to set them free not only from hunger and poverty but also from all forms of oppression and discrimination (PP 47). Our Christian calling urges us to side with the dispossessed; those who for centuries have been neglected. ‘The irruption of the poor,’ as Gutiérrez (1988:xx) calls it, is a vivid boost that reawakens the church and motivates it to review and revitalise its programmes of evangelisation and apostolate. The aim is to empower the poor and make them become protagonists of social transformation.

### **2.2.3 The Preferential Option for the Poor**

The preceding section (2.2.2) has shown how liberation theology takes an interest in the fate of the poor. Its goal is to liberate them from all sorts of oppression, exploitation and humiliation. And God is portrayed as opting for the poor and siding with them. If God is the God of life and creator of all, how then does the preferential option for the poor make sense in liberation theology? Alluding to this dilemma, Gutiérrez (1988:xxv-xxvi) says that ‘[t]he very word “preference” denies all exclusiveness and seeks rather to call attention to those who are the first—though not the only ones—with whom we should be in solidarity.’ But he quickly points out the great challenge with which liberation theologians are faced when taking this option. It is about how ‘to maintain both the universality of God’s love and God’s predilection for those on the lowest rung of the ladder of history’ (Gutiérrez 1988:xxvi; Pope 1992:163). However, he insists on being faithful to the gospel and avoiding any opinion that might ‘focus exclusively on the one or the other’ thus ‘mutilate the Christian message’ (Gutiérrez 1988:xxvi). ‘Therefore every attempt,’ writes Gutiérrez (1988:xxvi), ‘at such an exclusive emphasis must be rejected.’ According to Susin (2007:280; and also Gutiérrez 1988:xxvii; Bellagamba 1987:31; Bosch 1991:443), the option for the poor is not something invented by liberation theologians, but rather an imperative that finds its foundation in the Bible. God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed. When the oppressed become new oppressors, God challenges the new oppressors and sides with the oppressed. The adjective ‘preferential’ does not advocate exclusivism and partiality, but rather puts an accent on priorities. ‘Preferential means that the choice has a supreme priority in the chooser’s life’ (Bellagamba 1987:29). God’s preference for the poor originates from his unconditional love for human beings and his plans to save them from suffering and misery (Bombonato 2007:41). In other words, ‘[t]he

preferential option,' writes Pope (1992:163), 'is made for those who are exploited, outcasts, despised, marginalised, whose basic rights violated, and who suffer from what Medellín called "inhuman wretchedness".' In order to remain faithful to the calling of the Gospel, i.e., to be at the service of the poor, according to Pope (1992:165), the following requisites must be taken into consideration: first, 'a solemn decision to side with the poor and oppressed'; second, a need to undergo genuine personal conversion; third, a commitment to liberate and empower the poor; and fourth, 'embracing material poverty.' Liberation theologians embrace material poverty as a catalyst to motivate them in their determination to serve the poor and marginalised. They experience from within what it means to be dispossessed, then, in solidarity with the poor, they struggle against what Draper (2015:8) calls 'the grinding poverty of the marginalised majority.'

The OT gives witness to God's determination to liberate the poor from the wicked hands of Pharaoh (García Dávalos 2007:134-135), and certainly from all the other pharaohs that we know today (Exod 3:7-8). The Book of Exodus portrays God as the defender of the poor: He protects the alien (22:20) from exploitation, the widows and orphans (22:21-23) from the harshness of their neighbours. His protection is extended to the poor who go out to borrow money. The usurer is ordered not to practise usury because human life excels above everything (22:24). The proponents of liberation theology also draw on the prophetic tradition to show how God has been opting for the poor (Amos 5:11; Mic 2:1-5; 3:9-12; Isa 10:1-4). God protects the poor, and He denounces cheating against them (Boff & Pixley 1989:37-52; Miranda 1974:20-21), and He fights for them (Cone 1975:139). In the same vein, the preferential option for the poor has remained an important theme in the NT. Jesus in his inaugural speech on mission (Lk 4:16-20 declares His commitment to liberate and gladden the poor, the downtrodden, the blind and the oppressed. The Beatitudes also reveal 'God's predilection for the poor' and His 'unmerited goodness to us' (Gutiérrez 1988:xxvii). Good news is preached to the poor and the rich are denounced (Lk 6:20-26; Lk 7:18-23). The wounded are consoled and lifted up (Lk 10:25-37). The parable of the unnamed rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) and that of a rich ruler (Lk 18:18-23) illustrate God's option for the poor (Pope 1992:165), and condemn the rich who have chosen 'to worship money instead of God' (Nolan 1988:12). The eschatological judgment assesses people according to what they did to their fellow human beings (Mt 25:31-46).

The liberation theologians acknowledge as well the work of some Church Fathers whose insistence on sharing and solidarity with the poor is well articulated in their writings (Boff &

Pixley 1989:160). Furthermore, liberation theology sees itself as working alongside the Church in trying to implement its social teaching in a particular context (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:37-38). Thus the preferential option for the poor simply means to be in 'solidarity with the poor' and make it as a 'fundamental axis of Christian faith' and life (Gutiérrez 2003:292). According to John Paul II (in Twomey 2006:328), poverty is essentially the product of social injustice and exploitative economic structures. Its eradication requires that human beings see in the poor the image of God and treat them as their equals.

## **2.3 Fundamental Principles of Liberation Theology**

Liberation theology springs from a real historical context in which populations find themselves situated. The people's reality which is made up of cultural, religious, social, economic and political elements, becomes its point of departure. Thus liberation theologians decline to read biblical texts in a vacuum; they strive to make sense of their reading in a concrete context where life is not a metaphysical hypothesis or utopia, but rather a reality that people experience day by day. Below I outline some constitutive components of liberation theology as noted in the works of Gutiérrez, L. Boff and C. Boff and Frostin.

### **2.3.1 Gutiérrez's Theological Trajectories of Liberation**

In his book *A Theology of Liberation* (1974), Gutiérrez begins with a magnificent statement which seems to define and determine the locus and direction of liberation theology, and thus inaugurates trajectories on which a variety of liberation theologies will lay their foundations.

This book is an attempt at reflection, based on the gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America. It is a theological reflection born of the experiences of shared efforts to abolish the current unjust situation and to build a different society, freer and more human (Gutiérrez 1974:ix).

The extreme conditions of oppression and exploitation of the poor in Latin America became the place and historical womb from which liberation theology was born (Gutiérrez 1988:xxxiii). Its prime task therefore was to protest against the dehumanisation of human persons. A number of insights can be retrieved from Gutiérrez's works; however, with no intention to overlook any, for the sake of this study I consider five.

First, *locus theologicus* and critical reflection: liberation theology is not content only with the vertical faith that seeks to connect itself with transcendence (Gutiérrez 1988:5), but also with its horizontal dimension that calls for concrete actions to inspire social transformation and



strengthen solidarity among human beings. Theology thus departs from a 'traditional way of theologizing,' and opts for 'an altogether new theology' that aims at transforming the human reality of poverty into a better and new human society (Gutiérrez 1988:9; 1974:12). In other words, the *locus theologicus* is not limited only to a revealed Word of God and tradition but also extended to historical realities that continue to affect human life today (Gutiérrez 1983:36-37). In this case, critical reflection as an indispensable tool for doing liberation theology demands active involvement of theologians and believers in analysing and reflecting on issues that make up the totality of human reality (Gutiérrez 1974:11). It questions as well the existing economic theories and principles which guide the terms and conditions of international trade and foreign aid. If these are good principles, how come that poverty is never reduced especially in developing countries? How are we to speak of God when faced with the situation like that of the blind beggar (Lk 18:35-43) and Zacchaeus (19:1-10) in rural Tanzania? This critical approach also serves as a tool to analyse and question internal causes of poverty in developing countries. Furthermore, criticality appreciates human beings as being capable of 'assuming conscious responsibility' to determine their destiny (Gutiérrez 1988:24). Through the use and coordination of human faculties (mind, intellect, reason, soul, memory, sight, taste and hearing), men and women are able to cause social transformation. In doing so, they are preserved from falling into ideologies of fatalism, resignation, fetishism, dogmatism and idolatry. However, their actions must be guided by the love of Christ who is the true liberator (Gutiérrez 1988:25; Brown 1990:94-95). These human faculties normally work in conjunction with Christian wisdom and values such as communion, solidarity, charity and forgiveness (Gutiérrez 1983:36-37).

Second, social analysis of a context of the oppressed. Social analysis, though belonging to the social sciences, has an important role to play in liberation theology. It helps discover the mechanisms and interconnected elements that cause a devastating situation of poverty in society. Gutiérrez (1988:162-173; and also Brown 1990:55-57) classifies poverty into three kinds: material poverty, spiritual poverty and poverty as depicted in the Bible. Without disregarding the rest, social analysis focuses on material poverty. The analysis is done in such a way that the functioning of economic, political, social, cultural, and religious structures is examined and questioned to see why these structures to some extent have become the root causes of many injustices in society (Gutiérrez 1990:9). This exercise calls to account social extremes, structures and contradictions that seem to support inequality among people. In other words, according to Gutiérrez (in Brown 1990:93; Gutiérrez 1990:64), 'theology needs to

draw on the social sciences to gain “a more accurate knowledge of society as it really is,” so that it can “articulate with greater precision the challenges” it encounters. In some cases liberation theology employs certain principles of social analysis borrowed from Marxism, but it does not claim itself to be a component of Marxist ideology<sup>29</sup>. Any field of study may be enriched by findings from other disciplines without losing its physiognomy and identity (Gutiérrez 1990:66; Kroger 1985:17). In a context of oppression, with the use of the socio-analytical method, liberation theologians are able to ask relevant questions that take into consideration the reality of poverty<sup>30</sup>. It is often noticed that inequality creates social classes, and inevitably this leads to a class struggle between the two opposing poles: poor-rich, and oppressed-oppressor. Christians must avoid confusing class struggles with Marxist ideology of class struggle. The root cause of class struggle is not Marxism but unjust socio-economic structures and the presence of irresponsible governments such as kleptocracies (Gutiérrez 1990:73-74). These kinds of governments are literally organised and run by crooks/thieves. The kleptocrats use their power to manipulate and exploit the poor. The country’s natural resources are put at the disposal of a few corrupt politicians. Such leaders are not embarrassed to steal, embezzle and receive kickbacks and bribes. They make laws to protect their interests. The poor in such situations do not remain quiet; they rise to fight for their rights and resources. It is a tragedy that many poor people have no land, while the rich own large tracts that very often remain idle but fenced. Outside the fence we see a crowd of poor people struggling to survive in squatter camps. As long as an exaggerated economic inequality remains a visible reality in our midst, conflicts and social revolutions will always threaten our lives. It is true, in whatever situation Christians are called to love, even to love their oppressors and exploiters. Under normal circumstances, non-violent options are the best means to use in our struggle against oppressive socioeconomic structures. However, when this fails, other means must be sought and, sometimes, regrettably a certain level of violence is

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<sup>29</sup> This was the major concern of Pope John Paul II who feared that liberation theology was becoming just another way of doing theology using the Marxist ideologies. Instead of identifying themselves with Marxism, the Pope thought that Catholic theologians camouflaged as their outlook by coining the phrase ‘liberation theology.’ The reluctance to acknowledge liberation theology as another indispensable tool for doing theology today in the Catholic Church is indeed motivated by the fear of Marxism. The document by CDF ‘Instruction on Certain Aspects of the “Theology of Liberation” ’ (1984) was issued to challenge some aspects of liberation theology. Section seven of CDF (nos. 1-13) expressed the great concern of the Church with regard to the use of Marxist analysis as a tool in identifying and dealing with social issues. According to Segovia (2003:118), liberation theology does not treat Marxism as ‘a subject on its own but as always subject to the perspective of the poor’; in other words, Marxism is used ‘as an instrument, not as an end in itself’; and ‘as a companion on the way’ towards total liberation of the poor and oppressed from the exploiters and oppressors.

<sup>30</sup> A social analyst will have to ask questions such as: Who are the poor and oppressed? Why are they poor and oppressed? What mechanisms are in place that maintain oppression? What could be done in order to stop oppression? What does the Word of God tell us about this situation? What is our Christian response to poverty? Why does begging prove to be a lethal phenomenon in developing countries?

tolerated (Bellagamba 1987:27-28). This is not about supporting conflicts, but rather to imitate Jesus whose commitment to the cause of the poor remains non-negotiable<sup>31</sup>. It is a struggle against injustices and not individuals. That said, social analysis does not claim to be objective because social realities change, and, as such, these changes modify the existing scientific explanations (Gutiérrez 1990:59).

Third, the poor as an epistemological paradigm of biblical interpretation. Gutiérrez (1983:18) acknowledges that for centuries the Bible in the Church ‘has been read and communicated from the viewpoint of the dominating sectors and classes, abetted by a good part of exegesis that is thought of as “scientific.”’ The rich and the poor seem to read the Bible differently, and this has a bearing on the way they understand biblical messages. ‘One could almost conclude that the Bible read by liberation theologians, and the Bible read by middle-class Christians, are different books, so diverse are the messages derived from such readings’ (Brown 1990:107). Are we to continue reading the Bible in this way?<sup>32</sup> Certainly, not; but we must adjust and reform our approach. Gutiérrez’s liberation hermeneutics remains one of these approaches. Vatican II ‘gave fresh impetus to the study and application of the biblical message in the contemporary world’ (Brown 1990:107). Gutiérrez is seen as one of those Catholic theologians who pioneered the Council’s agenda of making the Church get involved in world affairs<sup>33</sup>. His writings are enriched and saturated with biblical material which highlights the situation of the poor. He argues that the poor must become ‘the epistemological privilege in reading scripture’ (in Brown 1990:107). In fact, the poor must be considered as the interlocutors of liberation theology. It puzzles the poor to realise that the oppressor/exploiter and the oppressed/exploited do share the same faith, but they do not share the same socioeconomic realities. In this situation, the poor wonder whether God is on their side or on the side of those who perpetrate oppression and exploitation.

Fourth, conversion and commitment to the poor: the majority of rural populations in many developing countries, including Tanzania, live in absolute poverty. This is an unacceptable situation that requires serious commitment to undo oppressive and exploitative political

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<sup>31</sup> This position raises a series of questions: Does liberation theology allow conflicts? As believers, how do we deal with class conflicts? It is impossible for a Christian to remain neutral when faced with realities of injustice. One option remains necessary for them — to be in solidarity with the poor (Gutiérrez 1988:159) and to denounce all that contradicts God’s love (Kroger 1985:18-19).

<sup>32</sup> In response to this question, I concur with West (1993a:21) who cautions that ‘if we do not find ways of reading the Bible which are transformative and liberating in our context then we are abandoning the Bible to those who use it to legitimate domination and oppression.’

<sup>33</sup> In reading the Bible, Gutiérrez (in Brown 1990:108) proposes ‘four insights’ to consider. Our reading must be ‘Christological,’ ‘faith-oriented reading,’ ‘historical’ and ‘a militant reading.’

structures. If we are taking an interest in liberation theology, it is because we are convinced that the poor should not be the way they are today. The unbearable situation of the poor calls us to bear Christian witness and work for social justice. As believers, we must recognise that somehow we are responsible for the current reality either through the sin of omission or through direct involvement in the inflicting of harm on our neighbours; thus conversion remains a necessity (Gutiérrez 1974:205; 1988:118). In order to free ourselves from sin, Gutiérrez (1988:106-110) recommends that we begin to see humanity as the temple of God and to acknowledge that God lives in the midst of his people. Conversion for us then would mean to be at the service of the poor, the beggar, the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

Fifth, empowerment and praxis as means of social transformation: liberation theology aims at enabling people to become agents, artisans and protagonists of their own liberation. Once empowered, the oppressed begin to question and challenge those who oppress them (Gutiérrez 1978:241). They begin to think for themselves, and they no longer need intermediaries to speak on their behalf (Gutiérrez in Brown 1990:70). In other words, empowerment opens doors for the poor to participate in social life and decision-making (Gutiérrez 1988:31; Freire 2000:126; Fanon 1963:188-190). Education is considered as the most powerful tool of empowerment — hence the slogan ‘education is power.’ Ignorance is one of the major enemies of humanity; it stifles people’s thinking and leaves them with a constant unnecessary fear — fear of nature, fear of evil spirits and witchcraft. In most cases, the illiterate ‘are ignorant [even] of the very law designed to protect them’ (Éla 1986:36). Through education people are empowered and endowed with knowledge of themselves and of political, economic and socio-cultural systems that function within their society. Empowerment leads to praxis<sup>34</sup>, and praxis to transformation.

### 2.3.2 The Boffs’ Three Mediations of Liberation Theology

As stated above (2.2.2), deplorable living conditions of many people around us are seen as the impetus that motivates liberation theologians to join the poor in their struggle against social injustice. ‘By “poor”,’ write L. Boff & C. Boff (1987:3), ‘we do not really mean the poor individual who knocks on the door asking for alms. We mean a collective poor’ — the

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<sup>34</sup> Praxis is an important component in liberation theology. Praxis as a form of ‘critical thinking’ consists of *reflection* and *action* (Brown 1990:65). Aristotle classifies *πρᾶξις* as one of the three essential activities that distinguish human persons from animals: *θεωρία* (thinking, contemplation, observing), *ποίησις* (making) and *πρᾶξις* (doing) (Smith & Eaton 2010:3). The end goal of *theōria* is truth, the end goal of *poiēsis* is production, and action is the end goal of *praxis*. Aristotle further subdivides human ‘praxis’ into two kinds: *εὐπραξία* (good action) and *δυσπραξία* (bad action) (Aristotle, NE, VI, 5, 1140b7).

exploited, the oppressed and marginalised. True faith never remains indifferent when faced with social injustice. Liberation theology, according to L. Boff & C. Boff (1987:24), rides on ‘three mediations,’ which somehow could be related to ‘the three traditional stages involved in pastoral work: seeing, judging and acting.’

First, socio-analytical mediation: procedures and practices of liberation theology begin first with the social analysis of the context of the study. In other words, it ‘operates in the sphere of the world of the oppressed. It tries to find out why the oppressed are oppressed’ (Boff, L & Boff C 1987:24). Since oppression manifests itself in various forms and kinds (both hidden and open forms), the preliminary assignment required in this stage is to try to honestly identify the forms of oppression, name them and see what measures people have already taken to address the situation. It uses social sciences to acquire ‘a contextual knowledge of society’ (Segovia 2003:110). The second step involves getting to know the root causes of oppression and poverty which in the end need to be overcome. It is not always an easy task to scrutinise, probe and identify oppressive forces; sometimes they present themselves as agents of benefaction. Liberation theologians identify three ‘readymade answers’ that some people use to explain the problem of socioeconomic poverty. First, an empirical explanation which considers poverty as a result of ‘laziness, ignorance, or simply human wickedness’ (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:26). This answer sounds superficial and does not correctly assess the root causes of poverty. It blames the poor, and characterises them as uncritical and uncreative masses. It sees aid as a practical solution ‘to the question of poverty’ and it treats the poor as ‘objects of pity’ (:26). The second explanation, ‘functional,’ equates poverty with backwardness (:26). In order to combat poverty, poor nations are coerced to seek foreign loans — but often these loans and gifts do not function as viable solutions. Third, the ‘dialectical’ explanation which acknowledges ‘poverty’ as ‘oppression’ — an outcome of exploitation. It ‘sees poverty as a *collective* and also *conflictive* phenomenon, which can be overcome only by replacing the present social system with an alternative system’ (:27). The dialectical explanation considers the poor as subjects in the process of overcoming poverty.

The following are named as weak points of socio-analytical mediation: first, its insistence on analytical scholarship risks taking into consideration only those elements which enter into the scientific categories as set by the analysts (:30). Second, it fails to recognise that the oppressed and marginalised know much more about their context than anyone writing about it. The social analysts, economists and anthropologists must know that their analysis has no

final say; they must also pay attention to what the poor have to say in order to avoid making premature and irrelevant assessments.

The second stage, ‘hermeneutical mediation,’ reads and interprets, in the light of the Word of God, the findings that resulted from the first stage (socio-analytical mediation). ‘The liberation theologian goes to the scriptures bearing the whole weight of the problems, sorrows, and hopes of the poor, seeking light and inspiration from the divine word’ (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:30; Segovia 2003:110-111). The Word of God sheds light on these findings and a contextual theology is constructed. It must be accepted that a number of theologies and biblical interpretations have been used to serve the mindset of the dominant class. Some theologians, influenced by the elite, interpreted scriptures in such a way that it raised no alarm for their masters. We need to read such interpretations with suspicious eyes<sup>35</sup>. It is through critical questioning that, today, liberation theology is able to retrieve and highlight themes like justice and liberation as having a biblical foundation. We should not be content with popular interpretations of Lk 18:35-19:10 without giving a second thought to whether they fit in our context or not. The fulcrum of hermeneutical mediation is the conviction that the Word of God reveals to us a God who is present in our midst, and is involved in our history.

The third stage, ‘practical mediation,’ focuses on liberating actions, commitment and engagement. In other words, ‘liberation theology leads to action: action for justice, the work of love, conversion, renewal of the church, transformation of society’ (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:39; and also Balasuriya 1992:39). This is the culmination of the preceding activities done in the first and second mediations. It is about bringing together the social analysis and the action-oriented theology in order to cause a series of actions. Practical mediation, writes Segovia (2003:111) calls ‘for an engaged and liberating theology, a theology with a political option and subordinated to praxis’ The first stage was about ‘seeing,’ the second stage ‘judging,’ and the third stage ‘acting.’ The key question is: What actions to undertake in order to transform the social context of the oppressed? What will be the role of the poor in the

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<sup>35</sup> The term ‘suspicion’ is used here somehow to mean what Villa-Vicencio (1994:189; and also Torres & Fabella 1978:269; Gebara, I 2003:250-254; Kalilombe 1999:197) calls ‘exegetical suspicion’ or a critique that questions the veracity of ‘imported’ theology in third world countries. According to Gebara (2003:251), the hermeneutics of suspicion begins with ‘lack of trust in certain interpretations of life advanced by either ourselves or others; it means, in short, a sense of unease or discomfort with respect to the beliefs, interpretations, and individuals in which one trusted or still trusts.’ In a similar vein, Míguez Bonino (1975:91; also Miranda 1974:17-19) writes that in concrete terms ‘we cannot receive the theological interpretation coming from the rich world without suspecting it and, therefore, asking what kind of praxis it supports, reflects, or legitimizes. Why is it, for instance, that the obvious political motifs and undertones in the life of Jesus have remained so hidden to liberal interpreters until very recently?’ Thus EATWOT calls for ‘a radical break in epistemology’ and questions theologies that have come from the West and wonders whether they are a true reflection of our contexts.

implementation of the proposed actions? The action-plan must therefore include coordination and strategies that are capable of implementation by the poor in their immediate context.

### **2.3.3 An Appraisal of Liberation Theology**

The preceding paragraphs have tried to demonstrate the workability, applicability and contribution of liberation theology in biblical scholarship. However, we notice that this mode of reading the Bible is ambivalent by nature. It has its merits and demerits. The following are considered as the merits of the liberationist approach. First, there is a growing ‘awareness of the presence of God who saves.’ The Exodus-experience by the Israelites is an excellent example of God’s concern for humanity (McGovern 1983:463). The healing of the blind man (Lk 18:35-43) and Zacchaeus’ conversion (Lk 19:1-10) illustrate God’s interest in saving and liberating his people. Second, the liberationist approach insists ‘on the communal dimension of faith.’ Third, the theological aspirations and praxis of liberation hermeneutics are ‘rooted in justice and love.’ Fourth, liberation theology ‘seeks to make of the Word of God the light and the nourishment of the people of God in the midst of its struggle and hopes’ (PBC 1993:65). According to L. Boff & C. Boff (1987:88), liberation theology, as the fruit of Christian efforts to reach out to the poor, has been ‘worked out on the periphery on the basis of questions raised by the periphery but with universal implications.’ It embraces humanity as a whole and longs to set free whoever is treated as a non-person regardless of race, religion, age, sex or sexual orientation. Liberation theology can also be described as an up-to-date theology because it takes an interest in what is happening here and now (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:88).

On the other hand, ‘[t]here is no dearth,’ says Boff, ‘of those who combat this theology, accusing it of Marxist tendencies and of seeking to politicize the faith in order to change society’ (Boff 1988:28). For example, John Paul II and Benedict XVI were not keen on promoting the biblical hermeneutics of liberation because of its insistence on the use of Marxist language and slant<sup>36</sup>. They challenged the liberation theologians for appealing to social sciences ‘without sufficient critical caution’ (Hohner 2015:4). Moreover, liberation theologians are seen as trying to overstress ‘the political aspect of questions relating to

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<sup>36</sup> There is nothing wrong, I concur with Segovia (2003:118), to use Marxist techniques to inquire about the way economic systems function, the origin of class struggles, and how certain ideologies serve to manipulate, oppress and domesticate people. All this is done in the light of faith with the intention of liberating the oppressed from social injustice. However, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), under the leadership of Joseph Ratzinger and during the papacy of John Paul II, expressed its concerns regarding the position and goals of liberation theology. The fact that Marxism rejects the possibility of God’s existence, raised concerns as to how one can incorporate Marxist ideology into Christianity without distorting it. John Paul II saw Marxist ideology as being ‘incompatible with Catholic beliefs’ (Kroger 1985:4; Hohner 2015:5). As a result, a number of liberation theologians were censored and discouraged from taking forward biblical hermeneutics of liberation.

oppression and liberation’ while overlooking other human and Christian values such as reconciliation, dialogue and solidarity (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:64; Uchegbue 2011:11-14). The liberation theologians are also accused of trying to reduce Christianity ‘to humanist concerns that may obliterate theology in a strict sense’ and it ‘tends to neglect or even exclude the transcendent, “vertical” dimension of Christian faith’ (Frostin 1988:12). The Church, as noted by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN 32), is at risk of becoming a kind of non-governmental organisation interested in temporal affairs to the detriment of her call to evangelise and liberate the whole person. This critique is also re-echoed in the CDF document as it points out that the liberation theologians tend to prioritise the acquisition of bread to the detriment of evangelisation. They are seen as trying to treat the two as two different entities. It is as if they want to affirm that to be Christian today means to deal with social issues<sup>37</sup>.

Other critiques are put forward as follows: first, liberation theology sounds biased as it seriously takes into consideration the situation of poverty while not paying much attention to other oppressing realities of modern life such as human trafficking, migrants, racism, homophobia and sexism. Second, too much attention is paid to the class struggle, hence giving the impression that doing theology means to enter into conflict with the oppressors (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:65; Frostin 1988:12). Third, there is a tendency to read only those biblical texts which meet the criteria of liberation theology, especially those which challenge injustice and oppression of the poor, and even those which call for ‘dissensus’ (Frostin 1988:13). Fourth, other critics see liberation theology as trying to force religious opinions and experiences into the public sphere (McGovern 1983:467-469). In doing so, it tries to impose ‘resacralization’ which, according to Frostin (1988:13), is ‘a relapse into pre-critical and pre-Enlightenment thinking,’ when the Church thought it had a control over the secular sphere.

## **2.4 African Contextual Hermeneutics**

### **2.4.1 Magesa’s Approach to Liberation Theology**

The aim of doing liberation theology, says Magesa (in Rwiza 2006:254), is to give ‘people, especially the marginalized, a sense of their own identity and dignity.’ Thus African liberation theology must aim to increase the ‘dignity of the human person’ and ‘transform the mindset of Africans’ thus making them believe in themselves. Furthermore, African liberation theology should not be treated as a replica of liberation theologies that exist ‘in other parts of

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<sup>37</sup> The document CDF (6.3) warns liberation theologians of this danger as it invites them to avoid overlooking evangelisation because human beings do not live ‘on bread alone’ (Mt 4:4).



the world.’ Despite some similar traits, each context renders different socioeconomic concerns. ‘This is the only justification,’ writes (Magesa 1977:221), ‘for using a qualifying adjective like “African”.’ Magesa (1978:514) asks: ‘How would a Tanzanian theology of liberation differ from a Latin American one, or any other?’ His own response shows that, in the end, what makes one liberation theology differ from others is the uniqueness of its context<sup>38</sup>. The approach to be used in each context will require different tactics of involvement. Magesa, as well, is concerned with the ongoing effects of neo-colonialism, the current unbalanced international economic structures, loss of identity in a globalised world, and useless domestic political ideologies. He concurs with Nyerere on the principles of Ujamaa, especially those which promote equality, harmony, solidarity, democracy, self-confidence, justice and freedom (Magesa 1978:508; 1987:6-7).

Magesa’s article ‘The Bible and a Liberation Theology for Africa’ (1977) highlights the importance of the Bible in the process of doing liberation theology in the context of Africa. The Bible is not a collection of unfamiliar narratives and stories for an African reader. The history of salvation that is presented in the Bible reveals the struggles of men and women in the light of faith to achieve freedom. The climax of these struggles is found in the exodus narrative where God directly intervenes and rescues the Hebrews from the hands of the Egyptian Pharaoh (Magesa 1977:218-219). Their liberation was the Good News in a real sense of the word. The African reader who delves into biblical texts feels at home with most biblical stories because they correspond to his/her own experience of humiliation. Like liberated Hebrews, African readers seek ‘an all-round liberation’ that consists of a ‘socio-political-economic notion,’ reconciliation and ‘liberation in the moral and spiritual sense’ (Magesa 1977:219). In aspiring to liberation, African readers must allow themselves to be guided by the exodus-event in order to gain ‘self-recognition as a people with dignity and a common identity’ (Magesa 1977:219). A liberation theologian finds from the Bible a text that makes sense in the context of his/her critical reflection. The end result of the critical reflection is ‘to bring the Good News — the good news of liberation from disease, ignorance, poverty and oppression — to bear on the whole nation via the participation of the Christian church’

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<sup>38</sup> Ukpong (1984:528) classifies Magesa as an African liberation theologian who combines ‘the indigenous and the Latin American orientations.’ He takes a Latin American theology of liberation as a paradigm, but he uses ‘African socialist principles to analyze the African situation in the light of the Bible.’ Thus Magesa is seen as a theologian who reads ‘the Bible with African eyes’ (Ukpong 1995:3). As a moral theologian, Magesa’s insights seem to function ‘in the context of liberation ethics,’ this explains why he is also known as a ‘liberation ethicist’ (Rwiza 2006:232; Wachege 1992:43).

(Magesa 1978:511). Three components are important in developing Magesa's approach to liberation theology: social analysis, inculturation and self-definition, and liberation ethics.

First, social analysis: most theologians see social analysis as an important component of liberation theology. The *Kairos Document* (1985) is acknowledged as an excellent example of the effective use of social analysis and theological reflections in the context of South Africa against the apartheid regime. Social analysis facilitates the making of a workable plan of action. 'To plan for a better tomorrow,' writes Magesa (1976:19), 'we will have to analyse our historical and present experience. This analysis may lead us to startling conclusions. Our task is to think, and to act on that thinking.' Findings that result from doing the social analysis help formulate theological reflections which correspond to one's lived reality.

Second, inculturation and self-definition: the effects of oppression and exploitation do not become manifest only in political, economic and social spheres, but also in the sphere of culture. Thus true liberation must include the restoration of the dignity of the human person in all aspects (social, cultural, economic and political). Mveng (1994:156) equates the loss of human dignity to an 'anthropological poverty' which means deprivation 'of everything that makes up the foundation of [one's] being-in-the world and the specificity of their "ipseity".' Consequently, economic development is nothing if people lose their dignity and they are uprooted from their culture. Magesa (1998:144) writes: 'African liberation theologies are attempts of the dispossessed to regain the right of self-determination and self-definition in the context of the prevailing hostile world-influence and pressures.' Liberation theology in the context of Africa, and of Tanzania in particular, demands that people be able to recover and restore their lost identity. One of the problems that affect African leadership, politics and economics today is a 'lack of self-confidence' (Magesa 1976:17). However, through education and conscientisation, people tend to gain self-confidence. Like Freire (1979:57-74), Magesa (1978:512-513; 1976:15-19) suggests a system of education that will 'awaken the critical awareness of the student' and 'lead him (sic) to ask more and more questions. The right questions are more important than the answers.' He advocates an education that leads to an 'authentic thinking and problem-solving,' a kind of education that is measured in terms of its capacity to empower the poor (Magesa 1987:20). It is a life-giving education – biophily<sup>39</sup> – for it makes people think for themselves. One way of doing this is to start questioning

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<sup>39</sup> The opposite of biophily is necrophily which becomes manifest in the banking concept of education (Freire 1979:64). Necrophilic persons learn by memorising/repeating things like a parrot. This is the case with educational systems in most African nations. Children are taught to learn what other nations have invented. Memorising for the sake of passing examinations becomes the preoccupation of parents, teachers and learners.

imported theological concepts and spirituality that glorify poverty. Though they do not mirror our context, people are taught to receive such theological formulations as a pattern of fixed truths. The pedagogy that was used in catechism was one that treated catechumens as children ‘who had to be provided with food already chewed’ (Magesa 1978:512). The spoon-feeding approach does not help Africans to authenticate their faith.

Third, liberation ethics: another component equally important in the formulation of a theoretical framework for African liberation theology is the deliberate decision to include the ethics of liberation. ‘The ideal love of God and neighbour’ is the cornerstone of Christian ethics. ‘An ethics,’ writes Magesa (1990:101), ‘which departs from or contradicts [with] this ideal can be called anything but Christian.’ The ethics of liberation aims at restoring the disfigured image of God in the human person. ‘The world cannot have a glimpse of God’s power until man (sic) is transformed’ (:101). We live in the world where two extremes of people (the rich and poor) seem to be moving in opposite directions with no hope of converging. ‘Does liberation capture the intent of the mission of Christ? ... Does it manifest the Christian God, give man (sic) freedom and humanize the world through service? Answers to questions such as these indicate what the ethics of liberation is’ (:102). The existence of the oppressed and oppressors is a proof that something unethical is being tolerated. The rich often consider themselves as being intelligent and hard working, and they point fingers at the poor accusing them of being ignorant and lazy. Poverty in this sense is understood as a phenomenon caused by the ignorance and laziness of poor people (:104). As an objection to this pattern of ideas, Magesa remarks that in reality the poor starve not because they are ignorant and lazy, but because the society’s economic system exploits and alienates them (:104). The rich are called ‘to let go of their ill-gotten privileges’ and the poor to let go timidity. The process of ‘letting go,’ however, does not happen without conflict and pain; the Christian knows that there is no resurrection without death (Magesa 1989:85).

#### **2.4.2 Gerald West’s Approach to Contextual Bible Study**

At the heart of the CBS exists a genuine dialogue between ordinary readers and trained readers<sup>40</sup>. It is a collective process at which ordinary readers are acknowledged not as passive recipients of theological findings, but as active and conscious subjects who have their own life-experiences to contribute. The task of biblical scholars is ‘to assist them to articulate and develop their own subjugated and incipient readings’ (Decock 2003:40-41). A contextual

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<sup>40</sup> West (2015:238-242) gives a list of six core values that constitute the CBS; each of them begins with a letter C thus we have the code of the six “C”s: community, criticality, collaboration, change, context and contestation.

reading of a biblical text presupposes the presence of a context in which the text will be read (West 1993a:12; 1996:29). One's existence is certainly shaped and influenced by one's race, culture, gender, and class (West 1993a:13; 1999b:47; Schneiders 1999:xxx, 4-5; Ilunga 1984:9). Our social, political, economic, historical and religious contexts play as well an indispensable role in shaping our ways of thinking, reading and interpreting biblical texts. For example, as a person from rural Tanzania, my context has a bearing on the way I read and interpret the Bible. At the same time I am aware that my training in biblical studies widens my scope of reading the Bible.

#### **2.4.2.1 Reading the Bible with Ordinary Readers**

The point of interest in the CBS is to read the Bible with 'ordinary readers' — those with no sophisticated techniques of biblical studies. Some of them are even illiterate. For years, biblical scholarship did not pay much attention to ordinary readers. The use of scientific methods in biblical studies was the focus of many scholars. Consequently, ordinary readers were left to survive on their own. The so-called 'knowledge from below' (Philpott 1993:17) or 'from the underside of history' (Gutiérrez 1983:167) was not given space to express itself. The poor were regarded as passive receptors and consumers of knowledge that was produced in the corridors of theological centres (Ndegwah 2007:6). Thus the CBS provides ordinary readers with the space they need to articulate their concerns. Our commitment to read the Bible with ordinary readers therefore must aim at creating an atmosphere of mutual trust. The trained reader should avoid minimising 'the contributions and experiences of ordinary people' (West 1993a:15-16). However, listening to rural voices does not mean that one has to welcome their contributions uncritically. On the contrary, critical reflection must guide the entire process of the CBS. This, however, requires humility and conversion on the part of the trained readers to acknowledge that the ordinary readers' lived experiences have an important role to play in the CBS (West 1993a:16). Following the example of the blind man (Lk 18:38-39) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:4), who were determined to reach out to Jesus, ordinary readers must not feel intimidated to take part in the CBS process.

#### **2.4.2.2 A Fourfold Commitment to Reading the Bible**

The success of the CBS, according to West (1993a:12-24; 1995b:220-228) depends on four key commitments: First, 'a commitment to read the Bible' from a well defined context, with preference given to the context of the poor and oppressed. 'The poor and oppressed,' in this case, writes West (1993a:13-14; and also Segovia 2003:120-121), 'are those who are socially,

politically, economically, or culturally marginalized and exploited.’ God who hears the cry of the oppressed calls us to be at the service of the poor the way the biblical prophets did. Thus, every effort must be made to understand the forces of domination and resistance. If this is not well carried out, both the oppressed and oppressor may try to say or do things that only satisfy public expectations, but their true story remains hidden. The trained reader is called to walk an extra mile to bring to light what has been hidden (West 1999a:49; 1999b:49).

Second, ‘a commitment to read the Bible in community with others, particularly with those from contexts different from our own’ (West 1993a:15). This encourages mutual learning, listening and sharing of experiences and contributions. The trained readers must deliberately decide to put their critical resources at the disposal of all in order to empower those (ordinary readers) who read the Bible with them. Once empowered, ordinary readers begin to question a pattern of biblical interpretations which came to them as ready-made theological truths. This also helps ‘to break the culture of silence and to recover the identity and experiences of the poor and oppressed’ (:16). The trained and ordinary readers read the Bible as dialogue partners each of whom has something to contribute. The catchphrase in the CBS process is ‘reading with’ or ‘speaking with’ and never ‘reading for’ or ‘speaking for’ (West 1999b:51).

Third, ‘a commitment to read the Bible critically’ (West 1993a:18). Reading the Bible critically involves the employment of critical consciousness. West (1993a:18-19; and also Philpott 1993:102) describes ‘critical consciousness’ as one’s ability to ask the ‘why questions’ and probe ‘beneath the surface,’ and the capacity to critique what has been established as truth or status quo. The poor are provided with critical skills which allow them to ‘do their own critical analysis of the Bible and its interpretations’ (West 1993a:20; 1999b:48). As they employ critical consciousness, they are able to ‘create their own language’ thus freeing themselves from the fixed set of biblical interpretations and truths that they inherited.

The fourth commitment requires ‘personal and social transformation’ (West 1993a:23-24). The CBS has as its goal to enable its participants to appropriate the Bible critically. If the appropriation of the Bible does not include critical reflection, one may use it as an effective tool of oppression. This was the case in South Africa when the white political hegemony tried to use the Bible to establish the ‘Afrikaner identity’ (Decock 2003:29). A dictator may like to use Rom 13:1-7 to justify the origin of his/her authority. A number of people have appropriated the Word of God to justify racism, slavery, sexism, homophobia, occupation of

other people's lands, subordination of women, and to 'legitimate imperial conquest' (Draper 2015:11). The Bible itself consists of ambiguous ideas; it is only by means of critical thinking and reading, one is able to avoid misusing it (West 1996:21; 1993b:5).

#### **2.4.2.3 Three Modes of Reading the Bible Critically**

As part of doing contextual Bible study, West (1993a:26-50) discusses three modes of critical reading: first, reading 'behind the text' — here the reader begins by delimiting the text, indicating both its upper and lower limits. With the use of other critical tools such as source criticism, textual criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism, the given text is situated and acknowledged in its historical context. The sociological setting of the text is also reconstructed here (West 1993a:29-30). Then the text is 'read in the light of these historical and sociological constructions' (West 1993a:30; Vogels 1993:16) with the intention of enabling the readers to make sense of these findings in their context. Black liberation theologian Mosala, who uses the historical-materialist method of analysis, falls in this category of reading the Bible (West 1995b:70-74; 1990:38-41; Mosala 1989:4; Akper 2005:4). Though this approach sounds too technical, and it proves almost impossible to reconstruct the historical setting of the text, it has some merits that are worth noting: the text is situated and read in its context; it minimises the abuse of the text; and ordinary readers are able to learn critical skills of reading the Bible (West 1993a:33-34). Some historical insights as shown in Chapter Four below do facilitate our reading of Lk 18:35-19:10.

The second mode deals with 'the text itself' in its canonical form. The interest of the reader is located in the text itself. The reader's primary concern is not about what stands behind the text, but the message one can retrieve from it (West 1993a:35). Boesak is one example of those who read the text as presented to them (West 1995b:64-70). The mode has the following advantages: 'it starts with the text as ordinary people know it, and reads the text as it is, which is the way in which most ordinary readers read the text, even if they do not read it very closely and carefully' (West 1993a:40). Its readers, especially ordinary readers, are motivated to read the text as a whole. As a setback, this mode remains a challenge for the illiterate.

The third mode reads 'in front of the text.' It is interested in 'the thematic and symbolic context of the text as a whole' (West 1993a:22). Thus, it deals with 'the predominant themes, metaphors, and symbols' as they appear in the Bible and uses them to guide us in the reading of the Bible in our context. The text is read in its final canonical form, and is viewed as a dynamic and flexible medium of communication. Its meaning is not some fixed truth, but

rather an open-ended interpretation adaptable to different contexts and interpretations<sup>41</sup>. The text is seen as living a life of its own<sup>42</sup>, independent of its authors who have disappeared from the scene a long time ago (West 1993a:42). This mode equally opens a dialogical space between the reader and the text. Since there is no single meaning in the text, different readers may come up with different meanings influenced by their respective contexts (Croatto 1987:21). Otherwise, our reading of any biblical text would give the impression that ‘the meaning is something locked inside the text waiting to be yanked out by the skill of the scholar by careful “objective” historical study’ (Draper 2002:12). As readers of the Bible, we have no power to eternalise its meaning. Hence, in interpreting Lk 18:35-19:10, one should not be surprised to notice that various meanings are retrieved from the same text. This is because ‘[t]he original message does not remain a cistern of stagnant water. It becomes a font of living water, ready to generate new meanings, by prolonging and concretizing the original meaning’ (Boff 1988:18). Since we are not its original interlocutors, our context as ‘a baggage’ we take into the text will influence our interpretation (Croatto 1987:67). The same text will produce a cluster of meanings if read in different socioeconomic and political contexts<sup>43</sup>. The three modes as explained above, do not work in isolation; they complement each other and overlap (West 1993a:47). In reading Lk 18:35-19:10, in some instances, the CBS participants needed to read ‘behind the text,’ some other time, ‘in the text’ and quite often ‘in front of the text.’

The CBS in general could be appreciated as an approach that empowers people to read the Bible critically and use it for their personal and social transformation. It provides them with an opportunity to gain critical resources and skills of reading biblical texts. People are able to

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<sup>41</sup> Fowl (1998:53; and also Fish 1980:305) uses Platonic concepts to demonstrate the power of the text to transcend its current reality, i.e. metaphysics of textuality. The text is never limited by the principles of literary criticism or by any other methods of interpretation; it has generative power to produce a set of meanings depending on the reader’s context. ‘Textuality calls us to keep interpretation always ongoing. It is part of one’s moral responsibility to textuality to rescue it by reading deconstructively whenever the dominant interpretation threatens to close interpretation down’ (:53). In this way, anti-determinate interpretation functions as a critical voice against the intellectual hegemony of trained readers, and it urges them to embrace humility.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Ricoeur (in Schneiders 1999:123; also Welzen 2008:) coins ‘the term “semantic autonomy” to designate this liberation of the text from control by its author’s intention,’ and that ‘far from being an obstacle to interpretation, the distancing of the text from its situation of composition actually endows it with a surplus meaning that grounds its endless capacity to give rise to new valid interpretations.’ The text is anew and generates new meanings each time is read in different situations by different readers (Welzen 2008:2). Sometimes the text may mean ‘something other than’ what its author intended to mean (Schneiders 1999:163).

<sup>43</sup> This understanding is also found in Ukpong’s ‘inculturation biblical hermeneutic’ which ‘presupposes that the biblical text is plurivalent and can be validly understood [in different ways] according to different contexts and perspectives. But this does not mean that the biblical text can mean anything. Instead it recognizes that there are dynamics built into a text for guiding interpretation, and that these dynamics can function in different contexts to produce different but valid interpretations’ (Ukpong 1996:191; 1995:9-10). According to Fowl (1998:63), ‘texts do not have ideologies,’ and certainly not fixed ideologies.

see that the text speaks and relates well to their real life. It ‘provides both a place and the democratic processes for discerning whether her “working” readings and theology resonate with and are representative of the group’ (West 1996:32). Furthermore, the CBS fosters ‘a deep sense of community’ (West 1993:24), thus affirming that the Bible is, as Okure (1993:78) calls it, ‘a community book,’ and its readers are called to ‘form the community of its interpretation.’ Mbiti (1994:38) goes even further to affirm that ‘the Bible is a lived book and a living book, by the community, through the community, and for the community, whose foundation and goal is God.’ The activities of the CBS are not the creation of one person, but rather the result of collaborative commitment between ordinary and trained readers (Ukpong 2000a:15-16). The interface between them is done in the spirit of trust and mutual understanding. I concur with West (1999b:47; and also Frostin 1988:6) who rightly writes that ‘[f]or those of us who work in contexts where readings of the Bible matter, whom we choose to read with makes a difference that matters.’ Possible setbacks are noted as follows: first, illiteracy could be a challenge for some<sup>44</sup>; second, we read a biblical text not as its original interlocutors, thus our interpretation always remains provisional (Speckman 2007:67; Deist 1991:14); and third, trained readers, if not well initiated, may, consciously or unconsciously, use their expertise to impose results that do not correspond to the findings of ordinary readers.

#### **2.4.2.4 Rural Insights as an Incipient Theology**

It is important to note that in reading the Bible with rural readers one does not pretend to absolutise and canonise their theological ideologies, but indeed to recognise that their insights do contribute to an entire enterprise of theology. Theirs is an incipient theology<sup>45</sup> that arises from their day-to-day lives; a collection of scattered and unsophisticated theological voices by ordinary readers that stand as a challenge to universal theology, which is often formulated on the basis of Christian tradition and developed theological discourses. It is therefore the role of

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<sup>44</sup> As shown below (7.3 & 8.2.1.5), during the CBS sessions it was noted that some people were illiterate. They relied on what other people read and told them about the content of Lk 18:35-19:10. In this situation, the illiterate are deprived of a possibility of getting first hand information because they rely on what the literate tell them (Kalilombe 1991:399). In a similar vein, Mbiti (1994:31) writes: ‘[m]illions of people who cannot read and write should not be put at the periphery of society; they have as much dignity and worth as those who read and write. The Bible does not despise those who cannot read.’ Thus creativity is needed to support the illiterate. In fact, many of the first followers of Jesus were not literate and they had no access to written materials, however this did not limit them from following Jesus, listening and interpreting his words. The rate of illiteracy is still high in Africa *cum* Tanzania, thus we must look for ways that will facilitate the critical reading and interpretation of biblical texts (Draper 2015:6).

<sup>45</sup> According to Cochrane (1999:22; and also West 2000:606-607; 2001:182; 1999a:141), the phrase ‘incipient theology’ means an undeveloped theology found among ‘ordinary believers, believers untrained in the formal canons or history of theological method’ who ‘reflect upon their faith, they engage in the task of theology in a provisional way, gathering an as yet untested wisdom about the meaning of their faith.’ The adjective ‘incipient’ in the writings of West (2000:606-607) maintains Cochrane’s description to which he also adds ‘inchoate.’



a trained reader to compile, analyse and write in a systematic way what people expressed in a random and spontaneous manner during the CBS sessions. This is done not as a proof that contributions ‘from below’ are elementary, crude and undeveloped, but to give them a structure which allows such theological insights to ‘be taken seriously as data for the wider theological reflection of the church’ (Cochrane 1994:35; 1999:147-148). The undisputed fact is that trained biblical readers<sup>46</sup> have scientific and critical tools at their disposal when working with literary works. Their approach to a biblical text or any written piece of writing differs from that of ordinary believers. The latter rely on intuitions gathered when relating their lived experiences to the Word of God. This can easily lead to their insights being classified as “incipient,” unsystematic, pre-critical, “base” and “scattered,” emerging from ‘the theologically untrained mind’ (Cochrane 1994:34-35). However, no matter how incipient this theology is, asserts Cochrane (1994:35), it must be understood as ‘the necessary starting point for an authentic contextual theology.’ In other words, the incipient theology serves as the raw material for an articulated and developed theology. It is ‘a people’s theology’<sup>47</sup> that requires the expertise of trained theologians to verify and develop it so that it may become part of formal theological thought and wisdom. Since the poor and oppressed are more familiar with their reality, we need to acknowledge their capacity to raise questions that eventually lead to the formulation of a local theology which is ‘the reflection of ordinary believers on their faith in context’ (Cochrane 1999:120) — ‘albeit sometimes with a technical assistance from the experts who are not themselves oppressed’ (Nolan 1991:162).

West’s insights as noted above (2.3.4.2.1) begin with the recognition of ordinary people’s modes of reading biblical texts proper to them and how they make sense of them in their context. He calls them ‘theologians’ (West 1994:16). Though the poor read the Bible pre-critically, they believe in its transforming power. Thus the CBS comes in not as an ‘alternative approach’ but rather like a ‘committed companion’ which ‘facilitates a more systematic and structured articulation of what is incipient and inchoate, the purpose of which is to effect transformation and change’ (West 1999a:141). This process of companionship allows both ordinary/pre-critical readers and a trained reader to maintain equal partnership in

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<sup>46</sup> Masoga (2001:133) uses the expression ‘those who read from the centre’ to mean all those who have been trained to read and interpret the Bible while employing scientific and historical critical tools. Their training took place in theological schools and academic institutions thus making them stand as a distinguished group opposed to what Masoga refers as ‘peripheral readers’ or ‘untrained and ordinary readers’ by West (1993a:9).

<sup>47</sup> The Kairos Document (1986:34-35) in its footnote no. 15 makes clear distinction between prophetic theology and people’s theology. The material found in this document is considered as a prophetic statement formulated ‘by theologians, ministers and other church workers.’ However, the document asserts that ‘the process that led to the production of the document, the process of theological reflection and action in groups, the involvement of many different people in doing theology was an exercise in people’s theology.’

questioning and changing oppressive structures. The trained reader participates in the CBS process not as the one who knows everything, but as ‘another reader with different resources and skills’ (West 1995a:65). Some scholars have criticised West’s concept of pre-criticality (West 1993a:9), which is ascribed to both untrained and ordinary readers<sup>48</sup>. For the sake of this work, I use the term ‘pre-criticality’ the way it is understood by West<sup>49</sup>. It fits well in the context of rural areas where I worked with the untrained CBS participants.

### **2.4.3 Draper’s Tripolar Model for Biblical Hermeneutics**

Together with the aforementioned African contextual hermeneutics (Magesa and West) I include a tripolar approach which focuses on dialogue between a text and a reader. Using Draper’s terminology, the tripolar model consists of a three-phase movement namely: contextualization, distantiation and appropriation (Draper 2002:16). The movement fits well within the mind-set of African contextual hermeneutics.

As far as the first pole, ‘contextualisation,’ is concerned, Draper (2002:16) acknowledges the crucial role that one’s context plays in reading and interpreting the Bible. This is due to the fact that ‘as readers and hearers of the Word,’ says Draper, we ‘are pre-disposed by our own social, economic, political and cultural contexts to read in a certain way.’ Our reading of the Bible is dictated by our context because each person reads it from his or her own perspective. Thus contextualisation ‘involves spending time analysing who we are and what our location in society and history is’ (Draper 2002:17). Like West (1993a:12-13), Draper focuses on one’s context as the point of departure when reading the Bible; but this context is never static. Our contexts change with time and space. These changes (positive/negative) do have power to influence our reading of the Bible. The past cannot and does not need to suffer complete deletion. Today’s reality bears the ramifications and marks of the past, and these somehow continue to have an impact on our culture and identity. They condition our ways of thinking,

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<sup>48</sup> Such scholars argue that West’s use of the terms ‘pre-criticality’ and ‘criticality’ presupposes the existence of an inferior approach that ordinary readers use when reading the Bible. He maintains the position of power between the dominant and the dominated, the master/servant or critic/ordinary relationship (Lategan 1996:245; Masoga 2001:145-146; Weems 1996:260-261). In a similar vein, Speckman (1999:31) asks: ‘Is he [West] not overlooking the important fact that those readers are also products of “trained” interpreters in which case, their views reflect their masters’ views? The Bible is preached or read out to them. During the process of reading or preaching, interpretation takes place and is imparted to the unsuspecting.’

<sup>49</sup> West (1999a:90) expresses his non-pejorative intention as he writes: ‘My use of “pre-critical” is not pejorative; ordinary “readers” have little option in being so characterized because of the specific technical sense in which I am using the term.’ For him, pre-criticality simply means that ordinary readers’ approach to biblical texts differs from that of trained readers because the latter are ‘trained to ask structured and systematic sets of questions and ordinary “readers” have not been so trained.’

reasoning and acting. However, we cannot use our past as a scapegoat to justify our present realities of poverty, idleness and irresponsible attitudes.

The second pole, ‘distantiation,’ involves treating the text as ‘the other’ and ‘setting [it] in its own specific historical context’ (Draper 2015:9) — allowing it to keep its distance from the reader<sup>50</sup>. In other words, the text is protected against the domination and dictatorship of its reader. Instead of imposing oneself, the reader learns to listen to the text, and allows it to talk to him/her. The reader allows her/himself ‘to gain “critical distance” from the text, to suspend what s/he previously understood the text to mean, to open her/himself up to new understandings which may contradict her/his pre-suppositions’ (Draper 2002:17). The text has power to challenge and change our pre-suppositions. It has become “an-other” in dialogue with the reader’ (Draper 2015:10). Distantiation ‘requires the reader/hearer to let the text be other than her/himself, to be strange, unexpected, even alienating’ (Draper 2002:17). In this stage, the otherness of the text is acknowledged because ‘the Word is not under our control or at our disposal. It has an integrity of its own, which stands over against us, challenges and even judges us’ (Draper 2002:17). The written text, having become ‘a reality unto itself’ (Vogels 1993:77), ‘calls us into conversation’ (Draper 2002:17). Ours, therefore, is the readiness to enter into a dialogue with the Word. The Word has power to challenge us, but we too have the capacity to use our contextual insights to challenge the biblical texts and make them ‘open themselves up anew as Word for today’ (Draper 2002:17). The modern reader may use his/her context to dialogue with biblical texts and question their legitimacy for us today especially those that seem to condone slavery, male domination and racism.

According to Draper (2002:18), the third pole, ‘appropriation,’ functions as a point of arrival whereby the reader owns and accepts the word and the meaning that he/she has ‘discovered in [his/her] own context and community and taking responsibility for it.’ By means of appropriation, the context (contextualization) and the text (distantiation) are fused, to cause action to happen. Here, the reader’s role is acknowledged because his/her ‘ideo-theological orientation’ ‘brings the text and context into a dialogue and enables the production of meaning and hence transformative praxis’ (Draper 2015:13). While using West’s concept of the ‘ideo-theological orientation of the reader,’ Draper (2015:14) accepts the importance of ‘the pre-understanding with which the reader comes to the text and the goals, acknowledged or un-acknowledged, which led the reader to the Bible and indeed to this particular context.’

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<sup>50</sup> Schneiders (1999:142-144) speaks of a threefold distantiation of a text: distantiation of the text from its author, from its original audience, and from its originating situation.

The ideo-theological orientation of the reader plays an important role in choosing the biblical text, determining the context, direction and the destination of interpretation. A Christian does not read the Bible as entertainment, but as something that challenges and raises concerns about one's behaviour and context. To appropriate the word 'results in changed behaviour, in action in and through the community of faith in society. It is not simply a question of mining the text for doctrine, but relating it to a lived faith' (Draper 2002:18). These consequences must lead to both 'transformative praxis' and also a 'change of consciousness' (Draper 2015:16). In the same vein, West (1993a:23) and Decock (2015:3) insist on the importance of appropriation of the word for personal and social transformation. However, they warn that this appropriation must happen as a result of critical reading. Doing otherwise, one may use biblical texts as a means to justify antisocial ideologies such as racism, homophobia, exploitation, ethnocentrism and religious extremism.

## **2.5 Socio-Historical Critical Method**

The socio-historical critical method aims at establishing the relationship that exists between the biblical text and the social history that was known to its author. 'The situation, the *Sitz im Leben*, from which the Bible springs is the life of the people' (Theissen 1993:4). The authors wrote and compiled biblical writings from their perspectives. According to Schottroff (1984:4), 'the Bible presents human persons as they really are: in all the manifestations of their lives, but also in the concrete, historically and socially differentiated relationships that make up their lives.' It therefore makes sense to read behind the text so that, the closer we get to their context, the more we become familiar with the events that conditioned its authorship. 'If the Lucan text has anything to say to our contemporary society, we must have security in outlining what it had to say in its own time' (Prior 1995:182). For a better understanding of the selected biblical text, it is recommended to incorporate the findings of 'textual criticism,' 'form criticism' and 'source criticism' (Fitzmyer 2008:64-65). It is the duty of biblical interpreters to try to reconstruct the world in which the biblical stories were written. If we come to know how Palestinian society and the Mediterranean world in general during and after the time of Jesus dealt with disability, sickness and tax collectors, this will facilitate our understanding of the narratives we read in the NT. It would be incomplete to unpack theological significance from biblical texts before allowing them to first speak and 'be understood' in their immediate social setting (Ukpong 2012:190-191).

With the use of the socio-historical critical method, we want to analyse, examine, interrogate and read what stands behind the text Lk 18:35-19:10. What background information is needed to grasp the text? What social, historical and cultural elements do we need to know beforehand in order to read and understand Lk 18:35-19:10 better? What was life for people like the blind beggar in the Mediterranean world and Palestine? Why were they wandering in public squares or sitting by the roadside begging? What was the attitude of people towards tax collectors? Who were the beneficiaries of tax collection? Why was Zacchaeus treated as a sinner or deviant? Insights retrieved from the social world of Lk 18:35-19:10 will facilitate its reading, interpretation and appropriation. However, we must become aware of the time factor; there is a huge lapse of time between our life and the times of the biblical literature. One must take into account challenges and problems that arise from this gap when trying to use the socio-historical critical method (Fee 1993:114-123). Though it is impossible to reconstruct the social world of Luke with certainty, we are able to retrieve some of his theological insights and use them as a compass to guide us in our struggle to overcome social injustice.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Chapter Two has mainly relied on the principles of liberation theology as developed by Gutiérrez, L. Boff and C. Boff, and African contextual approaches to articulate an ideological standpoint on which this study lays its foundation. Liberation of the poor from oppression and exploitation is going to be the catchphrase of this project as it reads Lk 18:35-19:10 in the context of the Mbinga Diocese. Five interrelated aspects have been identified from Gutiérrez's work and referred to as constitutive components of liberation theology. First, critical reflection. As presented above (2.3.1), this component urges us to begin thinking critically and asking relevant questions that aim at probing, challenging and knowing our realities. Second, social analysis. The primordial objective of social analysis is to inquire, analyse and denounce the causes of social injustice. By means of social analysis the reality of poverty in rural Mbinga will be brought to light (3.5), and how it influences the reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 is shown in chapter seven (7.3). Third, Gutiérrez opines that the Bible must be read from the perspective of the poor. Thus the poor become an epistemological paradigm of biblical interpretation. Fourth, our conversion and commitment to the poor must include concrete actions and works of justice. The fifth component focuses on empowering the poor so that they may begin considering themselves as worthy agents of social transformation.

From African contextual hermeneutics, we have considered three approaches as proposed by Laurenti Magesa, Gerald West and Jonathan Draper. Four features that characterise Magesa's methodological approach have been indicated: first, social analysis: just like Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff, Magesa insists on identifying the forms and causes of oppression and exploitation. Second, centrality of the Bible: the Word of God is acknowledged as having the capacity to inspire its readers in their struggle against oppression. Third, inculturation and self-definition: people's culture is what defines who they are. The people's cultural values that suffered suppression during the implantation of the church must be studied in order to identify those that can help them formulate their own liberation trajectories today. Fourth, liberation ethics: the existence of dehumanising tendencies and social injustices in our midst indicates that unethical behaviour is being tolerated.

Gerald West, through his CBS approach, engages the poor in the process of reading biblical texts critically. A fourfold commitment facilitates this process. First, a commitment to read the Bible from the context of the poor; second, a commitment to read the Bible in community with others especially with those whose contexts are different from ours; third, a commitment to read the Bible critically, and fourth, a commitment to personal and social transformation (West 1993a:12). We have also discussed Jonathan Draper's tripolar approach which entails three interrelated components: first, 'contextualization' — the reader's context provides a starting point of reading the Bible. Second, 'distantiation' — the readers treat the text as another, they allow themselves to be challenged by what they read. Third, 'appropriation' — one's reading leads to both personal and social transformation.

The contextual approaches studied in this chapter do not work in isolation; in some cases they are enriched by socio-historical criticism. In this way they complement each other thus reducing a gap that otherwise would have remained wide if the study relied only on one approach. With the use of the socio-historical critical method in Chapter Four, I interrogate and analyse socioeconomic and political conditions that might have influenced Luke in articulating the concerns and theology of the Third Gospel. In one way or another, such historical elements mark their presence in Lk 18:35-19:10, especially on what concerns the rules of purity, disability and the Roman system of taxation. It is against this backdrop that the stories of the blind beggar (18:35-43) and Zacchaeus the chief tax collector can best be read.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DESCRIPTION AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS OF RURAL TANZANIA: CASE STUDY—MBINGA CATHOLIC DIOCESE

#### 3.1 Introduction

Liberation theologians and socially engaged biblical scholars as noted above (2.3.1; 3.3.2 & 2.3.4) insist on scrutinising, analysing and examining the context of the poor, the oppressed and marginalised.<sup>51</sup> The aim of doing so is to inform themselves of ‘the actual conditions in which the oppressed live’ (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:24). Social analysis is concerned with issues related to equality, economic equity, social justice, human rights and availability of social services such as health facilities, education, and water. It also probes the quality of life and people’s participation in decision-making with regard to their political and socioeconomic lives. Demographic information as part of the social analysis helps to examine the impact of population on employment, socio-political life, economic growth, movements of people (rural-urban), life expectancy, leadership, ethnic groups, and population distribution and density. All these aspects are analysed in order to acquire a better knowledge of our context. ‘We cannot hear,’ writes West (1993a:14), ‘either the concerns of the poor and oppressed or God’s concern for them unless we are prepared to analyze our context.’

Mbinga Diocese is used as a case study to bring the reality of Rural Tanzania to the fore. Despite socioeconomic and geographic disparities identified from one rural area to another, most rural areas in Tanzania seem to have similar communal settings, socioeconomic and political features. This is partly due to the influence of Ujamaa socialist policies which eventually led to the grouping of people into villages under the national programme of villagisation. Therefore, Mbinga Diocese, which is largely rural, in this case serves as a typical example of rural reality in Tanzania. Though some political and economic progress has been made since independence (1961), poverty remains a widespread phenomenon in Tanzania, ‘with extreme poverty concentrated in rural areas’ (Kessy et al. 2013:vii). Chapter Three’s main concern is to analyse the socioeconomic conditions of Mbinga Diocese. However, a brief survey of the demographic, religious, socio-cultural, political and economic realities of Tanzania in general, helps us see the impact they have on rural lives in Mbinga.

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. liberation theologians Gutiérrez (1990:9), Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff (1987:24), Per Frostin (1988:8), Laurenti Magesa (1976:19), and also the socially engaged biblical scholars like Gerald West (1993a:12-13) and Graham Philpott (1993:32-44).

### 3.2 Demographic and Religious Situation

The national census, which was held in 2012, reveals that the total population of Tanzania was 44,928,923 (23,058,933 female, and male 21,869,990) (NBS 2013:iii) with the annual growth rate of 2.7%, which is ‘one of the fastest in the world’ (UNDP & URT 2015:xiii; NBS 2013:23; NBS & OCGS 2013:3). It is estimated that 70.4% of Tanzanians live in rural areas (NBS 2013:24) — a home for more than 80% of the ‘poor and extremely poor Tanzanians’ (WBG 2015:21; PMO 2001:2; Kessy et al 2013:1). The urban population stands at about 29.6% (NBS 2013:24). Life expectancy at birth has increased from 51 years in 2002 to 61 years in 2012. ‘The statistics further show that female life expectancy at birth in 2012 is higher (63 years) than that of males (60 years)’ (UNDP & URT 2015:10-11). According to demographic estimates and projections made by the UN as of July 2016, Tanzania’s population was about 55,155,473 (UN 2016: np). The country is still faced with the challenges of infant mortality: 51 per 1,000 live births, and maternal mortality: 454 per 100,000 live births as of 2010 (NBS 2013:30). Malaria and HIV/AIDS continue to threaten the population; as of 2012, it was observed that 10% of the total population tested HIV-positive (6% female and 4% male) (TACAIDS et al 2013:103). The rapid population growth remains a challenge, and it has a bearing on social service provision and household incomes.

The total number of inhabitants living in Mbinga Diocese by 2012 was 499, 843<sup>52</sup> (female 256,049 and male 243,794) (Ndunguru 2015:np). The population growth rate in Mbinga and Nyasa is 2.9% (Kamanga 2011:37) and is higher than that of the country as a whole (NBS & OCGS 2013:3). The Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports gives a list of 133 ethnic groups, but at the same time affirms that ‘[w]ithin the borders of Tanzania co-exist approximately 158 ethnic groups speaking languages representing all four major African language groups (Bantu<sup>53</sup>, Nilotic, Cushitic and Khosan)’ (TGW 2015:np). The official languages in Tanzania are Kiswahili (widely spoken and medium of instruction in primary schools) and English (mainly in secondary schools and tertiary education).

Tanzania is a secular state but it recognises citizens’ right to freedom of religion. The Arusha Declaration laid the foundation of this right and it became part of the manifesto of the ruling

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<sup>52</sup> According to the 2012 census, the population of Mbinga district was 353,683 (female 181,281 and male 172,402) (NBS & OCGS 2013:99) and that of Nyasa 146,160 (female 74,768 and Male 71,392) (:102). The population density of Mbinga is higher than that of other districts in Ruvuma region reaching 32 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (PCD & RCOR 1997:18) and in Matengo highlands 120 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (ICRA 1991:5).

<sup>53</sup> The Bantu group has the highest population in Tanzania. The ethnic groups (all Bantu) present in Mbinga Diocese are Wamatengo, Wangoni, Wamanda, and Wanyasa (Kayombo 2006:2).



party (TANU) (Nyerere 1968a:13; ADD 1967:1), which later on was inserted into the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 (Chenge 1998:23). It is against the law to use threats to coerce people into one's religion and every faith group must be registered with the Registrar of Societies at the Home Affairs Ministry (Goliama 2013:26). Though religion (Christianity or Islam) is taught in schools, students are not obliged to take it. Nevertheless, a number of students tend to study religion and sit for its final examination. Christianity and Islam are the major religions in Tanzania. It is estimated that about 40% of the population are Muslims and 45% Christians<sup>54</sup>. Those who follow Traditional Religions (indigenous beliefs) constitute approximately 10%. Jehovah witnesses and other groups of faith such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Bahá'í faith make up a total of about 5%. Islam constitutes about 98% of the total population of Tanzania-Zanzibar. It is noted that 85% of the population of Mbinga and Nyasa are Catholics (Nyenyebe 2012:87). Anglicans make up about 10%, Lutherans 2%, Muslims 1%, other Christian groups 1.5% and about 0.5% others (natural, animistic and African traditional religions)<sup>55</sup>. The Catholic Church has had a tremendous impact on the lives of people in Mbinga and Nyasa. The history of formal education and healthcare services in both districts owes a lot to the role played by the Church.

### **3.3 Getting a Glimpse of Natural Resources in Tanzania**

Tanzania in general is classified as one of the poorest of all Third World countries. The paradox is that the level of poverty felt in Tanzania contradicts its immense natural resources that are located in various regions of the country; this is what Mazrui (1980:72) calls 'anomalous underdevelopment.' Tanzania is home for wild animals in its famous national parks and game reserves<sup>56</sup> which provide the country with an opportunity to develop tourism and related activities. The highest peak in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro (5,895m), is situated in Tanzania. The country is also bordered by the largest and most important lakes of Africa (Victoria, and Rift Valley Lakes—Tanganyika and Nyasa<sup>57</sup>) and Indian Ocean to the East. It is also bordered by the small lakes Jipe and Chala to the North-East. These bodies of water have

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<sup>54</sup> By 2011, the Tanzanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had registered 650 churches and ministries in the country. Major Christian groups are recorded as follows: Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Baptists, Orthodox Church, Methodists, Presbyterians, African Inland Church, Pentecostals, Adventists, and Moravian Church. The Catholic Church (27%) is said to be the oldest and largest church in Tanzania (Goliama 2013:27).

<sup>55</sup> Source: Mbinga Diocese — Pastoral Coordinator's Office, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Only famous national parks and game reserves are mentioned here: Serengeti, Ruaha, Ngorongoro, Tarangire, Katavi, Mikumi, Lake Manyara National Park, Mkomazi, Saadani and Selous Game Reserve.

<sup>57</sup> Other inland Rift Valley lakes include Rukwa, Eyasi, Natron, Manyara and Balangida. The country also has a number of rivers which provide drainage and a good basin for agriculture, Rufiji, Kilombero, Ruaha, Ruvuma, and so on.

the potential of providing fishery resources to the country. Tanzania as a whole has favourable climatic conditions and fertile arable land that is good for the production of both food and cash crops, and keeping livestock (TANU 1967a:14). Forest reserves are found almost in every region, and they could support the country's economy if proper ways of exploitation were to be employed. The country has a variety of minerals, and they are grouped into five categories<sup>58</sup>. Gold, diamonds, tanzanite, uranium, coal and natural gas take the lead as far as exploitation is concerned. Most of these minerals are exploited by foreign mining companies. Riots have occurred where people refused to pave the way for mining activities to take place in their areas. It is also a known fact that some mining companies failed to live up to their promise to provide local communities with social services. This failure created tension between them (CCT 2015:np; Lamtey 2015:np). The tension was increased by concerns related to pollution and environmental degradation (Nyenyeembe 2012:157-160; IppMedia 2017:np).

### **3.4 A Survey on Rural Poverty in Tanzania**

From the early days of independence (1961), various economic strategies and socialist ideologies were proposed to combat poverty, ignorance and disease<sup>59</sup> in Tanzania. The aim was to reduce poverty and create an egalitarian society (Nyerere 1968a:103). Despite these measures, abject poverty still persists especially in rural areas. This section highlights some historical factors that are often cited as having played a significant role in the undermining of economic development in Tanzania. While relying on some indicators of human development, the section also demonstrates how rural Tanzania is associated with destitution. The Government's initiative to combat poverty in rural areas is also outlined in this section.

#### **3.4.1 A Bird's Eye View on Historical Factors**

Though it is not the aim of this work to revisit historical wrongs such as the slave trade, colonialism and wars against foreign invasion, I wish to highlight some of the social and economic damage that they caused.

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<sup>58</sup> These categories are listed as follows: first, metallic minerals that include: gold, iron ore, nickel, copper, cobalt, platinum, and silver. Second, gemstones or precious stones to which belong diamonds, tanzanite, ruby, rhodolite, garnets and sapphire, emerald, amethyst, alexandrite, chrysoprase, peridot, tormaline and pearl. The third category involves industrial minerals such as limestone, soda ash, gypsum, salt, kaolin, bentonite, tin and phosphates. Fourth, energy source minerals such as coal, uranium and natural gas. The fifth category consists of construction minerals such as aggregates, gravel, sand, and so on (Minesite Tanzania 2014: np). The government owned newspaper *Daily News* (2015:np) reports that 'Tanzania is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest gold producer in Africa after South Africa, Ghana and Mali and is the sole producer of the precious stone Tanzanite in the world.'

<sup>59</sup> Efforts to reduce poverty, according to Kessy et al (2013:1) can be assessed under three periods: the post-independence period (1961-7); the post-Arusha period (1967-early 1980s) & poverty reduction during the 2000s.

There is no doubt that slave trade and colonialism left the African continent wounded and deprived of its resources, both human and natural. The dehumanising effects of the slave trade are still fresh in the minds of many Tanzanians (Magesa 1986:2-3). The residues of the route of the slave trade from Zanzibar to Lake Tanganyika and other parts of the country are still visible with Bagamoyo, Kilwa and Zanzibar<sup>60</sup> noted as the most famous slave markets in Tanzania. Tippu Tip (1837-1905), whose real name was Hamed bin Muhammed el Murjeb, became a famous slave and ivory trader who ventured into the interior of Tanganyika and the Upper Congo to acquire slaves and ivory. Slaves on this route were taken to Bagamoyo — and those from the southern route were brought to Kilwa — then sold and shipped to Zanzibar for sale to farmers who had clove plantations in Zanzibar and Pemba; many others were shipped to overseas destinations (Magesa 1986:6). This was a severe form of cruelty. Human beings were treated as objects that one can buy and sell. Even ‘their sexual and reproductive capacities,’ writes Magesa (1986:8-9), ‘belonged to the master. It is he who could determine their use. Thus, male slaves who were taken to Persia, Arabia and Muslim North Africa were invariably castrated.’ The slave trade caused a disruption of culture as people were uprooted from their cultures and ‘sold like chattels to the highest bidder’ (Magesa 1986:12).

Colonialism was institutionalised in Tanganyika from 1884 to 1961. It all started with Karl Peters (German) who manipulated the local chiefs to make contracts with him, surrendering their territories to Germans who were, by that time, under the leadership of Bismarck (Magesa 1986:14-15). Karl Peters’ efforts were seconded by the military forces of Herman von Wissmann whose financial support also came from Bismarck. Tanganyika officially became a German colony in 1890, and, together with Rwanda and Burundi, formed the so-called German East Africa. Julius von Soden became its first governor in 1891 (Magesa 1986:15). The German colonial rule was violent and cruel. People (especially the male population) were forced to abandon their villages and sent to work on cotton plantations; those perceived as working lazily were harshly punished using the whip called the *kiboko* made of hippopotamus hide (Goliama 2013:36; Magesa 1986:20-21). The harshness of the Germans and their appointed taskmasters provoked anger against German colonialism. The imposition of the ‘hut tax’ in 1897 obliged people to begin planting ‘cash crops such as coco palms, sesame and cotton’ in order to get money to pay taxes (Magesa 1986:18; Shivji 1976:32). The Germans replaced some local chiefs with some puppets they believed would work for them, especially

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<sup>60</sup> The slave trade in Tanzania reached its apex in the period from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. The Zanzibar slave market was declared illegal and closed in 1873 by the British (Smith 2010: np). Despite this closure, it ‘continued to operate even as late as 1920’ (Magesa 1986:6).

collecting taxes. Groups of resistance emerged in different parts of the country to oppose the cruelty of Germans in the period between 1890 and 1907<sup>61</sup>.

The Diocese of Mbinga, as mentioned above (1.2), is located in the Ruvuma Region. During colonial rule, both the Germans and the British used Ruvuma as a reserve of cheap and unskilled labour (*manamba*) for their sisal and cotton plantations in the regions of Tanga, Morogoro and Dar es Salaam (Nyumayo 1980:44). This deprived Ruvuma of its active labour force. In terms of infrastructure (roads and social services) the region is still poor. The marginalisation of Ruvuma continued even after independence because in the early 1970s, the region received refugees and freedom fighters from Mozambique. Since the region shares a border with Mozambique, it was deemed too risky to invest in Ruvuma (Goliama 2013:38). The first tarmac road to reach Ruvuma region was inaugurated in 1985, and it reached Mbinga in 2011. The war between Tanzania and Uganda (1978-1979) also left the country in a deep economic crisis, and its effects are still felt today in several rural areas.

Generally, the level of poverty in rural Tanzania is higher than what one perceives in urban areas. This is due to the fact that urban households have higher per capita incomes, access to good quality education, assets ownership, and other social services (WBG 2015:54-55). This, however, does not ignore the poor living conditions that are notorious in slums and informal settlements near our cities. Rural areas mirror abject poverty, few assets, weak social networks, unemployment, marginality and vulnerability (Goliama 2013:29). Nassoro W. Malocho the then Minister of State, Planning and Parastatal Sector Reform correctly writes:

As we approach the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the problems facing rural areas in developing countries like Tanzania are numerous and formidable. Social and Economic services are deteriorating and proving to be unsustainable; school enrolment rates are declining; food situation is precarious; infant and maternal mortality rates continue to be high; unemployment is on the rise triggering off mass migration of youth from the rural areas into already overcrowded urban centres; in Ruvuma Region, for example, land pressure is escalating and deforestation is going on at an alarming rate (PCD & RCOR 1997:v).

Despite some signs of economic growth, estimated at the rate of 7% (UNDP 2016:np) and the establishment of internal peace and security, and some advances made in democratic

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<sup>61</sup> The Hehe people under the leadership of Chief Mkwawa fought against Emil von Zelewski from 1891-1898; the Chagga against Karl Peters in 1892; the Nyamwezi went against Emin Pasha in 1893; and the famous Maji-Maji war that brought together 20 tribes of the southern regions of Tanganyika under the leadership of Kinjikitile Ngwale fought against German rule from 1905-1907 (Magesa 1986:15; Kentake 2015:np). The aim was to combat taxation, forced labour and collaboration between the German rule and some missionaries who forced people to abandon the worship of their ancestors' spirits (*mahoka*) (Goliama 2013:37). The German regime in German East Africa ended in 1917. Rwanda and Burundi were mandated to Belgium, and Tanganyika to Britain. After the end of World War II (1939-1945), the newly formed UNO entrusted Tanganyika to Britain until December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1961 when Tanganyika achieved its independence (Magesa 1986:16-17).

development, Tanzania remains a poor country. As a result, 12 million Tanzanians ‘live below the national poverty line, almost unchanged from 2007’ (WB 2016:np). Of these 4.2 million are deemed to live in extreme poverty (WBG 2015:19). Uncontrolled population growth<sup>62</sup> in developing countries like Tanzania is also considered as one of the factors that leads to a high rate of youth unemployment, income disparities, and poor social services (UNDP 2016:np).

### **3.4.2 Indicators of Human Development**

Three elements appear as of paramount importance in measuring human development in any society: life expectancy, the level and quality of education and living standards. First, as far as life expectancy is concerned, Tanzania has managed to reduce child and infant mortality from 81 per 1000 live births in 2010 to 45 in 2012. The target was to reduce infant mortality to 38 per 1000 live births in 2015 (UNDP & URT 2015:xii). The standstill life expectancy (51 years) that prevailed in the late 1980s and early 1990s was adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic that claimed a lot of lives; the majority of premature deaths were registered within the age group 15-49 (NBS 2013:31). Tanzania diagnosed and registered the first case of HIV/AIDS in 1983 (UNDP & URT 2015:12). Cases of under-nutrition and malnutrition are still frequent in rural areas affecting children aged 0 to 5. It is said that chronic malnutrition causes about ‘one third of under-five year old deaths’ in Tanzania (UNDP & URT 2015:xii), and of children who survive child mortality, most of them suffer ‘from one or another form of brain damage’ (Magesa 1990:103; Evans & Da Corta 2013:110 UNDP & URT 2015:12-13).

The second indicator of human development concerns the levels and quality of education. The more people have access to education, the more they improve their living conditions. In Tanzania, it is estimated that about 78% of children in rural areas attend primary education, and about 88% in urban areas. Comparisons in terms of households’ economic possibilities indicate that 90% of children from the wealthiest families attend primary education, and 68% of children from the least wealthy households do so (UNDP & URT 2015:13). Children from vulnerable families usually do not complete their intended level of education because the rate

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<sup>62</sup> The high rate theory of population growth, however, does not go without criticism. Magesa (1990:105) disagrees with it and raises a series of questions to undermine its legitimacy.

of dropout is high among them<sup>63</sup>. Since 2016, the Government of Tanzania has introduced free primary education (Standard I-VII) and secondary education (Form I-IV). The number of students enrolled in primary and secondary schools has drastically increased owing to the fact that those from poor families now have access to education (Robi 2016:np). The increase has come with its challenges. Most schools in rural areas have insufficient classrooms, desks, tables, chairs, textbooks, electricity, and latrines. As a result, some schools have excessively large class sizes and overcrowded classrooms. This affects teaching and learning. The weaker pupils remain disadvantaged. Poor performance frustrates some teachers because people often treat them as incompetent professionals. The unsuitable learning environment also increases the rate of truancy, absenteeism and drop-outs in rural schools (PCD & RCOR 1997:83).

The third indicator concerns the living standards. In assessing this we consider people's living conditions and the access they have to social services. Things like clean and safe water, the type of cooking fuel, sanitation, electricity, and housing conditions that are available are examined. In general, 'living standards in Tanzania are poor. The situation is worse in rural areas, mainly because the agricultural sector, which is the main source of income, has been growing at around 4.2%' (UNDP & URT 2015:16). A large number of Tanzanians still live in poor houses made of mud and poles, roofed with grass, and have earthed floors<sup>64</sup>. Many households also lack sanitation facilities, especially in rural areas (UNDP & URT 2015:17). Few houses have clean and safe drinking water (UNDP & URT 2015:16; Éla 1994:137). This means that most Tanzanians in rural areas are exposed to unsafe drinking water<sup>65</sup>. When it comes to cooking fuel, most Tanzanians use the so-called 'solid fuels' that consist of firewood, charcoal, straw, grass and in some cases, dry animal dung, especially cow and donkey dung. The solid fuels are known to be the root cause of pollution (indoor smoke) and the health of people who depend on these fuels is often adversely affected.

Types of employment, level of education, religious beliefs, and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds also play a great role in determining what people would like to own. Having

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<sup>63</sup> The root causes of drop-outs are listed as follows: poverty forces children to drop schooling and start working; cultural beliefs and customs; pregnancy related cases; cultural rites of initiation in some rural areas; and child marriages. Many girls stop schooling after primary education (UNDP & URT 2015:14; PMO 2001:16).

<sup>64</sup> Most of these houses need renovation every year, and in some cases after every three years a poor person needs to build a new house. Often grass-roofed houses cause leakage during the rainy season, and they are at risk during the dry season because of uncontrolled bush/wild fires.

<sup>65</sup> In Mbinga Diocese, for example, people drink from wells, rivers and a few families collect water using hoses from the sources of water situated in the Matengo highlands. With the exception of a few, people drink unclean water, thus leading to recurring water-based diseases such as typhoid, dysentery, bilharzias and cholera. Griffiths (2008:1-74) and Stanwell-Smith (2009:1-14) give a list of waterborne and water-related diseases.

assets for a Maasai would mean to have a kraal with some cows in it. A peasant would consider owning farmland as a key asset. The assets that rural people count as of great importance may appeal less to urban dwellers. Narayan et al (1999:39-48) discuss four types of assets of the poor. First, 'physical capital,' to which belongs land and productive assets like livestock. The second group of assets, 'human capital,' includes health, education and labour. This is an important asset, especially for people who have no physical assets. Such people rely on their capacity to work. Illness reduces their capacity to work and drains their resources as they try to take care of a sick person. The third asset is 'social capital.' Poor people have no income that could allow them to have formal insurance to cope with unforeseen crises such as health problems, loss of jobs and natural disasters. Keeping good relationship with friends, colleagues and neighbours in this case matters a lot because the poor can support each other when facing a crisis (Narayan et al 1999:44). Extended families can be a source of help during a crisis, but also a source of expense and poverty when families load demands on their rich relatives. The fourth asset, 'environmental assets,' consists of things like water, marine and forestry resources, non-timber products, and so on. Poor people depend on nature for survival. They collect foodstuffs (mushrooms, fruit, edible herbs) from bushes. They find building materials and fuel from forests, and they supplement their food with fish from rivers and other water bodies. Thus, environmental and catchment degradation due to erosion, deforestation and depletion of some resources pose a threat to poor people (Narayan et al 1999:46). In a study carried out in different nations by Narayan et al (2000:25-28; and also Ådahl 2007:10), the poor noted the following components as indicators of wellbeing: enough food, right to own assets, employment, access to justice, guarantee of security and safe environment, ability 'to care for, bring up, marry and settle children' (Narayan et al 2000:26); have good family relations, self-respect and dignity, and freedom to choose and work according to one's capacity and interests. The opposite of wellbeing, which is illbeing, results from a lack of these components (:31-36). The consequences of illbeing manifest themselves at both physical and psychological levels thus causing in a person feelings of humiliation, shame, stigma, anguish, loss and grief (:25-28:37-40).

### **3.4.3 Government' s Initiatives to Alleviate Rural Poverty**

During the first decade of independence (1961-1971) and the subsequent years until 1979, the Government of Tanzania introduced various programmes as an attempt to alleviate poverty in rural areas. 'Among a series of programmes geared towards eliminating poverty were the improvement and transformation approaches; village settlements; agriculture-related

campaigns and programmes; nationalisation and villagisation; and cooperative movements' (Mashindano & Shepherd 2013:2). It was during this period that Tanzania 'registered high social development indicators in primary enrolments and literacy rates' (PMO 2001:1).

In the early 1980s, Tanzania was obliged to take serious measures to reform and address its economic challenges, partly caused by a flawed policy of villagisation and also by the recently ended Tanzania-Uganda war. Some of the reforms came from within and others, for example, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and the Poverty Reduction Strategies Programme (PRSP), were recommended by the IMF and WB. These programmes aimed at giving an alternative solution to poor economic situations in developing countries. One of the strategies was to liberalise trade and 'create an environment conducive to private investment, among other objectives' (Mashindano & Shepherd 2013:2). Despite policies of liberalism that took place in the early 1990s, rural Tanzania remained poor and the situation of peasants continued to worsen. The agricultural sector performed badly in the early 1980s and this pushed the government to find measures to increase productivity. A number of reasons explain why the Government of Tanzania needed to introduce a Rural Development Strategy (RDS). It was noted that the efforts of rural peasants to increase agricultural productivity were often hindered by the lack of markets. Access to urban markets was limited due to poor transport infrastructure. The government's initiatives to introduce some macroeconomic plans did obscure rural development thus leading to low agricultural productivity in rural areas. There was also a concern to diversify economic activities in rural areas instead of relying only on agricultural productivity (PMO 2001:1-2). Thus, the RDS was launched in 2001 as a strategy for freeing rural areas from poor living conditions (PMO 2001:3). One laudable approach of the RDS was that people from the grassroots were permitted to air their opinions concerning its planning and implementation (PMO 2001:10). However, its implementation remained a challenge.

As part of the vision towards achieving the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), the Government of Tanzania introduced other initiatives and strategies that aimed at reducing 'poverty, hunger, diseases, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women' (VPO 2005:1; Ådahl 2007:5). The first National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP or MKUKUTA I) was launched in 2005; this was after realising that the previous structural strategies were not effective. Though economic performance at the macro-level showed some positive signs, its growth was not translated into rural realities. Poverty remained high in rural areas and it was the aim of the NSGRP to ensure that those who were



living below the national poverty line must be reduced by half by 2010. MKUKUTA I registered some encouraging achievements, e.g. '[s]ome 2,171 new public secondary schools were built in the last five years through community participation and government cooperation. This is a notable achievement given that only 1,202 secondary schools were constructed between Independence in 1961 and 2005' (MFEA 2010:vii).

### **3.5 Poverty as a Tangible Reality in Mbinga Diocese**

According to Gutiérrez (1983:27), academics need to move out of their own narrow world if they want to be in touch with the real life that people live. This demands opening one's eyes and listening to the poor in order to detect negative forces that keep them oppressed, exploited and marginalised. This section analyses the socioeconomic conditions of rural Mbinga. First, it focuses on natural resources and various economic activities that are carried out in Mbinga. Second, the section underlines factors that continue to impoverish rural people. Third, it illustrates concrete examples of poverty in rural Mbinga. Fourth, the section shows how people, despite abject poverty, manage their lives. Fifth, it reports on the contribution of the church to the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease.

#### **3.5.1 Natural Resources and Economic Activities**

The districts of Mbinga and Nyasa are blessed with a favourable climate for agriculture. The land is rich and fertile. A huge reserve of coal is found in the Mbinga district at Ngaka coalfields in the ward of Ruanda, and the mining activities are going on there (Obulutsa 2009:np). Coal is also found in Mbamba Bay in Nyasa district, but is not yet exploited (PCD & RCOR 1997:64). Sapphires are extracted by small-scale miners at Masuguru in Amani Makoro and Ngembambili in the ward of Mkako (Nyenjembe 2012:151-152). Small-scale gold mining is done at Lukarasi and Lupilo in the Mbinga district, and Dar Pori<sup>66</sup> (Mpepo), Liparamba and Mipotopoto in the Nyasa district (PCD & RCOR 1997:25). Liparamba Game Reserve is located in the district of Nyasa and it covers an area of about 571 km<sup>2</sup> (Hahn 2004:22). A number of rivers (Ruhuhu, Lumeme, Lukumbo, Ruekehi) are flowing from the Matengo highlands to Lake Nyasa 'to feed the lake and form the catchments that support aquatic life' (Nindi 2007:71). People living along these rivers carry out some agricultural activities during the dry season. The natural vegetation of Mbinga and Nyasa is mainly

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<sup>66</sup> According to Nyenyembe (2012:129-130), '[t]he place is nicknamed *Dar-Pori* to reflect a huge crowd of people who flocked to the place during the rush season between 1993 and 2000. It was compared with Dar-es-salaam which is the largest commercial city of Tanzania. To distinguish it from the city of Dar Es Salaam they qualified the place as "Dar Pori" literally to mean "Dar-es-salaam in the Bush."

miombo woodland. As pointed out above (1.2), agriculture is the main economic activity in Mbinga Diocese<sup>67</sup>. Small-scale fishing is carried out on Lake Nyasa in the Nyasa district. Other economic activities include livestock raising, fishponds and beekeeping (ESRF 2014:43; Chinyuka 2005:6).

In the Matengo highlands, ‘ngoro’<sup>68</sup> is used as a method of conserving soil, maintaining soil fertility, increasing soil moisture and controlling soil erosion on steep slopes. By nature, the Matengo live in communal settings (hamlets) according to their clans, and most agricultural activities are done in groups (Mhando & Itani 2007:42). People support each other in the cultivation and harvesting of coffee and food crops (Nindi 2007:75-76; Nyumayo 1980:69). The coffee curing factory in Mbinga employs only a small number of workers. Few people are employed in public and private sectors, and others, especially men, are involved in carpentry, masonry, garment tailoring, bicycle and motorbike repair, and riding motorbikes as taxis known as ‘bodaboda’. Barter trade still exists between the Nyasa and Matengo people. In every village, one finds petty traders who sell all kinds of things, especially household goods. Diesel-powered milling machines are found in every village for grinding maize, wheat and cassava.

Tourism is another area that needs to be explored. The parish church of Kigonsera (built in 1899) still serves as a strong and attractive building to admire. Lake Nyasa and its sandy beaches provide a beautiful scenario, and there is room for water sports. Tourist hotels could be built on its shores. The Mbuji Rock that stands as high as a hill is another panoramic feature to admire in Litembo parish. There are also attractive war memorials and historical caves in the Matengo highlands that, if advertised, could become touristic sites.

### 3.5.2 Underlying Factors of Impoverishment

During the CBS sessions, a number of factors categorised as natural and man-made were identified as the underlying forces of impoverishment and poverty<sup>69</sup> in Mbinga Diocese. We begin with natural factors. First, the persistence of plant and crop diseases: between 2009 and

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<sup>67</sup> The use of hand-hoes characterises farming in Mbinga and Nyasa. This means that many peasants are able to produce crops for subsistence and very little for sale (Nindi 2007:76; Kayombo 2006:3).

<sup>68</sup> The Matengo word ‘ngoro’ refers to ‘an indigenous means of soil, water and nutrient conservation for land cultivation on steep slopes of the Matengo Highlands of Mbinga district, South West Tanzania. It consists of a series of regular pits, traditionally 1.5m square by 0.1–0.5m deep with the crops grown on the bund walls around the pits’ (Kayombo 2006:2; Kayombo et al 2015:96; Itani 1998:58-66).

<sup>69</sup> Two Kiswahili words *umaskini* and *ufukara* are often used to mean poverty. In rural Mbinga, the noun *maskini* is ambivalent in its use. It may mean either material poverty or a person suffering from any form of physical disability though some of them are not materially poor (Ådahl 2007:9). So, attention must be paid to what they mean by *umaskini*. The second term *fukara*, unlike *maskini*, always denotes material poverty (Ådahl 2007:9-10).

2013, coffee farms were attacked by a disease locally called *ipolomba*<sup>70</sup> that caused severe damage on all coffee farms in the Matengo highlands. This disease reduced the productivity of coffee almost to zero. Due to poverty, many peasants failed to cope with the exorbitant prices of pesticides. Second, rainfall fluctuations. Though Mbinga receives sufficient rain, fluctuating patterns of rainfall cause a serious problem. The first rainfall in November is important because it helps the flowering of coffee trees. Thus any irregular rainfall noted during this period remains a worrying concern for coffee growers.

Human factors were identified and listed as follows: first, liberalisation of the coffee market. This was introduced in 1993 and it started taking effect with the 1994/1995 coffee harvest season. The aim was to permit private coffee buyers and market forces to have control of coffee prices in agreement with farmers. It was also thought that competition among buyers would eventually raise the price of coffee. The beginning of free markets was promising as farmers realised that the market was close to them; they could sell coffee and get paid immediately. However, the honeymoon period did not last long<sup>71</sup>. The traditional co-operative unions that used to facilitate the sale of coffee standing between farmers and buyers by then had vanished. The absence of co-operative unions meant the disappearance of agricultural input subsidies from which farmers used to benefit<sup>72</sup>. These inputs (fertiliser, improved seeds, pesticides, and so on) were now supplied and sold by business people who form cartels to agree to exorbitant prices. This was the beginning of the crisis for coffee producers in the Matengo highlands<sup>73</sup>. Liberalisation also encouraged people to sell their coffee in advance through ‘a supply driven credit system’ also known as the ‘magoma system’ (Paschal 2004:2; Mhando 2007:46). One of the CBS participants in Maguu parish, Kisarindimbi Hyera (not his real name), when asked to give his impression on the practice of *magoma*, replied:

I feel as if the government does not care about us poor farmers, the rich are making huge profits, they do not see our problems. It is indeed a modern slavery. I work hard in my coffee farm, but the fruit of the work goes to rich people to whom I owe the money received in credit. I work for them. I had no other means; I needed the money to cover hospital expenses of my wife who was hospitalised for two weeks. A few days ago, I sold three goats and two pigs in order to cover my

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<sup>70</sup> Other coffee diseases were listed as: White Coffee Borer (*bungua*) (WCB); Coffee Mealy Bug (CMB); Coffee Berry Borer (CBB); Coffee Berry Disease (CBD); and Coffee Leaf Rust (CLR) (ICRA 1991:19).

<sup>71</sup> Paschal (2004:2; and also Mhando & Itani 2007:43) concurs with what the CBS participants narrated during our sessions.

<sup>72</sup> Chemical fertilisers and agro-chemicals used to be subsidised by the Mbinga Cooperative Union (MBICU) which was established in 1989. MBICU played a great role in supplying agricultural inputs on a loan basis. It began to collapse in 1993 when liberalisation of the coffee free market was introduced and this reduced its capacity to compete with private coffee buyers (Mhando & Itani 2007:44-46).

<sup>73</sup> Paschal (2004:1) equates trade liberalisation to ‘suicide’ as some coffee growers, through mortgaging their farms, ended up surrendering the farms to their creditors.

debt to another business man who had threatened to take me to court if I delayed to pay him. Certainly I was not ready to face the court that is why I decided to sell some animals.

The experience of Kisarindimbi Hyera is just one case among many. Paschal (2004:2) had a similar reaction from a farmer in the Matengo highlands, a victim of the Magoma system, who said: 'It is true liberalization has left us not only poorer, but also heavily indebted.'

Second, we should mention poor agricultural, fishing and mining technologies. Farmers, fishermen and craftsman miners in Mbinga Diocese still rely on primitive ways of carrying out their activities<sup>74</sup>. This diminishes their produce output. Those who grow only maize for both food and cash find it even harder than their counterparts in the Matengo highlands, who produce coffee for cash and maize for subsistence. Maize producers have to work hard so as to increase their production and in this way have some money in reserve to use for subsistence and family expenses.

The third human factor is related to a polygamous situation. In Mbinga Diocese, it is observed that among men, polygamy forms part of their social reality. One of the factors to explain this situation is associated with farming activities. Coffee farms demand large number of labourers. Men who have big coffee farms need many workers to manage coffee cultivation and harvesting. In most cases, the husband, his wives and their children live in the same compound. This has become a cause of quarrels in some families (Kinunda 2009:57). Due to the shortage of land, most of them do not expand their farms. Poor living conditions are visible in such families. The death of a husband often turns into a serious fight over the right to inherit the land and a coffee farm. Some family members begin to accuse each other of witchcraft practices. In reality, it is not witchcraft that makes them fight, but the scarce resources they have. Jealousy between wives, as noted by Ntshangase (2000:43), appears to be a common phenomenon in polygamous families. In Mikalanga parish, the CBS participants (female) argued against polygamy to the point of suggesting that polygamy be declared illegal by the government. As noted above (3.2), the majority of the inhabitants of Mbinga Diocese are Christians (85% Catholics), polygamy then raises a pastoral concern and challenge to Christianity which preaches monogamous marriage. Behind polygamy, there is, to a large extent, economic motivation (Kessy & Tarmo 2013:38; Joinet 1985:31). Another reason to justify polygamy, though not often cited, could be the search for honour. Some men think that the more wives one has, the more one's social status increases.

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<sup>74</sup> Regarding use of primitive tools, Nyerere (in Smith 1981:11) laments that '[o]ur tools are as old as Mohammad. We live in houses from the time of Moses.'

Fourth, witchcraft, or *uchawi*, as it is called in Kiswahili, remains a serious problem in Mbinga Diocese<sup>75</sup>. One would think that illiteracy makes people believe in witchcraft; unfortunately this is not always the case. The problem of witchcraft is found even among educated and religious people — indeed, a rural and urban problem. The Government of Tanzania does not believe in witchcraft; it is illegal to lay accusations on someone, based on witchcraft beliefs. However, a number of politicians and governmental officials seem to believe in witchcraft. Few Tanzanian politicians have tried to challenge it in public (Miguel 2002:4). Very few people in Mbinga Diocese have the courage to reject witchcraft. It is indeed a pastoral problem. It becomes even more acute when we have pastoral agents (priests, religious and catechists) believing in and promoting witchcraft. The death of a person is always associated with witchcraft (Miguel 2002:3; Mair 1969:10). Even if a person has died of a known disease like malaria, cancer or HIV/AIDS, the death will still be attributed to witchcraft. The spread of HIV/AIDS is also associated with such beliefs because people do not take precautions when it comes to marrying a widow/widower. A sum of money is often spent to hire a witch-finder to detect those who were behind the death of a deceased person<sup>76</sup>. The problem of witchcraft is sensitive and it involves emotional reactions and often awkward decisions<sup>77</sup>. In some cases, young people are hesitant to build a decent house or cultivate a big farm of coffee or maize because they fear being bewitched (Kessy & Tarmo 2013:33). People who work hard and have good harvests are sometimes accused of witchcraft and are believed to have used magic to harvest from their neighbours' farms<sup>78</sup>. As far as education is concerned, some families do not send their children to secondary schools because they believe that their jealous neighbours will cause harm to their learned children. A number of successful men and women who have businesses/jobs in cities often do not return to their villages; they claim that they fear witchcraft. However, the real reason could be to avoid responding to financial pressures likely to be imposed on them by family members.

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<sup>75</sup> The problem of witchcraft is a widespread phenomenon in Tanzania and sub-Saharan Africa. Allegations of witchcraft are also reported in countries like Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique, Uganda and Kenya. In these countries there have been cases of old people getting killed, especially widows accused of practising witchcraft (Mesaki 1993:9-26). The killing of albinos in some regions of Tanzania is linked to ritual murders and witchcraft practices. Some individuals 'still believe that spilling albinos' blood will yield better crops, guarantee business success, help in passing examinations, help in winning elections, drive off evil spirits and facilitate financial success' (Nyenyeembe 2012:164-165). This also involves the killing of children who are often found dead with their genitals removed (Miguel 2002:17; Mair 1969:102; Byrnes 2015:np).

<sup>76</sup> The shame imposed on the accused of witchcraft sometimes leads to suicide (Kinunda 2009:78-79).

<sup>77</sup> Mesaki (1993:19-20) reports an incident that took place in Songea (Ruvuma region) where villagers held meetings to cast votes to identify witches. 'As a result, contributions were made to enable those indicated as witches to travel to Bibi Kalembwana, the anti-witchcraft expert in Mahenge district, for "cleansing" rituals.'

<sup>78</sup> In an interview, Kessy & Tarmo (2013:33) report the response of an informant who believes that some people have power to 'make crops thrive well in their own farms at the expense of their neighbours farms.'

Fifth, the problem of property grabbing. Though this problem is not widespread, some widows and orphans are known to have lost their property, especially land and coffee farms, to their greedy relatives. This mainly happens when the widow remarries. The situation is even worse when the widow has no children. It is noted as well that though the law stipulates in favour of women's ownership of productive assets, the interpretation of this particular law often 'take[s] into account the customs of the community to which the parties belong, even if such customs are discriminatory' (Da Corta & Magongo 2013:59). Poverty among women is partly caused by these discriminatory cultural customs, religious beliefs and a patriarchal mentality (Mulisa 2017:np; Social Watch 2004:2; Ådahl 2007:12-13; Addae-Korankye 2014:151). Traditionally, a man is treated as the head of his family; whatever the family owns is under his supervision. When a woman is divorced, she generally loses almost everything.

Sixth, the problem of illiteracy: the number of illiterate people in rural areas is on the increase. The number went down when an adult education programme was compulsory in every village. This worked well and, at one time, Tanzania was acknowledged as one of the developing countries that tried to reduce illiteracy to the minimum (Kamuzora 2009:3). Illiteracy is a source of many problems in society including poor production, health problems, superstition and poor budgeting. Public schools and other social services are in a poor condition.

Other causes of poverty as highlighted by the CBS participants were as follows: lack of good leadership, corruption, poor infrastructure, unemployment, overpopulation due to the lack of family planning, and discrimination based on gender and age. Some participants also underlined environmental degradation as a serious problem that continues to hinder economic development in rural Mbinga. Its effects put pressure on women who have to walk long distances in search of firewood and water. This overburdens women who are already involved in many household chores and farming. Our Christian faith in this situation calls us to act in favour of the poor (Joinet 1985:59). Poor implementation of Ujamaa policies was also cited as a setback that left many rural dwellers in destitution.

### **3.5.3 Illustration of Rural Socioeconomic Conditions**

In Mbinga Diocese, though people seem to be managing well as far as food, shelter and clothing are concerned, poverty remains a striking phenomenon in every village. Most government-run health facilities (hospitals, health centres and dispensaries) are faced with the problem of poor infrastructure, lack of qualified staff (clinical officers, laboratory technicians,

nurses and doctors), medical equipment and medicine. In some areas, people walk long distances to reach health centres only to be told that the medicine they require is not available. They are often served with prescriptions and advised to buy from private pharmacies. In most cases, these pharmacies are owned by the same government health personnel. The Church is considered as a competent partner when it comes to offering health facilities<sup>79</sup>. The following diseases seem to recur quite often in rural Mbinga: malaria, typhoid, cholera, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

In rural areas, one also observes an increase of people who abuse locally brewed alcohol made from agricultural products such as maize, cassava and finger millets. Men are often seen drinking and sometimes even during working hours. Tendencies to loiter, drunkenness and indolence are not to be underestimated either. Local governments have stipulated laws to prohibit drinking during working hours, but this is still far from being effective. Most rural areas in Mbinga Diocese have no electricity; however the minority blessed with economic means manage to buy photovoltaic solar panels for private use. Nyasa and Mbinga are not yet connected to the national grid. The town of Mbinga uses diesel generators supplied by TANESCO to produce electricity. Efforts are underway to supply electricity to rural areas under the programme coined Rural Energy Agency (REA). With the exception of Mbinga town, rural dwellers use firewood and crop residues as fuel for cooking (ESRF 2014:xvii).

Bad farming practices have contributed to deforestation and soil impoverishment in Mbinga and Nyasa (Sturman & Bello 2014:9; ICRA 1991:100). The uncoordinated farming activities continue to cause severe sedimentation in rivers and Lake Nyasa (Nindi 2007:72; Nyenyembe 2012:159). In some areas, peasants cannot produce food crops without using chemical fertilizers. Formal employment is scarce in Mbinga because there are no factories (except Mbinga Coffee curing), no supermarkets or agro-businesses. When it comes to searching for employment and doing business, women remain the most disadvantaged group because of gender prejudice and a patriarchal mentality (PMO 2001:23). With few exceptions, women and men in rural Mbinga are involved in agricultural activities.

The Diocese of Mbinga is faced with the problem of transport infrastructure. All the roads that connect different villages, wards and divisions are not tarmac surfaced. These include

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<sup>79</sup> In Mbinga and Nyasa there are five hospitals: a district government hospital (Mbuyula) and the remaining four: Litembo, Lituhi and Ruanda are owned by Mbinga Diocese, and Liuli by the Anglican Church. In total, the Diocese of Mbinga has 18 health facilities: 3 hospitals (Litembo, Ruanda, Lituhi); 4 health centres (Maguu, Mpapa, Mpepai, Kigonsera) and some 11 dispensaries (Ndunguru 2015:np).

trunk, regional, district and feeder roads (PCB & RCOR 1997:68; ICRA 1991:19-20). They are either gravel or earth surfaced. During the rainy season, it is almost impossible to drive on the earth surfaced roads (Kayombo 2006:3; ESRF 2014:xviii). Transport becomes a problem and most people travel on foot, by bicycles, and those with some economic means buy/hire a motorbike. It is difficult to transport agricultural products to the market during the rainy season or to reach mining areas such as Dar Pori (Mpepo) (Nyenyeembe 2012:133). The Mbamba Bay-Songea road links Mbinga Diocese with other regions of Tanzania. The road is 170 km, but only 94 km, between Songea and Mbinga town, are tarmac surfaced and of these, 44 km belong to the territory of Mbinga Diocese. During the rainy season, travelling is difficult in the Matengo highlands. Marine transport is available on Lake Nyasa. People who live on the lakeshore often travel by boat and some villagers, though not safe, use canoes (ESRF 2014:xviii; PCB & RCOR 1997:74). There are three malfunctioning aerodromes in the area: one in Mbinga town, and two in Nyasa at Kilosa and Liuli. Landline phones and postal services are found in Mbinga town. Thanks to mobile phones, communication is now possible in rural areas. The dominance of one political party, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi*<sup>80</sup> (CCM), in Mbinga and Nyasa lessens the possibility of challenging and calling the government to account. Most rural people consider the police and judges to be incompetent and corrupt. The poor often lose the case because they have no money to bribe the court authority or seek legal support. As a result, every year, cases of mob justice take place. Its victims have no chance to defend themselves, and in some cases, an innocent person is killed because someone shouted ‘thief!’ A conflict between two individuals can, and sometimes is manipulated to incite mob justice against an innocent party.

### 3.5.4 Coping with Rural Socioeconomic Challenges

In doing social analysis, it would be unfair if we only considered the forces of death and failed to appreciate what has enabled people to survive thus far. According to Philpott, suffering and hope are ‘in fact integrally linked; two “ways of being” within the same reality, a reality in which both suffering and hope are present and interact with each other’ (Philpott 1993:31). In its struggle to combat social injustice and poverty, humanity does not resign itself or descend into helplessness, but awaits an opportune time to emancipate itself. The CBS participants first affirmed that poverty has not shaken their faith; in fact it is because of

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<sup>80</sup> The name *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* literally means ‘Party of the Revolution.’ It was formed in 1977 after merging two political parties the ‘Tanganyika African National Union’ (TANU), which was the sole political party in Tanzania-mainland, and the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) which operated in Tanzania-Zanzibar. Julius Kambarage Nyerere became its first chairperson.



faith in the living God that they are able to face the challenges of life with unwavering hope. They seemed to wonder what would have become of them if they had no faith in Jesus Christ. Faith engenders hope.

A few farmers' associations are in existence in rural areas and their members are allowed to take credit at low interest rates to support agricultural activities. Funeral and burial clubs are popular in every parish in Mbinga Diocese, and they have proved to be very effective. Through such clubs, even a poor person when deceased receives a decent burial. The CBS members also said that their freedom is not completely hampered because they have the opportunity to celebrate life through traditional dances, sports, conviviality, worship, festivals, religious and cultural events. There is a bustling life in Mbinga and Nyasa. Poverty has not discouraged the poor from expressing their joys and hopes. What Boff & Pixley (1989:215-218) call 'the culture of freedom' fits well in the context of the poor in rural Mbinga. Small Christian Communities are the source of hope for many people. They meet once a week. During their meetings, they read the Word of God; one member, usually the leader, does the interpretation. An exchange of ideas then follows. Needy people are given food, shelter and clothing<sup>81</sup>. As they use hand hoes, farming is done in groups to support each other. People have learned to survive together. Family members often work together on the farms of sick or bereaved relatives. Orphans are taken care of in families. People participate actively in development projects such as making bricks for new school buildings, dispensaries, churches, and so on.

### **3.5.5 The Church and Poverty Reduction**

The Development Office of Mbinga Diocese has the following mission statement: 'Evangelisation and to facilitate participatory community development and relief work by empowering people irrespective of race, ethnicity, sex or age.' This overview is followed by a statement of two major objectives: first, 'to look for practical ways of addressing the need of human person created in the image of God following the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 13:34)' and second, 'to inspire, stimulate, harmonize and support all activities aimed at ameliorating living conditions of people' (Chinyuka 2005:11). These objectives already articulate the desire of the Church to transform human society into better living conditions. The Diocese of Mbinga sees its mission of evangelisation and proclamation of the Good News as being part and parcel of the work of liberating men and women from social

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<sup>81</sup> Observation made on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2017 while attending a SCC meeting at Mtuha in Maguu parish.

injustice and poverty. As a response to this call, the church in Mbinga, from the very beginning of its evangelisation endeavours, has always been keen to incorporate human development as an integral part of its mission<sup>82</sup>.

The Benedictine missionaries settled and established the first mission station in Ruvuma region at Peramiho in 1898. The following year, 1899, another mission was opened in Kigonsera, which has now become part of Mbinga Diocese. In every mission station, the missionaries ensured that evangelisation was done hand-in-hand with the promotion of human development. Bush-schools<sup>83</sup> were opened to teach children the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. These schools became a perfect place of evangelisation and where the Bible also was read and taught (Magomba 2016:109). A trained catechist also played the role of a teacher; he/she became known as teacher-catechist (Goliama 2013:54).

After establishing parishes, in each parish a primary school was opened and pupils studied up to standard IV. In some parishes, middle schools (standard V-VIII) were opened to further the studies of those who obtained good results in their examinations of Standard IV<sup>84</sup>. In some parishes (Maguu, Lituhi), a domestic school was opened where girls were taught cookery, tailoring, weaving and needlework. It is thanks to Christian missionaries that rural areas in Mbinga and Nyasa had access to formal primary education. In Peramiho, the Benedictine Missionaries opened a Teacher Training College, a Nursing School and a Vocational Training Centre which imparted useful skills of tailoring, carpentry, motor mechanics, leather works, bakery, and masonry works to young people (Goliama 2013:54). The mission schools were also a source of inspiration for African liberation from colonial structures. Julius Kambarage Nyerere, educated in Catholic mission schools, became the first President of Tanganyika. The first Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tanganyika, Oscar Kambona studied in Anglican Middle School at Liuli in Nyasa. Most people who went through mission schools after the independence of Tanganyika became governmental officials, Members of Parliament, ambassadors, and teachers. Some mission stations were involved in farming and livestock raising. Local people were given opportunities to learn how to take care of their own farms and livestock. Otmar Kulsner, a Benedictine Brother, is well known for his great work of

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<sup>82</sup> The Development Office of Mbinga Diocese supervises the following projects: (i) sustainable agriculture; (ii) livestock development; (iii) water supply; (iv) women and development (home craft centres, provisions of soft loans, management of SACCOS); (v) environmental management and conservation; and (vi) relief and social affairs including advice to the victims of HIV/AIDS (Development Office Mbinga Diocese, 13 June 2017).

<sup>83</sup> They were called 'bush-schools' because they were established in the bush at the mission stations with minimal infrastructure (Goliama 2013:54).

<sup>84</sup> The following parishes, each had a middle school: Litembo, Maguu, Mango, Lituhi, Mbinga, and Ruanda.

providing clean and safe water in Mbinga town. The Church, through its personnel (priests, the religious and laity) still continues to promote integral human development.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has analysed important aspects that encompass the current reality of Mbinga Diocese. Economically, rural Mbinga and Nyasa relies on agriculture, fishing, beekeeping, small-scale mining and small businesses. Though rural areas give the impression of backwardness, the chapter has shown that in terms of natural resources, the territory of Mbinga Diocese has the potential for creating economic opportunities. A number of factors (natural and human) have been identified as having contributed to the impoverishment of Mbinga. Natural causes included the prevalence of crop disease, rainfall fluctuations and unfavourable weather conditions. The CBS participants listed the following human factors as being the root causes of poor living conditions in rural areas: liberalisation of agricultural products, polygamy, witchcraft, property grabbing, and illiteracy. Despite destitution, rural people have learnt to survive together through the formation of social support groups and associations.

A variety of initiatives have been taken by the Government of Tanzania to deal with the problem of absolute poverty in rural areas. Programmes such as Rural Development Strategies (RDS), Rural Energy Agency (REA) and National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP I and II) were introduced as an attempt to combat rural poverty. Under such programmes, secondary schools and health facilities, despite challenges, have increased in rural areas. The Diocese of Mbinga is one of the key development partners in Mbinga and Nyasa. It runs a number of kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, dispensaries, health centres and three hospitals. A number of challenges and possibilities as articulated by the CBS participants<sup>85</sup> and as presented above (3.5.2; 3.5.3 & 3.5.4) influenced their reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 in the CBS. As a whole, this chapter has striven to provide an overview of the material, political, historical, religious and cultural context in which Lk 18:35-19:10 was read.

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<sup>85</sup> The contributions of the CBS participants as shown in this chapter were complemented by some reading materials that dealt with the socioeconomic conditions of rural Tanzania and in particular of Mbinga Diocese.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POLITICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURES INFORMING AND SHAPING LUKE'S THEOLOGY OF DESTITUTION AND INCLUSIVENESS

#### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four, by means of socio-historical-critical analysis, studies and articulates the socio-economic and religious climate of the Greco-Roman world when Luke wrote his Gospel<sup>86</sup>. The aim is to become aware of the socio-historical components that possibly influenced the inclusion of the material we read today in the Third Gospel (Esler 1987:2). Each text has its own *Sitz im Leben* 'setting in life' that motivates its writing, reporting and redaction. 'Whenever people write,' says Guttler (1987:8), 'whether it be a newspaper editorial, a commentary on a sports match or a novel, they have to know their subject material well and they need to know who their audience is, and what that audience wants to read.' It is believed that the Third Gospel was written for Christian communities that lived outside Palestine<sup>87</sup>. Luke's excellent Greek makes some biblical scholars speculate that its author was a Greek-

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<sup>86</sup> Though it is not without doubt, a number of biblical scholars agree that the Third Gospel was written 'after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and before the end of the first century' (Esler 1987:27). The debate to establish the date of Luke's authorship is found in Esler (1987:27-29; also Kodell 1982:7; Morris 1988:24-28; Marshall 1978:33-35) where he concludes that 'the most likely date for Luke-Acts appears to lie in the mid-to late eighties or the early nineties of the first century CE.' Luke probably wrote while 'in a city of the Roman Empire where Hellenistic culture was strong or even dominant' (Esler 1987:30). This shows that the first hearers of Luke's message were far removed from the geographical, religious, social, cultural, political and economic conditions of Palestine. According to Marshall (1978:33), the Third Gospel was written 'for an urban church community in the Hellenistic world.' However, there is no certainty as far as its provenance is concerned. 'Early tradition connected Luke with Achaia, but has nothing positive in its favour. Luke's use of Mk may indicate a connection with Rome, but his use of Q possibly brings him into a Syrian environment. .... If we knew who Theophilus was, the situation might be much clearer, but his whereabouts are as obscure as those of Luke himself' (Marshall 1978:35).

<sup>87</sup> Kodell (1982:7; also Martin 2011:5; LaVerdiere 1980:xiv-xvi) opines that the Christian community outside Palestine was 'becoming more Gentile than Jewish in composition.' Esler (1987:30-45) discusses at length this subject; he disagrees with all those who dismiss the Jewish presence. He opts for a mixed community. This gives another weighty argument to support the need to read Luke with reference to a Palestinian Jewish background because some members of his Christian community came from this background. We may assume that some members of his community still had a clear memory of Jesus' ministry and the tragic end of his earthly life. Their witness, traditions and memories probably influenced Luke when gathering information. Though the Gospel was not written in Palestine, Marshall (1978:36) considers the message of Jesus as reported in Luke 'is directed to Israel, especially to the needy people despised by official Judaism, and Jesus' task is to call the people of God back to him and to enlarge that people.' Luke aimed at giving a theological meaning to these events and for this reason he locates Jesus in the context of Palestine. Thus one may speak of Luke's Palestine in view of focussing on Jesus' ministry first in Galilee (Lk 4:14-9:50) and second, the Jerusalem journey (Lk 9:51-19:27) (Moxnes 1988:49). In order to understand better Luke's portrayal of Jesus, it becomes necessary for the sake of this work to have an overview of the socioeconomic, political and religious environment that dominated the Mediterranean world (Morris 1988:31). Luke himself acknowledges that he became aware of Jesus' ministry only after inquiring and investigating things that were accomplished in Palestine as reported 'by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word' (Lk 1:2). The Palestinian context, therefore, becomes significant for an accurate understanding of the interaction between Jesus and the blind man (Lk 18:35-43) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10).

speaking Christian (Abogunrin 1998:1368). He writes to them using sources<sup>88</sup>, styles, terms and concepts with which they are familiar<sup>89</sup>. According to Ukpong (2012:190-191; and also Prior 1995:164-165), those who failed 'to recognise the social-cultural embeddedness of biblical texts' read them in a deficient manner. Though it is impossible to retrieve the original meaning of a biblical text, it remains necessary to probe what, in the first place, prompted its composition. It is to be acknowledged that biblical texts are not the result of some void and ahistorical reality, but 'the product of human history' (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:vii-viii; Schneiders 1999:114). However, we do not claim that only historical factors constitute what we read in Luke; such a claim would be to overlook his religious experience (Esler 1987:2). We try as well, as we read Lk 18:35-19:10, to understand how Luke utilised his socio-political context to construct his theology of destitution and inclusiveness.

We, too, today's readers, are influenced by our own context when we read biblical texts. We come to them with our own ideas and history. That explains why different people reading the same text tend to produce meanings that reflect their diverse contexts (Vogels 1993:53-54). Social sciences are helpful in this regard, but a careful study must be done in order to avoid giving the impression that our context and that of Luke are composed of similar realities<sup>90</sup>. In

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<sup>88</sup> Luke partly uses his prologue to acknowledge that his Gospel includes material he gathered from what other people wrote/spoke about Jesus (Lk 1:1-4). Among his sources, the NT scholars (Kodell 1982:7; Park 2004:3-4) see Luke at work employing Mk, Mt, Q-source and other older traditions to formulate his theology.

<sup>89</sup> Luke the implied author of the Third Gospel is widely recognised as a non-Jewish writer. His excellent Greek confirms that he was a person of letters. Being aware of Greek rhetoric and literary techniques of his time, Luke uses these techniques in his writings *Luke-Acts*. Although it is almost certain that the Third Gospel was not written in Palestinian context, Luke used the ancient Greek psychagogy to present the so-called Luke's Palestine and characterise figures and persons we find in his Gospel. Psychagogic methods were also used by writers and preachers like 'Paul, James as well as other early Christian thinkers' (Wildman 2016:1). This method aims at helping 'a participant to give birth to realities from within the participant himself' (:1). Psychagogy was also known in the world of great Greek philosophers like Socrates and Plato. For example, 'Plato believed that the human soul possesses latent knowledge, which could be brought out and elucidated by a specific type of discourse which he called dialectic: a bringing to birth from the depths of a person's higher being. He believed that a higher consciousness was needed in order to do this, and the result would bring forth a literal enlightenment and a furthered understanding of human nature' (Wildman 2016:1-2). The aim of using psychagogic methods was to stimulate thinking (thinking live), participation and imagination. The latent ability that is located in the person is brought to a higher level where it is influenced and shaped in order to cause the whole person to enter into a dialogical relationship with all his/her spiritual, emotional, intellectual, psychological and physical possibilities. According to Cohen (2014:2), '[p]sychagogy works on the soul by conducting the soul toward a new relation to itself, by conducting it toward a new, more "truthful" relation to being. Moreover, it manifests this truthfulness through the lives of those whom it governs by letting their thinking live.' Since Luke was aware of this method, it was easy for him to imagine the world of Jesus and present it in a manner that would raise excitement and influence his audience. Luke himself stands as an implied author and the readers (neophytes/apprentices) as his 'authorial audience.' The neophytes were introduced to these literary features and the psychagogic methods; consequently they were able to enter the authorial world of Luke to play their role. It is therefore possible to study, analyse and examine Luke's Palestine and use it as the context through which Luke reports the Good News of Jesus Christ. Thus Chapter Four is included here as an effort to understand the imaginary world of Luke's Gospel and demonstrate how its political and socioeconomic structures informed and shaped his theology of destitution and inclusiveness.

<sup>90</sup> Esler (1987:6-16) discusses the importance of the social sciences in the study of NT.

other words, we are called to maintain a ‘critical distance’ between our reality and that of the author in order to allow the otherness of the text to emerge (Draper 2002:17; 2015:15). It is also necessary to acknowledge that a biblical text is not static but dynamic; it lives a life of its own and it has in itself a transformative force that can challenge us and raise social consciousness (West 1993:23; Ukpogon 2001:192). Without overlooking other theological insights of the Third Gospel, the themes of poverty and inclusiveness are recurring throughout the Gospel. The stories of the blind beggar (Lk 18:35-43) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) are powerful illustrations of these themes.

Thus Chapter Four is divided into five parts. The first part surveys Luke’s social and political setting while focusing on the situation of the poor and rich in the Graeco-Roman context. In the second part, our interest is centred on the concept of taxation and its impact on societal and religious spheres. The perception of disability and purity rules is discussed in part three. The fourth part depicts the materially poor, as understood by Luke, and shows how as a privileged group the poor ‘stand nearer to the kingdom than all others’ (Segovia 2003:125). Part five deals with the question of begging and almsgiving in Roman Palestinian society. Insights gained from this part will inform our reading of the blind beggar narrative (Lk 18:35-43) and the Zacchaeus episode in Chapter Six.

## **4.2 Political Setting of Luke’s Gospel**

Most scholars seem to suggest that Jesus was born around 6 BCE when Palestine was under Roman administration (Wright et al 1995:1247). This already situates Jesus in the context of world political events such as foreign domination, tyranny, oppression and exploitation. Massyngberde (in Abogunrin 1998:1368) describes the time of Jesus ‘as one of the most turbulent and belligerent centuries of Jewish history.’ The governing class was not interested in the situation of the poor. The majority of the peasantry was illiterate and poor. There were no viable structures in place to cater for people with physical disabilities in the Roman provinces like Palestine. In rural Palestine, it can be assumed that the peasants took care of their sick and disabled people; however one cannot be sure how this was done<sup>91</sup>. The Roman Emperor Augustus whose reign extends from 27 BCE-CE 14 inaugurates the era of NT times in Palestinian society. The appearance of Augustus in the Third Gospel (Lk 2:1-5) underlines his importance in world history and at the same time gives hints to how Christianity found its way in the Roman Empire (Esler 1987:2001-2002). According to Park (2004:6), ‘[t]he Greco-

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<sup>91</sup> Doubts regarding such structures persist because of the existence of the laws of purity (Lev 13:45-46).

Roman world in the first century was a blossoming empire with much development in construction, transportation and warfare.’ This development also meant exploitation and high demand for slaves and day labourers in Rome and in the Roman provinces to work on farms and on large construction projects. The situation in Palestine deteriorated when it was subjected to direct rule under the Roman procurators<sup>92</sup>. Immediately after the removal of Archelaus<sup>93</sup> (4BCE to 6 CE), Coponius was appointed as the first Roman procurator of Judea (CE 6-9) (Grabbe 1994:423).

The fame of Jesus did not end with his death. His disciples claimed to have seen him alive (Wright et al 1995:1249). They preached about his resurrection; a number of people — Palestinian Jews and Gentiles — were gradually converted to the Christian movement (Acts 2:41, 47; 6:7). The primitive church thus grew and gained strength as it reached out to the Diaspora Jews, and as well to the Gentiles — Luke being one of them. Before the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, Christianity had already proved itself to be a growing religion in several metropolitan centres of the Roman Empire, but not without persecution by some Roman emperors like Nero (54-68 CE) (Grabbe 1994:445). Luke wrote his Gospel in this context. The miserable living conditions of the poor throughout the Empire must have influenced Luke to include in his Gospel a message of hope to the destitute. Another reason that moved the author of the Third Gospel to write was probably ‘to attest that Christianity, unlike new and therefore revolutionary religions, was no threat to Rome, nor to the order and stability so prized by the Romans’ (Esler 1987:218).

### 4.3 Social Stratification and Economic Structures

Social stratification is a reality that exists in every human society. There is, so far, no political or socioeconomic structure that has proved itself to be free of social and economic inequality. The degree of inequality may vary from one place to another, from one economic system to

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<sup>92</sup> A number of procurators who ruled over Judaea are believed to have come from the equestrian order (*equites*). These were men of great wealth and they belonged to an economically powerful elite class. Most of them also were involved in non-agricultural business, trade or public contracts. The emperor knew that the appointment of *equites* to work in foreign provinces would lead to the amassing of more wealth for the empire because of their business expertise (Wright et al 1995:1248; Goergen 1986:57-58; Hayes 1971:299). One would thus understand the reason behind the heavy taxes imposed on the Jewish population.

<sup>93</sup> Archelaus as ethnarch ruled over the great part of the kingdom consisting of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (Feldman & Reinhold 1996:176). He was tyrannical and ruthless like his father, Herod the Great (Grabbe 1994:366). People reacted against his cruelty; he was deposed and his territory became a Roman province ruled by a procurator (Hayes 1971:298). The main sphere of Jesus’ activity was Galilee, the territory of Herod Antipas’ (Wright et al 1995:1249). Among those who ruled over Archelaus’ territory was Pontius Pilate the one who endorsed the execution of Jesus (Lk 23:24).

another, depending mainly on the nature and historical background of each society. This fact was true as in ancient times as it is today.

#### 4.3.1 The Poor and Rich in the Graeco-Roman World

The different categories of poverty that are seen in modern societies — absolute, relative, severe, real or structural poverty — were not known in ancient times. In general ancient populations were divided into two: on the one hand, there was a small group of wealthy people (πλούσιοι) who enjoyed great possessions including the means of production, and on the other hand, masses of poor people (πτωχοι) comprised of ‘the urban non-elite and the rural small landowners, landless day labourers, slaves, the handicapped, tenant farmers, beggars (the blind, lame, lepers, destitute), widows and orphans’ (Ukpong 2012:200; Malina 1983:71; McKenzie 1966:681; Oakman 1991:155; Ituma et al. 2019:4). ‘There was no middle class, and opportunity for upward social mobility was minimal’ (Ukpong 2012:199-200; Meeks 1986:34). However, some theologians argue that a middle class of its own right did exist in the Roman Palestinian world consisting of, for example, retail traders who had ‘crowded shops in the bazaars, and the small tradesmen and craftsmen who owned and worked in their own shops. Each village, great and small, had some of these’ (Pilgrim 1981:42; Tashjian 2013:np)<sup>94</sup>. The affluent lived in cities<sup>95</sup> though most of them owned land and farms in remote areas (Esler 1987:172; Hamel 1990:138; Wafanaka 2000:494). The elite never worked on the land because the capacity to avoid manual labour in antiquity was perceived as a sign of wealth. It was the duty of the poor to produce for the elite (Nyirawung and van Eck 2012:2-3; Esler 1987:173). Part of the land was rented out to tenant farmers who made their payments in cash or by forfeiting a fixed quantity of the harvest. Since land was the main means of production, the rich sought every possible opportunity to expand their farms. They enticed the poor to accept loans at an exorbitant interest rate; and when they failed to pay, their land was confiscated (Neyrey 2002:np). Wealth remained in the hands of the few, thus the poor became poorer, and the rich richer. As the desire to own large estates (*latifundia*) grew in Rome, the land of the empire gradually came under the control of a few individuals especially the imperial family, the senatorial and equestrian orders (Oakman 1991:164). The policy on

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<sup>94</sup> Other social classes in the Roman Palestine may be sourced from the following scholars: Esler (1987:173-174); Pilgrim (1981:43-44); Kim (1998:255-256); Oakman (1991:165) and Crossan (1991:44-45). Scheffler (2011:118-120) challenges the division of the society into two (rich and poor); he proposes a hierarchical model. According to Green (1997:60), ‘the relationship among classes relied’ ‘on the concepts of power and privilege.’ The destitute had no power to influence the socio-political affairs that were functioning in their own context.

<sup>95</sup> In order to avoid anachronism, it is important to note that the use of terms ‘city’ or ‘town’ does not connote our today’s understanding of modern cities and towns. Here we refer to the preindustrial ancient cities and towns that existed before the birth of Jesus, and those that survived during and after his earthly life (Ukpong 2012:199).



landownership was also implemented in the Roman provinces including Palestine<sup>96</sup>. The Palestinian elites — the Herodians, Jewish elites, Roman agents and wealthy Gentiles — were mandated to supervise the use of land and collect the taxes. In general, socio-political and economic structures during this time tended to favour the elite at the expense of the poor. The practice of loitering and begging in streets, public squares and by the roadside was widespread among the poor.

### **4.3.2 Taxation: the Heart of the Roman Imperial Economy**

#### **4.3.2.1 Augustus' Population Census Decree: Motivation**

This section briefly examines the significance and motivation of a decree (δόγμα) that Luke records in the Third Gospel (2:1-5) stating that Caesar Augustus ordered that 'all the world'<sup>97</sup> (πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην) should be enrolled (ἀπογράφεσθαι). The debate regarding the historicity of this decree has drawn a lot of interest. However, it is not the aim of this section to advance some historical and theological arguments in favour or against Augustus' δόγμα<sup>98</sup>. Marshall (1978:99-104; and also Potter 2002:167-171) discusses at length the arguments and tentative solutions proposed by scholars in relation to this δόγμα. Though the debate is not yet conclusive, they seem to agree that some sort of census (ἀπογραφή) must have taken place because this was an effective means of ascertaining 'the income, property, and wealth of the inhabitants for purposes of taxation' ensuring its smooth and effective collection (Evans 1990:35; Pearson 1999:266). The recording of people's personal information and household property was necessary for successful taxation procedures (Marshall 1978:104). Potter (2002:187) traces the common features of conducting censuses and property returns 'throughout the Roman empire, including Egypt and Arabia, both close by Palestine' and finds that they share a lot of similarities. The collection of taxes, without doubt, was at the heart of the Roman imperial economy. The empire needed tribute for administration purposes and for equipping and training the army, running the imperial palace, provinces, financing wars and expansion of the empire, complete building projects, maintain the emperor's

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<sup>96</sup> Land for the Jewish Palestinians was a sacred gift received from God. The theology of the Promised Land gave direction on how one should possess and relate to his portion of land (Lev 25:3-28). It was forbidden to sell one's land (1 Kgs 21:1-3).

<sup>97</sup> According to Palme (in Potter 2002:180), the phrase 'all the world' or 'the entire world' means 'that the census was not limited to Palestine alone, but would have included the entire Province.' Torrey (in Marshall 1978:98) suggests that 'all the world' could be understood as a Semitic way of saying 'the whole land.'

<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, Johnson (1991:51) advises us not to treat Luke as a historian because 'an obsession with accuracy,' he says, 'leads the reader astray.' It is, however, important to acknowledge that Luke did not write from some void and ahistorical context. The singling out of some individuals, events and dates shows that he was aware of some political and historical facts of his time (Wiseman 1987:480).

household as well as constructing fortresses and opening roads. Wars were frequent in antiquity and they often caused financial crisis. In order to cope with frequent warfare, the Roman emperor was in constant need of revenues to strengthen his army (Ando 2006:185). Thus good strategies and mechanisms were required to be in place to supervise the collection of taxes. One such a strategy was to carry out a population census and registration of the members of a household and ‘habitable and arable property in possession’ to keep an eye on tax evasion, but also to assess ‘the appropriate amount of tribute’ to be paid (Ando 2006:186; Bruce 1997:199; Green 1997:126). Caesar Augustus’ δόγμα, though unpopular and unwelcome in Jewish Palestine, could be read and understood in this context of tax collection.

#### 4.3.2.2 Tithing and Taxation

In general, both words — tithing and taxation — express the process of extracting revenues in money or kind from people’s property or labour. Tithing primarily works in a religious sphere and it involves collecting or giving one tenth of a believer’s annual produce or earnings ‘for the support of a religious purpose’ (Wilson 1992:578). In this case, what the believer gives is called ‘tithe’ or δεκάτη<sup>99</sup> in Greek, ‘a tenth part.’ The Hebrew noun מַעֲשֵׂה *ma‘āšēr* has a similar meaning to δεκάτη. Jewish people were familiar with tithing, and they took it as a necessary religious duty willed by God<sup>100</sup>. A thorough stipulation of tithes is made in Lev 23:30-33; 18:20-32; 28:12-26; Num 18:21-32 and Deut 14:22-29<sup>101</sup>. Tithes were paid for the priests’ subsistence (Neh 13:10-14), but also ‘for the maintenance of public worship. After the destruction of the Temple, it was paid to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, in Rome, for a very long period’ (Hamel 1990:135). Giving tithes finds its origin in Gen 14:20 where Abraham is reported to have given one tenth of everything he owned to Melchizedek of Salem, who was king and priest of God, for the blessing received from him (Gen 14:17-20). Jacob made a vow to God promising that if he received favour, sustenance and protection, he would give to God one tenth of all that God gave him (Gen 28:20-22). In Israel tax collection was known from the time of King David (Scheffler 2017:161-163; De Vaux 1997:141-142).

<sup>99</sup> The noun δεκάτη is from the verb δεκατόω ‘to collect or pay tithes’ (see also ἀποδεκατόω) (Newman 1971:40).

<sup>100</sup> People indeed took it as an obligation, they tithed their possessions; and in turn they hoped to receive God’s overflowing blessing (Horsley 1999:53; Wilson 1992:579). The Book of Tobit exemplifies how some Jewish people were serious with tithes (1:7-8). The Levites as a priestly class had no land; it was therefore the duty of those to whom the land was allotted to provide them with their produce (Wilson 1992:578; Jacobs et al 2011:np).

<sup>101</sup> Oden (1984:163-171) considers tithes as one kind of taxation in Biblical Israel especially during the reign of kings starting with David. Examples of taxation are listed as follows: forced labour (1 Kgs 5:27-28; 9:20-22); the royal taxation system (1 Kgs 4:7-19); emergency tribute levy (2 Kgs 15:19-10); head/poll tax (Exod 30:11-16), ‘the first fruits and other offerings’ (Num 18:8-32), and so on. The NT does not insist on paying tithes. Jesus, following the footsteps of some prophets, e.g. Amos (4:1-6; 5:21-27) and Isa (1:10-17), reacts against the Pharisees who meticulously tithed people while they were not interested in social justice (Lk 11:42; Mt 23:23).

Taxation as the process of extracting revenues by the government from its citizens is a well known and documented phenomenon in the secular world. Elon (in Oden 1984:163) defines tax as ‘a compulsory payment, in currency or in specie, exacted by a public authority, for the purpose of satisfying the latter’s own needs or those of the public, or part of the public.’ The state ‘cannot exist in its fullest form if it has no taxing power’ (Snell 1992:338). In each city-state, for example in Greece, there was a ‘customs house’ or ‘tax office’ *τελώνιον* where a tax collector *τελώνης* (plural *τελωναι*<sup>102</sup>) was employed to farm the taxes (Hillyer 1978:755). The Greeks introduced a system of tax-farming in Palestine during the rule of Ptolemy II (Hillyer 1978:756; Hengel 1974:21-23). Tax-farming was auctioned annually. Those who won the bid were required to pay first instalments before they could begin to collect the taxes. Most tax farmers came from wealthy families. Hence it was easy for them to win the bid and pay the first instalment. The contractors (lessees) had to work hard in order to recuperate their money and make profits (Hillyer 1978:755; Goergen 1986:89). They did so through subordinating their contracts to other people (tax employees, slaves or underlings) (Pilgrim 1981:52), who actually went out to farm the taxes — mainly indirect taxation (Ravens 1991:24). The victim of all was the taxpayer who had to pay an exorbitant sum to satisfy all those involved in the collection of taxes (Donahue 1971:42-43). Most underlings (*portitores*) were Jewish by origin; this helped to control tax evasion. Tax-farming, by its very nature, encouraged cheating, so goes the saying: ‘All are tax collectors, all are robbers’ (Hillyer 1978:755).

#### 4.3.2.3 Roman Direct and Indirect Taxation

The Roman government was known for imposing ‘a bewildering array of direct and indirect taxes’ in its provinces (Ando 2006:185). Direct taxation included: first, poll-tax or head tax (*tributum capitis*) — a fixed tax levied on every male adult aged from fourteen to sixty-five (Hamel 1990:131) regardless of their income differentiations. In some provinces women too aged from twelve ‘were liable to the poll tax’ (Grabbe 1994:414). Second, land tax (*tributum soli*) which involved the collection of revenues from its produce (Ando 2006:1987). Indirect taxes included a series of taxes levied on business, property transfers, customs and tolls levied on goods that were brought to market, imported into the empire or exported from it (Neyrey 2002:np). Other sources of taxes were for the use of public services, roads, and bridges. This type of taxation was known as *portatorium* (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:9; Conzelmann &

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<sup>102</sup> The term *telōnai* (also known as *publicani*) means: (i) tax farmers/purchasers of the right to collect specific taxes; (ii) supervisors of tax collection like Zacchaeus who is called *architelōnes* (Lk19:2), and (iii) employees who collected such taxes at a toll booth as reported in Mk 2:14; Mt 10:3; and Lk 5:27 (Donahue 1992:337).

Lindemann 1988:123). It is said that ‘the collection of indirect taxes was the responsibility of local officials; the revenues themselves flowed into the coffers of the central government’ (Ando 2006:188). Direct taxes could also be paid in kind. Communities that lived near army barracks were asked to pay in kind to support the army. Some Jews paid in kind because the circulation of local currency was too limited, especially in remote areas. Other direct taxes in kind came from the state owned agricultural sectors. The Empire released its estates to land tenants who, by law, were required to pay taxes or to pay in kind. These taxes largely came from the Roman provinces of North Africa (Egypt and Tunisia) (Mattingly 2006:289; Kehoe 2006:298-299). It is believed that ‘Israel under Roman domination had more tax farmers and tax-office employees than did many other areas of the Roman Empire’ (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:7-8; Goergen 1986:89).

#### **4.3.2.4 Tax Evasion and its Dire Consequences**

The peasants in Roman Palestine were the most affected group; they became very poor due to heavy taxes and tithes. Almost every item they produced was taxed, including herbs (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:9). Some peasants lied about their property and earnings in order to avoid paying taxes, and they were prepared to endure the beating as long as taxes could be avoided. They often suffered a double affliction: first, by natural disasters (drought, locusts, hurricanes, and so on) and second, by merciless tax farmers. Of the two, according to MacMullen (1974:34), tax-farmers were worse than natural disasters. Torture was used to terrorise taxpayers who might have thought of evading payment. People used to abandon their homes when a tax collector was noticed in their area. A witness who saw the poor enduring tortures and blows of fist writes:

When certain debtor from poverty took flight in fear of some terrible retribution, [the collector of taxes] led off by force their women, children, parents, and other kin, and beat them and abused them and inflicted every kind of outrage on them to reveal where the fugitive had gone or to pay what he owed — though they could do neither, the one from ignorance, the other from greater property than the fugitive’s. He did not give up until he had wrung their bodies with the rack and scourge and ended their lives with unheard of afflictions (MacMullen 1974:36-37).

In Judaea the Romans used to vary taxation depending on the present circumstances. The levy was elevated when a revolt caused a threat to the provincial and imperial government. Any revolt/tax evasion was punished with a maximum penalty (Horsley & Hanson 1999:31). The Romans were aggressive in dealing with tax evasion. They treated tax evaders as dangerous individuals — worse than rebels — who were deemed to deserve severe punishment.

### 4.3.3 Jews' Attitudes to Tax Collection

Palestinian Jews developed negative attitudes towards the Roman taxation system and tax collectors. They hated, feared and despised tax collectors. In ancient literature the *telōnai* are classified and put in the same pot as thieves, robbers and beggars (Donahue 1992:337). Often they were also likened to a lion or bear preying on their clients, ready to tear them into pieces (Feldman & Reinhold 1996:186). The tax-collectors were notorious in timing their clients, if they saw a person passing while carrying something on his/her shoulders they would swiftly rush towards that person; they would verify if a tax was paid (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:11). A number of taxes were mentioned, the most famous one was the tax on grain. 'This was,' write Feldman and Reinhold (1996:186), 'the most important source of revenue for maintaining the Roman army.' Rabbi Jacob bar Judah (in Feldman & Reinhold 1996:186) compared tax-collectors to 'a prickly hedge,' every corner has a sharp hedge and ready to prick if one encounters them. They quickly hurried to say: 'bring your head tax, bring your general tax, bring the levies upon your crops and herds' (:186). In some cases, the well-to-do Jews hated the Roman rulers because of their distasteful manipulation that forced the rich to take public offices. It meant that if they failed to collect taxes, they would be required to use their own money to fill the gap (:187). A Jew who collaborated with the Roman government to farm taxes was despised. His family too was tarnished, for they lived on tainted money thus continuously sharing in the guilt of their relative who worked as a tax-collector (Hillyer 1978:756). Even to pay a visit or 'stay in such a person's house was tantamount to sharing in his sin' (Marshall 1978:697). People tried to avoid tax collectors the way one would do with lepers (Donahue 1992:338). Pious Jews believed that God would not save tax collectors because they made themselves as Gentiles<sup>103</sup> and chose to collaborate with the Roman oppressor to exploit their fellow Jews (Bock 1994:306; Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:7). By nature tax gatherers were considered to be professional swindlers, 'classed with thieves, extortioners, and murderers' (Ford 1983:83). They were religiously, socially and morally embedded in immorality. Tax collectors 'also had a further problem if they wished to repent, because they might not know all those whom they defrauded. This would make complete restitution impossible' (Ravens 1991:25). A tax collector was not allowed to work as a judge or even a witness in court because none would believe him as telling the truth (Hillyer

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<sup>103</sup> The *Book of Jubilees* (15.26) rates the Gentile/uncircumcised as the children of destruction because their foreskins were not circumcised on the eighth day. They have no communion with Abraham. A Jewish tax collector was seen as someone who turned himself into a deadly sin to the extent of acquiring a Gentile status (an enemy/hater of God) (McKenzie 1966:303; Bietenhard 1976:792). Mt 18:17 likens tax collectors to Gentiles.

1978:756; Ford 1983:83). Often taxpayers quarrelled with them because of overcharging. Insults were laid on tax collectors calling them criminals, monsters, barefaced profiteers and robbers (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:11). The list of despised people in Palestine was long, besides tax collectors, there were also swineherds, innkeepers, and so on (:12-13).

Paying excessive taxes is often cited as one of the major factors that motivated the Jewish peasantry to support and join rebellious groups to combat the Roman rule (Horsley & Hanson 1999:49-50). Paying tribute to any foreign ruler amounted to submission to human authority and thus compromising adherence to the Mosaic Law. The resistance of Judas the Galilean in BCE 6 was organised precisely to go against Caesar Augustus' decree on the population census in Judea (Pilgrim 1981:40; Grabbe 1994:423; Ford 1983:84-85). Jesus, who was born in the province of Galilee, did experience the political and economic realities of his time; and his teaching would, somehow, be influenced by the Galilean context (Pilgrim 1981:41). The Sicarii emerged as a group of terror, and it conspired against the Roman rule and its collaborators, 'Jewish puppets,' who oppressed and exploited the Jewish people (Horsley & Hanson 1999:20). The zealots as a fanatically rebellious group supported and joined those who fought against the Roman rule (Rhoads 1992:1048). Its members were seen as a dangerous group of lawless people capable of committing any ruthless deed. Politically, the zealots wanted to liberate the land of Judea from Roman domination, and also to challenge and resist over-taxation, incompetent procurators, and unruly soldiers (Rhoads 1992:1051).

#### **4.3.4 Jesus' Stance on Paying Tribute**

Jewish society had two categories of sinners: Jewish and Gentile sinners. The difference between them is that the former could be forgiven after contrition and repentance; the latter was incapable of receiving God's mercy. As seen above (4.3.3), a new branch of Jewish sinners came into existence, that is, a group of 'Jews who had made themselves as Gentiles' (Donahue 1971:39; Hillyer 1978:756). Tax collectors belonged to this new branch. They were the most hated group in Jewish Palestine. This section portrays Jesus' attitude towards the payment of tribute, his ministry among tax collectors and sinners, and how through his non-judgemental approach to the despised, he was able to restore their dignity.

##### **4.3.4.1 Giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar**

The dramatic scene that we read in the Synoptic Gospels, Mt 22:15-21; Mk 12:13-17; Lk 20:20-26, tells what one would call Jesus' position on the question of paying tribute. Though

each Gospel writer has his own style of reporting it, they all essentially seem to agree on the malicious and dastardly plot that those opposed to Jesus' teaching wanted to use as a means to raise accusations against him (O'Toole 1983:5). Luke (20:19) reports that it was the Scribes and the Chief Priests who sent spies and advised them 'to pretend to be sincere' (ὑποκρινομένους ἑαυτοὺς δικαίους εἶναι) (Lk 20:20) (Bock 1996:1609). In Mt (22:15-16), it was the disciples of the Pharisees 'along with the Herodians' who went to set the trap, and according to Mk (12:13), 'some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians' went 'to entrap him in his talk'. Though they were enemies, the Pharisees and the Herodians put aside 'their animosities' and 'combine efforts to get Jesus' (Bock 1996:1610). In each Gospel, the trap is introduced by flattering words with some variants noted (Mt 22:16; Mk 12:16; Lk 20:21). I present those from Luke because the current research is based on his gospel. 'Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God.' Then follows the trap in the form of a technical question<sup>104</sup>: 'Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?' (Lk 20:22; Mt 22:17; Mk 12:14). Jesus perceives their craftiness (πανουργία) (Lk 20:23), their malice/wickedness (πονηρία) (Mt 22:18), and their hypocrisy (ὑπόκρισις) (Mk 12:15). The technical question receives a technical answer as Jesus says: 'Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it?' They said, "Caesar's." He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's' (Lk 20:24-25; Mt 22:19-21; Mk 12:16-17).

The statement, 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God,' came as a surprise and it left his questioners astounded. Their trap did not materialise because on their own accord they acknowledged that the coin<sup>105</sup> in their hands belonged to Caesar — their current ruler. The logic was that by acknowledging Caesar's ownership of the coin, one had to pay tribute as a way of rendering back to Caesar his coin. "The things of Caesar" means the rights of Caesar, just as the "things of God" means the rights of God' (Derrett 1983:42). Jesus' position on the question of paying tribute is clear, and he seems to recognise it as the citizens' responsibility. Moreover, paying taxes meant receiving in turn social services (Derrett 1983:42). John the Baptist, as well, acknowledges the importance of tax

<sup>104</sup> According to Morris (1988:314), '[a] question on taxation seemed certain to result in an answer which would bring Jesus into trouble with either the Romans, who wanted the taxes paid, or the Jews, who did not. The question was thus aimed at alienating Jesus' support among the people, or alternatively putting him in a position where the Romans (...) would take action.'

<sup>105</sup> The coin shown to Jesus was 'a Roman silver coin which had the effigy of the Emperor Tiberius stamped on it. It was required that the tax be paid in Roman coinage. Various other coins, such as Greek and Tyrian as well as Jewish, circulated in Judea at the time and the pious probably avoided using coins with Caesar's head stamped on them as much as possible' (Morris 1988:315).

collection but he warns the tax collectors not to demand more than what has been stipulated (Lk 3:12-13). The encounters of Jesus with tax collectors provide an occasion for some of them to make a radical change of their lives, e.g. a tax collector leaves his tax office [τελώνιον] and follows Jesus (Mt 9:9; Mk 2:13-14; Lk 5:27-28). Others transform their lives from dishonesty to honesty (Lk 19:1-10). Furthermore, Jesus neither condemns tax collectors nor asks them to abandon their occupation (Ravens 1991:23-24).

#### **4.3.4.2 Tax Collectors and Sinners in Jesus' Ministerial Paradigms**

The catena of outcasts in the Synoptic Gospels includes a number of social groups to which Jesus pays special attention. Suffice to mention a few of them: tax collectors (Mk 2:13-14), beggars (Lk 18:35-43), the poor, and the crippled (Mt 12:9-14). Another social group that deserves mention is the group of sinners. Several categories of sinners are listed as follows: prostitutes, adulterers, defrauders, robbers and murderers. Others are classified as sinners because they are involved in despised professions<sup>106</sup> such as tax collectors, toll collectors, shepherds, usurers, gamblers, and donkey and camel drivers (Donahue 1971:42; Nolan 1976:23). It is rather a peculiar grouping to notice that 'tax collectors' are listed together with 'sinners.' Tashjian (2013:np) observes that sinners who are grouped with the tax collectors were not ordinary sinners, but extraordinary ones 'who deliberately and persistently transgressed the requirements of the law,' for example, money-lenders who overcharged 'interest on loans advanced to fellow Jews' thus violating 'the law of God stated in Lev 25:36-38.' In some instances, tax collectors are paired with sinners as a collective term (τελώναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ) (Mk 2:15, Mt 9:10; 11:19; Lk 7:34; 15:2). In other sections, for example Mt 21:31-32, tax collectors are placed together with prostitutes (τελώναι καὶ πόρναι). Mt 18:17 puts on the same scale a Gentile and a tax collector (ἔθνικὸς καὶ τελώνης). While in the Temple, the Pharisee gives praise to God and pairs the tax collector with extortioners, the unjust, and adulterers (Lk 18:11). Jesus is accused of being a drunkard and 'a friend of tax collectors and sinners' (Mt 11:19). To be likened to prostitutes and Gentiles indicates that tax collectors were seen as being 'religiously and morally beneath consideration' (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:7), a group of dangerous and despicable people.

Tax collectors and sinners seem to be a category of people with whom Jesus interacts easily. They belong to a group of common people often considered as impure because of their

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<sup>106</sup> Donahue (1971:40-41) gives a more detailed list of occupations that are, by nature, suspected of dishonesty (shippers, butchers, dung collectors, tanners, millstone cutters, tailors, bath attendants, and so one).



profession (Ford 1983:85-88). Nonetheless, Jesus' ministry was more accepted among such common people (sinners) than it was among the pious (Donahue 1971:39; Goliamma 2013:274-276). The Christian calling demands that people learn to love and be at the service of the outcasts (Boff & Pixley 1989:115). In Judaism this was not the case because people were divided into classes: the pure and impure, Jews and Gentiles, the pious and sinners. Jesus welcomed all, and he firmly declared that he did not come 'to call the upright but sinners to repentance' (Lk 5:32). A tax collector became one of the members of his inner circle (Mt 9:9). Jesus' association with public sinners, especially the tax collectors (Lk 5:30; 19:7) and prostitutes, (Lk 7:36-50<sup>107</sup>) made people question his status as prophet. His inclusive love towards humanity remained uncompromised, and it went against the rules of purity (Neyrey 1991:291-292; Ituma et al. 2019:8). He knew that if some people chose to work as tax collectors or prostitutes<sup>108</sup>, they did so because they had no other option (Soares-Prabhu 1991:165; Pilgrim 1981:52). Such people needed God's mercy to transform their lives. Jesus then presents himself as someone who restores their dignity.

#### **4.4 Rules of Purity and Peripheral People**

Humanity throughout the ages has been faced with the reality of social exclusion especially in societies where people's values is influenced by policies of separation, segregation and alienation. This mainly occurs when men and women tend to define, designate and classify themselves in terms of their background, religion, race, tribe, gender, caste and the like. Once a definition is set, an imaginary wall is built in their minds to keep them separate from those they have identified as outsiders. The two groups — insiders and outsiders — would then begin to behave and relate to one another as if they belonged to two different worlds. Strife and contention tends to arise in an effort to demolish the wall. However, there is usually a long painful process before its tearing-apart actually takes place. Political, socio-cultural and religious ideologies are mentioned as major factors that have led to the existence of exclusive tendencies among people, and still continue to keep humanity divided. There also exist societies whose social interaction is established on the basis of the rules of purity. Ancient Jewish society is one example of such societies. In Judaism, the Book of Leviticus entails a

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<sup>107</sup> The word 'prostitute/harlot' is not directly used here but it is presumed because she is said to be 'a woman who was a sinner' (RSV) (ἁματωλός) (Lk 7:37); and the NJB has it as 'a woman who had a bad name.' The Pharisee who invited Jesus knew the woman as a person of bad reputation, a sinner (Lk 7:39).

<sup>108</sup> While it is true that some women did engage in prostitution, many did not choose to do so. Most prostitutes 'came from the lower classes; slaves bought by owners, women forced by economic pressures to sell themselves, daughters of poor parents who sold or rented them for money (...), war prisoners and infrequently adulteresses punished by forced prostitution. The scene was as tragic then as now' (Pilgrim 1981:54).

set of rules that give a variety of instructions on different aspects concerning rituals of sacrifice (Lev 1-7); clean and unclean things (animals), permitted and forbidden food (Lev 11); purity and impurity matters (Lev 12-15); instructions regarding the day of atonement (Lev 16) and the law of holiness (Lev 17-27). Such instructions were used as a means of separating the insiders from outsiders (Moxnes 1988:102). It is also known that some passages in the Mishnah and Talmud were difficult to interpret. As a result, sections that dealt with tax collectors were often read as having declared them unclean (Maccoby 2001:60).

Instructions found in Lev 12-15 are indeed determinants of social interaction in Jewish society. For example, leprosy was understood as a dangerous and contagious disease, thus victims of leprosy were excluded from their community until fully healed and declared clean by the priest (Martin 2011:458; Ituma et al. 2019:5). Until these conditions were met, the unclean had to live alone outside the community (Lev 13:45-46). The ten lepers in Lk 17:11-19 give an example of people stricken by leprosy and subsequently doomed to dwell outside the community. It was thought that through exclusion, the community could be protected from uncleanness, impurity and from the spread of the disease (Pilch 1991:207). It was accepted that people who came into contact with the lepers became unclean, and were likely to contract the contagious disease<sup>109</sup>. The priestly class also had its own regulations; people whose bodies were affected by disease or suffered from physical disability were not supposed to approach the altar to perform priestly duties (Lev 21:18-23; 2Sam 5:8b). In the Mediterranean world, illness was perceived as a misfortune and good health as a blessing. No wonder every misfortune needed an explanation<sup>110</sup>.

Disease of the eyes too was seen as a dangerous disaster because of its capacity to cause blindness thereby rendering the victim totally dependent on others (Sussman 1992:12). The blind were often treated as expendable, an embarrassment, and useless people in society (Green 1997:663). Although the law foresees support and protection for the blind (Lev 19:14), in reality their survival depended on almsgiving. It was, therefore, normal to find blind beggars, and indeed every beggar, sitting alone by the roadside or in public squares begging (Lk 18:35-43). A number of peripheral individuals are frequently mentioned in Luke's Gospel especially 'sick people of various categories' (Lk 4:40; 5:12-16, 18-26; 6:17-19; 7:11-19, 21-22), and also tax collectors and sinners (5:27-32; 15:1-2; 19:1-10) (Schottroff

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<sup>109</sup> Disease like discharge of blood from a man's body (Lev 15:3-18) and that of a woman (Lev 15:19-30; Lk 8:43-48) was enough to make them unclean.

<sup>110</sup> Demons and evil spirits in particular seem to take a lead in tormenting a number of people (Lk 8:26-39; 9:37-43; 13:10-17). Other illnesses and disabilities were associated with sin as (Jn 9:2, 34) (Moss 2017:np).

& Stegemann 1986:15-16; Pilgrim 1981:53; Moxnes 1988:52-53). The sinners constitute a wide range of individuals whose lives seem not to align with the norms and mores of a society in which they find themselves, including those whose knowledge of the Torah is very much limited (the *am haaretz*). The common denominator that characterised all these groups (beggars, crippled and tax collectors) was marginalisation. It made them experience exclusion and social disapproval. Social stigma was the most painful experience to bear. People were stigmatised to varying degrees depending on the seriousness and longevity of their illnesses (Guijarro 2000:106). The sick felt guilty, as if they were responsible for their status. Malevolent conditions and deviant titles were imposed on them (Malina & Neyrey 1991:101).

#### **4.5 The Materially Poor, the Rich and Inclusiveness in the Third Gospel**

The significance of πτωχός as used in Luke<sup>111</sup> literally denotes destitution or social deprivation (Van Aarde 2016:154). It is poverty in the sense of lacking in material means for survival such as ‘food, drink, clothing, shelter, health, land/employment, freedom, dignity and honour’ (Pleins 1992:415; Scheffler 2011:120-123; Éla 1994:143). During his inaugural speech (Lk 4:16-30), Jesus in Lk 4:18, using Isaiah’s words (61:1), declares that he has been anointed ‘to bring good news to the poor’ εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς. Jesus’ use of πτωχοῖς (Lk 6:20) is put in contrast with the πλουσίοις to whom he pronounces a woe because they have already received their παράκλησιν ‘comfort and consolation’ (Lk 6:24), and the ἐμπεπλησμένοι ‘the satisfied’ will be hungry (Lk 6:25). Πτωχός in this context is meant to connote the materially poor (Prior 1995:172). Their status quo is associated with that of the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, and the dead (Lk 7:22). They are marginalised people like Lazarus (Lk 16:20, 22) whom Jesus recommends to be invited to banquets (Lk 14:13-14). Luke’s sympathy for the poor is evident in many of his passages (1:53; 3:10-14; 6:24-26; 14:12-14; 16:19-31) (Esler 1987:168-169; Bosch 1991:98-99; O’Toole 1983:11). Compared with the other evangelists, he appears more articulate on the question of social justice, solidarity and hospitality. He declares ‘a radical reversal of the fortunes of the rich and poor in the messianic age’ (Loubser 1994:62; Johnson 1981:13; Park 2004:7). For Luke the concept of poverty could also be broadened to include the rich who genuinely heeded the voice of Jesus, and decided to share their wealth with the materially poor (Decock 2015:8).

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<sup>111</sup> Of the Synoptic Gospels, Luke alone has πτωχός used ten times (4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8 and 21:3). Mk and Mt each five times (Mk 10:21; 12:42, 43; 14:5, 7, and Mt 5:3; 11:5; 19:21; 26:9, 11) (Esser 1976:824-825; Hanks 1992:415-417; Prior 1995:167-169; Ojok 1993:8).

Luke, being a Gentile, exposes at length a number of elements in his Gospel that support the inclusion of all people in the plans of God. First, his account of the birth of Jesus and his ministry indicates that he is born to be ‘a light for the illumination of the Gentiles and the glory of [God’s] people Israel’ (Lk 2:31-32). Second, he traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam — the progenitor of humanity (Lk 3:23-38). This is in sharp contrast with Matthew who presents Jesus’ genealogy as starting with Abraham (Mt 1:1-17) — the patriarch of Israel. According to Luke, God’s favours are not limited to Israel (Lk 4:25-27) but also extend to other nations as portrayed in the encounter between Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1Kgs 17:7-24), Elisha and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5:8-17). ‘The healing of a centurion’s slave (Lk 7:2-10)’ prefigures Jesus’ universalistic approach to his ministry (Morris 1988:39). All nations are invited to feast in the kingdom of heaven (Lk 13:29). The parable of the great banquet (Lk 14:15-24) mirrors inclusiveness and table fellowship as authored by Jesus (Esler 1987:34). His attitude towards tax collectors and sinners announces something new and unfamiliar to Palestinian society. His critics are scandalised to hear that a man like Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, could be saved (Lk 19:9).

#### **4.6 Begging and Almsgiving in Roman Palestinian Society**

In Roman Palestine some people became poor due to the fact that both political and economic structures were organised in such a way that a minority had access to wealth while the vast majority languished in poverty. Others were poor because of sickness and physical disability. The blind beggar in Lk 18:35-43 belongs to this group (Speckman 2007:151). Beggars were found in villages and in city centres like Jericho (Lk 18:35-43). Though Deuteronomy (15:4-10) dreams of a society free of poverty, this was not the case. The poor existed in Palestine (Deut 15:11), and they are still around today (Mk 14:7; Mt 26:11). Despite its negative impact on one’s social status, the only option open to the poor in ancient societies was to beg for their survival (Nolan 1976:22). The steward in Lk 16:3 knew what it meant to be a beggar. A self respecting person would always avoid begging (Johnson 1991:283; Speckman 2007:178).

##### **4.6.1 Giving Alms in the Jewish Context**

In Jewish Palestine, a theology of almsgiving was developed and people believed that ‘by giving to the needy they were rendering a service to God’ (Speckman 2007:176; Seccombe 1982:182). Those who gave alms to the poor believed that God was blessing and rewarding them with more material wealth. In other words, neglecting the poor would mean depriving oneself of God’s favour. Thus Speckman (2007:177) rightly writes, ‘withholding alms is like

making oneself a debtor to God.’ This kind of theology motivated people to come to the aid of the needy, not on a voluntary basis, but as an obligation. Every needy person, especially an Israelite, was entitled to receive some help from his Jewish brothers and sisters. Some people took advantage of the situation as they pretended to be blind so as to obtain almsgiving (Hamel 1990:198). In order to enforce the idea of assisting the needy, the Torah (Lev 19:9-10; Deut 24:20-21) went further, recommending that people have the poor in mind at harvest time. It taught ‘about leaving something in the field’ ‘for the poor to glean’ (Speckman 2007:177). It was a way of ensuring the practice of solidarity through concrete acts of sharing and providing the poor with the means of subsistence. The text of Deuteronomy as noted in the preceding lines highlights three categories of people to whom special attention was to be directed, namely the fatherless, the widow and the sojourner. These were vulnerable groups that risked being exposed to all kinds of exploitation and abuse (Kim 1998:278). Some rabbis taught that almsgiving was an excellent practice for gaining God’s forgiveness<sup>112</sup>. A multitude of sins would be forgiven if one chose to rescue the needy from destitution (Pilgrim 1981:134). There was a widespread belief in the ANE that the gods were siding with the needy. Thus coming to their aid was a kind of an investment (Owczarek 2005:70).

In the Hebrew Bible, criticisms against the exploitation of the poor are widely inserted in the prophetic literature (Amos 5:12-27; 8:4-6; Isa 1:23; 10:2; Jer 7:1-19). The prophets tirelessly reminded the Jews of their duty to feed the poor, the hungry, the widow, the orphan; to cover the naked, to house the homeless poor and the alien (Isa 58:7). Here the alien serves as a reminder to Jews of their own experience in Egypt. Their past experience of humiliation should motivate them to help those who undergo similar realities (Deut 14:28-29; 24:22; 26:12). The Israelites were also forbidden to practise usury when lending money to the poor (Lev 25:35-38). Two kinds of relief collection were organised to help the needy: the *tamhui* and *kuppah*<sup>113</sup>. In the distribution of alms, the Jewish poor had precedence (Hamel 1990:199).

According to Speckman (2007:177), in Hebrew language there is no ‘word for alms’; and the term ‘almsgiving’ is not translated as charity but as ‘act of righteousness.’ No time line was drawn to indicate as to when almsgiving would end. As a tentative solution it dealt only with symptoms without calling into question ‘the pyramidal social system that produces and

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<sup>112</sup> The poor, in this case, were used as means of accessing one’s salvation. Speckman (2007:178) wonders what would have become of the poor if everyone felt moved to help them in order to gain his/her salvation. Nonetheless, the poor are always with us. This is due to the fact that what is usually given does not reflect their real needs; the almsgivers give only a symbolic gift something like a tip of the iceberg.

<sup>113</sup> The *tamhui* (mainly food meant for strangers) and the *kuppah* (weekly supply to support the needy who belonged to the same religious community) (Speckman 2007:179; Hamel 1990:198; Kim 1998:279).

maintains the existence of the poor and the rich' (Owczarek 2005:71). Almsgiving thus functioned in a vertical way; it distributed the rich man's surplus to the poor who waited at the bottom of the social ladder. The danger of providing the poor with some handouts is that the needy themselves begin to lose their confidence. Creativity fades away and the dependency syndrome takes over. Almsgiving was considered as pure giving because it did not respect the principle of reciprocity. Beggars did not make part of community building spirit where values such as solidarity and reciprocity were given priority. Instead, they wandered and gathered at the gates of cities like Jericho and Jerusalem to beg for the means of subsistence (Pilgrim 1981:44).

#### **4.6.2 Almsgiving in the Graeco-Roman World**

In general, social interaction in Greek city-states was built on the principles of reciprocity and mutuality between equals. Even solidarity worked between equals, amongst the people who 'were of equal or similar status' (Lampe 2016:5; Kim 1998:280-281; Hamel 1990:194). The moral and religious obligations to help the poor as insisted in Judaism did not exist in Greece. Almsgiving was a personal preference, and it had no moral or religious value (Lampe 2016:7; Moxnes 1988:118). Beggars in Greece were quite often looked down and treated 'as lazy people' (Speckman 2007:141; Moxnes 1988:117). Begging was discouraged, and the poor were urged to sell themselves into slavery for subsistence (McKenzie 1966:682). According to Plautus (in Speckman 2007:138), '[t]o give to a beggar is to do him an ill service.' Despite this discouragement, four types of beggars are known to have existed in Greece<sup>114</sup>. However, the Roman Empire did make some provisions to help the needy in Rome, but not in the Roman Eastern provinces. Distribution of grain was a common practice though limited only to those who were citizens and who lived in Rome (Kim 1998:260-263). The distribution of grain was done in a selective way in order to gain political support among the Roman proletariat (Esler 1987:175; Lampe 2016:19-20). In some cases of crop failure due to drought and other natural disasters, the government of Rome did 'procure an adequate supply of wheat to be sold at a low and fixed price to everyone who was willing to stand in line for his allotment once a month at one of the public granaries that Gaius had ordered to be built'

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<sup>114</sup> First, structural beggars: no matter what kind of political ideology one is adopting, human inequality is a reality that is present in every society (Speckman 2007:144). Second, moira-type of beggars: this group refers to those who believed that they are poor because the divine power willed them to be so. Nothing could be done to alter their situation (:148). Third, physically disabled beggars: this was the most obvious type of beggars. Some were born with a physical disability (blind, lame, deaf or dumb). Others became disabled because of sickness or accidents. The Gospel stories tell how such people were desperate to seek healing (Lk 17:11-19; 18:35-43). The fourth type of beggary involves the so-called voluntary or philosophical beggars. These chose to beg in order to challenge the oppressors and exploiters (Hauck 1968:38; Speckman 2007:155-156).

(Hazlitt 1973:67-68). It is acknowledged that private benefaction (euergetism) in the Roman Empire was something that the rich were expected to do for their cities. This included activities such as ‘sponsoring games and feasts’ and providing their local communities with food in times of hunger (Kim 1998:263). Other activities were, for example, to erect public building using their own money, to provide material for war, and to renovate buildings and public structures. In most ancient cities throughout the Roman Empire, one could notice the existence of epigraphs and inscriptions that honoured some individuals for being of help to their cities and communities (Kim 1998:163-167). One negative element to note is that the public benefactors/benefactresses did so in order to promote their own interests. Most of them expected to be elevated to a public office.

#### **4.6.3 Christianity and Almsgiving**

From the very early days of Christianity, almsgiving understood as charity, received a considerable recommendation among Christians. Luke was aware of this tradition and it appears well articulated in his writings (Luke-Acts). For example, Jesus is portrayed as someone who rebukes the Pharisees because of being preoccupied with appearances like cleansing ‘the outside of the cup and of the dish’ while their inside is filled with ‘extortion’ (ἀρπαγῆς) and wickedness (πονηρίας) (Lk 11:39). Instead, he invites them to give ‘alms’ (ἐλεημοσύνη)<sup>115</sup> (Lk 11:41) from their possessions, and in this way to be made clean. Using Theissen’s thesis, Speckman (2007:180) differentiates the concept of charity from almsgiving. Charity seeks to decentralise ‘the aristocratic mentality of benefactors’ and promote ‘horizontal solidarity’ so as to correct vertical solidarity. Horizontal solidarity is inclusive in the sense that every person in community feels that they have something to offer. People with no money may use their hands to dig and harvest from their farms products that could be brought to the common pool. It was also part of the general teachings of the Church Fathers to encourage Christians ‘to gain their food by their labour and sweat’ (Hamel 1990:206).

Hamel (1990:210-216) explores at length the Church Fathers’ viewpoints on the importance of being at the service of the poor. Vertical solidarity is discouraged because it invokes superiority, exclusion and benefaction (Moxnes 1988:114). In most cases this is done with the aim of gaining a return such as honour and power (Lampe 2016:2-7). ‘Charity in Luke’s understanding means being of one heart and one in soul (Acts 4:32)’ (Speckman 2007:182).

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<sup>115</sup> In the NT the Greek noun ἐλεημοσύνη marks its appearance only once in Mt 6:1-4, and ten times in Lucan traditions (Lk 11:41; 12:33) and (Acts 3:2, 3, 10; 9:36; 10:2, 4, 31; 24:17). This means that ἐλεημοσύνη has an important place in Lk’s pedagogy and teaching on charity (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:109-111).

Acts 4:32-35, as a model of horizontal solidarity, does not stipulate the quantity required for each to contribute; it only says that '[t]here was not a needy person among them' because the proceeds of whatever was sold were laid at the apostles feet to help whoever was in need (vv. 34-35). Charity thus resonates in community building and the promotion of human dignity in the sense that none is ever in want. The formation of funeral clubs, peasants' associations, credit unions and SCCs in Mbinga Diocese, as discussed above (3.5.4), can be seen as ways of maintaining horizontal solidarity with a view to surviving. In such clubs and associations, the dignity of the human person comes first. Even the poorest person is given an opportunity to contribute according to his/her economic possibilities.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, we recapitulate some of the major findings observed in this chapter. It is noted that foreign domination played an important role in shaping the history of Israel. The Christ-event and the writing of the Gospel of Luke took place during the Roman imperial domination in Palestine. This was the time of crisis for Jewish people because they were forced to pay heavy taxes, and endure cultural imperialism, and exploitation. The Roman procurators collected the taxes for the Roman emperor, but they regularly exploited the situation to amass wealth for themselves by cheating and overcharging.

Social interaction also depended on the rules of purity. Certain sicknesses and diseases (leprosy; hemorrhage, and so on) were considered to be dangerous because they forced their victims to live far from their own communities. Such diseases left people divided into two categories: the pure and impure. Purity rules also were applied to people who, in one way or another, suffered from physical disabilities (the blind, the crippled, etc). The victims of physical disabilities were also deprived of their right to enter the Temple to perform the prescribed religious rituals (Olyan 1998:220-227). We also analysed two major social classes that were in existence in the first-century CE Roman Palestine: the upper and lower. The wealth of the kingdom was in the hands of a few, mainly the aristocratic and noble families, procurators, high priests and those from the equestrian order who owned most of the land. The upper class had power to determine and regulate matters that concerned the entire society.

Some of the historical and social features described in this chapter facilitate a critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 in rural Mbinga. During the CBS sessions, as shown in Chapter Seven below, a number of questions arose in relation to social problems such as poverty, begging, irresponsible leadership, embezzlement, inertia and corruption. A parallelism could be made



between the social problems that affected the Roman Palestinian context and those with which rural Mbinga is faced today. However, this does not pretend to equate or put on the same scale the two contexts. Each context is unique and it exists in a particular time and space. When working with Lk 18:35-19:10 during the CBS sessions, we must, therefore, be mindful of the possible dangers and drawbacks that oversimplification might bring to our reading and interpretation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: LK 18:35-19:10

#### 5.1 Introduction

Every discipline has its own indispensable rules and principles that make it stand as distinct from other fields of study. The Bible, like any other ancient literature, in the exegetical process, is no exception to the rule. Biblical interpreters need to employ certain hermeneutical principles and techniques when working with the Bible in order to facilitate its reading and interpretation. The aim of doing so is to try to ascertain, as much as possible, the meaning that the authors of biblical texts originally intended to communicate<sup>116</sup>. Although it is not fully possible to arrive at the author's intended meaning, it remains a necessity for us to grapple with all the difficulties that are likely to be found in the text so as to let the text be what it is. The text has power to transform its readers if well understood; the reverse is true when misinterpretation takes place<sup>117</sup>. In other words, before we actually begin to interpret a biblical text, we need first to analyse it and raise preliminary questions with regard to its context and content.

Fee (1993:31) underlines the importance of dealing with the historical and literary questions before engaging oneself in an interpretive enterprise. Questions and concerns related to social setting, historicity and the literary context of the text need to be thoroughly scrutinised as a way of preparing the ground for its reading and interpretation. This preliminary scrutiny is followed by an analysis of the text's content on the basis of the four proposed components: textual criticism, lexicographical enquiry, grammatical questions and historical-cultural background. In Chapter Four, aspects such as political and socioeconomic setting (4.2 & 4.3), historical-cultural and religious backgrounds were studied in detail as a way of grounding and establishing the context of Lk 18:35-19:10. This chapter focuses on some textual components of Lk 18:35-19:10 especially the following: delimitation, textual criticism, synoptic comparison, intra-textuality and inter-textuality, source, form and redaction criticisms, lexicographical enquiry, and grammatical questions. The study of these textual aspects,

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<sup>116</sup> On taking into account the original context of the Bible, Spangenberg (2017:215; and also Ukpong 1995:6; Thiselton 1992:33) writes: 'Christians should not construct a doctrine of Scripture which turns the Bible into something so sacred that it is no longer anchored in the cultures of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds.' 'The reader,' writes Thiselton (1992:33), 'must learn what it is to stand in the shoes of the author.'

<sup>117</sup> Thiselton (1992:31) insists that care must be taken to avoid using a biblical text as a means to serve one's own ends. History reveals that humanity did abuse itself as it used biblical texts to legalise slavery and racism. The battle is not yet over as we still witness a number of cases of abuse linked to the misuse of the Bible.

though unfamiliar to ordinary readers, is indispensable. It is the trained reader's contribution to a study of the internal movement of Lk 18:35-19:10 and it provides a compass to guide its critical reading in the CBS process. The starting point of textual analysis as shown below (5.3.1 & 5.3.2) is the Greek text taken from N-A<sup>28</sup> (2012); and the scriptural references are from RSV (1952).

## **5.2 Delimitation of Lk 18:35-19:10**

When working with a biblical text, it is recommended that the boundaries be established to indicate both the upper and lower limits, i.e. that they show from 'where the text begins and where it ends' (West 1993a:29; Meynet 2007:4-5). This enables the reader to decide whether the text can be studied as 'a genuine, self-contained unit' or not (Fee 1993:35). For instance, Lk 18:35-19:10 is seen as having two separate units — each with a complete thought: 18:35-43 (the healing of a blind man) and 19:1-10 (the Zacchaeus story). However, as shown below (5.2.2), they have a number of traits that bind them together as one sub-sequence.

### **5.2.1 External Limits**

As regards delimitation, the text Lk 18:35-19:10 is located between 18:34 and 19:11; and it stands as part of the long sequence Lk 9:51-19:27<sup>118</sup> which Conzelmann (1961:60, and also Fitzmyer 1985:1242; Karris 1995:700-711; Brown 2009:226) calls 'the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem.' The healing of the blind man (18:35-43) and Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (19:1-10) take place in the course of this journey. Jesus' decisive and solemn moment to initiate his Jerusalem journey is announced in 9:51 and re-echoed in 9:53. It is indeed an irreversible event, and it is repeatedly mentioned in 9:57; 10:1; 11:53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 11, 28. An inquiry regarding the historicity of the Jerusalem journey is not to be developed here<sup>119</sup>. Green (1997:666-667; and also Johnson 1991:286-287; Marshall 1978:677) shows how the passage Lk 18:35-19:1-10 is connected to the preceding events: the

<sup>118</sup> Craddock (1990:139-223) sketches Jesus' journey to Jerusalem covering from Lk 9:51-19:28 while Green (1997:394-695) extends it to Lk 19:48. Marshall (1978:400-401) limits it to Lk 19:10. He argues that there is a good reason to consider 19:10 as the terminus of the section 9:51-19:10 because 'the parable of the pounds which occurs at 19:11-27 looks forward rather than backward, and so the break is perhaps more appropriate before it.' Matera (1993:57) delimits the Jerusalem journey between 9:51-19:46. Each proposed terminus is supported by a number of reasons. This work limits Jesus' journey to Jerusalem from Lk 9:51 to 19:27. According to Brown (2009:226), the sequence 9:51-19:27 is one of the seven sequences in Luke. After a prologue (1:1-4), Brown outlines the following sequences: the infancy and boyhood of Jesus 1:5-2:52, preparation for his public ministry 3:1-4:13; Jesus' ministry in Galilee 4:14-9:50. The remaining sequences narrate Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem 19:28-21:38; last supper followed by passion, death, and burial 22:1-23:56. The highest point of Jesus' greatness is related to his stories of resurrection as reported in 24:1-53.

<sup>119</sup> Suffice tentatively to agree with Bock (1996:962; and also Conzelmann 1982:62) who argues that '[t]he concern is not so much a straight-line journey but an accurate, representative portrayal of this decisive period.'

unjust judge who grants justice to the widow (Lk 18:1-8); the prayer of a hypocrite (18:9-14), Jesus likens to little children those who enter the kingdom of God (18:15-17)<sup>120</sup>; and a rich ruler who fails to give away his wealth (18:18-30). The story of the ruler (ἄρχων) (18:18), who was exceedingly rich (πλούσιος σφόδρα) (18:23), parallels with that of Zacchaeus, who was chief tax collector (ἀρχιτελώνης) and rich (πλούσιος) (19:2) (Hamm 1986:464). The first is asked ‘to sell all he has and give to the poor; Zacchaeus sells half of his possessions and gives the proceeds to the poor’ (Green 1997:667). The rich ruler goes home sad (18:23) while Zacchaeus gladly receives salvation in his house (19:9). As a response to the question: ‘Then who can be saved?’ (18:26); Luke in 18:35-19:10 seems to say that salvation is granted to those who have faith in Jesus (18:42) and are ready to share with the poor (19:8) (Johnson 1991:286-287). The rich ruler and the blind beggar are presented as the two extremes of social spectrum — the rich and the destitute (Seccombe 1982:130). The two stand in contrast in the sense that ‘[t]he rich young man has all and can see, but really is blind. The blind man has nothing and cannot see until he trusts Jesus, and he has all’ (Bock 1996:1501). On the same note, Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) becomes an excellent example of the rich who gain salvation as they manage ‘to go through the eye of a needle’ (Lk 18:25) (Bock 1994:306; O’Toole 1992:1033). Indeed, it is God who does the impossible to call the rich to salvation (18:27).

Eternal life is gained by those who surrender everything ‘for the sake of the kingdom of God’ (18:28-30). However, the recipients must first join Jesus on his way to Jerusalem where suffering, death and rising from the dead will take place (18:31-34). Those who sincerely seek Jesus, oftentimes, end up being rebuked and treated as insignificant persons (18:15, 39; 19:7). The blind man’s persistent cry (18:39) recalls the persistence of the widow in Lk 18:1-8, and parallels ‘to the tax collector’s dependent humility in 18:9-14’ (Bock 1996:1501), and Zacchaeus’ courage to climb a sycamore tree (19:4) (Craddock 1990:219).

Similar links and parallels can be noticed in what comes after Lk 19:10, at the lower limit (Lk 19:11-27). For Marshall (1978:401), Lk 19:11-27 interrupts the flow of thought and it has no parallels with 18:1-19:10. However, he acknowledges the possibility of the parable of the pounds (19:11-27) to have been told to the same audience as was in Lk 19:1-10 (Marshall 1978:700). Similarly, Bock (1996:1531; and also Loewe 1974:330) considers the statement ‘as they heard these things’ (ἀκούοντων δὲ αὐτῶν ταῦτα) (19:11) as a link-point between Lk 19:1-10 and 19:11-27 suggesting that the hearers of the parable remain the same as those that

<sup>120</sup> According to Johnson (1991:287), ‘the story of the blind beggar matches that of the children in Lk 18:15-17.’ Like children (18:15), the blind beggar is rebuked (18:38), like them (18:16), he is received by Jesus (18:40).

witnessed the encounter of Jesus with Zacchaeus in Jericho. Green (1997:643) places 18:35-19:10 in the context of 18:9-19:27 to emphasise the relationship it has within this interval. If this is the case, then we are able to establish some kind of connection between 18:35-19:10 and 19:12-27. One such a connection could be the concept of salvation that marks its appearance in 18:14, 17, 24, 29, 42; 19:9 (Seccombe 1982:130). The conventional interpretation of the parable of the pounds (19:12-17) teaches ‘something about *parousia*, that is, the second coming of the Son of Man as judge’ (Johnson 1991:293). In this sense, *parousia* designates the fulfilment of salvation and ‘the arrival of the kingdom of God in its fullness’ (Green 1997:677). The entry into God’s kingdom is thus bestowed on those who are trustworthy (19:16-19; 18:15-17; 18:35-43 and 19:1-10).

### 5.2.2 Internal Coherence

This section aims at enforcing the idea that Lk 18:35-19:10, despite having two short stories 18:35-43 and 19:1-10, enjoys an internal coherence that makes it possible to view them as a single literary unit. A number of commentators have worked with Lk 18:35-19:10 as one block (Loewe 1974:329; Johnson 1991:283-288; Evans 1990:278-283; Meynet 2005:710-720). The following reasons support their preference.

First, the two stories are narrated and situated in the vicinity of Jericho (18:35) and (19:1) (LaVerdiere 1980:224; Talbert 1982:175; Green 1997:666). According to Marshall (1978:691), the geographical name Jericho seems to unify the two stories and associate them with Jesus’ journey motif towards Jerusalem. Evans (1990:278; and also Seccombe 1982:131) opines that Luke locates the healing of the blind beggar (18:35-43) in the vicinity of Jericho in order ‘to accommodate the Zacchaeus episode’ (19:1-10). Second, both the blind beggar (18:39) and Zacchaeus (19:7), from a Jewish religious point of view, are treated as outcasts (Green 1997:666, 670; Evans 1990:279). Third, in both stories, the role players are ‘blessed with salvation’ (Craddock 1990:218). The blind beggar is told: ‘your faith has saved you’ (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε) (18:42), and Zacchaeus hears Jesus say: ‘today salvation has come to this house’ (σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο) (19:9). Both have become believers like Abraham who is the father of all believers (Meynet 2005:718; Loewe 1974:330). Fourth, the intense desire to ‘see’ is noted in both stories. The blind beggar wanted to recover his sight, as he says, ‘that I may see’ (ἵνα ἀναβλέψω) (18:41). Zacchaeus, too, in 19:3 sought to see ‘who Jesus is,’ but because he was short in stature, he failed to see him in the crowd. He overcame this physical barrier by climbing a sycamore tree (19:4). The desire to see Jesus and

recover one's sight could be 'read in relation to the larger Lukan concern with blindness and sight as metaphors pertaining to salvation' (Green 1997:667; Fitzmyer 1985:122). Ravens (1991:28) considers the story of the blind beggar as a 'prelude to the Zacchaeus story' in which Jesus intends to open 'the eyes of the crowd to the true status of the toll collector.'

Fifth, the blind beggar calls Jesus 'Son of David' (Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ Δαυίδ) (18:38), and Jesus calls himself 'Son of Man' (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) (19:10). The idea of being a 'son of David/Man' connects the two episodes in the sense that they both seem concerned with the messianic figure. The titles 'Son of David' and 'Son of Man' normally reveal something of Jesus (Meynet 2005:719). Six, in both narratives Jesus is invoked as Lord (κύριε) in 18:41 and 19:8. Seven, another unifying element is the concept of restoration. After recovery of his sight (18:43), the blind beggar followed (ἠκολούθει) Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. Zacchaeus too is recovered and brought back to his community; he is declared to have the same status as any other son and daughter of Abraham (19:9). Social integration, once again, has been made possible (Ravens 1991:27; Kodell 1982:94). Eighth, in relation to the theme of our current study, the two stories represent the reality of a stratified society — the blind beggar stands for the destitute (πτωχοῖς) and Zacchaeus for the wealthy (πλουσιοῖς). Despite their diverse social statuses, both gain salvation (σωτηρίαν) (Talbert 1982:175). The ninth element, 'change of behaviour,' binds the two stories in the sense that in each story the key role player is liberated from his improper way of making a living (Gooding 1987:312-313).

### 5.3 Textual Criticism

#### 5.3.1 The Greek Text of Lk 18:35-43

The Greek text Lk 18:35-43 is taken from N-A<sup>28</sup>. As shown below, thirteen of its words (marked blue) raise some curiosity regarding their placement, usage and meaning. Most of them, as far textual criticism is concerned, do not present major exegetical problems. However, the following three ἐπαितῶν (v. 35); Ναζωραῖος (v.37) and σιγήσῃ (v. 39), according to some commentators do need a critical analysis.

<sup>35</sup> Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίξειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεριχὼ τυφλὸς τις ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἐπαितῶν. <sup>36</sup> ἀκούσας δὲ ὄχλου διαπορευομένου ἐπυνθάνετο τί εἴη τοῦτο. <sup>37</sup> ἀπήγγειλαν δὲ αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος παρέρχεται. <sup>38</sup> καὶ ἐβόησεν λέγων· Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με. <sup>39</sup> καὶ οἱ προάγοντες ἐπετίμων αὐτῷ ἵνα σιγήσῃ, αὐτὸς δὲ πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἔκραζεν· υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με. <sup>40</sup> σταθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν. ἐγγίσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν· <sup>41</sup> τί σοι θέλεις ποιῆσω; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· κύριε, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω. <sup>42</sup> καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἀνάβλεψον· ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε. <sup>43</sup> καὶ παραχρῆμα ἀνέβλεψεν καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ δοξάζων τὸν θεόν. καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἰδὼν ἔδωκεν αἶνον τῷ θεῷ.

### 5.3.1.1 ἐπαιτῶν (v. 35)

The participle ἐπαιτῶν ‘begging’ from the verb ἐπαιτέω as used in N-A<sup>28</sup> has been employed here as present active (nominative) with reference to a blind man τυφλός who sat by the road side (παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν) begging. The following ancient manuscripts of Luke ‘A K R Γ Δ W Θ Ψ f<sup>1,13</sup>, (N-A 2012:261; Fitzmyer 1985:1214) have replaced the participle ἐπαιτῶν with προσαιτῶν from προσαιτέω. Newman (1971:65, 152) defines both ἐπαιτέω and προσαιτέω as ‘to beg’ with no further explanation to clarify this similarity. Jones (1940:604, 1500) too, defines ἐπαιτέω and προσαιτέω as ‘beg as a mendicant’ or ‘ask an alms.’ This means that the two verbs ἐπαιτέω and προσαιτέω and their respective nouns ἐπαιτης and προσαίτης ‘beggar’ each can be used interchangeably in a sentence without changing its signification (Fitzmyer 1985:1215). Mk 10:46 uses προσαίτης together with τυφλός ‘blind’ to read a ‘blind beggar’ τυφλός προσαίτης (Wigram 1903:662). Luke employs the infinite ἐπαιτεῖν in 16:3 where the dishonest manager (οἰκονόμος) asserts that he would be ashamed if obliged to beg (ἐπαιτεῖν αἰσχύνομαι) (Johnson 1991:283). In Jn 9:8 we find at use both the noun προσαίτης and participle προσαιτῶν. The reading of ἐπαιτῶν in Lk 18:35, finds its witnesses in the following manuscripts: **ⲛ B D L Q T 579** (Aland et al 2012:261). The first two **ⲛ B** are among the best and they date as early as the fourth century. Though **A** dates from the fifth century and opts for προσαιτῶν as shown above, the witness given by **ⲛ B** can be taken as sufficient evidence in favour of the insertion and use of the participle ἐπαιτῶν in 18:35. Furthermore, a number of major English versions such as RSV, NJB, KJV, NIV and NAB translate ἐπαιτῶν as ‘begging.’ Most of these versions were translated from ‘a modern edition such as the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* or the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* without taking on themselves the rigidly adhering to that text alone’ (Harrington 1979:37).

### 5.3.1.2 Ναζωραῖος (v. 37)

The reading of the nominative noun Ναζωραῖος (preceded by the definite article ὁ), which is appositionally linked with the noun Ἰησοῦς (nominative) to read Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος (Jesus the Nazorean) raises a query regarding its authenticity. This is so, due to the fact that some ancient manuscripts opt for Ναζαρηνός as is the case in D f<sup>1</sup> lat. According to Fitzmyer (1985:1215), the copyist decided to read Nazarēnos, ‘Nazarene’ as a way of harmonizing the Lucan text with its source Mk 10:47. N-A<sup>28</sup> does not give a list of manuscripts that could be seen as bearing witness to Ναζωραῖος in Lk 18:37. According to Kuhli (1991:454-455), ‘Mark

uses only the form Ναζαρηνός<sup>121</sup> and he has it used four times (1:24; 10:47; 14:67 and 16:6) in his Gospel. The form Ναζωραῖος marks its occurrences in Matthew (2:23; 26:71); John (18:5, 7; 19:9); Luke 18:37; and Acts (2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5 [plural]; 26:9). The Third Gospel uses both words Ναζαρηνός and Ναζωραῖος interchangeably: Ναζαρηνός in 4:34 and 24:19 with its variant reading Ναζωραίου preserved in Koine D Θ; and Ναζωραῖος in 18:37 and its variant reading Ναζαρηνός in D λ (Kuhli 1991:455). The question of interest is: Do these diverse morphological forms — Ναζωραῖος and Ναζαρηνός — cause any change in meaning? Kuhli (1991:454) defines Ναζαρηνός and Ναζωραῖος as ‘one who is from/of Nazareth; Nazarene or Nazorean’ respectively. In ancient times it was a common practice to have people identified with the place of their origin. This should not astonish us because even today quite often we tend to identify people with their provenance. In the story of the blind beggar, Mk (10:47) keeps Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός, and Lk (18:37) who uses Mk as his source preserves Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος with no intention of modifying its meaning (Kuhli 1991:455; Fitzmyer 1985:1215; Marshall 1978:693). Thus the synonymity that exists between Ναζαρηνός and Ναζωραῖος must be reflected in the similarity of their signification<sup>121</sup>. Though a few commentators continue to suggest other possible meanings such as ‘*nāzîr* someone consecrated by a vow,’ ‘*nēšēr*, shoot, sprout’ or ‘*nāšōrayyā*, observers’ (Bock 1996:1507; Evans 1990:281), most readers tend to agree with the definition that identifies Jesus with his hometown, ‘Jesus the Nazorean’ (Green 1997:663). Sometimes such a reference sounds pejorative — a way of fixing some people in their place. ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ (Jn 1:46). Instead of using one’s provenance in a positive way, it becomes a social label that puts people in their place<sup>122</sup>. It is a way of defining their social status.

### 5.3.1.3 σιγήση (v. 39)

The current text uses the verb σιγάω (to be/become silent) as subjunctive σιγήση (aorist). The insertion of σιγήση in Lk 18:39 is witnessed by a number of ancient manuscripts including B D L P T W Ψ to mean ‘should be quiet’ or simply ‘be silent’ (Bock 1996:1512). σιγάω is replaced by the subjunctive of σιωπάω i.e., σιωπηση in the following manuscripts ⳨ A K Q Γ Δ Θ 063 *f*<sup>1.13</sup>, 565 to signify ‘should keep silence’ (N-A 2012:261; Fitzmyer 1985:1216). Newman (1971:162; and also Jones 1940:1596) defines σιγάω (intransitive) as ‘keep silent; stop talking’ and as transitive ‘keep secret.’ The Greek σιωπάω also is used to mean ‘to be

<sup>121</sup> Arguments on the use of ω in Ναζωραῖος instead of α as in Ναζαρηνός — confer Fitzmyer (1985:1215-1216).

<sup>122</sup> It is often the case in Tanzania that some urban dwellers do not declare their provenance especially if they come from rural areas. This is due to the fact that rural settlements are associated with poverty and illiteracy.



silent/quiet’ (Jones 1940:1603). Though σιωπάω marks its occurrences in the Third Gospel (1:20; 19:4) and Acts 18:9, Luke often uses σιγάω (9:36; 18:39; 20:26; Acts 12:17; 15:12, 13). Mk prefers σιωπάω (3:4; 4:39; 9:34; 10:48; 14:61) (Wigram 1903:685-686). Both σιγάω and σιωπάω have at least two important ancient manuscripts as witnesses. Most commentators use either σιγάω or σιωπάω without changing its meaning (Fitzmyer 1985:1216).

### 5.3.2 The Greek Text of Lk 19:1-10

Metzger (1994) does not analyse any word from this pericope. This means that, for him, there are no serious textual questions related to the Zacchaeus episode. However, N-A<sup>28</sup>, as shown below, highlights some words (marked blue) that need to be analysed in order to ascertain their authenticity. We consider only three words from this pericope that seem to draw the attention of some commentators: προδραμών (v. 4); ἡμίσια (v. 8) and ἐστίν (v. 9).

<sup>1</sup> Καὶ εἰσελθὼν διήρχετο τὴν Ἱεριχὴν. <sup>2</sup> Καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι **καλούμενος** Ζακχαῖος, καὶ αὐτὸς **ἦν** ἀρχιτελώνης **καὶ αὐτὸς πλούσιος**. <sup>3</sup> καὶ ἐζήτει ἰδεῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν τίς ἐστίν καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου, ὅτι τῇ ἡλικίᾳ μικρὸς ἦν. <sup>4</sup> καὶ **προδραμών εἰς τὸ** ἔμπροσθεν ἀνέβη ἐπὶ συκομορέαν ἵνα ἴδῃ αὐτὸν ὅτι ἐκείνης ἡμέλλεν διέρχεσθαι. <sup>5</sup> καὶ **ὥς** ἦλθεν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον, ἀναβλέψας **ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν** πρὸς αὐτόν· Ζακχαῖε, **σπεύσας** κατέβηθι, σήμερον γὰρ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μέναι. <sup>6</sup> καὶ σπεύσας κατέβη καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτὸν χαίρων. <sup>7</sup> καὶ ἰδόντες πάντες διεγόγγυζον **λέγοντες** ὅτι παρὰ ἁμαρτωλῶ ἀνδρὶ εἰσηλθεν καταλυῖσαι. <sup>8</sup> σταθεὶς δὲ **Ζακχαῖος** εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν κύριον· ἰδοὺ τὰ **ἡμίσιά** μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, κύριε, **τοῖς πτωχοῖς δίδωμι**, καὶ εἴ τινός τι ἐσυκοφάντησα ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν. <sup>9</sup> εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν **ὁ Ἰησοῦς** ὅτι σήμερον σωτηρία **τῷ** οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο, καθότι καὶ αὐτὸς υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ **ἐστίν**. <sup>10</sup> ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός.

#### 5.3.2.1 προδραμών (v. 4)

The reading of the participle προδραμών (aorist) in 19:4, also used as indicative aorist προέδραμεν in Jn 20:4, has some variants (Wigram 1903:668). It is read as προσδραμών in L T W Γ Ψ 2542, and as δραμών in 579 and 1424 (N-A 2012:262). Furthermore, it is read as προλαβών in D. In the NT, προστρέχω is found in Mk 9:15 used as participle present προστρέχοντες; and as participle aorist προσδραμών in Mk 10:17 and Acts 8:30 (Wigram 1903:667). This means that three verbs stemming from the same root are put at our disposal: προτρέχω (to run ahead) from which προδραμών is constructed (Jones 1940:1537); προστρέχω (run up [to someone], participle προσδραμών); and τρέχω (run/make an effort, participle δραμών) (Newman 1971:184). The fourth verb is προλαμβάνω (receive in advance; participle προλαβών) (Jones 1940:1488). The first two (προτρέχω and προστρέχω) are compound verbs of τρέχω, thus the meaning of each is modified by a preposition attached to it. According to Fitzmyer (1985:1223-1224; and also Bock 1996:1524), ‘[t]he best reading is *‘prodramōn eis to emprosthen’* (προδραμών εἰς τὸ ἔμπροσθεν) which literally means ‘running ahead into the

front' which has a number of ancient manuscripts as witnesses: **Σ** A B K Q Δ Θ *f*<sup>1.13</sup>, 28, 565 and so on. The prepositional phrase προδραμών is omitted in 1010 and 1424. Whether one reads that Zacchaeus 'ran ahead' (προδραμών) or he 'ran to' (προσδραμών) does not affect its meaning. The sentence starts losing its meaning when the prepositions προ- and προσ- are removed from τρέχω, and when some manuscripts replace both προδραμών and προσδραμών with προλαβών. The words εἰς τὸ are omitted in A D K Q W Γ Δ Ψ *f*<sup>1.13</sup>, 565 and the Koine text-tradition, but their inclusion in Lk 19:4 is supported by both major and minor manuscripts **Σ** B L T Θ 892 (N-A 2012:262). The following English versions RSV NIV NJB translate καὶ προδραμών εἰς τὸ ἔμπροσθεν as 'so he ran ahead' (19:4).

### 5.3.2.2 ἡμίσιά (v. 8) and ἔστιν (v. 9)

The neuter adjective ἡμίσιά (plural accusative) in 19:8 is read as ἡμίση (plural accusative) in D<sup>2</sup> K Γ Ψ *f*<sup>1.13</sup>, 565 and as ἡμίσις (singular accusative neuter) in A W Δ 1241 (N-A 2012:262; Moulton 1977:187). The adjective ἡμίσις as singular is used in Mk 6:23; Rv 11:9, 11; 12:14 (Wigram 1903:351). The use of ἡμίσις is witnessed by **Σ** D L Q Θ Ψ *f*<sup>1.13</sup> 33 (N-A 1979:222). Two of these witnesses **Σ** and D are considered as major manuscripts and they support the inclusion of ἡμίσιά. Used as an adjective ἡμίσιά agrees with its substantive in gender and number: τὰ ἡμίσιά μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων (v. 8) (Abbott-Smith 1981:200); this also applies to ἡμίση which is read: τὰ ἡμίση μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων (v. 8) (Blass & Debrunner 1997). The use of ἔστιν (v. 9) is omitted in **Σ**\* L R (N-A 1979:222) but its inclusion makes sense. It allows us to translate καθότι καὶ αὐτὸς υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ ἔστιν as 'since he also is a son of Abraham.'

## 5.4 Synoptic Comparison

### 5.4.1 Lk 18:35-43 and its Parallels in a Synoptic Table

This section identifies similarities and peculiarities of Lk 18:35-43 in comparison with Mk 10:46-52 and Mt 20:29-34. Special attention is given to Lk and Mk in an effort to see what Lk paraphrased from Mk as his first source-material and what he decided to omit. Lk's peculiar elements will be singled out and studied with much interest. The starting point of a synoptic analysis is the Greek text from N-A<sup>28</sup> as presented in the first table followed by its translation (RSV) in the second table. Identical elements are marked in bold, colours, italics, boxes, and so on. The table displays elements that are noted in all three Gospels; elements common to Mk and Lk; Mk and Mt; Lk and Mt, and points out elements unique to each of them.

Mt 20:29-34	Mk 10:46-52	Lk 18:35-43
<p>29 <u>Καὶ ἐκπορευομένων</u> <u>αὐτῶν ἀπὸ <b>Ἱεριχῶ</b></u> <u>ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ</u> <u>ὄχλος πολὺς.</u></p> <p>30 <u>καὶ ἰδοὺ</u>  <u>δύο τυφλοὶ</u>  <u>καθήμενοι παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν</u> <u>ἀκούσαντες ὅτι</u></p> <p><u>Ἰησοῦς <b>παράγει,</b></u>  <u>ἔκραξαν λέγοντες·</u></p> <p><u>ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς,</u> <u>[κύριε,] υἱὸς Δαυίδ.</u></p> <p>31 <u>ὁ δὲ ὄχλος</u> <u>ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς</u> <u>ἵνα σιωπήσωσιν·</u>  <u>οἱ δὲ μείζον ἔκραξαν</u> <u>λέγοντες·</u></p> <p><u>ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς,</u> <u>κύριε, υἱὸς Δαυίδ.</u></p> <p>32 <u>καὶ στὰς ὁ Ἰησοῦς</u> <u><b>ἔφώνησεν αὐτοῦς</b></u></p> <p><u>καὶ εἶπεν·</u> <u><b>τί θέτετε ποιῶσω ὑμῖν;</b></u></p> <p>33 <u>λέγουσιν αὐτῷ·</u></p> <p><u>κύριε,</u> <u>ἵνα ἀνοιγῶσιν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν.</u></p> <p>34 <u><b>σπλαγχνισθεὶς</b></u> δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς <u><b>ἤψατο</b></u> <u><b>τῶν ὀμμάτων αὐτῶν,</b></u> <u><b>καὶ εὐθέως ἀνέβλεψαν</b></u> <u><b>καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.</b></u></p>	<p>46 <u>Καὶ ἔρχονται</u> <u>εἰς <b>Ἱεριχῶ.</b></u>  <u>Καὶ ἐκπορευομένου</u> <u>αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ <b>Ἱεριχῶ</b></u> καὶ <u>τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ</u> <u>ὄχλου ἱκανοῦ</u></p> <p><u><b>ὁ υἱὸς Τιμαίου Βαρτιμαῖος,</b></u> <u><b>τυφλὸς προσαίτης,</b></u></p> <p><u>ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν.</u></p> <p>47 καὶ <u>ἀκούσας ὅτι</u></p> <p><u>Ἰησοῦς <b>ὁ Ναζαρηνός</b></u> ἐστίν <u>ἤρξατο κρᾶζειν καὶ λέγειν·</u></p> <p><u>υἱὲ Δαυίδ Ἰησοῦ,</u> <u>ἐλέησόν με.</u></p> <p>48 καὶ <u>ἐπετίμων αὐτῷ πολλοὶ</u> <u>ἵνα σιωπήσῃ·</u></p> <p><u>ὁ δὲ πολλῷ μᾶλλον</u> <u>ἔκραξεν·</u></p> <p><u>υἱὲ Δαυίδ,</u> <u>ἐλέησόν με.</u></p> <p>49 καὶ στὰς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· <u>φωνήσατε αὐτόν. καὶ φωνοῦσιν</u> <u>τὸν <b>τυφλόν</b> λέγοντες αὐτῷ·</u> <u>θάρσει, ἔγειρε, φωνεῖ σε. 50 ὁ δὲ</u> <u>ἀποβαλὼν τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ</u> <u>ἀναπηδήσας ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν</u> <u>Ἰησοῦν. 51 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ</u></p> <p><u>ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν·</u> <u><b>τί σοι θέλεις ποιῶσω;</b></u> <u>ὁ δὲ <b>τυφλὸς</b> εἶπεν αὐτῷ·</u></p> <p><u>ῥαββουνί,</u> <u>ἵνα ἀναβλέψω.</u></p> <p>52 καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· <u><b>ὕπαγε,</b></u> <u>ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.</u> <u>καὶ εὐθὺς ἀνέβλεψεν</u> <u>καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐν <b>τῇ ὁδῷ.</b></u></p>	<p>35 <u>Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίξειν</u> <u>αὐτόν εἰς <b>Ἱεριχῶ</b></u></p> <p><u>τυφλὸς τις</u></p> <p><u>ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν <b>ἐπαιτῶν.</b></u></p> <p>36 <u>ἀκούσας δὲ ὄχλου</u> <u>διαπορευομένου ἐπυνθάνετο τί</u> <u>εἴη τοῦτο. 37 ἀπήγγειλαν δὲ</u> <u>αὐτῷ ὅτι</u></p> <p><u>Ἰησοῦς <b>ὁ Ναζωραῖος</b></u> <u><b>παρέρχεται.</b></u></p> <p>38 καὶ <u>ἐβόησεν λέγων·</u></p> <p><u>Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ Δαυίδ,</u> <u>ἐλέησόν με.</u></p> <p>39 καὶ οἱ προάγοντες <u>ἐπετίμων αὐτῷ</u> <u>ἵνα σιγήσῃ.</u></p> <p><u>αὐτὸς δὲ πολλῷ μᾶλλον</u> <u>ἔκραξεν·</u></p> <p><u>υἱὲ Δαυίδ,</u> <u>ἐλέησόν με.</u></p> <p>40 <u>σταθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς</u> <u>ἐκέλευσεν αὐτόν</u> <u>ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν.</u></p> <p><u>ἐγγίσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ</u> <u>ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν·</u></p> <p>41 <u><b>τί σοι θέλεις ποιῶσω;</b></u> <u>ὁ δὲ εἶπεν·</u></p> <p><u>κύριε,</u> <u>ἵνα ἀναβλέψω.</u></p> <p>42 καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· <u>ἀναβλέψον·</u> <u>ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.</u></p> <p>43 καὶ <u>παραχρήμα ἀνέβλεψεν</u> <u>καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ</u> <u>δοξάζων τὸν θεόν. καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς</u> <u>ἰδὼν ἔδωκεν αἶνον τῷ θεῷ.</u></p>
Table One: Greek texts taken from Nestle-Aland's <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> 28 <sup>th</sup> Edition (2012)		

Mt 20:29-34	Mk 10:46-52	Lk 18:35-43
<p><sup>29</sup> <u>And as they went out of Jericho,</u> <u>a great crowd followed him.</u></p> <p><sup>30</sup> <u>And behold,</u> <u>two blind men</u> <u>sitting by the roadside,</u> <u>when they heard that</u> <u>Jesus was passing by,</u> <u>cried out,</u></p> <p>"Have mercy on us, Son of David!"</p> <p><sup>31</sup> <u>The crowd</u> <u>rebuked them,</u> <u>telling them to be silent;</u> <u>but they cried out the more,</u></p> <p>"Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"</p> <p><sup>32</sup> <u>And Jesus stopped</u> <u>and called them,</u></p> <p><u>saying,</u> <b>"What do you want me to do for you?"</b></p> <p><sup>33</sup> <u>They said to him,</u></p> <p>"Lord, let our eyes be opened."</p> <p><sup>34</sup> <u>And Jesus in pity touched</u> <u>their eyes,</u></p> <p><u>and immediately they received</u> <u>their sight</u> <u>and followed him.</u></p>	<p><sup>46</sup> <u>And they came to</u> <u>Jericho;</u> <u>and as</u> <u>he was leaving Jericho</u> <u>with his disciples and</u> <u>a great multitude,</u></p> <p><u>Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the</u> <u>son of Timaeus,</u> <u>was sitting by the roadside.</u></p> <p><sup>47</sup> <u>And when he heard that it was</u> <u>Jesus of Nazareth,</u> <u>he began to cry out and say,</u></p> <p>"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>48</sup> <u>And many</u> <u>rebuked him,</u> <u>telling him to be silent;</u> <u>but he cried out all the more,</u></p> <p>"Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>49</sup> <u>And Jesus stopped and said,</u> <u>"Call him." And they called</u> <u>the blind man, saying to him, "Take</u> <u>heart; rise, he is calling you."</u> <sup>50</sup> <u>And</u> <u>throwing off his mantle he sprang up</u> <u>and came to Jesus.</u></p> <p><sup>51</sup> <u>And Jesus said to him,</u> <b>"What do you want me to do for you?"</b></p> <p><u>And the blind man said to him,</u></p> <p>"Master, let me receive my sight."</p> <p><sup>52</sup> <u>And Jesus said to him,</u> <u>"Go your way;</u> <u>your faith has made you well."</u></p> <p><u>And immediately he received</u> <u>his sight</u> <u>and followed him on the way.</u></p>	<p><sup>35</sup> <u>As he drew near to</u> <u>Jericho,</u></p> <p><u>a blind man</u> <u>was sitting by the roadside begging;</u></p> <p><sup>36</sup> <u>and hearing a multitude going by,</u> <u>he inquired what this meant.</u> <sup>37</sup> <u>They told him,</u> <u>"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."</u></p> <p><sup>38</sup> <u>And he cried,</u></p> <p>"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>39</sup> <u>And those who were in front</u> <u>rebuked him,</u> <u>telling him to be silent;</u> <u>but he cried out all the more,</u></p> <p>"Son of David, have mercy on me!"</p> <p><sup>40</sup> <u>And Jesus stopped, and</u> <u>commanded him</u> <u>to be brought to him;</u></p> <p><u>and when he came near,</u> <u>he asked him,</u></p> <p><sup>41</sup> <b>"What do you want me to do for you?"</b></p> <p><u>He said,</u></p> <p>"Lord, let me receive my sight."</p> <p><sup>42</sup> <u>And Jesus said to him,</u> <b>"Receive your sight;</b> <u>your faith has made you well."</u></p> <p><sup>43</sup> <u>And immediately he received</u> <u>his sight</u> <u>and followed him,</u> <u>glorifying God;</u> <u>and all the people, when they saw it,</u> <u>gave praise to God.</u></p>

Table Two: English version taken from RSV (1952)

From the tables presented above, the three synoptic gospels are placed in three parallel columns starting with Mt in the first column, Mk in the second, and Lk in the third column (Sparks 1964:163-164). Most common elements in the three Gospels are underlined with a thin black line. The question of Jesus, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ is recorded in each synoptic Gospel and is marked green. The thick green line marks the common elements traced in Mk and Mt. The nearing of Jesus in Jericho is shown by a red dotted line in Mk 10:46 and Lk 18:35. The blind man (men) is the heart of these three pericopes; each time we register words that are related to a blind man/men including their number (one/two) and begging, healing and recovery of sight, we write them in blue. Matthew’s two blind beggars are double-underlined with blue lines; Mk and Lk speak of one blind beggar - indicated by a blue dotted line. Their *following* of Jesus after receiving their sight is reported in pink-words. Words that highlight the blind men’s cry and appeal for God’s mercy are placed in black-filled rectangles. Mk’s unique features are either put in a yellow-filled box or underlined with a thick red line. Peculiar elements to Mt are written in bold and placed in a box. Lk’s unique elements are all written in bold. Elements common to Mk and Lk are italicised. Aspects common only to Mt and Lk are very few and they are put in a green-filled box.

## **5.4.2 Synoptic Inquiry: Inventory and Stocktaking**

### **5.4.2.1 The Synoptic Parallels of Lk 18:35-43**

As seen above (5.4.1), Lk 18:35-43 has its parallels in Mk 10:46-52 and Mt 20:29-34. Internal evidence of the three narratives reveal that their contents have more common elements than differences. The minor differences we observe in their versions are the result of redaction activities influenced by individual theological orientation. Each author used and adjusted Mk in a way that matched his own context and audience. According to Brookins (2011:72), this way of adjusting things is called *παραφράσεις*, an element of rhetorical theory which ‘consists of changing the form of expression while keeping the thoughts, and may occur by variation in syntax, by addition, by subtraction, by substitution, or by combination of these.’ As far as synoptic comparison is concerned, I highlight three elements: first, the location of healing. Mk 10:46 and Mt 20:29 make it clear that the healing took place as Jesus was leaving Jericho (καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ Ἰεριχῶ) whereas in Luke 18:35, the healing is granted ‘upon Jesus’ entrance into the city’ (Bock 1996:1502). According to Johnson (1991:283), Luke’s alteration connects the healing of the blind beggar with the story of the chief tax collector (Lk 19:1). Marshall (1978:692) presumes that the beggar sat ‘near the gate of the town’ because

this was a strategic spot where many pilgrims and merchants passed through it on their way to Jerusalem (Martin 2011:492; Pilgrim 1981:131). Second, the number of blind men healed: Mt 20:30 alone mentions that there were ‘two blind men sitting by the roadside’ (δύο τυφλοὶ καθήμενοι παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν) while Mk 10:46 and Lk 18:35 speak of one blind beggar. The beggar’s name Bartimaeus appears only in Mk 10:46. His anonymity in Luke perhaps has a theological meaning (Hamm 1986:475). Third, the report on the mode of healing differs from one evangelist to another. Mk 10:52 reports that the τυφλὸς recovers his sight as he is told ὕπαγε, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε ‘[g]o your way; your faith has made you well’ (Bock 1996:1502). In Lk 18:42, the blind man is healed after being told ἀνάβλεψον ‘receive your sight’ followed by Mark’s words ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε ‘your faith has made you well’ (10:52). Mt (20:34) reports that the two blind men received their sight after Jesus had shown them ‘pity’ σπλαγχνισθεὶς and ‘touched their eyes’ ἥψατο τῶν ὀμμάτων αὐτῶν.

The phenomenon of sitting by the roadside is reported in all three Gospels (Mt 20:30; Mk 10:46 and Lk 18:35). Though Mt does not use the word beggar(s) προσαίτης as in Mk 10:46 and begging ἐπαίτων in Lk 18:35, the fact that his ‘two blind men’ were found seated by the roadside implies that their survival depended on begging and almsgiving (Taylor 1957:447). Hearing (ἀκούσας/ἀκούσαντες) (Mk 10:47; Lk 18:36; and Mt 20:29) is another aspect common to all as Jesus passes by (παράγει/παρέρχεται) (Mt 20:30; Lk 18:37). The blind beggar(s) was/were not passive; they remained attuned to the current events even the *passing by* of Jesus (Mt 20:30; Lk 18:37) with the great crowd (Mt 20:29; Mk 10:46, Lk 18:36) did go unnoticed. They seem to have known who Jesus was. The name ‘Jesus’ as seen above (5.3.1.2) is linked to his place of origin Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός (Mk 10:47) and Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος (Lk 18:37). Mt omits Ναζαρηνός/Ναζωραῖος. The cry of the beggar ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me’ has the same arrangement of words in Mk (10:47) and Lk (18:37). Mt (20:30) excludes the name ‘Jesus’ and transposes the phrase ‘Son of David.’ Mk (10:47, 48) and Mt (20:29, 31) use the verb κράζω (ἔκραξαν and κράζειν respectively) when referring to the crying out of the blind man (men); Lk (18:38) alone opts for βοάω. They all use κράζω when the blind man/men cried all the more (Mk 10:48; Mt 20:31; Lk 18:39). Lk’s shift from ἐβόησεν (he cried out) (18:38) to ἔκραζεν (he was crying) (18:39) perhaps is not without reason. Plummer (in Bock 1996:1509) suggests that this shift ‘indicates an intelligent cry for help instead of a more intensive scream, since the former term is also used of animal cries.’

The negative reaction shown by the followers of Jesus to the blind man (men) is recorded by the three evangelists: the crowd rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) the blind man/men telling him/them to be quiet (ἵνα σιωπήσῃ [Mk 10:48]; σιωπήσωσιν [Mt 20:31]; σιγήσῃ [Lk 18:39]). However, this prohibition did not discourage them, instead they cried out all the more: ‘Son of David, have mercy on me[us]’ (Mk 10:48; Lk 18:39; Mt 20:31). Jesus stopped (σταῖς/σταθεῖς) (Mk 10:49; Mt 20:32; Lk 18:40) and took initiative to call the two blind men (Mt 20:32), but in Mk (10:49) and Lk (18:40) he asked the crowd to call the blind man. The question ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ (τί θέλετε ποιήσω ὑμῖν;) is present in all three gospels (Mk 10:51; Mt 20:32; Lk 18:41), and it has an important role to play in establishing liberation and empowerment theories. The reply of the blind beggar is the same in Mk (10:51) and Lk (18:41) ‘Master/Lord, let me receive my sight.’ The change is noted in terms of Jesus’ title: the blind beggar in Mk (10:51) calls Jesus ῥαββουνί while Lk (18:41) and Mt (20:33) turn to κύριε. This alteration is considered when doing redaction criticism (5.7.2). The blind beggar in Lk and Mk seem to indicate that they were not born blind that is why they asked for the restoration of their sight (Caird 1963:207). This perhaps is not the case with Mt 20:33 where the two blind men asked for their eyes to be opened. The healing was rather instant emphasised by the adverb εὐθὺς ‘immediately’ (παραχρῆμα Lk 18:43; εὐθύς Mk 10:52; εὐθέως Mt 20:34), and each of them ‘followed’ (ἠκολούθει) Jesus (Mk 10:52; Lk 18:43; Mt 20:34).

#### 5.4.2.2 The Peculiarity of Lk 18:35-43

Luke alone states that the healing of the blind man took place as Jesus ‘drew near to Jericho’ (18:35). Mk (10:46) and Mt (20:29) maintain that the healing happened as Jesus was departing from Jericho. This change of direction by Luke is to be discussed below (5.8.1.1). Luke 18:36-37 records the dialogue between the blind man and the crowd<sup>123</sup>. This is unique to Luke because in Mt 20:30 and Mk 10:47 we are told that when the blind men/beggar heard that it was Jesus/Jesus of Nazareth, they/he cried out to him. There is no mention how he/they came to get the news about Jesus’ passing by (Bock 1996:1506). It is only in Lk 18:43 we read as well that the blind man followed Jesus ‘glorifying God’ (δοξάζων τὸν θεόν) after receiving his sight; and that all the people who saw it gave praise to God (καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἰδὼν ἔδωκεν αἶνον τῷ θεῷ). Glorifying God in Luke’s Gospel becomes an important aspect of those who witnessed God’s marvellous deeds (1:46; 1:64; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 17:15-16). The community dimension is mentioned in Lk to emphasise wholeness and restoration. The noun

<sup>123</sup> Luke alone highlights the blind man’s courage to initiate dialogue with the crowd as he inquired (ἐπυνθάνετο) about the reasons behind the crowd’s commotion (18:36).

λαὸς ‘people’ is only used in Lk 18:43. Mt and Mk opt for ὄχλος ‘crowd’; it appears twice in Mt, first as ὄχλος πολὺς ‘a great crowd’ (20:29), and second, only ὄχλος (20:31). Mk uses the word ὄχλος once accompanied by the adjective ἱκανός. Jesus was going out of Jericho, not only with his disciples (μαθητῶν), but also with a considerable crowd (ὄχλου ἱκανοῦ) (10:46). Lk employs once the noun ὄχλου (genitive) (18:36). As shown below (5.7.2), there is a shift from being a crowd (ὄχλος) (18:36) to becoming a people (λαός) (18:43).

### 5.4.3 Intratextuality and the Uniqueness of Lk 19:1-10

The Zacchaeus episode is unique to Lk and has no comparison in both Mk and Mt ‘just as the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the compassionate father are’ (Bock 1994:305). However its internal comparison — intratextuality — could be alluded to some pericopes in Lk’s Gospel (O’Toole 1992:1032-1033). For example, Levi’s call in Lk 5:27-32, according to Fitzmyer (1985:1219), has parallel elements if read together with Lk 19:1-10 (table below).

Luke 5:27-32	Luke 19:1-10
<p><sup>27</sup> After this he went out, and saw <b>a tax collector</b>, named <b>Levi</b>,</p> <p><u>sitting at the tax office;</u> <u>and he said to him,</u></p> <p><b>"Follow me."</b></p> <p><sup>28</sup> <u>And he left everything, and rose and followed him.</u> <sup>29</sup> <u>And Levi made him a great feast in his house;</u></p> <p>and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them.</p> <p><sup>30</sup> And <b>the Pharisees and their scribes murmured</b> against his disciples, saying, <b>"Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"</b></p> <p><sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick;</p> <p><sup>32</sup> <b>I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."</b></p>	<p><sup>1</sup> He entered Jericho and was passing through.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> And there was a man named <b>Zacchaeus</b>; he was <b>a chief tax collector, and rich.</b></p> <p><sup>3</sup> And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> <u>And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him,</u></p> <p><b>"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today."</b></p> <p><sup>6</sup> <u>So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully.</u></p> <p><sup>7</sup> And when <b>they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."</b></p> <p><sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold."</p> <p><sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.</p> <p><sup>10</sup> <b>For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."</b></p>

In accordance with the description of its intra-textual character, Luke 5:27-32 could be seen foreshadowing Lk 19:1-10, because a number of elements noted in the latter are already present in the former narrative. First of all, the context of both episodes appears to be the



same; it involves the interaction between Jesus and a tax collector. Furthermore, the two narratives seem to have more or less similar characters: tax collector (5:27; 19:2), Jesus (5:27; 19:5) and onlookers (5:30; 19:7). Though Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus (19:3-4), in both episodes it is Jesus who encounters Levi (5:27) and Zacchaeus (19:5). Levi is commanded to follow Jesus (5:27), and Zacchaeus is ordered to come down and get ready to welcome Jesus in his house (19:5). They both received Jesus gladly: Levi made a great feast in his house (5:29), and, due to the fact that Zacchaeus too received Jesus joyfully in his house, this makes us consider a convivium to have been prepared to honour Jesus' presence (19:6) (O'Toole 1992:1033; Craddock 1990:218). In Lk 5:28, we read that 'there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them'; we may presume that the same type of friends were present at Zacchaeus' house. Apart from Jesus and Zacchaeus' family, we cannot imagine the presence of other people in Zacchaeus' house except perhaps those labelled as sinners. This is due to the fact that most Jews would not mingle with tax collectors and sinners. In both stories, people murmured because Jesus took the initiative to be at table with tax collectors and sinners (5:30), or because he entered the house of the chief tax collector (19:7). In the eyes of Jesus, only the sick need a physician and not the healthy (5:31). Zacchaeus is one of the sick people to whom healing/salvation is granted (19:9). In this way the mission of Jesus to call sinners to repentance (5:32) and save the lost (19:10)<sup>124</sup> is completed.

## **5.5 Inter-textual Characters of Lk 18:35-43 and 19:1-10**

Below I present some biblical texts that can help us by means of intertextuality to read Lk 18:35-43 and 19:1-10 in the light of the OT.

### **5.5.1 Tobit<sup>125</sup> 5:10; 11:13-15 and Lk 18:35-43**

Blindness was one of the most serious and dangerous diseases in the biblical literature. Being blind meant 'total dependence on others' (Sussman 1992:12). Often in the Old Testament, the blind and the lame are presented together, this is probably due to the fact that the two

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<sup>124</sup> However, this possible link is disqualified by Mitchell (1990:154; and also Ravens 1991:23-34) who detects a set of differences between the two narratives — Lk 5:27-32 and Lk 19:1-10 — arguing that 'Jesus offers Zacchaeus salvation because he is a believing Jew and not because he had a sudden change of heart. His "sinner" label comes from the critical crowd, who echo a common view of toll collectors in Luke's day.' He considers Zacchaeus' famous statement in Lk 19:8 to be a 'defense of his customary actions countering the false perceptions of his opponents, who are chiefly criticizing Jesus for associating with an apparent outcast' (:154). An interesting discussion on Lk 19:1-10 is developed below (6.3.2) where a number of arguments are put forward to support or disregard the vindication theory.

<sup>125</sup> The Book of Tobit is one of the Deuterocanonical writings of the OT included in the Roman Catholic Canon.

disabilities symbolise a total dependence — ‘unable to see the way, the blind cannot walk without help’ (Meynet 2010:70; 2005:93). Despite having eyes, the lame cannot walk (Acts 3:1-10). One had to rely on the support of his/her family members, friends and neighbours who would avail themselves to facilitate his/her movements. This also included support for subsistence costs because the blind men and women could not work on their farms. Recommendation to care for the blind and all those who suffer from visual impairment is made in Lev 19:14: None is allowed to ‘put a stumbling block before the blind.’ Deut 27:18 curses a person ‘who misleads a blind man on the road.’ Job recalls his good deeds — guiding the blind being one them (Job 29:15) — thus showing that he was faithful to the law of the Lord. It is the Lord who is expected to open the eyes of the blind (Ps 146:8; Is 29:18) and guide them ‘by a way they knew not’ and ‘in paths they have not known’ (Is 42:16). Isaiah compares unfaithful leaders with the blind and ignorant watchmen who, like dumb dogs, are unable to bark; they like to sleep, lie down and love to slumber (56:10). When inaugurating his mission at Nazareth (Lk 4:16-20), Jesus made it clear that he was also sent to proclaim ‘recovering of sight to the blind’ (v. 20). Like Tobit (11:14), the blind beggar gives praise to God after receiving back his sight (Lk 18:43).

Blindness and ocular diseases were common and well known in the ancient Near East (Palestine, Egypt) (McKenzie 1966:99; Mansour et al 2004:448-449). ‘The Bible reflects a high appreciation of vision, where blindness is interpreted as the most terrible misfortune: “Guard me like the pupil of your eye” (Psalms 17:8)’ (Mansour et al 2004:448). The existence of physicians is mentioned in the Talmud and they functioned as general practitioners who dealt with all sorts of diseases including eye and ear diseases. Their profession received high respect (Ecclesiasticus 38:1-15). Payment was made to physicians as rewards for their work, and sometimes paid in advance (Mansour et al 2004:447). In Baba Kamma 85a (in Mansour et al 2004:448), we read: ‘A physician who heals for nothing is worth nothing.’ In most cases, the poor in first century Palestine would rarely resort to the professional medicine because they had no money to cover their treatment expenses (Guijarro 2000:107). According to McKenzie (1996:99), two forms of blindness could be identified in the Bible: first, ophthalmia, ‘a highly infectious disease which is aggravated by the glare of the sun, dust and sand in the air, and lack of sanitation’; and second, senile blindness that results from an advanced/old age — Isaac (Gen 27:1) and Jacob (Gen 48:10). Eyes growing dim as described in the Bible, modern ophthalmologists may link such conditions to glaucoma or cataracts (Boyd 2017:np). Mansour et al (2004:449) add other factors that led to ocular diseases and blindness

in ancient times: ‘the overcrowding, poverty, the poor sanitary conditions inside towns, the infrequent bathing, and the very frequent wars.’ Eye injuries were common due to stones and spears thrown during wars; plucking out and smiting the eyes of captives and slaves as a form of punishment, e.g., Samson in Judg 16:21 and Zedekiah in 2 Kgs 25:7. Sometimes blindness in the Bible is presented as a phenomenon willed by God (Gen 19:11; Acts 13:11).

We notice as well biblical expressions that describe blindness as a metaphor in spiritual realms often noting ‘lack of spiritual insight’ (Is 49:19; 29:18; Rom 2:19; 2 Cor 4:4) (McKenzie 1966:99). The drama of Tobit’s blindness is narrated in 2:9-11. Below the table shows an intertextual connection traced between Tobit 5:10; 11:10-15 and Luke 18:35-43. The focus is made on similar elements that are more or less present in both stories.

<p>NJB <b>Tobit 5:10</b></p>	<p>RSV <b>Luke 18:35-43</b></p>
<p><sup>10</sup> The angel came into the house; Tobit greeted him, and the other answered, wishing him happiness in plenty.</p> <p>Tobit replied:</p> <p>'Can I ever be happy again? I am a blind man; I no longer see the light of heaven; <b>I am sunk in darkness like the dead</b> who see the light no more. <b>I am a man buried alive</b>; I hear people speak but cannot see them.'</p> <p><b>The angel said:</b> 'Take comfort; before long God will heal you. Take comfort.'</p> <p><b>Tobit 11:10-15</b></p> <p><sup>10</sup> Tobias came on towards him</p> <p><sup>11</sup> (he had the fish's gall in his hand). He blew into his eyes and said, steadying him, 'Take courage, father!' With this he applied the medicine, left it there a while,</p> <p><sup>12</sup> then with both hands peeled away a filmy skin from the corners of his eyes.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> Then his father fell on his neck <sup>14</sup> and wept. He exclaimed:</p> <p>'I can see you, my son, the light of my eyes!' And he said:</p> <p><b>Blessed be God!</b>  <b>Blessed be his great name!</b>  <b>Blessed be all his holy angels!</b>  <b>Blessed be his great name for evermore!</b></p> <p><sup>15</sup> For, having afflicted me, he has had pity on me and now I see my son Tobias!</p> <p><b>Tobias went indoors, joyfully blessing God at the top of his voice.</b></p>	<p><sup>35</sup> As he drew near to Jericho, <b>a blind man</b> was sitting by the roadside begging;</p> <p><sup>36</sup> and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant.</p> <p><sup>37</sup> They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."</p> <p><sup>38</sup> <b>And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"</b></p> <p><sup>39</sup> And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent;</p> <p><b>but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"</b></p> <p><sup>40</sup> <b>And Jesus stopped</b>, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, <b>he asked him</b>,</p> <p><sup>41</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight."</p> <p><sup>42</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."</p> <p><sup>43</sup> And immediately he received his sight</p> <p><b>and followed him, glorifying God;</b></p> <p><b>and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.</b></p>

Blindness deprives one’s heart of happiness; Tobit likens his blindness to a person who is sunk in darkness, a dead person or a person who is buried alive. It is painful for him to hear people speak but he cannot see them (5:10). These words reflect the mind of a person who used to see, but now has become blind. The cry of the blind man in Lk 18:38-39 could be read

in the light of Tobit's lament. Both Tobit and Luke's nameless blind man are in need of healing. In both stories, a divine agent plays an important role (Tobit 5:10; Lk 18:42), but also human involvement is noticed Tobias in Tobit 11:10-12, 15 and the crowd in Luke as it informs the blind beggar about the *passing by* of Jesus (18:37), and also as Jesus asks the crowd to lead the blind person to him (18:40). After the healing, the spontaneous reaction in both Tobit and Luke is to bless and give praise to God (Tobit 11:13, 15; Lk 18:43).

### 5.5.2 Gen 18:1-6 and Lk 19:1-10

Luke 19:1-10 is considered as having a number of elements that can be referred to and read in the light of Gen 18:1-8 where Abraham's hospitality makes a remarkable significance. The appearance of the figure of Abraham in Lk 19:9 reinforces the idea that Zacchaeus, despite being stereotyped as a sinner, 'is a true child of the patriarch, as opposed to those who claim patrimony in name only' (Mitchell 1990:168). Zacchaeus does not rely on cheap claims saying: 'We have Abraham as our father'; he knows that this does not qualify one as a son or daughter of Abraham. One has to do more than this, otherwise God may raise stones to become Abraham's children (Lk 3:8). Authentic children of Abraham manifest their sense of belonging through concrete gestures like sharing their possessions with the poor, and restoring what they have falsely obtained (Lk 19:8). The table given below is adapted from that of Mitchell (1990:170) and it shows some parallels that exist between Gen 18:1-8 and Lk 19:1-10. While Mitchell includes only similar elements, this one places in it the entire text of Gen 18:1-8 and Lk 19:1-10. Some verses of Gen 18:1-8 and Lk 19:1-10 are arranged inversely so that they may be seen and compared simultaneously. In the two stories one notices the presence of 'a verbatim reproduction,' 'a variety of textual adaptations' and symmetrical phrases that facilitate the synoptic and intertextual reading of the two pericopes. All symmetrical words, phrases and ideas present in both pericopes are placed horizontally and they are marked blue. The underlined words are unique to Luke, but they seem to have a significant impact on the reading and understanding of both episodes especially around the figure of Abraham. The core of this textual comparison hinges on the concept of hospitality. In both narratives, the encounter between the divine agent and humanity makes reference to the presence of a tree: an oak tree (אֵלֶךְ) in Gen 18:1, and sycamore tree (συκομορέα) in Lk 19:4; according to Meynet (2010:186), both trees bear some sacred meaning<sup>126</sup>. Zacchaeus and Abraham both seem to be looking up (ἀναβλέψας) (Gen 18:2; Lk 19:5), running

<sup>126</sup> In order to appreciate how these terms — oak/terebinth and sycamore trees — have been symbolically used in the Bible, one would need to examine the meaning they carry in each passage.

(προδραμὼν) (Gen 18:2; Lk 19:4), and hurrying and hastening (σπεύσας) (Gen 18:6; Lk 19:6) to welcome their respective guests (Meynet 2010:186). Abraham ‘entertains his guests under a tree’ (Mitchell 1990:170) while Zacchaeus receives his guest of honour in his house (Lk 19:6).

RSV <b>Gen 18:1-8</b>	RSV <b>Luke 19:1-10</b>
<p><sup>1</sup> And the LORD appeared to him by <b>the oaks of Mamre</b>, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> <b>He lifted up his eyes and looked</b>, and behold, three men stood in front of him.</p> <p>When <b>he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them</b>, and bowed himself to the earth,</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree,</p> <p><sup>5</sup> while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on -- since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."</p> <p><sup>6</sup> <b>And Abraham hastened into the tent</b> to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes."</p> <p><sup>7</sup> And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, <b>who hastened to prepare it</b>.</p> <p><sup>8</sup> Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> <b>and said, "My lord</b>, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.</p>	<p><sup>1</sup> He entered Jericho and was passing through.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into <b>a sycamore tree</b> to see him, for he was to pass that way.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, <b>he looked up and</b> said to him,</p> <p>"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today."</p> <p><sup>4</sup> <b>So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way.</b></p> <p><sup>6</sup> <b>So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully.</b></p> <p><sup>7</sup> And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."</p> <p><sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and <b>said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord</b>, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold."</p> <p><sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, <b>"Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.</b></p> <p><sup>10</sup> For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."</p>

The two primary characters, Abraham and Zacchaeus could be said to be men of great possessions. The reception he made for his unexpected guests (18:5-8) shows that Abraham was a wealthy man. Lk in his text makes it clear that Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector (ἀρχιτελώνης) and that he was rich (πλούσιος) (19:2). Both Abraham and Zacchaeus address their respective visitors as ‘Lord’ (κύριε) (Gen 18:3; Lk 19:8) (Mitchell 1990:170; Meynet 2010:186). These similarities, according to Mitchell (1990:172), ‘are more than simple allusions and mere coincidence. Indeed they function to connect Zacchaeus with Abraham.’ Jewish people do not doubt about Abraham’s faithfulness. He is the model par excellence of

all believers in their relationship with God. This is not the case with Zacchaeus, who is treated as a sinner (Lk 19:7). However, Zachaeus' attitude as reported in Lk 19:8 makes salvation arrive in his house and his status of Abrahamic sonship is restored (19:9).

## **5.6 Source and Form Criticism of Lk 18:35-19:10**

This section investigates and analyses two important aspects of historical criticism: source criticism and form criticism. In doing so, first we try to inquire about possible sources that are said to have influenced the writing and composition of Lk 18:35-19:10. Since it is generally accepted that both Mt and Lk use Mk as their main source, the Markan source then becomes indispensable (especially when both have parallels in Mk). In some cases, Q-source is sought to justify the inclusion of passages that are not found in Mk (Koch 1992:165). Second, we are also interested in probing the literary forms of Lk 18:35-19:10. Since Lk 18:35-19:10 is composed of two short stories, the examination of the literary forms of each narrative is treated separately.

### **5.6.1 The Markan Source and Form Criticism of Lk 18:35-43**

A few commentators (Marshall 1978:691-692; Brookins 2011:70-71; Fitzmyer 1985:1211-1213), after working with Lk 18:35-43, seem to agree that the Markan version of the healing narrative of the blind beggar (Mk 10:46-52) is the main source of Luke's account. The apparent adjustments, modifications and alterations as noted in Lk 18:35-43, according to Marshall (1978:691), are the result of Lk's editorial strategies that can also be observed in other parts of the Third Gospel, especially when Markan pericopes are put at his disposal. According to Evans (1990:278), though Luke does not mention the name of the blind man who sat by the roadside begging (18:35), he is referring, 'beyond all doubt,' to the same blind beggar named Bartimaeus in Mk 10:46. Lk seems to paraphrase Mk 10:46-52 as he subtracts, transposes, substitutes and adds some elements in order to develop his own theology of a healing narrative. In the end, the paraphrased text (Lk 18:35-43) keeps intact the principal thoughts of its source while omitting a few elements and inserting some new ones. The synoptic table as presented above (5.4.1) shows both what Lk omits and adds in relation to Mk's account. Brookins (2011:71) remarks that such changes 'have rendered Lk's account of the healing about 12 percent shorter than Mk's.' Despite these alterations, Luke has kept intact the Markan thought in his healing narrative.

As far as form criticism is concerned, a number of commentators (Fitzmyer 1985:1213; Evans 1990:278) seem to consider Lk 18:35-43 as a miracle-story. For Marshall (1978:691), it is 'a

simple account of a healing miracle performed upon a blind man in response to his persistent cries for help.’ As a typical healing story, Lk 18:35-43 embodies the necessary elements required for its classification: first, the blind man is presented in 18:35-36 seated by the roadside begging, and he inquires about the event of the day; second, in 18:37-39 the blind man pleads for help and the crowd tries to silence him; third, his encounter with Jesus (healer) takes place in 18:40; fourth, a dialogue between Jesus and the blind man follows (v. 41); fifth, Jesus heals the blind beggar (v. 42); and sixth, in 18:43, the healing narrative ‘culminates in the glorification of God by the healed man and the audience’ (Marshall 1978:691). In front of us, indeed, we have a miracle-story of healing which demonstrates the Lukan Jesus’ power to restore sight to the blind (Fitzmyer 1985:1213). The current work, guided by the ideological orientation of liberation as demonstrated in Chapter Seven, is interested in this healing story because it rescues the poor from afflictions and empowers them to use their own feet to walk, hands to work, eyes to see, their ears to hear, and their brains to think.

### 5.6.2 The *L*-Source and Form-Critical Analysis of Lk 19:1-10

For what concerns source criticism, the Zacchaeus episode (19:1-10) does not have similar narratives occurring in the other Gospels — neither in the synoptic Gospels nor in John (Loewe 1974:321). It is unique to Luke and most probably he received it from the *L*-source to which the author of the Third Gospel alone had access (Pilgrim 1981:130; Fitzmyer 1985:1218). A trace of typical Lukan vocabulary in 19:1-10 suggests that the text is indeed reflecting Luke’s style of writing<sup>127</sup>. The name Ζακχαῖος, repeated three times in Lk 19:1-10 (vv. 2, 5, 8), seems to be one of Lk’s strategies when he is about to make an important teaching; this is also noted in Lk 7:36-50 in the context of the anointing of Jesus in the house of Simeon the Pharisee, the name Σίμων is mentioned three times (vv. 40, 43, 44), and in Lk 16:19-31, Lazarus’ name appears four times (vv. 20, 23, 24, 25) (Ravens 1991:29). However, ‘[t]he unity of the account has been challenged. In particular, some question whether 19:8 and 19:10 were part of the original account or Luke’s comments’ (Bock 1996:1514-1515). This challenge, however, does not serve our purpose because the Lucan account remains the only account to rely on. The priority of ‘Luke’s special source’ of Jesus-tradition takes the upper hand and it disregards Bultmann’s attempts to consider Lk 19:1-10 as a ‘developed variant of the simpler story in Mk 2:14-17’ (Marshall 1978:695).

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<sup>127</sup> Lk often seems to use the following phrases: καὶ ἰδοὺ “and behold” (19:2; 1:31, 36; 7:37); the verb διέρχουμαι “pass through” in its various forms and tenses διέρχου (19:4; 2:15, 35; 4:30; 5:15; 8:22; 9:6; 11:24; 17:11; 19:1), and so on. Luke will have διέρχουμαι again used ‘twenty times in Acts’ (Fitzmyer 1985:1223).

However, because of its uniqueness, the Lukan episode 19:1-10 has become a cause of endless debate regarding its literary form. Thus the form critical analysis of the Zacchaeus story relies mainly on Luke's account. Talbert (1982:176) after analysing the attitude of Jesus in 19:1-6, especially his decisive declaration σήμερον γὰρ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μένειναι 'for I must stay in your house today' (19:5) and the attitude of the people who murmured (διεγόγγυζον) in Lk 19:7, classifies the Zacchaeus episode as 'a conflict story.' He sees Jesus' response in 19:9-10 as a strategy aimed at silencing those who disapproved of his reaching out to the unpopular and the sinners. In contrast to Talbert's opinion, Tannehill (1986:122) places Lk 19:1-10 with the pronouncement stories (frequent in the Synoptic Gospels), but within the pronouncement stories, the Zacchaeus scene is classified as a quest story. It meets the criteria that characterise pronouncement stories of the quest types<sup>128</sup>. In Tannehill's understanding, the Zacchaeus episode (Lk 19:1-10) becomes one of the nine quest stories traced in the Synoptic Gospels, of which seven are located in Luke's Gospel<sup>129</sup>. Of the seven, four are unique to Luke (7:36-50; 17:12-19; 19:1-10; 23:39-43). These quest stories often have the oppressed, the downtrodden and outcasts as role players (Tannehill 1986:112). Bultmann (in Fitzmyer 1985:1219; and also O'Toole 1992:1032) classifies Lk 19:1-10 as 'a biographical apophthegm' that represents 'both an ideal and metaphorical situation.' Fitzmyer (1985:1219) classifies Lk 19:1-10 as a pronouncement story that ends with a solemn declaration made in 19:9 σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο, καθότι καὶ αὐτὸς υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ ἐστιν 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.' Agreeing with Dibelius, Marshall (1978:695) calls this episode a 'personal legend' and it has a 'historical core.' For Evans (1990:279-280), the Lucan episode of Zacchaeus is 'a story of conversion.' The heart of repentance is located in 19:8 where the wealthy tax collector embraces solidarity with the poor, and frees himself from materialism, dishonesty and greed. This current study, as shown below (6.3.3.3 & 6.3.3.5), treats the Zacchaeus episode as a conversion story.

## 5.7 Redaction Criticism of Lk 18:35-19:10

Redaction criticism involves editing, revising, compiling and drawing into 'suitable literary form' of source-material that redactors have at their disposal (Harrington 1979:96). It is the work of a redactor to decide about the inclusion and omission of some words in his/her final draft in accordance with the expectation of his/her audience. Sometimes, the source can be the

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Tannehill (1986:111).

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Tannehill (1986:112-127).



same, but different redactors may present and use it differently. Each writer according to his theological orientation and social location, adopts the Markan version differently. Below, we point out certain elements that seem to be the result of the redactor's work in Lk 18:35-19:10.

### 5.7.1 Redaction-Critical Analysis of Lk 18:35-43

The pericope Lk 18:35-43, as discussed above (5.6.1), is generally acknowledged to have used Mk 10:46-52 as its main source. However, a couple of alterations are noted as a result of the work of its redactor. Brookins (2011:72) states that παράφρασις as a rhetorical device can be of use in the process of analysing a redactional work of parallel biblical texts. This device as seen above (5.4.2.1) involves four ways of varying 'the form of expression' by addition, subtraction, transposition or by substitution. Each way is capable of causing a variant reading of a text without losing its original thought<sup>130</sup>. However, Brookins (2011:74) remarks that this exercise was used in order to draw 'attention to certain features of a text, by clarifying, simplifying or forging new connections in the thought.' Lk's editorial work with the use of παράφρασις has made three main modifications, namely: characterisation of Jesus, the people and the blind man. Concerning Jesus, Lk changed the direction of Jesus in order to make sure that he encounters the blind man 'as he enters the city of Jericho rather than as he exits' (Brookins 2011:76). Some commentators have suggested various opinions to justify this change of direction<sup>131</sup>. By means of intertextuality, Brookins (2011:78) sees Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-19:44) as a replica of Elijah's (2 Kgs 2:1-11) and that his journey can be read in the light of that of Elijah. Despite Brookins' position, most commentators seem to concur with the thread of thought that links the healing narrative to the Zacchaeus episode<sup>132</sup>.

Brookins (2011:79-80) also appears to say that, by means of redaction, the authority of Jesus is more affirmed in Luke than in Mark. In Lk 18:40, we read: σταθείς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν. The use of the verb κελεύω [ἐκέλευσεν] 'to order/command' sounds more forceful than what one reads in Mark 10:49 καὶ σὰς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· φωνήσατε

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<sup>130</sup> This is evident in Lk as we notice that the thread of thought regarding the healing of the blind man is the same both in Lk 18:35-43 and Mk 10:46-52, but new elements have been introduced in the Lukan text by transposition, subtraction, addition and substitution.

<sup>131</sup> Their opinions range from those of Summers (in Brookins 2011:76) who suggests that there were possibly two Jerichos one as referred to by Lk and another one by Mk — to Wiefel 'who offers a much simpler explanation: that the transposing of the healing from exit to entrance enables Luke to connect the healing episode with the subsequent Zacchaeus pericope, which occurs in Jericho.'

<sup>132</sup> A number of commentators seem to opt for this kind of reasoning thus seeing Luke as someone who wanted to ensure that the two narratives are happening as Jesus heads towards Jerusalem (Evans 1990:278; Porter 1992:92-94; Loewe 1974:329; Marshall 1978:692-693; Fitzmyer 1985:1213; Ravens 1991:28). I concur with this group because of their efforts to harmonise the healing narrative (18:35-43) and the Zacchaeus episode. I am not sure how well Luke read the account of Elijah's journey to Jericho so as to make it match with that of Jesus.

αὐτόν ‘And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”’ Lk edits the Markan version in order to reinforce the authority of Jesus, which will also appear effective when ordering the blind to receive his sight ἀνάβλεψον (18:41). Another element in this regard is by replacing ῥαββουνί (Mk 10:51) with κύριε (Lk 18:41). He does so because he probably wants to affirm that Jesus’ authority goes beyond that of a ῥαββουνί (master) and a διδάσκαλος (teacher) (:80).

In Lk 18:35-43, Luke characterises the people through the use of ὄχλος and λαός. In vv. 36-37, the blind man is in dialogue with the crowd that is passing as he inquired what was happening (v. 36). The crowd’s response (v. 37) motivated the blind man to cry out to Jesus pleading for his mercy and intervention (v. 38). The same crowd, especially those who were leading in front (προάγοντες), tried to rebuke (ἐπετίμων) the blind man telling him to keep quiet (σιγήσῃ) (v. 39). Until here, both Mark and Luke report that the blind man was rebuked by the crowd. It is in v. 43 that Luke replaces the crowd ὄχλος (v. 36) with λαός. The term λαός in this case, probably designates ‘people’ whose perception of Jesus has shifted from being blind followers to gaining new sight (Meynet 2010:84; Brookins 2011:82-84). The ὄχλος (crowd) in Lk 18:36 did not give praise to God, but the λαός (people) did so in Lk 18:43. According to Bock (1996:1511; and also Kodell 1969:328), the two categories of Jesus’ followers — λαός and ὄχλος<sup>133</sup> — as used in Luke are not to be understood in equal terms. The former is more advanced in their relationship with God than the latter. The latter needed time to mature in order to arrive at v. 43 where, after seeing what Jesus did, they too gave praise to God.

The name of the blind man is omitted in Luke. Mark calls him Bartimaeus (10:46) while Luke only speaks of ‘a blind man.’ During the CBS sessions, as discussed below (7.3.1.1), people seemed to appreciate this omission because they said that there is room for each one of them to insert his/her name.

### 5.7.2 Redaction-Critical Analysis of Lk 19:1-10

Nolland (in Bock 1996:1514) and Fitzmyer (1985:1218-1219) opine that ‘the abundance of parataxis’ and ‘non-Lucan elements in Lk 19:1-10 point to a pre-Lucan account.’ On the same note, Bultmann (in Fitzmyer 1985:1219; and also Bock 1996:1515) thinks that the episode Lk 19:1-10 ‘is not a unitary composition’ because some of its parts seem to be additions (vv. 8 and 10), and v. 1 serves as an editorial introduction. This means that v. 8 breaks the continuity

<sup>133</sup> An interesting discussion regarding the use of ὄχλος and λαός in Lk is developed by Nyirawung and van Eck (2012:3-6). The ὄχλος seems to vacillate in their following of Jesus, that is why it was easy for his enemies to approach Judas and the ὄχλος to entice and manipulate them so that they could have access to Jesus.

and the ‘flow of the story.’ The same objection is expressed against v. 10 which both Bultmann (in Bock 1996:1515) and Marshall (1978:695) consider to be a later comment which was not a part of the original tradition. However, Fitzmyer (1985:1219), though with some reservation, submits to its inclusion for he takes it as a later addition in ‘*L*,’ and ‘it can be rightly compared with that in 5:32’ where Jesus makes a parallel pronouncement: οὐκ ἐλήλυθα καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν ‘I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ A similar position is adopted by Holland (in Méndez-Moratalla 2001:229) who agrees with Bultmann on treating v. 1 as a redacted introductory note, but thinks that the original Lukan account was vv. 2-6; the rest are additions. Unfortunately, as the *L*-source was known only to Luke, there is no other recourse for comparison and redaction purposes. This work treats Lk 19:1-10 as a literary unit. This allows us to consider Zacchaeus from start to finish as someone who wants to transform his life.

## 5.8 Lexicographical and Grammatical Questions

### 5.8.1 Lexicographical Questions Arising From Lk 18:35-19:10

#### 5.8.1.1 The Use of the Infinitive ἐγγίζειν in 18:35

Here we inquire about the use of the verb ἐγγίζω<sup>134</sup> in Lk 18:35. The fundamental question is: What does it mean, for Luke, to draw near to Jericho? Different theories have been put forward to explain Luke’s wording ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεριχὼ (18:35). Marshall (1978:692) recognises the use of ἐγγίζω as making part of Luke’s style and vocabulary (7:12). For Luke ἐγγίζω means to go/come near. Thus Jesus in 18:35 encounters the blind man near Jericho, or a bit outside Jericho. However, after examining the use of Luke’s ἐγγίζω in the Third Gospel, Porter (1992:95-104) opines that ἐγγίζω could be understood both as a verb of motion and location. Taking it as the ‘verb of location, either in time and space,’ he claims that Lk 18:35 should be seen as referring to ‘location’ and not ‘movement’ (:95). He also argues that if 18:35 is read together with 18:40 (cf. 15:25-26), it becomes evident that Lk’s use of the infinitive ἐγγίζειν intended to maintain ‘the spatial locational sense’ (Porter 1992:101; Dormeyer 1990:370). The verb ἐγγίζω in Lk 18:40 sounds more logical if referred to location rather than movement. This is due to the fact that the blind man stands in a convenient location within the reach of Jesus for a dialogue (vv. 40-41).

<sup>134</sup> The verb ἐγγίζω appears 42 times in the NT; its highest frequency is registered in Lukan literature: 18 occurrences in Luke and 6 in Acts. Mt uses it 7 times and Mk 3 times; Jn does not use it at all. Εγγίζω has a spatial or temporal significance, which remains in all further aspects of its usage’ (Dormeyer 1990:370)

However, in Roman Palestine as discussed below (6.2.2.1), it is possible that restrictions were put in place to regulate the movement of the poor, the blind and the lame, especially in areas inhabited by the elite. Thus it is possible that the blind man sat by the roadside outside Jericho and not in the city.

#### **5.8.1.2 Luke's Respective Use of ἐβόησεν and ἔκραζεν in vv. 38-39**

In the healing narrative of the blind beggar (Mk 10:46-52), Mark uses the verb κράζω twice: first as infinitive κράζειν in 10:47; and second as imperfect ἔκραζεν in 10:48 with reference to the cry of the man as he pleads for the son of David, Jesus, to have mercy on him. In editing his Markan source, Lk replaces κράζω with βοάω (indicative aorist ἐβόησεν) in Lk 18:38. The synoptic Gospels (Mk 10:48; Mt 20:31; Lk 18:39) use κράζω when the blind man (men) cried all the more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἔκραζεν). The internal references of the synoptic Gospels show that βοάω is used by all when reporting about the voice of someone that cries in the wilderness (Mk 1:3; Mt 3:3; Lk 3:4). Lk's preference of βοάω is also noted in 9:38 and 18:7. According to Brown (1975:410), the use of βοάω (shout, scream, cry out) 'in both Testaments it is expressive of the extremities of man's needs and joys.' βοάω is used 'in the sense of calling out in distress' similar to Hebrew קָרָא (Judg 10:10); קָרָא (Num 20:16) or קָרָא (Is 40:3) (Brown 1975:410). In the context of affliction and suffering, the person's crying out to God 'does not go unheeded' (Brown 1975:410). God hears the cry of the afflicted and the powerless. This includes the blood of the innocent that cries out to God for vengeance (Gen 4:10). Jesus cried (ἐβόησεν) at the 'ninth hour with a loud voice' (Mk 15:34) thus expressing the sense of abandonment as in Psalm 22:1.

The use of κράζω has a considerable frequency in the synoptic Gospels, especially in Mt, where it occurs twelve times; ten in Mk, and four in Lk (Fendrich 1991:313; Wigram 1903:431). It is sometimes used to express the cry of hate and manipulation as noted in Mt 27:23; Mk 15:13, where the unruly crowd demands the death of Jesus, and the release of Barnabas in Lk 23:18. In its secular use κράζω is also employed with reference made to the uncontrolled and raucous cry of ravens and frogs. In some cases κράζω designates the cries of help ( Mt 9:27; 14:26) by human beings or by demons 'whether articulate (Mk 1:23; Mt 8:29, etc) or inarticulate (Mk 5:5; Lk 9:27)' (Carson 1975:409; Arndt & Gingrich 1979:447; Fendrich 1991:313). The Greeks and Romans used κράζω in the religious sphere, especially in connection with the demonic and underworld domains, involving wailing and uncontrolled cries. In the OT κράζω in some cases, designates the cries of men and women who call out to

God either as an individual or as a nation expressing to him their distress (Exod 22:22; Judg 3:9; Ps 21:5-6). Κράζω occasionally in the NT is used to mean the cry of desperation (Mt 27:50), the cries of one giving birth (Rev 12:2) or the cry of hatred (Acts 7:57). Luke's shift from ἐβόησεν (18:38) to ἔκραζεν (18:39) probably is not without reason. The former possibly connotes an uncontrolled cry, and the latter an intelligent one. But this opinion is not satisfactory because the Greeks also used κράζω to mean both the raucous cries of ravens and frogs, and uncontrolled shouts and cries of demons (Carson 1975:408). Since both the OT and NT in several instances alternate the use βοάω and κράζω, we may presume that Lk's employment of each at v. 38 and v. 39 respectively does not imply a change in signification. The cry of the poor in rural Mbinga, whether in the sense of κράζω or βοάω, remains the focus of this work as we seek to listen to their cries, empower them and cause social transformation.

### **5.8.1.3 Zacchaeus' Profession: ἀρχιτελώνης in 19:2**

The title of Zacchaeus' profession as a chief tax collector (ἀρχιτελώνης), of all the extant NT Greek literature, appears only in Lk 19:2 (Caird 1963:207; Loewe 1974:321; Marshall 1978:696; Fitzmyer 1985:1223; Morris 1988:297; Green 1997:668). This makes it difficult for modern readers to retrieve its precise signification, because there is no other place for comparison. In the context of Lk 19:2, ἀρχιτελώνης means someone in-charge of a group of tax-collectors (Marshall 1978:696; Evans 1990:282). As a contractor, he probably won the bid of collecting taxes in Jericho (Caird 1963:207). In turn, he delegated the contract to a number of tax assistants who worked under his supervision (Pilgrim 1981:131).

### **5.8.2 Grammatical Questions in Lk 19:8 — δίδωμι and ἀποδίδωμι**

This section discusses a grammatical case that has been noticed by many commentators when analysing Lk 19:1-10. The issue is about the translation of the verbs δίδωμι and ἀποδίδωμι in 19:8. The two verbs appear consecutively in Zacchaeus' statement made during the joyful reception of Jesus in his house: ἰδοὺ τὰ ἡμίσιά μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, κύριε, τοῖς πτωχοῖς δίδωμι, καὶ εἴ τινός τι ἐσυκοφάντησα ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν. People sometimes read and translate a biblical text to indicate a meaning that is not threatening to their own ideological trends. Those who interpret δίδωμι and ἀποδίδωμι as present tense or present continuous tense tend to read the Zacchaeus episode 'as a vindication story, as a defence of Zacchaeus' customary upright conduct' (Méndez-Moratalla 2001:231-232). Their emphasis rests on the argument that Zacchaeus' statement actually was signifying something that was

already happening. Plummer (in Fitzmyer 1985:1220), on the contrary, is of the opinion that these two sentences should not be understood as present tenses, otherwise Zacchaeus will be seen as ‘a boaster’, claiming that he was always giving half of his possessions to the poor and that he was repaying those he defrauded a fourfold refund. With the support of patristic and modern writers, Plummer is at ease with the futuristic interpretation of Lk 19:8; he sees it as a statement of resolve. This is also the opinion of Caird (1963:207) who considers Zacchaeus as one who admits his fraudulent practises and seeks conversion. The debate in relation to the Zacchaeus episode is presented in 6.3.2 below. Five English versions are given hereunder to underline their diverse translations of Lk 19:18.

- NAB** Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, **I shall give** to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone **I shall repay** it four times over.
- NIV** Look, Lord! **Here and now I give** half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, **I will pay back** four times the amount.
- NJB** Look, sir, **I am going to give** half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody **I will pay him back** four times the amount.
- NKJ** Look, Lord, **I give** half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, **I restore** fourfold.
- RSV** Behold, Lord, the half of my goods **I give** to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, **I restore** it fourfold.

From these versions, we notice that NKJ, and RSV translate δίδωμι and ἀποδίδωμι as present tenses thus indicating the habitual behaviour of Zacchaeus of supporting the poor and refunding those he overcharged at his toll booth. On the other hand, NAB and NJB translate δίδωμι and ἀποδίδωμι with a futuristic meaning, presuming that Zacchaeus’ statement is a positive change of heart that arises from his encounter with Jesus. ‘In the NIV the verb “give” is modified with “here and now,” words which are not found in the Greek text’ (Evans 1990:280). When reading this story with the poor in rural areas of Mbinga Diocese (7.3.2), it became evident that they were not impressed by the lifestyles of their own tax-collectors. They associated them with dishonesty.

## 5.9 Conclusion

As analysed above (5.2.1), both the upper (18:34) and lower (19:11) limits revealed that Lk 18:35-19:10 does not stand as a monolith having no connection with what precedes the current text and what comes after it. Most issues that emerged in 18:1-34, especially those related to justice (18:1-8), boastfulness, humility and repentance (18:9-14), rejection (18:15-17), greed (18:18-30) and suffering (18:31-34), did re-emerge in 18:35-19:10 thus suggesting

that Jesus used his journey as an opportunity to teach and reveal his mission. The healing narrative of a blind man in 18:35-43 and the Zacchaeus episode in 19:1-10 continue to echo that Jesus' mission is inseparable from his commitment to open the eyes of the blind and reach out to the poor and outcasts. The lower limit 19:11 makes part of the parable of the pounds (19:11-27), and this has influenced some commentators to situate the terminus of the Jerusalem journey at 19:10 (Marshall 1978:401). This work concurs with those who delimit the Jerusalem journey stretching it from 9:51-19:27. The concept of *parousia* that dominates in Lk 19:11-27 is linked to that of salvation repeatedly noted at 18:14, 17, 24, 29, 42; 19:9. In this case, *parousia* is perceived as the 'fulfilment of salvation' and 'the arrival of the kingdom of God in its fullness' (Green 1997:677), which is indeed one of the concerns of 18:35-19:10. The internal coherence of Lk 18:35-19:10 as studied in 5.2.2, carries a number of themes that bind together the healing narrative of the blind beggar (18:35-43) and the Zacchaeus story (19:1-10). And this is going to help ordinary readers in Mbinga Diocese to grasp how the two narratives could be classified as belonging to the same subsequence. Jesus' concern for the poor appeared to be the leading theme in Lk 18:35-19:10, a theme that plays an important role in Luke's Gospel (1:52-53; 4:16-30; 6:20-21; 7:18-23; 14:13-14; 16:19-31). Despite a few textual queries, the Greek text of Lk 18:35-19:10 presents no major problems.

Source criticism showed that Luke used Mk 10:46-52 as his main source when composing 18:35-43. The peculiar elements we noted in 5.6.1 as unique to Luke were the result of his redactional activity probably influenced by his own theological conception and the expectation of his audience. As stated in 5.1, skills gained from this chapter help the researcher and the CBS participants to analyse and evaluate the internal movement of the text. For example, as shown below (7.3.1.1), ordinary readers use synoptic insights to enrich their reading and understanding of Lk 18:35-43. Thus textual analysis of Lk 18:35-19:10, though technically demanding and characterised by complex procedures, remains an indispensable process completed by the trained reader to ensure that the selected text is well understood before one engages in its critical reading with the CBS participants.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RETRIEVING LIBERATIVE THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: CRITICAL AND CLOSE READING OF LK 18:35-19:10

#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter Six focuses on the world of the text and its challenge to modern readers. In other words, we want to investigate what the text had to say to its original audience<sup>135</sup>, and how today's readers make use of it. Since texts are open to diverse meanings depending on who reads them, and under which social conditions they are read, the modern readers have the chance to read 'in front of the text' and retrieve meanings that are valid in their contexts. As noted above (5.2.2), Lk 18:35-19:10 consists of two short stories: the healing of the blind man (18:35-43), and Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (19:1-10). Each story is first approached as a separate passage; thereafter, the two are viewed together while focusing on their points of convergence and divergence. The literature review, as presented above (1.3.1), revealed that most biblical commentators who have worked with Lk 18:35-19:10 tended to focus on the faith, conversion and salvation of the blind beggar and the tax-collector respectively, exalting them as models of what it means to have faith in God. They seemed not to question the socioeconomic structures that created beggars and wealthy people like Zacchaeus in first-century Roman Palestine. This chapter, while accepting the value of the commentators' focus, seeks to inspire and motivate rural dwellers to see in these texts a challenge to transform their current socioeconomic reality. The chapter begins with the presentation of the literary structure of each pericope followed by its critical reading. The process is largely guided by interpretive tools of liberation theology and African contextual hermeneutics of liberation.

#### 6.2 Literary Structure and Interpretation of Lk 18:35-43

In considering the literary structure as a rhetorical technique, our interest in the first place is not to search for some possible message that the text carries, but to identify the style that has been used to report its content and how this has been expressed. For a successful literary construction, we need first to pay attention to the way in which words, tenses, voices and

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<sup>135</sup> At the same time one must become aware of the fact that no text is capable of expressing entirely what its author had in mind. This is due to the fact that the existing text has used certain linguistic styles and principles to express its narration. The use of language also remains incomplete because, by means of language, 'what is said,' writes Schneiders (1999:138), 'stands always against *the backdrop of the vast unsaid* to which it is related.' Schneiders (1999:19) continues to write that '[t]exts, as language, not only say what they say but evoke a world of the unsaid that might well become articulate under different circumstances of interpretation.'



moods have been syntactically arranged to form sentences. According to Murai (2010:np), two kinds of literary structure seem to be evident in most writings of the Old and New Testaments namely chiasm and parallelism.

### 6.2.1 Proposed Literary Structures of Lk 18:35-43

At the outset, it is important to remind ourselves of the undeniable fact that different people read, structure and interpret biblical texts differently. Each reader usually proposes a literary structure according to what he/she wants to achieve. Sometimes a biblical commentator may reorganise his/her previous structure in order to accommodate new insights, e.g., Meynet's composition of Lk 18:35-43 (2005:70; 2010:82). Murai (2010:np; and also Bock 1996:1504) opts for a parallel structure to organise Lk 18:35-43 as shown below:

<b>A</b> (18:35)	Jesus approached Jericho (18:35) (ἐγγίζειν)
<b>B</b> (18:36-37)	A blind man inquired what was happening (18:36) (τί)
<b>C</b> (18:38-39)	And he cried: "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me! (18:38)" (ἐβόησεν)
<b>A'</b> (18:40)	Jesus ordered that he be brought to him (18:40) (ἐγγισαντος)
<b>B'</b> (18:41)	What do you want me to do for you? (18:41) (τί)
<b>C'</b> (18:42-43)	giving glory to God (18:43) (δοξάζων)

The letter **A** and its parallel **A'** focus on the action of coming near, firstly by Jesus, who is shown drawing near to Jericho (ἐγγίζειν) (18:35), and secondly by the blind man who is commanded to be brought near Jesus (18:40) (ἐγγισαντος) - **A'**. In **B** and **B'** the question-and-answer session guides the two interactions: firstly between the blind man and the crowd as he inquired about the affairs of the day (ἐπυνθάνετο τί εἴη τοῦτο) (18:36-37) - **B**, and secondly, between Jesus and the blind man τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω (18:41) - **B'**. The cry of pain and joy is exposed in **C** and **C'** respectively. In **C** the blind man cries out to Jesus asking for mercy (18:38) (ἐβόησεν); even when some people in the crowd tried to silence him, he continued to cry out all the more (18:39) (πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἔκραζεν). In **C'** the status of the beggar has changed, instead of crying out and begging, he follows Jesus (ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ) while praising God (δοξάζων τὸν θεόν) (18:43).

For the sake of this study, I follow Meynet's structure, which is synchronic by nature and divided into five parts by horizontal lines as shown in the tables below: (i) 18:35; (ii) 18:36-38; (iii) 18:39-40a; (iv) 18:40b-42 and (v) 18:43 (Meynet 2010:82). The first table uses the

Greek text (N-A<sup>28</sup>) and the second one, separated from the first by a thick-black line, employs its literal English translation.

•	<sup>35</sup>	Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ	ἐγγίξειν αὐτὸν	εἰς	Ἰεριχὼ	
•		τυφλός τις	ἐκάθητο	παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν	ἐπαιτῶν.	
➤	<sup>36</sup>	ἀκούσας δὲ ὄχλου διαπορευομένου	ἐπυνθάνετο	τί εἴη τοῦτο.		
❖	<sup>37</sup>		ἀπήγγειλαν δὲ αὐτῷ ὅτι	Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος παρέρχεται		
❖	<sup>38</sup>	καὶ ἐβόησεν	λέγων,	Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με.		
	<sup>39</sup>	καὶ οἱ προάγοντες	ἐπετίμων	αὐτῷ ἵνα σιγήσῃ,		
		αὐτὸς δὲ πολλῷ μᾶλλον	ἐκραζεν	υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με.		
	<sup>40</sup>	σταθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς	ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν	ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν.		
➤		ἐγγίσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ	ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν·	<sup>41</sup> τί σοι θέλεις ποιῆσω;		
❖	ὁ δὲ		εἶπεν·	κύριε, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω.		
❖	<sup>42</sup> καὶ	ὁ Ἰησοῦς	εἶπεν αὐτῷ·	ἀνάβλεψον, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.		
•	<sup>43</sup> καὶ	παραχρῆμα	ἀνέβλεψεν καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ	δοξάζων τὸν θεόν.		
•	καὶ	πᾶς ὁ λαός	ιδὼν	ἔδωκεν αἶνον τῷ θεῷ.		

•	<sup>35</sup>	It happened, as he	DREW NEAR	to	Jericho,	
•		a certain blind man		was sitting	by the roadside	begging;
➤	<sup>36</sup>	But hearing of a crowd	passing across, he was	inquiring	What would this [mean].	
❖	<sup>37</sup>	And they	announced to him	that	Jesus the Nazorean	passes by,
❖	<sup>38</sup>	And he	cried aloud	saying:	‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’	
	<sup>39</sup>	And those leading ahead,	were rebuking him	in order that	he be silent	
		But	he was crying out	much more,	‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’	
	<sup>40</sup>	And standing,	Jesus,	ordered him	to be led to him;	
➤		And DRAWING NEAR him,	he asked him:	<sup>41</sup> ‘What [do] you want that I do for you?’		
❖	And	he	said:	‘Lord, in order that I receive sight.’		
❖	<sup>42</sup> And	Jesus	said to him:	‘Receive sight; the faith of yours has saved you.’		
•	<sup>43</sup> And	immediately	he RECEIVED SIGHT	and he was FOLLOWING HIM,	GLORIFYING GOD;	
•	And	ALL THE PEOPLE,	SEEING,		GAVE PRAISE TO GOD.	

The literal English translation that is used in the second table has been constructed with the help of Bibleworks 6<sup>th</sup> edition (BGT), textual criticism as analysed above (4.3), and the work of Marshall ‘The RSV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament’ (1975). The translation may

not be grammatically correct, but it does show what it means to have a text translated literally. A couple of modifications are introduced to accommodate the ideo-theological articulation of this work. The arrangement of some verbs, terms/words (names, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs) and phrases do not rigidly follow what Meynet's structure suggests. However, as shown above, Meynet's composition focuses on the blind man's movement that moves from begging (18:35) to following and glorifying God (18:43).

Different colours and bold characters have been used in this composition in order to distinguish and place the elements in the table according to their respective functions. The pink colour marks the blind man (τυφλός) (v. 35b), his reception of sight (ἀνέβλεψεν) (v. 43a) and seeing (ἰδὼν) that is noted by all the people (v. 43b). The words in blue colour (v. 35b) express what the blind man was previously doing: sitting (ἐκάθητο) by the roadside (παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν) and begging (ἐπαιτῶν). The same colour is used to indicate the radical changes that transformed his life (v. 43) and the positive reaction of the people who were eye-witnesses at the scene of his healing: following Him (ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ), glorifying God (δοξάζων τὸν θεόν), and all the people after having seen it, gave praise to God (ἔδωκεν αἶνον τῷ θεῷ). The green colour indicates the active role of the blind man in the text: inquiring (ἐπυνθάνετο) (v. 36); crying out (ἐβόησεν and ἔκραζεν) to Jesus asking for mercy (Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με) (vv. 38b & 39b) and the expression of his desire to receive sight (κύριε, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω) (v. 41b). Jesus' proper names and pronouns are marked with brown colour (vv. 37, 40, 42, 43) in order to distinguish him from the pronouns — marked yellow — that stand for the blind man (vv. 37, 39, 40, 42). Jesus' question: 'What [do] you want that I do for you?' (τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω;) (v. 41a) and his words of comfort: 'Receive your sight, the faith of yours has saved you' (ἀνάβλεψον, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε) (v. 42) are written in red colour. The presence of a crowd is marked with a black colour shade (v. 36), also implied in 18:39a by the phrase 'those who were leading ahead' (οἱ προάγοντες), and 'all the people' πᾶς ὁ λαὸς in 18:43. Most of the verbs in 18:35-43 are written in bold.

The meaning of each word as used in this section (term, member, segment, piece and part) is given by Meynet (2010:29) in his glossary of technical terms. As far as Lk 18:35-43 is concerned, we are dealing with a passage which, according to the current literary structural analysis, is formed of five parts (18:35; 18:36-38; 18:39-40a; 18:40b-42 and 18:43). Each part is made up of members, segments and pieces. The first and fifth parts (18:35) and (18:43) play an important role in this structure because they show clearly how personal and social

transformation took place in the life of the blind man. Each part is composed of one piece of two segments (first part [18:35a+b] and fifth part [18:43a+b]). According to Meynet (2010:83), the two segments of the fifth part (18:43a+b) if put in parallel comparison reveal that the blind man's recovery of sight (18:43a) symbolises the 'seeing' of all the people (18:43b). The formerly blind man 'glorifies God' (18:43a) and 'all the people give praise to God' (18:43b). The first segment of the last part (v. 43a) stands opposed to the second member of the first part (35b); their members have the following parallelism: receiving sight/blind, following/sitting, glorifying God/begging. There is a clear shift from staying idle to doing something. The interaction between the blind man and the crowd is vividly portrayed in the third (18:36-38) and fourth (18:39-40a) parts respectively. Each part is composed of three segments bimembers; the three segments of part two are: v. 36, v. 37, v. 38; and part three: v. 39a; v. 39b and v. 40a. The most exciting phenomenon in both parts is the crying out of the blind man to Jesus asking for mercy (18:38 and 18:39b). The first cry in 18:38 (ἐβόησεν) is motivated by the response of his inquiry in 18:36 (ἐπυνθάνετο) where the crowd announced (ἀπήγγειλαν) (18:37a) that Jesus the Nazorean is passing by (παρέρχεται) (18:37b). The second crying out in 18:39b (ἔκραζεν), qualified by the phrase 'all the more' (πολλῷ μᾶλλον), is more decisive than the first one (18:38); it is his affirmative response to those who forced him to remain silent (18:39a). The blind man calls Jesus with a catena of messianic titles: Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ Δαυίδ (Jesus Son of David) (18:38b), υἱὲ Δαυίδ (Son of David) (18:39b) and κύριε (Lord) (18:41c). These titles are in contrast to the one used by the crowd which named Jesus after his provenance, i.e., Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος (18:37b).

According to Meynet (2010:83), part three (39a; 39b, 40a) adopts the concentric structure whose central element (18:39b) is surrounded by two commands: 18:39a and 18:40a.

A (18:39a)	καὶ οἱ προάγοντες ἐπετίμων αὐτῷ ἵνα σιγήσῃ
B (18:39b)	υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με
A' (18:40a)	ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν

In **A** (18:39a) part of the crowd, especially those who were in front, rebuked the blind man in order that he keep silent; in other words they asked him to stop crying/shouting. **B** (18:39b) is the heart of this structure where the cry of the blind man is repeated with a certain insistence. And in **A'** (18:40a) it is Jesus who ordered the crowd that the blind man be brought near him. Meynet (2010:83) notes that the cry of the blind man in 18:39b stands as 'the center of the whole passage.' It is this cry that is going to alert Jesus and make him notice his presence (18:40a). The fourth part (18:40b-42) is formed of two pieces (18:40b-41a and 41b-42). In

18:40b-41a, the blind man, drawing near Jesus (ἐγγίσαντος αὐτοῦ) (40b), is asked by him to state the motive of his cry (18:41a): τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω; (what [do] you want that I may do for you?). This is indeed a crucial question to ask and it deserves some consideration and will be developed below (6.2.2.5). The blind man's response in 18:41c reveals his deep longing for recovery of his sight: κύριε, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω (Lord, in order that I receive [my] sight). Without delay, Jesus tells him: ἀνάβλεψον, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε (receive [your] sight; the faith of yours has saved you) (v. 42b). The outcome of Jesus' action is recorded in 18:43a where it is stated that immediately (παραχρῆμα) he received [his] sight (ἀνέβλεψεν) — a turning point for the blind man as he abandons begging to join Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem.

## 6.2.2 Interpretation of Lk 18:35-43 from the Liberationist Perspective

In Chapter Four (4.4), we saw that people with physical disability in Jewish society were deemed to belong to an expendable class and were also numbered among the most despised individuals in the hierarchical structure of ancient Roman Palestinian society. They were seen as members of the 'disfigured faces' which included groups of 'beggars, cripples, prostitutes, criminals, who lived in the hedges outside the cities' (Neyrey 2002:np; Esler 1987:175; Prior 1995:173). In some social circles, they were treated as polluters and pests of society whose lives were 'an embarrassment' (Green 1997:663). Such human beings were exposed to what Gutiérrez (1974:291) calls 'a scandalous condition inimical to human dignity and therefore contrary to the will of God.' They were deprived of the basic needs and they lived a life of destitution (Boff & Pixley 1989:1), and had limited social ties (Neyrey 2002:np). Thus most healing miracle-stories that we read in the NT, especially in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, were meant not only to heal the afflicted, but also to empower and restore them spiritually, culturally, economically, politically and socially (Gutiérrez 1974:27; Speckman 2007:118-135). As we read and interpret Lk 18:35-43, we try to the best of our knowledge to pay attention to those concrete elements which lead to wholeness, recovery and integration. In other words, the blind beggar and the destitute in general become an epistemological paradigm<sup>136</sup> for our interpretation of Lk 18:35-43.

### 6.2.2.1 The Blind Man seated by the Roadside near Jericho

Luke, in 18:35, mentions the drawing near of Jesus to Jericho; this was one of the towns that Herod the Great had founded and in which he erected his royal estate and winter palaces that

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Gutiérrez 1983:18; Brown 1990:107; Frostin 1988:6; Prior 1995:191.

were adorned ‘with lavish pools and splendid edifices’ (Rousseau & Arav 1996:132). The town’s magnificent Roman-style-buildings reminded the Jewish people of ‘despotism, bloody family feuds, oppression, massacres, and foreign occupation’ (:134). Despite all this, Jericho was known for its economic prosperity, mainly enhanced by the fertility of its plain and by its strategic geographical location that provided access ‘to the main trade routes’ (:134). Many traders and pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem passed through Jericho (Lampe 1962:838). As a rich town, Jericho must have attracted all sorts of poor people including the blind and possibly all those whose subsistence depended on begging — ‘the crippled, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, and the mentally handicapped’ (Kim 1998:256). It is possible that merchants and pilgrims were considered as potential almsgivers for this reason it is not surprising that the blind man is found seated by the roadside begging for alms (18:35b) (Bock 1996:1506). Sitting by the roadside raises two points: first, perhaps it was an ideal location for begging (Martin 2011:492); and second, since beggars were often treated as the filth and polluters of society, sitting at the entrance gate of Jericho could be an indication that they were not allowed to enter the city (Neyrey 2002:np). Thus the description of the blind man who is encountered at the entrance gate of Jericho highlights a social problem that needs to be squarely addressed.

Certainly, begging was not happening only in Jericho, but also in other cities of Palestine (Pilgrim 1981:44). Begging as a social problem is not something that happens by chance, ‘there is human responsibility behind it’ (Gutiérrez 1974:175; Philpott 1993:114); it is the result of inequality and social stratification. In first-century Roman Palestine, it was utterly unthinkable for the poor to liberate themselves from the spiral of poverty. This was partly due to the fact that ‘the vast majority of the population was employed in subsistence farming’ (Kotter 2013:np), and whatever they produced was taxed heavily. Some peasants became beggars because their lands were confiscated as a result of failure to pay their taxes (Neyrey 2002:np). We may also imagine Jericho to be a place of contestation, strife and struggle between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots.’ The city itself symbolised and embodied elements of domination, oppression and exploitation. According to the estimation of Josephus as noted in his work *The Jewish War* (4:451-475), the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was known to be a dangerous one, and quite often a haven for robbers and murderers. The story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) probably reflects some historical events that were not infrequent in the vicinity of Jericho. The patience of the poor has a limit; it is like a time bomb that waits for a suitable impulse to explode. The rich are not safe in their mansions if they do nothing to

help those without shelters and those who often go hungry (Prior 1995:173; Bosch 1991:99). Freire (1979:41) rightly writes that '[v]iolence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons — not by those who are oppressed, exploited and unrecognized.'

#### **6.2.2.2 Unmuzzled Cry from the Underside of History**

One of the qualities of the Lukan blind man that can be retrieved from 18:35-43 is the capacity to sense the reality of his circumstances and the possibility of forging change. Though blind, he was able to use other senses and faculties to communicate with his outside world. For this reason, the commotion and excitement that the crowd caused as they followed Jesus did not pass unnoticed (18:36). Inquiry then becomes an important aspect in the process of seeking liberation from physical affliction and oppression. Silence would not have brought him healing. His ability to hear, speak and think remains intact. This eventually allows him to express his curiosity and enter into a productive dialogue with the passers-by (Marshall 1978:693). He was able to ask the right question (18:36b), at the right time, and he got the right answer (18:37). Correct information equips and empowers people (Ngetwa 2013:34).

Human beings like to play the role of spokespersons to speak on behalf of other people, especially on behalf of those whom they think are voiceless — those from the underside of history (Gutiérrez 1974:291). The rich think that they have a right to indicate what the poor should do. The marginalised are not even allowed to write about their own history (Philpott 1993:107). In the end, people fail to recognise the true voice of the voiceless and to separate it from that of the self-appointed spokesperson. Worse still is when the powerful try to prevent the poor from expressing themselves. In doing so, the afflicted are exposed to even more 'dehumanising aggression' (Freire 1979:77). One should not forget that the blind man was not a tabula rasa, somehow he knew how to survive. The reaction of some people in the crowd, especially those leading in front (προάγοντες) (18:39a), was negative. They thought that they had power to prevent him from reaching out to Jesus. Following the example of the widow (18:1-8), the blind beggar's determination to seek healing was firm. He refused to be forced 'to act according to role' (Green 1997:664; Gooding 1987:297). Those who accepted their condition and allowed themselves to be silenced were doomed to remain seated 'stationary on the margins' suffering (Mullins 2005:283-284). Clearly he understood that poor people should not fold their arms and remain seated, waiting for others to have pity on them. Miracles will take place if those concerned are involved in the process of making them a reality. According

to Nolan (1976:65), ‘a Christianity that does not challenge the poor and oppressed themselves, including women, to take an option and join in the struggle for liberation is simply unbiblical.’ It is also unacceptable to participate in behaviour that prevents the poor from realising their own liberation. Those walking in front, who tried to silence the blind beggar (18:39), could be any person, especially those in authority, who close their eyes and ears in order to avoid seeing and hearing what is happening around them (Kodell 1982:93). Despite threats, the poor, like the blind man, continue to cry out unceasingly, ready to use any opportunity to confront the ‘modern Goliaths’ (Byrne 2000:150). Their cry, therefore, must prompt us to join them in their struggle to combat social injustice (Philpott 1993:113-114).

### **6.2.2.3 Going beyond the Confines of Nazareth**

The blind man identified Jesus three times with rather unique titles, which later became known as messianic titles: Jesus, Son of David (18:38); Son of David (18:39), and Lord (18:41) (Bock 1996:1508). How come that only the blind beggar had this messianic insight correctly used here with reference to Jesus? Could it be said that he had become one of those to whom the Son chose to reveal himself (Lk 10:22-24)? It is said that the news about Jesus and his capacity to perform miracles was already in the ears of many people in Galilee and in neighbouring cities. If this was the case, then we may assume that the blind man must have heard of his fame (Fitzmyer 1985:1216; Bock 1996:1508; Evans 1990:278; Martin 2011:493). Earlier on, some people had already recognised Jesus as Son of David (Mt 9:27), and others were perplexed as to whether he was really a son of David or not (Mt 12:23). Some still associated Jesus with David since Joseph was from that lineage (Lk 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4; 3:31). Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem also caused the crowd to rejoice, bless and hail him as their king (19:38). Though people saw Jesus as someone from Nazareth (18:37), the blind man ‘saw in him the Royal Messianic son of David (18:37-38) with all the resources of the kingdom of God at his command’ (Gooding 1987:297). He perceived what the crowd and disciples could not dare see (Bock 1996:1507). Indeed, they have eyes but they cannot see (Pss 115:5-6; 135:16-17; Isa 6:9; Mk 8:18). These messianic titles cannot be associated with the flattering words with which beggars frequently strive to impress their prospectus almsgivers (Meynet 2005:713).

In Jewish circles, it was known that the messianic period would involve restoration and healing. During his inaugural speech in Nazareth as narrated in Lk 4:17-18, Jesus alluding to Isaiah 61:1-2 which describes the work of the promised messiah, lists among his miraculous



powers a capacity to open the eyes of the blind. This means that the blind man was able to identify Jesus with his mission that goes beyond the confines of Nazareth. The crowd found it hard to understand; it knew Jesus only by his provenance — Jesus of Nazareth — a title that could be used to identify any other person who was born and brought up in Nazareth. The cry of the blind beggar widens the horizon of Jesus; he is not only a man of Nazareth, but also the Lord who comes to save humanity. It was this faith of the blind beggar that prompted Jesus to heal him (Kodell 1982:93). Furthermore, the name Nazareth limits and situates Jesus in Nazareth, the place with no history of prophets or even of any renowned men and women. As mentioned above (5.3.1.2), the name of one's provenance could sometimes be used in a derogatory manner to mean remoteness, uncivilisation, poverty or simply a place with limited resources. In such situations, though not always the case, naming someone after his/her provenance could be seen as an insult (Jn 1:46). Many rural areas in Tanzania when mentioned have this kind of negative connotation because of their poverty. Some government employees would consider it as a punishment to be appointed to work in rural areas.

#### **6.2.2.4 Collaborative Ministry and Healing**

God's promises to save humanity are actualised through the ministry of Jesus as he paid heed to the genuine plea of the blind beggar (Morris 1988:296; Bock 1996:1509). Jesus was not caught in the trap like other people in the crowd, who seemed to function on the basis of excitements, emotions, prejudices and stereotyping attitudes (Evans 1990:279). He stops (ἵστησιν) and commands (κελεύει) that he be led (ἄχθῆναι) to him (18:40). Neither does he shout to disapprove of the crowd for ridiculing the blind beggar, but he asked the same people to bring the person to him. As the model par excellence of leadership, Jesus knew how to handle the crowd peacefully. He managed to turn those who rebuked the blind man into better persons, ready to collaborate with him in his ministry, as we see them at work leading the blind beggar to Jesus (18:40). At the behest of Jesus, those leading in front discovered that they had an important role to play in assisting the blind beggar to reach the place of his healing. Without this assistance he was not going to see the exact place where Jesus stood in the crowd (18:40). His healing was therefore a combination of several efforts coming from the blind man himself, the people and Jesus.

#### **6.2.2.5 Fundamental Question: 'What do you want that I do for you?'**

The question of Jesus to the blind man, τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω; (What do you want that I do for you?) (18:41), has an important place in this healing narrative. 'Jesus can see that he was

blind and destitute and in need of many things, but he leaves it to the man to ask for what he wants' (Martin 2011:494). Allowing such questions enables men and women to articulate their own situations, and become conscious of their needs. Having known what they want, then it becomes easier for them to play an active role in improving their social structures and political machinery (Gutiérrez 1974:47). De Gruchy (2009:8) observes that one of the problems that delays the process of poverty alleviation is that the poor are not considered as important agents in the fight against poverty. They are only treated as 'objects of charity.' In most cases, the approach to poverty alleviation begins from the wrong point of departure; most policies and decisions that intend to alleviate poverty are made in the absence of the poor. As a result, such arrangements often do not meet the true needs of the poor. The poor are often alienated and turned into mere objects that are put at the service of those who think, plan and do things for them (Ilunga 1984:21). Corbett and Fikkert (2012:109) argue that in order to improve the lives of poor people, one must avoid doing things that the poor themselves are able to do.

The insight of Jesus in asking the blind man to state clearly what he wanted to get from him was crucial and successful (18:41). Otherwise, under normal circumstances, the cry of the blind man that sought the Son of David to have mercy on him (18:38, 39) 'could be heard as a request for alms (as in Acts 3:2-10), which also may be why bystanders tried to silence him' (Johnson 1991:284). We are not told if other people inquired as to the real reason why the blind beggar sat by the roadside. Nobody seems to have asked if the blind man was in need of something more than alms. Jesus' question remains unique and necessary because it touched the heart of the problem. The blind man was begging because he was unable to work. Sitting by the roadside begging was indeed a situation of humiliation, shame and embarrassment; a concrete example of what it means to have no 'rights of self-determination and self-definition' (Magesa 1998:144). Those who gave alms determined the future of the blind man. Those who continually called him by his profession as a blind beggar and not by his real name defined his ontological existence. Most humiliated people have little 'self-confidence' because their minds have registered negative accolades that continue to remind them that they are good for nothing (Magesa 1976:17; Freire 1979:49). As a result, they see themselves as being incapable of doing anything of value. In this sense, we begin to appreciate the question of Jesus to the blind man (18:41) because it leads to what Magesa (1987:20) calls an 'authentic thinking and problem-solving attitude.' It is indeed a life-giving attitude for it aims at empowering the person, and resuscitating in them their God-given gifts that have been

lying dormant. Probably Jesus was not prepared to ‘bestow healing on a beggar who in reality was interested only in alms’ (Caird 1963:207). Giving alms to such a person perhaps would have meant to encourage begging as a solution to poor living conditions. The spontaneous response of the blind man ἵνα ἀναβλέψω ‘that I may receive [my] sight’ (18:41) shows that his sitting by the roadside begging was something unfortunate. If given opportunity to get out of it, he would have already abandoned the place a long time ago. After receiving the man’s response, Jesus pronounces words of comfort to heal him: ἀνάβλεψον· ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε (18:42). The healing takes effect immediately καὶ παραχρῆμα ἀνέβλεψεν (18:43a). In this way, Jesus proves himself to be the one who gives light ‘to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,’ and he guides their feet ‘into the way of peace’ (Lk 1:79). Having faith in Jesus plays a crucial role in the process of healing the sick, infirmities, deformities, and disabilities and in forgiving the sinful (Lk 7:50; 8:48; 17:19) (Bock 1996:1510). Jesus’ encounter with him turned out to be the most precious gift he ever received in his life. We may call it the gift of healing and empowerment. The question that the followers of Jesus asked, ‘Then who can be saved?’ (Lk 18:26), finds its answer here, that salvation is granted to ‘those who have faith in Jesus’ (Martin 2011:495).

#### **6.2.2.6 Sight-Recovery as a Requisite for Social Transformation**

In general terms, sight-recovery stands for ‘restoration of health.’ Speckman (2007:223) correctly writes that ‘[w]ithout good health, human activity is limited.’ People who enjoy physical fitness and good health are likely to be more productive than those with poor health. They can get involved in various economic activities, thus enabling the economy to grow and improve social services. In other words, good health equals effective production. For instance, blindness as a serious physical disability reduces the person to the status of dependency. The mobility of a blind person is usually limited. According to Meynet (2005:712), there is an inseparable connection between sight and the use of legs. Blindness tends to cause a paralysis of the legs. One is comfortable with walking if they have eyes to see the direction they want to take. The story of the blind man found seated by the roadside reflects the real situation of people with such problems. Most of them remain seated in some fixed location (18:35b) where their relatives, friends or neighbours bring them on a daily basis so that they may beg for money.

In most cases, blind people need someone to guide them. In rural Mbinga, for example, as observed in Chapter Seven below, blind people are always assisted by their relatives to reach

their intended destinations. In 18:40, people did this service as they led the blind man to Jesus (18:40a). After receiving his sight (18:43a), the man was able to walk and follow Jesus while glorifying God. This proves that the healing was effective and it changed the man's life. He was no longer confined to one location to beg; he has become a free person ready to use his eyes, feet, ears and mouth as he sees everything around him, as he walks to follow Jesus, as he hears everything, and as he uses his voice to glorify God (18:43a). The shame of begging has come to an end. The aim of preaching good news, therefore, is to reawaken in people the potential they have, and use it as a catalyst of social transformation. The blind man has been empowered and has become a new creature capable of transforming his social reality (Gutiérrez 1988:31). He 'has progressed from begging to giving, from hearing to seeing, and from sitting to following' (Hamm 1986:462; Meynet 2005:710; 2010:83). His healing has become a concrete example of the good news that Jesus announced in Lk 4:18: that he has come 'to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.'

#### 6.2.2.7 Restoration of Human Dignity and Community

The idea of 'salvation' or of 'being saved' as declared in Lk 18:42 that ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε 'the faith of yours has saved you' could be understood as having the same meaning as that of Hebrew words *gā'al* and *yāšā'*<sup>137</sup>. In Hebrew *gā'al* is employed to mean 'to redeem, deliver, buy back, restore or vindicate' and *yāšā'* 'to save, help in time of distress, rescue, deliver or set free' (O'Collins 1992:907). The most used word for 'salvation' in LXX is σωτηρία from σώζειν 'to save.' As often portrayed in the OT, the beneficiaries of salvation could be an individual, a family, a group or a nation (Pss 12:1; 43:1; 86:16; 1Sam 1:1-2:11; 6:5-9:19; Exod 5:1-21; 14:1-15:21). God is considered as the Saviour who rescues his people from oppression and suffering. He may use human agents (Abraham, Moses, Joshua) to bring about liberation, but behind all this stands his saving power. O'Collins (1992:908) mentions three dimensions of salvation: 'the earthly dimension,' 'the spiritual dimension' and 'future dimension.' The earthly dimension regards salvation as an outcome of one's rescue from the threat of death, barrenness and slavery (Deut 33:28-29). The spiritual dimension is concerned with the renewal of one's relationship with God. In most cases, God takes the initiative to restore the broken relationship by cleansing 'the people from their sins' (O'Collins 1992:909)

<sup>137</sup> Other Hebrew words that connote the idea of salvation, according to O'Collins (1992:907) include: *nāšal* 'to deliver,' *pālaṭ* (bring to safety), *pādāh* (redeem) and *mālaṭ* (deliver). However, *gā'al* and *yāšā'* remain the most important words to express the concept of salvation in the OT.

and by giving them ‘a new heart and spirit’ (Ezek 36:26-27). A number of biblical texts also seem to suggest that salvation is something that will materialise in the future (Isa 9:2-9; 11:1-10; Jer 31:31-34; and Ezek 37:1-14). In a similar vein, the future salvation also connotes an eschatological dimension expressed in ‘the form of apocalyptic hopes for the resurrection of the dead and a new life with God in a transformed world (Isa 26:19; 65:17-25; Dan 12:1-3)’ (:909). The attainment of salvation depends on one’s trusting faith (Ps 22:4); one’s fear of God (Ps 33:18-19) and one’s attention to the needs of the poor (Exod 22:20-27). Salvation in the Hebrew Bible means wholeness, and it connotes the idea of shalom or what Magesa (1977:219) calls ‘an all-around liberation.’

Similarly, the NT uses σώζειν (to save) with its corresponding substantives σωτηρία (salvation/deliverance), σωτήρ (saviour/redeemer) and σωτήριον (salvation/saving power) (O’Collins 1992:910), to signify the same meaning as is in the OT. When Jesus declares that ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε (18:42), this statement could be seen as having two meanings: first, the blind man is acknowledged as having a trusting faith. His persistence in calling on Jesus for mercy (18:38-39) shows that he knew that his cry was reaching out to the right person; and the certainty of his healing was uncontested. Second, Jesus wants to affirm that the healing of the blind beggar was not partial but complete. He is saved from both physical disability and social exclusion. The purity laws that forced him to sit by the roadside begging have come to an end. In other words, the blind man was healed as a whole person (O’Collins 1992:911; Brookins 2011:82). The reject of society has, once again, become part of his community (18:43). As a blind person, according to some Qumran texts probably based on Lev 21:17-23, he could not dare to enter the Temple. Guijarro (2000:109) quotes a Qumran text (11QTemple 45:12-14) that specifically restricts the blind from entering the Temple. The first gesture of Jesus in this healing narrative is to reclaim the person and make him feel that he is no longer an outcast, but one of them. To have a sense of belonging is something for which every person strives. We are safe when we belong to a community. We are created to live in community, where each of us is called to foster and consolidate social interaction and solidarity. ‘In the context of poverty,’ writes De Gruchy (2009:9) – ‘community is often what holds people together in times of difficulty. In development language we call this “social capital”.’ The healing of the blind man became ‘a communal experience of salvation’ as people joined him to give praise to God (18:43) (Byrne 2000:150). In Chapter Seven (7.3.1.5.5), Small Christian Communities and the formation of mutual support groups are going to be referred to as important means of solidarity in Mbinga Diocese.

## 6.3 Literary Structure and Interpretation of Lk 19:1-10

### 6.3.1 Literary Structure of Lk 19:1-10

Several commentators<sup>138</sup>, each according to his/her theological orientation, have proposed literary structures that facilitate a critical reading of Lk 19:1-10. LaVerdiere's structure guides the reading of Lk 19:1-10 in this work while focusing on the theme of conversion. He structures the Zacchaeus episode as follows: vv. 1-4 serve as an introduction, followed by 'the body of the narrative' (19:6-8) that is framed by two affirmative statements of Jesus (19:5 & 19:9), and the narrative ends with a Christological statement in 19:10 (LaVerdiere 1980:225).

19:1-4	Introduction: Jericho and Zacchaeus: featured as a chief tax collector and a rich man
19:5	I must stay at your house today
19:6-8	The body of the narrative
19:9	Today salvation has come to this house
19:10	Conclusion: The Son of man came to seek and save the lost

The introductory verses (vv. 1-4) serve to report firstly, the geographical location, that is Jericho, the city in which Jesus was passing through (διήρχετο) (19:1); and secondly, it names Zacchaeus the rich chief tax collector (ἀρχιτελώνης) as the protagonist of this second Jericho event (19:2)<sup>139</sup>. In this particular event, which is unique to Luke, Zacchaeus seeks to see Jesus, but his small stature (ἡλικία μικρὸς) prevents him from doing so because of the crowd (19:3). Despite his position as chief tax collector, Zacchaeus climbs up into a sycamore tree to gain a bird's eye view of Jesus (19:4). In 19:5, Jesus arrives and stops under the tree, he looks up, and orders Zacchaeus to descend (καταβαίνειν) and get ready to welcome him into his house. When 19:5 is read together with 19:9, we notice that the two form an inclusion that frames the content of 19:6-8 (LaVerdiere 1980:225). The former reports Jesus' decision to stay at the house of Zacchaeus on that day (19:5), and the latter wraps the inclusion with Jesus' declaration concerning the arrival of salvation to the house of Zacchaeus (19:9). Two words *σήμερον* and *οἶκος* are important in reading together 19:5 and 19:9. They guide the principle of identification 'between Jesus himself (who [today] must come to Zacchaeus' house) and the event salvation (which [today] has come to the house)' (Méndez-Moratalla 2001:264; Loewe 1974:325). These statements, if viewed together, form a parallelism that makes one see clearly the placement of the words 'today' and 'house' with reference to

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Pilgrim (1980:131-132) and Meynet (2010:184-185). Both Meynet and Pilgrim acknowledge that Zacchaeus' repentance is to be considered as the heart of the Lukan narrative 19:1-10.

<sup>139</sup> The first Jericho event involved the interaction between Jesus and the blind beggar (18:35-43)

salvation while focusing on the aspects of ‘immediacy’ and ‘community.’ The word ‘house’ makes sense if read as ‘household’ as in Acts 10:2; 16:31-33; 18:8).

{ 19:5 σήμερον γὰρ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μένειν (Today for in your house I must stay)  
 19:9 σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο (Today salvation to this house has come)

The equivalent statements in English are a literal translation from NA<sup>28</sup>, and they are organised in such a way that they correspond to the Greek text for a better visualisation: ‘today’ and ‘house’ match with σήμερον and οἴκῳ respectively in both verses; ‘salvation’ (σωτηρία) in 19:9 could be equated to the pronoun με that stands for Jesus in 19:5. It is in 19:6-8 that Zacchaeus, first, in haste (σπεύσας) comes down from the tree and expresses his joy to welcome (ὑποδέχομαι) Jesus to his house (19:6). Many onlookers murmured (διεγόγγυζον) against Jesus’ willingness to lodge (καταλύειν) in Zacchaeus’ house — that of a man who is a known sinner (ἁμαρτωλὸς ἀνὴρ) (19:7). Zacchaeus, aware of his dishonesty, resolves to give half of his possessions to the poor (πτωχοῖς), and give back four times (τετραπλοῦν) to whoever he cheated (ἐσυκοφάντησα) (19:8). According to LaVerdiere (1980:225), 19:10 concludes this pericope with the declaration of Jesus on his mission of seeking and saving the lost.

### 6.3.2 The Zacchaeus Episode: A Vindication or Conversion Story?

#### 6.3.2.1 Proponents of Vindication Theory

A number of commentators have read and classified the Zacchaeus episode as a vindication story (Fitzmyer 1985:1220-1221; Evans 1990:280; Mitchell 1990:161-162; 1991:546-547; Ravens 1991:20; Green 1997:670-672; Martin 2011:500). I outline here some of their arguments in favour of a vindication theory. According to Fitzmyer (1985:1220-1221) and Mitchell (1990:153), the verbs δίδωμι and ἀποδίδωμι in 19:8 are used as present simple tense or as ‘present progressives’ (Green 1997:671), and they seem to convey the customary actions of Zacchaeus in dealing with his possessions, that is, giving half of them to the poor and giving back fourfold to those he might have unintentionally defrauded. The original Greek text of 19:8 does not cause any ambiguity; the two verbs are ‘in the present tense’ ‘I give’ (δίδωμι) and ‘I give back’ (ἀποδίδωμι) (Byrne 2000:151). Commentators from this perspective see Jesus at work trying to vindicate and clear Zacchaeus of social stereotypes that made him appear as a sinner because of his profession. ‘To interpret Zacchaeus’ statement as a resolve,’ writes Mitchell (1990:154), ‘is to read the story according to the stereotype Luke is trying to subvert.’ In other words, Jesus defends Zacchaeus’ innocence before a crowd that murmurs

and treats him as a sinful man (19:7). Analysing Lk 19:8 from this perspective, such commentators have avoided considering Zacchaeus as one of the likely dishonest and corrupt individuals who continue to exploit their fellow human beings. They disregard opinions that impute a quest for conversion to Zacchaeus' mind. This group of commentators claims that in Lk 19:1-10 Jesus does not pronounce words of forgiveness as he does in other conversion stories, and he does not ask Zacchaeus to abandon his profession, which was apparently putting him in a perpetual state of sin. These commentators still seem to argue that even his status as son of Abraham is mentioned here not as the result of his repentance, but because of his Jewishness. Salvation is granted to him because he is 'a loyal Jew, a son of Abraham, without necessarily implying that Jesus saw him as a sinner' (Mitchell 1990:153). He is one of them; 'he is at home in the people of God; he is included within the community of salvation' (Byrne 2000:151). Therefore Zacchaeus is to be understood in terms of his honesty and loyalty as a Jew, and not as someone who 'had a sudden change of heart' (Mitchell 1990:154). Furthermore, Mitchell (1990:161) argues that in the Zacchaeus' story there is no mention of faith and sin, and; there is no mention of table fellowship. Moreover, Zacchaeus does not make a confession of sin 'as in the case of fellow tax collector in 18:9-14' (Evans 1990:280; Green 1997:672).

Mitchell (1990:157-158) still observes that in the long run the statement pronounced in 19:8 clears both Jesus and Zacchaeus before the crowd that murmured against Jesus because of his going to stay at the house of a sinner. 'The implication is that Jesus is a sinner for associating with someone perceived to be a sinner. Zacchaeus then explicitly defends himself and, by implication, defends Jesus' action' (:158). For the murmuring crowd, it was logical to presume that 'to stay in such a person's home was tantamount to sharing in his sin' (Marshall 1978:697; Green 1997:670). It was therefore necessary for Zacchaeus to end people's speculation by declaring his customary actions and solidarity of giving half of his goods to the poor and to the victims of his unintended fraud, making restitution fourfold. However, Zacchaeus' declaration needed to be confirmed by Jesus' vindication statement made in 19:9, which also 'clears him of any wrongdoing' (Mitchell 1990:159). The unwillingness to appreciate the good in Zacchaeus, according to Fitzmyer (1985:1221), is somehow reinforced by 'the modern reader's reluctance to admit that the Lucan Jesus could declare the vindication of a rich person who was concerned for the poor and even for his own customary conduct.'

Some commentators have used despised professions as a window for reading the Zacchaeus episode. In Palestinian Jewish society, people who worked, for example, as donkey drivers,



usurers, shepherds, bath attendants, laundrymen, butchers, goldsmiths, barbers, dung collectors, publicans and tax collectors were treated as sinners by virtue of their respective occupations (Donahue 1971:40-41; Maccoby 2001:62; Ford 1983:86). The Zacchaeus story challenges this mentality. It demonstrates how Zacchaeus, despite being a chief tax collector, was honest. In fact Zacchaeus is seen as someone who appropriated Abraham's values of hospitality, and this qualified him as one of the patriarch's authentic children (Mitchell 1990:175). The proponents of vindication theory seem to say that it is wrong to name people as sinners because of their despised employment. The person's innocence is not measured on the basis of his/her occupation, but rather on their moral behaviour (Ravens 1991:32). Zacchaeus' critics thus have no reason to justify their murmuring against his customary good actions, which make him stand 'opposite to Jews who reject Jesus and criticize him openly, as well as to those who claim the patrimony of Abraham but do not honor it (3:8; 16:19-31)' (Mitchell 1990:175; Green 1997:672). Their murmuring, like in Lk 5:30 and 15:2, reveals how ignorant they were of Zacchaeus' status. They judged Zacchaeus on the basis of stereotypes that were working against tax collectors (Mitchell 1991:547).

### **6.3.2.2 Méndez-Moratalla's Reading of the Zacchaeus Episode**

After surveying the concept of conversion and how conversion also meant adjusting one's ways of dealing and handling his/her possessions in both Jewish and Graeco-Roman milieus<sup>140</sup>, Méndez-Moratalla proceeds with the analysis of Lukan accounts. The key texts for this purpose are: Lk 3:1-17, where Méndez-Moratalla traces conversion in the teaching of John the Baptist. This is followed by the conversion stories of Levi (5:27-32), and that of a woman of the city — a sinner — who encountered Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50). Other conversion accounts include the parable of a prodigal son (15:11-32); the Zacchaeus story (19:1-10); and the conversion of one of the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus (23:39-43). For the sake of comparison, Méndez-Moratalla also includes the story of a rich aristocrat (18:18-30) who declines to welcome salvation because his heart was geared towards material possessions. Our interest in this section is to present Méndez-Moratalla's use of the Zacchaeus story (19:1-10) to support a Lukan theme of conversion. Méndez-Moratalla (2001:231-239) begins with the presentation of a vindication theory as

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<sup>140</sup> Méndez-Moratalla in his doctoral thesis entitled 'A Paradigm of Conversion in Luke (2001)' does a survey of the theological theme of conversion in the Third Gospel. His argument is based on the conviction that the main theological emphasis, as articulated by Luke the Evangelist, revolves around the theme of conversion. At the outset, Méndez-Moratalla investigates how the concept of conversion was understood in Judaism and the Jewish milieu (Méndez-Moratalla 2001:33-81), and also in the Graeco-Roman milieu (:82-101).

propagated by a couple of commentators whose interest is to free Zacchaeus from the Jews' prejudices and stereotypes imposed on tax collectors. His review of the vindication theory resembles, in a number of arguments, what has been discussed above (6.3.2.1).

Méndez-Moratalla reads the Zacchaeus story from another perspective, and he advances the theological theme of conversion with some convincing arguments as shown below. He argues that it was the encounter that took place between Jesus and Zacchaeus that made everything possible. If Zacchaeus is presented as the chief tax collector (ἀρχιτελώνης) and a rich person (πλούσιος) (19:2), it means that economically he was far beyond the reach of the poor who were in his neighbourhood, those who wondered 'where the next meal was to come' (Méndez-Moratalla 2001:241). He collaborated and participated in the corrupt tax system of the Roman administration; to become rich he needed to enter into the game of corruption, manipulation and fraud. Méndez-Moratalla (2001:239-240) is convinced that since Zacchaeus had his toll office in Jericho, he was able to have control over commercial trade movements that used Jericho as its important trade route. No doubt regarding his wealth, he was rich but his moral behaviour remains questionable. Wealth in itself is not something undesired, but its moral evaluation depends on how one acquires his/her material wealth. Luke's Gospel does not run short of words to characterise rich people in a pejorative manner (1:53; 6:24; 12:13-21; 14:12-14; 16:19-31; 18:18-30). This shows that their ways of making fortunes were not without suspicion. Zacchaeus' move to seek Jesus (19:3), according to Méndez-Moratalla (2001:242-243; and also Schweizer 1984:291), is seen as a gesture of proper curiosity and it differs from an improper seeking of Herod (23:8). Zacchaeus' seeing is also opposed to that of a rich ruler (18:18-30), but matched with that of the blind beggar in Jericho (18:35-43). His attitude remains like that of other toll collectors and sinners, who readily embraced Jesus' call to repentance (5:27-32). He is not ashamed to climb a sycamore tree to get a greater view of Jesus (19:4); this in itself is a clear sign of being serious in his search of Jesus.

The interaction between Jesus and Zacchaeus reveals another aspect of this encounter (19:5-6). There is a reciprocal seeking here. Zacchaeus seeks Jesus, and Jesus seeks Zacchaeus. However, Jesus takes control of the situation as he invites himself to the house of the sinner (19:5), and the sinner gladly welcomes Jesus to his house. It is in this kind of amicable story that 'a positive outcome of the encounter takes place' (Méndez-Moratalla 2001:245). It is eventually Jesus, observes Méndez-Moratalla, who makes salvation to arrive at that house (19:9); in that way, he fulfils the mission of the Son of Man of seeking and saving the lost (19:10) in accordance with 'the preordained divine plan' (:246-247). This language of seeking

and finding the lost is known in the Third Gospel and often has something to do with ‘sin’ and ‘repentance’ (15:1-7; 8-10; 11-32), and it is usually associated with joy and table fellowship. Even the outcast and despised find room at the table fellowship with the Lord (Méndez-Moratalla 2001:248-249). The element of table fellowship, though rejected by Mitchell, Ravens and Green, remains, for Méndez-Moratalla, an important element that is very present in the Zacchaeus story. One needs to open one’s eyes to see how hospitality is associated with table fellowship in 19:1-10<sup>141</sup>. Moreover, Jesus’ table fellowship with toll collectors and sinners does not pass unnoticed or without criticism. Méndez-Moratalla (2001:250-254; and also Bennema 2016:104) observes that, like in other cases of fellowship (5:27-32; 7:36-50; 15:1-32), Jesus’ decision to stay in the house of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, meets with disapproval on the part of the crowd (19:7). Table fellowship then becomes a forum that brings Jesus and sinners together, and its outcome often has been a positive change on the part of the sinner (5:8; 7:36-50; 18:13) (Méndez-Moratalla 2001:252-253). On such occasions, the crowd is always at work trying to block and prevent sinners from seeing Jesus (18:35-42; 19:3). Zacchaeus becomes another beneficiary of Jesus’ table fellowships. It would be a mistake to think that Jesus lodged in the house of an innocent person, and decided to use this opportunity to vindicate him from his false accusers. Nowhere in the text has Luke rejected the possibility of Zacchaeus being a sinner. If Jesus came to seek and save the lost, then Zacchaeus is one of the luckiest persons to be found and saved (19:10). It is without doubt Lk wants his audience to perceive Zacchaeus as a sinner who repents. The resolve he declared in 19:8 made him gain salvation and recuperate his status of Abrahamic sonship (19:9).

Méndez-Moratalla (2001:248) again compares Zacchaeus’ repentance with that of toll collectors and soldiers in Lk 3:10-14. John the Baptist asks them to observe honesty, to stop overcharging and accusing people deceitfully. Zacchaeus makes his resolve concrete by giving half of his possessions to the poor, and to those he overcharged, he refunds fourfold (19:8). Zacchaeus’ actions, according to Méndez-Moratalla (2001:258-263), must be understood in the context of his resolve. They have nothing to do with ‘boasting’ or ‘customary ways’ of doing things, but they signify ‘his new beginning.’ Moreover, conversion to Judaism or to some trends of philosophical schools meant also to be in

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<sup>141</sup> It is incongruous to present Zacchaeus as the chief tax collector and a rich man (19:2), who welcomes Jesus to his house (19:6), only to be told that there was no table fellowship. Welcoming here implies hospitality, and Jesus made it clear that he was going to remain (μείναι) there (19:5). Did he remain without taking part in table fellowship? I agree with Hamm (1991:250; and also Byrne 2000:150-152; Blomberg 2016:40-41) who suggests that meal hospitality in the context of 19:1-10 has to be understood as an implied event. The murmuring crowd (19:7), therefore, should be evaluated in similar terms like the Pharisees’ attitude in Lk 5:27-32 and 15:1-2.

solidarity with the poor, to do justice and to abandon the hoarding of possessions. Zacchaeus, in order to make concrete his conversion, does precisely that as he pronounces his resolve in 19:8. He moves from serving mammon (16:13) to serving humanity (19:8). This resolve prompts Jesus to announce the arrival of salvation to Zacchaeus' house, and that his mission to seek and save the lost is being completed. How then do rural dwellers read and interpret Luke 19:1-10? Do they read it as a vindication story or as a conversion story? Their responses are explored below (7.3.2) as we read the Zacchaeus episode in the CBS.

### **6.3.3 Interpretation of Lk 19:1-10 from the Liberationist Perspective**

This section furthers the argument of conversion by reading and interpreting Lk 19:1-10 from the liberationist perspective. It is true that natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts and floods are known to have devastated human life, but chronic poverty, which is the reality of many people in rural Mbinga, is mainly caused by social injustice. African theologians often cite corruption, dishonesty, fraud, embezzlement and theft as major negative forces that continue to impoverish the continent. Zacchaeus' confession therefore serves as a spark of hope in the midst of social injustices and abuses of human rights.

#### **6.3.3.1 Zacchaeus: Rich Chief Tax Collector and Roman Collaborator**

Zacchaeus' two qualifications — chief tax collector (ἀρχιτελώνης) and a rich man (πλούσιος) (19:2) — highlight his place in society. Economically and socially he belonged to an affluent class (Green 1997:668). In our modern times, we could compare Zacchaeus to a puppet, defector and traitor who betrayed his own people as he collaborated with the cruel regime of the Roman Empire (Cuany 2018:15). The woes that Jesus pronounced during his great sermon (Lk 6:24), to some extent, were also directed to Zacchaeus (Parsons 2001:56). Overcharging and cheating were part of the business at his toll office, and these practices made Zacchaeus a wealthy person (O'Toole 1992:1032; Marshall 1978:696; Martin 2011:497). Repentance in this case will also demand self-assessment. His attitude towards social commitments and responsibilities will have to be carefully scrutinised. In a metaphorical manner, we may say that conversion is like cutting the umbilical cord; one has to detach from one's former illegal activities. In this case, Zacchaeus will need to make a radical change, departing from his dubious behaviour to a life of justice, sharing and critical solidarity. It is also about changing oppressive structures that diminish the dignity of human beings (Gutiérrez 1974:205). 'Faith for the rich,' rightly observes Magesa (1990:109), 'means that they must side with the poor,

with all that action implies.’ This will not mean that one has to abandon one’s profession, but certainly one will have to become a just person.

### **6.3.3.2 Overcoming a Double Obstacle: Physical Smallness and the Crowd**

In his seeking of Jesus, Zacchaeus faces two immediate obstacles: one is related to his physical smallness, and the other is the presence of the crowd. Each hinders his view of Jesus. In other places too, Luke presents the crowd as an obstacle to those who want to see Jesus (5:17-26; 18:39; 18:15-17). Luke characterises Zacchaeus as a man who was small in stature (ἡλικίᾳ μικρὸς) (19:3), and because of this he finds it difficult to see Jesus over the crowd. Parsons portrays how Luke in writing his Gospel was probably influenced by rhetorical techniques of his time. In Graeco-Roman society, people were familiar with the language that was used to characterise people according to their physical appearances as a way of appreciating or ridiculing them. In some cases, one’s moral behaviour was associated with one’s physical appearance, i.e. physiognomics (Parsons 1993:51). In the Scriptures, we find several places where physiognomic consciousness is applied to describe some biblical figures (1Sam 9:2; 1Sam 16:12), and in some cases it was used as a critique of outward appearance (1Sam 16:7) (Parsons 1993:52). The description of Zacchaeus as a man who was small in stature thus bears a concrete example of physiognomic consciousness. According to Parsons (1993:53), being small in stature could imply ‘smallness in spirit’ and a way of describing someone as ‘a small-minded person,’ or associating them with pettiness and greediness. These elements seem to match with the description of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, a wealthy and dishonest man. He is a greedy and small-minded person who plays ‘the puppet for the Romans’ (Parsons 1993:54). As a result, he is treated as a person who is in ‘perpetual ritual impurity’ (Blomberg 2009:52).

Shortness of stature was also used as the rhetoric of ridicule. It intended to make people laugh, but at the same time a message was delivered. Zacchaeus’ smallness was a laughable description, a cruel and derisory joke; it was a way of saying that he was short like a dwarf (πυγμή), ‘so short he could not even see over the crowd’ (Parsons 1993:55). The extreme and rude understanding of shortness of stature was related to one’s moral misbehaviour. This would mean that, according to Parsons (1993:55), ‘Zacchaeus is a sinner not only because he cheated people in his role as chief tax collector, but also because his physical smallness may have been regarded as the result of sin.’ His shortness in stature was seen as a disability like any other disabilities (blindness, deafness, dumbness) and often considered as a result of sin.

The description suggests that physically and morally, Zacchaeus was a sinner. Luke's audience was familiar with this style of characterisation of an individual; they were convinced that Zacchaeus 'was born a sinner, as evidenced by his physical size, and he lived as a sinner, as evidenced by his cheating of his fellow countrymen out of their money' (Parsons 1993:55).

Despite his problematic physical and social status, Luke uses the figure of Zacchaeus to portray Jesus' concern for the poor, the despised and the marginalised. Obstacles such as stigma, stereotyping and the murmuring crowd did not prevent Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus. He was creative enough to use the means at his disposal such as climbing a sycamore tree in order to have a full view of Jesus (19:4). Zacchaeus is called by name<sup>142</sup> and ordered to make haste to come down from the tree because 'today' Jesus must stay at his house (19:5). Hospitality takes place (19:6), and Jesus forges a new relationship with Zacchaeus. Hospitality turns out to be an opportunity of grace, conversion, forgiveness and fellowship.

### **6.3.3.3 Zacchaeus' Radical Repentance and Restitution**

The progression of the Zacchaeus episode shows that the chief tax collector was indeed in need of repentance and salvation. 'In Luke the turning of Jesus to sinners and their conversion go together' (Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:107). Conversion remains a necessity if illegal behaviour has to come to an end (Magesa 1976:8). The comments of Jesus in 19:9-10 only make sense if we acknowledge that Zacchaeus made a resolution in 19:8. He declared a new beginning, which even changed his attitude towards wealth. In other words, if Zacchaeus' resolve is dismissed and replaced with customary actions as discussed above (6.3.2.1), then Jesus' comments in 19:9-10 become 'nonsensical' (O'Toole 1992:1032). That is why this work opts for the conversion theory based on the pronouncement of Zacchaeus in 19:8. Zacchaeus' change of heart did not depend on the criticisms put forward by the murmuring crowd because, as Gooding (1987:299) notes, such criticisms 'had never produced any such result before.' It was through Jesus' initiative to remain at Zacchaeus' house that Zacchaeus decided to correct his past life. This sounds like a serious change of heart by on the part of someone who formerly lived an extravagant life. Zacchaeus has come to acknowledge that to know God 'is to establish just relationships among men, it is to recognize the rights of the poor' (Gutiérrez 1974:195; Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:11; Johnson 1981:19-20). Jesus does not demand that the rich abandon their profession and business in order to follow him,

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<sup>142</sup> It is not said how Jesus came to know the name of Zacchaeus. Could it be 'by supernatural enablement' (Bock 1996:1517; and also Evans 1990:283) as was the case with Nathanael in Jn 1:47-48? Luke points out Jesus' supernatural knowledge in several places 5:22; 6:8; 7:39-40; 11:17. Or did he inquire from the crowd?

but he wants them to imitate Zacchaeus by allowing the poor to be part of their joy, and also to pay back what was stolen from them. Zacchaeus' conversion equally challenges the socioeconomic structures that continue today to divide 'humanity into oppressors and oppressed, into owners of the means of production and those dispossessed of the fruit of their work, into antagonistic social classes' (Gutiérrez 1974:273). It is something of a shame if a Lukan Christian decides to lead a luxurious life, while at his/her gate lies a hungry and naked Lazarus 'who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table' (Lk 16:21).

#### **6.3.3.4 The Mission of Jesus: Restoring the Outcast and Lost**

Zacchaeus' profession as the chief tax collector had made him become socially unpopular, detested and ostracised. Apart from mingling with his associates, it was impossible for him to interact with his Jewish brothers and sisters, especially those who knew him as a puppet of the Roman Empire. His climbing a sycamore tree (19:4) probably expresses his state of loneliness and social exclusion. We are created as social beings (Gen 1:26-27), and relationality, as a necessary component of human life, determines and guides our social interaction. Zacchaeus was rich, but his wealth did not bring him joy. According to Philpott (1993:61), '[a] rich person can have a house, cars, and other things – but if he doesn't have love, he doesn't have daily bread.' The news of Jesus probably reached Zacchaeus through his fellow tax collectors who happened to have shared table fellowship with him (Lk 5:27-32; 15:1-2), or through the healing of the blind man near Jericho (Lk 18:35-43) (Bennema 2016:103). Their encounter with Jesus must have inspired and changed the horizons of their lives. In a similar vein, Zacchaeus looked forward to having such an opportunity. Jesus' actions in this story seem to satisfy Zacchaeus' curiosity and needs: first, he experiences forgiveness of his sins (implied), and secondly, he is restored to his community. According to Bock (1996:1523), the joy that Zacchaeus expresses at this invitation (19:6) parallels that of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son (15:20-32). Zacchaeus' joy is in contrast with the rich ruler's sadness (18:23), and his humility with the pride of a Pharisee (18:11-12). Zacchaeus is, once again, given an opportunity to experience the joy of being part of the people of Israel. Repentance in Luke also means 'restoration of brotherhood' (Seccombe 1982:183). Zacchaeus is no longer an outsider, but one of Abraham's children. The crowd seems to have set boundaries to define who could be considered a son/daughter of Abraham. Tax collectors, seen as the 'mafia' of the first century Palestine, were no longer regarded as descendants of Abraham (Ford 1983:85). Jesus does the opposite, he brings Zacchaeus home. It is God who finally seeks out the lost and brings back the strayed (Ezek 34:16).

### **6.3.3.5 The Ethical-Social Implications of Zacchaeus' Conversion**

Zacchaeus' entry into God's plan of salvation 'through the eye of a needle' (18:25) is a paradigm that is open to each and every person. This demands the example and commitment of Zacchaeus be followed. Conscience is the sacred place from which one's deeds are regulated and assessed, it is in the heart that Jesus must be allowed to enter and transform it. Zacchaeus shows the way to go about it (19:8); he 'becomes a living illustration of what the Lukan Jesus repeatedly states on the subject of wealth' (Kim 1998:193). It is also evident from the Zacchaeus episode that moral behaviour and one's occupation are two different things. One cannot be judged on the basis of one's employment. Not all tax collectors in Palestine were rich; a number of them opted for this most despised work because they had no other means of survival (Soares-Prabhu 1991:165). Some tax gatherers used their slaves to collect the taxes; the profits gained were for their masters. Indeed, God does not deal with his people on the basis of their outward appearance, but on what comes from the heart. The rich ruler in the first place (18:18-23) appeared pious and committed to the Mosaic Law, but when confronted by Jesus, he walked away sad. He was rich, and he was not prepared to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. Thus the rich ruler's devotion to mammon replaced his love for God and neighbour (Moxnes 1988:167; Soares-Prabhu 1991:161). Zacchaeus, who was treated as an outcast and defrauder, turned out to be a trustworthy person. This also applies to many Christians who are involved in different economic activities (e.g. merchants). Such people have an important role to play in society in order to transform the lives of their fellow human beings.

## **6.4 Seeing Lk 18:35-43 and 19:1-10 Together**

In Chapter Five above (5.2.1), it was shown that the pericopes Lk 18:35-43 and 19:1-10 together form a sequence 18:35-19:10, and that a number of components were brought forward to show their coherence (5.2.2) and how they relate to each other in terms of geographical location and of the role played by the crowd in each pericope. We are also aware of elements that are unique in each story, and how the two passages differ from each other<sup>143</sup>. The aim of this section is to highlight how the healing of physical and spiritual blindness, and restoration of lost humanity appear as unifying themes of both Lk 18:35-43 and 19:1-10.

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<sup>143</sup> Some of these differences could be illustrated as follows: for example, in 18:35-43, Jesus encounters a blind man who is said to be a beggar and found seated by the roadside (18:35), whereas in 19:1-10 we have a rich chief tax collector called Zacchaeus who was found seated and hidden in the branches of a sycamore tree (19:4-5). The blind man remains anonymous while Zacchaeus' name is known by all (19:2, 7) (Meynet 2010:189). The former is unable to offer hospitality; the latter gladly receives Jesus at his house (19:6).



#### **6.4.1 The Healing of Physical and Spiritual Blindness**

The miraculous physical healing of blindness is registered in all Gospels (Mk 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Mt 20:29-34; Lk 18:35-43; Jn 9:1-41). Jesus is reported to have healed a number of people, who were either born blind or became blind because of sickness. However, in another development, both Old and New Testaments seem to use the term ‘blindness’ as a metaphor for spiritual blindness. In the New Testament, Jesus is challenging his disciples when asking: ‘Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?’ (Mk 8:18). It is clear that these scriptural references do not intend to mean conditions of physical blindness, but rather to highlight a lack of spiritual insight. Recovery of sight in Luke does not only mean physical healing, but also a deeper spiritual vision. It signifies having ‘the faith that perceives Jesus’ true identity and acts upon it’ (Hamm 1986:458). This means that his healing (18:35-43) was not an end in itself, but it also aimed at opening the eyes of those who witnessed his sight-recovery. They too began seeing the presence of Jesus in their midst.

Hamm (1986:463) makes an interesting comparison between the blind beggar and the blindness of Zacchaeus. The blind beggar suffered from physical blindness, and Zacchaeus from spiritual blindness which was caused by his wealth. In embracing conversion, ‘Zacchaeus’ transformation from spiritual blindness begins with his search to “see Jesus, who he is” (19:3)’ (Hamm 1986:465; Meynet 2010:189). The recovery of his spiritual sight liberated him from the riches that kept him blind (19:8). The ‘crowd’ in both narratives is seen as a group of blind people who needed Jesus to open their eyes to see who Jesus was (Meynet 2010:190). If they gave praise to God, it is because they saw that Jesus is indeed their Saviour (18:43). We are not informed if the murmuring crowd (19:7) recovered their sight by recognising the presence of the Son of David. However, Jesus’ pronouncement that affirms his mission of seeking and saving the lost (19:10) is meant for each and every person.

In economic terms, blindness as a metaphor may be referred to human actions that delay development processes in Third World countries, Tanzania being one of them. No matter what history tells us, African nations are still in the extremes of poverty because of many obvious human factors that do not take away their responsibility and involvement. These include, *inter alia*, corruption, nepotism, incompetence, unethical leadership, poor education, tribalism, political immaturity, poor economic strategies, ignorance, individualism, laziness, bribery and theft. Most of these factors could be corrected if the will to do so were there. Unfortunately, individualistic and egoistic attitudes seem to dominate the hearts of our leaders.

#### **6.4.2 Recuperation and Restoration of Lost Humanity**

The main protagonists of the two narratives — the blind man (18:35-43) and Zacchaeus (19:1-10) — despite their economic differences, were treated as outcasts. And this made them lose their basic rights of social interaction. Rules of purity did not allow the blind man to take part in religious activities or enter the Temple to offer sacrifice. His physical disability was seen as God's punishment imposed on a sinner. Sitting by the roadside then enforces the idea of his being marginalised. Zacchaeus too was an outcast because of his profession. Working as a tax collector automatically made Zacchaeus impure. In one way or another, the blind man and Zacchaeus were both lost and marginalised (18:39; 19:7). Jesus came to seek and save the lost (19:10). The blind man's dignity is restored, and he is brought back to his community. Zacchaeus too is brought home to welcome God's salvation in the person of Jesus (19:9). Jesus shows an excellent example of how to treat the marginalised. He opens his arms to welcome and treat them with respect. The blind man 'is no longer an inconvenience who should be pushed away, but a person who is to be invited to encounter his saviour — and theirs' (Meynet 2010:190). In the same vein, the murmuring crowd is challenged to stop muttering; instead, they are invited to receive Zacchaeus as one of them, a real Jew, as a member of the extended family of Abraham, as a true son of the Jewish patriarch. Every Jew could claim to be a son/daughter of Abraham, but not all of them are saved (Morris 1988:299). An extra mile has to be walked to imitate Zacchaeus if they really want to receive salvation. The blind man (18:35-43) and Zacchaeus are already becoming paradigms of all those who aspire to welcome God's salvation. Zacchaeus was lost, but now is found (19:10). The crowd too was lost in their murmuring, in making itself a judge, but now is called to see God's presence in the person of Jesus (Meynet 2010:10). Solidarity, love, compassion and mutual acceptance are clearly inherent components of Jesus' mission. In Tanzania, the rural peasantry in most cases could be compared with a marginalised person. Here, we mean those rural areas, which, since independence (1961), have no access to health services, decent schools, electricity, roads, and so on. Theirs is like a lost humanity which yearns for healing. The fight against poverty as a process of healing, therefore, must continue, and we do this because we are convinced that '[t]he Lord has not come to institutionalize and beatify misery, but delivers us from it' (Mveng 1994:163; Éla 1994:148). God created the earth and put at our disposal all that we need to prosper (Gen 1:29). No human being is supposed to go hungry, but greed often frustrates God's plans. Humanity as a whole needs to be freed from greed and to strive for fairness, solidarity and social justice.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The story of the blind man raised issues that are useful in developing a theology of liberation. His sitting by the roadside at the entrance gate of Jericho begging (18:35) highlights the plight of many poor people who are found begging for money in the streets. The inquiry that the blind beggar raised in 18:36 remains a fundamental component in the process of enabling people to come out of destitution. Through this inquiry he was able to receive correct information about the passing-by of Jesus (18:37). This was a unique opportunity that eventually changed his situation. The crowd tried to force him to be silent (18:39), but because he was free to speak and knew who Jesus was, he cried out all the more (18:39). Silence deprives people of their dignity. 'Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection' (Freire 1979:76). Another subject that has been studied in the story of the blind man is with regard to the titles that are given to Jesus. The crowd refers to him as Jesus of Nazareth, but the blind man calls him Jesus, Son of David. The blind beggar helped the crowd to understand that the one they were following, in fact, is not only Jesus of Nazareth, but also the Son of David, whose messianic role is about liberating people from their suffering and healing them from their physical and spiritual blindness. The question of Jesus to the blind beggar: 'What do you want me to do for you?' (18:41) has an important role to play in the process of empowering and transforming the poor.

The conversion of Zacchaeus is a necessary requirement in a society where the wealthy have control over means of production and political power. The decision of Zacchaeus to repent was a turning point for him, but also for poor people who became beneficiaries of his conversion. Overcharging and fraud characterised Zacchaeus' habit. His conversion meant not only to desist from illegal business, but also to embrace solidarity and restitution as his new way of life. Zacchaeus, before his conversion, was an example of government officials and politicians who have turned public office into a den of robbers, liars and defrauders. Tanzania as a nation has to realise that her 58 years of independence have, on the one hand, been years of hope; on the other hand, these have been years that have favoured a wealthy minority, and condemned the majority to poverty. Both the blind beggar and Zacchaeus have shown that in order to achieve one's goal, the victims of economic injustice and social exclusion must prepare themselves to combat stigma and overcome intimidation (18:38) and mutterings (19:7). Some of these insights are correlated with the findings that came from the CBS sessions and they are analysed in Chapter Seven.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY OF LUKE 18:35-19:10: DATA ANALYSIS AND ARTICULATION OF INCIPIENT THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

#### 7.1 Introduction

Chapter Seven analyses and articulates the incipient insights that were collected from the CBS sessions carried out in five rural parishes of Mbinga Diocese (1.7.2). Their inclusion in this thesis is based on the views and arguments of several liberation theologians such as L. Boff and C. Boff (1987:19) who invite trained readers to reach out to the poor and become ‘vehicles of the Spirit so as to be able to inspire and translate the demands of the gospel’ into reality. It follows then that trained readers are expected to be attentive to the voices of the poor, and interpret them in the light of the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives. In doing so, they imitate Jesus Christ, whose earthly life was dedicated to the victims of oppressive social, political and religious structures. The poor and marginalised<sup>144</sup> thus become the *raison d’être* of biblical reading and theological reflection. Theologians are convinced that, God who listened to the cry of Israel — ‘the original poor people of the Bible in Egypt’ (Nolan 1985:192) — is still at work today alleviating the suffering of the oppressed and ill-treated, the defrauded and the deceived (Kairos Document 1986:18). They equally believe that the poor are poor because our modern societies have allowed the ‘social sin of injustice’ to divide people into groups of the haves and the have nots (Gutiérrez 1974:175). In third world countries, including Tanzania, this division is very unbalanced because the rich are always the minority and the poor the majority. Most poor people live in squalor and absolute poverty, and frequently some are involved in criminal activities. Poverty in rural Mbinga has created another social problem, i.e. an increase of young people who migrate to urban centres in search of economic resources. We need to analyse their reality before issuing theological and moral statements (Boff & Pixley 1989:141; Nolan 1976:21). This chapter, therefore, seeks to demonstrate how the poor, together with a trained reader, through reading Lk 18:35-19:10 are able to formulate a theology that reflects the reality of their social context. I begin with a description of the procedures used during the CBS sessions and collection of data. This is followed by an articulation of incipient theological principles.

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<sup>144</sup> Though Nadar (2003:199-200) is not comfortable with the use of the terms ‘poor and marginalized’ as a way of naming the participants of CBS, the reality of poverty is not something that one can deny especially when we think of many rural dwellers in Mbinga Diocese whose living conditions are near subsistence. During CBS sessions, rural dwellers did not hesitate to classify themselves as poor people.

## 7.2 Fundamental Attitudes and Procedures

### 7.2.1 Facilitation and Participation in the CBS Process

The organisation and facilitation of the CBS was guided by Gerald West's fourfold commitment as outlined above (2.3.4.2.2). These interrelated components became my compass in determining and selecting the context in which the critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 was carried out. I was aware of the fact that, as a trained reader, I needed to avoid the temptation of becoming a provider of readymade interpretations. This meant that I had to refrain from reading and interpreting a biblical text for ordinary readers and strive to encourage community reading. It was also necessary to avoid the pretence of uncritically accepting the contributions of ordinary readers. This kind of pretence would have defeated the purpose of the CBS<sup>145</sup>. Our fundamental attitudes in the CBS relied on the catchphrase 'speaking/reading with.' This approach considers both the socially engaged biblical scholar and ordinary readers as partners endowed with a diversity of resources useful for biblical reading and interpretation (West 1999a:53; Nadar 2003:201). Any temptation on the part of the trained reader to speak for others would have deprived the poor of their fundamental right to speak for themselves thus subjecting them to the danger of subordination and becoming victims of academic hegemony. A trained reader must therefore remain vigilant and self-disciplined so as not to pontificate his/her ideas on the basis of 'superior knowledge' (Lategan 1996:246). When the poor notice that a safe space is provided and trust is gained, they begin to express even what was initially taken as taboo. The hidden transcript of the oppressed becomes a real story to narrate, and the culture of silence ends. This is very important, especially when biblical texts seem to highlight issues of poverty, incest, rape, domestic violence, sickness and homophobia. However, one must not equate silence to passivity; in some cases silence speaks louder than expressed words. It is an art of resistance that gives priority to the safety of the dominated (Scott 1990:137; West 1999a:39-50; 1999b:49; 1999c:54). I did my best to foster an atmosphere of trust during the entire process of the CBS. Our respective resources helped us, as shown below (7.3), to read Lk 18:35-19:10 critically. Every participant was given an opportunity to speak with his/her own voice. Effective facilitation thus becomes a *sine qua non* for any successful CBS. Each CBS participant became a real reader, and a trained reader became what Weems (1996:258-259; and also Nadar 2003:196) calls 'a flesh and blood reader.'

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<sup>145</sup> On the contrary, the trained reader must use his/her 'interpretative resources' to help untrained readers to appreciate their own wisdom but also become aware of the 'critical wisdom of Christian community, past and present, which the trained reader should represent' (Cochrane 1999:11; West 1993a:15; Masoga 2001:146-147).

### **7.2.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

The primary data used in this chapter comes from the information gathered during the CBS sessions in rural Mbinga. A combination of both closed and open-ended questions was prepared to facilitate a critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10, and ‘to encourage participants to engage with the text from their own experience’ (West 1999a:129). Most responses came from participants in a large group, but also from the small discussion groups. Their insights were first recorded on posters. Then each poster was attached to a wall ‘for all to see’ and approve of its contents; this was done as a way of giving feedback to the respondents<sup>146</sup>. The CBS was done in Swahili — the national language of Tanzania — but the results, as shown below, were translated into English. As a facilitator, my responsibility was also to record the contributions that people made during the CBS process. I was assisted by a third year theology student from Peramiho Catholic Major Seminary who was on home leave. With his support, I was able to remain focused and deal only with ‘significant points’ (Bell 1993:24-25). At the end of the day, it was my duty to compile the findings while indicating the date, place and the duration of the CBS session. This stage of data collection and analysis required critical thinking and sound assessment of the findings (Dawson 2009:124). The participants, as part of their consent, understood that ultimately the information would be used by the researcher in his project of constructing a local theology. It is also important to note that not every response had the same weight — some were unique and impressive while others, despite minor changes, were simply repetitions of what has been said earlier on. The findings that have been included in this work are the result of my assessment regarding their significance and value they bring to this project.

### **7.2.3 Clearing the Ground for the CBS Sessions**

As a researcher, my first assignment was to seek written permission from the gate keeper (Local Ordinary of Mbinga Catholic Diocese) to allow the CBS sessions to be organised in his diocese. I then visited five parishes which were selected for this purpose. In each parish, with the help of the priest in-charge, I organised a group of 15 people composed of male and female participants. The names of the parishes and their respective dates of the CBS are noted as follows: Maguu (10-12 July 2017), Kindimba (20-22 July 2017), Mikalanga (3-5 August 2017), Mango (10-12 August 2017) and Mkoha<sup>147</sup> (17-19 August 2017). Consent forms were

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<sup>146</sup> According to West (1999a:129-130), giving feedback plays an important role in CBS.

<sup>147</sup> Initially Mkoha was not among the five parishes selected for CBS sessions. It replaced Kigonsera after realising that three attempts to organise a CBS session were without success.

distributed and signed by each CBS participant. An obvious limitation of this work is that the choice of a biblical text, questionnaire and initiative to organise the CBS sessions did not come from the ordinary readers<sup>148</sup>, but from me, a trained reader. Automatically this raised some suspicion with regard to the nature of our relationship — between ordinary readers/lay people and trained reader/ordained minister. According to Lategan (1996:245-246), questions of power between the dominant and the dominated, the critic and ordinary, if not well negotiated may discourage the entire CBS process. People tend to play an active role in implementing certain projects, especially when the initiative comes from themselves. However, as the research starts making sense, the level of participation increases and the participants begin to see it as their own initiative (Philpott 1993:23). Thus, before proceeding with the CBS sessions, a thorough introduction was made. I had to explain why I chose to work with them, and I insisted that the issue of power disparity was not going to prevent them from speaking with their own voices. Though a smooth running of the CBS process was noticed, there is no way I can claim that complete trust was gained. However, I did not doubt the quality of their contributions. On the contrary, as shown below (7.3), the enthusiasm they expressed during the CBS sessions was a clear sign that the participants were pleased with this exercise. The following elements were underlined as possible benefits of the CBS:

- Participants would gain tools and skills for reading the Bible closely and critically.
- Participants would appreciate how the Word of God, if read critically, might speak to the heart of their social reality, empowering them to become agents and partners of economic development and social transformation.
- Participants would have an opportunity to analyse their social context, judge it and together dare to take action to protest against social injustice.
- Participants would become part and parcel of the construction of a theology that matches their social realities and gain skills for working together as a group.
- Participants would gain and develop the spirit of an inquiring mind as an indispensable tool to deal with social problems without excluding Christian values such as self-sacrifice, love, respect, honesty, critical solidarity, and self-sustainability.
- While using Lk 18:33-43, the study seeks to raise questions about reliance on foreign aid and its dire consequences on individuals and the nation as a whole.
- As we read Lk 19:1-10, the study invites reflection on the negative effects of corruption on a developing nation like Tanzania.

These benefits portray the intention of this work, which is to try to empower the poor in their struggle to build a just society from a biblical perspective. It is an attempt to help people to

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<sup>148</sup> This goes against the general practice of CBS which recommends that it begin ‘with the needs and concerns of poor and marginalised communities’ (West 1995a:64). Though I chose the text, the outcomes of the CBS did not disappoint us. Nadar (2003:187-188) shares a similar viewpoint, saying that her initiative to reach out to a group of women turned out to be an encouraging experience for both ordinary readers and trained reader.

begin to believe in themselves and to realise that they have the power to improve their living conditions. The CBS sessions lasted for three consecutive days in each parish. Two and half hours of work were spent in each session including 20 minutes of tea break. At the end of the CBS session in Mango, some people expressed their disappointment that there was no time foreseen for them to raise other issues related to their experience of reading the Bible. For example, one woman a member of the Legion of Mary thought that my coming to the parish was going to give them an opportunity to ask questions related to some biblical passages they had found difficult to understand. She gave an example of 1Thessalonians 4:13-18. She regretted that this had not been possible.

The first day of the CBS in each parish was mainly used to share experiences, analyse the context by naming its challenges and joys, and describing how people are coping with life despite the discouragement and harshness of living conditions. This, according to West (1999a:66; and also Gutiérrez 1988:162-173; Brown 1990:55-57; Magesa 1976:19; L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:24), was the stage of doing ‘critical analysis of social reality.’ We may also call it the stage of opening our eyes to see what is happening around us, and unmask factors and agents of exploitation, oppression, and marginalisation. ‘The key is to know reality better,’ writes Boff (1984:5) — ‘to understand better the mechanisms that produce poverty, and the avenues that can lead its victims away from it.’ The poor themselves must be actively involved in identifying their needs and challenges. Paul VI, in his encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens*, insists on the need of each Christian community to get engaged in the process of analysing its situation ‘with objectivity’ in order to avoid partiality and tendencies that overlook the truth of the Gospels (OA 4). Emotions emerged as people recalled, relived and told what their fate was. The success of this stage depended very much on our ability to employ ‘critical consciousness’ which Groome (in Philpott 1993:102) describes as ‘the ability to see through and beyond the appearances of present reality that society asks us to take for granted.’ All this was done ‘in the light of faith seeking understanding’ (O’Brien 1989:64; Magesa 1976:19). Most of the elements which were noted and recorded from this exercise are included in Chapter Three (3.3.3; 3.4.1 & 3.4.2). I used the first day to highlight some preliminary issues related to the socio-historical background, translations and grammatical questions of Lk 18:35-19:10 as presented in Chapter Four, and to some extent in Chapter Five above. The aim of doing so was to situate the text Lk 18:35-19:10 in its social and historical context thus appreciating cultural, religious, socioeconomic and political aspects that might have conditioned its writing (Schottroff 1984:4).



### 7.3 Engaging with Lk 18:35-19:10: Listening to Rural Voices

The Lukan text 18:35-19:1-10 was read from the Swahili Bible version<sup>149</sup>. Our reading was guided by two questionnaires: one for 18:35-43 and another one for 19:1-10 as shown below (7.3.1 & 7.3.2). ‘These questions,’ notes West (1999c:61; 2000:607), ‘are the contribution of the socially engaged biblical scholar, and provide resources for repeated returns to the text and more careful and “close reading”.’ In each parish, the CBS participants were also asked to act out the two scenes (Lk 18:35-43 & 19:1-10) as a way of enabling them to focus on important elements. This exercise helped non-literate members and those with poor hearing to see what the text had to say<sup>150</sup>. Moreover, according to Waddy (1975:3), people ‘will love the Bible, and learn what it says, by involvement rather than by listening.’ Different persons were assigned different roles as in a play. Others were asked to retell the stories using their own words. In two parishes — Mkoha and Kindimba — songs were sung using the words of Lk 18:35-19:10. I had the impression that every CBS participant was delighted to sing them.

#### 7.3.1 Questionnaire on Lk 18:35-43 and its Rural Respondents

The second day of the CBS in each parish was used to read the story of the healing of the blind beggar (18:35-43). After a short prayer, which was said by one of the participants, the text was first read individually in silence, and twice it was read aloud. Each participant was invited to share his/her spontaneous impressions beginning with the naming of the main characters. The following characters were identified: the blind beggar (18:35), the crowd (ὄχλος) (18:36), those who were in front<sup>151</sup> (προάγοντες) (18:39), Jesus (18:40), and the people (λαός) (18:43). Then the participants were divided into three groups composed of five members (male and female). The groups read and wrote on posters words/phrases that seemed to dominate their discussions. The following words were frequent in all groups: begging, marginalisation, helplessness, blindness, poverty, cry, rebuking and silencing, and resistance. Other words were: exclusion, courage, faith, healing, comfort, empowerment, God’s mercy, joy, restoration, conversion, seeing, following and glorifying God. Such spontaneous

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<sup>149</sup> The Lukan text 18:35-19:10 was read from the *Holy Bible* in Kiswahili *Biblia Takatifu*. Iringa: The Bible Society of Tanzania and The Bible Society of Kenya, 2004.

<sup>150</sup> Here I concur with Kalilombe (1991:402-404; and also Mbiti 1994:29) who encourages us to be creative in finding means and ways that will help the illiterate to perceive biblical messages. In most cases non-literate people feel at ease with the use of ‘mnemonic devices’ such as repetition, singing, acting, dancing and retelling.

<sup>151</sup> The participants identified two types of crowd (i) the group that was with Jesus and it did not rebuke the blind man, and (ii) the group of those who were in front (προάγοντες) (Lk 18:39), those who ordered him to remain silent. The first group probably included Jesus’ disciples/followers, Levi (Lk 5:27-32), the woman who anointed Jesus (7:36-50); the group of women who accompanied Jesus and provided for him and his disciples ‘out of their own resources’ (8:1-3); and the seventy-two disciples whose account we read in 10:1-16.

responses play a significant role in forming raw material that is useful for ‘interpretative and appropriative acts’ (West 2000:603). The questionnaire on Lk 18:35-43 consists of two sections: first, section *a-g* which probes the situation of the blind man and his interaction with Jesus and the crowd. Second, *h-m* that relates the story to people’s lives. The aim was to help rural readers become aware of their responsibility towards the disabled, grasp begging as a social problem, and use the narrative to construct what West (1994:20) calls a ‘transforming discourse.’

- a. Why do you think the crowd followed Jesus?
- b. Why do you think the blind man sat alone by the roadside begging?
- c. Why do you think the crowd identified Jesus with “Nazareth” while the blind man called him “Jesus, Son of David”?
- d. Why do you think the crowd was trying to stop him from reaching out to Jesus?
- e. Why do you think Jesus asked the blind man: ‘What do you want me to do for you?’
- f. What do you think are the most important reactions of the blind man after recovering his sight?
- g. Why do you think the blind man’s name is not given?
- h. Do you know any blind person in your area? How does he/she make a living? What do you think is the relationship with his/her family and with the Christian Community?
- i. Is there any infrastructure put in place to help and accommodate disabled people?
- j. Who do you think are the blind men and women today?
- k. What does it mean to be a blind beggar seated by the roadside begging in the context of your village? What does it feel like to be called a beggar?
- l. Our country begs for its development. What do you think our country could do to avoid begging?
- m. What does the story mean for us today? How does the account of the opening of the blind man’s eyes impact on you as a reader?

### **7.3.1.1 Focus on the Crowd and Healing of the Blind Man**

The first question, ‘Why do you think the crowd followed Jesus?’ was answered as follows: Jesus was non-judgemental and a friend of all. This was probably one of the reasons that attracted many people, especially the poor, the oppressed and marginalised to follow him. Some women who perhaps escaped either from forced prostitution or from abusive husbands followed Jesus with the intention of seeking protection. We may assume as well that sick people who experienced his healing power were part of the crowd. Others were, without doubt, spies sent by the Jewish religious authorities to find blasphemies that would eventually lead to his arrest. It is also possible that merchants and pilgrims, although they did not know

Jesus, were in the crowd on their way to Jerusalem. When the blind beggar called out: ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me’ (18:38) they ordered him to remain silent (18:39).

The second question was directly linked to the situation of the blind beggar. Ordinary/rural readers were asked to state ‘why they thought that the blind man sat alone by the roadside begging.’ Spontaneous responses were recorded as follows: ‘No one wanted to be with him’ because ‘he was dirty.’ Others said that perhaps he was a source of income for his family, so if those who brought him sat with him, prospective almsgivers would have ignored him. Therefore, it was a better option to leave him seated alone, only to return at sunset to walk him homeward. This remark suggests that some people take advantage of disabled people in order to supplement their financial needs. Another respondent said that the text does not say that the blind beggar was there sitting ‘alone’; it only reads ‘a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging’ (18:35). Since blindness was associated with sin and impurity, one may conclude that people avoided sitting near him because the rules of purity restricted them from doing so.

When asked ‘why the crowd identified Jesus with ‘Nazareth’ while the blind man called him ‘Jesus, Son of David,’ the respondents replied that probably the news about miraculous healings performed by Jesus had already reached his ears (Mt 4:23-25). Some people might have told him that Jesus had been healing the sick, the crippled, the dumb, the deaf and blind. As a pious Jew, the blind man knew that the healer would come from the clan of David, so the commotion of the crowd passing by him prompted his inquiry as to what was happening. Their response that ‘it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by’ made him realise that this was his unique opportunity to seek healing. The text (18:41) reports that Jesus asked the blind man to declare what he wanted from him. His reply, ‘Sir, let me see again’ (v.41) sounds as if he had not been born blind. If this is the case, then he might have seen Jesus at work carrying out his ministry that had also included opening eyes of the blind. It is also possible that some people in the crowd whispered and acclaimed Jesus as the son of David as noted in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 21:9; 22:41-46; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44) and that this acclamation reached the ears of the blind beggar.

Among the responses to the question, ‘Why do you think the crowd tried to stop the blind man from reaching out to Jesus?’ were the following: it was going to be an embarrassment that such an impure poor person would be seen by Jesus. This reflects the manner in which some people in villages treat disabled persons; they lock them inside the house especially

when they receive visitors. In such cases, the disabled/crippled are deprived of social interaction, education and proper healthcare. As a person of low status, the blind man had no right to be in the company of someone important like Jesus. People relate to one another according to their social status. In other words, the blind person was supposed to know his diminished status as a member of society. In the church too, there are restrictions that keep some people outside. For example, they said the baptism of children from poor families is often delayed because the parents fail to pay tithes and other contributions in time. This also applies to other sacraments like First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, and also the celebration of funeral masses. The CBS participants said that, in their experience, if one is poor, neither the church nor society wants them.

To the question ‘Why do you think Jesus asked the blind man: “What do you want me to do for you?”’ the respondents said that first, this question aimed at testing and verifying the blind beggar’s faith. Second, Jesus wanted to know what his concern really was. Third, some participants claimed to have concrete examples of men and women who circulate in towns pretending to be blind, but in reality they are not. They do so in order to impress and attract prospective almsgivers. This explains why beggars often do not beg for money in areas where everyone knows them. Jesus did well to inquire about what exactly the blind man wanted to get from him. Fourth, Jesus wanted to drive the lesson home that we should not allow others to define our needs. The blind man’s need was for the recovery of his sight (18:41). Without the question ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ (v. 41), the crowd would have assumed that the blind man was seeking alms from Jesus.

To the question, ‘What do you think are the most important reactions of the blind man after receiving his sight?’ we recorded the following responses: the man expressed an immense and overwhelming joy. He was able to see, follow and glorify God. The recovery of sight changed his status; he progressed from begging to self-sustainability. As a healed person, he would no longer sit by the roadside begging. He was given an opportunity to take care of himself thus regaining his social status. Other people in the crowd were moved by his faith and sight-recovery; they too, in turn, started giving praise to God (18:43). Although the crowd had been following Jesus for some time now, it had never glorified God. It was only after seeing the great works of God that the eyes of all the people in the crowd were also opened.

The question, ‘Why do you think the blind man’s name is not given?’ received a variety of responses. Before responding, the participants were invited to read Mk 10:46-52 and Mt

20:29-34. They immediately noticed and appreciated that they were reading parallel stories of Lk 18:35-43. When asked to mention what they observed as differences, they reported that Mk gives the name of the blind beggar, that is, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, and Jesus encounters him as he leaves Jericho. They also noticed that Luke does not mention the name of the blind man, and Jesus meets him as he enters Jericho. In Mt, Jesus met two blind men seated at the side of the road as he leaves Jericho. Mt does not use the word beggar/begging, and the names of the two blind men are not given. As far as Luke's blind beggar is concerned, the respondents said that Luke does not mention his name because he wanted to protect his identity and that of his family. Other respondents said that it is possible that the blind man (an insignificant person) was known in Jericho, so there was no need to mention his name. Others noted that the Jewish culture probably had some cultural aspects similar to theirs because such people are known by their form of disability. This explains why some people are named Kimumuta (dumb), Kagulu (disability related to one's leg/s), Kaboko (related to one's hand/s), Mpuli (deaf), Lugono (blind), Limutu (one with a big head), and Kandoto (small head). Luke also knew that, in terms of moral life, some blind spot could be noted in each person; thus he leaves an empty space for each person to write his/her name. A male participant raised a concern: Mt, Mk and Lk seem to mention only blind men, what about women? A female participant jokingly replied: it is because men are limited and incapable of 'seeing many things.'

### **7.3.1.2 Focus on the Situation of Rural Blind People**

In view of trying to know how blind people are treated in rural areas, the CBS participants were first asked to tell if they knew any blind person in their area, and how he/she made a living. In every parish, at least four blind persons were mentioned. With the exception of one, most of them became blind either because of old age or illness. Below I use Maguu parish to show how people deal with cases of blindness. Reference is made to two old men (widowers) and one old woman (widow) — their names withheld. They became blind in their old age. A family roster is made to provide the two blind men with their basic needs. The two men did not attend the CBS session. The last day of the CBS sessions in Maguu I visited one of them. He appeared a happy man and pleased with the care he gets from his family. He said that the family does everything for him: they prepare his food, wash his clothing and bedding, and clean the house. The case was not the same with the blind widow whose story was narrated by her younger sister. The woman has two daughters and one son. The relationship with her son is not good, especially with the daughter-in-law who accuses the mother-in-law of causing the

death of her child who died some years previously. She claims that a witch-finder revealed that the mother-in-law was responsible for that death. After paying some money, she was promised protection. She was told as well that if a person tries to bewitch them, that person will become blind. Coincidentally, that same year the poor widow, who already had problems with her eyes, became blind. Since then, she has been marginalised. She moved to the house of her younger sister. Her two daughters regularly provide their mother with groceries.

The participants also were asked to state if there is any infrastructure in place to help the disabled (the blind, the lame, the crippled and the mentally ill). Generally, in rural Mbinga the government has no mechanism that functions on an ongoing basis to support the disabled. However, through the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), the disabled and destitute families receive some money to buy food. In some families this financial assistance has become a source of problems. An example was cited to show how an alcoholic husband always quarrels with his wife when refused access to the money given to help his crippled son. The participants also recognised the assistance that the disabled receive from the Sisters of Mercy of Vincent de Paul, especially groceries and clothing.

The question, 'Who do you think are the blind men and women today?' was spontaneously answered as follows: men and women who have abandoned their faith may be said to belong to a group of blind people. Some church leaders were mentioned as a group of blind people because they impose strict rules on the faithful, and sometimes they behave as if their faith is superior to that of other believers<sup>152</sup>. They pretend to have all the answers related to human reality; they are indeed blind. Government officials and politicians who exploit their people could be classified as blind people because they fail 'to see' the suffering of their own people. Parents who abuse alcohol using family resources were also seen as belonging to this category. Men who deprive female children of education are blind, just like the blind beggar of our narrative. Husbands who abuse their wives are blind as well because they do not see the harm they cause to their wives and children, who often endure such domestic violence<sup>153</sup>. The CBS female participants seemed to be vocal in condemning the subordination of women and the prevalence of domestic violence.

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<sup>152</sup> The misuse of power was one of the elements that the CBS participants pointed out during the CBS sessions. They said that rural people often feel hurt by political and religious leaders who use their office to exploit and oppress the poor. Cochrane (1999:31) describes similar reactions from the texts of Bible studies read and discussed in Amawoti.

<sup>153</sup> Later on I came to know that the participant who made this contribution was a victim of domestic violence. This situation is known by all in her Small Christian Community. A few times some community members tried to reconcile the couple, especially urging the husband to stop drinking alcohol, but their efforts to date have been fruitless.

### **7.3.1.3 Focus on a Begging Phenomenon**

In view of the following questions, the participants were once again asked to read Lk 18:35-43 while imagining that each of them was playing the role of a blind beggar. After this exercise, the following questions were asked: What does it mean to be a blind beggar seated by the roadside begging in the context of your village? What does it feel like to be called a beggar? Their responses were recorded as follows: to be a blind beggar seated by the roadside begging in the context of our village means to be a lazy person. It refers to people who stay idle during the rainy season. While everyone is busy farming, such people spend most of their time loitering, gambling and drinking. They dedicate only a few hours to work on their farms; as a result hunger never departs from their homes. When harvest time arrives, we see them roaming around begging for food. It is awkward to be labelled a beggar. The Bible says, whoever refuses to work, he/she must not eat. People with no physical disability have no right to beg for money. However, it is known that some healthy people go to rural areas to collect disabled people, especially the blind and crippled, and force them to beg for money in urban centres. This explains why most blind men and women that we see begging in streets have someone to guide them. As people created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), we must use our God-given gifts to work hard in order to fend for ourselves. We cannot wait for a good life to descend from heaven like the manna that Moses and his people ate while in the wilderness. Poverty belongs to us; it is up to us to begin doing something here and now to combat it. If we refuse to work, we are like blind people who sit by the roadside begging. Nyerere taught us that a visitor in one's house is a visitor for the first two days, on the third day, he/she is to be given a hoe to work on the farm or go home. Many young people consider working the land as Adam's curse (Gen 3:17-19), they try to avoid it whenever possible. This explains why rural-urban migration has become a serious problem.

The participants also were asked to respond to the following questions: Since independence, Tanzania depends on foreign aid for its development. What do you think our country can do to avoid begging and relying on foreign aid? They replied: it is sad to witness that from the time of independence (1961) our country depends on foreign aid for its development. The reality of rural areas shows that people's lives have stagnated; very little progress seems to have taken place. Despite its natural resources as described above (3.3), the country still begs for money. Whether an individual or a country begs, shame characterises the beggar. Our leaders need to know that there is no country in the world that is prepared to liberate us from poverty. We ourselves must learn to stand on our own feet to build our country and promote

the common good for the benefit of all the people. It is true that colonialism was bad, we do not approve it, but it is equally wrong if we keep on accusing the past as being the root and sole cause of all our current economic woes. After almost six decades of independence, we must acknowledge that we have responsibility for moving our nation forward. However, it is impossible to grow the economy if our leaders behave like *fisi*<sup>154</sup> to amass wealth for themselves. The useless political rhetoric to which we are subjected has no power to improve our rural living conditions.

#### **7.3.1.4 The Impact of the Healing Narrative on its Rural Readers**

The reading and interpretation of Lk 18:35-43 did not end in vain. In several instances, as shown above (7.3.1.2), the participants identified themselves with the blind beggar. Part of their involvement was to act out this story. The participants voluntarily chose the roles to play: Jesus, the blind beggar, the crowd, and almsgivers. This was one way of helping the participants to assimilate the internal movement of the story. In other words, the play gave life to the narrative, and its readers were able to situate themselves in the story. The question, ‘What does the story mean for us today?’ was answered as follows: being blind, they said, is not only about being physically blind; it may equally mean failure to actualise our humanity. This is due to the fact that oftentimes we allow negative elements such as ignorance, cowardice, negligence, incompetence, laziness, corruption and lack of charity to obscure our God-given gifts. The story of the healing of the blind man has helped us see how Jesus cares for humanity. Despite our sinfulness/blindness, Jesus comes to transform us into a new people. Following the footsteps of the blind beggar, we should not remain seated waiting for someone to offer alms<sup>155</sup>. We must stand up and move forward knowing that God is always with us in our struggle for survival. This reminds us of another healing story in Lk 5:17-26 and it has its parallels in Mk 2:1-12 and Mt 9:1-8. The paralytic, after being healed, is ordered to rise and walk (Lk 5:23; Mt 9:5; Mk 2:11-12). God’s healing power does not encourage laziness. The CBS participants here seemed to concur with Fanon (1963:197) when he writes that ‘the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.’ The poor have the power to transform their lives if given an opportunity to do so. Unfortunately, the wealthy often think

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<sup>154</sup> The word *fisi* (hyena/s) here was used in the context of the court case that is still going on in Tanzania where an employee of TRA is accused of misusing her office to acquire possessions that do not reflect her income. It is said that she ‘owns properties including 19 motor vehicles and maintains a life style beyond her income’ (Kapama 2017:np). Similar remarks were expressed by the Synod Fathers (EA 113) who remarked that Africa’s economic problems are generally caused by corruption and theft. The continent is filled with uncommitted leaders, and quite often they collaborate with foreigners to exploit their own countries.

<sup>155</sup> According to Magesa (1976:24), this kind of charity ‘serves only to keep the poor and the oppressed in a dangerous stupor in which state they continue to be instruments of those who give them charity.’



that the poor are poor because of laziness, and that the rich are rich because they work hard (Magesa 1990:104). There are also those who think that they are rich because God has blessed them. They see the fate of the poor as something willed and determined by God; nothing can be done to alter their poor living conditions<sup>156</sup>.

The participants also admitted that no one is ever self-sufficient; solidarity then is considered an important component in human life. Thus, the blind beggar's restoration of his social status was a precondition to the completion of the process of healing. It was acknowledged as well that a frequent reading of the Bible in small groups might become a source of empowerment because people reflect together about their situation in the light of the Word of God. Bible reading then becomes something that triggers transformation, and is not just a source of information. The rural readers noticed that their reading of Lk 18:35-43 did not leave anyone unconcerned; each of them had something to say. Begging was perceived as a distasteful phenomenon that needs to be discouraged in order to pave the way for self-sustainability. The CBS participants also noted that the Lukan text 18:35-43 calls them to support the disabled. This would clearly entail the creation of social infrastructure which would take into account the conditions of disabled people. They equally decried public buildings, schools, and health centres that did not provide friendly environments for disabled people. In rural Mbinga, they said, if one is born with a physical disability (blind, dumb, deaf, and crippled) he/she will not have access to education.

### **7.3.1.5 Rural Voices: Construction of Theological Insights**

Since rural readers are part of the universal enterprise of theology, reference to insights from theologians like Gutiérrez, Magesa, West, Ukpong and Philpott is made in order to complement what has, so far, been achieved in the CBS sessions. I begin with the presentation of three ways of interacting with ordinary readers as suggested by West (2002:69-70). The aim is to show how 'ordinary African "nonscholars" ' become 'constitutive of African biblical scholarship.' First, the African readers are considered as recipients of Biblical scholarship. At this level, ordinary readers seem to be beneficiaries of the findings put at their disposal by professional biblical scholars, preachers and teachers. They consume what others have skilfully produced for them. Although the recipients occasionally manifest some critical engagement as they consume a readymade theology, their level of engagement appears to be

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<sup>156</sup> According to West (2016:396), this kind of theology is often promoted by 'those who benefit from systemic privilege' and those who belong to a privileged racial class.

limited (West 2002:69). The second way envisages ordinary readers as providers, contributors and ‘informers for biblical scholarship.’ Their lived reality in its totality becomes like a container of information and experience that is put at the disposal of biblical scholarship. In other words, ‘[t]he ordinary reader can enable biblical scholars to see something they might have missed concerning what the text historically meant’ (West 2002:70). This level marks a further stage because ordinary readers have progressed from being recipients to being contributors. They have become ‘constitutive of African biblical scholarship in some more profound sense’ (West 2002:70). The third way, ‘the more advanced level’ is the one that takes into consideration both ordinary readers and their contexts. Here the ordinary readers are now seen as ‘the subject of interpretation of the bible’ (Ukpong 2000a:16; 2000b:23). Both trained readers and ordinary readers become identified with the context; they become flesh-and-blood readers because they read it from their own perspective. The goal of this reading, writes Ukpong (2000a:16; 2000b:24), is to ‘engender commitment to personal and societal transformation.’

My reading of Lk 18:35-43 with rural readers proved to be effective and mutually enriching. Ordinary readers appreciated the use of the questionnaire because, they said, it forced them to go back to the text, familiarise themselves with it and provide responses which confirmed that they were mastering the text. Thus our interaction became a school of ‘learning and sharing,’ a school of exchanging resources. It was no longer only a trained reader making use of the knowledge ‘from below’ but they too had an opportunity ‘to make use of the expertise and technical knowledge of academics’ (Nolan 1991:165). This interface must be considered as a necessary process for mutual benefits of co-operation between trained and ordinary readers. What follows below is an attempt to systematise ‘an oral theology’<sup>157</sup> as gathered from a close and critical reading of Lk 18:35-43 as described above.

#### **7.3.1.5.1 The Healing Power of the Word of God**

When reading Lk 18:35-43, it was observed that the aspect of healing received positive remarks. This showed that healing was also the main concern and expectation of rural readers whose lives are seen as a struggle for survival. Lack of reliable healthcare and other social services influenced their understanding of healing. Jesus becomes the healer par excellence —

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<sup>157</sup> Nolan (1991:65; 1996:218) employs the phrase ‘an oral theology’ to mean a theology that arises from group work; it includes theological reflections that both a trained reader and ‘workers,’ in our case ‘rural readers,’ were able to develop together through frank discussions. It is opposed to book theology that relies on print sources, a theology that is disconnected from the people’s lived reality.

the only hope of poor people like the blind beggar (18:41-43). However, the blind man's unwavering faith was acknowledged as having played a great role in his recovery of sight (18:42). Rural readers believed that faith was a precondition to his healing. His faith thus becomes a model to follow by all those who believe in the healing ministry of Jesus. It is through such a ministry that Jesus identifies himself with the poor. He allows 'an indissoluble unity' to exist between him and the poor (Boff & Pixley 1989:111).

A number of rural readers confirmed that when in a difficult situation, especially if faced with sickness, they pray while reading any story that narrates a miraculous healing that Jesus performed. They do so hoping that the same miracle might happen to them. In a similar vein, Ukpong (2000c:587-588) observes that people 'believe that all kinds of evil including illnesses, childlessness, poverty, accidents, deaths, calamities and hardships come from evil spirits and witchcraft. They believe that these afflictions can be overcome by invoking the power of God as expressed in the bible.' In the CBS, one person gave an example of her own elder sister who became blind in her old age; some people linked her loss of sight to practices of witchcraft. There were also those who thought blindness, or any other form of physical disability, is a clear sign that the person is being punished by God. This kind of interpretation needs to be corrected for it relies on the theories of retribution, fatalism and predestination. Such theories are problematic by nature because they fail to explain the suffering of the innocent, for example, a baby born deformed and a mother infected after taking care of her dying HIV positive son/daughter. West (2016:393-410) presents Makhoba's dilemma in trying to grasp the theology of retribution in relation to the plague of HIV/AIDS. 'The Book of Job,' writes West (2016:404), 'is an excellent example of an intense debate about the theology of retribution.' The suffering of an innocent person in most cases has no simplistic answer. It challenges the justice of God. In this case, the understanding of God's healing power as portrayed in the Bible becomes a contested subject. The danger of retribution theology is that it makes the victim endure double suffering: physical disability and stigma. This could also be noted in the life of the blind man: the crowd treated him with disdain (18:39). One needs to have courage to overcome intimidation and marginalisation<sup>158</sup>. There is no doubt that the Bible has an important place in the lives of its readers but the way people

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<sup>158</sup> After reading Lk 18:35-45, the rural readers appreciated the blind man's firmness in standing against the crowd that tried to reprimand him. He performed a heroic act by challenging his detractors (18:38-39). His coming to the public platform concurs with Gutiérrez's phrase 'the irruption of the poor' to mean 'those who until now were "absent" from history are gradually becoming "present" in it' (Gutiérrez 1990:8-9). The poor begin to raise up their voices to question the hegemony of their oppressors and exploiters.

sometimes interpret it needs to be scrutinised, especially when one's interpretation, instead of engendering life, destroys it.

#### **7.3.1.5.2 Healing Perceived as a Process of Empowerment**

Another distinctive feature that the CBS participants observed from the healing story of the blind beggar was the connection between healing and empowerment. In practical terms, his blindness pinned him down and he was subjected to subhuman living conditions. His entire life depended on the generosity of almsgivers; he had no control over his future. Life for him was full of uncertainty. Blindness had crippled him and made him lame, unable to invest in creativity. Power was latent in him as he sat by the roadside begging (18:35). The restoration of his sight, according to rural readers, was also a precious moment of empowerment. There is no doubt that this power was latent in him as he sat by the roadside begging. The miraculous healing he received resuscitated what was dormant, and enabled him to retrieve his dignity and recover his rights as a human being. According to Kaseje (in Philpott 1993:101), '[t]he goal of empowerment is to enable communities, individuals and families to read their reality and transform that reality in order to be less dependent on outside resources, services, and regulations and to be in control of their own destiny.' His blindness was the obstacle that turned him into a beggar. Unfortunately, the material support he received was only providing temporary solutions. According to Magesa (1976:24), this kind of support deserves to be considered 'diabolical and criminal.'

Biblical hermeneutics of liberation seek to enable the poor to become shapers of their own destiny. The liberationist approach condemns the oppression, exploitation and humiliation of human beings. It also condemns dependency because this too dehumanises the poor. Thus Philpott (1993:101-104) speaks of two levels of empowerment. First, empowerment at a psychological level. This achieves its purpose when the poor start seeing themselves as 'important actors in shaping their own history' (Philpott 1993:102). It happens when the poor discover that they have an inner power that enables them to combat dehumanising forces and say "no" to all those who deny 'them their rights as equal members of society' (:102). In other words, the poor begin to analyse how such forces function in society. Second, political empowerment. The poor discover that 'a primary cause of poverty and human suffering is powerlessness' (Philpott 1993:103). They start realising that their misery is caused by unjust social structures. The only solution is to react against them. Once empowered, the poor are able 'to become the subject of their history rather than passive objects' (Ngetwa 2013:51).

They also become aware of God's support as they combat social injustice. The poor must also know that empowerment does not take half measures; it has to be a holistic touching of all aspects of the human situation (Éla 1994:140-41). Ignoring one aspect would cause the rest to limp as well.

#### **7.3.1.5.3 Overcoming Oppressive and Abusive Cultural Practices**

A number of respondents, as pointed out above (3.4.1), did express that rural life is sometimes lagging behind because of some outdated cultural customs and beliefs. Witchcraft, though also known to exist in urban areas, was singled out as one of the major obstacles to rural development. Physical disability, sickness, death and even poor harvests are often linked to magic and witchcraft. Nothing happens without a cause. Quite often we hear people: 'Why is this person sick? Or rather, who bewitched him/her?' In their plight of HIV/AIDS, young people are often convinced that their illness is because old people have bewitched them. The case of the old blind woman, as mentioned above (7.3.1.2), serves as an example to show the extent to which such beliefs can destroy family life. Fatalism is another aspect that affects rural lives. People consider poverty, sickness or death as something willed by God. Evil spirits and demons were also mentioned as playing a significant role in destroying people's lives. Some physical and mental disabilities were believed to have been caused by demons or angry spirits of the ancestors. When children perform badly at school, some parents attribute this to witchcraft caused by jealous relatives. Unfortunately, such beliefs, writes O'Donohue (1973:5), 'induce a passive and fatalistic approach to life which stifles intellectual curiosity and discourages initiative.' Widows in particular are accused of being agents of magic and witchcraft the usual accusation being that in some way they are responsible for the death of their husbands (Nkwame 2018:np). This is often orchestrated by brothers-in-law who want to grab the widow's property. In this case, witchcraft beliefs become a pretext for legitimizing widows' expulsion from the families of their late husbands. A Christian is invited to fight against such unjust behaviour. Reading the Bible in rural Mbinga today must aim at liberating people from the trepidation of magic, witchcraft and the subordination of women.

#### **7.3.1.5.4 Charity and Solidarity as Pillars of Rural Life**

Through the CBS process, we noticed that some families have found appropriate ways of supporting their disabled relatives. The two old blind men, as seen above (7.3.1.2), gave witness to this observation. Their children and relatives provide them with their basic needs. This type of support expresses both cultural and Christian values, and it must be encouraged

as a practical way of showing that ‘to love God means to love the neighbour’; these two horizons of love are inseparable. ‘To sin is to refuse to love, to reject communion and brotherhood, to reject even now the very meaning of human existence’ (Gutiérrez 1974:198). Our love for neighbour must spring from the heart of Jesus, whose life was totally given for humanity. Gutiérrez (1974:202) cautions that ‘the neighbour,’ however, should not be used as ‘an instrument for [coming] closer to God.’ He advocates a kind of love that does not seek personal glory but it rather imitates Christ who emptied himself (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν) for the sake of humanity (Phil 2:7) to the point of being born ‘in the likeness’ of human beings. His followers are called to do the same — emptying themselves for the sake of others. The act of emptying oneself — κένωσις — requires on the part of human beings, a spirit of self-sacrifice and humility. In other words, love and faith remain inseparable; they are like two sides of the same coin. ‘Love is our trademark, branded into our being by the hand of him who made us’ (Gutiérrez 1983:20). Despite poverty, rural dwellers in Mbinga know how to support one another. They live as a family inspired by the philosophy of Ujamaa authored by Nyerere which advocates a construct of society in which one finds no elements of ‘economic, sexist or racial oppression’ (Frostin 1988:56). Though Ujamaa has lost its popularity, in practical terms, the structures of rural settlements remain intact and are still influenced by villagisation policies. The sense of familyhood in villages is still strong, and it continues to enable people to survive together. The peasants’ lives seem to reflect the values of African traditional society which insist on sharing; they remain opposed to selfishness and individualism (Ukpong 1996:206). These values — solidarity, charity, sharing and communion — are also cherished in Small Christian Communities.

### **7.3.2 Reading and Interpretation of Lk 19:1-10 with Rural Readers**

The Zacchaeus story (19:1-10) was read on the third day. The pattern of reading and interpretation was as in Lk 18:35-43. After having read the story, the participants were asked to name its main characters. The following names were put forward: Zacchaeus, Jesus, the crowd, the murmuring crowd, and Zacchaeus’ household (family members and servants). Then the participants were divided into three groups of five, each composed of both male and female members. The groups were recommended to spend thirty minutes reading, raising and discussing issues that they found to be of great significance from the story. Each group recorded its key words/insights on posters. The following elements seemed to recur in all groups: taxation, stealing, bribery, corruption, embezzlement, murmuring, jealousy, dishonesty, conversion, restitution, solidarity, hospitality and salvation.

As shown below, the questionnaire on Lk 19:1-10 consists of two sections. The first section (a-f) has questions that focus on Zacchaeus, his profession and encounter with Jesus. Section two (h-j) requires rural readers to relate the Zacchaeus episode to their own context.

- a. Why do you think people were paying taxes?
- b. Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?
- c. Why do you think Zacchaeus climbed a tree?
- d. Why do you think the crowd began to grumble?
- e. What is your attitude towards Zacchaeus' decision to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay victims of fraud four times?
- f. What do you think Jesus meant by "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham?" and "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost?"
- g. Do you know any tax collectors in your village? How is your relationship with them?
- h. What is your attitude toward tax collectors?
- i. What knowledge do rural readers have about tax collection and its use?
- j. What challenges and impacts does the story of Zacchaeus pose for you today?

#### **7.3.2.1 Focus on Zacchaeus and his Encounter with Jesus**

The inventory of social challenges, pains and joys helped to prepare the terrain of its reading and interpretation (3.5.2 & 3.5.3). The explanation related to the Roman tax collection system (4.3.2) was acknowledged as an eye-opener for the participants because it gave them a glimpse of how taxation was perceived in first-century Palestine. When asked to state why people were paying taxes in Palestine, the CBS participants generally recognised that paying taxes was the responsibility of every citizen, and they were intended to improve social services. In theory, this meant that they understood the purpose of taxation was to improve people's lives. However, they noted that tax collection was faced with the problems of dishonesty and corruption. To a great extent tax-revenues, in their estimation, benefitted a few unethical politicians and government officials. Some of these had become rich, like Zacchaeus because the political machinery tended to favour the rich to the detriment of the poor. That Zacchaeus was seen and assumed to be corrupt was not a surprise to the people of Maguu.

Responses to the question 'Why did Zacchaeus seek to see Jesus?' (19:3) were captured as follows: perhaps the fame of Jesus disturbed him to the extent of wanting to see and compare who, between them, was the richest. Probably Zacchaeus was aware of his sin, and (possibly with the encouragement of fellow tax collectors' recounting of their own experiences (5:27-32; 15:1-2), had sought an encounter with Jesus in order to explore the possibility of being

transformed by him. Although the general consensus was that Zacchaeus' seeking of Jesus was motivated by his desire for repentance, some opined that he pretended to seek Jesus when, in fact, his real motive was to ascertain if some people in the crowd carried things that were subject to tax.

On Zacchaeus' initiative to climb a sycamore tree, some participants opined that he did so because he wanted to draw the attention of the crowd, and to 'look down on them.' This is what wealthy people normally do; they think that they are above everyone. They build mansions, and possess expensive cars just to show that they are not like their poor neighbours. Zacchaeus was used to such an opulent life, so he wanted to be on a pedestal where all would see him. The text speaks of his short physical stature being the reason that forced him to climb the sycamore tree (19:3), but the CBS participants asked: 'Was he the only one in that crowd who was small?' They argued that being short should not be considered a serious barrier preventing him from seeing Jesus. When a government official visits their village, they said, the gathering includes adults and children, but none would claim to have failed to see him/her because of the limitations of their physical stature. Another reason could be associated with his low social status. As a sinner, Zacchaeus had to distance himself from the crowd that knew his moral behaviour. So taking camouflage in the branches of a sycamore tree was a practical solution to his situation.

The question, 'Why do you think the crowd began to grumble?' was answered as follows: We need first to acknowledge that Zacchaeus seems to be a well known figure in Jericho. One can tell that from the manner in which he is elaborately presented as a chief tax collector, a wealthy man (19:2), and short in stature (19:3). We are told as well that, on seeing Jesus going to stay in Zacchaeus' house (19:5), the crowd grumbled because he went to lodge in the house of a notorious sinner (19:7). The murmurers seem to have known Zacchaeus well; their mutterings cannot be entirely considered unfounded. People grumbled because they were convinced that Jesus lodged in the house of a dishonest person.

The resolution that Zacchaeus made in 19:8 did impress the CBS participants. They said that for Zacchaeus, repentance came to mean helping the poor and paying back four times to all victims of his fraud. In other words, the poor became beneficiaries of his conversion. The respondents noted as well that the poor that Zacchaeus exploited were not different from their own situation. These were people who relied on agricultural products for their survival, and they were aware that their sweat often benefitted moneylenders, dishonest leaders and tax



collectors. Zacchaeus, then, is seen as a model of conversion and critic of the tax collectors who continue to exploit the poor today.

On the two affirmations that Jesus made in 19:9 ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham’ and 19:10 ‘For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost’ the CBS participants had the following to comment. As human beings, they said, we are all created by God (Gen 1:26-27); none of us is excluded from God’s kingdom. Zacchaeus was saved because of his readiness to embrace conversion. In other words, human beings have no power to determine who can receive salvation and who cannot. Unfortunately, some think that they are entitled to do so. As an example, the CBS participants in Maguu parish said that their parish cemetery, before its closure in 1998, used to separate the dead according to their Christian status. One part was for those who died in a ‘sacramental state,’ and the other part for those whose Christian life was tainted by ‘irregularities’ such as polygamy and cohabitation. In doing so, remarked some participants, their leaders behaved like the crowd that murmured against Zacchaeus (19:7). Furthermore, they said that some men, though married to two/three wives, remain committed to their Christian faith. However, when they die, the priest is not allowed to celebrate the Eucharist at their funeral. This is also true for suicide cases. No funeral mass is offered for a person who commits suicide. God’s saving power, they said, cannot be conditioned by rules and restrictions made by human beings.

### **7.3.2.2 Questions Focusing on Rural Readers and their Context**

In an attempt to relate the Zacchaeus story to the context of its readers, the CBS participants were asked to tell if they knew any tax collectors in their village(s), and to state the relationship they have with them. The respondents unanimously acknowledged that two tax collectors were, at that time, working in Maguu. Both, it was confirmed, collected taxes for their local government. In most cases, tax is collected from people who run small businesses or from those who bring agricultural products and animals for sale at the local market<sup>159</sup>. It is also known that the government levies taxes on coffee, but the participants were unable to tell how this was done. They also appeared less informed about the activities of TRA (Tanzania Revenue Authority) which is responsible for the assessing, collecting and accounting of government revenue. The participants’ focus was mainly on village tax collectors whom they accused of being dishonest. Sometimes, it was agreed, these tax collectors, in exchange for

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<sup>159</sup> The non-discriminatory poll tax that was levied per head of the adult population aged from 18 is no longer in existence. It was abolished in the late 90s. People were pleased with this abolition because of its non-discriminatory nature: even the poorest of the poor were obliged to pay it.

the consent of a taxpayer to forgo a receipt, reduce the amount that has to be paid. In rural Mbinga, it is almost impossible to convince people to trust that taxes are used for a good cause. The ordinary readers queried: ‘They tell us that taxes are collected in order to improve social services; our village is still poor and has no piped water, no electricity, no good primary school and no reliable health centre. Which social services are they claiming to improve?’ However, when reading Lk 19:1-10, unlike biblical scholars, people were not concerned with the arrangement of words in the pericope or how verbs like δίδωμι and ἀποδίδωμι have been conjugated and translated. Their interest was mainly to listen to what the current pericope tells them in relation to their context.

### **7.3.2.3 The Impact of the Zacchaeus Episode on its Rural Readers**

After working so closely with the Zacchaeus episode, the CBS participants were also asked to state how, in their opinion, it challenged them in their daily lives and their social context. In response to this, some said that they must remain honest in whatever they do, while others said that the government must find ways of educating people on matters that concern the payment of taxes and how such income is being used. Some women said that men who spend most of their time and income in pubs seem to care little about their families and, in effect, to be as dishonest and greedy as tax collectors who exploit their neighbours. A male participant commented that the confession of Zacchaeus had reminded him of his own behaviour, and of the great joy he had experienced as a result of having achieved a genuine change within himself.<sup>160</sup> This quite personal intervention seemed to free people to speak of themselves and, *inter alia*, the following positions were articulated: a few people said that in all truth it is not only tax collectors who are called to change their behaviour. All of us are urged to live as responsible citizens and Christians; Zacchaeus has shown us the way to follow (19:8). Others said that, like Zacchaeus, we are all in need of conversion, not only from fraud but also from treating old people and widows as witches; that the mentality of treating homosexuals as criminals must come to an end as well. We cannot continue harbouring barbaric attitudes towards our fellow human beings simply because their preferences and orientations are different from ours. Coffee buyers should avoid tampering with weighing scales in order to exploit the rural peasantry. We should also raise awareness among our fellow rural dwellers urging them not to borrow beyond their means. It was recommended, as well, that our government must upgrade its tax collection system. As it stands now, it gives the impression

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<sup>160</sup> The response of this man caused people to laugh because in 2013 he was served with a prison sentence of one year after being found guilty of stealing a goat.

that a *laissez-faire* attitude is at work, thus creating loopholes for misuse. Another participant said that he read the story of Zacchaeus many times, but he never thought that the story would reveal such an enriching teaching. There was a general consensus that the parish priest should organise similar sessions in the near future so that people may continue to read the Word of God and relate it to their lived reality. The final speaker said that he would not pay taxes if a tax collector declined to give a receipt. The reading of Lk 19:1-10 in rural Mbinga proved that when a biblical passage is read in community, it does not remain as an archaic script; it touches and challenges their everyday reality.

#### **7.3.2.4 Rural Voices within a wider Context of the Zacchaeus Debate**

This section places rural voices within the wider context of the Zacchaeus debate. In doing so, the rural voices then are given an opportunity to take part ‘at the inn of Biblical Studies’ (West 1995a:68; Philpott 1993:92). It is the task of a trained reader to systematise and articulate the incipient insights in the context of theological discourse and allow them to be at the service of the church and society at large.

During the CBS sessions, as recounted above, conversion was a recurring theme and was central to the community’s response to the Zacchaeus story (7.3.2.1 & 7.3.2.2). In the eyes of the Jewish people, tax collection was considered as a grave sin, impossible to expiate unless one was prepared to abandon it (Donahue 1971:37; Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:7; Ukpong 1996:197). The people hated to pay taxes for two reasons: first, tax collection was under the control of the Roman administration; second, the tax collectors regularly overcharged their clients (Pilgrim 1981:52; Schottroff & Stegemann 1986:11). In a similar vein, rural readers in Maguu felt that tax collectors are there to exploit the poor. So, the conversion of Zacchaeus stands as a challenge and an example for anyone who wants to hear Jesus tell him/her ‘today salvation has come to this house’ (19:9). The rural voices correspond to Méndez-Moratalla’s conversion theory as discussed above (6.3.2.2); for them it is evident that Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus resulted in his personal change of heart.

Another factor to take into account is the role of the crowd as reported in Lk 19:7 which recalls that people murmured because Jesus had gone to lodge in the house of a sinner. The participants were of the opinion that these people knew more about Zacchaeus than the Lukan narrative illustrates. Some members surmised that it was possible that some of those in the murmuring crowd had been his victims (7.3.2.1), and that his claim of having given fourfold restitution to all his victims could have been exaggerated. For these reasons, we should

assume that the victims were well aware of the tax collector's practices. Listening to the voices of the murmuring crowd would certainly help open our eyes to the tension that exists between the crowd and Zacchaeus. Moreover, it is reported that all from the crowd murmured (πάντες διεγόγγυζον) (19:7). This point was not lost on the rural readers and some of them wondered if it made sense to assume that all had murmured wrongly against Zacchaeus. The CBS participants felt that people in the crowd knew Zacchaeus the way they know their own tax collectors. When they say Zacchaeus was dishonest, they really mean it because they know how often they have been cheated. Thus, while accepting that Zacchaeus had converted, he was, in their understanding, before his conversion, a typical example of corrupt officialdom. His conversion was, in their opinion, long overdue.

If people were aware of Zacchaeus' generosity and his habit of giving back fourfold to people he cheated, the crowd would not have treated him as a sinner (Danker 1988:305). For example, in the context of the healing of the centurion's servant (Lk 7:1-10), the elders who were sent to ask Jesus to come and heal the servant spoke in favour of the centurion, though he was a foreigner working for the Roman administration (7:4-5). If Zacchaeus were a person of this calibre, the crowd definitely would have spoken well of him; they would have regarded him as their local benefactor. The rural readers went further saying that if Zacchaeus were such a generous and dignified person, the crowd would have given him space to see Jesus instead of embarrassing and forcing him to climb a sycamore tree, 'something a child or young person would be more likely to do than a dignified person of affairs' (Byrne 2000:150).

#### **7.3.2.5 Outcomes of the CBS Session: A Theological Reflection**

To the participants of this CBS session the Zacchaeus story is predominantly a story of conversion. If, as at least some members seemed to assume, some people in the crowd were victims of Zacchaeus' fraud, then the vindication theory as put forward by Fitzmyer (1985:1220-1221) would sound like mockery. It would demonstrate how some commentators, perhaps unwittingly, side with the exploiter and ignore the exploited. We must therefore read Lk 19:1-10 while taking to heart the situation of the poor (West 1999a:14; Frostin 1988:6). We should not hesitate to challenge what, so far, has been understood as the classical interpretation of the Zacchaeus episode.

The rural readers did not doubt Zacchaeus' conversion, they even compared him with the story of *Mwana Mpotevu*, 'the Prodigal Son' (Lk 15:11-32). The theme of getting lost and being found is frequent in Luke (5:27-32; 15:1-7); Zacchaeus is no exception (Hamm

1988:436; Naseri-Mutiti Naseri 2012:15-17). The reaction of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:8) shows that he has allowed Jesus to challenge his moral behaviour. His resolve must therefore be seen as something that is to happen in the future. He gains salvation (σωτηρία) (19:9) because of his being open to the presence of the Lord. Fowl (1993:157) classifies Zacchaeus as ‘a widely recognized and self-confessed sinner (19:7-8).’ ‘Sin demands a radical liberation’ (Gutiérrez 1974:176; 205). What Zacchaeus does here is to commit himself to this radical change of heart. His conversion becomes a legacy that can inspire rich Christians today especially with regard to the right use of wealth (Ukpong 1996:198). In Lk 3:10-14, John the Baptist invites people to repentance and solidarity. Each person according to his/her situation is urged to adjust his/her previous life in order to embrace the values of God’s kingdom. John’s audience is moved by his teaching, and they seem to provide a positive response as they ask: ‘What then shall we do?’ (3:10, 12, 14). John’s answer to the multitudes is very clear: he recommends them to be in solidarity with the poor, sharing with them their coats and food (3:11). The tax collectors are ordered not to collect more than what is appointed to them (3:13), and soldiers not to rob anyone by violence or by false accusation, and they have to be content with their wages (3:14). For John the Baptist, it is obvious that salvation requires repentance from illegal activities. Zacchaeus’ resolve is in line with John’s teaching (Lk 3:10-14). He shares his possessions with the poor, and gives back fourfold to the victims of his fraud, thus fulfilling the modalities of restitution required for unfaithful tax collectors<sup>161</sup>. Each person is invited to redirect his/her previous life so that he/she may be counted as a son/daughter of Abraham. It is a kind of ‘profound rebirth’ (Freire 1979:47) that takes place in the person; it orders them to do things which promote human dignity. Conversion for us believers must then mean what Gutiérrez describes as ‘a radical transformation of ourselves; it means thinking, feeling, and living as Christ — present in exploited and alienated man’ (Gutiérrez 1974:205).

Zacchaeus’ entry into God’s kingdom ‘through the eye of a needle’ (18:25) is a paradigm that is open to each and every person. The account invites the listener to be open to such a possibility. Zacchaeus thus ‘becomes a living illustration of what the Lukan Jesus repeatedly states on the subject of wealth’ (Kim 1998:193). Conscience is the sacred place from which one’s deeds are regulated and assessed; it is to the heart that Jesus must be allowed access. It is also evident from Lk 19:1-10 that moral behaviour and one’s occupation are two different things. People cannot be judged on the basis of their employment. Not all tax collectors in

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<sup>161</sup> Schottroff & Stegemann (1986:10) discuss in detail how retribution was done in ancient societies.

Roman Palestine were rich; a number of them opted for this most despised work because they had no other means for survival (Soares-Prabhu 1991:165). Some tax gatherers used their slaves to collect the taxes; the profits gained were for their masters. Indeed, God does not deal with people on the basis of their outward appearance, but on what comes from the heart. The rich ruler in the first place (18:18-23) appeared pious and committed to the Mosaic Law, but when confronted by Jesus, he walked away sad. He rejected the offer of discipleship because he was not prepared to lose his wealth. Thus the rich ruler's devotion to mammon replaced his love for God and neighbour (Moxnes 1988:167). Zacchaeus, who was treated as an outcast and defrauder, turned out to be a trustworthy person.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

Rural readers' reflections, though unique and contextual, have enabled this chapter, as shown in the preceding pages, to contribute theological insights that spring from the real life of the people. In the healing narrative (18:35-43), the following theological reflections were found to be of great significance. First, recognition and acknowledgement of the healing power of the Word of God. The rural readers confirmed that their daily struggles for survival are being accompanied by God's word. They consider it as having an effective influence in the fight against poverty, disease and ignorance. Despite many challenges, their faith in the God of Jesus Christ remains unshaken. Like the blind man who, after recovering his sight, followed Jesus on his way to Jerusalem, rural readers too expressed that the power of God's word empowers them to withstand the temptation of discouragement and resignation. Second, the recovery of sight stands as a symbol of empowerment towards self-sustainability. The rural readers, identifying themselves with the blind beggar, said that their eyes were opened, and they were empowered to confront and name oppressive social structures and unhealthy cultural practices. They began realising that cultural practices such as witchcraft beliefs, patriarchal mentalities, and gender-based violence do not help them to advance the agenda of socioeconomic development. Third, components such as charity and solidarity were perceived and acknowledged as pillars of social interaction and mutual support in rural areas.

In relation to the Zacchaeus story, the rural dwellers reinforced the idea that personal conversion must remain a requisite to end dishonest behaviour. Zacchaeus' initiative to refund the victims of his fraud was referred to as a concrete gesture of genuine repentance. It was also said that God chose Zacchaeus in order to use him as a paradigm of conversion. If God could save such an impure person (so-labelled), they remarked, it means that salvation is no

longer perceived as something reserved for a few seemingly ‘holy’ people. Zacchaeus’ inner attitude towards those he exploited changed, and this gained him salvation. In other words, reconciliation becomes an important element in the process of recovering one’s social identity. Zacchaeus’ fraud can be equated to all acts of injustice that people commit in order to maintain the gap between the poor and the rich. The existence of a discriminatory legal system is another challenge with which rural dwellers are faced; only those with material means have access to court and other places where important decisions are made. Restitution in this sense would eliminate the structural sin that very often discriminates against the poor and the marginalised.

The contributions that emerge from a critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 with the rural readers in Mbinga as abundantly articulated above (7.3.1 & 7.3.2), provide insights and potential measures required for combating poverty and marginalisation. Ideals such as empowerment, critical solidarity, awareness-raising, self-confidence, self-determination, participation and integrity, *inter alia*, as noted in this chapter, were the most recurring themes during the CBS sessions. These insights and goals shape our discussion in Chapter Eight with the objective of advancing an agenda of social transformation in rural Tanzania.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **TRANSFORMING RURAL REALITY INTO NEW POSSIBILITIES OF SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: APPROPRIATION OF LUKE 18:35-19:10 IN MBINGA DIOCESE**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

Chapter Eight highlights the need to bridge the gap that exists between theology and praxis. The two must intertwine in order to make Christian faith instrumental in serving humanity<sup>162</sup> and in transforming human society. As believers, we do not serve an alien and distant god; ours is the God who engenders life. According to Lohfink (1987:5-15; and also Éla 1994:146), the God of Christians takes interest in the ‘here and now’ and desires that ‘his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ The same God blesses the ‘material things’ he created to sustain human life. This means that any teaching that scorns wealth and exalts poverty needs to be questioned<sup>163</sup>. Bearing in mind Lohfink’s position, a theology emanating from a study of Lk 18:35-19:10 in rural settlements together with the works of some liberation theologians must now, in concrete terms, be put at the service of its proponents.

Chapter Eight is divided into three sections. The first section revisits the problems of dependency and corruption as analysed and discussed in 7.3.1.3 & 7.3.2.3, and shows how they continue to keep rural Mbinga underdeveloped today. The second section, in line with the rural voices, articulates possible responses to the problem of poverty. The third section suggests concrete measures to be taken in order to empower the poor for social transformation.

#### **8.2 Dependency and Corruption Affecting Rural Lives**

##### **8.2.1 Challenges of Dependency Syndrome**

When reading Lk 18:35-43 in the CBS, it was noted that begging and borrowing remains a serious problem among the poor. The CBS participants seemed to say that during the rainy season many rural dwellers become destitute, and this situation forces them to beg or incur debts from moneylenders. They do so because they need money to buy agricultural inputs

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<sup>162</sup> For Connor (1991:226-233), serving humanity means getting rid of all elements that tend to dehumanise and undermine human dignity, such as widespread social injustice, alcoholism, abuse of drugs, inadequate medical care, poor educational services, hunger, illiteracy, oppression and unemployment.

<sup>163</sup> According to Nyerere (1974:91), God does not exalt poverty or consider it a value that increases our chances of becoming saints.



(fertiliser and seeds) and to cover medical expenses. The recurrence of diseases such as cholera, malaria, bilharzia, and typhoid is high during the rainy season. Local moneylenders use this crisis to make profits through usury. As a result, many rural families are trapped in poverty<sup>164</sup>.

### **8.2.1.1 Begging as the Worst Form of Humiliation**

Apart from begging (Lk 18:35), the blind man had no other means of survival. His physical disability deprived him of socio-economic, cultural and religious privileges. Moreover, as discussed above (4.4), rules of purity classified him as an impure person. His loss of sight made it impossible for him to fend for himself. Even in our modern societies, remarked the CBS participants, such people continue to receive alms and social grants because they are unable to make a living on their own (cf. Hazlitt 1973:229; Burkey 1993:3). A number of examples were given to show how rural dwellers take care of the deserving poor<sup>165</sup>. Family members take turns to provide them with basic needs<sup>166</sup>. However, the CBS participants considered begging by the ‘undeserving poor’ as a phenomenon that needs to be discouraged. Songs are sung during the traditional dances to discourage begging in rural Mbinga. A healthy person has no right to beg for survival<sup>167</sup>. The CBS participants were pleased with the decision taken by some municipal leaders in Tanzania to force beggars to return home instead of loitering in town<sup>168</sup>. Two young men in Maguu who had returned home because of this ruling served as an example. To illustrate the wider problem of begging, I used the CBS sessions to show that Tanzania, as a developing nation, relies, to a large extent, on foreign aid especially ‘systematic aid’ (Moyo 2009:7). The CBS participants retorted that begging, whether by individuals or nations, undermines the dignity of beggars; according to Missiaen (2005:61), begging stifles creative thinking.

The CBS participants noted, as well, that the interaction between a beggar and almsgivers takes a form of a patron-client relationship. The blind man was forced to remain silent (18:39) because he had no power to influence the affairs of his society. People who beg cannot raise their voices to challenge those who support them. Likewise, if our country relies on foreign

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<sup>164</sup> Sachs (2005:56) considers ‘the poverty trap’ as the major cause of destitution in developing countries.

<sup>165</sup> Iliffe (1987:247) considers as deserving poor all those who are unable to support themselves due to physical disability (the blind, the crippled, the mentally ill, and so on), sickness, old age and children. It is the responsibility of society, family members, relatives and other institutions (religious and NGOs) to assist and provide the disabled with their basic needs.

<sup>166</sup> However, not every needy person enjoys this privilege; some are abandoned on the basis of witchcraft beliefs.

<sup>167</sup> Begging or preying on the rich is discouraged in some deuterocanonical writings (Sirach 40:28-30).

<sup>168</sup> An example of this incident could be read from one of the government owned newspapers as reported by John (2013:np).

aid, it means that she has no power to determine her future. Submissiveness on her part guarantees her future survival. She is made to believe that without aid she has no future<sup>169</sup>. The process of healing requires decisive determination on her side to say ‘no’ to begging. Pain is inevitable if this process has to bear some fruit (Moyo 2009:75). In order to shake off the ‘dependency syndrome,’ the country must first learn to stand on her own feet. Otherwise, she will remain in ransom as she goes ‘cap in hand’ begging for material support<sup>170</sup>. The negative effect of foreign aid is also noted in the writings of some African politicians like Nyerere, Nkrumah, and scholars such as Éla, Magesa, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o<sup>171</sup>.

The rural readers observed that for a number of years different groups of NGOs have worked in their areas trying to do all sorts of development projects with the donors’ money, but nothing concrete is visible. The poor remain the same, and those who supervise such projects drive expensive cars and live in urban centres. According to Ngetwa (2013:72; and also Yunus 1999:145), one of the criticisms of NGOs is linked to ‘a problem of mismanagement.’ A sum of money destined to support the underprivileged often ends up in the hands of a few individuals. The CBS members, too, noticed that what they get from these projects is only ‘handouts’ which in reality do not alleviate poverty. They compared themselves with the blind beggar (18:35) who used to receive alms but whose material situation remained unchanged.

#### **8.2.1.2 Begging and Foreign Aid as a Sleeping Pill**

During the CBS session in Mkoha parish, one participant jokingly said that ‘*omba omba ni kama dawa ya usingi*’ which literally means ‘begging is like a sleeping pill.’ To a large extent, a sleeping pill serves to induce sleep as a way of coping with one’s bodily pain. When one is awake, one continues to confront the same suffering. Temporary postponement of one’s pain could be seen as an attempt to avoid dealing with the root cause of one’s problem. Similarly, handouts are likened to sleeping pills; they work on the symptoms of poverty without touching its root cause. The rural readers said that the concept of a sleeping pill also

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<sup>169</sup> I concur with Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:107; and also Mills 2010:194) who argues that begging incapacitates beggars. Begging nations tend to believe that they cannot survive without foreign aid. Foreign aid ultimately impoverishes the developing nations. They ‘[lose] self-respect and self-reliance’ (Hazlitt 1973:174).

<sup>170</sup> Sachs (2005:246-280) argues that the extreme poor are incapable of making their capital work without foreign aid. They need both financial and material help to increase and boost their capital. Based on this argument, he puts forward three possible solutions to combat poverty in developing countries: first, donor countries must continue to give poor nations more aid; second, foreign aid must also aim at investing in science and technology; third, cancellation of debts owed by developing countries. Despite his good will, Sachs must know that poor countries will not be developed by rich nations. Since independence (1961), foreign aid has not accelerated economic development in Tanzania. Alternative measures to grow our economy must be sought from within.

<sup>171</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986:28; and also Mveng 1994:162; Awori 2005:7) calls for critical reflection on how Africa is to regulate and monitor the use of its natural and human resources.

challenges their attitudes towards work and use of time. It invites them to avoid ‘sitting idle by the roadside’ (18:35) and spending much time drinking alcohol. In the context of rural Mbinga, the CBS participants said that aid can only work if it is intended to increase agricultural productivity, and improve social infrastructure. As long as foreign aid is used to organise elections, feed the hungry, and import military equipment, we cannot hope to grow our economy in the near future. Another weakness observed by the CBS participants is that beggars do not have a plan to end begging. They do not foresee one day to stop begging, unless old age or poor health stops them from doing so. In general, African nations including Tanzania have no plan to stop seeking foreign aid. They see it as an endless process to which they are entitled to go cap in hand every year<sup>172</sup>. Seeking aid all the time could also be likened to a lethal injection that aims at killing the spirit of initiatives in its recipients. A change of mindset is required in order to begin looking for solutions from within. The recipients of handouts must begin to raise critical questions: Why does foreign aid have no limited duration? What motivates foreign donors to support us?<sup>173</sup> Because of their failure to address these issues, beggar nations are condemned to forgo the goal of self-reliance<sup>174</sup>. In effect, they accept remain, as Magesa (1976:24) puts it, in a state of ‘vegetables’. In fact, these questions need serious reflection and not cheap answers like replacing Western donors with the Chinese hoping that the latter are better than the former<sup>175</sup>. The sleeping pill, whether it comes from Western Europe or China, in the end has the same effect, that is, to reduce one’s pain temporarily. Moreover, foreign aid often ends up in the hands of selfish and corrupt

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<sup>172</sup> According to Moyo (2009:35), aid that comes to Africa differs from the Marshall Plan and that of McArthur that aimed at enhancing economic recovery in Western Europe and Japan respectively after World War II. The Marshall Plan had a limited duration, and it worked within the confines of that given time.

<sup>173</sup> The impression that most African nations give is that they have allowed themselves to be used as toys — characterised by what Quayesi-Amakye (2011:168) calls ‘the Samson syndrome. ‘Unfortunately, like Samson,’ writes Quayesi-Amakye, ‘many Africans, if not all, have allowed themselves to become blind to the realities around them. Pitifully, instead of acknowledging their self-induced negligence, many Africans delight in playing the blame game that always sees the West as the culprit’ (:169). Some African leaders are known for looting their countries’ resources and taking them to foreign countries (Kinunda 2014:28). In a similar vein, Uchegbue (2013:144) observes that ‘African countries are played like a football. Whoever has the ball kicks it until it is near deflation! It is then pumped up by some foreign loans, and the process continues. Such has been our lot since independence.’

<sup>174</sup> Mills (2010:255-256) mentions two trends of opinions in relation to foreign aid: tweekers and revampers. For him, tweekers are ‘those who believe that the benefits outweigh the costs, but that improvements are necessary; the revampers believe that aid generally does more harm than good, and that Africans need to find their own way.’ Though most people seem to embrace the first option, Mills agrees with the revampers.

<sup>175</sup> Here I disagree with Rodney (1972:32) who seems to pay attention to exploitation done by capitalist countries while mitigating what socialist countries do simply because they never colonised Africa. He believes that ‘socialist countries are not involved in the robbery of Africa.’ The Chinese would be delighted to read such an argument. Africa will be mistaken if it naively deals with the Chinese. We must not consider and treat the Chinese as good Samaritans. Their presence in our countries does not connote solidarity with developing nations, but business as usual, i.e., to maximise profits.

government officials who use it for their own benefits (EA 120). The poor in such cases do not even know what it means to receive foreign aid (Goliamia 2013:253; Speckman 2007:13).

### **8.2.1.3 Blindness as a Metaphor of Irresponsibility**

The CBS participants seemed to be at ease with the use of metaphors<sup>176</sup>. For example, when asked to tell ‘who they thought were the blind men and women today,’ their responses went far beyond the literal meaning of ‘blindness.’ Church leaders who impose strict laws on the faithful were compared to blind people. In the same vein, blindness was associated with government officials and politicians who exploit their own people. Men and women who abuse alcohol, husbands who mistreat their wives and deny their daughters’ right to education were equally likened to someone whose eyes have gone blind. Lazy individuals also were compared to people who suffer from blindness<sup>177</sup>. During the CBS sessions, the participants used the figure of the blind man (Lk 18:35-43) as a metaphor of ignorance with reference to all those who are incapable of embracing moral and ethical values. They said this happens when one’s reason is clouded by dishonesty, senseless passion, irrational decisions, and ignoble appetites of material wealth to the extent of turning a blind eye on matters that concern social justice. The rural readers seemed to concur with Koosed (2015:np), whose notion of sight-recovery means to move ‘from ignorance to understanding, from faithlessness to faithfulness’ or from begging (Lk 18:35) to giving glory (18:43). The following elements are sometimes seen as agents of blindness: pride, selfishness, incompetence, corruption and lack of creativity (Quayesi-Amakye 2011:168). Blindness, in the sense of lacking credibility among leaders, remains a serious problem in rural Mbinga. The CBS members seemed to suggest that uncommitted leadership has contributed to their state of being poor.

### **8.2.1.4 Illiteracy in Rural Mbinga**

During the CBS sessions it was noticed that some participants were illiterate. In organising discussion groups, I made sure that each group had at least one person who was able to read and write. This was necessary, as otherwise, it would have been impossible to report the results of their discussions to a larger group. In every parish where the CBS sessions were conducted, illiteracy was underlined as a serious problem which hinders the poor in their

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<sup>176</sup> The use of metaphors, proverbs, parables and anecdotes in speech, rhetoric and poetics is known in all cultures. People tend to use such linguistic styles as means of learning and teaching (Koosed 2005:np; Wood 2015:110). When a word is used metaphorically in a sentence or speech, it often goes beyond its literal meaning.

<sup>177</sup> Certain portions of prophetic literature (Isa 6:9-10) make similar impressions to describe people who claim to see but in reality they are unable to perceive. In the Bible, blindness as metaphor is often used to mean lack of faith, understanding and discernment (Mt 15:15; Lk 6:39; Mt 5:27-29; Mk 9:47; Lk 24:16) (Guijarro 2000:108).

determination to combat poverty. They requested the government to reintroduce adult education which was popular and compulsory in the 70s and early 80s when Tanzania tried to implement the Ujamaa and villagisation programmes<sup>178</sup>. Every illiterate adult was enrolled in an adult education programme. It was through such programmes that rural people gained skills in writing, reading and numeracy. They were also empowered and liberated from unfounded fears of nature, witchcraft and evil spirits. It is difficult to improve people's living conditions if they are illiterate. What will be their understanding of family planning programme, and children's education? Will they fight against cultural practices such as child marriages and forced widow inheritance? How will they increase agricultural productivity if illiteracy dominates their lives? Like the blind man who praised God after recovering his sight (18:43), rural dwellers unanimously expressed their great desire to be liberated from illiteracy. Today people have access to information through reading newspapers, books, radios, tvs, internet, mobile phones, and so on. In rural Mbinga, most peasants have no radios and tvs, but mobile phones are widely used. The transaction of money by mobile phones, known as 'm-pesa,' was mentioned as the major reason that justifies the wide use of cell phones in rural Mbinga.

### **8.2.2 Corruption and Abuse of Power**

In working with the Zacchaeus story, the words 'corruption'<sup>179</sup> and 'dishonesty' appeared to dominate our CBS discussions. As pointed out above (7.3.2.4.3), Zacchaeus became a typical example of dishonest tax collectors, politicians and government officials. It was also noted that the rural readers' understanding of corruption is limited to what Blind (2011:6; and also Calderisi 2007:88) calls 'petty corruption.' It exists mainly in government institutions that are located in rural areas, such as police stations, primary courts, health centres and land department offices<sup>180</sup>. Such institutions are marked with high levels of bureaucracy and corruption. Corruption involves moral questions in the sense that the culprits tend to do things

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<sup>178</sup> Policies on Adult Education can be accessed from some of Nyerere's writings issued between 1973 and 1978: 'Adult Education Year' (1973); 'Education for Liberation' (1974); 'Adult Education and Development' (1978). 'The first function of adult education,' writes Nyerere (1978:29), 'is to inspire both a desire for change, and an understanding that change is possible.' Nyerere's vision did register positive outcomes (Magesa 1987:22-23).

<sup>179</sup> The term 'corruption,' though widely used, remains a difficult word to explain due to its ambiguity and vagueness. This work employs De Graaf's description of corruption to mean 'behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends' (De Graaf 2007:43; Smith 2014:np).

<sup>180</sup> Some scholars name low salaries and poor living conditions as the root causes of corruption, but I think corruption is usually escalated by greed, and irresponsible leadership (Ellison 2000:np; Shuaib 2015:2). Here I have in mind individuals who are known for their corrupt practices despite being extremely wealthy. Large scale corruption normally takes place in government parastatals, important public offices, mining companies, fishing and forest sectors, government building projects, and tax evasion by rich people.

that are morally unacceptable, for example, ‘the plundering of the common good by a minority to the detriment of entire peoples’ (AM 24). Corruption is evil because it promotes a culture of favouritism, mistrust, partiality, inequality and ‘a money-talks-mentality’ in society. One’s qualification for a job does not matter; it is one’s money that matters<sup>181</sup>. Just a year before independence, Nyerere declared corruption as an enemy to be treated in almost the same way as one treats treason. He opined that the only thing to do with a corrupt government is ‘to take up arms and remove that silly government’ (Nyerere 1966:82). Blind (2011:6) distinguishes four different types of corruption: first, bribery; second, embezzlement; third, fraud, and fourth, extortion. Bribery was the most popular type of corruption in rural areas. When poor peasants go to hospital, they need to have some extra money to give as *chai* (something for a cup of tea) to a member of the hospital staff to facilitate access to treatment. Many rural dwellers believe that corruption is a natural phenomenon - impossible to eliminate it<sup>182</sup>. Because of corruption, thievery and embezzlement, the CBS participants in each parish said that development projects (communal farms, tractors, and so on) that were intended to develop rural Mbinga have ceased to exist. The participants seemed to concur with Speckman (2007:xxii) who considers corruption as a symptom of a major unearthed problem, that is ‘the lack of a true African identity and vision.’ Corrupt officials betray their country<sup>183</sup>.

### 8.3 Alleviation of Poverty in Rural Mbinga: Possible Solutions

#### 8.3.1 Disability and Respect for Human Dignity

According to the observation made by rural readers, people scorned the blind man because he was blind (18:39). In doing so they compromised his dignity. Under any circumstance, they said, physical disability should not be seen as a defect that diminishes one’s humanity. One participant echoed a Swahili proverb saying: *Hujafa hujaumbika bado* which literally means ‘You are not fully created if you are not yet dead.’ Life is like being on a journey, as long as

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<sup>181</sup> As a result, unqualified personnel are present almost in all government institutions (Smith 2014:np). During the CBS sessions (July-August 2017) in each parish, the participants referred to a high number (9,932) of civil servants who had been removed from the payroll after establishing that they used false qualifications to obtain their jobs. This phenomenon was widely known in the country, and it became ‘the news’ in social media (Reuters 2017:np; Abdu 2016:np). Many families whose survival relied on these salaried employees, felt the pinch of this unexpected move to suspend unqualified personnel.

<sup>182</sup> Similar impressions are noted in a report by the group called ‘Social Watch’ that did a survey in some villages of Tanzania (Social Watch 2004:2). According to Twineyo-Kamugisha (2012:79-81), corruption is chronic simply because there is no genuine will to combat it. He proposes a series of remedies including committed political will to combat corruption, and the establishment of effective laws to address the vice.

<sup>183</sup> Moyo (2009:56-57; and also Ituma et al. 2019:4), despite her disapproval of corruption, is less condemnatory of ‘positive corruption’ which happens when perpetrators of corruption use the stolen money to invest in their country. However, it is clear that money leaves Africa for overseas.

travellers have not yet reached their destination, anything can happen, for example, accidents. Thus there is no need to scorn and mistreat the disabled. The CBS participants seemed to agree with John Paul II, whose encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (n<sup>o</sup>. 22) invites people to support disabled people and give them opportunity to participate in socioeconomic activities, each according to his/her capacity. Jesus remains our model of love and compassion. He reached out to the poor, the blind and the disabled with no biased attitudes. The miraculous healings that Jesus performed as narrated in the Synoptic Gospels, in fact, offered holistic restoration to the sick and disabled. They aimed at empowering and giving people ‘authority, power, strength and confidence’ (Soanes 2002:288; Speckman 2007:227). For instance, liberation from blindness made the blind beggar stop begging, and this in turn increased his social mobility and capacity to take part in economic, political and religious activities. Every human being deserves respect and protection from threats to his/her dignity. This respect does not depend on one’s race, physical condition, sex, religion or socioeconomic possibility, but on the image of God imprinted in every person.

### **8.3.2 Participation and Engagement**

The question of Jesus to the blind man, ‘What do you want that I do for you?’ (18:41), was used by the CBS participants as an example to challenge the programme of villagisation in rural Mbinga. At the outset, they said, to settle in an Ujamaa village was understood to be a voluntary move (Nyerere 1974:36-37). However, the CBS participants recalled that in the early 70s, the central government did not bother itself to inquire about what people thought of the policy of villagisation. The sluggish move to Ujamaa villages shown by people influenced Nyerere in 1973 to declare that ‘to live in village was an order’ (Nürnberger 1998:136), and its implementation took effect from 1974. People had to abandon their traditional settlements, and they were resettled in the newly created villages. Those who declined to move (the so-called stubborn peasants) had their houses burnt and farms destroyed<sup>184</sup>. Some were treated as traitors to the socialist government of Tanzania. Some CBS participants in Mikalanga and Mkoha parishes recalled how settlement in Ujamaa villages affected their families. They were obliged to sell some of their possessions (e.g. cattle, goats) at cheap prices in order to get money to build provisional houses in their new settlements<sup>185</sup>. Because of such misguided

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<sup>184</sup> McHenry (1979:138-145) narrates the horrors experienced by the peasants who tried to resist moving to Ujamaa villages throughout the country.

<sup>185</sup> Shepherd (2013:102; and also Nafziger 1988:71; Boesen et al 1977:90-91) considers a non-participatory implementation of villagisation policies as one of the major causes of rural poverty in Tanzania.

policies, the villagisation programme was becoming worse than the state it was designed to replace.

The CBS participants proposed that there should always be room for the poor to take part in initiating development projects. The duty of socially engaged biblical scholars, and other promoters of rural development, must be that of ensuring that the poor become active role players and owners of such projects. Many development projects in Ujamaa villages collapsed, not only because of corruption and embezzlement, but because force was used to compel people to take part in communal work (McHenry 1979:169-172). The participants appreciated the way they were given an opportunity to read Lk 18:35-19:10 and relate it to their social reality. According to Burkey (1993:56; and also Gutiérrez 1974:113), participation must be considered as ‘an essential part of human growth’ which makes people gain ‘self-confidence, pride, initiative, creativity, responsibility, cooperation.’ The blind man was given a chance to state his concern (18:41); recovery of sight was his real need and not alms. Thus participation and engagement remain key elements in the process of empowering the poor (Éla 1994:150). The CBS participants, as noted above (3.5.4), gave examples of projects that seem to function well because they are the fruit of their own initiatives: funeral associations, peasants’ associations, and SACCOS<sup>186</sup>.

### **8.3.3 A Quest for an Inclusive Liberation**

The logic of true liberation lies behind the argument that social justice is to be attained only when both the oppressed and the oppressor are inclusively liberated from their respective conditions — the oppressed from oppression, and the oppressor from oppressive attitudes and behaviour. This understanding is opposed to those who take liberation in the direction of class antagonism. In its truest sense, liberation seeks to humanise human society. It is about making both sides realise that their current conditions are incompatible with the values of God’s kingdom. It is in this context we speak of liberation ethics which seeks to establish a new social order where respect for human dignity comes first. However, the poor and those who support their cause must oppose against oppression and exploitation. In Mikalanga parish, two local businessmen were part of the CBS group. This shows that there is a possibility of making both the poor and rich reflect together about their socioeconomic conditions. It is through mutuality and solidarity that people begin to respect each other (Isasi-Diaz 2010:16-

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<sup>186</sup> The rural readers seemed to concur with Corbett & Fikkert (2012:100) who write, ‘[d]evelopment is not done *to* people or *for* people but *with* people.’ Moreover, the poor in the Bible, observes Soares-Prabhu (1991:161), are not presented as idle observers but as a dynamic group that embraces God’s initiative to liberate them.



17). The concern to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor is also underlined by Gutiérrez (1974:275) who sees universal love as a necessary component of liberation. Jesus did not win Zacchaeus by means of hate and condemnation, but through love, conviviality and solidarity. If liberation aims only at removing power from the elite, it risks creating a new class of oppressors.

## **8.4 Social Transformation and Self-Sustainability: Concrete Measures**

Social analysis of rural Mbinga revealed common traits that generally characterise rural areas in Tanzania — major ones being chronic poverty, peasantry, poor social services, lack of transport infrastructure, low level of agricultural technology, poor participation of the people in decision-making, poor gender division of labour and lack of family planning. The critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10, as shown above (7.3.1 & 7.3.2), motivated and inspired the CBS participants to come up with concrete measures to alleviate poverty in rural areas.

### **8.4.1 Avoidance of Victim Mentality**

Most CBS participants were aware of the fact that in our school pupils are always told that Tanzania is poor because of some unavoidable realities that happened in the past especially the slave trade and colonialism<sup>187</sup>. This way of thinking instils in the mind of children a ‘victim mentality.’ In the same way, it also disables communities or nations that think their past history is what determines the present events. This justifies our continuous going ‘cap in hand’ to Western Europe and North America to seek financial aid. Are we to continue attributing our poor living conditions to the slave trade and colonialism, even after 58 years of independence? According to Speckman (2007:xviii), this attitude ‘conditions the mind to always think backwards instead of forwards.’ Moreover, the current population of Tanzania largely consists of people who were born after independence (1961). Most of them read about slavery and colonialism in books, or see it displayed in museums. We cannot continue seeing ourselves as permanent victims of slave trade and colonialism. As seen in Chapter Three (3.5.1), rural Mbinga is still endowed with a variety of natural resources, thus the real question to ask today must be: What are we doing with these resources?<sup>188</sup> Without denying our past, it is time we begin to do self-criticism and see what so far has been our contribution

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<sup>187</sup> The narrators of these causes seem to concur with Walter Rodney — the author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) — who popularised the idea that Africa is poor because of slave trade and colonialism. Even today, Europe and North America continue to exploit Africa. The book was popular in the 70s and 80s in Tanzania when it served as one of the text books in secondary schools.

<sup>188</sup> Ikechukwu (2013:122) raises similar critical questions in relation to the situation of poverty in Africa.

to the current conditions of severe poverty. The CBS participants recommended that, as a nation, we must begin forging new ways of dealing with our economic problems. It does not help us to use a conspiracy theory to convince people that they are poor because the whites stole from them. In blaming the whites, we cover up for the misbehaviour of African leadership which is associated with dishonesty, irresponsibility and corruption. Ikechukwu (2013:126) urges us to ‘fix our problems instead of fixing blame because the colonial masters have left officially, and the blame and glory is ours now alone to share.’ It is also important to admit that if foreigners amass our natural resources today, they do so with our permission. In other words, Africa is exploited because it is filled with greedy and uncommitted leaders<sup>189</sup>. Thus ‘[w]e must look for internal factors in the dispossession of the African masses’ (Éla 1994:139). Nyerere (1968a:18) is right to write:

We have been oppressed a great deal, we have been exploited a great deal and we have been disregarded a great deal. It is our weakness that has led to our being oppressed, exploited and disregarded. Now we want a revolution — a revolution which brings to an end our weakness, so that we are never again exploited, oppressed, or humiliated.

According to the CBS participants, the phrase ‘victim mentality’ could also be employed to mean people who use witchcraft beliefs as an escape from their responsibility. Such people do little on their farms; when they have poor produce they see the problem in the neighbour whom they falsely blame to have bewitched their farms. The blind man (18:35-43) was determined to seek healing and liberation from begging; he did not use his physical conditions to blame other people. Zacchaeus decisively changed his life and opted for solidarity and justice (19:8). The two, each according to his context, did something in order to reorganise their lives. For both — the blind beggar and Zacchaeus — the change started from within. Jesus used their respective initiatives to complete the process of healing and restoration. Education has an important role to play in shaping and transforming the thinking of the people. The persistence of witchcraft beliefs and fatalistic tendencies is a clear sign that ignorance still dominates the thinking of many rural people. Poverty is not something that has been predetermined by gods<sup>190</sup>, but is a result of social injustice and lack of creativity. In this case, empowerment must mean to create ‘conditions, both material and spiritual’ in order to enable men and women to become their best (Nyerere 1974:84). Not long ago several Asian nations, economically, were in a similar situation to what we have in most African nations

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<sup>189</sup> Calderisi (2007:57-76) analyses the African political situation as he traces its leadership from the early years of independence. He laments that most African nations have been under the leadership of ‘thugs’ like Mobutu (Zaire), Idi Amin (Uganda), and so on. These leaders have betrayed their independent nations.

<sup>190</sup> Rodney (1972:30) rebukes anthropological theories that use racist ideology to condone Africa’s underdevelopment.

today. These nations have worked hard to attain a certain level of economic growth far ahead of Africa. Surprisingly, a number of African nations have what one may call ‘stagnant economies,’ and, in fact, some of them have even ‘regressed’ (Moyo 2009:29). This is a tragedy that needs to be addressed properly. Otherwise, the African nations will be mocked and classified perpetually ‘third world nations.’

#### **8.4.2 Integrity and Servant Leadership**

During the CBS sessions, the participants remarked that the two stories (Luke 18:35-43 and 19:1-10) reveal that Jesus was a competent and wise leader. They saw him as the model of good governance, the prototype and a leader whose concern was to recuperate the dignity of the despised. If a multitude followed Jesus (18:36; 19:3), it did so because he embodied all qualities of servant leadership<sup>191</sup>. He knew how to handle the crowd. Even when people tried to marginalise the so-called ‘outcast’ (18:39; 19:7), he never condemned them. Instead, he helped them to change their negative attitudes towards the despised. His style of dealing with the oppressed, the exploited and the despised differs from that of the dishonest judge who intentionally delayed the poor widow’s justice (Lk 18:1-8). Jesus exhibited an extraordinary brand of leadership<sup>192</sup>. He was opposed to selfish leaders ‘who opted for leadership before service’ (Anagwo 2016:72). Now and then, the CBS members mentioned and considered Nyerere as a model of servant leadership<sup>193</sup>. His courage to resign in order to pave the way for a newly elected leadership was appreciated by all. Since then in Tanzania every elected president, if re-elected, serves a maximum of two five-year terms.

Immediately after Independence (1961), Nyerere abolished traditional and hereditary leadership. Knowing that Nyerere’s father was a Zanaki chief (Kassam 1994:2), opposing hereditary leadership was a heroic act. It showed a willingness to forgo royal privileges and demonstrated his interest in serving rather than in ruling. ‘Our leaders are not leaders by birth,’ writes Nyerere (1968b:140), ‘they are elected by the people. For why should a person be a leader by birth? Our leaders must be chosen by us. There is no need to have hereditary leaders.’ Despite Nyerere’s outstanding reputation, leadership as a whole in Tanzania has not

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<sup>191</sup> Spears (2010:27-30) presents ten characteristics of a servant leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment, and building community.

<sup>192</sup> According to Segovia (2003:126), ‘Jesus presented himself as the image of the new order of God, the new human being and the new creation. He showed himself as a person of good sense, of creative imagination, and of authentic originality.’ He never permitted religious and racial prejudices to have place in his ministry.

<sup>193</sup> Definition of servant leadership, cf. Ngunjiri (2015:244-245) and Robert Greenleaf (in Ingram 2016:23).

yet proved its credibility<sup>194</sup>. Most civil servants are surrounded by greedy relatives who encourage them to use the rare given opportunity to enrich themselves and their acquaintances<sup>195</sup>. As a result, the poor in many African countries are oppressed by their own people (Éla 1994:140).

Ethical values, competence and integrity are also lacking in many of our leaders because some of them were not prepared to work as leaders. It is a fallacy to assume that some people are born leaders. This thinking has resulted in disastrous leadership in Africa; it has even caused some tribes to illogically think that God created them to dominate other tribes. Training and the formation of leaders must be given priority (Nyerere 1966:124; Ingram 2016:24). The church has a role to play and must engage ‘in the civic formation of citizens’ and in ‘awakening their consciences and their civic responsibility’ (AM 23; EA 75). We must encourage people to pursue proper leadership training. Well prepared leaders tend to guide their nations to greater success. They realise that it is their responsibility to maintain harmony and protect the civil rights of every citizen<sup>196</sup>. Jesus did not exercise power over people, but ‘over situations and conditions such as sickness, sin, demons, and unjust laws and structures that caused suffering or stood in the path of their development’ (Sibanda 2016:62; Cochrane 1999:32). Lay people, if well prepared, are likely bring to the public office Christian values such as respect, love, compassion, trust, commitment, solidarity, equity, integrity, and so on (Du Plessis 2015:214-216). An informed conscience will be used as a compass to guide the process of decision-making (AM 22).

In Tanzania, remarked the CBS participants, a number of retired military personnel are appointed as regional commissioners, district commissioners, and permanent secretaries in some ministries. As a result, the practice of holding people in custody because of ‘disobedience’ is becoming a common practice. Pomposity, which Nyerere (1966:226; and also Smith 1981:24-25) denounced immediately after Independence, is widespread in recent times. A number of Tanzanian politicians and government officials invoke the name of Nyerere as their model of leadership, but their actions betray them. Nyerere ruled Tanzania for over twenty years (1961-1985); his integrity earned him such a high reputation in

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<sup>194</sup> In reality, writes Hemby (2017:47), ‘genuine credibility among leaders’ has become ‘a challenging and apparently rare commodity.’ Most leaders do not consider credibility as an important component of leadership.

<sup>195</sup> Anagwo (2016:74; and also Calderisi 2007:86) says that ethics of work and accountability in most African nations are ‘easily thrown overboard or to the garbage of history’ and ‘relegated to the background by the friends and relatives of those newly appointed/elected to leadership positions.’

<sup>196</sup> Nyerere (1974:29-30; and also Twineyo-Kamugisha 2012:48-49; Ikechukwu 2013:123) advises leaders to consider leadership as service and not as a licence to dominate and rule over people. Leadership means to persuade and dialogue with the people, and not shouting at them.

Tanzania and internationally. People remember him as a frugal and honest leader. He took his Ujamaa ideology to the letter. He lived his Christian faith with simplicity, humility and piety (Caldirisi 2007:67-68). Tanzania needs leaders who see themselves not as demigods but as human beings entrusted with responsibility to serve their fellow citizens. Nyerere's political ideologies met with mixed success but people remember him as a great leader and the father of the nation because of his honesty and integrity.

#### **8.4.3 Nyerere's Ideology of Education for Self-Reliance Revisited**

During the CBS sessions, it was often pointed out that education is the most powerful tool for liberation, empowerment and social transformation. This viewpoint concurs with Nyerere's educational philosophy as articulated in his work entitled 'Education for Self-Reliance' (1967). His ideas are still of great significance in spite of the passage of time. This document points in the direction that education in Tanzania needs to follow for decades to come. It rejects the colonial education system which was founded on the values of capitalism and individualism. Instead, it opts for education that promotes socialist values. Each society has educational values that it envisages as promoting its own aspirations. Whether informal or formal, its chief aim is 'to prepare the young people for their future membership of society and their active participation in its maintenance or development' (Nyerere 1968a:45; Sanga 2016:2; 2017:2). When education serves as a means to create little bourgeoisies, it betrays this authentic goal.

Nyerere is aware that colonial education had as its objectives: first, to induce attitudes of subservience, fear and submissiveness among the colonised; second, 'to train individuals for the service of the colonial state' to work as 'local clerks and junior officials,' but also to make them subscribe to colonial values and ideals (Nyerere 1968a:46; 1968b:269; Nafziger 1988:43-44; Rodney 1972:35). The few educated blacks literally helped the colonial government to siphon off our natural resources; they were made to believe that education increased their social status. This kind of education tamed the African mind making it assimilate colonial attitudes and values such as human inequality, exploitation, racial segregation, selfishness, individualism and intellectual arrogance (Nyerere 1968a:47; Frostin 1988:62). Our educational system today must aim at fostering solidarity and equality (Nyerere 1968a:50; Magesa 1987:20). The CBS participants observed that the previous life of Zacchaeus was incompatible with these values, and this made him become wealthier than his fellow citizens (19:1-2). It was only after his conversion that Zacchaeus opted for solidarity.

Nyerere (1968a:54-59) laments that after Independence, many people continued to endorse colonial education with its values (e.g., elitism, alienation from one's society, parasitic mentality). Pupils grew up with negative attitudes towards their own culture and manual work. The learned considered farming as the occupation of uneducated people (Nyerere 1968b:279). According to Magesa (1987:19), these elitist attitudes worried Nyerere because they 'presented the purpose of education as an escape from the village life, agriculture and manual work generally. They presented education as the route to the "more respectable" white-collar job opportunities.' In an effort to correct these attitudes, Nyerere (1968a:61) proposed three areas to be examined: first, 'the content of the curriculum itself' — what is to be taught must reflect our values and needs; second, the entry age to primary schools must be raised<sup>197</sup> so that pupils, after completing primary education, must be able to participate in economic activities; third, 'the organisation of the schools' must permit the pupils to experience and live community life and also actively engage in some practical activities such as farming, gardening and keeping livestock. Ultimately, the students' assessments will have to include both theory and practice (Kassam 1994:5; Sanga 2016:3).

Despite Nyerere's vision of education for self-reliance, the CBS members observed that the educational system of Tanzania still continues to produce young people who are constantly in search of white-collar jobs. This means that the knowledge they received has not yet made them capable of, or even aspiring to, self-reliance. The CBS participants also lamented that most of these young graduates do not want to work in rural areas; as a result, for example, rural schools are faced with problems of understaffing. Even those who are trained as agricultural advisers often hesitate to take up their employment in rural areas. In the eyes of Nyerere (in Magesa 1987:21; Sanga 2016:5), such educated men and women become traitors to their own people. Tanzania, as a poor nation, is unable to provide 'white-collar job opportunities' to all her university graduates. Our efforts must therefore be geared to offering education that will equip Tanzanians to solve their own problems. To accomplish this, we must envisage offering education that equips Tanzanian citizens with three important things: an enquiring mind; ability to learn from others and take what serves our purpose; and boosting one's self-confidence (Nyerere 1968a:53; Ngetwa 2013:41).

Paul VI in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967) dedicated a section to education focusing on its significance for the advancement of the social order. He compares lack of

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<sup>197</sup> Nyerere (1968a:72) suggests that the age of children to be enrolled in primary schools be raised from 5/6 years to 7/8. In fact, most rural children were enrolled from the age of 9/10, and some were aged 12/13.

education with someone who suffers from the lack of food; in the end, the person suffers from malnutrition. The illiterate is likened to ‘a starved spirit’ (PP 35). Through education human beings are enabled to become critical thinkers and creative innovators<sup>198</sup>. Instead of relying on replicas, they begin to invent<sup>199</sup>. This is a serious concern today in Tanzania, as well as in many other African nations, where ‘young people spend time on frivolities of social media, preferring to take short cuts and cheat in exams, leading to a generation of professionals without professionalism and skill’ (Lumumba 2014:np). True education must aim at liberating the populace from disease, poverty and ignorance (Sanga 2016:4). The CBS participants urged the government to introduce moral education in schools and higher learning institutions so that learners may acquire and integrate moral values in their lives.

A work-oriented education is to be given priority as an effective approach to preparing young people to appreciate possible alternatives of employment and self-employment. Today one sees an exponential increase in the number of universities, higher learning institutions, secondary and primary schools in Tanzania. Free education is offered from primary school up to the ordinary level of secondary education. The number of university graduates has increased greatly; however, employment opportunities have remained scarce. The majority of young people in rural Tanzania, after completing primary education, do not proceed to secondary education. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that our primary schools provide the pupils with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to cope with their lives upon completion. It is very unwise to prepare all students for office work. This has proved problematic in developed countries, and it is worse in developing countries like Tanzania. Young people must be motivated to perceive that their dreams and aspirations can be fulfilled through self-employment, and through taking advantage of economic opportunities that lie idle in rural areas.

#### **8.4.4 People-Centred Development: Nyerere’s Development Ideology**

The CBS participants recalled the ‘good days’ when Nyerere was the Head of State. These were days when, in an Ujamaa village, nobody was allowed to stay idle<sup>200</sup>. The socioeconomic, political and cultural realities were defined and worked out within the realm

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<sup>198</sup> According to Sanga (2017:3-6), education must have as its main goal the liberation of men and women from ‘psychological and physical constraints’; it should liberate them from all that affects their mind and body.

<sup>199</sup> We must avoid falling into the trap of what Freire (1979:58-59; Museveni 1992:164) calls the ‘banking’ system of education. This happens when education ‘becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor.’ Learners must acquire knowledge that inspires critical thinking and which makes them become curious about their context and environment.

<sup>200</sup> Nyerere (1968a:15) argues that if every healthy person works, there will be no room for exploitation.

of Ujamaa ideologies (Nyerere 1968a:1; 1987:4). The goal was to build a classless society on the basis of human equality as articulated in the 1967 Arusha Declaration — a human-centred document. Nyerere dreamt of a society in which every citizen would be given an opportunity to take part in political life, live a decent life, find protection of his/her life and property, enjoy ‘freedom of expression, movement, religious belief and association within the context of the law’ (ADD 1967:1). Despite the well documented failures of Ujamaa villages (Nürnberg 1998:136-139), the CBS participants felt that the initiative itself was a welcome idea. During the early years of Independence it was impossible to reach the peasants in their remote and scattered homesteads. Thus, establishing Ujamaa villages was perceived as a necessity in order to ensure easy distribution of social services (Magesa 1987:15).

The CBS participants also pointed out that in a number of writings starting with the Arusha Declaration (1967), Nyerere thought of men and women as the focus and goal of development; that development is caused by people and not by money (Nyerere 1968a:28-29; ADD 1967:13). Of the four requisites of development — people, land, good policies and good leadership — people come first<sup>201</sup>. Nyerere (1974:25) sees, as well, an inseparable link between freedom and development. For him, there is no freedom if people have no development; and the reverse is also true. The two concepts remain closely interrelated and interdependent. Only free men and women are capable of developing themselves. Enslavement diminishes the freedom of human beings, and eventually this leads to their permanent state of poverty<sup>202</sup>. Thus, according to Nyerere, it is an obligation that we place men and women above every material good. For him, things like ‘roads, buildings, and the increase in crop outputs are not development; they are only tools of development’ (Nyerere 1974:26). The purpose of development is, therefore, to promote human dignity, and make men and women ‘aspire towards union with God through Christ’ (Nyerere 1974:84). Material things are made by human beings, and they are meant to be at their service. On this ground, the CBS participants appreciated the attitude of Jesus towards both the blind beggar (18:40-42) and Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector (19:5, 9-10). Jesus was concerned with their dignity as human beings. Nyerere urges the Church to become the voice of those whose humanity is put at risk because of selfish rich people, and of those who have decided to treat their fellow

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<sup>201</sup> The following are the most influential documents in which Nyerere articulates his people-centred development ideology: ‘The Arusha Declaration’ (1967); ‘Education for Self-Reliance’ (1967); ‘The Purpose is Man’ (1967); ‘Socialism and Rural Development’ (1967); ‘Progress in the Rural Areas’ (1968). These documents are found in Nyerere’s book *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*.

<sup>202</sup> Sen (1999:15-17) gives a list of things that deprive human beings’ freedom: famines, poor health care, lack of water, unnecessary morbidity, premature mortality, poor education facilities, chronic unemployment, lack of economic and social security, inequality between men and women, lack of political liberty and basic civil rights.



human beings as instruments of production to the detriment of their dignity. If people are treated with respect and dignity, they will behave with dignity, but if treated as objects, 'they will act without dignity' (Nyerere 1974:90). In his speech to the Maryknoll Sisters' Conference in New York (1970), while alluding to Gen 1:26-27, Nyerere (1974:86) said:

We say man was created in the image of God. I refuse to imagine a God who is poor, ignorant, superstitious, fearful, oppressed, wretched — which is the lot of the majority of those He created in his own image. Men are creators of themselves and their conditions, but under present conditions we are creatures, not of God, but of our fellow men (sic).

The Church, according to Nyerere, has an important role to play in order to build a just human society. She can only do this if she decides to attack elements that undermine the freedom of human beings, and herself becomes a model of social justice<sup>203</sup>. In so doing, the Church will allow human beings to progress and grow in dignity as they move forward 'working for their common good' (Nyerere 1974:90). On the same note, human beings must be conscientised and helped to realise that they have the ability to develop their society. Outsiders (experts) are welcome to help the poor in their efforts to alleviate poverty, but not to impose inappropriate and foreign solutions to local challenges. The CBS participants recognised the role the Church is playing to run health centres and schools in Mbinga Diocese. Through such commitments, the Church takes forward the mission of Jesus Christ of healing and liberation. Nyerere's vision of development re-echoes what one may find in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in which Paul VI insists on the development of the whole person and not only on economic advancement (PP 14). Though Nyerere's critics challenge him of being too idealistic, the CBS participants thought that his daring move to defend the dignity of a human person deserves recognition. The failure to embrace human equality is not to be found in Nyerere's ideology but rather in those who have opted for anti-social values such as greed and selfishness. The healing of the blind man (18:41-43) symbolises empowerment and human development. At the heart of Nyerere's development ideology lie elements of human aspiration such as empowerment, self-reliance, participation and self-determination.

#### **8.4.5 Enhancing Agricultural Productivity in Rural Tanzania**

The CBS participants in all five parishes were aware that many people, especially urban dwellers, associate rural areas with pejorative words such as backwardness and uncivilisation, illiteracy and disease, misery and extreme poverty. However, they themselves were of the

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<sup>203</sup> Nyerere (1974:85) contends that if the Church is to be seen as a relevant instrument in serving humanity, its relevance must be measured in terms of its active participation in the fight against socioeconomic and political structures that condemn men and women to poverty. If it does not live up to this calling, it risks to die.

opinion that poverty is not the entire rural reality and that rural people, typically, are grounded and content. There are a lot of economic possibilities in rural areas that need to be harnessed. Moreover, they said that the survival of urban dwellers depends on the food crops that rural dwellers produce. It is equally true that agricultural products from the rural areas contribute largely to Tanzania's exports. The CBS participants said that this negative description of rural areas stems from prejudice, hearsay and the voices of outsiders who have limited knowledge of rural life. Chambers (1983:2) echoes a similar view when he writes, '[t]he direct rural experience of most urban-based outsiders is limited to the brief and hurried rural visits.' They are incapable of asking questions such as: 'Despite poverty, how come that rural people continue to survive?' For example, they pointed out that despite physical blindness, the blind beggar survived until the time when he was encountered by Jesus (18:35-43). Those who disregard rural settlements seem to agree with an English industrialist who worked in Norway and thought that the Norwegians were incapable of participating in development projects. In his own words (in Burkey 1993:3):

There is no use trying to help these people. These dirty, ignorant people are putting too many children into the world. They won't work; they have no discipline. They misuse every opportunity they get. Every time they get some money in their hands, it all goes to drinking and senseless waste. All the help we give them is just an incentive to laziness, and another opportunity to produce more children.

The Norwegians refused to be labelled as poor people, and today 'Norway has one of the highest incomes per capita of the industrialised nations' (Burkey 1993:3).

From the early years of Independence, recalled some CBS participants, it was declared that agriculture was going to be the backbone of Tanzania's economy. This was due to two major reasons (ADD 1967:11): first, the country is poor and lacks the capital and technical know-how to industrialise the country; second, the main part of the Tanzanian population is rural and relies largely on agriculture, livestock and fishing. Tanzania is gifted with arable and fertile land that allows the productions of both food and cash crops; it is up to the government and non-governmental organisations to empower the poor so that they can boost agricultural productivity<sup>204</sup>. Two conditions are necessary in order to increase agricultural productivity: hard work, and intelligence. Nyerere (1968a:34) saw hard work as the root of economic development; every citizen must be proud of work and ashamed of laziness, drunkenness and idleness. However, he says that hard work alone is not enough; it must be combined with the

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<sup>204</sup> The agricultural sector has not fully realised its potential contribution to the economy. A number of constraints as enumerated by MAFSAC (2013:3-6) indicate why such contribution is limited.

use of intelligence, and also local wisdom especially the people's knowledge of environment, crops, patterns of weather conditions and different kinds of vegetation (Nyerere 1968a:58-59; Chambers 1983:75-102).

During the CBS sessions, the peasants lamented that the Ministry of Agriculture had abandoned them; agricultural advisers who used to visit and assist rural peasants to improve farming seemed to have disappeared. Most of them expressed the need to have agricultural technicians to advise them on good farming practices. It was also said that most of arable land in rural Mbinga has been overused; as a result, the production of agricultural crops has diminished. It is difficult to achieve good yields if people lack reliable access to agricultural inputs such as improved seed, fertilizer and pesticides. Since such agricultural inputs require a lot of money, poor peasants fail to buy them<sup>205</sup>. The government, through its Ministry of Agriculture, has the responsibility to assist farmers and peasants to increase agricultural production, and to find markets and regulate prices. The practice of abandoning peasants in the hands of businesspeople has proved to be exploitative and oppressive<sup>206</sup>. In order to cope with this situation, the government must find relevant ways of helping rural dwellers to create peasants' cooperative credit unions through which they will be allowed to borrow money at low rates, thus rescuing them from the hands of profit-oriented moneylenders. It is also noticed that the government seems to invest more in cash crops than in food crops. As a result, rural peasants spend time working on coffee farms leaving little time and energy for the production of food crops. After selling coffee, most of them use their money to buy food crops at a very high price, sold to them by the same people who bought their coffee at a throwaway price.

As mentioned above (3.5.3), lack of social infrastructure remains a serious concern in rural areas. When we speak about social infrastructure, we mean facilities and utilities that are related to health; education; sanitation; housing; roads and transport; electricity; recreations and sports; corrections and justice; water supply, and so on. In practical terms, these facilities play a great role in enabling a community to move forward towards self-sustainability. Improved social infrastructure increases the quality of life. In other words, people who enjoy good health and have good working conditions are in better position to push forward the

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<sup>205</sup> In Maguu parish, for example, out of 15 CBS participants only 4 said that they were able to buy and use improved seed, fertilizer and pesticides in the previous year (2016).

<sup>206</sup> Éla (1994:144) invites the Church to reconsider her vocation to serve humanity. This must mean seeing Jesus 'in the life of black peasants' who are constantly exploited by the rich, and take courage to liberate them. In the context of Mbinga Diocese, moneylenders are the real exploiters of the poor. They are indeed, if we were to use the phrase of Shivji (1976:63-66), the local 'petty bourgeoisie.'

agenda of economic growth than those with poor health and are living under inhuman conditions. When social services are ‘below standard,’ people experience economic stagnation and poor livelihoods. The rural settlements in Tanzania are such a typical example of the interdependence that exists between social infrastructure and economic growth. The absence of improved social services has led to the stagnation of economic growth, and the latter has led to the absence of the former (Temu et al. 2003:33).

In 2001 and 2015, the government of Tanzania launched a special programme that intended to boost agricultural productivity, that is, the ‘Agricultural Sector Development Strategy’ (ASDS). The first ASDS was to last from 2001 to 2015. The second ASDS was launched in 2015. The reality of rural dwellers in terms of economic growth has not changed much from 2001 to 2015. The CBS participants did not argue against mechanised agriculture. They know that there will always be rich farmers whose incomes allow them to use advanced agricultural technology on large scale farms. However, it is not through such grandiose agricultural strategies that rural incomes will be increased, but rather through effective small scale farming. In view of Tanzania’s economic situation and its high rural population, a concern to help rural peasantry was recommended during the CBS sessions<sup>207</sup>.

#### **8.4.6 Supporting and Diversifying Rural Economy**

Small scale farming, so far, remains the major economic sector that employs almost the entire rural population of Mbinga Diocese. Even those who are involved in fishing, mining and craftworks rely ultimately on farming as their primary economic activity. The agricultural sector in Mbinga and Nyasa relies greatly on rainfall; this means that farming is only possible during the rainy season (November to April). A few peasants, who have their homesteads near rivers and swampy areas, continue with low scale farming during the dry season (May to October). The rest, apart from harvesting maize, beans and coffee, remain ‘idle.’ It is in the dry season that rural dwellers keep themselves busy with traditional dances such as *Chioda* for women, and *Mganda* for men. Despite their adherence to culture and traditional dances, the CBS participants raised concerns about these cultural activities. They questioned the amount of time dedicated to the recreational activities at the expense of economic endeavours. Nyerere (in Smith 1981:11) is quoted to have said: ‘While the Americans and the Russians are going to the moon, we Africans are dancing.’ The CBS groups did not consider Nyerere as someone who despised their culture, but rather as a concerned Head of State who wanted the

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<sup>207</sup> On the same note, Todaro (1986:252) rightly writes: ‘[i]f “development” is to take place and become self-sustaining, it will have to start in the rural areas in general and the agricultural sector in particular.’

citizenry to get involved in combating poverty. If people spend time during weekdays rehearsing traditional dances in order to compete on weekends, and this is done for the entire period of the dry season (May to October), we must accept that this is a misuse of human labour. It is indeed to behave like the blind man who sat by the roadside begging daily (18:35).

In Maguu and Mkoha parishes, the CBS participants gave examples of families that have managed to supply piped water in their homes. These families contributed money for a period of 3/4 years and were able to collect enough money to implement their water project. Such initiatives are indeed good news and are an indication of the movement from being blind (18:35-40) to seeing (18:41-43). In Mikalanga parish, three families were mentioned as examples of self-reliant efforts: each owns a fish pond. The sale of fish enables them to attend to family needs including school fees for their children. Such projects are also known as ‘micro-economic initiatives’ (ICRC 2009:11). They become more successful when offered small financial loans by the banks and other financial institutions. However, during the CBS sessions, it was observed that most financial institutions in Tanzania are not found in rural areas<sup>208</sup>, the reason being that rural dwellers are classified as not creditworthy. As a result, most peasants are not given an opportunity to take advantage of micro-credit services. Such financial institutions can learn from moneylenders who are not afraid to lend out money to rural peasants. Despite high rates of interest imposed on them, a number of poor people manage to pay back their debts. The initiative of Zacchaeus to give half of his possessions to the poor (Lk 19:8) deserves praise, but as noted by the CBS participants, it would have been more productive if it aimed at motivating the poor to create micro-income generating projects. In reality, a hand to mouth existence does not alleviate poverty, instead it creates dependency.

#### **8.4.7 Conversion as a Prerequisite of Social Transformation**

The Church as a community of faith consists of both rich and poor members, the hungry and the sated. It is paradoxical and ironic to have church members who claim to be united in Christ, while the poor hardly have means for subsistence (Gutiérrez 1974:274; Frostin 1988:7). The rich and poor seem to be living in two different worlds — the world of mammon and the world of destitution<sup>209</sup>. It is indeed the world of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-2) and that of the

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<sup>208</sup> Most financial institutions ‘are still heavily urban biased’ (Temu et al 2003:16), and if found in rural areas, they are situated near public institutions such as schools, health centres, hospitals, and so on. The target is not rural peasantry but rather salaried employees.

<sup>209</sup> Freire (1979:61) argues that the oppressed are not to be treated as ‘marginal’ because there is no such group of people living outside society. The poor have always been in society, making up part of it. The unfortunate

blind beggar (Lk 18:35-36). Magesa (1990:109) invites the exploited and the exploiter to ask themselves: '[I]s there really room for Christian love? Where human beings consider one another as "things," can it be possible to see God?' Christ urges us to undo social structures that make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Love as an ultimate goal in Christianity can only be witnessed if the rich followers of Christ decide to serve God and not mammon, and the poor to take the route of liberation instead of resorting to despair and resignation. In other words, '[t]o live and to think Christian faith is, therefore, something that cannot take place outside the consciousness of the situation of dispossession and marginalization in which such individuals find themselves' (Gutiérrez 2003:290). A Christian must consider material poverty as something inhuman and anti-evangelical that goes against the spirit of the Gospel. Paul Ricoeur (in Gutiérrez 2003:296) rightly declares that 'we are not with the poor, unless we are against poverty.' During the CBS sessions, as noted above (7.3.2.3), some participants frankly said that they are involved in business, especially buying coffee from the rural peasants. They do this mainly through moneylending at exorbitant interest rates. Most of them want to be paid in kind and this gives further profit. As a result of this, moneylenders are able to make a profit up to seven times the amount given out<sup>210</sup>. This kind of exploitation replicates the behaviour of Zacchaeus who made his fortune by overtaxing his own people. The CBS participants urged the government to protect rural peasants by prohibiting the demand for payments made in kind. I think such reflections mark the beginnings of personal and social transformation, which is the ultimate goal of the CBS process. The approach of Yunus<sup>211</sup> to poverty eradication through microcredit services could be imitated by the rich to support the extreme poor of their community.

In Maguu parish, the CBS sessions took place at Mtuha Small Christian Community; all discussions were done in an open space. On the last day of our sessions, one peasant offered a small piece of land saying that this would be his contribution; and other members of the community were tasked with providing labour to build a small church on his plot for the use

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situation of social injustice has made some people appear as if they are not part of the "normal structure." As a result, they are used as instruments to serve others. 'The solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves."'

<sup>210</sup> Ukpong (1996:192-193) tells a similar experience of exploitation by moneylenders in the context of Nigeria.

<sup>211</sup> Muhammad Yunus, a founder of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, is considered to be a serious proponent and pioneer of microcredit and microfinance concepts as an effective approach to combating poverty among the rural poor. He believes that poverty eradication is possible if the poor are given an opportunity to have access to credit institutions. Thus, the Grameen Bank was basically established in order to allow the poor to borrow small sums of money at low interest rates in order to begin small businesses. Yunus (1999:150) also condemns the economists and credit institutions that refuse loans to the poor; he considers this practice to be financial 'apartheid' imposed on the poor so that they can be permanently trapped in poverty.

of the community. His decision impressed all. I am not sure whether this was the result of the CBS session or not. However, it provided a meaningful local example for our CBS participants. Their SCC was established in 1998; its members have been meeting under a mango tree for community activities. Frequently during the rainy season, the meeting had to be postponed. The gift of this plot was received as something that was in God's plan.

The CBS participants expressed their sense of wonder at the way they studied and worked with the Lukan text 18:35-19:10. They were of the opinion that they have never spent time together reading the same text for three consecutive days and discovering such enriching challenges. They suggested that some men and women be trained to organise the CBS sessions even when priests are not there. It is difficult to determine what, in the sense of seeing and acting, people gained from this exercise. However, their attendance and the enthusiasm shown during the CBS sessions confirms that the CBS initiative was not done in vain. In the end, the CBS sessions are expected to touch and transform the lives of the participants. Zacchaeus shows how to appropriate the Word (19:8), and the blind man how to respond to the Word of God with immediacy (18:43). This is indeed the moment of transformation, the moment of 'owning the Word, of accepting the meaning [we] have discovered in [our] own context and community and taking responsibility for it' (Draper 2002:18). The man from Mtuha who offered a piece of land could be referred to as a concrete example of those who decide to transform their lives from within, and become active members of the Christian community.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

Chapter Eight has tried to establish a link between the theological insights that emerged from the close and critical reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 and the life situation of rural Mbinga. Theological praxis by its very nature entails awareness and liberative action that combine to change the oppressive structures hindering human beings from becoming what God intended them to be. Our working with the two short stories — the healing of a blind man (18:35-43), and Zacchaeus the chief tax collector (19:1-10) — helped the CBS participants to name oppressive forces that continue to affect their lives. Dependency, irresponsibility, illiteracy, corruption and abuse of power, *inter alia*, were named as major hindrances to both human and socioeconomic development in rural Tanzania. The figure of the blind man (18:35) who begged by the roadside is associated with developing nations whose economy depends on foreign aid. The rural dwellers saw begging as something that humiliates the beggar. And if

begging, they said, is done by an independent nation, such a nation risks losing its freedom to determine her future. According to Nkrumah (1964:102), losing our freedom would mean to hand back our ‘independence to the oppressor on a silver platter.’ Blindness, as a metaphor of irresponsibility, is used in this chapter to challenge unethical leadership. Like Zacchaeus, dishonest leaders are invited to undergo conversion and commit themselves to the cause of the poor. The CBS participants also identified blindness with the rural dwellers whose lives are tainted by alcoholism, witchcraft beliefs and laziness.

The chapter underlined the following as possible solutions to rural poverty. First, holistic empowerment of rural dwellers. The life of the blind beggar changed after recovering his sight; this enabled him to regain his social status. The rural dwellers need this kind of recovery so that as human beings they may realise that they have a role to play in the task of social transformation. Second, participation and engagement. Every project that aims at alleviating poverty in rural Mbinga must involve the poor from start to end. Development is done with the people and not for the people. Third, true liberation must be inclusive. Both rich and poor people need to be liberated — the rich from their exploitative practices, and the poor from the fear to confront the exploiter.

The following were proposed as guiding principles in our effort to improve rural lives. First, avoidance of victim mentality: people are discouraged from rewinding history and accuse it as being the root cause of their poor living conditions today. Second, the crisis of leadership in Tanzania and Africa in general is a fact that cannot be denied. Most African nations are filled with greedy, dishonest and corrupt leaders. Lack of servant leadership is indeed a serious problem in Africa. As a way forward, the CBS participants insisted on instilling ethical and moral values in young people so that they may grow as responsible citizens ready to serve their country with integrity. Third, Nyerere’s ideology of education for self-reliance is referred to as the most important insight for a country like Tanzania. It requires learners to use critical thinking and a problem solving approach in dealing with their context. Fourth, a need to enhance agricultural productivity in rural areas: more than 70% of the Tanzanian population is rural and its main economic activity is agriculture. If the government intends to improve rural lives, it must start with the agricultural sector, helping the rural poor to increase the production of both food and cash crops. Fifth, rural economic diversification: instead of depending solely on agricultural activities, rural dwellers could be motivated to initiate micro-income generating projects, especially during the dry season when the majority remain idle.



## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

Through working and interacting with the rural readers in the CBS, the key question to which this thesis sought an answer was that of assessing how a close and critical reading of the story of the blind man and that of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, as recorded in Lk 18:35-19:10 could become a resource for empowerment and social transformation in rural Tanzania. Having looked at this concern in detail in the preceding chapters, it is now necessary to review and evaluate the extent to which the study has addressed the research question and provided a response to the concerns that it raised at the outset. This Chapter, therefore, is a stocktaking which points out the thesis' achievements, challenges, and its contribution to biblical scholarship. Two extremes of human reality are presented in Lk 18:35-19:10: on the one hand, the blind man who begged by the roadside (18:35-43) stands for the poor, the outcast, the oppressed and marginalised; Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10), on the other hand, represents the rich and affluent who either ignore or exploit the poor. In other words, the study aimed, first, at examining the impact of being blind, begging and healing on rural areas; and second, at articulating the rural readers' perception of tax collectors in the light of a critical and close reading of the Zacchaeus' episode. The two approaches of biblical hermeneutics of liberation (liberation theology and contextual Bible study) as presented in Chapter Two served as the theoretical foundation of this work. The option for the poor (2.2.3) thus remains the thesis' catchphrase and it marks its presence in all chapters. The poor here connotes all human beings who are economically disadvantaged and culturally oppressed, exploited peasants, the oppressed and marginalised, discriminated and deprived of the basic needs (2.2.2). The reality of rural Mbinga, as presented in Chapter Three, revealed how the peasantry feel abandoned and forced to survive on its own. The thesis has also shown that the Word of God, when read in community, has power to challenge and transform its readers.

#### **9.1 Thesis' Achievements**

The thesis has shown that the rural readers' context plays a great role in determining how the people read and interpret the Word of God. Just as Luke's theology of destitution and inclusiveness as noted in Chapter Four was informed and shaped by the political and socioeconomic realities of the Mediterranean world, the CBS participants, too, in reading Lk 18:35-19:10 were influenced by their immediate social reality. Chapters 5 & 6 to a great extent consist of material that was provided by the trained reader. Chapter 5, for example,

tried to delimit Lk 18:35-19:10, and it dealt with issues such as synoptic comparison, intertextuality and intratextuality, source and form criticisms, and lexicographical issues. Though these literary components were unknown to ordinary readers, the rural readers were, at least, able to appreciate the synoptic parallels of Lk 18:35-43 as noted above (7.3.1.1). These components, to a large extent, helped the researcher to analyse and evaluate the internal movement of the text. Chapter 6 is largely scholarly work as it attempted to propose a literary structure of Lk 18:35-19:10 that allowed it to be read from a liberationist perspective.

The thesis has also managed to demonstrate how the story of the blind beggar (18:35-43) prompted the CBS participants to apply its lesson introspectively to their own reality (7.3.1.1; 7.3.1.2 & 7.3.1.3). In fact, their reading encompassed many aspects that affect their lives including socioeconomic, cultural, religious and political realities. The rural readers admitted that God's healing power continues to sustain their lives and empower them in their fight against poverty, and oppressive social and cultural structures. Their close reading of Lk 18:35-43 also took them to another level of thinking and awareness. On the one hand, they acknowledged that blindness (18:35-43), to a certain extent, serves as a metaphor to symbolise outdated cultural practices like witchcraft beliefs, polygamy, gender-based violence and child marriage. On the other hand, the story of the blind beggar conscientised rural readers with regard to their social responsibility to support the disabled (7.3.1.5).

In relation to the Zacchaeus story, the thesis has reinforced the idea that personal conversion must remain as a requisite to end dishonest behaviour. If conversion is to make sense, the Zacchaeus-like characters in Tanzania, as part of their conversion, will have to collaborate with the rural peasantry in order to alleviate poverty. Zacchaeus, before his conversion, was an example of the government officials and politicians who have turned public office into a den of robbers, liars and defrauders. Tanzania as a nation has to realise that her 58 years of independence have, on the one hand, been years of hope, on the other, years that have favoured a wealthy minority to the detriment of a poor majority<sup>212</sup>. Zacchaeus' initiative to

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<sup>212</sup> I concur with Uchegbue (2013:144) who invites an African to begin examining and assessing his/her responsibility when faced with the problem of poverty. Are we still to continue asking 'How Europe underdeveloped Africa? (Walter Rodney). Uchegbue believes that the time has come for us as Africans to alter this discourse. Instead of reechoing Rodney's question all the time, Uchegbue requests that we begin doing self-criticism. The genuine question to guide our transforming discourse today must be 'How Africa underdevelops Africa' or, to be precise, 'How Tanzania underdevelops Tanzania.' 'Africa today,' writes Uchegbue (2013:143), 'is still under this kind of local or internal colonialism – the ceasing of power and political domination by the local powerful few.' Natural resources in many African nations are still under the control of a few elite, mainly the ruling class and some pockets of businesspeople. In some countries, the ruling class has replaced apartheid with its own version of exclusive policies under the umbrella of tribalism, ethnicism, nepotism and classism. In other words, the Africans have become 'the culprits of the destruction of Africa today' (Uchegbue 2013:144).

share with the poor his possessions urges us to embrace the same radical conversion. This means, first, to share one's wealth with the poor or use one's resources to create jobs for the unemployed; second, to conscientise the poor so that they may become aware of their exploitation and seek to liberate themselves from their exploiters (Pope 1993:165).

The thesis has also shown how a biblical text can be used as a lens through which social challenges are brought to light. This is exemplified by the close reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 in Chapter Seven, and how, as noted in Chapter Eight, it helped to relate the text to the wider context of rural dwellers in Tanzania. The figure of the blind man (18:35) who begged by the roadside is seen as a typical example of developing nations whose economic strategies rely heavily on donor countries. The irresponsible and unethical leadership that is evident in many government offices and parastatals is a clear indication that those to whom leadership is entrusted often betray their own people. It is their turn now to listen to John the Baptist's voice that urges them to stop robbing, exploiting and collecting more than what is appointed to them (Lk 3:13-14). The rural dwellers also underlined that the people's living conditions can be improved if people themselves become part of the solution. This demands that they take part in economic projects that are intended to alleviate rural poverty (8.3.2). The participants agreed that liberation would be efficient if it aims at liberating simultaneously both the exploited and exploiter (8.3.3). They proposed that the following guiding principles underpin efforts to combat social evils. First, avoidance of victim mentality (8.4.1): In our discussions we agreed that it is good to learn from past history but this should not limit people from advancing an economic agenda today. We cannot continue to blame slave trade and colonialism as the major causes of our current reality of poverty. Secondly, we agreed on the need to promote ethical leadership values and the value of service (8.4.2). According to Chandler (2009:70; and also Ituma, E et al 2019:9), ethical and selfless leaders are concerned with the welfare of their followers. They even walk an extra mile to sacrifice personal interests for the sake of their people. Unfortunately, unethical leadership behaviour is still present in Tanzania<sup>213</sup>; it is often likened to a cancer that does not respond to medication (Chandler 2009:70-71). Its effects are strongly felt in rural areas where the poor have no access to reliable social services. Nyerere's development ideology (people-centred

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<sup>213</sup> Ntata (2015:np) names seven challenges that seem to affect leadership in Africa: 'the policy of rewarding friends,' nepotism, blurred vision, competition of preeminence, corruption, dictatorship, and failure to redefine goals. All these challenges are present in Tanzania despite variation in terms of seriousness and frequency. The current Tanzanian leadership under John Pombe Magufuli seems to earn people's support because of some seriousness that is shown in the fight against corruption, *laissez-faire* attitudes and embezzlement.

development) (8.4.4) and his philosophy of education for self-reliance (8.4.3) are still adhered to by the rural dwellers as valid measures of combating rural poverty today.

Another achievement that deserves to be mentioned here is the capacity of the CBS approach to bring people together to read the Word of God and reflect on it from their own perspective. This was perceived as an unusual initiative by the rural dwellers. They acknowledge that it was their first time to be involved in the CBS process, and they were pleased to have had such a rewarding experience. Their experience, up to this time, was that their pastors taught, preached and interpreted the Word of God for them. It was, therefore, a kind of revelation for the CBS participants to realise that they have the capacity to read a biblical text in community and use it as a point of departure to construct what West (1993a:16) calls a 'transforming discourse.' Most participants said that being part of the CBS process broadened their horizons and allowed them to speak with their own voice. Their coming together to read the proposed biblical text also fostered the spirit of solidarity, mutuality and community among themselves.

The CBS was also appreciated because of its ability to harness and integrate local wisdom and community values with their practice of faith. It enhanced the sense of belonging, and its participants began to see that the Bible as a community book that needs to be read in community. In reading Lk 18:35-19:10, the rural readers, though some were illiterate and not theologically trained, were able to bring their lived experience to the text. In that way they became readers who read the text with their own eyes; indeed, they became flesh-and-blood readers. Though unique and contextual, their interpretation of Lk 18:35-19:10, coupled with their lived experience, remains open to the possibility of new and different interpretations.

In a short evaluation of the learning experience of the CBS sessions some surprising observations emerged. Some participants said that these sessions did not seem to ask 'What do the accounts we read in Lk 18:35-19:10 mean and how are they to be explained?' In their opinion the question that was raised was 'What do these accounts ask us to do as Christians and as a Small Christian Community?' The members agreed that they found this demand both liberating and challenging. It was pleasing to notice that after conducting three CBS sessions in each parish, at least some CBS participants had moved to acknowledging the Word of God as a source not just of spiritual guidance but also, a challenge to involvement in social transformation. In this way, one can clearly see the workability and interdependence of the Boffs' three mediations: socio-analytical mediation which was basically done in Chapter Three; hermeneutical mediation as detailed in Chapters Seven and Eight and practical

mediation in which people themselves discovered that their study was not only for spiritual guidance but also called them to engage in liberating actions and commitment (L. Boff & C. Boff 1987:39). In this manner, the CBS participants seemed to agree with West (1993a:23-24) who insists that the ultimate goal of CBS is ‘a commitment to personal and social transformation.’ Concrete actions, therefore, have to be part and parcel of CBS. It is ultimately the appropriation of the word of God that matters. People discover a meaning in the text and they use it as a compass to guide their actions.

## **9.2 Challenges Encountered**

A few participants expressed their disappointment mainly for not having had an opportunity to examine other biblical texts apart from Lk 18:35-19:10. They had come to attend the CBS session with some other biblical passages marked in view of seeking clarification from the trained reader, especially those texts whose meaning they found obscure and confusing. This was rather disappointing because they said that, although they had met three times they had only managed to discuss two stories (18:35-43 & 19:1-10).

One parish, called Kigonsera, the first to be founded in Mbinga (1899), was among the five selected for the CBS. I visited the parish three times in my effort to organise the CBS sessions but with no success. I was told that people were busy harvesting maize so they had no time to meet for the CBS. Being the first parish to exist in the diocese, this would have been an opportunity to assess the extent to which it was adept at the reading of the Bible and applying its values to the local situation. Since my plan was to involve five parishes in this project, I replaced Kigonsera with Mkoha Parish which was founded in 2010.

The CBS participants were more active and outspoken in Maguu and Mango than in the three parishes of Mikalanga, Kindimba and Mkoha. I surmised that this was because the sharing was held in absence of their parish priests. In future, it might be useful to limit attendance at these sessions to ordinary readers.

As noted above (7.2.3), one obvious drawback of this work is that the choice of a biblical text, critical questions, and initiative to organise the CBS did not come from the ordinary readers, but from a trained reader. This, I believe, at the outset created an atmosphere of suspicion. It was difficult to get started, and I had to explain great detail why I wanted them to be part of this project. Although I chose to read Lk 18:35-19:10 with them, I had to ensure that, from beginning to end, people understood that it was not merely out of personal interest I proposed

this text. I did so for the benefit of the community as whole. West (1993a:75), who had envisaged the problem that I encountered first hand, writes:

The contextual Bible study process chooses ordinary readers and particularly those ordinary readers who are from poor and oppressed communities, as primary dialogue partners. So it is their questions which should frame and inform our reading of the text. Questions ‘from below’ should frame our reading in the sense that we come to the text conscious of the needs, questions, and interests of the poor and oppressed. More specifically, questions ‘from below’ should inform our reading in the sense that, when we read the text, we read it with the particular questions of a particular community of the poor and oppressed.

Since I am a native of Mbinga Diocese, the choice of the text and critical questions was motivated by the poor living conditions of rural people, which was also my reality. During my informal interactions with the poor, it was simply not possible to avoid contact with the reality of destitution. In fact, rural poverty often became the focus of our discussion. The poor repeatedly raised questions arising from their own poor living conditions dominated by illiteracy, fear of witchcraft, unethical leadership, hunger and disease.

### **9.3 The Thesis’ Contribution to Biblical Scholarship**

As noted above (1.4.1 & 2.1), the ideo-theological orientation of this study is constructed on the theories of liberation theology and African contextual hermeneutics. It is therefore necessary, as we conclude, to highlight the thesis’ contribution to biblical scholarship taking into account both the paths of liberation theology and of African hermeneutics.

#### **9.3.1 The Path of Liberation Hermeneutics**

The main contribution of this thesis to biblical scholarship is to be measured in terms of its capacity to involve and motivate ordinary readers to read a biblical text from their perspective and in a critical way. In other words, the thesis joins a number of biblical scholars<sup>214</sup> who have demonstrated the possibility that Biblical texts, when read critically in the context of the community, can champion the cause of the poor. In using liberation hermeneutics and the CBS process, the thesis has to begin ‘with the reality, experiences, needs, interests, questions and resources of the poor and marginalized’ (West 1999a:15). The Diocese of Mbinga, which is largely rural, became the context of this study. The text of Lk 18:35-19:10 was read by the

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<sup>214</sup> The biblical scholars I have in mind here are listed as follows: Gutiérrez 1974; 1983; Philpott 1993; Cochrane 1999; Frostin 1988; Sugirtharajah 1991; Prior 1995; Pilgrim 1981; Schottroff & Stegemann 1986; Segovia 2003; L. Boff & C. Boff (1987) and so on. The first four take the context of the poor as a point of departure of biblical scholarship, that is, ‘the epistemological privilege of the poor.’ This ‘suggests that cognizance of the experience of those defined as poor is a necessary condition for theological reflection’ (Frostin 1988:6; and also West 1999a:14).

rural readers from their own perspective. This is a laudable contribution especially in rural Mbinga where the poor are often treated as passive recipients of ‘the expert’s superior knowledge and solutions’ usually produced in theological centres (Philpott 1993:17) or through Sunday homilies and liturgical services by their pastors. In this case, the reading of a biblical text with the ordinary readers was an attempt by the trained reader to challenge a non-participatory and lifeless way of reading and interpreting biblical texts. Indeed, it was an initiative that aimed at listening to rural voices in Mbinga in order ‘to make the invisible, visible’ (Philpott 1993:17).

The CBS raised interest and motivated people to consider their social context as the locus, the heart and womb of biblical interpretation. This was to affirm that:

The theologian is not adrift in some historical limbo. His or her reflection has a precise locus, a precise point of departure. It springs up out of the material foundations of society. Like Archimedes of old, the theologian, too, needs a “place to stand” (Gutiérrez 1983:91).

The rural readers were able to probe and analyse their socioeconomic conditions in the light of the story of the blind beggar (18:35-43) and that of Zacchaeus (19:1-10) as portrayed in Chapters 7 & 8. Community reading then energised and motivated the CBS activities. In other words, the ordinary readers progressed from what Ndegwah (2007:6) calls ‘the individual-centred kind of interpretation’ to ‘one that is community-centred.’ The reading of Lk 18:35-19:10 confirmed that we gain more understanding when we read the Word of God together, and learn to listen to one another.

### **9.3.2 The Path of African Hermeneutics**

Ukpong (1995:3) in his article, ‘Reading the Bible with African Eyes: Inculturation and Hermeneutics,’ insists that the Bible be read ‘from the perspective of [one’s] own culture, worldview and life experience, and appropriate its message.’ This approach challenges African biblical scholars who rely solely on the Western interpretive grids to read and interpret biblical texts ‘and then seek to apply the result in their own contexts’ (:4). This widens the gap ‘between [the] academic reading of the bible and the needs of ordinary African Christians’ (:4) and leads to a dichotomy between their two worldviews. On the one hand, Western approaches hardly correspond to African cultures; on the other, African biblical scholarship tries to ensure that an African can read the Bible with his/her own eyes and from an African perspective. In an effort to bridge this gap, modern African biblical

scholars<sup>215</sup> have proposed alternative approaches that take into account ‘the African social and cultural contexts’ (:4). The following questions help to guide this endeavour: How can an African read the Bible in his/her immediate context without seeing himself/herself as being alienated from his/her customs, traditions and cultures? Or as Ukpong (1995:4) puts it: ‘[H]ow to make the word of God alive and active in contemporary African societies and in the lives of individual Christians within their [own] socio-cultural contexts.’ Providing an answer to these challenging questions was one of the primary goals of this study.

These concerns take us back to the question raised in the introduction of this study: ‘How can we make the Bible become a text that speaks to the heart of our social reality?’ In other words, one’s context has an important role to play in reading and interpreting the Bible. This work serves as an additional voice to African Biblical scholarship; it focussed on reading the Bible in community and with participants whose terms of reference are African. In this manner it follows the route of Gerald West’s approach to Contextual Bible Study (2.4.2). The work has considered rural Christian communities as important partners in an effort to bring home the message of Lk 18:35-19:10. As the study has shown, the CBS participants proved to be reliable partners; they helped to shape our ways of reading, interpreting and preaching the Word of God in their local setting. Their insights, though incipient, as detailed in Chapter Seven provided an example and template for formulating and constructing contextual theologies. Biblical scholarship can no longer be considered solely as an enterprise of trained biblical scholars but as a community-centred endeavour. The exercise demonstrated that the Bible has to be looked at as a community book read in community for the benefit of all. If done in this manner, its readers form what Okure (1993:78) calls ‘the community of its interpretation.’ The importance of reading the Bible in community is also acknowledged in PBC (1993:59) which reminds us that ‘since the biblical texts were written for communities, it is to communities in the first place that the reading of the Bible has been entrusted.’ This study in a very concrete and practical way took this path as it involved rural dwellers from five parishes in Mbinga Diocese to read Lk 18:35-19:10.

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<sup>215</sup> A few proponents of African biblical scholarship and some of their works are mentioned here: I. J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (1989); G. O. West, *Contextual Bible Study* (1993); 1995b. *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the Southern Africa Context* (1995); G. O. West & M. W. Dube (eds), *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (2000); L. Magesa, *The Church and Liberation in Africa* (1976); ‘The Bible and a Liberation Theology for Africa’ (1977); ‘Towards a Theology of Liberation for Tanzania’ (1978); T. Okure, ‘Invitation to African women’s hermeneutical concerns,’ in *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa* (2001); J. S. Ukpong, ‘The Emergence of African Theologies’ (1984); ‘Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and hermeneutical directions’ (2000); ‘Popular Reading of the Bible in Africa and Implications for Academic Readings’ (2000).



Most black African societies still live in and cherish community settings. Thus, the CBS as a kind of communitarian hermeneutics makes sense in this context. As trained readers, therefore, we need ‘to be converted to a sense of community consciousness’ (West 1993a:15) so that our reading becomes part of a whole and not just as a private theological enterprise. To do so requires the humility and readiness to acknowledge that ordinary readers have unique knowledge and insights that can contribute to the advancement of biblical scholarship and social transformation.

#### **9.4 The Future of the CBS in Rural Areas**

It is difficult to determine what people actually learnt from the three days of the CBS sessions in rural Mbinga, but their enthusiasm, active participation and constructive insights seem to suggest that they were pleased to be involved in this process. On the last day of our gathering, one of the participants in Mango parish on behalf of the CBS group said:

We thank you, Father Quinbert Kinunda, for coming to share this experience with us. It was an eye-opener for us to have spent time together reading the same text for three consecutive days. We pray and suggest that such opportunities be given more often because the social issues that need this kind of reflection are still many. We hope that this is not your first and last visit; when time allows, please come again.

From this verbatim, I find the sentence, ‘social issues that need this kind of reflection are still many,’ to be both the zenith of this thesis but also the beginning of further study. The rural readers were left with a desire to engage in similar sessions in future. The social analysis of rural Mbinga revealed that the poor are confronted with a number of socioeconomic and cultural challenges. Issues that seemed to be weakening rural development were underlined as follows: price fluctuations of agricultural products, exploitation by moneylenders, polygamy and witchcraft beliefs. Others were property grabbing, alcoholism, domestic gender-based violence, and privation of female children’s rights to education. Each of these patterns of behaviour in its own way slows down economic growth, and diminishes the human and social development of the poor in rural Mbinga. This thesis, through reading Lk 18:35-19:10 with the ordinary readers, has shown that the poor in rural areas are enthusiastic and ready to be engaged in a critical reading of biblical texts. On this note, I recommend trained readers to use this fertile terrain to help the poor reflect more and more about their social context in the light of the Word of God.

If I were to initiate another research project in rural Mbinga, I would begin with issues that are associated with witchcraft beliefs and polygamy.

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