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ABSTRACT
When Luke 12:35-48 is read from the vantage point of black theology, then Luke's special concern for the poor and oppressed comes to the fore. The message of the gospel as a liberating force comprehends the totality of the human person viewed spiritually (kingdom), socially (neighbour) and ethically (accountability).

1 INTRODUCTION
A reading of Luke 12:35-48 from the vantage point of a black South African theologian seems beset with many problems among which can feature the following:
* Which are the main themes (or theme) of Luke 12:35-48?
* What is Black theology? What does it address?
* Is a hermeneutic link between Luke 12:35-48 and the main aspects of Black theology feasible?
Only after one has reflected on these questions can the viability of a Black theological reading of Luke 12:35-48 be considered or attempted. Much preparation seems necessary since we are treading on a somewhat "virgin ground".

2 WHICH ARE THE MAIN THEMES (OR THEME) OF LUKE 12:35-48?
The first part of our pericope, namely Luke 12:35-40, seems to be a Lucan version of a more fuller parable of the ten virgins represented in Matthew 25:1-13. (Here note that Luke's reference to lamps and wedding feast finds an echo only in Matthew). Matthew's parable has its punch line in the last verse: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour". From this it could be concluded that the parable in Matthew is told in function of alertness.

Mark records the same alertness or watchfulness in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem and the parousia, in the eschatological discourse of the thirteenth chapter (13:33-37). The concept "watch" or "wakefulness", which occurs no less than three times (cf vv 33,35,37), is given a brief contextual coverage of five verses (i.e vv 33-37) as compared to Matthew's thirteen verses (i.e vv 1-13). But how does Luke present his (or Q's?) version?

Mark the wisdom motif which recommends alertness in a situation of master-servant relationship is introduced by the term "watch" - for example, "watch therefore..." (Mt 25:13a and Mk 13:35a), or simply "watch" (Mk 13:33a). Here the wisdom implied simply means precaution,
prudence, or sagacity in the light of practical knowledge and experience. To be on the alert simply means to be sensible.

But in Luke, the implied wisdom has a transcendental (as opposed to mere practical) reference. The watchfulness pervading Luke 12:35 assumes a moral-religious dimension in verses 37 and 38, introduced by the term "blessed" (μακάριος). Thus, although the Matthean and Marcan watchfulness is presupposed in Luke, in the latter emphasis falls on the double use of "blessed" to which "watchfulness" eventually becomes subordinated. In Matthew and Mark, the eschatological dimension is suggested by the context rather than the relevant text itself in each case.

The second part of the pericope, namely Luke 12:41-46, seems clearly Q. Luke is close to Matthew 24:45-51 in orientation and thrust. Alertness is equated to conscientious stewardship, while tyrannical treatment of those over whom one is the in charge, or even self-indulgence, are both equated to lack of vigilance - nay, to sheer infidelity - now viewed in a serious light. This seriousness is taken up again in moral questions suggested in the rest of the passage, namely verses 47-48, apparently from Luke himself. Here, punishment is meted out in proportion to the degree of responsibility. The degree of responsibility is determined by the closeness of the servant to the master, where closeness suggests knowledge of the gospel or awareness of what the master wants. There is no acquittal on the basis of ignorance.

3 WHAT IS BLACK THEOLOGY / WHAT DOES IT ADDRESS?
Black theology seems a religious counterpart of the more philosophical Black consciousness movement. The latter is aimed at promoting the Black person's "courage to be", his identity and sense of vocation. This "courage to be" will inspire Blacks to break loose from the shackles of colonial bondage and exploitation. Just as freedom FROM slavery in Egypt ultimately meant freedom FOR the service of God in holiness and justice in the Promised Land, even so does Black theology seek to articulate the Liberation Struggle as the will of God for the Blacks. Black theology heralds a return from the (psychological and cultural) Babylon of apartheid, to the service of God and one another, which is possible only within a new dispensation of change (understood in the McMillan sense of "Winds of change"). This change approximates the West European spirit of "Liberty, equality and fraternity" underlying the African National Congress freedom charter, or the more humanist-socialist trend in which fraternity is expressed by "comradeship" within some (African) Gemeinschaft setting.

Black theology will try to rediscover everything originally ordered to its advantage, whether in Karl Marx, the human sciences or even the Bible. The presupposition here is that the "colonial church" (with its prophets and its theologians) used only those paradigms designed to legitimate colonialism in the Third World, in what amounted to cultural imperialism.
Finally, Black theology is poised to exploit a moral leverage over capitalist ethics which naturally rates profit-making above human worth or dignity. (Note that capitalism is defined in terms of its abuses, as did Marx). Although capitalism is a western phenomenon it assumed a unique role in South Africa, by exploiting and institutionalising racism. Note that racism can also masquerade under the euphemism of undue emphasis on "group", in such phrases as "the right of each group to self-determination". Traditionally, the west has been satisfied with something like the Bill of rights.

4 IS A HERMENEUTIC LINK BETWEEN LUKE 12:35-48 AND THE MAIN ASPECTS OF BLACK THEOLOGY FEASIBLE?

4.1 Orientation
We have already indicated that Black theology addresses itself to the situation of Blacks. Now if Blacks are a sociological "minority group" and Whites, by virtue of their power, a dominant or "majority group", then a Black theological perspective of the gospel according to Luke will be valid to the extent that Luke shows sensitivity to such sociological variables. For example, the concept "poor" πτωχοί without the article (Lk 4:18) can denote a quality or state approximated by "minority group" in our context, rather than individual poor persons.

At this juncture indications are that a Black theological view of the gospel will be in keeping with Luke's "favouritism for minorities, segregated groups, and the underprivileged. Samaritans, lepers, publicans, soldiers, public sinners in disgrace, unlettered shepherds, the poor - all these receive special encouragement in his Gospel" (Stuhlmueller 1968:116).

4.2 The Christology of Luke vis-a-vis that of Matthew and Mark
Stuhlmueller's allegation may not be far-fetched after all, if we note that Luke's Christology seems uniquely predisposed to the underdog as compared to other synoptics. In Mark's gospel, to begin with, the title Son of man (also equivalent to son of God, or simply Son) stands in an antithetical relationship with that of Messiah or Christ. The tension between these two titles (i.e. son of God and Christ) constitutes a criticism of the exclusivity of Jewish nationalist interests or ambitions connoted in Messianism. In Israel's history of theology, it was already one of Isaiah's sad realisations that when religion became a blank check for the nation and its wrongdoings, then the end could not be far off. Mark, however, apparently moved not much further than universalising his Christology, without by that fact denying its Jewish antecedents.

In Matthew, Christ is presented as the new Moses, who brings the new Law; his genealogy goes back to Abraham (Mt 1:1), while Luke's goes back to Adam, son of God (Lk 3:38). The role of Jesus is subsequently seen as that of the fulfiller of the Law (Mt 5:17-19). This type of Christology does not
ostensibly exclude the pagans from salvation, as long as they identify with the Jews, either explicitly (e.g. through circumcision/proselytism) or implicitly (e.g. Christians who in addition to their baptism undertake to observe the Law in part or as a whole). The opponents of Paul in Galatia apparently opted for the latter position. This model of Christology is not free from ideology or cultural bias, inherent in the salvific pretensions of the law, which nullify God's grace and Jesus' death, as Paul will argue in the letter to the Galatians (Gl 2:21).

On the positive side, the assumption that salvation comprehends the whole person, whether viewed physically, spiritually, socially or politically, is not merely shared by all the gospels, but is Biblical in character, since the Old Testament anthropology knew no compartmentalisation of reality into segments.

In Luke, not only is Jesus presented through a universalist divine ancestry (Lk 3:23-28), but his vocation is unequivocally couched in terms of some liberation movement, as it were. The following will illustrate our point: In 4:18-19, Luke delineates Jesus' messianic programme. This is done through a modified version of Isaiah 61:1-2. In Luke "to heal the brokenhearted" is left out and replaced by "to send away free the oppressed". This phrase is apparently taken from Isaiah 58:6. The reason for Luke's modification is evident from the context of Isaiah 58:6, which is a plea for the replacement of the ritualism of fasting by social justice, presented as true religion or authentic worship of God.

The context of Isaiah 61:1-2, on the other hand, serves to define the role of Jesus in prophetic terms, from whence he derives his authority. Needless to say, the Old Testament finally receives fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. Conversely, Jesus' ministry is interpreted by Old Testament categories.

Now we can see why Luke merits to be called the "Gospel of the Poor" (Stuhlmueller 1968:117), who, of course, include women. This tendency in Luke ranks among other major tendencies found in designations such as the "Gospel of Universal Salvation"; the "Gospel of Prayer and of the Holy Spirit", and so forth.

Finally, the possibility of a hermeneutic link between Luke 12:35-48 and some aspects of Black theology will depend on the extent to which Luke's wider concern for the poor is reflected in our pericope and the extent to which it warrants a Black theological reading.

4.3 A Black theological investigation of Luke 12:35-48

4.3.1 The context of Luke 12:35-48

The context of Luke 12:35-48 will be discussed in a twofold division: detachment and poverty (12:13-34) and recognising the Kairos (12:35-59).

4.3.1.1 Detachment and poverty (12:13-34): Detachment and poverty will be discussed under three headings: the vice of avarice (vv 13-21), providence (vv 22-32) and almsgiving (33-34).

* The vice of avarice (vv 13-21):

Luke does not denounce the vice of avarice by condoning deprivation nor does he canonize destitution as a virtue for the masses, as did the colonial theology of exploitation. This would run counter to the message of the prophets (e.g. Amos 4:1). Evangelical poverty has a moral shade sometimes described as "spiritual" (Mt 5:3; cf Lk 6:20 and Zph 2:3 where humble means "poor" or anawim). What is at issue is not merely possessions, but the moral existential effect of attachment to hoarded riches acquired through hoarding. Hence the reason for this prohibition is spelt out clearly: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (v 34). In the Old Testament anthropology the human heart is the core of one's existence and spirit; by it we can sincerely love, hate, serve or worship. (cf Mt 15:15-20; Ezk 36:26; Mt 22:37). And since one cannot be a slave both of God and money (Mt 6:24), a lover of riches is in effect a worshipper of wealth, where hoarding possessions becomes a symptom of idolatry. To "worship" something means to accord it top priority so that everything else (including God) is subordinate to it. Since Biblically it has been shown that actions do speak louder than words (Sebothoma 1987) worship is determined by one's moral choices throughout the week rather than what one ritually attests on the Sabbath. The services (e.g. in the synagogues) are a stereotyped communal avowal of faith which may be either confirmed or belied by one's life. If the latter is the case, then we have an example of ritualism.

To return to the text, in verse 15 we encounter a word of warning, "watch!", as though introducing the parable of the rich man which follows (vv 16-20). The folly of this rich man is his failure to recognise true wealth, namely that which is valid in the sight of God (v 21). Note that the opposition between material wealth and God is not ontological (or inherent in beings so compared) but ethical in character, sometimes called "internal forum" - that is, of the moral subject.

In this first passage of our context, then, detachment and poverty (conceived as two sides of the same coin) are presented as a precondition of readiness for the master's return. Thus readiness entails detachment from inhibitions or distractions such as material cares and love of wealth; "readiness" means the freedom to devote oneself to the service of God.

4.3.1.2 Reliance on providence (verses 22-32): While the preceding section is negative in form and characterised by a warning against avarice, verses 22-
32 seem to offer a positive moral ideal exemplified by the carefree attitude of ravens (v 24). But does the opening phrase: “Then he said to his disciples...” (v 22a) serve as a connecting link between what were originally two separate parables highlighting opposite points? Could such opposite points revolve round the term "barn" which occurs in both sections (vv 18,24)? Whatever our conclusions, the golden thread between the two sections consists in one's attitude to material possessions which can take the form of either attachment (vv 13-21) or detachment (vv 22-32). Attachment to material possessions is equated with the faithlessness of the pagans (vv 28-30). Thus the two sections treated here centre on the moral subject's attitude to things, in so far as one is influenced by faith or the lack of it. Needless to say, faith is fundamental to eschatological "readiness".

4.3.1.3 Almsgiving verses (33-34): The last two verses (vv 33-34) propose almsgiving in opposition to hoarding; a recognition of true wealth in contrast to false (or material) wealth; and authentic worship over against unauthentic worship, detectable from the inclinations of the heart (vv 29,34).

Luke has now thoroughly prepared the reader for the recognition of the importance of the eschatological urgency presented as "readiness for the master's return" (vv 35-48). The elimination of avarice (vv 13-21), and its replacement by trust in God's providence (vv 22-32), bear fruit in one's generous attitude to one's fellows, exemplified in almsgiving (vv 33-34). This triangle of (a) myself, the moral subject, b) God, the object of my faith and c) my neighbour, the occasion for my generosity (almsgiving) has now been clinched as the criterion for the life of a believer as opposed to a non-believer. In the parable that follows (vv 35-48) the triangular dynamics will persist in (a) the slave in charge, (b) the servants over whom he takes command, and (c) the master, who is to return. And finally, we will show that the classical notion of justice is not only essentially social (concerning me and my neighbour) but it has a vertical or religious dimension, in addition to the civil or horizontal. Again, the triangle emerges.

4.3.1.4 On recognising the Kairos 12:35-39: The parable on "being ready for the master's return" (vv 35-48) which we will discuss hereafter is part of a larger whole under the theme on "recognising the signs of the times" (vv 35-39); the latter is proposed as the context of the former.

The vigilance implied in "watch!" (see our discussion of vv 33, 35 and 37 above) is a virtue which makes sense only in the light of its beneficial effects in a given situation. It is therefore a specific situation which warrants a particular virtue at a given moment. In practice this means that one requires wisdom and discernment in order to read the signs of the time (with a view to an appropriate moral response), even as one recognises natural signals that mark changes in the face of the earth and sky (vv 54-59). Just as impending rain or hot weather will be noticed by the local folk (so that they can prepare
themselves), disputes among people need to be weighed in the light of the possibility of the opponents' recourse to the judge, so that the desirability of a settlement out of court can be considered. In the latter case the correct way to act in view of the impending parousia (or the master's return v 46a) is for the unfaithful steward (v 45) to repent and to "judge for yourself what is right" (v 57a), says the Lucan Jesus. This same Jesus is sure to return as the judge of the living and the dead, according to Christian tradition presupposed in Luke.

Finally, those who are watchful and living under the vigilance of faith will experience the fire cast by Jesus upon the earth (v 49). This fire (elsewhere of judgment, cf 3:16-17) will work through Jesus' word and his Spirit to separate and purify those destined for the kingdom. The baptism of Jesus (v 50) may allude to his coming passion (cf Ps 124:4-5 for the imagery). Although Jesus is for peace, (cf 1:79 or 7:50) he will not tolerate peace at any cost (e.g., the negligence of duty or injustice of the unfaithful steward in v 35-48). According to Stuhlmueller's analysis of verses 51-53, Jesus will not bring the sobriety of the status quo, "but the sword that will divide the eager from the contended" (1968:146). Thus recognition of the Kairos or penultimate times in verses 35-39 cannot overemphasise the need for change (or conversion) as the faith requirement for the gospel urgency. This change for what is "right" (v 57a) may also be termed "readiness" for the master's return.

A Black theological investigation of Luke 12:35-48 will centre round the broader existential notion of "the poor" or anawim on the one hand and its impact on the dialectical interplay between oppressor and oppressed, on the other - that is, vis-a-vis the fundamental virtue of justice or righteousness as a precondition for love (itself the central message of the New Testament) within the framework of eschatological urgency. The concept of justice or righteousness will be given special attention hereafter.

While the anawim motif in Israel's self-conception took comfort in anticipating the Day of the Lord, during which the nations will be punished and Israel rewarded, the prophets reminded Israel that it too would be punished for infidelity and social injustice. The phrase "widow and orphan" often epitomises "the poor" who were oppressed in Israel. The prophetic outcry against social injustice testifies to the existence of a situation of oppressor and oppressed AMONGST the people of God. But is the oppressor / oppressed situation applicable to our passage? It seems to be alluded to in the "us" as opposed to "all" in verse 41, as well as in the wicked servant or slave left in charge in verse 45.

In the New Testament the term oikovomai occurs first in the parables of Jesus. The term is a cognate of oikovomía which means "the office of household administration and the discharge of this office" (Lk 16:2f). The word can also mean "plan of salvation", "administration of salvation", "order of salva-
tion", etc. In this sense it has both a religious and general significance. The ordinances and decrees of the authorities are also described by this term. At this stage the African sense of Gemeinschaft and that of οἰκονόμια as existential models of Christian living seem to be in agreement.

We have alleged that in the New Testament the term occurs first in the parables of Jesus. Now, Luke 12:42 refers to πιστός οἰκονόμος ὃ φρόνιμος; compare Matthew 24:45: ὁ πιστός δοῦλος καὶ φρόνιμος. Now as the interchangeability of οἰκονόμος and δοῦλος in Luke 12:42, 43, 45f shows plainly, the reference both here and in Matthew 12:45ff is to a ben ba'iet or steward from among the slaves, who is over the whole household θεραπεία (and sometimes the whole property of his master (τὰ υπαρχόντα). This is not applicable to οἰκονόμος in Lk 16:1,8).

Verse 37 encapsulates the central moral demand(s) introduced by the formula μακάριος, elsewhere a stereotype formula for the evangelical discourse (cf Mt 5:3-10). But in Luke, μακάριος seems predicated to readiness γρηγορεία, where the latter is a prerequisite for eschatological urgency. Its function is to posit the eschatological banquet as a reward for readiness (vv 37,39). Indeed the whole passage (Lk 12:35-48) can be entitled "on being ready for the master's return". Readiness becomes a moral attitude with prompt compliance as a motto (as against delay χρονίζω in v 45). The routine of daily duties includes a stewardship that allots food to the household in due time. That is the vigilance or conscientious execution of duty proper to a steward or slave (of Christ). Being on the alert is presented as a "prudential virtue", (see Lk 21:34-36) in view not of the Day of the Lord, but its New Testament counterpart, namely the coming of the Son of man (Lk 21:25-28). Verse 41 introduces social positions of authority and power on the one hand, and those of subordination and powerlessness on the other. These positions constitute a conditio sine qua non or raw material for the roles of oppressor and oppressed. The parable seems meant for those in a position of power and authority as opposed to the common people.

Verses 42-44 describe the ideal steward whose dutiful exercise of authority correspond to nurturing or loving care or beneficence by the Lord himself. In contrast, verse 45 describes the unfaithful steward who seems to lord it over the household members. We may presume that he not only does not give food to the members in time, but also beats the menservants and the maidservants. This steward abuses authority because power is exercised in the light of self-interest rather than on behalf of the master (Lord). In a word, he oppresses the household of the Lord. The question is: if the coming of the Lord means judgment for the unfaithful steward, does it also imply, conversely, liberation for the members of the household? The answer will be in the affirmative if in the Old Testament the Day of the Lord means (a) the liberation of Israel from the tyranny of the nations and (b) the liberation of the widow and the orphan from the oppression within Israel. Verse 46b
seems to equate the fate of the unconscientious steward with that of the unfaithful in general, who will be condemned.

Verses 47-48. In these verses the proper administration of the household of the Lord seems so basic a requirement as to brook no ignorance. Knowledge of what the master wants (in matters of household administration and human relations) or the lack of that knowledge, accounts not for judgment or acquittal but for differences in the degree of guilt or the gravity of the charge. This is so, not because ignorance per se deserves less punishment, but because knowledge deserves more. The "few" (stripes) in verse 48 seem relative only to the "many" (stripes) in verse 47. In other words, the amount of punishment is determined by the degree of trust (e.g. stewardship).

4.3.3 Justice or Righteousness in Luke

4.3.3.1 Introduction: One of the areas of overlapping concern between Luke and Black theology is justice. This word can denote conduct which is fair or the exercise of authority in the maintenance of right; it can also refer to retribution. The term δικαίωσύνη, barely hinted at in the context of our passage (Lk 12:57), probably because it is taken for granted in the background, is here proposed as the thematic content of "watchfulness", or being "ready" for the master's return. But what does Luke understand by this term? Λατρεύων αὐτῷ ἐν ὅσιότητι καὶ δικαιοσύνη ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ in Luke 1:75 indeed speaks with liturgical power of the messianic salvation. The Messiah or the "Righteous one" is considered righteous because his nature and action conform with the norm of divine will. This view was common both in the synagogue and in apocalyptic writings.

In the New Testament, δικαίωσύνη is almost always used for the right conduct of a person which follows the will of God and is pleasing to him. The word denotes rectitude of life before God, or uprightness before his judgment. In contrast to the (popular) Jewish thought of merit (cf pharisaism), δικαίωσύνη is regarded as a gift which God gives to those who ask for it. Righteousness is thus closely linked with God and his kingdom. For Paul, justification comes through faith in Christ apart from works of the law (Gl 2:16).

4.3.3.2 The nature of justice and righteousness: Whether we think of justice in secular or in general religious use, the very close connection between legal, ethical and religious terminology results from the central position occupied by δίκη as "right" in early Greek thinking. One is righteous when one meets certain demands which another makes on one, with regard to relationships. Thus even the righteousness of God is primarily his covenantal rule in fellowship with his people. In the final analysis it is always my relationship with my neighbour before my God. Eschatological readiness means acting justly or righteously toward my neighbour. Indeed, Quell is in fact expressing the
sentiments of Black theology (which is a facet of liberation theology) when he says:

We can see particularly from Deutero Isaiah (δικαιωθήναι in 43:9,26) that the image of the legal dispute is always present. The justice of God vindicates His oppressed people against their conquerors, and as ἡ ἱλασθείσης (Is 50:8). He carries through the cause of righteous to victory (Quell 1964:195). When Thomas of Aquinas describes justice as giving the other person(s) their due, he relies heavily on Aristotle’s idea of the role of a judge. In addition to judicial justice we have Solon’s legislative and distributive justice. This means that an unjust (e.g. racist or discriminatory) law is foreign to the Western notion of justice and Christian ethics, and is conceptually a contradiction in terms. Such a law is not only morally not binding, but also an agent of rebellion against God’s law and order as Israel understood it.

That God posits law, and that He is bound to it as a just God, is a fundamental tenet in the OT knowledge of faith in all its variations. The element of unity in the faith of all the righteous in Israel, whether prophets, priests, law-givers, or men of a less distinctive sociological type, is the acknowledgement of God’s law ordering all life both great and small and forming a basis of hope.... Yahweh is the source of all bodies of law in the OT.... The law of Yahweh is an order of life which cannot be challenged or changed.... Yahweh’s law is righteous because He is righteous (Quell 1964:176).

Now, while it is true that the concept of law in Israel exercised so strong an influence on all social relationships that even theological reflection on the fellowship established between God and his people was decisively affected by it, it is equally true that Christianity conceived of itself as bound by the same law (Mt 5:17-19; cf 22:34-40) or the law of Christ (Gl 5:14; cf 6:2).

At this stage, it should be clear that the concept “rule of law” automatically comprehends justice, as well as the stability of “order” that derives from it. Any so-called law and order based on unjust law is precarious and a breeding place for dissent or revolution. A purely secular notion of justice is perhaps negative if libertinistic in character, inspired by a fixed revolt against the so-called religious domination during the Renaissance. Here, one can speak of “rule by law” leaning more toward philosophical theories like the “Social Contract” propounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau rather than the wisdom of jurisprudence inherited from Roman Dutch law. True to their origins, the advocates of this kind of religious freedom can be identified by their plea for a separation of politics and religion, as well as the “sovereignty” of the state that may not be dictated to, either by the West or the community of nations around the world. For Christians holding this view, it is difficult to escape the impression that a separation between religion and politics rests on a schizophrenic philosophy of life (or perhaps some ideology?) where it is “normal” for moral acts not to be guided by a conscience informed by faith. It is here that the prophetic utterances of Luke find not only an echo but a reincarnation in Black theology.
In conclusion, Black theology presumes that South Africa is a Christian country and therefore subject to the Law of Christ.

WORKS CONSULTED


Ouellen, H & Schrenc, K s v δικη ktl. TDNT.


