

THE CHALLENGE OF ECONOMY:  
A CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF LUKE'S *OIKONOMIA*

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Religion

May, 2011

Nashville, Tennessee

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To Eunji, my wife,  
For her love,  
And to Daniel and Irene, my children,  
For their unending inspiration,  
And to Ikrae Park and Changsoon Yeo, my ultimate role models,  
For their loving support and prayer

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the financial support of the Community Church of Nashville and the Graduate Department of Religion of Vanderbilt University.

I am especially indebted to Dr. Fernando Segovia, my teacher and my mentor, who has taught me more than I could ever give him credit for here. He is the perfect embodiment of the organic intellectual, an extraordinary human being, and has shown, by his example, what a good scholar and person should be.

I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work and share the insights and development of this project. Each of the members of my Dissertation Committee has provided me extensive personal and professional guidance and taught me a great deal about both academic research and life in general.

Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this project than the members of my family. I would like to thank my parents, whose love and guidance are with me in whatever I pursue. They are the ultimate role models. Most importantly, I wish to thank my loving and supportive wife, Eunji, and my two wonderful children, Daniel and Irene, who provide unending inspiration.

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AB	Anchor Bible
ABD D. N.	Anchor Bible Dictionary
BAGD	W. Bauer, F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the NT
BCSR	Bulletin of the Council on the Study of Religion
BFT	Biblical Foundations in Theology
BR	Biblical Research
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CR	Critical Review of Books in Religion
GRBS	Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies
HBC	J. L. Mays, et al., eds., Harper's Bible Commentary
HBD	P. J. Achtemeier, et al., eds., Harper's Bible Dictionary
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBR	Journal of Bible and Religion
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTSup	JSNT Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament



JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones, Greek-English Lexicon
NTS	New Testament Studies
SBLASP SBL	SBL Abstracts and Seminar Papers
SBLBMI SBL	SBL Bible and Its Modern Interpreters
SBLDS SBL	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS SBL	SBL Monograph Series
SBLSP SBL	SBL Seminar Papers
SBLSS SBL	Semeia Studies
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TS	Theological Studies
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZRGG	Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte
ZWT	Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie

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The Challenge of Economy:  
A Cultural Interpretation of Luke's *Oikonomia*

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Lk 4:18-19).

Introduction: Power, Construct and Representation

The Bible is never read in a vacuum insofar as it affects believers in their own (con)texts as a 'Word of God' by which to live. Whether the interpreter is aware of it or not, the (con)text serves not only as a choice but also as a consequence. It is a choice because the interpreters choose to read from a particular location. It is also a consequence because biblical interpretation has powerful effects on people and their lives. Hence, critical readers have to make explicit at the outset their own (con)text and bring to critical understanding their own interests and perspectives.

As a student of early Christianity, born and bred in South Korea and now living in the southern US as a resident alien, I recognize that much of the significance of the economy (*oikonomia*) comes from the dwelling (*oikos*) of 'self' and 'other' within the world at large (*oikoumene*).<sup>1</sup> The Third Gospel in particular unveils the colonial construct of economy (*oikonomia*) that carries out the norms affirming "this is the way things are" or "should be."

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<sup>1</sup> Here the *oikonomia* has a deliberate connotation of introducing the two-fold dimensions of both 'dwelling/habitation' and the 'rule' of dwelling/habitation. The Greek *oikonomia* is a compound word of *oikos*—"house" in the sense of the community of those inhabiting it—and *nomos*—"law" in the sense of distribute, administer, allocate. We will observe later how it is controversial in Aristotle.

The *oikonomia* in the New Testament is literally translated as the management or administration of the household—relating to the task of a steward (οἰκονόμος) (cf. Lk 16:2).<sup>2</sup> It also suggests figuratively a plan which involves a set of arrangements—referring to God's plan for bringing salvation to human beings within the course of history (cf. 1 Cor 9:17). In this dissertation, I employ the term code *oikonomia* as pertaining to the economy that keeps the household (*oikos*) in operation—that makes a living together.<sup>3</sup>

Under the concrete material reality of the Roman Empire, Luke's household (*oikos*) discourse represents a construction of economy that decides the life and death of human beings. My reading of the Gospel of Luke and its economy emerges from an East Asian global context where globalization becomes a new world order and its own rule and conception creates scarcity. This context informs the 'text' when I read and relate to the biblical text. However, the same context is also informed by my reading of the text, which helps me to see it in a new light. In the Gospel of Luke, I see that the people of God struggle with the lack of agency under the construct of economy.

The issue of human agency is such an “uncomfortable” subject in my native South Korea. The country was one of the poorest countries in Asia until the 1960s and has grown

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<sup>2</sup> See *Liddell and Scott Greek-English Lexicon*, 28199.

<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation, instead of family, I prefer to use “household” as the term relating to the function of common life and its economy (*oikonomia*). Thus, it is not always bounded by place per se. In *Putting Jesus in His Place*, however, Halvor Moxnes puts a strong emphasis on the house as a place or spatial arrangement. For his discussion of how the household was rooted in place in regard to kinship, neighborhood, and village, see *Putting Jesus In His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

into the fifteenth largest economy of the world today.<sup>4</sup> However, without breaking with the colonial structures and being able to achieve true liberation after decolonization, the “world” within and beyond Korea has been heavily influenced by what Althusser might call “ideological representation of ideology.”<sup>5</sup>

During the latter part of the twentieth century, South Korea was governed by a military dictatorship that had served the Japanese Empire and then quickly turned to the U.S. for its protection.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the Japanese colonial legacy and the American hegemony have long supported each other in South Korea. At the same time, the domestic power has combined itself with such discourses as anticommunism, modernization, and globalization, which have followed one after the other, each supporting the next.

Being haunted by the memory of colonial cruelty and exploitation, South Korea has cultivated its own colony—not a “colony” abroad, but a “colony” within.<sup>7</sup> Thus, while problems and contradictions emerge from the life of the colonial and postcolonial subjects, South Koreans must relegate them to a distant past and move on rather than contest and resist in their present (hi)story. They were deprived of their own (hi)story, culture, and

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.economywatch.com/world\\_economy/south-korea/](http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/south-korea/)

<sup>5</sup> Louis Althusser states that “ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” For Althusser, the “ideological representation of ideology” is a reflection and action of ideology by way of “consciousness” or “belief” in particular ideas. *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), 36-42.

<sup>6</sup> For further elaboration, see George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> As Franz Fanon observes, in this situation, the combination of colonialism and such other discourses forms oppression that runs tighter. *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 148-205.

language, while being harnessed for modernity, progress, and development—in Partha Chatterjee’s words, to experience “continued subjection under a world order which only sets their tasks for them and over which they have no control.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, what the colonial and postcolonial subjects desperately wanted and still cannot acquire is their sufficient agency and freedom. Their lack of agency, however, arises most poignantly today in globalization—a process of appropriation that reaches across diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial identities while creating ‘inside’/‘outside’ boundaries. With regard to the current globalization, Fernando Segovia traces it to the last five hundred years of imperialism and the domination of capitalism:

At each stage of imperialism in the modern and postmodern era, capitalism has prevailed and dominated the economic landscape, from mercantile capitalism in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, to monopoly capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to global capitalism in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present.<sup>9</sup>

At each turn, human identities are contested, challenged, and often jeopardized by strife and scarcity. Throughout this history, the poor—the “others” of history—always have been present, crying for a more just world.

In Korea, the seed of capitalism was first laid during the period of Japanese Empire’s invasion and exploitation (1910-1945). Capitalism has since made strides and pushed the

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<sup>8</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zen Books, 1986), 10.

<sup>9</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 127.

land of Korea to a place of “periphery capitalism,” or, in other words, an “emerging market,” in contrast to the most “developed” nations of the Group of Eight (G8). In this respect, capitalism, and its accompanying imperialism, cannot be treated as a matter between the Western and non-Western world. It is a phenomenon, “crosscultural” as well as “transhistorical,” that affects the dynamic flow and mobility throughout space and time.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, a simple de-westernization does not help to prevent the current neocolonial economy.

Within the global market economy with neocolonial influence, the grassroots people, *minjung*, are acutely divided by their good or bad “luck,” whether in employment or health. A member of the *minjung* is to be the “disciplined,” who remain within the household laboring like a slave, yet never daring to ask to go outside and meet with his friends, nor being able to embrace his brother, the “prodigal” (cf. Lk 15:25), who conveys the inscription of ‘otherness,’ or, in Gilles Deleuze’s terms, a symbol of ‘open-becoming.’<sup>11</sup> From an East Asian *minjung* perspective, reading the Bible becomes thus a mutual dialogue between the text and readers more than a discovery of the latent meaning of the text.

While economy originally refers to a household (*oikos*), it also provides a norm (*nomos*), whereby self and other, or individual and community (communal selves), may live in a house in a manner that is both just and sustainable. The household in the ancient world extends beyond direct bloodlines to include the slaves, hired hands, lands, animals,

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<sup>10</sup> For more discussion, see Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 126-129.

<sup>11</sup> For Gilles Deleuze, the world is a creative, complexifying, and problematizing space, capable of “open becoming.” *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

and furnishings (cf. Luke 16:18-20). It also refers to those who share a common life or even those who hold goods in common (cf. Luke 15:4-9).<sup>12</sup> In the Greco-Roman Mediterranean world, one may not find “family,” but instead one finds the household, that is, a group who lives together and makes a living together.<sup>13</sup>

However, the issue of living together, as well as the representation of self and other, has drawn limited attention from modern economics, while the over-representation of scarcity has been widespread.<sup>14</sup> Biblical studies also have increased knowledge of wealth and poverty. However, biblical criticism’s seemingly “impartial” and “neutral” measures have not advanced the awareness of how the construction of political economy pertains to such a topic, while the value of such practices as ‘almsgiving’ is dragged into the politically charged zone of economy.

If the contemporary construct of globalization in which everyone is so interrelated and interconnected can be a cultural (con)text, does the biblical text also help us to confront the power that entraps human agency and creates scarcity today just as it did in the past? Is there an economics of life, a theology of “self” and “other” in the Gospel of Luke that can move people today beyond clinging to wealth and possessions?

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<sup>12</sup> See the discussion of Halvor Moxnes, *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. 13-29.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> I find myself in agreement with the alert offered over the assumptions of modern economics and their solid presupposition of scarcity by Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), see esp. 15-28.



In this dissertation, I engage in the investigations into, arguments for, and construction of the economy (*oikonomia*) in the Gospel of Luke that emerges from the *oikos*—a place to which the prodigal son returns as he is still “prodigal” (Luke 15:25) and where the dishonest steward is praised for his “shrewdness” (16:8). The economy embodied in Luke’s *oikos* discourse may not be merely or essentially comprised of wealth and property; rather it serves as the impetus that encourages the subject to cross over the constructed boundary between center and periphery, metropolis and margins—in effect, the imperial and the colonial. Its pervasive interdependence from with-in and with-out spurns the Empire and embraces the voiceless and invisible (cf. Luke 15:32). In this regard, the engagement in, and reflection of, political economy in the Gospel of Luke shall become a prophetic statement as well as a promise for the world today.

For the overall project, I ground myself as a real reader, immersed in a specific historical, cultural, social, and geo-political location. From such a location, I will read “across” Luke’s text and its readings, analyzing how each construction stands with regard to the “People of God” living in the “world” in which they are exploited as the “other” of Empire.<sup>15</sup> These critical reflections will form the basis for debating with the text in the presence of destructive social, economic, cultural formations and discourses.

Five steps are necessary to carry out this process of inquiry. Chapter I establishes a reading strategy for critical dialogue and engagement. First, I present the economy as both

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<sup>15</sup> This undertaking inserts the voice of the real reader and brings to critical understanding her/his own interests and perspectives. Such a comparative and dialogical practice helps biblical criticism cease to be “a matter of recuperation and exhibition” and to become “a matter of ethics and politics.” Fernando F. Segovia, *Interpreting beyond Borders. The Bible and Postcolonialism* 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 67.

construct and representation. Second, articulating the hermeneutical premises and the cultural topography of my own context, I take into account the social memory of *minjung* as an illustration that characterizes both the narrative world of Luke and my own reading context. Finally, I challenge the scholarly neglect of the evaluation and critique of the “reading-constructs” and “reader-constructs” as they relate to the issue of economy (*oikonomia*) in the Gospel of Luke.

Chapter II offers an analysis of the imperial economy as it stands in the text. Within the textual world created by Luke and acted out by its literary characters, the parables of the Rich Fool (12:13-21) and the Great Dinner (14:15-24) demonstrate most clearly the colonial construct of economy. Both stories encompass the discourses of scarcity that represent the life of the people, hinting at Luke’s construal of an alternative economy.

Chapter III explores the liberating economy as it challenges the established norms of life and living together. The Parable of the Prodigal (15:11-32) confronts the problem of the political economy, while at the same time revealing the underlying motives at work in the construct of political economy. By exposing the economy (*oikonomia*) for what it is, Luke challenges the colonial construct of power and scarcity.

Chapter IV includes an analysis of economy as it is transformed. The dishonest steward as the chief household slave (16:1-9) represents a complicated position in terms of economic production and (re)distribution. Unlike the anonymous rich man in the Parable of Lazarus (16:19-31), the steward serves as a model of a person refining his own

opportunities, pursuing and realizing the kind of life he has reason to value.<sup>16</sup> The stories of the slave *oikonomos* and the rich *oikodespotes* narratively create the discussions of the role of human agency in bringing about a different life and reality.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, Chapter V reweaves my argument through a more direct theological engagement in the political and economic dimension of life and life-together in the Gospel of Luke. Recognizing the ethical and political power of biblical interpretation, I consciously subscribe to the critical dialogue and reflection as to the ultimate challenge of economy where struggles abound, but true possibilities of human existence emerge. While the economy is a historical product of time and place rather than of fate, all economic “laws” are equally limited and historical<sup>18</sup>:

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth  
(Luke 3:5).

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<sup>16</sup> I follow here the thesis of Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999)

<sup>17</sup> Generally, *oikonomos* alludes to a manager or an administrator (*Liddell & Scott*, 29994), while *oikodespotes* refers to the master of the house (*Liddell & Scott*, 29976).

<sup>18</sup> See Meeks, *God the Economist* (1989).

## Chapter I Economy as Construct and Representation

The US-Korea (KORUS) Free Trade Agreement disturbs Korean laws and systems. And the lack of discussion and parliamentary review could affect not only the current generation of Koreans but also those in the future. (Chung Tain 2007)

An understanding of political economy and its construction of scarcity requires an examination of the representation of self and other, or individual and community (or communal selves), that points to ideology and subjectivity, as well as politics and economics. I move, by a necessarily circuitous route, from a critique of political economy and its conceptualization of self and other to the question of how subjectivity is represented in *minjung* theology.

Along the way, I will have recourse to the crossroads of *minjung*'s past experience, present struggle, and hope for and vision of the future. From an East Asian global perspective, recourse to the *minjung* may serve not only as a point of contact, but also as a tremendous resource for trans-historical and cross-cultural reflection on humanity and human agency—the kind of vision that Luke presents over against the colonial construction of “scarcity” and “scarcity.” Re/membering of *minjung* will be, therefore, a key element for my intercultural reading of the Gospel of Luke.

Typically, the dynamics of the economy and its systematic construction are embedded in the exchange of products, goods, services, and people. For Aristotle, this exchange requires money “since [money] measures everything” (*NE* 1133<sup>a</sup>20-21). It may not be easy, however, to establish equalities between shoes, for example, and money, nor between

things as different as shoes and houses.<sup>19</sup> They are incommensurable, and the difference between them is qualitative. In this regard, Aristotle proposes that need (*chreia*) forms the basis to resolve the problem: “Everything, then, must be measured by a single standard. In reality, this standard is need...But need has come to be conventionally represented by money” (*NE* 1133<sup>a</sup>25-30). According to Aristotle, money, introduced as a medium of exchange, is an unnatural kind of wealth, one advanced by a science of its own, *chrematistics* (χρηματιστική).<sup>20</sup> Its use of money to make money is, at its worst, no other than usury:

The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it. ... Of all modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural. (*Politics*, 1258b)<sup>21</sup>

However, natural wealth consists of the resources and tools required by the household managers and statesmen. The latter pertains to *oikonomia*, the science of management of the household, which deals with the administration of community, such as house, village, or state (*Politics*, 1256<sup>b</sup>36-37).

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<sup>19</sup> See the discussion of George E. McCarthy, *Marx, and the Ancients: Classical Ethics, Social Justice, And Nineteenth-Century Political Economy* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990). I employ his analogy regarding the abstract exchange. The volume is especially useful on the relation between Marx and Aristotle.

<sup>20</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics*, III, 12-20, 1257a-58a; LCL 40-49. *Chrematistics* pertains to wealth as far as it can be calculated in terms of money.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle condemns usury because it is the most extreme and dangerous form of *chrematistic* acquisition, or the art of making money for its own sake.

For Aristotle, the use of property is part of, or assistance to, the *oikonomia* that ensures a development and cultivation of human virtue for the life of community.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, Aristotle would not support the liberal separation of politics and economy, the one public and the other private. Economics for Aristotle ultimately relates them to each other.

However, Aristotelian *oikonomia* was quickly replaced by *chrematistics*, while his scientific rationalism was adopted in the modern concept of *homo oeconomicus*. Henceforth, setting equivalences in rates has become significant as it serves as a drastic arbitrage of life and life-together. Individual decisions aligned with *homo oeconomicus* can be made “impersonally” without regard for a process of provisioning and caring with needs to be fulfilled for all people simultaneously and in multiple dimensions.

This is most evident today in neocolonial economy where the market renders all transactions inhuman, or everything for sale. Commodification as such has displaced human relationships and even reduced the human person into a thing. It is no longer the human person who has decisive power; instead, capital has the power of decision over the life and death of human beings. However, such sciences as neoclassical economics have amoraled the world by seeking to understand phenomena as morally neutral rather than passing judgment on them. The implementation of the market is simply a “given” or “politically neutral.”

In this regard, Marx’s suspicion over the modern economy resounds. In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx observes how two commodities with quite different “use-values”

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<sup>22</sup> However, Aristotle’s conception of the household remains controversial when he sharply draws the demarcation between men and women, inferior and superior, and masters and slaves (*NE* 1252<sup>a</sup>9-12, 30-31, 1253<sup>b</sup>32, 1254<sup>a</sup>10, 1260<sup>a</sup>12-13).

can be equally exchanged and how this exchange effects an equation between things incommensurable.<sup>23</sup> Marx points out precisely the deprivation of human agency “by the servitude of the person [or life] to thing.”<sup>24</sup> For Theodor Adorno, such mechanism of abstract exchange is “the very secret of ideology itself.”<sup>25</sup> While ideology suppresses the uniqueness and plurality of persons and life, it not only expels all the contradiction, but homogenizes the world such that, in Frederic Jameson’s conception of “strategies of containment,” it becomes difficult to dream or even aspire outside the terms of the system itself.<sup>26</sup>

This sort of principle has made human beings estranged from their real needs and real agency, “almost by default,” as Philip O’Hara points out. He refers to the economist Heilbroner’s reaction to the market process as follows.

I have gradually come to see the market system as one in which the same underlying processes that assure discipline and order as those of older societies continue to exert their force, although in a manner that escapes our recognition...these powerful aspects of the market process throw a veil over

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<sup>23</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961).

<sup>24</sup> Rosemary Ruether states that “the real crux of Marx’s argument lies not merely in the physical but in the spiritual or human impoverishment of the subjective essence of man by the servitude of the person to thing.” *Radical Kingdom: The Western Experience of Messianic Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 99.

<sup>25</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 126.

<sup>26</sup> Sean Homer, *Frederic Jameson: Marxism, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 157; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), esp., 281-99.

other processes—a veil that obscures understanding and recognitions, that, were they present, would cause “economics” as well as market societies to look very differently from the way they do.<sup>27</sup>

The process of market, regarded as a “veil” by Heilbroner, should not be seen as representing merely a problem with the market system itself. It rather points to a broader constitution of economy as a site of contention—that is, a place where political processes and cultural gravity become acutely condensed, as does the human subjectivity in its interrelated symbolic, political, and economic constructs.

Thus, as Charles S. Maier points out, the economics of a society cannot be seen “as frameworks for analysis,” but “as beliefs and actions that must themselves be explained.”<sup>28</sup> As a system of beliefs and actions, political economy conveys the representation of self and other, or individual and community. Scarcity emerges from such representation. In the following, I will turn to the distinctive, yet related, issues that appear relevant for the subsequent explorations of the economy of the Gospel of Luke. Those issues give rise to the questions as follow: How does the role of human agency emerge into conversation about normative claims in modern (mostly, Western) economics? What analysis can be made of the construct of self and other, or individual and community, in such economics?

I will address these questions by introducing a debate among the major paradigms including formalist and substantivist models within the field of economic anthropology.

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<sup>27</sup> Robert L. Heilbroner, *Behind the Veil of Economics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 17. See also R. Philip O’Hara, *Economics of the Basilea Tou in Mark* (Nashville: Vanderbilt Ph.D. Dissertation, 2003), 22-23.

<sup>28</sup> Charles S. Maier, *In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3-6.



This is not meant to evaluate the models in general, but to address the construct of economy that emerges from the power and representation of self and other which forms the undercurrent of ideologies and political economy.

### Construct of Political Economy

*Homo Oeconomicus* Neoclassical economics has long grounded economy as a rational choice between the alternative uses of limited means. In the market system, individuals—essentially *homo oeconomicus*—respond only if the proffered benefits are attractive. Because of material “scarcity,” they pursue the maximization of utility, measuring the benefits and costs of each means.

This view of humanity conveys the utopian idealization of the self. The market cannot coerce since it is based on the “free choice” of individuals. The formalist understanding of the self has served as an argument for a particular kind of “progressive” Western society, and it can be applied to any society with validity if appropriate modifications are made.<sup>29</sup> The ethic of utilitarianism therein penetrates society or replaces culture. This model has extended into a number of specific approaches such as information theory, game theory, cost-benefit analysis, rational choice, and a host of other offshoots.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Harold K. Schneider, *Economic Man* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

<sup>30</sup> Gerald F. Gaus, *On Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* (Singapore: Cengage Learning, 2008).

Nevertheless, the model has contributed to the atomization of humanity. According to this model and approach, the proximity and distance of self and other cannot be negotiated because it is already given by nature. In this regard, B. Ward explains in his monograph, *What's Wrong with Economics* that:

Atomism is the assertion of the essential separatedness and autonomy of each man from every other, with the consequent stabilization of values by means of processes internal to the individual human organism.<sup>31</sup>

With humans being atomized, the market promotes competition. Indeed, there might be some defects in competition. However, Friedrich Hayek asserts that competition is worth pursuing:

[W]hile it relies on [a] process of learning and imitation, [it] recognizes the desire it creates only as a spur to further effort. It does not guarantee the results to everyone. It disregards the pain of unfulfilled desire aroused by the example of others. It appears cruel because it increases the desire of all in proportion as it increases its gifts to some. Yet so long as it remains a *progressive society*, some must lead and some must follow.<sup>32</sup>

Hence, the model sets itself as a “universalist,” or “didactic” project for a “progressive” society. That which is not “progressive,” the uncivilized, is merely an early state of

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<sup>31</sup> B. Ward, *What's Wrong With Economics?* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 24. See also Philip O'Hara (2003).

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.thefreemanonline.org/featured/the-common-sense-of-progress>; See also its print version, Friedrich Hayek, “The Common Sense of Progress,” in *The Freeman*, Vol. 10/Issue 11 (Nov. 1960).

humanity, against which modern progress should be measured and vindicated. What might be the “progressive society” comes to be filled mostly by a political economy that constitutes the “West” (hence, “ours” as civilized and rational), as opposed to “the others” (hence, “theirs” as negative and intrinsic to the primitive). Such relational juxtaposition of ‘self’ and ‘other’ provides only an opportunity for the “West” to disguise its “anxieties and doubts” and to defend the “best selves” of the West and describe its greatest historical achievements.<sup>33</sup>

Its assumption of the self and self-interested behavior, in fact, makes it difficult to develop the capacity of human agency whereby a number of other economies emerge and operate, as Amartya Sen points out.<sup>34</sup> While human beings are totally uncommitted to anything other than maximizing their own narrowly conceived well-being irrespective of political values and class interests, they become “rational fools,” winding up with the idealization of the self (e.g., Luke 12:20 “the rich fool”).<sup>35</sup>

In this regard, human agency—either individual or collective—remains substantially underdeveloped and even superseded in a heroic tale of the progress of society which conveys the market process. Market veils power by institutionalizing individual desires and

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<sup>33</sup> See the discussion of Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> For Sen, sticking entirely to the narrow and implausible assumption of purely self-interested behavior seems to take us into an alleged short-cut that ends up in a different place from where we wanted it to go. *On Ethics and Economics* (Oxford; New York, NY: B. Blackwell, 1987), 78-9.

<sup>35</sup> Amartya Sen, *Choice, Welfare, and Measurement* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 442.

thereby controlling them and making them invisible. Such domination of the market creates insufficiency and perpetuates itself as “given” or “politically neutral.” The construct of economy as such has been increasingly denounced by scholars who claim that the economic laws cannot operate regardless of the specificity of space and time or the particulars of social, cultural landscapes.

*Homo Reciprocans* Rather than placing economy in a separate and distinct social sphere, scholars such as Karl Polanyi assert that the economy is embedded in the various social institutions. Economic exchange takes place within, and is regulated by, society rather than being located in a social vacuum. The human subject is placed in relations of production, exchange, and consumption, while also equally embedded in the networks of social relationships and cultural influences. For Polanyi, by denying the role of social relations in economic life, modern economies are at risk of failure and crisis.<sup>36</sup> This is especially true in that the market economy has distorted society’s perception of a person and one’s social relations.<sup>37</sup>

The act of making commodities out of humans (individual and communal), nature (land), and money—in Polanyi’s terms, “the commodity fiction”—will eventually lead to the demolition of society.<sup>38</sup> Polanyi resists the notion that a self-regulating market is a

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<sup>36</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The great transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 60.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

phenomenon arising from the law of nature.<sup>39</sup> In noticing that production for gain and profit is not natural to humanity, he is actually in accord with Aristotle.

Polanyi sees all economic relations as one of three types—reciprocity, redistribution, and market exchange. Each form of economy arises not as a natural development, but as transformation through history. Marshall Sahlins adopts Polanyi's three different economic forms, but he lays them out according to space instead of time. He labels them as “generalized,” “balanced,” and “negative” reciprocities. They may exist at the same time but they operate in different spatial spheres depending on kinship relations, rank and wealth distinctions, as well as the object of exchange.<sup>40</sup> Each system requires a separate set of analytical concepts, since a different set of socio-cultural obligations, norms, and values play a significant role in people's economics in each sphere. In this regard, the modern market is one amongst many other institutions.

This model and approach, so-called “substantivist,” as opposed to the formalist, understands the power of reality in society as one that restrains the way in which people organize their lives in general and economy in particular. The economy substitutes ‘commodities’ for ‘reciprocities’ between ‘self’ and ‘other,’ or ‘individual’ and ‘community,’ across space and time, and it becomes a system of ‘obligation.’ Hence, the

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>40</sup> Marshall D. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine, 1972), 197-200.

economic exchange cannot be merely “economic,” but must also include “a synthesis of self and other” through making of connections and relations of reciprocity.<sup>41</sup>

In particular, with respect to gift exchange in small-scale societies in the Trobriand Islands and in classical texts, Marcel Mauss asserts that exchange is based not on voluntary or spontaneous giving but on social obligations. In certain exchanges among the Maori, for example, the *hau* (“the spirit of things”) creates an obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate.<sup>42</sup> Levi-Strauss views this kind of exchange relationship as a universal rule or principle that governs and even creates society.<sup>43</sup>

Recently, focusing more on socio-cultural dynamics in local communities, Stephen Gudeman asserts that reciprocity includes a tension “between separation and unity, self-sufficiency and interdependence.”<sup>44</sup> When it serves as an exchange of inequivalents,

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<sup>41</sup> Caroline S. Tauxe, “Exchange,” in David Levinson and Melvin Ember (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 2: 470.

<sup>42</sup> According to Marcel Mauss, the obligation to give helps maintain a person’s authority within the social network of relations. The receiver of the gift acknowledges that he or she is not equal to the giver and maintains his/her own dignity and place in society by accepting the gift and also by assuming the obligation to repay. In principle every gift should always be accepted and even praised. A gift is received with a “burden” attached in this regard. See *The Gift: the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Gudemann, *The Anthropology of Economy: Community, Market, and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 92.

reciprocity often becomes “a gesture of commensality not commensuration,” filled at times with “countervailing impulses of competition.”<sup>45</sup>

From the observations of both formalist and substantivist modes of political economy thus far, one cannot dismiss Heilbroner’s “beliefs and actions,” or, more precisely, the “ideologies,” operative therein. According to Marxist philosopher Althusser, ideology grounds the process of what he calls “the formation of social subjects.”<sup>46</sup> For Althusser, ideology is the substratum for “lived-out relations” between persons of differing social standing and among peoples of equal social class—that is, a guiding principle how they react and respond to their social and economic reality.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, according to Edward W. Said, ideology serves as medium by which powerful individuals and nations have constructed a charged image of the other, i.e., the Oriental, in contrast to the “noble” capitalist West, i.e., the Occidental.<sup>48</sup>

Hence, economic anthropology must include space for ideologies because they endorse the prevalent modes of political economy that often works at the service of the powerful and at the expense of the powerless and also keeps peoples and nations in the upper or lower end of the international power pyramid.<sup>49</sup> Political economy entails a specific ideology that claims or contests the representation of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Therefore, it serves

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>46</sup> See Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: New Left Books, 1965)

<sup>47</sup> Terry Eagleton. *Ideology: An Introduction*, 19

<sup>48</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Terry Eagleton. *Ideology: An Introduction*, 19.

as the arena of a power struggle which impacts the material world. This becomes most evident in the historical present of South Korea to which I now turn.

### Kicking Away the Ladder?

It is well recognized that South Korea is one of the most prominent developing countries in the world. Since the Korean War (1950-53), Korean conservative governments have consistently favored export-driven growth at the expense of internal market supply. In 1962, exports accounted only for 2% of the GNP, but this figure increased to 16% in 1972 and 32% in 1982.<sup>50</sup> As of 2010, South Korea is the tenth biggest trading power in the world, accounting for about 3% of the whole world trade.<sup>51</sup>

However, as the importance of exports for the Korean economy has continued to grow, such trade dependency has accelerated vulnerability to fluctuations in the world prices and demand. Moreover, as a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which represents transnational corporations, South Korea has charged itself with an obligation to remove trade barriers and facilitate foreign investments—a position that has reinforced inequality within the nation. While the Korean *Chaebols* (the large economic conglomerates) are profiting the most from the global trade,

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<sup>50</sup> The commodity trade volume reached more than US\$274.9 billion in 1996, in contrast to US \$477 million in 1962. See Sunhyuk Kim, *The Politics of Democratization in Korea: the Role of Civil Society* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 52-54; Yugui Guo, *Asia's Educational Edge: Current Achievements in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and India* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 78.

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/economy.htm>.



structural adjustment becomes more extreme and relentless for the rest of the population. The labor market has divided the people at grassroots level by “flexible” adjustment without regard for their agential choices. Following the measure of labor flexibility, non-standard, temporary, or part-time workers have significantly increased.<sup>52</sup> In the process, the conflicts between the fortunate who enjoy the benefits and the unfortunate who are kept away from the benefits within the society have emerged.<sup>53</sup>

Henceforth, developed countries have pushed South Korea to adopt a set of “good policies” and “good institutions”—that is, liberalization of trade and investment. In this regard, the economist Ha-Joon Chang notes that:

Their belief in their own recommendation is so absolute that in their view it has to be imposed on the developing countries through strong bilateral and multilateral external pressures, even when these countries don’t want them.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The incidence of part-time work in total employment has witnessed sharp increases since the mid-1990s. See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Growing Unequal?: Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* (Paris: OECD, 2008), 83; In the year 2004, the non-standard workers occupied 55% of the whole work force in South Korea. See Kwon, Jin-Kwan, “Contextual Theology and Theological Education: Korea,” in David Kwang-sun Suh et. al. eds. *Charting the Future of Theology and Theological Education in Asian Contexts* (London: ISPCK, 2004), 87.

<sup>53</sup> As such, capitalism has thrived at the cost of its devalued others, such as wives, children, slaves, aliens, natives, and other disenfranchised human subjects and environment. See Rohun Park, ‘Revelation for sale: An intercultural reading of Revelation 18 from an East Asian perspective’ *The Bible and Critical Theory* 4 (2008:2), 25.1–25.12. DOI: 10.2104/bc080025; See also Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 42-43; Earnest Mandel, *Long Waves of Capitalist Development: A Marxist Interpretation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Verso, 1995), 76-96.

<sup>54</sup> Ha-Joon Chang, “Kicking Away the Ladder”, *post-autistic economics review*, issue 15, Sep. 2002, article 3: [http://www.btinternet.com/~pae\\_news/review/issue15.htm](http://www.btinternet.com/~pae_news/review/issue15.htm); see also

From the point of view of the developed countries, their recommendation is safe and solid. Indeed, what they recommend are the “global standard” policies and institutions.

According to Ha-Joon Chang, however, the developed countries did not actually advance on the basis of the same kind of policies and institutions that they now recommend to, and force upon, the developing countries.<sup>55</sup> Chang sees the United Kingdom as the most dramatic example since it used tariffs, subsidies, and other means in order to promote her industries in her early stages of development. However, almost all other developed countries today also employed the same sort of policies. Later, when the US reached the top of the world economy after the Second World War, it also started to preach and force free trade upon the less developed countries.

In this respect, “free trade” means “the freedom of multinationals” from local interference, as Amartya Sen points out.<sup>56</sup> The developing countries are not free not to trade and hence must trade on whatever terms are imposed on them. When the rich countries propose for poor countries the policies and institutions that they did not employ, one may assume that they are in fact trying to “kick away the ladder,” the very ladder that allowed developed countries to climb up to their present stage.<sup>57</sup> As such, their discourse of imposition, which is in itself, ideological, maintains the status quo. Therefore, the

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Chang’s recent monograph, *Bad Samaritans: the Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> Ha-Joon Chang (2002).

<sup>56</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 297-8.

<sup>57</sup> Ha-Joon Chang (2002).

commitment of the West to ‘development’ of the periphery promotes a new form of colonialism, as Rosemary Radford Ruether points out.<sup>58</sup>

In this connection, even the well-intentioned Christian missions have often perpetuated unequal and uneven market inclusivity. When the missionaries first arrived at Inchon, Korea in 1882, their US navy ship became the site where the unequal treaty was signed. The US became the first western nation that obtained a binding agreement from a colonial Korea.<sup>59</sup> In the recent debate for the Christian mission from the First world to the Two-Thirds world, the term, “missionize” becomes inevitably tied to the expressions such as “develop,” “liberate,” or “democratize.” One of the main features of the missional project is an effort to implicitly or explicitly bring such a political economic effect to the developing countries.

Meanwhile, the whole world has seen economic instability escalate, as manifested in several financial crises over the last decade alone. Not a few developing countries have faced an increase in debt rather than a decrease.<sup>60</sup> In 1997, when the financial crisis finally

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<sup>58</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> L.G. Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910* (Pyeng Yang: Union Christian Press, 1929), 61. Missions may create unequal interaction when they operate by characterizing the indigenous as the object of the mission rather than the subject. Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi points out: “Being the object of mission symbolized a religious and social location that assumed that my cultures were inferior and that multiple religious backgrounds were deficient. As one who has been missionized, one who has been the object of mission, I am expected to be grateful for the gospel transmitted, civilized by the education given...In other words, I was never expected to become a subject of mission.” (2002:12). See Carlos F. Cardoza Orlandi, *Mission: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).

hit East Asian countries, South Korea also had to find a way out, albeit a deplorable one: more foreign borrowing. The government signed an enhanced International Monetary Fund (IMF) package, including loans from the IMF, the World Bank, and the Asia Development Bank. Under the terms of the program, South Korea agreed to further accelerate the opening of its financial and equity markets to foreign investment and to reform and restructure its financial and corporate sectors in order to foster economic efficiency.<sup>61</sup>

Hence, while global capitalism becomes more bureaucratized and more subject to administration, the world within and beyond South Korea has seen a dissonance in human rights. Rights defined by the privileged in the economic sphere of life are allowed to define and limit rights in many other spheres. For example, justice has been reduced to a commodity available to those with purchasing power. Also, health is regarded as a commodity to be bought and sold. This situation resonates with Enrique Dussel's observation that within the framework of the capitalist rationale no solution would be possible since it has no explicit ethical consciousness, nor responsibility, for the conditions of humanity.<sup>62</sup> Not only the working class, but ethnic groups, tribes, and other marginal

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<sup>60</sup> For the countries of the Two-Thirds world, the weight of tremendous debt has become impossible to repay. According to Susan George, however, debt becomes an efficient tool for developed countries. "It ensures access to other peoples' raw materials and infrastructure on the cheapest possible terms." See *A Fate Worse Than Debt* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 143. For a theological reflection in this regard, see John B. Cobb, Jr. *The Earthist Challenge to Economism: A Theological Critique of The World Bank* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: the Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (New York, NY : Bloomsbury Press, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). See especially his discussion on Chap. 13.

groups around the world, as Dussel states it, have their lives immolated on “the altar of a fetish.”<sup>63</sup>

In the face of growing inequality, there should have been a move in South Korea to reinforce the moderating institutions—to raise taxes on the rich and use the money to strengthen the safety net. However, for the past decades, especially during Lee Myoung-Bak’s presidency, the trade-offs have been consistently settled in favor of the “haves” and “have-mores.” For the “have-nots,” economic security became merely a matter of luck, being contingent upon such elements as health and employment which could, at any time, plunge one’s own family into poverty.

Furthermore, the Korean government recently made a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union (EU) and is also close to endorsing an agreement with the US.<sup>64</sup> Included in the various provisions of the FTA is one known as a “ratchet mechanism,” which makes it impossible to increase or restore local content rules once they have been cut or removed.<sup>65</sup> In regard to the word “ratchet,” the Collins Cobuild Lexicon provides its definition as follows:

A wheel or bar with sloping teeth, which can move only in one direction,  
because a piece of metal stops the teeth from moving backwards.

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2010/10/07/2010100700953.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/10/07/2010100700953.html)

<sup>65</sup> Aaditya Mattoo, Robert M. Stern, and Gianni Zanini, *A Handbook of International Trade in Services* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 308-327.

Accordingly, the ratchet mechanism in the FTA agreement means that any unilateral liberalization is immediately bound in the FTA and cannot subsequently be wound back.<sup>66</sup> Thus immediately protected government services can become open to trans-border ‘bidding,’ but local governments can no longer move those services back to the protected service category. The idea is that it can only go in one direction, towards making all services into commodities. Hence, market reforms such as privatization and deregulation of public service are locked in place. Attempts to go in the opposite direction—returning them to the public sector—are blocked by deliberately punitive penalties.

These penalties include a financial compensation to the transnational companies for their loss of the right to operate a service and also a retaliation by the country whose companies are excluded from providing services. These ratchet effects close and subordinate all other considerations and also the subjectivities of the people to create and participate in their own destiny and future to “open” markets. However, from the viewpoint of developed countries, because of the “ratchet effect” prohibiting new changes in restrictions, the FTAs generally provide greater benefits to FTA partners than are available under any other agreements.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See John Calvert and Larry Kuehn’s *Pandora’s Box : Corporate Power, Free Trade and Canadian Education* (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves Education Foundation, 1993), 30.

<sup>67</sup> See *OECD Reviews of Regulatory Reform: Australia 2010 Towards a Seamless National Economy* (OECD Publishing, 2010), 190-193. Australia is one of many OECD countries to request a broad review by the OECD of its regulatory practices and reforms. This review presents a general picture, set within a macroeconomic context, of regulatory achievements and challenges, including regulatory quality at the Commonwealth level as well as across levels of government, competition policy and market openness. It also provides a special focus on Commonwealth-state relationships.

In the face of such a closed system, how does one assign any particular privilege to the consciousness of the revolutionary ‘self,’ or “the essential *non*-identity” (Adorno)<sup>68</sup>? One may call such practice a “new critical practice” (Catherine Belsey)<sup>69</sup> or “emancipatory critique” (Harbermas),<sup>70</sup> as opposed to ideology and ideological representation of economy. With this question, I now turn to the East Asian *minjung* (hi)stories.

### Does the *Minjung*-Jesus Still Live?

In a context such as mine, the presence of the Korean *minjung*, or grassroots people, is highly significant.<sup>71</sup> While the legacy of colonialism and the threat of neocolonialism shape the lands of the Far East, *minjung* have been subject to a long subordination and have borne the imprint of colonial oppressions.

Since the seeds of capitalism and its infrastructure were first laid in Korea during the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945), colonial and neocolonial development has continued upwards. Economic success made possible by the *minjung* and their cheap labor has favored the wealthy and the corporations. This brought out strong resistance from students, laborers, farmers, and religious institutions in the 1970’s.

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<sup>68</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E.B. Ashton, (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

<sup>69</sup> Catherine Belsey, *Critical practice* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>70</sup> Jürgen Harbermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Trans. by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

<sup>71</sup> The concept of *minjung* first came to the fore when people in a rural area flocked to urban centers after the Korean War (1950-53).

At that time, one famous poetic expression of discontent came in the form of a parody, “Five Bandits,” by Kim Chiha. “Five Bandits” employed stylistic features of *Pansori*, a traditional style of oral performance that often had its own obscene and satirical elements. Such use of traditional folk culture has served as a “negative dialectic,” as Adorno put it, and became central to *minjung* movements through the 1980’s. His work contributed to the formative *minjung* theology in the mid-1970s. For this and other poems, Kim was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured. Later, in 1974, he would be sentenced to death for advocating rebellion. However, he was eventually released because of heavy international pressure upon the Park government.

Upon being released, Kim Chiha wrote another *Pansori* poem, “Chang Il Tam,” that came out in *Declaration of Conscience* (1976). In this poem, a man named Chang Il Tam is a butcher and the son of a butcher. He comes from a lineage of three generations of butchers and prostitutes. He himself is the son of a prostitute. He later becomes a criminal and escapes from prison. While being pursued by the police, he was able to hide in a back street where prostitutes live. There he notices a prostitute giving birth to a child. She has tuberculosis, and her body is rotting with venereal disease. She is risking her life with the delivery. This scene enlightens Chang’s consciousness, and thereby he exclaims, “Oh, from a rotten body, new life is coming out! It is God who is coming out!” He kneels down and says, “Oh, my mother, God is in your womb. God is the very bottom.”<sup>72</sup>

By way of this awakening, Chang not only recognizes but also invalidates the code of “identity thinking”—for Adorno, a “covertly paranoid style of rationality” which

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<sup>72</sup> Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*. Edited by Chong Sun Kim and Shelly Killen (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), 27.



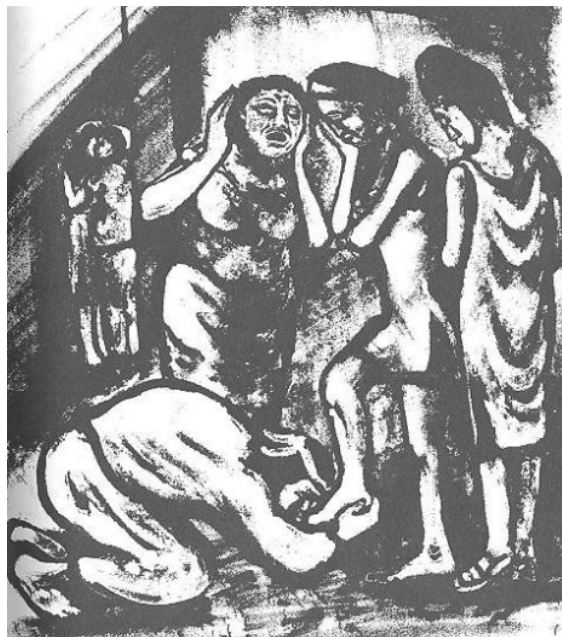
inexorably transmutes the Others into a mere simulacrum of humans or expels them beyond the human borders in “a panic-stricken act of exclusion.”<sup>73</sup> After his awakening, he himself becomes an itinerant preacher, proclaiming the liberation of people. He calls prostitutes his mother, kisses their feet, and declares:

The soles of your feet are heaven.

God is in your decaying wombs.

God’s place is with the lowest of the low.<sup>74</sup>

Chang meets and argues with various urban mission pastors, priests, intellectuals, professors, trade union leaders, monks, servicemen, and social workers.



“Oh, you are my mother!”

Figure 1: The Picture of Chang Il Tam and Prostitutes in *The Gold Crowned Jesus*.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Terry Eagleton. *Ideology: An Introduction*, 126; Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 1973

<sup>74</sup> Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*, 27.

He acknowledges his own life as a journey going in a reverse direction to that which most people have been forced to take. He leads his disciples into a mountain and teaches them the philosophy of *Dan* that pertains to self-denial, and which helps them cast out the temptation of selfishness and comfort.<sup>76</sup> At the end of story, Chang leads his disciples, and they march together toward the capital city, each and every one carrying beggars' cans. Chang proclaims in their midst:

Paradise is to share food with others.

Food is heaven. (28)

When the big march comes closer to the capital, the authorities get more confused and more frightened. The journey of Chang and his disciples goes against the flow of the multitudes undertaking their daily journey, an "endless transmigratory pilgrimage to their destination and then a return to the place where there is no food."<sup>77</sup> These multitudes throng

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<sup>75</sup> Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*, 29.

<sup>76</sup> See Nam-dong Suh's discussion of *Dan*, "Towards a Theology of Han," in eds. The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, *Minjung theology: People as the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983), 55-72. According to Suh, *Dan* (meaning the act of "cutting") is the poet's self-denial. One's enlightenment (or revolution) should be accompanied by living as "a wayfarer, leaving everything behind." *Dan* also conveys a social dimension of the people: "Cutting the vicious circle of revenge" for "the transformation of the secular world and secular attachments." If needed, *Dan* ought to be developed into a decisive and organized explosion. This transition lies in "religious commitment" and in "internal and spiritual transformation." I will address the theme of "commitment" and "internal/spiritual transformation" in the concluding chapter. See Suh (1983), 56-57.

<sup>77</sup> Nam-dong Suh sees the life of Chang as the social biography of the Korean *Minjung*. Suh notes that: "religious ascetism, revolutionary action, a yearning for the communal life of early Christianity and a deep affection for the valiant resistance of Koreans are all part of Chang's kaleidoscopic world." For Suh, some of those movements and ideas combine and coalesce, and others clash in confrontation. See "Historical References for a Theology of

around Chang and his disciples, adding to their numbers. Before Chang finishes his journey, however, he gets arrested. He was betrayed by one of his disciples, another down-and-out.

The authority takes him out in order to execute him in public for conspiring against the throne. At the moment, he begins to sing a song, entitled “Food is Heaven”:

Food is heaven  
You can't make it on your own  
Food should be shared.  
Food is heaven.  
We all see  
the same stars in heaven  
How natural it is that we  
all share the same food.  
Food is heaven  
as we eat  
God enters us  
food is heaven.  
Oh, food  
should be shared and eaten by all. (30)

Finally, Chang is beheaded. Three days after his decapitation, however, he returns to life.

His resurrection is so strange that his head is put on the betrayer's body, and the betrayer's

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*Minjung*,” in eds. The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, *Minjung Theology: People As the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 155-182; esp. 177.

head on Chang's body. The head speaking justice and truth is bonded to the body carrying injustice and falsehood.

Presumably, such a strange scene promises resurrection not to physical bodies, but to hybrid existence woven out of 'self' and 'other,' regardless of whether or not each is recognized as 'good' or 'bad.' For Kim, this is the resurrection—an embrace that is truly celebrative, from which the notion of political economy shall flow. In the face of conceptual straitjacketing, Kim affirms heterogeneity over and against the tyranny of seamless homogeneity. Chang already witnessed the Otherness—a 'God'—in a grimy cesspool of humanity.

As such, Kim envisions Chang's birth, itinerating, preaching of liberation, trial, and execution as the reproduction of the life of Jesus.<sup>78</sup> Those prostitutes, prisoners, and beggars, with whom Chang joins himself were, in fact, the *minjung* who are victimized by the powerful oppressors—that is, markets, governments, and corporations. They were heavily taxed by the bias of the ruling class and marginalized from the center of society. Some of them lost their speech, others followed the path of the powerful, and still others had to engage in self-censoring. Chang Il Tam's story is a witness of the life of *minjung* in the 1970s, one that slides into a deep pit where political economy normalizes the degrading of human lives and bodies.

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<sup>78</sup> David Suh describes Chang's life as "complete conformity with the *han* of hell." According to Suh, *Han* which is a feeling of helpless suffering and oppression becomes the most important element in the politico-economic consciousness of the *minjung*. See the discussion of David Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," in *Minjung theology: People as the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 24-28.

However, when Chang finds the truth at the bottom, the bottom turns upside down and becomes heaven. Chang's resurrection is an initiation into mysteries, enabling those marginalized to perceive and understand what is otherwise beyond human perception and understanding. Through the carrier, a body of the 'evil,' the news of liberation becomes widespread as by a wild and stormy wind.

### Challenge of *Minjung* Theology Today

The word *minjung* was first used in theology by two scholars, Ahn Byung Mu and Suh Nam Dong, both in 1975.<sup>79</sup> When Minjung Theology first arose in Korea in the early 1970's, it was most likely a theological proposal to vindicate 22 year-old *Jun Tae-il*. He immolated himself on a street in the front of the Pyonghwa Market in November 1970 in a protest against the labor conditions to which he and his coworkers were subject. Sweatshops were densely packed into the market where he toiled as a garment worker.

What particularly caused his suicidal protest were the miserable lives of "See-da," who worked in a sweatshop covered with dust, from early morning to midnight every day. The term "See-da" used to refer to downcast laborers, albeit with a despised connotation of 'errand boy'. Most of them were women as young as thirteen, in Korea. The Japanese

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<sup>79</sup> The word *minjung* indicates common people who undergo socio-cultural alienation, economic exploitation, or political oppression. Kim Yong-bock states that "the reality and identity of Minjung is not to be known by the philosophical or scientific definition of the character or substance of *minjung*. It is to be known by the story of *minjung*, that is, the social biography created by *minjung* themselves." Kim Yong-bock, *Korean Minjung and Christian* (Seoul: Hyungsungsa, 1988), 110.

colonial etymology of the word, however, points to a different meaning, that is, “supporter” or “advocate,” “*See-da-ba-da-rakee*.”

These “*See-da*,” who were never known by their own names or capacities, frequently fell victim to abrupt deaths or fatal diseases due to the hazardous working circumstances. Feeling that there was no other way to bring attention to their plight, *Jun Tae-il* had decided on a more radical course of action. He left his world shouting, “We are not machines!” Jun’s death is recorded in Korean history as a spark that started the labor union movement, which led to the end of the ‘developmental’ dictatorship. A distorted meaning of *See-da*, the plight of the downcasts and undocumented laborers, has been still transmitted through Korean *minjung* (hi)story.<sup>80</sup>

For the *minjung* theologian, Suh Nam Dong, Chang Il Tam is an heir to both Korean *minjung* and Christian *minjung* traditions. He acknowledges that the story of Chang Il Tam provides a description of the suffering Jesus *in disguise*, just like the poor, the weak, and the ones who need clothes or have nowhere to go (e.g., Matt 25:31-46). Chang Il Tam is the Jesus of Korea, born in Korea in the 1970s. In this way, the *minjung* becomes Messiah.<sup>81</sup> This does not mean that the *minjung* and Jesus are ontologically identical. Although the *minjung* are not Jesus himself, they rather play the role of Messiah in two distinct ways.

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<sup>80</sup> Much the same could be said about the consequence of the Japanese imperial conscriptions in Korea whether sexual slaves (*Chongshindae*) or military/labor resources (*Chingyong*) at the war fronts. While the legacy of colonialism and the threat of neocolonialism that shaped the lands of the Far East have often gone unnoticed, the colonial implications can be seen readily at work in any number of instances. Such a multifaceted context involving politics and economy which form another cultural text proves ever more significant for our reading of the political economy of the Third Gospel.

<sup>81</sup> Suh Nam Dong, *A Study on Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1980).

First, they bear “the remaining suffering” of Messiah. In Matt 25:31-46, for example, the poor, the weak, and those who are in need of clothes and have nowhere to go are identified with Jesus. They are “Jesus in disguise.” A man who suffered at the hands of robbers in Luke 10:30-35 also can be a type of Messiah, playing a Messianic role, a role of Jesus Christ. He was half dead and cried out for help. His groaning and crying is a symbol that repeatedly asserts itself in the process of history and controls what one may find in the cultural text.

By presenting the despised *minjung* as the one who has true subjectivity, the early *minjung* theology attempted to tackle all the stereotypes and prejudices. True salvation is found among those *minjung* who bear the suffering of the Christ and who cannot truly rely on powerful institutions—be they economic, political, or religious institutions. The suffering Jesus is an affirmation for *minjung* in the face of a constant barrage from the experience of “otherness,” a cry from agony.

Second, tainted as they are by colonial exploitations, the identity of *minjung* regenerates itself into the one who participates in the suffering of the *minjung*. The fellowship of suffering involves a self who responds to the Others as a “subject of history.”<sup>82</sup> A self-conscious turn to the Others not only expresses the eschatological aspiration of an unredeemed world, but actually overcomes the powers of evil that enslave, and dwell in, humanity. In this regard, Suh states that:

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 181; emphasis mine.

If someone goes to the dying man and treats him, then s/he becomes a true human. But if s/he ignores him and passes by, then s/he becomes a beast. The way I fulfill humanity depends on whether I hear the groan of the suffering man and help him or not...The participating in the suffering of the *Minjung* is the way of becoming a true human and a way of salvation.<sup>83</sup>

The affirmation of those participants as a *prototype* of humanity is a call to recognize the *present* manifestations of the divine Jesus in the *minjung*. This enables human agency in a mysterious way and creates opportunities in bringing about different life and reality.<sup>84</sup>

With hope both for and against historical realities, *minjung* share such stories as folktales, songs, and even rumors that inspire the *minjung* to resist or to transform the oppressive power and construct. Through the stories multiplying, the *minjung* participate together in their movement.<sup>85</sup> In this respect, the role of the *minjung* as Messiah is not merely *given*, but *gives*, especially to the one who receives it. The affirmation of those participants not only clarifies what it means to be a human being, singularly and in community, but also establishes their identity as the subjects of history. The vision as such brings forth the ethical, political, and theological significance of human subjects. *Minjung*

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-81.

<sup>84</sup> This seems peculiar when compared with the Hebrews exodus from bondage in Egypt. Richard Horsley asserts that those Hebrews are the very prototype of people claiming its agency. See Richard Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 18

<sup>85</sup> Indeed, listening to those stories and voices from the margin should broaden one's knowledge and information base, provoking the process that becomes a discursive conscientization. See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 52-53.



Theology, through the 1980s, has addressed the power of subordinated individuals and groups to resist and subvert the dominant structures, even if they must do so in ways that appear hybrid, abnormal, illegal or ineffective.

For early Minjung Theology, the “social biography of the *minjung*,” or the collective experience of *minjung*, serve as the hermeneutical basis for interpreting the resources of Minjung Theology—that is, the Bible, tradition, and history.<sup>86</sup> Listening to the voices from the margin through such stories as folktales, songs, and even rumors inspires the readers to (re)read the Bible and examine some of the core beliefs of history. Hyun Young-Hak refers to this as an “experience of critical transcendence.”<sup>87</sup> He states that “beginning to *do* theology in such a way is exciting, for you feel theology with your body and dance with it before you *think* it.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, as anti-Western theology, early Minjung Theology pertains to what Freire might call a “discursive conscientization.”<sup>89</sup>

However, later *minjung* traditions have not been sufficiently enlisted to contribute to Minjung Theology. Taesoo Yim explains the reasons for this in his monograph, *Minjung Theology towards a Second Reformation*:

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<sup>86</sup> Kim Yong-bock, *Korean Minjung and Christian* (Seoul: Hyungsungsa, 1988), 110.

<sup>87</sup> Hyun Young-Hak, “A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea” in *Minjung Theology*. Edited by the Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (CTC-CCA) (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 47-54.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Freire (1993): 52-53.

A problem lies in the fact that contents of *minjung* traditions are diverse and different. Their value systems are not only diverse, but also contradictory and antithetical to each other sometimes.<sup>90</sup>

Indeed, since *minjung* traditions first gained their widespread recognition in the mid-1970s, such contradiction and diversity have significantly increased and become part of the tradition itself.<sup>91</sup> In the globalization process, traditional contradictions between classes, races, and genders have become more complicated and complicating at all levels and in all places.

In addition, whether out of fear, ignorance or prejudice, not a few working classes accepted their role in politics of “trickle down” economy that they have handed over their share of freedom and development to those who are already rich. With such “beliefs and actions,” the increase of gross product has been commonly associated with the improvement in their welfare. In reality, however, the effect on the *minjung* was to make them more dependent in every way for their very existence on the vicious rules in the global market and thereby exclude them further from participation in their own life. The majority of laborers who are jobless and contingent have become more persistent, while the administered world of capitalism ensures the freedom of multinationals from local interference.

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<sup>90</sup> Taesoo Yim, *Minjung Theology Towards a Second Reformation* (Seoul: Christian Conference of Asia, 2006), 121.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

Hence, the lives of the *minjung* have been deeply marked as ‘contradictions,’ ‘gaps’ and ‘silences’ that serve as a signifier of problems in the cultural text that involves a variety of colonial and postcolonial exploitations of people and land. Poet Ko Un, gripped by pain and sorrow, reveals his powerlessness in *Letter to the Tuman River* (1993).

My sister dear, one hundred times dear, ever dear sister, suppose that you die  
up there one day and I down here? But that’s our people’s life, age after age,  
that kind of hidden, nameless death.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, in the 1990s when the incongruities escalated consciousness, the *minjung* traditions, as well as the traditional understanding of *minjung*, have ceased to be evident.

The problems and difficulties that *minjung* theology encounters today bring about the following questions: Would there be today the economics of life, a theology of *oikonomia* in the Bible that can move people beyond their own fear and constraint to be here, here and now? Can one be simultaneously located within boundaries and constantly moving across boundaries, attached to the present and detached from it, with a deeper vision both for and against historical realities? Can *minjung* survive with such a vision—not a vision that is projected from a culture—because, as Ted Smith notes, it might become its ‘uncritical’ reproduction, though it may seem ‘ideal’—but a vision of the beyond that arises from their sacred household (cf. Lk 3:23-38), in which one already lives—either in a ‘sanctuary’ of

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<sup>92</sup> Ko Un, *The Sound of My Waves: Selected Poems by Ko Un*. Trans. by Brother Anthony Kim (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 29.

silence (e.g., Lazarus, Lk 16:19-31) or ambivalence (e.g., the shrewd steward, Lk 16:1-13)?<sup>93</sup>

Henceforth, from an East Asian *minjung* perspective, I focus special attention on the household parables in the Gospel of Luke that might thrust the reader back to an encounter with the (*minjung*-)messiah, which will foster human agency and (comm)unity—that is, *oikos* and *oikonomia* between and beyond center and periphery, metropolis and margins, in effect, the imperial and the colonial.

In the section that follows, I will review and critique the history of scholarship of the Gospel of Luke as related to the Lukan re-presentation of economics and the academic treatment of such economics.

#### Delineating the Methodological Approach

The interest which Luke, unique among the evangelists, manifests in the issue of wealth and poverty is always related to the matter of household.<sup>94</sup> The Gospel of Luke unveils the colonial construct of household, inherited or otherwise, that carries out the norms affirming “this is the way things are” or “should be.” Under the concrete “material” reality of the Roman Empire, Luke’s household represents a reconstruction of economy that

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<sup>93</sup> Ted Smith, *The New Measures: A Theological History of Democratic Practice* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>94</sup> Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: the Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 188.

challenges the reciprocities, as well as inequalities, embedded in the imperial establishments. As such, I shall argue for the economics of the Gospel of Luke as an expression of resistance and liberation that germinate from within the imperial context of the colonized Mediterranean world.

While recognizing and unveiling an imperial-colonial structure of economy, Luke's household frees people from that economy, or otherwise challenges it, unmasking its threat of scarcity and starvation. Luke associates economy with various, yet distinct, kinds of political, social, cultural, and religious expressions, integrating extraneous bits and pieces into a unified whole of *oikonomia*. Luke's construct of economy does not simply function in terms of the welfare of a few, as in most of the Greco-Roman world; but bases itself on the heteronymous dimensions of human existence and effects the empowerment of human agency that includes the 'self' and 'other' or the 'individual' and 'collective.'

With the introduction of redaction criticism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, much of the scholarly literature on wealth and possessions in Luke has focused on accounting for or resolving the tensions between the traditions of renunciation and almsgiving.<sup>95</sup> Their dilemma is well articulated by Luke Timothy Johnson: "The problem we face is that although Luke consistently talks about possessions, he does not talk about possessions

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<sup>95</sup> See the helpful discussion of Thomas E. Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001); see also John Donahue, "Two Decades of Research on the Rich and Poor in Luke-Acts," in Douglas A. Knight and Peter J. Paris (eds.), *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 129-44; Robert Karris, "Poor and Rich: The Lukan Sitz-im-Leben," in Charles H. Talbert (ed.), *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), 112-125.

consistently.”<sup>96</sup> The swell of recent attention notwithstanding, their understanding of property and its ‘relational’ appropriations has conveniently evaded the exploitative construct of economy that justifies the present condition and deflates human aspiration of transformation.

My argued heteronymous construct of Luke’s economics resists the purely idyllic, optimistic notions of Luke’s almsgiving as presented by traditional scholarship. This traditional scholarship which forms a popular point on the ideological spectrum has condoned the system of economy within which the colonial, socio-cultural norms persist. My reading, or ‘reading-construct,’ of Luke’s economics also warns against simplistic negativism, bluntly renouncing either all or part of wealth and property. This other point of the ideological spectrum has weakened the possibilities of celebration and freedom between and beyond ‘self’ and ‘other.’ My reading of the Gospel of Luke and its economics does not subscribe to either ideological stance under the Empire.

In order to expose the political, ideological, and economic nature of the Gospel of Luke as a response to the empire and its colonial exploitation, one must engage in decisive and conclusive hermeneutic reflection. In the section that follows, I will review and critique the history of scholarship of the Gospel of Luke as related to the Lukan re-presentation of economics and the academic treatment of such economics. After surveying the diverse reading strategies employed to interpret the Lukan text and their ensuing positions

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<sup>96</sup> Luke T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*. SBL Dissertation Series 39 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 129-30.

concerning the construct of economy, I shall situate myself as an interpreter in a hermeneutic venture and stress the need for a postcolonial optic.

This invites discussion with, and reading across, other particular geopolitical and geoeconomic reflections—in my case, the East Asian postcolonial context. From the East Asian *minjung* perspective, political economy is a space in which one finds the modern West’s most enduring and most sacred social and political ideals, its greatest fears and anxieties, and, thus, potentially deeper hopes and visions of well-being and conditions of life and life-together. In order to better engage in the evaluation and critique of the ‘reading-constructs’ and ‘reader-constructs,’ I shall follow, in general terms, Fernando Segovia’s plotting of the development of biblical studies over the century and ask how the text of the Gospel of Luke has been used with regard to the power and democratic visions of life and life-together.<sup>97</sup>

*Historical-Critical Approach* With the rise of modern critical scholarship in the nineteenth century, several scholars began to suggest that social and economic factors played a decisive role in the messages of Jesus and the early church. While these initial attempts tended to focus upon selected texts without regard to their Lukan context, the redaction criticism of the mid-twentieth century induced a more “consistent” reading of issues of wealth and poverty in the Gospel of Luke and, often, Acts. Critical readers have since

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<sup>97</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000). See also “‘And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues’: Competing Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism,” in *Reading From This Place*. Vol. 1. Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States, eds., Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1-32.

responded to the diverse stances and inconsistencies within the texts, such as dispossessions of goods, common possessions, and almsgiving.<sup>98</sup>

In order to sort through these diverse views as such, most redaction critics constructed “historical” readers who create a consistent reading of the texts, or traditions, on the basis of their first-century extratextual knowledge or experience. Stegemann points out that “Luke’s presentation of issues of wealth and poverty was directly related to the concrete situation in Luke’s own community.”<sup>99</sup> What they assume to be the “historical” reader and situation, however, is derived from their own particular constructions of Luke and the Lukan community. Those historical readers would be able to apply, and thus justify, the various demands of the texts upon themselves, either effectively (in case the diversity of economic demands are aimed at the single group of people) or selectively (in case those demands are two-fold and given to two different groups of people, such as groups of itinerant followers and of sympathizers).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> J. Donahue, “Two Decades of Research on the Rich and Poor in Luke-Acts.” Pages 129-44 in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson*, edited by Douglas A. Knight and Peter J. Paris (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 135.

<sup>99</sup> Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor*. Trans. by Matthew J. O’Connell. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 120.

<sup>100</sup> Hans Joachim, *Lukas Evangelist der Armen: Besitz und Besitzverzicht in den Lukanischen Schriften* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1965); Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Walter Schmithals, “Lukas-Evangelist der Armen,” *Theologia Viatorum* 12 (1973-74); Robert Karris, “Poor and Rich: The Lukan *Sitz-im-Leben*” in Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on Luke-Acts Perspectives in Religious Studies* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978); Walter E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor: Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981); J. Donahue, “Two Decades of Research on the Rich and Poor in Luke-Acts.” Pages 129-44 in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson*, edited by Douglas A. Knight and Peter J. Paris (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Vernon Robbins,



However, Luke's construct of wealth cannot limit itself to the one- or two-fold group of believers. Either way of construction affirms the basic or impressionistic relational character of the economy and its institutions and thus only advances Luke's political harmlessness. Because of its idyllic, apolitical grip, when regarded as a life condition in a broader colonial context, this method and approach runs the risk of sustaining the oppressive system and thus deprives theology of the most radical contribution of the biblical tradition—that is, inspiring and drawing its historical readers into radical visions of the beyond.

In this regard, Western dualism, individualism, pragmatism, and historicism, alongside intellectualism, militate against a sensible and energizing reading with colonial and neo-colonial subjects. In addition, this historical critical analysis leaves out the real readers who re-read and re-interpret the text, while such readers re-produce and re-present their undertakings as more than simply plausible, as necessary. In this regard, the recognition of today's flesh-and-blood readers provides a perspective which makes visible features of the

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“Luke-Acts: A Mixed Population Seeks a Home in the Roman Empire” in *Images of Empire*. Edited by L. Alexander, JSOTSS 122 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 202-221; Ireland 1992 Dennis J. Ireland, *Stewardship and the Kingdom of God: An Historical, Exegetical, and Contextual Study of the Parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-13*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 70 (New York: E. J., Brill, 1992); Kyoung-Jin Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology*, JSNTSS 155 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1999), “The Parables of Jesus: Current Trends and Needs in Research” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluation of the State of Current Research*. Edited by Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 231-54.

text and of the reading of texts that have remained invisible.<sup>101</sup> For this dissertation, however, historical critical analysis serves as a call for the study of the distinctive first-century Greco-Roman world, since the gaps and differences between societal, cultural dimensions among periods cannot be overstated.

*Literary Analysis* While redaction critics assume the historical readers' extratextual knowledge and experience in relation to the text, advocates of an examination of the finished product in terms of its overall arrangement and development, such as Luke T. Johnson, tend to disregard particular readers and contexts. In his work, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, Johnson explains his method and methodological presupposition:

A literary analysis presumes more than the simple recognition that the work as a whole bears a uniformity of style; it presumes that the writer was more than a collector and collator of sources, was in fact an author in the fullest sense.<sup>102</sup>

Hence, paying special attention to the wholeness of the text, Johnson seeks a pattern (or patterns) to the story into which dialogue or action concerning possessions may fit. In particular, "the pattern [of the Prophet and the People] is the very mainspring of the story,

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<sup>101</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza observes that biblical scholarship as a discipline still clings to scientific assumptions belonging to the "positivist value-neutral stance" that gave birth to its important historical-critical methods (1989: 6).

<sup>102</sup> Johnson (1977): 13.

that which gives the story both coherence and color.”<sup>103</sup> For Johnson, the rich and poor serve as metaphors corresponding to rejection and acceptance of the Prophet:

When the believers lay their possessions at the Apostles’ feet, therefore, they were symbolically laying themselves there, in a gesture of submission to the authority of the Twelve.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, dispossession becomes a sign of conversion or a designation of spiritual status—“an indication, a symbol, of his interior disposition.”<sup>105</sup> At the heart of Johnson’s interpretation is an all-encompassing definition of the poor.

The poor stand for all those who have been rejected on the basis of human standards, but are accepted by God; they in turn accept the Prophet. Among them are the crippled, the lame, the blind and deaf, the sexually mutilated, and all those ritually excluded from full participation in the life of the people. The religiously unrighteous are also included, the “sinners and tax-agents,” as well as those women who by virtue of their gender always took a second place within the ritual life of the Jewish community.<sup>106</sup>

Johnson combines a literary view with a historical critical approach, connecting the literary function of the Gospel of Luke to the historical situation of Christianity at the end of the

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 148. Johnson also states that: “Positively, possessions are a sign of conversion; by selling possessions and giving alms, a man shows that he is responding to God’s visitation” (1977: 148).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

first century. In his view, such a literary formation had a legitimizing function in antiquity, confronting a particular ecclesiastical or existential situation with persuasiveness.

However, while analyzing each part and its relation to the whole of the literary context, his literary analysis overlooks the wider “whole,” a broader context of way of life in the Empire. Johnson’s identification of the features of the text of Luke does not even address the representation of the Empire. His claims largely remain at a formalist level of the text, asserting the strict objectivity of biblical/historical narratives without direct engagement with the social location of the reader who engages in the reading and interpretation of the text.

The subject of literary formation in Luke’s narrative has been further cultivated by Robert C. Tannehill.<sup>107</sup> He finds that Luke’s originality goes way beyond simple editorial changes and extends to his composition of the narrative as a whole. For him, the literary devices such as parallelisms, internal connections, progressive sequences, and repetitions, pertain to Luke’s careful “disclosures of the over-arching purpose which unifies the narrative.”<sup>108</sup> Theological insights become apparent from such literary clues: “On the borderline between character and plot,” the story emerges “as a dialogue between God and a recalcitrant humanity.”<sup>109</sup> As Stephen Moore points out, this type of literary criticism is devoid of references to the Mediterranean environment, much less to the reader-construct,

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<sup>107</sup> Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. Vol. 1: The Gospel According to Luke (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986); see also Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York : Crossroad, 1982).

<sup>108</sup> Tannehill (1986): 112.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 113

thereby disallowing “the ‘personal’ associations that reading invariably sparks,” as well as “the affective aspects of reading as opposed to its cognitive aspects”.<sup>110</sup>

However, later development into more recent reader-oriented approaches begins to bring out the role of a real reader as both situated and perspectival. In his recent monograph, *Consummation and Wealth in Luke’s Travel Narrative*, James Metzger articulates that “as a way of respecting the social, cultural, and historical otherness of the Gospel,” his work prioritizes “the literary and cultural repertoire of the first century Mediterranean world.”<sup>111</sup> In this developmental phase, the Empire as context starts to be engaged. However, it still remains an element of narrative background, not the basis for an alternate political, economic, ideological representation. Scarce and limited attention is paid to the imperial-colonial construct of economy within the text.

*Sociocultural Interpretation* Since the 1980s, a number of different critical readers have attempted to enhance their understanding of economy in the Gospel of Luke by incorporating the tools and insights of social-scientific analysis into their reading strategies. For example, Halvor Moxnes has worked in specific cross-cultural analysis of the economic type, such as patron-client relations and the economic underpinnings of the Empire, including imperial monopoly, urbanization, and land expropriation.<sup>112</sup> In his work,

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<sup>110</sup> Stephen D. Moore, “Doing Gospel Criticism As/With ‘Reader,’” *BTB* 19 (1989): 84, 90.

<sup>111</sup> James A. Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth In Luke's Travel Narrative* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 56.

<sup>112</sup> Halvor Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 241-68. *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and*

*The Economy of the Kingdom*, Moxnes asserts that Jesus urges a transformation from distant relations to relations that are very close and characterized by sharing without expecting a return, while his later work *Putting Jesus in His Place* further exemplifies the relationship as pure gift from the mercy of God the housefather. Moxnes's typological understanding of socio-economic relationship follows Sahlins's characterization of the three different forms of reciprocities (generalized, balanced, negative). For Moxnes, almsgiving creates non-expectation of reciprocity and thus signifies the end of a patron-client relationship as the way in which people organize their economic relations.

Being informed by an abundance of social disciplines (e.g., anthropology, social psychology, sociology of religion, comparative historical, political, and economic research, etc.), socio-cultural analysis has escalated its engagements with the Empire.<sup>113</sup> Hence, the

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*Economic Interaction in Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), *Putting Jesus In His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003)

<sup>113</sup> B. Malina, "The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation," *Interpretation* 37 (1982): 229-42; "Why Interpret the Bible with the Social Sciences?" *American Baptist Quarterly* 2 (1983): 119-33; and, "Wealth and Poverty in The New Testament and Its World," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 354-67; P. Elser, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London/ New York: Routledge, 1994); J. Stambaugh, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); R. Rohrbaugh, *Modeling Early Christianity. Social-Scientific Studies of The New Testament in Its Context* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995); See also *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996); J. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991); J. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991); B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); C. Osiek, *What Are They Saying About the Social Environment of The New Testament?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984); D. Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of The New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1983); C. Roetzel, *The World That Shaped The New Testament* (Atlanta: John Know Press, 1985).

imperial reality as a wider socio-political context starts to become distinct hermeneutical considerations for this reading strategy.<sup>114</sup>

This model and approach has helped the modern readers discover how differently Luke views the economy from the way they do, since cultural uniformity is neither possible nor desirable. Due to the scientific and objective pursuits of socio-cultural analysis, however, the text has served as an opening or a “map” to the ancient society, culture, and time. Thus, when Moxnes finds almsgiving and hospitality as Luke’s alternative to the economic exchange governed by the power of the elites, he sees almsgiving simply as a return to the “old” values of internal solidarity, a traditional system of reciprocity, communal sharing, and village values. He limits and oversimplifies other relations deeply embedded in the colonial *oikos* and *oikonomia* and its complicated, and complicating, economic values and operation. To counterpose almsgiving to the modes of political economy in the Roman Empire is to merely lapse into a distant past, discounting the claims of that which is essentially heterogeneous reality under the Empire.

When the reader argues for such a socio-cultural reconstruction of the text, he most likely risks condoning an ethnocentric, colonialist hierarchy with the readers at the top and people of different spaces and times underneath. When the real reader remains faceless and becomes an “unchanging property of the text,” such a “reader” excludes flesh-and-blood

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<sup>114</sup> See the discussion of Gilbert J. C. Medina, *The Lukan Writings as Colonial Counter-Discourse: A Postcolonial Reading of Luke’s Ideological Stance of Duplicity, Resistance, and Survival*, Thesis (Ph. D. in Religion: Vanderbilt University, 2005).

readers in their diversity.<sup>115</sup> Later, socio-political/economic readings started to evaluate the implications of imperialism both for ancient communities and contemporary reading communities.<sup>116</sup> Only at this stage of the socio-political/economic readings does one see a direct engagement with the cultural/social location not only of the text but also of the contemporary readers of the text.

The overview, thus far, has sought to provide the scholarly framework with regard to the representation of the Empire and the politics of reading. With this critique and evaluation, I discuss the relevance of my reading strategy for the field of biblical studies and studies of the Gospel of Luke in particular.

*Intercultural Interpretation* Commentators have long dismissed the presence of the real readers and their social locations lying behind the variety of interpretive model-constructs. From the East Asian *minjung* perspective, however, I bring fully to the fore the construct of the real reader—in my case, that of an East Asian postcolonial reader.

Thus, I intend to read the text from an East Asian global perspective and thereby discern the ways in which Luke's economy (*oikonomia*) discourse transforms power and representation and promotes liberation in contemporary contexts. For my purpose, recourse to the *minjung* shall serve not only as a point of contact, but also as a tremendous resource

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<sup>115</sup> Jean Kim, *Woman and Nation: An Intercontextual Reading of the Gospel of John from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 25.

<sup>116</sup> Fernando Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll, N.Y. : Orbis Books, 1981); Roland Boer, *Marxist Criticism of the Bible: A Critical Introduction to Marxist Literary Criticism and the Bible* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2003); Richard Horsely, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009)



for transhistorical and crosscultural reflection on humanity and human agency—the kind of vision that Luke presents over against the colonial construction of scarceness and scarcity.

Luke's *oikos* narrative unveils the vision of life, a living reality, in this world—embodied or embedded in a new economy. This economy is not static, but is always changing, subject to reconstitution, or better transformation, because it is the outcome of future hopes and visions in the midst of present struggles and contests.<sup>117</sup> It also delivers a challenge for believers to transgress the boundaries charged with divisions of margin and center, slave and master, and exploited and exploiter.<sup>118</sup>

For this overall project, I comply with intercultural criticism, along with cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and studies of the ethics of reading.<sup>119</sup> Intercultural criticism, as I employ it, is, in principle, ideological not only because it situates Luke's ideological

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<sup>117</sup> According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, the postcolonial literatures emerged “in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center.” Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London, New York: Routledge, 1989), 2-12. See also <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/ashcroft3a.html>.

<sup>118</sup> In this regard, see Fernando Segovia's helpful questions for the readers today: “How do the margins look at the world—a world dominated by Empire—and fashion life in such a world? How does the center regard and treat the margins in the lights of its own view of the ‘world’ and life in that world? What images and representations of the other-world arise from either side? How is history conceived and constructed by both sides? How is ‘the other’ regarded and represented?” F.F. Segovia, “Biblical Criticism,” 57, 171. This kind of multi-layered questioning and investigating helps us to see alternative constructions that challenge our own convictions. Then, we can allow the economic myths of Luke's day to confront the systematic constructs of today's free market economy.

<sup>119</sup> Combining insights from various disciplines, including modern and cultural economics, not only allows for an awareness of economic relations and values brought to expression in Luke's *oikos* narrative, but also helps elucidate multiple dimensions of Lukan *oikonomia*.

position within the framework of imperialism and colonialism but because it pertains to the political and ideological effect upon the world in general and the world in East Asian postcolonial in particular.<sup>120</sup>

Fernando Segovia refers to the strategy of intercultural criticism as “an approach to texts, readings of texts and readers of texts as literary or aesthetic, rhetorical or strategic, and ideological or political products—not only to be analyzed as others but also to be engaged in critical dialogue.”<sup>121</sup> In addition, its framework pertains to what he calls “a hermeneutics of otherness and engagement,” because one may engage in “texts, reading of texts (reading-constructs or ‘text’), and readers of texts (reader-constructs) as others – not ‘others’ to be bypassed, overwhelmed and manipulated but others to be acknowledged, respected and engaged.”<sup>122</sup>

For Segovia, the sense of ‘construct’ on the part of ‘reading’ and ‘readers’ emerges, in fact, from “a realization that no final recreation of meaning or reconstruction of history is possible beyond all perspective and contextualization,” and, thus, “all constructs call for

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<sup>120</sup> The economic and cultural effects of Roman imperialism on subjugated peoples are frequently well described by current theories of colonialism, neocolonialism, and postcoloniality. See Sugirtharajah (2002): 24-28; Fiorenza (1989): 6.

<sup>121</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 31; see also “Toward Intercultural Criticism: A Reading Strategy from the Diaspora,” in F.F. Segovia and M.A. Tolbert (eds.), *Reading from This Place, I. Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 303-30.

<sup>122</sup> Segovia, *Interpreting beyond borders* 31; See also “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement,” in F.F. Segovia and M.A. Tolbert (eds.), *Reading from This Place, I. Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 57-73.

critical analysis and engagement in a spirit of critical dialogue.”<sup>123</sup> This pertains to what he calls as ‘reading-across’ that:

reads ‘across’ the texts, readings and readers it analyzes in ‘inter’—cultural criticism, highlighting what it considers liberative and rejecting what it considers oppressive. In so doing, it inserts the voice of the real reader, as constructed, into the discussion fully and unapologetically so. Criticism ceases to be a matter of recuperation and exhibition and becomes a matter of ethics and politics.<sup>124</sup>

The process of intercultural criticism as such helps me on several fronts. First, because it is, in essence, a comparative and dialogical practice, it helps me to resist the drive toward stereotypical homogenization—which reflects its primary context in the capitalism of the West, as Segovia points out<sup>125</sup>—and to abandon hierarchical biases and privileges. This helps me, in turn, to recognize the unavoidable limitations of interpretations, to engage in critical dialogue with other interpretations, and, thus, to relate to the history of Lukan scholarship. One’s cultural/social location cannot be essentialized nor generalized over other colonial and postcolonial subjects—across gender, race, and ethnicity—on another global time and space, as David Roads has pointed out.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Segovia, *Borders* (2000), 46.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>126</sup> David Rhoads (ed.), *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective* (Nashville: Fortress Press, 2004).

Second, intercultural criticism helps me to bring in materials from fragmentary stories, social memories, and the *minjung*'s life to bear upon my interpretative task concerning power and representation. This, in turn, helps me to destabilize the almost normalized interpretations of the Lukan text and disclose destructive political, economic, cultural formations and discourses. The engagement as well as appropriations of the text implies that real readers do have agency in the way that they "interpret the text from the materials and discourses available to [them] in [their] sociohistorical contexts," as Jean Kim points out.<sup>127</sup> The process of reading the text *interculturally* amounts to the process of reading the text anew with respect to the readers's cultural texts.

Third, intercultural interpretation as a critical tool keeps me open to constant questioning and continual revisioning with regard to the world behind, within, and in front of the text. It also encourages me to evaluate and critique as to which reading-constructs and reader-constructs stand as helpful or harmful to life, a life that has been denigrated as the Others of the contemporary neocolonial world. Indeed, there can be no ethical interpretation without critical reflection—a reflection which exposes oppression and misrepresentation and fosters justice and liberation.

Last but not least, the intercultural reading I employ helps me to address a sense of cultural, social dis/location. I read the text not only from this place, but also from the perspective of being dis-placed. Potential impacts I discern from this-place of mystery can be drawn in part through the power of the imaginations and the polyglot constructions of the world in which a new perspective emerges. While this reader's cultural/social locations

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<sup>127</sup> Jean Kim (2004): 23.

are hyphenated and become more complicated by the fluidity and complexity of identity, intercultural interpretation helps me to read the Bible anew.

Henceforth, by way of an intercultural interpretation, I analyze the first-century biblical world, but project its study to the contemporary experiences of colonialism/imperialism in a specific historical, cultural, geopolitical, geoeconomic location—that is, in my case, the East Asian postcolonial. From an East Asian global space and time, I should like to advance such a model and strategy within the literary text of the Third Gospel, particularly those parables related to God’s household and applied to the grassroots *minjung* in the Empire.

### Reconsidering Luke’s Discourse on Economy

More than the other Gospels, Luke’s account of wealth and poverty has evoked intense debates over the centuries. For the reading of the Gospel of Luke, I align myself with the marginal people and their voices which are suppressed and locked out of the prevailing modes of political economy. Luke’s text unfolds the events of economy that carry out the colonial, socio-cultural norms, which say “this is the way things are” or “should be.” Its ethic tends to focus on loyalty rather than on entitlements, on interested/‘ideological’ relations (Althusser) rather than on mutual/‘heteronymous’ unity—such as ‘hugging’ and ‘kissing’ with the ‘prodigal’ (15:20).

Once such a colonial norm becomes internalized among the colonial subjects, they act it out spontaneously. Accordingly, the “disciplined” remains unquestioningly within the

household, never realizing a chance to ask for even a young goat to commune with his friends (15:29-30). In itself, the mode of rationality condones silence or reinforces mimicry (cf. 15:25, “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command”). For colonial and postcolonial subjects, it will not be an easy task to articulate the power and transformative visions of self and other, or communal selves.

In this sense, traditional emphasis on almsgiving either effectively or selectively frames the Gospel of Luke as being ignorant of the dehumanizing effects of the imperial economy. Beyond the alleged value of individual assets and their utilitarian appropriation, such as trickle-down (from the top) economics, Luke’s considerate and nuanced approach is directly related to the transformation of political economy. Without addressing the larger texture of a (de)colonizing context, one cannot go beyond the contradictions, gaps, and silences in the text towards the transformation of history itself, as Luke challenges and invites us to do today.

Henceforth, this dissertation engages in investigations into, arguments for, and construction of the *oikonomia* in the Gospel of Luke that emerge from the *oikos*—an *oikos* where the prodigal returns as he is still prodigal and where the colonial *oikonomos* is praised for his shrewdness. It would seem that such an *oikonomia*—neither insensitive, nor self-interested—represents more than a self and other and registers interests that contradict its subsumed Hellenistic ideology. Thus, it provides an indicator for scrutinizing how the construct of economy embodies and codifies the vested interests of those who keep and maintain it.

Luke's *oikos* discourse is directly related to the creation or restraint of life and life-together under the Empire and opens the possibilities for perceiving an economy (*oikonomia*) without regard to property. While recognizing and unveiling the Greco-Roman structure of economy that holds the lines of power and property both hierarchically and patronizingly, Luke instead frees people from it or otherwise challenges it. Luke's economy becomes, therefore, institutionalized and more associated with various cultural, social, and moral expressions, integrating extraneous bits and pieces into a unified whole vision of *oikonomia*.

I have selected the five household (*oikos*) parables (12:13-21; 14:15-24; 15:11-32; 16:1-9; 16:19-31) in Luke's so called "Travel Narrative," not only because they are directly related to the theme of economy (*oikonomia*), which is not merely nor essentially comprised of property, but because they are further related both in structure and in substance, taking three interrelated steps one after the other: the Economy as It Stands (12:13-21; 14:15-24), the Economy as It Resists (15:11-32), and the Economy as It Transcends (16:1-9; 16:19-31).<sup>128</sup> Each story supports the next in anticipation as well as retrospection. With a focus on this progression, this dissertation attempts to redirect the attention to Luke's highly conflicted and ambiguous construct of political economy while offering one attempt at ordering and responding to this material by addressing the importance of cultural/social location in terms of the biblical interpretive task.

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<sup>128</sup> On the theme of poverty in the travel narrative, see J. Metzger's recent monograph, *Consumption and Wealth In Luke's Travel Narrative* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007); see also L. Johnson, *Literary Function*, 103-15.

Luke's vision of economy is the kind of construction that emerges from such concrete material reality of the empire whose economy is being drastically confronted. It is in the encounter with the world and economy in the Gospel of Luke that we are encouraged to be aware of our own constructs and myths. What is at stake is the well-being of the people of God being reduced to monetary or quantitative rational measurements. There is, therefore, an inseparable link between a praxis of biblical interpretation and a praxis of social change.

The early Christian Gospels' most radical construction of economy pertains to an alternative *oikos* and *oikonomia* which writes its empowerment ethic for liberation and justice both among readers of the text and in the contemporary world. Jesus' economy (*oikonomia*) arises not from the moral of good economic discipline and earnings, but rather from real needs and real *community* under the mercy and grace of God, who levels all boundaries of "every valley" and "every mountain" (3:5).

With this introduction, I will turn to the household (*oikos*) stories attributed to colonial subjects emerging both from with-in and with-out. Hence, an examination of the creation of the household (*oikos*) is in order.

### Political Economy for the People of God

Most discussions in the New Testament present the believers as God's own family. According to David A. deSilva, the formation of the family of God takes a Christ-centered focus:



It is now attachment to this Jesus that determines whether or not a person is in the family, rather than the person's bloodline or natural lineage. Discussions in the New Testament of the formation of this family focus on determining "the true descendants of Abraham" as well as adoption into God's own family.<sup>129</sup>

However, Luke's interest in the people of God is unique in that the scope of the genealogy in the Gospel pushes past Abraham to Adam and, ultimately, to God (3:23-38). Most of the persons in the genealogical list up to David are otherwise unknown, and David's and Abraham's place in the genealogy are not highlighted (cf. Mt 1:6, 17). As such, Luke establishes Jesus in the line of Adam, thereby pointing to the significance of genealogy for all humankind.<sup>130</sup>

The most striking feature of this genealogy is that it establishes a household of the divine and of humanity (individual and communal). This household of God does not "scale down" the Kingdom of God, but makes the place of creation the locus of *oikonomia* and the model for politics, economics, and theology (cf. 11:2-3, "Father...your Kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread.").

The image of the household remains the central picture that Luke employs as an alternative to the world as constructed.<sup>131</sup> The household of God, which is profoundly

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<sup>129</sup> David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>130</sup> In this sense, the genealogy provides the information of social order in a drastically different way from Matthew's and thus, a different guide for social interaction. Cf. Matt 1:1-17.

political and economic and profoundly cultural and religious, precedes and transcends the existing institutions of the Roman Empire and, indeed, any political economic frameworks. Hence, to read Luke's genealogical narrative as though it spoke of the God in the family history of a certain believer would be to miss the force of Luke's audacious metaphor as to what dis/qualifies all the established order whether within the Roman Empire itself or outside of it.

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<sup>131</sup> Recent studies have offered a wealth of scholarship on the nature and function of the household and the family in the Greco-Roman period. In their co-authored article, "Fathers and Householders in the Jesus Movement: The Perspective of the Gospel of Luke," Destro and Pesce argue that the life and function of the household are to be seen as the counterpart of the politics centered on the *polis*. Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, *Biblical Interpretation*, 11 no 2 (2003): 211-238. In *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family*, Richard Saller states that between parents and their children the virtue of *pietas*, which demands dutiful respect and loyalties, formed the core of the Romans' ideal of family relations and also public life. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). In her essay, "Roman Imperial Family Values," Mary Rose D'Angelo further investigates the impact of the Roman ideology of families on Jewish and Early Christian writings and finds that "family values," in the Pastorals, represent an accommodation to Roman values while, at the same time, the writings also encourage resistance towards the Romans. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Eusebeia: Roman imperial family values and the sexual politics of 4 Maccabees and the Pastorals," *Biblical Interpretation*, 11 no 2 (2003): 139-165; See also the discussion of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. E.S. Fiorenza claims that Jesus intended to subvert the patriarchal, hierarchically-organized society and to establish an egalitarian community for both men and women. With regard to the view of radical social egalitarianism, see also John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); I would agree that Luke's Jesus looks at the life of his time under the Empire from the point of view of the *oikos*. The household does not seem to be left inert or neutral by him. Jesus goes into the houses because they are the places where some of the central problems of his society become evident. Jesus himself deconstructs (e.g., renunciation of family) and reconstructs (e.g., institution of fictive kinship) a household that is simultaneously political, economic, theological, and cultural. It is obvious, therefore, that a discussion of the attitudes toward the house and household in the Jesus tradition cannot be made without a detailed description and analysis of the colonial experience.

I will, therefore, use Luke's construction of *oikos* which emerges from the genealogical narrative as a foundational point of departure for Luke's challenge of political economy. Luke's genealogy informs and reforms our historical imagination to understand the circumstances to which political economy applies as follows. First, God provides the imminent force and creative present power in political economy. This comes for the colonial subjects as a corrective, in which Mary being aware of her pregnancy is able to "see" the salvation of the lowly and oppressed (Luke 1:46-55; 10:23, "Blessed are the eyes that see...!").

Second, it is likely that certain norms of political economy should be obvious to humanity as a whole (2:31, "[your salvation] you have prepared in the presence of *all peoples*.") regardless of their identities, power, and status. God's *oikos* is not an "incrementalist" but a "maximalist" agenda (3:6, "and all flesh shall see the salvation of God"), involving radically new visions of political economy.

Third, Luke's genealogy reinstates the human person in *community*. My "life" is not merely given, but gives especially to the one who receives it. This does not point to reciprocity (e.g., *homo reciprocans*), nor self-fulfillment (e.g., *homo oeconomicus*); it rather points to *communion* (e.g., *homo communitas*) because God creates the person as in *community*. This person (rather than "commodity") must be recognized as such, and this can be done only when *oikonomia* is enacted in relation to the communion, and the community is structured accordingly.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> On this point, see Franz J. Hinkelammert, *Weapons of Death* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986).

Fourth, the representation of genealogy as an “umbilical cord” carries human subjects into the (re)union with God. In the Roman Empire and colonial Palestine, there is one movement proposed—a movement from the colonizer to the colonized, from the center to the periphery, from the powerful to the powerless.<sup>133</sup> When overt ‘rebellion’ outside ordinary and everyday life seems doubtful, the Gospel not only “turns around” the movement from its prior restraint, signifying there is more than one direction, but also “ratchets up” toward God (*contra* Matt 1:1-17), condemning the demands from the top: “In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be taxed” (2:1). Hence, Luke’s political economy empowers those from below to engage in powerful acts of imagination and contests in a dynamic-creative fashion the foundation of the present livelihood as constructed.

With strong political and economic overtones, Luke is bent on claiming and exercising a new kind of political economy in the context of the Roman Empire. The Lukan vision and dream which are attributed to the people of God are now ascribed to colonial subjects, who had formerly been reduced to monetary or quantitative measurements of Mammon (16:11). In order to be a living hope for all and for a just society, Luke’s political economy

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<sup>133</sup> F.F. Segovia, “Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic,” in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The Postcolonial Bible, The Bible and Postcolonialism 1* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 49-65. See also Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies* (2000): 119-144.

inevitably warns against Mammon which takes a place of a “god.”<sup>134</sup> The Parables of the Rich Fool and the Great Dinner are examples of such warning, to which I turn.

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<sup>134</sup> James Cone observed that what people think about God cannot be divorced from their place and time in a definite history and culture. This view continues to find support. James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

## Chapter II Economy as It Stands

Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread.  
Cancel our debts, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.  
And do not bring us to the time of trial. (Luke 11:2-4)

### Introduction

Politics and economics are closely related in colonial Palestine where Roman taxation ultimately pressures the economy to the point of near collapse and eventually to the point of outright revolt (66-70 C.E.). G.E.M. De Ste. Croix asserts that “the Roman political system facilitated a most intense and ultimately destructive economic exploitation of the great mass of the people.” The ruling elites, who had crafted the system for their own benefit, “drained the life-blood from their world.”<sup>135</sup>

Hence, the question “Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” (Lk 20:22) is directly related to the people’s longing for liberation from oppression and exploitation.<sup>136</sup> The question is clearly a trap devised by the scribes and high priests because, as they well know, “the things that are God’s” meant literally everything according to the commandments and laws: nothing belongs to Caesar. While the question is given to find an

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<sup>135</sup> G.E.M. De Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (London: Duckworth, 1981). He also asserts that “the Roman political system facilitated a most intense and ultimately destructive economic exploitation of the great mass of the people, whether slave or free, and it made radical reform impossible. The result was that the propertied class, the men of real wealth, who had deliberately created this system for their own benefit, drained the life-blood from their world and thus destroyed Greco-Roman civilization over a large part of the Empire” (502).

<sup>136</sup> Alföldy, *Social History of Rome* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1985), 156.

excuse to accuse Jesus before Pilate, the point at issue reveals that political economy cannot be separated from religion.

People must pay tribute to Augustus Caesar, the Savior of the Empire.<sup>137</sup> In his confrontation with the client rulers of Rome in Jerusalem, Jesus is forced to address the question of the tribute to Caesar. Jesus asks them to show him a coin and tell him whose likeness and inscription it bears. When they answer “Caesar’s,” Jesus responds: “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (20:22-26).

In the Roman Empire, the emperor was not just the Savior. He is also the Father, referred to as the “supreme father of the Empire,” or “the father of the fatherland.” The title of *Pater Patriae*, which was consistently conferred on emperors, was closely related to the protective, yet coercive power and exclusive authority of the *paterfamilias*.<sup>138</sup> However, the responses and responsibilities come from both sides by way of patronage. The colonial associates also relentlessly held onto the Roman Empire and became clients of Roman benefaction.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> The emperor Domitian was addressed as “*dominus et deus*” (“Lord and God”). Cf. Revelation 4:11, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

<sup>138</sup> See the entry for “*Pater Patriae*” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1121.

<sup>139</sup> Because of success of Romanization, the political, social system was consistent across the province from the early Empire, even in terms of patron-client, child-father relationship. Palestine was also completely romanized; accordingly, the ruling class of Judea cooperated with the Romans. According to Josephus, even the Yahwist religion was absorbed into Rome as one of the religions. See Per Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: his Life, his Works and their Importance* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988).

In this connection, the *familia* is intertwined with the larger social fabric. Malina draws on this connection when he states that throughout the entire Mediterranean world,

[T]he centrally located institution maintaining societal existence is kinship and its set of interlocking rules. The result is the central value of familialism. The family or kinship group is central in social organization; it is the primary focus of personal loyalty and it holds supreme sway over individual life.<sup>140</sup>

One's right to subsistence/welfare was only protected if one belonged to such a household and came under kyriarchal benevolence.<sup>141</sup> In this regard, one's *familia/oikos* replicates the dominant ideology of its own world without much consciousness and visibility. In this sense, the construct of *oikos* is not merely "economic," but closely connected to a norm that governs and even creates society. In the Roman Empire, the *oikos* was directly related to ideology and ideological representation within which the characterization of self and other becomes most symptomatic.

Luke's *oikos* discourse develops with respect to the life of self and other, which heightens tension that is simultaneously political, economic, cultural, and religious.<sup>142</sup> The

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<sup>140</sup> Bruce J. Malina, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide for U.S. Consumers," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19 (1989): 131.

<sup>141</sup> The word kyriarchal/kyriocentric derived from the Greek term for lord/ruler (*kurios*). According to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, this coinage underscores that domination is not simply a matter of patriarchal, gender-based dualism but of more comprehensive, interlocking, hierarchically ordered structures of domination, evident in a variety of oppressions, such as racism, poverty, heterosexism, and colonialism. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: the Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).



Parables of the Rich Fool (12:13-21) and the Great Dinner (14:15-24) unveil the colonial construct of economy as such. Both stories are directly related to the acquisition and re/distribution of property in the Empire which involves necessarily the agency of many lives and hands as well as inequalities embedded therein. For each parable, several questions are worthy of pursuit: How does the text describe the world with respect to the construct of wealth and property? What does the world, as described, present for the life of the colonized? What are the different attitudes the Gospel of Luke advances toward property? With these questions, I now turn to the stories.

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

The Parable of the Rich Fool displays the sense of security when the rich counsels himself to “eat, drink, be merry” (v. 19).<sup>143</sup> However, his security is misplaced, and he remains a “fool” in the eyes of God. This point about the false security of wealth and worldly possessions is driven home in Jesus’ warning against greed and the hoarding of possessions: “Take heed and beware of all greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (12:15).

For his fate, some argue that the rich man did not foresee his approaching death, while increasing his wealth for the future. Only later did he learn that all the possessions he

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<sup>142</sup> The dynamics of the economy and its systematic construction are embedded in the exchange of products, goods, services, and people. See Lévi-Strauss (1969).

<sup>143</sup> This saying often continues with “...for tomorrow we die” (e.g., Eccl 8:15; Tob 7:10; 1 Cor 15:32).

acquired would not delay his death and the reckoning that follows. Jesus' pronouncement resounds in this regard: "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God" (v. 21).<sup>144</sup>

Others argue that the rich man failed to use his wealth properly on behalf of the poor. According to Scott, the rich man did not earn by evil means. His wealth is God's miracle, as in the case of Joseph's time in Egypt or the land's produce before a Sabbath year. However, the rich man did not understand the purpose of his wealth, that is, charity (e.g., Sirach 31:5-11).<sup>145</sup>

However, either the idea that the rich man needed to be kindly instructed that he cannot predict the timing of his death or the perception that the poor had to be properly helped by the condescending rich man serves as part of the problem rather than the hoped-for solution. Ultimately both teachings cannot address the predicament in which the poor and rich are placed, because what is at stake is not a matter of knowledge (as opposed to being naive) or will (as opposed to hoarding). It is rather the system of oppression, in which the oppressors remain oppressors even when they are well-informed or well-intentioned. The fate of the rich man grounds itself in a place where the economy currently stands under the Empire. Both teachings condone the injustice whereby one cannot truly envision life and life-together.

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<sup>144</sup> Duch-ho Oh, *Faith and Wealth: A Literary-Historical Study of Luke 16 Thesis* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1996), 102-103.

<sup>145</sup> Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 138.

## Construct of Scarcity in Colonial Palestine

For the rich man, the dilemma arises when he produces a superabundance of crops:

And he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' (v.17)

Thus, he decides to raze his 'inadequate' barns and replace them with barns capable of holding the surplus crops, which will become provision for the years ahead. It would seem that this particular scene conveys the features of a rural life. In the Roman Empire, the majority of the rural population consisted of peasants, and above them were large landowners, officials of the kings and tetrarchs, and Roman emperors.<sup>146</sup> Under such hierarchies, rural peasants in colonial Palestine were extremely oppressed and exploited by such colonial elites, most of whom were city dwellers.<sup>147</sup>

It is widely acknowledged that ancient society was made up of two social classes: the elite and the nonelite. Among the elites portrayed in Luke-Acts are emperors (e.g., Augustus, Tiberius), the Herods, Roman prefects, centurions, and also priestly elites.<sup>148</sup> The scholarly consensus is that the central and local levels of aristocracy constituted less than one per cent of the whole population of the Roman Empire, but this tiny fraction of society

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<sup>146</sup> Freyne, *Galilee*, 94; Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 270.

<sup>147</sup> Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 67.; Sean Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 125 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 147-48.

<sup>148</sup> See Mary Ann Beavis, "Expecting Nothing in Return: Luke's Picture of the Marginalized" in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical & Social-Scientific Approaches*. Edited by Jack Dean Kingsbury (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997).

is known to have possessed a vast proportion of its total wealth, both in land and in other resources available at that time.<sup>149</sup>

Below these elites, Luke describes a group of people such as merchants, traders, skilled workers, and artisans who were relatively affluent (cf. Acts 9:43). To the rest of society belong such people as tenant farmers (cf. 16:5-7; 20:9-18) and unskilled workers (15:15)<sup>150</sup> and the slaves whose economic, social conditions vary; sometimes they were better off than the unskilled workers, who had to depend upon employment which was not always available (cf. 16:1-9).<sup>151</sup> All were largely regarded as the poor. There were also the expendables, such as the physically or mentally handicapped who were not able to work at all and whose only resort was begging for their survival (cf. 14:21-23). Poverty is, therefore, neither a virtue nor a spiritual state. It is a concrete material situation, relating to the helpless, the indigent, the hungry, the oppressed, and the humiliated.

It is also noteworthy that the economy of colonial Palestine was a subsistence one, in which goods were in short supply. Hence, “if someone gets ahead, someone else is sure to have lost.”<sup>152</sup> In this regard, poverty had arisen from the unjust actions of the powerful.

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<sup>149</sup> Dill, *Roman Society*, 94-95; MacMullen, *Relations*, 94-98; Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 102; Brunt, *Conflicts*, 21); Stambaugh and Balch, *Social World*, 65; Hones, *Roman Economy*, 30-31, 38, 42, 122, 125-26, 130, 136.

<sup>150</sup> The unskilled workers also include burden bearers, messengers, animal drivers, and ditch diggers. Consider the example of “the younger son” who had to feed pigs (cf. 15:15).

<sup>151</sup> Finley notes that in antiquity there was no clear distinction between slaves and unskilled workers in terms of social status. See Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 73-74; see also MacMullen, *Relations*, 114-15.

<sup>152</sup> Douglas Oakman, “The Countryside in Luke-Acts” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*. Edited by J. H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991): 151-79. See esp. 159.

While the wealthy took all the grain from the lands, the mass of people were left “the other leguminous crops” and had to face starvation.<sup>153</sup> Hence, scarcity thinking or the scare of starvation had driven people to the edge.<sup>154</sup> The colonial construct of economy was based on exploitation and the fear of starvation as such.

The system of double taxation—tax for the government and for the temple—is most responsible for famine in colonial Palestine.<sup>155</sup> According to Josephus, the Roman Empire required a quarter of the produce every other year, that is, roughly 12.5 percent a year.<sup>156</sup> In addition to this tribute, there were the tithes and offerings already due to the Temple and high priestly aristocracy.

In regard to these two levels of demands, Richard Horsley notes that: “The priestly aristocracy was responsible for collecting the tribute as well as managing their own revenues.” Furthermore, “the Roman governor appointed and deposed the high priest from one or another of those families, while other leading members of the families occupied other offices in the temple-state.”<sup>157</sup> Hence, Jerusalem high priests and other Roman client rulers whose own positions relied on Rome’s favor “prudently” collected and paid the

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<sup>153</sup> R. MacMuleen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 249-54. Cf. Esler, *Community*, 177-78.

<sup>154</sup> Peter Garnsey, *Famine*, 31.

<sup>155</sup> Douglas E. Oakman, *Economic Questions*, 66-72. Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics, and the World of the New Testament*. Trans. By Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

<sup>156</sup> *Ant.* 14.202-203.

<sup>157</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 85.

tribute.<sup>158</sup> According to Horsley, the total of double taxation on the peasants probably amounted to well over 40 percent of their entire production.<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, peasants and small landholders were pressed down by the lending system's high interest rates (6:34; 7:40-42).<sup>160</sup> In colonial Palestine, client rulers and their officers found various ways to advance their income by exploiting the people's needs for loans to pay the tithes and tribute.<sup>161</sup> As debts mounted, many had no choice but to "sell" or relinquish control of their land to their wealthy creditors—mostly, priestly aristocrats and the Herodian family and their officers. The small landowners and peasants became landless tenants or completely dependent on day labor; otherwise, they were imprisoned for their debts (Lk 12:58-9; cf. Matt. 5:25-26; 18:23-35).<sup>162</sup> In so doing, the concentration of land ownership was increasingly aggravated; the arable land came under a few privileged elites, of which Isaiah once warned:

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<sup>158</sup> See the discussion of "prudent handling" in Chapter 4.

<sup>159</sup> Horsley and Hanson (1985): 58.

<sup>160</sup> The concern of usury is encoded in the law by the prohibition of interest in Lev 25:35-37: "If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens. Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them food at a profit."

<sup>161</sup> Horsley (2009): 83.

<sup>162</sup> The poor often sold themselves as indentured slaves across the Empire. See Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, prophets, and messiahs: popular movements in the time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 58. The impoverished posed an ever-present threat to the Empire. The historian Tacitus uses poverty to explain the disorder of the Roman imperial society, whether it be civil war or provincial rebellion. See *Histories* 3.47.

Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room  
for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!

(Isa 5:8; Mic 2:2; cf. Amos 5:10-12; 1 Enoch 97:8-10).

The elites in the Empire continued to expand their wealth through rent, which came from leasing their lands to the peasants, who made up the vast majority of the population of the Roman Empire, and who in turn became impoverished because of heavy taxes and high rents.<sup>163</sup> In such circumstances, there were no isolated poor and no independent, ‘innocent’ rich. If one cannot discuss the poor without discussing the wealthy, the accumulation of wealth itself is a problem: “Woe to you rich. You have received your reward” (Luke 6:24; cf. 1 Enoch 97:8-10).

The Parable of the Rich Fool building extra granaries serves as a signifier of those problems with respect to the cruel construct of political economy. It is his control of land and people that has allowed him enormous economic success. The harvest he has acquired is indeed a consequence of exploitation. His land *Chora* represents extensive holdings, a whole district or region—an example of the concentration of land ownership.<sup>164</sup> The abundant crops from his land cannot be, thus, a miracle of Joseph as Bernard Scott argues:

[The] harvest...is God’s miracle. At the same time, the harvest’s size leads a hearer to anticipate that certain things will happen. The miraculous character of the harvest places demands on the rich man. To tear down his granaries

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<sup>163</sup> Hones, *Roman Economy*, 30-31, 38, 42, 122, 125-26, 130, 136.

<sup>164</sup> See BAGD, 889.

and build new, larger ones implies that he, like Joseph, will care for his people in the coming lean years.<sup>165</sup>

With regard to the repertoire of harvest, it is comparable to what Joseph achieved in the Egyptian Empire. Joseph, a slave of the captain of the guard, interprets Pharaoh's dream that "There will come seven years of great plenty," followed by seven years of famine; "and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land" (Gen 41:29-30). Hence, becoming "chief operating officer" of the imperial regime, he manages the collection and storage of the surplus (Gen 41:37-49). While the story illustrates how political economy is inseparably connected to religion (Gen 41:39-40a, "God has shown you all this...you shall be over my house; all my people shall order themselves as you command"), it also illustrates how the imperial regime commanded the economy and controlled producers and production.

The abundance of grain the regime of Pharaoh stored up was "beyond measure" (Gen 41:49). When the famine comes, however, Joseph demanded that they yield up all their donkeys, horses, and herds of sheep and goats in "exchange" (Gen 47:14-19). The imperial government began to buy all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh (Gen 47:20) and made the people debt-slaves "from one end of Egypt to the other" (Gen 47:21). Moreover, it ordered the people to render up one-fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh (Gen 47:24-26). In this way, the imperial regime and its officers took advantage of the people's hunger and the threat of starvation. Wealth and poverty is, then, clearly a construct set up by the powerful, who had control of the surpluses.

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<sup>165</sup> Scott (1989): 134



In this respect, Scott proposes that Ben Sira's teaching serves as a model for the repertoire's possibilities<sup>166</sup>:

Blessed is the rich person who is found blameless, and who does not go after gold. Who is he, that we may praise him? For he has done wonders among his people. Who has been tested by it and been found perfect? Let it be for him a ground for boasting. Who has had the power to transgress and did not transgress, and to do evil and did not do it? His prosperity will be established, and the assembly will proclaim his acts of charity (Sirach 31:5-11;)

Indeed, riches and poverty seem to be taken for granted in Sira (e.g., Sira 31:3-4); yet, Luke does not play in a minor key Ben Sira's tune. Luke never praises the prosperity of one's own making. Ben Sira's teaching is largely utilitarian and eudaemonistic since its goal is largely the attainment of a good and happy life.<sup>167</sup> Consider the following examples: "A lavish lifestyle is not necessarily immoral; rather, it is foolish and self-injurious" (18:32 – 33); "Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from every disaster" (29:12); Gluttony is condemned not necessarily because it is immoral but because it causes sleeplessness and nausea and illness (31:20 – 22). In this regard, John Collins states that

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<sup>166</sup> Dumoulin also notes that "the points of contact between the texts of Sirach and Luke are numerous." Pierre Dumoulin, "La Parabole de la Veuve de Ben Sira 35, 11 – 24 a Luc 18, 1-8," 169-179 in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom. Festschrift M. Gilbert*. Edited by N. Calduch-Benages and J. Vermeylen. BETL 143. (Leuven University Press, 1999), 178.

<sup>167</sup> For Ben Sira, "Riches are good if they are free from sin" (13:24); all people, regardless of rank, social status, or piety, go to Sheol (14:12, 16-17; 38:21). Consequently, Sirach advises his readers: "Do not deprive yourself of a day's enjoyment" (14:14).

“[Ben Sira] has a strong pragmatic emphasis on results rather than on intentions,” viewing the chasm between rich and poor as “inevitable.”<sup>168</sup>

For Luke, however, wealth and poverty is more than a problem of individual whims or contingent events. It is the problem of a particular “set-up” institutionalized in a particular form of material conditions created by human beings.<sup>169</sup> In this connection, the “rich” and “full” emerge as the target of the woes:

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation! Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep! (6:24-25; cf. Jer 22:13)

For Luke, the accumulation of wealth itself is sinful, since it is at the cost of the very poor. This is directly related to the scene in which Zacchaeus is redeemed (19:1-10). When confronted with Jesus, Zacchaeus announces that:

"Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham (19:8).

Having improperly amassed at least part of his wealth, Zacchaeus not only gives half of his goods to the poor, but makes the fourfold restitution to all those he had previously

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<sup>168</sup> John J. Collins, “Ben Sira’s Ethics.” Pp. 62–79 in *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*. The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997). See esp. 76.

<sup>169</sup> However, Ben Sira indicates that our location in society is in some sense “predetermined.” Cf. 33:12, “Some he [i.e., God] blessed and exalted, and some he made holy and brought near to himself; but some he cursed and brought low, and turned them out of their place.”

defrauded. Why, compared to the case of the rich ruler who was demanded by Jesus to sell all that he had and distribute the money to the poor (18:18-25), the fact that it is not all of his possessions has been debated.

Most importantly, however, there needs to be restitution, more than charity, over and against the fraudulent construct of scarcity. It is not about self-impoverishment, nor self-satisfying benefaction, but about redistribution of wealth. Making restitution is a recognition and indictment of the system that is harmful to the people of God. Zacchaeus's unorthodox engagement with the system marks him as the one who crosses colonial edges which have been least traversed.<sup>170</sup>

Ironically, however, when the rich ruler was incapable of confronting the *system*, he was *systematically* blockaded from the kingdom: "Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (18:25).<sup>171</sup>

Given the perception of limited goods under the colonial economy, the rich man's abundant stock heightens tensions in Luke's *oikos* discourse.

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<sup>170</sup> In Luke's narrative there are numerous other exemplars with astonishing flair, bringing out the conscientization and transgression for their emancipations, such as Mary (2:30), prodigal son (15:11-32), shrewd steward (16:1-13), and those others who "see" (2:20; 7:22; 15:20), "hear" (2:20; 4:21; 7:22), and "respond" (1:46-56).

<sup>171</sup> However, the audience would have thought that the affluent are sufficiently eligible to enter the kingdom (18:26, "Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?")

## The Foolish Self

In the parable, the rich man inexorably held onto a more exclusive and more self-interested household unit. The parable's beginning is a statement about the land's abundant harvest:

The land of a rich man produced abundantly (v. 16).

ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου εὐφόρησεν ἡ χώρα.

However, the harvest turns out to be only an occasion for the real subject, the man. He becomes the subject in the (hi)story as follows:

What should *I* do, for *I* have...to store *my* crops;

*I* will do this; *I* will pull down *my* barns;

*I* will build large ones...;

*I* will store all *my* grain and *my* goods...;

*I* will say to *myself*...(vv. 17-19; emphasis added).

τί ποιήσω, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχω ποῦ συνάξω τοὺς καρπούς μου...

τοῦτο ποιήσω...καθελῶ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας...

μείζονας οἰκοδομήσω...

συνάξω πάντα τὸν σίτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ μου...

ἔρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου...

It is notable that the man sees himself in the (hi)story, addressing himself as my soul (ψυχή μου), that is his very own self.<sup>172</sup> He carries on a dialogue with himself throughout the story, excluding the Others from it or never attempting to introduce them. It is “his” produce, which will keep “his” life for many years ahead. His “life” is, however, equivalent to the theft of the life of others, the poor. Through the survival of the fittest, he who proves “stronger” reaps honorable, lavish rewards and those who become “weaker” are selected out “naturally.”

He not only becomes the subject of the narration, but raises himself as the narrator, as Scott has observed.<sup>173</sup> He replaces the narrator to narrate his own story (v. 19; “and I will say” rather than the narrator’s “he said”). Just as he takes over the story and “usurps” it from the narrator, so he usurps the harvest, that is, the surplus life of its victims. He has gained wealth at the expense of the Others, taking advantage of vulnerable peasants. His monologue “What shall I do...I will do this” is strikingly similar to the soliloquy of the “unjust” steward: “He said in himself... ‘What shall I do...I will do’ (16:3; cf. 12:17).<sup>174</sup>

What began as a problem for the rich man is, however, a lucrative plan in disguise:

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<sup>172</sup> Scott notes that ψυχή often translated as “soul” indicates in the parable the whole existing person and not the spiritual entity inhabiting a body (e.g., Pss 41:6, 12; 42:5; Ps. Sol. 3:1). See Scott 1989: 135.

<sup>173</sup> Scott (1989).

<sup>174</sup> This sort of interior monologue occurs only in Luke.

My soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years;

relax, eat, drink, be merry (v. 19)

ψυχῆ, ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κείμενα εἰς ἔτη

πολλά· ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου.

The phrase “relax, eat, drink, be merry” recalls the famous inscription reported to be on the tomb of the Epicurean Sardinapalus: “Eat, drink, and sport with love; all else is naught.”<sup>175</sup>

The reference in the Pauline epistle also evidences such a form of the saying: “If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor 15:32). In this connection, Paul has warned that: “For all who eat and drink without discerning the body eat and drink judgment against themselves” (1 Cor 11:29).<sup>176</sup>

In the Gospel, the punchline comes after the story. Jesus says that:

But if that slave says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and if he begins to *beat* the other slaves, men and women, and to *eat* and *drink* and *get drunk*, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful (12:45-46; emphasis added).

Jesus connects the rich man’s plan to ‘eat, drink, and be merry’ to the harsh treatment of the “others.” Putting the self in first place—a self with voracious desire to have it all for himself—over the Others is subject to divine intervention. It is sinful because he eats

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<sup>175</sup> This is a common adage in Greek tradition and Jewish wisdom literature (Eccl 8:15; Tob 7:10; Sir 11:19); see also Scott 1989: 136-137. Sardinapalus was widely known in the Hellenistic world as an example of Epicurean philosophy.

<sup>176</sup> See the discussion of Young Suk Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008).

instead of “seeing” (e.g., 1:46-55, 3:6, 10:23), devours rather than paying attention (e.g., 14:1), and refuses to share the banquet of life while yet consuming the life of others. His plan cannot be neutral because he intends to gain ‘grain’ and ‘many years’ of life by the hunger and shortage of the others (cf. James 5:1-6).

Finally, at the end of the (hi)story, as God speaks, the rich man no longer speaks.<sup>177</sup>

Thus, his narration ends:

But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded

of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (12:20)

εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ θεός· ἄφρων, ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ τὴν ψυχὴν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν  
ἀπὸ σοῦ· ἃ δὲ ἠτοίμασας, τίνοι ἔσται;

The question, “And the things you have prepared (ἃ δὲ ἠτοίμασας) whose will they be?” (v. 20) is given not because he is rich, but because his wealth is made possible at the expense of the Other(s) upon whom he depends and who depend upon him. In Luke’s version of the Beatitudes, the poor are poor because the rich have made them poor. The hungry are hungry because those who are satisfied have made them hungry (6:20-26). If one person monopolizes wealth, there will be none left to go around.

The power the rich man has ascribed to goods produced, barns constructed, and household expanded, which has been authorized by the Empire, has idolatrous status in

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<sup>177</sup> By contrast, consider the example of shepherds in the wilderness in Lk 2:20: “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen...”

economy, a status not only rarely questioned, but, more importantly, hardly analyzed and understood by the rulers and their sympathizers.<sup>178</sup>

God refers to this rich man as “fool,” someone who shows a lack of good judgment—for Luke, the one who has usurped both the resources and (hi)story.<sup>179</sup> In the Gospel tradition, everything belongs to God and nothing to Caesar or to any human being. However, the rich man pushes a divine presence to the side of the stage and thereby denies God’s existence (e.g., Ps. 14:1, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’). Those who act selfishly and do not *see* the Other(s) (e.g., 11:40, “You fools!...so give for alms those things that are within and *see*...!”) are the ones who “store up treasures for themselves and are not rich toward God” (v. 21).

In this respect, Luke rejects the ideology that legitimates wealth and poverty—that is, viewing wealth as divine blessing and poverty as divine punishment (e.g. 15:18. “I have sinned against heaven...”). The rich man who has accrued wealth from an exclusive economy expects to stave off death for many years to come. However, “this very night” (v. 20), his life will be forfeited as opposed to his expectation for “many years” (v. 19). Presumably, God’s judgment that falls upon the rich man will be a “normal death,” which keeps the (hi)story prophetic, while it is quite unnoticed.<sup>180</sup>

The rich man entirely occupied with his own concerns has, in terms of Aristotle’s point of view, nothing to with the *oikonomia*—a development and cultivation of human virtue for

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<sup>178</sup> In this regard, the rich man’s silence should be different from Lazarus’s in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31).

<sup>179</sup> See Scott (1989): 127-140.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.



the life of *community*. In no way useful to the *community*, he is only capable of continuing his solitary existence, which is, in fact, made possible through interrelation and interconnection with the Others.

In God's judgment, the phrase "this very night (ταύτη τῆ νυκτὶ)" adds a sense of urgency, which is tantamount to the temporal expressions in the Apocalypse. The Seer's oracle in Apocalypse was made against Babylon and its collaborators who have accrued wealth from an exclusive economy:

Therefore her plagues will come *in a single day* ... (18:8);

For *in one hour* your judgment has come. (18:10);

For *in one hour* all this wealth has been laid waste! ... (18:17);

For *in one hour* she has been laid waste. (18:19)

The phrase such as "in a single day (ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ)" and "in one hour (μιᾷ ὥρᾳ)" intensifies the immediate fate of Babylon. In such a moment, the plagues will shatter the aspirations of 'Babylon' to everlasting glory. The excessive consumption as well as monopolization of resources will end as swiftly as the fate of Babylon.

However, "this very night" when God's judgment falls upon him, he will probably die in his sleep—for many, a completely normal death. In such a way, unlike Revelation, Luke refuses to create the Kingdom of God as an apocalyptic destruction of evil. The man will die. Reality will continue. There is no boundary between reality and Kingdom; they are mixed, combined, mingled, and running together. Kingdom exists in the present. It is in the muddled reality.

### *Oikonomia* for Gratification

For the rich man, his *oikos* serves as an embodiment of material force in its massive retention and defilement. As such, the story presents the deleterious societal effects of hoarding possessions which becomes the belief and practice of the ruling class of colonial Palestine, the overseeing masters of imperial Rome and the overarching rulers of economy.

Their belief and practice, which is, in essence, idolatry, seems equivalent today to capitalism where money is absolutized, idolized, or fetishized. Thus, as Sen points out, a human being committed to maximizing his or her own narrowly conceived well-being becomes today another “rational fool.”<sup>181</sup> Daniel Patte states that such “absolutization comes from a warped, darkened mind made *foolish* by deeply rooted desires to own, possess, and control...what does not belong to them”<sup>182</sup> (emphasis mine).

Indeed, all social goods are given to us communally. Such communal coherence should be the presupposition of distributive justice—relating to the *oikos* which is broader and deeper and longer than its exclusive goals and management. The economy as it stands in the Roman Empire becomes more intricate in the Parable of the Great Dinner.

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<sup>181</sup> Sen (1982): 442.

<sup>182</sup> Daniel Patte, “Romans,” *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 440.

## 2. The Parable of the Great Dinner (14:15-24)

The Parable of the Great Dinner sets up front a householder (*oikodespotes*) of wealth and property. He becomes angry when his invitations return rejected (v. 21). With regard to his anger, Steer argues that it is a response to the attack upon his honor represented by the declined invitations.<sup>183</sup> For Steer, the host's angry response leads him to offer radically different invitations that are a repudiation of the ethos of honor and status and the practice of balanced reciprocity. Scott also states that the host finally avenges his honor by himself rebuffing those who rebuffed him.<sup>184</sup> Heil further argues that:

Rather than seeking revenge on the originally invited, socially elite guests for the shame and dishonor of refusing his dinner invitation, the householder demonstrates a complete social conversion as he totally rejects the system of social reciprocity and surprisingly initiates a beneficent and non-reciprocal social interaction with the non-elite.<sup>185</sup>

However, the question still arises as to why patronage in the first scene is returned with rejection. Would it be also possible that the invitees did first repudiate such repressive social norms and the exchanges the householder wanted to reciprocate? In addition, how legitimate is it that the host's "conversion" to a "complete social" practice led him to "compel" the others to come in—such as the "poor," the "crippled," the "blind," the "lame"

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<sup>183</sup> Simon Morrison Steer, *Eating bread in the Kingdom of God: The Foodways of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Westminster Theological Seminary, 2002).

<sup>184</sup> Scott (1989): 161-174.

<sup>185</sup> Heil (1999): 109.

(v. 21) and the those in the roads and lanes (v. 23)—without even issuing a respectful invitation?<sup>186</sup> Insofar as the banquet rebounds to the honor of the host in the village, it shall, at any rate, increase the social indebtedness of those marginal people to the host.

If the host's invited guests are his friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors—commonly linked together as entanglements in that society—it is inconceivable that all the guests refuse to attend the banquet. In this regard, Scott asserts that their excuses lack merit:

A shrewd landowner would first inspect and then buy a field, and so also with oxen and the other commercial activities. Similarly with the marriage excuse. Since the servant is only bringing the courtesy reminder, the guests have previously accepted the invitation. How could the bridegroom have forgotten when he first accepted the invitation that he was going to be married on the day of the feast? Or who in a small village would give a party for his friends on the day of a marriage? A marriage feast is a major occasion in village life.

Indeed, it is always possible that at the last minute one or two guests would be unable to attend, but all the guests? If by necessity—for example, in order to recompense his lost honor or to insult those originally invited—the host turns to those marginal people, the

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<sup>186</sup> For those physically disabled, see the prohibition of becoming priests in Lev 21:17-21. Alongside the lame, the blind, and the crippled, the poor in Luke would refer to those who are equally marginalized, materially deprived, and substantially destitute; however, Tuckett states that in Judaism the poor are those “who rely totally on God in utter dependence for their existence” and “‘poverty’ can then be seen as a term denoting religious attitude, as much as, or at times instead of, material destitution.” Christopher M. Tuckett, *Luke* (London; New York: T&T International, 2004), 99.

story rather ends up intensifying the constraint of patronage and reciprocity.<sup>187</sup> Henceforth, I argue that the banquet is, in essence, a messianic banquet, to which the Gospel also invites the readers today.<sup>188</sup>

## Two Groups

Before the parable is given, Luke first exhorts the hearers to invite not only their social equals who could respond in kind, but also those social and economic inferiors who could not reciprocate: “Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind...because they cannot repay you...” (14:12-14). The parable introduces, then, two groups of people standing in opposition: the first consisting of persons with wealth and status and the second those with physical poverties and disabilities brought in from the city and the highways and hedges.

However, the parable follows a “pattern of reversal,” as Robert Funk calls it, whether it be tragic or comic.<sup>189</sup> The groups firstly invited to the banquet do not come and participate, while the people who are least anticipated become the ones who enjoy the feast. In this sense, the banquet initially functions as a catalyst, demanding a response from the people and ultimately defining such a response as either positive or negative.

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<sup>187</sup> Scott (1989); see also R. I. Rohrbaugh, ‘The Pre-Industrial City in Luke-Acts’, in Neyrey (ed.), *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 125-49.

<sup>188</sup> See also Philip Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: the Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>189</sup> Robert W. Funk, *Parable and Presence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 42-51.

For the elites, the dinner was a “social event whose significance far outdistanced the need to satisfy one’s hunger,”<sup>190</sup> so much so that it created and legitimated insufficiency for those others. Sharing food as well as sitting at the table, including who sits where in relation to whom, conveys encoded messages about power and hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, and boundaries-in-making.<sup>191</sup>

For those who were not invited to such table fellowship—that is, the “poor,” the “maimed,” the “blind,” the “lame,” and those from the streets and the lanes, they were least expected and the most unacceptable. They were outsiders not only in terms of cult, but also economics, since they were unable to repay hospitality. However, when the call arrives, those who were most unexpected respond with acceptance.<sup>192</sup> They prove themselves to be those who eat at the great banquet, described at the beginning of the parable: “One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, ‘Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God!’” (v. 15)

The invitation initially signifies the common Greco-Roman reciprocity and its ethic among those with privileges, properties, and power.<sup>193</sup> However, the banquet develops into an eschatological event “in the Kingdom of God” (v. 15, ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ), while at

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<sup>190</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Michigan: Grand Rapids 1995), 86.

<sup>191</sup> Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 249-75.

<sup>192</sup> See J. A. Sanders, “The Ethic of Election in Luke’s Great Banquet Parable,” *Essays in Old Testament Ethics: J. Philip Hyatt, In Memoriam*. Edited by James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1974), 245-71.

<sup>193</sup> Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., “Poor and Rich: The Lukan Sitz im Leben,” in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, Edited by Charles H. Talbert (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978).

the same time the first group turns to their *oikos* and *oikonomia* with an attachment so ardent.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, inspection of a field and oxen and marriage must be normal affairs amongst the elites.<sup>195</sup>

The excuse the first-invited proffered was that he must go and inspect the field. Presumably, he was an absentee landlord, both wealthy and of financial resources, a character well known from other Lukan stories (cf. 16:1-9): The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ (v. 18)

In the Greco-Roman world and its agrarian economy, land was the most important property and the safest means of wealth.<sup>196</sup> The wealth of the elites was based on land. Grain their lands produced was “the one indispensable commodity in antiquity.”<sup>197</sup> Rent also came from leasing their lands to the peasants, the vast majority of the population of the Roman Empire, who in turn became impoverished because of high rents.<sup>198</sup> As such, his excuse, “I have bought a piece of ground,” is directly related to the scarcity of the others.

In like manner, the second guest makes an excuse that he must test five yokes of oxen he purchased: “And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’” (v. 19)

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<sup>194</sup> Johnson 1977: 147; Evans 1990: 574; Derrett 1970, 136-37; J. A. Sanders 1974: 256-57; Ballard 1972: 345-50; cf. The exemptions from holy war in Deut 20:5-8.

<sup>195</sup> Johnson 1977: 147; Evans 1990: 574; Derrett 1970, 136-37; Sanders 1974: 256-57; Ballard 1972: 345-50; cf. See the exemptions from holy war in Deut 20:5-8..

<sup>196</sup> Finley, *Ancient Economy*: 102; Brunt, *Conflicts*: 21.

<sup>197</sup> Stambaugh and Balch (1986): 65

<sup>198</sup> Hones, *Roman Economy*: 30-31, 38, 42, 122, 125-26, 130, 136.

Oxen are essential for peasants to plow the lands. Without draft animals, their livelihood will be inevitably diminished or even destroyed.

For the peasants, both field and animals are the essential elements for production. Their absence could ruin the fundamental structure/subsistence of a family's life. With regard to adding fields and buying oxen, one need go no further than the story of Joseph. When the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread, Joseph demanded that they yield up their land and their animals in exchange (Gen 47:14-19).

Now marriage is the third and final excuse for the one who cannot accept an invitation<sup>199</sup>: "Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come'" (v. 20). It would seem that marriage as a matter of economy allows the imperial elites to consolidate their economic power.<sup>200</sup> In Plutarch's *Cato the Younger*, Quintus Hortensius states that:

Wanting to be more than just a friend and companion to Cato, but also to become as closely joined to him as possible and to link their two households and families...[I] tried to persuade him to give him his daughter Porcia ...<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. Matt 22:1-10.

<sup>200</sup> Braun (1995): 77.

<sup>201</sup> See Jane, F. Gardner and Thomas Wiedemann, *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 58; In this regard, "the more children a man had, the greater the number of potential connections with other families" Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 155.



Luke elsewhere describes marriage as a complacent living that characterizes the advent of the kingdom: “They were eating and drinking, and *marrying* and being given in *marriage*, until the days of the son of man” (17:27; cf. 21:34).

Henceforth, by setting possessions and the *oikos* side by side and connecting one to the other, Luke grounds the question of the configuration of political economy in the Empire—an interlocking association of power, property, and identity. The Gospel has Jesus telling his would-be disciples that they must “hate” or “leave” their household if they intend to follow him: “If anyone comes to me and does not *hate* his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (14:26)”. As in Luke 6:22 and 27, the verb *μισεῖ* in 14:26 indicates true hatred—to the point of blessings at the end time—and not merely some form of “loving less.” In this regard, the verb “hate” should be given its full negative force as in leaving:

Truly I tell you, there is no one who has *left* house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who will not get back very much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life (18:29; emphasis added).

In both of these passages “hating” and “leaving” function as boundary crossings; they characterize the break with the exclusive economy (*oikonomia*) to which one used to belong. The individual must reject the established familiar, cultural obligations and reciprocities and cross over into a type of *community*.

To the affluent, however, the boundary crossing, such as “hating” or “leaving,” is too grave, and they turn them to excuses. In this sense, their thrice-repeated refusal to attend

represents their inability and failure. Hence, the dinner is, in essence, a messianic banquet rather than a social feasting. Threefold invitations as well as urgent calls are merely markers that show the gravity of entering the Kingdom across the constraint of the economy of our day. The banquet as such serves as a space or margin, which has the potential to criticize the ideology—that is, economics—fundamentally inscribed in and around the *oikos*. The guests expected, mostly colonial sympathizers, were not able to come because their agency was deeply entrenched in the colonial constraint of the *oikos* and *oikonomia*, to which I turn below in detail.

### Patronage and Reciprocity

In colonial Palestine, the Pharisees served as advisors and assistants to the high priestly client rulers.<sup>202</sup> Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees is, thus, an indictment of the imperial economy in which the Temple and high priesthood were subsumed. In the outer setting of the parable, a Pharisee acts as host at a meal to which Jesus and a number of other people are invited. Jesus is the guest while other Pharisees stand aligned with the host, "watching closely" Jesus (14:1; cf. 11:38): "Now it happened, as he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely" (14:1).

In Luke's *oikos* parables, Jesus consistently engages in table talk with Pharisees (7:36-50; 11:37-54, 14:1-24). The Pharisees come into view in their hypocrisy (12:1); sitting down at

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<sup>202</sup> Horsley (2009).

the place of honor with the lawyers (14:3, 7); grumbling with the scribes about Jesus' welcoming and eating with sinners (15:2); and ridiculing Jesus, yet loving money (15:4).

The religious-political-economic position and role of the Pharisees, along with the lawyers and scribes, represents the interest of the priestly aristocracy, keeping revenues flowing with tithes, offerings, and in other ways (e.g., *korban*).<sup>203</sup> Luke's Jesus acutely pronounces them six "woes," referring to them as "fools" (e.g., "The rich fool"; cf. Matt 15:1-9, 7:1-9; Rev 18:1-24):

You fools!...give for alms those things that are within; and see...!

Woe to you Pharisees! For you neglect justice and the love of God...

Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor...

Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves...

Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear...

Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets your ancestors killed...

Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away...knowledge ...(11:40-52)

Jesus' pronouncement of all the woes takes place when the Pharisees are amazed to "see" (11:38) that Jesus does not first wash before dinner. Traditional interpretations have viewed this occurrence as the one related to Jewish purity codes. However, it is striking that Jesus' initial response was that: "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of *greed* and *wickedness*" (11:39; emphasis added). The Pharisees' obsession with the ritual laws is in effect to "plunder the resources that belong rightfully to

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<sup>203</sup> See the discussion of Horsley. He states that "In the traditional Christian caricature of the Pharisees as representative of Judaism in their obsession with ritual laws, however, interpreters usually miss the economic charges leveled against the Pharisees in these woes." *Covenant Economics*, 161.

the people.” According to Horsley, the Pharisees had “their own interest in the application of the tithing and other laws.”<sup>204</sup>

Thus, the scene at meals becomes intensely charged. According to Jerome Neyrey, meals convey a code which communicates a multi-layered message.<sup>205</sup> Meals, as “symbols of both macro social systems and micro body control,”<sup>206</sup> become highly complex social events related to social ranking, group solidarity, and economic transactions.<sup>207</sup> Neyrey’s view of meals is directly related to the typical social system of the Greco-Roman world in late antiquity—that is, patronage. From the title ἄρχων as well as from the list of guests (v. 3 “lawyers and Pharisees”), it is obvious that the host is a wealthy and powerful benefactor. The system of patronage was the dominant mode of political-economic-cultural relationship by which Rome controlled the cities and provinces.

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>205</sup> Neyrey, “Ceremonies in Luke-Acts,” 361.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>207</sup> Neyrey, “Ceremonies in Luke-Acts,” 362. Neyrey further applies the observation of the anthropologist Mary Douglas that: “If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries...Food categories encode social events.” Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal” in *Implicit Meanings* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 249.

Within the social relationships governed by patronage, one's position was not based on universal human rights but on one's place in a personal hierarchy.<sup>208</sup> With regard to the system of patronage, it is worth quoting Saller's balanced definition as follows:

First, it involves the reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Secondly, to distinguish it from a commercial transaction in the marketplace, the relationship must be a personal one of some duration. Thirdly, it must be asymmetrical, in the sense that the two parties are of unequal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange – a quality which sets patronage off from friendship between equals.<sup>209</sup>

Since patronage relations were predominant, there was no such thing as an isolated act of “grace” in Greco-Roman society.

In this connection, social anthropologist Marcel Mauss proposed that exchange is not based on voluntary or spontaneous giving but on social obligations.<sup>210</sup> The obligation to give, for instance, helps to maintain a person's authority within the social network of relations. The goods distributed by the master or his family refer to “the basic act of ‘recognition,’ military, juridical, economic, and religious in every sense of the word.”<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Moxnes, “The Social Context of Luke's Community,” in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical & Social-Scientific Approaches*. Edited by Jack Dean Kingsbury (Harrisburg, Pa. : Trinity Press International 1997)

<sup>209</sup> R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1; See also Moxnes 1988:42.

<sup>210</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Trans. by W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 11-12.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

This makes the recipient recognize his position and become grateful towards the giver. In principle every gift should always be accepted and even praised. The receiver of the gift acknowledges that he/she is not equal to the giver and maintains his/her own dignity and place in society by accepting the gift and assuming the obligation to repay. The failure to reciprocate in a generous way could be punished by falling into slavery for debt, or by being ostracized from the community.

When this exchange operates between the locals and the emperor, it is typical that local governing bodies erect imperial shrines or hold festivals for the honor of the emperor. In return, the emperor grants privileged status to cities. Then, the local establishment creates special local inscriptions or monuments in honor of the wealthy magnates who funded the project and thus brought imperial favor to their province and cities.<sup>212</sup> In such a way, the oppressive rulers and ruling institutions consolidate their power and privilege.

The system of patronage also applies to the case of providing the less affluent with food. When the wealthy and powerful figures supply them with food, the less affluent give them, in return, honor and prestige.<sup>213</sup> The fundamental ethos that governs this binding relationship is that “grace must answer grace.”<sup>214</sup> In this sense, almsgiving in the proper sense of the word did not exist in the imperial economy.<sup>215</sup> In colonial Palestine, the rulers

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<sup>212</sup> Horsley (2009):137

<sup>213</sup> Moxnes (1988): 42.

<sup>214</sup> deSilva (2000): 212.

<sup>215</sup> See Scott (1989): 149; Stambaugh and Balch notes that charity for the poor and destitute, who could not reciprocate anything in return, was virtually unknown (1986: 64); Kyoung-jin Kim also states that benefaction systems in the Greco-Roman society did not include the

of Israel, that is, the Pharisees and high priests, along with the Romans have organized an exclusive movement of resources by way of patronage.

In like manner, the parable shows that the Pharisee, one of the client rulers (v. 1), sits at the very top of the “ladder” in patronage and invites his allies to the banquet. His invitation serves precisely as the gift “to be reciprocated” in the interpersonal exchanges. Strikingly, however, Jesus speaks about those who could not reciprocate, such as the beggars, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, instead of one’s kith and kin<sup>216</sup>:

He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your *friends* or your *brothers* or your *relatives* or *rich neighbors*, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the *poor*, the *crippled*, the *lame*, and the *blind*. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (14:12-14, emphasis added; cf. 6:35, “lend, expecting nothing in return”).

In contrast to the affluent groups, such as the householder’s friends and peers, the poor and social outcasts are those who are unable to repay the favor. Inviting those outsiders means breaking the system of patronage and reciprocity that upholds and cultivates an elite group, which is, in Luke, clearly related to the construct of economy in the Empire: “The

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poor since they cannot reciprocate. Indeed, there was no “pure altruism”. *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke’s Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998)

<sup>216</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Green states that welcoming people at the table was equivalent to “extending to them intimacy, solidarity, acceptance.” In this regard, “table companions were treated as though they were of one’s extended family.” See esp. 86-88.

kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors” (Lk 22:25). Luke’s Jesus knows perfectly the mechanism of patronage (cf. Lk 7:1-10). In this regard, Jesus’ exclamation is unmistakable: “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God” (Lk 18:24).

As for Luke’s alternative, however, many commentators quickly return to the practice of almsgiving. For example, Moxnes argues that Luke’s recourse is to “a set of relationships based on ‘free’ hospitality (generalized reciprocity), gift giving, and servanthood.”<sup>217</sup> For Moxnes, hospitality is a ‘village’ value, as opposed to the ‘city’ ideals of patronage, benefactions, and the quest for honor. However, by returning to the “old” values of internal solidarity, he limits and oversimplifies other relations deeply embedded in the colonial construct of economy and its complicated, and complicating, practices.

The puzzle that one confronts is that of perpetuating ‘constrained totality’ by way of ignoring the role of human agency. Without encountering competing visions and cultivating human capabilities and freedom, such a construct of values and norms creates another baffling gap in the (hi)story. Putting hospitality too quickly as Luke’s alternative should be seen, thus, as a value which develops at the expense of transformation and liberation across the inside and outside. To what extent does such an option for or against the messianic banquet remain entirely up to human subjects, both individual and communal? The Gospel’s interest in the capability of human agency, rich or poor, should be unmistakable, while yet to be tackled.

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<sup>217</sup> See Halvor Moxnes, “The Social Context of Luke’s Community,” in *Gospel Interpretation: narrative-critical & social-scientific approaches*. Edited by Jack Dean Kingsbury (Harrisburg, Pa. : Trinity Press International 1997), 227.



## Who Can Come?

In his most recent book, *Development as Freedom*, Sen, the 1998 Nobel Laureate of Economics, turns decades of economic theory on its head by arguing that economic development and individual freedom should go hand-in-hand in order to counter poverty. By shifting primary attention away from the means toward ends that people have reason to value or pursue, Sen proposes the constructive role of human agency as an engine of change. For him, development should be viewed as enhancing substantive freedoms over and against “poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states.”<sup>218</sup> This assumption differs radically from seeing people as “passive beneficiaries of cunning development programs.”<sup>219</sup> Sen urges the need to overcome such a misleading image of development that often justifies the denial of civil rights and liberty. He further states that: “Being relatively poor in a rich country can be a great capability handicap, even when one’s absolute income is high in terms of world standards.”<sup>220</sup>

In this connection, the story unmasks the lack of human agency. The affluent and the outcast groups stand in contrast with each other, as do their responses to the call of the Kingdom. While the first group’s excuses convey their lack of capability, the second

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<sup>218</sup> Amartya Kumar Sen, *Development As Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 3.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

group's non-verbal, silent action may indeed come as a surprise. For the wealthy householders, the power of economy, which creates fear and scarcity, frames their perception of reality, which involves their complete person and world.

Indeed, Luke's exposure of their precarious agency is striking: They "watch closely" (v.1, "παρατηρούμενοι"). They "see" their field (v. 18, "ἰδεῖν"), "examine" their oxen (v.19, "δοκιμάσαι"), and "marry" another noble person (v. 20, "ἐγγημα"). However, they fail to understand the gravity of the banquet as well as of the "others."<sup>221</sup> For them, it is an ideology which is generated from the forms of "field," "oxen," and "person." Their ideological thought will have to be disclaimed if they participate in the banquet, a place of *communion* with the Others, whose otherness would threaten their closed economic system which produces its own image and likeness (cf. Lk 20:22 "Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear? They said, "The emperor's.")).

From the very bottom of the (hi)story, however, emerges the group of people, a group of outcasts, expelled beyond the borders but being able to "see" the true "greatness" of the banquet. They are the ones who have been excluded from the *oikos* and *oikonomia*. For those outsiders, the significance of the banquet is apparent, for their world only pushed them into the margins (v. 21, "the streets and lanes"; v. 23 "the roads and lanes"). From the *minjung* hermeneutical point of view, they are the very *minjung* who "see" new life coming

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<sup>221</sup> See the discussion of Frank Ivey, Jr. *Scripture and Parables: Luke's Gospel and the Spoken Word* (M.A. Thesis in Religion: Vanderbilt University, 1987), 34-43.

out from a “rotten” body. Even though they are in need, their need is precisely what gives them the capacity to recognize and celebrate in the banquet.<sup>222</sup>

The call of the banquet as such is Luke’s genuine apparatus for unmasking the debilitating construct of economy (*oikonomia*) in the Empire and the degree of agency actually attributed to human beings in the process. This becomes most poignant when Luke carefully compares and contrasts those affluent with the poor, alongside other physically disadvantaged groups: the crippled, the blind, and the lame (v. 21). Who are the ones that lack more capabilities and freedoms? With regard to the great banquet, the difference between them lies not so much in their property as in their capacity to ‘trespass’ from within and without. The discourse of imposition and deprivation encompasses both groups of people, while at the same time reversing expressions of inclusion and exclusion.

The banquet scene as such uncovers all the established allegiances to and scarcities in the economy of the Empire that is, simultaneously, political, religious, and cultural. In Luke, one may enter and find the inscription of, and critique against, the cruel construct of economy as such. The capability of seeing and responding paves the way to a new world, a new *oikos*, as opposed to that which the Pharisees represent.<sup>223</sup> Humankind will experience therein abundant life-blessings.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-43.

<sup>223</sup> Johnson goes so far as to say that: “‘rich’ in Luke effectively equals ‘Pharisee/lawyer,’ and ‘poor’ equals ‘sinner/tax-agent.’” *Literary Function of Possessions*, 125.

<sup>224</sup> C-H Abesamis, *A Third Look at Jesus: A Guidebook Along a Road Least Traveled* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2000), 36.

When the denial of affluent guests reveals their highly exclusive operation of the *oikos*, the inclusion of the outcasts represents an intense protest against the stronghold of “this is the way things are” or “should be,” the prevailing economic order in the Empire.

## Conclusion

Luke’s household discourse relates to dominant borderlines that create and legitimate scarcity in a colonial society. Behind the construction of scarcity and scarcity thinking, the Parable of the Rich Fool presents the one who claims self-sufficiency at the expense of the Others. On the other hand, the Parable of the Great Dinner presents the world of exclusive exchange and reciprocity. Food and meals were reciprocated not to the needy, but to one’s friends and fellow-citizens, either equal or unequal in economic status, who would be able to repay in return.<sup>225</sup>

The role and position of the Pharisee in both parables mirrors the political-economic-religious framework or cultural “zeitgeist” who claim their space, legitimizing their rules and norms. Their implicated authority is to be inscribed throughout, exerting pre-eminent influence over the life of human subjects. The all-pervasiveness of that exploitative construct justifies status, order, and identity, and provides both a chance to evade accountability and a vast source of patronage. For its victims, poverty becomes an

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<sup>225</sup> For neoclassical economics today, “demand” as compatible with “supply” in a market does not account for the consumers with a lack of purchasing power.

inevitable condition or the “divine will” (cf. 15:18). As such, human lives are hoarded and treated like other means and instruments.

However, this construct of political economy cannot endure God’s condemnation. The ruling elites who have expropriated the produce and consume the resources of the people cannot participate in the “great” banquet, a place of *communion*, where ‘self’ and ‘other’ celebrate life and life together. To do “economics” apart from the *community* and *communion* is a grave mistake for Luke.

Both parables offer invaluable insights for our consideration of the pattern of economic relations in the Empire. Given the global experience of the neocolonial market economy, which excludes those who have no claim to what can be exchanged, responding to the invitation is also urgent and imperative for readers of today who “see” its gravity.

These insights cannot be told, however, through the narratives of success or failure, narratives with their endings in this present world. They rather take the form of stories that can be told from a redeemed end that continuously addresses the present moment. This is a political-economic, cultural, and ideological turn to the present *oikos* and *oikonomia*. Luke’s construct of economy is not presented as an available set of codes, such as patron-client, honor and shame, and reciprocal exchanges; yet it is given as a site where new possibilities are articulated.

I now turn to the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which hints at Luke’s construal of an alternate kind of economy which invites the (post)colonial subjects to discern the call of God to act and resist as well as to embrace the power and transformative visions of life and the economy of God.

### Chapter III Economy as It Resists

O, yes,  
I say it plain,  
America never was America to me,  
And yet I swear this oath—  
America will be!—Martin Luther King Jr.

#### Introduction<sup>226</sup>

In the previous two parables, Luke's narrator has uncovered the colonial relations of economy and its justification of scarcity. Now in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke further cultivates an alternative economy in greater tension with the colonial norms, affirming "this is the way things are" or "should be."

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, several commentators argued that the Parable of the Prodigal as the *Evangelium in Evangelio* pertains to the topics of sin, repentance, grace/forgiveness, joy and sonship. In subsequent decades, Lukan scholars continued to pay attention to the theological, mostly soteriological, focus of the parable, turning the parable into a contest of personal characters—"good" or "bad," "disciplined" or "prodigal."<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> See the abbreviated form of this chapter, "Revisiting the Parable of the Prodigal Son for Decolonization: Luke's Reconfiguration of *Oikos* in 15:11-32, *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches*, Volume 17, Number 5, 2009: 507-520.

<sup>227</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes* (Eerdmans: Michigan, 1983). See also his *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992) and *Jacob and the Prodigal: How Jesus Retold Israel's Story* (InterVarsity Press, 2003); Stephen C. Barton, "Parables on God's Love and Forgiveness (Luke 15:1-7; Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:8-32)," in Richard N. Longenecker (eds.), *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 199-216.

In this regard, traditional interpretations have instilled in readers the perception that the father shows an upstanding type of loving, merciful patriarch—whose generosity resonates with the idealized picture of the Roman emperor as *Pater Patriae*—while the son(s) is a suspicious character, disobedient and appropriately deficient—precisely, what the modern European self is not. The waywardness of the younger son who represents sinners and tax collectors indicates their sinful transgression. Though “lost” in the past, they are now “found,” since they are receptive to Jesus’ call to repentance. On the other hand, the older son is a reflection of the Pharisees and scribes who think that they have always been obedient to the Father but, in fact, remain oblivious to their own lostness. They must emulate their merciful father in their relationship with others.

This sort of traditional interpretation has since closed the text with an acceptable interpretation and created a canon for the subjects who stand in front of the text by avoiding tensions and gaps between exploitative structures of domination and exclusion and the radical vision of liberation and well-being for all. Thus, it is important for us not to form judgments about any story or any characters in the story, but to allow them to speak for life and justice. In so doing, a new vision can emerge in another way as a flesh-and-blood reader is engaged in the reading process. With this in mind, I turn to the Parable of the Prodigal.

## The Socio-Historical Context of the Parable

The textual history of the Parables of the Lost and Found in Luke 15 is complex. To some extent, the first two parables—the Parables of the Lost Sheep (15:4-7) and the Lost Coin (15:8-10)—already provide the framework for the interpretation of the Lost Son—that is, what we call the Parable of the Prodigal.<sup>228</sup>

It would seem that at least the Parable of the Lost Sheep (15:4-7) represents a realistic pericope that can be counted as an early free-floating unit of tradition (cf. Matt. 18:10-14). For our intercultural reading, however, it is more important to notice the socio-historical context of the parables which influences Jesus' response to the grumbling Pharisees.<sup>229</sup> The Pharisees criticize Jesus' ministry of "welcoming and eating" with sinners and toll collectors.<sup>230</sup> Jesus indicts them for their hypocrisy (12:1), for neglecting justice and love (11:42), and for seeking money, status and self-justification (11:43, 16:14-15; cf. 18:9-14). Likewise, in other scenes, Luke's Jesus attacks the religious-political leaders and agents of the colonial authority (6:1-5; 11:37-44; 19:45-48; 20:45-47).

The Pharisees' and scribes' criticism and Jesus' response enclose the collection of parables. This context functions as a type-scene in Luke, that is, as a basic situation that

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<sup>228</sup> The parable of the Lost Son in particular appears, along with other arresting parables and stories, only in Luke.

<sup>229</sup> In other scenes, Luke's Jesus attacks religious-political leaders, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees—the client rulers of the Empire (Lk 6:1-5; 11:37-44; 19:45-48; 20:45-47).

<sup>230</sup> It is notable that, when there is no sign of any meal occurring, they criticize Jesus' ministry of "welcoming and eating with" sinners (Luke 15:1-2). The Pharisees' and scribes' criticism and Jesus' response enclose the collection of parables.



occurs several times with variation (cf. 5:29-32; 7:34; 14:25-35).<sup>231</sup> This particular scene pertains to Luke's challenge over and against the construct of the economy that justifies the 'inside'/'outside' boundaries, within which human identities are contested and often jeopardized, dealing death as often as life (cf. 15:32, "But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."). While retelling stories of Jesus and the Jesus traditions in his own time, Luke's narrator unveils an alternative *oikonomia* and writes its effects into the present context.

### Politics of Boundary

Luke's critique of the construct of economy is most evident with respect to the *paterfamilias*. When the older son describes his relationship with the father not as parent-son, but as master-servant, he actually serves as the mouthpiece for a relationship with the *paterfamilias*, who wields enormous power (*patria potestas*) over the household. This kyriarchal order carries out the creation and authorization of scarcity. With the *paterfamilias* commanding economic goods and food, the *oikos* becomes an embodiment of material force in its exclusive operation, serving as the site of denial to "enough" for everyone.

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<sup>231</sup> The Pharisees' and scribes' criticism and Jesus' response enclose the collection of parables. Likewise, in other scenes, Luke's Jesus attacks religious-political leaders, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees—all agents of the colonial authority (Lk 6:1-5; 11:37-44; 19:45-48; 20:45-47).

By analogy, the Roman emperor himself was commonly referred to as the supreme father of the Empire (*Pater Patriae*).<sup>232</sup> Roman emperors assumed this eloquent title as a symbol of the absolute power (*patria potestas*) over the political *familia* and also of their generosity and mercy toward their citizens. Henceforth, the Roman emperor became a model figure of property owner, slavemaster, and patron to clients. As such, the kyriarchal pattern became the mainstay of the imperial order, in which economy was sacralized and the land, such as that of Palestine, was appropriated.<sup>233</sup>

Luke's description of the *oikos* presents such a system adorned with divinization.<sup>234</sup> In the Greco-Roman world, household and religion were inseparable, as Chen states it:

In Greek and Roman thinking household and religion were closely entwined. The *familia/oikos* constituted the basic unit of the society whose welfare depended on the divine benevolence. As such it owed worship to the deities, and one of the duties of the head of the household was to see that they received it, as it was also to see that his ancestors received proper attention. Should he or anyone subject to his authority (*paterna* or *patria potestas*) be

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<sup>232</sup> Since Caesar, the title of *Pater Patriae* was consistently conferred on the emperors, although Tiberius never accepted this title. See the entry of *Pater Patriae* in Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1121.

<sup>233</sup> See the discussion of E. S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 7.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Luke 15:21, "Then the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against *heaven* and before *you*; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Notice that heaven and the housefather (*oikodespotes*) stand together.

remiss in these obligations, he could be held accountable for *impietas* against the gods.<sup>235</sup>

Richard Saller also states that between parents and their children the virtue of *pietas* (dutiful respect) formed the core of the Romans' ideal of family relations. S. Scott Bartchy further argues that the family and household cannot be "mere private refuge but a powerful focus of relationships thriving at the heart of public life." In the Roman Empire, according to Bartchy, "the conjugal family household was the fundamental focus of human loyalties."<sup>236</sup>

In this connection, the father exerts substantial power over those who live in and around the household.<sup>237</sup> The older son's broken silence conveys the father's monopoly of property and persons as such: "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends" (v. 29).<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> J. Kevin Coyle, "Empire and Eschaton: The Early Church and the Question of Domestic Relationships," *Eglise et Théologie* 12 (1981): 39.

<sup>236</sup> S. Scott Bartchy, "Families in the Greco-Roman World," *The Family Handbook*. Edited by Herbert Anderson [et al.], (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 286; see also Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>237</sup> Paul Veyne, *A History of Private Life* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 92.

<sup>238</sup> Here in the older son's speech, one may perceive the last words which Luke removes from the younger son's rehearsal: "treat me like one of your hired hands" (15:19).

The older son describes himself as a laboring ‘slave’ in the field.<sup>239</sup> He is the figure who illustrates colonial norms and values by way of legitimation and concealment of the victimization under the Empire. For the older son, doing good works for the household consists in strictly remaining within the *oikos* by subjecting himself to harsh and unjust labor. He could not go outside to ‘celebrate with’ his friends. For him, the boundary is highly marked by the power (*patria potestas*) of the *paterfamilias*. This is an ideology, as Fredric James points out, that proves successful not only because it has controlled tensions and stabilized the state of affairs but because it has made it impossible to think anything outside the norms of the system itself.<sup>240</sup>

This kyriarchal relationship stands out most in a crosscultural comparison with the Confucian family system in an East Asian society. Even though the Confucian family is gradually modifying and adapting itself to an increasingly egalitarian perspective, it is still defined by its value systems which include worship to ancestors, duties between parents and children and among siblings. In particular, one expresses the gratitude one feels toward their ancestors in a filial piety, which is regarded as the primal virtue of the family.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Notice that when the prodigal returns, he also deems himself to be a slave. On this point, with a specific focus on the border between slavery and freedom, see Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in early Christianity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>240</sup> See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), esp., 1-102, 281-99.

<sup>241</sup> Regarding the filial piety, see Andrew Songmin Paek, “Korean Ancestor Worship,” in Pp. 162-183. *East Wind: Taoist and cosmological implications of Christian theology*. Edited by Charles Courtney (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997).

Family roles also require proper discipline and behavior. The focus is on the mutual obligations people have to one another and the satisfactions of reciprocal integrity. There might be occasional insubordination against the patriarch's leadership, but there is never defiance against the system that establishes and maintains the family structure.<sup>242</sup>

However, it is striking that the *paterfamilias* of the parable does not dictate or exercise power (*patria potestas*) over the prodigal who “squanders” his inheritance: “But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him” (v. 30).

The term “dissolute living” (ζῶν ἄσώτως), which was used in an earlier description of the younger son, is taken up by the older son as “sexual excess”. While this claim might be an exaggeration, it would make perfect sense in the colonial discourse, for the younger son's misery will allude to the extreme insolence and personal corruption of the colonized in the colonizer's view. Such an ideological discourse “curves back upon itself like cosmic space”—for the parable, a space of the *oikos* and *oikonomia*—“denying the possibility of any outside” or defining the ‘others’ as incommensurable with the ‘self’.<sup>243</sup> Notice how the elder brother refers to his younger brother: “this son of yours!” Nevertheless, the father

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<sup>242</sup> See the discussion of the Confucian family by Walter H. Slote, *Confucianism and the Family* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

<sup>243</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 129. Eagleton also states that “If a ‘universe of discourse’ is truly a *universe*, then there is no standpoint beyond it where we might find a point of leverage for critique. Or if other universes are acknowledged to exist, then they are simply defined as incommensurable with one's own.” 129.

appears to exercise no paternal severity toward the prodigal, a hopeful-to-be-slave, as well as the older son, a self-evident-slave.

First, with respect to the prodigal, the *paterfamilias* not only accepts him back into the family, but also gives him a robe, ring, and a banquet in his honor—the signs of wealth and status in the Greco-Roman world. Given that the author of Luke would be familiar with popular Greco-Roman genres such as comedy, mime, and farce, one must not miss the contrast between the lenient, forgiving attitude of the father in Jesus' parable and the harsh, punitive behavior of fathers toward delinquent, prodigal sons in contemporaneous literature. For example, in Petronius's *Satyricon* 46, a father who is firm and exercises meticulous care over his son controls his learning and does not even tolerate his son's:

When he has a minute to himself, he never takes his eyes from his tablets; he's smart too, and has the right kind of stuff in him, even if he is crazy about birds. I've had to kill three of his linnets already, I told him that a weasel had gotten them, but he's found another hobby, now he paints all the time.<sup>244</sup>

Also in Persius's Satire 3:44-62, a son, who lives for the current moment against the father's wish, faces the fatal consequences of his wrongdoing.

So our hero goes to his bath, with his stomach distended with eating and looking white, and a vapour of sulphurous properties slowly oozing from his throat; but a shivering comes on over the wine, and makes him let fall his

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<sup>244</sup> *The Satyricon of Petronius Arbiter*. Trans. by W. C. Firebaugh (New York: Liveright, 1943), 102-03.

hot tumbler from his fingers; and his teeth are exposed and chatter; the rich dainties come back again from his dropping jaws. The upshot is horn-blowing and tapers; and at last the deceased, laid out on a high bed and daubed with coarse ointment, turns up his heels stark and stiff toward the door; and citizens of twenty-four hours' standing in their caps of liberty carry him to the grave.<sup>245</sup>

On the other hand, in Herodas' *Mime* 3, a mother brings her truant son to school to be flogged for neglecting his studies in favor of gambling.<sup>246</sup> She wants her son's teacher, Lampriscos, to punish him. After being rejected, she says that she will talk with her husband and let him punish the son:

You should not have stopped flogging, Lampriskos, till sunset.....On afterthought, I will go home, Lampriskos, and tell the old man of this, and return with footstraps, so that as he skips here with his feet together the Lady Muses, whom he has hated so, may witness his disgrace.<sup>247</sup>

In ancient comedy and mime, particularly stories about rebellious, prodigal children embarrassing their parents and fathers in particular, severe treatment is the typical response. This must be a normal event in an ancient Greco-Roman society.

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<sup>245</sup> *The Satires of A. Persius Flaccus*. Trans. by J. Conington (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), 68-71.

<sup>246</sup> Even though a mother appears, she is playing the traditional role of a father.

<sup>247</sup> *Herodas: The Mimes and Fragments*. Edited by A. D. Knox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 116.

Greco-Roman art also provides evidence for this fatherly severity. A relief panel in the Naples Museum pictures a comic scene of an enraged father emerging from the door of his house bearing a staff for beating his drunken son.



Figure 1: Marble Relief of a Comic Scene, Museo Nazionale, Naples.<sup>248</sup>

The relationship between Herod the Great and his sons is also worthy of consideration. According to Josephus, although they were not prodigal nor cried out for inheritance, Herod killed his sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, because he was suspicious of their treachery. Antipater, the eldest son by Herod's first wife, falsely accused his stepbrothers after learning that he was not favored to take over from his father. Just before Herod's death, however, he also commanded Antipater to be slain after he was arrested for laying a

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<sup>248</sup> M. Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1879), 92: figure 324.



plot against him: “[Herod] cried out louder than his distemper would well bear, and instantly sent his guards and slew Antipater”.<sup>249</sup>

Herod was far from being as lenient or forgiving as the father in the parable. The death warrant for Antipater was also signed by Augustus Caesar. In the colonial Mediterranean culture, a father has both power over and responsibility for his children. His role as a father includes instruction, discipline, and punishment. Indeed, it would seem that Greco-Roman society expected fathers to punish their delinquent sons.

This role of the father as *paterfamilias* should be understood in regard to a colonial environment. Clearly, a properly ordered household should be crucial to a properly ordered empire; one is a microcosm of the other. However, the father in the parable breaks every rule of what appears to be proper household management. He champions the return of the prodigal who demanded premature inheritance from him as the cause for celebration—the most joyous occasion in the household’s memory. When he welcomes his presence most blissfully even before his confession is completed (vv. 19, 21), the highly marked construction of *oikos* and *oikonomia* hits rock bottom.<sup>250</sup>

Second, with respect to the older son, the father engages in a conversation with him, never raising his voice against him. As a moderating and consoling parent, he invites him to celebrate together with the younger one—“this brother of yours” (v. 32): “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because

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<sup>249</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War* I, 664.

<sup>250</sup> The younger son’s last words in his rehearsal, “Treat me like one of your hired hands,” could not be delivered (v. 19).

*this brother of yours* was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found” (vv. 31-32; emphasis added).<sup>251</sup>

The claiming son and the soothing father represent a “typology of disclosure and interaction,” unveiling the imperial system in a more perceptible way.<sup>252</sup> In such a way, as Virginia Burrus observes, Luke’s text does not totalize one empire (Kingdom) over the other empire (Rome); rather creates a space for liberation:

Not unlike Josephus, Justin, or other Jewish and Christian ‘apologists’, Luke has, in the act of laying claim to the political values of Rome, used those same values to interrogate the oppressive policies of Empire, thereby wedging open room within which a persecuted people might maneuver.<sup>253</sup>

As such, the *paterfamilias* of the parable does not dictate nor exercise *patria potestas*; yet he confronts the greatest purveyor of violence.

It is also noteworthy that, during the celebration, the markers of both public and private spheres are obscured in and around the *oikos*. Notice how the first two lost and found parables are set in different locales. The man stands in an open, public space where he cares for his sheep, while the woman stays in a private sphere where she manages her household. The parent of the third parable, however, not only welcomes his younger son *inside* the

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<sup>251</sup> Note that the father replaces the elder son’s phrase “this son of yours” (v. 30) with “this brother of yours” (v. 32).

<sup>252</sup> Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 163.

<sup>253</sup> Virginia Burrus, “Luke-Acts,” *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*. Edited by Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 139.

*oikos* and hosts a party, but also comes *outside* the *oikos* to engage his older son. He limits his activity to the geographic contours of the *oikos* although he steps beyond it and without going too far. From the moment the father steps out from the inside and engages those in the outside, however, he is no longer a mere insider and vice versa.

While he moves in and out of the house, his household represents a “hybridized haven” that becomes a site of resistance to the colonial construct of life and existence. Hence, the outside and inside of *oikos* are interwoven together and generate a new space of meaning. Thus, if one accepts Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of hybridity, this kind of in-between space produces antagonism in the political process and becomes an unpredictable force for political, as well as economic, representation.<sup>254</sup> In addition, the identity of the father as a parent is also hybridized, as compared to the identities of both shepherd seeking a disappeared sheep and housekeeper searching for a lost coin.<sup>255</sup> When we consider those

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<sup>254</sup> Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), “Introduction: Narrating the Nation” in *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 4; there are, of course, diverse modalities of hybridity, such as “forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political cooperation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creating transcendence.” See E. Shohat, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 110; nevertheless, Bhabha has to be credited with noting that the colonial discourse is never transmitted perfectly to the natives but is always transformed by a process of translation, indigenization and contextualization. He states that the colonial presence is “always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference.” H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 107. In this regard, the gap left by this ‘split’ in colonial discourse becomes a site for resistance.

<sup>255</sup> Johnson points out that it is typical of Luke to pair a male example with one involving a woman (cf. 1:6-7; 2:36-38; 4:25, 38; 7:11-15, 36-50; 8:1-3, 19-21, 43-56; 10:38-42; 11:27; 13:10-17). See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 236; see also Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, Ga. : Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 287-295.

who are living in hybrid realities with hyphenated, yet hidden and disguised identities, there can hardly be such a thing as an essential insider or an essential outsider.<sup>256</sup>

In the Parable of the Prodigal, Luke's vision of the *oikos*, which emerges from real needs, turns fluid rather than static, providing for those in the colonial periphery a haven that releases the construct of exclusive boundaries. The colonial construct of economy (*oikonomia*) that legitimates the lack of human agency is thus seriously challenged. For the colonizing power, however, all the attempts at blurring the boundary between 'self' and 'other' or 'insider' and 'outsider' will be the great cause of anxiety.

#### *Oikonomia* in Discussion

Luke's challenge against the colonial construct of economy is also evident with regard to the matter of the scarcity which it creates. For the older son, a young goat he desired reveals the ways in which scarcity emerges. It is the *paterfamilias* that creates and authorizes scarcity. For him, power is economic. It defines his scarcity as well as his identities: "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends (v. 29)."<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> The distinguishing feature of this new identity goes beyond the colonial categories and representations, which employ core elements such as nationality, ethnicity, femininity, and so forth.

<sup>257</sup> Here in the older son's speech, one may perceive the last words which Luke removes from the younger son's rehearsal: "treat me like one of your hired hands" (v. 19).

The older son addresses the problems he has perceived from his cultural perspective in colonial Palestine and re-affirms this cultural perspective which he has internalized.<sup>258</sup> For him, the young goat is a “fetish” of a culture such as the one in which he has lived. When he enters the interlocking structure of social control and exploitation, its system becomes “natural” to him within that context and becomes invisible. This is an ideology, as Louis Althusser observes, that the dominant classes produce to perpetuate subordination of working classes in order to maintain the state of affairs.<sup>259</sup>

For the older son, ideology as an invisible cognitive power deflates any possibility of actual change.<sup>260</sup> In this sense, the disciplined child is entrapped by “strategies of containment,” as Jameson points out.<sup>261</sup> According to Foucault, the disciplinary mechanism fabricates “docile bodies” which would then operate in rigorously prescribed manners.<sup>262</sup> “One can no longer even talk here of repression,” just as Jeremy Ahearne observes, “for in such a perspective there is nothing left to repress.”<sup>263</sup> At this point, there is no outside or

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<sup>258</sup> In this regard, Spivak has argued in “The Rani of Sirmur” that “colonial worlding” involves not only the construction of the colonizers, but also the potential internalization of that constructed world on the part of the colonized. Gayatri C. Spivak, “The Rani of Sirmur,” *History and Theory* Vol. 24. No. 3 (Oct, 1985): 247-272.

<sup>259</sup> Louis Althusser, “On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy* (London: New Left Books, 1971), 121-73.

<sup>260</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, esp., 1-102, 281-99.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>262</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 137-8.

<sup>263</sup> Jeremy Ahearne, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and Its Other* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1995), 146.

inside.<sup>264</sup> There remains only an aspiration of a “young goat”—a fetish of the world. From a *minjung* hermeneutical point of view, the colonial power has made the children of the colonized see the present condition—“gridded, measured, and surveyed”—“in an implacable, impersonal light.”<sup>265</sup> The *oikonomia* is, then, nothing but a homogeneous and homogenizing total institution.

However, the father of the parable does not show any interest in maximizing profits nor intensifying social control. That which he does instead is to waste riches for the prodigal and values his presence most blissfully. He does not dictate to the older son either, but rather shares with him the conviction that his younger brother has to be free; otherwise it is as though they might not be free. By rejecting scarcity-thinking and by redirecting the murderous *oikonomia*, Luke confronts the colonial construct of political economy at its heart.

Luke’s liberating vision of the *oikos* does not allow a chance to exploit people through a sense of indebtedness, inequality, or immorality. It does not condone interested relations, but rather fosters *community*. Hence, the father’s utterance, “Son, you are always with me, all that is mine is yours,” could only amount to saying: “You are neither as indebted nor obligated to me as you think because you are part of the *oikos* whose economy guarantees mutual commitment and liberation.” In addition, the father’s declaration, “But we had to celebrate and rejoice” denies turning the occasion of ‘life’ and ‘death’ into a personal discipline and punishment, which is precisely what the imperial-colonial power does with

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<sup>264</sup> In this regard, it is “surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons.” See *Discipline and Punish*, 228.

<sup>265</sup> Jeremy Ahearne, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and Its Other*, 146.

the disenfranchised. Hence, the father's move is profoundly deconstructive and reconstructive, and draws the readers into a path of conscientization.

Both the prodigal and the disciplined son will be able to participate in the *oikos*, entering the *communion* as person. No distinction is to be made between the "prodigal" and the "disciplined." Their *communion* is far from binomial interdependence or enslavement, yet pervades the concrete time and place, disarming the construct of imperialism and colonialism and, indeed, its political-economic framework.

Few *familias* distribute inheritance not by the will of the father but by the demand of the younger child and equally with no objection from the older son before the father's demise, so when the readers hear that the father not only has agreed but also has thrown a great banquet for that child who returns with nothing left, the children of the colonized will know that they are in a new world.<sup>266</sup> In the past, they fantasized a treat from the *paterfamilias*. Now they reason with the parent, then-master, at which people in the public peek (v. 28, "His father came out and began to plead with him.").

In this regard, the story resonates with what James Scott calls a "hidden transcript." In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott asserts that the everyday resistance of subalterns shows that they have not consented to dominance. For Scott, the 'public transcript' represents the open, public interactions between dominators and oppressed, while the 'hidden transcript' conveys the critique of power offstage which power holders

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<sup>266</sup> See Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Lost: Two Rebellious Sons—Who Will Find?" (Luke 15:11-32)," in 238-241. *The Family Handbook* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). According to Reid, the younger son's demand is "tantamount to wishing his father dead and would have been heard as a shocking insult in the original telling" (238).

do not see or hear. However, the dominated can “see” and “hear” the contradictions in the established order. Hidden transcripts serve as “a zone of constant struggle” capturing a range of practices, skills, and competencies, in which the subordinates remain human in the face of dehumanization.<sup>267</sup>

Likewise, the parent—normally, property owner, slavemaster, and patron to clients—betrays kyriarchal management. He instead re/members the children of the *oikos* and invites them to debate values and norms. The most noticeable effect of these changes is in the way they are now demanding and commanding food. In modern economics, however, “demand,” compatible with “supply,” does not count for those consumers who lack purchasing power.

As such, Luke’s construction of the household serves as the place in which confrontations take place, and the vision of the beyond erupts. Luke’s vision of economy is not divided, nor discriminatory. It goes far beyond individual relations and an exclusive motivation as they exist in a market economy today. It does not even allow for the division of costs from benefits, since both are interpenetrating and interdependent through mutual commitment and liberation. In this regard, the gain of the one is not the loss of the other.

When the governing ethic focuses on loyalty (*pistis*) instead of entitlements, on discipline instead of rights, Luke’s *oikos* narrative becomes not merely a technical analysis

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<sup>267</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). According to Scott, hidden transcripts demonstrate hidden grievances, alternative social organization, and other practices that are repressed by the hegemony of the dominant. With regard to Scott’s hidden transcripts, Joan Martin states that he is “against absolutizing hegemony, even though objective structures make elements such as upward mobility or overt rebellion and victory outside ordinary and everyday expectations seem doubtful.” See Joan Martin, *More than Chains and Toil: A Christian Work Ethic of Enslaved Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 73.



of the structures of domination, but a recognition and indictment of those structures that stand harmful to the people of God. In this regard, the manifest breach of the rules in Luke is actually the condition for the alternative *oikos* and *oikonomia* to become more visible. Luke's *oikonomia* as a project of life and for life informs and reforms the institution of economy. The kind of qualities Luke conceives and articulates dismantles the existing authorities and institutions (e.g., Luke 3:5).<sup>268</sup>

### Conclusion

Luke's construction of economy frees the subjects as self-conscious agents from the colonial power of 'fear' and representation of 'scarcity' and allows mutual commitment and liberation beyond the inside/outside boundaries. Hence, one may reject a notion of "prodigal," or "disciplined," as signifiers of values and norms when they are presented as synonymous with a colonial construct of economy. The point is not to proclaim a moral of "good" economic discipline and earnings, but rather to realize the economics which, as opposed to the interested/'ideological' relations, fosters a mutual/'heteronymous' unity, such as 'hugging' and 'kissing' with the 'prodigal'.

Luke lays his claim by awakening imaginations in re-presenting the *oikos*, a colonial discursive space, which is not only domestic space but also a political economic entity invested with history and tradition. Luke's claim as such is by nature hybrid; yet becomes a

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<sup>268</sup> Luke 3:5, "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth" (cf. Isa 61:1-2).

site of colonial resistance by way of lively negotiations and contestations of identity. For *minjung*, when there is only one move, that from the imperial to the colonial, the younger son's early departure and absurd return is a deconstructive and a reconstructive move—truly postcolonial. Thus, Luke's *oikos* discourse becomes not merely a source of political economic critique, but also a site of emergent political economic possibilities. Now, the members of the household must find new ways to speak for life and justice, filling the site of their hybrid and diasporic realities. As is common in the text of Luke, the story is open-ended and up to the readers to finish. With regard to our response to the world, a new world which borders on our doors, there are blessings and curses, to which I now turn.

## Chapter IV Economy as It Transforms

We were just sitting there talking when lines of people began to form, saying 'We need bread.' We could not say, "Go, be thou filled.' If there were six small loaves and a few fishes, we had to divide them. There was always bread...There is always room for one more; each of us will have a little less...We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship. *The Long Loneliness* (NY: Harper and Row, 1952): 317-18.

### Introduction

In the previous parables, Luke's narrator has uncovered the colonial construct of economy and confronted its justification. Luke's household discourse in the Parables of the Shrewd Steward (16:1-9) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31) presents full human beings who settle, or fail to settle, in the institution of "eternal homes." Now Luke's narrator announces the eschatological crisis of economy. This crisis becomes a motive for transformation for the human subjects. Responding to the crisis, while reclaiming their own agency, they are subject to the judgment of God, either blessings or curses.

Notably, scholars have long been preoccupied with the use of wealth and possessions in Luke, all too easily translating it into formal or symbolic values of capital operation, while dismissing the root causes of the problem. The economy embodied in the Parables of the Shrewd Steward and the Rich Man and Lazarus invites the "haves" and the "have-mores" to cross over the charged relations between center and periphery, metropolis and the margins. For an East Asian global reader, this more fluid, plural, and hybrid account of

economy suggests a vision within a wide array of institutions between and beyond ‘self’ and ‘other.’

#### A. The Parable of the Shrewd Steward (16:1-9)

The Parable of the Shrewd Steward presents the figure of the household steward with subtlety and realism: charged with squandering his master’s property he shrewdly “cooks the books” to ensure his security. With regard to its narrative framework, the story’s end has long created confusion and controversy. Since the rich man is identified with *kyrios*, just as Jesus has been in Luke’s narrative, there has been much debate among scholars about the referent of *ho kyrios* in 16: 8a: “The master praised the wicked household steward because he acted cleverly.”

Joachim Jeremias views this referent as Jesus and argues that the story ends at v. 7. For him, since the master could not possibly praise the dishonest steward, the commendation of v. 8 is Jesus’ own interpretation, and *ho kyrios* is Luke’s way of referring to Jesus (cf. Lk 18:6).<sup>269</sup> As such, Jeremias reduces the parable into the more material text by itself, free of narrative construction. However, Joseph Fitzmyer has pointed out that it is more natural to understand *ho kyrios* in v. 8a as the master of the story, because without v. 8a the story has no ending: “From the beginning the reaction of the master to the steward’s conduct is expected; it is finally given in v. 8a.”<sup>270</sup> He calls attention to the natural need for narrative

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<sup>269</sup> Joachim Jeremias (1972): 45-47; John Dominic Crossan (1973).

<sup>270</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer (1964): 27-28; see also Bailey (1976); Donahue (1988); Scott (1989).

closure, whether the closure is what one expects or not. Indeed, praise runs directly contrary to expectations of punishment.<sup>271</sup>

This sort of discussion is directly related to these questions: How could the master praise the servant? What is the master praising? Or what in the steward's behavior is 'faithful' such that Jesus would commend it? To these, I turn below.

### What in the Steward's Actions Is 'Unfaithful'?

In a tension-filled environment in Roman-occupied colonial Palestine, it is important to define justness or faithfulness carefully. Luke addresses the subject matter by presenting two opposite characters: A certain man was rich who had a steward (16:1a).

The first character is a rich man, probably absentee landowner or a member of the local nobility. The second is a steward, having access to his master's wealth and serving as his agent in business affairs such as "renting out land, granting loans to tenants against the harvest, keeping records of these transactions, etc."<sup>272</sup> His identification as steward is crucial, since the plot of the story revolves around his household management, which is the first meaning of *oikonomia*. The report of his work and its impending release drive the story forward: "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this

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<sup>271</sup> Many other scholars also argue that the parable ends v. 8b or v. 9. See William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*. 233-237.

<sup>272</sup> Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of The Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 137.

that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my steward any longer” (vv. 1-2).

The parable does not state that the steward actually squandered the master’s property. However, it reports that the charge was brought against him (16:1b-2). No further information is revealed concerning the charge. With regard to the “squandering (διασκορπίζων)” (cf. Lk 15:13), the steward was not given a chance to defend himself, nor respond to his accusers.

The word “accused (διεβλήθη),” which is related to the word “devil” (διάβολος), expresses the hostility in the accusation and also the extreme tension with regard to the household management.<sup>273</sup> The intense narrative context quickly brings to the fore the crisis of the steward’s failure and punishment. The expression “no longer (οὐ ἔτι)” pertains to a scene of “peremptory judgment.” The master is in control. The steward will surely lose his position. While the steward receives no chance to defend himself nor does he even protest his innocence, the story reveals his inner monologue: “Then the steward said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg’” (v. 3).

As the steward is ousted from his position, his reference to the rich man as “my master” (v. 3) displays his liminal security. He ponders what to do to rescue himself since his dismissal from the stewardship is a “death sentence.” He knows his limits—‘too weak to dig, too proud to beg.’ As Herzog notes, digging (σκάπτειν) and begging (ἐπαιτεῖν) are

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<sup>273</sup> The verb διαβάλλω means “to bring charges with hostile intent” (BAGD 181).

associated with the class of expendables.<sup>274</sup> The steward will join, at best, the work force of day laborers and, at worst, become a beggar. “Like Lazarus (Lk 16:22) and thousands of others in colonial Palestine,” according to Herzog, he will most likely die “from the complications of malnutrition and disease.”<sup>275</sup> The ousted steward is thus faced with the alternative of death by digging or death by begging.<sup>276</sup> If he is to survive, he must employ his own agency and develop a different way out: “I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as steward, people may welcome me into their homes” (v. 4).

Hence, the parable draws most of its attention to the steward’s problem and his remarkable solution. The steward’s inner monologue is, in fact, equivalent to his subjectivity, with which Luke contests the murderous construct of economy.

First, the steward connects himself with his master’s debtors through reducing the amount of their debts.

So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He said, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' (vv. 5-7)

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<sup>274</sup> William Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1994), 242.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

He finds himself in the context of the villagers being in debt vis-à-vis their creditor. He repeated, then, the debt redemption as many times as the number of debtors: “One by one...the first...and another...”

Initially, the figures on the contracts such as “a hundred jugs of olive oil (ἑκατὸν βάρους ἐλαίου),” “a hundred containers of wheat (ἑκατὸν κόρους σίτου)” indicate that the master has large householdings, including an orchard.<sup>277</sup> However, the figures are also related to the colossal system of exacting interest, taking usury on loans.<sup>278</sup> According to Torah, usury was expressly forbidden (Exod 22:25-27; Lev 25:36-38; Deut 15:7-11; 23:19-20) because it was oppressive. As Jacob Neusner has noted, later Judaism opposes not only usury but the taking of interest itself.<sup>279</sup>

However, in colonial Palestine where Rome and its local collaborators dominated the land, the high priestly families found ways to charge interest under other guises (6:34; 7:40-42).<sup>280</sup> Rome justified their exploitation of economic surplus. And the judicial system remained subservient.<sup>281</sup> For instance, in the Gospel of Luke, the widow cries out against

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<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>278</sup> Kenneth Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

<sup>279</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Economics of the Mishnah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); “Aristotle’s Economics and the Mishnah’s Economics: The Matter of Wealth and Usury,” *JSJ* 21:41-59; Herzog (1994): 246

<sup>280</sup> Herzog (1994): 246

<sup>281</sup> Sugirtharajah (2002): 34; see also the discussion of Horsley. Horsley notes that “the Romans’ appointment of Antipas as ruler in Galilee meant that Jerusalem rulers no longer had direct jurisdiction in the area.” Horsley (2009): 87-88.



injustice; however, the judge is described as having no fear of God and no respect for anyone (18:4).

While the steward has kept the master's estates productive and profitable, he himself has been part of the economic problems as such, reflecting "strong pressures toward the centralization of economic goods and the development of the exploitative pattern," as Oakman states it.<sup>282</sup> The story ends, however, in a mysterious way and amazes as well as tantalizes its interpreters. The master does not act as expected when the steward's behavior—indeed, outrageous and scandalous cancellation of debt clearly demands punishment rather than commendation.

And his master praised the dishonest/unjust steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light (v. 8).

The most unexpected terms are the steward's unjustness (*ἀδικία*) and the master's praise (*ἐπῆνεσεν*). Inevitably, the question arises with respect to the parable's contours: If the steward is deceiving his master by reducing what is owed him, why does the master praise him? John Donahue asserts in this regard that the Parable of the Dishonest Steward should be read as the parable of "the foolish master," whose counterpart is the father in the preceding parable.<sup>283</sup> John Dominic Crossan also views the master of the parable as the one

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<sup>282</sup> Oakman (1986): 211.

<sup>283</sup> John Donahue (1988): 167-68; see also the discussion of Herzog (1994): 236

being duped by a rascal.<sup>284</sup> The master-dupe model he proposes addresses the master's foolishness by allowing a steward-rascal to disperse his own possessions.

However, if the master is not a dupe and the parable is not a simple trickster story, in which "a hearer is allowed to go on a moral holiday with no penalty expected" as Scott points out,<sup>285</sup> what can the reader draw from the parable?

Herzog finds God instead in the characters of the father and the master: "Taken together, the figures of the father and the master define a God whose forgiveness overrides the human machinations of an errant son and a scheming steward."<sup>286</sup> Since Luke's *oikos* parables have followed one after the other, each supporting the next, it is likely that Luke has placed the master as comparable to the father, both signifying constraints (in terms of current culture in a hostile world) as well as chances (in terms of struggle for justice and liberation). Indeed, when the steward's behavior clashes with justice in the Empire, what the master does instead is that he "hears" and "watches," as often as he "comes in" and "goes out"—the kind of features the father in the Parable of the Prodigal has displayed.

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<sup>284</sup> John Dominic Crossan views the parable as belonging to a cycle of "trickster-dupe" stories. He employs Heda Jason's model for such stories as follows: (1) A situation evolves which enables Rascal to play a trick on Dupe; Dupe reveals his foolishness so that Rascal can utilize it (2) Rascal plans a trick (3) Rascal plays a trick (4) Dupe reacts as Rascal wished him to do (5) Dupe has lost; Rascal has won. For Crossan, the parable is a trickster-dupe narrative with step 4 unused. Crossan (1974): 192-221; H. Jason (1968): 7; cf. Bailey (1983: 95. Via also has argued that the actions of the steward belong to a "picaresque comedy...the story of a successful rogue." Dan O. Via Jr. *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 159.

<sup>285</sup> Scott (1989): 266

<sup>286</sup> Herzog (1994): 236

On the question about the use of another's money, F. E. Williams argues that the idea that "almsgiving is not from ours but God's" coheres with the steward's actions.<sup>287</sup> However, according to Duck-ho Oh, Williams's argument is not convincing since, with almsgiving as such, one cannot explain the dishonesty in the steward's actions. Oh rather proposes the method of argument known as *a fortiori*, i.e., "how much more."<sup>288</sup> In that case, the teaching of the parable will be:

If the steward uses the dishonestly earned money for his this-worldly future, how much more should truer wealth be used for an eternal future at the present. If the steward tries so hard to secure an earthly place, how much more should the disciples make efforts to prepare for an eternal place! If the steward's shrewdness is praised, how much more the better wisdom will be praised!<sup>289</sup>

Oh further argues that since the steward is concerned about his earthly future, not an eternal one, "the reader, who knows the Parable of the Rich Fool (12:16-21), recognizes the steward is not truly wise."<sup>290</sup> As such, Oh's reconstruction of the story does not ground

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<sup>287</sup> F. E. Williams, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke xvi. 1-9): Notes on the Interpretation Suggested by the Reverend R. G. Lunt," *ExpTim* 66 (1955): 294.

<sup>288</sup> Roland G. Lunt, "Expounding the Parables: III. The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-15)" *ExpTim* 77 (1966), 134.

<sup>289</sup> Oh 1996:206; cf. G. B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke*, The Pelican Gospel Commentaries (New York, 1968), 188.

<sup>290</sup> Oh (1996): 206.

itself with regard to the present construct of political economy, while he addresses a preparation for one's eternal life.

Specifically, with regard to “the dishonest wealth” (v. 11), if that signifies “the dishonestly earned money,” the steward is actually breaking the economics of “exploitations” by way of “squandering” or “decentralizing.” Much of the commentary on the parable has assumed, however, a simple moral code, as Herzog points out:

[Commentators] assume an economic morality rooted in capitalistic ideology, and therefore the commentators all side with the master and blame the steward for cheating the master by participating in some first-century version of a saving and loan scandal. In fact, the steward was just doing his job, and the charges brought against him are just a normal part of the endless war between the landowners and the peasants.<sup>291</sup>

Indeed, while falling below subsistence level because of colonial exploitation, typical peasants became landless tenants and debtors. Some may have been sold into labor, or imprisoned for their debts (12:58-9; cf. Matt. 5:25-26; 18:23-35). In this circumstance, there was no truer wealth. If wealth came as a result of oppression and exploitation, the wealthy not only perpetuated injustice but also inflicted evil on others.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Herzog (1994): 245-246.

<sup>292</sup> In this regard, Elsa Tamez states in her article, “Good News to the Poor”: “We must always keep in mind, therefore, that poverty is an unworthy state that must be changed. I repeat: poverty is not a virtue but an evil that reflects the socioeconomic conditions of inequality in which people live. Poverty is a challenge to God the Creator; because of the insufferable conditions under which the poor live, God is obliged to fight at their side.” See Elsa Tamez, “God News for the Poor,” in *Biblical Studies Alternatively*, Edited by Susanne Scholoz (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003).

While wealth in the Empire flows from the bottom to the top and from the margins (conquered territories) to the center (Rome) by means of extreme and extensive exploitations, the steward's behavior moves resources back to where they are needed (v. 5-7) and where they belong (v. 10-12).

With regard to the steward's debt redemption, however, Moxnes asserts that by reducing the debts of the peasants, the steward makes them his clients who now must make returns to him: "[t]he main point is clear: the farmers will now become indebted to the steward, and will, therefore, be under a strong obligation to reciprocate."<sup>293</sup> In this case, the steward carried on patronage first with his rich master and now continues with a group of peasant debtors. What has changed, Moxnes adds, is a perspective regarding the question, "who are the important people?"<sup>294</sup>

However, while the steward's intention is not "giving" without "expecting in return," his practice clearly encounters the problem of "indebtedness," a broad and concrete situation of first-century Palestine. Notice that Luke refers to wealth as "unjust mammon" (v. 9)!

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of *dishonest* (or *evil*, *unjust*) *wealth* so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes (v. 9; emphasis added)

Καὶ ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπη δέξωνται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς.

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<sup>293</sup> Halvor Moxnes (1988):145.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*,

Wealth is stained by injustice; yet it depends on people more than on things, whether the quality developed in wealth can be referred to as “just/faithful/honest” (δίκαιος) or as “unjust/unfaithful/dishonest” (ἀδίκος). This linkage between injustice and wealth can only be broken by faithful behavior—that is redefining the system, more than just giving alms.<sup>295</sup>

The steward’s redemption of debts is, indeed, far from almsgiving. Thus, if anyone wants to know the truth (just as the master does) or find himself faithful (just as the steward does), one has to change his way of living and interacting with the economy. Truth and faithfulness are deeply bound up with political economy in Luke. Luke brings forward justice claims so that the *oikos* can be altered, or better, transformed, institutions (cf. v. 4, “homes”; v. 9 “eternal homes”) where they might be ‘redeemed.’ Thus, if one does not discuss the framework of political economy, one cannot discuss the “injustice” of wealth that creates and legitimates scarcity. In this regard, “faithfulness” is clearly related to a deconstructive and a reconstructive move, which ensures the greater wealth.

If then you have not been *faithful* with the *dishonest wealth*, who will entrust to you the true riches? If you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? (vv. 11-12; emphasis added)

εἰ οὖν ἐν τῷ ἀδίκῳ μαμωνᾷ πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε, τὸ ἀληθινὸν τίς ὑμῖν πιστεύσει; καὶ εἰ ἐν τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε, τὸ ὑμέτερον τίς ὑμῖν δώσει;

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<sup>295</sup> Moxnes argues that: “These parallels indicate that to use ‘the unrighteous mammon’ to make friends is a metaphor for ‘giving alms,’ that is, to give to the needy.” *The Economy of the Kingdom*, 145.

With regard to the steward's "shrewdness" (v.8. φρονίμως), one may recognize the complicated position he holds in terms of production and distribution in colonial Palestine. He stands among the peasants since he is subordinate and in debt vis-à-vis their creditor, that is, his master. In the Roman Empire, according to Douglass Oakman, division between elites and peasants stands out most in terms of labor:

It became increasingly expedient for the elites of the Empire to think of the tenants/peasantry as 'human cattle', as mere implements or livestock of the Roman (or private) estate.<sup>296</sup>

The imperial slave *oikonomos* as the chief household slave possesses the authority over other slaves and has responsibility for his master's possessions; yet he remains a slave. If he failed to discharge his duties "prudently" (or "shrewdly"), he might be beaten, even killed by a heartless master. The ambiguity of the steward's position in the ancient economy emerges into a broader picture of success and deprivation in the Empire. In this sense, his role as *oikonomos* represents the formation of hyphenated and multiple, and multiplying identities under the Empire.

Interestingly, however, the steward reenters into the relationship with the debtors and wastes his master's assets, rectifying the "injustice of usury."<sup>297</sup> When Aristotle distinguished *oikonomia* from *chrematistics*, *chrematistics* was actually the form of 'usury,'

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<sup>296</sup> Oakman also states that association of wealth and power is most evident in the control of political institutions, such as in the emperor and imperial family and governing military and legal administrations (1986:23).

<sup>297</sup> Moxnes (1988):141.

making a gain out of money itself.<sup>298</sup> In all his endeavor, the steward proves himself “shrewd” (v. 8, φρονίμως)—strikingly, relating to the basic meaning of *oikonomia* as ‘prudent handling,’ as opposed to ‘poor handling,’ of the matter at hand. Luke’s Jesus connects this *oikonomos* with his liberating, transformative conception of *oikonomia*. The steward serves as a model of a ‘person’ refining his own opportunities, pursuing and realizing the kind of life he has reason to value.<sup>299</sup>

As such, Luke confronts that which people view only as accumulation of “material” in terms of “capability”—which relates to the ability to put oneself in *communion* with others. The steward is, in principle, the center of the *oikos* and the imagination behind what is essentially a time-bound, creative work of economics. The kind of agency he represents runs against the contemporaneous trends which overwhelmingly favor the production of “like-mindedness” in a colonial economy.

However, the idea of “like-mindedness” which condones the exploitative relations fails to explain Luke’s substantial development of the human agency. The text of Luke does not give the reader a chance to exploit people with a sense of indebtedness, inequality or immorality.

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<sup>298</sup> Aristotle states that: “The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it. ... Of all modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural” (*Politics*, 1258b).

<sup>299</sup> With regard to such roles of human agency, Amartya Sen is most explicit in his economics of freedom.



## The Economy as It Transcends

While retelling Jesus and the Jesus traditions in his own time, Luke writes its transformative effects into our present context. The steward's fate has called for blessings or curses, which becomes for him a motive for transformation. Consequently, he uses his own freedom to survive, rather than succumb to, impending afflictions.

The Parable of the Shrewd Steward also draws on a unique characterization of the master. The master commands and demands competitive action; yet approves the loss of his assets and praises his servant—apparently a parallel to the 'father' in the Parable of the Prodigal, appearing and disappearing at each turn. In noting the steward's "shrewdness" (or "prudence"), the master ironically recognizes that the steward has *finally* done his job in an unexpected circumstance.<sup>300</sup> His praise invites a hearer to reconsider justice in this-world. As such, Luke not only acknowledges the economy, governed as well as sanctioned by the Roman Empire, but also transcends it to the economy connected to the institution of the eternal house (v. 9, τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς).

Jesus' narration following the master's praise, "When it is gone, they may welcome you into the *eternal* homes" (v. 9b), suggests that the master has recognized 'values' much bigger and longer-lasting than simple 'tricks.' By a powerful questioning and juxtaposition of the stereotype of the master and economics, the parable presents an alternative economy within which justice arises and gives rise to hope over and against the Empire.

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<sup>300</sup> Scott 1989.

As for the steward, he takes on his own agency between the debtors and the master (*kyrios*). He has the sort of knowledge which becomes instrumental for the survival of both *himself* and collective *selves*. Luke's Jesus pronounces the steward's *oikonomia* as the one "making friends" (v. 9)—a signifier of *communion* and *community*, in which the cruel construct of material demarcation—including patronage between lender and debtor—disappears. The steward moves beyond the boundaries of dominating norms, keeping an eye on the vision at all costs; this urges other colonial subjects such as debtors to appropriate their unique identities, space, and voices. In this regard, to "make friends" has a contagious effect which is both liberating and transformative.

The parable appeals to the agency substantially attributed to human beings, rather than enslaving those in need by "unjust mammon". Moxnes is right when he recognizes the transcendent dimensions of political economy as such:

The prohibition of usury is irrelevant in the kingdom of God because all loans have been transformed into gifts. Similarly the law of the Jubilee is unnecessary when the regime of strict justice has been replaced by a regime of mercy. It is clear that in the kingdom of God there are no debts, since each shares freely with all. It defines a new regime, a new covenant, a new relationship between God and his people.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Moxnes (1988): 143.

In Luke's economics, the steward is one of the numerous exemplars who, with astonishing flair, accept liminality as "holy insecurity," as Fumitaka Matsuoka calls it.<sup>302</sup> The story of the slave *oikonomos* fosters, in principle, the discussions of the instrumental role of human subjects in creating a different life and reality.

However, the constructive role of human agency has been easily missed by traditional interpretations that tend to view Luke's economics as simply almsgiving or hospitality. No doubt the Gospel of Luke contains many such insights, but these are secondary to the basic plot of Luke's economics, which is the story of a transformation and renewal of the world. The construct of subordination which condones the "like-mindedness" of the exploitative relations cannot address Luke's vision of humanity and human subjectivity as an engine of change.

From a *minjung* hermeneutical point of view, a creative self-constitution of human agency enables the *minjung* to make (hi)story and realize the present transformation. In this connection, shrewdness becomes a weapon in the struggle to attain full humanity and a sense of freedom, resistance, and liberation over and against the constraint of indebtedness, inequality, and immorality. Through the story of the steward, the believers will be able to revolutionize their mindsets and release their lives from misappropriations by exploitative power. Such beliefs and practices can enrich and contribute to the world of the Others, saving all from the bondage of scarcity and also blessing themselves with a full, yet never-claimed, restitution.

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<sup>302</sup> Fumitaka Matsuoka, *Out of Silence: Emerging Themes in Asian American Churches* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1995), 63 and chapter 2.

In this connection, there exists what James Scott calls “the hidden transcript,” which points to the constructive role of human agency which is never stifled, implicit, nor unconscious. In a space of hidden transcript, rather than public transcript, the steward incorporates “the imagination of the dominated” in his struggle to think discursively and to attain the fullness of self and other.<sup>303</sup> In this regard, human agency becomes an engine of change, claiming full humanity and human capability. The subjectivity of the imperial slave *oikonomos* is clearly present and much alive within the imperial system.

To summarize, for the steward, redemption comes as a vision in which he, facing removal from his livelihood, is able to see the “homes” (τὸς οἴκους) welcoming him that emerge from the present. Hence, Luke presents an economy that pertains to the recovery of dreams and visions and enlightens readers with the realization that dreaming is a deeply engaged commitment that requires *community*. The dream of a transformed future becomes ever more strategic within the world of imperialism and colonialism. It is this relocation into the imaginative landscape of economy that invites the colonial subjects to dream of and see a hopeful future at the intersection of a denounced past and an insecure present.

The Parable of the Shrewd Steward presents the slave *oikonomos* who has sufficient agency at the time of crisis. His practice is personal, but not individualistic. By contrast, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus introduces the royal householder (*oikodespotes*) who suffers from a lack of capability—even to grasp the meaning of what he is asking.

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<sup>303</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* New Haven, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

## B. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

While the Parable of the Shrewd Steward presents the relocation into eternal homes, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus describes a scene from the afterlife. The portrayals of the rich man and Lazarus draw them into close parallel and yet convey the realities drawn from society's extremes. While the rich man has wealth and property, Lazarus has only his name. They are related in proximity while at the same disconnected through the inside/outside boundary of the *oikos* during life and also in the afterlife.

As to why the rich man and Lazarus end up in different places, many commentators assert that their fortunes are reversed by a "law of compensation," regardless of their deeds. For the rich man, "your good things" (v. 25), which is well attested by his clothing (e.g., v. 19, "being dressed in purple and fine linen") and eating (e.g., "feasting sumptuously everyday"), can mean "your good part"—that is, a certain definite amount of happiness designated to him. Only later comes his share of unhappiness.

However, some other commentators disapprove of the law of compensation. According to Duck-ho Oh, the latter part of the parable, a passage concerning the rich man's brother's repentance (vv. 27-31) suggests that the reason is not a mere reversal.<sup>304</sup> Nolland also argues that the agony in the flame in 16:24 is a punitive image, not a mere reversal of fate,<sup>305</sup> and so it implies that the rich man is at fault. Plummer further asserts that "being

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<sup>304</sup> Duck-ho Oh (1996): 8-26.

<sup>305</sup> Johan Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*. Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX : Word Books, 1989-1993), 830.

rich” cannot be the issue because after all Abraham was rich.<sup>306</sup> For those critics who argue that the rich man is at fault, however, the problem still remains because, as they reckon it, the parable does not explicitly relate the wrongdoing of the rich man or the goodness of Lazarus.

However, is it possible that certain norms and values should be obvious to humanity as a whole—that is, self-evident qualities that emerge from the nature of human existence? With this question, I turn below to the issue of the justice and judgment of God in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

### Justice and Judgment

The parable begins with descriptions of the figures of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man resides inside, while Lazarus stays outside at the gate of the rich man. Unlike the rich man, Lazarus eats the scraps falling from the rich man’s table. The description of the one sharply contrasts with that of the other. Their divided fates are intertwined; yet conspicuously different not only in the present/this-world, but also in the future/other-world, replicating and reversing their blessings and curses at each turn.

The society of the time often views beggars as sinners receiving a divine chastisement.<sup>307</sup> Their miserable condition is the result of sin. However, Lazarus is “carried

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<sup>306</sup> Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke International Critical Commentary* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898); see also Scott (1989): 44.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Lk 15:18, 21. See Scott 1989:31.

away by angels into the bosom of Abraham” (v. 22) as his name Lazarus—“God has helped” or “helped by God”—indicates, while the anonymous rich is simply “buried,” only later to be found in *Hades*. In their afterlife, there exists an abyss in between; however, they are still located within sight. Thus, the inside/outside construct persists before and after, as closely intertwined as their distance in between.

Under the imperial economy, the rich man earned his place at the expense of the poor man, Lazarus. Their different locations are not solely metaphorical, but convey the highly exalted forms of power and representation. For example, the rich man is clothed in purple and fine linen, while Lazarus is covered with sores:

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores (vv. 19-20)

Purple and fine linen place the man among the wealthy elites. In particular, purple signals royalty or official power (cf. Rev 18: 16). In the Hebrew Bible, the Median kings wear purple robes (Judg 8:26), and Mordecai wears a purple robe and linen as he leaves the king’s presence as his special emissary (Esth 8:15): “Mordecai left the king's presence wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration.”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> See Scott 1989:148-149. Intertextual evidence indicates that the rich man is among the ruling elites. See also Ezek 27:7, “Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail, serving as your ensign; blue and purple from the coasts of Elisha was your awning.”

This rich man also feasts “sumptuously” every day, while Lazarus wishes to eat what falls from the rich man’s table. The root sense of the term λαμπρῶς is “shining, radiant,” which also signifies royalty.<sup>309</sup> This is most poignant when compared with the critique of Roman economy in Revelation. Intertextual evidence in Revelation reveals that the demons not only advance their own place within the world but radiate signs of glorification therein:

*She glorified herself* and lived luxuriously ... (18:7);

All your *dainties* and your *splendor* ... (18:14);

The great city, clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls. (18:16)

In Hellenistic culture, as Plutarch remarked, the wealthy parade their possessions as in a theater before spectators and witnesses: “With no one to see or look on, wealth becomes lackluster indeed and bereft of radiance.”<sup>310</sup> For Luke, the attainment and perpetuation of such wealth is inherently foolish, wicked, and evil, which therefore affects the destiny of the rich *oikodespotes*.

While in Revelation the haunt of the foul spirits serves as a site of denial to the divine (18:7, “In her heart she says, ‘I rule as a queen’”), in the Gospel the rich man’s place functions as a denial to the Other, either person (as opposed to “dogs”) or friend (as opposed to the one eating scraps from the table):

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<sup>309</sup> BAGD 465.

<sup>310</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, Dennis P. McCann & Shirley J. Roels (eds.), *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics in Economic Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich. : W. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1995), 93.



[He was] desiring to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the *dogs* would come and lick his sores (v. 21; emphasis added).

καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου· ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ κύνες ἐρχόμενοι ἐπέλειχον τὰ ἔλκη αὐτοῦ.

Hence, the rich man and Lazarus are in proximity to each other, yet disconnected by the gate in between, which presently governs their existence. Bringing together “figures who were normally kept apart...does not rely on social realism but serves another purpose,” as Herzog points out.<sup>311</sup>

In addition, the way in which the rich man eats food in the immediate vicinity functions as an occasion to share either in the life-restoring or the life-destroying economy. For the rich man, his meals and food choices have reproduced the very character of economy in the Empire and colonial Palestine—justifying scarcity and excluding the Others from life. In this respect, the gate serves as a boundary marker, as opposed to Abraham's bosom (v. 22). According to Herzog, “it shuts out Lazarus and symbolizes the social barrier between the elites and the expendables.”<sup>312</sup> It is here worthwhile to quote Amos's indictment of Israel and charge to her.

For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and *push aside the needy in the gate*...Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said. Hate evil

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<sup>311</sup> Herzog (1994): 120

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 121

and love good, and establish justice *in the gate*. (Amos 5:12, 14-15a; emphasis added)<sup>313</sup>

For the rich man, either coming out of the gate or letting people in is important since the present gate replicates itself as an abyss in the afterlife. However, he fails to respond to a call to *communion* with the Others and therefore fails to cross the boundary.

Besides all this, between you and us *a great chasm has been fixed*, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us (v. 26; emphasis added).

καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις μεταξὺ ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται, ὅπως οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι ἔνθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς μὴ δύνωνται, μηδὲ ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαπερῶσιν.

In view of Spivak's usage of “responsibility” or Bakhtin’s “answerability,” the rich man’s *oikonomia* denies making discursive room for the Others to exist by withholding his care and attention.<sup>314</sup>

Since the story presents an eschatological crisis, it inevitably demands preparation from the audience which becomes increasingly critical. However, this “crisis” is strange to

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<sup>313</sup> According to Herzog, Amos referred to the gate of the city, a public space, while the parable addresses the gate of a mansion of the elite, a private space. However, the household in an ancient world extends beyond the family related by bloodlines to the slaves, servants, stewards, hired hands, lands, animals, and furnishings. It also refers to those who share a common life or even holds goods in common. Thus, it should be both private and public. See Herzog 1994:114-130.

<sup>314</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Spivak Reader*. Edited by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York : Routledge, 1996), 269-270; Greg Marc Nielsen, *The Norms of Answerability: Social Theory Between Bakhtin and Habermas* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 2002).

face: it does not have the immediacy of plague as in Revelation or a war as in Amos. Rather, it is with “how he lives” on a daily basis—the food he eats, the clothes he wears, the size of the holdings he lives with, the goods he consumes, the luxuries he allows himself, and so forth. In this regard, wealth is not the sign of God’s blessing. In the Gospel of Luke, the rich have been introduced as those over whom Jesus pronounces misfortune (6:24), who find their security in their wealth (12:16), and who show little regard for those of lower status (14:12).

For the rich man, the way he lives is unjust to those who cannot attain their livelihood. Both the rich man and Lazarus are part of the very household, a place in which to call Abraham “father” (v. 24, 27); yet the rich man never recognizes Lazarus as his kindred. Unlike the shrewd steward, the rich man remains blind throughout. For the rich man, the distance he finds between himself and Lazarus becomes a place of pain and agony, as indeed it has been:

Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ (v. 24)

The rich man feasting sumptuously everyday is in want of a drip of water, while Lazarus licked by the dogs is resting in the bosom of Abraham—precisely, a marker of true *communion* and *community*.

In the flames (v. 24), as Herzog observes, the rich man may not know why he is in there; but knows why Lazarus is with Abraham. To the rich man, Lazarus is “self-evidently

a servant, a domestic, an errand boy to do Abraham's bidding, so his demand follows."<sup>315</sup>

However, as his demand is denied, he begins, this time begging:

He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send [Lazarus] to my father's house, for I have five brothers that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' (vv. 27-29)

While neglecting Lazarus as a brother and kin, the rich man is bargaining for his five brothers. By implication, he is proposing that Abraham, and thus God, work for the case of his class. The members of his class require "privileged, insider information"<sup>316</sup>; yet completely ignore the divine provision of the Torah.

By describing the rich man as such, Luke urges his audience to enlighten themselves against the economics that have long supported the elites and excluded the Others. Being part of those economics is just to fall into sin and to make oneself subject to the judgment of God, a judgment that has been already made. However, no one may intervene in people's consciences and force them to awakenings. For it will risk a totalizing, essentialist "mythology" as Derrida might describe it. For Luke, it is impossible to shape such a totality:

He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead' (v. 31).

εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ· εἰ Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν οὐκ ἀκούουσιν, οὐδ' ἂν  
τις ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆ πεισθήσονται.

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<sup>315</sup> Herzog (1994): 123.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 125

Not a few commentators have argued that the reference to Moses and the prophets indicates that the law is in force.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, the condemnation of the rich man shows that the command to take care of the poor is still in effect (cf. Deut. 15:7-11). In the Israelite tradition, there is no doubt that the command of the law is in operation. However, it is noteworthy that the law as such is also committed to stemming the tide of structural injustice within the creation of God (e.g., the Jubilee in Lev. 25; cf. Luke 4:17-19; 6:20-38; 11:2-4; 24:27).<sup>318</sup> When this is unrecognized, however, even though the command is relevant to the needs and challenges at hand, it would leave us within the limits of the world as is, in which the cruel construct of political economy has not been radically challenged or, worse, has been condoned.

Finally, the judgment falls upon the rich, and a grand narrative of glorification and gratification falls apart. His failure pertains to a lack of appreciation for the Others as related to God, as Donahue notes: “One of the prime dangers of wealth is that it causes ‘blindness.’”<sup>319</sup> The rich man fails to perceive and understand the manifestations of God—that is, “Moses and the Prophets”—and thus a collective human identity. For the audience, the rich man is clearly a counter-model, an illustration, clarification of the problem.

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<sup>317</sup> See Scott (1989); see also Duck-ho Oh (1996): 349-373. Oh paraphrases v. 31: “If people will not believe the witness of the law, why would they believe one rising from the dead?”

<sup>318</sup> See Robert Sloan, *The Favorable Year of The Lord: A Study of Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke* (Austin: Scholar Press, 1977).

<sup>319</sup> Donahue (1988): 171

The parable concerns the wealth of colonial elites, obtained only at the expense of the poor and maintained only by their continual oppression. The manifest curses (rather than blessings) of the rich man in the parable become grounds for an alternative economy coming to light. Luke's *oikonomia* emerges not from a "new heaven and earth," but from in the midst of colonial space and time infested with such injustices as poverty, hunger, and cultural, ideological decompositions. In their midst, Luke presents an *oikos*, a dwelling of life and liberation for all.

#### The Economy as It Transcends

The theme of transformation emerges from a great reversal in the parable. The status of "now" is the reverse of "then," just as the location of "inside" becomes "outside." The parable does not intend a precise image of the afterlife, but rather continues the reversal between the rich and poor Lazarus.

For the rich man, the reversal unfolds from sumptuous feasting to a drip of water, extravagance to indigence, and becomes finally fixed. For poor Lazarus, however, the reversal occurs in a way that moves him up from the place of "dogs"—indeed, a degrading human condition—to the place in Abraham. In regard to the chasm between the rich and Lazarus, it is being opened when the rich man's gate is being closed. The rich man's gate is equivalent to the boundary creating "us/insider" and "them/outsider." The gate is, thus, oppressive because it excludes the Others from the life. However, what is oppressed does

not disappear; rather it returns to disturb the constructions as such, no matter how safe and certain it seems.

At this point, we can see both the immanence and transcendence of the political economy Luke envisions. On the one hand, the quality of transcendence involves the *communion* and *community* of ‘self’ and ‘other,’ which replicates itself in the Kingdom. Human subjectivity, which is ‘ritualized,’ invites the (post)colonial subjects to embrace the Others not simply as alien, but as persons in their full human dignity. On the other hand, the feature of immanence frees the subjects from the power that keeps them in chains of oppression and exploitation, in orders of kyrarchy and poverty, and in idolatry and the concupiscence of the ‘self.’ It is, therefore, an emancipatory transformation.

With regard to the figure of Lazarus, however, not a few commentators find that he remains a passive recipient throughout the narrative. While the rich man takes an active role, beseeching Abraham in direct speech, Lazarus seems at no point active in the narrative. The agency for Lazarus would be therefore no more than a “designated agency—an agency by invitation only.”<sup>320</sup> However, if Lazarus’s miserable situation leads to an understanding that the poor are the object of one’s accumulation and use of wealth, the issue of Lazarus’s silence emerges not from the text itself, but from the readers’ silence about Lazarus and his challenge of life and life together.

However incapable the text is of providing direct access to the voices at the margins, it might be a consequence of its strongly rhetorical purpose—to disclose the construction of

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<sup>320</sup> Anne McClintock, “No Longer in a Future Heaven”: Gender, Race, and Nationalism” in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Edited by Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, Ella Shohat (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 98.

the Other(s) and also to allow the alterity of the Other(s) to function subversively. In this sense, Lazarus' action—"lying" at the rich man's gate—shows that he is not completely passive in coming into *communion*. When no other means get through, his agency is inscribed on his body, as in Spivak's subaltern woman.

Hence, one needs to reject a notion of silence as the signifier of passivity, especially when the voice as "self" is denied in a colonizing context (e.g., a sister/brother in Ko Un's poem "Tuman River"). From a *minjung* perspective, poor Lazarus is, in fact, *minjung*-messiah. He is the code with which to understand Moses and the prophets.

The rich man, however, gives up the gift of the "Other" and, thus, the opportunities of redemption. When he finds himself unable to pass through the gate, he rather pleads twice to have Lazarus come through, one time for a drip of water to relieve his wretched condition (v. 24) and a second time for the rescue of his five brothers (v. 27). Indeed, it is the rich man, a patron of the imperial economy, who finds himself impotent. His requests demonstrate his precarious agency, and he remains incapable in regard to the chasm throughout. Abraham's refusal to give a sign teaches that the rich man's problem is not his lack of exterior signs, but his lack of agency needed to struggle with the manifestations of God that the Other(s) brings to him.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus subverts the complacency that divides the world into dualistic conflicts such as good and evil, superior and inferior, woman and man, and 'you' and 'me'. The point is not that power and authority delimit the boundary, but rather they delimit the ability to go through the gate, metaphorically, to the other side putting friendship and a communion first with the Others. In this sense, the *oikos* is a site



where the competing visions are contested and engaged. Without having recourse to the atomized ‘self’ or constrained ‘other’, Luke’s *oikos* serves as a living space in which to encounter the sacred, which becomes for us a motive for transformation, and to cultivate human capabilities and liberation for all.

For the rich man, however, the imperial/colonial ideology has proved successful, because he was not able to think outside the terms of the political-economic system itself. Such an ideological formation curves back upon itself like cosmic space and kicks into overdrive in the afterlife. Hence, one may have to unravel the governing conventions within the present in order to press up against its own structural limits in the other world.

With regard to the curses upon the rich, the Gospel becomes prophetic literature that fosters re-imagination against the worship of wealth, the complicity of property, and the cruel exploitation of the wretched of the earth. In this connection, Jesus’ teaching lends clarity and concreteness to the message of the parable:

No slave can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (v. 13)

Οὐδεὶς οἰκέτης δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ.

Representing two masters, Luke clearly identifies the problem—the glorification of wealth (μαμωνᾶς) as a god. Such a deformed god-concept is idolatrous, because it not only

represses human subjects but also reduces them to an “undifferentiated entity.”<sup>321</sup> This is an ‘obsession,’ as Daniel Patte calls it, that entraps human agency and renounces the full exercise of freedom to the point where this idolatry is able to decide on the life and death of human beings, both individual and collective, and who is to be respected and celebrated.<sup>322</sup>

Luke takes up the wholes of life as mutual celebration, saving all from the threat of starvation and scarcity. Luke’s prophetic demonstration against the obsessive power not only demystifies a sacralized system of (neo)colonial economy, but also grounds an awareness that the God of justice and liberation (as opposed to the god of mammon) should be obvious to humanity as a whole. The story encourages the readers to see the world in a different way, for it is God’s world and they are God’s creatures; it also urges them to release their lives from the misappropriations by exploitative power and desires and bless themselves with a full, yet never-claimed, restitution.

## Conclusion

The Parables of the Shrewd Steward and the Rich man and Lazarus present an economy that is both material and transcendent. In the wake of life and death, the parables become not merely strategic but also prophetic, since the visions of the beyond emerge from and react to the present. By describing “critical transcendence,” Luke proclaims

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<sup>321</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford; New York : Oxford University Press, 2002), 39.

<sup>322</sup> Daniel Patte, “Romans,” *Global Bible commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 440.

blessings on the poor and hungry but woes against the wealthy. In this sense, Luke pointedly argues that poverty is not God's curse for their sins; nor is wealth God's blessing.

Both parables achieve, as their outcome and consummation, full human beings. Their constructive roles undercut calming certainties allied with the relationships of power and property surrounding the master and the slave (16:1-13) and the rich and the poor (16:19-31) and build the economy and household of God by way of crafting communal humanity (e.g., "making friends," 16:9) and fashioning themselves as individual persons (e.g., "I have resolved what to do," 16:4).

Indeed, the imperial slave *oikonomos* finds himself in the dual situation of being a member both of the dominant class and of the working people. Dreaming out of his mixed experience of living on the periphery, he unabashedly engages the existing political-economic order. His subjectivity of creating and entering the *oikos* (e.g., "their houses," 16:4; "the eternal homes," 16:9) pertains to both materialistic and transcendent liberation.

However, the rich man was incapable of either living into this type of individual freedom or forging the communal transcendence. Insofar as there is the disenfranchised Lazarus with him, he is endorsing conditions under which others are reduced to dehumanizing poverty. His understanding of human subjectivity therefore remains weakened and distorted. Notice that he still objectifies Lazarus while in the flames, making him an "errand boy" rather than a kin (16:24, 27), yet referring to Abraham, "father"!

When (neo)colonial market economy increasingly harms the most vulnerable, Luke invites readers to embrace the visions of the beyond *from this place* and challenges them to work toward its fulfillment *in this place*. In a world where many employ god-concepts to

justify scarcity and scarcity thinking, the Gospel lays its prophetic oracle by providing stories from a redeemed end that is continuously materialized in the present moment. Luke does not suggest that believers should stand aloof and isolated from the world; on the contrary, it encourages them to be involved in the world. By affirming the subjectivity of the people of God, Luke helps them to proclaim and exemplify the vision for the world in this age, rather than extricating themselves from it. Over and against any oppressive political-economic framework, their maneuver becomes not only deconstructive, but also reconstructive, laying the groundwork for an alternative path in the present.

In conclusion, Luke does not make any empty promises that an abundant future will follow after the present destitution. Nor does the Gospel make hackneyed promises that the present life, though disadvantaged, will be rewarded with eternal blessings in the afterlife. Luke rather tells the colonial subjects to engage and contest their present (hi)story in a dynamic-creative fashion. Luke's economy is not static, but is always changing, subject to reconstitution and transformation while at the same time being saturated with actual experience and clear-eyed observation.

## Chapter V Conclusion

As we have seen, Luke conveys, in and through such cultural, ideological, theological concerns and pursuits, a sharp sense of the political economy. The achievements the Gospel makes at various levels and by way of conflict are ultimately and closely interrelated and interconnected in three steps: a description of the imperial economy as it stands with regard to the people of God; a statement of the liberating economy as it challenges the established order; and a declaration of the transcendent economy as it involves dynamic and intracommunal transcendence, whether blessings or curses.

The colonial construct of political economy as both construct and representation has created scarcity and scarcity thinking, sanctioning life and death and driving away the powerless and the people at the grassroots into exile, making them “outsiders” within. From ‘antiquity’ to ‘postmodernity’, the collective dimensions of life of the *minjung* should be seen as a fundamental phenomenon in the world in general and in the world of imperialism and colonialism in particular. In the Gospel of Luke, the achievement of both individual and communal liberation starts with the most disenfranchised voices in community (e.g., the “poor,” the “maimed,” the “blind,” the “lame,” etc). In doing so, Luke provides a sharp revisioning of mutual/‘heteronymous’ *community*, as opposed to interested/‘ideological’ power and exploitations.

Engaging this line of inquiry of the text, I started my work from the (hi)stories of *minjung* in order to resolve the queries about the construct of political economy in Luke’s *oikos* narrative. I conclude this project by exploring how my interpretation might reorient

the debates on Luke's economy with an emphasis on the 'real' reader—the flesh-and-blood reader, historically and culturally conditioned, with a field of vision fundamentally informed and circumscribed by such a social location.

The aim of this work was to contribute to the present Lukan scholarship by way of intercultural interpretation with a focus on the reading of the Bible in an East Asian global space, with special emphasis on the construct of political economy. Since real readers contribute to the recuperations of meaning and reconstructions of history, it would seem crucial to consider which reading-constructs and reader-constructs stand as helpful or harmful to life, a life that has often been denigrated as the 'other' of the world. This undertaking inevitably inserts the voice of the real reader and brings to critical understanding my own interests and perspectives. Henceforth, I attempt a summary assessment of how my perspective and methodologies have enabled a novel engagement with the biblical text and also bring into reflection reading the present from the Gospel of Luke.

#### Reading Luke's Construct of Economy from the Present

The model of intercultural interpretation I have employed touches upon the coalition of crosscultural and transhistorical experiences and does not pretend to attempt any interpretation for all situations. Rather, it has helped me to employ the marginality of the colonized as another cultural text with which I can engage in ethical reading of the biblical text. Thus, *minjung* becomes re/membered with voice and informs the text and its construct

and representations. The intertextual ‘otherness’ of *minjung* in which I read the Bible has opened up a new path to Scripture as it provides a better chance of making ethical appropriations of the text for my place and time—as an East Asian postcolonial.

I have made the contextual character of my reading as explicit as I can, in order to signal the way in which I make sense of the biblical text, undertaking both dialogical and transformative explorations. It is dialogical because the reading acknowledges the others, whose interpretations of the Bible we respect. It does not confront the others with an “imperative” objectivity, but engages in dialogue. In this respect, the cultural/social location of readers serves as a construct to enhance the dialogical imagination. It is also transformative because new meanings and challenges emerge when the interpreter reads the biblical text from the present and also reads the present from the biblical text. As such, I have attempted to read the text of Luke in terms of the present cultural (con)text and also read such (con)text in terms of the text. In reality, both ways of reading and assessing are not completely unfamiliar in Luke as follows:

First, in Mary’s dialogue with Elizabeth (1:46-55), Luke calls attention to traditional hopes for God’s salvation in regard to the lowly and oppressed, which echoes Hannah’s song over Samuel’s birth (1 Sam 2:1-10) and recalls psalms that celebrate God’s victories. Second, following the description of the reign of Emperor Tiberius and his local collaborators in colonial Palestine, Luke introduces the message of John the Baptist drawn from the prophet Isaiah (3:4-6; Isa 45:20-23). This proclamation declares the salvation of God as evident for all to see in contrast to the empty claims made by other gods and rulers that they are the saviors of the world.

Third, Luke's recognition of poverty as a systematic construction has parallels in the institution of Jubilee, which Jesus reads a portion from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 58:6; 61:1-2):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to *bring good news to the poor*. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (4:18-19; emphasis added).

Not a few commentators have argued that Luke's "good news to the poor" is an inner-Christian message, and that Luke's concern was limited to the needy in Luke's own community.<sup>323</sup> However, insofar as the institution of Jubilee is not an appeal for charity within the believers' group(s), but a redefinition of justice and a reordering of society, its full implications cannot be restricted within the believers' community, but extend beyond it (Luke 6:27-38; 14:13, 21-23; cf. Acts 9:41).<sup>324</sup> Indeed, the jubilee theme is present in the programmatic texts of Luke (e.g., 4:16-21 "inaugural address"; 6:20-38, "sermon"; 11:2-4, "prayer"; 24:27 "the great commission").

In the Gospel of Luke, the political-economic (re)constructions of its time and space cannot be dissociated from the social (hi)story of the past as such. However, while recognizing the requirements of the traditions and understanding the nature of God's salvation, Luke proposes the economy as it transcends. Within the household of God, one cannot divide gains and losses since both interpenetrate through mutual commitment and

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<sup>323</sup> See the aforementioned historical critical analysis in Chapter I.

<sup>324</sup> Indeed, as Schottroff and Stegemann observe, the crippled, the blind, and the lame (14:21) are not necessarily the members of the Christian community.



liberation. Because there are no loans therein, there is no such thing as usury or prohibition of usury.<sup>325</sup> Moreover, there is always enough to go around even in a most unlikely place (9:12, “deserted place” [ἔρημος]) for an astonishing number of people (9:17, “And all [five thousand men] ate and were filled;...twelve baskets of broken pieces.”; cf. 12:27-31, “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you ...!”).

It is God who has entered the *oikos* as a direct character (15:11-32) or a voice (12:20) in the text (12:20). God makes himself connected to, and part of, humanity (3:23-38). Neither the sacred temple-household that has been wrested from the oppressed, nor the imperial household that the oppressors present as sacred is unique and special. For those in the margin, this is particularly significant since God’s household re/members those oppressed as children of God.

Though more sudden and unexpected, Chang Il Tam also witnessed God who enters the cesspool of humanity. He then exclaims, kneeling down: “Oh, from a rotten body, new life is coming out! It is God who is coming out! Oh, my mother, God is in your womb. God is the very bottom.”<sup>326</sup> With regard to why God enters into the picture in this way, one of the *minjung* cultural texts, the Donghak, which is deeply related to the tale of Chang Il Tam might provide an intertextual explanation.

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<sup>325</sup> For Moxnes, the prohibition of usury is irrelevant in the kingdom of God because all loans have been transformed into gifts. However, it should be more than “gifts”, if the gifts still demarcate the self and the other as binary opposition. See his discussion on gifts, “The Economy of the Kingdom” (1988).

<sup>326</sup> Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*, 27.

When the foreign imperial powers began to influence Korea in the mid-nineteenth century, Choe Je-u (1824–1864) established the Donghak (Eastern Learning) with the intention of helping peasants suffering from poverty and restoring political, economic stability. The Donghak provided a message of salvation to peasants in distress, and its teachings were set to music so that uneducated peasants could understand and accept them more easily. The Donghak rapidly gained acceptance among the peasantry and spread across the country. It shortly involved itself with the Peasant Revolution in 1894, in which the peasants in large numbers rose up against the landlords and the ruling elite. Taxes were so high that most of them were forced to sell their ancestral homesteads to rich landowners at bargain prices. Their revolt was, in nature, an intense anti-Japanese and anti-government movement since the Japanese Empire and its collaborators took the entire economic surplus. Eventually, the Peasant Revolution was leveled by Japanese and the pro-Japanese government troops. The government later executed Choe as a criminal; yet his teachings had a marked impact on the development of *minjung* literature, such as Kim Chi-ha's *Chang Il Tam*.

The most significant teaching Choe presented was “Inward Spirit, Outward Complexity.” Life in me is a site of transcendent experience and also a site of heterogeneous human existence. This pertains to full, enlightened, human beings and the community thereof, including the multiple and multifarious ‘self’ and ‘other’. Because of its universal spiritual trait within the human being, the teaching assumes that what is truthful (*Tao* or the way) should be obvious to humanity as a whole.

If this is the case, would it be also possible that the household of God has certain self-evident qualities (Mich 6:8), binding on peoples of all social, political, economic classes, yet keeping the self and other as liberated (in relation to concrete historical/material projections) and as transcendent (in relation to sacred communal/ritual projections)? The Gospel ensures that when the people of God stand before the high priestly client rulers and the colonial authorities, the Spirit re/members individually and communally who they are and also teaches them what they should say (Lk 12:4-12).

Luke's representation of political economy is not an institution that gathers the people with "purchasing power" based on some agreed-upon purposes among them. Rather it is the *community*, in which 'self' and 'other' join together in communal celebration. This eliminates murderous and dehumanizing effects and re/members the 'prodigal' and the 'disciplined' alike. In this respect, the Gospel of Luke presents a significant event which is, in principle, a deconstructive and a reconstructive move over and against the drastic construct of household and its economy.

As we have observed thus far, the discussion of *oikos* and its genealogical history in Luke enacts the three recourses to political economy as follows: (1) from homogeneity to heterogeneity, (2) from imperial-colonial framework to human agency, (3) from scarcity to abundance.

*From Homogeneity to Heterogeneity* Neither an ‘atomized’ self nor an ‘ideal’ whole can be viable “in a salutary and vivifying manner” without the Other(s).<sup>327</sup> In view of the Gospel, it is pure formalism to imagine that otherness, heterogeneity and marginality are unqualified political/economic benefits. Without the imperial-colonial drive to ‘atomized singles’ (e.g., the rich fool) or ‘constrained wholes’ (e.g., *paterfamilias*), one may find the *oikos* in Luke to be both internal pluralism and external connection—that is, a living space in which to encounter competing visions and to cultivate human capabilities and freedom. The readers are also invited to imagine and build up (οἰκοδομέω) what they could be with regard to the political-economic ‘double bind’. The divine *oikos* in Luke does not divide or discriminate according to interested, oppressive relations. It rather fosters a mutual, ‘heteronymous’ unity (e.g., “hugging” and “kissing,” 15:20). This calls into existence the people of God as *community* whereby one re/members the suffering Others as (*minjung*-)messiah, a manifestation of God, oppressed as well as exploited by the destructive power. In the *minjung*’s intertext, Chang Il Tam encounters God when he sees the prostitute risking her life at delivery. This shapes truly postcolonial subjectivity which is heterogeneous by nature over and against homogenizing, colonial, and capitalist, straitjacketing totality.

*From Imperial-Colonial Framework to Human Agency* With regard to the instrumental role of human agency, Luke presents that which rescues us from the power of the world that scares us and represses human vitality. Luke draws us back to the beginning of creation

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<sup>327</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins’s insightful discussion of humanity, *Being Human* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 82.

and calls us to be full human beings attaining God-given human capabilities.<sup>328</sup> What Luke helps us recover is the conception of human subjectivity whose agency refines freedom over and against both the external, structural system of oppression and the internal slavery to self-possession, autonomous individualism, and greed. In Luke, one does not escape history but reorders and transforms it; redemption flashes in the now of its recognizability. A constructive role of human agency in the Gospel surfaces from below; and it involves dynamic and intracommunal transcendent process, as it “ratchets” upward and to the center (to the Temple [priestly aristocracy] and Caesar [imperial rulers and their local clients]). Sufficient agency brings about new possibilities for both liberation and transformation.

*From Scarcity to Abundance* In the Gospel of Luke, human misappropriations bring about scarcity. For those who monopolize resources and exclude those who do not have property from the *oikos* (that is, from livelihood), Luke’s prophetic impulses announce irretrievable curses. No elite families on earth have a natural, moral, or divine mandate to monopolize the resources of the earth. However, for those who “see” (2:20; 7:22; 15:20), “hear” (2:20; 4:21; 7:22), and “respond” (1:46-56), they will find the beginning of their redemption by entering God’s economic work for the creation which ensures abundance for all.

Hence, Luke unabashedly presents a whole range of work options: renouncing riches for the poor, lowering debts (16:5-7), lending without expecting return (6:34-35), putting oneself at others’ disposal both with service and riches by and providing hospitality (8:1-3; 10:38-42), inviting the poor and the social outcasts (14:15-24), offering (21:1-4), wasting

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<sup>328</sup> On this point, see Hopkins (2005): 161-188.

for love (7:36-50; 15:22-32), disposing half of one's assets and also making restitutions (19:1-9), and communal ownership (Acts 4:32-37). This sort of variety in the Lukan corpus precludes the formulation of any single norm as to "the" Lukan ethic about property and wealth. Rather Luke commends and even celebrates all the options by inviting the people of God, be they "children" (16:25), "friends" (12:4, 22; 16:9), or "disciples" (14:26; 16:1), to the *oikos*—a rich, full, and joyful environment for the individual and the communal.<sup>329</sup>

Luke's political economy, therefore, pertains to cultural, ontological, and theological consciousness. All the parables we have observed occur in Luke's unique so-called Travel Narrative. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, which inspired Chang Il Tam, remains a central section of Luke. Luke describes Jesus as one constantly on the road. At the heart of this journey are the invitations to the people of God to live in the present being shaped and transformed by the dreams and visions, which go beyond simply a concept of 'utility', or 'disutility,' while affirming *communion* and liberation.

As such, reading the Gospel from the present may give us pause, but does Luke's narrator also want to stop us in our journeys? Several markers in the text give rise to the questions as follow: Does the Gospel also involve critique of our present construct of economy and its rationality? How does the Gospel help us to confront our biases over the construct of political economy today?

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<sup>329</sup> Sondra Ely Wheeler, *The New Testament on Wealth and Possessions: A Test of Ethical Method* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Yale University, 1992).

## Reading the Present from the Gospel of Luke

One can understand prophetic visions of the Gospel as a ‘fitting’ theo-ethical response where a rhetorical situation similar to the Gospel’s exists.<sup>330</sup> In this regard, it would seem that implicit and explicit scriptural allusions also abound in the contemporary neo-colonial economy. I come back around, finally, to the proposition placed at the beginning of the Introduction: My reading of the Gospel of Luke and its economy helps me to see my own context in a new light where globalization becomes a new world order and its own rule and conception creates scarcity.

*Economy as Domination* Today, while the contemporary world sees a more nearly equal, ‘flat’ world, bringing with it ‘open markets’, ‘open trade’ and ‘open politics’, proponents of neoliberal shifts release diverse capitalist truisms for those who strive to be globally competitive:

Make your corporate taxes low, simple and transparent; actively seek out global companies; open your economy to competition; speak English; keep your fiscal house in order; and build a consensus around the whole package with labor and management.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> E. S. Fiorenza, “Changing the Paradigms: The Ethos of Biblical Studies,” in *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 31-55.

<sup>331</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, “The End of the Rainbow,” *New York Times*: 29 June 2005.

Since globalization has become a new world order, its own rule and conception has been able to influence virtually every space in the world. Its deceptive appearance presents capitalist realities as natural and eternal—a continuing representation of ‘god’, which is an idolatrous cult of Mammon.<sup>332</sup>

Henceforth, when capitalism charges itself with domination and exclusion, poverty becomes the result of divine will, though it is an inevitable consequence of the nature of the capitalist market. It has thrived at the cost of such disenfranchised human subjects, while at the same time having excluded those who do not have the property which results from having a livelihood. This leads to a number of issues, or problems to be resolved: first, the market itself as the mechanism of global domination; second, commodification as the reality of the mechanism as such; and third, scarcity as the consequence of the domination and its justification.<sup>333</sup>

First, while the market promises a free and harmonious way of integrating and coordinating society, its universal justification for ‘rational’ choice is, in reality, a reflection of domination. Second, commodity chains emerge as the core of marketization. The whole process of commodification effectively reduces the lands and labor to rents (in place of lands) and wages (in place of persons) as well as limiting justice, health, and life. Everything in the commodity chain is commodified; the market renders all transactions inhuman. Third, as wealth is used merely as a means for gaining more wealth, scarcity

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<sup>332</sup> See the earlier discussion of Segovia (2000); Meeks (1989).

<sup>333</sup> Rohun Park, “Revelation for sale: An intercultural reading of Revelation 18 from an East Asian perspective,” *The Bible and Critical Theory* 4 (2008:2): 25.1–25.12.



emerges and it effectively denies others access to their livelihood.<sup>334</sup> The Gospel tackles the problems and needs as such, while conveying a liberating new narrative for the people of God living under global capitalism.

*Economy as Liberation* For an East Asian postcolonial reader, Luke's parable stories point to political and economic changes by way of a broader sense of the Others not simply as alien, but in their full human dignity as persons and groups. This awareness is directly related to the ethical imperative: If God is on everyone's side, what must I/we do as a 'faithful' response to the world as is? The question touches upon how broadly we can imagine the economy for all of God's creation and how broadly we bring justice for sustainable existence for all.<sup>335</sup>

In this regard, Luke's genealogical representation suggests that my existence is not quite my own since my life is already bound up with the life of the Other(s): Life 'gives' and 'is given.' However, this proposes none of the traits of constraints most economic models harness either in the 'commodity fiction' ending with the 'Rational Fool' (as in the case of *Homo Oeconomicus*) or in the power of reality feeding 'a system of 'obligation' (as in the case of *Homo Reciprocans*). The Gospel rather proposes a complete person and a

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<sup>334</sup> In this regard, Dussel notes that "Once capital is absolutized – idolized, fetishized – it is the workers themselves who are immolated on its altar, as their life is extracted from them (their wages do not pay the whole of the life they objectify in the value of the product) and immolated to the god. As of old, so today as well, living human beings are sacrificed to mammon and Moloch." *Ethics and Community* (Maryknoll, NY : Orbis Books, 1988), 260.

<sup>335</sup> It is here worth quoting from the poem of Wallace Stevens: "We are not our own. Nothing is itself taken alone. Things are because of interrelations and interconnections." *Opus Posthumous: Poems, Plays, Prose*. Edited by Milton J. Bates (NY: Vintage, 1990), 163.

complete world. In addition, the relationship to self and other emerges in the *dative* (e.g., Lazarus in the ‘bosom’ of Abraham; kissing and hugging between the parent and the prodigal).<sup>336</sup> This economy redefines what our culture ‘sees’ as the problem with poverty and also redirects how we envision life and life-together for ourselves, our families, and our society.

The teaching is therefore seen as unsettling and even threatening. However, constant empowerment through the corrective of the Gospel shall serve as a condition for being rescued from the power of mammon and its destructive bondage of slavery. This understanding certainly opens the possibility of liberation, as opposed to oppression by neocolonial market mechanisms. For the people at the grassroots, Luke’s *oikos* stories serve as a vehicle through which all others participate in their world as envisioned by story-makers, story-tellers, and story-performers. The *oikos* becomes a possible locus for emancipatory practice. Hence, the *minjung* can be directly connected to and grow out of the irrepressibly inspired convictions that imagine the world that is not and engage in the practice of freedom.

*Economy as Transformation* What still needs to be done is to display that which the practice that Lukan (hi)stories inspire might look like in our time and space. At the heart of the *oikos* is God’s invitation to God’s people to live in a ‘present’ that has been liberated and transformed by the visions of the beyond. For grassroots *minjung*, this is an affirmation

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<sup>336</sup> Deleuze defines transcendence by means of the *dative* relation. *Between Deleuze and Derrida*. Edited by Paul Patton and John Protevi (London; New York: Continuum, 2003), 81; see Claire Elise Katz and Lara Trout’s *Emmanuel Levinas: Levinas and the History of Philosophy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 179.

of hope and a call for dreaming new visions in a way that is so “foreign” in their land which obsesses with mammon-‘capital’.

One of the East Asian cultural manuscripts provides an admirable record in this regard. In *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu suggests that value distinctions cause problems, but ‘natural’ opposites complement and enhance each other.

When all under heaven know beauty as beauty

There is then ugliness

When all know the good

There is then the not good (Tao Te Ching, 2).

The five colors blind a person’s eyes

The five musical notes deafen a person’s ears

The five flavors ruin a person’s taste buds (Tao Te Ching, 12).

According to Lao Tzu, the construction of beauty and goodness splits the world into two objects clashing with each other. So do five categories of colors, musical notes, and flavors. When these categories are fixed, these socially contracted categories begin to control human perceptions.<sup>337</sup> Then, the categories control the invisible colors, musical notes, and flavors.

However, in a real homeland—which is, for Lao Tzu, nature—harmony and unity persist beyond their differences. It would seem that Lao Zu prefers to choose for things to be as obscure and mysterious as they are and to have them without possessing them. In this

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<sup>337</sup> See the discussion of Chansoon Lim, *East Wind: Understanding Tao from a Theological Perspective*. Edited by Charles Courtney (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), 21-38.

sense, his philosophy becomes radical not only because it opposes the imperial-colonial framework of distinctions used to stratify power relations, but because it presents the concept of whole. In this regard, Lao Tzu challenges market values and norms; having “to know what to offer and in what moment; to take advantage of every available opportunity; to know when to sell and to buy; to know how to deceive and convince.”<sup>338</sup>

Luke raises this sort of radical reflection and critical consciousness over and against the construct of political economy that justifies scarcity and triggers the threat of starvation. Luke’s economy not only goes beyond all the concepts of ‘utility’ or ‘disutility’ but also establishes transformation across categorical dominant boundaries of ‘self’ and ‘other’. In the *oikos* of God, partial identity cannot rule or tyrannize communal identity. In addition, all the exploitations, abstractions, and delimitations of life are lifted up. There is always “enough” to go around for all by radical interdependence from with-in and with-out. One may return to the *oikos* and find oneself at home. Luke’s *oikos* stories as located in the travel narrative invite us to a transmutatory pilgrimage to God and then to return to the place in which there is found enough for us all.

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<sup>338</sup> René Krüger, “Luke” *Global Bible commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 395.

## The Ethical Interpretations of the *oikos* Parables in Luke

I have explored how my interpretation might reorient the debates on Luke's economy with an emphasis on the 'real' reader—an East Asian postcolonial. From an East Asian global perspective, I have contested the scholarly neglect of imperial economic constructs and relations involved in the reality of Empire. Notably, commentators have long been preoccupied with the ("right" kind of) use of wealth and possessions in Luke, such as 'almsgiving' and 'hospitality'—all too often translating them into formal or symbolic values of capital operation, while dismissing a level of interaction between the imperial and the colonial that is deeply charged.

Those prevailing views of Luke's political economy affirm the 'impressionistic' character of the economy and its institutions, which, when regarded as a life condition in a colonial context, leaves the readers within the limits of the world as is—a world in which the established 'canons' of politics and economics have been condoned, never being radically challenged. To put it differently, such a theological preference can never be ambitious enough because it misses the vision of the beyond, the great economy, an economy of God.

The failure of these previous attempts, thus, motivated me to investigate a new paradigm, that is, Luke's challenge to political economy. While recognizing and unveiling the colonial structure of economy, Luke unmasks its creation of scarcity (Lk 12:13-21; 14:15-24), challenges its construct (Lk 15:11-32), and frees people from a sense of indebtedness, inequality, and immorality (Lk 16:1-9; 19-31). Within the Empire's overall system, Luke's economy integrates extraneous bits and pieces of such diverse expressions

into a unified whole of *oikonomia*. Indeed, the economy embodied in Luke's programmatic texts is not comprised of wealth and property as separable from politics and religion in the Empire. Luke's vision of economy (*oikonomia*) emerges, in principle, both with-in (in relation to various Christian groups) and with-out (in relation to the Roman Empire), crossing the boundaries of binomial framework in the broader context of the Roman Empire.

Hence, Rome as an encompassing political, economic, and religious condition has been carefully criticized and countered heretofore. In this connection, scholarly literature have often seen divergent interpretations of Luke's political stance with regard to the Roman Empire, whether it is a compromise (apologetic about the church or the Empire),<sup>339</sup> legitimization (assuring believers and legitimating their faith with allegiance to the Empire),<sup>340</sup> contradiction (presenting believers as contravening social patterns supported by the Empire),<sup>341</sup> or of no interest (uninterested in the politics of the Empire).<sup>342</sup> These

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<sup>339</sup> With regard to the political apology for the church to Rome, see Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). With regard to the apology for Rome to the church, see Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982); Paul W. Walaskay, 'And so we came to Rome': The Political Perspective of St. Luke (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>340</sup> See Philip Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*.

<sup>341</sup> See Richard J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987); see also *Jesus, Politics, and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978).

<sup>342</sup> Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Eric Franklin, *Christ the Lord* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975).

proposals have put Luke's Christian community and Rome in binary opposition. However, as Yong-Sung Ahn observes, Luke's text does not support such divisions.<sup>343</sup> These divergent views rather lead the readers to turn to an ideological optic and ask why they have to consider what type of particular relation.

With regard to the Roman Empire, Luke is direct in that he initiates a reordering of economy from within the imperial-colonial framework of Rome that is simultaneously social, political, theological, and cultural. Luke is also rigorous in the way he describes the vision of God's *oikonomia* that mobilizes diverse, yet persistent, ideas and actions for actual change while, as Luke Johnson notes, modern readers feel the text does not talk about possessions consistently. In such a way, however, Luke highlights and scrutinizes the existing political economy. However, Luke is indirect in that he lays out an alternative vision by way of awakening imaginations and encouraging discussions between and beyond 'self' and 'other'. Luke's vision and practice disguise expectations considered revolutionary, yet create an *oikos*, a place of life and freedom for all.

However, 'scientific' approaches have easily missed this alternative because they tend to present Luke's account of economy as simply usable insights against poverty, such as changing the habits of the wealthy and distributing money to the poor. Without a doubt, the Gospel contains many such insights, but these are secondary to the basic plot of Luke, which pertains to the radical re(de)construction of political economy.

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<sup>343</sup> Yong-sung Ahn, *The Reign of God and Rome in Luke's Passion Narrative: An East Asian Global Perspective* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006); Steve Walton, "The State They Were in: Luke's View of the Roman Empire," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church*. Edited by Peter Oakes (Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Academic, 2002): 1-41

Luke's construction of political economy exposes the limits of our established canons. Indeed, the economy embodied in Luke addresses not merely the use of wealth, but a broad sense of human subjectivities that cross over the imperial-colonial descriptions of the boundary between center and periphery, metropolis and the margins—in effect, the imperial and the colonial.

Thus far, my reading of the Gospel has not taken place beyond perspective and contextualization. While the exclusive focus on the text has long obscured the ways in which cultural context and social location inform the subjectivity of interpretation, foregrounding cultural/social location puts readers in a better position to recognize the ways in which their location informs and reforms their understanding of the text. Bringing an interpreter's context to critical understanding also enables interpreters to 'see' more clearly when their interpretations contribute to oppression or to justice—that is “ethical dimensions and ethical consequences.”<sup>344</sup>

Hence, from an East Asian global perspective, I have employed the marginality of the colonized as a cultural text that creates new horizons with biblical interpretations. I have since attempted to read the text anew by way of discursive reflections and conscientizations through a struggle between competing visions and ideologies.<sup>345</sup> In the process, meaning

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<sup>344</sup> Rhoads (2004): 55.

<sup>345</sup> On this point, Segovia states that: “[C]ritical situation envisioned is not necessarily one where 'anything goes,' since readers and interpreters are always positioned and interested and thus always engaged in evaluation and construction: both texts and “texts” are constantly analyzed and engaged, with acceptance or rejection, full or partial, as ever-present and ever-shifting possibilities.” *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (2000), 47; see also the discussion of E. S. Fiorenza. She asserts that: “In and through such a critical rhetorical process of interpretation and deliberation religious and biblical studies are constituted as



has been produced through complex modes of interaction involving both text and reader; the meaning is, for sure, not value-neutral, not autonomous-hermeneutical, and not authoritative-dominant.

The alternative construction of Luke challenges our own convictions and empowers us to confront the economy in our worlds. We cannot be inactive in this endeavor since without our collective self-reflection of and engagement in the political economic institution we will remain its victims. As “the child grew and became strong in spirit” (1:80), the readers need to be deeply connected to, and grow out of the irrepressibly inspired convictions that imagine the world that is not and draw them into radical visions of the beyond. Since the experience as such cannot be transmitted directly—because it is not an idea or doctrine that one can understand—one only experiences it in a true experience of *communion* with the Others, in which one determines the very character of political economic existence.

It is, then, a relocation into the imaginative landscape of God’s *oikos* that allows the readers to ‘see’ and ‘hear’ “salvation”—indeed, ‘see’ (2:30, “My eyes have seen your salvation”) and ‘hear’ (4:21, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”). This salvation shall no longer sound like a special language for the saints, since the economy (*oikonomia*) of God is the greatest ‘realism,’ with its emphasis on the intuitive appreciation

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public discourses that are sites of struggle and conscientization. The transformation of biblical studies into such a theo-ethics of interpretation calls for a rhetorical method of analysis that is able to articulate the power and radical democratic visions of well-being inscribed in biblical studies.” E. S. Fiorenza, “Changing the Paradigms: The Ethos of Biblical Studies” in *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 55.

of the Others as a way to sane heavenly belief and practice (11:2, “Your Kingdom come!”)—a concrete, real, efficacious, bodily contest and engagement, as we listen:

Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them (7:22).

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