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Did the Lucan Jesus Desire Voluntary Poverty of his Followers?

Dr Liu, a teacher at Hong Kong Baptist College, is one of a group of welcome new contributors to this issue of The Evangelical Quarterly. *The topic which he takes up is one that has aroused considerable discussion in recent years, and his survey of the debate together with his own contribution will be warmly welcomed as a helpful guide in a tricky area.*

Introduction

What did Jesus require of his disciples and would-be followers when he issued the call to 'leave everything?' The present study is focused on two issues. The first is the meaning of this demand. The second is the problem of the coexistence of passages in Luke–Acts which require voluntary poverty and other passages which teach a right attitude to the continuing possession of wealth. Since the former set of directives precludes the latter, questions may arise with regard to the teaching of Jesus on possessions. Did Jesus require the renunciation of wealth and voluntary poverty or did he only require the right use of possession? Is voluntary poverty a condition of discipleship or a demand directed to a specific situation? Is it a contextual demand or a timeless ideal, a general ethic? What place does renunciation of wealth have in the process of conversion?

Views on Renunciation of Possessions as a Condition of Discipleship

Different authors have tried to resolve the tension between the call to renunciation of wealth and the legitimate possession of private property by different theories. We shall make a survey of the representative theories along with some evaluative comments. Then, after examining the biblical data, we shall give our own view.

1. Hans-Joachim Degenhardt: Two Sets of Standards for Two Groups of People

Hans-Joachim Degenhardt seeks to resolve the tension between the demand for total renunciation and the teaching on the proper use of possession which presupposes the validity of private possessions by pointing out that two distinct directives were given to two separate groups of people. He argues that the more stringent demands in Luke were intended for the Twelve and the Seventy, while the injunctions concerning the proper use of possessions are meant for the extended circle of adherents.[1] In so doing, he separates the 'disciples' from the 'people' and the 'crowds'. The same double standard is applied in Acts. The traveling apostles, the missionaries, the evangelists, and all others who formed the *Amtsträgern*, are enjoined to renounce their possessions.[2] They are the ones who must meet the radical demands of Jesus.[3] The other Christians are allowed to retain their possessions as long as they are rightly handled. In short, Degenhardt is arguing for a restricted sense of the word 'disciple'.

Degenhardt's theory has its merits. He recognizes the fact that Luke had preserved radical material and subsequently asks why. However, his double-audience theory, attractive as it may seem, is deficient on three counts. First, it is impossible to separate the 'disciples' from the 'people,' for the latter heard Jesus gladly (Lk. 19:48). As pointed out by I. Howard Marshall, 'the stringent commands to self-denial in Lk. 14:25ff are clearly addressed to the crowds, and there is no ground for Degenhardt's claim that these commands are concerned with becoming missionaries rather than becoming followers of Jesus.'[4] Although Jesus and his disciples undoubtedly had fewer possessions than the more settled members of the early Church, Degenhardt's audience theory seems artificial. The Gospel of Luke did not intentionally limit the demand of renunciation to Jesus and his followers; rather, everyone who desired to follow Jesus was called to share it as well (12:33; 14:33; 18:22). Apparently, Jesus did not apply a double standard to his followers.

Secondly, the context of Lk. 12:33 indicates the presence of crowds of onlookers (12:1, 13), so the demand for renunciation could not have been intended for an inner core only. In fact, when Peter asked

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[1] Hans-Joachim Degenhardt, *Lukas-Evangelist der Armen: Besitz und Besitzverzicht in den lukanischen Schriften*, (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1965), 27–39.

[2] *Ibid.*, 105.

[3] *Ibid.*, 41, 214–215.

[4] I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 207, fn 1.

whether Jesus was addressing the inner core of the crowd (12:41), Jesus deliberately refused to restrict the scope of the teaching to a select group.

Thirdly, although Degenhardt calls the whole section of Lk. 16:1–31 *'ein "ethisches Kompendium," das dem christlichen Amtsträger für seine ethische Unterweisung Material in die Hand gibt,'*[5] he has to admit lamely that it was part of a series of ethical preconditions for attaining salvation.[6] Thus the teaching could hardly be directed only to the *Amtsträgern;* more likely the passage suggests an application to the church as a whole rather than to the ministerial class only.

The major weakness of Degenhardt's thesis lies with his restricted sense of 'disciple.' He argues that the 'disciples' were Jesus' literal followers who were called to renounce family, possessions and career to follow their itinerant master. However, the disciples of Jesus could be 'a changing circle of followers,'[7] instead of the limited circle of the Twelve or the Seventy. Granted that for some, discipleship and literal following were synonymous, such might not be the case for others. More crucially, discipleship is intimately linked with the heeding of the words of the Lord and the translating of his words into action (Lk. 6:40, 47). This meaning of the 'disciple' is undoubtedly intended in Acts. Instead of reserving 'disciples' as a special term for a few, Luke applies it comprehensively to all believers.[8] Therefore, Degenhardt's endeavor to restrict the call to total renunciation as intended *only for 'church leaders'* for whom he reserves the title of 'disciples' is a forced argument.

2. *David L. Mealand: Ebionism in the Lucan Source*

Similar to Degenhardt's observation, but without claiming the application of a 'double standard' to the adherents of Jesus or the first Christians, is the theory of David L. Mealand. Mealand tries to solve the problem by attributing the 'ebionism' of Luke to his source.[9] He

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[5] Degenhardt, *op. cit.*, 113.

[6] Degenhardt states: 'Die Frage, was zum Heil erforderlich ist, bildet das Thema der Komposition. Nachdem in Kap. 15 von der Berufung der Sünder die Rede war, werden im Abschnitt 16, 1–17 sittliche Voraussetzungen für die Erlangung des Heils genannt . . .' (*ibid.*, 114).

[7] R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963, 345.

[8] Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 11:26, 29; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 18:23, 27; etc.

[9] The attribution of the ebionite *Tendenz* to one of the Lucan sources has a long standing history. The following is a list of some of Mealand's predecessors. P. Feine, 'Über das gegenseitige Verhältniss der Texte der Bergpredigt bei Matthäus und bei Lukas', *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie* 11, 1885, 1–

concludes that Luke inherited the comparatively more radical teachings on possessions from his source. The discrepancy in severity between the teachings of the third Gospel and the other Synoptics was not caused by a heightening on the part of Luke. Rather, it was caused by attenuations in the Marcan and Matthaean parallels.[10] The attenuation was probably done for the sake of 'accommodation to the values implicit in a settled community of believers who own(ed) possessions.'[11] The editorial treatment of Luke, on the other hand, was kept to a modest level. In support of his assertion, Mealand points to the obvious affinities Luke had with the relatively prosperous classes.[12] His acquaintance with the way of commerce, his feeling for literature, his financial illustrations of medium-scale businessmen in the Gospel, and his sympathy for and interest in people of power and influence, all point to his innocence in face of the charge of accentuating hostility to the rich. However, Luke's affinities with the more affluent is in tension with his editorial trait of retaining some 'very fierce denunciations of the rich' in Luke-Acts. To reconcile these contradicting interests, Mealand explains that Luke 'wished to emphasize the spiritual dangers of riches, rather than express direct hostility to the rich,' as some of his predecessors had done.[13]

In attributing the hostility to wealth to the oral tradition, Mealand classifies the materials concerning wealth and the poor into two basic groups. The first group consists of passages that 'expressed the

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85, esp. 15f.; idem, *Eine vorkanonische Überlieferung des Lukas in Evangelium und Apostelgeschichte*, (Gotha, 1891), 140–145; J. Behm, 'Kommunismus und Urchristentum,' *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 31, 1920, 275–287, esp. 286f.; F. Hauck, *Die Stellung des Urchristentums zu Arbeit und Geld*, (Gütersloh, 1921), 82f.; idem, *Das Evangelium des Lukas*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, 3, (Leipzig, 1934), 250f.; H. J. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, trans. Douglas R. G. Hare, (Philadelphia: Fortress) 1969, 102; etc.

Mealand's opinion is also shared by other scholars in the last decade. For instance, Donald Juel, 'The Life of Faith,' *Luke–Acts: The Promise of History*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983), 87–100, where he states, 'Scholars are perhaps correct in speaking of the limitation imposed on Luke by the gospel tradition he inherited' (87).

[10] The more severe teaching about possessions, claimed Mealand, was modified in Mark. Such modification is even more obvious in Matthew. Therefore, the ascending order of severity in the teaching about possessions is Matthew, Mark and Luke (Mealand, *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels*, 91–92; so Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 233.)

[11] Mealand, *loc. cit.*

[12] Idem, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Here Mealand finds his support from B. E. McCormick, *The Social and Economic Background of Luke*, dissertation, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1960), 132–154, 186–205.

[13] Mealand, *op. cit.*, 91–92.

hope of recompense, and expected a future reversal of fortune,'[14] For two passages out of this group—the woes and the story of Dives and Lazarus—'the *Sitz im Leben* seemed to be that of early Christianity suffering poverty, hunger, and derision while others feast and are prosperous.'[15] The arousal of political suspicion and the impoverishment of the Christian community in Jerusalem, the famine around A.D. 48 that led to the subsequent sale of capital assets in order to support the community, and the worsening situation before and after the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66 are all part of the background of the early Jerusalem community in which the oral tradition was formed.[16] The sharply stratified society compounded with the devastation and disaster brought by the political upheaval made the circumstances of the early Christians all the more precarious. Sayings and stories of the Gospel that promised a reversal of fortune are naturally pertinent to the early Christians under such trying times.

The second group of materials which condemns hoarding and extols generosity is more disparate than the first group. It includes the following passages: the one on treasure; on the story of the rich fool; on serving either God or mammon; on the camel and the eye of a needle; on renouncing possessions and on the parable of the sheep and the goats. All of these either condemn the hoarding of wealth or commend generosity. Without denying the compatibility of this group of materials with the *Sitz in Leben Jesu*, Mealand sees an even closer affinity between this group and the social and economic situations of the early Church.

Mealand has emphasized the *Sitz im Leben* of the early Church at the expense of the pre-resurrection *Sitz im Leben* in his attempt to demonstrate the relationship between Lucan teachings on possessions and the milieu of the early Church. To resolve the discrepancy stated at the beginning of this paper (section I), he attributes the ebionite *Tendenz* to the Lucan sources rather than to Luke himself. However, the modern emphasis on Luke's *active role* in selecting and editing his material rules out the possibility that he has simply piled up materials without any regard to its self-consistency. Moreover, the sheer quantity of 'ebionite' materials that Luke has preserved makes it impossible to avoid the conclusion that he has *special interest* in this area. Therefore, we cannot simply attribute the discrepancy between the severe demands of total renunciation and the directives

[14] This group includes the Woes (6:24–26), the story of Dives and Lazarus (16:19–31), the Magnificat (1:46–55) (esp. v. 53) and the compensations for followers of Jesus (18:29–30). (Idem, 'Hostility to Wealth in the Oral Tradition,' *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels*, 41–50.)

[15] *Ibid.*, 50.

[16] *Ibid.*, 38–41.

of proper use of possessions to the Lucan sources. Even so, Mealand's attention to the *crises* experienced by Jesus and the early Christians is valid and we can make good use of this insight in our present search for an adequate explanation.

3. *Luke T. Johnson: The Symbolic Function of Possessions*

Instead of making a historical study like that of Mealand, Luke T. Johnson engages in a literary interpretation of Luke–Acts in order to grasp the significance of the possessions-motif. The genre of Luke–Acts as a whole is that of the 'Story'.[17] The main characters in this story are Jesus and the Apostles. The importance of the secondary characters is found only in their response to the main characters, which Luke has attempted to use as representatives of particular modes of response. In seeing Jesus as the Prophet like Moses and the apostles as his 'prophetic' successors,[18] Johnson views their relation to the secondary characters as that of the Prophet to the people. The people's response to or rejection of Jesus is connected with certain patterns of the use of possessions.[19]

In the course of his analysis, Johnson discerns that 'Luke employed the language about possessions not only literally, but also metaphorically, or symbolically'.[20] Luke takes seriously the literal hold worldly possessions can exert in human lives. He also sees the metaphorical possibilities in the language of possessions for expressing the conditions of the human heart. Possessions for Luke are 'a primary *symbol of human existence*, an immediate exteriorization of and manifestation of the self,' and they express the inner response of one's heart to God's visitation and authority.[21] One who accepts Jesus exteriorizes that acceptance by renouncing possessions, and one who rejects salvation exteriorizes that attitude by clinging onto his possessions.[22] The use of possessions also reveals the interpersonal relationships in a community.[23] When there is unity, sharing will follow. When there is a lack of unity, everyone will seek his own interests. According to this theory, the field of Judas symbolizes his apostasy from the community of the Twelve who renounced their

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[17] Luke T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke–Acts*, SBL Dissertation Series 39, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977, 21.

[18] Johnson detects a high consistency in the use of 'the prophetic mode (as) a literary method' (*ibid.*, 15).

[19] *Ibid.*, passim.

[20] *Ibid.*, 170.

[21] *Ibid.*, 221, 170.

[22] *Ibid.*, 144–158, esp. 148, 155.

[23] *Ibid.*, 158f.

possessions. Judas abandoned his apostleship by going to his 'own place'.[24]

Johnson's literary study is an innovative attempt to unify the meaning of the 'language of possessions' in Luke–Acts. His inclusion of both volumes of the Lucan writings serves well to provide a control for his analysis, and in this regard his methodology is superior to that of Mealand. However, there is a glaring fault of artificiality in his study. Johnson specifies the 'poor' as the receptive ones, and the 'rich and powerful' as the rejectors.[25] However, people like Joanna the wife of Chuza, the steward of Herod Antipas (Lk. 8:1–3), would fit both categories simultaneously. While being 'receptive' and supportive, Joanna presumably had not dissociated herself from her powerful and influential husband. Therefore, Johnson's literary interpretation of the language of possessions in Luke–Acts may be in need of refinement.

4. *Schuyler Brown: the Age of Jesus and the Age of the Church*

In order to make sense of 'the double standard,' Schuyler Brown draws attention to two *successive historical periods*.[26] In the *Age of Jesus*, renunciation meant 'the immediate, irrevocable surrender of all one's property for the benefit of the poor.' In the *Age of the Church*, renunciation meant 'the abandonment of the proprietary

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[24] Ibid., 174–183, esp. 179–181. Once again Johnson discerns the metaphorical nuance of possessions.

[25] *Ibid.*, 138.

[26] Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke*, Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969, 104–105.

Jacques Dupont also holds a similar opinion in 'The Poor and Poverty in the Gospels and Acts,' *Gospel Poverty*, ed. and trans. Michael Guinan, Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1977, 25–52, esp. 45–46. In qualifying the missionary instruction as time-bound, Dupont points to the dialogue at the last supper, recorded in Lk. 22:35–36. He explains: 'The happy times of Jesus' ministry are over, when one needed nothing and lacked nothing. What would one have done with a purse or traveling bag for provisions? But now, *at the hour of Jesus' passion, a new period begins*. Now one cannot do without a purse or traveling bag, and simply rely on people's hospitality. From now on, they can count not on hospitality but on hostility. The disciples, when attacked, would have to defend themselves; this is what the image of the sword suggests, which certainly has a symbolic value here'.

The above word of caution by Dupont to P. George cannot be received without questioning. While it is true that the saying could have signaled a time of danger, the details with regard to the carrying of sword and purse cannot be so readily explained as the *cancellation* of the prohibitions of 'excessive' equipments in the missionary instruction. Verses 38, 49–51 are probably intended to reject the idea of literally selling one's cloak for the purchase of a sword (cf. Mealand, *op. cit.*, 69–70). Even if one literally sold his cloak for a sword, he cannot have much in his purse. His financial state cannot be much different from before.

spirit'.[27] 'The difference in practice concerning worldly goods between the Age of Jesus and the Age of the Church is evidently determined by the change in the actual conditions of discipleship.'[28] Encountering with Jesus results in the abandonment of riches, while inclusion in the Church requires the right use of them.[29] However, Jesus seems to have tolerated a variety of kinds of behaviors from his open circle of adherents. Besides those who, like the Apostles, have abandoned all to follow him, there are also people like Mary Magdalene and Joanna (Lk. 8:1–3), who support the itinerant Master and his disciples with their means. They are the ones who did not renounce all, but are nevertheless accepted by the Master. In addition, Brown's explanation does not account for the co-existence of teachings on total renunciation and teachings on the right use of possessions, which imply the allowance of private property within Luke's Gospel.

5. *Eric Franklin: Eschatological Urgency*

Franklin disputes the simplistic view that the only proper use of wealth is its disposal for the sake of charity.[30] He holds a more complex attitude in regard to wealth, acknowledging that within the Lucan writings 'there are both passages which require complete renunciation of earthly possessions . . . (and) those which teach a

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[27] *Ibid.* Brown claims that 'only Jesus' followers on his earthly Way are required to practice poverty in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven.'

[28] *Ibid.*, 102.

[29] Brown speaks of 'Luke's conception of actual renunciation of all property as a requirement for discipleship only during the Age of Jesus, a requirement which is replaced in the Age of the Church by the *willingness* to part with one's property for the good of the community . . .' (*op. cit.*, 101–105, esp. 103.) In saying this, Brown is not far from Conzelmann whom he takes issue with. The latter explains that the ideal was to be an ideal of his own time. The 'instructions given in the mission charge were not timeless ideals of poverty,' but were appropriated for a *particular time*. They were not to be followed as normative commands. The determining factor in Luke's understanding, claims Conzelmann, is the so-called parousia delay. Luke no longer expects an imminent end, and the *vita Christiana* has emerged. (Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte Der Zeit*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), trans., Geoffrey Buswell, *The Theology of Luke*, (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1960), 231–234, esp. 233).

Brown's view of the practice of renunciation in terms of the two ages is similar to that of Schottroff and Stegemann, who also argue for the variance in the practice of renunciation between the time of Jesus and the post-resurrection period. Abandonment of possessions, they argue, were meant only for the earthly discipleship in Jesus' time (Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus von Nazareth – Hoffnung der Armen*, (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), 108–113, esp. 103).

[30] R. E. Brown, *New Testament Essays*, London, 1965, 269.

right attitude to the continuing possession of wealth.'[31] Luke's radical teaching about riches is *directed to a specific situation* rather than given as more general ethical instruction.[32] By this Franklin is contending that Luke is not trying to lay down a guide for the developing Christian community, but is addressing a particular situation.[33] Had Luke been trying to lay down ethical standards for the Christian community then and in the years following, the double standard would be irreconcilable.[34]

While it is true that Luke's teaching about riches is colored by his social concern, such teaching 'is nevertheless determined by his theology'.[35] Rather than giving a general ethical instruction or eliciting an ethical response, Luke is more concerned with *fostering a sense of urgency* and evoking a response of awareness in an eschatological situation. 'Luke did not abandon the eschatological expectations of the early Church. He reinterpreted them in such a way that the eschatological hope was not reduced but was rather increased'.[36] To counteract the concern of his readers with possessions and their entanglement with this world, Luke repeatedly shows the ensnaring effect of wealth on men, 'preventing the openness to God's grace' and 'turning their eyes away from the reality of the transcendent Kingdom'.[37] The call to complete renunciation is presented to men in an urgent eschatological situation,[38] and it is not intended as a guide for a continuing and developing church life.[39]

Much of Franklin's argumentation and explanation is searching and cogent, especially the conclusion drawn from the reexamination of Luke's eschatology which he reinterprets rather than reduces. Nevertheless, to say that Luke put forth an ideal of renunciation only

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[31] E. Franklin, 'Men waiting for their Lord,' *Christ the Lord*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 145–172, esp. 152.

[32] *Ibid.*, 156.

[33] Franklin's explanation of Luke's aim in fostering urgency is clear (*ibid.*, 154). The particular situation was occasioned by 'two problems, namely, that provided by the non-occurrence of the parousia, and that by the failure of the Jews to respond to Jesus.' The destruction of Jerusalem simply escalated the incomprehensibility of the claim that Jesus was indeed the Messiah of Old Testament expectations. In such a situation, instead of abandoning the eschatological expectations of the early Church, Luke reinterpreted the difficulties as a 'reality for men in spite of the delay and in spite of the seeming calamities of history' (146).

[34] *Ibid.*, 153.

[35] *Ibid.*, 156.

[36] *Ibid.*, 146.

[37] *Ibid.*, 154.

[38] *Ibid.*, 151.

[39] *Ibid.*, 154.

to be attenuated for the sake of the more resourceful readers[40] is to infer that Luke makes his concession by introducing a 'double standard.' This concession would seem all the more unnecessary if, as Franklin has ascertained, Luke shared the hope of an imminent parousia. If Luke's purpose was not even to encourage a missionary outlook because of the already fulfilled universal witness and 'little that was new could be added,'[41] all the attenuation and concessions suggested would seem inconsistent with his theological outlook. In what way, then, would the situation warrant two sets of seemingly inconsistent instructions on possessions? A different explanation would be necessary in order to account for the 'inconsistency'. In the concluding section, we shall attempt to supplement Franklin's eschatological treatise.

In the following pages, we shall examine the relevant passages on renunciation of possessions in Luke–Acts. It is our thesis that together these passages illustrate how the demand for renunciation *tests* and *enhances* one's psychological, social and religious *transformation at conversion.* The test is not the end, it is only a means. The end is discipleship.

Crucial Questions Concerning Discipleship and Possessions

1. Is Renunciation a Condition for Discipleship?

Most of the instructions given concerning the call for renunciation of possessions are found in the Travel Narrative (Lk. 9:51–19:44), but there are other passages that echo the same theme. We shall begin

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[40] After accounting for the teachings on renunciation, Franklin remarks: 'But Luke is nevertheless aware not all his readers are poor, and his realism makes it certain that though he puts the ideal before them, they are unlikely to enter upon absolute poverty. His Gospel therefore contains a block of teaching which discusses and suggests the right use of riches' (*ibid.*, 155).

A similar point of argument is presented by G. Theissen, 'Wanderradikalismus: literatursoziologische Aspekte der Uberlieferung von Worten Jesu im Urchristentum,' *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 70, 1973, 245–271; also 'Itinerant Radicalism: The Tradition of Jesus Sayings from the Perspective of the Sociology of Literature,' *Radical Religion* 2, 1975, 84–93, esp. 91. He argues that Lk. 22:35ff rescinded all the radical material on renunciation. Luke, he contends, was arguing against the successors of the first wandering preachers who plagued his church. Cf. idem, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (E.T. by John Bowden of *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung*, [München: Kaiser, 1977]; (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978)), 65. However, we agree with R. J. Karris that the argument of Theissen is highly speculative and is in need of more evidence and factual support (R. J. Karris, 'Poor and Rich: The Lukan *Sitz im Leben*,' ed. C. H. Talbert, *Perspectives on Luke–Acts*, (Danville, 1978), 112–125, esp. 115.)

[41] Franklin, *op. cit.*, 146.

our study by examining the summon to 'sell one's possessions and give to the poor' (Lk. 12:33a), the demand to forsake all (Lk. 14:33), and Jesus' answer to the quest of eternal life (Lk. 18:22).

A. 'Sell Your Possessions and Give to the Poor' (Lk. 12:33a). This logion is found in the teaching on cares (Lk. 12:22–31) and heavenly treasures (Lk. 12:32–34). While most of the materials are from the Q source,[42] v. 33a is peculiar to Luke. Because of this, the suggestion was made that the Matthaean version (6:19–21) might represent 'a weakening of the demand, reducing it to advice against hoarding in place of the positive requirement of renunciation.'[43] In addition, the explanation was given that 'there was a tendency in Matthew to mold the precepts of Jesus into legislation for the Christian society, and this sometimes requires a modification of their original rigor.'[44] This suggestion raises the question whether the logion is to be taken as an exhortation or as a commandment?[45] Is the logion a requirement for entering into the company of Jesus? Or is it a gentle invitation to the followers to progress in their faith by showing a positive carefree approach to life, outgoing generosity, and complete trust in God?

The intent of the teaching seems to be the invitation to *replace anxiety* for life *with true security* in the heavenly Father.[46] Instead of relying on material security, the audience are urged to have their security firmly rooted in the Kingdom. Involved in this is a desire for consistency as expressed by the words of v. 33a, 'Sell your

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[42] The teaching on cares and the teaching on heavenly treasures are also found in Matthew; only that Matthew has them in reverse order (6:24–34, 19–21) in the Sermon on the Mount.

[43] F. W. Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*, (N.Y.: Abingdon, 1962), 169.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Jacob Jervell observes: 'Almsgiving is important for Luke, and only for him among the New Testament writers, as a sign of true adherence to the law (11:41; 12:33; Acts 9:36; 10:2, 4, 31; 24:17).' Almsgiving, contends Jervell, is primarily conceived as a duty to Israel as the people of God (Acts 10:2; 24:17) ('The Law in Luke–Acts,' *Luke and the People of God*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 140, 150 fn 31.)

[46] Even though the call might not necessarily be for complete renunciation, it can still be carried out to its utmost extent if the situation so requires. Luke might have in mind situations similar to that reflected in Acts 4:36–37. Seccombe's argument against taking the call as complete renunciation is one-sided (D.P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke–Acts*, Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt (SNTU), Serie B, Band 6, Linz, (Austria, 1982), 153f.). Given the fact that the term 'treasure' does not necessarily express the idea of all that a person owns, 'treasure in heaven' certainly does not tell how much earthly possessions it takes to cover the 'currency exchange rate' between the old order and the new. It might take all, or it might take less.

possessions and give to the poor.' The rationale behind this call is apparent: *worldly goods captivate one's heart*, whereas the heart of the disciple must be free for the Kingdom (Lk. 12:31). If a man's heart is preoccupied with his possessions and earthly needs,[47] he will be incapable of responding to God's invitation. For where one's treasure is, there will his heart be also.

Giving to the poor helps one gain favor with God. Luke's audience know well that God favors the poor whose miserable plight calls for a total dependency on God (Lk. 6:20). Aligning oneself with the poor is the logical move if one wants to be conformed to the values of the Kingdom. On the other hand, giving to the poor demonstrates a concern for right social relationships. Instead of exploiting others and dehumanizing one's fellow men, instead of being indifferent to the plight of others, the disciples are exhorted to right the scales of justice. Hence, not only is the disciple's heart concerned with God and his Kingdom, his sensibilities are also in tune with the miseries of others.

In order to inherit the promised Kingdom, however, the audience must show their readiness. Detachment from false values and concern for others are two indications of such readiness. Such injunction is seemingly not limited to the Twelve and Seventy-(two), for they have already shown signs of trust and readiness for the coming of the Kingdom (Lk. 9:3; 10:3–4). The invitation is probably meant to be extended to a larger circle, comprising both believers and others.

B. Renunciation as a Condition of Discipleship (Lk. 14:33). Here we find a Lucan text issuing a call to voluntary poverty for the sake of the Kingdom. In the introduction and the twin sayings (Lk. 14:25, 26, 27), we find that Luke *heightened* the Matthaean (10:37–38; 16:24) and Marcan (8:34)[48] demands of discipleship. Where the Matthaean

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[47] Even though one may argue that Lk. 12:22–32 and Lk. 12:33–34 were originally independent sayings of Jesus (cf. Manson, *Sayings*, 111f; etc.), and that the former, unlike the latter, was more concerned with the lack of possessions than the surplus of goods, there is no obvious break as intended by Luke. Therefore, the former was probably concerned with anxious thoughts about earthly needs rather than just with the real lack of possessions.

[48] Since Mk. 8:34 also has a similar introduction to the discourse of discipleship ('And he called to him the multitude with this disciples, and said to them . . .'), the context may be pre-Lucan. However, critics have often viewed this introduction (Lk. 14:25) as fashioned by Luke to fit the situation of a journey (Bultmann, *The History of Synoptic Tradition*, 334; cf. F. W. Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*, 177; etc). It is typical of Luke to locate much of Jesus' teachings in relation to an audience and a specific occasion (A. W. Mosley, 'Jesus' Audiences in the Gospels of St Mark and St Luke,' *NTS* 10, 1963–1964, 145–149;

version reads 'loves more,' the Lucan version reads 'hates not' instead. In addition, the list of relatives to be *surpassed* in one's dedication to God is extended to include 'wife, brothers, sisters, and even one's own life.'

When Luke closes the list of valuables by demanding the surrender of all of one's possessions, he is clearly trying to draw a parallel between the place of possessions and other intimate ties that one might have. Possessions as well as one's kinsfolk can hold one's attention. Disposing of one's possessions is like disinheriting one's own flesh and blood. In the immediate context, the Parable of the Great Banquet (Lk. 14:15–24), both property and wife so absorb one's attention and enthrall one's soul that one turns down the divine invitation. The Lucan Jesus cautions the would-be followers to size up obstacles, such as intimate ties to relatives and possessions, that might prove to be insurmountable in the course of discipleship.

The Parables of the Tower Builder (Lk. 14:28–30) and the King going to War (Lk. 14:31–32(33)) are peculiar to Luke, but they are coherent within the context of the preceding theme: the cost of discipleship. Together they caution the responsive hearers to make 'self-examination before any undertaking.'[49] The discourse is then supplemented by the application: 'So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple' (v. 33). The Closing Saying (Lk. 14:34–35) that follows warns of judgment for those who fail to comply with the call for renunciation and demonstrate total allegiance to Jesus.

In its present context, the discourse (14:25–35) apparently took place on the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus knew that his crucifixion was inevitable; he was already on his way to the cross.[50] Jesus asked them to 'hate' their dearest and nearest kin, and even their own life in order to be able to die for the same cause.[51] Jesus expected his adherents to be completely prepared for service in the cause of the

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J. A. Baird, *Audience Criticism and the Historical Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969); P. S. Minear, 'Jesus' Audiences, according to Luke,' *Novum Testamentum* 16, 1974, 81–109).

[49] Bultmann, *op. cit.*, 171.

[50] The possibility of Jesus' anticipation of death by crucifixion has been argued by E. Bammel, 'Crucifixion as a Punishment in Palestine,' in idem, ed., *The Trial of Jesus*, SBT, second series 13, (London: S.C.M., 1970), 162–165; Martin Hengel, 'Mors turpissima crucis: Die Kreuzigung in der antiken Welt und die "Torheit" des "Wortes vom Kreux," ' (Crucifixion), *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlmann and P. Stuhlmacher, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, und Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), trans. John Bowden, (London: S.C.M., 1977), 46–63.

[51] J. Denney, 'The Word "Hate" in Lk. 14:26,' *The Expository Times* 21, 1909–1910, 41f.

Kingdom of God. However, the 'bearing of one's cross' cannot be confined exclusively to the literal sense. For in an earlier instance, Jesus had warned about his rejection and consequent execution, and that his disciples would also have to bear their crosses *daily* (Lk. 9:22–23). The adverb points to *cross-bearing*, not always as literal martyrdom, but more often as a continuous renewal of self-renunciation. Such continuous renunciation was demanded of the potential disciples in Lk. 14:33. They were urged *to be continuously*[52] *ready to forgo all* in times of great crisis, only that the crisis here might also mean the threat of a literal martyrdom instead of just a metaphorical one. The demand of renunciation here can thus be understood in a general sense as well as in a literal sense.[53]

We have established the inclusion of a *situational interpretation* along with a *general interpretation.* However, one may ask why Luke would emphasize voluntary poverty along with martyrdom. The answer would be: Martyrdom, breaking of family ties and renunciation of possessions would test one's ultimate loyalty. Possessions are repeatedly mentioned as the *major obstacle* for discipleship and for entrance into the Kingdom (Lk. 8:14; 18:24–30). The danger of riches is often cited in the warnings of Jesus (Lk. 12:13–21). In the Parable of the Great Banquet (14:15–24), those invited are so preoccupied with their acquisitions that they are deaf to the call.

C. Jesus' Answer to the Quest of Eternal Life: 'Sell all that you have, and Give to the Poor; and Come, Follow me' (Lk. 18:22). Our concern lies in the question of how the demand to renounce all and follow Jesus relates to the keeping of the commandments and the quest of eternal life.

The interchange in the dialogue, as some interpreters have suggested, may betray an attack on legalistic righteousness.[54] However, no evidence can be adduced in support of a claim to

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[52] The present tense of ἀποτάσσεται indicates a *continuous* action.

[53] D. P. Seccombe argued exclusively for a *situational* sense (the readiness to face the cross together with Jesus) in *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, 99–117, but in so doing he dismissed too lightly the similar saying of cross bearing in Lk. 9:22–23, which has to be construed in a *general* (metaphorical) sense instead of in a situational sense. Moreover, he did not take note of the *continuous* tense of the verb βαστάζει (14:27).

[54] B. W. Bacon, 'Why Callst Thou Me Good?' *Biblical World*, vol. 6, 1895, pp. 334–350, esp. 347; C. E. B. Cranfield, 'Riches and the Kingdom of God, St. Mark 10:17–31,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4, 1951, 301–311; Norval Geldenhuys, *Luke* (NICNT), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 457ff.

perfection on the part of the ruler.[55] Some interpreters think that Jesus intended to expose the fact that the man observed the negative commands but not the positive ones.[56] However, we would point out that honoring one's father and mother (Lk. 18:20) and loving one's neighbor (Mk: 10:19; Mt. 19:19) are both positive commandments. We can say with certainty that the law remains a valid guide for all Jews, even at the time of Jesus.[57] The law forms the basis of the call to repentance, and co-exists with the message of the Kingdom.[58] By pointing to the central commands of the law, Jesus is offering an answer similar to that of Lk. 10:25–28. The major difference comes in the following exchange where Jesus supplements the law's commands with his own summons.

The call to a radical divestment of wealth and to personal discipleship goes beyond mere obedience to the law.[59] Eternal life is to be found in discipleship,[60] which constitutes, in this particular instance, the irrevocable disposal of possessions and the following of Jesus. This is not an exclusively Lucan saying of Jesus, for the Matthaean teaching on the Last Judgment also tells of the future award or withholding of eternal life according to the way one treats the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned (Mt. 25:31–46). One's *relationship with one's fellow men* reveals whether one is truly a follower of Jesus or not.

The demand to sell all that one has is regarded by some as exceptional, since not all followers are called in such a vigorous manner.[61] Nevertheless, it is clear that Jesus demands undivided

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[55] Seccombe, *op. cit.*, 119–130, esp. 119–121. Contra E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, (Göttingen, 1937), 212f; Hugh Martin, *Luke's Portrait of Jesus*, (London, 1949), 74ff.

[56] E. P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark*, ICC, 1907, 191.

[57] As S. G. Wilson observed, it is virtually impossible to construct a consistent pattern of Jesus' attitude to the law in Luke–Acts. Luke 'presents Jesus as sometimes opposed to and sometimes in league with the law.' At times, even 'potentially contradictory sayings are closely juxtaposed (11:41–42; 16:16–18).' No obvious attempt was made on the part of Luke to resolve the ambiguity (S. G. Wilson, 'Law in Luke's Gospel,' *Luke and the Law*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 50, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983), 12–58, esp. 56–57).

[58] Idem, *op. cit.*, 54.

[59] The stories of Lk. 10:25–28 and Lk. 18:18–30 are similar in their concern with the question: 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' However, they are in tension with each other with respect to the law. In the former, obedience to the law will result in eternal life. In the latter, obedience to the law alone is no guarantee of eternal life.

[60] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Luke*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), trans. by David Green, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 286.

[61] Seccombe, *op. cit.*, 126.

loyalty from his followers, and there is to be no exception. *Singular devotion* is generally demanded. The ruler's sorrowful response testifies to the ensnaring power of possessions. Precisely because the ruler is so interested in eternal life and yet so attached to his possessions that Jesus summons him to renounce all and follow him.

D. Summary. As a result of Jesus' apocalyptic message about the Reign of God, he attracted an open circle of adherents, not all of whom became close followers. To the latter group Jesus directed his call to sell their possessions and give to the poor (Lk. 12:33). They would indicate their readiness to inherit the promised Kingdom as they surrender the false securities of the world and put their trust in the fatherly care of God instead. Anyone who wants to be a disciple of Jesus would have to be ready to forgo all in the time of great crisis (Lk. 14:33). Jesus requires *undivided loyalty* from his followers, *especially the sort of loyalty that reflects* one's *freedom from the bondage of mammon* (Lk. 18:22). The true followers of Jesus would identify with his concern for the poor and for right social relations. Riches can turn out to be incompatible with participation in the Kingdom. Should that be the case, renunciation (Lk. 18:22) would be the key to inheriting eternal life.[62]

2. *How did Some of Jesus' Followers actualize this Demand?*

A. The Response of Simon, James and John: 'They Left Everything and Followed him' (Lk. 5:11). There are diverse descriptions of the call of these first disciples in the gospel tradition. A critical study of the Lucan narrative against its Synoptic parallels would reveal that Lk. 5:1–11 is *more complicated* than Mk. 1:16–20 and Mt. 4:18–22. The Lucan transposition of this episode into its new setting and the report of a miraculous catch offer a more logical explanation of *why* Simon and his companions would leave everything and follow Jesus.[63] After the previous encounter in the healing of Simon's mother-in-law and then having had the opportunity to hear Jesus

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[62] E. Percy, *Die Botschaft Jesu, Eine traditionskritische und exegetische Untersuchung*, Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, n.s. 49, (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1953), 92–93.

[63] Even with the Lucan 'improvement,' however the episode is not without difficulties. For instance, Peter's falling down at his knees and his words 'Depart from me' would be more appropriate on land than in a boat. Raymond E. Brown et al. have cited other inconsistencies in 'Peter in the Gospel of Luke,' *Peter in the New Testament*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 109–128, esp. 115.

preach and witness a miraculous catch, they *readily responded* to the call of Jesus.

While Mark and Matthew say that Simon, James and John left their nets, their father, the hired helpers and the boat, Luke simply employs an emphatic 'all' to recount the *radical renunciation* by the first disciples *of their old way of life.* Peter's decisive response was commensurate with the immediacy ('from now on') intended in the call of Jesus. The abandonment of property and ties by the first disciples is complete, and the *reliance on the power of Jesus instead of on oneself* ought to *commence at once.*[64] Because of the imminence of the Kingdom and the necessity to proclaim it throughout the land, they abandoned property[65] and ties in order to take on the role of the itinerant preacher inaugurating the Kingdom of God. To engage in full-time *discipleship* with Jesus *means sharing the master's homeless, meager, itinerant existence.* Their miraculous catch proves to them that this is a superior mode of existence and a calling from on high.

Even though Peter's abandonment of property and ties was *voluntary*, it was also *necessary*. Just as he needed to rely on Jesus for the miraculous catch of fish, he would need to be *dependent* on the power of Jesus in fishing men. With *faith* and *determination*, he accompanied the itinerant preacher to proclaim the in-breaking Kingdom of God and the need of repentance. In abandoning his source of support and becoming utterly dependent on Jesus, Peter was following the paradigm of the poor. In the Kingdom of great reversal, this is a superior lifestyle.

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[64] The period of fishing for men may have begun at the moment when the disciples are sent out (Lk. 9:1ff). In light of the difficulties created by the immediacy of 'from now on' creates, Klein suggests that the episode is a survival from the period in which the story had a post-resurrection setting (G. Klein, 'Die Berufung des Petrus,' *ZNW* 58, 1967, 1–44.) However, in our exegesis, the first disciples were capable of being fishers of men through the power of Jesus. Thus, the apostolic sending of Peter and his success in the missionary endeavor is grounded in the pre-Easter intention of Jesus (H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, III, Band i, (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), 264.)

[65] According to the Johannine Gospel, Simon Peter and the other apostles went fishing in a *boat* after the resurrection of Jesus (Jn. 21:3, 6, 8). However, John does not report the details about the ownership of the boat they used. As native Galileans the disciples would not have much difficulty in finding a boat for fishing. The saying of Peter, 'Silver and gold have I none . . .,' as reported in Acts 3:6 surely points to his *continuation* in voluntary poverty.

B. The Response of Levi to the Call: 'He Left Everything and Followed him' (Lk. 5:28). The call of Levi resembles that of Simon with the exception that what was only implicit in the call of Simon—the command to follow Jesus—is now made explicit (Lk. 5:27). Levi responded with decisive action. All the Synoptic writers recount that he rose and followed Jesus. However, in Luke, the decisive action is *accentuated* by the addition of 'he left all.'[66] The fact that he could give a 'sumptuous banquet' and had his own house which accommodated a 'large crowd' of tax collectors and other people would indicate that he was among the well-to-do. However, the question may arise as to whether Levi truly illustrated the practice of voluntary poverty,[67] since he could still afford to hold a great feast in his house for his business associates.[68] While this question is not directly answered in this text, the tension can be eased by viewing the act of Levi as an exercise of the commission given to Simon: 'he holds a feast in his house and invited to it those who need the gospel; the gospel is proclaimed to them (5:31–32) and so Levi has in fact become a fisher of men.'[69] We would point out that the motive for holding a great feast is 'in no way inconsistent with his decision to give up his lucrative trade in order to become a disciple.'[70] Therefore, we should probably still interpret the response of Levi as similar to that of Simon.

C. A Decisive Action in Conversion: The Example of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–10). This pericope and the stories of the rich ruler and the blind beggar (Lk. 18:18–30; 18:35–43) share the common theme of individual salvation. The rich ruler was saddened by the summons of Jesus, and the final outcome was left unstated (Lk. 18:18–30). The blind beggar followed Jesus joyfully, praising God along the way (Lk. 18:35–43). In the case of Zacchaeus, he received salvation in spite of his wealth. Zacchaeus' conversion, as a deliberate contrast to

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[66] Whereas in both Mark and Matthew the response of Levi is recorded simply as καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολ ούθησεν αὐτῶ (Mk. 2:14; Mt. 9:9), in Luke this is rendered as καὶ *καταλιπὼν πάντα* ἀναστὰς ἠκολ ούθει αὐτῶ (Lk. 5:28). The *accentuation* of Luke is thus obvious.

[67] Mealand has suggested a different argument, namely that the reaction of Levi could be related to the nature of his work. Since his business associates were named with sinners (Lk. 5:30), they could be regarded as thieves and their money as stolen property (David Mealand, *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels*, (London: S.P.C.K., 1980), 77.)

[68] Marshall, *loc. cit.*

[69] Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, (Sheffield: Univ. of Sheffield, 1981), 175–179, esp. 178.

[70] Marshall, *op. cit.*, 217.

the dilemma of the rich ruler, illustrates *God's power to do the impossible* (Lk. 18:27).

The story of Zacchaeus has an intrinsic importance in being the paradigmatic example of *authentic salvation* which includes both repentance and the *fruits of repentance.* Zacchaeus expresses his genuine conversion in five ways. (1) He establishes an *intimate relationship* with Jesus by receiving him into his home. (2) He demonstrates *loyalty to Jesus* by defending him and His cause. (3) He *repents* of his past fraudulent activities. (4) He demonstrates his *change of priorities* by making just recompense to those he had sinned against. (5) He displays his *concern for just social relationship* by giving half of his possessions to the poor. By his restitution and his gift to the poor, Zacchaeus shows that he is a true son of Abraham and a recipient of the salvation offered by Jesus. His willingness to make full recompense according to the law and to share one-half of his possessions with the poor, thus going beyond the call of duty,[71] sets a new standard for the godly person. The example of Zacchaeus offers no easy way for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God. It is noteworthy that in Luke only one rich man is saved and it is Zacchaeus. Therefore, Zachaeus serves as a *paradigm* for Luke of how a person, especially the rich, can enter the Kingdom of God.

D. Summary. Our examples show that becoming a follower of Jesus entails a variety of sacrifice. To some, it can mean the renunciation of the old way of life in order to preach the imminence of the Kingdom. These disciples not only share the master's destitute existence, they must also have faith in his provision. To others, as in the case of Levi, becoming a disciple may mean becoming a fisher of men through physically following Jesus as well as using one's possessions for his cause. To still others, becoming disciples entails a demonstration of loyalty to Jesus, repentance and change of priorities, as well as a concern for just social relations. Their different roles and contexts demanded different modes of renunciation.

3. *Was the Demand of Renunciation also meant for the Age of the Church?*

A. Koinonia in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 2:41–47; 4:32–35). Should the communal life of the early Church at Jerusalem be taken

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[71] According to the rabbinic literature, one is only required to give one-fifth of his entire wealth initially and then one-fifth of his annual income thereafter. (H. L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und*

as a general rule? The use of πάντες (2:44) and ὅσοι (4:34) would seem to imply that *all* the owners of land or houses sold their property in order to distribute the proceeds to the needy.[72] However, the description, 'not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own (4:32),' seems to point to the continuance of possession of private property,[73] except that the possessions were made available to those who had need. Apparently, absolute ownership was replaced by stewardship. Had every property owner liquidated his entire estate to live from a communal fund, the action of Barnabas in selling a field (4:37) would hardly be exemplary.[74] The account of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11) also lends support to the conjecture that there was a continued possession of private property. Therefore, the practice of shared possessions was voluntary rather than obligatory.

Since the Greek verbs used to describe the sharing of goods[75] are all in the imperfect tense, such activity is probably intended to be understood as *typical* rather than invariable.[76] The imperfect tenses also suggest an ongoing or occasional sharing, a sale of property whenever need arose.[77] Here, Luke seeks to present not only a historical narrative, but also a *paradigm* of what every Christian community ought to be like.[78]

B. The Example of Barnabas (Acts 4:36–37). There is much speculation about Luke's motive in singling out Barnabas as an

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Midrash IV, (München: C. H. Beck, 1922), 546ff.; also cf. J. Peah i, I, 15b.23, cited by Jeremias in *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress), 1969, 127.)

[72] Verses 34f., according to Haenchen, offer a *generalized* summary based on the instances known to Luke involving Barnabas and Ananias (*The Acts of the Apostles*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 14th ed., 1965), trans. R. McL. Wilson, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 233).

[73] Because of the variance in the two accounts, Bo Reicke detects two traditions which are placed beside each other (*Glaube und Leben der Urgemeinde: Bemerkungen zu Apostelgeschichte 1–7*, (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1957), 57–60).

[74] Seccombe, *op. cit.*, 207.

[75] The sharing of goods is depicted by the verbs in the following phrases: They *sold* (ἐπίπρασκον) their property (2:45; cf. 4:34), they *brought* (ἔφερον) the proceeds to the apostles (4:34), they *laid* (ἐτίθουν) the proceeds at the feet of the apostles (4:35), and they *distributed* (διεμέριζον, διεδίδετο) the amount to the needy (2:45; 4:35).

[76] R. H. Fuller and B. K. Rice, 'The First Christian Community,' *Christianity and the Affluent Society*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 38–45.

[77] So Haenchen, *op. cit.* p. 192; Pilgrim, *op. cit.*, 149f.; Leonard Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, trans. Robert A. Guelich, (London: A. & C. Black, 1970), 49.

[78] Pilgrim, *op. cit.*, 148.

example in the second description of community life (4:32–5:11): his role in Acts,[79] his relation with the Antiochene church[80] and an exceptional act of generosity. The immediate context of the passage shows that he is proudly pointed to as a *leading figure* who had himself taken part in the sharing of possessions. In giving up a piece of his property for the needy, Barnabas exemplified Jesus' teaching that it was possible, though difficult, for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Lk. 18:24–27), and he could advice men to lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth (Lk. 12:33). Thus he is comparable to Zacchaeus, the only rich man in the Third Gospel who received salvation.

The mention of Barnabas, therefore, also serves as a *paradigm* of Christian discipleship. The example of Barnabas serves well to demonstrate how a rich man can be freed from the bondage of mammon and by means of it make friends before God (Lk. 16:9). The spontaneous generosity of Barnabas the Hellenistic Jew is set forth by Luke as *the way* of life among believers. The exemplary story of Barnabas is used to illustrate the spiritual oneness of brotherly solidarity that leads to the sharing fellowship of the Pentecost church.

C. The Case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). As is commonly held, the incident of Ananias and Sapphira was deliberately juxtaposed with that of Barnabas to give a contrast. The two passages contain a commendatory account of generosity and an admonitory account of counterfeit generosity, respectively.

At the outset, vv. 1–2 reveal that the nature of the couple's sin is pretension. The husband laid the proceeds from the sale of a property publicly at the feet of the apostles, having first secretly embezzled (ἐνοσφίσατο)[81] a portion of it. Because of the use of the

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[79] J. Dupont modified his view concerning the special mention of Barnabas later in 'L'Union entre les premières Chrétiens dans les Actes des Apôtres,' *La nouvelle reveue théologique* 91, 1969, 898–915, esp. 900.

[80] M. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church*, trans. John Bowden, (Philadelphia: Fortress, (1973) 1974), 33; also idem, *Between Jesus and Paul*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 151–206, esp. 157–158. In the latter work, Hengel expounds: 'Barnabas' gift (Acts 4:36f.) was neither an individual instance nor an exception, but was remembered because of its significance for the later Antiochene community; Luke therefore incorporated it in his historical account.'

[81] Even though in poetry νοσφίζομαι refers only to 'turning one's back on,' explains F. F. Bruce, it carries the sense of 'peculate' or 'purloin' in prose. Therefore, the term as used in Acts 5:2 connotes a secretive and fraudulent act rather than having the much milder sense of 'keeping back,' as rendered in most translations (F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles, the Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), reprinted 1984, 132).

verb νοσφίζομαι, some interpreters conclude that 'Ananias had no right to withhold any part of the proceeds.'[82] However, the rhetorical question of Peter, 'After it was sold, was it not under your control?' (v. 4), makes it evident that Ananias was free to give all or just a portion of the proceeds to the community, just as he was free to sell or not sell his land. The retention of a portion of the proceeds in itself did not constitute an offense. Rather, the offense was the conspiracy to deceive (vv. 3, 4). Thus, in laying the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles, Ananias must have pretended to be handing over the entire amount. Because of this pretense, his retention of the other portion of the proceeds constitutes an embezzlement (v. 3).[83]

In addition, Ananias was guilty of counterfeiting the unity portrayed in Acts 4:32: 'The whole body of believers was united in heart and soul. Not a man of them claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything was held in common' (NEB). Ananias was unable to part with his possessions, although he recognized that the laying of the entire proceeds of their sale at the feet of the apostles would be a highly esteemed expression of fraternal unity, a Spirit-filled gesture. By hiding a portion, they violated this unity. To make the grand gesture of sharing *all* things and yet retain a portion as 'one's own' is to counterfeit the unity (*koinonia*) generated by the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost community. In his pretense, Ananias probably thought he was only being deceitful to men. In actuality, however, he was falsifying the unity created by the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit was conceived as present in the apostles and in the community (5:3,9), a lie to the apostles was a direct challenge to the

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[82] Haenchen, *Acts*, 237; Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke*, (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 106.

[83] Contra Haenchen (*loc. cit.*) and Schuyler Brown (*loc. cit.*). What constitutes Ananias' retention of a portion of the proceeds an embezzlement is his conspiracy of deception rather than any set rule for total donation of proceeds from sale of possessions. We agree with Schnackenburg that contributions were made not because of a set rule but for the poor members of the community as need arose (Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Die sittliche Botschaft des Neuen Testamentes*, (Münich: Max Hueber Verlag, rev. ed., 1962), trans. J. Holland-Smith and W. J. O'Hara, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 209–211). Likewise, Leander E. Keck has expressed his view of the sharing as voluntary: 'The accent does not fall on holy poverty as a mark of the community but on a sharing of wealth for the sake of the needy and for the sake of eschatological egalitarianism' (idem, 'The Poor Among the Saints in the New Testament,' *ZNW* 56, 1965, 100–129, esp. 105).

Holy Spirit.[84] Ananias was thus guilty on three counts: embezzlement, being deceitful to the apostles and the community, and destroying the unity generated by the Holy Spirit. All counts were directly related to the charge of 'lying to the Holy Spirit.'[85]

The mortal danger man encounters in his attachment to worldly goods as illustrated here is reminiscent of those parables that expose the enticing nature of 'unrighteous mammon' in the third Gospel. Mammon ensnared Ananias and Sapphira, causing them to forfeit truthfulness and genuine discipleship. Thus, the case study of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates how the use of possessions constitutes a preeminent test case of Christian discipleship. It provides a clear warning of God's impending judgment on the greedy.[86] The severity of the punishment shows the gravity of the affront which the counterfeit *koinonia* posed to God. The whole community was in awe, and great *fear* came upon all who heard of the judgment. Only then was the Jerusalem community called ἐκκλησία (5:11),[87] a subtle reference to the genuine *koinonia* which should mark the church.

D. Summary. In Acts, the total renunciation required for inheriting eternal life seems to be replaced by willingness to part with one's

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[84] Luke T. Johnson is right in saying, 'It is not just the unity of human assembly which is threatened by conspiracy, but the Spirit of God Himself who creates that unity. An offense against the unity is therefore an offense against God.' (*The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke–Acts*, SBL Dissertation Series 39, (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 207.)

[85] It is inconceivable that anyone would expect to succeed in deceiving the Holy Spirit. In all likelihood, therefore, Ananias thought that he was only dealing with men, not knowing that the Spirit was in charge. Therefore the sin of 'lying to the Holy Spirit' was probably more than he had intended, even though his pretense in the end became 'a lie to the Holy Spirit.' A similar correlation is seen in Jesus' answer to Saul, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting' (Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15). Saul thought he was persecuting the Church. However, the risen Christ identified himself with the Church, and insisted that he was in fact the one being persecuted. This identification with the victims is similar to that of Acts 5:3, where the Holy Spirit is identified as the ultimate 'victim' of Ananias' conspiracy. In this sense, the lie to men constituted the lie to the Holy Spirit.

[86] Haenchen, *op. cit.*, 241. Likewise Seccombe sees that the essence of this episode is to give illustration and content to the fear that came upon the primitive community in Acts 2:43; 5:5, 11. 'God is near to, and jealously guards the new community, which is his own possession.' (D. P. Seccombe, *op. cit.*, 210–214.) Also P. B. Brown, *The Meaning and Function of Acts 5:1–11 in the Purpose of Luke–Acts*, Diss., (Boston: Boston University School of Theology, 1969), 236.

[87] Unless preference is given to Codex D, in which ἐπὶ τὸ αυτό (Acts 2:47) is glossed as τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, otherwise the first occurrence of ἐκκλησία is in 5:11 instead of 2:47. We prefer to follow UBS in adopting the readings of Codex Sinaiticus, A, B, C, G, etc. in which the first occurrence is in 5:11 instead of 2:47.

property for the good of the community. In the first two major summaries of community life in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 2:41–47; 4:32–35), we note that the contribution by the members was not necessarily given in a single, irrevocable act of renunciation, but was more generally made by repeatedly putting one's possessions at the disposal of the community. The koinonia of the first Christians serves as a paradigm of what a Christian community should be like. Their communal life bore signs of conversion. The willingness of Barnabas to sell a piece of his property for the sake of the needy members of the community is a positive example of Christian discipleship. The inability of Ananias and Sapphira to part with all the proceeds of their property demonstrates how the use of possessions constitutes a preeminent test case of Christian discipleship.

Schuyler Brown observes a difference in practice concerning worldly goods between the Age of Jesus and the Age of the Church.[88] In the comparison between Lk. 18:22 and Acts 4:34–35, he points to the replacement of the once and for all act of renunciation, expressed by the aorist imperative (πώλησον, διάδος), by repeated acts (present participle: πωλοῦντες; imperfect indicative: διεδίδετο).[89] However, the latter manner of disposing of property has its prototype in the Gospel. Besides the single act of irrevocable surrender of one's possessions in favor of the poor, there is the repeated demand for the proper use of possessions.[90]

Conclusion: Renunciation as a Test and a Tool in Discipleship Training

In answering the questions we posed at the beginning of this essay, we have first of all to delineate our assumption about the purpose of Luke which underlies our inquiry.

We suggest that Luke's primary interest is practical instead of theological.[91] His concern was above all pastoral,[92] and he was

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[88] Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy in the Age of the Church*, 102.

[89] *Ibid.*

[90] The story of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–10) and the summons to make friends with one's wealth (Lk. 16:1–13), to invite the uninvited (Lk. 14:13), to perform deeds of love (Lk. 10:25–35), and to lend without expecting any return (Lk. 6:34–36), etc., fall under the rubric of *faithful stewardship* rather than actual renunciation of all property.

[91] S. G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke–Acts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1973), 266–267. However, Wilson does not entirely deny the view of Luke as a theologian. If Luke were to be viewed as a theologian he would be a theologian 'of a different type, both in the motivation and in the focusing of his interests' (*ibid.*).

[92] Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations* I, 1975, 249.

'seeking to elicit a response in the "present" by his recital of past events.'[93] We suggest further that Luke, along with the other Gospel-writers, was trying to *preserve* the call for *renunciation*. Moreover, Luke has at times *intensified* this demand in order to depict what discipleship could mean in an extreme situation.

We agree with Franklin that Luke's intended readership includes both the rich and the poor. Had they consisted of the poor only, it would be hard to understand why Luke has to warn his readers about the dangers of wealth.[94] In addressing his readers, however, Luke was probably not making any concession because of his sense of 'realism.'[95] Rather, his treatise was determined by his understanding of the nature of renunciation in relation to discipleship.

The Lucan community that received the Gospel was, in all likelihood, one that included both the poor and the rich.[96] This community was threatened by the dangers of a weakening faith.[97] They were treated with suspicion by the government and their disgruntled neighbors. Their circumstances were intensified by the

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[93] J. C. O'Neill, 'The Six Amen Sayings in Luke,' *JTS*, n.s., 10, 1959, 1–9, esp. 9.

[94] Jacques Dupont enters the discussion of the present issue via the Beatitudes and Woes. He argues that the Beatitudes and Woes envisage two distinct groups, the poor and persecuted Christian community of Luke's day, and the persecuting and incredulous Israel. But how could Luke convey his message of the Woes to complete outsiders in his writing to the poor and persecuted Church? The underlying difficulty of Dupont's thesis is that he thinks of the Lucan community in monolithic terms (J. Dupont, *Les Béatitudes III: Les Evangelistes*, (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1973), 19–206, esp. 149–203).

[95] Franklin, *op. cit.*, 153.

[96] Just as the Jerusalem community consisted of the more resourceful and propertied (like the mother of John Mark who provided the meeting place, and Joseph Barnabas who donated the proceeds from the sale of a field, etc.) besides the poor, the Hellenistic Christian communities might also have had a similar composition. For instance, Lydia who was a seller of purple goods (Acts 16:14), Crispus who was a ruler of the synagogue (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14) and a person of private means capable of affording the cost of the upkeep and occasionally even the building of a synagogue, Erastus who was a city treasurer (Rom. 16:23), Stephanas who was a person of means besides being the head of a household (1 Cor. 1:16; cf. 16:15ff), and the hospitable Gaius, host to Paul and to the corinthian Christians, who provided a place of meeting (Rom. 16:23; Acts 18:7; I Cor. 1:14), are all examples of the well-to-do. Dorcas of Joppa and Cornelius of Caesarea also lend support to the presence of such a constituency among the early Christian communities. (Cf. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, ed. and trans. John H. Schutz, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); and Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, second ed., 1983), esp. 71–84, where Malherbe argues for a 'guild-like' house church, and the rarity of aristocratic members.)

[97] Ralph P. Martin, 'Salvation and Discipleship in Luke's Gospel,' *Interpreting the Gospels*, ed. James Luther Mays, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 214–230, esp. 228; Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance*, passim.

delay of the parousia and the rejection of the Messiah by unbelieving Jews.

To counteract the dwindling enthusiasm within the Christian community and the increasing tendency of compromise with the secular world, Luke writes with the purpose of encouraging his readers to see the imminence of the *parousia* and to expect the manifestation of the transcendent Kingdom.[98]

The demand for renunciation functions as a *test* of discipleship. It is a test of true repentance, as in the cases of Levi and Zacchaeus. It forces us to examine our values and priorities (Lk. 14:26, 33). It reveals the object of one's ultimate allegiance (Lk. 18:22; 19:1–10). It differentiates the person who truly recognizes the urgency and radicalness of the message of the Kingdom (Lk. 5:11, 28; 9:3–4) from the one who remains in the service of mammon.

The demand for renunciation is also a *tool* in the discipleship training process. It provides a context whereby the disciples can learn to be totally dependent on God (Lk. 12:33a) and be single-minded in purpose (Lk. 18:22). In drawing the disciples' attention to the poor, this demand trains them to be in right social relationships, to be in harmony with the Kingdom's societal ideals.

The call of Jesus to renunciation is, as concluded in our exegesis above, a demand for undivided loyalty from his would-be followers, even in face of crisis.[99] Riches are enticing, and they turn people away from Jesus and the reality of the transcendent Kingdom. People are called to take decisive action in face of the eschatological crisis. The force of Jesus' demand on the rich ruler (18:22) should not be attenuated. However, the call to the rich ruler cannot be applied to every bystander without qualification. When applied to bystanders, the demand for renunciation can mean the requirement for *readiness* or *willingness* to surrender all. Such application does not necessarily entail a literal abandonment of possessions, though in some cases it may. This understanding of the teaching on renunciation would seem to be much more compatible with the teaching on the right use of possessions, which allows for the continuance of possessions.

However, as a test and a tool in the discipleship training process, renunciation can be applied to all, be they leaders or neophytes. Sometimes Jesus uses this test and tool, at other times he does not. To those who are already loyal to the Lord, as in the cases of Levi and Zacchaeus, the abandonment of all possessions is not necessary. But

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[98] Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke–Acts*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 100–157, 180–187.

[99] Cf. the 'situational' interpretation cited previously in the exegesis of section III.

they must show genuine signs of discipleship; they are not to be attached to their possessions, nor should they neglect the poor. For one's horizontal relationship is often indicative of the state of one's vertical relationship with God. In this vein, the story of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–10) serves as a preeminent yardstick for genuine conversion and discipleship.

In exploiting a point of genuine correspondence between the Greek and Christian viewpoints on *koinonia* (Acts 2:42),[100] Luke wants to show his readers that Christians treat each other as 'friends,' and the essence of 'the way' is to give alms and care for one another (Acts 11:27–30). The renunciation in the teaching of Jesus has to be translated into action, and its practice takes on various forms, ranging from irrevocable relinquishment of all one's goods on behalf of the poor to repudiation of the possessive spirit.

The Age of Jesus and the Age of the Church are similar in being surrounded by lots of needy people. However, Jesus and his disciples lives an itinerant life, and selling all of one's possessions is compatible with this life style. Hence we find the disciples making personal and individual responses to Jesus' call. In the Age of the Church, Christians are more or less sedentary. In this context, making one's possessions available to the community and selling parts of them as needs arise becomes a more appropriate expression of loyalty to Jesus and his cause.

Readiness to respond to the call of renunciation is a sign of genuine conversion, a sign of undivided loyalty to Jesus, a sign of unwavering faith in him. It shows that the person has turned from self-reliance on God, that he has changed from self-centeredness to God-centeredness and other-centeredness. Readiness to renounce reveals that there is genuine repentance, a transformation from acquisitiveness to generosity for the cause of the Kingdom. The readiness to renounce one's possessions discloses the object of his ultimate allegiance and the reality of his relationship with God.

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[100] Seccombe, 'Koinonia-friendship, Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37,' *Possessions and the Poor in Luke–Acts*, 200–209.