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ABSTRACT
The paper employs recent developmental theories to investigate the subject of beggars and the gospel in Lucan writings. It argues that contrary to current perceptions, Luke provides no basis for charity as a response to the phenomenon of beggars. Instead, intervention with a total transformation of the person's condition constitutes the good news for the beggar. This enables the person to take his/her place in the ἄναμμα, an alternative to being a 'social burden'. This is as true of Luke's treatment of the subject as it is of the treatment of beggars by communities in the background of Luke and Acts. Such a response to beggars is in line with the theory of human development.

'To give to a beggar is to do him an ill service' (Plautus)

1 INTRODUCTION
The alternative view of a beggar as portrayed in Plautus' statement confronts the modern Christian head-on. What is the basis of the subjective Christian attitude towards a beggar? Is it the Greco-Roman and Jewish background to Christianity? Is it the Jesus tradition? Is the church under the influence of the 'Good Samaritan' syndrome? It would seem that for the Greeks and Romans of antiquity, a beggar was seen as a social burden who lived on the kindness of others (cf Homer) while for the Jews, a beggar was a shameful sight. In either case, according to Plautus, 'to give to a beggar is to do him an ill service' (Trinummus 339, in Hands 1968:65).

Given this injunction, the aim of this paper is to employ recent developmental theories to investigate the subject of beggars and the gospel in Luke-Acts. I argue that contrary to current perceptions, neither Luke nor the

* This paper is an abstract from 'work in progress'. Financial assistance from the Human Sciences Research Council (South Africa) and Missions Akademie (Hamburg) respectively, is hereby acknowledged and highly appreciated.
Greco-Roman background provide a basis for charity as a response to the phenomenon of beggars. Instead, there was on the one hand, a perception in the Greco-Roman world that to 'give to a beggar is to do him an ill service'. On the other hand, while Luke does not discard the Jewish tradition of charity, he consistently portrays a Jesus who (directly or through the apostles) responds to a beggar by transforming his/her condition. This constitutes good news (gospel) for the beggar (cf Lk 4:18-19).

In the first part of the paper I discuss the theory of development as it will be employed in this paper; in the second part, I explore the idea of a beggar in the Greco-Roman and Christian world; in the third part, I return to the reflection on beggars and the gospel in Luke and Acts.

2 A PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

It is often forgotten that the term ‘development’ is broad and elusive; those who use it mean different things and they approach it from different epistemological frameworks. In this paper, I use the term within the epistemological framework of post-modernism.1 In fact, human development is associated with ‘affirmative post-modernism’ to the extent that it is empowering and liberative.

In his book, Getting to the 21st century: Voluntary action and the global agenda, Korten (1990:67) defines development as:

...a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations.

Central to this definition are notions of process, production and improvement. These are not new in the field of development. However, Korten uses them in a different way. For example, by ‘process’ he implies a continuous act in which people participate personally and corporately, in their own transformation. In other words, he is not thinking of some ‘Good Samaritan’ who has a plan to transform people who are otherwise inert. Nor does he think of a mechanical catalytic event. By ‘production’, Korten implies an output that is sustainable and justly distributed. In fact, he is critical of the present trend of economic development which is sure to exhaust the resources of the earth. He calls it a ‘cowboys economy’. By ‘improvement’ he means improvement in the quality of life, consistent with the people’s vi-

sion of their destiny. What makes these terms new in Korten’s context is the fact that he has focused them more on people than on economic growth. Hence he talks of a people centered development.2

This view of development is shared by several theorists. For example, Desroches and George who worked in India in the 1980s also advocate a people centered development. They argue for a people centered development precisely because of the failure of projects that were aimed at economic growth rather than at developing the human capacity to grow (Desroches & George 1984).

The notion of development that is advocated by Korten is not entirely original. For example, the Tenth International Conference of Social Work (1958) defined community development as

...the conscious process wherein small, geographically contiguous communities are assisted by the more developed community (sic) to achieve improved standards of social and economic life. This is done primarily through their own local efforts and through local community participation at all stages of goal selection, mobilisation of resources, and execution of projects, thus enabling these communities to become increasingly self-reliant (in Jeppe 1980:8 [my emphasis]).

While this reflects good intentions, it can also create a dependency syndrome. The less privileged might use the privileged as ‘cushions’. Thus development would be stifled. On the other hand, the privileged might manipulate their beneficiaries through their donations. Yet all this is contrary to the intention of the Tenth International Conference of Social Work.

The above ideas of development are expressed theologically by Pope John 6 thus:

Man (sic) is only truly man in so far as, master of his own acts and judge of their worth, he is author of his own advancement, in keeping with the nature which has been given to him by his Creator and whose possibilities and exigencies he himself assumes. Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and the whole of man...We do not believe in separating the economic from the human, nor development from the civilisations in which it exists. What we hold important is man, each man and each group of men, and we even include the whole of humanity (Encyclical, Populorum Progressio, cited in Henry & Hancock 1979:5).

Thus development is about people (cf Coetzee 1989). The human being is at its center; the promotion of the inherent good in individuals alongside eco-

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1 See for example, discussions of the hermeneutics of development in Booth (1989), Graif (1989), Coetzee (1989) and Corbridge (1990). Note especially the tension between modernity and post-modernity in these approaches.

2 'People centered development' in this paper is synonymous with 'human development'. It focuses on human beings and their participation or non-participation in structures that govern their daily lives.
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nomic growth will ensure completeness. In the words of Burkey (1993), such a view of development will advance humanity economically, politically, socially and personally.

Against this background, David Korten has published the above-mentioned book which popularised the notion of a people centered development in the 1990s. The book itself was a culmination of a series of conferences and workshops which he had previously held, following which he published papers on people centered development. His ideas were based on empirical data which he collected during his thirty years of involvement with major 'developers' in the world. His fundamental criticism of the approach adopted by these developers was that they focused on economic growth rather than on human development. In fact for Korten, human development is a prerequisite for economic growth.

Korten refers to four stages or phases through which the theory of development has evolved since its inception after World War 2. These are (i) charity, (ii) community development, (iii) policy development and (iv) a people centered development. He sees these as successive stages which nevertheless overlap at some points, for example, charity is sometimes used as temporary relief even by the well-intentioned developers. However, it is used in a limited way and within a specific time frame. The present trend is to develop the human potential to achieve sustainability and to transform social structures. This means a break with the dependency syndrome in favour of exploring one's potential. The success of this rests on localising the efforts. In post-modernist approaches, this is known as a micro-foundation.

A micro-foundation emphasises the active subject as the initial origin and source of all human action. It recognises that people act in terms of unuttered, implicit knowledge and rules that can be applied effectively to specific situations, although they do not necessarily explain them (Knorr-J.

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3 This means a 'process by which people through their own individual and/or joint efforts boost production for direct consumption and to have a surplus to sell for cash' (Burkey 1993:36).
4 This means a 'process...in which the people increase their awareness of their own capabilities, their rights and their responsibilities; and use this knowledge to organise themselves so as to acquire real political power...' (Burkey 1993:37).
5 This means 'those investments and services carried out or provided by a community for mutual benefit of the people of that community whether as a village, a district or a nation' (Burkey 1993:38).
6 This means a 'process by which an individual develops self-respect, and becomes self-confident, self-reliant, cooperative and tolerant of others through becoming aware of his/her shortcomings as well as his/her potential for positive change' (Burkey 1993:35).
7 Korten worked for the World Bank during this period.
Cetina in Knorr-Cetina & Cicourel 1981:4, in Coetzee 1898:94) Thus, knowledge of people in development is a prerequisite. In fact, Soemarwoto puts it succinctly thus: 'development, from whatever angle we look at it, is anthropocentric with the objectives of enhancing human material and cultural welfare' (in Nossin 1977:38).

In the light of this theoretical background, I propose the African model that follows below as the framework within which to reflect on the theme of beggars and gospel in Luke-Acts. I see this as a necessary declaration of my 'reading' locus.

3 AN AFRICAN MODEL

Although the formal and conscious attempts at development are relatively late in world history, some African people have long had their formal system(s). Obviously, they did not themselves regard these as development, but the above understanding of development shows that these systems are essentially about human development. In the Xhosa system for example, the very word for development, *ukuphuhlisa*, connotes the idea of 'laying bare' with the view to 'advance' someone or something. When a person communicates a message in a highly philosophical way, the person is usually asked to *phuhla*, that is, to 'come out clearly.' This means that the person should 'unpack' the statement(s) made.

In the context of development, those who use the term today sometimes mean material growth. However, as its etymology suggests, it has nothing to do with this. Instead, it refers to the 'heart' of the matter. It means 'getting to the very being of something' (Mthuze 1995). In other words, it means drawing out the real person—the 'real me' in order to facilitate growth in me. This 'real me' might be clouded or suppressed by a number of things.

8 Renewed interest in African culture and religion has caused a number of seminars and workshops to be held recently. However, most of those seminars have struggled with the definition and scope of what are called African culture and religion. This is due to the existence of several cultures in Africa. The question is whether it is correct to talk of an African culture or of cultures. Without attempting to solve this problem, the present study focuses on the culture of the Xhosa people in the Eastern Province with which the author is familiar. The term 'African Culture,' unless indicated otherwise, refers in this study to these people.

9 Korten (1990) dates the modern trends back to 1948 after World War. However, there are seeds already apparent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

10 There are in fact two other terms, namely, *impucuko* and *inkqubela*. The former means 'civilisation'; it is associated with the idea of a 'quantum jump' from the 'traditional' to the 'modern' and it reflects a missionary school which portrayed the 'modern' as being superior to the 'traditional' and African. The latter term means progress in the sense of dynamism.
'developer's' task is to facilitate the process of removing those things that cloud or suppress the 'real me.' Once this has been done, the person is said to be making progress.\(^{11}\)

Who was responsible for facilitating the development of a person?\(^{12}\) Facilitation was always done collectively and it was shared by the community and the individual's family. This is encapsulated in the proverb Umntu ngumntu ngabantu, translated as 'a person is a person through other persons'.

In African thought the meaning of this proverb is very profound. In the first place, it reminds the individual that s/he\(^{13}\) is nothing until s/he recognises the fact that s/he has a responsibility towards the others and is accountable to them because they made him/her what s/he is. Thus it is not uncommon in the Xhosa/Zulu language to hear the statement: asingomntu lo, yinja (this is not a person, he is a dog). A statement of this nature is reserved for selfish and individualistic persons, usually men. Emphasis is not on degrading the person. Rather, it is to expose the extent to which such a person has lowered his dignity as a human being and a member of a particular community.

In the second place, the statement conveys a sense of belonging and wholeness. It means that every individual belongs to another and together they belong to the wider family. Consequently, the community has the responsibility of cushioning the individual, especially in times of distress (cf Kekana 1995). In this case it is not the individual that is expected to act beneficially but the community because of the individual’s actual and potential contribution to it.

The proverb: umntu ngumntu ngabantu is used in relation to a living person. Between birth and adulthood the person goes through a process of 'socialisation' which culminates in a formal initiation into adulthood. This is when a person is expected to assume full responsibility in the community by contributing to its welfare, thus making it whole.

Social structures into which a person is born do not change. The process of socialisation is vital in preparing a person for a role in these structures so

\(^{11}\) For example, when a person claims to have made a child, umntu (someone), by giving the child education, that person is in fact claiming responsibility for removing ignorance and whatever else would have suffocated the 'real person' in the child.

\(^{12}\) It should be remembered that some of these practices have survived till this day. In fact, with 'African revival' in the last few years there is now a resurgence of the inherited traditional practices.

\(^{13}\) The clumsiness of this reading results from the English language. Many African languages do not this problem as the same pronoun is used inclusively. However, in order to be in line with developments in the area of gender sensitivity, I avoid what might (in other languages) appear to be sexist language.
as to ensure a preservation of the community. This is pro-active; it is not, for example, a defence against the disturbance of a social equilibrium.

In regard to the socialisation of the individual, there is stress on values that make a person 'humane' (abe nobuntu) in the face of others. These values surpass anything material and include sexual conduct, social behaviour, respect for others, especially adults—living and departed, work ethic, use of material possessions, relationship to nature, and so forth. In fact, the ethical dimension of wealth is only a component of this teaching and not the entire story.\(^\text{14}\) This is different from the modern Western tradition where acquisition of technology and materialism is stressed.

Finally, it should be noted that the process of ukuphuhlsa is localised. It is only effective when it is appropriated to a particular community. Progress is therefore measured in terms of an individual's, hence the community's, proximity to the values that are meant to benefit the particular local community. Education means education in those values that made one humane among other humans and proud to be a member of a particular clan and community. Hence a person is said to be 'a man' or 'a woman' when the person could display those values of society that made the person independent and responsible.\(^\text{15}\)

In the rest of this paper, reliance on this model will become apparent. Both the biblical text and the social background to Luke-Acts seem to be in line with the above theory of human development: begging and giving of hand-outs to individual beggars are discouraged, human potential is focal and individuals are encouraged to be independent. However, there is no precedence for the use of developmental models in New Testament studies although models that are based on sociological and social scientific theories have been used in recent years.

4 UNMASKING THE BEGGAR

The subject of beggars is not common in New Testament studies. It appears that most New Testament scholars, like the writers of antiquity, see no

\(^{14}\) The phrase 'economy of affection' (whatever its intended sense) in the paper on African Communalism (cf Bounds of Possibility) errs where it defines Ubuntu as the 'economy of affection.' Those who have an experience of some vestiges of Ubuntu know that it is much more than this.

\(^{15}\) For example, in the Xhosa culture in the Eastern Cape Province, initiation of young boys and girls is meant to provide the kind of education they need for responsible membership in the community. The focus is on cultural values. If these lack in a person, no matter how educated he/she is (in modern Western terms) or how much wealth he/she may possess, that person is said to be no person—Asingomntu or Yinja.
Consequently, little is known about beggars, especially those in antiquity. What we know of them has been gleaned from aristocratic writings where they are only mentioned incidentally and from a biased perspective (cf Theissen 1983:231). For example, in aristocratic writings of the classical period, the term *ptochos* is used in the context of beggars. Yet upon examination of instances where it is used, it becomes clear that the people referred to are in fact not destitute people but those who have to work in order to make ends meet (the correct word to describe such people is *penès*). In other literature, the word *ptochos* refers to the destitute for that is what the root *ptei* means (i.e. 'crouched together'; cf Van Manen 1931:18-28). The actual Greek word for beggar, namely *prosaitēs*, appears so rarely that New Testament scholars tend to use *ptochos* as if there were no appropriate word for beggar. The Latin word *mendicus*, which means 'beggar', sometimes translates *ptochos*, sometimes *prosaitēs*, although the Latin word for poor is *pauper*.

Given this, the use of the term 'unmask' in this paper is justified. Although I will not attempt to do that below, as that would constitute a digression, I will however comment on the types of beggars found in antiquity.

5 EVIDENCE OF BEGGARS IN ANTIQUITY

The presence of beggars in antiquity is attested by a number of classical writings, including Christian documents. Rabbinic sources also make reference to the existence of beggars. Evidence suggests four basic types. These are *struct*-

16 These authors, who addressed their fellow aristocrats, had no reason to worry about beggars. Nor did anyone else in society care to keep records of beggars—either on tombstones (which beggars could not afford), or on other inscriptions (cf MacMullen 1974:34–35).

17 Incidentally, the term is used in this way about 100 times in the Septuagint (cf Esser) and about 37 times in the New Testament (cf Bammel). In Mk 10 and Jn 9, the word *prosaitēs* is used to describe them. In other cases, the word *ptochos* is used and in some (e.g. Acts), neither of the two words is used; the use of *eleemosunē* usually suggests a context of beggars and begging.

18 I am not here referring to numbers but to the phenomenon. The mere mention of certain types of beggars indicates that they existed.

19 This is not intended to suggest that the empire was homogenous. Different city-states had different practices (see, e.g. Dimont for Athens, Alfoldy 1985 for Rome and Garnsey (1988) and Hands 1968 for both Rome and Athens). Palestine which falls under a different category, had its own practices as well. However, as Polybius once cautioned, the historian cannot reconstruct the whole world of the past 'by visiting every notable city, one by one, and certainly not by looking at separate plans of each one' (Polybius 1.4.6, in MacMullen 1974:63).
beggars, moira-type beggars, philosophical/voluntary type beggars and physically disabled beggars. For the purposes of this paper, I will not give more than a comment on each of these types.\textsuperscript{20}

5.1 Structural beggars

Several models of the social structure of Roman society during the 'principate' have been suggested (cf Szesnat 1995, esp the bibliography). However disparate these are, they all have the category of the lowest social class. This includes, among others, a beggar population. At the top of the social ladder is always found a small minority of the wealthy (equestrians included) which did not exceed one percent of the total population (cf MacMullen 1974). They owned all the sources of wealth, leaving the majority poor, some of them destitute.\textsuperscript{21} These are the people referred to as 'structural' beggars in this paper.

Some clues about beggars who are neither disabled nor foreigners are scattered in various documents. For example, among vices in the city is a story about prostitutes 'going off duty' in the morning while the beggar still enjoys his sleep under a tree (MacMullen 1974:87). The beggar in this story is not the type mentioned in the New Testament, that is, the blind or the crippled. He was physically whole save that he lacked the means of making a living. His case (as well as that of the prostitutes) is among the stories that show the negative side of city life.\textsuperscript{22}

There are other references to beggars in classical sources. For example, in his \textit{Sermons} (345.17) Augustine writes: 'the hand that reached out to beg can be seen everywhere. The open air is their dwelling, their lodgings are the porticoes and street corners and the less frequented parts of the marketplace'. Here again, there is no explicit link of beggars with sickness or disability. We can only assume that they, like most other beggars were casualties of a social system rather than victims of physical diseases. Juvenal refers to such people when he writes: 'every tree is under strict orders to pay rent to Roman people; the Camenae have been thrown out; the whole forest's turned beg-

\textsuperscript{20} It should however be remembered that in the Gospels and Acts, the types of beggars referred to are those who are physically disabled. Other types are encountered in other types of literature.

\textsuperscript{21} De Ste Croix (1981:64) for example refers to \textit{demos} and \textit{populus} as political terms used for those in lower ranks. These are collective terms for the common people or the general mass. In classical Greek literature this group which is described by the term \textit{ptochoi}, included beggars.

\textsuperscript{22} I have not encountered stories of beggars outside the cities. This however, does not mean that there were no beggars in rural places. It only suggests that rural cultures had a different way of dealing with the issue.
gar' (3:15–16). He thus refers to the Jewish people who have proliferated Rome (cf Ferguson 1979:137) and have been turned into beggars by the social structures.

While it is not possible to obtain figures about the size of the beggar population, partly due to their ubiquity and partly due to the fact that their details were not important for tax purposes, we can be sure that they were a visible phenomenon. However, I will not pursue that argument in this paper. The above information has sufficiently explained what is meant by 'structural beggars'.

5.2 Moira type beggars

The term moira first appears in Homer's work in the eighth century BCE. By it he meant fate (cf Philo; Josephus BJ 4.86, AJ 17.303). In his view fate was the destiny of some in accordance with the divine plan. Effort paid little as one was bound to follow a predetermined direction.

The Stoics later used the term in the same manner. They went on to explain that fate manifests itself 'in a series of events that are appointed by the immutable counsels of God'. This is the law of providence by which God governs the world: *logos kath' hon ho kosmos diezagetai* (DioLae 7.149). However, as Elizabeth Carter explains, this does not mean that God interferes with the liberty of human actions (cf Epictus' *Moral discourses: Enchiridion and fragments*).

There are however beggars who think of their fate as having been divinely planned. These are the type we refer to as the 'moira-type'. Typical of such is Odysseus in the Odyssey:23

I myself was once blessed, and I inhabited
A rich house among men, and gave to such a wanderer many times,
no matter who came, whatever he needed.
I had numberless servants and many other things
Men have who live well and are called prosperous,
But Zeus, son of Chronos, destroyed me, as he somehow wished. (Od 19.75–80).

As can be seen in the above example, the role of the divine one is not ruled out. Odysseus the beggar, blames his fate on Zeus, the god (19:80). In other words, he himself has had no control over what happened to him, nor did other human beings contribute towards it.24 Fellow human beings in the

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23 The Odyssey is based on life in the eighth century BCE. However, apart from its continued influence in Greek society, it is also evident that social life had not become different during the classical period.

24 We know from reading earlier in the story that Odysseus was turned into a beggar by the gods who wanted to expose the evil of the suitors (13.395–415). In his case therefore begging is acted out. But the responses of his hosts reflect social attitudes
story were blamed for the manner in which they received beggars like him (19.65-9).

A beggar like Odysseus was known as an *olbion* in Greek society. This was a reference term for a beggar who was once wealthy and had everything before losing all and turning to begging. Society judged such a person differently from other types of beggars (cf Hauck), that is, they were more sympathetic towards such a person. Hence it is difficult to think of an *olbion* as being *pandemosi*, i.e. being chased from one house or city to another.

This then, explains the category known as 'moira-type'.

### 5.3 Voluntary/philosophical beggars

These type of beggars are so called because they have opted, on philosophical grounds, for ‘self-imposed’ poverty by giving up all their possessions in exchange for a beggar’s life (cf Malherbe 1989). The Cynics were especially convinced that poverty was a virtue in the midst of a society that defined the purpose of life in terms of seeking happiness through wealth (cf Aristotle’s *Genius*). They stood on street corners and worked for no pay (Dio Chrysostom, cf Malherbe 1989:21) while they earned their bread by begging (Dio Or 32.9).

Clearly, philosophers did not turn to begging for ‘easy material benefits’. Their aim was to transform the society’s attitude to wealth and towards the poor. They saw wealth as a momentary preoccupation and beggary a possible destiny for anyone. For example, when Diogenes is asked why people give to beggars and not to philosophers, he answers: ‘Because they think that they may one day be lame or blind, but they never expect that they will turn to philosophy.’ (Diog. 6:56) In another incident, Diogenes asks for alms from a man who replies: ‘Yes [I will give you] if you can persuade me’, to which Diogenes replies ‘If I could have persuaded you, I would have persuaded you to hang yourself.’

A genuine beggar does not use the kind of language used by Diogenes. It is only a person who has ‘nothing to lose’ who can address the prospective benefactor in the way Diogenes did. The man possibly appeared to have an undermining attitude towards a beggar, hence the aggressive response from Diogenes. In fact, his general outlook is expressed in his reply to the question why he was called a Cynic (hound): ‘I fawn on those who give anything, I yelp at those who refuse, and I set my teeth in rascals’ (Dio 6.60).

This category of beggars is interesting in that it is the only group that engages the *status quo*. Others are passive and dependent. It is possible that
Jesus was influenced by such ideas (see, e.g., Lk 9:3, 10:4). A detailed discussion will take us beyond the limits of this paper.

5.4 Physically disabled beggars

The physically disabled beggars are those beggars who, as a result of physical disability or chronic illness, are unable to meet the basic necessities of life and are consequently forced to beg from others. In fact, all the beggars that are mentioned in the New Testament suffer from one form of disability or another. The mere fact that they are reported to be beggars means that they cannot afford the basic necessities of life. As it has become clear above, this is not to suggest that these were the only type of beggars found in the Gospels. On the contrary, the authors of the New Testament intended to draw attention to the connection between begging and physical disability and how the 'good news of Jesus' transforms such situations.

Several examples of physically ill or disabled people are found in the Gospels and Acts. However, it is only in a few of those instances that a direct link is made between physical illness and begging. In fact, Matthew, in all the stories he shares with Mark and Luke, does not mention begging. Instead, he has edited the stories Mark and Luke have (e.g., the healing of the blind man). Luke on the other hand shares with Mark the story of the blind beggar near Jericho (Lk 18:35-43, cf Mk 10:46-52) and with John the healing of the cripple at the temple entrance (Acts 3:1-10, cf Jn 5:1-9).

Similar stories to those found in the New Testament are recorded in secular literature of the time. Plutarch (Lives) for example, refers to two persons, one blind and another crippled, who once presented themselves for healing to the emperor. Their motivation for this was economical. They asked the emperor to heal them so that they could provide for their families in the way they were able to provide before the illness. They came to the emperor because such miracles were performed by such great persons as emperors.

In Tacitus (Annals 4.81) an almost similar story is recorded. Here the story is about two persons, one blind, the other with a paralysed hand, who came to emperor Vespasian to ask for healing. These two do not motivate their request by linking their socio-economic status to their inability to use

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25 We prefer this manner of talking about this category of beggars to Malina's conclusion that 'the "poor" rank among those who cannot maintain their inherited status due to circumstances that befall them and their family, such as debt, being in a foreign land, sickness, death (widow), or some personal physical accident' (1987:356). As both a noun and an adjective to describe such people, 'poor' is weak. The term 'destitute' makes better sense.
some of their body limbs. However, since there is a close connection between this and economic independence or lack thereof, we assume that that was the reason they sought healing.

A number of similar stories from antiquity, for example stories from the temple of Asclepius, show the incapacitating effect of physical disability. However, not all of them make a direct link between one's economic status and one's physical health. This is true of the stories found in the New Testament. Since our own experience today shows that where family and state share the responsibility of providing for such people the effects are less visible, we assume that that would have been so in some cases in antiquity.

The above section was intended to foreground the identity of a beggar and to highlight the difference between the types that existed and the type we encounter in the New Testament. We now proceed to look at the context in which they lived, and particularly at some ideas of charity in that context. Owing to a scarcity of literature, this is the closest we can come to understanding responses to beggars.

6 CHARITY, BENEFAC TION AND ALMSGIVING

Owing to a lack of information pertaining to beggars and societal responses to them, we have decided to focus on terms and concepts that are usually mentioned in relation to almsgiving in the New Testament. These are discussed under the broad term ‘charity’ whose meaning is often (erroneously) narrowed down to alms distribution.

It is rather arbitrary to call this system by which Romans and Greeks exchanged gifts,26 loyalties and material goods charity, if by charity is meant the above. There were obligations between the parties involved which took the practices beyond our narrow understanding of charity.27 The Jewish idea was no different.28 For example, the word by which almsgiving is denoted,

26 Lactantius defines a gift as ‘anything which is wrought of gold or silver; likewise anything which is woven of purple and silk’ (Divine Institutes 4.420). This suggests something precious, something of value which is given to an equally valuable person. Hence our concurrence with Bird’s definition of charity as ‘a gift and not...an exchange of goods and services given to benefit persons outside one’s own family’ (1983:5).

27 Even if we were to understand charity in its narrow sense of almsgiving, a relationship between the two parties involved would still be a determining factor. As Stambaugh & Balch posit, 'charity or almsgiving for the poor and destitute who could not offer anything in return was virtually unknown' (in Gillman 1991:26). In other words, it was not a matter of giving hand-outs to the needy. The claim on the giver in Greco-Roman society consisted not in need, but in some pre-existing personal relationship (cf Countryman 1980:105).

28 By insinuating that Christians borrowed their concept of charity from the Greeks, Johnson (1981) is in fact forgetting the influence of Judaism from which Luke does not
eleēmosunē, occurs both in the Septuagint and the New Testament. It refers to kind deeds and acts of pity towards others. In the LXX however, the word referred largely to God's relationship with human beings rather than to interpersonal relationships (cf eleēmosunē). For convenience, I will summarise the discussion under two 'cultural' groupings, namely, the Greco-Roman and the Judaeo-Christian cultures.

6.1 The Greco-Roman concept of charity

As indicated above, charity extends beyond almsgiving, although it is often narrowed down to this. Relationship to others and the willingness to participate in the good of others is charity. This will be demonstrated in the discussion that follows below under the following headings: (i) patron-client relations, (ii) euergetism and (iii) aristocratic prejudices.

6.1.1 Patron-client relations

The term ‘patron-client relations’ refers to a relationship between a very wealthy individual and one who is not in his socio-economic rank and who is in need of his protection (Winter 1994:45; cf Garnsey 1988). This implies a relationship between unequals (Malina 1988:211). This relationship goes with obligations on both sides, i.e. the client binds himself to the patron by undertaking to fulfil certain demands such as ‘morning greeting’ and protection in the public arena. The patron on the other hand undertakes to provide food and shelter where necessary, as well as legal protection. These obligations stand even when there has been a recess in the relationship as a result of favourable conditions for the client (Winter 1994:46).

It must be pointed out however, that the patron never entered a relationship with a person from the bottom classes. As we have noted above, his client was a person who was in the rank just below him. A higher ranking individual played the role of patron for lower ranking individuals, the clients. The reason is not difficult to guess: such individuals usually com-

want to divorce Christians. The Greeks had the proverb ‘friends are one soul’ but the Jews talked of ‘a fellow Israelite’. Thus for Johnson charity meant that all should be of one heart and soul, as expressed in Acts 4:32.

This also comes out strongly in the Didache where the teaching on charity is not confined to begging by individuals. It is general: ‘Give to everyone that asks you, and do not refuse, for the Father's will is that we give to all from the gifts we received’ (Did 1.5).

We concur with Garnsey here, that this system was not common in the Greek world but that it was a Roman practice. In the Greek world, as in Athens, there were no private socio-economic relationships; poverty was public, and so was the community response to it.

In this connection, Gillman provides a useful list: ‘Examples are those relations
manded some influence in certain areas and were usable as rabble-rousers for the patron’s gains in the politeia (cf Winter 1994:48). According to Malina, the patron and the client had a ‘common bond in the quest for honour’ (1988:211).32 Even so, status played a role, the patron sought to be ‘more honourable’ (MacMullen 1974:109).

The bottom line of this was that the patron was acting beneficially (charitably?) towards another person. Together, they had come to an agreement that they would be caretakers of each other’s needs. In other words, they took responsibility for each other’s well-being. This is charity in the broad sense.

It should be clear from the above that the relationship between a patron and a client extends beyond the exchange of material benefits. A mutual relationship between the two parties involved includes power and status (cf Moxnes 1994). But this happens on a smaller scale than in euergetism whose discussion follows below.

6.1.2 Euergetism

The term euergetism was coined in this century by André Boulanger and Henri-I Marrou. It is based on the Greek word euergesia (Veyne 1990:10). It refers to benefaction which some people incorrectly regard as a response to the problem of poverty and begging. However, the term entails benefaction as well as the honouring by the community, of those who ‘did good to the city’ (Veyne 1990:10).

Benefaction was well established in Greek times and it was continued during the early centuries of the Roman empire. It was a method of providing, not for the individuals but for the city. The individual (benefactor) had an obligation to the society, especially to those who voted him into public office, to provide buildings, bread, circuses, theaters (the Greek version of between landlord and tenant, ruler and servant, lender and debtor, landowner and day laborer. Ranking above a client, a patron provides scarce (economic) resources and political advantages; a client, in turn, reciprocates with expressions of solidarity and loyalty’ (1991:34).

32 In spite of this, the patron humiliated the client. Winter cites one example from Juvenal where the patron at a restaurant orders a sumptuous meal for himself while he orders an inferior dish for his client (Winter 1994:52; cf Juvenal 5:2; 80;110–113). The connection between the inferior meal of the client and the superior one of the patron is interesting here. It is not clear what Winter’s source is for this. The satire describes the meal ordered by the patron for himself and says nothing about the client’s meal. Commentators are equally silent on the client’s meal, such as Fergusson (1979) and Courtney (1980). They focus on the nature of the patron’s meal.
bread and circuses being *theas kai dianomas*, cf Dio 40.8). This was understood even before he entered the office.

Veyne mentions two types of *euergetism*: In the first place, it referred to the community’s expectation that the rich should ‘contribute from their wealth to the public expenses, and that this expectation was not disappointed…” (Veyne 1990:10). As he explains, ‘the rich contributed indeed, spontaneously or willingly’ (Veyne 1990:10). In the second place, *euergetism* refers to the benefactions of a voluntary nature or to the *obhonorem* which was offered by those elected to public office (Veyne 1990:10–11).

The important feature of the latter kind of benefaction is that it was not directed at individuals or at the poor. Rather, it was directed at the whole community (Veyne 1990:11). These were gifts and they were given for the benefit of the community in honour of the public office bestowed upon the individual. Veyne refers to the gifts as ‘collective benefits’ by which he means ‘those satisfactions which, owing to their external nature, are, like the radio or national defence, at the disposal of all users, without being in principle objects of competition between them’ (Veyne 1990:12). These ‘collective benefits’ included such public buildings as amphitheatres which were donated to the public by the benefactors.

Various types of inscriptions attest to various ways in which benefactors demonstrated their responsibility towards the community. These were not only of material nature, they were also contributions of human resources. For example, some benefactors donated services such as soldiers, or built roads, aqueducts, theatres and other public places. The latter were probably more valuable than the gifts of ‘bread and circuses’ although, according to the inscription, their value was not immediately recognised (see Danker 1982:60–70).

It appears that the contribution of the rich to the community was both obligatory and moral. MacMullen for example, cites incidents of the rich being stoned by the community for withholding grain during the times of famine (1974:66, see bibliography on :171 esp n 30). Although the surplus belonged to him, there was the unwritten law that the society could not perish while his granaries were full. Unless he wanted to become an enemy of the society, he could not avoid his responsibility. However, faithfulness to the expectation brought rewards (see Winter 1994:27 for such inscriptions).

What I have described thus far was not for the benefit of the individual or the poor or beggar. Nor did it have any religious connotations. As Veyne (1990:19) posits:

*Euergetism* and pious and charitable works differ in ideology, in beneficiaries and in agents, in the motivations of agents and in their behaviour. *Euergetism* has no direct connection with religion.
Thus it was a standing social practice in both ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ times. However, it is clear that some benefactors did it for altruistic reasons while others did it for personal aggrandizement. It placed them in a powerful position and they used their positions of power to gain more wealth (cf. Lenski 1966). The more generous they were the better their standing in the community. In fact, in most cases, even the wording of the inscription was determined by the benefactor concerned (cf. Winter 1994:31). Thus, the beneficiaries remained indebted to him and his posterior (Gillman 1991:26).

As can be seen above, it is incorrect to equate euergetism with either almsgiving or intervention in a situation of poverty. However, the practice itself assumes that nobody in society is in a destitute state. Beneficiaries are in most cases people who are above the poverty line. Hence theatres and other cultural centers are important to them. In antiquity, this is charity at the level of the community.

6.1.3 Aristocratic prejudices

In contrast to the idea of charity as portrayed above there is also what may be referred to as the prejudices of the wealthy. This is important for this twentieth century researcher because it reveals some developmental tendencies.

Although in the Greek society the poor were likely to receive more sympathy than they would in the Roman society, nothing compelled the citizens to take care of beggars. As Hauck observes, ‘to give alms is never regarded as a virtue even from a religious standpoint’ (887, cf. Woodhouse 1910:386). In fact, in the Greek world, almsgiving was never regarded as a national item of ideal conduct (Woodhouse 1910:386). As a widespread response to beggars in the empire, it is a later development. Bolkestein dates this development back to the first century (Hands 1968:47).34

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33 Woodhouse, however, postulates that in Athens, there was a State system of outdoor relief in operation for infirm paupers (adunatoi), which originated during the time of Solon or Pisistratus, about 6BC. Such relief was originally confined to those invalidated through army service (Plut Sol 31). However, it appears that the practice was later extended to other disabled members of the society who could not support themselves. A document of mid-fourth century states it vaguely thus: ‘There is a law which lays down that those who possess less than three minae [300 drachmae] and who are physically maimed as to be incapable of work are to be examined by the council and to be given two obols a day for maintenance at public expense’ (Doc 61 in Hands 1968:202). This however is the only known incident where the disabled are given state welfare.

34 It appears that in the context of the empire, it is the Christians that spread the practice so rapidly. Dimont argues that the first period of this began with the epoch of the Flavian emperors because before then, poverty was not widespread in the empire (Dimont 1910:382). At this stage however, Christianity had not become official. It is
As it will become clear below, (pagan) writers in classical states give us a biased view of beggars. They not only view them shamefully, they despise them too.\(^3\) Cicero for example, described them as ‘sordem urbis et faecem’ (i.e the ‘scum’ or ‘filth’ of the city cf Hands 1968:64). He continues with his denigrating language thus:

Do you suppose that body of men to be the Roman people which consists of those whose services are hired out for pay? ... a mass of men, a herd of slaves, of hired men, of rogues and destitutes?

A comment on this line posits that Cicero spoke thus of beggars after his failure to secure their votes (Saddington 1996).\(^4\) The poor and destitute are known to have voted for those who showed kindness towards them. That is what they could offer in return for the kindness of their benefactors. In the same way they ensured the continuation of favours as politicians made gains out of them. Seneca, for example, is known to have been one of those benefactors that were favoured by beggars. ‘The beggars demand his election’ is an inscription on a wall above a long bench where the city’s (Pompeii) poor sat the day through (McMullen 1974:87).

However, it was not all those who could give that gave charitably. Some resented having to ‘maintain’ beggars. We find this for example, in Plutarch’s Moralia: ‘But if I gave to you, you would proceed to beg all the more; it was the man who gave to you in the first place who made you idle and so is responsible for your disgraceful state’.\(^5\)

only after the fourth century, when Constantine had made it a state religion, that official institutions were set up by the church for the purposes of administering charity. Further developments, e.g., the development of a theology around almsgiving, which continue to influence Christian thinking about charity today, originated in the Mediaeval period (Dimont 1910:384). Dimont however, forgets the role played by Pliny the Younger in the second century, in encouraging charity (cf Hands 1974:88).

35 Homer is the only early writer known thus far who has taken a positive view of beggars. In Odyssey (cf esp books 13–21), he treats a beggar (in the form of Odysseus) as a manifestation of the presence of the gods. For this reason, he advocates that they be treated with dignity. Although Homer is of a much earlier period, little had since changed.

36 It should be remembered that Cicero was thus playing on the emotions of the Roman aristocracy. They despised those who had to work to earn a living. In other words, they did not have to become beggars before they were ‘marginalised’ by these wealthy people. Ironically, those who wanted power depended on the votes of the people who are denigrated by Cicero.

37 Romans are reputed to have had the most inhuman attitude towards beggars. Philo, in line with the Spartan’s response to the beggar, points out to his son that to give food and drink to a beggar is a loss, as it merely prolongs his life for further misery (in Coleman-Norton 1969:45). Cf Cicero who refers to the poor as the ‘poverty stricken scum of the city’. 
In modern-day sociology this statement reflects developmental tendencies. So is the one by Plautus. They are developmental to the extent that some of the potential givers were critical of the practice. They did not see it as the solution to the problem of begging but an encouragement of the dependency syndrome. This however, is how the modern mind would see it; the classical thinker, on the contrary, was verbalising his inner prejudice. This is clear in the tone of the statement, for example, the use of words such as ‘idle’ and ‘disgraceful’.

Such words are to be expected from the rich who had a natural dislike for the poor. They perceived them as people whose poverty had reduced them to lying, cheating and stealing. They in fact confessed that they were the only ones that could afford to be honest (MacMullen 1974:116). As Cicero crudely puts it, poverty in and of itself is ‘vile’, ‘dishonoured’, ‘ugly’ (in MacMullen). And an anonymous writer on a wall in Pompeii wrote (probably in response to the first inscription), ‘I hate poor people. If anyone wants something for nothing, he is a fool. Let him pay up and he’ll get it’ (MacMullen 1974:119). The following statement is more likely to have been directed at a beggar than at an ordinary poor person: ‘To certain people I shall not give, even though there is need, because there will still be need even if I give’ (MacMullen 1974:118).

While this represents aristocratic prejudices on the one hand, on the other, it reflects a diversity of views between the wealthy and the poor on the question of charity. As it has become clear above, the poor expected some ‘horizontal solidarity’ while the wealthy only viewed charity as almsgiving and were weary of it.

7 THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF CHARITY

7.1 Temple charity

By the first century, charity in Judaism had become synonymous with almsgiving. Those who had were under obligation to give alms to a beggar (although Israel had believed that there would be no beggar in its nation, see Dt 15:4f). They also believed that they were doing so in the service of God (cf Moxnes 1988:113). In line with this there was a belief among Jews that ‘he who befriends the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed’. Again, ‘the donor who owes God all he has, becomes a creditor of God...’ (Moore 1962:169; cf Montefiore & Loewe 1946:416). However, it remained a set of moral standards, which it was in ancient Israel (cf Bird 1983:7), rather than a state policy, although a theological legitimation of it was beginning to emerge (cf Bird 1983:13; 1982:150; Prockter 1991:69–80).

The import of this teaching is this: ‘giving alms to the needy is like giving to God; withholding alms is like making one a debtor to God’. Thus religion
ensured that the spirit of nationalism would prevail among Jews. But, where does this teaching come from and what was it intended to achieve? Are we correct in seeing it as a societal response to beggars?

According to available sources the teaching about giving can be traced back to the days of Moses. It was intended as a counter to the practice of lending to those who were needy, a practice which turned out to be exploitative for many. The practice had reached the point at which even food was given out on loan (Brown 1976).

As a corrective of this state of affairs, Moses taught that giving to a fellow Israelite (and to the stranger?) was more acceptable to God. In fact, he taught that it was an act of righteousness (there is no Hebrew word for alms). The recipient was then freed from indebtedness to the giver. After all, the giver gave from the plenty which belonged to God. Thus developed the teaching in Deuteronomy about leaving something in the field during harvest for the poor to glean and about taking no basket along to pick up the falling grapes. It is about the same time that the teaching about the Jubilee or the 'Year of the Ram' started.

With the passage of time there developed a very strong theology around the question of charity. Any kind actions towards others came to be regarded as meritorious acts (cf Bruce, Haenchen, Billerbeck), meant to buy God's favour. Focus was thus not on the recipient but on the giver. Notwithstanding this, definite categories of beneficiaries were identified, as the following statement makes clear:

Certain classes are frequently specified in Deuteronomy as objects of charity: the levite, the alien living in an Israelite community (ger), the orphan, and the widow. The first two named own no land from which to get a living; the orphan and the widow have lost their natural providers. They are all under the peculiar patronage of God (Moore 1962:164; cf Bird 1982:145).  

38 Note the difference between this and the practices of the 'pagan' world. Most scholars would argue that giving here has no strings attached to it although Bird would counter this by postulating that the recipient had an obligation to reciprocate (1982; 1983).  

39 Cf the understanding of the Didache: '...the Father's will is that we give to all from the gifts we received' (1:5). Withholding anything from the one who asks means withholding God's possessions from God's people. 'Blessed is he that gives according to the commandment' (1:5). In other words, this teaching is mandatory.  

40 In Christian teaching later, charity was not indiscriminate: 'But concerning this it was also said: “Let thine alms sweat into your hand until you know to whom you are giving”' (Did 1:6). In other words, it was better not to give than to give to anyone. In this respect, Christians resembled their counterparts in Judaism, contra Secombe (1978) who argues that Christian did not model their system of charity on the Mishnaic system of quppah and tambuy.
As can be seen above, the Jewish concept of charity does also presuppose some form of a relationship. However, the paternalistic attitude is more pronounced in the Jewish context than it is in the Roman context. Those who have must take care of fellow Jews who do not have for two reasons: (i) what they have has been bestowed on them by God, (ii) almsgiving is a meritorious act.

7.2 Christian charity

In general, Christians advocated a redistribution of the individual’s wealth among the needy. This is suggested in a number of passages that are found in, for example, Luke-Acts, such as Lk 18:22, Acts 2:45, Acts 4:34–35. But the ideal situation was that everyone should be able to dig with their hands or use their minds (e.g Lk 16:3; Acts 20:33–35). However, in certain cases they commended benefaction (e.g Acts 10:2). As a short term measure, there was temporary relief going back to the time of Jesus, for example multiplication of loaves; baskets by respectable and wise men (Acts 6:3), collection of alms during famine (Acts 19–20). These became the most important part of Christian ministry.

Recent scholarship has tended to adopt two extreme positions in search of the Christian concept of charity: the one position tended to read back into the ministry of Jesus what was in fact, a teaching that was developed by the church after the time of Jesus. A second position consists of a realisation that almsgiving contradicts modern sociological theories of development. Theissen’s thesis as outlined in his recent article entitled: ‘It is better to give than to receive’ is a case in point.41

In his article, Theissen develops the thesis that the early Christian ethos of help is to be understood as the ‘democratisation of the aristocratic mentality of benefactors’ (1995:1). According to this thesis, ‘simple mutual help is valued as a sign of “inner nobility”. Horizontal solidarity corrects vertical solidarity—but claims superiority at the same time’ (1995:2). By this, he means that sharing of goods is also a religious act, in fact, a better one than piety. In developing this thesis, he focuses on Acts 20:35, a verse which contains words that are purported to have come from Jesus (Theissen 1995:2f).

Some documents from antiquity are used in support of this thesis (e.g, the Persian documents, and Christian Fathers such as 1 Clement). These focus mainly on the question of giving and on the need to do manual labour in

41 Theissen’s paper was due for publications in a Festschrift for Prof A Stein in 1995. The present summary is based on a rough translation (from German) of the paper by Mr H Szesnat to whom I am greatly indebted.
order for one to be able to donate to the poor. Some Pauline letters, such as Thessalonians and Romans, are also used in support of Theissen’s thesis. Ultimately, Theissen concludes that: (i) in early Christianity is found a democratisation of an aristocratic benefactor mentality which is linked with an ascetic work appeal to the balancing of needs, (ii) ordinary people become benefactors by means of work and fasting, (iii) vertical balancing of needs was supplemented and corrected by means of a horizontal balance, (iv) all Christians were involved in the internal balancing of needs in the community so that the Christian communities were in a position to maintain a certain independence from wealthy donors.

Even before investigating the effect of the words on Christian communities, we must first establish whether the words used by Paul did come from Jesus. If the words did come from Jesus, then Paul would be reminding his hearers of the source of their practice. If the words came from elsewhere, then Paul would be using the name of Jesus as an important person, to give authority to his point. After all, these words are unknown in the rest of the New Testament (cf Lövestam 1987:7).

There seems to be some reluctance among exegetes to accept the words as those of Jesus. The one question asked is why Luke only introduces these words at this point and not in the gospel earlier (Kilgallen ). Besides, these words are not preserved anywhere else in the New Testament. Having mentioned the words, Paul does not develop them further than just using them to conclude the point he made to the Christian leaders of Ephesus.

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42 This was a common practice. Sometimes, entire documents were published in the name of an important person even though the work had nothing to do with that person. Hence the term ‘pseudonym’.

43 In his commentary, Joseph A Alexander (1963) explains this by referring to John 21:25 where it is stated that neither all his words nor his deeds had been recorded (1963:255). This is an interesting way of seeing it, but it is not a plausible one. Packer (1966:173) on the other hand, posits that the question, which is found nowhere else, may have been handed down orally.

44 This also makes it difficult for the exegetes to say anything more about the quote (see, e.g., Stott, Hargreaves, Kilgallen, O’Toole, Bruce). It is clear however, that Paul was responding to a particular situation of the responsibility of Christian leaders (cf Lövestam 1987:1f; cf also vv28ff) towards those they serve rather than the obverse. A Christian leader is to show a particular character that distinguishes him from other leaders. Part of that character, according to Luke, is not to take from the community or to expect to be maintained by the community, but to work with his hands, and if there is anything in excess, to share with those who cannot help themselves. Karras comments thus: ‘Fourth, the faithful missionary-pastors will be able to detect false missionaries and prophets by their life-style and care for the weak’ (1966:187 in Kilgallen 1994:117).
Could it be that he was utilising words which he borrowed from another context? (Theißen). Could it be that the words are preserved in the L-source?

The latter seems improbable for there is no corroborating evidence elsewhere. Besides, the L-source is only a hypothetical document to which is attributed everything else that is not easy to explain in the gospels. The former is however, explained with different theories. The one theory, which was only hinted at in a footnote by Haenchen, associates this saying with Thucydides (Haenchen 1979). This theory has been taken up and examined by Kilgallen (1993:291-293) who criticises Haenchen. But the problem with Kilgallen's short argument is that it ends at distancing the saying from Thucydides, instead of providing reasons why we should insist (as he does), on attributing the words to Jesus.

Interestingly, verse 35 on which Theißen bases his thesis is not regarded as a very important verse in this passage. For Kilgallen for example, verses 33-35 are not crucial but are used to 'buttress Paul's request that the elders should care for the weak' (1994:117). The words that are attributed to Jesus function as motivation for caring for the weak. Kilgallen comes to this conclusion after examining the structure of the pericope. But for O'Toole (1994:329, 330), the words are an 'integral part of the speech'\footnote{O'Toole supports his assertion with four arguments, namely, (i) the nature of the saying, (ii) how Luke links the saying with the speech, (iii) parallels in Luke-Acts and (iv) the fact that Jesus' saying summarises the thought of the speech. However, the latter is not a convincing reason. In fact, each of these arguments is undermined by the fact that O'Toole does not go behind the text but harmonises with the text what he sees before him.}. In other words, they are crucial for the completion of the point which is made by Paul.

The lack of convincing evidence for a connection between Jesus and the words in Acts 20:35b\footnote{Notwithstanding the red colour it is given in the NRSV. We do not deny the fact that as a Jew, Jesus may have encouraged giving but there is no evidence of him giving alms, and there is no plausible evidence of his connection with the words of Acts 20.} gives us reason to turn to Johnson's laudable suggestion that the Greek proverb, 'friends are one soul' has had an influence in the Christian concept of charity (1981:119). This has, in fact, transcended the teaching of Jesus (cf Lk 18:18-30) and to some extent, rendered it outdated. The wealthy were no longer expected to turn their wealth over to the poor. On the contrary, they were to pool their resources together with the poor (2:42; 4:32). After all, 'for friends all things are common' (cf Aristotle \textit{Nicomahan Ethics} 9.8.2; Plato \textit{Republic} 449C, D, 450C). Seen through Luke's hindsight, Dives (Lk 16:19-31) is punished after death precisely because he negates this by depriving Lazarus, who is around his household, a proper
place in his house. The point is that charity means being one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32). However, it is not to be abused.\footnote{Cf Didache: 'Woe to him who receives; for if any man receive under pressure of need he is not innocent; but he who receives it without need shall be tried as to why he took and for what, and being in prison he shall be examined as to his deed, and shall not come out thence until he pay the last penny' (1.5).}

A slight contrast between Christian and Jewish concepts of charity lies in the demand on the giver to 'renounce' possessions and to be emotionally, materially and physically one with fellow Christians. Possessions are no longer individually owned but they belong to all in the small community and for the good of all. Whether this was peculiar to Luke's kind of Christians or general, is not clear. Below we will briefly look at how this is reflected in Luke's use of the stories about beggars.

8 BEGGARS AND GOSPEL IN LUKE-ACTS

There are only two healing miracles in Luke-Acts which involve beggars or begging. In the Gospel, the miracle is performed by Jesus on a blind beggar (Luke 18:35f); in Acts, Peter raises a crippled beggar to his feet (Acts 3:1f).\footnote{Our analysis here focuses on the stories as they appear in the text rather than on their historicity.} These miracles have in common the following characteristics: (i) Jesus does not give anything material to the beggar, however much sympathy he has for the beggar; (ii) he communicates with the beggar, usually to obtain from the beggar what he desires or wishes for; (iii) an alternative to begging is offered, namely, a total transformation of the person from being handicapped to being able; (iv) the person usually feels ready to go back to the community, to lead a 'normal' life. This is as true of the ministry of Jesus as it is of Peter and John.

In the above scheme, there is no room for almsgiving. After all, if Jesus gives, the person will continue to beg in any case because giving provides temporary relief.\footnote{For the purposes of this paper, we shall not pursue a discussion about the 'limited goods society' and Jesus' encouragement to give alms which both Moxnes (1988) and Johnson (1981) seem to base their arguments on. Moreover, both scholars have disappointingly 'exegeted away' Jesus' sharp stance against wealth/possessions.} It is not an alternative to begging.

Beggars are poor although this does not mean that all poor people are beggars. By virtue of their poverty, they are among the poor to whom Luke's Jesus is sent to preach good news (gospel) (cf Lk 4:18). The position of the reference to the poor in the passage shows that the poor are to become a priority in the ministry of Jesus. And in his reply to John's disciples the poor become the climax of his list (Lk 7:22; cf Bosch 1991:99).
The first instance of a beggar in Luke-Acts appears in Luke 18:35-43, where a blind man is healed by Jesus. He is described as a beggar. In this instance it is the beggar himself who calls out to Jesus for help although he does not specify the kind of help he is asking for. Jesus inquires of him what his need is and the man responds by asking for the restoration of his sight. Here as we can see, the man is unable to contribute to the well-being of the community due to his blindness. The community has to take responsibility for his well-being. Obviously, he had been given alms by others, without any questions raised. But Jesus pauses to ask him what he wanted (other than alms). Without a suggestion from Jesus or anyone, the man tells him that he wants to receive his sight. From this we can surmise that he long had the desire to be independent but was incapacitated by his illness. The community had become so accustomed to his dependency that no one was able to discern his deeper yearning. Jesus transformed his life so that he would be able to live differently.

A second instance is that of a crippled beggar at the temple entrance (Acts 3:1-10). Here, neither the word πτοχος nor the word προσαίτις are used. Instead, we infer from the use of the word ελεήμωσαι that the context is that of begging and that the man who is brought to the spot καθ’ χειμέραν is a beggar. In fact, he is a destitute person as far as our view of the text is concerned. The type of beggar we find in this case neither seems to desire to live a new life nor does he think that such a life is possible (he has been like that for forty years, Acts 4:22). He asks for alms from the apostles. They do not give him alms but healing, much to his surprise. Hence his being overjoyed. The apostles here have not responded to him in a conventional way but in the way that Jesus would have responded to him—they transformed his condition.

Here however, is a clear instance of a person joining the public life (πολιτεία) immediately after his healing (3:11f). Since we are not told where he eventually parts with the company of the apostles, we assume that he joined the crowd that listened to Peter’s explanation (3:11f) as well as the crowd that protested against the arrest of Peter and John (4:21). Thus he fully joined the public life which he was unable to do as the crippled beggar. The word ἴσωκληριαν (3:16) suggests completeness, therefore nothing should prevent him from partaking in public life.

50 As observed above, this term does not occur at all in Acts while it occurs ten times in the Third Gospel (cf Bosch 1991:98). However, where it occurs in the gospel, it does not always refer to a beggar, it refers to the poor. Gillman (1991:98) explains its absence from Acts as being consistent with Luke’s portrayal of the Jerusalem community in the following terms: ‘There was not a needy person among them’ (Acts 4:34).
In Luke 13 and in Acts 14, there are instances of healing of disabled people. But the biblical text does not in these instances mention anything about begging; it is the interpreters of the texts that assume that. The woman in Luke 13 was presumably in the synagogue for worship and the man in Acts 14 was outside the temple in the city. We may not assume that he was begging for Luke explicitly states that he was sitting and listening ‘intently’ to the apostles (14:9). When the crowds marvel later, they say nothing about him having been a beggar (cf Acts 3:10).

In both the above stories concerning beggars charity is not the giving of material goods. Instead, the person's condition is transformed. Thus, it is charity as understood in a wider sense in the empire.

9 CONCLUSION

We have set out to investigate the subject of beggars and gospel in Luke-Acts. This we did in the light of recent developmental models. A few points have emerged as a possible model which needs further exploration. These follow below:

- Luke does not refer to beggars in general, he refers to a particular type, namely, the physically disabled. However, a number of other people among whom might be found beggars are referred to as πτωχοί in Luke and translated as poor in the English bible.
- There is no uniform response to beggars in the empire, although in Palestine there are some guidelines provided by the Rabbis on how to treat a beggar. Christians might have been partly influenced by this in their treatment of the beggar.
- Charity is understood in much broader terms than just almsgiving. It has to do with relationships, with the well-being of the other person and of the society. Almsgiving is only a component of this. Christians in this regard were influenced by both Hellenism and Judaism.
- While the society is responsible for the welfare of the individual and vice versa, there is no indication, in the ministry of Jesus, that he ever gave materially to beggars. Whenever he intervenes in the condition of a beggar, the result is always the total transformation of the person's condition. This becomes the case in the early stages of the apostles' ministry, although the situation changes in the later life of the church. This is what constitutes 'good news' for the beggar in Luke-Acts.
WORKS CONSULTED


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