PART 1

Themes in Luke-Acts

The Fundamental Paradox in Luke's Perception of Money and Property

Paul J.J. van Geest

None of the authors of the Old and the New Testament wrote a systematic treatise on any of the issues that the scientific discipline of economics deals with today. Nevertheless, principles and assumptions are articulated in the Bible that have become highly influential in economics. For example, 'poverty,' understood as the lack of essential consumer goods, is seen as far from ideal in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 15.4). The tithe system, in which a tithe was levied on wine, wheat and cattle for the benefit of the Levites and the poor, served the purposes of alleviating poverty (Leviticus 27.30; Deuteronomy 12.6; 14.22–29; 26.12). The consequences of poverty, such as lack of food, clothing and housing are also described as miserable, especially since they are a prelude to social contempt and isolation (Proverbs 14.20; 19.7) and lead to fear of falling into debt bondage and losing one's children in the process (Amos 2.6).[1]

In the New Testament, Jesus identifies with the poor in order to encourage his followers to fight poverty: "I was hungry and you gave me food … I was naked, and you clothed me … Whatever you did for one of the most insignificant of my brothers or sisters, you did for me" (Matthew 25.35–40, trans. by PvG). Even though the Bible contains no systematic treatise on economic issues, the principle of need is reflected in the exhortation to ensure the poor are provided with the necessities of life. And the economist Amartya Sen's capability principle finds resonance in the exhortation not only to provide the poor with food, which would keep them dependent, but also to support them in their development so that they can build an independent and dignified life themselves.

The first interpreters of Scripture, the church fathers, in their exegesis of the 'economic' passages in the Gospels, especially pointed out the moral dangers

1 See also: Archibald van Wieringen, "The Economy of Hope," in *Hope: Where does our Hope lie? International Congress of the European Society for Catholic Theology* (*August 2019—Bratislava, Slovakia*) (ed. Miloš Lichner; Theology East—West European Perspectives/Theologie Ost—West Europäische Perspektiven XXVIII; Münster: Lit Verlag, 2020), 89–101, especially 93. The author is much indebted to Carlos de Bourbon de Parme, Philip Hans Franses, Archibald van Wieringen and Harry Commandeur for their comments on an earlier version of this contribution.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004678125_003

inherent in commercial activities.[2] Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, used the much-quoted passage from Luke's Gospel about the 'Mammon of iniquity' (Luke 16.9; cf. Matthew 6.24), as grounds to describe the pursuit of profit as abject, because it intensifies avarice, which prevents people from having a relationship with God.[3] For Tertullian, trade can be traced directly to the vice of greed and must therefore to be characterised as idolatry.[4] Augustine did not ascribe any intrinsic immorality to money as a means of exchange and payment. Money is good for good people because it enables them to practise charity, and bad for bad people because it fuels their greed and thus their isolation.[5] Yet he is not entirely positive about trade and money. *Ne-gotiu*—the denial of rest and quiet (*otium*) for him includes the denial of the silence we need and that can be found in a house of prayer. That is why Jesus was justified in expelling the money changers from the temple.[6] Augustine refers to the cleansing of the temple (cf. Matthew 21.12–17; Mark 11.15–19; Luke 19.45–48; John 2.13–16), which was his point of departure when criticising not only merchants but also bishops, priests and deacons who are guilty of usury. Jerome, too, considered this unacceptable.[7]

The person to whom this Festschrift is dedicated, Bart Koet, has focused throughout his scholarly career on the work of Luke the Evangelist. It is for this reason that in this contribution I wish, on this valedictory occasion, to look at Luke's appraisal of money and property in his gospel. Of all the New Testament authors, Luke speaks most explicitly about these topics. At first sight, money seems to be a divisive issue for Luke. Greed for money turns the temple into a den of thieves and prevents people from seeing the sacred (Luke 19.45–48).[8] Wealth causes a great separation between the rich man and Lazarus (16.19–31). Quarrelling over an inheritance sets one sibling against another (12.13–15). And Zacchaeus was shunned by his fellow Jews because they accused him of putting money above solidarity with his people (19.1–10).

Yet there is more to be said. In this study I would like to point out a fundamental paradox that is present in Luke's gospel on the subject of money

2 See for instance Lev. 19.35–36; Deut. 25.13–16; Ezek. 45.9–12; Hos. 12.7–8; Amos 8.4–6; Mic. 6.10–11; Prov. 11.1.26; 16.11; 20.10, 14, 23.
3 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.30.1.
4 Tertullian, *De Idolatria* 11.
5 Augustine, *Sermo* 50, passim.
6 Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 70.1.15.
7 Augustine, *Tractatus in Euangelium Johannis* 10.4.
8 Cf. Edmondo F. Lupieri, "Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father," in *Money as God? The Monetization of the Market and its Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics* (ed. Jürgen von Hagen and Michael Welker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 379–413, especially 403–404.

and property. In doing so, I follow in Bart Koet's footsteps.[9] Already in 2013, he asked a number of fundamental questions about why Luke wrote the parable of the rich man and the unjust steward.[10] He gave no definitive answers. As the title of one of his latest collections indicates, Bart Koet has always continued to think in questions.[11]

1 The Utility and Power of Money according to Luke

In the environment in which Luke's teacher Paul used to preach, money was an accepted means of exchange and payment. The value of Roman coins, which circulated in relatively large quantity, was recognised in all regions of the empire; economic and financial transactions could therefore proceed smoothly and the currency had a stabilising effect on the markets.[12] Perhaps because his teacher was also an entrepreneur—Paul was a tent maker—no other New Testament author, perhaps with the exception of the author of the letter of James, writes as clearly and forcefully about the usefulness and power of money as Luke does.[13]

The literature that has appeared on this subject in recent decades is abundant.[14] Admittedly, the interpretation of economic terms in the Gospel

9 Bart J. Koet, "Arm en rijk volgens Lucas: Iedereen uitgenodigd voor het koninklijke bruiloftsmaal," *Coll* 48 (2018): 243–258.

10 Bart J. Koet, "Maak vrienden met de mammon," in *Vrienden met de Mammon: De levensbeschouwelijke dimensie in de economie* (ed. Paul van Geest, Marcel Poorthuis, Theo Wagenaar, and Alette Warringa; Almere: Parthenon, 2013), 352–371, especially 364–371.

11 Cf. *Vragen staat vrij: Over vragen stellen als methode in oude en nieuwe wijsheidstradities* (ed. Archibald van Wieringen and Bart Koet; Heeswijk: Berne Media, 2020).

12 Richard Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 [digital print 2006]), 3, 21, 33.

13 So argues Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 137.

14 For a review of literature on Luke's notion of poverty and wealth see Thomas E. Phillips, "Reading recent readings of issues of wealth and poverty in Luke and Acts," *CurrBR* 1 (2003): 231–263. A classic is Hans-Joachim Degenhardt, *Lukas, Evangelist der Armen: Besitz und Besitzverzicht in den Lukanischen Schriften* (Stuttgart: Verlag Kath. Bibelwerk, 1965). More recent publications on this theme include Vincenzo Petracca, *Gott oder das Geld: Die Besitzethik des Lukas* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter III; Tübingen: Francke, 2003); Hans Georg Gradl, *Zwischen Arm und Reich: Das lukanische Doppelwerk in leserorientierter und textpragmatischer Perspektive* (FB CVII; Würzburg: Echter, 2005); Imre Kocsis, "Armut und Reichtum im Lukasevangelium," in *The Bible and Economics International Biblical Conference XXV. Szeged Ferenc Gal Theological College 22nd–24th August 2013* (ed. György Benyik; Szeged: JATEPress, 2014), 179–189. See also footnote 15.

of Luke varies. Thus, the poverty that Luke speaks of has been interpreted as a spiritual or even a symbolic reality.[15] Nevertheless, scholars generally conclude that he did intend to draw attention to the concrete, material poverty in which a large part of the population lived in his time.[16] Whether or not Luke focused on the poor or the rich in the Lucan community, and whether or not he placed poverty and wealth in an eschatological perspective, in any case he denounced actual poverty and wealth.[17]

There is greater unanimity regarding Luke's view of the concrete phenomenon of money. Scholars agree that, according to Luke, money must never hinder the possibility of faith in God. It must not become an idol.[18] Irenaeus's interpretation mentioned above shows that over the course of time, Mammon (16.9) came to refer specifically to an obsession with money, which hinders a relationship with God. More recently, theologians have sometimes called economics and finance 'Mammon's modern aliases' and have argued that in today's society their main task is to remove Mammon from his throne.[19]

Strong doubts have been raised, however, whether Luke himself ascribed an intrinsic immorality to money as a personification. On the basis of the original meaning of the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic "Mammon," Koet argued that Luke 'only' invites his reader to place trust in God above trust in money, but without actually condemning the latter.[20] He did not curse money and property, but

15 Spiritual, for instance, Eduard Lohse, "Das Evangelium für die Armen," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 51–64; symbolic, for instance, Warren Heard Northbrook II, "Luke's Attitude Towards the Rich and the Poor," *A Puritan's Mind* https://www.apuritansmind.com/stewardship/northbrookwarrenlukerichpoor/ [accessed May 5, 2021].

16 Cf. Jacques Dupont, "Les pauvres et la pauvreté evangelique dans les Evangiles et les Actes," in *La pauvreté evangelique* (ed. Jacques Dupont et al.; Lire la Bible XXVII; Paris: Cerf, 1971), 37–63; See also Gerd Theissen, *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums* (WUNT XIX; Tübingen: Mohr, 1983); Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium: Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–9,50* (HThKNT III/1; Freiburg: Herder, 1969); *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

17 Cf. Jeanne-Pierre Gérard, "Les riches dans la communauté lucanienne," *ETL* 71 (1995), 78–86. See also Outi Lehtipuu, "The Rich, the Poor, and the Promise of an Eschatological Reward in the Gospel of Luke," in *The Otherworld and Its Relations to This World: Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions* (ed. Tobias Nicklas, Joseph Verheyden, Erik Eynikel, and Florentino Garcia Mártinez; JSJSup CXLIII; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 229–246, especially 239: "what is striking in Luke's description of the eschatological reward is its 'real life-character'."

18 See Jean B. Mavungu Khoto, *Dieu ou Mamon: La valeur de l'argent selon l'Evangile de Luc* (Kinshasa: Médiaspaul, 2012).

19 See for instance the Lenten booklets by Justin Welby, *Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2017* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 59–83, 131–158, especially 135.

20 Cf. Koet, "Maak vrienden met de mammon," 366–370.

presents people fixated on money, the rich who have had their fill, with a miserable prognosis for the future (6.24).[21] More than the other evangelists, Luke confronts his readers with the choice they have, to make money and property a blessing or a curse for themselves and others in interpersonal relationships.[22]

Sometimes Luke is very direct and unambiguous. He leaves no room for doubt especially in his practical guidelines. Like Horace before him in *Andria* 1.1.34 and Augustine after him in, for example, *Enarratio IV in Psalmum* 118.1—both of whom refer to the *ne quid nimis* principle—he instructs his readers to keep right measure, for instance when he writes that John advises his audience not to demand more money than the appointed rate (3.12–13). He tells the crowd to share their property and food, and admonishes soldiers not to extort people and be content with their salaries (3.10, 14). He also warns against the greed that dividing inheritances often enkindles and underlines his advice by pointing out that even abundant wealth is of no value when faced with death (12.13–16; 13.16–21).

Luke is also unequivocal when he denounces greed. He condemns the outward piety of the Pharisees by comparing them to the outside of the cup that is being cleansed, but without cleansing the inside.[23] This means that despite their outwardly correct appearance, interiorly, they are still motivated by greed and wickedness (11.38–41; cf. 16.14–15).[24] His instruction to be meticulous and honest even in the slightest financial transaction is also unambiguous (16.10–13). More penetratingly than the other evangelists, Luke outlines the disposition that people must internalise to ensure that their wealth will be a blessing to society.

But Luke expresses his view of money and property not only in the instructions that directly articulate what readers are expected to do if they are to be Christ's disciples. Luke's comments on property or the lack of it, on wasting wealth, on poverty, employment, hospitality, wastefulness, negligence or forgiveness reveal a more profound paradox. I now aim to illustrate this by

21 See the literature in the previous footnotes. We will not here address Luke's view of money and community of property in Acts. For this, see, for instance, John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith: A Reading of Luke-Acts* (Zaccheus Studies: New Testament; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 11–35.

22 Cf. Koet, "Arm en rijk volgens Lucas," 244–245. He stated that Luke is concerned with the appropriate handling of possessions; he does not address only the rich or the poor.

23 See Lehtipuu, "The Rich, the Poor," 245 for the for the ideological character of Luke's description of the Pharisees.

24 Cf. Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (OBT XXIII; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 1–9, 17–21, 146–147.

analysing a number of crucial passages, which I will discuss as far as possible in the order in which they appear in Luke's text.

2 Deprivation as a Prelude to Openness

At the beginning of his Gospel, Luke emphasises that Joseph and Mary's socio-economic situation at the time of Jesus' birth was one of deprivation. After observing that there was no room in the upper room, the guesthouse (2.6), he seems to allude to this situation by mentioning explicitly no fewer than three times that Jesus was laid in a manger after his birth (2.7, 12, 16). He refers to their poverty more explicitly when he mentions Mary offering a pair of turtledoves or ordinary young pigeons during a visit to the temple. The precept in Leviticus 12.6–8 was that a one-year-old ram should be offered as a burnt offering and a turtledove or common young pigeon as a purification offering. There is no mention of a lamb in Luke 2.22–24. Perhaps this is a hint that this offering was too expensive for the young family?

There is nothing strange about Luke's double emphasis on Joseph and Mary's deprived socio-economic circumstances. In the continuation of his Gospel, he often characterises the rich as people too absorbed in their own worries or in their own comfortable lives to see the needs of others and to practise charity. We will elaborate on this later. By implicitly describing the poor circumstances in which Joseph and Mary lived, Luke emphasises that, according to his own criteria, they were in a position to see their salvation, together with the shepherds and Simeon (2.13, 30–31). In the same way, he also twice underpins Mary's own statement: "the humble will be lifted up" (1.52).

When Luke records Jesus' words that the poor will inherit the kingdom of God and the rich already have their reward (6.20–21, 24–25), he again highlights that wealth and material plenty prevent people from receiving a higher form of food, comfort and joy. It is not clear what exactly he means by this. But this does not alter the fact that, without insisting on voluntary poverty, Jesus advises his disciples to be like πτωχοί (6.20): people who are dependent on others and must politely answer their questions.[25] Socio-economic deprivation seems to stimulate the humility that is necessary as a disposition to remain

25 Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 327. Cf. Lehtipuu, "The Rich, the Poor," 243–244, who states that in liberation theology πτωχοί were understood as literally the poor, the vulnerable and poor workers. Cf. for the list of evidence also Koet, "Arm en rijk volgens Lucas," 246–24.

open to God. Luke points out in the second chapter of his Gospel that Mary and Joseph possessed this disposition.

3 Wealth as a Prelude to Exclusion

A second insight that Luke presents in respect of money and property, again relatively early on in his Gospel, is that wealth can lead to exclusion. He develops this insight in his account of Jesus' stay in Jericho, where he meets Levi. Twice, Luke introduces a tax collector: Levi (5.27–32) and Zacchaeus (19.1–10). Because of their social position, financial strategy and acquired wealth, they were despised by the Pharisees and scribes. Luke suggests that this led to their social isolation. To the irritation of the Pharisees and scribes, who saw them as scapegoats, Jesus draws them out of this isolation by sharing a meal with them, a social event *par excellence*; accepting the invitation implies recognition and appreciation of the host. When Jesus has to answer to the scribes about his participation in Levi's feast, a sign of wealth, he explains the strategy he will use again with Zacchaeus. He compares himself to a doctor and the rich man to a sick man (5.27–32). Although Jesus does not explain what the rich person's illness is, it is clear that it is related to the person's position and wealth and to their exclusion on this basis.

In the story of Zacchaeus, Luke does not repeat this comparison, but shows what the medicine and the cure are. The medicine is the meal, through which Zacchaeus feels liberated from his solitude. In the latter story, this liberation results in Zacchaeus' willingness to give half of his possessions to the poor and to compensate fourfold those he wronged (19.8). Luke makes it very clear here that punitive lecturing or rigidly judging someone does not produce healing—that is, liberation from social isolation. A shared meal, which implies recognition and appreciation of the socially marginalised rich person, causes the rich person to look at their wealth differently, and to create an attitude in them that is the prelude to the restoration of social and economic relations.[26] Whereas in the story of Levi the emphasis is on the way Jesus sees and treats the rich, namely as κακῶς ἔχοντες (5.31), in the story of Zacchaeus the emphasis is on healing the rich through the voluntary and wholehearted acceptance of becoming poorer for the sake of restoring social relationships.

26 It is also striking that the term ἀδικία ("injustice," 13.27; 16.8.9), δίκαιος ("just," 14.14; 15.7), ἄδικος (16.10–11), and the verb δικαιόω (16.15) occur in 13.22–17.10 in connection with money. The use of money there is related to doing justice.

According to Luke, the 'recovery' of the rich thus goes hand in hand with restoring social justice, and also with a concrete financial 'offering' by the wealthy person. Both stories seem to support Jesus' announcement in the synagogue—in the words of Isaiah (Isaiah 58.6; 61.1–2)—that he will "bring the good news to the poor … proclaim a year of the Lord's favour" (4.18–19).

4 Wealth as a Hindrance to Clear Sight

In the sixteenth chapter, Luke speaks of the οἰκονόμος who carelessly managed his lord's property. It is difficult to interpret this pericope.[27] Surprisingly, the lord agrees with the strategy of the οἰκονόμος to make the debtors pay back fifty rather than a hundred jars of oil, and eighty rather than a hundred crates of wheat (16.1–8). In doing so, the manager harms his employer. Yet he is praised by his lord, who is evidently a *Realpolitiker*, for making the most of the circumstances. Even injustice sometimes seemingly appears able to produce something good.

Luke here forces his reader to think about the difficult dilemmas that entrepreneurs face in extremely complex situations. But the textual structure suggests he does not wish the reader to dwell on these complex dilemmas for too long. The story of the failing manager is followed by a passage in which Luke confronts his reader with the choice of serving God or Mammon (16.9). The terrifying depiction of this complex case is intended to force the reader to unequivocally choose the "lord" who frees people from the suffocating dilemmas with which the other "lord" continues to burden the reader who chooses money and property (cf. 16.13).

The subsequent story of the rich man and Lazarus is a classic demonstration that money and property not only cause great distress, but ultimately prevent people from seeing the reality of social inequality and doing something about it. The rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, is so spoiled every day that he is no longer able to see the distress of Lazarus, a poor man covered with sores, although he lives in close proximity to him throughout his life (16.19–25).

The remarkable story of the king and the drachmas must perhaps also be classified as a story in which Luke wishes to convince his reader that money and property can so preoccupy people that they no longer 'see' what they must do to restore social relationships (19.11–27). In this story, a man of noble birth

27 François Bovon, *Luke: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 439–454; for the role of the manager see Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom*.

travels to a distant land to be appointed king. On his return, he praises those who made him a profit. But the servant who did nothing for fear of losing what he had and because he is afraid of his master is condemned; those who reject his rule are killed. The story is reminiscent of that of Herod Archelaus who travelled to Rome in 4 BC to have his kingship over Judea confirmed but was confronted by an envoy from Judea who opposed his appointment. He was subsequently 'only' appointed ethnarch but, on his return to Judea, he took revenge on his opponents.[28] In any case, Luke in this story, draws an explicit connection between money and property, greed and harshness. This connection obscures the need of the other.

5 Indifference to Money and Property as a Christian Virtue

In addition to addressing the rich in stories and parables to show them that their wealth is preventing them from seeing the needs of others and restoring justice and social relationships, Luke also gives his disciples advice concerning money and property. He instructs them to live by a logic that is contrary to the logic of *do ut des*. He tells them not to expect anything in return from anyone, but to love even their enemies and, in so doing, to be as merciful as God is (6.27–38). For Luke, it is indispensable to and inherent in the development of such a way of life that one should be indifferent to money and property to the point of carelessness. This is clear in the words of Jesus when he commands his disciples to give a thief their underclothes too if he robs them of their outer garment (6.29), to give something to anyone who asks for it (6.30) and not to demand that any possessions be returned if anyone has taken them (6.30). These instructions culminate in the call to become as merciful (οἰκτίρμων) as the Father and, formulated in immediate connection with this, to condemn no one (6.36–37). Luke thus portrays the indifference that borders on carelessness when it comes to possessions as a precondition for becoming as merciful as the Father.[29]

This indifference is also embodied by the creditor in the story of the debtors, one of whom had to pay five hundred denarii and the other fifty denarii. Jesus points out to the Pharisee Simon that it is only normal that the one who is forgiven most should be the most joyful (7.40–43). But given the context in which this story stands, it is clear that Luke is not concerned with the debtors' state of mind, which can be understood easily. The story of the debtors is included in

28 Flavius Josephus, *J.W.* 2.80–100.111.
29 Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 362.

that of the woman who pours tears and oil on Jesus' feet out of love (ἠγάπησεν, 7.47). By comparing the woman to a creditor who does demand repayment of his debt, Luke emphasises the importance of the logic of selflessness and generosity, which is opposite to that of *do ut des*; in the case of the creditor, it again borders on indifference to money. This indifference seems to be what Luke wishes to highlight as something that is liberating. Similarly, in the parable of the sower, worries, wealth and the pleasures of life are described as stifling (συμπνίγονται). They impede receptivity to the word of God (8.14).

Luke attaches great importance to carelessness bordering on indifference with regard to property and possessions. This is evident also from his description of the sending out of the twelve disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God and (*sic*) to heal. He emphasises Jesus' command that they must take nothing with them for the journey: no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, not even an extra tunic (9.3). This command is repeated when the Seventy are sent out; they are also commanded to carry no purse, no bag, no sandals (10.2–12). Luke for a third time underlines the requirement that Jesus set for anyone to proclaim his message authentically when he recounts Jesus' closed-ended question to Peter when he asks him whether he lacked anything when he was sent without a purse, bag or sandals (22.35–38). If the disciples have not acquired the indifference that borders on carelessness with regard to possessions, if they have thought even for a single moment about how to safeguard their livelihood, then they will not only fail to proclaim the Good News authentically but also fail to embody it.

Luke 11.22–32 stands in direct continuity with the passages in which Luke advocates indifference to money and property as a Christian virtue. In this passage, the evangelist describes the carefreeness that must characterise Jesus' disciples if they are to enjoy creation intensely and be absorbed in the here and now. The birds in the sky and the flowers in the field are an invitation to embrace the freedom that is necessary to become attuned to trusting in God (cf. also 12.6–7). In contrast to the 'carefree' disciple stands the man who refuses to face up to his own relativity, his mortality, because the abundant grain harvest means he can only think about building a bigger barn (12.16–21). Similarly, the man who first calculates the cost to be sure he can complete the construction of the planned tower, and the king who calculates whether his finances are sufficient to defeat an enemy army, are among those who do not have the disposition or freedom to be Christ's disciple (14.28–33).

The person who does not realise how transient his property is and therefore fails to sell his possessions to give alms and restore social relationships is equally contrasted with the independent, free disciple (12.33–34). Luke shortly afterwards introduces the high-ranking person (ἄρχων, 18.18) traditionally known as 'the rich young man'—as one who fits this description perfectly. He wants to follow Jesus and keeps all the commandments, but is unable to give up his many possessions (18.18–23). Jesus does not condemn him for this. But he expects his disciples to have a disposition that is not completely determined by financial concerns.

From the nativity story onwards, Luke hints that money and possessions entail concerns that hinder people from truly seeing their neighbour in need, and that are therefore alien to discipleship of Christ. His disciples are so liberated from the need to occupy themselves with the accumulation of possessions that money and property are of importance to them only insofar as they can help to restore social relationships (πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς 18.22). For Luke there is a great difference between the ἄρχων and Zacchaeus, just as there is a great difference between the priest and the Levite who, like the ἄρχων, formally keeps the Law, but does not, like Zacchaeus and the Good Samaritan, invest in others and alleviate the suffering of those who are in pain and in need. This brings us to the next and last point: the paradox in Luke's perception of money and property.

6 The Paradox: Money as a Precondition for the True Christian Life

Apart from the fact that Luke regards money and property as obstacles to the freedom and carefreeness that are inherent in the discipleship of Christ, in several long narratives he paradoxically regards property and ownership as necessary to shaping the virtues that Christ wants to see practised in his society.

In the story of the Good Samaritan, Luke emphasises that the character who stands below the higher-ranking temple priest and Levite in the socio-religious hierarchy of the time, a Samaritan, is the one who practises a higher and more valuable virtue than that exhibited by the priest and Levite (10.30–37). He does not mention this explicitly, but Luke assumes in this story that the Samaritan has the means to practise this higher virtue of mercy, and that he also has the indifference to money that characterises a disciple of Christ. He has to trust the innkeeper to actually use the money paid by him to care for the wounded person; just as the innkeeper has to trust that the money given will be sufficient to cover the costs of the care required. This is one of the reasons why, as early as 1975, the Samaritan was characterised by one author as a pragmatic, non-strategic altruist, whom we 'modern men' no longer recognise.[30] Be that

30 James Buchanan, "The Samaritan's dilemma," in *Altruism, Morality and Economic Theory* (ed. E.S. Phelps; New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1975), 71–85.

as it may, in the narrative of the Good Samaritan, Luke presupposes the possession of money as a condition for practising Christian virtue.

In the same vein, he also assumes that money is necessary to practise the virtue of hospitality. The host who invites his friends from the higher social classes to a sumptuous banquet and is humiliated because no one accepts his invitation because of other pressing concerns ("just married," "bought a field," "acquired five spans of oxen," 14.18–20), cannot be anything other than wealthy (14.15–24). However, the host's anger at being humiliated by people from his own network is but the prelude to magnanimity, because he then invites the poor, the blind, the lame and the crippled to his meal (14.21). He has become the opposite of someone who calculates and treats people from a network according to the logic of *do ut des* (cf. 14.12–14): the mentality that is diametrically opposed to the mentality of Christ's disciple, as we have seen above. But even though Luke discusses the host's development more explicitly than his financial position, the fact is that the evangelist presupposes the possession of sufficient wealth to be able to practise hospitality and generosity.

Practising the virtues of mercy and forgiveness requires money—this is evident especially in the story of the prodigal son (15.11–31). Having squandered his allotted inheritance, he returns to his father's house, humbly hoping to become one of his day labourers (15.20). But the father, full of joy at the return of his lost son, gives a feast and has the fatted calf slaughtered. Like the Samaritan, the father is completely indifferent to his money and property ("all that is mine is yours," 15.31). But he uses his fortune to strengthen the restoration of family relationships.

7 Conclusion

The paradox in Luke's perception of money and property lies in the fact that he demonstrates, implicitly and explicitly, in several places in his Gospel that wealth leads to exclusion and blinds people to the needs of others, and, therefore, causes them to fail to pursue the restoration of social cohesion through their wealth. Their wealth afflicts the rich with a *bounded morality*: they become limited in their ability to make ethical choices.[31] In addition to wealth, Luke regards the concerns of finance and control, of managing a business or a household, as equally abject. Luke seems to be speaking of *bounded morality* even before this term was coined when he describes the manager of a

31 Lans Bovenberg and Paul van Geest, *Kruis en munt: De raakvlakken tussen economie en theologie* (Utrecht: Kok Boekencentrum, 2021), 166–178.

household who justifies his immoral choices (16.1–8). Bounded morality is also in evidence in the case of the priest and the Levite in the story of the Samaritan, because the environment in which the characters find themselves exerts pressure and leads them to behave in a less morally responsible way.[32]

Wealth, then, does not lead to the disengagement or indifference to money and property that Luke equates with carefreeness, and freedom from the *homo economicus's* sphere of influence. In this model, a theoretical construct for the purposes of economic analysis, human beings are conceived as persons endowed with consistent preferences and unlimited cognitive capacity, who always act out of self-interest and in a goal-oriented manner; the *homo economicus* has a fear of commitment and usually has only two goals: the maximisation of monetary income and quantitative production growth.[33]

It is true that since Herbert Simon's "A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice," behavioural economists have increasingly questioned rationality as a constant factor in people's choices, as if people always make the right choices based on the knowledge available to them, experience no conflict between feelings and reason, and have unambiguous and stable preferences.[34] In any case, in Luke's experience the true disciple of Christ is nothing like the *homo economicus*. Luke attributes to the πτωχοί (6.20; 18.22; cf. 2.7–16, 22–24) the disposition which prepares them for being disciples. The rich are treated as κακῶς ἔχοντες (5.31), who can only be fully healed not by observing the Law, like the Levite, the priest and the ἄρχων, but when they free themselves from the influence of their possessions by giving these away to the poor (18.22). Then they become like πτωχοί.

The paradox in Luke's perception of money and property lies in the fact that he all the while also accepts their usefulness and even necessity if virtues such as mercy, trust and forgiveness are to be practised, and if Jesus' demands are to be realistic and viable (14.12–24; 15.11–31 and passim). In addition to viewing money and property as obstacles to the freedom and carefreeness that is inherent in the discipleship of Christ, in several long accounts, Luke paradoxically regards property and possession as an essential precondition for the performance of the virtues that Christ wants to see lived out in his society. Wealthy characters in Luke's Gospel such as the Samaritan and the father of the prodigal

---

32 Gerd Gigerenzer, "Moral Satisficing: Rethinking Moral Behavior as Bounded Rationality," *Topics in Cognitive Science* 2 (2010): 528–554, especially 529–533, 549.

33 Lans Bovenberg, "Finance: A Relational Perspective," in *Finance and the Common Good* (ed. Cor van Beuningen and Kees Buitendijk; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 79–97.

34 Herbert A. Simon, "A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 69 (1955): 99–118.

son are completely indifferent to their money and property. Nevertheless, they do use their wealth to "bring the good news to the poor," as Jesus summarises his programme in 4.18, and to reinforce the restoration of family relationships.

Luke perpetuates a great paradox. And so do we.

Bibliography

Bovenberg, Lans, "Finance: A Relational Perspective," in Beuningen, Cor van, and Kees Buitendijk, Eds. *Finance and the Common Good*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019, 79–97.

Bovenberg, Lans, and Paul van Geest, *Kruis en munt: De raakvlakken tussen economie en theologie*. Utrecht: Kok Boekencentrum, 2021.

Bovon, François, *Luke: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.

Buchanan, James, "The Samaritan's dilemma," in Phelps, E.S., Ed. *Altruism, Morality and Economic Theory*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1975, 71–85.

Degenhardt, Hans-Joachim, *Lukas, Evangelist der Armen: Besitz und Besitzverzicht in den Lukanischen Schriften*. Stuttgart: Verlag Kath. Bibelwerk, 1965.

Duncan-Jones, Richard, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 (digital print 2006).

Dupont, Jacques, "Les pauvres et la pauvreté evangelique dans les Evangiles et les Actes," in Dupont, Jacques, et al., Eds. *La pauvreté evangelique*. Lire la Bible XXVII. Paris: Cerf, 1971, 37–63.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A., *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004.

Gérard, Jeanne-Pierre, "Les riches dans la communauté lucanienne," *ETL* 71 (1995), 78–86.

Gigerenzer, Gerd, "Moral Satisficing: Rethinking Moral Behavior as Bounded Rationality," *Topics in Cognitive Science* 2 (2010) 528–554.

Gillman, John, *Possessions and the Life of Faith: A Reading of Luke-Acts*. Zaccheus Studies: New Testament. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991.

Gradl, Hans Georg, *Zwischen Arm und Reich: Das lukanische Doppelwerk in leserorientierter und textpragmatischer Perspektive.* FB CVII. Würzburg: Echter, 2005.

Heard Northbrook II, Warren, "Luke's Attitude Towards the Rich and the Poor," online: https://www.apuritansmind.com/stewardship/northbrookwarrenlukerichpoor/.

Koet, Bart J., "Maak vrienden met de mammon," in Geest, Paul van, Marcel Poorthuis, Theo Wagenaar, and Alette Warringa, Eds. *Vrienden met de Mammon: De levensbeschouwelijke dimensie in de economie*. Almere: Parthenon, 2013, 352–371.

Koet, Bart J., "Arm en rijk volgens Lucas: Iedereen uitgenodigd voor het koninklijke bruiloftsmaal," *Coll* 48 (2018): 243–258.

Kocsis, Imre, "Armut und Reichtum im Lukasevangelium," in Benyik, György, Ed. *The Bible and economics International Biblical Conference XXV. Szeged Ferenc Gal Theological College 22nd–24th August 2013.* Szeged: JATEPress, 2014, 179–189.

Lehtipuu, Outi, "The Rich, the Poor, and the Promise of an Eschatological Reward in the Gospel of Luke," in Nicklas, Tobias, Joseph Verheyden, Erik Eynikel, and Florentino Garcia Mártinez, Eds. *The Otherworld and Its Relations to This World: Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions.* JSJSup CXLIII. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 229–246.

Lohse, Eduard, "Das Evangelium für die Armen," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 51–64.

Lupieri, Edmondo F., "Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my Father," in Hagen, Jürgen von, and Michael Welker, Eds. *Money as God? The Monetization of the Market and its Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 379–413.

Mavungu Khoto, Jean B., *Dieu ou Mamon: La valeur de l'argent selon l'Evangile de Luc*. Kinshasa: Médiaspaul, 2012.

Moxnes, Halvor, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel.* OBT XXIII. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004.

Neyrey, Jerome H., Ed. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Petracca, Vincenzo, *Gott oder das Geld: Die Besitzethik des Lukas*. Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter III. Tübingen: Francke, 2003.

Phillips, Thomas E., "Reading recent readings of issues of wealth and poverty in Luke and Acts," *CurrBR* 1 (2003): 231–263.

Schürmann, Heinz, *Das Lukasevangelium: Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–9,50*. HThKNT III/1. Freiburg: Herder, 1969.

Simon, Herbert A., "A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 69 (1955): 99–118.

Theissen, Gerd, *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums.* WUNT IX. Tübingen: Mohr, 1983.

Welby, Justin, *Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2017*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Wieringen, Archibald van, "The Economy of Hope," in Lichner, Miloš, Ed. *Hope: Where does our Hope lie? International Congress of the European Society for Catholic Theology* (*August 2019—Bratislava, Slovakia*). Theology East—West European Perspectives/Theologie Ost—West Europäische Perspektiven XXVIII. Münster: Lit Verlag, 2020, 89–101.

Wieringen, Archibald van, and Bart Koet, Eds. *Vragen staat vrij: Over vragen stellen als methode in oude en nieuwe wijsheidstradities*. Heeswijk: Berne Media, 2020.