

**ALMS OR LEGS? A CONTEXTUAL READING OF ACTS 3:1-10 IN  
THE LIGHT OF AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY OF HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT**

by

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**DECLARATION**

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I declare that **Alms or legs? A contextual reading of Acts 3:1-10 in the light of an alternative theory of human development**, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

  
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## ABSTRACT

The central thesis of the present study, entitled *Alms or legs? A contextual reading of Acts 3:1-10 in the light of an alternative theory of human development*, is that when read contextually, some biblical texts are capable of empowering individuals and small groups for social and structural transformation (Human Development). A contextual reading of the story of the crippled beggar at the Jerusalem temple entrance (Acts 3:1-10), within a context of begging and lack of initiative in a small community in the Eastern Cape provides a good example of such texts. The "horizons" of the text's author and the text's present reader are drawn together, in the creation of a "symbolic universe" for the context of underdevelopment. This serves as a vision, a positive alternative for the underdeveloped and non-developed communities.

Following an introductory chapter in which the purpose and context of the study are outlined, and methodological problems introduced, the study proceeds, in the second chapter, with an outline of the contextual approach, undergirded by the "alternative theory" of development, namely, a people centered development (as opposed to the "economic growth" approach). This does not only result in a grid or categories against which to read the text, it also provides a broad framework within which subsequent discussions of the subjects of beggars (Chapter 3) and miracles (Chapter 4) respectively, take place. The topics of beggars and miracles, like "alms or legs", are used on the same semantic level, thus suggesting that if beggars constitute a problem, then miracles provide a solution.

In communities of antiquity under investigation, no evidence is found to support almsgiving as the basis of Christian social action. On the one hand, Christians advocated charity, which was a reflection of deep friendship and oneness; on the other, miracles in the Christian context served in part, to integrate those on the margins into the community (or church) by transforming their physical and psychological conditions. This makes a developmental reading, which then follows in chapter 5, the main chapter of the study, possible. The conclusions of chapter 5, which amount to a vision for Human Development, lead to the concluding chapter (Chapter 6) in which a way forward for development in the post-apartheid South Africa is suggested.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABQ *American Baptist Quarterly*  
AFER *African Ecclesial Review*  
AJT *Asia Journal of Theology*  
ASV *Authorised Standard Version*  
ATR *Anglican Theological Review*  
ARA *Annual Review of Anthropology*  
CE *Contextual Exegesis*  
BI *Biblical Interpretation*  
BT *The Bible Translator*  
BTB *Biblical Theology Bulletin*  
BTF *Bangalore Theological Forum*  
CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*  
CIAS *Canadian Journal of African Studies*  
CF *Ching Feng*  
CT *Contextual Theology*  
DBT *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*  
DTT *Dictionary of Theological Terms*  
DFT *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*  
DEM *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*  
DET *Dictionary of Ecumenical Theology*  
DNTT *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*  
EATWOT *Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians*  
ECLA *Ecumenical Council of Latin America*  
EFSA *Ecumenical Foundation of South Africa*  
EMQ *Ecumenical Mission Quarterly*  
EQ *Evangelical Quarterly*  
ER *Encyclopaedia of Religion*  
ERE *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*  
ERT *Evangelical Review of Theology*  
ET *Expository Times*  
ETL *Ephemerides Theologicae Louvanienses*  
FIB *Feminist Interpretations of the Bible*  
GEAR *Growth Employment And ~~Reconstruction~~ Redistribution*  
HD *Human Development*

HSAG *Health SA Gesondheid*  
 HSRC *Human Sciences Research Council*  
 HS *Hebrew Studies*  
 HTS *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*  
 ICT *Institute for Contextual Theology*  
 IDB *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*  
 IMF *International Monetary Fund*  
 ISBE *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*  
 JAAR *Journal of American Academy of Religion*  
 JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*  
 JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*  
 JFSR *Journal of Feminist Studies and Religion*  
 JNSL *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*  
 JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*  
 JTSA *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*  
 JRE *Journal of Religious Ethics*  
 JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*  
 JST *Journal of State & Theology*  
 JSNT *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*  
 JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*  
 KD *Kairos Document*  
 KJV *King James Version*  
 LQ *Lutheran Quarterly*  
 MAN *Medical Anthropology Newsletter*  
 MAQ *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*  
 NIDNTT *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*  
 NGO *Non-Governmental Organisation*  
 NRSV *New Revised Standard Version*  
 NTS *New Testament Studies*  
 PCD *People Centered Development*  
 PEH *Political Economic Health*  
 PEMA *Political Economic Medical Anthropology*  
 PMUQR *Pontifical Missionary Union Quarterly Review*  
 PRS *Perspectives in Religious Studies*  
 R&E *Review and Expositor*  
 RiL *Religion in Life*

R&T *Religion and Theology*  
RDP *Reconstruction and Development*  
R & Soc. *Religion & Society*  
RST *Religious Studies and Theology*  
RSR *Religious Studies Review*  
RSV *Revised Standard Version*  
RUCSD *Rhodes University Center for Social Development*  
SA *South Africa*  
SBL *Society of Biblical Literature*  
SBET *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*  
SJT *Scottish Journal of Theology*  
SNTS *Studium Novum Testaments Societas*  
SPCK *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*  
ST *Studia Theologica*  
SWJT *South Western Journal of Theology*  
TB *Tyndale Bulletin*  
TE *Theologia Evangelica*  
TER *The Ecumenical Review*  
TEFWCC *Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches*  
TDNT *Theological Wordbook of the New Testament*  
TJT *Toronto Journal of Theology*  
TWNT *Theological Wordbook of the New Testament*  
USA *United States of America*  
USQR *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*  
WCC *World Council of Churches*  
WTJ *The Westminster Theological Journal*  
W&W *Word and World*  
ZCC *Zion Christian Church*



## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

*Without participation there is no  
knowledge and therefore no power.  
(Sartorius 1975:64)*

### 1.1 TITLE AND PURPOSE

“Alms or legs?”, the main title of this study, reflects a search for a most effective Christian intervention strategy in situations of poverty and destitution, in post-apartheid South Africa. In its long history of social action, the Christian Church has not developed a developmental or transformative theory of social intervention, partly due to its adherence to a misguided form of the rabbinic theology of charity,<sup>1</sup> partly due to a reductionist and modernity view of development whereby development is only seen as economic growth and technological advancement. Viewed from the perspective of the “alternative theory of development”, a theory which focuses on developing human potential and structural transformation, current methods of Christian social intervention amount to “almsgiving” which leads to dependency at both micro- and macro- levels.<sup>2</sup> At a micro-level, there are intra-personal and community dependency; at a macro-level, there is international dependency. The “alternative theory” of development sees the micro-level as a potential for developing “steady legs” for destitute communities to stand on. In line with Fernando Cardoso (cf 1979), a well-known Latin American sociologist and proponent of the dependency theory, we believe that it is at the micro-level that the reasons for un(der)development can be explained. Equally, effective solutions can be found at that level.

Although this might reflect less than a radical view in that in most cases, the analyses of the root causes of underdevelopment go back to the macro- policies, the micro-

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<sup>1</sup>It will become clear in chapter 3 of this study, that charity is often confused with almsgiving which in turn is incorrectly thought to have foundations in the past history of Christianity.

<sup>2</sup>Lindberg (1981) has observed that the church’s response moved from individual ‘charity’ to ‘self-help’ and then back to individual charity.

context is always the best starting-point for “transformative development”.<sup>3</sup> There is a related point to this, namely, the nature of intervention, even at the micro-level: Should the intervention be geared towards “economic growth” (hence almsgiving) or should it be geared towards human empowerment? As Pope Paul VI states, development is not only about economic growth; it is, more importantly, about “drawing out” and releasing the human potential. In the papal words:

Man (sic) is only truly man in as 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* (italics mine). What we hold important is man, each man and each group of men, and we even include the whole of humanity (ex *Encyclical, Populorum Progressio*).

It would seem that unless the Church adopts such a “holistic” view of development, it will continue to fail to distinguish between almsgiving and development and no effective development will take place. Chepkwony (1991) reminds us of the futility of the exercise in the Kenyan context in the following words: “Yet it should be clearly stated that even with combined efforts of the church and the state in socio-economic development the economy remained weak and dualistic in nature”. Clearly, the Church has to carefully think out the nature of its partnership with a “welfare-state” if its goal is human development, and the economy cannot be fully developed unless people have been developed.

Given the above, the purpose of this study is to read the story of the crippled beggar at the temple gate (Acts 3:1-4:31) in the light of the aforementioned theory of development with the view to develop a biblical foundation and guidelines for a theory of human development in post-apartheid South Africa. The central argument of the study is that some biblical texts, *inter alia*, Acts 3:1-10, are capable of empowering individu-

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<sup>3</sup>This is intended to distinguish between the kind of development that leads to the improvement of people's lives and development that produces imitators in terms of culture, values and temperament (imperialism).

als and small groups when read contextually. This is in contrast to the reductionist tendency among researchers, to confine development to economic growth. As hinted at in the statement by Sartorius (1976), recent theories of development advocate an alternative approach which focuses on the release of the full human potential as the basis of development (cf Coetzee 1989; Korten 1990).

In line with this approach, this study will employ categories of a people centered development as rehabilitated to suit the purpose of the study. Thus, the study will: (i) focus on the concepts 'beggars' and 'miracles' in the context of antiquity and (ii) reflect on the text in the light of a people centered development (PCD), otherwise known as the "alternative theory" of development, informed by the concerns of the present South African context. The context of the study, which is explained below, justifies this bifocal approach.

## 1.2. THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The initial context of the study is the negative socio-economic reality of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, and the damage this has caused to human dignity. A specific manifestation of this damage to human dignity is the growth of the beggar class, mainly black people<sup>4</sup>, male and female, old and young. The present researcher's experiences are specific to two geographical areas, one peri-urban (Kei Road) and the other urban (Grahamstown). Something must be said about the background of these communities because our reading of the text is done in context rather than in a vacuum. Since there is more information available about Grahamstown, we prefer to focus on it. A brief profile follows below.

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<sup>4</sup>In the Gauteng Province, it is both black and white people who beg in the streets while in the Eastern Cape, it is predominantly black people who beg. The study of beggars which was commissioned by the City Council of Johannesburg in 1958 was specifically focused on white beggars. That appears to be the only study of beggars in South African cities. Were it not for the fact that economic conditions were not as bad as they are today for white people, it would be easy to explain the present phenomenon. There must be other explanations for begging, in addition to the economic factor.

Grahamstown is a small town in the Eastern Cape Province with a population of just a little over 130 000<sup>5</sup> people. It is one of the first towns to be established by the 1820 British Settlers at the beginning of the 19th century. The nearest big city to it is Port Elizabeth which is about 115 km to the South of the city. Grahamstown itself hosts two private schools, two "model C" schools, a number of public schools, churches, an army base, the Supreme Court of the Eastern Cape division, three hospitals and a university. The aforementioned places provide employment for a number of people. The municipality and justice system are other major employers. The rest of the population is either employed in local stores, at building contractors, as domestic workers, bask in the sun at home or they roam the streets, begging.

According to estimates by the Center for Social Development at Rhodes University, Grahamstown (June 1994), half the population of Grahamstown was unemployed at the time. Of the income earning group, about 60% were pensioners while others were either professionals or were employed as domestics or by the army or by local schools, etc. This meant that a large part of the population depended on welfare grants and that those who were employed would never rise above subsistence level.

It appears that the situation was aggravated recently, by the implementation of the macro-economic policy, GEAR, by the South African government.<sup>6</sup> Recent estimates by a researcher in the Economics Department at Rhodes University (Mather 1998) indicate 80% as the unemployment figure.<sup>7</sup> This is a 20% rise in just under four years.

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<sup>5</sup>This figure has been extracted by Mrs Anthea Garmen of the Department of Journalism at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, from the 1996 National Census . According to her, the Black population (Coloureds, Indians, "Africans"), account for 120 000 and the White population account for only 13 000. Incidentally, Black people depend largely on this small group for employment.

<sup>6</sup>The predecessor programme, the RDP, which was implemented in 1995 disappeared from public scene in 1997, inspite of Mandela's insistence that the programme was the result of wide consultation (RDP 1994: preface). This suggests that a focus on economic growth, given the present situation of the market economy may not be the best solution to the socio-economic problems created by apartheid in South Africa.

<sup>7</sup>According to Dr Mather, the researcher referred to, the traditional definition of the unemployed is that they are an able-bodied group between the ages of 16 and 60, who are not able to find work. However, his own criteria includes the disillusioned, the housewives, the drop-out students, the under-employed, etc. This inflates his figure to about 80% which he claims, is scientifically valid although he applies popular criteria (telephonic interview, 7 June 1999).

This is not an indication of some unwillingness to work. There are no employment opportunities. What would normally be viewed as a solution, namely, investment in the form of industry is not possible. According to a geographer and director of the Rhodes University CSD, Thelma Henderson (1994),<sup>8</sup> several reasons, ranging from water problems to railage, are often advanced against such a development. In addition to this, there is currently (1999) a debate about moving another big employer and economic booster, the Supreme Court of the Eastern Cape, from Grahamstown to Bisho (See Groccotts Mail 15 January 1999). This will cost the province at least R250 million rand and Grahamstown itself about 900 jobs.

Given the above state of affairs, one would expect an extremely high crime rate. However, by comparison with other centers with similar conditions, serious economic crimes such as car theft or hijacking are non-existent; petty crimes such as bag-snatching or housebreaking are also very low compared to other centers. This may be attributed to several factors, among them, the community-police collaboration and cultural and religious values. Although Grahamstown may be listed among urban areas, its social values, especially those of the African community, are relatively speaking, still traditional and 'conservative'. This helps to maintain a reasonable measure of acceptable social behaviour in terms of black-white relations. In addition to this, the majority of citizens, black, white, etc. are religious. Thus, instead of spontaneously turning to crime, most people depend on the mercy or charitableness of those who are well off. They beg in order to survive, not as a way of life.<sup>9</sup> Crime in most cases, becomes the "last resort".

While not intending to belabour the point made about the socio-economic conditions, mention must be made of a couple who visited the present researcher's home in 1994, as beggars. When they realised that this researcher had no food or clothes to give them,

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<sup>8</sup>Paper delivered at Spokane University, USA.

<sup>9</sup>Incidentally, it is difficult to determine the number of beggars in the streets since they are not usually confined to one place. Besides, some beg for a while and then abandon that for something else. Having failed to establish exact figures for Grahamstown, the present researcher approached the Welfare Department in Pretoria where the social workers explained problems involved in getting the number of beggars. They were similar to those of Grahamstown, namely, lack of stability, the problem of defining a beggar etc.

they offered to wash the car for whatever they could get. They went on to say that as little as R2 would suffice as long as they could get home with a loaf of bread for which they would have worked. They had left their children at home.

The point is that while they had an economic need, they were also aware that their dignity was very much at stake. It is indeed, a struggle to maintain one's dignity and to regain a sense of initiative in the face of limitations that have been placed on one by the socio-economic structures of the country. Such a struggle has made many poor people to see the church as their natural ally, if not a place of refuge, since they benefit both materially and spiritually from the church or church-related individuals and organisations.<sup>10</sup>

This experience of Grahamstown which is typical of many others in South Africa, led to a second context of the study, an academic pursuit: In what way can the church use such people's amenability to cultural and gospel values for sustainable development? Is there a message in the Christian Bible in support of the view that human development can guarantee a sustainable vision of development?

Notwithstanding the above questions, there has not been a lack of preaching to the poor and beggars by the Church. However, much of it has been alienating in the sense that some scriptural passages have been interpreted in a manner that made the poor and beggars feel that their condition is caused by their failure to heed such passages.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, those Christians who have taken passages about almsgiving literally have testified from their experience that material intervention has not helped the beggar to

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<sup>10</sup>The church has always initiated and participated in welfare work-whether in the form of hand-outs or 'self-help' schemes. Notable among these in South Africa are the Dutch Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church. However, both material relief and the so-called self-help schemes constitute the initial stages of the theory of development (Korten 1990:115-120). They are seen to be inadequate for effective development.

<sup>11</sup>The problem here lies in the way scripture has been interpreted and used in this country: some fundamentalists have used it in an oppressive rather than a liberatory manner. Consequently, people do not know the difference between what constitutes guilt and what has to be exorcised from the society, eg.unjust economic and social structures. This is what others would refer to as "unethical" or "irresponsible" interpretation of scripture (see Stibbe 1995 and Craffert 1998).

transform his/her situation; instead, it has in most cases, produced and aggravated the dependency syndrome.<sup>12</sup>

As an academic, the present researcher saw in this an urgent need to develop a biblical foundation, (which is presently lacking), for a theory of human development (which is very vital). The lacuna in this area had become vivid during the present researcher's preparation for a Bible Study on the same topic at Kei Road in 1994. The only available documents were an article by Kritzinger (1991) and Mutambara's (1992) paper. The former article was void of any biblical texts while the latter, delivered during the EFSA conference, and based on Genesis 1 and 2, had no sociological background and it showed a lack of familiarity with current theories of development. This researcher later discovered via Sabinet, that there were no theses written on the topic of development from a biblical perspective. Information through internet was equally disappointing: A Masters thesis was about to be submitted at Stellenbosch University, in the Department of Development Administration (Liebenberg 1995). However, it contained a chapter on church and development, based on Matthew 25 (Liebenberg 1997). Other studies under way included research by Ignatius Swart, also from Stellenbosch University. The latter study was located in the field of Systematic Theology. A different study which is also in progress, focuses on women, and has been undertaken by Beverly Haddad who is based at the School of Theology at Natal University. An earlier personal conversation with Mary-Lee James (1994), had revealed that although her own "church-related" study was based on Korten's people centered model, it was intended for Anthropology. Therefore, it had no biblical focus. These discoveries led to the start of the present research on the role of a biblical text in the context of human development.

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<sup>12</sup>The danger of making almsgiving a norm in development is, as shown by Peter Sartorius (1975:65) in his study on "Churches in Rural Development," that it decreases the chances of people seeing any urgent need to continue working. They have been receiving aid; they will continue to expect that aid. The researcher of the present study constantly struggles to maintain a balance between this and the parameters of Christian social responsibility in his dealings with the "beggars." Infact, the major problem is that there are no parameters at all.

### 1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY: IS A BIBLICAL APPROACH ESSENTIAL?

Owing to the uncommon nature of the present study in Lucan studies thus far, some justification of it is necessary. Besides, given the number of attempts at development in SA presently, what difference will a biblical approach make? We provide three basic reasons, in addition to the above sketched background:

#### 1.3.1 Resourcing the church

The study would establish a biblical base for the legitimate role of the church in development. By church in this context is meant both missionary and African indigenous and "independent" churches in South Africa. Recent publications on the subject of development (eg WCC publications) show that the issue of development is a world-wide ecumenical concern. However, it is our opinion that the church can only have a legitimate and significant role when focused in a local and particular context. The broad context of the present study is the SA context seen through the eyes of a particular area, Grahamstown.<sup>13</sup>

A spin-off of this study might be that it will overcome some of the failures of the past pertaining to the church's practice of development. In its attempts at development the church, like other NGOs<sup>14</sup> in South Africa, has not been effective, while the recipients have remained passive and dependent. This is partly due to a narrow understanding of development, which emphasises the material at the expense of the spiritual and mental needs, and partly due to the lack of a biblical reflection on the empowering moment of the text. Any exegetical attempt that ignores this condemns the text to irrelevancy.

Life experience in South Africa presently is characterised by a low self-esteem among most African people. This is part of the legacy of three centuries of repression, four decades of which were deliberately aimed at making Africans *personae non gratae*

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<sup>13</sup>Recent micro-theories of development have shown that explanations for "underdevelopment" and "dependency" are to be sought primarily in the local situation (cf Cardoso in Graaf 1989). It is therefore imperative that the local situation takes priority over any other "foreign" context.

<sup>14</sup>James (1992), using Korten's categories, has satisfactorily argued that the church is an NGO. I concur.



under apartheid rule.<sup>15</sup> The effect of this is portrayed by Biko (1988: 42) in his analysis of the black person in the 1970s. Following his discussion of the “spiritual poverty” of black people at the time he writes:

The logic behind white domination is to prepare the black man for the subservient role in this century. Not so long ago this used to be freely said in parliament, even about the educational system of the black people...*To a large extent, the evil doers have succeeded in producing at the output end of their machine a kind of black man who is man only in form. This is the extent to which the process of dehumanisation has advanced.* (my italics)

There have been some structural changes since Biko wrote the paper. However, the need to restore self-worth in most African people, to enable them to participate fully in the programme of reconstruction and development is very apparent.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the loss of status among white people, and the accompanying loss of dignity introduces a “class” dimension to the problem. While this needs to be kept at the backs of our minds in this study, our focus is more on the historically disadvantaged group which has the potential to transform for better. To this end a programme that will focus attention on human development while not losing sight of the need for economic growth is imperative. Such a programme might function without difficulty elsewhere in the world, but in the SA context,<sup>17</sup> a biblical justification will make it more effective for, *inter alia*, the reasons provided in the following section. However, the role of the

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<sup>15</sup>There may be other factors, such as the teaching of missionaries about the place assigned to dark-skinned people by God, namely, the inferior position to that of light-skinned persons; or personal factors which have led to personal degeneration. In most cases, it is the socio-economic structures that are responsible for the condition which is described by some as “underdevelopment”.

<sup>16</sup>Reconstruction and development should continue despite the closure of the programme by the South African government in 1997. In the light of the remark about the failure of successive Third World governments in development, it is the feeling of this researcher that the programme will succeed if there is maximum participation by all citizens, through NGOs, the church being one of them.

<sup>17</sup>Here we mean a Christian context without distinguishing between Protestants, Catholics or other Christian strands. Such distinctions are misleading for in South Africa, the Bible has an influential role on the average Christian, regardless of his/her doctrinal confession.

Bible in transforming individuals' lives is already well known. But the Bible can also function in a broader way than that.

### 1.3.2 The centrality of the Bible

In 1980, Christians accounted for 73% of the South African population (cf Nolan 1988). In 1991, according to census results, 95% of the population indicated their religion as Christianity (Dreyer, Pieterse & Van der Ven 1999:197). However, by 1995, the figure had, according to ICT (Kairos II), dropped to 85%. In spite of the latter, such growth can be termed phenomenal. Common among these people is the Bible, the only ecumenically shared document of the church. In times of vulnerability, as the 1991 figures show, there is increased inclination towards the Bible,<sup>18</sup> to draw inspiration. Often, it is the marginalised and poor people who make a recourse to the Bible in the absence of other forms of material and spiritual support.<sup>19</sup> This fact is well illustrated in the two studies that emerged from the Amaoti community, north of Durban, in the first half of this decade.

In the two studies, Martin Mandew (1993) and Graham Philpot (1993) respectively show how the Bible has inspired and strengthened a community under a seige<sup>20</sup> from all fronts, economically, politically and socially. Over a period of time, the two research-

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<sup>18</sup>See for example, the *Kairos Document* (1985;1986). The State of Emergency has forced the victims to turn to the Bible for solutions. This is equally true of the development of Black Theology in the USA and SA and Liberation Theology in Latin America.

<sup>19</sup>cf The *Anawim* which came into being towards the end of the Old Testament period and continued even during the time of Jesus and from which according to Richard Horsley (1989), Luke might have extracted the birth narratives in the gospel. They are said to have turned their suffering into a spiritual one, believing that only God would save them.

<sup>20</sup>The term is used by Mandew (1993:59-61) in a chapter in which he sketches a profile of the Amaoti community. The area is also referred to as a peri-urban area.

ers have conducted separate studies of the community, using a participatory approach and both using Bible Studies as vehicles of their research. Three notable outcomes which the present researcher<sup>21</sup> can also confirm are: (i) the sudden awakening of the community after the Bible Studies started, as if they had been waiting for a catalyst. This was partly due to a confidence that was instilled through Bible Studies and partly due to conscientisation during Bible Study sessions, as opposed to ignorance which had previously “imprisoned” them (ii) the initiative taken by the community in improving the quality of life in the area. Self-help projects such as gardening and building were initiated by the community itself. There were educational sessions such as Bible Studies for the disabled and ‘general’ Bible Studies and literacy classes for all. (iii) the gradual emergence of a solid and moral leadership as demonstrated in responsible decisions taken, for example, in avoiding the violence that had engulfed the adjacent Bambayi area at the time. Owing to this, leaders of civics and trade unions begged Bible Study leaders not to stop Bible Studies as the Bible was seen to be making a qualitative and ‘measurable’ contribution in the improvement of the quality of life.

In addition to the Amaoti example, one could mention the example of the Zion Christian Church of which the present author also has first hand experience. In this case, the place of the Bible is foundational rather than just central. In other words, the Bible is not a reference point but a departure-point. The law governing the lives of members and church polity is grounded in the Bible, especially the Old Testament. This includes purity laws as they are found in the Pentateuch (eg, Leviticus 11-15). Prophecy and miracles, which are central to the life of the church are also based on the Bible. Admittedly, much of this appeals to the members who are predominantly African because there is much overlap between African cultures and the Jewish/Hebrew culture as found in the Bible. The ZCC is a predominantly African Church with a claim to over two million souls.

What would continue to attract so many people to the church if its Old Testament based polity might be outdated? The strongest point, according to our observations is the strict and close observation of some principles which have been extracted from the Bible. In other words, there is strict discipline. For example, the idea of *shalom* is an Old Testament concept. However, it is also encouraged in the New Testament. In the ZCC, there is a conscious attempt to live it out: there are sharing of virtually every-

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<sup>21</sup>The present researcher worked with the community of Amaoti alongside Mandew and Philpott.

thing among the members, solidarity in a number of ways and peace, which is also fundamental in both vertical and horizontal relationships. As the current leader of the church, Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane (1993) once put it, the ZCC is the only church in SA that takes care of the 'spiritual, material and physical aspects of its members'. Indeed, the whole idea of a *shalom* is wholeness. Hence a comprehensive approach to human needs.

These two examples<sup>22</sup> should suffice to demonstrate the actual and potential role of the Bible in human development. Any theory of development that is based on what are perceived to be biblical principles will increase the probability of effectiveness among the poor and destitute.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, these examples show what small communities (which the church is capable of creating) can do. The church for which the Bible is foundational is perceived as an institution that has much credibility among the "underdeveloped" people. As Wilson (1989:145) correctly observes: "Christianity is not only a supernatural, spiritual force it is a social force for change. By its very nature, vital Christianity is an active social agent". With a correct hermeneutic key, the church will serve its role as a vehicle of development. To this end those who are concerned with development and theology have to realise that:

...the churches, because of their close contact with the people, can have a manifold influence on development and on the *efforts to create among the people the will for development and an awareness of the possibilities for achieving it* (italics mine), and can follow this up with advice and practical help in tackling specific ....problems (Sartorius 1975:10).

Clearly, a biblical focus in addition to anthropological observations in respect of development in SA has both strategic and ideological advantages. The Bible is the document of the church whose contents are accessible to many, including the illiterate (see West 1993). For many, it serves virtually as a blueprint for social behaviour. The church will

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<sup>22</sup>There are a number of others. Needless to say, in the countries of the South, most liberation struggles are undergirded and motivated by biblical reflections and theology.

<sup>23</sup>Surprisingly, a leading SA research council, the HSRC has omitted a theological investigation in its long list of the needs for development research in SA (cf Beukes 1989). This might be interpreted as an underestimation of the influence of the Bible/ church in social transformation.

be an authentic home for development if it encounters the "underdeveloped" at this level with the view to facilitate their transformation. We pursue this in spite of Illich's counsel:

The church must recognise that she is growing powerless to orient or produce development. The less efficient she is as a power, the more effective she can be as a celebrant of the mystery...The Church will *have to renounce progressively the 'power to do good' she now has, and see this power pass into the hands of a new type of institution* (in Dickinson 1967).<sup>24</sup>

It is assumed that by "a new type of institution" Illich means a "transformed church" with a different approach to development; otherwise there is no merit in his advice. The church cannot relinquish its role in development to the government and other NGOs.<sup>25</sup> It, among other community organisations, has a vital role to play in development. A shift in biblical interpretation towards a contextual paradigm in South Africa, will not only help the church to proclaim a relevant message in the context of development; it will facilitate the creation of a "symbolic universe" (cf Berger & Luckmann 1976), a reality which transcends the present, a utopia (vision) towards which the people will strive. As Croatto (1983:143) would argue, the text is language and language, according to Berger & Luckmann (1976:52) is an ingredient in the creation of reality-it is a vast repository of accumulations of meaning.

Despite the preceding discussion, the question could still be: why the Bible? Could development not take place without the Bible? Christians believe that a religious perspective has to be prominent in any dealings with human beings, especially in attempts to improve the quality of human life. This view is not only based on the belief that human beings are created in God's "image and likeness" (Genesis 1:26) but also on the sociological view, that religion creates a symbolic universe that legitimates earthly

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<sup>24</sup>Illich's warning was valid and necessary at some point. However, the church is increasingly becoming aware that development is not only about charity or hand-outs. It only needs to find a way of turning this into its *modus operandi* then it will play a major role in precisely this situation.

<sup>25</sup>Using Korten's model, James (1992) has argued that the church is also an NGO. I accept this view on the grounds that the church that is true to its mission does voluntary work and that it does not serve a particular ideology, nor does it depend on government funding in return.

structures, thereby giving people the will to live. Social programmes without a theological dimension become nothing more than humanitarian acts, leaving the impression that human beings have, as Machiavelli (1469-1527) suggested, "come of age". A "committed reading" of the Bible becomes a point of convergence for religion and social action, (in this case, development).

### 1.3.3 A new perspective on Luke-Acts

Owing to the absence of comprehensive New Testament studies on development, a study of this nature represents a leap into new grounds. Besides, the study is based on Acts 3:1-10, a passage which has only been investigated in detail by Hamm (1975). However, Hamm focused on the literary aspect.

While it is true that this contextual approach to Acts 3:1-10, is unique in respect of Lucan studies, it should be remembered that its uniqueness stems from the fact that it is based on the South<sup>26</sup> perspective of development, "alternative development". Thus, while it is in a sense a "sociological" study, it would be incorrect to view it in the light of social scientific studies such as those of Elliott, Neyrey, etc. which are based on traditional social scientific theories. To pretend to be doing the same thing would be unjust on the scholars who operate with such theories and the present study would make no difference in our context. This study however, remains faithful to the new trend in biblical interpretation that is emerging in South Africa and in the circles of the Society for Biblical Literature, namely, a concern for social and economic issues in the Bible and the relevance of these for today.<sup>27</sup> Thus the political-confrontational readings that have proliferated Lucan studies in the past two decades as an extreme reaction to Conzelmann's functional approach to church-state relations are being relegated to the back-

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<sup>26</sup>South refers to countries which are otherwise known as Third World countries. The latter term is not fully accepted by countries in the South, but we accept it for the purposes of this study.

<sup>27</sup>See, for example, Semeia 1986 (35); Johnson's (1981; 1992) work on possessions in Luke-Acts; Molnes' (1988) work on the economics of Luke-Acts.

ground.<sup>28</sup> In South Africa, we predict that a developmental approach will become a new paradigm of biblical interpretation, spanning no less than two decades.

Owing to the newness of this perspective, it has been difficult to find literature. West has, since the publication of his first book (1991), been developing or popularising some theories on the contextual approach, Nolan has focused on the implementation of the contextual method and others, such as Lategan, have raised useful questions in relation to contextualisation in respect of the Bible. Croatto (1983, 1987) has approached the issue from a linguistic perspective which is very useful for the purposes of this study. Thus, this study basically generates ideas from bits and pieces gleaned from various sources rather than focus on any particular author in detail.

The following section will *briefly* sketch *some* of the major turning-points in the history of the study of Acts, the aim being to show that there has been much dynamism in the approaches that have proliferated recently. The present study is part of that dynamism. Yet it is significant to note that despite this, no attention has been given to the area of development in the present interpretations of the Acts of the Apostles.

#### **1.4 A HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF ACTS**

There are several summaries of the history of the criticism of Acts (eg. Gasque 1975). An analysis of these reveals two major historical periods, namely, the 'pre-critical' period (before the eighteenth century) which is not rigorously critical,<sup>29</sup> and the period which is characterised by the rise of critical scholarship. Within these eras are found different scholarly trends. Some of these, in particular those of the latter period, are summarised below.

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<sup>28</sup>The impact of globalisation has produced different kinds of problems and questions. There is now much activity around globalisation by both theologians and non-theologians, focusing on the economic disadvantages for the developing countries. Hence some recent "standard" works on socio-political issues in Luke-Acts, for example, those of Conzelmann (1960) and Cassidy (1978 2nd ed. 1986), will not be given a prominent place in this study.

<sup>29</sup>By this statement is acknowledged as a fact, that there was in a way an attempt to raise some historical questions, eg. the question of the authorship of some NT books (cf Kummel 1973:13) and Calvin's attempt to locate geographical and historical places of the composition of Acts.

#### 1.4.1 The 'pre-critical' era

In his survey of New Testament interpretation, Kümmel (1973:13) writes:

It is impossible to speak of a scientific view of the New Testament until the New Testament became the object of investigation as an independent body of literature with historical interest, as a collection of writings that could be considered apart from the Old Testament and without dogmatic or credal bias. Since such a view began to prevail only during the course of the eighteenth century, earlier discussion of the New Testament can only be referred to as *the prehistory of New Testament scholarship*.

The interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, prior to the eighteenth century should be seen within this historical framework. Gasque (1975:7), has identified no less than 19 books or fragments from the church's history of the interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, all of which lack a "scientific view" of the work. This covers a number of centuries, from the second to the eighteenth centuries. The period is not only characterised by the fact that scholars take different directions but also by fluidity in that there are no formal and objective principles of interpretation.

Notwithstanding this, there is a common but by no means uniform tendency to interpret Acts as the history of the early church, or in Calvin's understanding, "sacred history." (Gasque 1975:11 cf Kümmel 1973:13). This is the traditional view. According to this view, "the purpose of this history is to recount the achievements of the apostles, the history of the early church, as the gospels had recounted the words and works of Christ, and its trustworthiness was beyond question" (Beginnings 1807:363).

In the period leading up to, and including the Reformation however, there was an attempt at understanding the historical background of Palestine during the first century. This is clear in the work of both Calvin and earlier exegetes where there is an attempt to understand the geography and history of the time. However, this is not the same as historical criticism as it is practised today, where the text and its background are subjected to scrutiny. We must then conclude together with Kümmel that there is no scientific or critical approach to the study of Acts before the eighteenth century.



#### 1.4.2 The period of historical criticism

While Calvin and others of his time represent a period of 'pre-critical' scholarship there are others from the nineteenth century onwards, who represent rigorous scholarship for their times. It appears by historical accounts, that the pioneers were at the Tübingen School of Theology. However, the initiator of critical historical questions had been JD Michaelis (1777) who saw both an apologetic and a missionary purpose in Acts. He had also raised questions about the authenticity of Mark, Luke and Acts (see Introduction vol.1)

This period reflects a change in the questions asked previously. Concern is no longer about whether Acts is an historical account of what happened in the church but about what the author's underlying purpose is. For example, Eckermann (1807) observed that Luke purposely omitted much information, the intention being "to select from the events known to him only such as showed most clearly in the miraculous co-operation of God in the establishment of his kingdom on earth" (Beginnings 1807:365). At this stage already, the author's theological intention was becoming a central exegetical issue.

This focus has in turn led to the investigation of sections of the document with the view to determine the author's motif(s). Baur who first applied the earlier form of this method on Romans, called it "*Tendenzkritik*." Through it he was able to distinguish between what he regarded as early writings of Paul and the later ones. The criteria he used was that books which reflected either Pauline or Jewish theology were early, while those that reflected the synthesis of these were late (cf Ladd 1967:43). Baur was at Tübingen at the time.

The idea of a specific theological purpose rather than a historical record had also been suggested by HC Heumann who argued that Acts was written "as an apology for the Christian religion for the benefit of the magistrate by the name of Theophilus, who was a Roman or Italian" (Gasque 1975:21-22). This was in line with Michaelis' assertion that Luke did not intend to narrate the history of the church during the first thirty years after the "ascension" of Jesus, this accounting for his selective use of the material he had received.

A turning point was brought about by Schneckenburger in the 15th century. Like his colleagues in the discipline, Schneckenburger entered the debate with a criticism of the

view that Acts was an accurate historical account. But unlike them, he avered that the idea had resulted from an incorrect interpretation of Luke 1:1-4. He also questioned the view that the third gospel and Acts had the same purpose although he admitted that the author was the same. Following his analysis of the text, he concluded that the author (in his view, Luke) was a Paulinist who was an eyewitness to a large part of the events of the last part of the book. Although his conclusions may not have been acceptable he did however, raise critical issues of an historical nature. These were the early stages of Form Criticism which later gave rise to Redaction Criticism.

Given all the contributions of the Tübingen Schule, which were undoubtedly significant, they raised critical issues in the book of Acts although the advocates themselves were unable to find laudable answers.

A scholar who advanced Redaction Criticism in this century is Martin Dibelius. His rationale for the method is set out most vividly in the introduction to his *A Fresh Approach To The New Testament And Early Christian Literature* which he first published in 1936 and was reprinted in 1979. He was the first to apply the method to the study of Acts (Gasque 1975:200 cf Dibelius 1979:15-24). But he initially started with what he called the "Stilkritik" or "style-criticism" (cf 1956). He focused as his starting-point, on Paul's missionary travels in Acts 13:1-14:28. Going beyond the central section, he went on to identify the forms of a number of small units of tradition which were handed down independently and which the author has inserted into his narrative at some places. In addition he proceeded with the argument that Acts is a piece of literary work and that it should be understood in the same manner that ancient literature was understood. Thus, Dibelius gave attention to the history of the units that were transmitted orally in the early church (cf McKnight 1989:149).

It was the work of Dibelius, although initially only essays on Acts, that laid the ground for Haenchen's complete study of the book as a whole (1971) and for today's literary criticism of Acts.<sup>30</sup> Haenchen took the insights of Form critics further, relying a lot on the insights of Dibelius. His importance for the study of Acts is largely due to the fact that unlike Dibelius, he studied the entire book. However, he differed from Dibelius in that he argued that the author of Acts, for theological and literary purposes, rewrote his source in such a thoroughgoing manner that it is impossible to determine the exact

<sup>30</sup>McKnight (1989:153) however, credits Bornkamm for the early beginnings of Redaction Criticism.

but not on Acts, on Mk. etc.

extent of the itinerary document (cf Gasque 1975:238-9). Thus he was questioning the existence of an itinerary document, as suggested by Dibelius.

The method which Haenchen applied is known as <sup>Composition</sup> Redaction Criticism. The name for it was coined by Marxsen (1956) in his study of Mark's gospel. In this way he distinguished it from Form Criticism and went on to explain the different principles at work in the two methods.

By using the method, Haenchen was able to distinguish the author's creativity from the tradition which he received and the rationale for that. Moreover, the tradition which he received did not go back to the earliest days of Christianity; rather, they reflected the legendary accretions and theological developments of the Church in the author's own time (cf Gasque 1975:237). He argued that the author of Acts is too far removed, both theologically and historically, from the apostolic age to understand the theology of the *Urapostel* or of Paul. Yet, the author had creatively connected the material together. Thus, Haenchen consciously focused on the final form of the written text.

Recall  
Haenchen  
himself.  
Acts  
Comm.

In subsequent years, Redaction Criticism has been applied in different and better forms. As Moessner (1989:4-6) correctly observes, "there is no uniformity about the manner in which Redaction Criticism is applied. From the beginning, Lucan scholars challenged Conzelmann's use of, and results of the method in his study of Luke's gospel. But, the longer the debate, the more refined the method became".

It is therefore not surprising that in recent years the application of Redaction Criticism has been combined with literary and linguistic issues so that the literary context for example, plays an important role as the "interpretational" context (see for example, the work of O' Toole on Acts, 1978-present; Neyrey 1984; Horsley 1986). In other words, the text is now finally being recognised as a literary piece of work, containing meaning in itself.

Esler (1987) has used the tool (Redaction Criticism) in conjunction with a sociological model of "legitimation" and he preferred to call it 'socio-redaction criticism'. In his work, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, he analyses Luke's manner of dealing with social problems in his multi-cultured congregation and reads Acts in the light of Berger and Luckmann's model of "legitimation" to second and third generations of a movement. This, he argued, is what Luke intended to do with Acts.

The point of convergence of these different ways of applying Redaction Criticism is the attempt to establish the author's theological intention-whether from the literary angle or from a sociological-historical perspective.

Literary Criticism on the other hand, provided a framework for the analysis of the Graeco-Roman history. Here, as may be seen for example, in the work of Tannehill (1990, cf Brodie 1984:17f), Acts is read as a story, against the historical background 'for which the story was intended', and in the light of what is reflected in the story itself. In his reading, Tannehill sees Acts as a continuation of the narrative that began in the gospel, with a single theme running through the two volumes (see 1990:6-7). However, although Greco-Roman historical sources are available in these days, Tannehill seems to have ignored the hard socio-economic issues, a tendency prevalent among those who use the method to escape from the socio-historical questions of the text (eg. Kingsbury (1986); Culpepper (1983)).

Some use the literature of the Greco-Roman time as the *topos* in their interpretation of Acts (see for example, Holgate, 1994). However, literary studies of Acts are almost non-existent although Beardslee (1989:184) has predicted that the field of literary criticism and historical study should be expected "to be an active one in the near future". This is largely due to the fact that this method has only recently taken its place on the stage of New Testament criticism. The return to the Greco-Roman history approach in recent years, for example, the works of LT Johnson, H Moxnes, A Malherbe, J Pilch, B Malina, W Meeks and others could be pointing towards the activity referred to by Beardslee.

This survey of approaches to the Acts of the Apostles is not only germane to a thesis that explores a new and more relevant focus in Lucan studies; it also shows the work already done in the field, thereby legitimating the present research as the logical development of such work. As it has become clear, different scholars have exercised their freedom and creativity in working with the text. As Tannehill (1990:1) has correctly observed, Acts can be useful in a number of ways in the church, particularly to those "who are united by a mission of whatever kind". And it appears that the key to this is what he calls "methodological pluralism" (Tannehill 1990:4). This lays a foundation for the creative interpretation that follows in this study. In other words, although the study is methodologically different, it is aimed at advancing the work that has been started, without undermining it or radically 'breaking away' from the tradition.

## 1.5 METHOD

In his 1954 address as president of the SBL Cadbury urged Biblical scholars not to "divorce their work from the social context". This is a methodological issue. The text cannot make sense in any context unless an appropriate interpretative method has been applied on it.

In two lines, at the beginning of this chapter, Sartorius (1975:64) has also alluded to the importance of method in facilitating empowerment: People will have "no power unless they have knowledge, and no knowledge unless they participate". In pursuit of a reading<sup>31</sup> in the context of human development, this study attempts as far as possible to remain methodologically sensitive to the need to empower its recipients in the context. The developmental theory is about this. Such sensitivity, better still commitment (cf Polanyi 1958), will further enhance the value of the Bible in the context.

In line with this the present study presupposes those hermeneutical insights which had been developed within contextual theologies that stress the need for Biblical Studies to effectively transform specific situations. After all, no exegete approaches the text "objectively".<sup>32</sup> The author of a thesis reads the text with the restrictions and influences of his/her situation. The SA situation is decisive in the present thesis.<sup>33</sup>

Not only does the experience of this researcher determine the manner of reading the text, but the questions posed to the text emanate in the life situation of a poor community. In this thesis the reflection on the text follows after an interaction between this

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<sup>31</sup>The term "reading" is used as a distinguishing term between those who believe that they can "lead meaning out" of the text (exegete) and those who believe that the text's meaning is dependent upon the interpreting community (reader-response).

<sup>32</sup>This is where we part ways with what Martin (1987) calls 'classical historical-criticism'.

<sup>33</sup>Incidentally, readings by African scholars have not been included, not only because of a lack of contributions by Africans in the area of our study but also because much of what this research encountered in African scholarship differs very little, if at all, from writings by Euro-western scholars. It would therefore, serve no significant purpose to attempt to make a case for African readings in this study.

researcher as part of a *particular* community, and the text. The result is a theology that is based on an interface between life experience and a reflection on the text.

The main question that is posed to the text is: What role(s) can the story of the crippled beggar at the temple entrance play in the context of human development? The subsidiary questions are: What can we glean from the background of antiquity that will enable us to maintain a measure of respect for the text as such?<sup>34</sup> What implications does our reading of the text have for human development in the post-apartheid South Africa.?

These questions arise out of both academic and social concerns of this study. In pursuit of these, the study proceeds in the manner described below:

### 1.5.1 Exegetical methods

A combination of several exegetical methods has been used in the study. The dominant method is narrative criticism. This method is used here, albeit with some changes such as the focus on a particular episode rather than on the entire narrative.

Secondly, the sociological model of a People-Centered Development (PCD), espoused by David Korten (cf 1990), has been used in conjunction with the contextual method, (incorporating current exegetical methods), to reflect on Acts 3-4 with the view to construct a biblical foundation for human development. Its use is however not absolute although it is based on empirical data. The text is a product of a first century community whose dynamics were naturally different from those of today. It responded to questions that were most probably different from those of the twentieth century contexts although in some cases, some similarities can be discerned.

The PCD model is used in the context of a contextual reading which is undergirded by an African philosophy of life rather than a Marxist or other Euro-Western philosophy (cf Chapter 2 below). Justification for this is that it is in line with the theory of development, namely, "alternative development", that is followed in this study. The goal of development, namely, to facilitate a process through which people live their full human

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<sup>34</sup>Contextual exegetes are accused of not respecting the textuality of the text (cf Craffert 1998; Lategan 1995).

potential and are thus in control of their destiny, cannot begin from outside of oneself and of one's context. Hence the importance of an African starting-point.

### 1.5.2 Structure

Given the above concerns and aims of the study, it proceeds in the following chapter, with a discussion of the contextual exegetical paradigm and the introduction of the "People-Centered Development" model. This at the same time, helps the reader to place the rest of the study in perspective.

Chapter 3 follows with a discussion of beggars in the cities of the provinces of the empire during the 'classical period' (150BCE-150CE).<sup>35</sup> The aim of this chapter is to determine the nature and extent of the problem. This will shed light on the understanding of the story of the crippled beggar the exegesis of which follows in chapter 5, thus facilitating a contextual exegesis.

A discussion of the social function of healing miracle stories follows in chapter 4. Here, the aim is to sketch an outline of "authenticating", "transforming" and "empowering" functions of miracles. Thus, further light would have been shed on the story of the beggar (Acts 3:1-10). Since begging appears to be a problem in the story and the miracle a reversal of the problem, chapters 3 and 4 are not only necessary, they are of vital importance as background to chapter 5.

With such interpretational foundation laid, a reading of Acts 3-4 follows in chapter 5. The aim as repeatedly stated above, is to construct a contextual meaning of the text, with some help from the background of antiquity. This is intended to provide a biblical foundation for the church's participation in the programme of development and in the struggle to combat increasing poverty. This discussion, which lays a foundation for the application of the exegesis, is concluded in chapter 6 which also draws together all the conclusions of previous chapters and makes some practical suggestions. We proceed below with the second chapter.

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<sup>35</sup>The description of the said period as classical is debatable. However, we concur with those who designate this period as such. While the demarcated years are our focal area, the investigation will swing backwards and forwards like a pendulum, due to the scarcity of useful information for our purposes about the said period.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL (EXEGETICAL) PARADIGM: THE CASE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

When confronted with contextual issues, such as the issue of human development, which does not stand out as an “obvious” concern of the writers of biblical texts, the interpreter of the text soon becomes aware of the limitations of the historical-critical methods which were intended as an improvement on the pre-critical historical approach. The questions they ask are often not of immediate relevance to a contextual reader. This point has already been made by several scholars although very few have attempted an alternative.

It is therefore, the primary purpose of this chapter to draw an outline of the theory of Contextual Exegesis which some have seen as an alternative. This is necessary for two reasons: First, as stated above, historical-critical methods which we discussed in the previous chapter are inadequate for our purpose, namely, a contextual reading of Acts 3:1-10. Secondly, there is a lack of clarity about the theory of CE, even in the writings of contextual exegetes in South Africa. Operating in a theoretical void or uncertainty increases the chances of susceptibility to counter-productive influences. In this regard, the Bangkok Conference made an apt observation at the beginning of the present decade: “Churches of the Two Thirds World (*sic*) are in danger of bondage to alien categories. These do not permit them to meet adequately the problems and challenges of proclaiming Christ in our contexts” (Costas 1990:54). A year earlier, Mosala (1989) had published a study whose chief concern was to find appropriate “categories” for the South African context of the liberation struggle (cf 1989:3-4). This highlights the need for a method that is located within a contextual framework.

Pursuant to the above purpose, the chapter builds on the works of West (1991) and Croatto (1983). West has used Croatto extensively in his analysis of some readings in the SA context of struggle. A major strength in both works is the serious light in which the text is regarded. This is in line with Maluleke’s (1996:14) advice in his discussion of the Bible as a problem in Black and African theologies, “...the way out of Biblical entrapment is not to take flight but to confront, not only the Bible, but all other sources



and interlocutors of theological discourse precisely at (the) hermeneutical level".<sup>36</sup> The present chapter seeks to do that: to advocate an approach that acknowledges the nature of a religious text as a dynamic entity whose language is intended to be symbolic rather than "steno" (cf Wheelright in Herzog 1983:111), thus making the text vulnerable to the concerns of every new context in which it lends (cf Gadamer 1975).<sup>37</sup> In the words of another exegete, "it is the content of the Bible not the exegetical method itself, that makes exegesis a theological discipline" (Stenger 1993:1). Our attempt to make the text relevant for our own context should therefore not affect the "sacredness" of the text.

A sound theoretical base for the contextual approach will also allay doubts about the "scientific" value of contextualisation (cf Kuhn 1970 in Pillay 1990:116). However, this does not mean a complete replacement of the historical-critical approach. As it will become clear in our discussion below, interpretive methods tend to complement each other. In their dialogue with each other, some elements of the respective methods get eliminated while others are taken further.

A study of this nature would pose less problems in a systematic theology department where the contextual method has found wide acceptance. In fact, Contextual Theology seems to have become integral to systematics in recent years.<sup>38</sup> However, lack of emphasis on the text by contextual theologians complicates the task of the present

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<sup>36</sup>Maluleke based his argument on the premise that the Bible is a problematic document. His statement addresses a problem that Banana (1993) raised in a different manner, namely, a frustration with what appears to be the irrelevance of the Bible in the African context. However, unlike Banana, Maluleke does not suggest a "ditching" of the Christian Bible in favour of writing an African one; instead, he urges Black Theologians to confront the Bible. The problem as Punt (1998:273 cf note 31, p.295) surmises, is not with the Bible but with the interpreter. In this case, no one but African interpreters themselves can deal with this because they have their unique questions (cf Barnhart 1980:507-508).

<sup>37</sup>Gadamer (1975:351) posits that the text is a living tradition with a new meaning for the interpreters of each generation. Thus, he pursues his attack on theologies built on reconstructed histories. This is a major consideration in our preference of a well argued contextual reading as opposed to the historical-critical approach.

<sup>38</sup>cf Kaufmann's doctoral thesis on contextual theology which was submitted to the Pontifical University in Rome, as recently as 1997.

author. Not only does the present author have to provide a clear outline of the method, a sound justification of it also has to be provided. With very few South African biblical scholars having delved into the area of contextual exegesis, such an expectation is not arbitrary. Hence West and Mosala are used as points of departure in the SA context. Croatto, a Latin American scholar, is invoked for his literary and linguistical insights. These together, provide the gateway to past and present scholars in both traditional and contextual exegesis. We shall avoid what has become tendencial among researchers and theses writers, namely, a repetition of past arguments when no new point is actually being made.<sup>39</sup> Wherever possible, we take the points made forward and we only revert to original “protagonists” for the purposes of verification, reserving the rest of our text for new insights. Thus, our task here is partly to outline and partly to advance present views on the theory of CE.

A second purpose of the chapter is to briefly outline yet another theory, the theory of human development. Had this also been a traditional theory, the task of applying it to biblical interpretation would hardly provoke questions. Biblical scholars such as Elliott (1993),<sup>40</sup> Neyrey (1994), Herzog (1983), Pixley (1983), Countryman (1994), Draper (1988) etc., have been using social-scientific models and theories for some time now. The present study however, works sociologically, within the “alternative theory”<sup>41</sup> of development which must needs be explicated. Thus, nothing could be more germane to this section than an outline of the theory of development, associated with the names of Coetzee (1996), Korten (1990), Graaf (1996), Hettne (1995), Ekins (1992), etc.

Another purpose of the chapter is to develop a model of approach out of the former two purposes. For the purposes of the present study, we call this a “contextual-developmental approach”, meaning an approach whereby the text is read against a developmental theory. The chapter would not be complete without this concluding section which maps out the categories that will be applied in the reading of the text in

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<sup>39</sup>Understandably; their aim is to demonstrate familiarity with the “body of knowledge”, to use Perkins’ (1993:92) language. However, we think that the same point could be made through use of notes, as we intend to do in the present study.

<sup>40</sup>Elliott (1988) already used a social scientific model in his reflection on 1 Peter.

<sup>41</sup>This theory is explained in the second part of this chapter where it is used.

chapter 5. The theory of a social construction of reality, as advocated by Berger and Luckmann (1976), undergirds this section.

This three-fold purpose then provides the structure for the rest of the chapter. Following this introduction, the chapter proceeds with part 1 in which the contextual theory is discussed; part 2 follows with an outline of the theory of human development and part 3 follows with a model for reading the text.

## **2.1 THE INCIPIENT PARADIGM: CONTEXTUAL EXEGESIS**

Our aim in this part (Part I) of the chapter is to provide an outline of the theory of Contextual Exegesis as we understand it in the present study. We depart from the premise that CE is gradually becoming a paradigm, albeit in an undeveloped (incipient) stage. With the view to justify interest in its development, six basic points, based on the current state of affairs are provided. These follow below, prior to a discussion of West's and Croatto's views on contextual readings of the Bible. Contrary to common practice of starting with a definition, we shall not discuss our definition of CE at this point since it our contention is that those who apply CE have yet to define it.<sup>42</sup> Instead, we shall build up to its formulation at the end of the section, using elements of our discussion.

### **2.1.1 WHY A CONTEXTUAL (EXEGETICAL) PARADIGM?**

There are several reasons in support of the need for a shift to a contextual paradigm. They follow below though by no means in any order of importance. However, West's three points seem to be the place to begin due to the historical background they provide about the problem.

#### **2.1.1.1 Interest in reception stage**

In his book, West (1991:7) zooms into a discussion of what he designates as 'the interpretive crisis'. Essentially, this refers to the inability of academic biblical interpretation

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<sup>42</sup>Even West (1993:7) who promises to give a definition, does not really give it; instead, he refers to four ways in which the term "contextual" is used in his department and to Luckett's definition. In both cases, it is clear that no solid definition has been found as yet.

to deal with a 'committed reading' where the relationship between the text and its interpreter "matters" (cf 1991:10). The crisis is apparently caused by the emerging interest in interpretation, which according to Lategan (1984), is characterised by a shift away from the more historical and structural issues towards the reception of the text by its readers.

According to Lategan (1984), in the first stage, interest was more on the *author and the production* stage of the text. In the second stage, interest shifted to the *text and its message*. In the third stage, there is a shift towards the impact of the text on the reader, or what he calls *reception*. In this latter stage, readers are primarily concerned about the meaning of the text for them, regardless of what its original author meant. Obviously, this is a deviation from the historical-critical paradigm. As will be seen below, not only do these stages overlap, more importantly, West (1991:140) sees value in all of them, depending on the reader's preference and usage.

#### 2.1.1.2 The Enlightenment paradigm

In West's view, the crisis to which we alluded above, is embedded in the Enlightenment scientific paradigm. West (1991:10) argues, following Hertzog, that since Enlightenment, science has provided the dominant model for talking about the world and, indeed, texts. This model was also adopted by or had influenced biblical studies, among other disciplines. This resulted in the emergence of the historical-critical method as the interpretational framework for biblical scholars. With this came two assumptions, namely, the presence of an "objective observer" (the exegete) and an "objective object" (the text) (cf West 1991:11).

The cause of the crisis with which biblical scholarship is faced is not so much the existence of these assumptions which were later questioned within natural sciences (West 1991:11), as it is with 'scientism'. Many South African interpreters have been enslaved to this under the guise of maintaining 'international standards' while on the other hand, refusing to associate biblical interpretation with anything social.<sup>43</sup> The belief was

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<sup>43</sup>This has certainly been the trend in the NTSSA circles until the mid-nineties. There was on the other hand, doubt about the present research topic at a certain Divinity Faculty (which had links with the NTSSA) in SA until verification that the topic fell within the New Testament discipline was given by English and German scholars who incidentally, appeared more enthusiastic than the local prospective promoter. The argument of that particular faculty was that this topic belonged to anthropology and that it would never be accepted by "international" New Testament scholars.

that the text could be studied objectively without involving the exegete's world.<sup>44</sup> Needless to say, this is extremely limiting to a committed reader of the text.

### 2.1.1.3 The call of the *Kairos Document* (KD)

Having foregrounded the manner in which 'scientism' has been questioned and undermined by a plethora of 'radical' hermeneuticians recently, West proceeds to contextualise the interpretive crisis in the South African context. His departure-point in this instance, is the *Kairos Document* which had emerged from the context of the liberation struggle in the 1980s.<sup>45</sup> In this document, West (1991:31) highlights for his purposes, (i) the call of the document for a return to the Bible, in search of a relevant message to the South African experience at the time (ii) the struggle between what the document designated "Prophetic theology" on the one hand, and "State theology" and "Church theology", on the other. Since the crisis continues in spite of the political changes that took place in 1990, West's (1991:31) judgement is that the "crucial part of the South African crisis is an *interpretive* (emphasis original) crisis". He elaborates on this crisis as he traces, through the help of some scholars, the tradition of 'conservative' interpretation, representing mainly a white ideology, which is in conflict with the liberative readings, which represent a black perspective.

It is needless to repeat West's well researched argument in this study. We have however, highlighted in the above summary, the nature of the crisis as perceived by West, which strengthens our justification of a contextual approach in South Africa. While we agree with West's analysis of the South African crisis, there is a feeling that his study could be more explicit and emphatic on ideology and power relations which West (cf 1990) articulates well elsewhere, for example, his analysis of the story of Job's wife.<sup>46</sup> The crisis is not as simple as disparity or incompatibility between black

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<sup>44</sup>By this we mean both the mythical and real worlds.

<sup>45</sup>See *Kairos Document*, 1985; 1986.

<sup>46</sup>See also Mosala (1989:46) who explicitly links the historical critical approach with the ruling 'power bloc', the bourgeois.

and white worlds;<sup>47</sup> nor is it as mundane as a dichotomy between the approaches of what West respectively, calls 'ordinary' and 'trained' readers of the Bible. At the heart of the problem, we suggest, lies 'power and privilege'<sup>48</sup> for those who are advantaged by the socio-political and economic systems. Thus, political changes may take place, however, they remain cosmetic as long as they do not affect this fundamental problem. Hence the crisis identified by West tends to perpetuate itself.

#### 2.1.1.4 Black Theology's search for a liberative hermeneutic

This view finds support in Mosala's study (1989:3) where he seeks to develop a 'more effective hermeneutic'<sup>49</sup> for the context of a struggle for liberation. Although Mosala particularises his problem to Black Theology, he traces its origin, in respect of black theologians, to the dominant or traditional approach to interpretation, which is somehow related to the Enlightenment paradigm. He specifically "castrates" Boesak, Tutu, Gqubule, Mgojo, Buthelezi and Dwane (cf Mosala 1989:17-24) for being "steeped" in the European mode of reading the Bible. This he sees as a drawback as it relies on the 'oppressive tools' that keep the underprivileged in the 'underdog' position. He mentions as an example, the view of the text as the 'static' Word of God, which, he argues, is a common starting-point even for the "most theoretically astute of current black theologians", Cornel West (Mosala 1989:16). However, Mosala fails to see that in order for him to be able to succeed, he has to adopt a contextual paradigm

#### 2.1.1.5 The need to break the vicious circle

Mosala's observation in the above point is spot-on. It points to a vicious circle, a somewhat "incestuous" relationship between scholars of different ages, owing to the uncriti-

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<sup>47</sup>See for example, the reasons for Nolan's (1988:xii) allusion to two worlds in South Africa, which he links to respective socio-economic conditions of black and white communities and the reasons for Mbeki's (1998) conclusion that there are two nations in South Africa.

<sup>48</sup>The term is used in Lenski's (Lenski 1966:210-211) sense that those who have 'power' have access to a number of privileges and that those privileges or resources help to acquire more power.

<sup>49</sup>In the same prologue to his book, Mosala (1989:1-2) laments the fact that Black Theology has not become a liberation tool despite its relatively long history in South Africa. He then sets the development of Black Theology as a tool of liberation as his goal.

cal assimilation and use of 'established' methods. In the "circle", interpreters produce and reproduce each other regardless of their ideological or socio-economic locations. This seems to be a universal problem which makes it difficult to distinguish between the methods of First and Third World interpreters. As Mosala correctly concludes in his criticism of social scientific methods, this takes us "two steps backwards in that it not only reintroduces the "old ideological hunches" inherent in the historical-critical methods, but it hides them under the cloak of a more systematic approach" (1989:58).<sup>50</sup> Seemingly, no one has escaped contamination.

This being so, one wonders whether West is correct in portraying his 'ordinary readers' as pre-critical or innocent. Is he not, as Craffert (1998) would argue, overlooking the important fact that those readers are also products of 'trained' interpreters in which case, their views reflect their masters' views? The Bible is preached or read out to them.<sup>51</sup> During the process of reading or preaching, interpretation takes place and is imparted to the unsuspecting.

A visit to black township congregations of whatever Christian denomination in SA confirms the suspicion that the average preacher, whether lay or cleric, is caught up in the vicious circle which is at the heart of our crisis. This is what the challenge of the *Kairos Document* is directed against (cf Church and State Theology) and it is the kind of preaching that Biko critiques in the preaching of the missionary churches, in his motivation for a Black Theology (Biko 1988:45).

Despite this, a distinction between the integrity of the Bible as the Christian document and its interpretation has to be maintained (cf West 1995). As Wimbush correctly observes in respect of African slaves in America, it is possible for the oppressed to 'appropriate and own' the Bible in what he calls the 'second phase of encounter with the Bible' (in West 1995 cf Punt 1998). This is the reason for the discussion of this section: if the poor and marginalised in South Africa have appropriated and owned the

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<sup>50</sup>It should be noted that in spite of his eloquence and "castration" of Black Theologians, especially in South Africa, Mosala is himself not immuned against the influences of American and European theories. The 1989 work referred to above is a case in point.

<sup>51</sup>In West's (1997:330) terms, the ordinary readers he refers to are not readers but hearers, interpreters and retellers of the Bible.

Bible, what interpretive tools do they have to 'make it speak' to their context? If their reading tools lead to further enslavement and alienation from self, who is failing them?

#### 2.1.1.6 Complicity of academics with the status quo

The failure to break the cycle and to lead non-academic readers of the Bible out of their predicament can legitimately be blamed on the complicity of academic interpreters with the status quo. Their influence has always set the trend, either in favour of the status quo<sup>52</sup> or in rebellion against it (eg Boesak 1977). However, it appears that the former has always dominated. We will not discuss individual contributions in detail in this study since the aim of this section is to highlight the issues that justify a shift to a 'contextual paradigm' rather than to delve into philosophical hermeneutics.

It is clear from the above remarks about the problem that the failure of academic interpreters of the Bible to find an appropriate interpretative tool is partly responsible for the lack of improvement in the quality of life of the poor and marginalised. Thus, biblical scholarship in South Africa lacks accountability to the context and its people.<sup>53</sup> Its first allegiance is seemingly to the general and positivistic Enlightenment paradigm which seems to have one view of truth. Had the situation been different, communities such as those discussed in the introductory chapter of this study, with the potential to develop, would have been empowered. As a corrective to this situation, South African academic interpreters of the Bible need to consciously adopt a 'committed reading', (Herzog 1983:106 cf Polanyi 1958:300-324), what we prefer to call a 'restitutive paradigm'<sup>54</sup> in this study. This should guide all contextual interpretations for at least

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<sup>52</sup>See for example, Loubser's (1987) documentation of Afrikaans theologians' contribution towards the growth of what he calls '*The Apartheid Bible*' or Smit's (1990a,b) two articles on the history of scholarly interpretations of the Bible in South Africa in which he exposes the complicity of white theologians with the status quo.

<sup>53</sup>The *Kairos Document* (cf 1986) mentions academic theology specifically in its critique of church theology.

<sup>54</sup>According to the *Oxford Complete Word Finder*, restitution is 'reparation for an injury'. In other words, it is a form of compensation for the damage caused. The practice is akin to the 'justice system' in African traditional cultures. There were no jails to keep offenders or the guilty. Besides, keeping the guilty incarcerated was no satisfactory solution either for the complainant or for the defendant. In cases where an issue could be physically fought out, for example, where the two undermined each other, that was done and at the end of the fight, the two would know who is who between them. There were also extreme cases, such



the next decade or two, the aim being to empower through the Bible, those who are continually marginalised by the system.<sup>55</sup>

The challenge to academics to interpret within a contextual paradigm is in fact, a challenge to them to suspend 'scientism' with all its often irrelevant preoccupations and to treat the new South African situation with urgency. Biblical Studies, for example, was cited, by the Minister of Finance during a Parliamentary Budget debate (1997), as an example of a 'soft subject' which did not deserve state funding. This was the first public 'denunciation' of Biblical Studies by a senior member of government. Before, it had been rumoured in the corridors that the subject is irrelevant in the present context, namely, a context of development and reconstruction.<sup>56</sup> Such rumours had resulted in diminishing numbers of students who register for the course and the closure of theological faculties in some universities. There is a feeling that unless South Africa becomes a priority for biblical scholars, the Bible will remain socially and economically irrelevant in the context.

This being the case, let us look at attempts at correcting the situation and some possibilities for the future. We continue with the work of West as he appears to be thus far, an outstanding and consistent South African who is wrestling with the theory of contextualisation in respect of the Bible. However, neither West nor any other contextual Biblical Studies scholars provides a satisfactory definition of CE. Hence the argument is intended to culminate in a definition at the end of this first part. Croatto is chosen, not only because of the mark he seems to have left on West but also because of

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as witchcraft where the sentence was usually death. In some cases, for example, theft, adultery with another man's wife or a defamation of character, the offender, if found guilty, was often ordered to pay with livestock either to the chief or the complainant or both. The point is that the consciences of both parties involved could only be appeased through some form of visible restitution.

<sup>55</sup>See for example, a similar Bible Study programme of CEBI in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

<sup>56</sup>A number of young people continue to question the relevance of Biblical Studies for their future careers if it does not lead to anything one can do practically. The solution suggested by Deist (1990:6-15) still misses the point or it is certainly not directed at a black clientele.

the South<sup>57</sup> perspective he represents. The relationship between the two is that West focuses on *what* can and has been done with the text while Croatto shows *why* it is possible for the reader to be creative with the text. There is a feeling that the theory of CE will only crystallise when a clear outline has been delineated. A definition provides such an outline.

### 2.1.2 WEST'S THREE MODES OF READING THE BIBLE

In his book on hermeneutics of liberation, subtitled "Modes of reading the Bible in the South African context", West (1991) analyses the readings of the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis, rendered by two South African scholars, Mosala and Boesak, as examples of different modes of reading the Bible in SA during the context of the liberation struggle in the 1980s. In addition to this, he has a reading by a feminist and one by a Latin American scholar.<sup>58</sup> One of the readers, Mosala, reads the Bible from the perspective of historical materialism. This means a reading that goes into the history of the text in its pre-written and precanonical form.

In this background, the sociological analysis that is done by the exegete focuses on "uncovering" the material conditions that produced the original story, who it originally belonged to and how it had been appropriated and by whom. This, according to Mosala, helped to expose the ideological use of peasant stories by bourgeois classes and to draw attention to the fact that even the text that is found in the Bible is not innocent but is ideologically loaded. Such a text could not be appropriated or, in our language, contextualised without being scrutinised because that would mean a contextualisation of a contradictory and counter-productive text. West (1991:107-117), who analyses Mosala's reading of the story of Cain and Abel in this mode, calls it a "behind the text" mode of reading.

On the other hand, West looks at Boesak's (1991:46-51 cf. Trible's in West 1991:117-124) reading of the text although he does not analyse it to the same extent as he does

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<sup>57</sup>South is the recent term used to refer to what is sometimes known as Third World. We prefer it in this study. However, "Third World" is used where it appears in the material we work with.

<sup>58</sup>The latter two, Trible and Croatto are discussed in relation to a "reading on the text" mode.

Mosala's.<sup>59</sup> According to him, Boesak is concerned about communicating a relevant message to the community. His categories are those of justice and injustice. Thus, the history and sociological background of the text are of secondary importance. Therefore, Boesak uses the text as the authority for his pronouncements in an unjust situation without having looked at its background, what we might call, "text-proofing" or concordist approach (cf Punt 1998, Croatto 1983:141, 1987:6). This approach focuses on readings that have been influenced by the era of structuralism. Much attention was paid to the structure of the text and the underlying ideological pillars. Thus, readers hoped to be able to find meaning by spending a lot of time analysing the structure of the text. Having compared Boesak's reading of the story of Cain and Abel with Mosala's, West (1991) refers to it as a "reading on the text".

In a third mode of reading, which West (1991:124-139) calls a "reading in front of" the text, he analyses Croatto's (1983) "hermeneutic" approach to the text. He follows Croatto's hermeneutic circle to its conclusion. Since Croatto's concern in this way of approaching the text is to find meaning for the present context, which he calls the "horizon of the reader", West calls it a reading "in front of the text" (that is, where meaning for the present context is located). As it will become clear in our use of this model in this study, the historical world of the text is not totally excluded although it is difficult to reconstruct its "first horizon" or its first readers.

Although West himself acknowledges that there are no clear demarcations between these modes of reading as one mode overlaps with the other, they are a useful tool for clarifying and locating one's own reading. In fact, West has in this way simplified Lategan's (1984) model of the stages of development in the theory of interpretation. In his model, Lategan posits that interest in the text has evolved from a focus on history, production and sources used, to a focus on the text, which was seen as the medium of communication, to a focus on reception, which is concerned with the reader's response to the text. Of course, we have also summarised the model which Lategan has outlined in detail (cf 1984:1-17). Our interest is to show that the "behind the text" mode could be seen as the stage in which, according to Lategan's scheme, focus was on the history of production; the "on the text" mode could be seen in Lategan's scheme as the stage in which focus was on the text as the medium and the "in front of the text" mode could

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<sup>59</sup>See a better analysis of this story in West 1990a; 1990b:10-25.

be seen as the stage at which focus is on reception. Lategan (1997:117) has recently acknowledged this connection himself.

Significant about West's study is not only the three modes which are an object of his analysis but also his analysis of the "interpretive crisis" in general and in South Africa, in particular. Without falling into the temptation to repeat what has already been mentioned, an important observation has to be recorded, namely, that according to West (1991:10-11), the Enlightenment paradigm on which the historical-critical method is based, is the cause of the crisis in interpretation. This is in line with Tracy's (cf 1987:31) analysis, according to which the problem with the Enlightenment understanding of science is "scientism", that is, a dogmatic view of science. However, natural scientists were themselves questioning the Cartesian view of the world, which caused a crisis for the Enlightenment paradigm (cf Pillay 1990:113; Polanyi 1958:17). In spite of this, biblical scholars continue to adhere to the "scientism" of the Enlightenment. We shall return to this below. Suffice it at this point to mention that West saw post-modernity as the way out of the entrapment by the Enlightenment paradigm. Hence he affirms all three modes, basing his affirmation on their ability to function in a liberative way (1991:140).

The reason for this summary of West's work is that it had engendered certain questions which in our opinion, are among obstacles to the acceptance of contextualisation in mainstream Bible interpretation and which are intended to set the trend of our discussion.<sup>60</sup> These pertain to the identity of a contextual reader of the Bible; the relationship between philosophy and contextualisation and whether contextualisation could be regarded as scientific (status).

#### 2.1.2.1 Who is privileged to read contextually?

The question "who is privileged to read contextually?" arises out of the observation by the present author, that West (cf 1991:129) has not used the term contextualisation in his discussion of scholarly readings of the Bible. Instead, the term that he uses is "appropriation". At first, this makes one wonder whether his intention is to avoid associating it with those who have ideological problems with the term "contextual" (cf

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<sup>60</sup>These questions arose out of discussions with the present author's former seminary students, based on parts of the works of Mosala and West (College of the Transfiguration, Grahamstown 1994-1995).

Mosala 1989:20) or whether that is an oversight on his part. However, on reading further, one also notes that in his discussion of the role of “ordinary readers” in the same work, West uses the term. Is it his intention to differentiate between “academic” and “ordinary” readers or does he only intend to convey the idea that a contextual reading is the privilege of the “poor” and “ordinary” reader to which he makes reference in his work? If so, can he speak on behalf of the “poor” and “ordinary” readers? This is an important point because, as hinted above, the place of CE in mainstream New Testament studies is precarious. It is being asked to prove its ‘scientific’ credentials (eg. Craffert 1995:167).

Notwithstanding this, it appears that it is not “who” but “what” that matters in CE. If we were to focus on who is privileged to do contextual exegesis, the field would be impoverished. Those who are familiar with the nature of the daily readers of the Bible, whether highly educated or semi-literate, know that they use the Bible as a blueprint for life (cf chapter 1; Punt 1998; Lothead 1983; Hertzog 1983). We are inclined to agree with Craffert (1998) who correctly points out that the manner in which they read the Bible does not reflect “innocence” but the influence of those who have trained them. In other words, they read within a specific doctrinal framework. Therefore, what they contextualise, if they have the privilege of contextualising, is what they have learnt from the pulpit, during their Sunday School days or from literature written by “academic readers” of the Bible. If anything has to be corrected (which appears to be what Mosala (1989) sought to do), our opinion is that this level (ie. the level of practitioners) seems most appropriate for such a correction.<sup>61</sup>

We have averred that the field of contextualisation would be impoverished without the intervention of academic readers. That averment will now be substantiated: Our experience at the empirical level is that most readers of the Bible—whether individuals or groups, rely a lot on the trained or professional person, whether directly or indirectly.

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<sup>61</sup>Non-academic readers have even developed what we call their own “limited degrees of interpretation”. However, as the works of West (1991), Philpot (1993) and Mandew (1993) show, this does not mean that “non-academic readers” are uncritical. West (1993:5), citing Chaffee (1985:52) describes the qualities of a critical reader thus: thinking actively, thinking for ourselves, carefully exploring a situation or issue, being open to new ideas and different view-points, supporting our views with reasons and evidence and being able to discuss our ideas in an organised way.

The reason is that scripture is never easy to fathom, more so for individual readers.<sup>62</sup> This gives “unethical” researchers an opportunity to infuse their ideas and later publish them as the ideas of the “ordinary reader”. However, in some cases, these ideas tend to articulate the aspirations and concerns of the “untrained” readers of the Bible and they identify with them.<sup>63</sup> Such sensitivity depends on the proximity of the academic reader of the Bible to the people he/she “reads with”.<sup>64</sup> The advantage for contextualisation is that if the researcher is what Gramsci (1983:5) calls an “organic intellectual”, then the field becomes enriched by the insights of an intellectual whose duty it is to articulate “grassroots” concerns. In this case, the academic becomes a “committed reader”. We shall return to the concept of a “committed reader” below.

Despite what appears to be West’s “differentiation” in terms of the reader’s status, we may infer from his discussion of the three commitments of a Contextual Bible Study, used by CEBI, in the work referred to above, that differentiation is not intended. Any reader in the group who adheres to the commitments is a contextual reader of the Bible (West 1991:174-175). This is clear in a subsequent book in which West (1993) declares his socio-economic and ideological location in the preface. However, this does not prohibit him from proceeding to write about the methodology of a Contextual Bible Study. Needless to say, very few would doubt West’s credentials as an international scholar .

The point however, is not that the contextual approach is not accepted in the field of hermeneutics but that it has not been welcomed among the mainstream methods of

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<sup>62</sup>According to one of the principles of a Contextual Bible Study, no study of the Bible takes place in isolation. It must always be done in a group so that the individual does not only hear himself/herself in the text as it is the case with theology’s isolation from other disciplines in anycase (See Stenger 1993:2). If CE is a transformative project, then its proponents must be involved (cf Van Huyssteen 1986 in Moutton et al 1995).

<sup>63</sup>Some verbal feedback from the Transkei Women’s Bible Study group on West’s work shows this. They identify with it because they feel that he is articulating their concerns. The same applies to the Mothers’ Union of the Grahamstown Diocese of the Anglican Church in respect of the present author’s Bible Studies.

<sup>64</sup>The opposite can also be true. As Bonino (1975:39) warns, using insights from the Sociology of Knowledge, the presence of those of a dominant class in a group could change the whole direction of the group in favour of the dominant class.

exegesis. This is the reason for the question about the identity of a contextual reader. Is it a non-academic exercise, therefore an activity outside the Biblical Studies discipline? In attempting to show its credentials above, we have used West, an international scholar and an advocate of contextualisation in Biblical Studies to show that a contextual study of the Bible is as much an academic activity as any other form of making sense of the text. We could move a little further, to other renowned scholars outside South Africa. For example, Richard Bauckham who is located in Edinburgh, also an international scholar, has not only been sympathetic towards CE. He has himself published some “contextual” readings. In addition, he has also made useful comments in support of contextualisation. For example, in his discussion of the Bible and politics, Bauckham (1989:5) remarks that an ancient text should be able to “transcend” its original context and attain new freshness in order for it to be relevant to a new context. This is in line with the idea of Gadamer (1975) to which we alluded in the introduction to the present chapter.

Apart from Bauckham, Rowlands who is located at St Andrew’s College, Oxford, shows attempts at contextualisation in his recent publications. However, he seems to take South African and Latin American authors as his mentors in the field. Our point here is that even Rowlands, another international scholar, is “meddling” in contextualisation as an integral part of his New Testament discipline. For example, the style in which he wrote his commentary on Revelation (1994), an earlier joint publication (1990) and several articles he published recently (eg. Rowland 1993:228-245) reflect a deviation from the “traditional” European style. Both Bauckham and Rowland are members of the *Studium Novum Testamentis Societas* (SNTS), an international New Testament society which has influenced New Testament studies for almost a century now. Most of the world’s well known and respected New Testament scholars belonged to this society. On the other hand, the society is known for its conservatism. Would Bauckham and Rowland then be classified as deviants of the SNTS or is the SNTS appreciative of the implications of their actions?

Either question can be answered with less difficulty. In response to the first, it could be argued that a trend towards accepting contextualisation is beginning to emerge. It does not emerge as such but as toleration, sympathy, understanding and keenness of scholars from the North to move closer to scholars from the South, whose operational paradigm is contextualisation. Among indications are Rowland’s publication (1987) in which he debates with Mosala and the fact that for the first time in its long history, the SNTS

will hold its conference on the African soil, (South Africa), in August 1999. In addition to this, it has allowed and financed the contextual studies group to organise an event around African readings of the Bible at the same time. At the risk of misinterpreting this generosity of the SNTS, one is tempted to conclude that acknowledgement is slowly being made, that “contextual” and “unscientific” are not necessarily synonyms in biblical interpretation.

With regard to the second question, there is a possibility that some authors are not conscious of their paradigmatic location. For example, Mosala (1989:20) starts off his book by weighing out options for a liberative hermeneutic. He dismisses the possibility that contextualisation might be an alternative on the grounds that it uncritically appropriates problematic texts which reflect oppressive ideologies. Not all biblical texts are liberative, argues Mosala (1989:19 cf 1987:20), as the text’s ideology becomes dominant beyond its own context. The approach to Scripture from the “Word of God” perspective is problematic as it is seen for example, in texts such as the call of Moses in Exodus 1-2 (Mosala 1995:43).<sup>65</sup>

As he argues, in his search for an effective hermeneutic of liberation, Mosala shows no awareness or acceptance of the fact that Black Theology is a contextual theology as far as the definition of contextual theology is concerned. In a different publication (Mosala 1991:268f), he alleges that CE is popular theology which confirms the ignorance of the people. He refers in particular to an ICT (1990) Annual General Meeting in which he observed the “crisis of populist Christianity” (Mosala 1991:268). That reflects some dualism on his part: a contextual theologian before the masses but is unwilling to identify with this “other self” at an academic level. Understandably, Mosala’s problem at the time was not so much with the practice of contextualisation as it was with those who were on the forefront of it in South Africa. He was suspicious of the hermeneutic keys of those contextual readers whose background was white, symbolising economic, social and political advantage over blacks. Thus, we suspect that his attitude towards contextualisation was only polemical. Mosala’s importance in this section is justified by the fact that he has had “disciples” who surpassed him in denouncing anything con-

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<sup>65</sup>Seen in this light, the argument by some, eg. Childs (1973), that the canon should provide the exegetical context for a biblical theology is problematic for Mosala because it pretends that such contradictions do not exist. It even overlooks the fact that some texts within the canon contradict each other. In a more recent work, Childs (1993) argues for what he calls a “canonical approach.”



textual, for example, Maluleke (cf 1997) who places himself in the Black Theology camp.

We have hopefully, done “enough” in this section, to demonstrate that contextualisation is neither of necessity, a non-academic exercise; nor is it the non-academic reader’s monopoly. Academics who are committed to the contexts of non-academic readers and whose mandate is to articulate the concerns and aspirations of non-academic readers can and do contextualise from their perspectives. This having been established, we proceed with the next question, the relationship between philosophy and contextualisation.

#### 2.1.2.2 Philosophy and contextualisation: Partners or antagonists?

In this sub-section, our aim is to briefly clarify the relationship between philosophy and contextualisation. There appears to be a swing from the extreme end of “scientism” towards “philosophism”. If anything is not approved by philosophers, dead or living, it is easily dismissed (cf Berlinerblau 1993). Equally, philosophy can be used to renegade contextual concerns to an inferior level or to “explain away” some important contextual questions. This points more to abuse of philosophy rather than a dismissal of the discipline.

This tendency appeals on the one hand, to past philosophers who shaped the thinking of communities in antiquity. Of these, Herzog (1983) writes in relation to biblical interpretation, that “the Graeco-Roman background and philosophers were studied and thereafter, the exegete would be satisfied that he/she has the meaning of the text”. What does not fall within this topos is easily dismissed as inferior.

On the other hand, in contemporary hermeneutical discussions, an appeal is made to philosophers and hermeneuts who have published in several fields (eg. Ricoeur; Habermas; Gramsci; Gadamer, etc.). This is expedient academic exercise. In fact, our trade is about building on the wisdom of those who have traversed the ground before us. However, that is often done to the detriment of the wisdom of the local and marginalised whose voices are never heard (cf Kretzschmar (1986), West (1990), Masenya (1995)). It is often forgotten that such philosophers are culture and context-bound. Their philosophies respond to the questions of their experience in their context. However, these philosophies are usually uncritically given a “universal” status whereas

the biblical text is seen to be context-bound.<sup>66</sup> Such inconsistency makes it difficult to formulate a contextual theory that is widely accepted. We need not look further than the problems scholars seem to have with West's popularisation of the "wisdom" of the poor and non-academic readers of the Bible. Thus, the discussion does not end with philosophical hermeneutics. There is also an attempt to control the contents of one's reading as well.

In his critique of Wittgenstein's philosophy, Anthony Kenny (1984:xi) warns:

there is a philosopher in each of us, against whom we need to be on our guard: we must, if the occasion arises, exorcise the bad implicit philosophy which we imbibe unknowingly as we acquire language; philosophy will enable us to avoid this bewitchment to which we are subject as to an original sin.

While there might be truth in Kenny's argument, one wonders which philosophy he considers good and which he considers bad and how one exorcises oneself of bad philosophy. Our understanding is that Wittgenstein's statement about philosophy being a battle against the "bewitchment of the mind" was a polemic directed at the Cartesian legacy. That being so, Descartes' view of the world would be seen as mundane rather than philosophical; hence the need for philosophy to correct it. To be sure, that is not our problem. In fact, we see that as the function of philosophy. But that operates at a different level from that of contextualisation. The contextual approach is concerned more about existential questions and less about questions of "curiosity".

Since philosophy is associated with a particular class, that is "middle-class" intellectuals, it seems that logic rather than hard philosophical arguments is sufficient in a contextual argument. Probing could be done through sociological rather than philosophical questions. In the development of the contextual theory, this question is important. Biblical scholars tend to look down upon anything contextual as being void of philosophy, therefore, less valuable. If contextualisation is a correction of such perceptions, then it cannot do so by overemphasising philosophy.

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<sup>66</sup>Lochhead (1983) asks whether he can use questions from another context to answer the problems of his own context.

### 2.1.2.3 Can contextual be scientific?

In an article entitled "Can New Testament theology be saved: the threat of contextualisms," Scroggs (1988:17-31) discusses the proliferation of contextual methods into the New Testament study. However, Scroggs had in mind a type of contextualisation that now appears to be different from the contextualisation seen in the scholars of the South. The type of contextualisation he was referring to consisted of an investigation of the text against its social and historical background. Some went on to apply the fruits of that investigation to their contexts; others left it as an indication that a text can be applied to many situations (cf Hirsh in Herzog 1983), by implication, after it has been studied "scientifically". This is not the kind of contextualisation we refer to here although Scroggs' concern is an indication of a fear that the "objectivity" of the text was in danger of being compromised.

The question of contextualisation revolves around whether it is scientific or not. By this is usually meant an "objective" study of a "stable, objective and immutable" text (Herzog 1983). This means, in other words, a detached "observation" of the text in the same way that scientists of the Enlightenment paradigm observed the world. We have already said that West (1991 cf Herzog 1983) has showed how this was undermined by natural scientists themselves and that according to Tracy, biblical scholars suffered from scientism.

In the case of biblical texts, a stable text was the canonised text. In the first place, the reader was expected to respect its status as such for "all scripture is inspired by God" (1Tim.2). In other words, the text could only be studied as the "Word of God" with a self-contained meaning which the exegete had to uncover (cf Punt 1998:278). As already mentioned above, the "scientific" exegete had to focus on analysing the language of the text, to uncover its meaning. Hence the study of Semitic languages was very important. As the "Word of God", the text had no human imprint. Therefore, it was detached from human experience. To study the text from a contextual or sociological perspective was tantamount to debasing it from its "sacred" status.

Both the Word of God concept and the notion of a self-contained meaning are debatable. We have already mentioned what Mosala had to say about this.<sup>67</sup> It is a concept that is linked to the Enlightenment paradigm. Even Boff (1987:136) who uses the historical-critical paradigm agrees that “sense arises in the interstices of the relationship between the twin poles [text and context]”. Suggit (1994:75), as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, argues that it is the (reading) community that confers authority upon the text. In other words, the meaning is not self-contained. The opposite is part of the legacy of the Enlightenment paradigm which seems to have affected even the sharp hermeneuticians of the South. For example, Mosala (1989:15) accuses Black Theologians in South Africa of having followed Cone uncritically on the question of the Word of God framework of interpretation. Croatto (1983:149; 1987:29) on the other hand, uses the same starting-point but he does not use the phrase “Word of God” instead, he talks of the “text” as his departure-point. So do some other scholars in South Africa who see their task as that of explaining the word of God (cf Mosala 1986 in Sugirtharajah, 1991:51). However, the effect is the same.

This danger of a capital lettered “word of God” notion is increased by advocates of tradition such as Gadamer. Although Gadamer (1975) believes that the text is given its meaning by the interpretive context, he goes on to contradict that by linking interpretation to tradition, which becomes very limiting. Tradition teaches that the text has a self-contained meaning which transcends all contexts and times.<sup>68</sup> The question is how to fathom the meaning of the text in the way proposed by the historical-critical method. In our opinion, this is an impossible task: owing to the fact that scripture was meant to be symbolic, it’s meaning is never ending. As Suggit (1994:74) argues, we cannot accept the statements of scripture as factual, historical records of what took place and what was said. In what sense then, is meaning contained in the text?

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<sup>67</sup>It should be noted however, that Mosala is not the first scholar to problematise the “Word of God” concept. Several debates have taken place prior to him, about the “Word of God”, “Canon”, “Authority” and “Inspiration” (see, eg. Deist 1978 with bibliography; Lundeen 1975 with bibliography).

<sup>68</sup>This is based on the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. See comments of Ward and Dunn on the dangers of adhering to this doctrine. Ward (1991:150) argues that we are living in post-biblical times; Dunn (1987:107) argues: “it is exegetically improbable, hermeneutically defective, theologically dangerous, and educationally disastrous”.

Clodovis Boff (1987:140) concedes that while the written text remains open to future readings, it is nevertheless “illusory to think that one has direct access to the original sense of a text”. This is what the historical-critical methods pretend to be able to do. Ricoeur (1976) on the other hand, advocates a level of interpretation “between structural and critical eras”, which in our view, may end up where Croatto is, that is, reading “in front of the text” with the view to obtain meaning for their particular context. This may not be a satisfactory approach to contextualisation as it disregards, in Craffert’s (1997) view, the “textuality of the text”.

Discussions of the questions of authority, Word of God, inspiration, canon, abound (eg Sanders 1977; Deist 1978; Lundeen 1975). As we have said above, it is not our intention in this study, to repeat discussions that have already been exhausted. The only observation we need to make is that every scholar has described the origins of the concepts mentioned.<sup>69</sup> However, there has been no pointer to a direction. In the present study, we argue that the canon is only meant to be functional. Since the Spirit of God continues to inspire,<sup>70</sup> we shall not be limited in our dealings with the text by a misunderstanding of the canon. This also means that a committed reading should not be labelled “unscientific” owing to its being contextual. It might be subjective; however, it falls under a scientific reading theory that is known as “reader-response criticism”. After all, science is itself a social activity (Barber 1962:26). Our task in this study is what Kiwiet (1985:14) calls the “historical-theological task of making the Gospel intelligible to modern man”, in his discussion of the history of hermeneutics.

It would however be a misunderstanding to think that this refers to what is known as ‘theological exegesis’. Theological exegesis confines itself to reading the text against its perceived historical background (cf Cunningham 1996:60). This often takes a lot of

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<sup>69</sup>For example, there is a brief sociological study of the canon in Punt’s (1998:269-271) study. However, it only serves to shed light from a different perspective of a human creation that is now limiting to the work of the spirit (Herzog 1983). Nolan (1987:21-28) on the other hand, has described the problem with the Cartesian view of the world but no solution is provided about how to go about establishing a new paradigm. Hence our conclusion that contextualisation is only an “interim paradigm”, to control the damage caused by the collapse of the Enlightenment paradigm (cf Kuhn 1970) but does not as yet constitute a shift.

<sup>70</sup>According to Croatto (1983), revelation is unending. For Ward (1991:153), scripture is always “able to evoke a new disclosure, appropriate to our own time, in us”.

imagination because reconstructing a world that existed over two thousand years ago, using the text is no simple task.<sup>71</sup>In fact, the process, according to Rowland (1994), leads to a *cul de sac*. This is typical of the historical-critical approach. After all the effort, either a positivistic solution to the question of background is given or the author's intentions are "read", out of which are deduced certain theological principles to live by.<sup>72</sup> This is not what we mean by the "historical-theological task" above. What we mean is the task of rooting the gospel in history, with particular reference to the present context. Below, we show how Croatto approaches this task.

### 2.1.3 CROATTO'S "HERMENEUTIC" APPROACH

In the above sub-section, we have discussed a South African's analysis of the interpretative scenario in contexts of struggle, with particular reference to the South. Three "trajectories" have emerged from his analysis which must be taken cognisance of in any attempt to develop a contextual theory. We portrayed West as the only biblical scholar in South Africa who is consciously wrestling with a contextual theory, from all possible angles for that matter.<sup>73</sup> As we have pointed out, West has to a large extent, been influenced by Croatto, a Latin American Old Testament scholar, with a similar agenda. However, unlike West, Croatto focuses, more on linguistic than on sociological issues. This does not mean that there is no connection between the two. In fact, his very concern about contextualisation is a recognition of the fact that the text was born of certain historical circumstances which no longer prevail.

In his address at the Ecumenical Association of Third World Countries (EATWOT) meeting in 1982 (published 1983), Croatto outlined a literary theory which he called the "hermeneutic approach". By this, he means an approach that makes a break with

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<sup>71</sup>See earlier criticisms of sociological approaches in this regard.

<sup>72</sup>Nolan (1987) calls this a deductive approach and he associates it with the Enlightenment era.

<sup>73</sup>It might be wondered where a New Testament scholar like Nolan fits in here. As it will become clear below, Nolan has not attempted to develop a theory for contextual readings of the Bible. Instead, he has focused more on adapting and promoting the Latin American contextual method to the South African context. Lategan (1995) and Vorster (1987; 1995) who have recently written about the contextual approach only examine whether it represents a paradigm shift and to what extent that is so.

historical criticism on the one hand, while on the other, it affirms commitment to reading contexts. Croatto focuses on the text as a medium of communication, in other words, as language. Although he understands a text in a post-modernist sense, as both oral and written, he focuses on the written text as “coded language”.

There are three major elements of “speech” as language event (i) a *transmitter*, or speaker who selects the signs (ii) a *receiver*, or interlocutor to whom the speaker addresses the signs and (iii) a common context or *horizon of comprehension*, which permits “coincidence in reference” (1983:143). In the act of discourse, there must be actual “closure” of the potential polysemy in the words or phrases (1983:143). Croatto goes on to argue that speech is impossible, except where polysemy is deliberately maintained, as in poetry or symbolic language. In the speech act, it is not only the transmitter who is active, the receiver is engaged as well (1983:143). He/she is engaged in a process of grasping the “code” or “key”, for language is “communication in code” (1983:143). Confusing one code with another may lead to a distortion of the message where speech uses a determinate code as a form of “meaning-closure”. Croatto (1983:143) refers to the process from language to speech, from competency to performance, from system to use, as *first distantiation*.

What he calls the *second distantiation* occurs in the same three areas as mentioned above. (i) The original *transmitter* now disappears. This means that the text’s author ceases to exist as the text becomes public property through the act of coding the message (cf 1983:144). (ii) The original *receiver* who is the first interlocutor, also disappears. The present reader of the text is not its first addressee. This affects meaning down the ages. (iii) The original *horizon* of discourse also vanishes. The cultural and historical context is no longer the original one. The present reader lives in a world with its own interests, concerns, culture, etc. (1983:144). Croatto acknowledges indebtedness to Ricoeur for this analysis. Clearly, the hermeneutic process here revolves around the fact that the author is no longer there to explain or defend himself/herself. For Croatto (1983:144), this absence of the author is “semantic wealth”. It leaves the meaning of the text open to whoever will read it. The new reader, adds his/her own gestures, intonation, etc., which are effective for communication in his/her horizon. But as soon as this happens, a new meaning comes into being. This is what Croatto (cf 1983:145) calls “textual infinitude”. While the departure point might be the text, a reading of that text produces its own discourse.

The discourse is about an event. By “event” Croatto (1983:150) means what was understood to be God’s action in history, what he calls, an experiential point of departure. This may be a state of oppression, liberation, etc.. Out of many such events, some become meaningful and they get resumed in words. However, the words do not always describe; they often interpret the event (1983:150). In other words, the written text is not necessarily an historical account but a reading of the event from a particular *locus*. The interpreter of the event gives it his/her meaning.

Of primary interest for the purposes of this study is the event, what Croatto (1983:151) calls “God’s event”. The event gives confirmation of God’s faithfulness to God’s people, as manifested in the event (see discussion of miracles in chapter 4 of the present study). This theological principle cannot and should not be undermined by the receiver’s reading of the sign. To different readers, the sign means different things. Hence it is important that the reader be aware of this and undertake the reading with this guiding principle at the back of his/her mind.<sup>74</sup> Failure to do this, according to Croatto, constitutes a “closure” or an absolutisation of meaning. This is the temptation those who “misuse” the canon tend to fall into.<sup>75</sup> However, hermeneuts have debated this issue for some time now and we shall not go into it.

We now come to a final point that Croatto (1983:157f) discusses in his work, the question of *exegesis* and *eisegesis*. This is important for a theoretical discussion of contextualisation. Croatto discusses this under different points, eg. process Bible, unending revelation, liberation theologies and future. To sum it all up, the point he makes is that there is no escape from the fact that even what we call *exegesis* is *eisegesis* because the reader always takes a baggage *into* the text (1983:158). Consequently, s/he finds in the text what s/he is looking for and has the freedom to do so because some things are not explicit in the text. As such, something new will always be discovered about the text as

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<sup>74</sup>Interestingly, Clines (1993:74) raises a very important question: should we say that it does not matter what prejudices or presuppositions we bring into the text, so long as we have acknowledged them? However, the answer he gives is not satisfactory. He probably is still wrestling with the issue himself.

<sup>75</sup>In terms of Kuhn’s (in Pillay 1990:115) argument, a paradigm is capable of doing this as well, for it can insulate a community, for instance, by ruling out as “unscientific” all that does not fit its conceptual frame of reference. Thus, the community’s own understanding tends to become *the* meaning instead of their *perception*.



God's revelation continues beyond the first century. Thus, liberation theologies, for example, have a legitimate right to find liberation in the text. After all, liberation is one of the "semantic axes" of the Bible (Croatto 1983:159).

Before we leave Croatto, we need to highlight, as we have done with West, a couple of significant points for the present study.

### 2.1.3.1 Text and context: which comes first?

Our discussion of West and Croatto respectively focused on philosophical and linguistic issues. Does this mean that the context is of secondary importance? As it has become clear above, the context is as important as the text. For West (cf 1991:31), the context is the starting-point: it is the situation, the present experience, which forces the reading community to "go back to the Bible", to discover its message anew. For Croatto (1983:147), the text is the starting-point; it has to be because it is the text that is being read in CE although the text itself arose out of some real life experience (cf 1983:148). The text has its life which it wants to communicate. The understanding of the meaning of that life depends on the interpreter's reading horizon or context and the concerns, interests and questions the interpreter wants to emphasize. However, argues Croatto (1983:165), the text will not permit the reader to see in it what it (text) does not permit the reader to see. In both cases, there seems to be an acceptance of the dialectical relationship between the text and the context.

Both terms, "text" and "context" need explication. Croatto understands text to mean 'texture'- the "warp and woof of the elements of language-all woven together according to structural functions, which, as such, produce a meaning" (1983:144). Vorster (1995:35) posits that since texts were studied within the framework of communication, emphasis was put on them "as (a) system(s) of signs". Earlier, philosophers such as Derrida (1979:84), argued that texts are "networks of traces of other texts without centers or margins continually referring to other texts". Needless to say, all these definitions link up with what we have discussed under Croatto's "hermeneutic" approach above.

The term "context" is a derivative of the Latin term *contextere*, which will be explained later in the chapter (see section 2.1.5). For the present, it should be understood as the existential situation or "a particular life situation" (ICT publication)

of either the text or its interpreter and all its networks and dynamics. The term is used extensively in contextual theology and it is often understood primarily as the “existential situation”. For the biblical scholar it is important to remember that a text is the product of social interaction. It has not “descended from the sky”.

The relationship between the two may be understood in terms of Croatto’s scheme of *transmitter*, *receiver* and *context*. While the text gives us a focal point for ongoing revelation, the context flashes back to the time of the text’s production and forward, to the present. Croatto refers to these as “context-back” and “context-forward” respectively.

### 2.1.3.2 Creativity and context

If text and context on the one hand, have a dialectical relationship and on the other, there is disparity between the context of the reader and the original context of the text, how then, do we arrive at the meaning for today? Croatto (1983:144) implies that the “horizon of comprehension” should be the determining factor. The interpreter is located in his/her present context, not in an ancient context; and his/her capacity to comprehend is determined by the framework provided by that context.

This seems to be in line with Gadamer’s (1975) idea of reading a text. For Gadamer, the meaning of the text does not reside in it but is dependent on the reader’s context. Suggit (1994) puts this differently: instead of referring to the meaning of the text, he alludes to its authority. For him, the text is just words without authority. It is the reading community that confers upon, or withholds authority, from the text. It would seem that authority and meaning in this case refer to the same thing. A text would not have authority unless its import has been comprehended by the readers. Boesak’s reading of the text may be seen in the same way, that is, as creative reading, although for West (1991), his use of it is “authoritative”; in other words, Boesak according to West, uses the text to “judge” the situation.

Notwithstanding the above, Croatto also hints at the ambiguity of the situation: On the one hand, one needs to interpret the text in a manner that is relevant in one’s context; on the other, the text did not originate in one’s context, nor do the text and one’s context have in common the same conditions as those that produced the text (Croatto 1983:158). No matter how hard a modern exegete tries to find similarities, he/she has

to acknowledge that no one context can ever be the same as the other and that there are contexts within contexts (cf Barnhart 1980:504). Therefore, answers have to be “induced” rather than “discovered”. Croatto (1983:157) refers to this as *eisegesis*. As he puts it:

One does not extract pure meaning “from” the text (which would be pure *exegesis*), as a diver might come up out of the sea with coral in his (sic) hand, or as you or I might pull an object out of a suitcase. First you have to “get into” the text yourself, with questions the sacred authors never heard of, questions gathered on a new horizon of experience. This is “*eis*-egesis,” and it will have significant repercussions on the production-of-meaning of a reading. For, after all, a reading is indeed a true *production* (1983:158).

This raises anew, the question whether there is a “value-free” or “objective” reading of the text. This is an old question which has been discussed by several scholars before.

While answers to it remain ambiguous, possibly due to guild pressure<sup>76</sup> or doctrinal commitments, Croatto has explicitly and unambiguously stated that every reading is inevitably a reading *into*. Even those who think that they are reading objectively are in a sense taking a “baggage” into the text because, as Punt (1998:266) puts it, they do not read *tabula rasa*.<sup>77</sup>

How then, “do texts mean”? (Vorster 1995, cf Malina 1984). This takes us back to the question with which we started this sub-section. The import of the question is: what constitutes meaning in a text or, how does one make sense of an ancient text in the twentieth century? We suggest that all the factors taken into consideration, every interpretation is a creative act (cf Stibbe 1995:8). One makes sense of the text by being creative. Iser (1974:288) sums the manner of reading up poetically:

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<sup>76</sup>Lategan for example, has argued that young scholars who might have chosen the contextual direction have been pressurised by dominant groups to conform to the tradition (1995:49).

<sup>77</sup>Bultmann (1960:289) raised the question: Is exegesis without presuppositions possible? His answer was negative.

We look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their non-fulfilment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject: this is the dynamic process of recreation.

In this creative act, readers fill in the gaps that the author has left. Their ideas tend to fit in as if they were the author's ideas. Thus, they not only create new meaning for their context<sup>78</sup>, that meaning gets transmitted to future generations. They then proceed to "construct" a literary and social background of the text out of that recreated text. On the other hand, questions are posed to the text, for example, pertaining to its structure (as we intend to do with Acts 3 later), with the view to "manipulate" certain elements of the text for answers. This is not necessarily unorthodox, but it produces a kind of language that is different from the one expected by traditional theologians. This is called creativity. As it became clear above, it is not necessarily unscientific. Croatto (1983:159) would see it as unraveling the "reservoir of meaning" in the text. In his language, "it is but saying the unsaid in what was said in another age". For him, this is contextualisation. We cannot therefore, deal with the text as if it was a static entity.

Having 'mapped the route' towards the outline of a theory of contextual exegesis, we now begin our "walk" towards it. However, before then, we need to clarify the relationship between traditional and contextual exegesis.

#### 2.1.4 TRADITIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL EXEGESIS: CONTINUITY OR DISCONTINUITY?

Having highlighted some important points in the new method, it remains to be asked whether there is any relationship between old (traditional) and new (contextual) approaches, in other words, whether the contextual approach represents a continuity or discontinuity with the old approaches.

By "traditional exegesis" in this study we mean the dominant modes of exegesis which are based on the Enlightenment paradigm. These have already been alluded to above and in the first chapter of this study. It is not our intention to discuss them individually; nor is it our aim to provide any more detail. It became clear in the summaries of these

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<sup>78</sup>Croatto (1984:153) refers to this as the "accumulation of meaning".

in chapter 1 that such methods were too formal to make room for contextual and committed readings, more so, pertaining to development. Developmental issues have never been the focus of biblical scholars. In this section, we want to justify this further by briefly comparing these traditional methods to the contextual approach. In doing so, we shall only focus on three points which are deemed important to make in the present study.

#### 2.1.4.1 Incompatible but complementary

In our view, it was somehow premature for Vorster (1987) and Lategan (1995), to talk of a paradigm shift in South Africa. Vorster had correctly identified a movement towards the contextual approach but as Lategan (1995:49) correctly observed, publications then (1995) and now, continue to show that the historical-critical paradigm is still intact. The term “paradigm shift” conjures up different ideas in different people. More importantly, as we see in Vorster’s case, it is associated with every change in epistemological framework. However, this way of seeing things is typical of theologians although Pillay (1990:118) opines that unlike in science, theological paradigms *do not replace* others that are riddled with anomalies; each theological paradigm *survives alongside* others inspite of their initial or perpetual competition. Thus, for Vorster, the signs of discomfort with the historical-critical paradigm already mean the ushering in of a new paradigm whereas for Lategan that is “not yet a revolution”. In our opinion, the difference lies in their understanding of Kuhn (1970) to whom both refer.

Kuhn first used the term “paradigm” in the 1960s in his analysis of scientific revolutions.<sup>79</sup> His analysis has since become an invaluable model in the hands of theologians. What Kuhn meant by paradigms is open to the receiver’s interpretation. He describes them as “universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (Kuhn 1970:viii cf 1970:175). Indeed, one has to dig further in his work before understanding that by this he might be referring to an “epistemological frame of reference” that has been developed by a ‘closed group’ that shares the same view. Kuhn (1970) however, is aware of this deficiency in the first edition of his book. In the postscript of the second edition of his

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<sup>79</sup>His work on the structure of scientific revolutions was first published in 1962. It is in this work that he introduced the term ‘paradigm’.

book, he refers to criticisms that followed his use of the term paradigm in the first edition. He commends one of the critics, Margaret Masterman (Kuhn 1970:174) who by his own admission, has identified no less than twenty two ways in which the term "paradigm" was used by Kuhn himself (Kuhn 1970:181).

In response to criticisms, Kuhn (1970:182) isolated two levels at which he wanted to use the term: At the first level, he uses the term to refer to a "disciplinary matrix" as for instance, among scientists. This definition is open-ended in that a matrix suggests ordered elements which need further specification.<sup>80</sup> At the second level, he refers to paradigms as "shared examples" (Kuhn 1970:187). Members of a community or culture make recourse to examples of situations that their predecessors in the group have already learned, to see "as like each other and as different from other sorts of situations" (Kuhn 1970:193-194).

Thus, a paradigm appears to result from an "agreed upon" meaning of truth. As can be seen in the history of Christian theology for example, there have been at least six such periods at which the truth about God and Jesus was understood: (i) the apostolic period (ii) the Hellenistic period (iii) the medieval Roman Catholic paradigm (iv) the Protestant (Reformation) paradigm (v) the modern, Enlightenment paradigm and (vi) the emerging ecumenical paradigm (Bosch in Pillay 1990:110). Some would argue that it takes a significantly long period before a paradigm becomes such (cf Martin 1987); Kuhn argues that it is a revolution that happens suddenly, although it takes long for the paradigm that develops out of such a revolution to receive scientific recognition.

At this point, a return to Vorster and Lategan will help to concretise the theory. We have said that the suggestion of a paradigm shift was premature. We can now support this with two specific reasons: First, there has been no revolution in South African biblical interpretation. Some theologians from the South have felt that the historical-critical approach does not meet the needs of the South. Although the Cartesian world-view has been questioned and transcended by natural scientists, theologians continue to trail behind (cf Clines 1993:75). Thus, the Enlightenment paradigm, despite its problems, continues to dominate. Consequently the South is beginning to turn to the contextual approach, whose theory is still in the mundane stages of development. Secondly, in terms of Kuhn's philosophy, the prevalent paradigm must fall into disuse

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<sup>80</sup>For a further elaboration on this read Kuhn 1970:182-187.

before a paradigm changes, in other words, it must become redundant so that the need for a new paradigm becomes acute (cf Kuhn 1970). That has not happened as far as the historical-critical paradigm is concerned. Therefore, the stream that chooses to contextualise becomes a small "interest group" that will not affect the dominant paradigm. Although a paradigm does not necessarily affect the whole group (cf Kuhn 1970), there needs to be some consensus about it. This has not happened in the case of CE in SA. Instead, as mentioned above, it is viewed with suspicion.

A case in point is Lategan's observation that publications in almost all theology journals show that the historical-critical paradigm is still intact. However, he then goes on to state why, in his opinion, proponents of the new method were not attracting converts. One of the reasons he mentions is the "arrogance" of the proponents of the method. He accuses them of wanting to do away with everything at once (Lategan 1995:49). However, Lategan fails to see that contextual exegetical publications reflect a struggle to "harmonise" the historical-critical approach with the contextual approach. Hence Maimela (1989) for example, sees nothing new or extra-ordinary about contextualisation. Rehabilitated forms of the historical-critical approach are used by almost all "contextual" biblical scholars (cf Draper 1988; Mosala 1989) which in our opinion, justifies Maimela's remark. Thus, a radical break with the dominant paradigm still has to occur. In Kuhn's understanding, a "usable" theory that will replace the present theory will have to be found. But as we have said above, this is not the place for a detailed discussion of that. We are only highlighting issues with the view to justify our choice of the contextual approach.

Clearly then, Lategan has understood Kuhn better than Vorster on the question of a paradigm shift. However, he has not understood the *modus operandi* of CE. The emerging contextual theory is set to establish a paradigm once it has been fully developed. That paradigm will incorporate elements of the historical-critical approach because despite the discomfort with the historical-critical method, historical investigation cannot altogether be done away with. It complements the contextual method. It is in this sense that though the contextual and historical approaches are incompatible (depending on how the historical investigation is done), historical investigation does complement the contextual approach. This is our basic presupposition. The question is, who benefits from this? We discuss that briefly in the following section.

#### 2.1.4.2 The *pro bono pro publica* principle

This principle whose author is anonymous<sup>81</sup>, raises the question of the usefulness of academic research in real life situations. Is it worth pursuing Biblical Studies or a study of the New Testament if it is only for the benefit of library shelves? After all, were not scripture and the study thereof meant for the edification of the Church? Is the Church the academia or is it in the society?

A belief is held in some circles, that what is not relevant to the community cannot be relevant to the academic either. This is expressed concretely in the attempt by the School of Theology at the University of Natal, to facilitate an interaction between academic research and community concerns. The two contextualisation programmes (cf West 1993:2), the Institute for the Study of the Bible and the Contextualisation Project, take up the issue of the “interface” between the community and the academia at both the level of Theology and Biblical Studies. A theoretical discussion of this interface is recorded in West’s 1991 book.<sup>82</sup> Examples of publications that have been “interfaced” are the Bible Studies published in Challenge Magazine by West and the present author respectively (1991-1996), publications by Wittenberg (eg.1994) and most of West’s publications, including the joint publication with Draper in 1989.

These examples show that it is possible to “interface” the academia and the community without compromising academic sharpness (cf Berlinerblau 1993). The *pro bono pro publica* principle means that the work must be of value to the public while at the same

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<sup>81</sup>It was found in an HSRC (1995) invitation leaflet to a conference on contextualisation. The Latin phrase refers to the “good or well being of the public”. Croatto (1983 cf Barnhart 1980) argues that theology always has an audience. If it is done in enclosures, who will be its audience?

<sup>82</sup>In the 1993 article already alluded to, West provides a rationale for contextualisation under three topics, “engagement”, “criticality” and “contextualisation”. This shows that contextualisation does not necessarily mean undermining the historical paradigm. However, it provides one with a space to develop an outcomes based Biblical Studies without considering past constraints (cf West 1993:4).



time, its academic bonafides are not to be doubted. In fact, Tracy (1981:3f) alludes to three publics in respect of theological research: society, academy and church. However, a true interface begins even at the level of research: the "public" (interlocutors) must be involved in a participatory research which is not imposed upon them but is rather negotiated before it is undertaken. This prevents a situation in which historical research takes place in an ivory tower and then have application tagged on as "contextualisation". Application is not contextualisation; contextualisation takes place throughout the process of reading if contextual questions form the basis of the reading, as this will become clear in our definition below. Conn (1990:54) writes of application:

Theology is always theology-on-the-road. And in this sense, it is not simply a question of relevance or of application. It is not a twofold question of, first, theological interpretation, and then, practical application. *Interpretation and application are not two questions but one...Theology must always ask what Scripture says. But it always asks in terms of the questions and answers our cultures raise* (italics mine). And to ask what Scripture says, or what it means, is always to ask a question about application.

As this statement makes it clear, application is not considered as a separate stage in a contextual reading of the text. This would make it difficult to guard against the temptation to transplant ideas. As it is an integral part of the process, the question that remains at the end of the process is not "what does this mean for our context?" rather, it is "how can we implement it?" This is the goal of contextual exegesis.

The *Kairos Document* (1985) to which, according to West (1993), the School of Theology responded initially in respect of Biblical Studies, challenges those who teach theology to be "public friendly". It accuses them of being academic to the point of being irrelevant. This is an example of public outcry for the relevance of theology in the South African context. The document thus questioned the method of doing theology. West (1991:31) particularised this criticism in Biblical Studies as an "interpretative crisis".

Clearly, as there can be no scripture without a community of faith (Suggit 1994:75), so can there be no biblical research without beneficiaries, the entire church. This challenges biblical scholars to be rigorous in relating the text to the context. We reflect briefly on this in the next sub-section.

### 2.1.4.3 A focus on Text and Context: the exegetical task

An important element which is problematic in traditional exegesis is the place of the text in its social and historical context. We are here referring to a written text. We have discussed this above with emphasis on the role of the text in the reader's context. However, Craffert's question remains unanswered: How do we bridge the gap between the context of the text and the present? In our opinion, the answer is: through the text. That is the obvious common factor between the context of the text and the present context. The text is central to all contextual readings of the Bible. It is the link between the world of its author and that of its reader. However, as it will become clear below, CE differs from traditional methods with regard to how the meaning of the text is arrived at.

That the text is a product of its context is now commonplace. Put differently, the context is its womb, to use a biological metaphor. Without that context, there is no text but that context will continue to exist even in the absence of the text. At the same time, a change in the context produces a "new text". That is when the text is "reread" or "retold" in the context of the early church. We may refer to that as its "cradle". Therefore in order for us to understand something about the text, some knowledge about the womb in which it was conceived is necessary. We cannot run away from the influence of the evangelist's context on the text we have. It is not the task of CE to waste time on attempts to unravel that. Instead, CE accepts it as it is as it focuses on the earlier stage. In this case, the womb takes precedence over the cradle. The womb is the context behind the cradle where the cradle is the context of the Early Church.

These distinctions have already been made by Form Criticism. However, Form Criticism ends with 'womb' and 'cradle' stages. Redaction Criticism, which was meant to improve on Form Criticism, begins and ends with the 'cradle'. In other words, it focuses on the situation of the Early Church and the author's theological intention in that situation. This is not contextual but "theological" exegesis. However, some apply the results of such exegesis to their context, as we have seen in Draper's case above and that is their understanding of contextual exegesis.

There needs to be a recognition that the text got to a stage at which it could be said to have 'come of age'. That is when it became 'public property' in the sense of it being

perceived through the interpreter's eye rather than its "dead author's" mind (cf Croatto 1983:158). This stage began long before Lategan (1984) could analyse the shift of interest in interpretation. The debates about allegorical interpretation, etc. in the early church were strictly speaking, about this. However, a lot of anachronisms would creep into the interpretation if the background of the text were not at all considered. This is where some practices of CE in the popular strand have showed a weakness. It is also where the "womb" stage becomes important. However, our womb stage does not go back much earlier than the time at which the text might have been written. It is 'contemporaneous' with it, as the discussions of chapters 3&4 of the present study show.

In our practice of CE, the 'womb stage' serves as a 'resource stage'. It resources the reader of the text with the history of the wider social context of antiquity which s/he is unable to obtain from the text. From this history, the reader obtains a picture of the type of people and conditions that may have produced the text. One might argue that this is what Mosala is trying to do in his biblical hermeneutics. There is a fundamental difference in that Mosala spends too much time on the analysis of that 'womb' whereas what CE does is only descriptive. Having described that context CE looks at how it relates to the present context. Then, it looks at how the given text would address situations such as those that cause concern in the respective contexts of the reader and the 'womb-stage' of the text.

This differs slightly from Redaction Criticism in that CE does not attempt to get the author's theological intention, that is, a "contextualised" text. Instead, it focuses more on how the text possibly functioned in the situation. It is from this, that a construction of meaning for the present context begins. To extend the metaphor of wombs and cradles, the exercise of making constant recourse to the womb engenders a sense of anticipation for the text is not a stable entity, its meaning changes all the time. Yet we cannot compare that to an objective analysis of the baby itself, as the historical paradigm would claim. Our argument in other words, is that in CE, the relevant text is a vehicle of empowerment; it provides "sturdy legs" for the weak. However, in order for that to happen, something must be known about its background although not necessarily in detail.

Note should be taken, that the context of the writer is not the major concern. What is important is the structure and what the text suggests, that is, its internal logic or in

Croatto's words, what the text will permit the reader to say. Having established that, we then conclude that this is how we see the impact of the text, not "what it is". As argued by Croatto (1983:144), we no longer have the author of that text to explain himself/herself. Therefore, we formulate our own perceptions or ideas, in the light of our own "horizon".

The scholar who is familiar with recent forms of Redaction Criticism (RC) will observe that our view of CE borders on it. It (RC) has found a different way of getting to the author's theological 'intention'. It makes use of the literary context as well as obvious links of thought as suggested by certain words and ideas. But the basic questions between it and CE still differ.

Below, we look at what this has meant in practice in SA. The reason for not placing this at the beginning of the chapter is that we are not engaged in a process of "elimination" or "demolition". In other words, it is not our intention to argue why we prefer one approach over the other; rather, how different the approaches are from each other. In that case, it makes sense to reflect on practices at this point, following the theoretical discussion.

#### 2.1.4.4 DOMINANT FORMS OF CE IN SOUTH AFRICA: THREE STRANDS

In the above sub-section, "traditional and contextual exegesis", we compared the two approaches. We then proceeded to discuss the *pro bono pro publica* principle and then, to a focus on the text and its context. The idea was to view the issue from a theoretical angle. In what follows below, the same discussion is advanced from a practical angle. The practice of contextual exegesis in SA will be divided into three major strands. No exhaustive discussion of these strands is intended though. The aim is merely to foreground them with the view to move towards our own definition of contextual exegesis, based on these practices and the foregoing discussion.

The three strands of CE as it is practised in SA and elsewhere are *populist*,<sup>83</sup> *historical-critical* and *post-critical*. We may also call them pre-critical, critical and post-critical. This is the present author's categorisation.

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<sup>83</sup>This is based on experience with Bible Study groups (1992-1995) which are not necessary to mention individually.

#### 2.1.4.4.1 The Populist manifestation

There seem to be two common problems of the populist approach:

(i) *The isolation of the text from the rest of its literary context.* For example, in the practice of SEE-JUDGE-ACT, a social analysis is usually done, with good and often penetrating questions. However, the second stage, namely, JUDGE stage, demands that a text be used. Often, the text is chosen because of its semblances to the contemporary context (concordist<sup>84</sup>). While this is a good starting-point, those who use this method, especially in Contextual Bible Studies, tend to end the process there. They neither bother about the literary context of the text nor its meaning in that context. They take the text at face value and then proceed to develop a theology out of that. As it has become clear in the last section, this is not what we mean by a contextual reading.

(ii) *The lack of background material or no attempt to look at the text's background.* An example of this is the Contextual Bible Studies of the Institute for the Study of the Bible, based at Natal University. In the context of Bible Studies (an empirical context) which West, Mandew and Philpot mention in their respective writings, participants usually have no access to background material.<sup>85</sup> These are the 'ordinary' or 'untrained' readers West refers to in his work. Their views on the text, which do not have to be subjected to any scrutiny, as this is not the aim of a Contextual Bible Study (as West understands it), are often accepted and affirmed. This means that whether they are on, or off target, they nevertheless get affirmed. Academics are only interested in the hermeneutics of the reading community, in other words, 'how' and 'why' they read a given text in the way they do. Hence Mosala's (1991:267-274) conclusion that contextual exegesis confirms the people's ignorance. However, it also has to be realised that Mosala has only looked at half the story.

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<sup>84</sup>This is Croatto's (1983:141) designation.

<sup>85</sup>The reason in most cases, for example, the Amaoti community with which Mandew and Philpot worked, is the level of literacy. However, this tends to be a general practice, except for an educationally and socially highly advanced audience.

There is an aspect of a popular approach to CE which was sanctioned and popularised by the WCC. A “theology by the people”<sup>86</sup> as Poobe calls it, (1990:984) is the product of the Vancouver assembly of 1983. Its initial focus was on developing a people-centered church as opposed to the clergy-centered church whose idea of theology comprised of a set of doctrines rather than the experiences of God’s people.<sup>87</sup> Theology by the people therefore recalls theologians (in the way the KD does) to a missiological emphasis (Poobe 1990:984).

An important rationale for a “theology by the people” however, is provided by Poobe (1990:984-985) in the following manner: (i) if holy scripture is the source of revelation, it is also claimed that people’s experiences can be a source of revelation. (ii) Since theology is concerned with good news, it cannot only be an intellectual activity; it must involve a life-style which acts to bring good news to the poor, makes sacrifices on behalf (sic) of the poor and the weak in whom Christ meets people. (iii) The poor are particularly part of the Body of Christ and must therefore be respected and given due recognition (iv) If the theological task of the church belongs to the whole people of God, then traditional elitist theological education practices are inadequate for the task.

Undoubtedly, this rationale is laudable. It is not only valuable for a ‘people’s theology’, it should also be the basis of all facets of contextual theology. However, if implemented without caution, there is a possibility that a reaction to the traditional elitist theological practices might lead to an extreme position. For example, some Bible Studies within the popular framework have the potential to be “maverick”. Indeed, Witvliet (1987:11) raises a similar concern in respect of liberation theology (which is a contextual theology) in the following statement:

So the Bible is discussed as the book in which the good news of the poor is documented. But, we may ask, does this method not contain a hidden danger of tautology? That is indeed the case if liberation theology does what it accuses

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<sup>86</sup>This should not be confused with “popular theology” as it is used by Old Testament scholars (cf Berlinerblau 1993). The focus of this term seems to be on Israel’s popular theology as opposed to the theology of the elite (rather than official theology).

<sup>87</sup>This is an empowering model. See details, 1990:984.

the dominant theology of doing: appropriating the Biblical story. In my view, it avoids that danger when it takes the particularity of the biblical story as seriously as the particularity of its own context.

The idea of appropriation is not altogether popular although West (1991:140) seems to have no problem with it. Croatto (1987) argues that it amounts to a “closure” of meaning, which is a disadvantage for the present readers of the text. However, as has been seen above, Mosala also finds it difficult to accept it. However, Croatto (1983:148, 152) argues that the ordinary person reads the Bible like that in anycase.

This aside, Witvliet’s latter point is valid. However, if he were to be taken seriously,<sup>88</sup> then he would have to explain the difference between contextual exegesis and what is sometimes known as “theological exegesis”. We shall not pursue this question due to the limited scope of this section. The reader is reminded that in the practice of CE within the historical-critical paradigm, some scholars are doing theological exegesis.

#### 2.1.4.4.2 Contextual exegesis within the historical-critical framework

By “contextual exegesis within the historical-critical paradigm” is meant the strand of contextualisation which is characteristic of scholars in search of a relevant interpretation of the text while operating within the historical-critical paradigm. Some are unaware of the contradictions while others show a willingness to move beyond the paradigm. This raises the question of a relationship between contextual exegesis and the historical-critical paradigm which has already been discussed above. As it is clear in the work of some exegetes, for example, the aforementioned work of Draper’s, there is no contradiction. The only problem, if Mosala is anything to go by, is its limitations in depth. In a paragraph or two, we briefly comment on Mosala’s views in his 1989 book, thereafter we comment on Draper’s approach to CE in his article on Romans 13:1-7.

The insights of the historical-critical framework are used by Croatto (1984; 1987). However, he uses them, in conjunction with linguistics, to his own advantage while he leaves out what is not helpful to him. Mosala (1989) has combined it with the Marxist ideology of historical materialism. The initial questions arise from his context (1989:3), Mosala takes them through the text (1989:13-99); however, he loses them during the

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<sup>88</sup>Contextualisation within the historical-critical approach seems to do this.

reading of the text of Micah (1989:101-153) and never returns to them. This leaves the reader who is looking for a solution “hanging in the air” or remarking, “a good argument, what then?” Up to the end of his reconstruction of African communalism, Mosala is contextual, in terms of our definition. However, as soon as he ceases to do this, he becomes academic in the European sense of the word. Consequently, he pursues historical inquiry rather than a contextual project. It should however, be remembered that Mosala does not see himself as a contextual biblical scholar in any case but as a theologian in search of a relevant hermeneutic for his context. In addition to what he has often said verbally, this could also be discerned from the second chapter of his 1989 book as well as in his article in *Jobbling* 1991.

A scholar who has claimed to do CE is Draper (cf 1988:30-38). In his reflection on the pre-1994 constitution of SA, Draper first outlines Weber’s sociological model of authority structures (1988:30-31), then he conducts a social analysis of the South African religio-political situation at the time before he turns to the text (Romans 13:1-7). Surprisingly, Draper returns to the initial contextual situation of the constitution which was then new and exclusive, only in his conclusion. Between then and the social analysis, one gets the feeling that the contextual situation has been suspended. Therefore, when it returns to conclude the discussion, one feels that the results of a different inquiry are being applied in the new context of the text.

There are two reasons for the “uncertainty” about Draper’s reading of Romans 13: First, he has not isolated any particular issue in his social analysis. His analysis of the situation is good but one would expect Draper for example, to raise a sharp question about Romans 13 and abuse of political authority in SA. This is what he has portrayed in his social analysis. Instead, he approaches the text with the statement that he intends to ‘examine the validity of the implicit appeal to Romans 13:1-7 made by the “new constitution” by examining the kind of authority assumed by Paul to be legitimate for himself and for the Roman imperial government’ (1988:33). The enquiry becomes too general to be contextual. However, it remains a good academic inquiry.

The second problem with Draper’s reading of Romans 13 is that the article has very little background situation while it focuses on Paul and what are purported to be his words. In terms of our discussion of West’s analysis of the three modes of reading above, and Croatto’s “hermeneutic” approach, this is acceptable. However, if the context of reading the text is characterised by the abuse of political authority in SA, then it



is not enough to focus on what Paul might have meant or not. We need to know more about the wider socio-political issues of Paul's context. This will strengthen the contextual reading.

While much remains to be said about Mosala's book and Draper's article, this is not the place for that. We only used these as examples of a contextual approach within the historical-critical paradigm. In both studies, advantages and limitations have come to light. We now proceed with a third approach, CE within the post-critical paradigm, which is the approach we want to strengthen in this study.

#### 2.1.4.4.3 Contextual Exegesis within a post-critical paradigm

In his article in *Paradigms and Progress in New Testament Exegesis*, Vorster (1995) designates the shift in biblical interpretation which is alluded to above, as a "post-critical paradigm". If anything, this is an acknowledgement by one of the most verbose and prolific South African New Testament scholars that interpretation in South Africa is 'deviating' from the historical-critical paradigm towards 'committed readings'. Before we look at the practical implication of this below, some understanding of the post-critical paradigm is necessary.

The term post-critical paradigm was first used by Michael Polanyi (1958) in his discussion of ways of knowing (Hatchet 1992:4). According to Polanyi, tacit knowing is an act of human imagination in which particulars of which we are only subsidiarily aware are integrated into a coherent whole of which one is focally aware (in Martin 1987:380). He defines tacit knowing as the outcome of active shaping of experience performed in pursuit of knowledge. It is also post-critical because it is not merely informational in the objectivist, derivative sense. Such knowledge is transformational because post-critical interpretation includes an essential participatory praxis coherent with and integral to the interpreter's focal awareness. Polanyi further argues that post-critical hermeneutics operates with an essential participatory praxis, a political parameter, which is not an option or an auxiliary enterprise added on after completing critical reconstruction (Martin 1987:380; van Aarde 1993).

Careful to keep the post-critical paradigm within the evolutionary process, Martin (1987) goes on to reflect on its place within the historical-critical paradigm. He distinguishes between what he calls "classical historical-criticism" and historical-criticism

within a holistic paradigm. Classical historical-criticism in his view was objectivist, pursuing mechanical analysis and working with Cartesian split consciousness (1987:381). The emerging form of historical-criticism on the other hand, functions not only to discern the dynamics of the social-political world of the text in its past context, but also to discern the same dynamics in the contemporary context of the interpreter. Contemporary hermeneutics has consequently become the focus of post-critical or holistic movements, thus reversing the archaeological direction of classical historical-criticism.

Thus, the post-critical paradigm, sometimes called post-modernism (see Vorster 1995), is an ideological framework beyond the precritical period (cf Vorster 1995, Hatchet 1992) although it sometimes refers to a chronological period beyond the critical period, that is, the period following the Enlightenment. The popular usage however, is the former which perceives post-criticism as a strand within the critical period, which represents a rejection of 'scientism', (cf Tracy 1987:31), a dogmatic approach to scientific models, in the critical theory.

Our approach to CE is undergirded by the post-critical philosophy which argues that knowledge is cumulative, not static. Thus, the text is treated as a concrete narrative rather than a theological abstract (cf Lochhead 1983:102). The reader places it in its sociological context which increases the chances of contextualisation because a sociological analysis produces a typology and this enables one to study what works, in what kind of situations.

Despite the three strands with these different emphases, critics of CE tend to publish blanket appraisals. These include critiques of Lategan (1995), Craffert (1998), Vorster (1995), Mosala (1989), etc. These critiques however, tend to be peripheral to the main point of CE. For example, on looking at why CE does not attract converts, we have already referred to Lategan's critiques of the exponents of new approaches. This might be so. There is a common tendency among scholars to think that the ideas they discover are completely new and that they have no need to look at their predecessors' contributions. However, this is peripheral to the business of CE. We have extracted what we deemed important for our purposes.

Our discussion has thus far, focused on reinforcing the contextual theory as understood (and debated) by some South African scholars. Clearly, contextualisation has not as yet

found acceptance in the field of exegesis. It is therefore largely ignored by those who should be writing about it. When it is written about, it is often scrutinised by the suspicious. The discussion has nevertheless, helped to highlight important issues on which contextual and traditional exegesis part ways and which, owing to traditional views of CE, make CE appear less academic and less scientific than traditional exegesis. As mentioned above, the primary purpose of this chapter is to outline the developing contextual theory. This has been done through a synthesis (though less detailed) of ideas from different angles with particular focus on West, Croatto and Mosala. Wherever appropriate, our original views have been incorporated. From this, it became apparent that a clearly articulated contextual theory in respect of exegesis depends on a clear definition of CE whose parameters will give shape to the theory. Below follows a discussion of a working definition of CE. It is informed by the above discussion and it will guide our dealing with the text.

#### 2.1.5 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF CE: STURDY LEGS?

At the beginning of the present chapter, we have argued that the theory of CE can only be possible to formulate when clear parameters of what CE is about have been delineated. A definition is the best possible means of doing so for it highlights the most important factors in what is being defined. Below follows the definition which captures all that has been discussed above. However, before we arrive at a definition, a word about contextualisation.

##### i) What is contextualisation?

As already indicated above, the term contextualisation is a derivative of the Latin word, *contextus*, which means "a weaving together" (1990:60). Its cognate, "contextual", (from *contextere*) means "to weave together". The word is usually used in relation to a particular setting or situation in history.

According to Marilyn J Ledge (1990), the term was introduced to the theological world by the World Council of Churches Theological Education Fund (WCCTEF). It replaced such terms as *inculturation*, *adaptation* and *indigenization*, which were previously used to designate ways of reformulating theology in a context other than the dominant Euro-North American (Ledge 1990:56). The individual who is accredited by Poobe (1990:985) for coining the term, is the former director of the Fund, Shoki Coe who

defined 'context' as 'the interpenetration of subject and object, signalling the willingness and concern to live with specifics rather than generalities, particulars rather than universals'. Coe went further; "By contextuality we mean the wrestling with God's word in such a way that the power of the incarnation which is the divine form of contextualisation can enable us to follow his steps to contextualise" (TEF 1974).

Clearly, the context, peoples' experiences and divine activity play an important role in contextualisation. It appears that the reason is that theology is about God's people in their particular contexts. In line with this and the World Council of Churches (WCC) definition of Contextual Theology (CT), the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) which has since the 1980s,<sup>89</sup> been the guardian of contextual theology in South Africa, defines CT as 'the conscious attempt to do theology from within the context of real life in the world' (ICT publication, undated). By this the Institute understood itself to mean a theology that has been thought out in and from a particular context, a particular life-situation (ICT:1) as opposed to a theology that is unaware of its contexts and pretends to be quite independent of any worldly context (ICT:1). In fact, it sees such a theology as abstract and irrelevant with its roots in either isolated monasteries or academic enclosures (ICT:1). According to Stanger (1993 cf Van Huyssteen), one has to be involved.

This definition emphasises a concern with social issues and the importance of doing theology from the perspective of the 'underside'. This is confirmed by Bevan who describes CT in the following terms:

(it) takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologising; and social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation (Bevan 1992:1)<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>ICT was formed in September 1982 and formally launched in 1983. It was intended as an institute to resource the church with alternative theology during the days of the struggle for liberation. It was hoped that it would operate under the umbrella of the University of Cape Town but circumstances did not allow that. It then moved to Johannesburg where it has since been located (See detailed history in Kaufmann, 1997:6-22).

<sup>90</sup>See also his discussion of the five models of Contextual Theology, namely, "translation", "anthropological", "praxis", "synthetic" and "transcendental" models in the same work.

It should be noted that in the description provided by Bevan, there is allusion to the Bible which is rare in many definitions of CT. In fact, it could be said that Bevan is thus giving a 'comprehensive' definition of CT. A similar view is expressed by Poobe (1990:985-986) thus, 'contextual theology is concerned to bring together faith and life, the Bible and one's respective context and the different ways in which people's context or consciousness of their context influences their understanding or appreciation of the Bible'.

If this is so, why then is contextualisation associated almost exclusively with systematic theologians, for example, 'contextual theology'? Two reasons account for this over-emphasis on contextual theology: (i) biblical scholars are still struggling to accept the term in biblical studies; freedom with the text has always been limited (ii) the historical paradigm on which exegesis has always been based creates the impression that the text is an 'object' to be studied 'objectively' (cf West 1991:10). By contrast, contextual theologians look at the text subjectively owing to a commitment to their respective contexts. And they are conscious of not only the particularity of the context but also the particularity of the answers they obtain for their contexts.<sup>91</sup>

Recently, however, a number of biblical scholars in South Africa have been making "overtures" to the contextual approach. However, they presently operate in a theoretical void. This reinforces the marginalisation of contextualisation by mainstream

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<sup>91</sup>This emphasis on one's context however, does not mean that any exegete is automatically an expert on the context. A social analysis of the context is imperative. Failure to do so results in outcomes such as that of Masenya (1994) in which she attempts to develop an "Africanist-womanist" theology. In the article, all but black African scholars are used. Mandew, the only South African black who is cited has made use of an American feminist scholar. The result is an unfair judgement by Masenya her culture which indicates that she might be out of touch with some aspects of it or that she might be out of touch with the "heart-beat" of present-day adherents of the same culture.

A similar comment could be made on a publication on Contextual Theology by Swanepoel (1993) with a promising title. In the article, he uses all but local Liberation theologians about whom he is writing. Consequently, he makes unfair judgements on them, without appreciating or even understanding their agenda. The problem again is being out of touch with the context he is analysing.

exegesis despite its impact on committed non-academic readers of the Bible.<sup>92</sup> West has taken up Croatto's concern about the "ordinary readers" further as can be seen in his publications on the role of the Bible in contexts of non-academic and marginalised readers. These are persuasive enough to elicit a response from biblical scholars, not least the present researcher.

Since Systematic Theology and Biblical Studies deal differently with a biblical text, there is need to particularise the definition of contextualisation in the context of the latter. In the absence of any definition of CE presently, the definition that follows below is intended as a working definition for the purposes of this study.

## ii) What is Contextual Exegesis?

Contextual Exegesis (CE) can be understood and defined in more than one way. However, it is best understood within the broad context of the process of contextualisation. Summing up the brainstorming of participants at a National Workshop on Contextualisation of Theological Education, in Pietermaritzburg (1996), James Cochrane (in Cochrane & Walker 1996:5) writes:

Two definitions dominated the discussion. One treated the notion of contextualisation as a *general reference* to the location of theology in life (whatever the status of the person doing theology might be), and the other reflects the position of those who believe the term finds its most useful role in suggesting a *particular* kind of ethical commitment.

Cochrane (1996:5) discusses the two definitions under two positions, namely, a "generalist position" and a "particularist" position. Under the "generalist" position, he highlights five points, namely (i) all theology is socially situated and located (ii) a distinction between the academic and non-academic sense of contextualisation (iii) a conviction that theology must be consciously rooted in the experiences, questions, hopes and fears of ordinary people (iv) the importance of local communities in the work of

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<sup>92</sup>An example of this is the recent publication by Craffert (1995) in which he challenges contextual theologies to first prove that they can close the gap between the then and now of the text. It appears that Craffert has not yet come to grips with the idea of CE.

doing theology and (v) listening to the voices of those whose faith and life is the occasion of theological reflection.

Under the "particularist position", Cochrane (1996:5-6) highlights four points, namely, (i) the commitment to a particular context of theologising (ii) a resistance of pre-conceived "objective" theological categories, (iii) the choice of interlocutors and use of 'contrast experiences' and (iv) a non-sectarian particularity of contextual theologies.

It is not our intention to discuss these points since they are self-explanatory. Our aim in foregrounding them was to highlight the fact that the definition of CE that follows below has to some extent been influenced by them, especially, the "particularist" position. However, two brief general comments are in order.

First, Cochrane must be commended for the analysis he derived from the workshop. The elements of the definitions he coined indeed reflect current practices of contextual theologies, regardless of whether workshop participants were aware of them or not. In fact, many contextual theologians in South Africa, including those who did not participate in the workshop, would agree with him. Both views link up in many ways with the discussion of the previous section of this chapter. However, both only provide a framework within which contextual issues can be discussed; they are not specific about the biblical text, which is where our problem lies.

Secondly, we have a slight problem with Cochrane's presentation of the last point under 'particularist position'. The manner in which it is presented could be interpreted as being apologetic. Participants at the workshop expressed a definite view that effective and meaningful contextual theology is one that is particularistic. The context might be women, rich, poor, etc. and there is no need to qualify that because it is a "pro-stance" and in no way intended to discriminate against anyone. That is not sectarianism for pro-is not synonymous with 'laager' or sectarianism. Opposition to the pro-stance amounts to encouraging a 'universal' theology. As Tutu often warns, "there can be no universal theology for theology is not the same as the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ".

In fact, this is one of the gripes Black Theology had against the Kairos Document. It wanted to see South African theology addressing the experiences of Black South Africans as a unique people, not as 'representatives' of the entire human race. Mosala

(1989:21-24) makes this clear in his attack on Gqubule, Mgojo and Buthelezi, respectively. If contextualisation takes sociology seriously (which is what it should do), then it cannot work with a generalist approach. It must root itself in particular (micro) contexts because each of these has its own particular dynamics (cf Scalise 1994). It would seem that those committed to contextualisation will have to accept the “particularity-universality” tension<sup>93</sup> as part of their future reality.

Given the above discussion of contextualisation, our working definition of CE which follows below, is a summary of its elements:

Contextual exegesis is a re-reading of a biblical text which arises out of and is informed by sociological (ie. cultural, economic, social, etc.) and philosophical (ie. world-views, thought-patterns, etc.) concerns of a particular context. Its pre-exegetical stage comprises of a social analysis out of which emerges the crucial concerns and questions with which the biblical text is approached. At the exegetical stage, the text is engaged with such questions as are relevant to the concerns of the present context. There is a dialectical relationship between the two stages to the extent that one is not complete without the other and no contextual exegesis stands on only one leg.<sup>94</sup>

As has been pointed-out above, not all those who claim to do contextual exegesis subscribe to the above definition. It would therefore be little surprising if some critics of CE see in it nothing new or different from what has been done before. Notwithstanding, the implication of this definition for this study is that questions that have arisen from our social analysis, which are stated in chapter 1 above, can now become the basis of our interaction with the text.<sup>95</sup> Previously, the motivation for studying a text had to be academic, “objective” and detached from the context.

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<sup>93</sup>See discussion of the problem in Mosala 1992.

<sup>94</sup>Note that nothing is said about a ‘post-exegetical’ or application stage. There should be no such a stage in anycase because the investigation of the text with questions that arise out of the context should end with conclusions. Further, implementation could follow on as a practical step.

<sup>95</sup>However, the envisaged result is the good of all rather than differentiation through a “perverted” form of contextualisation (cf Loubser 1996:321-337).



## 2.2. THE THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT<sup>96</sup>

In the section that follows below, we turn to the theory of development. This will strengthen our dealing with the particular text we are reading in this study. As indicated above, CE is a tool for a transformative project. Our project in this case is human development.

Having discussed issues pertaining to the theory of CE we now proceed to briefly sketch the theory of human development as it is understood and used in the present study. This is necessary because the term 'development' is an enigma. Our use of it in this study is however, specific. We focus on two main approaches to development, namely, the modernity approach (whose emphasis is materialistic) and the post-modernity approach (the alternative theory which emphasises human development). Dependency is presupposed, therefore a summary of the dependency theory is our starting-point. Since the alternative theory of development operates in small groups, is therefore context specific (particularistic), allusion to the African view of development will be made. Throughout the discussion, Korten's (1990)<sup>97</sup> understanding of a people centered development will be taken cognisance of.

### 2.2.1 Definition of development

Development is approached from different epistemological frameworks. As has been hinted at above, the epistemological framework in which the term is used in the present study is that of development as perceived by post-modernist theorists. Its particular location is in the alternative theory of development.

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<sup>96</sup>This discussion will exclude the present sociological debate on the "impasse" in development theory. For a pursuit of the debate, the reader is referred to the works of, inter alia, Booth (1985), Graaf (1989), Coetzee (1989) cf Corbridge (1990). Although the debate is important, its exclusion is justified by the fact that it does not affect the point made in the present study. In anycase, the majority of sociologists in the debate argue that there is no impasse while others confirm that the debate has gone beyond the impasse.

<sup>97</sup>See especially 1990:68-71; 113-128.

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 Korten's definition are notions of process, production and improvements. 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. Echoing Boulding (1968), Korten (1990:37) calls it a 'cowboys economy'. By 'improvement' he means improvement in the quality of life, consistent with the people's vision of their destiny.

It may be argued that these terms are not new in anycase in the field of development. However, cognisance should be taken of the fact that Korten has focused them more on people and less on economic growth. This is a major distinction between his idea of development and the prevalent definition of traditional sociology before the 1980s.<sup>98</sup> Hence he calls it a people centered development.

Korten shares his view of development with several other theorists. For example, Joseph and Desroches (1985) who worked in India in the early 1980s also advocated a people centered development. They argued 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. There are others such as Trainer, Ekins, etc.

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<sup>98</sup>It should be noted that before the 1940s there was no theory of development. Since World War II, a theory developed. However, development has since been understood in terms of charity and later 'community development'. It is only in the 1980s that the theory of Human Development evolved (cf Korten summed up in James 1992).

who are leading writers within the alternative theory whose chief concern is people. Hence their theory is sometimes known as populist or holistic theory.

The notion of development that emphasises human development is not entirely original with Korten. 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).

While this reflects good intentions, and a combination of human and economic growth, it can also create a dependency syndrome. The underdeveloped might use the privileged as 'crutches', thus stifling development. On the other hand, the privileged might manipulate their beneficiaries through their donations. However, this is not the intention of the Tenth International Conference of Social Work.

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

Man is only truly man in as 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* [my emphasis]. What we hold important is man, each man and each group of men, and we even include the whole of humanity (ex Encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, cited in Henry and 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 economic growth will ensure completeness. In the words of Burkey (1993:36), such a view of development

will advance humanity (i) economically<sup>99</sup> (ii) politically<sup>100</sup>(iii) socially<sup>101</sup> and (iv) personally.<sup>102</sup>

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 held previously, following which he published papers on a 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 (eg World Bank; IMF). He criticised the approach adopted by these developers for focusing on economic growth to the exclusion of 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 the World War II. 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.<sup>103</sup> The alternative theory posits the development of 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

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<sup>99</sup>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' (1993:36)

<sup>100</sup>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... (1993:37)

<sup>101</sup>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' (1993:38)

<sup>102</sup>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' (1993:35)

<sup>103</sup>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.

efforts. In post-modernist approaches, this is known as a micro-foundation.<sup>104</sup> Before we proceed with that discussion, a brief explanation of the dependency theory.

### 2.2.2 Dependency Theory: A background to the theory of HD

The theory of dependency originated in Latin America in the 1970s. It is based on the premise that the stronger nations siphon wealth from the smaller nations (cf Center-periphery theory which presupposed that the “Big Five” at the center siphoned the wealth of the smaller nations on the outside).<sup>105</sup> Thus, their growth is sustained by the nations of the South. On the other hand, the stronger nations claimed to be developing the weaker nations when in fact, they created dependency through the market system.

In a sense, the dependency theory can be said to be a reaction of the South to modernisation. It blames the big capitalist countries directly for the poverty of “Third World” countries. The proponents of this theory demonstrated how one part of the country exploited the other which is what the stronger nations do to the weaker nations. Prebisch, an Argentinian and chairperson of the Ecumenical Council of Latin America (ECLA) at the time, argued in the 1950s, that the view that international trade was universally advantageous was fundamentally wrong and that the dominant system of free international trade did not advance development of the Third World (cf Stewart 1997:64). Instead, the core group at the center so controlled the market that they profited doubly from it while the producers on the periphery had to settle for the lowest prices. Consequently, “die kern (groep) trek dus twee maal voordeel-eerstens uit sy eie tegnologiese vordering en tweedens uit dié van die periferie” (Stewart 1997:64). Prebisch thought that the solution was rapid and more controlled industrialisation for the Latin American countries. However, as Roxborough (1979:35) observes:

The policies designed to achieve rapid industrialisation in Latin America were not very successful. Most attempts at industrialisation via the substitution of imports led to increasing balance of payments problems, increased foreign penetration of the economy, increasing unemployment, widening rather than narrowing income differentials, greater vulnerability of the economy to cycli-

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<sup>104</sup>This term will be explained below.

<sup>105</sup>See Numberger’s (eg. 1992:296) discussion of the “center-periphery” theory.

cal movements, a continuing dependency on the export of a limited and fluctuating industrial growth. Above all, it was increasingly clear that the *mass of the population was not participating in the benefits of economic growth. If anything, they were getting poorer and poorer* (my italics).

This made it clear to ECLA that the problem was structural. There was an imbalance in international economic policies. Therefore, a distinction had to be drawn between non-development which was caused by other factors, and underdevelopment which resulted from bad economic policies. Apart from this leading to the establishment of the New International Economic Order (cf Hoogvelt 1982:75-76), it also raised interest in more research on the issue of underdevelopment. Sunkel (in Blomstrom and Hettne 1984:49) saw it as an integral feature of the "normal" functioning of the economic system :

...low income, a slow rate, regional imbalance, inequality, unemployment, dependency, monoculture, and cultural economic, social and political marginalization, etc. The conventional theory considered these symptoms to be deviations from the ideal pattern which, like children's diseases, would disappear with growth and modernisation. It did not realize that behind this lay a system, the normal functioning of which produced these results, and that this would continue for as long as development policies attacked the symptoms of underdevelopment rather than the basic structural elements that had created it.

Clearly, the issue behind this statement is that the development of greater capitalistic nations is coupled with the underdevelopment of the smaller nations. Modernisation seems to be at the center of the process that impoverishes the smaller nations. Economic growth that is proposed by developers seems unsuccessful for "economic development in underdeveloped countries is profoundly inimical to the dominant interests in the advanced capitalist countries" (Palma 1978:401).

The theory of development has been critiqued by some. In the first place, a question is raised as to whether there are any guarantees that the smaller nations would be capable of developing on their own if there was no dependency on the center. The answer to this question is as good a guess as would the answer to the question whether Africans would have been culturally and technologically advanced without colonialism. The second critique is that the dependency theory implies that there is an alternative, and pre-

ferable, kind of development of which the dependent economies are capable, but which their dependency prevents them from achieving (Leys 1982:104).

Since this is not a sociological study as such, we will avoid entanglement with a discussion of these critiques. Suffice it to point out that the alternative theory of the nineties sees human development as a precondition for economic growth. Having emerged in reaction to multinationalism and overemphasis on economic growth and accompanying ecological disasters, the alternative theory emphasises small groups and the release of human potential. Its goal, as Ekins (1992), Hillman & Hutchison (1992:12) explain, is "to build a materially modest, culturally more diverse way of life-community based, convivial, sustainable and on a human scale-in which all people can participate and find fulfilment".

We have now established a working definition of development for the purposes of this study. We have also outlined the theory of dependency which has led to the development of the alternative theory of development in Latin America. We now proceed with a discussion of the modernity and post-modernity approaches to development. Our aim is not to do a synoptic study of these but to show why, for the purposes of this study, a particular approach, the post- modernity approach, is preferred. Owing to this, much space will be devoted to exposing the modernity approach to development.

### 2.2.3. TWO APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT: CRUTCHES AND LEGS

These two approaches are not only for convenience; they reflect two disparate streams. The first, called "modernity approach" in this study, is the "traditional view"; it has been accused of causing the dependency of the South on the North. The second, referred to as "post-modernity" approach, refers to the alternate theory which is intended to "strengthen the legs" of the South.

#### 2.2.3.1 The modernity approach to development

The genesis of modernity has coincided with the industrial revolution in Europe. It represents a movement against traditionalism, towards a modernisation of the society (cf Coetzee 1989:17). It emphasises science and technology as progress or development from the traditional to the modern era. In fact, its understanding of development pivots around the term "progress" by which it implies a movement from the past towards the future.

This idea is expressed by Coetzee (1989:20) thus:

A further connotation of meaning is linked to modernisation, namely that a movement takes place in the direction of a new technology and a new organisational unity. Literally, modernisation means that a process of bringing up to date is taking place (*italics mine*) ... in which older things are adapted to such an extent that they can stand the test of modern times.

Clearly, modernity sees progress as a forward movement in a linear direction (cf Coetzee 1989:22), as the above statement shows. The old must conform to the new or it must be replaced by the modern. This takes place within the two ends of the continuum, namely, traditionality and modernity (Coetzee 1989:18). Jolly (see Nossin, 1977:27) expresses this idea even sharper than Coetzee thus:

The essence of development was thus the *quantum jump* (my italics) from the old and inadequate to the new and modern-the developed. This is most explicitly and clearly seen in the Lewis-Ranis model in which the process of development consists in shifting people from the subsistence, traditional, rural sector to the urban, the modern, the industrial. Less clearly one can see the same process implied in many other models of development.

Jolly's assertion may be crude but it is true. It describes a situation where the process of modernisation has robbed some communities of their traditional cultural identity. The "quantum jump from the old and inadequate" which is the intended result of modernity, has in fact meant involuntary surrender of some communities' most cherished values and cultural practices. There are many examples of this in the former colonies of European nations.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>For example, the carrying of sticks and the kind of sticks carried by different people in the Zulu and Xhosa cultures has a deep significance in terms of one's social status or rank. Likewise, certain types of blanket (previously, an animal skin) had different meanings and befitted certain ranks. Yet, already during missionary days, the "Christianised" people were prohibited from having any contact with these things. They were said to belong to the backward people or *amaqaba*, meaning those who still wore red clay on their faces (implying barbarism).



The three characteristic features by which modernity can be analysed are: differentiation, integration and adaptation.<sup>107</sup> These are the corner-stones of a modern western society. Needless to say, they encourage competition, discrimination and conflict. This happens during the process of bringing one's own level of development into harmony with the most advanced and modern accomplishments (Coetzee 1989:31). At another level the above-mentioned features of modernity manifest themselves in the dichotomy between private and public life. As Berger (1977) puts it:

Modernisation brings about a novel dichotomisation of social life. The dichotomy between the huge and immensely powerful institutions of the public sphere (the state, the large corporations and labour unions, bureaucracies) and the private sphere, which is a curious interterrestrial area "left over," as it were.

These two spheres of modern society are experienced by the individual in very different ways. The megastructures are remote, often hard to understand or downright unreal, impersonal, and *ipso facto* unsatisfactory as sources for individual meaning and identity. (They are) alienating (in James 1992).

The two major methods of enforcing modernity on nations that are considered to be 'backward' are coercion and imperialism. Coercion happens when the less powerful nations are forced through what appears to be economic and political incentives, to conform to modernity. Imperialism takes place when the powerful cultures market themselves and their products as models of life. Naturally, in doing this various vehicles of modernity are used. Among them may be included education, market system, social values, politics, religion, etc.<sup>108</sup> These areas are used to spread the kind of knowledge that is considered to be in conformity with modernity. Religion with its symbols, is the most powerful of these. As Isaak (1990:122) puts it:

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<sup>107</sup>These terms are explained in detail in Coetzee 1989:25-28. For the purposes of the present study it is sufficient to note that "differentiation" refers to the separation of social subsystems; "integration" unites the differentiated structures on a new basis; "adaptation" provides a collective meaning and direction to the potential for change in all social systems.

<sup>108</sup>Education and religion were the main thrust of the missionary activity in the last two centuries in the Eastern Province. Through these two vehicles many European values were imparted to those African who succumbed to the forces of modernity while they became estranged from their own cultural values.

Science, anthropology, technology and theology did not arise as pure and free responses to colonialism but rather as supporting agents.

For example the bourgeoisie, who had earlier repudiated religion altogether, now brought religion, the Church and theology back with vengeance. Colonialism needed Christianity, but to perform the function as defined by colonialism, to legitimate its authority, to undergird law and order, to give the working class a plausible explanation why this "Christian world" was so cruel to them. Christianity accepted this role. It restricted itself (and the God with whom it dealt) to the realm of religious experience, staying out of politics, science, technology and economics, for these were accepted as autonomous realms with their own built-in, self-regulating mechanisms.

In western thought then, development is progress and progress is understood as advancement in materialistic terms. Money is thought to possess the capacity to solve the problems of the world. Hence development aid always manifests itself in economic terms. However, Isaak (1990:119) comments on this as follows:

...relief work has been institutionalised and the poor given the status of a bona fide member of an established social class. The social and political function of charity or relief work seems to be to make the social horror of poverty less horrible, by turning poverty into a tenable medium of existence alongside other social strata. Indeed, knowing no better life, the poor may live a life of "happiness" in their poverty, especially if they get occasional doses of charity.

Having summarised the modernity approach, we respond in the following manner: First, it should be noted that the "macro" approach to development as has been portrayed above has no focus; it works with a world-view, ie. a wide and general situation. It sees through the lens of modernity. The local context is overlooked. Consequently, the development of non-Euro-western nations, for example, is judged in terms of whether or not, they possess what Euro-westerners possess. The question is whether the yardstick for development should be this rather than local practices.

Secondly, modernity does not develop; it creates indebtedness and dependency. So is a method that is based on it. As a philosophy with deep roots in capitalism, it is incapa-

ble of 'letting go and letting grow'. Once it emancipates potential clients of the capitalists, then it will have destroyed itself. Symbols that keep others indebted and dependent on dominant cultures are continually invented-*ie.* religious, cultural, political symbols etc. Biko humorously summarises the impact of American cultural imperialism on South Africa in the twentieth century thus, (Blacks have accepted an) irresponsible culture of Coca-cola and hamburger and consumerism" (see Isaak 1990:121-2).

Thirdly, critics of the modernity approach have argued that "underdevelopment" in the South has been caused by "overdevelopment" in the North (cf Muthien in Coetzee 1992). This implies two things in the case of Africa: In the first place, it implies that the imperialist activity has led to the draining of human and natural resources in these countries, in the name of development. Consequently, it is not only human beings that have been impoverished but the eco-system as well. In the second place, it implies that the countries of Africa were unable to advance their traditional cultural world-view owing to a forced abandonment of this by the imperialists who understood and defined progress differently.

Africans have been forced through coercion and religion to denounce their cultural heritage in favour of modern western values. Often it is not possible to distinguish between religion and western civilisation, especially when "civilisation" is brought in the name of religion. Those who refused to conform were branded as heathens and backward people, one way of demonising them. Taylor (1963:24), a European missionary in Africa, reacted to such a situation when he wrote:

Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solution to the needs that Western man would feel, the Savior of the world of the European world-view, the object of the adoration and prayer of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking, what would he look like? If he came into the world of African cosmology to redeem Man as Africans understand him, would he be recognizable to the rest of the Church Universal? And if Africa offered him the praises and petitions of her total, uninhibited humanity, would they be acceptable?

Fourthly, emphasis on money or economic growth leads to the destruction of natural human ties and the introduction of artificial socio-economic relations. In such a situa-

tion, the parties involved have no relationship unless it is based on some kind of economic gain for one or both of them. Critics euphemistically talk of "strings attached".

In a recent consultation of theologians in South Africa (Oct.1994)<sup>109</sup> to look at the theological demands of the Southern African context in a post-apartheid South Africa, the consultation concluded that the problem was not materialistic and that it was rather a crisis of values. It went on to advise that this crisis needed a more urgent attention than the actual material poverty (cf SA Outlook, Dec. 1994). Everything was held together by social values whose disappearance from the center led to a breakdown of all structures and institutions. Wealth could not restore what has broken down; it is only a return to the basic social values.

### 2.2.3.2 The post-modernity (micro-) approach

While the theory of development has been developing since the 1950s, it was only in the 1980s that a clear distinction between the theory that advocated economic growth and that which advocated a people centered development emerged (cf James 1992). It could be said that it emerged in reaction to the modernity approach which emphasised economic growth. It sees development in the same way as in our definition above. And it takes the micro-situation seriously with emphasis on developing 'communities' rather than 'nations'.

There is a growing recognition of the need to first localise any talk of development. It is impossible to make sense of an international theory and concepts which overlook the way reality is interpreted in the local situation. Bammate (in Nossin: 1977:5) makes this point when he writes, referring to macro-approaches:

This brings into question the legitimacy of international actions for the problems we have had to deal with...there is a growing questioning of the western consumer urban, and industrial models, and an attempt to rediscover and revive, what for example, Algeria refers to as "an authentic national culture."

Taken seriously, this statement represents a quest by local people to promote themselves. This can only take place at a local and particular level, as the Black Conscious-

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<sup>109</sup>The consultation was organised by the Institute for Pastoral Education in Grahamstown, October 1994.

ness movement for example, has shown in both South Africa and the United States. For example, the Black Consciousness philosophy which was 'imported' from the USA in the late 1960s, had two legs: first, mental emancipation which included among others things, self acceptance, self-respect and pride in being black; secondly, black power which entailed activity aimed at physical liberation. Organisations that espoused it in SA had focused on the first leg. The "banning orders"<sup>110</sup> came at the dawn of Black Power activity (cf 1976 student uprisings).

The "micro" approach has been adopted by social scientists recently. They have become aware of the role of human consciousness in development and the particularity of each context. The approach at this level means that local communities are involved at all levels of the development process. Their own world is taken seriously. This is inevitable because, as Coetzee (1989:87) correctly postulates:

...acceptance of the fact that the reflection on social change can be regarded as one of the most fundamental and basic inducements for the origin of sociology as well as a decisive rationale for its survival and continuance, inevitably leads to the conclusion that the sociology of developing societies must be considered to be one of the most fundamental points of departure of present-day sociology.

In the same way, development begins when the base is taken cognisance of. The base or micro-level informs the developer about the meaning structures of individuals as reflected by their individual behaviour, the assumption being that the individual meaning structures direct group interaction (Coetzee 1989:89).

This takes the discussion to the question of human consciousness in development. Critical theorists think that knowledge is important in all human quest. It accounts for what ought to be in reality (Habermas). It is influenced by particular interests. According to Habermas, (who is also influenced by Kant), there are three particular interests: (1) technical interest (2) practical interest and (3) emancipatory interest. The aptness of this analysis is evident in the way Europeans in particular, have dealt with nations of the "Third World."

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<sup>110</sup>These were orders imposed by the apartheid state on political activists and their organisations. They restricted a person's movements, associations and they took away the freedom of expression. Organisations were silenced "for ever".

A micro approach emphasises the active subject as 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 it (Knorr-Cetina in Knorr-Cetina & Cicourel 1981:4, cited in Coetzee 1989:94). Thus, knowledge of people in development is a prerequisite. In fact, Soemarwoto (in Nossin 1977) puts it succinctly thus: "development, from whatever angle we look at it, is anthropocentric with the objectives of enhancing human material and cultural welfare."

Coetzee (1989:95) is emphatic about the importance of where this should begin:

Not only can all of the so-called macro concepts in the development literature be traced to a micro foundation, but it can also be said that understanding cannot be acquired if it is not explained from the micro elements. The effort to come to an understanding of social development becomes a translation of social development if studied from the viewpoint of the micro components in their constituent contributions.

This emphasises the importance of a local approach to development. However, what does it mean in the context of Africa? In the following discussion, the African view of progress is highlighted not only as an alternative to the macro approach but as an example of a micro approach in the present study. However, its limitation is its lack of literary sources while it is based almost entirely, on empirical observations.<sup>111</sup>

### 2.2.3 THE AFRICAN VIEW OF DEVELOPMENT

Development is a very recent practice in world history. Consequently, words that define it reflect what has been observed from the concrete application of development strategies. For this reason, it is most appropriate that the terms used in the context of development be properly scrutinised so that they convey what is meant by each understanding of development.

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<sup>111</sup>Much of what follows has been observed in projects with which the present researcher is working. A part of it is based on participation and experience.

We begin with two Xhosa words that are used in the context of progress or development. The first word is *impucuko*. This is translated as "civilisation." Often, this means in practice, an adoption of the western way of life such as religion, clothing, politics, etc. It is used in both negative and positive contexts. When it is used negatively there usually is a sarcasm about people who have become so westernised that they have discarded their own cultural practices. It is usually used positively by those who are themselves on the path of a western way of life, to encourage others to adopt the way of life that is supposed to be "better" than their own. It is needless to say that the idea contained in this term is strictly-speaking, not a reflection of the traditional African concept of progress.

A second word is *inkqubela*. This word is translated as "progress." However, it is progress in the sense of a forward movement, ie. from "darkness" to "light" as some people always explain. This connotes a movement from points A to B or from the traditional past to a modern present. Associated with this is the idea of materialism so that when a person for example, has bought the most expensive car or owns some business, it is said *unerikqubela* (s/he is progressive). It is possible that this word has been coined at a missionary school as was the case with several others that we find, for example, in earlier Xhosa translations of the Bible; hence it is loaded with the idea of modernity. In fact, shortly after the introduction of "bantu education" in SA in the 1950s, the word was used as the name of a propaganda magazine which was published by the then Department of Bantu Education.

The word that has become common since the middle of the last decade is *ukuphuhlisa*. The word connotes the idea of "laying bare" or of "exegeting." When a person communicates a message in a highly philosophical way, the person is usually asked to "phuhla," ie. 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 usually 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". This "real me" might be clouded or suppressed by a number of things. A 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.<sup>112</sup>

The problem that is associated with the first two words highlights the fact that progress or development was understood differently in Africa. The word that describes this understanding as portrayed above accurately, is ubuntu. It is the real person or *umntu* that must be laid bare. We shall work with this understanding in the rest of the study.

### 2.2.3.1 *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*

In African thought this proverb has a very profound meaning. In the first place, it reminds the individual that s/he 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 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.

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 to cushion one, 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 process into adulthood. This is when a person is expected to assume full responsibility in the community by contributing to its welfare.

Social structures into which a person is born do not change. The person is prepared, through a process of socialisation, for a role in these structures so as to ensure a preservation of the community (This is pro-active; it is not a defence against the disturbance

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<sup>112</sup>In this sense it is not unusual to hear an African person claiming to have "humanised" a child by giving him/her education.



of a social equilibrium). The ability to play this role is progress. Thus there is a link between progress and socialisation.

When tradition is discarded or reformed, interference with the basics of the community begins. Those who abandon their cultural practices in favour of foreign cultures not only upset the living but also change the appearance of "what was known"<sup>113</sup> to the dead when they were alive. This is no progress or development; it is viewed as *ukulahleka* ("lostness"). It is believed that the ancestors turn their back on such people. (cf "*Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*," by AC Jordan, ie. 'the wrath of the ancestors') Thus it is not possible to talk of progress in the same way as westerners understand it.

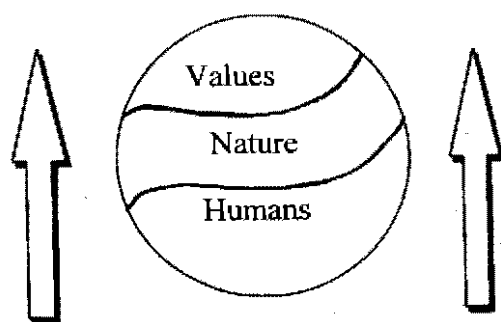
An important difference between western and African views of progress is that in the African understanding, there is stress on values that make a person "humane" (*abe nobuntu*) in the face of others. These values which include sexual conduct, social behaviour, eg. respect for others, especially adults and ancestors, work ethic, use of material possessions, relationship to nature, etc. surpass anything material. In fact, the ethical dimension of wealth is only a component of this teaching and not the entire story. This is different from the modern western tradition where acquisition of technology and materialism is stressed.

In the light of the above, the African view of progress may be described as being spherical or round like a ball, rather than circular or linear. It is based on the ability of the individual to weave together different values that make responsible individuals. Every component contributes towards making a whole and no individual can make progress on his/her own.

Pictorially, this presents a ball which is made of structures into which people are born and socialised; these are followed by people without whom structures are unnecessary; then follows the values which ensure the preservation and smooth functioning of the community. All these make the community whole and progress is defined in terms of that wholeness. The diagram below makes the picture clearer:

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<sup>113</sup>The dead are believed to be alive and present around the home as beneficial spirits for the family. They can only be beneficial when they find what they have left behind, ie. towards what they are familiar with.



The imagery of a ball helps us to understand that there is no elasticity about the African view of progress. It does not stretch or contract between two points. When there are any changes, it is the whole structure that is affected—in other words, the ball rolls "forwards or backwards," depending on the nature of the change. The individual is subsumed in this dynamic.

However, the movement takes place between the two points of "good" and "bad" rather than from "past" to "future." For example, a youth who is being initiated into adulthood is not said to be moving from childhood to adulthood but from "nothingness" to being someone. This is not a movement from points A to B but an assent to the values that build up the society, as the vertical arrows in the diagram show. A person is born into unchanging structures and all education during the person's lifetime is geared towards a legitimation of those structures and an assent to the values that ensure the stability of the structures is maintained. It is the movements of this ball that colonialists tampered with.<sup>114</sup>

An additional advantage of the ball imagery is that it portrays the African reality as it is, namely, that it is round and whole. In other words, there is nothing like the "other side of the coin." Whatever angle it is viewed from will show that everything is related

<sup>114</sup>The idea of a "dark continent" is still prevalent among some Europeans. It is based on the perception that Africans are backward heathen people because they do not meet the standards of western civilisation or progress. However, the judges do not take cognisance of the fact that African civilisation may have been curtailed by colonialism before it reached its highest point. It is not certain, apart from inferences from individual cases such as Africans becoming popes or bishops or serving in the Russian educational institutions or discovering certain types of beans during the days of slavery, how much impact "African civilisation" would have had in the world.

to another, not through links as in a chain (cf western reality in Coetzee) but in a dialectical relationship.<sup>115</sup>

A final point to make is that the African view of progress is localised: All the values that constitute the larger framework become effective in various ways in a local 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 meant education on those values that made one human among other humans. Hence a person was said to be "a man or a woman" when the person could display those values of society that made the person independent and responsible.<sup>116</sup>

Clearly, in African understanding, progress is not in the structures nor in anything material. It lies in the ability of the local community to bring out the potential of its members which in turn moves the community towards the realisation of the destiny of all.<sup>117</sup> Everything else flows out of this and none suffers-either materially or spiritually when this process has been completed.

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<sup>115</sup>The present researcher has learnt from experience with the Amawoti community (1993) that life is integrated; everything is related to another. A course organised by the ISB along the lines of Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, Church History, etc. was not accepted with that structure by the community. They suggested that the name of the course be changed to "Community Faith and Life" course. This meant putting all these disciplines together and weaving them into the experiences of the community.

<sup>116</sup>For example, in the Xhosa culture in the Eastern Province, initiation of young boys and girls is meant to provide the kind of education they need for responsible membership in the community. Focus is on cultural values. If these lack in a person, no matter how educated he/she or how much wealth he/she may possess, that person is said to be no person-*asingomntu* or *yinja* ie. dog. No community can have such persons as beacons of its civilisation.

<sup>117</sup>A good example of this in the economic sphere is the custom of *ukunqoma*. This refers to the practice of lending a cow to a poor person until the cow has had a calf; the borrower in turn retains the calf in order to use it to start his own herd.

A bad example in the spiritual realm is the practice of *ukuthakatha* (witchcraft). This refers to the ability to manipulate evil spirits to cause harm to individuals or the community. The symptoms of this practice are such vices as jealousy, envy, divisive tendencies, etc. Some people in the project with which the present researcher works blame their inability to find employment on *ukuthakatha*. This is not a good sign for the community.

A community that has taken the process of socialisation seriously is seen by its results, namely, communal living, '*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*', in a localised context; voluntary action out of moral persuasion and a sense of responsibility; and self-sufficiency as a sign of independence and maturity. No healthy individual is allowed to be a burden on the community. Hence at a certain age, the community decides as it were, that an individual ought to have an immediate responsibility by "taking a wife."

Having thus summarised the African view of development, we proceed with a reading method to be followed in this study.

### 2.3 A "CONTEXTUAL-DEVELOPMENTAL" APPROACH: A TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECT

This is the last of the three parts of the present chapter. As indicated in the introduction, it consists of a synthesis of parts one and two. The aim is to develop, out of that theoretical discussion, a model for reading Acts 3-4 on whose literary elements we focus in Luke-Acts. We begin with the outline of Berger's and Luckmann's theory of the symbolic universe. This theory helps to further explicate the actual and potential sociological role of a religious text.

#### 2.3.1. The creation of a symbolic universe

Contextual Exegesis is a "corrective" approach to scripture. Its goal is to reverse the psychological, thus physical damage that has been caused by many years of domestication and dehumanisation through scripture.<sup>118</sup> Let us take for example, what we said about African people in the introductory chapter. Many years of oppression and systematic dehumanisation have left them with a low self-esteem. Scripture was used to legitimate much of what they had already internalised, for example, the teaching that the black races were descendants of Noah's cursed son (cf Wittenberg 1991; Loubser

<sup>118</sup>If Liberation Theologies such as Feminist, Black, Womanist, Political, etc. are accepted as contextual theologies, then it is clear that their agenda is to correct oppressive readings of the message of the Bible by reversing them. All use the Bible, no matter to what extent, with the view to 'improve' the condition of the marginalised.

1987). One of the ways of reversing this, apart from using personality development theories in psychology,<sup>119</sup> is by creating a symbolic world which will legitimate the new “corrective” social structures and create an alternative universe or a “utopia” with a corresponding reality.<sup>120</sup> Thus CE becomes a formal project with clear objectives and time frames, rather than spontaneous dealings with texts.

The idea of a “symbolic universe” was popularised by Berger and Luckmann in their work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, which was first published in 1966 and had since been reprinted several times. In this work which has become a reference book in the social sciences, the two authors analyse the social construction of reality. We summarise the relevant section of their study for the purposes of the present study.

Berger and Luckmann link the creation of symbolic universes to the process of legitimation. In their view, legitimation is justification or a ‘second-order’ objectification of meaning (1976:110). These meanings, which are produced by legitimation, serve to integrate the meanings already attached to disparate institutional processes (1976:110).

This is usually done to integrate participants of second and third generations in a movement. In other words, these participants are made to ‘relax’ and accept the new order by making their lives subjectively meaningful (1976:110). Legitimation further justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives (1976:111). However, the authors caution against the view of legitimation that confines it to normative elements only. They postulate that it has a cognitive element as well (1976:111). In other words, there is knowledge involved. This is legitimation at the first level.

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<sup>119</sup>We have said in chapter one, that we are focusing on structural and people centered development rather than on personality development, as does Max-Neef for example. The former is a sociological approach and the latter, a psychological approach. There is some overlap between the two for one cannot do without the other. Berger and Luckmann acknowledge that their sociological approach is only one, the other being psychology (Berger and Luckmann 1979:117).

<sup>120</sup>Psychological theories work well with individuals. They are not always successful with groups. Besides, we are talking of a large group which is united by its religion. What is wrong with using such a vehicle for development?

At a second level, legitimation contains theoretical propositions in a rudimentary form. These consist of various explanatory schemes which are both pragmatic and concrete (1979:112). Here, teaching through proverbs, folk-tales, wise sayings, etc. are common. The aim is to prepare the child for 'life' by making it discover what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour.<sup>121</sup>

At a third level, legitimation contains explicit theories by which an institutional sector is legitimated in terms of a differentiated body of knowledge (1976:112). Due to their complexity and differentiation, legitimations with fairly comprehensive frames of reference are frequently entrusted to specialised personnel who transmit them through formalised initiation procedures (1976:112). In the absence of tasks assigned to them, these specialised personnel discuss the theories, inventing new ones in the process which unwittingly, takes the process beyond practical application to pure theory. Ultimately, institutions develop (1976:113).

At the fourth level, bodies of theoretical tradition, known as 'symbolic universes', develop. These integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality (1976:113). The two authors refer to symbolic processes as 'processes of signification that refer to realities other than those of everyday experience' (1976:113). In other words, this is above the sphere of pragmatic application, in the sphere of 'symbolic totalities' (1976:113). This becomes an all-embracing frame of reference, constituting a universe (1976:114) for all.

On this fourth level of legitimation, a whole world is created. Institutional roles become modes of participation in a universe that transcends and includes the institutional order (1976:114). In this connection, it is important to note that symbolic universes are social products with a history despite the fact that they tend to present themselves as 'full-blown and inevitable totalities' (1976:115). They nevertheless, help the individual get a sense of order and definitiveness for the nomic function of the symbolic universe; for individual experience 'puts everything in its right place' (Berger and Luckmann 1979:116). Even the most trivial transactions of everyday life may come to

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<sup>121</sup>Cognisance should be taken that Berger and Luckmann argue elsewhere in the same work, that the individual's identity is a key element in all subjective reality. This identity of course, has a dialectical relationship with society (1979:194f). In other words, one's sense of identity derives from one's interaction with society in a process of socialisation.

be imbued with profound significance (1979:117). These include the periodisation of one's biography, eg. childhood, adolescence, etc., all of which are legitimated as a mode of being in the symbolic universe. With these stages for example, having been legitimated as particular modes of relating to the world of the gods, the individual assures himself/herself that he/she 'is living correctly' (Berger & Luckmann 1979:117).

A final point that needs to be made about the symbolic universe is that it also orders history. All collective events are located in a cohesive unity that includes past, present and future (Berger & Luckmann 1979:120). This links the predecessors and their successors in a meaningful totality, serving to transcend the finitude of individual existence and bestowing meaning upon the individual's death (Berger & Luckmann 1979:121). Thus all the members of a society can now conceive themselves as belonging to a meaningful universe which existed before they were born and will continue to be after they have died (Berger & Luckmann 1979:121). This becomes a frame of reference within which all individual actions take place.

This very simple summary of Berger and Luckmann's analysis of symbolic universes helps us identify a particular niche which CE can cut for itself in the context of transformation. Of course, societies that are fashioned in line with pristine principles and norms are very rare today. However, human structures and institutions resemble each other albeit under different conditions. We believe, following Esler, that the theory of Berger and Luckmann is appropriate for reading Luke-Acts. As Esler has demonstrated in his book for example, there is an attempt to legitimate the Christian faith to the Jews who may have doubted their new direction (1987:16-23). Besides, the opening chapters of the gospel (chapters 1-4) introduce a "new beginning" and they pitch the rest of the gospel at the level of hope. The same applies to the first six chapters of Acts, said to be ahistorical by Klaus Berger and others. These chapters clearly introduce a new reality, destined to be a symbolic reality in the rest of the narrative. Beginning with the first chapter which links Acts with the gospel (1:6), God's control is asserted more rigorously than before, following the death (and resurrection) of Jesus; the Pentecost which sets the tone for all future activities of the apostles, creates a symbolic universe which legitimates all facets of life in the early church.

Unlike Esler, it is not our intention to explain or look for this in Luke-Acts although we have indicated that this is possible. To do so would be to contradict what we said earlier, namely, that the issue of development was not on the agenda of New Testament

writers. Our aim is to use the theory of a social construction of reality to construct a positive reality for the undeveloped and the underdeveloped. We have now seen that the text, if read contextually, is amenable to development. The question is “how”? That we answer below.

### 2.3.2 Categories of a “contextual-developmental” approach

What we can do with the text has been sufficiently motivated above. This section deals with how we are going to do it. We are going to read it, unravelling the “said” and “unsaid” meanings, against certain categories that emerged from our discussion of the theory of development. These categories are grouped under three major headings: 1. Contradictions 2. Utopia 3. Method. We explain briefly below.

#### 2.3.2.1 Contradictions

Under this category we discuss those conditions that contradict the ideal human situation. These include powerlessness, dependency, universalisation and bureaucracy. A lot could be said under each of these headings but the text in chapter 5 will determine how much should be said.

#### 2.3.2.2 The ideal situation (vision)

The ideal situation referred to are the dreams and hopes of a particular community, what Korten calls a vision, which provides a “social wave”. It usually provides an incentive for improvement in one’s life. In other words, it helps one to make sense of life. Thus, it is empowering. In the fifth chapter of this study, it will be discussed under the following headings: investment in people, productivity, democracy, wholeness. Once again, the text determines how much is said under each of these headings.

#### 2.3.2.3 The method

The method entails how the text could be used towards the achievement of the utopia. It is cognisant of the important principle of sustainability. Under it we discuss the following headings: mobilisation of community, organisation of socio-economic units, structural transformation and self-definition and destiny.



These categories will be used primarily in our reflection on the text in the exegesis chapter. However, the theory of development will undergird the entire study. Thus, it will be implicit in our interpretation of historical documents in chapters three and four of the study.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter set out to outline theory of contextual exegesis, building on those of West and Croatto. This was deemed necessary because traditional exegetical methods were deemed inadequate for the purposes of this study while it was felt that the theory of the contextual method had left some questions unattended. An outline of important points in theoretical discussions was provided with the view to clarify the theory further. Having established that nothing precludes a contextual reading in biblical hermeneutics, the theory of human development was briefly outlined, without a detailed discussion. This set the ground for an outline of the categories of a contextual developmental reading of the text. The theory of a social construction of reality was also outlined with the view to reinforce the use of the text in human development. It is however important to note that the above discussion has served to show how difficult it is to totally ignore the the historical dimension when reading a text. However, this does not necessarily mean that the reader of the text should exhaust his/her energy on the reconstruction of that dimension from the text. Instead, the results of archaeology and social history could be utilised fruitfully in creating the "wider historical context" which was contemporaneous with the text.

With this done, the stage has now been set for the reading of Acts 3-4, beginning with a discussion of the topic of beggars in the next chapter. The "grid" developed in this chapter will be reserved for chapter 5 while the developmental theory will undergird the rest that follows, beginning with chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### BEGGARS AND SOCIETY IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN AND JEWISH WORLD: SOME EMERGING TRENDS FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

*To give to a beggar is to do him an ill service*  
(Plautus)<sup>122</sup>

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2, we discussed the theory of CE which we then linked to the theory of human development. In so doing, we acknowledged the inadequacy of exegetical methods within the historical paradigm, for the purposes of this study and the need for a contextual theory. We then concluded with categories necessary for a transformative reading of Acts 3:1-10. In this chapter, our aim is to sketch a picture of beggars in their social contexts. This connects with the particular context in which our contextual theory is grounded. We argue that despite disparity between our questions and those asked by writers of antiquity, as we avered in the last chapter, and contrary to the widely held view, the societal attitudes towards a beggar in classical city-states give us no reason to justify almsgiving (*ἐλεημοσύνη*) as the best response to a beggar. On the contrary, available data shows developmental tendencies in the responses of societies that were confronted with beggars.

The “alternative” view of a beggar as implied in Plautus’ statement is a case in point. Plautus may not be dismissed as a mere literary creation for entertainment; there is other corroborative evidence in social history of antiquity, as it will become clear in the discussion below. The basic question is: “what can we learn from antiquity about the societal attitudes towards a beggar?” It appears 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, *Od.*) while for the Jews, a beggar was a shameful sight.<sup>123</sup> In either case,

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<sup>122</sup>*Trinnumus*. 339

<sup>123</sup>In the first place, the Jews had envisaged no beggars in their midst (*Deut.*15:4f). To have one (in early days) was a shame to the (largely rural) society and it dishonoured the ‘haves’. Later however, the pious rich used beggars to honour themselves as well as appease God (cf Moore 1962:169).

Plautus' statement applies: "to give to a beggar is to do him an ill service". No society is proud of being a beggar society. In pursuit of our question within the framework of Plautus' statement, we will reconstruct from classical literature, the concept of a beggar as well as societal attitudes towards the beggar in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world between the first century BCE and the second century CE.<sup>124</sup> Thus, this chapter explores a new ground in Lucan studies in general and in the study of Acts 3:1-10, in particular. Notwithstanding the latter statement, Hands (1968) and MacMullen (1974) remain standard works in this area of background studies. Crossan (1991) and Winter (1994) who made much use of the former two studies, have not focused on Luke-Acts either.

In order for us to obtain deeper insight, a comprehensive study of the concept beggar is necessary.<sup>125</sup> However, in doing so cognisance must be taken, of certain limitations such as the following:

- \*Different terms are used to refer to a beggar in classical literature. Owing to this, the researcher is confronted with the problem of which term to focus on. Is *πτωχός* the correct term? Is *προσαίτης* the most common term in antiquity? Do all these terms convey the idea of a *mendicus*?
- \*Socio-political fragmentation is another problem: Each city-state had its own social norms and politics. There was no homogeneity. This means that the researcher cannot generalise-s/he must be area-specific. For example, the Greeks in Athens viewed the beggar differently from the Romans living in the city of Rome. The Athenians had a different welfare programme from that of

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<sup>124</sup>The years 150BCE and 150CE are usually thought of as being the classical years—the years around which the present civilisation began to crystalise. It is for this reason and the fact that most of New Testament writings originated at about this time, that this period is focal in this study. However, relevant documents from other periods have also been used since little is available on the subject of beggars during the classical period.

<sup>125</sup>This will not only shed some light on the kind of people that were described by this term, it will also help us to determine the limits of what New Testament writers might have meant by the term as we find it in Christian documents.

Romans.<sup>126</sup> 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.). There were some similarities due to Hellenistic influence.

\*There is a dearth of literature on the subject.<sup>127</sup> The little we know has been gleaned from aristocratic writings where beggars are mentioned incidentally (Theissen 1983:231). As Molthagen correctly surmises: “the writers, 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” (J Molthagen, 1995 cf MacMullen, 1974:34-35). It is commonplace that aristocratic or privileged writers always had a biased view of the situations they wrote about. This complicates issues for a researcher whose aim is to present an “objective” picture. In other words, the researcher can never be certain of the accuracy of this literature as a mirror of conditions during the classical period.

Notwithstanding the above limitations, an attempt at understanding the beggar should be made even if this implies reading between the lines (to use Fowler’s language). Focus will be devoted to the analysis of the identity of the beggar and the social attitudes towards a beggar. Little attention will be given to the pure historical questions although such a digression would be invaluable if facts were readily available. Due to a lack of comprehensive studies or articles on the subject of beggars, we rely on snippets of information from various texts, primary and secondary documents. The sociological theory which we discussed in the previous chapter undergirds the entire reflection of the chapter although, save in the title, no overt mention of human development or the creation of a symbolic universe is made.

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<sup>126</sup>See Dimont (1910) for Athens, Alföldy (1985) for Rome and Garnsey (1988) and Hands (1968) for both Rome and Athens.

<sup>127</sup>The scarcity of sources has led to the avoidance of the subject in modern day studies. Those who have written about beggars at all base their studies on later centuries, for example, twelfth century, Reformation era, modern day America, etc. For a glance at such studies, the reader is referred to the following literature:

The discussion of the chapter then develops along the following structure: In the first part, we discuss and analyse the beggars as they are portrayed by the authors of antiquity; in the second part, we discuss the societal attitudes towards a beggar in “classical city-states” and in the third, we reflect on emerging trends that may shed some light on our reading of the text.

### 3.1 EVIDENCE OF BEGGARS IN ANTIQUITY<sup>128</sup>

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. Available data suggests four basic types.<sup>129</sup> These are “*structural beggars*”, “*moira-type beggars*”, “*philosophical-*” or “*voluntary-type*” beggars and “*physically disabled beggars*”. It should however, be remembered that in the Gospels and Acts, the types of beggars referred to are the physically disabled. Other types are encountered in other literary genres. Before we proceed with a brief comment on each of the above types of beggars, a look at terminology used for beggars in antiquity is more than germane.

The discussion of terminology which follows below is confined to Greek terms. The justification for this focus is that in modern societies, a person who begs for food or money is commonly referred to by the English word “beggar” or the Latin derivative “mendicant”. There seems to be no problem and no ambiguity as far as these words are concerned. However, in the Graeco- Roman society which is the subject of our focus, two languages, Latin and Greek, dominated. There appears to be no problem with Latin words, for “beggar” is “mendicant”<sup>130</sup> and “poor” is “pauper”. In other words,

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<sup>128</sup>We are not here referring to numbers but to the phenomenon. We believe that the mere mention of certain “types” of beggars indicated that they existed. We therefore analysed the data in terms of such phenomena.

<sup>129</sup>This is not intended to suggest that the empire was homogenous. Different city-states had different practices (see note 5 above). Palestine which falls under a different category, had its own practices as well. The four types are the present author’s invention.

<sup>130</sup>See various forms of the term: *mendicabulum* (beggar; mendicant); *mendicabundus* (begging); *mendicatio* (a begging; obtaining by begging); *mendicimonium* (beggary; indigence); *mendicus* (a beggar; mendicant). *Mendicus* as adjective also means beggarly, needy, in want. The only digression to pauper is *mendicitas*, which either means beggary or pauperism.

there is a definite demarcation of concepts. However, the situation is different in the Greek language: there seems to be an oscillation between *πτωχός* and *προσαίτης* although *πτωχός* is used for both “poor” and “beggar”. This makes it difficult to determine the identity of a beggar in antiquity. Hence the need to examine the latter two words. We proceed with this below under the heading “nomenclature”. The rest of this section is further divided up into two sub-sections, namely, “types of beggars” and “general characteristics”.

### 3.1.1 NOMENCLATURE: CONFINING AN ELUSIVE TERM

In his book, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome*, Hands (1968) translates the word *πτωχός* as beggar. However, in his usage, the term refers to “the vast majority of the people in any city-state who, having no claim to the income of a large estate, lacked that degree of leisure and independence regarded as essential to the life of a gentleman” (1968:62 cf Crossan 1991:271-272).

As can be seen from this definition, this understanding of *πτωχός* has a particular socio-economic bias: it implies that everyone who did not draw income from an estate (like the elite) but had to work for a living, was regarded as a beggar. This possibly represents the view of those who lived off surplus from the large estates they owned and had thought that life was meant to be like that. During the period in question, those who owned such large estates in the Roman empire were the aristocrats. These not only owned land but some of them were also authors (eg Horace, the poet) and inscriptions from which part of our knowledge of socio-economic relations in the empire during the period in question is gleaned.

The reluctance with which Hands (1968:64) accepts the aristocratic understanding of a beggar may be surmised from his warning that this understanding should not be generalised because of the constant change in the usage of words. He cites as an example Plato’s usage of the term in *Dyskolos* where for Gorgias *πτωχός* refers to those who do not exercise control, ie. the *demos* (cf also de Ste Croix, 1981:64). Elsewhere, Plato described beggars as those “who make their livelihood by endless entreaties” (Hands 1968:64). This latter definition refers to beggars and not to the ordinarily poor people. In fact, Hands follows Plato’s definition with a profound remark that to have “excluded the poor from the state would have been impossible, for the state would have ceased to

exist" (1968:64). This remark refers to both Plato's ban on beggars (*πτωχοί*)<sup>131</sup> in his ideal republic and to the number of poor people in the empire. We may surmise from it that Plato's use of the term refers to beggars, rather than to the poor.

The problem with Hands however, is that while he shows an awareness of the shortcomings of the aristocratic understanding of *πτωχός*, he is not rigorous in his critique of it. Instead, he has surveyed a number of classical writers who have used the term and then only provided us with some data of how they have used it. Yet as he continues to discuss the poor, and later the destitute, one gets the impression that his own understanding is that the people described in aristocratic writings are the poor who would normally be described by the term *πένης*. For example, he distinguishes between these people and the destitute thus: "if those who worked for their living merited so little regard, it would be surprising if the beggar were viewed with any kindness" (1968:65).

Crossan (1991:272) draws attention to three commentaries on the conversation between Chremylus and Poverty in Aristophane's *Plutus*. These are commentaries (in Crossan's chronological order) by Hands (1968), Finley (1983) and Hamel (1973). Interestingly, all three studies come to the same conclusion, namely, that the *Penetes* are those people who could not have luxury without having to work; the *Ptochoi* are the destitute while the *plusioi* are the very rich. That these three commentaries have come to the same conclusions suggests that there is no other way of interpreting the passage in question. It reflects an aristocratic view which has pitched the standard of living very high for the wealthy and much higher for the destitute.

Incidentally, beggars were looked down upon as lazy people. For example, the Latin word *iners* and the Greek word *ἀργός* which are used in connection with beggars both suggest not lack of opportunity but the lack of will to work (Hands 1968:65). Thus a distinction has to be made between the beggar and the poor on the one hand, and between the aristocratic understanding of the term *πτωχός* and the general understanding of the same, on the other. In order to make sense of Hands' position, and move beyond Crossan, Finley, Hamel and Hands, we must conduct an investigation of the term's semantic history.

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<sup>131</sup>See Plato, *Republic*.

The word *πτωχός* normally refers to the “materially poor”. However, in the several instances where it appears in Roman literature it refers to a beggar. In Latin, the word’s equivalent is *mendicus*. The latter is the commonly used word. Other translations are *stipem petens* (eg Lk 14:3.21.16; 20.22.2) and *pauper* (eg Mk 10:21.12, *Apuleias* 13,16).

It appears that the word has been used with reference to the beggar since the time of Homer (8th BCE). Based on the root *πτῆ*, it was understood to mean “utter dependence on society” or “timid” (Esser 1975).<sup>132</sup> The root *πτῆ* from which it comes means “crouched together”. This implies a feeling of inadequacy which is also conveyed in the metaphorical usages of the word in secular Greek, eg. meagre, inadequate, scanty, unable, conceding something.<sup>133</sup> Some words that have been derived from this word bring its meaning very close to ‘beg’. For example, the word *πτωχεία*, means ‘activity of a beggar’, ‘begging’, ‘destitution’ and ‘poverty’ (Brown 1976). These words echo the translations of the word in some literature.

The common usage of the term *πτωχός* for beggar in antiquity is attested by the fact that apart from classical literature, it is used in the LXX 100 times. Here it translates the following Hebrew words which nevertheless do not have Greek equivalents (see Esser 1976:821-822): *ʾani* (occurring 37 times and meaning oppressed, poor, humble, lowly) *dal* (occurring 22 times and meaning low, weak, poor, thin) *ʾebyḏn* (occurring 11 times and meaning ‘one seeking alms’, a beggar) *rās* (occurring 11 times and meaning want, poor) and *mišken* (very rare, meaning ‘dependent’, ‘socially lower’).<sup>134</sup> Since these words have no direct translations, their meanings are usually contextually determined.

Clearly, *πτωχός* was commonly used in talking about a beggar. However, it should not be taken for granted that it was used as a synonym of *προσαίτης*. Rather, it was used because “it was logical to categorise the destitute people it describes as beggars” (Louw

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<sup>132</sup>See detailed discussion in Van Manen 1931:18-28.

<sup>133</sup>See Dionysius of Halicarnassus who lived in 30BCE-10CE.

<sup>134</sup>Bammell has found that *πτωχός* occurs only 34 times in the New Testament, ie. in both senses. However, this is more than the occurrences of the word *προσαίτης*.



1997-interview). This does not however, mean that all the beggars were destitute people. For example, moral philosophers were not driven to begging by indigence or destitution, they were motivated by moral principles. There were alternatives to begging if they so wished (see below).

The proper Greek term for beggar, *προσαίτης*, is not commonly used in classical literature although it appears in various forms in some literature. *Πτωχός* seems to be the most common term instead.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, nothing much is known about *προσαίτης*. However, in order for us to be able to distinguish between it and *πτωχός*, a brief discussion of a few examples will suffice.

The term *προσαίτης* is translated in lexica and dictionaries as ‘beggar’ or ‘one who asks for charity’ (Louw and Nida (1988) cf Woodhouse (1910)). This translation is supported by the use of the word in various forms in the few instances where it appears in literature. For example, in Diogenes Laertius the plural form, *προσαιταις*, is used in the discussion of why people give to beggars and not to philosophers (Diog.6:56). As can be seen, the meaning here is straight-forward. The giving referred to is giving to the beggar primarily.

In a different example,<sup>136</sup> the word takes the form of a verb. In his discussion under the heading “tranquility of the mind”, Plutarch explains that everyone has a problem of one kind or another, no matter how self-sufficient you may consider yourself to be. In a sentence to illustrate his point he uses the verb *προσαιτουμεν*. The translation in the context of the sentence is ‘we...beg’ (*Moralia* 471). The text reads as follows: "Λαμπρα τα καθ' ἡμας πραγματα και ζηλωτος ἡμων ὁ βιος. Οὐ προσαιτουμεν ουκ ἄχθοδορουμεν ου κολακευομεν." (Our affairs are splendid and our life is enviable: we do not beg, or carry burdens, or live by flatters).

These examples make it clear that the word is straight-forward. Its occurrence in different forms does not alter its meaning. Unlike *πτωχός*, its emphasis is on the social

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<sup>135</sup>Even Josephus (*Bellum*. 5,570) uses *πτωχος* when writing about beggars.

<sup>136</sup>Several examples could be used but three only have been selected since the meaning of this term is neither contested nor complicated. See also Plutarch, *Moralia* 1058 D.6 where the verb ‘beg’ is used; 499c where also a verb is used; Lucian, *Navigium*. 24.

status of the person as well as the consequent behaviour. Πτωχός on the other hand describes the material and spiritual condition of the person. In other words, it is a "holistic" term.

The above discussion has shed some light on the Greek words used which are translated by the word 'beggar'. We now have some idea of who Christian writers might have had in mind when they wrote of beggars. It appears that in order for us to understand the writings, the word to work with is πτωχός although in our definition, the word would encompass both Christian and aristocratic views. With this in mind, we proceed below with the categorisation of beggars.

### 3.1.2 TYPES OF BEGGARS

As already mentioned, four basic types of beggars can be inferred from the available data. Some of these are not beggars in the sense of being destitute (πτωχός) but in a social sense (προσαίτης).<sup>137</sup> However, in order to be able to distinguish between these, one has got to be able to define each type. Failure to do so will hinder the attempts to determine what the New Testament writers understood by "beggars" and what kind of intervention they deserved. An explication of each type follows below.

#### 3.1.2.1 Structural Beggars<sup>138</sup>

All human societies, primitive and modern, capitalist or socialist, are stratified in one way or another (Reissman 1967:206). The very existence of strata implies inequality. And inequality is vertical in that some are at the 'very top' and others are at the 'very bottom' and wanting to ascend. The key to understanding this is power, not functional

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<sup>137</sup>This is a convenient distinction to make. Were it not for the fact that in aristocratic literature the word πτωχος is used indiscriminately, this division would be real.

<sup>138</sup>This category of beggars is found everywhere where there is competition over resources. As Lindberg (1981) profoundly states, "...poverty is *not* a natural problem but a social one, i.e. poverty cannot be explained by scarcity". Yet no state is ready to admit this — other reasons are found and advanced as the explanation. It is therefore not surprising that the 1958 report on beggars in Johannesburg also has everything but this category. Nor is it surprising that the many studies on poverty in the USA do not have an explicit reference to the structures.

necessities (Reisman 1967:207). Those at the top benefit while at the same time they manage to keep others outside the circle, thus away from power.

We do not however, wish to dwell on the issue of power in this chapter. Rather, our aim is to highlight one of the consequences or by-products of the ideology of power, namely, the creation of an expendable group of people who are neither needed by the society nor are they of any benefit to it. This usually works in favour of the *status quo* through which it limits the number of those who qualify for privilege and also ensures that others are manipulable. In a model<sup>139</sup> that was developed by Warner among the Yankees in the 1940s, he found that the Yankee City society (as most others) was stratified as follows: (i) the 'upper-upper class' made up of the old-time aristocratic residents. (ii) the 'lower-upper class' which accommodated those people who lacked the aristocratic background but who qualified on the basis of wealth. (iii) the 'middle class' which was divided into upper and lower segments according to income and profession (iv) the lowest strata which included the poor but honest people below which were the outcasts (see Reissmann 1967:224).

It must be remembered however that the above structure is only a model developed out of empirical observations in a modern society. We may never be sure of its accuracy. It may nevertheless be used in conjunction with an earlier model which was developed by G Lenski (1966:200ff) whose work focused primarily on primitive societies. For convenience, we call Lenski's model of agrarian societies 'power classes' model (cf Lenski 1966:74-75). According to him, these groups ('classes') were arranged according to their access to economic surplus and power. Status was important and it had a dialectical relationship with power. As in Warner's 'Status Reputation' model, Lenski placed the social outcasts at the bottom of the social ladder. He called these the expendables among whom he included prostitutes, antinomians, beggars and such like.

The slight difference between the two models is that Warner's model portrays a small town, perhaps much like a typical town (not more than thirty thousand people) in antiq-

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<sup>139</sup>Agrarian societies are very few and scarce these days. However, there are some communities who to some extent, live in the same way in that they have a bit of the 'industrialised/urbanised world' and a bit of 'agrarian/rural world'. Warner's model describes such a community. We will not, however, discuss its details or those of others described in this chapter. Our point is that used heuristically, this model may help to create a mental picture of what some communities in antiquity may have looked like.

uity while Lenski's focuses on peasant societies before the development of cities. However, this difference does not represent a divergence, rather, it makes the two models complementary because in our opinion, there was no rigidity in terms of movements between town and country.<sup>140</sup>

Notwithstanding the above, Warner's model provides us with a 'working idea' of what the social structure could have looked like in antiquity. What for example, is our basis of talking about the structural type of beggars? Is there any suggestion in classical literature that social structures of the Graeco-Roman world produced beggars?

There may be indications of structural problems in classical literature, (eg. Juvenal), however, the problem is: how do we know whether the structure we have is appropriate for a particular city-state or not? To date, there has been no agreement among social historians and classicists about the social structure of the empire in particular. Various suggestions have been made. For instance, MacMullen (1974:94) suggests two major groupings, namely, the rich and prominent nobility which is split into a higher (senatorial) and lower (equestrian) stratum. At the bottom was a large mass of the totally indigent, mostly free but partly slave. In the middle was a small variety of people.

Although there are some semblances between this and Warner's model, it does not necessarily reflect reality about the societies of the empire at the time. Scholars have constructed their own models to use as heuristic devices. Hence the varied views on the social structure of antiquity. Carney (in Crossan 1991:59) posits a patronage structure. In terms of such a society, there was no macro structure but pyramids, each under its own leader or head. This is in contrast to Rorhbough's view, that the social structure of the empire was pyramidal, producing its own kind of social relations.

Given all the above suggestions, one wonders in which way exactly the society was stratified. Whatever the case may be and however much disparate these are, they all

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<sup>140</sup> The two models share the short-coming of using the category of 'class' which is difficult to define in the context of pre-industrial societies. For example, Lenski (1966:75) defines class as an "aggregation of persons in a society who stand in a similar position with respect to force or some form of institutionalised power". In the context of his study this defines urban 'groups' who controlled the distributive process. One wonders to what extent this applied to the Roman society.

have the category of the lowest social class. This includes among others, the beggar population. At the top of the social ladder is always found a small minority of the wealthy (equestrians included). There seems to be no agreement about the size of this group. Seemingly, it was between 1% and 3% (cf MacMullen 1974; Rostovtzev 1957 cf Malina 1981:73). These owned all the sources of wealth, leaving the majority poor (cf de Ste Croix (1981), Moxnes 1988).

This type of social organisation inevitably produced what sociologists today call social differentiation. The components of the various suggested models imply different social ranks which determined what one was entitled to or barred from by the structures. Those at lower social ranks were obviously nonentities. They remained, in political language of the time, the *demos*, the *populus* (cf de St Croix 1981:64). These are collective terms for the common people or the general mass. This group which is collectively described by the word *πτωχοὶ*<sup>141</sup> in classical Greek literature included beggars.

If one were to ask whether classical literature makes any direct reference to such people the answer would be “yes” and “no”. It is “yes” insofar as there are several references to beggars who are not sick or otherwise disabled. They are beggars as a result of unfavourable economic conditions. It is “no” because, as in modern studies (eg. The Johannesburg report on beggars, 1958, several American studies on the same) beggars are not directly linked to social structures. Classical writers (who were aristocratic) were nevertheless not conducting sociological studies; they wrote largely for entertainment but also to transmit their own values.

Some clues about beggars who are neither disabled nor foreigners are scattered in various documents. For example, among vices in the city, as recorded by MacMullen (1974:87)<sup>141</sup> is a story about prostitutes ‘going off duty’ in the morning while the beggar still enjoys his sleep under a tree. There is no suggestion that he was blind or crippled; nor is there any reason to assume that that was the case. In the context, the author is describing life in the city. The conditions he describes were conducive for the growth of beggars-whether healthy or otherwise. The reference made to beggars by Augustine (*Sermons*, 345.17) (who is incidentally later than first century) does not specify the reason for their begging. It only points out that beggars are everywhere, waiting to receive: “the hand that reached out to beg can be seen everywhere. The

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<sup>141</sup>MacMullen (1974) has not provided a source for this. However it is a very important reference.

open air is their dwelling, their lodgings are the porticoes and street corners and the less frequented parts of the marketplace” . If their begging had resulted from a physical disability, Augustine would have been specific.

An inscription that makes the point clearly is found in Pompeii where beggars demand the election of a candidate who apparently favoured them: “the beggars demand his election” (Dela Corte, 1954, trans. MacMullen 1974). Here again, one must assume that the beggars referred to were casualties of a social system rather than victims of physical diseases. If they formed a political constituency, then there were too many of them to have been the disabled people alone. Besides, Juvenal provides us with information that should make us look beyond physical disorders. For example, he mentions Jewish beggars that have proliferated Rome: “every tree is under strict orders to pay rent to Roman people; the Camenae have been thrown out; the whole forest’s turned beggar.” (3:15-16) Although this is a Satire, typical of Juvenal’s attitude towards the city, it suggests that there were a number of beggars among Jews in the grove who could not afford to pay rent (cf Ferguson 1979:137). These were most probably, casualties of the Roman social structures which had precluded them from participation in economic activity. By contrast, the Greeks whose presence in Rome was also resented, accepted any form of work in exchange for food (cf Juvenal Sat.3:58f).<sup>142</sup>

There are regrettably, no statistics of this group of people — either in the official records of the empire (for they did not pay tax and had no fixed address) or in other types of written sources from antiquity. This makes it difficult to determine the extent of begging in the cities.<sup>143</sup> But one can surmise from the scanty information we have

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<sup>142</sup> This does not mean that in Athens, Greeks avoided begging by doing the same. Homer (Od. 14:226f; 18:363), for example mentions the fact that some of those in lower strata of the society would not work; instead, they preyed on the well-to-do and would not let others benefit from their benefactors (cf Odyssey 18:49). This is probably related to the clientelle system as well.

<sup>143</sup> Beggars were an urban phenomenon because begging thrived at the centers of economic activity. These were either Temples, which served as banks or market places, where beggars could find benefactors (cf Juvenal Sat.5). In rural places, begging was not visible largely because the community “sheltered” a person who was less fortunate. Most of those who begged in cities either left rural areas after various calamities such as continuous crop failure has led to them losing their land. They went to the city with the hope of finding employment. However, if the situation in antiquity was similar to what we have today, then there was no stability.

that there was a significant number of beggars; they were so many that Cicero (cf Hands 1968:64) for example, had hoped to use them and other poor people as a political constituency. These are the people he later insulted as the *sordem urbis et faecem* (the 'scum of the city') when he failed to secure their votes.

The situation in the country may have been different. For example, Mark distinguishes between Galilee (rural) and Judaea (urban) in terms of his focus and bias. Much of Jesus' ministry in Mark's setting, took place in Galilee but there are no beggars, except the disabled.

### 3.1.2.2 *Moir*a-type beggars

The term *moira* first appears in Homer's writings in the eighth century BCE. By it he means fate. In his analysis, fate is the destiny of some in accordance with the divine plan. In other words, some people are destined for suffering while others are destined for success. Effort pays little as one is bound to follow a predetermined direction. Homer however does not explain the source of this fate and the reason for it.

According to the Stoics who also used the term, fate is divinely ordained. It 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: *λόγος καθ' ὃν ὁ κόσμος διαφέρεται* (Diogenes Laertus vii:149). However, as Elizabeth Carter explains, this does not mean that God interferes with the liberty of human actions.<sup>144</sup> Responding to Carter is the task of 'process theologians'. Our point here is that the Stoics used the term *moira* in the same manner as it was used by Homer. They may have even been influenced by him. However, it is they who directly linked fate to God, the governor of all history.

Although Homer did not explicitly use the term in relation to beggars it is used in this chapter to categorise a particular type of beggars that lends itself to that definition. These are people who once were wealthy or were on the road to being wealthy but have met their fate along the way.

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<sup>144</sup>cf Carter's introduction to *Epictetus' Moral Discourses: Enchiridion and Fragments*

The type of beggar that is portrayed by Homer in the *Odyssey*<sup>145</sup> is a case in point. He was once an ὀλβιον. By this is meant a rich man who like others lived in a 'fine house'.<sup>146</sup> He had everything before 'losing everything' in the city. As he himself confesses in response to the 'rich host':

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 Cronos, destroyed me, as he somehow wished.  
(The *Odyssey* 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 has had no control over what happened to him, nor did other human beings contribute towards it. City life was no solution for those who have had a similar experience. For, as Juvenal avers: city life was lonely, everyone guarded his/her own economic interests (cf *Sat.*). The lack of support in such a competitive situation 'put a spanner in the works' (cf *Od.* 19:65-9 cf the warning at 19:81-2).

The change in the attitude of Odysseus' host, Penelope, may have been caused more by the news that the beggar in question was once a rich person (19:103-4) than by the mention of her husband's name (19:84). She showed an interest in him as a person and began to ask such humane questions as "where do you come from?", "who are your people?" (19:104). The mere act of giving a chair to a beggar and sitting down to talk to him already gave him some social recognition. This is due to the fact that a beggar

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<sup>145</sup>The *Odyssey* is based on life in the eighth century BCE. However, apart from its apparent continued influence in the Greek society, it is also clear that social life had not become different during the classical period.

<sup>146</sup>This refers to a house typical of those occupied by wealthy people. The adjective "fine" was used at the same semantic level as "good", to define the wealthy. For example, "good birth" (as in *Corinthians*) refers to a wealthy background. Fine or purple cloth (as in *Acts*) would refer to expensive cloth, symbolising the economic status of its bearer.



who was once an *ἄλβιον* was judged differently by the society (cf Hauck 1976). It is debatable whether any other beggar would be treated in the same way.

Although Homer wrote about life in the eighth century BCE, there is no indication of much change since. Stories that are told by Juvenal about city life in his time for example, are not necessarily confined to life in the Roman capital. They are shared by humanity beyond the borders of Rome. As will be seen below, beggars or the poor were treated in a similar way by the rich in the empire, the difference being in Palestine where rabbinical teaching about beggars was relatively favourable. The rejection of wealth by moral philosophers and their choice to become beggars not only shows obsession by stoicism, but also a rejection of the morality of the wealthy. Hence the quest for freedom, even from material possessions. Homer is therefore relevant for our period of study. Besides, historical studies of later centuries also point to bad socio-economic conditions (Goodman 1988, Freyne 1987, Freyne 1998a, Freyne 1988b, especially for the Palestinian situation).<sup>147</sup> Given this, it is highly probable that the situation had not changed seven or eight centuries after Homer. Crossan (1991:34f) provides an example of how people lose their property. He mentions Virgil and Horace who lost their property during the war. Upon return, they had lost their land. There were however, other methods used such as confiscation of land, following its owner's death or confiscation of land by the creditor, for debt owned.

It is to be assumed that the *moira* type of a beggar was found everywhere, i.e. homes, temple entrances, market places. We may not confine it to one place, eg. the temple entrance because they were physically mobile, unlike the cripples or the blind who frequented such places. However, we may not on the basis of Odysseus' story alone, that they were *pandemios*, that is, moving from one house or city to another (cf *The Odyssey* 21:327; 17:10 and 18f), take their ubiquity as a given. We have to acknowledge that the case of Odysseus was different and that it does not by itself give us enough evidence to be able to formulate a theory. The only other place where we can assume that

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<sup>147</sup>We are consciously using information about Palestine and the rest of the empire interchangeably to explain the socio-economic conditions at the time. The reason is that although it is possible to work with different layers in respect of Palestine and the Roman Empire, it cannot be denied that Hellenism had an influence in the region on the one hand while the socio-economic and political policies of Rome affected all under its rule almost equally.

there were beggars who were *pandemios* in Palestine because here the Rabbis give guidelines about how to deal with such (see below).

With this brief but scanty evidence, we proceed with the next type of beggars that were found in the empire, the physically disabled.

### 3.1.2.3 Physically disabled beggars

The physically disabled beggars are occasionally mentioned in the New Testament (Luke 18:35-43; Mark 10:46-52; John 9:1-42; Acts 3 of a different kind of begging in John 5:1-9).<sup>148</sup> In fact, all the beggars that are mentioned in the New Testament suffer from a form of disability or another.<sup>149</sup> And the mere fact that they are reported to be beggars means that they are unable to survive without appealing to public sympathy.<sup>150</sup> As it has become clear above, this is no suggestion 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 (eg. Acts 3:16).<sup>151</sup> We are here concerned about this connection rather than the miraculous nature of the healing.

Recent scholarship has been trying to find a connection between New Testament stories and similar stories in the Graeco-Roman background (eg Holgate 1993). There is a con-

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<sup>148</sup>Note that Matthew does not mention begging in any of the stories he shares with Luke and Mark. Instead, he edits the term out of the story. It is difficult to determine why he does this. Even if he has a Jewish audience in mind, begging was known in Jewish communities in spite of the wish in Deuteronomy 15:4 that there should be no beggars among them.

<sup>149</sup>Garland has documented a number of different kinds of the physically disabled in the Graeco-Roman world. The book is invaluable for the study of disability in antiquity.

<sup>150</sup>Interestingly, Malina (1987:356) mentions physical disability among the causes of poverty.

<sup>151</sup>See also discussion in the following chapter of this study, about the significance of the miracle stories and the *theios aner*.

sensus about such stories (eg. the healing of the cripple in Acts 3:1-10), others have been controversial (eg. the healing of the woman who could not lift herself in Luke 13). Let us take as our starting-point, the healing of the cripple in Acts 3:1-10.<sup>152</sup>

The healing of the cripple at the temple entrance has been linked to a story that is told in Plutarch (*Tacitus* IV:81) about the blind and the lame who came to emperor Vespasian to ask for healing. Their motivation was that before their different afflictions, they were able to work and maintain their families (cf Hendrickx 1987). However, since they have lost the use of some of their body limbs, they were forced to beg. They therefore asked for healing so that they could continue to provide for their families.

We are not to ask here why they went to the emperor to ask for this kind of help as does Theissen (1995). This is irrelevant to the concern about a connection between disability and the socio-economic status of a person. Theissen who raised the question about the involvement of the emperor wanted to make the point that since Pentecost (Acts 2), power has been so “devolved” that even the apostles (who by social standards of the time were nothing) were now able to do what has been thought of as the prerogative of emperors and such great men (Acts 3:6-7 cf Acts 4:13f). In other words, he sees Pentecost as a democratic model. For us however, it is important to note some good elements of the story, eg. the intention of the men to be economically independent, putting aside the fact that their goal smacks of patriarchal tendencies (see eg. eagerness to protect and maintain wife and children).

Another good element of the story is the fact that the men were able to identify exactly what the cause of their economic suffering was. In the discussion that was conducted above, there is no mention of such an insight from a beggar in any of the other stories obtained. Further, the men went ahead and sought help to transform their situation. These are instructive points for the readers of the story today.

#### 3.1.2.4 Voluntary/philosophical beggars

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<sup>152</sup>Since this story will be discussed more fully in chapter 5, we are not going to focus on the detail but on the parallel stories in the Graeco-Roman world.

The types of beggars already discussed above, structural, moira and physically disabled, had no control over their respective situations. If they had been given a choice, they would most probably choose the opposite of their conditions. The next type however, referred to as “voluntary” or “philosophical” beggars in this study, has chosen begging voluntarily. In fact, we refer to them by this name because they have opted on philosophical grounds, for “self-imposed” poverty by giving up all the material possessions they have had, in exchange for a beggar’s life.<sup>153</sup> Some stood on street corners, working without accepting payment (*Dio Chrysostom* of Malherbe 1989) while they earned their bread by begging (*Dio. Oracles* 32.9). Others however, did not take to the streets as they were supported by their well-off friends. Our focus is on the former, particularly the Cynics, since they were more ‘in the world’ than other moral philosophers (cf Malherbe 1989:21).

Cynics are among the philosophers that saw poverty as a virtue in the midst of a society that defined the purpose of life in terms of seeking happiness through wealth. The extreme end of poverty as has been seen in above definitions was beggary. In this condition the person was ‘in want’ and totally dependent on others. He or she<sup>154</sup> becomes timid. This is the way of life most Cynics chose for themselves.

Given the examples provided by Dio Chrysostom, the question this way of life raises is: ‘to what extent was the begging of these philosophers genuine?’ They had the means of making a living yet they chose to live as if they did not. In search of an answer, we turn to the writings of Diogenes Laertius.

In Diogenes Laertius, it would seem that voluntary beggars had embarked on a “preaching and teaching by example” campaign. They sought to influence, through their lives, the rest of the society in which they lived. In this case, the teaching was about the attitude to wealth and to the indigent of the society. It would be surprising if anyone from the aristocracy cared to listen to them or read their writings. Taking to the

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<sup>153</sup>In this sense then, they may be described as *προσαιται* rather than *πτωχοι*. They were beggars in so far as their occupations had changed. However, their spiritual condition remained the same, ie. they retained their ‘moral high ground’.

<sup>154</sup>We have not come across references to a female beggar in our research. However, the term *επητρια* (beg-gress) which is very rare, is used in Luke (cf Moulton & Milligan 1930:227).

streets then, as beggars, would make the point more emphatically. Clearly, the philosophers did not turn to begging for “easy material benefits”: They saw wealth as a momentary preoccupation and beggary as a possible destiny of everyone. For example, when Diogenes is asked why people give to the beggars and not to philosophers, he answers: “Because they think they may one day be lame or blind, but they never expect that they will turn to philosophy” (Diogenes 6.56).

At first this statement appears to be optimistic, ie. an encouragement so to say, to strive to be a philosopher or to be in a higher eschelon of the society. This would imply that philosophy is accessible to all. Yet we know from other sources that philosophers themselves saw theirs as a high vocation to which only a few are called (see Plato). On the other hand the question was possibly intended to be sarcastic, ie. to mock the philosopher for turning to the kind of philosophy that sets him aloof from the society. A second look at it shows that given the socio-economic realities of his time, Diogenes saw beggary and poverty as being within the realms of possibilities for everyone. Life favoured more a downward rather than upward mobility although according to Lenksi’s (1966) model, there was no rigidity between “class” structures and lot of movement in both directions. This made any position of prestige temporary. In our opinion, the implication of Diogenes’ statement was that it was better for the wealthy to make friends with beggars rather than view them contemptuously.

Our interpretation of Diogenes’ words is supported by his reaction to a bad-tempered prospective giver from whom he was asking alms. In response to a plea for alms, the man said to Diogenes: “Yes, if you can persuade me”. Diogenes then replied thus: “If I could have persuaded you, I would have persuaded you to hang yourself”. Although Diogenes comes across as one with a witty personality, it would be incorrect to assume that here, we have some of that personality reflected. The alternative is probably true, namely, that the man would be “persuaded to hang himself” because he has displayed an “inhuman” attitude towards a beggar. Diogenes had very little regard for such a person as he himself says, in response to a question: “I fawn on those who give anything, I yelp at those who refuse, and I set my teeth in rascals”.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>155</sup>Diogenes (6.60) was thus explaining why he is called a Cynic, that is hound (see Crossan (1991) for further explication of Cynic).

The extent of Diog's reaction to those who despised a beggar may also be seen in his hostile response to the miserly man who was slow to respond to his plea for alms: "My friend", he said, "it's for food that I am asking, not for funeral expenses".

Normally, a destitute person would not use the kind of language that is used by Diog against his would-be benefactor. As we have seen above, it was characteristic of the beggar to humble himself or to "crouch" (Hauck) before the would-be benefactor. But Diog. uses hostile language which a genuine beggar could neither afford nor had the guts to use. Nevertheless, he thus reveals the anger that is suppressed by many a genuine beggar.

Given the above discussion, can it be maintained that voluntary or philosophical beggars were genuinely destitute? On what grounds could that be maintained? It appears from above that they used begging as part of their campaign for a new morality in society, one that taught detachment, especially from materials. For example, in a much earlier writing (c 8th cent) Homer's Odysseus pretends to be a beggar in order to "expose" the negative social attitude towards a beggar, perhaps prevalent during Homer's time. This helps him to convey the teaching that beggars represented Zeus (14:55). This is the first explicit positive attitude towards a beggar in Greek literature. Homer himself was no philosopher.<sup>156</sup> However, his writings were read widely and were influential in society.

These examples show that the interpreter of the snippets we find about beggars in the philosophical writings cannot see them in isolation from the historical tendencies of their time. In some cases the philosophers articulated the prevalent spiritual and social mood of their time; in others, they agitated for change. It is clear in this case that attitudes towards wealth, the poor, the beggar, were targets of change. Even Christian writings of this time reflect this (cf especially Luke, 1 Timothy, James). This is further support for the view that voluntary beggars were not destitute and that they had their own agenda to pursue while other types of beggars (eg structural and moira-related) had to beg or perish.

A final example in support of our view is provided by Plutarch who casts doubts on the genuineness of voluntary beggars. In *Moralia* (1058c) we read:

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<sup>156</sup>It is said that Homer was a blind bard from Iona (cf Introduction to *The Odyssey*).

...he who has got the Stoic cornucopia, though he has become opulent, begs his bread from others and, though he is a king, analyses logical arguments for pay and, though he alone has everything, pays rent for his lodgings and buys his bread and cheese, often doing so by borrowing or by asking alms of those who have nothing.

Cornucopia and opulent mean the same thing. Both words refer to 'having plenty'. It was the very wealthy and rulers who could have plenty-to the extent of being able to share with others. However, our opinion is that in the context of Plutarch's writing, the Stoic Cornucopia would refer to too much influence by the stoic philosophies. Consequently, those who were not in need would live as though they were.

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. Hence, of all the categories of beggars mentioned above, they are the only group that engaged the *status quo* while others remained passive and dependent. Crossan (1991) thinks that Jesus was himself linked to this group. However, his thesis has been refuted by some scholars, the most recent being Draper (1993).

Having completed the section on types of beggars, let us now place them in their social context, to see how society received them.

### **3.2 SOCIAL ATTITUDES: RECEPTION OF A BEGGAR**

The problem of fragmentation to which we alluded in the introduction to this chapter makes it difficult to establish a general pattern of responses since each region responded according to its "own customs and norms". In order to deepen our understanding of attitudes towards a beggar, we need to examine "conceptions of charity" rather than responses. Some responses and attitudes may be ascribed to conceptions. In this case, it is the conceptions of charity that have determined response to the beggar. As it will become clear in the discussion, conceptions in antiquity differ from present Christian conceptions of the same. For convenience, these have been divided according to two major 'cultural groupings', namely, the Graeco-Roman and the Judaeo-Christian cultures under which specific terms and concepts are discussed.

Owing to scanty information about beggars and “responses” to them, we will focus on terms and concepts that are widely used in relation to interventionist strategies in situations of economic ills. These are discussed under the broad term ‘charity’ whose meaning is often (erroneously) narrowed down to alms distribution.

It is rather a misnomer to call this system by which Romans and Greeks respectively, exchanged gifts,<sup>157</sup> 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.<sup>158</sup> The Jewish idea was no different:<sup>159</sup> For example, the word by which almsgiving is denoted, *ἐλεημοσύνη*, is both Septuagintal and New Testament. It refers to kind deeds and acts of pity towards others.<sup>160</sup> In the LXX however, the word referred largely to God’s relationship with human beings rather than to interpersonal relationships (cf Moore 1962). Although primary focus is on social attitudes, the discussion that follows below will help us to obtain a clearer picture of what the term *ἐλεημοσύνη* entailed.

### 3.2.1 THE GRAECO-ROMAN CONCEPT OF CHARITY

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<sup>157</sup>Gifts as understood by Lactanius (*Divine Institutes Book IV: 420*) refer to “anything which is wrought of gold or silver; likewise anything which is woven of purple and silk”.

<sup>158</sup>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 and Balch (in Gillman 1991:26) posit, “charity or almsgiving for the poor and destitute who could not offer anything in return was virtually unknown”. In other words, it was not a matter of giving handouts to the needy. The claim on the giver in Graeco-Roman society consisted not in need, but in some pre-existing personal relationship (cf Countryman 1980:105).

<sup>159</sup>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 want to divorce Christians. If the Greeks had the proverb ‘friends are one soul’ then the Jews talked of a ‘fellow Israelite’. Thus for Johnson charity meant that all should be of ‘one heart and soul’, as understood by the Greeks and expressed in Acts 4:32.

<sup>160</sup>This also comes out very strongly in the *Didache* where 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).



As indicated above, charity extends beyond almsgiving although it is often narrowed down to this. For example, a healthy relationship towards 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 (iii) Aristocratic prejudices.

### 3.2.1.1 Patron-client relations<sup>161</sup>

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 cf Garnsey 1988).<sup>162</sup> In other words, it is a relationship between unequals (Malina 1988:211). Of significance in the definition is the relationship between two individuals. For Schmidt and others (in Crossan 1991:60) this is even more serious than a merer definition: "the only element essential to the definition is that the relationship must connect two individuals with each other by a direct personal tie". This relationship goes with obligations on both sides, that is, 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).

A social convention which was called 'giving and receiving' was at the heart of patronage (Winter 1994:46). This was different from the Greek practice of gifts exchange. In this case, the client was expected to show gratitude for the gifts received. This gratitude was cause for more giving on the part of the patron (Winter 1994:46).

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<sup>161</sup>Much has been written on this subject. We will not go into all the publications. In fact, what follows is not even the tip of an iceberg but a select individual authors who are helpful in our attempt to understand the institution better.

<sup>162</sup>We concur with Garnsey 1988 here, that this system was not common in the Greek world but that it was a Roman practice. In the Greek world, eg. Athens, there were no private socio-economic relationships; poverty was public, so was the community response to it.

It must be emphasised however, that the kind of patronage referred to here never entered a relationship with a person from the bottom classes.<sup>163</sup> 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.<sup>164</sup> The reason is not difficult to guess: Such a person commanded some influence in certain areas and was usable as a rubble-rouser for the patron's gains in the *πολιτεία* (cf Winter 1994:48). According to Malina (1988:211), the two who were involved in a relationship had a "common bond in the quest for honor".

It would therefore be expected that the patron would treat such a person as more of an 'equal' than a subordinate. However, evidence point to the contrary: the patron humiliated the client. As MacMullen (1974:109) correctly observes, status still played a role-the patron sought to be "more honourable". In Moxnes' (1994) words, a mutual relationship between two parties included power and status. Winter (1994:52 cf Juvenal 5:2; 80; MacMullen 1974) 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.<sup>165</sup> This, according to Winter (1994:52) sparked off the following reaction from the client:

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<sup>163</sup>Crossan (1991:64) holds a different view for he distinguishes between what he calls "vertical patronage" and what he calls "horizontal patronage". Not enough evidence. It is only based on Cicero's letters.

<sup>164</sup>According to Gillman (1991:34), "Examples are those relations between landlord and tenant, ruler and servant, lender and debtor, landowner and day labourer. Ranking above a client, a patron provides scarce (economic) resources and political advantages; a client, in turn, reciprocates with expressions of solidarity and loyalty".

<sup>165</sup>The connection between the inferior meal of the client and the superior one of the patron is interesting here. In 5:2, the satire introduces the insulting situation in which the client is placed by the patron. It is as bad as living on crumbs from another man's table. In 5:80f, the two meals are described in detail, leading to the client's reaction in 5:10. See notes in eg. Fergusson (1979); Courtney (1980); Duff (1970). This discrepancy in the types of meals ordered at a restaurant is indicative of rich-poor statuses. Poor people were not expected to buy expensive meals at the restaurant. When they did so, they were forced to work hard in the ensuing days to make up for the financial loss they had incurred (see MacMullen 1974). By highlighting a similar situation between the rich and "not-so-rich" Juvenal shows the central role that is played by wealth in social relations. He himself had aristocratic connections.

No one asks of you such lordly gifts as Seneca or the good Piso or Cotta used to send to their humble friends: for in the days of old, the glory of giving was deemed grander than titles or faces. All we ask of you is that you should dine with us as a fellow-citizen: do this and remain like so many others nowadays, rich for yourself and poor to your friends (Sat V.110-113 cited by Winter 1994:52).

The client could afford to protest in this way. His socio-economic status is different from that of a beggar. He is aware that while he receives something from the patron, the patron also gains by having the client. Hence he could afford to reprimand the patron.<sup>166</sup> After all, in accepting a client, the patron wanted to increase his honour in society. To once again use Garnsey's terminology, he sought to be "More Honorable" (in MacMullen 1974:109).

This notwithstanding, patron and client needed each other. They benefitted mutually from the relationship. The problem about the patron asserting his status is characteristic of the society in which they lived.<sup>167</sup> Otherwise he would not be a patron. We now turn to a similar practice, on a less personalised scale.

### 3.2.1.2 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).

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<sup>166</sup>The word *civiliter* which is used in this context in the Latin version was, according to Duff (1970:194 cf note 73, p.296), first applied to the emperor's status of being 'an equal with equals', ie. a fellow-citizen. It was later used when the emperor was condescending and not using his position to insult his subjects. The meaning could also be extended to include the rich and great who do not use their status to insult others.

<sup>167</sup>cf A summary of socio-economic relations as provided by Moxnes (1994:379-389) in his self-evident article: *The Social Context of Luke's Community*.

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 those who voted him into public office, to provide buildings, bread, circuses, theaters, etc (the Greek version of "bread and circuses being" *θεῶν καὶ διανομας*, cf Dio Chrysostom. 40.8). This was understood to be an expectation even before the prospective benefactor entered the office.

Veyne (1910:10) 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: the rich contributed indeed, spontaneously or willingly'. In the second place, *euergetism* refers to the benefactions of a voluntary nature or to the *obonorem* which was offered by those elected to public office (Veyne 1910:10-11).

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 (1990:11). These benefactions were gifts *euergesia* and they were given for the benefit of the community in honour of the public office bestowed upon the individual. Veyne (1990:12) 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'. These 'collective benefits' included such public buildings as amphitheaters which were donated to the public by the benefactors.

There are indeed several inscriptions which illustrate the bestowal of honour on city benefactors in recognition of their contributions to the welfare of the city (it should be remembered that each large city was a state on its own). A few examples of these in support of the point will suffice:

Gods, RESOLVED by the Council, that Hegelochos of Tarentum be declared public friend and benefactor, together with his children, and that they receive public maintenance whenever they are in the city, that they be free of levies and receive front seating at the contests, in view of his participation in the liberation of the city from Athens (in Danker 1982:65).

This inscription was apparently given in honour of a benefactor from Tarentum. His name, as clearly indicated, was Hegelochos. The inscription reflects the recognition of a different kind of benefaction: It relates to events in 411 BCE when Euboeia was supported by Tarentum in securing its freedom from Athens during the Peloponnesian War (Danker 1982:65). In other words, Hegelochos was a soldier, honoured for his part in liberating the city. This shows that a recognised contribution to the 'welfare of the city' was not only that which took material form but was spiritual and physical as well.

Another kind of benefaction that was not very common, yet not necessarily rare is reflected in the following long letter:

Titus Aelius Hadrianus [Antoninus] Augustus Imperator Caesar, son of God Hadrian, grandson of God Traianus Parthicus, great grandson of God Nerva, Pontifex Maximus, Tribune for the eighth time, Imperator for the second, Consul for the fourth, Father of his country, to the officials of Ephesos, the Council, [and the People]: Greeting.

I learned about the generosity that Vedius Antoninus shows towards you, but not so much from your letters as from his; for when he wished to secure assistance from me for the adornment of the structures he had promised you, he informed me of the many large buildings he is adding to the city but that you are rather unappreciative of his efforts. I on my part [agreed] with every request that he made and was appreciative of the fact that he does not follow the [customary] pattern of those who discharge their civic responsibility with a view to gaining instant recognition by spending their resources on shows and doles and [prizes for the games]; instead he prefers to show his generosity through ways in which he [can anticipate] and even grander future for the city. His Excellency Proconsul [Claudius Ju]lianus is transmitting this letter. [Farewell] (in Danker 1982:69-70).

This type of inscription refers to the benefactors who built roads and aqueducts, theatres and other public places of entertainment-possibly a member of the municipality. These were lasting gifts compared to gifts of bread and circuses or other forms of entertainment for the city population. However, their value was not

immediately recognised since the beneficiaries were accustomed to daily entertainment that brought about excitement.<sup>168</sup>

It appears that the contribution of the rich to the community was both obligatory and moral. MacMullen (1974:66 see bibliography on p.171, fn. 30) for example, quotes incidents of the rich being stoned by the community for withholding grain from the community during the times of famine. 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 the responsibility of feeding the community. However, faithfulness to the expectation brought rewards, as the following inscription shows:

Dion, son of Diopethes, moved that 'whereas' (*epeidei*) Agathocles, son of Hegemon of Rhodes, having imported a quantity of wheat, and finding that the corn in the market was being sold at more than(?) drachmae, persuaded by the superintendent of the market and wishing to please the People, sold all his corn cheaper than that which was being sold in the market: it is hereby 'resolved' (*dedochtai*) by the Council and the People to grant citizenship; to the end that all may know (*ὅπως ἅπαντες ἤδωσιν*) that the People understand how to repay with its favours those who are benefactors to it (Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum-Ephesus, translated and cited by Winter 1994:27).

Winter on the other hand, postulates that the responsibility of every citizen towards the welfare of the city meant acting beneficially at both material and spiritual levels.<sup>169</sup> This was good statesmanship. However, this benefaction was not directed at individu-

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<sup>168</sup>Benefactors were honoured during an elaborate procedure with four parts. Winter (1994:22) spells them out thus: "This was done by the *erection of an inscription* commemorating the event, the *public praising* with words of commendation, the *crowning* with a crown of gold, and being *allocated a permanent seat of honour in the theatre*". They were honoured for different kinds of gifts to the community, ranging from public buildings to providing food and entertainment.[cf also Dio Chrysostom 66.2.1; Eph.(1)390]

<sup>169</sup>Winter based his study on 1Peter. This expectation was, according to him, directed at Christians. They were urged to make that contribution in the *πολιτεία*.

als; nor was it an intervention in a situation of poverty; nor did it have anything to do with religion. As Veyne posits (Veyne 1990:19):

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.<sup>170</sup> However, some benefactors did it for altruistic reasons while others did it for personal aggrandizement (cf Garnsey 1988:83-84). The more generous they were, the better their standing in the community. In some cases, even the wording of the inscription to honour him was determined by the benefactor concerned (Winter 1994:31). Thus the beneficiaries remained indebted to him and his posterior (cf Gillman 1991:26).

Hands (1968:36) sees the subjective element as an inevitable part of being a benefactor. He asserts "the very title *benefactor/euergetes* was itself *philanthropon* since it did not simply state a fact but conferred a status, indicating that the person on whom it was conferred was in credit, as it were, in respect of the balance of friendly acts" (1968:36). While conferring of the status meant expectation for more gifts, the benefactor willingly gave in order to remain in 'control' even if only psychologically.<sup>171</sup>

Danker (1982) has recorded from epigraphic literature, the writing about a good benefactor for the city (Ephesus). Whatever his sins or faults, owing to his known contribution to the community, he had to be given a special place. This seems to have been common in antiquity-what you had (and was able to give) rather than who you were,

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<sup>170</sup>Here we tend to differ with Garnsey (1988:84) who asserts that euergetism was ad hoc and limited to reacting to a specific situation. Garnsey falls into the trap of seeing this situation through modern eyes something against which he warns us earlier in the same work.

<sup>171</sup>In his discussion of the promises to would-be benefactors, Winter (see 1994:28-32) leaves the reader with the impression that benefactors were created and encouraged by civic authorities. This takes the focus away from their own ambitions. But, as seen above, social history of the time does not entirely agree with Winter in this regard.

determined your destiny in society (Winter 1994 cf Lenski 1966).<sup>172</sup>This takes us to the next point.

Euergetism has also been described in Aristotelian terms (cf Veyne 1994:14). Seen from this angle, it is described as 'magnificence'. This, according to Aristotle, is the manifestation of an 'ethical virtue', a 'quality of character' (Veyne 1990:14). Thus, the magnificent man was a social type: the 'rich notable' (Veyne 1990:16). Many such men used their wealth to buy support from the community. They spent generously on 'anything that interests the whole city or the people of position in it, and also the receiving of foreign guests and the sending them on their way' (1990:16)

Such a man occupied a high position in society. Owing to his 'good deeds', he was held in high esteem. Hence the honours he is given upon entering the city or even posthumously. He provided food and entertainment or in Veyne's language, 'bread and circuses' at his own expense. He was aware that he was under an obligation to do so. Of course, the poor man could never afford this. Nor was it advisable for him to attempt to imitate the rich.

As can be seen then, it is incorrect to equate *euergetism* with either charity or intervention in a situation of poverty (contra some commentaries on biblical passages that have to do with giving).<sup>173</sup> The practice presupposes that nobody in society is in a destitute state. For the beneficiaries are in most cases people who are above poverty line. Hence theatres and other cultural centers are important to them. This then helps us to distinguish between what New Testament scholars usually regard as the societal attitudes towards the beggar in some texts and the significance of the practice in antiquity.

In addition to the situation described above, there is also what we call "aristocratic prejudices". The categorisation is ours, following a reflection on some statements

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<sup>172</sup>There are similar examples in Christian documents, eg. the plea to Jesus on behalf of a man who deserved his favour because he had done so much for the nation (Luke 7:5); In the Acts of the Apostles, it is a woman who deserves ministry because she too has done much for the people (Acts 9:39).

<sup>173</sup>The word *euergetes* appears in Acts 4:9 where Peter explains that they are being charged for performing a good deed on a disabled beggar. On an exegetical note, this might mean that although the deed is performed on the individual, it is for the benefit of the community (cf Acts 3:11f).



which follow on the next section. The inclusion of the section on "Aristocratic prejudices" is justified by its explicit developmental tendencies. This section in the present chapter because of its importance in developmental issues.

### 3.2.1.3 Aristocratic prejudices

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 in either case. As Hauck observes, "to give alms is never regarded as a virtue even from a religious standpoint" (in Friedrich, p887, cf Woodhouse 1910:386). In fact, in the Greek world, almsgiving was never regarded as a national item of ideal conduct<sup>174</sup> (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).

It appears however, that in the context of the empire, it is the Christians that spread the practice so rapidly. Dimont (1910:382) 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. At this stage however, Christianity had not become official. It is 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, eg. the development of a theology around almsgiving, which continue to influence Christian thinking about charity today originated in the Mediaeval period (see Dimont 1910:384). Dimont however, forgets the role played by Pliny the Younger earlier, in encouraging charity.

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<sup>174</sup>Woodhouse (1910:387) however argues that in Athens, there was in operation a State system of outdoor relief for infirm paupers (*adunatoi*) which originated during the time of Solon or Pisistratus, about 6BC. He goes on to say that such relief was originally confined to those invalidated through army service (Plut *Solon* 31 in Encyc 387). However, it appears that the practice was later extended to other disabled members of 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 maintainance at public expense" (Doc.61 in Hands 1968:202). This however is the only known incidence where the disabled are provided with state assistance.

As it will become clear below, non-Christian writers in classical states give us a biased view of beggars. They not only view them shamefully, they despise them too.<sup>175</sup> Cicero for example, described them as "*sordem urbis et faecem*" (ie the 'scum' or 'filth' of the city, cf Hands 1968:64): His denigrating language continues 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?

(Cicero)

It is possible that Cicero spoke thus of the poor and beggars after his failure to secure their votes.<sup>176</sup> The poor and destitute are known to have voted for those who showed kindness towards them. In a sense 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 the beggars. "The beggars demand his election", says the inscription on a wall above a long bench where Pompeii's poor sat the day through (MacMullen 1974:87).

However, it is not all those who could give that gave charitably (cheerfully). 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". In another statement, Philto (in Coleman-Norton 1969:45), 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, so it merely prolongs his life for further misery".

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<sup>175</sup>Homer is the only early writer known thus far who has taken a positive view of beggars. In *Odyssey* (cf esp books XIII-XXI), 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.

<sup>176</sup>Cicero's intention may have been to play on the emotions of the Roman aristocracy so as to secure their support. They despised those who had to work to earn a living. If this was so with them, how much more with beggars? Ironically, those who wanted power depended on the votes of the people who are denigrated by Cicero.

In modern-day sociology such statements reflect developmental tendencies (see chapter 2 above). So is the one by Plautos (in *Trinnumus*). They are developmental in the sense that some of the potential givers were critical of the practice. They did not see almsgiving as the solution to the problem of begging but as an encouragement of the dependency syndrome. This is how we would see it; from the perspective of the “alternative theory” of development. However, the aristocrats thus only verbalised their inner prejudices. 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 seem to have had some aversion 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” (MacMullen 1974:116). 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’s a fool. Let him pay up and he’ll get it.” (MacMullen 1974:119).

Even (Politics 1319a) some of the most respected philosophers had prejudiced views of the poor. Aristotle, for example, pronounced all traders, artisans and hired labourers incapable of virtue. Consequently, he saw no reason for them to be granted effective political rights. The rich with their ‘virtuous’ lives would become political guardians of the poor. However, he could not practically exclude the poor from the state for that again would have meant the extinction of the state.

If this was so with the poor, one wonders how much prejudice there was against the beggar who is in a stage beyond poverty. The same perceptions were likely to exist, especially because beggars had no source of income other than the public from which they expected alms. The following statement which is captured by MacMullen (1974:118) is more likely to have been directed at a beggar than 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.”

Some of the wealthy did however realise that the beggar was not going to leave the society in the future. Even Plato’s “beggar-free” city was only idealistic. This is clear in Madame de Romilly’s sarcastic response to what appears to have been a ban on beg-

gars. She refers to it as "that optimistic outlook of much Greek political thought" (Hands 1968:65). In other words, Plato like his Greek predecessors is idealistic in thinking that Rome could ever be without beggars, an observation that is already implicit in Aristotle's ideal republic.

It should be remembered that while arguing for a ban on the one hand, on the other, Plato, like Aristotle, had a positive attitude towards wealth. There had not at that stage developed moral philosophies most of which adopted a negative attitude towards wealth while they clearly encouraged poverty as a virtue. For Aristotle, for example, wealth brought about "happiness" which is said to be "a human paradise" (Livingstone, p114). In other words, he thought of wealth as being in the service of man rather than the obverse. For example, in his work he defines happiness as:

...prosperity conjoined with virtue, or as independence of life, or as the pleasantest life conjoined with safety, or as an abundance of goods and slaves with the ability to preserve them and make a practical use of them: it would be pretty generally admitted that happiness is one or more of these things (in Livingstone, p115).

This being the ideal situation, no beggar is envisaged in such a society. Yet the philosophers did not spell out the source of prosperity although both Plato and later Aristotle suggested responsible use of the land with the view to combat the problem of poverty (Hands 1968). We suspect that this would only be true for the already privileged.

We have in this section, briefly sketched the prejudices of the aristocracy. As it became clear, poor and beggar were virtually the same in their sight. And they treated them with equal contempt. As Juvenal sadly records (Sat.3:153f) "Unhappy poverty has nothing about it harder to bear than that it makes men the target of ridicule". MacMullen (1974:111) expands this thus:

...Invite him to dinner and he came, sure to be shown a place at table that demeaned him, a serving of food that left him hungry, cheap wine, and the insolence of the servants-servants in this respect taught by their master. The insults he handed out had to be swallowed along with the dinner, so long as his guests had nothing better waiting for them at home.

### 3.2.2 The Judaeo-Christian concept of charity

The impact of this must have been both psychological and pathological. When such mockery and scorn is deliberate and repetitive the recipient tends to loose heart. We must thus understand the impact of aristocratic prejudices on beggars.

So much for the Roman-Hellenistic context. We now turn to the Judaeo-Christian context. It must be emphasised again that social historians would not distinguish between areas and cultural groups because there was much cross-cultural polination by then.

This section introduces a different territory in the Roman Empire. Since Palestine was not originally part of the empire, but became one through conquest later, it had its own cultural outlook. However, since the Jews had already been influenced by the Hellenists and since the Romans had also taken over much of the Hellenistic culture, there are a number of convergent points. This is the cross-cultural polination referred to earlier. The practice of 'organised' charity is particularly Palestinian. We look at it from two angles, namely, Jewish and Christian. The former has provided the basis of the latter's view of charity.

#### 3.2.2.1 Temple charity: A Jewish perspective

The first response, almsgiving, may be seen as a pious act on the part of devout Jews. 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 (Deut 15:4f). They themselves believed that in giving, they were rendering a service to God (cf Moxnes 1988:113). In line with this there was a teaching 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 and Loewe 1946:416).<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>This teaching however, seems to have only remained a set of moral standards as in ancient Israel (cf Bird 1983:7) rather than a "state" policy. A theological legitimation of it began to emerge during rabbinic times (Bird 1982:150, 1983:13; Prockter 1991:69-80).

The import of this teaching is simply 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 “comradeship”, if not nationalism, would prevail among Jews. The question we might ask is: 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?

Sources tell us that the teaching about giving goes back to the days of Moses. It was meant to counter 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 than lending. It was an act of righteousness (there is no Hebrew word for alms). The recipient was then freed from indebtedness to the giver.<sup>178</sup> After all the giver gave from the plenty which belonged to God. Thus developed the teaching which is found in the Pentateuch, about leaving something in the field during harvest for the poor to glean (Leviticus 19:9f, Deuteronomy 24:20f) and about taking no basket along to pick up the grapes. The teaching about the Jubilee or the “Year of the Ram” started at about the same time (see different explanations of this practice, eg. Wittenberg 1995). A provision was also made to the effect that what grows in the fields in the seventh year, when the fields lay fallow, was free to the whole community as well as to the proprietor (Moore 1962:162).

As can be seen, in the terminology used this teaching was envisaged for a society which depended on agricultural produce (Moore 1962:162). Those who would give would do so from the plenty which God’s earth had produced directly. However, the teaching became more difficult as towns and cities, with a different form of economic activity developed. With this grew the alienation of city dwellers from the religious culture of the countryside. Thus, the phenomenon of beggars which the rural culture was meant to preempt or absorb (cf Deut 15:4) became very apparent in the city. Individuals in

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<sup>178</sup>Note the contrast between this and the practices of the ‘pagan’ world. Most scholars would argue that giving here has no strings attached to it although Bird (1982; 1983) would counter this by postulating that the recipient had an obligation to reciprocate.

the city degenerated rapidly to the condition of beggars due to lack of social support structures which are found in the country.

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 1952, Haenchen 1971), meant to buy God's favour, so to say. Focus was thus not on the recipient but on the giver.<sup>179</sup> It was in a sense a question of the giver "looking for a beggar to give a handout to" so that he could be in good standing with God.

While there was a consciousness about the religious duty in response to poverty on the one hand, it is also true that begging was a shameful act (cf Theissen 1983), on the other. The person who, for whatever reason was reduced to begging, was seen to have fallen from the status of a dignified person in society (according to Lenski (1966), beggars in agrarian society fell in the class of expendables). He had lost the essence of his being a "man among men" (the ideal state being that every man should sit under his own fig tree or vineyard (Micah cf Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:375; Moxnes 1988:80 and Horsley 1989:88 for the economic life of a peasant)).

Regarding the beneficiaries of religiously sanctioned almsgiving during rabbinic times the practice was not indiscriminate.<sup>180</sup> In old Judaism there was freedom to give anyone, sometimes deceivers (Montefiore & Loewe 1946:412). There were definite categories of beneficiaries. As Moore's (1962:164 cf Bird 1982:145f) work on Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian era shows:

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<sup>179</sup>cf See Christian teaching in 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 (cf Lake's translation of the Didache).

<sup>180</sup>Even in the Christian context later, charity was never indiscriminate as the Didache teaching shows: "But concerning this it was also said: 'Let thine alms sweat into your hand until you know to whom you are giving' (Didache 1:6). In other words, it was better not to give than to just give to anyone. In this respect, Christians resembled their Jewish counterparts (contra Seccombe 1978, who argues that Christians did not model their system of charity on the Mishnaic system of *quppah* and *tanhuy*)

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.

It is interesting that the infirm are not mentioned in this list. We are not, however, to assume that the Deuteronomist envisaged no sick people in Israel. In most societies today, the sick are a responsibility of their own families. The question is: whose responsibility were the physically disabled in Israel? That of the public? In the few instances where begging is mentioned in the gospels, it is in connection with the physically disabled people; and they beg for alms from the public.

The common form of alms was money; every beggar expected to receive money as was the case in the healing miracle of Acts 3 (cf Louw and Nida 1988). Consequently, there had been set aside some currency which was specifically used for beggars. This was known as an '*argurion*'. This suggests that begging was largely, if not solely, an urban phenomenon; Money was an urban feature.

As can be surmised in the preceding argument, the Jewish concept of charity does also presuppose some form of a relationship. However, the paternalistic attitude towards the beneficiary is more pronounced in Judaism than it is in the Graeco-Roman context. Those who have are under obligation to 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. However, they do this after they have first met their obligation to their families (Moore 1962:170). This might be difficult to comprehend if it is viewed from a Graeco-Roman perspective or a modern frame of mind: Jews understood charity in broader terms than mere almsgiving—all works of kindness towards the neighbour were charity (Montefiore 1946). This is the idea found in Paul as well. In Hebrew, this was a virtue, a higher form of virtue for that. It was known as *gemilut hasadim* (Moore 1962:171). In this system, relief of the poor was not left to individuals but to the community. Thus organised, the Jewish concept is more of a communal concept than a handout. In fact, this is clear in the two forms of "organised" charity (i) the *Tanhu* which was a basket with compartments for different kinds of food, meant for strangers or short term relief. This was possibly a basket of "leftovers" (ii) the *Kuppah*, already mentioned above, was a weekly supply, given on a regular basis to the needy from members of the same religious community.



To an extent, Christianity, which evolved from Judaism and also co-existed with it, was influenced by this. However, much of its socio-economic principles reflect a synthesis of Hellenistic and Jewish practices. We turn to it below.

### 3.2.2.2 Christian social intervention: Relief and charity

It became clear above that the Jewish practice of charity differed from any similar practices in the Graeco-Roman world. The Jews had a clear relief programme which was administered from the temple while elsewhere in the empire, there was no formal or clear welfare policy during the period under discussion. Should it be assumed that Christian understanding and practice of charity was the same as that of the Jews, given the fact that the two emanated from a similar background? Do Christians mean something else by relief and quite another by charity?

Recent scholarship tends to adopt two extreme positions in search of the Christian concept of charity: the one position tends to read back into the ministry of Jesus what is 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.<sup>181</sup>

In his article, Theissen (1995:1) develops the thesis that the early Christian ethos of help is to be understood as the 'democratisation of the aristocratic mentality of benefactors'. 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 meant 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 (1995:2f), a verse which contains words that are purported to have come from Jesus.

Some documents from antiquity are used in support of this thesis (eg. the Persian document, Christian Fathers' teachings such as 1Clement). These focus mainly on the ques-

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<sup>181</sup>Theissen's paper was due for publication in a Festschrift for Prof. A Stein in 1995. The present summary is based on a rough translation (from German) of the original paper by Dr H Szesnat to whom this author feels indebted.

tion of giving and on the need to do manual labour in order for one to be able to donate to the poor. Some Pauline letters, eg. Thessalonians and Romans are also used in support of Theissen's thesis. Ultimately, he 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 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 purported to have been used by Paul did in fact, come from Jesus. If the words could be traced back to 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.<sup>182</sup> 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 question is why Luke only introduces these words at this point and not in the gospel earlier. Besides, these words are not preserved anywhere else in the New Testament.<sup>183</sup> In any case, Luke's Paul does not develop them further than just using them to conclude the point he made to the Christian leaders of Ephesus.<sup>184</sup> Could it be that he

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<sup>182</sup>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'.

<sup>183</sup>In his commentary, Joseph A Alexander (1963:255) explains this by referring to John 21:25 where it is stated that neither all his words nor his deeds had been recorded. 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.

<sup>184</sup>This makes it difficult for the exegetes to say anything more about Paul's "quote" (see for example, Stott (1990), Hargreaves (1990), Kilgallen (1993), O'Toole (1993, 1994), Bruce (1952)). It is clear however, that Paul was never responding to a particular situation of the responsibility of Christian leaders (cf Lövestam 1987:1f; cf also vv28f) 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. Karris (1966:187 in Kilgallen

was utilising words which he borrowed from another context? 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 an hypothetical document to which is attributed much of what is not easy to explain otherwise. The former is however, explained with different theories. 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 only ends with 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 (1994:117), for example, verses 33-35 are not crucial but are used to 'buttress Paul's request that the elders should care for the weak'. 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'<sup>185</sup>In other words, they are crucial for the completion of the point made by Paul.

The lack of convincing evidence for a connection between Jesus and the words in Acts 20:35b<sup>186</sup> gives us reason to turn to Johnson's laudable suggestion that the Greek

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1994:117) 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".

<sup>185</sup>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.

<sup>186</sup>We have noted elsewhere (Speckman 1997:331, note 46), albeit in passing, that inspite of the red colour given to this verse in the NRSV, there is no evidence elsewhere in the New Testament where it can positively be proved that Jesus gave alms or encouraged his followers to do so.

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 Luke 18:) and to some extent, rendered it outdated. The wealthy were no longer expected to provide for the poor. On the contrary, they were to pool their resources together with the poor (Acts 2:42; 4:33f). After all, 'for friends all things are common' (cf Aristotle, *Nicomachian Ethics* 9.8.2; Plato, *Republic* 449C, D; 450C). Seen through Luke's hindsight, Dives (Luke 16) 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).

Halvor Moxnes has examined passages that have never before been associated with almsgiving. These are Luke 11:37-44 and Luke 14:1-14, respectively. His study associates these passages with social relationships, focusing in particular, on the Pharisees.

According to Moxnes (1988:109), in both passages, there is a contrast between the concern for purity and the main theme of the passage, namely, the Pharisees' involvement in the socio-economic interaction in a negative way. The alternative behaviour which is posited by Jesus are almsgiving and hospitality, which to him are forms of social interaction. Moxnes goes on to suggest that this is deliberate in Luke since it is Luke alone who associates the Pharisees with almsgiving and hospitality, as forms of social interaction.

In Lucan writings, the idea of almsgiving appears in Luke-Acts for the first time in Luke 11:41. Here, as in all subsequent places where the author uses it, it appears alongside the exhortation to sell what one has (Moxnes 1988: 113). In Acts, the intention is clearer since the term appears in relation to a true sign of the worshipper of God (Moxnes 1988:113). However, why this is not the same in the case of the disciples who healed the crippled man raises questions.

However, there is careful explanation that God attaches no value to any of these but innocence and justice. This explanation should help us to distinguish almsgiving from the ideas of gift-giving which are found for example, in Acts 3:6, 20:33, 16:14, 10:2,31, 9:32-43 (cf Moxnes 1988:113).

It would seem therefore that in general, Christians advocated a redistribution of the individual's wealth rather than almsgiving per se. This is suggested in a number of pas-

sages that are found particularly in Luke-Acts, eg. Luke 18:22, Acts 2:45, Acts 4:34-35. The ideal situation however, was that everyone should be able to dig with their hands or use their minds (eg. Luke 16:3; Acts 20:33-5). However, in certain cases, benefaction was commended (eg. Acts 10:2). As a short term measure, there was temporary relief going back to the time of Jesus, eg. multiplication of loaves, baskets by 'respectable and wise men' (Acts 6:3), collection of alms during famine (Acts 19-20). These have become the most important part of Christian ministry.

In the two healing miracles stories involving beggars in Luke-Acts (Luke 18:35f, Acts 3:1f), there is no almsgiving. Instead, beggars in each case, are transformed. In other words, their situations are so changed that they become new persons who cannot survive on alms but are able to live on their own. This does not mean that Jesus did not care about the immediate needs of the beggar. As it is clear in several places in the gospel, the poor were a priority in the ministry of Jesus (cf Luke 4:18). In his reply to a question by John the Baptist, he outlines what he had already accomplished as the messiah, in an order of importance, culminating in the "good news" for the poor (Luke 7:22 cf Bosch 1991:99).

The two miracle stories mentioned introduce the only two instances in Luke-Acts where beggars are healed. They are what we categorised as the "physically disabled" type of beggars. As such, they are neither able to "maintain" themselves, nor are they able to contribute to the well-being of the community. The blind man in Luke 18 calls out for help out of his own volition while the crippled beggar (Acts 3)<sup>187</sup> is offered help by the apostles. In each case however, there is a willingness to be transformed. This is a good starting-point for their transformation.

A fundamental 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.

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<sup>187</sup>It should be noted that the words for beggar (*πτωχός* and *προσαίτητος*) do not occur at all in Acts although *πτωχός* occurs ten times in the Gospel. However, where it occurs in the gospel, it does not always refer to a beggar, it sometimes refers to the poor. Gillman (1991:98) explains its absence in 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).

The above discussion has so far focused on understanding the beggar in the Graeco-Roman context of antiquity. Although it was difficult to generalise about conditions in the entire empire, the little information 'accessed' showed that there were different names by which a beggar was known to different economic groups, that there were different kinds of beggars some of which did not befit the personalities described in the New Testament and that social attitudes to charity, which is usually regarded as a given response to begging and poverty, varied fundamentally. Below, we proceed with a brief sociological reflection on these findings. We are only going to focus on identifying the major trends that emerge from this.

### 3.3 EMERGING TRENDS

The theory of development which was outlined in the previous chapter presupposes that a conscious programme of development be put in place if a transformation from one condition to another is to take place. It is however difficult to follow this to the letter in respect of classical societies. There was no programme of development or one to combat poverty and begging. This necessitates one of the two approaches to the problem: either, we acknowledge the absence of such a programme and then continue to read development into the society; or we acknowledge the absence of such a programme and then go on to analyse what the society did that we can use as a model today. The latter seems to be an appropriate route. However, in following this route we will be cognisant of the guiding sociological principles as provided in the last chapter. The dependency theory for example, is germane to this discussion. So is the theory of development.

#### 3.3.1 Lack of uniform welfare policy

It was avered at the beginning of this chapter that the empire was not one entity but that it was made up of a number of autonomous city-states. The above discussion has confirmed this averment although there does not appear to be much cultural difference between city-states. It is possible however, that owing to Carney's "patronage structure", each small community was left to deal with cases that confronted it. Hence, Palestine had its own practice, Rome its own, Athens its own, etc. Since this seems to have worked out well in antiquity, we should not attempt to harmonise or critique it. Instead, we should appreciate the hint it gives about possible solutions to begging at a micro level.

### 3.3.2 Individualism vs societal response

We have seen in the previous chapter (chapter 2) how the society (at least in the African context) was responsible for the welfare of the individual. The individual could not suffer on his/her own, nor could any other individual attempt to bring relief to that person. It all happened within the prescribed norms of the society. This helped to curb the situation in which one individual would be 'puffed' up above others or where one person would become a parasite of another.

It was however different in the Graeco-Roman societies: Theoretically, the individual was to be subsumed by the community. The group was more important than the individual (Malina 1988:208). This meant that the individual had no status unless that was conferred upon it by the group. Therefore, recognition and approval by others were important. Hence social relationships were characterised by the competition for recognition and the defense of one's own status and honour (Malina 1988:208).

Malina seems stuck at this theoretical level of understanding the Graeco-Roman society. He is only describing the ideal situation. However, as has been seen above, in most cases, the individual benefactor determined what the group ought to do. Individuals used their wealth to achieve this. As Malina pointed out earlier, this was in competition for honour. But it was honour that would be used to manipulate the community.

We have showed above, how wealthy individuals had risen to places of honour by donating buildings, food, etc. to the city. We have also shown how other individuals have secured honour by adopting others as their clients. This is how dependency is created. Therefore, unlike what we saw in "organised" almsgiving of the Jewish communities, individual benefactors worked for selfish gains, this resulting in unhealthy dependency.

This, notwithstanding, in all cases, there is an apparent distinction between almsgiving and charity. Charity is a relationship much deeper than almsgiving. The material expression of that relationship is only a part of it and not what defines the relationship. It is more a question of sharing what friends have in common rather than giving a hand-out to a destitute person. This is important for our understanding of New Testa-

ment statements about charity and for our understanding of the story in Acts 3-4 which will be read in detail in chapter 5 of this study.

### 3.3.3 Social integration vs Ecclesial integration

While there is no specific programme to integrate beggars into society in the Graeco-Roman world, there were “proactive” individual and sporadic schemes (known as guilds) in cities where people formed themselves into groups to help each other. This is especially true of Rome but it had nothing to do with beggars. In the Judaeo-Christian world the situation was different. We outline our findings in both worlds below:

The examples cited above have shown that Romans did not respond to begging directly but that they had a welfare programme that responded to poverty among Roman citizens. There was for example, ‘corn dole’ which was provided by the state, to alleviate poverty. This was drawn especially from the colonies, for the benefit of Roman citizens. As can be seen, no citizen of another state benefitted from this. In fact, some Roman citizens blamed their poverty on outsiders. They singled out Greeks and Jews (see Juvenal 5:2). They blamed the Greeks for accepting any form of employment, thus depriving them of opportunities to earn. Their problem with the Jews was not that they took away their employment but that they had turned into “beggars”—an unacceptable condition in Rome. What if the latter were among the group to which Cicero referred as ‘rogues’ and the ‘scum of the city’?

In about the third century (outside our period), the Roman government established the *alimenta* system. In terms of this system, subsidy was given to children of Roman citizens to enable them to attend schools and to live a better life. Different amounts are specified for boys and girls respectively. But this system had nothing to do with the alleviation of poverty. According to historians, it was a system meant to encourage population growth among Roman citizens. Foreigners were apparently entering Rome in huge numbers. It was also a system intended to have the same effect as did the *Pax Romana*, namely, keeping Roman citizens content, so that Rome only had external enemies to deal with.

While this was so in the western part of the empire, in Palestine, there had always existed a fairly well organised welfare system. We have showed above how this benefitted the Jews only as it was primarily meant for them. But it had also benefitted the



stranger. It would be good to separate this from the Christian welfare programmes for reasons that will become clear below.

Needless to mention, there is a fundamental point of convergence between Jews and Romans. The contents of their respective programmes were undoubtedly different. However, the principle of benefitting 'own group' first applied in both situations. Thus, theirs could be referred to as "social integration." The individual was, through certain programmes, integrated into his/her own society, to fulfil certain roles in that society. We shall discuss this in detail in the following chapter.

Christians on the other hand had a relief programme for the church, for example, "relief baskets" in Jerusalem during famine. There were also many exhortations from church leaders to give and to support one another during the difficult times Christians were going through, especially towards the end of the first century (see, eg. 1 Clement). 'Christians' in this context is inclusive in all respects. Unlike in Jewish and Roman contexts, the individual here is integrated into the church, that is, as full, healthy and independent witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

#### 3.3.4 Transformation vs alms

Throughout our discussion, there has been a reluctance to argue for almsgiving as a normative response to beggars although the Jewish position was outlined. If that happened elsewhere outside Palestine, it was spontaneous, perhaps sporadic as well. The attitude of the aristocrats towards beggars showed that they did not see material giving as a long term solution. However, they never went on to do or suggest the alternative. Christians on the other hand, beginning with the ministry of Jesus, responded by transforming the condition (and situation) of the beggar. We cited two cases in Luke-Acts where this was definitely the case (Luke 18 and Acts 3). Seen in the light of Jesus' statements and that of Paul in Acts 20, shows this approach as a commitment of the early church. Where relief is to be given at all, it is to be done communally for the membership and with discretion. The idea is to share rather than to give a "hand out", to transform rather than to provide a pair of crutches.

#### 3.3.5 Marginalisation and the need for integration

Having said this, an important observation needs to be made, which will be addressed in the next chapter, namely, that a lack of mechanism for social integration in

“secular” society. A beggar was simply a beggar, one that went the way predestined for him (her). There was no attempt to integrate such a person into society. Instead, he (she) was marginalised. Most of the beggars discussed, especially in the Graeco-Roman context, lived on the fringes of the society. There is no evidence of an attempt to integrate such persons in the Jewish context either.

By contrast, Jesus set a precedent in the Christian context by transforming the lives of beggars through healing. This example was to be followed by the apostles as we find in Acts. The small Christian communities that emerged at the start of the Early Church would have served, among other functions, the function of rehabilitating those who formerly begged and were “transformed” and perhaps the least advantaged who joined the community with the meagre belongings they might have had. While there may have been other ways of integrating people into the church (a community), we will focus, in the next chapter, on miracles, the transformative method that changed the crippled beggar’s life in Acts 3:1-10.

### **3.4. CONCLUSION**

The discussion of this chapter has laid a foundation for chapter 5 where the story of the crippled beggar will be read ‘in context’, in the light of our context. However, we first look at the function of miracle stories in the following chapter. The present chapter has portrayed a background against which their socio-economic function could be understood. We have alluded for example, to social integration in the present chapter. This we develop further in the following chapter, under the concepts of transformation and empowerment which are corollaries of social integration.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE FUNCTION OF HEALING MIRACLE<sup>188</sup> STORIES IN ANTIQUITY: AUTHENTICATION, TRANSFORMATION, EMPOWERMENT

*Men may seek salvation from evil conceived in many forms—from anxiety; illness; inferiority feelings; grief; fear of death; concern for the social order. What they seek may be healing; the elimination of evil agents; a sense of access to power; the enhancement of status; increase of prosperity; the promise of life hereafter, or reincarnation, or resurrection from the grave, or attention from posterity; the transformation of the social order (including the restoration of a real or imagined past social order)...Of the various theodicies that organise appropriate promises and command the appropriate activities to cope with these specific apprehensions of evil, two responses are widely found among the less-developed peoples—the thaumaturgical and the revolutionist*

*(B Wilson in Crossan 1991:303).*

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

Miracles are often relegated to a “spiritual realm”, the “other world”, so to say. As such, they are seen as a flight from present realities, an alternative to a revolution, as Wilson’s statement implies. However, this is debatable: a miracle can be a means towards a revolution while the revolution itself may in some cases, be regarded as a miracle. As Gardavsky (1968:47) puts it, the miracle stories are a “radical answer to an appeal uttered in the accents of necessity”. It appears that the end rather than the means is the deciding factor. This is clear in the role played by miracles in antiquity and to some extent, in the twentieth century.

The purpose of the present chapter is to briefly sketch the function of healing miracle stories in communities of antiquity. By miracle stories we mean those stories and often

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<sup>188</sup>The title is deliberately specific (healing miracles). The justification for this is that most of New Testament miracles are healing miracles, according to Praeder (1986:46), they are sixty-one in total. Much has been written about them. In order to limit the field of study a specific area of focus has had to be isolated.

legends, that circulated in oral<sup>189</sup> or written form, about the supernatural powers and deeds of certain individuals. The justification for this is the need to highlight the revolutionary nature of miracles which sceptics for example, often downplay. In order to avoid being unnecessarily tedious, focus is limited to healing miracle stories since these have a direct relevance to the biblical text under investigation in the following chapter of this study. Thus, our focus is more on stories that were told about certain figures (which may have been true or legendary) than about the actual miracles.<sup>190</sup>

In the foregoing chapter we reflected on the position of beggars in the socio-economic context of antiquity. We concluded that their destitution which was caused by a combination of factors beyond their control, such as congenital abnormalities, extrinsic factors such as socio-economic conditions and intrinsic factors such as low self-esteem, was incapacitating. This had resulted in dependency.<sup>191</sup> Since in general, there was no formal welfare policy in antiquity (cf Chapter 3 above), those who had gone beyond the stage of ordinary penury became a burden not only to themselves but on the society as

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<sup>189</sup>Admittedly, the stories we now have are all in written form. However, it is necessary to mention oral tradition to make the point that what we have in written form may be an edited and modified form of the oral tradition. Some scholars have doubts about the faithfulness of, for example, the evangelists to the original form of the healing stories they received (cf Funk 1978:60 and Wire 1978:88, who says that only a vestige survives).

Further, our understanding of miracle stories is based on Vledder's (1984:81) description, namely, that a miracle story is "... 'n diskoers waarin taal georganiseer is in terme van *karakters* wat in 'n bepaalde struktuur van tyd en *ruimte* beweeg en 'n kronologie sekwensie van episodes meebring wat in kousale verband tot mekaar staan". These have their origin in pagan (sic) aretalogy which could either be a reporting of miracles or the narratives which contained the reports (Sabourin 1972:283).

<sup>190</sup>This approach lies somewhere between Propp's inventory of functions in Russian folktales and Greimas' universal diagram of narrative possibilities (cf Funk 1978:58). Perhaps the closest there is to it is Wire's (cf 1978:93) approach to Jesus' miracles, ie. their social function. We thus want to avoid Theissen's (1983) approach to Form Criticism which focuses much on linguistical issues.

<sup>191</sup>This is intra-people dependency, not a dependency of weaker nations on strong nations as discussed in chapter 2 of this study. However, intra-people dependency is a microcosmic model of international dependency.

well. The absence of a social welfare policy also meant that beggars were relegated to the margins of society. Any possibility of transformation, for example, miraculous healing, was seen as increasing the potential for self-sufficiency and it opened up possibilities for social integration (cf lepers, blind, lame, etc.). This is a form of a revolution. In this chapter then, we shall establish the significance of miracle stories for such people as beggars and the implications thereof for the entire study.<sup>192</sup>

It may be wondered how a chapter of this nature fits in a study that deals with developmental issues. It is precisely this which necessitates such a chapter. We believe that like begging, health is a developmental issue. Illness can be a symptom as well as a cause of underdevelopment.<sup>193</sup> Otherwise it would not be a concern of the United Nations and every developed and developing nation. As it has become clear in chapter 2 of this study, the theory of human development with which we work takes the micro-situation as its departure-point. This involves value-systems, culture, everyday socio-economic experiences and beliefs of a people in their micro-context.<sup>194</sup> In the case of the New Testament world, everything seems to be determined by a mythical view of the world: the earth here, heaven up there and the world beneath the earth (Bultmann in Vledder 1993:91; Hendrickx 1987). It is thought that there are always supernatural powers at work. Experiences such as illness are often linked to the activity of these supernatural forces.<sup>195</sup> In such a cosmology, the solution to illness is often supernatural. In the case of Acts 3:1-10 which is the passage in focus in this study, of importance is not only the fact that the disability of the man had personal and communal economic implications but also that the solution to his problem is purported to have been miraculous (Acts 3:6-7 cf Acts 2:43, 3:12, 4:12). As it will become clear in this chapter, miracles served *inter alia*, the function of integrating such people as beggars and others on the

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<sup>192</sup>The reader is reminded that in the introduction to chapter 2 of this study, we have stated that to a certain extent, the historical-critical method is deemed useful. It is in that context that some results of historical-critical methods such as Form Criticism are utilised in this chapter.

<sup>193</sup>Proverbs for example, links poverty with ill-health (cf Van Leeuwen 1992).

<sup>194</sup>According to the Sociology of Literature, there is a connection between the writings and their contexts (cf Theissen 1983:28,30). Therefore, miracle stories as recorded by writers of antiquity also convey a story about their contexts (Hendrickx 1987:2).

<sup>195</sup>Pilch (1991:182) suggests that there is a connection between sickness and misfortune, fortune and health.

peripheries (for whatever reason) into the community. Although this approach to miracles is new, existing research on miracles is utilised and in a sense, categorised under different headings.

Given the vast majority of writings about miracles,<sup>196</sup> it is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel by undertaking another indepth study of the phenomenon. As already stated in chapter 2 above, we only work with the data that is relevant for the purposes of reading the text in question. A selection from both primary and secondary sources hints at the possibility of three concentric functions which are nevertheless implicit in the present studies but have yet to be systematised. These are authentication, transformation and empowerment.<sup>197</sup> These constitute the basic structure of the present chapter. Thus the chapter is divided in two parts: “preliminary issues” which constitute an attempt to place this investigation in context and the “function of healing miracle stories” which is discussed under the above three sub-headings.

#### **4.1 PRELIMINARY ISSUES: MAPPING THE ROUTE**

The aim of this section is to map out the route to be followed in this chapter, thereby linking the present discussion to previous discussions of miracle stories. Focus is mainly on the understanding of a miracle story, a discussion of the healing miracle in order to help create a conceptual framework and the explication of an anthropological model through which we view miracles in antiquity.

##### **4.1.1 UNDERSTANDING THE MIRACLE**

###### **4.1.1.1 Definition**

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<sup>196</sup>See standard works such as Van Der Loos (1965), Moule (1966), Brown (1984), etc. A recent doctoral thesis by J Engelbrecht (1983) contains a useful bibliography of both German and English sources, most of which will not be dealt with in this study. Our criticism of secondary sources is that the majority of them are written from a Christian perspective with a biased Christological focus.

<sup>197</sup>It should be clear from these terms that we are not contesting the historicity or non-historicity of miracles. There is a belief however, which is rejected by, among others, Kee (1983:194), that miracles are inventions of writers (cf Blomberg 1984:436). Scholars therefore tend to ask: “What did the writers understand by miracles?” Our question however is: “What role did miracles play?”

The word 'miracle' derives from the Latin word *miraculum*, which means 'a wonder, a wonderful thing' (IDB).<sup>198</sup> Both the Latin noun and the cognate verb *miror*, 'wonder, be astonished', draw attention to the subjective response to the event rather than to speculation about its validity. Although Bible translations have been quite deliberate in their use of the term miracle,<sup>199</sup> the word has been defined in several ways by different theologians. Definitions range from magic to wonders. A few of these will be selected with the view to arrive at a working definition for the present study. We have selected those definitions that have influenced the attitudes of theologians towards miracles down the ages.

In Hume's (in Selby-Bigge 1975:114) view, a miracle is:

a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.

As can be seen from this definition, Hume sees a miracle in terms of the laws of nature. This is in line with the view commonly held from Augustine onwards, con-

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<sup>198</sup>For a discussion of terminology which we do not want to repeat in this study; see the resourceful article by Harold Remus (1982:531-551). However, Remus has regrettably only selected Rengstorf and Moule 1966 for his dialogue with those who wrote about the terminology of miracles as if they were principal representatives of the views they espouse in their respective works. While his discussion which is subsequent to his critique of Rengstorf and Moule does not differ much in its conclusions (see 1982:535ff), it is worth reading for the primary sources he has used.

<sup>199</sup>eg. the KJV=37x, the ASV=8x in NT only, the RSV=13x (IDB, 393). Notwithstanding, the term miracle is an analytical construct in that it is not found in the gospels. In this sense then, it is *etic* (cf van Eck and van Aarde 1993:38). Where it occurs, it translates such Greek terms as *semeia*, *terata*, *thaumasia*, *dynameis* (cf Remus 1982:531-535). It also translates Latin parallels such as *prodigium*, *portentum*, *monstrum* (cf Remus 1982:536). Remus (1982:535) makes one strong assertion, that terminology about miracles is more ".....fluid than many interpreters have noticed or are willing to allow and that *semeion* and *teras* are often not sharply distinguished and on occasion function as synonyms". René Latourelle (1988:263-265) adds to this list a couple of Hebrew words which are also translated by the word 'miracle'. These are *mofet*, 'ot

cerning the association of a miracle with a violation of the laws of nature.<sup>200</sup> Such a definition did not find much support on the grounds that it is not possible for God the creator to violate the laws of nature. Miracles are after all, believed to be effected by some divine power. If it is God's power then we need to ask whether it is possible that God would act against himself/herself.

Hume may have struggled with the same questions. Was it possible to violate the laws of nature if God was in control of both nature and miracles? Could God violate his/her own laws?

This however, is Hume at an earlier stage. His understanding has since evolved from the "violation of the laws of nature" to a recognition of divine activity. For example, in the Boyle Lectures of 1705, Hume produced the following definition:

the true Definition of a Miracle, in the Theological Sense of the Word, is this; that it is *work effected in a manner unusual, or different from the common and regular Method of Providence*, by the interposition either of God himself (sic), or of some Intelligent Agent superior to Man, for the Proof or Evidence of some particular Person. And if a Miracle so worked, be not opposed by some plainly superior Power; nor be brought to attest a Doctrine either contradictory in itself, or vicious in its consequences, (a Doctrine of which kind no Miracles in the World can be sufficient to prove;) then the Doctrine so attested must necessarily be lookt upon as Divine, and the Worker of the Miracle entertained as having infallibly a Commission from God (Kee 1983:85)

This definition brings us closer to what is revealed in both modern and ancient writings about the miracle. The performer displays an unusual act or performs a particular act in an unusual manner. Thus he becomes the center of attraction for in him is seen dwelling the power of the divine one. The ability to perform becomes a manifestation of that power. However, the person becomes the mediator or "conduit" of divine powers. Needless to say, this is an improvement on the earlier and controversial definition which involves the laws of nature.

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<sup>200</sup>cf Augustine's definition as repeated by Fuller (1963).



John Locke, another English scholar, provides a combination of Hume's first and second definitions, via a different word order. He defines a miracle as follows:

A miracle, then, I take to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine (see Locke in Kee 1983:43).

The element of wonderment and violation of the laws of nature once again surfaces. Not surprisingly, respondents think in scientific terms. They evaluate or judge a miracle in such terms. This is characteristic of European scholars where for some centuries, the existence or validity of miracles was doubted (cf scepticism which goes back to the 19th century). Consequently, even those whose intention it is to argue in favour of miracles, find themselves using science as a departure-point.<sup>201</sup> The African understanding however, which will become clear below, is close to the biblical understanding. What is known as an act which violates the laws of nature in European understanding, is seen as a wonderment, a sign or manifestation of divine activity, in African view. Thus, a miracle in African understanding is not a mystery or a heavenly secret but that which becomes a concrete manifestation of the hidden or invisible power. The Xhosa word, *umqondiso*, for example, means "that through which is made manifest". By implication, a miracle is in one sense proof of the existence of some supernatural power in a person, in another, it is the fulfilment of a prediction or prophecy. This is known as divine activity.

According to George Luck (1986:135), miracles can be defined as "extra-ordinary events that are witnessed by people, but that cannot be explained in terms of human power or the laws of nature." They are therefore attributed to supernatural beings. In this sense, an act of healing can be considered a miracle, for it involves a healer who is divine or who is especially favoured by a higher being who acts through him.

The Greek word *δύναμις* covers both magic and miracle; magic produces miraculous effects, and miracles can be attributed to magic. The word magic was borrowed by the Greeks from the Persians to describe religious rites totally foreign to them, totally dif-

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<sup>201</sup>Interestingly, psychologists begin from a different angle: they begin with behavioral patterns. Accordingly, they see a miracle as an unusual event whose technical term in psychology is 'paranormal event' (cf Thouless 1969:253).

ferent from them, and therefore suspect (Luck 1986:5-6). The word *miraculum* (from *mirari*, to marvell) is Latin; the word *prodigium* is also used in the Latin Bible and is translated by the word marvell. Thus, what is a miracle in one culture might be a magic in another. For example, Jesus has been called a magician and put in the same category of wonder-workers such as Apollonius of Tyana by his adversaries.

There are however, differences between magic and miracles: Magic could be performed privately or secretly. Miracles, especially in the sense of signs, have to be seen and experienced in the open by many people (Luck 1986:136). Miracles happen spontaneously;<sup>202</sup> magic takes several days of hard work.

Some characteristics of the miracle according to Luck (1986:136), are *τὸ παράδοχον* (the extraordinary), *τὸ τερατοδες* (the strange) *τὸ φοβερός* (the fearsome). These describe the emotions and comments of the people witnessing the event. Magic is suspect but when it is at the service of a god, it is accepted.

What we call miracles are very often extraordinary cures of diseases and physical conditions. The term "faith healing" is commonly used, but this is open to the objection that faith in the healer is not always a precondition (for example, Acts 3:6). Hence the terms "divine healing" and "spiritual healing" (Luck 1986:137).

Many patients whose miraculous cures are recorded had probably sought help from conventional medicine at one point, going to the healer as a last resort. Many would go to the healer in the first place rather than to a physician. Scientific medicine existed since Hippocrates (5th cent. BCE) but folk medicine existed side by side with it. The upper classes who had the means, made much use of the Hippocratic doctors before resorting to folk medicine (Luck 1986:137 cf Theissen 1983:237).

Having said this, what is our working definition of a miracle? First, we have to bear in mind that the problem we have with a miracle and definitions is a modern problem and a cultural issue. It results mainly from scepticism, declared or taciturn. The ancient world was generally less incredulous of "miracles" than we are today. They saw the

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<sup>202</sup>This is debatable. At times, miracles may happen instantly; at times, they take several days, weeks or months. The central point is that the "unexpected happens."

event and believed that if it was not magic or witchcraft, it was then a sign of divine activity.

Thus, our definition, resulting from the above discussion, is that a miracle is “an act or event which manifests divine activity at a particular time and place” (cf Kanda 1973). It may be sudden or gradual; it may be mediated or direct. Having defined a miracle thus, we now proceed to discuss the types of miracles that have been identified in Theissen (1983). These combined with the definition of miracle stories above, should give us an idea of what was called miracle and what was not.

#### 4.1.1.2 Types of miracles

In his book, *Miracle stories of the early Christian tradition*, Theissen (1983) dedicates a section to the social function of miracles in antiquity. While this section is intended for miracles in general, focus seems to be more on healing miracles. This is not beyond expectations, not only because a huge part of the collection on miracles in antiquity is about healings but also because no other miracle was more important than a healing miracle. Why was it so?

Theissen provides an answer via the conflict theory. He sees the harsh socio-economic realities as the cause of panic about being disabled or infirm (1983:237-238). Those who were not healthy or were disabled were not provided for by others. Consequently, they resorted to begging. Being healthy therefore was a “protection” against this selfish system. Theissen demonstrates this by citing stories of those who went to ask for healing with the motivation that they were unable to use their limbs to make a living (eg. Tacitus IV:81).

To be sure, Theissen himself is not void of presumptions. His German socio-economic background surfaces in his interpretation of the social attitudes towards the infirm. For example, we do not have enough evidence to be able to conclude (as he does<sup>203</sup>) that the weaklings in antiquity, were left to struggle on their own. But that seems to be the case in Germany today (to some extent in Africa as well) where the society sees as a burden anybody who is not able to stand up and demonstrate his/her strength.

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<sup>203</sup>See: the discussion in chapter 3 of this study

Another important point made by Theissen pertains to the nature of the people who subscribed to miracles. He suggests that they were different people from different social classes. However, he also concedes that the majority were drawn from the lower poor classes (1983:236, 237, 238). He supports this with some evidence from antiquity.

Theissen (1983:85-112) who has since been followed by a number of others (eg. Hendrickx 1987) has classified miracle stories under six categories. These broad categories go beyond the two or four types of miracles that are usually argued for by other scholars.<sup>204</sup> An outline of each follows in turn.

#### a) Exorcisms

Exorcisms are a form of healing. Hence Theissen finds it difficult to make them a separate category (cf 1983:85). Like healings, they also have to do with disease. However, in the New Testament, there is a distinction between exorcisms and healings (cf Mark 16:17-18).

There are motifs which can be divided into two groups: the demonological aetiologies of illness and techniques of healing which use exorcism. In demonological aetiologies, the demon causes diseases. In techniques of healing, the demon is understood to inhabit the victim. The healer's role here is to deal with the effect of the demon's actions while the exorcist deals with its presence (1983:86).

#### b) Healings

According to Theissen, there are three components of healing miracles. These are: (i) healing power (ii) healing touch and (iii) healing agents (1983:90). These are almost

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<sup>204</sup>See for example, Fuller (1963:37) who distinguishes between only three types of miracles, namely, nature miracles, healing miracles and exorcisms. Betz (1977:82-3) adds 'theophanies' to Fullers list. Pesch (1970:12) adds the 'resurrections' to Fuller's list as the fourth class, Thouless (1969:253) from a psychological angle, has physical healing and extra-sensory perception (ESP) and Wire (1978), who argues for two types, namely, nature miracles and healings.

universal in every healing act. Transmission of power is effected by a healing touch. Even in the non-Christian or pagan world, the laying on of hands was a specific gesture of healing (Theissen 1983:92). In addition to the touch, there are other substances, eg. medicaments (*dunamis*) and the hands of God. In the New Testament for example, spittle is used as a healing substance. The laying on of hands is also used (as in Mark 8:22ff; 7:32). As can be seen here, spitting in this context is different from the manner in which it is used in exorcisms where it is a sign of contempt. Usages of the spittle are found in Tacitus (hist. IV:8:1-3; Theissen 1983:93 and Van Der Loos 1965:428).

c) Epiphanies

Any healing can be regarded as a miracle. Epiphanies occur when the divinity of a person becomes apparent not merely in the effects of actions but in the person himself. Miracles can be divided into theophanies, christophanies, angelophanies and pneumatophanies. Dodd (1955) classifies appearance narratives by summary and 'descriptive' narrative style, eg. Matthew 28:8-10 (cf Lk 24:13-25). Commissioned people serve as legitimate and their activity is justified. Characteristics are: extraordinary visual and auditory phenomena, terrified reaction of humans; word of revelation; miraculous disappearance (1983:95). Epiphanies are associated with a cult.

d) Rescue miracles

Rescue miracles are those miracles that happen in order to save from danger. Examples of these are stories of rescue at sea; the freeing of prisoners. The aim is to overcome hostile forces, defeat the power of nature or the state. Rescue miracles differ from exorcisms in that they are performed on material objects such as wind, waves, ships, chains, etc. (Theissen 1983:98).

e) Gift miracles

Gift miracles are not initiated but are spontaneous. They arise out of a momentary need. Examples of these include the making of bread, the transformation of water into wine, etc. (Theissen 1983:103).

f) Rule miracles

These are miracles that are intended to reinforce the rules. Their role is to justify the rules. Theissen (1983:109) illustrates this with the story of the ban of Rabbi Eliezer and its rippling effects; the story of Paul and the snake in Acts 28:1-26 and the punishment miracles in Epidaurus. The origin of this genre of miracles goes back to Dibelius (see Theissen 1983:112).

Under these categories, Theissen covers almost everything. We shall keep this at the back of our minds in our further discussions of miracles.

#### 4.1.1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF A MIRACLE: A SUMMARY

Miracles have certain characteristics by which they are known. While we are conscious of different scholarly views on this, we prefer the guidelines provided by Van Der Loos (1965:120ff.) among the earlier views. According to Van Der Loos, there are at least, ten features of a miracle. These include: (i) the nature and seriousness of the disease is specified (ii) failure of official medicine gives rise to an opportunity for a miracle (iii) scepticism of audience which leads to ridiculing of the miracle-worker (sometimes by the audience, sometimes by the demons themselves) (iv) the difficulty of healing (v) encounter between patient and healer takes different forms (vi) treatment of the sick (vii) proof of the reality of the cure, eg. showing oneself to the priest or some other activity (viii) instant healing as expressed by the word 'immediately' (ix) response of demons, namely defense and pleas and (x) the reaction of the bystanders, usually found in two groups, disciples and Jewish leaders.

These are some of the characteristics with which several scholars concur. This helps us to identify and understand several miracles in the Bible. We now proceed to a more detailed discussion of healing miracle stories. The aim is to highlight some important points about healing miracles which will be helpful in the discussion that follows below.

#### 4.1.1.4 HEALING MIRACLE STORIES

In addition to the above summary of Theissen's points about the types of miracle stories found, mainly in Christian literature, there is need to deliberate further on the specific subject of healing miracle stories. This need is occasioned by the treatment given by theologians to the subject of miracles in general. As Kallas already observed:

There is a paradoxical fact relative to the miracle in modern theology today. On the one hand, the miracles furnish us with the greatest portion of the gospel narratives...The other side of the paradox is this: that despite of (sic) the gospel narrator's insistence upon *the centrality of the miracles, modern theology has almost completely ignored the subject.* (in Vledder 1984:77)

True, the subject has been ignored largely because earlier scholars, dating back to the sixteenth century, had viewed miracles sceptically. The birth of Newtonian physics added impetus to scepticism (cf Kee 1983, Latourelle 1988 29), a development which was to become a distinguishing factor between a scientific and non-scientific scholar. For example, one of the most influential theologians of this century, Bultmann, dismissed miracles as myths. However, he saw them as myths to be demythologised or decoded (cf Vledder 1993:93). For him, there was only one miracle—namely, revelation (Bultmann 1958:221). Strangely, he did not see revelation as a myth.<sup>205</sup> Since Theissen's study (1983), combined with questions from believers in churches, interest in the subject has been rekindled.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup>See a critique of Bultmann in Remus 1982. There seems to be agreement between Bultmann and the Byzantine lexicography that *semeion* is given a divine meaning if and when the extraordinary event it denotes remains inexplicable. If it can be explained then the word ceases to have a divine reference (Remus 1982:538). Bultmann talks of demystification. If the event is demystified, then it is no longer a miracle in the sense of 'other worldliness'. In other words, 'miracle only becomes an exclamation word.

<sup>206</sup>Theissen's study joined the ongoing debate which antedates him. However, he has to his credit a fresh approach, namely, a sociological study which made the subject more interesting and objective than it had previously been.

Our particular focus in this study is on healings rather than on miracle stories in general. However, we distinguish between *healings* and *cures*. This distinction is made among others, by John Pilch in his 1988 study of 'sickness and healing in Luke-Acts'. In another study, Pilch (1991:183) makes the point that a cure belongs to modern medicine, what anthropologists call 'medical materialism' and which Pilch calls 'medicocentrism'.<sup>207</sup> On the contrary, in the first-century Mediterranean world, health or well-being was a sign of good fortune while sickness was an example of misfortune (Pilch 1991:182). This is a cultural approach where healing is essentially 'an interpretive activity carried out according to the specific interpretive strategies adopted by the healer (Pilch 1988:63).<sup>208</sup> Van Eck and Van Aarde (1993:37), among those who use Pilch's, work concur that illness was a socially disvalued state in antiquity. In that context then, healing meant primarily a restoration of the individual to the community (social integration) rather than mere curing.

There are various kinds of healings other than exorcisms. In his 'monumental' study, *The miracles of Jesus*, Van Der Loos (1965) discusses these. Among examples in this regard he mentions the healing of the blind, lepers, a woman with a bleeding haemorrhage, etc. These are mainly healings that were performed by Jesus. However, there were other healers in antiquity, some contemporaries of Jesus, who also performed miracles. Among the popular healers of the first century may be mentioned Apollonius of Tyana and Aesculapius.<sup>209</sup> Jesus himself acknowledged this by not monopolising miraculous powers as a manifestation of his holiness alone (Thoules 1969:255). This is implicit in the gospels themselves (eg. John 14:12, MK 9).

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<sup>207</sup>This appeals more to Africans because the African-(western) paradigm within which Africans are working demands that they take the communal and cultural understanding of illness seriously. After all, as pointed out earlier, Theissen avers that even in antiquity, only the elite had access to physicians such as Galen, Hippocrates, etc. as we understand them today. Even so, in most cases, ultimate healing was found in what is known as 'medical anthropology'.

<sup>208</sup>The process of healing according to a medical anthropological model is described by Pilch in the following manner: (i) when illness surfaces, it will only be meaningful if it is a reality for the sufferer (ii) such a person will be labelled as unclean (iii) the person then wants to be declared clean (iv) the leper is then asked questions (v) the cause of illness is named, eg. God's punishment for sin in: van Eck and van Aarde 1993:33-34)

<sup>209</sup>Aesculapius soon reached the status of a god (Sabourin 1972:281)



Was there a difference between the miracles of Jesus and those of other miracle workers in antiquity? Van Der Loos (1965) suggests that there was. Among his arguments are (i) that Jesus did not use psycho-therapy (Van Der Loos 1965:417) (ii) that certain characteristics of the miracles are unique to the miracles of Jesus; for example, the prohibition from telling anyone (Van Der Loos 1965:422). Thus, Van Der Loos follows on the footsteps of early Christian apologists who attempted to discriminate against pagan (sic) miracles (eg Barth 1961:212f in Brown 184:242). For example, they had argued, in respect of Apollonius, that his doctrine did not agree with that of Jesus, which “invalidated” his miracles and that this contradicted reason itself (Sabourin 1972:290).<sup>210</sup> Latourelle (1988:18), advancing the Roman Catholic view, postulates as follows: “the miracles of Jesus are the privileged source for any theology of miracles, because they are the archetypes of all miracles: those of the Old Testament as well as those in the lives of the saints and in the universal Church”. Such arguments are not persuasive. As it will become clear below, they are explanations from a biased position.

In non-Christian literature of antiquity, there are many stories about healing. For example, Aesclepius, Apollonius and Vespasian (Tacitus VII in Van Der Loos 1965:435). The kind of people they healed were returned to economic activity, see, *Vita Apollonius*, 111, 39: “Then came forward a cripple... He was a good lion-hunter; his leg got dislocated at the hip. Sages healed him; another’s eyes flowed out, went away healed; another had a paralysed hand but was cured”. Thus healed, these characters were able to return to their economic activity.

These stories have many points of convergence with those found in the gospels and they clearly arose from the same context (though different locations) of socio-economic need. For example, the story of the man with the withered hand is similar to that in the gospel used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites; there the man is a mason (Van Der Loos 1965:438). Woolston argues that the man was lazy rather than lame. Jesus shamed him

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<sup>210</sup>One would want to know why Christian apologists reacted to Apollonius in the way they did. If Jesus himself granted that there were others he found performing miracles as well as his contemporaries, why would his own miracles make him different? It can also be argued that Jesus’ divinity or God’s power do not depend on miracle stories. Whatever is said in the Bible about God and Jesus can stand without the support of miracles.

out of that. According to Paulus (in Van Der Loos 1965:455), the man suffered from an “insignificant” disease, whilst he “merely abused the charity of that hospital”. He did not want to be cured, so that he would continue to beg.

Regardless of the latter analysis of the man with an ‘insignificant disease’, one wonders which comes first here—the pagan miracle story or the Christian narrative. It is difficult to tell. But the question has to be raised.

The text often creates its own world (cf Vledder 1984:107) but sometimes that world is close to the real world. Therefore, while not accepting all miracles as real with an historical correspondence, there are however, lessons for real life. For some elements describe what was known in reality, eg. beggar, cripple, etc.

Latourelle (1988:54) argues that the place of miracles in gospels leave no doubt that Jesus was admired because of them. This may or may not have been true. There are suggestions in the gospels themselves that each miracle Jesus performed either drew more followers or it led to a conflict with authorities. However, Latourelle does not make reference to any of the previous miracle performers in Israel, such as Moses, Elijah and others. In this way, she implies that Jesus was the first miracle performer in Israel, which is obviously incorrect.

At the conclusion of this discussion, a word about exorcism is necessary. No talk about healing miracles is complete without mentioning the other side of its coin. We therefore very briefly discuss it below.

#### 4.1.1.5 Exorcisms

Exorcisms operate in the world of demonology. They are a direct opposite of demons and their aim is to route the demons and demon possession out. The Babylonian idea of possession is that one is possessed by anything that leaves one with no other choice. For example, one could be possessed by a headache spirit. The Rabbis talked of at least 300 kinds of spirits, each associated with a particular form of “oppression” in a person (Van Der Loos 1965:351). Christian response to this was the ‘name of Jesus’. Later, the cross was used (1965:356).

Minucius Felix (in Van Der Loos 1965:358) describes demons in the following manner: that they

....conceal themselves under statues and consecrated images, linger in temples, control the flight of birds and call man away from God to material things. They throw life into disorder and 'by secretly entering the body in the form of ethereal spirits they breed disease; they frighten the mind, distort limbs, so that they may compel their victims to pay homage to them, so that they, fattened by the scent of altars or by the sacrifices of cattle, after releasing their prey, may seem to have brought healing.

Such behaviour is known among the demon-possessed in the African indigenous churches today. Demons take over the whole person. As Minucius Felix correctly continues,

Once the demon settles in the victim, 'the patient seems to be in the power of another personality; the demoniac seems to have become a 'double' individual. This .....dual personality, makes itself felt in various forms: in the facial expression, in the bearing and in particular in the voice which the 'other' uses (in VD Loos 1965:374).

The above discussion served to inform us about healing miracle stories in antiquity and the attitude of the modern mind towards miracles. Clearly, there has been (and will always be) divergent views on the definition, historicity and characteristics of a miracle. Since our purpose in this section was only to foreground some of the important issues in the debate about miracles, we will not pursue a rigorous argument on such issues. Instead, we will now proceed to a discussion of an outline of the approach that is adopted in this study. Our working definition of a miracle is that of a manifestation of divine activity. The anthropological model which is followed in this chapter is called the 'political economic medical anthropology (PEMA)' which is associated with several names but is here represented by Morsy (1990:32-46). This is juxtaposed with Pilch's application of medical anthropology on the healing stories in the New Testament. An example from the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is used to corroborate the discussion.

#### 4.1.2 AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODEL

Cairns (in VD Loos 1965:14) remarks in connection with Hume's arguments in favour of miracles in the following manner "Hume's argument, briefly put, is that the only

conceivable way in which miracles can be proved is by human testimony. This, combined with Bacon's call for an empirical study, strengthens the case for the study of the Zion Christian Church a short report on which follows later in the chapter.

To be sure, it is difficult to discuss the issue of miracles in an abstract, philosophical way especially in an age dominated by natural science and neo-scepticism. However, the British have developed alongside empiricism, social anthropology (see Douglas 1967:49), which, among other things, helps us to understand miracles in the context of living communities.<sup>211</sup> We are part of communities that believe in miracles. However, a cultural approach on its own cannot help us to understand much about healing miracles in antiquity. It leaves room for a further explanation of the impact of international economic systems on the health of local communities.

What is the importance of this, given the distance between the modern, industrialised world 20th century and antiquity? Since as we have stated above, miracles need to be experienced and that those who comment on them often have no experience of them, an empirical case should provide us with a 'fresh' look at them. It could serve as a window to the communities of antiquity who unlike us, experienced rather than read about miracles. The idea of windows is itself a methodological approach (cf Philpot 1993:31-34). For the sake of avoiding anachronisms, we cannot see present day miracles as mirrors because we are not exactly sure of the situation in antiquity. Besides, our contextual approach emphasises a construction in response to the concerns of the present context rather than a reconstruction, which is almost impossible.

Since the methodological debate is but a small, though important, fraction of this chapter, it is not our intention to spend much space on it. Suffice it to confine ourselves to a critique of Pilch's approach to medical anthropology, an outline of the political economic medical anthropology and a brief discussion of the ZCC model.

#### 4.1.2.1 Pilch's application of medical anthropology

In several of his studies, beginning in 1988, John Pilch has applied various forms of the so-called 'holistic' approach to sickness and healing. Common among these

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<sup>211</sup>We are not discussing Douglas' essay on the "structure of myth" here. However, this essay which consists of a discussion of various philosophical views, is commended for its resourcefulness.

approaches, which are also known as medical anthropology, is the understanding of sickness as a cultural/social construct. Sickness is named and defined socially and the cure to it is also socially determined.

In his discussion of healing in the first century Mediterranean world, Pilch uses the works of such leading anthropologists as Kluckholm and Strodbeck (1961) and Papajohn and Spiegel (1975). In line with these, his departure-point is the contrast between the values found in Western societies and those found in the Bible. He then notes the following variations (Pilch 1991:184-190, table mine):

<b>VARIATION</b>	<b>MODERN SOCIETY</b>	<b>FIRST CENTURY SOCIETY</b>
activity	doing	being
relationships	individualistic	collateral
time	future oriented	present-oriented
humanity and nature	mastering of nature	no attempt to master nature
human nature	good/evil	good/evil

In line with these variations, Pilch defines health as 'a state of complete well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (1991:189). By implication, emphasis here is on the 'state of being' rather than on the ability to function, as in modern society (cf Van Eck & Van Aarde 1993:32). Further, the contrast between modern and first century values implies that the individual's sickness becomes a communal problem and that healing only takes place in the context of that community.

This becomes apparent in Pilch's assertion that the relationship of disease to culture is three-dimensional: *words, things, human meaning* (1988:60-61). This links illness to society's deep semantic and value structure. Consequently, a distinction between healing and curing becomes necessary. In modern cultures, for example, it is not inappropriate to talk of healing while in first century cultures, curing would be the most

appropriate term.<sup>212</sup>In the context of antiquity, illness<sup>213</sup> becomes a reality, therefore an object of therapy, after it had been named and then talked about. Thus, healing becomes an interpretive activity (Pilch 1988a:63).

The community participated in the healing process through a health care system whereby people were sensitised to note deviance from the culturally defined norm known as 'health'. Often, it was others who told one whether one was ill or healthy (Malina 1979:128). They did so in the light of what they regarded as the symptoms of various kinds of spirit possessions as determined by the community.

#### 4.1.2.1 (a) A critique of Pilch

First, it should be noted that the model that is used by Pilch is not unique to him nor is he its author. Anthropologists antedate biblical scholars in their concern for what originally began as a quest for alternative medicine. The result was a gradual growth and independence of the subdiscipline known as 'medical anthropology' (Morsy 1990:29-30). Pilch (1991:182) however, poses as the initiator of a 'new perspective that must build on the insights of the first-century Mediterranean world'. In so doing, he confines himself to the cultural and 'holistic' approach to medical anthropology which reflects the earlier views.

Secondly, the table that reflects variants implies a clear distinction between first century and today. However, this is not the case. There is a lot of 'to' and 'fro' between the two worlds. In other words, there is much that overlaps. The Cartesian linear view of history is misleading. For example, it is often assumed that individualism is characteristic of modern (usually Western) societies; yet this is neither totally true of modern societies nor is it not partially true of communities in antiquity. For example, the elite that became the target of Jesus' critical tongue and later, the target of insurrectionists (in 66CE) were individualistic in the eyes of peasants; so were those who got stoned by mobs for refusing to supply the community with grain during famine (cf MacMullen

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<sup>212</sup>The difference between sickness and illness is discussed further in Botha PJJ 1996:5.

<sup>213</sup>This term is preferred in medical anthropology. Disease is modern and western while sickness is an 'umbrella' term for various facets of that reality (cf Van Eck & Van Aarde 1993:34, cf Murdock 1980:6; Young 1982:270)

1974 in chapter 3 above). What is presented as the opposite of individualism is as true of today as it was in antiquity. Human nature tends towards 'togetherness' or communalism. This is normative in most societies. However, it is often the material (and economic) conditions that tend to interfere with this way of life. Thus it might not be inappropriate to conclude that the opposites in the above table reflect Pilch's own saturation with a "corrupt" 'western' way of life and is now renouncing his western roots.

Thirdly, if Pilch's definition of health is interpreted correctly in this study, then the point must be made that his knowledge of first century communities is inadequate. The concept of a 'complete state of being' may refer to *shalom*, but that is a different matter. It may also refer to full health, as expressed in the term *holoklerian* which is rarely used in the New Testament (cf Acts 3:16, James 1:4) but was a medical term in antiquity. The sense in which Pilch should be using it is the second one. If this is so, then in the latter sense the word would incorporate the ability to function. For example, one of the stories mentioned in the last chapter about two men who went to Vespasian for healing is a good example of healing with the view to enable to function.

Fourthly, the appropriateness of Pilch's use of medical anthropology in respect of biblical accounts of sickness and healing is debatable. He is caught up in the view that in order to understand sickness in antiquity the researcher must first investigate cultural values. To an extent this is true. However, it cannot be done in isolation from the wider context of politics and economics, the 'material conditions'. As Morsy (1990) puts it, medical anthropology cannot only concern itself with what is in the people's minds without looking at what pushes them from behind. The force behind this statement is that one leg of medical anthropology should consist of a political economic investigation. It is only then that the 'holistic' approach can be said to be complete. Fearing being anachronistic, researchers tend to avoid the fact that even in antiquity, there were macro political and economic systems that impacted in a similar manner on the local communities as they do today. This will be discussed further in the following section.

Having critiqued Pilch as above, we now turn to a brief outline of the political economic medical anthropology (PEMA) which is mentioned above.

#### 4.1.2.2 The political economic medical anthropology (PEMA)

It was Onoge (1975:30), an African anthropologist who raised the question about the neglected area of the impact of global systems on the health of world populations. In this way, Onoge was acknowledging that power originates and resides in arrangements between social groups that are not defined simply by local boundaries. It was also an acknowledgement that cultural determinism lacked a macro analysis. The latter thus undermined the early Egyptian notion that the 'conditions of life' were the major determinants of health status (Morsy 1990:32). These conditions were often determined externally. Al Suuyti's medieval treatise on the medicine of the prophet recognises *want* as a cause of poor health (Elgood 1962).

Our view of PEMA is based on the paper already referred to by Soheir Morsy (in Johnson and Sargent 1990) which in our view, summarises developments in alternative medicine very well. According to Morsy, political economy is concerned with systemic relations. It has a materialist emphasis, transcending academic disciplines. In anthropology, political economy involves attempts to integrate analysis of global processes with ethnographic detail, utilising the discipline's characteristic comparative method to test the validity of general world-system propositions. The political economic analysis has also served to highlight global power relations and their health consequences (Morsy 1990:27).<sup>214</sup>

Several political scientists who have demystified anthropological ideology have thereby foregrounded the social foundations of all intellectual developments, including the incorporation of political economic analysis into medical anthropology (cf Kuhn 1970; O'Laughlin 1975:341; Mafeje 1976; Navarro 1981, 1985; Estroff 1988:421-22). In the 1980s, the explicit link between sickness and healing and social relations was made in the works of Baer (1982) and Baer, Singer and Johnsen (1986). This perspective was initially known as 'political economy of health' (PEH). It emphasises explicitly designated macroscopic focuses of inquiry. As Morsy (1990) observes, this frees 'us to address such nontraditional concerns as the effects of national revolutionary transforma-

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<sup>214</sup>Korten (1990) discusses the analysis of international policies in the third phase of the theory of development. This supports the notion that there is a link between development and international policies on the one hand. On the other it strengthens the view that health is linked to development. As discussed in chapter 2, the development of the North means *underdevelopment* of the South. Health is one of the resultant by-products, to use a sociological term.



tion of health services, the impact of regional political and economic developments on the incidence of spirit possession and the issue of industrial health in advanced capitalist society (Nash and Kirsch 1988). PEMA (which evolved from PEH) explicitly acknowledges that both anthropological and medical knowledge are socially informed, i.e. they are products of particular historical and cultural contexts.

As can be seen above, PEMA has the potential to broaden our perspective of sickness in antiquity although it is based on a modern industrialised society. This appropriation of the model to antiquity is made possible by the material conditions that were prevalent in antiquity. Although it is not our intention to go deep into socio-historical conditions, it is necessary to mention that globalisation in antiquity took the form of political subjugation through conquests. Linked to this was the siphoning of produce (equivalent of monetary capital today) by the conqueror from the weaker nations. In such a situation we talk of a tributary mode of production (cf Mosala 1989:156-157) and this is accompanied by high taxes to the conqueror. The consequence is that invariably, the standards of living of local communities dropped with hunger and poverty being significant manifestations. This is certainly true of Palestine and it is also true of some parts of North Africa which were under Roman rule at the time. Internal systems had affected them. The health care system did not escape the impact of such bad economic times. Indeed, with or without the international economic system, only a few could afford medical practitioners (Theissen 1983). But the system ensured that no more would ever be able to. Hence the majority turned to alternative ways of healing.<sup>215</sup>

This notwithstanding, the gap between antiquity and twentieth centuries is a reality. In order for PEMA to be used effectively, it has to be rehabilitated to suit the purposes of this chapter with the view to bridge the gap. This we do by briefly reinforcing it with the African Church model as observed in the ZCC.

#### 4.1.2.3 AN AFRICAN CHURCH MODEL

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<sup>215</sup>We cannot call this alternative medicine because alternative medicine consists largely of pharmacopoeia. We are here dealing with therapy, an intervention, which did not rely on medicine. Pliny the Elder associates medicine with wealth which supports the notion of phamacopia. He regrets its advent by the Greeks (Botha PJJ 1996:6).

The African Church model referred to in this study is the Zion Christian Church where most of our observations<sup>216</sup> were made. This author distinguishes between the breakaway or what are known as independent churches and indigenous churches. Indigenous churches are regarded as those churches whose roots can be traced no further than the soil of Africa. Thus they are not breakaway churches from the missionary churches but have been established in their own right on the African soil.

The Zion Christian Church was, according to oral tradition, established on the African soil in 1924, following the meteoric descent of a star upon the soil of Moria in 1910,<sup>217</sup> a farm outside Pietersburg, which belonged to the late Engenas Lekganyane. Its main thrust was healing and facilitation of *shalom* in its Old Testament sense, amidst real and imaginary sicknesses which were intrinsic to the changing economic conditions of traditional Africans. Thus from the outset, the ZCC dealt with a human being holistically. It sought physical, spiritual and material blessings.<sup>218</sup> Consequently, it became an attractive alternative to those afflicted in these ways. Hence initially, it was able to draw much of its following from the lower income groups in large cities such as Johannes-

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<sup>216</sup>We prefer to talk of "observations" rather than "research" because empirical research implies a negotiated relationship between the researcher and the "researchee". In this case, the ZCC has a policy against allowing researchers to write about it. This author then has participated fully in the life of the church and is therefore, so to say, "talking from experience".

<sup>217</sup>GE Oosthuizen propounds a different view, namely, that the ZCC is an independent church in that it broke away from the Zionist movement in the USA. The oral history of the church however, gives us a different picture. This makes one wonder whether Oosthuizen is not perhaps, interpreting the ZCC from a distance, thus assuming that it is what he knows of the American version (an input at the 1998 ICT Annual General Meeting with the theme "Theology beyond 2000: Towards a new vision").

<sup>218</sup>This is explicit in the present bishop's Christmas message of 1993 where he states that the church takes care of the whole person in a way unequalled by other churches. Physically, people are prayed for and they get healed; spiritually, counselling and prayers for inner healing are offered and materially, gift miracles and a communal way of life are common examples. The church runs its own burial scheme with which members and their dependents are insured at a nominal fee.

burg.<sup>219</sup> Some researchers tend to mistake it for an Ethiopian movement although it was not established as a resistance movement. It is rather more appropriate to see the church as an attempt to provide an alternative society in this world.<sup>220</sup> Below follows a model that has emerged from observations at the ZCC.

#### A Manifestation of divine activity

What became clear from the beginning of the church was that it defined itself in terms of an operational sphere for the god of the forefathers of Israel and that this god revealed himself to Africa through the African ancestors. The will of the divine one is to fight all that threaten the *shalom* of his creation. Thus, he becomes an invincible power above the oppressive powers of the world.

Miracles are a primary manifestation of divine activity. Most of the miracles performed are of the types Theissen refers to as 'gift miracles' and 'healing miracles' respectively. Gifts given range from homes, employment, business, cars and other material gifts; healings are usually both physical and spiritual. These are effected in various ways. At times, a person is prayed for over a period of time whereafter he/she receives healing. At times some substance such as tea, water, coffee, etc. is prescribed and healing follows. Praying may or may not involve touching in order for it to effect healing. The

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<sup>219</sup>Empirical research undertaken by this author recently, shows that this picture has already changed. In 1958, for example, the first two teachers joined the church in response to a plea by the former and second leader of the church, Bishop Edward Legkanyane, for participation by educated Africans. One of these teachers is now the General Secretary of the church. Since then, a number of highly educated and rich people have gradually joined the church. Others are born into the church and they grow up to become professionals while remaining in the church.

<sup>220</sup>Here again, empirical research shows something that is unparalleled in other churches: Members are obliged to join the aforementioned burial scheme whose monthly premium is very low (R13.00) which ensures that upon death, a certain burial amount is immediately available. The scheme also provides some bursaries for the children of members if they are also baptised members. All the minor children of the insured are automatically covered by the burial scheme. Apart from this, warmth, the essence of fellowship there, is felt everywhere among the members. This goes with sharing of resources among the members. Physical and spiritual healings are at the center of all activity. Thus, it could be said that the ZCC is concerned about the spiritual, physical, material and social needs of a person. Hence holistic.

faith that God's spirit is present and at work is enough. Although in the process, names of ancestors may in some cases be invoked, it is believed that God has the ultimate power to effect healing.

There are no exorcisms in the way exorcism is understood and described above. There is no preaching about demons either. However, this does not mean that there is no belief in demons. On the contrary, the prophet does on occasion diagnose demon possession in a patient. This may refer to different kinds of demons, namely, anything that oppresses a person spiritually or physically. Treatment of that is not to 'scold' the demon out of the patient in a certain person's name. Healing is effected by a special song to the ancestors of Africa, in the context of a group, often during the night, occasionally during the day. The protective spirits of ancestors are that which drives the demons away.

#### B Mediator as God's agent

The spirits act through a person whom we call a mediator in this chapter. The mediator is often charismatic because of the wonders he/she performs. In the case of the ZCC, its three heads, Engenas, Edward and Barnabas are all charismatic leaders. The present living head has drawn over two million followers to the church. The ability to perform wonders is a strong attraction. It gives the assurance that present economic pressures do not have the last say.

This assurance is a source of stability and security for many. This cuts across socio-economic boundaries. Thus, beneficiaries have various cultural backgrounds with the effects of global economic systems as a central concern.

#### C Purpose of telling miracle stories

There are basically three reasons why miracle-stories are told from one generation to another. However, the case of the ZCC may be unique and it therefore cannot be given universal application.

In the first place, miracles are not told as propaganda but as witness (though sometimes exaggerated), to the divine power that is vested upon a particular individual. Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, for example, is seen as the "bearer of God's power" and this is

manifested in his ability to perform miracles. When such stories are shared with those who have not had physical contact with him, the resulting awe makes some feel that hearing about him is enough for their faith. There is no longer a desire to meet him personally.

Secondly, miracle stories are told with the view to empower those who are on the verge of giving in to “oppressive” forces. The hearer embraces the miracle stories as their own. They then use it as a source of strength in times of weakness and hopelessness. Hence, even in the face of tough economic conditions, very few members of the ZCC would despair. Instead, they live in the hope that God would do for them as he had done for other recipients of miracles.

Thirdly, miracles have a missionary effect whether by design or coincidence. When some people hear of God’s wonders through historical figures, they become converted. It is as if the miracle triggers off something in a person. The one who hears the story gets “converted” to the church.

This model shows how effective miracles can be against what we today may regard as global political and economic forces. They provide “social energy”, a vision worth living for, at a micro-level. Thus, they reduce the impact of global forces on their daily lives.

Apart from giving the underdeveloped this capacity to contain the effect of global forces at a micro-level, PEMA also helps, at a micro-level, to distinguish between local causes of sickness (Cardoso) and global causes. Therefore, it is important for the application of PEMA in this study, to have a micro-dimension. This will become clear in the discussion that follows below.

#### **4.2 THE FUNCTION OF HEALING MIRACLE-STORIES: A REFLECTION**

Our focus in this section, following the above discussion of preliminary issues, shifts to a reflection on the function of healing miracle stories in antiquity. Under the term ‘antiquity’, we include both Christian and non-Christian communities of antiquity, although for the purposes of this study, our emphasis is on the former community.

While there will be no distinct Graeco-Roman and Jewish-Christian categories as in the previous chapter,<sup>221</sup> such a background will nevertheless be utilised in the discussion.

In the introduction to this chapter, we have stated that our purpose is to reflect on the function of healing miracle stories in antiquity. Further, we limited our reflection to the areas of authentication, transformation and empowerment. In so doing, we acknowledged the work done by an army of scholars on miracles while at the same time, identifying a lacuna in the above-mentioned areas. Owing to this, what follows below is a reflection based on snippets of information on related issues that have been gleaned from both primary and secondary sources.

The approach from the perspective of the political economic medical anthropology (PEMA), as discussed above, may not be explicit. However, it undergirds the following discussion which is conducted under the headings: authentication, transformation and empowerment.

#### 4.2.1 AUTHENTICATION

By 'authentication' in this section we mean the method of validating a claim about the teacher, itinerant leader or philosopher.<sup>222</sup> This happened in Christianity as well as in other religions of the time. Certain leading figures became social pivotal points because of this.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup>Such a distinction is usually made conveniently. By the first century, Hellenism had so spread that even the Romans had been influenced by it. Jewish resistance to it had also been overtaken by the Roman question. Some apply the distinction even in the context of a discussion of the *theios aner* concept although they do so with a sense of discomfort (see for example, Graham 1986:87).

<sup>222</sup>The use of this term is debatable. Did the miracles authenticate the performer? While cognisant of this, the discussion of this section takes place within the framework of authentication. There are some, eg. Latourelle (1988), who argue along the lines of authentication.

<sup>223</sup>We have to bear in mind here that in antiquity, there was a thin wall between religious and secular leaders. The emperor had a religious role as well; so did the king. There are records of some from these categories, performing miracles.

One of the strategies used for authenticating a charismatic leader, 'holy person' or philosopher was by telling miracle-stories about him (cf Mark 1:45). Thus, without being told to believe or not to believe in the miracle-worker, the stories often influenced the listener to 'conversion'. Several devices were used to achieve this. These range from the language used, the nature of the miracle and the manner in which the miracle is told. This is as true of Christian miracle-stories as it was of the ancient non-Christian world stories.

The discussion of this sub-section takes place under the following sub-headings: miracle-worker, social status of the miracle worker, the coming of the miracle-worker, the 'one with, the one before' and the herald's stories.

#### 4.2.1.1 The miracle-worker

The question with which we are concerned in this sub-section is: Who was a miracle worker? Put differently, the question would be: What kind of person was regarded as a miracle-worker and who decided that? This question is important if we are to make sense of the impact of the miracle-worker or the 'hero' of the story, the 'protagonist, the 'benefactor' or whatever else he was called, in recipient communities.

We may begin to answer the question by looking at stories about miracle-workers in both Christian and non-Christian contexts of antiquity. These were about heroes who had become a source of hope and strength for some in times of distress.<sup>224</sup> They were variably seen as being close to the gods or as being the gods themselves (Acts 14:14f cf Aesclepius<sup>225</sup>; Apollonius). Some thought of them as possessing supernatural powers, eg. Moses (cf Grant 1952).

It is however, incorrect to lump them all together under the banner of religious leaders since such a designation would in today's context, be limiting. Some were

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<sup>224</sup>Note that some scholars associate the use of the term with apocalypse. They see the stories about a miracle-worker in this light.

<sup>225</sup>Aesculapius for example, is known to have once been a god, then he became a hero then he became a divine man. Plutarch on the other hand, distinguishes between gods who are men and have obtained such a status, eg. Heracles or Dionysius and the gods, eg. Apollo (Moule 1966:96).

philosophers<sup>226</sup> while others were teachers of faith. The common factor was the charisma they possessed which made them 'friends of the people' and 'divine men'.<sup>227</sup> They always drew a group of followers to themselves which later became the 'inner group', as in the case of Jesus (Mark 3:14) and John the Baptist (John 1:35; Luke 7:18-19).

This is as true of the so-called pagan world as it was of the Christian world. For example, there are such famous miracle-workers as Aesclepius, Apollonius, Empedocles and Pythagoras among the well-known. However, these are what we propose to call 'fulltime workers'.<sup>228</sup> There are others to which we may refer as 'occasional workers'.<sup>229</sup> Among these we include emperors, kings and other benefactors whose work would not normally center around miracles. In Judaism, there are a few miracle-workers of note such as for example, Honi the Circle Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa (cf Holladay 1977, Crossan 1991, Moore 1946).

The term by which such people are known is *theios aner*. This is a scholarly analytic construct which is used to refer to a 'holy' or 'divine' man. A less controversial term to use for such people would be "shaman", even prophet (Crossan 1991). However, these terms mean different things to different people. The category of *theios aner* sometimes includes Jewish or Christian missionaries as well as the apostles (Graham 1986:87).

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<sup>226</sup>In fact, wisdom seems to have been one of the attributes of a miracle-worker in both Hellenistic and Jewish antiquity.

<sup>227</sup>They were divine because they had access to knowledge that no average human being was able to access. This seemed to the people of antiquity as if they had divine powers. A Congolese colleague avers that some rural people in Congo today view a wise or highly educated person as a witch who possesses western witchcraft. They therefore fear him/her (Dr Mulemfo, the Academics and Intellectuals Conference, 19-20 November 1998).

<sup>228</sup>They are 'fulltime workers' in the sense of being itinerant. Their work is among the people, teaching and performing miracles.

<sup>229</sup>This is the opposite of 'fulltime workers' in the sense that they did not live to teach or perform miracles. These included kings and emperors, for example, Pyrrhus, Alexander (cf Plutarch. *Lives*). However, since they were regarded as benefactors in any case, as seen in the case of Vespasian, they were occasionally approached for miracles.



There is as pointed out above, a protracted debate over the use of the term in understanding New Testament figures, especially the application of the term to Jesus. According to Holladay (1977:5), this debate has intensified in the twentieth century where there is more awareness about religious plurality than there ever was before. Two flaws may be pointed out in relation to the use of the term on Jesus. First, the term does not converge with the original. Secondly, signs manifest at the beginning, they do not have to stay.

Kanda (1973:28), who wrote earlier than Holladay seems to have no problem with the application of the term to Jesus. In fact, he seems to be unaware of the controversy about the term. He refers to the Synoptic tradition according to which a healing discloses Jesus to be the *theios aner*. His interpretation of this is that through the power (*dunamis*) displayed in the healing, Jesus is revealed as the "Son of God", in accordance with the Hellenistic tradition.<sup>230</sup> Brown (Forum:80) who will not associate Jesus with the title, argues that the problem of Christian theologies is that they face a crisis if miracles were to be a source of faith - for example, they are undermined by Pharisees among others. In the light of this he poses the question: How can the messiah be a miracle worker?

Our focus however, is on the significance of the term for understanding the miracle-worker.<sup>231</sup> As Holladay (1977:7) rightly observes, the term acts as a prism into which certain questions can be focused. The issues arising out of the term (which make it important) are much broader than the term itself. However, we cannot attempt to cover those in the present study.

While the term *theios aner* appears neither in the Old nor New Testaments, it appears frequently in Hellenistic literature (Holladay 1977:6). Even in this context, the term excludes the known Greek gods such as Zeus but includes human beings such as Asclepius and Apollonius of Tyana. One of the important attributes of a *theios aner*, apart from being a wise man, was the ability to perform miracles. This was common

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<sup>230</sup>Here again, Kanda (1973) seems unaware of the influence of Egyptian religion on the Jews (Hebrews) in this regard. Their kings were seen as 'Son of God', after the Egyptian "*nhe*", which referred to the divine nature of the Egyptian king.

<sup>231</sup>The reader may pursue the debate in Holladay 1977:1-45, Blackburn 1991:4-10.

among Hellenistic, Jewish and Christian cultures. However, Mackay (1966:106) notes the absence of such qualities in heroes described by Plutarch in *Lives*:

It might be expected that heroes of the kind Plutarch writes about would themselves sometimes show divine qualities of wisdom or insight, or would possess powers of prophecy or of healing. One of the interesting things about the 'Lives' is the extreme rarity of anything of this sort. Alexander, indeed, is said to have been keen on the theory and practice of medicine, but this was due to Aristotle, not to the gods...The only subject of the 'Lives' with a charismatic gift of healing was Pyrrhus.

Pyrrhus however, seems to be an exception. He is said to have even offered his services to the poorest or humblest of the sufferers (Mackay 1966:106). Thus he compares to such great leaders as Moses and Elijah who possessed both wisdom and healing powers.

Notwithstanding, these attributes befit those of Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, the New Testament remembers Jesus as a miracle-worker and his fame, according to Mark 1:21-34 derives from this (Manus 1989:663). That being so, the question is: What difference is there, if at all, between Jesus and other miracle performers? This appears to be a sensitive issue for the Christian apologists. In essence, there need not be a difference. However, Christian apologists (eg. Justin Martyr (2nd century CE)) had implanted it in the minds of Christians that the miracles of Jesus were unique and different from those of his contemporary counter-parts and that Jesus was himself a unique figure. As this is a very important issue in this study, a digression to it seems appropriate.

The digression however, is not intended to provide answers. Rather, it is aimed at exposing Christian conceit which is often justified with the name of Jesus. This is supported by the kind of arguments that are often advanced by Christian apologists. The following excerpt from the argument of a second century philosopher and apologist, Quadratus, is but one example of the kind of arguments that are usually advanced:

You may say that Jesus was simply human and was regarded as a god only after his death. His career was like that of Heracles or Asclepius or the Dioscuri. But the deeds of leaders-especially those which are false-remain unaltered only while the leaders are alive, and are done away after their death

(Sext. Emp. Adv. math. ix.35). On the other hand, *our Saviour's works were permanent, for they were true-those who had been healed and had risen from the dead did not merely appear healed and risen, but they endured not only during the Saviour's stay on earth, and after his departure they continued for a considerable time, so that some of them reached our own times* (italics original)(Grant 1952:188).

The language of the fragment betrays the bias of its author. Clearly, the author is championing the cause of Jesus. For him to be successful, he has to elevate him above other miracle-workers. However, the deficiency of his argument is that in his attempt, he only portrays one side as successful in the sense of having permanent healings. This is the trend found in the New Testament as well. The gospels are about Jesus, therefore, they focus on the deeds of Jesus. Other ancient records show for example, the success of Asclepius and Apollonius to the extent of them being immortalised.

This trend of thinking among Christian apologists is especially common from the second century onwards. The idea was to highlight the divinity of Jesus. However, they did this 'by all means'. For example, Justin Martyr argued for the superiority of the miracles of Jesus above those of Apollonius on the grounds that the miracles of Apollonius, who incidentally comes after Jesus, did not agree with those of Jesus (Van Der Loos 1965). Blom (in Van Der Loos 1965:435) wrote that the historical charismatic wonder-worker Jesus appears in symbolic intensification as a divine miracle-worker.

Such arguments are not plausible grounds for dismissing the miracles of non-Christian miracle workers in any case. Christians seem to be forging a different identity where it does not exist. If the disciples of Jesus were also able to heal miraculously, why would those who healed outside their circles not be acceptable? (cf Jesus in Mark 9:39-40<sup>232</sup>) Here again, Christians would argue that the apostles extended the mission of Jesus and that their miracles were not theirs but those of the elevated Christ who acted through them. Such arguments still abound in Catholic circles in the twentieth century (cf Latourelle 1988).

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<sup>232</sup>This might be a Marcan version of the story although the NRSV gives verses 40-42 a red colour, meaning a confirmation of the words as the sayings of Jesus.

There may however, be a point in other arguments such as those advanced, for example, by Hofius (1976:630-632). They argue that New Testament miracles adopted certain forms and motifs from their milieu. In Jesus' miracles for example, magic, conjuration, cursing of people and spells are absent which might be a reflection of his own milieu. Jesus performed miracles by his authoritative word to which can be added a gesture (eg. Mark 1:31,41;5:41; Matthew 9:29). He carried out no miracles of punishment<sup>233</sup> (cf Luke 9:51 cf 1Kings 10ff). He declined to perform miracles in order to rescue himself (Matthew 4:1f par. Luke 4:1-4; Matthew 26:51; 27:39f par. Mark 15:29). Jesus also forbade the healed to tell others (eg. Matthew 8:30, Mark 5:43; 7:36; Luke 8:56). Jesus' miracles presuppose faith, they do not increase it. Finally, unlike those of his contemporaries, Jesus' miracles introduce the beginning of the age of salvation, a foreshadowing and a promise of the coming universal redemption.

All this is described in the gospels. However, we must still ask whether it does not reflect a biased view. How many non-Christian performers do the opposite of this? Should we lump them all together? Is it correct to argue that Jesus' miracles presuppose faith rather than increase it? If that is so, why is the man in Acts 3:1-10 an exception? We will not attempt to answer these questions in this section. However, mention must be made of an attempt to make Jesus unique by denying that he was a Θεῖος Ἄνθρωπος. For example, Weeden (1968 in Blackburn 1991:1) among those who argue for the superiority of Jesus, published a study in which he argued that Mark introduced a lot of miracle material at the beginning of his gospel in order to refute it again later. He cited the concealment of Jesus' identity as one of the ways in which the association with the Θεῖος Ἄνθρωπος term is being refuted by Mark. Thus, he had hoped to refute any notion that the miracles served the purpose of authenticating Jesus as divine. To him the divinity of Jesus did not depend on his performance of miracles, as it is the case with other 'deities'.

There is however, a different view to this. This view is espoused by several scholars and it reflects the New Testament portrayal of miracles. Hofius (1976) among others, asserts that miracles point beyond themselves, to the performer. For example, Christian miracles prove Jesus to be the Christ of God (cf John 20:30) who brings fullness of eschatological salvation. This view is echoed by Duffour (1973:363) who argues that

<sup>233</sup>If the apostles acted as hands and feet of Jesus, then the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 contradicts this.

Jesus performed miracles to show forth God's power at work, as prophecy had foretold and to overcome Satan by the finger of God.<sup>234</sup> These various ways of stating it point to the one general trend, that New Testament miracles theologically authenticate Jesus (Manus 1989:663).

Given this, the question is: what is the relevance of the argument to the topic about the miracle worker? We are here looking at the characteristics of a miracle-worker. The obvious being that he performs miracles. Thereby, he is able to display the divine or supernatural powers with which he is endowed. Secondly, he is a benefactor in that some people look up to him for "providence" (Acts 4:9 cf Chapter 3 above, Crossan 1991). Thirdly, he is a wise person. Fourthly, he is a charismatic person who attracts people to himself.

This notwithstanding, there are mixed opinions about the role of miracles in authenticating the miracle worker. This will be discussed more extensively below. Suffice it to say that modern Christian writers argue that miracles are not decisive for the presentation of Jesus as a divine man (Best 1983:232 contra Barth, Bultmann, Latourelle). This finds support in Olson's assertion that there is nothing to be added by miracles to what God or Jesus did for example, in the New Testament. The miracle only serves to reinforce God's activity. By contrast (and this too is discussed below), in the 'pagan world' a miracle authenticates the miracle-worker.

The above discussion has given us some idea of a "miracle-worker" or a "divine man" or a *θεῖος ἄνθρωπος*. In order to verify and enhance it, it is necessary to probe a related issue, namely, the social status of the miracle worker. It may be that our discussion above has been informed by philosophical approaches of modern scholars. We now approach it from a societal perspective. This is the essence of the discussion that follows below.

#### 4.2.1.2 The social status of a miracle-worker

Given the above description of a miracle-worker, we now need to consider a different question: What was the status of such a person in society? The answer here depends on

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<sup>234</sup>The 'finger of God' in New Testament writings usually means the hand of God. The idea has been inherited from the Old Testament.

the society looked at. For example, in the 'pagan' society, the miracle worker could be the equivalent of a god (eg. Apollonius of Tyana); in the Jewish society, the miracle-worker bore witness to God's presence and activity in history and in the Christian context, miracle-working was a sign of god's activity in history (cf Hemer 1990). This description however, does not mean that we accept all miracles as historical events.

As already mentioned above, according to stories, different persons in different offices played the role of miracle-worker. We mentioned for example, kings and emperors (eg Vespasian). For such people, status was obvious. They did not need the miracle to infer it. In fact, it was by virtue of their social positions that they were thought to be extraordinary and capable of performing miracles. However, the miracle served to enhance their power and control over people and to reinforce the notion that they were benefactors.

What about those who had no obvious social status? Did Jesus for example, have a recognised social status before his baptism and the start of his work? (see sarcastic question: "can any good come out of Galilee?" in John 2). Perhaps this is one reason the evangelists portray the picture that Jesus could not start his work until he was baptised. His baptism would have authenticated his status as Son of God (cf Mark 1:11.). In the Acts account we read that the apostles were viewed as uneducated followers of Jesus (Acts 4:13 ). Mark also suggests that Jesus' social status was questioned (Mark 6:2-3).

Clearly, the importance of one's family background cannot be ignored here as it was of utmost importance especially in the Jewish culture. Mosala (1989) makes this point emphatically in his discussion of the genealogies in Luke 1-2. His point is that whatever Jesus came to proclaim was unacceptable to the Jews because Jesus had a nebulous and low social background. Apart from the economic side, there was also a suspicion that he was born outside wedlock (1989:165-170). A way had to be found by the evangelists, to fit this within a divine plan otherwise Jesus' mission would have no status. Hence the genealogies.

Although Mosala's averments about Jesus might appear to be 'sweeping statements' because of the minimal evidence in support of his case, there is enough information, though not directly related to Jesus, that genealogies played an important role in

determining a man's social status during the time of Jesus (cf Jeremias 1969). Besides, Mosala is making a point about the author's ideological motifs. However, unlike Mosala, Jeremias (1969:291) confirms the Davidic origin of Jesus. He argues that if the family tree of Jesus was questioned, his Jewish enemies would not have missed that and that it would have been an issue against him. In fact, Jeremias claims that there is evidence that Jesus' whole family claimed Davidic descent. However, this is not sufficient to dispute Mosala.

While itinerant preachers and popular philosophers were clearly accepted socially, how was Jesus received? The answer to this question is often assumed. We know that Jesus was no philosopher or street teacher but an itinerant preacher (Theissen) although Crossan suggests that he was a Cynic philosopher (1991:421). At the same time, his identity was nebulous-even Crossan had to qualify his identification of him as a "peasant cynic" (see also the theory of the Messianic secret in Wrede (1971)). He claimed to be holy, at the same time identified with those who were regarded as sinners before the Jewish laws: publicans, prostitutes, drunkards, etc. This notwithstanding, we know that first century Christians confessed their allegiance to him as the messiah, the bringer of the kingdom of God (Jervell 1965:44).<sup>235</sup> According to Jervell, the kingdom had come (for those who had eyes to see). However, remaining were "need, and want, sickness and death, all these things have no place in the kingdom of God" (Jervell 1965:54).

Jervell suggests that miracles should be interpreted in this light. Thus, they strengthen the performer's social standing. However, it appears that Jesus was only recognised as such post-humously<sup>236</sup> (Jervell 1965:52). This has left us with the image of Jesus the miracle-worker we have today. It also explains why the coming of a miracle-worker, which is discussed below, was regarded as a great event.

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<sup>235</sup>Was the problem with Christians or did it come from Jesus? According to Wilkens (1980:115), Christian apologists emphasised Christ as the object of veneration rather than a teacher. Thus Christianity was perceived as a collegium around Jesus just as there were similar groups at the time (eg Pythagorus, believed to be divine).

<sup>236</sup>We do not know for example, which crowds asked for his crucifixion nor do we know which crowds were tempted to help the Jews who wanted to hurl him down the cliff in Luke 4:28-29 and those who wanted to stone him in John 10:31-33. However, there clearly was a difference between a crowd and a crowd and we cannot pretend that they were all in pursuit of God's purpose.

#### 4.2.1.3 The coming of the miracle worker

The miracle worker was a representative or plenipotentiary<sup>237</sup> of a beneficial god. This point has already been made above. He mediated, as an intermediary, a power that is beyond himself. This idea is not new, according to Delling, Josephus believed that God acted, sometimes through human beings (in Moule 1966:136). In the pagan Hellenistic world, wonders are often the work of the men who perform them. No wonder, Plutarch attaches no divinity to that. His presence therefore embodied the divinity behind him (cf. eg. John 14) and his actions were the actions of the divine one (John 14). A community under 'siege', for example, the Jews under Romans in Palestine, always looked forward to the coming of a miracle worker as they were looking forward to the 'Day of the Lord' (cf Amos 5:18-20). It is for this reason that the association of miracles with apocalyptic ideas can partially be justified.

This idea is however, disputed by Fortna (1970:230). He postulates that there is little evidence in support of this, especially in John's Gospel. If the Jews expected divine intervention, then Jesus represented to some, an eschatological figure, which nevertheless, plays an important role in apocalyptic thinking. However, there is more to this.

First, it has to be admitted that the link between miracle-working and the socio-economic conditions is a reality. The majority of those who believe in miracles are often of the rural and/or low economic bracket group. This was so in antiquity as it still is today. As already mentioned, Jesus' fame, according to Mark 1:26f, grew in the province of Galilee, a rural province. Kingsbury argues that Jesus' miracles show him to be Son of God (in Bradley 66). In other words, for him, they have an authenticating function among the "little folk".

Secondly, it is argued that some had used miracles as refuge from the harsh realities of life while others used it as banditry (Crossan 1991). Refuge connotes a spiritual flight while banditry conjures up direct confrontation. If we look at the pattern of Palestine during the time of Jesus for example, it is in the rural province, Galilee, where Jesus performed most of his miracles. The reason is obvious. The peasant community was

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<sup>237</sup>This is a term used by Jervell (1965) in his discussion of the identity of the historical Jesus.



humble, defenseless and a target of exploiters.<sup>238</sup> Miracles were manifestations of divine presence on their side. As Keller & Keller (1969) argue, miracles prefigured a new world and were thus a sign of hope. This is perhaps the well-being referred to in Isaiah 52:7. We shall return to this below. Before then, a brief digression to the question of banditry.

Palestine provides a good case for a discussion of banditry.<sup>239</sup> According to Sean Freyne (1988), the Southern part of Galilee which was hilly, was conducive for the activity of bandits (cf Horsley & Hanson 1985). They launched their attacks on the wealthy of Judaea from there (Koester 1982). Their's was not only a political battle but primarily a socio-economic one.<sup>240</sup> This became vivid during the 66 CE attack on Jerusalem where the bandits made the debt archives in Jerusalem their first target (Freyne 1988; Koester 1982). This is the direct confrontation referred to above, a direct confrontation with the wealthy of the time.

Back to the new world and hope: Keller and Keller discuss Bloch's interpretation of Feuerbach's view of miracles in a chapter entitled: *From Feuerbach to Bloch: miracles as prefiguration of a new world*. Bloch (in Keller & Keller 1969:146) begins with the theory that miracles are in the mind, that they have a psychological genesis. As part of religion, they are a projection of human need. This is clear, for example, in the idea of the expected messiah in the first century.<sup>241</sup> The messiah is to declare war on evil and introduce the longed for values. An illustration of this may be found in the following messianic hymn:

He has shown strenght with his arm;

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<sup>238</sup>See Wolf (1966) for peasant life and Coote for an earlier process which led to the landlessness of the peasant in the context of "Israel".

<sup>239</sup>While we work with the theory that Luke wrote his two volumes outside Palestine, possibly in Ephesus, we nevertheless treat Palestine as the world of his story and a part of the Roman Empire in any case.

<sup>240</sup>cf Economic conditions in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus in a book bearing this title by Jeremias (1969).

<sup>241</sup>Strangely, Sanders (1980:94) in his discussion of the eschatological prophet supports the idea that the coming of the miracle-worker in Judaism was not associated with messianic activity.

he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,  
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and exalted those of low degree;  
he has filled the hungry with good things;  
and the rich he has sent empty away (Luke 1:51f cited in Keller & Keller  
1969:148)

According to Keller & Keller (1969:148), reference here is apparently made to the new situation which is called the 'kingdom of God'. One of the ways in which Jesus shows the presence of the kingdom is by performing miracles (cf Luke 7:22f). These are a sign that God is at work and that the messiah had come. This is what people are looking forward to. The coming of the messiah will mean this to them (cf Steggeman & Schottroff 1986). In chapter 3 of this study we referred to such a person as a Benefactor. The coming of a benefactor to any city was an important event to the citizens (see the discussion in chapter 3 of this study).

While for others in the empire, it was the benefactor or provider in economic terms (see chapter 3 above) that was expected, the Jews in Palestine lived in intense expectation that God would in the very near future, reveal his power over the world and the peoples (Jervell 1965:41). This was expected to be a miraculous altering of the course of history. Naturally, nobody, especially Jewish religious and political leadership, expected that to be Jesus. His conduct and preaching however, contradicted their expectations of a messiah.

Reitzenstein (1989:660) has showed that the coming of a miracle-worker was not a monopoly of the Jews. Hellenistic antiquity also had such expectations though in a different way and for a different reason. In Hellenistic antiquity visions, dreams, control of nature, ability to predict the future, all belonged to the miraculous because they displayed the intervening activity and power of a deity. Although the idea of a messiah was political and nationalistic, miracles were signs and manifestations of his presence (cf Longenecker 1991, Isaiah 52:7). For example, king solomon was a political figure, yet he performed miracles (Bradley).

Clearly, the person was associated with the activity and the activity could not be detached from the needs otherwise there was no point in expecting a miracle-worker or benefactor. As Latourelle (1988:19) puts it in the case of Jesus, the dominant function

of miracles is to bear witness to Jesus, the person. Jesus saw himself as 'Son of David'. This title is mostly associated with healing and exorcism (Matt. 9:27, 12:22, 15:22, etc.). However, Countryman (1985) disputes the interpretation of miracles as signs of Jesus' mission and authority. Basing his argument on Mark's Gospel, he argues that they wane as Jesus' ministry progresses. In other words, they are unreliable for the purpose of authentication. This contrasts with Bradley's understanding (see p.66).

This task is usually highlighted by the disciples of the miracle-worker. They are the 'ones with' him as well as those that precede him, to 'make straight his paths'. Below, we briefly look at these.

#### 4.2.1.4 The 'one with, the one before'

Miracle workers in antiquity as today were great people. They were always in the company of disciples or 'patients'. These offered voluntary submission. As part of this, the volunteers acted as heralds whenever the worker was on his itinerary. In other words, one or more went before him to tell the audience about the kind of person who was coming and what kind of miracles he boasted of. The effect was to impress the hearer about an unusual quality in the person (Thoules 1969:254).

Note should be taken that we are here referring to a person who is always in the company of the miracle-worker as a disciple. The same person moves out to tell the hosting audience about the kind of person he is with. There is no person hired specially for this. The reason is that the presentation of such a person is done better by the one who knows him well. Where it is necessary to use some discretion, the herald is trusted to be able to do so.

What does the herald share with the potential audience? As indicated above, they talked about his miraculous acts. In fact, people asked them if there was a story or two to tell about the coming person. When the person had come, they would ask the person to perform a miracle.<sup>242</sup> As Latourelle (1988:22) emphatically states it:

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<sup>242</sup>For example, Hezekiah asked Isaiah 'to perform some sign or miracle in order that he might believe in him when he said these things as in one who came from god. For the things said by Isaiah are beyond belief and surpass (our) hopes. They are to be made credible by acts of a like nature. (2 Kings 20:8 of *Antiquities* 10:28). Even false prophets had to do this (*Act.* 20:168). Vermes (1973:63-64) in "Jesus the Jew", reminds us that Jesus was also asked for a miracle in Matt. 12:38-42.

...to win recognition for himself, (Jesus) has to give signs of this *dynamis* in the service of *agape*. That is why his miracles play such an important part in this first phase of revelation. Unless Jesus had used miracles to force the question of his identity and authority, he would have remained simply anonymous and unidentifiable for his fellow Jews. Thus every attempt to reduce the place of miracles or to eliminate them is, if not the expression of an innate prejudice, at least evidence of a profound failure to understand the economy of revelation.

The role of authenticating the performer however, should not be confined to Jesus as does Latourelle. For example, in Antiquities, Josephus authenticates Moses with miracles (cf Moule 1966:173). This was one of the roles miracles played. Whether those of Hellenistic and Jewish antiquity could be tied to revelation is a different issue. But Christians certainly interpreted those of Jesus in that light. Vatican I took this further in that it emphasized chiefly the corroborative or judicial function of miracles. Thus it sees miracles as “divine facts”, proofs, and signs whose function is to afford solid proof of “the divine origin of the Christian religion” (in Latourelle 1988:281).

Finally, we must look at some of the stories told by the herald to the potential audiences of the miracle-worker. These are the stories that have survived as miracle-stories today. Needless to say, they have inspired the religious over many centuries. They have the potential to inspire even today in the face of overwhelming global forces with all they entail.

#### 4.2.1.5 The herald's stories

While the role of the herald was to prepare the way for the coming *theios aner*, he did not always have stories to tell about him. However, it was the people themselves who asked for the stories if he did not tell them. As we have said above, stories authenticated the person. The people would urge them to “tell us a story or two”. His power or greatness was measured against that. Upon arrival, the “god-man” was also asked to perform a miracle or to tell a story about his powers.

In *Arcana Mundi* or “the secrets of the night”, Georg Luck (1986) has collected a number of stories associated with the cult of Aesclepius. Some sound legendary and others sound true. However, this was besides the point for the hearer. Their value was that they empowered the listener. They also authenticated the one who told the stories. In order to illustrate this, three stories from different collections of texts will suffice:

First, one of the stories recorded by Luck (1986:143) tells of a man whose fingers were paralysed. The text does not say whether the man had been paralysed since birth or not. However, when he sought help at the sanctuary of Aesclepius at Epidauros, he fell asleep in the sanctuary. During his sleep, he dreamt that he was playing dice in the temple. A dice was, and still is today, one of the ways of making a living. However, with a paralysed hand, it was not possible to throw the dice. By implication, it not possible to earn. Still in his dream, the god appeared to him as he was about to throw the dice, possibly with the paralysed hand, and stretched out his fingers. As a result, the man left the sanctuary cured.

Imagine the impact this would have on the audience, especially one that was likely to be gullible due to socio-economic stresses. The focus of the story is not on the healed but on the healer-the power he has even over demons. This is clear in the story of the demoniac who was cleansed by Jesus (Mark 1:23-28). The reaction (1:27) crowd who witnessed that is very important. One can only think of a similar response and curiosity on the part of the audience that hears of the story, to see the coming miracle-worker who performs such deeds.

The third story has already been referred to in the previous chapter of this study. This is the story told by Tacitus (*Annals* VI) about the blind and the lame who came to Vespasian, to ask for healing. Vespasian was no god but a king. However, the desperation of people who went to him did not only reveal his humility but also the power to heal he was not aware of. The god used him at the right place and time. Here again we can only imagine his fame spreading and his herald using such stories to legitimate his office. These are some examples of the stories taken by the heralds to prospective audiences.

We have thus far discussed PEMA as a framework within which to approach a contextual reading of miracles. This has helped us to view the stories we have in a different light, that is, through the lenses of a Third World socio-economic context. Thus, miracles are no more than a sign of hope that there is one greater than the present over-

whelming forces. We also looked at the authenticating role of the miracle. This was discussed under different headings, all related to the function of miracles. We now propose to proceed to the transforming function.

#### 4.2.2 TRANSFORMATION

One of the functions of healing miracles that is reflected in the sub-title of this chapter is transformation. This happens directly and indirectly, as the discussion below will show. The drift of the argument is in the spirit of Wilson's assertion (in Crossan 1991:303). The lower social classes who are often in the majority in circles where miracles or magic are foundational religions, are always motivated by the desire to see their social conditions transformed.<sup>243</sup> For Crossan, magic is to them religious banditry (1991:304). His understanding of magic is however, contentious. He lumps miracle-workers with magicians and accepts no distinction between the two (1991:305, 306). Thus he sees no distinction between a 'trick' and 'wonderment' or 'surprise'.

The discussion will be conducted under the following sub-headings: element of marvel, physical restoration as transformation, spiritual restoration as transformation, social restoration as transformation and health as precondition for transformation.

##### 4.2.2.1 The element of marvel

Marvel is the external manifestation of shock, wonderment or surprise (Oxford Complete Word Finder). The term is used by theologians to describe one of the features of a miraculous act, namely, that at the end of the miracle, those who witness it marvel. This happens at the end of most but not all miracle stories that are recorded in the gospels. One is then left wondering whether it is the intended 'turning-point' on the reader's part or whether it is intended to be a 'punchy' ending of the story.

Since this happens at the end of the miracle story, there may be justification in assuming that it is intended to evoke aesthetic elements in the reader (cf Stibbe 1995) and to make the reader think deeply about the event.<sup>244</sup> The common feature is that it is never

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<sup>243</sup>See contents of the opening statement of this chapter.

<sup>244</sup>These are some gaps deliberately left by the author, according to Stibbe.

the enemies that marvel but those in favour of the performer or the patient (eg. John 9:10). Enemies usually reject everything outright (cf for example, John 9:11).

The outcome of that thinking is in our opinion, a decision in favour of the performer. This may be called a conversion experience. Put in sociological language, we may talk of transformation on the part of the individual. Hence our interest in the transforming function of miracle stories.

The element of wonderment in a miracle story is a climactic one. The miracle usually begins with the introduction, then follows the setting of the scene, then the establishment of the problem and then the miracle, which concludes with the onlookers marvelling (eg Acts 3:10b). It is at this end of the miracle story that the process of transformation<sup>245</sup> begins because the impact of the story affects that listener in one way or another.

This is true of both the original context and the context of readers. According to accounts (both biblical and extra-biblical), those who witnessed the miracle marvelled (eg. Acts 3:10; Luke 4:36). This did not end there: they were also filled with a sense of awe or they praised God (Luke 5:26). This was followed, (as in Acts 2:22 example), by a conversion or transformation of the audience: 'Brothers, what shall we do then?' (Acts 3:). Peter's response was that they should *repent* and *believe* the good news. Similar developments following a miracle, are reported in the Graeco-Roman world.

If wonderment is a sign that something out of the ordinary has happened, then it cannot leave anyone untouched or unmoved. Even at the level of a reader or listener of the story, the realisation that something unnatural or unusual had happened makes one want to probe or search for more information. That in itself constitutes a transforming act. Besides, it also aids in pointing to the intermediary agent of the miracle. Hence focus on him as the benefactor or provider or healer or protector.

It is needless to say that marvel and miracle go together for the reasons given above. However, some scholars extend this to the relationship between miracle and magic.

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<sup>245</sup>By 'transformation here is meant a process whereby a thorough or dramatic change in the form, outward appearance, character, etc. is made.

They insist on seeing similarities between the two. For example, Crossan (1991:306) refuses to see a distinction between a miracle and magic. His reason is that there is a divine element in each as well as a technical element in each. Although his reason differs from that of his predecessors he does nevertheless bring back to life what already appears to be an "old ghost". The allegation that Jesus was a magician was made in antiquity (as reflected in the gospels) as well as much later in the history of the church. However, it was always the opponents of Jesus who accused him of practising magic.

The accusation against Jesus has a polemical element. Rival groups often demonised one another with the view to gaining power over the other (cf Morton-Smith's comment on son of god, divine man, magician in early Roman Empire, in Crossan 1991:308). Accusations against Jesus and other holy men should be seen in this light. However, what is more important for us is to establish the extent of the influence of miracles for change.

In our observations at the ZCC, people have been transformed and converted by the stories they heard or the miracles they witnessed. One miracle which sounds incredible but is nevertheless true, is that of a former taxi-driver who returned to life six days after he had been certified dead, following a motorcar accident. His own account of events is that at the moment the accident happened, he knew that there was no way he would survive. Unaware of what had happened thereafter, he heard people saying that he must be taken to the mortuary as he was dead. Just at that point, he saw Bishop Edward Lekganyane (who had long passed away by then) who was busy telling people that the man did not belong to the mortuary and that he should be taken to Moria, to be healed and then baptised. He woke up in protest and found himself in the mortuary in Johannesburg. He discovered later that by then, he had been in the mortuary for six days. Funeral preparations for the following day were well under way.

This happened in 1989. Although we have not been able to verify it from official records, there are witnesses to the event and some time back, there has been a story about him in the church's newsletter, *The Messenger* (1989). The only evidence left on him are the permanent scars on his legs; the lower part of the right leg is suspended to his flesh, but has circulation and life. He claims that the prophets of the church had advised him against surgery. The man claims that holy coffee had healed him. That is all he was instructed to drink by the prophet in the early days following the accident.



This story which comes from the 'horse's mouth', affects a number of people in various ways upon hearing it. Undoubtedly, a number of them see the hand of God at work. This is the god who is known and worshipped by the "Lekganyana family". Those who hear the story claim that as their god as well. Thus, the fame of Lekganyana spreads.

When one hears this then what Mark for example, says about Jesus' fame spreading in all the provinces and in the villages because of his miracles, begins to make sense. Their location aside (village or town or city), it appears that their needs were similar to those of the kind of people that are attracted by the ZCC today. Hence our conclusion that marvel may have been understood in the same way even in antiquity.

#### 4.2.2.2 Physical restoration

It is common knowledge that illness can be incapacitating. This is more so where illness consists of a physical disability. The cause may be demon-possession, it may also be a congenital abnormality. The effects tend to be the same as it is evident in most cases of healing miracles that are reported in classical literature (including Christian documents).

What effect does this have on the person? It appears from the stories recorded in the gospels and in 'pagan' literature, that a sick person finds himself/herself in chains. This is clear for example, in the case of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:2-20) or the blind man (Mark 8:22-26) or the woman "bent over" (Luke 13:10-13). The longer it takes to transform his/her situation, the more sick he/she becomes.

There were different kinds of sicknesses and different causes. Some ailments could be described by the term sickness. Others, more psycho-social, are best described as illnesses. Causes might be external or internal. Examples of these are provided in (cf Botha PJJ 1996:5-8).

We must however, not lose sight of the fact that we are talking about stories. In other words, we are not dealing with original contexts where miracles might or might not have taken place. Our concern is about the meaning or significance of such stories as literary entities.

It would appear that miracle-stories are by design, symbolical. Physical healings or restoration are used to manifest the work of the divine. The meaning might not even have anything to do with human health but with the well-being of the nation. A well-known example which has already been used in this section is that of the Gerasene demoniac whose interpretation by several scholars is that it symbolises the impact of the Roman army occupation of Palestine (Crossan 1991). Another example which is also mentioned in this section is the story of the woman who was bent backwards (Luke 13). This is also interpreted in the light of the well-being of the nation, namely, the yoke of Israel and her freedom from the yoke by God (cf Hamm 1990). By contrast, there is no attempt to interpret symbolically in the 'pagan' context.

Clearly, the impact of these stories on listeners or readers transforms. John 5 for example, has led to a transformation of at least an individual in modern times;<sup>246</sup> and an attempt by communities to transform themselves (eg. Kei Rd; Grahamstown). Thus, physical restoration provides one form of transformation or it opens up possibilities for social transformation and participation.

#### 4.2.2.3 Spiritual restoration

Many of the illnesses healed in community as proposed in PEMA and are recorded in classical literature, are psycho-social. This means that they are both psychological and social illnesses. Everything is related to the other.

Given this, illness can lead to physical and psychological alienation. The story of the sick man at Bethesda is an example (John 5:1-9). Another example is the story of lepers. In both modern and ancient communities, lepers are not easily accepted. Often, they are physically excluded from the community. Certain areas were designated from them, in order to reduce the chances of the m contaminating others. How some managed to become part of Jesus' audience is not clear. However, Jesus' command to them to 'go and show themselves to the priest' shows that they were not part of the community. Healing was a way of opening the gate for them. There were however,

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<sup>246</sup>A student attending a 'retreat' where a Bible Study of John 5 was read from a developmental perspective confessed at the end of the session that his eyes had been opened to the fact that he had behaved like the sick man at Bethsaida. He vow from that time onwards to 'take up his mat and go'. His life turned about completely from that time onwards. Today (1999), he is about to complete a Masters programme.

those whose friends ensured that they remained with the community albeit at the bottom echelon.

Freeing a person from oppression by illness equals both physical and psychological emancipation. However, it is only Jesus who perceptively linked illness with forgiveness of sins. This is a very direct psychological/spiritual healing. Incidentally, no evidence of this can be found in 'pagan' healing miracles.

Another contemporary example from the ZCC might help to illustrate the point further: In the ZCC, people who are mentally sick are taken to Moria where they are healed through "group therapy". Together with others who suffer from psychical and psychological problems, they are exposed to worship, given responsibilities such as picking up papers around the turf and they are also prayed for. In this way, they are rehabilitated socially and therefore spiritually stabilised. Thus, they are spiritually restored.

#### 4.2.2.4 Social restoration

By 'social restoration' here is meant the reintegration of a person into society. As already mentioned above, sickness alienates. It is even more so when there are no means to acquire medical treatment.

Theissen (1983) avers that miracles are a cheaper way of acquiring medical treatment. Botha (1996) concurs with this; he therefore links healing to the peasant community who could not afford medical treatment. At first this seems to make sense, in fact, when we look at the response of villagers to Jesus' healing miracles, it contrasts with that of urban areas where Jesus was often rejected. However, viewed in the light of modern experience, it becomes debatable whether faith healing could be confined to rural centers. Today, it appears as if spiritual healing is an urban "cost-free" substitute for traditional rituals which would normally provide the security needed by those who are weighed down by economic pressures.

The restoration of lepers who in antiquity, were "pushed out" of society, is a good example of social integration. After healing several of them, Jesus sends them back to the priest, to show themselves clean. In this case, focus is clearly not on the healer but on the worthiness of those healed. For the leper, due to his uncleanness, was isolated from society. Their cleansing therefore, gave them an opportunity to return.

#### 4.2.2.5 Health as precondition for life

At this point we return to Theissen's (1983) averment that sickness was feared for its social implications. However, this is only Theissen's analysis. None of the texts on healing makes this point-neither in Christian documents nor in 'pagan' literature. The closest we have in the New Testament, for example, is Luke 16:3 where the shrewd steward who fearing being "retrenched", acknowledged the uselessness of his physical health: "...I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg" (Luke 16:3). The opposite is Acts 20:33 where Paul talks of working with his hands to earn a living. In Theissen's (1995) essay which we discussed in chapter 3 of this study, the latter passage forms the basis of his essay.

The two contrasting situations best explain the social implications of either good or ill-health. The steward is only too aware that without a strong body, the pending retrenchment posed an existential threat to him. On the other hand, Paul boasted of a strong body which enabled him to boast of being reasonably "self-sufficient". By implication, no one should depend on the mercy of others when their bodies are fully functional. The passage in 2 Thessalonians 3:8-10 is explicit about the consequences of this on the body: those who are idle become a burden on the body (3:8) and they must be starved (3:10). In secular texts (eg. *Annals* ), the man with a disabled hand is said to have used that as a reason for not being able to feed his family. These instances suggest that Theissen's averment can only be inferred rather than 'fished out' of the text.

There seems to be no shortage of evidence in support of this in both contemporary society and antiquity. In chapter 2 of this study, we saw how in African culture, inability to work could be construed as laziness or being irresponsible. It is difficult to accept that a physically healthy person would be a burden on other members of the society. In chapter 3 above, we saw how a beggar, sick or healthy, was seen as a burden on the society. According to the view of the aristocrats (see Chapter 3 above), beggars were lazy and vile. This has implications for our understanding of the story of the crippled beggar which will be looked at in the following chapter.

Clearly, without health there is no life but survival as we shall see in the story of the crippled beggar at the Jerusalem temple (Acts 3:1-10) before his encounter with the apostles. Physical health plays a vital role in movement and in productivity. In the same way, as we have seen in the above section, psychological health is also important. The two combined with conducive social and economic conditions make a whole person. We discuss the socio-economic conditions in the following section.

#### 4.2.3 EMPOWERMENT: THE WILL TO STAND ON ONE'S LEGS

In pursuit of our discussion in this section, we go back to where we started, namely, Wilson's (1974) notion that miracles are an alternative to a revolution. We have questioned this earlier and it is not our intention to pursue the argument at this point. In this section, we focus on the two axes of "cause" and "effect" or experience and reaction. In Wilson's analysis, it is the experience of suffering, manifested in various forms (cause), that results in either a thaumaturgical or a revolutionary response (effect). We explore this notion further. In our view, the experience that constitutes the background to miracles is largely socio-economic while the political conditions also play a role. For convenience, we discuss cause and effect separately, beginning with the socio-economic experience of antiquity. Our discussion in this section will, however, be brief since much of the kind of issues discussed have been discussed by other scholars elsewhere. Besides, the aim is only to show how miracles and socio-economic conditions relate to each other and what results from that encounter. In other words, this section does not constitute an enquiry.

##### 4.2.3.1 The socio-economic experience of antiquity

In chapter 3 above, we discussed beggars as a social problem. However, we did not discuss the socio-economic conditions as the major cause of begging, save in a brief discussion of "structural beggars". The justification for this is that our focus was not so much on causes as it was on societal responses although mention of social conditions became inevitable. In order for us to be able to appreciate the empowering moment of the miracle, we have to know a bit more about the socio-economic conditions of the empire. However, this will be selective information for three reasons: (i) the empire covered an area much bigger than Rome itself. It had incorporated conquered lands such as Palestine whose economic practices differed slightly from those of others (ii)

owing to the depth and magnitude of the area, it will not be possible to conduct a detailed study of the conditions in a section of this size (iii) there exists a number of studies on the Jewish-Hellenistic background of Christianity (eg. Grant 1980); our interest is on a particular aspect of such a background. A summary of important points will therefore suffice.

The socio-economic conditions during our period may be described as prosperous for a few and depressing for the majority. We are here referring to both city-states and provinces. Wengst (1987) explains the advantages for the Roman citizens and the implications of the underlying *Pax Romana* ideology.<sup>247</sup> Alföldy (1985), Stambaugh and Balch (1986) as well as other social historians, describe the social and historical conditions while de Ste Croix (1981) provides a more analytical view of classes from a Marxist perspective and Rohrbaugh (1984), a structural analysis.

That the Roman Empire was largely an urbanised society is attested by a number of social historians (eg. Rovstovzev, Sjöberg). By Roman Empire here we mean a collection of societies (cf Kidd 1990:35) which in one way or another, came under the rule of the emperor. These societies differed in wealth, power and prestige. Scholars<sup>248</sup> tend to apply modern categories such as “class”, “bourgeoisie”, etc. in their analysis of such societies although the appropriateness of modern categories for the societies of antiquity was questioned by Judge more than three decades ago (Judge 1960). As already mentioned above in this study, the problem of cross-cultural interpretation was recently raised more acutely, in an article by Craffert (1995). We will therefore, not pursue it in this section. The immediate question is: Who were the “stake-holders” in the empire at the time?

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<sup>247</sup>Wengst (1987:8-9) defines *Pax Romana* as the political peace which was imposed by the Romans in the empire from the time of the reign of Augustus Caesar. In terms of this peace (the peace of Rome), prosperity in the empire, and security on its borders were guaranteed by the empire. However, it only benefitted the rich and ensured that they enjoyed their riches without fear or interference from the outside.

<sup>248</sup>Kidd (1990:35) refers to a “middle class”, citing Aristotle as his authority for this. Aristotle, in a discussion of his ideal republic envisioned a state run not by the exceedingly wealthy (οἱ εὐποροὶ σφόδρα) nor by the overly poor (οἱ ἄποροὶ σφόδρα), but by those of middling prosperity (οἱ μέσαι τούτων).

There seems to be some consensus among recent scholars, that the entire population of the empire (including provinces) numbered about 50 million (cf Kidd 1990:35; Wood 1991:16). About 80% of these were food producing peasants, supplying the nearby towns (for example, the Italian towns) while only between 1% (cf Kidd 1990:35) and 3% (cf Wood 1991:17) of the total population constituted the ruling class. The ruling class were in turn, divided into three groups, in a descending hierarchical order: senators, equestrians and decurians (Wood 1991:16). Since these are not of primary interest in this study, it is not necessary to discuss them. We focus on the peasants and free and freedmen.

It is suggested that the peasants were a class between the ruling class and the citizens and freedmen.<sup>249</sup> This suggestion is made by Wood (1991:17) who also argues that there were about 600 000 citizens and freedmen. Before 'descending' to the citizens and freedmen, a word or two about the peasants is necessary. Wood (1991:17) posits that in Italy, these numbered only three million by the period of the Principate,<sup>250</sup> a 25% decline from over four million before the Second Punic War. These figures may only be conjurations. However, they give us an idea of the potential strength the peasants may have had. According to Hopkins (1978:7,15 cf Finley 1973:105), the Roman economy in Italy and provinces rested on the backs of free peasants although most of them led an impoverished and 'backbreaking' existence on ten acres or more (Wood 1991:17). Some owned the land they tilled, others were tenants (Wood 1991:17) of absentee landlords.

Wood (1991:18) goes on to argue that about a third of surplus labour of the average peasant was appropriated by the ruling class in the form of rents, taxes, and market exchange. However, the primary means of exploitation was military conscription. This argument is in line with that of Wolf (1966) and Sjöberg (1960) save in one respect, namely that according to the latter two, peasants did not produce more than they

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<sup>249</sup>We are aware of the complexity of the task of analysing the social structure of the empire at any stage. Scholars have a number of conflicting views on this. Our solution is that each scholar should settle for what works as a tool in pursuit of his/her research for as long as this avoids anachronisms. For discussions of the structure, see: JG Gager (1975), MI Finley (1973), EA Judge (1961); AJ Malherbe (1989), WA Meeks (1983) and Rohrbaugh (1984), to mention a few of the more recent works.

<sup>250</sup>The Principate was established in 27 BCE.

needed for subsistence. If what they had was appropriated by the ruling class, then the peasants were left with nothing.

With regard to citizens and freedmen, which Wood regards as a class on their own, it is important to mention that the 600 000 strong group which lived in Rome was not only the biggest compared to other Italian cities, they were also confined to the frightful living conditions of the city of Rome (Wood 1991:18). This class, known as "plebs/plebeians", consisted of labourers, craftsmen, tradesmen and professionals (cf Lenski 1966:62). They lived side by side with between 300 000 and 350 000 slaves.

By all accounts, it appears that freedmen were in a better position economically, than the freeborn: They dominated in numbers and in business; they owned property which they bought out of the savings they had made during slavery and, as the following quotation reveals:

The many small enterprises combining crafts and shopkeeping were primarily in the hands of freedmen: the butchers, bakers, dyers, cloth makers, metal workers, jewellers, and goldsmiths. Mass production in the modern sense was non-existent; but such commodities as bricks, lead pipes, glass, and lamps were made on a scale larger than in the normal small shops, in establishments owned by freeborn and sometimes freedmen, usually supervised by freedmen, and employing slaves. Freedmen and slaves served as confidential secretaries and occasionally were men of letters (Wood 1991:19).

Kidd (1990) and Wood (1991) seem to concur on this history. In the final analysis of the socio-economic conditions, it might be concluded that it was 'better to be a slave than a freeborn'. Beavis (1992:38) contends, with Bradley (1987), that the Roman Empire was a slave society in that "many of the accomplishments of the upper classes depended upon the leisure time which accompanied the exploitation of a servile labour force". This latter point will become clearer as the discussion unfolds below.

The freedmen were in the majority while the freeborn numbered not more than 60 000. Along with slaves and freedmen, the freeborn were forced to do the menial and unskilled tasks in the city such as building, carting, and seasonal work on the docks and adjacent farmland (Wood 1991:19). The majority of the freeborn were poor male adults, many of them former peasants. Some of these resorted to begging. Wood



estimates that freeborn artisans were fewer than 10%. To what extent did this influence the socio-economic relationships?

We shall argue below that it is both a psychological and sociological truism that social and economic insecurities contribute to a strong belief in miracles.<sup>251</sup> In order to be able to sustain that argument, it is imperative that the paralysing or incapacitating dimension of bad social and economic conditions be foregrounded. Thus far, that has not been the case. The problem is that in our written sources, most of which are written from a Christian perspective, there is no link between suffering and religion with regard to the empire. The miracle stories we mentioned earlier are specifically about physical healing. These, it seems, transcend 'class' divisions.<sup>252</sup> A better illustration of our point then, is the Palestinian context, especially, the Galilean situation.<sup>253</sup>

As clarified above, the aim of this discussion is to briefly demonstrate a connection between socio-economic conditions and belief in miracles. In describing the situation in Galilee then, we are not exhausting all there is to say about the socio-economic conditions but are instead, constructing a typology.

The present author has argued elsewhere (1993:33), that social conditions in first century Palestine can best be understood through social stratification. This appears to be the best way of explaining what appear to have been socio-economic relations. It should be remembered that while the Empire had a mixed economy (Szesnat 1992 cf Jeremias 1969:4-54; Belo 1981:62), Palestine in particular, especially Galilee, was an agrarian society in which land played a fundamental economic role (cf Belo 1981:60f;

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<sup>251</sup>This does not discount the fact that a small number of the relatively affluent believe strongly in miracles, not for economic reasons but as a result of spiritual needs. This is not only true of today, as our observations in the ZCC have shown, there are corresponding examples in antiquity, for example, the Centurion who went to Jesus for the healing of his servant, the woman who dealt in purple cloth, the rich went to Aesclepus.

<sup>252</sup>See stories in *Arcana Mundi* (1986).

<sup>253</sup>Freyne (1987; 1988) has sufficiently demonstrated that there was a difference between conditions in Galilee and those in Judaea. Belo (1981) also refers to differences even in practices; in fact, Belo distinguishes between "Galileans" and "Jews", respectively.

Waetjen 1989; Goodman 1988:51-52). If Lenski's (1966) model of agrarian societies in antiquity were to be normative, we would conclude that social relationships were in fact, socio-economic relationships. In other words, the worth of a human being and his/her status were defined by their proximity to power and economic surplus. The more access they had to the surplus, the more powerful they became and the better their social status (cf Lenski 1966:43).

It appears that in both Judaea and Galilee power resided with the "upper classes". According to Saldarini, these did not devote any time to manual labour but rather lived off the surplus produced by the peasants (1989:37). In our discussion in chapter 3 of the present study, allusion was made to the effect that the Roman aristocrats saw this as the way life was meant to be. Hence they defined those who made a living through labour, as beggars (see Chapter 3 above).

However, it should not be forgotten that even those who enjoyed "good life" in the entire empire (cf chapter 3), did so at the expense of peasants; they did not have to work themselves but the peasants produced surplus on their behalf (cf de Ste Croix 1981:120; Goodman 1988:55). Wolf (1966) who has collected evidence about peasant life, posits that free peasants produced enough to cover their needs, including ceremonial dues, seed money and implements replacement. They did not produce surplus since they did not cultivate the land for commercial purposes but for subsistence. However, those who have lost ownership of land or were for some reason indebted to estate owners, had to produce a surplus (cf Wolf 1986:3,14) which in turn, would enrich the ruling class (Draper 1994:37). Hence these did not have to labour in order to live.

Saldarini (1988:36 cf Carney 1975:99-100) suggests that the most dominant manner of coercing a peasant was through heavy taxation. Different items were taxed, including salt, income, land, etc. Other peasants had become tenants on the land which was owned by the king or some absentee aristocrat. This often landed some peasants in huge debts, especially when there was crop failure, often due to natural causes. The peasant farmer was then forced to borrow from the rich at the risk of ultimately having to surrender their land as payment. Interest rates usually exceeded 100%. In our opinion, these marked the early stages in the 'making of a beggar'; if not, it forced the resilient to social banditry (cf Freyne 1988:51; Horsley 1981:409f; Josephus, *War*).

This takes us to the question of relationships between peasants and the “ruling” elite: As we have argued in chapter 3 of this study, patron-client relationships were a common phenomenon. Viewed from a functionalist perspective, such relationships were mutually beneficial: peasants saw the elite as their protectors against outside aggression (cf Saldarini 1989:36,37) while they in turn, rendered services to the elite. However, if the relationship was as harmonious as that, one would ask why there were peasant revolts against the elite (cf Lenski 1966:273). We suggest that peasants disapproved of the practices of the elite against them. This was to become clear at the start of the war in 66 CE when the debt archives in Jerusalem (Judaea) became the first target of social bandits, thereby ‘buying’ the support of peasants who were exploited by the system (cf Goodman 1988:58). However, as Draper evers, it was only in extreme cases, such as threat to their land, that peasants resorted to violence (1994:37). We have also shown in chapter 3, that available sources portray relationships between clients and patrons as both good and bad. We will not however, digress to that in this section. Our discussion in this section is sufficient for the point made, namely, that disempowering socio-economic conditions favoured the emergence of miracles as an empowering alternative. Instead, we will proceed to a discussion of the “empowering moment”, a reflection on the effect of the miracle in situations such as those described above.

#### 4.2.3.2 THE EMPOWERING MOMENT

Solzhenitsyn (1968)<sup>254</sup> once wrote:

However much we laugh at miracles  
when we are strong, healthy and  
prosperous, if life becomes so  
hedged and cramped that only a  
miracle can save us, then we clutch  
at this unique, exceptional miracle  
and believe in it.

Solzhenitsyn expresses a view of the miracle with which we want to conclude this part of the chapter. Some see this as a spiritual refuge from life’s problems, as discussed in the above section. We however, see it as the “empowering” moment of the miracle. It

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<sup>254</sup>In Mills J 1983.

brings hope where there is none; it recharges the despondent. In other words, it provides a reason to live, especially where people's lives are threatened by the kind of socio-economic conditions we described above.

We however, do not know enough about the communities of antiquity to be able to make any definite conclusions about them. Whatever we argue then, reflects our own biased perception of the situation. An example of such a tendency is Theissen's (1988:36) attempt to forge a link between an individual's experience of life and religion:

At the time of Jesus there were many socially rootless people in Palestine. Many lived in unconscious readiness to leave their ancestral homes. They included the disciples of Jesus. But these represented only a variant of possible behaviour. *Anyone who was dissatisfied with things as they were could become a criminal or a healer, a beggar or a prophet, a man possessed or an exorcist. He could identify himself (sic) with a new form of Judaism or lose his identity completely and become a helpless victim of demons* (italics mine).

There may be problems with Theissen's reconstruction of the situation. However, modern day experiences make Theissen's reconstruction of the situation in antiquity a possibility. Theissen (1988:37) reinforces his statement thus:

An unmistakable pointer to the socio-economic background to social rootlessness is the fact that all the renewal movements within Judaism which drew their recruits from those who had no roots in society were critical of society: in various ways they criticized both riches and possessions. A programme can be seen among Essenes and resistance fighters, but the Jesus movement was characterised by a certain "lack of principle".

There is a feeling that Theissen may be exaggerating to some extent. His argument that everyone who belonged to social renewal movements was socially rootless is a generalisation. For example, we have argued in chapter 3, that some, eg. philosophers, voluntarily stepped out of society in protest against social ills. The Jesus Movement itself drew followers from across the social spectrum although it may have started off as a movement of those at the bottom of society; towards the end of the first century, the Jesus Movement had become a church, composed of people from different regions,

socio-economic backgrounds and racial affiliation. They were not all socially rootless (cf Esler 1987; Grant 1980; Crossan 1991). It should also be noted that there is no evidence that Jesus was himself rootless. Thus, Solzhenitsyn's statement becomes plausible. The impact of the miracle cuts across the social spectrum; human need rather than social affiliation determines that.<sup>255</sup>

Our focus in this concluding section is on that impact. We propose an approach from a Jewish apocalyptic angle since we are in anycase, using the Palestinian experience as our case study. Apocalyptic is often seen as a projection of the ideal situation by the suffering. For example, when people find themselves helpless in a socio-economic and political situation, they sometimes resort to a spiritual refuge, a state in which they feel triumphant.

The emergence of peasant movements for example, has been viewed in this light by some. According to Draper (1994:37), it is related to distress which finds expression in several ways such as for example, the emergence of banditry, popular prophets and the "wishful" popular election of a king. As Draper argues, this distress which was a natural reaction to socio-economic conditions, only became overt under extreme conditions. The present author has argued elsewhere (Speckman 1997a), that there was no way in which experience under social and economic conditions can be left out of attempts to make sense of biblical texts.

The latter point finds support in several studies of the Jewish apocalyptic writings (eg. Hanson; Russell). They trace these back to adverse economic and political conditions. The writings of Baruch, Enoch and parts of Daniel are important references for understanding the Jewish apocalyptic. Parts of Isaiah are also understood in this light. As we have argued in this chapter (see the "coming of a miracle-worker") there was a "spirit of expectation" in the hope that God would send a servant to deliver them. Hence the messianic expectations. Even a miracle-worker represented the dawn of the messianic age. Without such hopes and expectations, life would have been meaningless. The coming of Jesus filled that gap as it will become clear in the following chapter. He did more than just perform a miracle, he transformed situations in that way. Thus,

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<sup>255</sup>This should not be understood to mean that Christianity was only about miracles. Miracles are part of Christianity and it is noteworthy that some of those of 'good birth' who are mentioned in Pauline letters may have been brought into Christianity through miracles.

miracle stories were more than a mere expression of belief in miracles (contra Theissen 1983:231); they were meant to empower.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we discussed the function of healing miracle stories in antiquity. We focused in particular on authenticating, transformative and empowering functions. In our discussion, it became clear that to an extent, healing miracle stories authenticated the hero or performer of the miracle, transformed the beneficiary and empowered the onlookers or supporters of the beneficiary. Belief in miracles is apparently induced in most cases, by unfavourable life experiences (cf Theissen 1983 esp.249-253) although as we have seen in the modern example of the ZCC, this is not the only reason.

The background which is uncovered in this chapter will be used in the following chapter in support of the reading that the healing of the crippled beggar at the temple entrance did all three things, depending on the reader's perspective. The author may have intended to authenticate Jesus or Christianity, the "transformation" however, ends up empowering to those who "hear" the story.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ALMS OR LEGS?: A CONTEXTUAL-DEVELOPMENTAL READING OF ACTS 3:1-10

#### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2 we introduced the contextual approach and the theory of human development (hence contextual-developmental). We concluded that chapter by introducing a grid or categories against which we proposed to read the text. Having laid a foundation for reading the text in chapters 3 and 4 by painting a picture of the wider social context contemporaneous with the text, we now proceed to read the text, using the said categories. The problem of dependency and beggars was discussed in chapter 1. It then emerged that the Bible has the potential to empower for social transformation. However, that is only possible when the Bible is read contextually, an approach which is lacking in current readings of Acts. This necessitated the discussion of the contextual paradigm in chapter 2, which was limited to, and concretised in human development. The criteria for reading the text which emerged from chapter 2 provided a frame of reference as we pursued the subjects of beggars (chapter 3) and miracles (chapter 4), respectively, the two axes that converge in the text in question.

Some helpful strands have emerged from the latter two chapters: In chapter 3, it emerged that there was no formal welfare or almsgiving policy except in Palestine, where a theology was developed by the rabbis; charity on the whole, was done by benefactors, directed at whole cities rather than at individuals. By implication, the tendency to justify “hand-outs” with beneficence in antiquity shows a misguided view of beneficence and a limited understanding of charity. It also emerged that the idea of social integration for beggars and the disabled was present in a very small scale in Athens and Rome. This helped us to focus on the function of healing miracles (chapter 4). Although for convenience, this is divided up in the chapter, into “authenticating”, “empowering” and “transforming” functions, the basic idea was social integration.

In the present chapter, these different strands will be drawn together in a reading of the story of the crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-10). We work with the hypothesis that read con-

textually, against a theory of development, Acts 3:1-10 has the potential to empower individuals and small groups for social transformation.<sup>256</sup>

Approaches to this passage have varied greatly. The two dominant strands that are of interest to our study are those that interpret the passage in the context of the speeches of Peter (cf Steyn (1996)<sup>257</sup>, Barrett (1994), Moule (1966), Hamm (1975),<sup>258</sup> etc.) and those that view it in the light of entire chapters 3 and 4. One would think that the two approaches are respectively, of no consequence. Yet each approach determines what the outcome of the interpretation will be. For example, focus on Petrine speeches presupposes a situation of Israel's idolatry and apostasy. Seen from that angle, the healing story symbolises the healing of Israel at the gate (cf Hamm 1986). A focus on the entire context of Acts 3 and 4 presupposes a situation of caring and the call to Christians to behave accordingly. The conclusion of this view is that a needy person is always at our doorstep.

Neither of the above approaches however, satisfies the need that the present study seeks to address (see chapter 1 section 1.4): They are not appropriate for the context of development. Steyn's approach at first looks better. However, it soon becomes clear that it is no different from what we referred to as theological exegesis in chapter 2 above, which results in charity. It focuses on what happens in the socio-historical background of the text with the view to determine the author's theological intention (a *diachronic* approach). Thus, it confines itself to the stage of the text's development that we referred to as the "cradle" in our discussion in chapter 2. Our approach would be *synchronic* or in the current language of liberation theologies, *contextual*: How can the text function in the present context, eg. that of development in South Africa today?

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<sup>256</sup>It should be noted that there are no terms for development in either the Greek or Latin. There are only related ideas.

<sup>257</sup>Steyn's approach to speeches differs from that of Barrett's. He focuses on the apostles' response to the man as representative of the church's dealing with a needy person (see Steyn 1996:39).

<sup>258</sup>Hamm's studies (1975, 1986, 1990) will receive special treatment in the present study since Hamm's doctoral study which was based on Acts 3:1-10, was the first to be undertaken, and probably the last since. It is therefore of special importance for the present study.



Thus we approach the text with a contextual question. In an attempt to find answers, the discussions conducted in chapters 2, 3 and 4 will be utilised in this chapter.<sup>259</sup>

The chapter is divided into three major parts: Following this introduction, the chapter proceeds with an analysis of the text under the heading 'alms or legs: highlighting Luke's presentation of the miracle story'. The structure of the story is significant for the construction of a theology of human development. In the second part with the heading 'the notion of human development' we reflect on the text against the grid of categories of Human Development as established in chapter 2 above. This helps to highlight the notion of HD in the text. In the third part with the heading 'the construction of a new reality', we proceed to construct the theology of HD in the passage under the heading: 'towards an empowering reading of Acts 3:1-10'.

## **5.1. ALMS OR LEGS? HIGHLIGHTING LUKE'S PRESENTATION OF THE MIRACLE STORY**

In this first part, our aim is to highlight Luke's presentation of the miracle story in Acts 3:1-4:31. Preachers and commentators often take this story for granted: They give it a spiritual meaning which tends to confine the story to an example of miracles resulting from the Pentecost experience (Acts 2:43). This may well be so, however, for us, the elements of the miracle story and its aftermath are important pointers to a theology of development that is either implicit or incipient in the text. We will focus on these elements in this first part of the chapter. As a prelude to that, we will look at various aspects of the miracle account (Acts 3:1-10).

### **5.1.1 TEXTUAL PROBLEMS**

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<sup>259</sup>Chapter 2 introduces a relevant method for reading the text in the context of the problem which was introduced in chapter 1; chapter 3 discusses a similar problem in antiquity and chapter 4 discusses possible solutions from which could be drawn some clues for our own context.

### 5.1.1.1. Variants<sup>260</sup>

It is important before proceeding with this discussion, to note three variants in the pericope, which are relevant for our understanding of it. Their inclusion or exclusion in our study will influence our understanding of the text in one way or another, which justifies our concern with them. We shall take them in turn below.

Some scholars, for example, Barrett (1994:174), find the abrupt beginning of the story (3:1-10 esp.v.1) in the old uncial puzzling. They see no connection between it and either Pentecost or the description of the primitive Christian community in 2:42-47. In fact, Barrett (1994:177) finds the use of ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτο tautological because it repeats that Peter and John who in any case act in unison throughout, were 'going up to the Temple together'.<sup>261</sup> This repetition is unnecessary. A possible explanation for it is that it reflects Luke's attempt to harmonise the story which he found elsewhere<sup>262</sup>, with the rest of the material he had at his disposal, with the view to make it serve as a specific example of the τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα (wonders and signs) as mentioned at 2:43 (so Rackham 1957). There are in any case, other places subsequent to the healing at the temple entrance, where healing is mentioned (eg. Acts 4:30; 5:12, 15, 16). In these places, it is not clear whether the healings referred to "occurred" before or after the incident at the temple entrance.

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<sup>260</sup>The text of the 26th edition of Nestlé-Aland (1979) is used in this study. The reader's attention is also drawn to the fact that our intention in this subsection is only to highlight some of the crucial issues for our purposes in the discussion of variants in Acts 3:1-10. There are comments in a number of the standard commentaries on Acts. We do not find it necessary to repeat these.

<sup>261</sup>The reader should note that by analysing the present pericope, we do not necessarily declare the story historical. That is a different and debatable issue. However, whether historical or not, Josephus does inform us that there was activity in the temple and even during the siege, the priests continued to offer sacrifices in the temple in the morning and during the ninth hour (*Antiquities* XIV, 4,3). Kurtz (1997:296) in his discussion of the introduction to Acts postulates that the recorded events were historical. However, he provides no credible evidence to dismiss those who argue that the first six chapters of Acts are the author's creation.

<sup>262</sup>Barrett (1994:176) suggests that where Luke found the story, it was possibly known as a cure worked by magical means. He rehabilitated it in the way he used it in Acts 3, to correct that view.

The existence of more than one reading of 3:1 corroborates our problem. Where does the healing episode belong in the literary context of chapters 3 and 4? Is it to be read together with the preceding section, the summary (that is, from 2:47) as some commentators do? Is it independent of Peter's speech (3:11f) and the summary of life in the church?

Some manuscripts add ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις... (cf D *et al*) at the end of 2:47, before "Πέτρος δέ...". This effectively binds what follows in chapter 3 to the preceding section (the summary). In fact Steyn (1996:39-40), following the old uncial, makes this link between the temple entrance episode and the preceding section, thus echoing some previous contributions on the passage. We however, disagree with his view that the variant does not affect the interpretation of this passage. There is at least one important way in which it affects the passage, namely, its status in the narrative. The addition implies that the passage is part of Acts 2:43-47 and that the division at the end of 2:47 can be ascribed to the editor of the older manuscript. As a rule, the fact that such an addition would make the reading difficult, especially in terms of the flow of the story from 2:47 to 3:1, makes it highly probable that the reading of D *et al* is correct. However, when read against the textual context of the *textus receptus*: ὁ δὲ κύριος προσετιθει τοὺς σώζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτο (and daily, the Lord added to them those who were being saved), the present reading in the *textus receptus* helps us to demarcate the two sections (2:42-47 and 3:1f) clearly. We shall therefore retain it for the purposes of our discussion in this chapter.

The second important variant for our purposes is found at 3:4. The non-Western text has rearranged the order of the words βλέψον and ἀτενίσας.<sup>263</sup> The verse in the *textus receptus* reads that Peter and John looked straight at the man, that is, a fixed looking (Carter and Earle 1973:50). The word used there is ἀτενίσας.<sup>264</sup> In turn, they ask the man to look at them (βλέψον). In this reading, focus is in fact, on the apostles as miracle workers (cf Metzger 1971:306-7). It is they who stare at the man while

<sup>263</sup>In the Nestle-Aland edition (26th), we see that D has substituted ἐμβλέψας for ἀτενίσας and for βλέψας, D has ατεμισσον.

<sup>264</sup>The word is also used by Diogenes Laertius as ἀτενίζοντα and (in the Loeb series), the word is translated as 'repeated glances' (cf Diogenes VI, 61). Here is also distinguished between seeing ἴδων and repeated glancing ἀτενίζοντα.

the man gives them an ordinary look that any man would give when ‘his attention is thus aroused’ (Lenski 1961:127). However, Codex Bezae (D) changes this. In the latter reading, focus is on the crippled man: He is the one who is asked to stare (ἀτενίσσον) at the apostles after they had looked (ἐμβλέψας) at him. The aim is probably more on the emphasis of the miracle (which is about to happen) and less on the apostles’ role as wonder-workers.<sup>265</sup> Lake and Cadbury suggest that the Western text might be original while the B-text might be ‘an accommodation to the typical vocabulary of a miraculous story’ (in Metzger 1971:307). This suggests some strong internal evidence.

When both internal and external evidence has been evaluated, some factors stand out as being persuasive: (i) The older manuscripts (2nd century) keep the order as “βλέψον...ἀτενίσσας”. This suggests that the text’s original ideology had not as yet been “corrupted” by later ideological influences. In the original ideology, the role played by the apostles is subjected to the power of Jesus. They are *only* mediators of his power. (ii) Thus, the older manuscripts wanted to establish the principle that the recipient (beneficiary) rather than the mediators of Christ’s power (benefactors) was the focal point. In fact, if we look at 3:16, it is the man’s completeness/wholeness, that is highlighted. Throughout Acts 3-4, there is constant reference back to the healed person while the “benefactors” either explain the healing or are being interrogated. (iii) It appears that focus on the apostles rather than on the beggar is the editor’s work which reflects a sensitivity to the aristocratic readers who seem to have had little regard for the beggar (see chapter 3 of this study). If the beggar were to be the one who looks intently at the apostles, the implication would be that he was disrespecting those of a higher status than he. In the culture of agrarian societies, it is not common practice that a person of a low status (as was the cripple to the apostles) “stares” a person of a higher status in the eye. This is tantamount to undermining in the agrarian culture.<sup>266</sup>In

<sup>265</sup>Note that in chapter 4 above, we indicated that the apostles gave credit to Jesus. The miracles highlighted him and not them who mediated the miracles on his behalf.

<sup>266</sup>Hamm (1986:311), following D, keeps the order as ἀτενίσσας...βλέψον...He explains the sentence as the ‘dynamic of attention’ whereby the role of the apostles is highlighted. Here, Hamm gives no indication that there is a variant; nor does he explain why he has chosen to ignore it. In the same way, Hamm has not looked at possible circumstantial influences on the author. In fact, his onesided approach to the text may be seen in his forcing of ἀτενίζετε in verse 12 to echo ἀτενίσσας in verse 4. If the cultural context for example, were to be taken cognisance of in the interpretation of the sentence, then the contrast between the natures of the two groups on whom the words are used would be clear. The group at 3:12 are not beggars. Therefore, their reaction should be expected to be different.

fact, vestiges of this culture are still visible in some agrarian cultures today. This leads us to the conclusion that the editor or second author of the text might have wanted to accommodate the cultural situation by changing the words. For the purposes of this study, we prefer the Western text reading.

A third variant is found near the end of the pericope, at 3:6. Some witnesses (cf, the *textus receptus* reading) give a peripheral status to the words “rise up and...” (ἐγείρε καὶ...). They have the imperative “walk” (περιπάτει) with the words ἐγείρε καὶ... in square brackets. Yet, the inclusion of the words which is supported by major uncials (N B D) changes the healing into a process (rise... and...) and their exclusion simply takes the man (or the ‘demon’ in him) by surprise.<sup>267</sup> For the purposes of this study, the text would make better sense with the words included. We therefore align ourselves with the majority of the Committee who considered the longer reading to be more probable (cf Metzger 1971).

The variants mentioned above and our preferences, will therefore be used accordingly in the exegesis that follows below. The episode will be regarded as independent of 2:43,<sup>268</sup> although it might be an example of the work of the Holy Spirit as mentioned at 2:43.<sup>269</sup> Ἀτενίσσας will be used after βλεψον and ἐγείρε καὶ... will be read as part of the text. These emphases strengthen our reading of the text for development.

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<sup>267</sup>Carter and Earle (1973:51) however turn this command into a catalytic moment: they translate περιπάτει as “start walking, and keep on walking”. Thus, they also acknowledge the possibility of some implicit process which begins with walking (περιπάτει). On the contrary, Bruce (1981) sees no process. Therefore, it is immaterial to him whether the “rise up and walk” are included or not.

<sup>268</sup>Note the difference between the Gospel and Acts in this regard. In the Gospel episodes have a causal relationship with a smooth flow while in Acts, they are loosely connected (Du Plessis 1997:12-13 cf. Tannehill vol. I) The advantage is that this makes it possible to study individual episodes independently and in depth.

<sup>269</sup>This point seems to be taken for granted in most commentaries. There are no reasons provided for understanding it in that way. Bruce (1981:82-83) suggests that it is one of the stories that received considerable publicity. While we accept the possibility of this connection, given the position of the story in the narrative, we still feel that a better explanation is necessary. This we cannot do in this study.

### 5.1.1.2. A healing or an exorcism?

It is usually taken for granted that Acts 3:1-10 is a healing miracle. Almost without exception, the available commentaries accept it as such. However, when questions of the definition of a healing miracle and that of an exorcism are raised, some doubts come to the fore. How are the terms healing and exorcism defined and what is the relationship of Acts 3:1-10 to them? We do not intend to conduct a detailed discussion of this matter here. It will take much more than a few lines to change a long accepted tradition. All we are trying to do is state this new insight after rereading the story.

As we have seen in the last chapter of this study, the term 'miracle' is elusive. It can be defined in several ways. However, the working definition which is commonly used by scholars goes back to the 12th century, to Augustine who defined it as "an occurrence which is contrary to what is known of nature."<sup>270</sup> (see also other definitions and list of terms used in chapter 4 above). This definition has since been challenged by Fuller on the grounds that it goes contrary to the Biblical understanding of a miracle, namely, that the Bible defines it by different names, depending on the context (cf Hume in chapter 4).

For the purposes of this study we refined this definition a little. We defined a miracle as a manifestation of divine activity (cf chapter 4 above). The healing of the crippled person was apparently 'contrary to what was known in nature.' This is evidenced by both the man's joy at what he apparently never imagined would be possible (3:8-9) and by the reaction of the people to the healing (3:10).<sup>271</sup> In the words of Bruce (1982:85), the healing was "more than a marvel, it was a sign. The very behaviour of the former cripple was itself a token, to those who had eyes to see, of the advent of the messianic age". Hence divine activity.

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<sup>270</sup>cited by RH Fuller 1963:10.

<sup>271</sup>However, this does not suggest that miracles, especially healings, were unheard of before. The OT for example has several healing miracles. The gospels contain a lot of them. Yet in each case they were regarded as happenings outside the ordinary course of nature. There is also extra-Biblical evidence of miracles being performed by people other than Jesus or his apostles and one instance in Luke where a non-Christian performs a miracle which Jesus condones.

An analysis of different kinds of miracles shows at least six categories under which miracles may be classified.<sup>272</sup> The healing of the crippled man belongs to the particular category of "healings". This is different from "exorcisms." The simple distinction drawn by Theissen (1983:90) is that healings have images of the transmission of power whereas exorcisms rely more on "powerful" words. In comparison with the gospel, there is little evidence of exorcisms being performed in the early church although there are a couple of instances (eg Acts 16:18 cf Acts 19:13-16).<sup>273</sup>

The miracle in Acts 3:1-10 used the means of power transmission: "In the name of Jesus..." (cf 3:6; 3:16; 4:30). In other words, power is in the name of the risen Jesus which is now being invoked.<sup>274</sup> The touch that follows is usually the visible form of transmission in other healing miracles.<sup>275</sup> In this story this happens after the pronouncement of healing has been made. As if waiting for the apostles to complete the process by touching him, the man does not respond until he is helped to his feet by the apostles.

Hemer (1989:434-435) has summed up the categories of miracles in Luke-Acts in a ten-point scheme (see the points in the discussion of chapter 4). The advantage of his summary is that it is not a general discussion of miracles but one with a particular focus on miracles in Acts. An attempt to locate Acts 3:1-10 in this scheme will sharpen our view of first century perception of a miracle.

In this scheme, Hemer places the healing in Acts 3:1-10 under 3 (cf Hemer 1989:435) which reads thus "Acts of power, through Jesus or his disciples, which appear

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<sup>272</sup>The list, as discussed in chapter 4 above, is provided and discussed by Theissen (1983:90-112) as: exorcisms, healings, epiphanies, rescue miracles, gift miracles and rule miracles.

<sup>273</sup>Acts 5:16 is not an instance of performance but a general report. In the light of our discussion in chapter 4 above, possession could refer to anything from ordinary flu to demon occupation. The report can therefore not be used as evidence for exorcisms. In fact, the existence of only two instances of performance of exorcisms in Acts says something about the author's priorities.

<sup>274</sup>See the discussion of the significance of this in Haenchen, *ibid.* 200; Jackson and Lake (1965), vol.V; Harnack, Jeremias (1969). The name invoked the authority and power of the person a particular trait.

<sup>275</sup>cf Van Der Loos (in chapter 4) above.

involved". It is an act of power through the apostles, the mediators of Christ's power (cf Williams 1978:74). However, in our own judgment, it belongs to both 3 and 9.<sup>276</sup> While it is an act that is performed by the apostles in the name of Jesus, it also points to God's activity in history, or in line with Bruce (1981:85), it is "a sign of the times".<sup>277</sup>

The argument may be taken further: this particular miracle is a healing miracle with economic implications. The healed person is described not only as a "cripple from birth" but also as one who "begged"<sup>278</sup> daily" (καθ' ἡμέραν) (3:2). Following his healing, others marvel at what they perceive to be God's activity in history (3:10). The healed person himself is so enabled (empowered) by this "activity"<sup>279</sup> that he immediately resumes his place in public life (πολιτεία), as implied by his going into the temple (3:9) and his participation in the political situation that had developed between the apostles and the Jewish authorities (cf 4:14).<sup>280</sup> Interestingly, the word used to describe his healing (albeit in different forms) in Acts 3 and 4 is σώζω, which can be translated

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<sup>276</sup>Point 9 in Hemer's scheme reads thus: "The theme of scripture divinely fulfilled in Christ and in the Church as an argument testifying to God's action in history, a recurring feature of the argument of the speeches".

<sup>277</sup>See a discussion of the importance of being alert to the signs of the times in Nolan (1987); Speckman (1993); Speckman (1998).

<sup>278</sup>Our emphasis here is on begging as an economic activity. As it became clear in chapter 3 of this study, people begged in order to survive. Commentaries do not highlight this aspect when they do comment on the verse.

<sup>279</sup>In Luke's writings, the ability to perceive God's activity in history is usually a privilege of the humble as opposed to the leaders of Israel, eg. LK 1:46f; 19:41-44. In this case too, it is the "ordinary" worshippers in the temple that see the miracle and marvel. The leaders do not seem to see God's involvement; instead, they seek to oppose those that are able to do or see (Acts 4:1-22).

<sup>280</sup>There is wide agreement among scholars that he had never gone into the temple before, owing to his infirmity which was regarded as a sign of God's displeasure in Judaism (eg. Steyn 1996). However, while the doctrine of retribution (which Jesus attempted to correct, cf John 9:3) was present in Judaism, there is no certainty about whether the beggar was prevented by this from going into the temple or whether he was prevented by his being a non-Jew (cf Tannehill 1990).



as “healed” (eg 3:9) or as “saved” (3:12). According to Rackham (1957:49), this gift of healing or restoration to soundness (of health) or salvation, is the special hope of Israel, the doctrine of messianic kingdom. Hence the coming of the ‘miracle-worker’ was important.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is difficult to describe the genre of the miracle in question with one or two words. It falls within the category of healing miracles. However, it is a healing miracle with a socio- economic slant in that the man is transformed from being economically dependent on others and he is being freed for participation in public life (πολιτεια). One would expect Luke, with his interests in socio-economic issues, to have several miracles with an economic slant. However, he only has the feeding of the five thousand once while each of the other two synoptists (Matthew and Mark) has two different accounts of the same feeding.

The discussion conducted in this section was important because from a developmental perspective, dependency can be seen as an “oppressive demon”. Freedom from the demon is effected through exorcism (and this could be symbolic or actual). It is clear in the story, that the cripple in Acts 3 was not sick but deformed. The two have to be distinguished. As we have seen in chapter 4 above, there can be various demons for different kinds of ailments. A demon which oppresses the mind as a result of physical deformity aggravates the problem, thus prolonging the duration of one’s sickness. The story of the crippled beggar therefore implies that some people may not be physically sick but only “mentally crippled”.

#### 5.1.1.3. Inference of the term ‘beggar’.

The terms πτωχός and προσαιτης do not appear anywhere in the Greek version of the pericope in question. Nor are they used anywhere in the Acts of the Apostles. Instead, the ‘transformed’ person is simply referred to as ‘the man’ (Acts 3:2; 4:9; 4:14; 4:22). Yet the non-Greek versions invariably describe the man as a ‘beggar’. This necessitates an explicatory note.

Given the above definitions of the term beggar (chapter 3 of this study) and the situation described in Acts 3, the non-Greek versions are correct in describing the crippled man as a beggar. He asked for alms (ελεημοσύνη), he was crouched together, he depended on the mercy of others, he sat at the temple entrance, he received alms at the

entrance and it can be assumed that he also dressed up like a beggar and carried a 'sorry wallet' so that he could be pitied by the passers-by. These are some of the descriptions of a beggar gleaned from different sources of antiquity, for example, Homer (cf Crossan 1991). These elements of the story, despite the absence of *πρωχός* and *προσαίτης* make it clear that the man was a beggar. Specifically, he was a physically disabled beggar (see chapter 3 of this study).

It is therefore not incorrect to describe the crippled man who asked for alms as a beggar although in the story, he is described as a cripple. The elements described above show that it is more of his character as a beggar than a cripple that is highlighted, let alone the fact that one is the cause of the other. Hence the importance of this explication in a study of this nature.

Given the above explanation, we shall use the term beggar without further qualification. We now proceed with a discussion of the broad structure (*macro-structure*) of the text in question, which is justified by the need to trace the internal logic of the text.

#### 5.1.2. The Broad Structure (Acts 3-4)

Some scholars (eg Barrett, Moule, Steyn, etc.) would argue that the author's intention with the story of the crippled beggar in Acts 3:1-10 can only be understood against the background of Peter's speeches. Their argument is that the editor of the narrative broke the flow of the sermon which had started at the beginning of chapter 2, at 2:43-7 and that it continues thereafter. They therefore see the story of 3:1-10 as the first example of the wonders referred to in the summary (2:43).

We however, are of the opinion that with or without the interpretational context which is provided by the speeches of Peter, the story is capable of holding its ground. This means that its interpretation does not necessarily depend on the speeches or on the Pentecost event. On the contrary, Peter's speech which begins at 3:11, starts a new topic whose theme seems to be the guilt of Israel in the murder of Jesus. If it were to be a continuation of the Pentecost speech in chapter 2, there would be a problem with the smooth flow into 3:1, the variant discussed above. Thus it is best understood in the context of chapters 3-4.

The story itself is possibly part of a tradition that was moving around (see for example, a different version of it in Acts 14)<sup>281</sup> but its use in Acts 3 has a particular significance. We shall return to this later. For the present, a consideration of the structure of chapters 3 & 4 is germane as this indicates where 3:1-10 fits in.

It appears that the task of figuring out what the structure of the passage is, is not difficult. Nor do Lucan scholars differ much on this. Krodel (1981:8) for example, divides the structure up into two major sections with subsections. In the first section, he has 'benefactions and opposition' (3:1-4:31). In the second section, he has 'threats from within and without' (4:32-5:4).

The first section is divided into four units (i) healing of the lame (ii) speech by Peter (iii) the arrest and appearance of Peter and John before the council (iv) prayer of the community in the face of opposition. These units, according to Krodel (1981:26), are bound together by the name of Jesus which 'runs like a red thread through it'. In support of this, Krodel cites 3:6,16; 4:7,10,12,18,30.

Krodel (1981:3) has structured the two chapters in line with his view of the theme of Luke-Acts, namely, 'God the Great Benefactor, reaches out to his world at the time appointed through his rejected Servant-Benefactor Jesus and through his Benefactor-Servant Community, Israel-the-Church'. Even the theme of the section in which he discusses the structure of the two chapters is entitled 'The Benefactions of God, Christ, and the Spirit through His Benefactor Witness and Servants' (Krodel 1981:8). However, he acknowledges his indebtedness to Danker (1982) for his preference of the 'benefactor' theme.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>281</sup>Hamm (1986:310) suggests three possibilities: (i) that Luke was working with a story about the healing of a well-known crippled beggar at a familiar gate (ii) a tradition about the original Jerusalem Christian community commonly meeting in Solomon's Portico, and (iii) a vague knowledge of the temple layout. The first point is relevant to the present discussion. However, it is possible that Luke was not only working with a story about a well-known beggar but that the story itself was well-known, possibly written in Aramaic and translated by Luke as he incorporated it into his narrative (Barrett 1994:175).

<sup>282</sup>Following our discussion of the meaning of benefactor and the role played by a benefactor in chapter 3 above, we are loathe to use the term for either Jesus or the work of the apostles in the early church. Neither Jesus nor the apostles consciously intended to establish a relationship of material dependency but one based on physical health and socio-economic equity.

While the structure suggested by Krodel finds support from a number of other scholars,<sup>283</sup> the connecting link between the units, which he identifies as the name of Jesus, is not *the* link, and certainly not a very strong one either by itself. The New Testament is replete with the name of Jesus in any case. There is in the units, a strong sense of continuity, not only through the name of Jesus but also through the miracle itself, together with its rippling effects.

The speech of Peter, following the miracle (3:11 ff) appears to be an imposition upon the rest of the units that follow in Acts 3-4. It forms the only unit in Acts 3-4, that makes a recourse to the details of the history of Israel in the whole section that is made up of chapters 3&4. As such, it would make a better fit with the Pentecost speech.<sup>284</sup> But it is linked to the previous unit by the idea of 'power' and being 'strong' (cf vv 16-18), *salvation*, the *name of Jesus* (3:13, 20; 4:10,11,27,30,33) and the *healing* itself (cf Hamm 1986), although these occupy no more than four verses in the entire speech of twenty-three verses. In fact, the speech begins with a reference to the healing before it goes on a tangent that is not necessarily an interpretation of the healing (contra Hamm 1975:199) but an attempt to legitimate<sup>285</sup> Jesus to the Jews as well as a display of the apostles' power which they received at Pentecost.

The idea of power appears as such very rarely in the two chapters (and only once in the speech, at 3:12). However, we refer to the idea (rather than to the occurrences of the word) precisely because our focus is on the 'spirit of power' which pervades the whole section (chapters 3-4), in spite of the scarcity of the word for power in the unit. For example, integral to the narrative is the *empowerment* of the man by the two apostles (3:6ff) which leads to the *empowerment* of the apostles (3:11f) which leads to the



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<sup>283</sup>Walaskay (1988) is an outstanding exception with his structure that starts at the beginning of chapter 2 and ends at 4:31.

<sup>284</sup>There are, as mentioned above, some suggestions that the speech which starts at 3:11 is a continuation of the Pentecost speech which was interrupted by the summaries and the healing miracle (cf Walaskay 1988). This however, would make sense if there was a smooth transition from 2:47 to 3:1, the latter being regarded by some as an example of the 'many wonders' that resulted from the Pentecost event.

<sup>285</sup>We use the term here in the sense of "justification" or "making acceptable".

*empowerment* of the community (cf 4:21). This 'rippling' effect of the miracle is consistent with the dynamic nature of *power*. We shall discuss this in more detail in the third part of this chapter.

This takes us to a structure that is slightly different from that which is presented by Krodel: Mikeal Parsons' (1990) point of departure is Robert Funk's (1988) postulation that 3:1-4:31 is a narrative stretch that is isolated from what precedes and what follows. The contours are apparently drawn by the summaries on either side of the narrative (Parsons 1990:411). In line with this, Parsons (1990:411-415) goes on to divide the two chapters into four sections which he calls scenes.

Under the first scene, he discusses events at the "Beautiful Gate" (3:1-10). Here the reader encounters the lame beggar (3:2). He gets healed by the apostles (3:6). Filled with joy the man leaps and praises God (3:7). According to (Parsons 1990:412), this act of leaping echoes Isaiah 35:6, even Luke 7:22. To this Parsons adds an important detail, namely, that the ninth hour referred to might be an "opportune moment" for the man and that the man himself, (according to Luke's story), was placed at the "Gate of Opportunity" (Parsons 1990:412). We shall return to this detail in our discussion below. Suffice it for the moment, to say that all the people who knew the man as a crippled beggar marvelled at what happened to him. This miracle sets the stage for the next three sections (in chapters 3-4) which are to follow.

Under the second scene he discusses events around Solomon's portico (Acts 3:11-4:4). He identifies a pattern that is similar to that of Pentecost in Acts 2 in three ways: (i) a miraculous event takes place (ii) it draws a crowd<sup>286</sup> (iii) Peter then delivers a speech. While the speech deals with the healing of the man on the outer frame, in the inner frame, a traditional Christological kerygma follows (3:12-26). Here Christological titles such as "Servant", "Holy and Righteous One" are used. These provide an interpretational base for the healing miracle (Parsons 1990:412).

Following this is the third scene (Parsons 1990:413-4). This deals with Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-22). Here Peter, under the power of the Holy Spirit, leads evidence on behalf of the two of them (and Jesus?). He reiterates his accusation

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<sup>286</sup>There is a feeling among some scholars that the aim of the miracles was evangelical. They attracted the crowd's attention, then the preaching followed.

of the Jewish leaders as murderers and God's response to them by raising him up. A new element is introduced, namely, that the healing is a "good deed" or "benefaction" (*euergesia*-4:9). This according to Parsons, foreshadows Peter's characterisation of Jesus' healing ministry as benefaction (Acts 10:38). After receiving a warning not to talk about the name of Jesus again, the apostles are released. The scene then ends with a reference to the healing event of 3:1-10 (Parsons 1990:414).

In the fourth scene, which he has entitled 'Reunited with friends (Acts 4:23-31)', he discusses the apostles' return to 'their friends'<sup>287</sup> and the prayer of the 'friends' after hearing of the threats of the chief priests and elders (Parsons 1990:414-415). The scene ends at 4:31.

Given the above suggestions, one gets the feeling that in line with the contextual approach, the structure can be perceived according to the manner in which the exegete intends to use the pericope. Thus logically, there should be no correct or incorrect structure between the two mentioned above. However, this does not mean that both structures are conducive for the purposes of this study; Parson's structure is preferred. It serves the interests of the present study better. Notwithstanding this, the broad (*macro*) structure only provides a literary context for our interpretation of 3:1-10. Already, we can see emerging a connection with terms such as power, the name of Jesus, the theme of salvation. However, we still need to show where Acts 3:1-10 the focal text, fits into this whole picture. We now turn to Acts 3:1-10, the micro-structure (to use Stibbe's 1995 language) of Acts 3-4.

### 5.1.3. A *micro* structure: Acts 3:1-10

The story is divided up into three parts, namely, *introduction*, *body* and *conclusion*.<sup>288</sup> This breakdown of the story makes it easy for the exegete to follow its internal logic. We shall read the story as we discuss its structure.

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<sup>287</sup>This is not the place to discuss who the 'friends' are. But in passing, it should be noted that they may be the crowd which is later said to be with them at 4:29.

<sup>288</sup>This breakdown of the story is taken from Iser (1974).

5.1.3.1 The *introduction*,<sup>289</sup> which stretches from verses 1-2,<sup>290</sup> sets the scene by introducing Peter, John, the Temple and prayer time.<sup>291</sup> It also proceeds to introduce the lame person who usually begs at the Beautiful Gate while others are "preoccupied" with prayer in their minds.<sup>292</sup> Samartha (1987:75) draws attention to the contrast between the Gate called Beautiful, where the man is placed daily, and the ugliness of begging. It is possible that Luke himself had intended to arrive at this with the contrast. The man is carried to the scene by his friends. However, they bring him late in the afternoon, a strange time to beg (cf Hamm 1975), and that is the last we hear of the friends in the text, although it is clear that they laid him there daily. The lame person who is being introduced is said to have been lame for as long as he had lived.<sup>293</sup> This flows into verse 3 which, in some ways, belongs together with verse 2.

Regarding the time of bringing the man to the spot, Haenchen (1971:198) correctly notes that the imperfect "being" does not mean that the man was being brought to the Temple only in the afternoon. As it stands, it suggests that he was being brought in (process in progress) at the time the apostles arrived. This is supported by Lake and Jackson (1965). These confirm an earlier assertion by Lenski (1961:124), that there was a simultaneous action—that the man was laid down as Peter and John passed the

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<sup>289</sup>See also the structure proposed by GJ Steyn (1996:41)

<sup>290</sup>For Bruce (1965), the introduction stretches from 1-3. We disagree.

<sup>291</sup>This study deliberately excludes comments on Peter and John, the Beautiful Gate and the ninth hour. A lot has already been written in commentaries about these. The reader is therefore referred to commentaries such as: Williams 1978:74f.; Bruce 1954:82-85; Bruce 1965:103-105; Tannehill 1990:48-52; Rackham 1939:48, Barrett 1994, etc.

<sup>292</sup>In his comment on this verse, Haenchen (1971:199) posits that Peter is the real 'protagonist' of the story while his 'antagonist' is the crippled man. This is an interesting characterisation. However, in Luke's view, both Peter and John are 'protagonists,' to use his (Haenchen's) language, although John's role in the story is minimal. If by antagonist he means an opponent, then he has missed the point: the crippled man can hardly be described as an antagonist, he is rather a 'helper' in that he helps to unfold the power of the apostles (cf de Klerk and Schnell 1987).

<sup>293</sup>At 4:22, it is said that he was forty years old. This noting of the duration of one's infirmity is characteristic of Luke (Bruce 1965:103). But it is also important for this reader of the text.

scene. Either there was a coincidence on that particular day or it was his customary time to arrive, targetting those who came to the late prayers of the day.

Whatever the case might have been, Haenchen (1971) used this to boost his argument that 3:1 does not belong to the original story. However, this argument is not plausible because he seems to base his own argument on a “misreading” of the text, namely, that the man was being laid on the spot (*δειλιμόν*) which is based on a variant that is supported by D only. No doubt, the textus reading of 3:1 is a bit “clumsy” which explains why *δειλιμόν* is used (to harmonise). However, *δειλιμόν* as a substitute changes the sense of the entire sentence, which affects the entire pericope. It implies that the apostles went to pray every evening, which strengthens Hamm’s query about the time the beggar was taken to the spot. In our opinion, the time in the verse refers to the time when the apostles went up to the temple for prayers. The verse goes on to explicitly say that the man was *being carried* (imperfect) and laid at the entrance daily (*καθ’ ἡμέραν*); it does not say “in the afternoon” or “towards the evening” (*δειλιμόν*) (3:2).

Being ‘carried’ (3:2) connotes dependency on others. As the story of the crippled man shows, he was ‘being carried’ (*ἐβαστάζετο*) by others literally and otherwise. The silence of commentators on the significance of this important word in the passage is conspicuous. This highlights more and more the need to review the current readings of Luke-Acts. Even if the story was not read from the angle of development (as we are trying to do in this study), the word would still be significant in the story. Is it the duty of Christians to ‘carry others on their shoulders’ throughout their lives as the friends of the cripple had done or are Christians expected to point others to a vision beyond themselves as givers? (cf chapter 3 above). This point will also be discussed further in the third part of this chapter.

Carrying the man is undoubtedly an indication of the severity of his disability. It was a congenital disease (Lenski 1961:124 cf Walker 1965), not a faked one (Lenski 1961:138). However, it is also symbolic of the extent to which he had become dependent on others, not only those who carried him but also those who gave to him. We see this in the example of the sick man at Bethesda in John 5: 1-9. He became so dependent on others that he himself did not realise that he was capable of initiating (5:7-9). It took a reminder from Jesus before he could realise his own potential (5:7). The crippled man in Acts 3 should be seen in this light. According to Willimon (1988:44),



he did "... what totally dependent and helpless people often do-he asks for a handout". Given this condition of the man the rest that could be said of him should be expected to reflect his being at the "mercy of" others. In line with this, the story goes on to say that he was expecting to receive alms from everyone who went into the Temple (Acts 3:4).

Clearly, the crippled man did not go to the gates as a "hawker" or "vendor" as would be the case today; nor had he tried alternative ways of making a living.<sup>294</sup> He placed his life the at mercy of others. Of course, as Bruce (1954:83) avers, charitable benefactors gave large gifts of alms. They hoped thereby to receive a huge quantity of blessings, as the saying went (from the beggar to the benefactor): "Bless yourself by giving me alms".

Having introduced these characters and the gist of the story, the author proceeds to the body of the episode.

5.1.3.2 In the *body* of the story focus shifts from the description of the man to an account of the dynamics around him (verses 3-9). This may be sub-divided into several units, according to sense.

5.1.3.2.1. In the first unit, the story focuses on the *spiritual condition* of the man. This is reflected in his great expectation (if not a deep desire) to receive something from the apostles (3:3). The man looks at Peter and John expectantly, hoping that they will do what others have done ever since he had started begging at the Temple entrance. This, if read together with "being carried" (3:2), is a reflection of the man's lethargy and dependency. Willimon (1988:44) notes that he has no hope of ever being able to do anything for himself. Begging was probably the only alternative he had, regardless of its social stigma.

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<sup>294</sup>Our search for officially recognised alternative ways of making a living in antiquity, such as 'self-help schemes' have been unsuccessful. We have however, come across prostitution and humans who served as 'beasts of burden'. We do not know of municipality laws that forbade prostitution of other 'self-help' schemes although on the religious side, both occupations mentioned here were regarded as unclean and those doing them, as expendables. On the other hand, it became clear in chapter 3 of the present study, that the Romans largely took care of their poor, so did the Greeks and the religious Jews.

As has been seen in chapter 3 above, it is not only those who have fallen from their social status that became beggars. Some have also been turned into beggars by their lack of economic independence which resulted from their physical disability. These have also become destitute people who 'crouched' before others (cf Hauck in chapter 3).<sup>295</sup> While this might be so on the psychological side, socially, those who gave did not do them good. Although we focused mainly on reactions on the negative side in chapter 3, there were those who saw it as a religious duty to give, especially among the Jews.

The cause of the spiritual condition of the beggar described in Acts 3 is explained or amplified in subsequent verses which are also analysed below.

5.1.3.2.2 The second unit proceeds with the *restoration* of the man's status (3:4). In the agrarian society where the order of superiority (hierarchical order) matters, it could be expected that the man was looking down because his would-be benefactors, Peter and John were superior to him. To look them in the eye would signify disrespect on his part (cf Malina 1986).<sup>296</sup> The man perhaps knows this. Hence his feeling of inadequacy which according to Rempel-Burkholder (1992:276), is a manifestation of an inferiority complex. It should not be forgotten that almsgiving is a subtle form of power display (cf Samartha 1987). This makes it difficult for a person who has nothing materially, to undermine or resist this power. Thus by asking the man to look up at them (3:4), they are elevating him to a level higher than where he conventionally "belongs", their level.

This elevation begins a process of spiritual transformation for the man. After all the time of being subservient to benefactors and of losing hope of being valued as a human being, the apostles attitude towards him is liberating. In a sense, it foreshadows the substitution of healing for money which follows in the ensuing verse (3:6). If the beggar is on this day raised to the status of his would-be benefactors, then something

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<sup>295</sup>We have seen in chapter 1 for example, that the beggars referred to are physically able people who have been turned beggars by unfavourable socio-economic structures. Their dignity has been affected by their having to crouch before their own peers who now happen to be in a better economic position.

<sup>296</sup>We have already indicated in chapter 3 of this study that social relations were determined by economic means of an individual. Some of the rich had a condescending attitude towards the poor while others frowned at those of a lower class, especially the beggar.

greater than the odd coin was in store for him (Rackham 1957). This message was very clear. Hence the importance of ἀτενίσσας, the (variant) reading we have chosen in this case. The Byzantine reading shows a class or status bias in that the editor of the story already has the potential (real?) reader (of the first horizon) in mind as he wrote the story. He probably wants to avoid offending those who read it, especially those of upper classes because it is in fact, their social status that is being turned upside down. Hence the avoidance of the reading which gives prominence to ατενίσσας. In this unit then it is clear that the man's dignity is being restored. This prepares for the healing that follows. In other words, healing is not a paternalistic gesture in which the recipient is expected to be subservient or passive. He is an equal participant with a positive self-image.

5.1.3.2.3 In the third unit, the *healing* which according to Steyn (1996:41), is *genesingsgestalte*, takes place. Peter and John declare themselves to be mediators of a healing that otherwise happens in the 'name of Jesus' (3:7). They themselves are not the ones who heal but Jesus in whose name they heal and whose power strengthens them (Acts 3:16). This healing is all they can offer to the man; yet it replaces 'silver and gold'. 'Silver and gold' in this instance represents wealth. Another metaphor used in Acts is that of a 'purple cloth' (Acts 16:14). This power raises the man to his feet and above his present condition. Interestingly, the actual healing is effected by the words "rise up and walk" rather than by a physical or surgical act on the man. Interestingly these words highlight a *process*: First, the man *gets up*, then he *gets strong* and then he *walks*.<sup>297</sup> In other words, nothing is mechanical about the man's development. It is a process. Yet this does not change the genre of this episode. Some miracles are known to be a process (cf Asclepius' patients), others happen instantly.

5.1.3.2.4. *Praise and welcome* to the community are the last unit of the middle section or body. The man is so elated that he (almost besides himself) walks and leaps (ἐξαλλόμενος) and praises God. The staccato of this line says much about the mood he is in compared to how he was at the beginning of the story. He has had an experience of what he thought would never happen to him. As if overwhelmed by new and unknown possibilities, the lame man leapt up, stood upright and praising God, followed the apostles into the temple (Anchor Bible 1981:25). This contrasts with "being

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<sup>297</sup>This might sound like common sense. But it is an important detail which is often overlooked. No other healing miracle story in Luke-Acts, its co-text included (Acts 14:8-18, especially 14:10), has such details.

carried" (3:2). He is now standing on his own feet.<sup>298</sup> This makes it all the more important that he praises God. In the same way, he is now able to enter the Temple whereas before, his infirmity had prevented him from doing this (cf Hamm 1986). In other words, he had to rise from where he was sitting before being able to walk into the temple. This is a reversal of the situation of the beggar as discussed in chapter three and that which is described above in this chapter. It is immaterial how far into the Temple he was able to go; the point is that nothing will now prevent him from taking his full place in the community if he so wishes.

5.1.3.2.5 Finally, the *conclusion* of the story (3:10) is also dramatic and is best expressed in antithetical or binary statements. The man who was formerly *alone* (3:2) after being left at the usual spot by his friends, ends up being surrounded by a *crowd* (3:10). He used to sit at the *entrance* (3:2); he is now *inside* (3:10) one of the courts of the Temple. He is healed outside, in the *absence* (3:7) of others; but they notice what has happened to the man and they *acknowledge* (3:10) it (cf Rackham 1939:48; Steyn 1996).<sup>299</sup> He was crippled (3:2), he is now whole (3:10). They remember that he is the one who used to beg (3:2) daily at the "Beautiful Gate"; now they no longer see a beggar (3:10). This takes the story back to the beginning, namely, the beggar at the "Beautiful Gate"- rather the 'transformed beggar' who used to sit at the entrance of the Temple (3:2 cf 3:10).

Within the framework provided above may be seen the internal logic of the story. This is the progression of the cripple from *passivity* to *participation*. The story began with a focus on the beggar, it ended with a focus on him again. In other words, the story has

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<sup>298</sup>This researcher has recently published a Bible Study on the same passage with the title "Standing on our Feet" (Challenge, July/August 1994). The public response was very positive, indicating that to readers in SA at this point in time, such verses as 3:8 in the passage are in fact, the climax of the story. Readers of especially poor and undeveloped communities identify with the man's former condition and they are looking at how he received his transformation. However, some scholars think that in Luke's narrative, the verse goes back to Isaiah 32 and that it refers to the healing of Israel. We do not have to accept this because, despite its Isaianic origin, it is used in a different context and it does not have to mean what Isaiah meant.

<sup>299</sup>According to Marshall, it is typical of the author of Luke-Acts to describe the reaction to a miracle in terms such as "wonder and amazement," eg. Lk 4:36; 5:9, 26; 7:16. However, in this case, Marshall (1980:89) sees no other befitting description.

moved in a *circular* manner to the same point, although a different emphasis is made at the end-point.<sup>300</sup>At the center of it is life in Jesus which in this case is made real through the mediation of the Apostles. Consequently, it is now possible to refer to the man "before" and "after" the encounter with Jesus' apostles, that is, his past as a passive character (3:2-6) and his present as an active person (3:7-10). Thus, the man has been given power to live (Bruce 1952). The possible significance of this for the author's audience is explained in what follows from 3:11f, in terms of power and salvation<sup>301</sup> offered by God in Jesus. The meaning of the story unfolds within this framework in both chapters 3 and 4.

#### 5.1.4. Acts 3:1-10 within the Lucan miracle genre

In summing up this section on preliminaries, attention is drawn to the status of Acts 3:1-10 in Luke's miracle genre. This is important for the purposes of this study as we consciously avoid (wherever possible) what are known as traditional exegetical issues (for example, date, authorship, author's theological intention, first century *Sitz im Leben*, etc.) all of which are extremely difficult to verify historically.<sup>302</sup> The discussion of this sub-section will help us to proceed with our discussion without fearing the accusation of being anachronistic.

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<sup>300</sup>The idea has been borrowed from the book by de Klerk & Schnell (1987). However, Stibbe also uses the idea in his analysis of John's Gospel. He refers to it as *inclusio*.

<sup>301</sup>The terms 'power' and 'salvation' are used concomitantly with development in this study as their import conveys a concept of human development.

<sup>302</sup>It is needless to repeat the discussion of chapter 2 above, in relation to the problem of a 'purely' historical approach. In an earlier article (Speckman 1996), we have argued in favour of the historical-critical approach. However, frustration with what seems to be a deep dark hole when applying this approach in writing a thesis has caused a rethink. Therefore, in a recent unpublished presentation at the University of Natal (June 1998) in Pietermaritzburg, we appealed for a more contextual approach that places less emphasis on philosophy and the *Sitz im Leben* of the text as such, while more emphasis is placed on pursuing contemporary contextual questions. This route is even more open to an instrumentalist use of the text than the traditional approach (See also introduction to an unpublished presentation at AIC, November 1998). The influence of the discussion of Willem Vorster's (1995) attitude to historical criticism is hereby acknowledged.

The healing of the cripple at the temple entrance falls within the genre of miracles in Luke-Acts, whose primary function is to draw attention to the presence of a Saviour or Messiah of Israel (cf chapter 4 above). God is active and his activity is an intervention on behalf of the 'little ones'.<sup>303</sup> The evangelist uses miraculous works to show the might of Jesus<sup>304</sup> (in comparison with that of Augustus Caesar who claimed to be the Saviour of the world). In other words, Jesus is portrayed as the Saviour who came from above and is thus able to penetrate the spiritual realm (cf Luke's belief in spiritual powers).

Miracles can thus be said to have an authenticating function in Luke-Acts (cf Chapter 4 for authentication and Hemer for a contrary view). Hence they are not introduced arbitrarily but at certain calculated points. For example, the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:31-35 cf 2:7) which portrays him as a greater king than the present rulers; the healing of the man with an unclean spirit (4:31f) following Jesus' rejection at the synagogue; healings at Simon's house (4:38f) which culminates in the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah; the cleansing of a leper (5:12f) which follows the call of disciples but culminates in the repetition of growth of crowds who follow Jesus; this too is followed by the healing of a paralytic (5:17f) which highlights the start of the conflict with the Pharisees and teachers of the law;<sup>305</sup> the healing of the man with a withered hand (6:6f) follows a controversy over sabbath (6:1f) and it also takes place on a sabbath. This exacerbates the fury of the Pharisees and lawyers (6:11); this is followed by a healing of many, following the choice of the twelve apostles; the healing of the Centurion's servant follows the teaching about hearing and doing and the centurion is said to be a doer (7:4-5). For this he is rewarded for his faith is greater than that of Israel (7:9). This and the story of the Widow of Nain (7:11f) already move beyond the boundaries of Israel, to the Gentile world where Jesus' greatness is acknowledged (7:16b); the faith of Jesus' disciples is tested during a storm. This follows Jesus' declaration that his family are all those who do God's will. Immediately after this (8:26) follows the healing of the Gerasene demoniac who is not a Jew. As usual, following Jesus' success out-

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<sup>303</sup>Nolan (1976) looks at different phrases used to describe these 'little ones' in Luke's gospel. As his list shows, they are not confined to Israel but extend to all the marginalised in the world of Jesus.

<sup>304</sup>See discussion in Hemer (1989) of Luke's inclination towards the supernatural. Miracles partially fulfil that role in Luke's writings.

<sup>305</sup>Although an important landmark, this conflict in Luke is not as pronounced as it is in Mark.

side Israel, a Jewish leader, Jairus, acknowledges Jesus' saving power and seeks help from him. Likewise, a sick woman and the crowds are also helped by him.

Could the story of Jesus be narrated without the use of miracle stories? No, because it would then have no credibility in antiquity. We have already showed in chapter 4 of the present study that a *θεῖος ἄνθρωπος* had to be authenticated with a 'miracle or two'. In the case of Jesus in Luke, we have more than a *θεῖος ἄνθρωπος*. There are plenty of stories to tell about him. Luke has selected a few for his own purposes, according to Hemer (1989:439), the few that appear "real" to those who told them.

The place of Acts 3:1-10 within Luke's miracle material is best explained in Hemer's (1989:434-435) ten point scheme of miracles in Acts which follows below:

- 1) Divine events of fundamental significance for the history of salvation and of the Church and occurring within the limits of Acts, namely the Ascension and Pentecost, together with the divine manifestations recounted on those occasions.
- 2) Other references to the great salvation events, including the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection, whether in narrative, or in the speeches, or proleptically, as in Jesus' foretelling of the Ascension and Pentecost (Acts 1:2,5,8).
- 3) Acts of power, through Jesus or his disciples, which appear to involve explicit breaking of the regularities of nature, as understood then or now, whether inexplicable healings or 'nature' miracles.
- 4) Incidents which may be, or may be implied to be, of the preceding category, but told with such reserve that the question may be left more or less open whether they are to be taken as miracle at all, even if it be granted that the ancient audience reacted with wonderment to them.
- 5) General summarized references to unspecified 'signs and wonders'.
- 6) Narratives, as of travel or circumstance, which involve nothing strictly miraculous, but where a sense of the overruling Providence of God is implicit: God is at work, even if the chain of events appears mundane.
- 7) The explicit recognition of God's hand at work in things like the success of the Christian mission or conversely in the collapse and death of Herod Agrippa I as divine judgement through angelic agency (Acts 12:23).
- 8) Ecstatic phenomena-visions, dreams and prophetic revelations, and 'psychological' miracles.

9) The theme of scripture divinely fulfilled in Christ and in the Church as an argument testifying to God's action in history, a recurring feature of the argument of the speeches.

10) Claims of magical and demonic opposition to God, and the perspective that God's power is superior to that of any pretended rival.

Hemer (1989:434) himself places it under 3 in the scheme, 'an act of power, through Jesus or his disciples, which appear to involve explicit breaking of the regularities of nature, as understood then or now...'. This is an appropriate placing. However, as already stated above, this miracle-story may be placed under 9 as well. Luke uses it for "missionary" purposes as well as for the purposes of "empowering" the marginalised.

In this first part of the chapter, we have looked at Luke's presentation of the text, that is, Luke's presentation of the healing miracle-story. The justification for this is that the text we are dealing with is not only much older than our context but that it has been used in different ways and contexts by various exegetes. In taking cognisance of this we are not only trying to understand what others have done, we are also foregrounding some perspectives they have not considered previously. The variants discussed, the justification of our use of the term beggar and the analysis of the structure and how certain words are used within that structure has established for us a foundation on which to ground our analysis of the notion HD in Acts 3-4. This we pursue in the second part of this chapter.

## **5.2 THE NOTION<sup>306</sup> OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

In this section, our aim is to reflect on the story of the restoration of the cripple at the Jerusalem temple entrance as presented by Luke, against the grid of the categories of HD, as discussed in chapter 2 of this study, with the view to foreground the notion of HD which is implicit in the story. We hope thereby to arrive at two things: (i) to show that when read contextually, Acts 3:1-10 functions well in the context of development

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<sup>306</sup>The word is used here in the sense of an "inclination". As already stated, Luke obviously did not have development in mind when he wrote. Our reading of the text in the context of development does not, however, mean that we are forcing it into the text. The idea is inducible from the text. Hence we talk of an inclination.



and (ii) to lay a foundation for a contextual reading of the text in the third part of this chapter.

We have entitled this section 'the notion of human development'. We are conscious of the presumptuousness of such a title. In fact, the title implies that the outcome has been predetermined. This is a methodological issue in that we have declared at the outset (chapter 2 above), that our contextual method seeks to *construct* rather than to *reconstruct*. We are therefore not attempting to *reconstruct* Luke's theology. Instead, we are looking at ways of *constructing* a theology of development out of the document Luke has presented to the church. As Croatto (1983) posits, there is a "reservoir" of meaning in the text. Our aim is to uncover that. We work with two presuppositions: (i) that the text contains elements that hint at development (ii) that every text should have some relevance in every new context it finds itself in (Gadamer 1975). However, this is done in a manner that respects the integrity of the text in that our construction is based on what we deem 'explicit and implicit'<sup>307</sup> in the text rather than on what is altogether non-existent. Hence the importance of this section in this chapter.

The categories used below are based on the theory of development as discussed in chapter 2 of this study. The text which we briefly analysed above is seen through the grid of such categories. Given the author's presentation of the text as analysed above, what does it suggest as its author's focus—the power of apostles or the man's economic situation arising out of his disability? This question is important, especially in the light of the theory of development used in this study, which puts the undeveloped or underdeveloped<sup>308</sup> person at the center, making him/her responsible for his/her life. The following reflection in this section wrestles with that. It is discussed under the following sub-headings: 1) the problem of dependency 2) health as foundation of human activity 3) empowerment of the individual and community 4) wholeness/completeness and 5) 'begging or the power of Jesus?'

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<sup>307</sup>Term borrowed from Gottwald's (1980) *Sociology* and also used by Mosala. In Croatto's (1983) language, we could put it as 'what is not said in the text but was said in another age'.

<sup>308</sup>As suggested in chapter 2, "undeveloped" refers to the "natural", the "innocent", while "underdeveloped" refers to those whose development is hampered by others.

### 5.2.1. The problem of dependency

Dependency is one of the categories discussed in the model developed in chapter 2 above. It is given priority in this section because it is the occasion of this study and the problem to which everything said in the study attempts to respond.

As already stated in our model in chapter 2 above, dependency is characterised by a lack of initiative, a low self-esteem and non-productivity, among others. These are by and large, characteristic of some Third World countries, not by divine will but as by-products of the impact of global socio-economic practices on them. As it became clear in the African traditional society model which we discussed above (chapter 2), a healthy person was expected to be productive otherwise the society had no need of him/her.<sup>309</sup> This is equally true of modern industrialised societies. In fact, it is even more pronounced in modern industrialised societies when productivity determined the worth (value) of a person. However, due to external factors, many potential producers become a burden on the society. It is unthinkable in traditional societies, that a healthy person would be a burden on others. In what way(s) then is this dependency reflected in the Acts passage?

First, as the above analysis has shown, the passage presents the reader with a man who is unable to walk (Acts 3:2) because he had been lame since birth. The man is said to have been carried by others on a daily basis to a certain spot (Acts 3:2). In other words, his mobility depended on external help; without it he is unable to reach the spot where he was usually laid, in order to beg. As we have tried to show above, there was no reason other than begging, that took the man to the spot where he was laid. His physical disability may not be an exoneration from being seen as a social burden on the community today due to interest in production and profit. However, we cannot say with certainty, that the situation was the same in antiquity. What we can say, as this became clear above (chapters 2-3), is that whoever was not contributing to the community's life but was instead taking from it was seen as a burden, especially in the Graeco-Roman context. In fact, the aristocrats seem to have viewed everyone who did not have the same socio-economic privilege as they, as a beggar (cf chapter 3).

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<sup>309</sup>The Xhosa proverb is: *Akukho nkwali iphandela enye. Ephanhela enye yenethole*. A *nkwali* is a type of bird which is always busy with its feet. The proverb is meant to convey that that bird is busy fending for its young ones and not for other hens. Each hen that wants to eat must earn its feed.

The question is whether during Luke's time, there might have been a perception that beggars were by "divine decree", the responsibility of fellow Christians or the Church. In chapter 3 above, we have argued that societies in antiquity did not see begging as the will of the gods, save in Homer's *Odyssey* (much earlier but still influential) where Odysseus blames his fate on Zeus. However, this says nothing about what then should happen to beggars. Further, we have showed that save among the Jews (in Palestine), there was no organised welfare system to help beggars or poor people-either in Palestine or in the rest of the empire. In earlier days, begging was not accepted in Israel. It is only during rabbinic times that a theology around begging developed (Prockter 1991). This makes no distinction between the physically sick and other types of beggars. If begging was thought to be God's will for the infirm, the Church would have developed a theology around that. The theology developed by the rabbis in addition to the guidelines given earlier about whom to give to and how (cf chapter 3), was meant for the members of the temple or synagogue. However, it may not have been all the physically disabled that begged. Those whose family or friends could afford to maintain them, did not have to resort to begging. For example, in the largely rural Galilee where most of Jesus' work took place, according to Mark, there were sick and physically disabled people. However, we find no instances of them begging in Christian records, save blind Bartimaeus on Jesus' way to Jerusalem (Mark 10:46-52). They may have been protected in their incapacity by the social and economic organisation of the countryside, in other words, their culture. Rural (traditional) culture had a way of taking care of beggars as we can see in some traditional communities today.<sup>310</sup> Begging of the physically disabled then, appears to have been a problem of the urban poor. As already mentioned (cf chapter 3), welfare provision of a *drachma* was meant for the infirm that suffered in war etc., not for everyone. That is in the case of Athens. We do not know what the Romans and Jews did with the physically disabled non-soldiers in particular.

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<sup>310</sup>For example, in modern rural areas in the Eastern Cape in SA, one is very seldom able to distinguish between a member of the extended family and a beggar. One has to know the culture in order to be able to realise that the woman who "stays" there with her children, sometimes her husband as well, initially came as a beggar before being absorbed into that family's life. We suggest a similar situation prevailed in peasant communities of antiquity.

Clearly, the man was not mentally sick. That is a given in the text. Unlike the story of the man at Bethesda (cf John 5:3), we are not, in this case, left to guess about the type of illness the man suffered from. What then prevented him from applying his mind to alternatives? In John 5:1-9, we have a case of a “physically disabled” man who sat at Bethsaida for thirty-eight years. His sincere explanation for failing to use the opportunity to get healing after the angel had stirred the water points to a dependency on others (cf John 5:7). Subsequent verses leave it to the reader to surmise that his problem was psychological.<sup>311</sup> The author of the story lists the other types of sicknesses (5:3) but leaves this one to the reader’s imagination. As the elements of the story show, the man’s problem is dependency, perhaps combined with or arising out of a deep-seated depression or sense of rejection. There is a perception among scholars, that Acts 3:1-10 and John 5:1-9 share the same basic elements and that it is possible that the evangelists used one story. This suggests that the crippled beggar may also have been seen as a social burden.

Secondly, the man is said to have been crippled for forty years (Acts 4:22). We do not know how many of those years he spent on the streetside, begging. We may only guess that he spent a significant part of the forty years as a street beggar. That appears to have been his only source of income.<sup>312</sup> In his case as well, we must ask the same question that is often asked about the man at Bethsaida. Could he not have taken the initiative to look for an alternative, namely to make a living without having to beg?<sup>313</sup> The passage goes on to say that he was expecting to receive alms even from the apostles as they approached him (3:4). This is typical of a dependency syndrome. It is in a sense, uncharacteristic of the spirit of Pentecost which is portrayed as the energising spirit (Acts 2). The correct effect of Pentecost may be seen in the new life, vigour and boldness of the apostles who had previously been timid and lacked initiative.

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<sup>311</sup>See GJ Steyn, UNISA teaching material for (BSB301-6 Tutorial Letter 104/95) and the present author’s reading of the story (BSB301-6 Tutorial Letter 104/96) for a more detailed discussion of the issue.

<sup>312</sup>Search for evidence of child beggars in antiquity has been unsuccessful. But this is no reason to assume that there were no child beggars. As we already mentioned in chapter 3 of this study, there is no recorded information about beggars.

<sup>313</sup>Obviously, there was no consciousness about development and as already mentioned in chapter 3, there were no self-help schemes but feeding schemes which only came into being during the second century for the Jews and in the fourth century for Christians.

The remark of the Pharisees in 4:13, namely, that the apostles who healed the man were *only* ordinary uneducated people is a curious observation. The phrase used is “*ἄνθρωποι ἄγροίματοι εἰσιν καί*” (Acts 4:13). They wished that they could ignore the good deed or regard it as something that has never happened. But the fact that it was performed by people from whom they never expected it threatened them. Why should what they did be a problem to the authorities? Is not the act of healing beneficial to the society? In chapter 4 of this study, we have referred to Franz Fanon’s understanding of mental illness during the Algerian revolution, which is also used by a number of scholars in the interpretation of the Gerasene demoniac story (Mark 5:1-20). In the story of the Gerasene demoniac, the miracle frees him from the clutch of evil which is interpreted as symbolising freedom from the bondage of the Romans (Myers 1988). That obviously would not please the authorities because it not only undermines the power of great people (who always perform such miracles), it also adds to their problems. It is an addition to sane critics with whom the authorities have to contend. In this light, the healing of the crippled man must be seen. Moreover, the apostles had done what was thought to be the work of emperors, kings and recognised holy men (cf chapter 4 above). Their intervention in this way spelt a revolution.

This being the case, the apostles’ action is tantamount to an abrogation of the power that was normally exercised by those in higher echelons of the society (Theissen 1995). In a sense, the apostles turned the tables upside down. Those at the bottom were beginning to rise. Thus what they thought of as a ‘good deed’ (*εὐεργεσία*)(4:9) was viewed as a subversive act by those whose authority was under a threat (cf 4:7). More will be said about this under the discussion of empowerment. The point made in this sub-section is that dependency was rife and that it seems to have been condoned by those in authority even if they only did so tacitly. The more dependent people there were, the fewer their political opponents.<sup>314</sup>

Another dimension which we will not discuss in this study is vertical: it is the foundation of every religion, a dependency upon an external “invincible” and “omnipotent”

<sup>314</sup> For example, a story is told about Jesus, son of Annas who was had been regarded as a “madman”, therefore no threat to the establishment. As soon as he began to say things that were regarded as subversive by the authorities, such as “prophesying” the destruction of Jerusalem, he was killed in 65 CE, a year before the outbreak of War.

power. This tends to reflect horizontally as well: We have shown in chapter 3 how a benefactor was exalted. In the present passage, the cripple looks up to others. God is portrayed as “freeing”- s/he does not cause dependency. Hence in the rest of Acts, we encounter no beggars for alms. The pro-active “basket system” (cf Acts 6) and relief during famine are not to be counted among responses to begging.

### 5.2.3. Health as foundation of human activity

Basic to the problem of dependency which we discussed above was the question of health. Without good health, human activity is limited. In chapters 3-4 of this study for example, we identified physical illness as the cause of all the begging that is reported in the New Testament. This does not mean that there were no other forms of beggars (apart from those mentioned in chapter 3 of this study). The evangelists, who shared most of their stories, chose to be silent on these. Why?

There may be different reasons, based on the purpose and target audience of the author. For example, Matthew, whose focus is on the Jews, avoids the stories of beggars. Where he makes use of them, he edits the parts about begging. The reason may be the verse in Deuteronomy 15 which talks against begging. Matthew may have been sensitive to his Jewish audience in this respect. Mark on the other hand, wanted to prove the divine origin of Jesus and the fact that in spite of the servant role he chose, he was God’s son. Miracles in general served to highlight the conflict between the son of God and the forces of darkness that held God’s people captive. In his scheme therefore, the attachment of miracles to beggars is of no consequence. What about Luke? If Luke is concerned about the poor (cf Cassidy 1987; Berquist 1986),<sup>315</sup> why does he not expose the structures that caused begging?<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>315</sup>For a long time, Luke’s Gospel was seen as a gospel of the poor by exegetes. It is only recently that such a view was questioned. Some see the work as an attempt to placate the rich (cf Cassidy 1978). Others see it as an apology to the empire on behalf of the church (Conzelmann 1960). Others see it as a way of forcing the rich to share with the poor, ie. the work is intended for the rich, about the poor (cf Karris in Talbert 1978:124).

<sup>316</sup>See the discussion of ‘structural beggars’ above.

Apart from Yoder's (1972) point about the politics of Jesus being realistic, there is an important observation to be made, in respect of Luke: Luke's style is not to dwell on the past. He sketched the past as a prelude or background at the beginning of his story (Luke 1-3). Against this began the mission of Jesus which starts off as a corrective of that situation.<sup>317</sup> In the rest of the gospel, he looks forward, then back (cf Luke 16:16). This does not mean dwelling on the past; as Luke 16:16 shows, there is a conscious demarcation of the past from the present times.<sup>318</sup> Secondly, it is easier to do something about the begging of the physically disabled than to fight the structures on an unrealistic plain (cf Moltmann on answer to the question of tax payment). Thirdly, Luke looks at "internal realistic and achievable" goals. This is important for development today.

As pointed out in the discussion of the African situation of development (chapter 2 of this study), no one, particularly a healthy person, is expected to be a burden on others. Instead every member is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the life of the community. This incidentally, coincides with the Greek situation which we also discussed in chapter 3 where we referred to the expectation of the individual to participate in the *πολιτεία* (Winter (1994) took the title from Jeremiah but sees the same for Christians in the Hellenistic-Roman context).

In what way(s) then, does the text reflect this? In the whole of Luke-Acts, physical healings, among the deeds of Jesus, are highlighted. In Acts 3-4 in particular, the importance of health in the text is portrayed in a positive manner, that is, through the act of healing. We shall return to this below. Before then, attention is drawn to the fact that the negative, namely, sickness, is only mentioned in passing. It is introduced in one verse (3:2) although its consequence, begging, is elaborated on (3:2-5). This is in line with Luke's 'progressive' programme. Our concern at this point is not with how the miracle was effected but with how effective it was. In other words, we are concerned about its manifestation.

The first manifestation of the miracle is that the man's legs did become strong (3:7). The word used in the text, is *ἐστερεώθησαν*, meaning 'strengthen'. In 3:7, this word

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<sup>317</sup>We infer this from the list mentioned by Jesus in his "Liberation Manifesto" (Luke 4:18-20).

<sup>318</sup>This is only Conzelmann's (1960) view with which we concur. Others prefer two demarcations, namely, promise and fulfillment (eg. Talbert 1984, 1989).

indicates that the man's ankles have been strengthened. This is the first step in the healing process, to give strength to the weak, enabling him to stand up. Thus 'strong' becomes a corollary of 'power'.

According to some scholars, the word ἐστερέωθησαν which Luke has used in Acts 3:7, is associated with medical jargon (Bruce 1965:105; Carter & Earl 1973:51; Walker 1965:68). Hobart's (1882:35) contribution in this regard remains a valuable point of reference for every scholar after him. Citing examples from Galen and Hippocrates, he asserts that the word was applied in respect of bones (cf Bruce 1965:105; Carter & Earl 1973:51). In fact, according to Walker, though without substantiation, the word is used only of being 'strengthened in the feet' and of being 'strengthened in the faith' (1965:68). This is accompanied by βᾶσεις and σφοδρά. Occurrences of ἐστερέωθησαν are found in 3:7; 3:16 and 16:5 (Carter & Earl 1973:51).

It is however, a moot point whether the association of βᾶσεις is professional. Some, eg. Bruce (1965) think that it is literary rather than professional. The association with the word is poetic in origin (1965:105 cf Cadbury 1918:52; Barrett 1994:183). For example, in Wisdom 13:18, βᾶσεις is associated with the word δυνάμενον. This brings it close to the idea of power. Carter & Earl (1973:51) concur with the idea that since Luke uses medical terms frequently, these words should be understood in a medical sense. Thus, 'strong feet and ankles' literally means the ability to stand on one's own.<sup>319</sup> This indeed happened in this case, as subsequent verses of the story (Acts 3:8,9) show. By implication, the man who had been confined to one place all his life, suddenly found himself mobile.

The notion of mobility is first encountered in Acts 3:8 where the healed man is said to have jumped with joy upon becoming conscious of his ability to walk. In the first section of this chapter, we used the word "staccato" to describe his movements. This is his first independent movement for he has been crippled ἐκ κοιλίας (3:2). In 4:22, we read that this means being crippled for more than forty years, almost his lifetime.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup>See this author's Bible Study in *Challenge*, 1993 and in *Niemand sal honger weggaan* 1996.

<sup>320</sup>In the gospels we read that Jesus was not yet forty when he was crucified and that he therefore did not have a "beard". According to scientific research, the lifespan of people in antiquity was between thirty-five and forty five years (cf Botha 1996). If the man is being healed at this age, and is able to jump around, then his healing signified a new lease of life.



The word used by Luke to describe his movements is ἐξαλλόμενος. This word is also used in Isaiah 35:6 with reference to Israel's restoration. But this does not necessarily mean that Luke has taken it over from Isaiah, as alleged or assumed by some scholars (eg. Hamm 1975, 1986). It is possible that the word had a connotation other than religious and that Luke did not imitate the LXX in using it.<sup>321</sup> For Barrett (1994:175) the word signifies the suddenness and completeness of the cure.

By contrast to his former condition (3:2 cf 3:8), as discussed in the first section of this chapter, the man is and will no longer be dependent on his friends for his movements. He will no longer be carried (ἐβαστάζετο) to the spot they choose for him and he will no longer sit in one place (3:2). He is now mobile without his friend's assistance. He chooses to follow the apostles into the temple (3:9), a building he has probably only viewed from the outside throughout his period of begging. Following this, he moves to court where the apostles are tried for healing him (4:14). Perhaps, he also goes beyond the court as he follows the apostles in their mission. The point is that he is now free. The physical bondage has been unshackled "in the name of Jesus" (3:6).

This physical movement of the crippled man has significance for the rest of chapters 3 and 4. For Luke, this signifies the mobility and freedom of the church. In other words, it impacts upon the wider group of believers so that they begin to defy the structures that interfere with their freedom (4:23). According to Boesak (1988), this had become clear in Acts 2, where the pentecost church could not sit still or be silent but could only be dynamic.

What we see in the story is in line with the theory of human development in that the man's health has enabled him; in turn (as a rippling effect), it helped to mobilise his community. We will discuss this further under the heading: 'community vision', below. An important point for this section is that physical fitness was important for productivity. This is not only surmisable from the text, it also emanates from the discussions conducted in chapters 3&4 of this study. The man has been healed, therefore he will no longer depend on hand-outs. He will have to use his hands to earn a living

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<sup>321</sup>See occurrences in different forms in Homer, Micah 2:12; Aristophanes; *Vespasian* 130 X; Josephus *Bel-lum* 11, 443; Isaiah 55:12.

(see also African view in chapter 2 above). The apostles restored the use of his limbs instead of giving him a handout. Significantly, he is not elevated as the most important person thereafter. He becomes part of the active and “well-organised” crowd.

#### 5.2.4 Empowerment of the individual and community

In our discussion of miracles in chapter 4 of this study, we cited the healing act as empowerment (chapter 4:3). The ‘powerless’ went to ask for healing so that they could have power to act. Prior to this we saw, in chapter 3, that beggars were powerless and lived at their benefactors’ mercies. Part of their powerlessness was caused by their ignorance about their capabilities. For example, it appears that the man at Bethsaida did not know that he was able to walk until Jesus told him to do so (John 5:7). In this section, we argue that the story of the miraculous healing of the crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-10) not only empowered him but also the hearers or readers of the story. Before we delve into that, a word about terminology.

The term ‘power’ translates the Greek term *δύναμις*. Moulton (1978:106) renders the meaning of the word as “power”, “strength”, “ability”. The meaning of the term in Acts 3:12 in particular, is entered as “might”, “power”, “majesty”. Thus defined, *δύναμις* has both material and political force behind it. Its corollary, “empowerment”, is the “active verb” describing the method of engendering power, strength, etc. where it is latent or non-existent, for example, in the case of a sick or disillusioned person (cf chapter 4 of this study). It is the ‘how’ of *δύναμις*.

In the context of Acts 3:1-4:31, the term occurs at 4:7 and 4:33 with reference to the apostles. In fact, at 4:7 the question of power is raised by the opponents of the apostles. The authorities question the source of their ability to heal. At 4:33, the apostles are reported to have proclaimed with great power. We need not read anything out of this, save to note that nothing is said about the power of the crowd. There are several ideas associated with the term in the text. These are encapsulated in the terms discussed below.

#### 5.2.4.1. Boldness

The healing of the crippled man is once more proof of the activity of the living God who works wonders in history (Hemer 1989; Maddox 1982). With this manifestation before the eyes of all begins the fulfillment of promises made to all (cf Karris 1966). Even those accused of participating in the murder of Jesus get converted. This empowers believers to seek the good and to challenge the evil, regardless of its source. Hence the apostles are able to tell the court officials that it is better to 'obey God than men' (4:19). This statement is repeated in a different context (5:29). Thus believers, empowered with the knowledge that their God is at work, defy oppressive "temporal" authorities.<sup>322</sup>

The commitment of believers to the defiance of unjust structures of the temple-state<sup>323</sup> is manifested in their prayer for 'more boldness' (4:29). This is *pro-active* as well as *reactive* boldness. *Proactive* boldness in this context, is about the challenge of structures by believers, regardless of the consequences, with the view to transform them. This only happens when those who challenge have been empowered with a vision of a better alternative (cf Korten 1990). The vision in this case appears to be that of creating an alternative community with opportunity given to all in the community of believers (eg. 2:43-7; 4:32-35). More will be said about this later. *Reactive* boldness is about the resistance and defiance of oppressive structures, such as those of Roman Palestine, by believers. Both kinds of boldness are surmised from Acts 4.

This notwithstanding, Tannehill (1990:61) posits that the crowds in Acts are 'fickle'. In their 'fickleness' they are swayed by false charges against the apostles. He argues further, that the crowds are generally unreliable (1990:61). However, we see no plausible grounds for this averment. On the contrary, we see in Acts 3-4 a consistency on the part of the crowd: (i) they are challenged by the apostles about the death of Jesus (3:13b-15). Those who identify with the culprits make good by repenting and

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<sup>322</sup>In Korten's People Centered Development model, this is what an organised community, with a vision begins to do.

<sup>323</sup>Palestine is so-called because it was a state characterised by a government by temple rulers. Elsewhere in the Roman Empire, large cities were called city-states.

accepting the salvation of Jesus as preached by the apostles (4:4). (ii) Later, it is the crowds outside the courtroom whom the authorities take into consideration before they could sentence the apostles (4:21). This crowd remains on the side of the apostles and prays for more boldness instead of deserting the apostles (4:29). Surely, this cannot be the crowd that Tannehill refers to as being 'fickle' and easily swayed by false charges against the apostles.<sup>324</sup> Even if Tannehill were referring to the crowds in the Gospel, at the trial of Jesus, this would be debatable.

Not surprisingly, Tannehill isolates the apostles from the crowds in order to strengthen his case. He only ascribes boldness to the apostles (1990:62-63), while he ignores Acts 4:24-30. He highlights the defiance of the apostles which in his view, is a theme that continues until Acts 7. But he does not recognise the role of the crowds that accompanied the apostles. He argues instead, that in 5:23, focus is not so much on miraculous rescues but on the impotence of human authorities to control the course of events (1990:66). In other words, even in this case, the prayers of the crowd have had no effect. Thus, unlike the Jewish authorities, Tannehill underestimates the crowd's potential contribution or like the Jewish authorities, he attaches no importance to them.<sup>325</sup> This contradicts Luke who has a sympathetic presentation of the crowds because among them are included the 'little ones', the 'babes', the 'poor', etc. (cf Nolan 1977 ). In fact, it could also be argued that Luke's highlighting of the crowd's participation in the prayer for boldness is deliberate, with the view to show how they have been transformed from being subservient and passive to being bold and participatory (Acts 3:13f cf 4:23). Is this not what the structure of the miracle in 3:1-10 is about? This should be compared to the earlier verse in which Luke highlights the disbelief of the authorities when they learnt that miracles had been performed by the ordinary and uneducated people (4:13). Indeed, the authorities themselves acknowledge the empowerment of the ordinary people.

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<sup>324</sup>In fact, as far as the story goes, it is incorrect for Tannehill to refer the charges as false. According to the story, the man had been healed. That is "subversive" in the eyes of the temple authorities. Their charges then were one way of intimidating those who continued to perform such acts.

<sup>325</sup>The text makes it clear that those in authority feared the reaction of the crowds (Acts 4:21b). Even in the gospel (Luke 22:2), the same fear is expressed. This raises the question whether the crowds that supported Jesus were the same as those who followed him from Galilee or whether they were a different crowd of Jerusalem.

It may be asked whether it is possible to have power without being in power or without authority. This question arises in the face of the overall historical conditions in Palestine, involving the Roman occupation of the area and bad political and economic conditions for the Jews. Sociologists argue that this is possible (cf Masenya 1997:141). Organised communities<sup>326</sup> can assert themselves in such a way that they become powerful. However, this does not necessarily mean that they should become part of oppressive authority structures. In this case, the man and the crowd who have been empowered by the apostles became “powerful” outside the official power structures. In the Gospel, power resides with the powerful who are in control (Luke 13:1-9).<sup>327</sup> But the young church shows a determination to resist that authority, in obedience to God. Thus, we see power gradually eroding beneath their feet.

In concluding this section, mention should be made of our feeling that boldness in Acts 3-4 is a manifestation of power (in this case, the power of the ‘powerless’). The reader of the story would be empowered by the elements discussed. The story gives assurance that God intervenes decisively.

#### 5.2.4.2 Ἀτενίσσας as empowerment (3:4)

As an ordinary Greek word, Ἀτενίσσας only means “stare”, “look intently”, “gaze” (cf Moulton & Miligan (1930), Arndt and Gingrich (1957) Liddell & Scott (1968)). However, understood against a cultural context and the context in which it is used in Acts 3:4, it assumes an anthropological nuance. It becomes an empowering term.

The culture of the empire which was portrayed in chapter 3 of this study, shows inequity between those in “lower classes” and those in “upper classes”. One of the ways in which this manifested itself was the attitudes of the upper classes towards those in lower classes, eg. the relationship between client and patron or benefactor as discussed in chapter 3 of the present study. They expected honour and respect from them. In fact, in our opinion, the story (which probably has a Palestinian origin) may have even been influenced by the author’s familiarity with the socio-cultural conditions of

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<sup>326</sup>The idea of community is strong in Luke-Acts (eg. Lk 6:27-45; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-37).

<sup>327</sup>See Draper’s (1991) reading of this parable.

the empire and then appropriated to the context of Palestine. His aim would be to show that those who were formerly outsiders or were marginalised, due to their physical conditions, have, since their physical restoration, been enabled to participate fully in society. Hence the idea of “social integration” (cf Chapter 3).

In the first part of the present chapter, it has been showed that the apostles’ command that the man should look at them not only transcended the cultural stereo-types of the time, it also elevated the man to their status.<sup>328</sup> Thus, without using many words, they empowered the man. This was a necessary step so that the man could henceforth relate to them at their level.

The author may have had in mind a situation where the society generally despised a beggar. In chapter 3, we suggested that this seems to have been common in the Graeco-Roman world. In applying the story in the non-Jewish-Christian context, there is another culture of which the author does not approve, namely, a pietistic culture in which the benefactor becomes paternalistic, thus ‘dehumanising’ to the recipient. Thus, Luke uses a word that changes the conventional practice. The attempt by scribes to avoid this betrays their socio-cultural considerations.

The import (intended or accidental) of the use of ἀτενίσσας in this context is that the healing that follows is not imposed on an inferior, passive object. The symbolic raising of the status of the cripple to that of the apostles has a theological significance. It proves that the beggar too had the dignity that all God’s creatures had. Consequently, those who offer help should put the needs of the potential beneficiary (whether beggar or not) before theirs, if they are to be developmental. This is even clearer in John 5:6, where Jesus applies the principle of first negotiating the healing with the ‘needy’ man.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>328</sup>We do not know what it exactly was. However, it is clear that whatever the case might be, it would be higher than that of a beggar.

<sup>329</sup>Note that there was no need to raise the status of the man in this case. The fact that he has been noticed by Jesus (5:4) after thirty eight years of not being noticed by anyone, already gave him a psychological advantage.

The context of these words alone proves the issue of empowerment which is our concern in this situation. Reading the same passage, Samartha (1987) posits that the passage is about the power of the powerless. We concur. However, he does not pursue his theory further. In the light of our discussion of the words above, Samartha could find support in no less than five passages in Acts 3-4. First, all five passages follow the healing act. Having seen the healed man, the people marvelled, for they had known him as the powerless, crippled beggar. Now, they were seeing him jumping and leaping for joy (3:8), a sign of power in Samartha's mindframe. In the second place, Luke makes Peter declare the formerly weak beggar to be completely healed as a result of the power that is in the name of Jesus (3:16-18).

Thirdly, in 4:13, the Jewish authorities marvel at the power the apostles had, for they were "ordinary uneducated people". What is marvellous is precisely the fact that the power of Jesus which has been transferred to the "ordinary and uneducated" people has reduced the power of the powerful authorities (4:16-18). This had already been predicted by Mary in the Magnificat (Luke 1:52-3f) and had become part of Jesus' manifesto (Luke 4:18-20).

Fourthly, during the trial of Peter and John, the *οἱ πολλοί*<sup>330</sup>, the common people so to say, who would never be considered by the authorities in passing judgement on Peter and John (Acts 4:21), are now taken into consideration. We saw an "organised" and orchestrated kind of crowd during the trial of Jesus who asked for a death sentence for Jesus. It is debatable whether the crowd that followed Jesus from Galilee is the same as the one that was organised by the Jerusalem authorities. In the case of Acts 3-4 however, the crowd consists of believers or, as the verse goes (4:23), the *τους ἰδίους* (their own). These are considered volatile and are feared by the authorities. Hence Peter and John must be released with a mere warning (4:17).

Fifthly, the materially powerless are empowered by others within the movement.<sup>331</sup> Hence the report: "...no one had need..." (4:33). This is in contrast to the context

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<sup>330</sup>Luke uses the term *ὄχλος* instead of *οἱ πολλοί*. The latter is our term here, emphasising the point made in (Acts 4:13), that they were regarded as the rank and file by the authorities.

<sup>331</sup>Bergquist (1986:7) notes that the sharing of possessions in the young church was not meant for outsiders but for the members of the young Christian community (cf Barrett 1994:176). The same was true of the service to the needy (Bergquist 1986:8).

where beggars were visible, where poor people were in the majority as was the case in the Roman Empire (cf chapter 3 above). Whether this refers to the salvation of Israel is debatable. The tradition Luke used may have been taken from Israel but the context in which he has appropriated it goes beyond Israel.

These instances are signs of a rich theology of empowerment which is implicit in Acts 3-4 and which is not confined to the Jews but is a benefit of all who responded to the Pentecost gift (Acts 2). However, it should not be forgotten that they are found within the interpretational context of the story rather than in the story itself (cf contrast between those who interpret through the speeches and those who analyse the story itself). We have briefly considered some of these in our discussion of the structures of Acts 3-4. We now need to look at important elements in 3:1-10 which give clues to this theology of empowerment. We are here only focusing on what comes across in the text, ie. what is explicit. The implicit will be considered later, under the reflection on the theology of HD.

#### 5.2.5 Wholeness/completeness

The idea of wholeness is one of the categories mentioned in chapter 2 of this study. There the point made is that in the African context, wholeness is a sign of development taking place in a person. Wholeness entails ascent to all the values agreed upon by one's community as values of a 'progressive' community.<sup>332</sup> Among these may be mentioned health, education, good social relations, participation in public life, etc.. This is what development or *ukuphuhla* is about in the African context.

The text uses two words to express the idea of wholeness. One word with its own independent meaning is *σωζω*, meaning healed or saved. In this context it means "healed". The other word used is *ὀλοκληρία*, meaning "completeness" or "wholeness". Both words in Acts 3-4 are connected with the healing episode. They describe, in different ways, what has happened to the man. Since both words connote the idea of wholeness, we shall treat *σωζω* as such in the context of Acts 3:1-4:31.

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<sup>332</sup>See discussion of the concept of *ukugqibelela* (Speckman 1996:) and the "fullness of Humanity" (Pato 1997) and Kekana (1995).



The first word, *σῶζω*, occurs in several places in the New Testament. It is used in contexts other than those of physical healing. Some of these contexts, eg. forgiveness of sins (Luke 5:20)<sup>333</sup> reflect healing of a different kind. Others, eg. Luke 1, refer to political salvation. Thus, the idea of salvation as ‘wholeness’ is not totally foreign to Acts 3-4 since we have to do here with physical, spiritual and material salvation. Healing is thus seen as salvation. Perhaps this is salvation in two ways, ie. body and soul. Given the view with which we concur, namely, that God’s plan in Luke-Acts is salvation (cf Powell 1991), it may not be anachronistic to infer a third dimension of salvation, material salvation. This is present in both gospel and Acts. Besides, no salvation is complete without it. We conclude this section with the word for wholeness which is used in Acts 3.

The word *ᾠλοκληρίαν* (whole, perfect) is very rare in the New Testament. For example, in Acts it only occurs at 3:16. Elsewhere, it occurs in 2 Thessalonians and in James 1:4. It only occurs once in each of the three instances. There is no other occurrence in the New Testament. The word means “completeness” or “wholeness”. As such, it is associated with physical healing in its Graeco-Roman context (see *heel* in Afrikaans). There is no evidence of it being used in a religious context. The three instances in which it is used in NT are exceptional. Interestingly, all the authors (writer of James, Luke, writer of 2 Thessalonians) that have used it in the NT have in one way or another, connections with the non-Jewish Graeco-Roman world. In the Greek context, the word may have a spiritual connotation as well. New Testament authors chose the word because it expresses the idea of wholeness in a strong and comprehensive sense. Therefore, we must distinguish it from the other two words used for ‘completeness in the New Testament: Paul for example, uses *τέλος* to describe ‘complete’ in the sense of being finished. John also uses *τέλος* for ‘complete’ but also *τετελεσται* for ‘accomplished’ or ‘finished’. We will not go into the discussion of these words in this study. They have no direct relevance to our discussion. We mentioned them in order to eliminate them.

In the present passage, the word *ᾠλοκληρίαν* is used in the context of being healthy or completely well. Hence virtually all translations have it as ‘perfect health’. However, perfect health sounds limiting or narrow. The point of the verse (Acts 3:16) is that following the transformation, the man is now whole, that is, he is complete in every

<sup>333</sup>Some see forgiveness of sins as Jesus’ way of healing. Infact, he does pronounce forgiveness as salvation.

respect. By implication, he has been restored physically and mentally. Thus, he is freed to develop materially as well. In fact, Korten's idea is that human development is a step towards material restoration. This is coterminous with the project of salvation in Luke Acts. Pinnock postulates that salvation is nevertheless, wholeness.

#### 5.2.6 Beneficence (*εὐεργεσία*)

This word is first mentioned in Acts 4:9 in the context of our two chapters. It looks back at the healing. It describes it as a good deed, a beneficence. This way of describing healings or gifts from others is typical of the Hellenistic world (cf chapter 3 above; Bertram ). The word can indicate an individual benefit or favour or general beneficence.

As discussed in chapter 3 of this study, the word in the Hellenistic world is usually associated with a title which is conferred publicly and is generally acknowledged. This usually involved great 'men' who provided certain gifts for the city-either as part of an agreement before assuming public office or out of their kindness. The honour was conferred on them at a public ceremony.

While there may be no direct semantic connection between salvation and beneficence, the import of the two words, in the context of our discussion, is similar: Someone gives or does something for the sake of others. This is true in the case of a benefactor and it is also true in the case of a *goel* or 'redeemer'. If Luke had salvation in mind, this idea cannot be excluded. The Saviour has to be a benefactor. However, this beneficence transforms instead of creating dependency.

#### 2.5.7 Rise/raise (*ἐγείρει*)

The next word is *ἐγείρει*. It appears in different forms in Acts 3:6; 14:9. In the Gospel the word is used in the raising of the widow's son from death (Luke 7:14); in the raising of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:54); in relation to the raising of Jesus from the dead (Luke 24:6).

Although the word appears in several different contexts, there is a tendency among New Testament exegetes, to confine it to the resurrection of Jesus. However, the fact that another word for rising up, *ἀνάσθημι*, is used at certain places and not at others

while ἐγείρω is used in certain strategic places compels us to read more out of the texts than meets the eye. It suggests that the author intends to shift the reader's focus.

Essentially, the word means "standing up" or "rising" or "being raised". In the instances of its occurrence in its various forms, it refers to "rising" in respect of the living and the dead and "being raised" in respect of the dead. If one were to consider its semantic history and the reason for its importance in the New Testament, a few points would have to be mentioned.

In Acts 3, the word is used twice: In the first instance, it is used in connection with the healing of the crippled man (3:6). Peter and John tell him to "get up" or "rise up" and walk, in the name of Jesus. This transforms the man's condition from being dependent on others, including strangers, to being independent or "self-sufficient". This makes one wonder whether in this context, it is fair to categorise the episode as a healing in the sense of healing from sickness or a transformation in the sense of both correction of the deformity and enabling to perform. What is clear in the story is that although the man had a disability due to his deformity, he was not medically infirm. In fact, with elements such as dependency on others for mobility, lack of evidence of physical sickness and healing without anything being done to his body, the story compares well with John 5:1-9. If John 5:1-9 can be interpreted as the story of the man with a psychological problem, Acts 3:1-10 can be interpreted as the story of empowerment. The second instance is found in Acts 3:15. Here, it is in connection with the raising of Jesus from death. Peter is explaining to the crowd that the power of Jesus is still at work as surely as Jesus is alive.

The theological significance of the word is that God brings back to life in both a literal and literary senses. There is never a situation too bad to be transformed or one too good to be left alone. If the beggar suffered for being in his condition, then God has transformed it. If he enjoyed living on alms, then that situation was never too good to be transformed either. His restoration means that he has been "raised to new life".

#### 5.2.8 Begging or the power of Jesus?

We now return to the question which was raised at the beginning of this section: Is the author's focus in Acts 3:1-10 on begging or is it on the power of Jesus as mediated by the apostles? Approached from a developmental perspective, the focus of the passage

can be either way. We no doubt have to know something about the social background of the text in either case.

It is clear however, that if we place focus on the power of Jesus, then the construction of a theology of development will not be possible. Putting focus on Jesus in the case of a man who has taken no initiative would aggravate the problem of dependency. Besides, there is nothing in the text that compels us to think in that direction. The man had no prior knowledge of the apostles and no faith played a role in his healing. In fact, even Peter in the most problematic verse (apart from 2:45) in the first six chapters of Acts, does not ascribe the healing to the man's faith. He talks of faith 'in his name' (3:16) which is general and ambiguous, to say the least. The persistent interpretation of the text as a way of elevating the name of Jesus is typical of a religious rather than a theological approach to the text. Consequently, Christianity has a tendency of creating dependency rather than creating whole persons.

The alternative is a better option: Given the immediate literary context of the text, it is not inappropriate to focus on the issue of begging. The text is couched by the summary of the socio-economic state of the church at the time (2:42-47) on the one hand; on the other hand, it has the summary of life in the church (4:31-37). All this has to do with socio-economic relations (see community of limited goods). As we have already mentioned in chapter 3 above, Theissen's (1995) thesis is that the caring nature of the early church (economically) is what held it together. This is in line with the "summaries" in Acts (2.43-47; 4:32f).

There have been attempts to downplay the importance of the "summaries" on the grounds that they are the imagination of the author. Whether they had historical roots or not is not the point here. We are dealing with a literary text and we cannot avoid the fact that the author had a purpose in putting together the stories he collected in the way he did. Even if the stories were not true, we would still have to ask why the author found them important for his work, given the moral lessons they have. This is a redactional question.

Secondly, we have stated in chapter 3 above that while friends had everything in common, that was not an encouragement for people to take advantage of the community (*Didache* cf 2 Thessalonians). People were in fact, taught to strive towards wholeness as implied in the use of the term ὁλοκληρίαν (3:16) and Paul's encouragement of

people to work for themselves (20:33f). In its secular usage, this term refers to wholeness in a medical sense. This is the sense implied even in its rare occurrences in the New Testament (Acts 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 3). However, in the New Testament, there is a nuance towards a comprehensive wholeness which involves the psychic aspect, ie. what others would refer to as 'holistic' (cf Thoules 1969). In a situation where the ability to use one's limbs was important for economic reasons, it makes sense to see Luke's perspective as a socio-economic one. The whole of Luke-Acts (especially the gospel) reflects this.

Thirdly, even if the passage were to be viewed from a missionary perspective it could still be focussed on begging. The evangelist's intention is to show that since the fulfillment of Jesus' promise at Pentcost, life has become better for those in 'The Way'. The "weak" have been empowered with ability to do wonders (Acts 2:43), the poor are part of a caring community where there is no need (Acts 2:42-47, 4:31-37), the sick are healed (Acts 3:1-10), the Jewish-Gentile walls are being broken down (Acts 2:7-11). These echo the mission of Jesus as portrayed in the gospel (Luke 4:18-20, 7:22).<sup>334</sup> The spirit is the same as that of the mission of Jesus. Thus, the evangelist is drawing attention to the transformation that was wrought by Jesus and was intended to continue in the church.<sup>335</sup>

Fourthly, although the point we want to make about begging here may be discussed under the third point above, it is important to draw focus to it by making it a different point. We have pointed out in chapter 3 of this study, that begging was a shame: The shrewed manager (Luke 16:3b) for instance, could not 'work with his hands' and yet he was 'ashamed of begging'. Paul on the other hand, worked with his own hands because he 'did not want to beg' (Acts 20:33b-34). This reflects a seemingly general attitude towards beggars in the empire, as discussed in chapter 3 of this study. Palestine may have been an exception given the religious view they held. However, it is difficult to know the extent of the influence of such rules.

Fifthly, we need to ask how often the name of Jesus has appeared in the episode in comparison with the idea of begging and whatever is associated with it. In respect of

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<sup>334</sup>This is the *kairos* Jerusalem failed to see (cf Speckman 1998)

<sup>335</sup>This has already been discussed in chapter 4 above.

3:1-10, the name of Jesus appears only in verse 6. However, ἑλεημοσύνη, which is used for alms, appears several times. It is as if the point made is that the man who used to beg, is now free from begging. How that release from the demon that bound him took place, appears to be secondary.

Given this and the foregoing discussion, our conclusion is that viewed from whatever angle, the focus of this passage is on the beggar rather than on the healer. This will help us in our construction of a new reality for a beggar and those forced into a similar situation, which follows below.

### 5.3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW REALITY: FROM ALMS TO LEGS

Having established the major points in the text that are relevant for our context of development, we now return to the question raised at the beginning of this study and indeed of the present chapter, pertaining to the function of the text in a context of development. Needless to say, the question has no easy answers. However, the alternative is not an answer either, namely, to treat the study of the text as an academic exercise that is remote from reality. As Baukham (1989:5) says, in order for it to be relevant, "the ancient text should be able to transcend its original context and attain new freshness without losing its origin (*sic*) intended meaning".<sup>336</sup> While we agree with the first part of Baukham's statement, we find the latter part problematic. No exegete will ever be able to find the original meaning of the text. It "died" with its author (see Croatto 1983). Readers down the ages have given it different meanings. Baukham's problem, as is Craffert's (1995), is that he is oscillating between the new and the old, the historical-critical and the contextual.

In chapter 1, we have seen how modern-day communities in South Africa, have been inspired by the biblical values to create for themselves a vision of liberation. This vision has carried them through difficult times and spurred them on to challenge oppressive structures fearlessly. This was so in spite of Mosala's remark in relation to hermeneutics of liberation, that with or without Black Theology, the worker's struggle goes on (1989). Many have derived their resilience from the Bible.

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<sup>336</sup>See also Suggit 1993. Suggit is much closer to our view for he argues that the text is given meaning by the context. The word has no authority without its user bestowing it.

The question of our concern in this section is how to transform the vision of liberation into a vision of development; how to transform resilience into sustainability. In other words, how can we construct a different reality from the one which causes them to suffer, for example in the Grahamstown community? Is the biblical text helpful in this regard? In order for us to be able to answer such a question, we have to utilise the outcome of our analysis in the last two sections.

We have already established above, that the notion of human development is present in Luke-Acts, although in an inchoate state. This is represented by the values of empowerment, health, wholeness, transformation, self-sufficiency, etc. all of which arise out of the miracle which opened up new possibilities for the community. Elements of the text which we analysed in the above two sections show that to the extent that the story of the crippled beggar has had a 'rippling' effect on the community of believers and has since been responsible for the believers' defiance of unjust structures, the text has developmental tendencies (cf Korten 1990). In the definition of development in chapter 1 of the present study, we have seen that development is closely linked to the release of human potential and that there is a strong link between the economic and human development (cf Pope Paul IV in Hancock 1979)-you cannot successfully have economic growth without human empowerment and motivation; nor can you have human empowerment without that being translated into economic advantages (cf Korten 1990).

A more comprehensive definition which includes the above ideas has been provided by Korten (1990:67) and is mentioned in chapter 3 of the present study as follows:

*...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.*

In the actions of the community in Acts 3-4, we see human potential in display. The knowledge that life could be different and that suffering does not have the final word inspired them to claim that life for themselves (Acts 4:4, 21b, 24-26, 29, 32-35 cf 2:38). Thus, what was initially one man's experience was turned into a communal point of reference. In Korten's language (1990), that experience became the 'social energy' of the community. Starting with the apostles themselves, the community begins to challenge the validity of the authority of Jewish authorities who arrested the apostles (Acts

4:8b-12, 19-20), they constitute themselves into a support group for the apostles (something that was not experienced by Jesus) (Acts 4:21b, 23-31), they swell the ranks of the alternative community (Acts 4:32-37 cf 2:42-47), a community of equality, sharing and sincerity. Those typical of deceivers and hypocrites<sup>337</sup> as represented by Ananias and Sapphira, get “wiped out” of the face of the earth (5:5-10) for their “anti-social” behaviour.

In this section, we focus our reflection on the salient points that have emerged in the last two sections of the present chapter, against the grid of the categories of human development as established in chapter 2 above. The broad categories are: *contradictions*, the *ideal* situation and the *method*. These broad categories which have been borrowed from Korten are ‘stuffed’ with data from other authors on alternative development and from the African view of human progress (see chapter 2 above). Before proceeding with the aim of this section, we briefly turn to Hamm’s (1986) theory of the restoration of Israel. This may not be ignored, not only because Hamm is the only scholar (known to the present author) who has produced a thesis on Acts 3:1-10 but also because ignoring it might weaken our attempt to take the import of Acts 3-4 beyond Israel. We discuss this under ‘salvation’.

### 5.3.1 Salvation

It is generally agreed that the theme of salvation is consistent throughout Luke and Acts (cf O’Toole 1987, Marshall 1980, etc.). Scholars only differ on how they explain this (cf Conzelmann 1960, Cullmann 1957, etc.). Some see it as material salvation or salvation from poverty; others see it as salvation from political bondage (cf Yoder 1972, Cassidy 1987). Both the Gospel and Acts, especially the Gospel, lend themselves to all these interpretations. In recent times, there has also been a suggestion that Luke has a theology of power and salvation in Acts (Samartha 1987). This view however, has not reached a huge audience; nor has it been provided with one as yet. A major reason, in our opinion, is the fact that it was discussed on the fringes of Lucan studies, with little prominence given to its development.

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<sup>337</sup>In a sense, they may also be representing resistance of “communalism” while they wanted to be members of the church at the same time. They did so in a dishonest way.



Given the discussion under section I of the present chapter, the pivotal point of our discussion is the healing episode (Acts 3:1-10). Everything in Acts 3-4 is centered around this episode.<sup>338</sup> Indeed, it remains a point of reference even at the trial of Peter and John (Acts 4:9,10,14). Peter's explanation also arises out of the healing (3:12f). Some of the sub-themes raised in the two chapters (Acts 3&4) arise out of the healing episode. The theme of power and salvation is also present in the healing episode. We shall return to these later. It seems important, at this stage, to examine Hamm's<sup>339</sup> theory that the element of salvation is directed at Israel. Our basic premise from the start, is that one cannot talk of salvation to the exclusion of power in Acts 3-4 or vice versa. Abuse of power has the potential to rob people of salvation; yet a beneficial use of power has the potential to liberate. This is the essence of development.

Notwithstanding this, Hamm (1986) has a different, though not necessarily contrary, view of the crippled beggar's story (Acts 3:1-10). He proposes a symbolic interpretation. For him the story symbolises the "healing of Israel at the gate", as foretold in Isaiah 32 and 35. In support of this, Hamm (1986:200-201) points to what he calls "indicators of symbolic intent" in Acts 3-4. These include the following: (i) Luke intends the healing to point beyond itself, to Jesus (ii) emphasis on what might be called the "dynamic of attention", that is, "people seeing" (iii) total passivity attributed by Luke to the beggar (iv) the healed man's activities of leaping, walking and praising are described with a remarkable emphasis and leaping is described in words that evoke Old Testament passages.

It is from these indicators that Hamm (1986:2-16-217, cf 206) infers several theological motifs, one of them being the *restoration of Israel* at the gate, the other being that the restoration of the man symbolises the resurrection of Jesus so that he might continue his work as the "one sent". In accordance with the Isaianic promises (Isaiah 35:6), he argues that Israel is being restored from "lameness" to "wholeness". Hence "leaping like a lamb".

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<sup>338</sup>It has to be so because, as Croatto (1983) posits, it is the text that is being read. There is no reading of the text without the text (cf chapter 2 above).

<sup>339</sup>Dennis Hamm (1975) whom to date, has provided the only detailed study of Acts 3:1-10 which he followed up with scientific articles in the last two decades (1984; 1986; 1989)

Although Hamm's conclusions are based on his exegesis which he conducted fairly well, we are loathe to accept any of his seven conclusions on both methodological and historical grounds. Methodologically, he is aloof from his context, which has resulted in a disinterested and non-committed reading (exegesis?) of the text. We have already discussed the problem of a pretence to be able to read the text "objectively" in chapter 2 of this study. This makes us suspicious of results such as those Hamm has arrived at.

Historically, Hamm's conclusions are not only incapable of addressing the needs of twentieth century contexts, there is also no evidence of either Israel responding to the gospel of Jesus or that of her healing or that of focusing the mission in Acts on Israel. Instead, Luke ends Acts (28:28) with a warning to the Jews that salvation (which according to the Third Gospel, was primarily intended for the Jews), would be accepted by the Gentiles since the Jews had rejected it by killing Jesus whom God then raised from the dead.<sup>340</sup> Some may argue that this is a rhetorical device, used to persuade the Jews to accept Jesus. However, there is no record of Jewish devotees being converted *en block* in the entire book of Acts. Instead, 'outsiders' and individual Jews are those who respond positively to the preaching of the apostles. Incidentally, towards the end of the gospel, (Luke 24:16 cf 24:31) Jewish travellers do not recognise Jesus in their company; at the beginning of Acts (1:6), a question is raised about the restoration of Israel's glory but Jesus evades it (1:7); the portrayal of the Pentecost event itself is not about the experience of Israel but about its "implosion" and the founding of a new people of God. It is therefore incorrect to suggest that the episode symbolises Israel's healing at the gate. That kind of connection might have applied in the gospel. In Acts, Luke seems to be "moving on", taking along those who have chosen the Way.

Since Hamm may be regarded as an "authority" on the passage, his contribution may not be "brushed aside" easily. However, given the two points made above, and the fact that our study is by choice, different from Hamm's, a detailed critique of Hamm is no longer necessary, save to make some further brief observations:

First, while Hamm is not expected to accept Conzelmann's view, it is however expected that he would indicate his position in relation to Conzelmann whose approach

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<sup>340</sup>For Van De Sandt (1990:341-358), the rejection only comes at the end of Acts (Acts 28:28), when Israel receives the "final verdict". In our opinion, however, Luke wrote precisely to make the point that salvation is not confined to Israel for Israel did not accept it from the start (cf eg. Luke 4:28-29; 13:31; 19:4:41-44).

influenced Lucan studies in the English and German worlds for over a decade. Given the “catholicity” of Luke-Acts<sup>341</sup> and the location of Luke in the metropolis,<sup>342</sup> a focus on Israel solely would need to be argued out quite convincingly. Did the author ignore all other members of the early church in order to focus on Israel or was he trying to show what good things God had in store for those who turned to the “Way” in the new dispensation? (cf du Plooy 1988, Van De Sandt 1990). Without elaborating, it can safely be said that the latter is most likely.

Secondly, the issue of a link with Isaiah is also debatable. Luke’s use of the LXX does not always and of necessity, mean that he intends to draw parallels between his work and that of Isaiah (cf du Plessis 1996). If Hamm were to insist on his interpretation of Luke’s theology, he would have to also show how it links with the rest of Luke-Acts.

Thirdly, there is a tacit assumption, not only by Hamm but by most commentators, that the beggar was a Jew. This is usually based on the link with the temple and the theory that due to his physical condition, he was not allowed inside (cf Steyn 1996). These are not plausible grounds on which to base the argument. In the first place, we have indicated in chapter 3 of this study, that temples and shrines were places where beggars were usually found (cf Juvenal V). This is besides what we discussed in chapter four of this study, namely, that some physically disabled people went to shrines and temples not necessarily to beg for alms but for healing (cf Asclepius). Thus Luke may have used the story of the crippled beggar primarily because it epitomises human condition rather than as a result of its Jewishness. In fact, we have mentioned above, that some scholars believe that the story was taken from elsewhere and then rehabilitated for a Jewish context.

In the second place, scholars tend to assume the crippled beggar’s identity. They base their argument on the assumption that he was prohibited from entering the temple by the Jewish law, due to his disability. Jewish religion precluded the “blemished” from ‘holy privileges’. On the basis of this some scholars, eg. Steyn (1996) aver that the man was a Jew who was only allowed into the temple after he had been healed. But

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<sup>341</sup>Esler (1987:16) for example argues that the community Luke wrote for, that is, the early church, was composed of Romans, Jews, rich, poor etc. Contrary to some suggestions, it was not exclusively Jewish.

<sup>342</sup>Some argue for Antioch (eg. Marshall), others argue for Ephesus.

when we study the geographical setting of the temple, this becomes questionable. Gentiles and the infirm were allowed into the temple and were assigned a certain area. Would the man not have been able to go beyond that place after he had been healed? When we look at the healing episode, it does not say that the man went beyond a particular point or was limited to a certain point as he followed Peter and John. That again would be an “affront” of the dignity that has just been restored by the apostles. What it says is that he followed them into the temple (3:8b cf 3:11).

Given these problems it is difficult to accede to Hamm’s theory that Luke’s theology is about the healing of Israel. This is more so when we consider that Luke attempted to “demolish” the selfish Jewish identity in Acts in favour of the new “Way” and the catholicisation of salvation. An alternative view to Hamm’s is that of Samartha’s with which we concur.

Samartha (1987:78) argues that all people, not just Christians, are recipients of God’s healing power. Peter and John were trying to show that in the “cross-resurrection” event a new power is now manifest, the power of powerlessness, the power that transforms weakness into strength (1987:78). To exclude anyone would be to undermine that power and to disempower others. For the story of the Jerusalem temple beggar shows two chief theological principles: First, that God has bestowed power upon all God’s people. This power is manifested in many ways and is known by different names. Secondly, that where that power is threatened or has been usurped by the evil one, God saves God’s people. We have seen this clearly in the story of the beggar: His disability was symptomatic of the evil that had replaced the “good” bestowed on the man by his creator; consequently he became powerless and lost control over his destiny and ended up a social burden. That became a problem for his community. In the second phase of the story, it became clear that the miracle had become catalytic-it transformed the man instantly, thus opening up new developmental possibilities for others in the community. This is salvation in both physical and social senses. The approach taken in the reflection that follows below will be cognisant of this.

### 5.3.2 THE TEXT AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: TAPPING THE “RESERVOIR” OF MEANING

Our focus in this section is on the function of the text in a context of human development. Given our critique of Hamm, how can we read the text in the context of develop-

ment, in such a way that it liberates and empowers instead of being oppressive and reactionary? As we have seen in our discussion of Croatto in chapter 2, it is possible to transcend the “horizons” of the author and the first audience of the text in order to find meaning for our own context. Yet in doing this, we will not prefer one over the other two of the three modes of reading that were identified by West (1991). We will allow all three to come into play.

In the light of the empirical situation that is portrayed in chapter 1 of this study and the model of human development developed in chapter 2, we will reflect on the above analysis of the text. We will do this under three broad categories, namely, *contradictions*, the *ideal* situation and the *method*.

### 5.3.2.1 Contradictions

By contradictions here is meant situations or dynamics in the context which negate the ideal situation. Focus is mainly on the text and its possible social background. We have already identified begging as the problem and the miracle as the solution, to put it simply. However, a deeper analysis would identify the physical condition of the man and the social structures as the cause of his begging. We approach the text at this level of the analysis.

#### a) Powerlessness

As we have seen above, the crippled beggar was powerless in more than one way. *First*, he was physically incapable of moving about (Acts 3:2). This incapacitated him and bound him literally and metaphorically to one place. This became clear in the analysis provided in the previous section of this chapter. Thus, God’s good creation (cf Genesis 1:31) was contradicted by some evil which had crept into God’s creation, to spoil it (cf Hick 1977).

This, in a broader sense was also the experience of the Jews under the Roman rulers. Although initially they were ruled by local client kings (cf Koester 1982; Mosala 1989; Crossan 1991), the terms under which they lived made it impossible for them to develop. They were physically surrounded by the Roman legions which had

continually occupied Palestine<sup>343</sup> and the harshness of Roman soldiers had reduced their physical strength to nothing.<sup>344</sup> Consequently, some zealous elements resorted to banditry (Crossan 1991).

Secondly, the cripple was economically powerless, another contradiction of God's will that there should be 'no beggars among you' (Deut.15:4f). However, Deuteronomy 15:4f has a definite context: it is a promised reward for living out the law. It is like a blessing. However, the crippled man's case is different as are the cases of beggars discussed in chapter 3 of this study. Conditions of begging in all cases are not caused by God. Begging is not retributive. By contrast, conditions that cause begging could all be traced back to human avarice. In fact, for Samartha (1987:75), Luke's intent in providing details about the "Beautiful Gate" was to expose the contradiction between such a gate and the condition of begging. We know from his begging, that the cripple was economically powerless (Acts 3:2,4). He did not produce anything himself.<sup>345</sup> Besides, he could not have had a good economic family background. If that were so, his family would have supported him and he would not have had to beg. For instance, we mentioned in chapter 3 that some philosophical beggars did not ask for alms in the streets because they were maintained by their friends. The cripple was brought to his daily begging spot by friends. They most probably also lacked the means.

In ancient as well as modern societies, wealth puts one in a position of power. That position of power in turn determines what one gets economically. As Lenski (1966) puts it, power exposes one to economic surplus and access to economic surplus puts one in a powerful position. As a consequence of this dialectical relationship between power and economic surplus, the cripple who does not have access to the surplus is also socially marginalised. This leads us to a *third* point, namely, that because the man had

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<sup>343</sup>See Myer's (1986) interpretation of the story of the Gerasene demoniac... (cf Crossan 1991).

<sup>344</sup>Events leading to the fall of Masada (74CE) is a good example of the mercilessness of the Roman legions in Palestine.

<sup>345</sup>If Garland's assertion is anything to go by, that sickness was prolonged because the sick did not have the means to seek medical attention, then we must count the crippled beggar among those (1995).

no social status,<sup>346</sup> he could not influence the course of events in any way, his own destiny included. He had no political say (of course, many others did not either) and the social structures did not allow him to participate in any way save to conform.

*Fourthly*, the man was politically and religiously powerless. He is portrayed as a beggar outside the temple, at the gate. The Palestinian temple at the time was the seat of Jewish government. It is where the Torah was administered; it is where political decisions were taken, eg. the decision to kill Jesus (Mark 15, Luke 23, Matthew 26) and later, his brother, James (Acts 12).

The cripple had neither direct nor indirect representation in that system. First, he was not a member of the temple (as a beggar, he was an expendable. He therefore had no social status and no political rights). He begged outside the temple, the seat of power. Secondly, he may not have been a Jew, therefore he was not protected by the Jewish religious system. Hence he sat on the 'corridors of power' which he himself was not able to taste while he was crippled.

This scenario is a contradiction of what we isolated as the principle of power above. Part of this stems from the congenital condition of the man, part of it is externally imposed. If we were doing a theological exegesis we would ask: What is God saying in this situation? However, we approach it from a developmental perspective. Our question therefore is: In what way is God empowering us in this situation? Below we look at another manifestation of the contradiction of God's ideal world, dependency. Needless to say, this is negative dependency.

#### b) Dependency<sup>347</sup>

As mentioned above, the man's physical incapacity made him dependent on others. In the first place, he was not able to move about without the help of others. He had to be

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<sup>346</sup>It should also be remembered that the man was an "expendable" in Jewish religious culture because as a cripple, he was blemished, therefore, a shame.

<sup>347</sup>We distinguish between powerlessness and dependency. As already seen above, a powerless person does not necessarily have to be dependent. Instead, powerlessness sometimes spurs the person on to fight for survival.

carried by friends from one point to another (Acts 3:2). Thus he was a burden on them. This again is a contradiction of both the perfect creation of God (Genesis 1:31) and the social expectations of every living person.

This dependency is also clear in his begging for alms. Owing to his lack of mobility and productivity, he has to live off what the sympathetic in the community are able to give him. A day without assistance in the form of alms would probably cost him a day's subsistence. Hence he had to be taken to the spot daily (*καθ' ἡμέραν*).

The sympathy of temple-goers however, although we do not know how much he received per day, was not a solution to his problem. It only aggravated the situation of dependency. The man's primary problem as it has already become clear, is his inability to function or produce. That is the first problem to be addressed in any attempt to help him. Failure to do so causes a lack of initiative.<sup>348</sup> The beneficiary tends to look up to the benefactor for everything, in the spirit of dependency.

It is worth noting though, that in this instance, the apostles, the man's benefactors, did not expect the man to depend on them. They have freed him from his shackles but the rest would depend on his discretion. For example, he went with the apostles into the temple. But Luke makes it clear that it was the man who clutched on to them (Acts 3:11) and that it was he who followed them into the temple (Acts 3:8). This is different from the attitude of benefactors towards their beneficiaries, as portrayed for example, by Winter (1994) and discussed in chapter 3 of the present study. In other words, unlike the known benefactors of the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world at the time, it was not the apostles' goal to make themselves patrons or powerful people. They saw a special need in the man, the need to be independent. Therefore, they transformed his situation. Hence this story (Acts 3) is itself unique and not universal.

### c) Universalisation

We have said in chapter 2, that the radical theory of development advocates a localisation of the problem. In Liberation Theology, this is known as particularity (see Mosala's article on universality and particularity, Dwane, Tutu). Each situation has its

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<sup>348</sup>This was the effect of outside material help on the community of Kei Road in the Eastern Cape to which we alluded in chapter 1 of the present study.



own merits and demerits, questions and answers. Therefore, what might appear to be a universal situation might take a different shape in a given local setting. Consequently, no universal solution can be given.

In the text about the cripple at the temple entrance, it is clear that his case is treated in general terms. He is treated (by the beneficiaries) like “any other beggar” who deserved an ἀργύριον, a beggar’s pittance (cf Louw & Nida 1988). No one converses with him. No one seems to care about how he is spiritually affected by his disability and the fact that he has to beg. If this did happen, the author has left it out, possibly hoping that the reader would fill in that gap even if by raising questions about it. Yet, our suspicion is that the author left it out because in reality, beggars were *personae non gratae*.

In our categorisation of beggars in chapter 3 above, into the four categories of *structural*, *voluntary*, *physically disabled* and *moira* types of beggars, we have showed that there are different situations and causes of begging. The dynamics of each are important and may be a clue towards a solution of each.

It is possible that if the cripple was given the necessary attention, as a unique person, which the apostles only gave later in his life (Acts 3:4 cf 4:22), his problem might have been detected earlier and perhaps solved in an appropriate manner (cf John 5:6). However, the question is: what could be better than the legs he received even at that late stage? As one of the old exegetes puts it: ‘the man asked for alms and he got legs’.

Thus, the restoration of the man’s legs shows God’s disapproval of dependency rather than the restoration of Israel at the gate (contra Hamm). In this way, it conflicts with the rabbinic theology of begging which approves of, and encourages charity (cf Dimont). According to this (cf chapter 3), giving ensures a person’s place in heaven or a person’s approval by God although this kind of theology was never a part of the original understanding of charity (cf Prockter 1991:61). The word almsgiving had no Hebrew equivalent. In the Hebrew language, the word *zedeqa* was used. But it referred to righteousness. Clearly, only God or those who did God’s will deserved to be called righteous. In this way, the merits of each situation matter. In a situation where “universal” answers are given, such unique situations get overlooked and they get overshadowed instead of being resolved.

#### d) Bureaucracy

The temple-state system was rigid and hierachical. In addition to this, it was “bureaucratic”. This made it a complicated system whose effect was oppressive whether by design or coincidence. As the theorists of development argue, no development can take place in a bureaucratic context (cf Korten 1990). There needs to be a decentralisation of power.

The one hint at “bureaucracy” in this case is the man’s exclusion from the temple. Whatever his nationality, he was obviously ‘unclean’<sup>349</sup> in the judgement of the temple authorities. If he wanted to enter, he would have to go through a process of proving to those in authority that he had been “cleansed”. A much clearer case of “bureaucratic” restrictions is that of the rest of the crowd who at first felt restricted by the structures and elected to defy them (eg. Acts 4:4, 21b). The apostles themselves were undermined by the authorities because they were mere “ordinary and uneducated” people (Acts 4:13). In other words, they themselves were ‘nothing’. But the deed they committed (restoration) made the authorities rethink their attitude towards them (Acts 4:16). It is only those approved through training (education) by the authorities that were seen to be educated (Bruce 1952). For any others, bureaucracy would expect the apostles to seek approval from them for the healing. Like their Master, Jesus, they did not seek permission or consult.

In a restricted and closely controlled environment, no development takes place. It is when power is decentralised or democratised that much growth and productivity takes place. Theissen (1995) suggests that this is what Luke tries to do in Acts. However, there developed a hierachical system later in the early church, which also became restrictive.

#### 5.3.2.2 The ideal situation (vision)

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<sup>349</sup>The list of the unclean, especially in agrarian societies (of which Palestine was a part and part of the Roman Empire), included beggars, the sick, prostitutes, those who worked as tanners, those served as “beasts of burden”, etc.

A vision is an “imagined idea”, a perceived ideal situation. In this study, this means a construction of an ideal reality with the help of the text. This follows below:

a) Investment in people

The term used above was empowerment. This term, as explained in chapter four of this study, refers to the method, the manner of doing things so that recipients feel liberated rather than oppressed. There are several ways of doing this. Education is one of them.

In our discussion of the African view of progress (chapter 2), education was mentioned among the ways of empowering a person. In fact, it was an important aspect of the process of initiation, if not the most important one although learning continues indefinitely. The aim was to empower the individual with the knowledge and wisdom necessary for life. Thus education would have been an investment in people.

Throughout Acts, the apostles are engaged in a teaching campaign. They teach about Jesus and what God has done through him. Their story, which they repeat often, especially in the first six chapters, is the murder of Jesus (whom God raised from death), by the Jews.

The *second* important aspect of investment in people is by taking care of their physical health. A person who was healthy had no reason to depend on others in a negative way. Instead, there would be mutual dependency in a way that shows that they need each other rather than one depending on the other.

The *third* important aspect is the highlighting of local social values. No people can be developed on general or universal values. Each cultural situation has its own emphases which are empowering to its members. As Coetzee (1989), in line with Cardoso, argues, causes of non-development are often explained successfully in a local situation.

In the text of Acts 3-4, beginning with the apostles' approach of the cripple, respect for a fellow human being is highlighted. This is the value of equity. You cannot bring another person to your level unless you respect that person as a fellow human being, with a right to life. The sharing of possessions according to each individual's needs (Acts 2:43f, 4:33f) is another way in which this point is made. As discussed in chapter

3 of the present study, Luke may have been influenced by the Nicomanian ethics as he wrote. According to this teaching, friends have things in common and no one can claim anything for himself/herself alone.

If this was not happening in the community that Luke had in mind, then the summaries were a critique of that situation. The man was left out of that situation by the selfish who saw no value in him because of his social status. In correcting such a situation, no universal principles would be effective. The case had to be viewed on its merit.

Thus, the apostles did not give the man what he expected to get. As usual, he expected to be counted among the many beggars who were given alms by beneficiaries (Acts 3:4). Hence he looked up, expecting to receive alms from the apostles. However, the apostles were aware that his case was not a general one-his primary problem was not begging but the disability which resulted in his begging. While charity or handouts can never be regarded as a solution to the problem of begging, it was particularly so in the case of this cripple. In other words, his case had to be treated as an exception.

According to our analysis above, focus is on the person rather than on the material. The disciples did not give the beggar money or other material relief. They did not aim at developing the person materially after seeing his need. Instead, they sought to empower him for his future development rather than momentarily.

In advising the church to stay away from developmental issues, Illich (cf chapter 1) had in mind a church which tried to be what the church should not be. The church often intervenes in situations of poverty, with material aid which, ironically, it has to beg from elsewhere.<sup>350</sup> Material relief is not within the church's realm, therefore, it does not always do justice to it. Material hand-outs constitute a small portion of the caring referred to by Theissen (1995). Illich was therefore reminding the church to do what it is meant to be good at, namely, human empowerment, and to do it very well.

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<sup>350</sup>Many people in South Africa live on welfare grants. These are distributed by the government. Church and para-church organisations on the other hand, run welfare schemes (eg. the DRC). The RCC has recently (1992) realised that running welfare was not developmental. So, it changed the name of its welfare department to social development (cf Hope 1992).

The apostles' dealing with the crippled beggar is a lesson to the church and other Christian charity groups, that material relief is not an end in itself. Nor is it a permanent solution to the problem of poverty. Developing the person might be a long term solution, but it has more permanency than occasional hand-outs. How is this done in the passage?

In the first place, the apostles level the grounds between themselves and the beggar (Acts 3:4). For a while, the crippleness of the person is put aside while focus is on his status as a beggar. He is asked to look up to the apostles, an act of elevation. This is what God also did for the world in Jesus (cf 1John.): God did not wait for sinners to become righteous before sending Jesus for salvation. Nor did God address the world from above, in a dictatorial manner. Instead, God became like us in human flesh (John 1), dwelt among us and experienced our experience. In the words of S Gqubule (1974), 'God came to pitch his (sic) rondavel next to our rondavels'. It is only after this elevation to an equal status that the apostles are able to help the cripple.

There is enough evidence in psychology, that when a person's identity has been affirmed, the result is a free person (Man in Context). The person is free in the sense that his/her potential comes out and the person begins to blossom with freedom. In Pope Paul VI's definition of development, this human potential which is freed is God's gift to humankind.

In the second place, the apostles add to their levelling of the grounds, a transformation of the person's situation (Acts 3:7). This is a very important aspect of empowering the person. A person has not been developed until s/he has a different experience and a transformed situation in a different spiritual or physical shape. This increases the chances of participation in the *πολιτεία* (public life).

#### b) Productivity

For lack of a more appropriate word we use the word productivity here. However, the idea of productivity refers to the ability to produce with one's hands and mind. This is not necessarily productivity in the sense that productivity is understood in the modern industrialised world. A healthy person is expected to be a producer in one way or another. While this is logical or should naturally be so, in African traditional culture, it is particularly stressed. This in the text, may be seen in the restoration of the cripple.

We have said earlier (chapter 3) that some disabled people asked for healing in order that they might be able to use their limbs for productivity. We even cited a case of a cripple and a blind man who went to Vespasian to ask for healing so that they could be enabled to use their limbs for productivity. One man approached the emperor with the request that prior to his disability, he was able to use his hand to support his family. After losing the use of his limb he was no longer able to do so. So, he asked for healing.

It is the expectation that both individuals and community should be productive, especially when the community and its members are healthy. In the text in question, the individual is empowered for that productivity. The story is not long enough to take us to that logical conclusion. However, the negative part of the story tells us that the incapacitated man was not productive. The positive part tells us that now that he is physically healthy, nothing, save structural limitations, should stop him from being productive. More positively, his restoration has influenced the rest of the community to challenge the structures successfully.

#### c) Participation

Participation is the term we prefer to use in the place of what Theissen calls democratisation in his paper. The term democracy is overused in the modern context, and it is not always regarded with respect. In talking about a community in antiquity, participation is more appropriate. As a descriptive term for the vision of the apostles for the new community, participation is not far fetched. This is clear in the life and actions of the new community. If the Jewish authorities will not grant it, the people, led by the apostles, will nevertheless practise it. For that matter, they will defy any structure or individual who becomes an obstacle in their way.

The first instance of a willingness to defy may be seen in the answer of Peter and John to the Jewish authorities who threaten their freedoms of conscience and expression and association (Acts 4:19), to use modern human rights categories. It is God's will that they proclaim the risen Jesus. It is therefore their God-given right to express themselves anywhere and at any time. For that reason, no one but God has the right to silence them.

Freedom of conscience and freedom of expression are among the freedoms guaranteed by a democracy. They imply that people have the freedom to believe and to choose what to believe in. They also imply that people have a right to express themselves without a middle person talking on their behalf or about them. When the authorities silence the apostles, they do so out of fear that their claim to represent the people and the living God will be invalidated. Only kings, emperors and high priests have the prerogative to represent the people.

It appears that the Holy Spirit which was poured out on 'all flesh' on Pentecost Day had freed the peoples' tongues and consciences. For it is repeatedly said that they were filled with the Holy Spirit whenever they were bold to do or say something (eg. 4:31).

However, there are limitations to this freedom. For example, no one is allowed to take advantage of the community by being a burden economically. That is not a dimension of democracy but an abuse of it. In our discussion of beggars in chapter 3 of the present study for instance, we have seen how the Didache has prohibited begging by people who did not deserve charity and the kind of punishment recommended for such people. We have also seen Paul's teaching that people should work with their hands so that they do not beg (Acts 20:33 cf 2 Thessalonians 3:8) and Paul's recommendation in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that those who do not want to work should be starved by the community for they are "taking advantage" of it.

On the other hand, it is made absolutely clear that fraudulence and cheating are not part of democracy. They represent corruption. Whoever brings those into the new community is ejected and eliminated (cf Acts 5:4; sons of Sceva, attempt to buy the apostles' power).

The action of believers in asking the apostles to pray for more boldness is indicative of a new era (4:24). It is an era of participation. Perhaps it should be said that it is an era of "maximum participation" because participation even through prayer is "participation by all means".

Jewish authorities are stunned by the fact that those who have newly found freedom are ordinary and uneducated people. In other words, their understanding of participation is limited to those who occupy great places, those whose economic means have made them socially powerful. The healing by the apostles invalidates this. In a democracy, all, regardless of their status, have a right to participate.

d) Particularity

The healed man was not an ordinary beggar. Yet the temple-goers treated him generally, in a way they have always treated other beggars. He had been crippled for forty years (4:22). We do not however, know how much of that time he had spent begging. It is probable that he had spent much of his lifetime begging.

There is no sign that those who had given alms to him before had ever taken an interest in his well-being. After all, a beggar was not a person to share treasured belongings with (cf Divine Institutes...). He was not a friend. Therefore, he was given hand-outs. As already mentioned earlier, an *ἐργύριον*, the money reserved by Jews for a beggar, had no value. Valuable gifts were given to God and friends (cf chapter 3 above).

To treat the crippled beggar in the same way was to miss a very important fact, namely, the man's need which transcends the immediate material want. His particular need was for the transformation of his physical and economic conditions. He was not like the other beggars whose conditions could be accounted for otherwise. Without paying attention to this, there was no way the man would be helped, at least, not in a sustainable manner. The starting-point had to be his psychological condition since after all the time of being negated, that is, his identity being defined in terms of begging, he too had a low self-image. This is seen in his expectation after the apostles invited him to look at them (3:4). He thought that he was worth nothing more than a mere hand-out.

The physical condition was the next step. The apostles saw that as an important move after encountering him. Money or other forms of material responses were only momentary and they would never bring about sustainability. Yet the goal of the apostles' ministry was to develop a complete community.

As the discussion of the theory of development in chapter two has showed, the solution to a situation of dependency begins in a micro-context. It is the local analysis of the situation that brings about lasting solutions. The healing of the cripple as an individual signifies what could be the experience of others in the context of the community.



e) Wholeness

Ancient societies regarded a person with a physical deformity as “incomplete” in the sense of not being whole. This is clear in Jewish religious expectation that a Jew should be whole. Those who had deformities were seen as ‘rejects’ in the sense that God had punished them for their’s or their parents’ sins (cf John 9). A true and living sacrifice offered to God had to be without blemish (Garland 1995). This applied to priests and sacrificial animals as well (Crossan (1991)).

In the Graeco-Roman world, physical and mental deformities were thought to be a sign of displeasure on the part of the gods. There were a number of such abnormal beings, for example, hermaphrodites, a human being born with a pig’s head or a person born with a lion’s head, etc. (see Garland 1995). Whoever had a deformity, no matter how little, did not qualify to be a priest or any kind of religious leader.

The crippled beggar was also not whole. We have suggested in the first part of the present chapter, that he was not only physically affected but that he was also spiritually affected. Yet God’s will, as seen in the apostles’ action, was that he should be whole in a comprehensive sense. This is God’s saving work. The formula used by the apostles in restoring him was ‘in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk’ (Acts 3:16, 4:9). The word used for rise, *ἔγειρε*, is also used of the resurrection of Jesus. In the case of Jesus, the implication is that his rising from the grave was comprehensive. In other words, he came back to full life. If the same effect was intended by Luke then what it means is that the crippled was made whole.

This idea of wholeness is not explicit until at 3:16 when the apostles point out to the ‘ignorant’ crowd (cf 3:17) that their faith<sup>351</sup> in Jesus had made the man whole. As already explained above the word used, *ᾠλοκληρίαν*, is very rare. In the New Testament, it only occurs thrice. However, in all its occurrences, it is not used in a religious but a medical sense. It refers to comprehensive physical completeness. Some translations of the Bible (eg. NRSV) have it as ‘perfect health’.

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<sup>351</sup>This must be the apostles’ faith because the man was not asked whether he believed in Jesus or whether he had faith in him. It is however, tempting to who overlook this point by assuming that reference is to the man’s faith.

When we look back at the gospel, the idea of salvation that is espoused there is wholeness. There is a comprehensive approach which entails economic, physical and political salvation. In Luke 4:18-20, Jesus declares his mission in these senses. Later in the gospel (7:22), Jesus points John's disciples to the fulfillment of this programme. The lame walk, the blind see, etc. However, no prisoner's are set free until in Acts. The down-throdden do not get political freedom in the way they understand it but as planned by Jesus, that is, in a sustainable way: They must be developed in such a way that it becomes impossible to colonise or keep them in bondage. All this is already hinted at in Luke 1 and 2.

### 5.3.2.3 The method

Given the above situation, the apostles had had their own approach with the view to achieve their vision. To be precise, the approach was revealed to them by the spirit, according to Acts 2:13. For it appears as if the former disciples of Jesus are filled with new wine. Since Pentecost, they, together with the community, have a new vigour. They are no longer afraid, they challenge the structures, they are not dependent on Jesus but on the programme of development that Jesus had left with them. The discussion under the headings that follow below is a reflection of that.

#### a) Mobilisation of community

In talking about the mobilisation of the community we are in fact, referring to the rippling effect of the crippled beggar's restoration. Those who witnessed or heard about the restoration seem to have claimed that as their's. They saw themselves healed, risen and leaping and praising God. That is what they put before themselves as their goal or vision. It was around this, that is life in the risen Christ, that the apostles organised them.

The rippling effect of the healing begins with the apostles' explanation of the healing (3:12f) where Peter plays on the Jews' emotions. He uses that opportunity to show that nothing had changed in God's plan and that the Jews did in fact, unknowingly aid God in that plan by killing Jesus. God raised him up, making a mockery of Jewish power. The response from the listeners was to join the apostles' group (4:4 cf 2:37.).

Following the explanation and the crowd's response by joining the mission, those in authority react negatively to the apostles' preaching. They interrupt Peter's speech (4:1-3) and question their power to heal. They are particularly concerned about the apostles' proclamation of Jesus. Hence they take issue with them for daring to mention his name (4:2, 18). What they tried to destroy in one man reemerges in many and even stronger. Hence Gamaliel was to warn later: "if this plan or undertaking is of human origin, it will fall; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them-in that case you may even be seen to be fighting against God" (Acts 5:38b-40).

The negative reaction of the authorities to the apostles' 'good deed' helped the community to organise itself even better than before. For example, at 4:24, following Peter and John's report to their friends (believers), the crowds spontaneously raised their voices in prayer. This is the first instance in both the gospel and Acts, that the crowd does that. This must be a different crowd from the one described by Tannehill above. If it has elements of the crowd that asked for the crucifixion of Jesus in the gospel (Luke 23:13-24), then the preaching of the apostles and the miraculous acts of God had helped to liberate them from their ignorance.

This organisation of the community also spread to the economic area. Believers organised themselves into economic units. Of course, this precedes the restoration of the cripple (2:43f). But it appears that following it, there was a better organisation of the community (4:33f).

#### b) Economic units

The concept of economic units needs further explanation. The church had no money and it did not set out to be a profit-making organisation. However, the poor community out of which it had evolved had to live. That living would not be actualised by receiving hand-outs or through donations from the well-off outside the church. Members had to each make a contribution.

It is highly probable that the idea of economic units within the church grew out of that concern. The question is why, if there was a distribution of alms to the needy, the church went ahead with an alternative programme. Had the programme failed or was the evangelist just critical of it? What happened for example to the distribution of alms after Stephen's death?

We have argued above, that the idea of alms distribution was not Christian and that it is possible that the apostles did not fully approve of it; neither did Jesus adopt the practice. We have based the argument on the hint provided at Acts 7, that the apostles appointed "someone else" to undertake the task while they themselves continued with the gospel. The statement goes on to say that the apostles would not interrupt the preaching of the good news for the sake of alms distribution. Therefore, whether the idea was successful or not, the hint is that it was regarded as foreign to the gospel. It was not the good news. The good news, as we have argued elsewhere is that the needy had their situation transformed (Speckman 1997:) instead of getting hand-outs. In other words, hand-outs are incompatible with the gospel. They provide momentary material relief while the gospel transforms and makes whole.

In Lucan context, it is not known whether the idea is based on the concept of the 'community of limited goods' (see Draper, etc.) or on the Qumran and Essene communities. We have argued in chapter 3 that the idea of sharing, whatever other influences, was taken from the Nicomanean ethics. Hence it differed from hand-outs. That was "sharing among friends" as we already see it in Luke 6:28f.

#### c) Self-definition and destiny

When people live under oppressive masters, they lose their identity and dignity. They are not in control of their destiny; they are defined by the masters and they neither have the freedom of choice or of creativity. In our conversations with the people of Kei Road in the Eastern Cape (1994) and some in the ZCC (1998), this author asked about the Afrikaans names some people have, something that is not usual among African people. In one case in the ZCC, MB (initial and surname) has both first and last names in English. As if the people spoken to in the two communities were talking in a single voice and from one location, they told this author that it was common for farmers to give Afrikaans names to their workers who did not have "Christian names". Afrikaans and English names were said to be Christian names. In other cases, for example, in the case of MB, one name ran down the family from the great-grand father who either lived on the farm or had lived in several farms before death. The children adopt his name as an official family name. Hence a non-African family name. It was however, conceded that in most cases, the missionaries had also played a role in naming and renaming people.

The above "conversations" explain why, under apartheid rulers, Black people in South Africa were, until towards the last days of apartheid, defined by apartheid rulers. Apartheid rulers called them by names such as "natives", "non-European", "Bantu", "Plural People", etc. They never accepted the authentic name "Black" because it was a positive identification. Blacks had elected to define themselves by that term. Hence the rulers would not accept it.

An explanation from anthropology is that naming is essentially a display of power. The one who has the right or privilege to name is often the one who is in a powerful position. They can name in any way that pleases them, a form of "subjugating" one. Often, domination begins with naming and then continues to other areas such as deciding how people should live and what their destiny should be, as it became clear in the way Black people were treated by successive apartheid governments.

Lest we forget, our focus is the church of the apostles which was apparently struggling to free itself from the clutches of Judaisers. The South African situation has been portrayed as an aid for understanding the situation of "subjugated" people, particularly the strategy of depriving them a sense of identity. It appears that temple authorities tried to do the same with the early Christians. They called them the "ordinary and uneducated" followers of Jesus (Acts 4:13). In other words, their miracles and what appeared to be good life among them meant nothing as they were only uneducated and ordinary people. By virtue of their status, nothing wonderful was expected of them; nor were they expected to rise above their own social status. Incidentally, the word Christian appears for the first time in Acts 17: , a suggestion that the early groups had no name other than that of disciples or followers of Jesus. However, they had a sense of direction, a sense of purpose, which appears to have been a uniting factor among them.

In order for Christians to survive (which probably accounts for the church's survival to this day), they had to assert themselves. One of the ways in which they asserted themselves was the "strong consciousness diffused among early Christians of their being a *people*" (Markus 1980:1). This, according to Markus, helped Eusebius to write the history of the Christian Church as a new people. Harnack (Harnack 1904:349) describes this "new people" as the "third race" (*tertium genus*). He writes:

It is indeed amazing! One had certainly no idea that in the consciousness of the Greeks and Romans the Jews stood out in such bold relief from the other nations, and the Christians from both, that they represented themselves as independent 'genera', and were so described in an explicit formula. Neither Jews nor Christians could look for an ampler recognition, little as the demarcation was intended as a recognition as all.

Their way of life and their "mixed" composition in the midst of racial, religious and economic status consciousness support Harnack's view of early Christians. They were indeed a different group of people from those known in their time. This led them to an authentication of their existence as an earthly structure with a heavenly home (cf Markus 1980:3). They saw themselves as a people "set apart" in this world for a divine purpose. Although there seems to have been an attempt by Christians to define themselves doctrinally, there seems to be no evidence of a unified and coherent concept of orthodoxy (Markus 1980:4). In fact, Käsemann opines that there was a multiplicity of confessions (1964:103).

It appears that while Christians in the first century were forced to define themselves by social and religious conditions, in the second century, there was a different reason. It is beyond our intention in this section, to discuss that. Suffice it to say that the writings of Early Church Fathers suggest that the need to be distinct from Gnosticism was the second factor that put Christians under pressure to define themselves. The point here is that even in the first century, before the term Christian was used on Christians, they were able to define themselves. The negative identity given by temple authorities (Acts 4:13) did not affect them in any way. In fact Luke defines them as "friends", a very profound relational term, as seen in the kind of sharing that characterised friends.

#### d) Structures undermined

The new community which appears to have been 'filled with new wine' (2:13), was a determined community. Its determination has taken it to the extent of defying the oppressive structures of authority. This is born out in the passage in question (Acts 3:1-10), by the act of healing itself which in the eyes of Jewish authorities, was a subversive act. We have said above, that according to Fanon's analysis of sickness and mental illness during the Algerian revolution, it benefitted the state to have sick, especially, mentally sick people. Whoever heals them or transforms their situation subverts that.

Apart from this act of healing, authorities are defied in a different way. The apostles preach the risen Christ in spite of prohibitions by those in authority (4:2, 18). When they are confronted for mentioning the name of Jesus, they tell the authorities that they would rather obey God than men (Acts 5:19 cf 5:29). At 4:28, they undermine the power of those in authority by declaring their deed part of God's plan. In other words, if it was intended to be a deterrent, it did not have that effect. Instead, it was seen as an aid to God's plan for God cannot be defeated by evil men. In fact, in his address to his fellow members of the "jury", Gamaliel had warned that if the apostles's movement was from God, it would continue and that if it was from men, it would soon die out.

The economic units which are mentioned above are also an act of defiance. Those in authority, who were accused by Jesus of "crossing the oceans to get a convert" but are insincere, want the people to always be dependent on them. They see themselves as God's representatives on earth and will not free the people from enslavement to them. Enabling people to be self-sufficient is a threat to the authorities. As we have said above, no development can take place in a bureaucracy. Bureaucratic structures could not be expected to support or promote any movement that would "set people free" for that was potentially dangerous for it. Freedom to be themselves might lead to defiance as it has become clear in the passages already referred to.

#### 5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we set out to read the story of the crippled beggar, using a contextual approach, in the light of a theory of "alternative development", that is, Human Development. Two important points emerged: First, it became clear that read contextually, Acts 3:1-10 lends itself to human development. It has an inchoate form of development which only comes to light when the whole context of Acts 3-4 is taken cognisance of. Past readers of the text have not associated the text with development precisely because at the point of the impact of the story of the crippled beggar on the community (Acts 3:11-4:37), they see the restoration of Israel at the gate.

Secondly, ideas suggesting development which emerged from the text are: (i) the stunning refusal of the apostles to give alms to the man. This suggests their anti-dependency stance. In fact, in the community to which they belong, each brings his/her own contribution, there are no hand-outs. (ii) The transformation of the man from

being a beggar to being an independent person. From this may be surmised that the apostles did not see hand-outs or material response to a beggar's need as the best solution. A transformation of the beggar's condition has long-term benefits. (iii) The experience of the beggar becomes a community experience just as the experience of the Hebrew slaves who were freed from Egypt became the experience of all the refugees, bandits and ex-slaves they found in the Fertile Crescent. In this case, the transformation of the man has a rippling effect on the community. The community begins to act, in defiance of authority structures and in search of a better life, identity and destiny. (iv) A number of important ideas such as self-sufficiency, mobilisation, economic units, productivity, participation, etc., have emerged.

These ideas reflect our reading of the text. We have argued in chapter 2 that we approach the text from the perspective of our own "horizon". The original author of the text may not have had any such ideas in mind; however, as Croatto says, his non-availability to confirm or dispute the conclusions reached is "semantic wealth" for us. In the following chapter, the conclusion, we translate these conclusions into some practical ideas for further research and implementation in the SA context of development.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION:IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

This study set out to test the hypothesis that when read contextually, some biblical texts show a potential to empower individuals and small groups in a transforming manner. The background to the study, a situation of begging and lethargy, justified the choice of Acts 3:1-10 as the text to be read in the light of the theory of development. Focus on the topics of beggars and miracles, which provided “supporting data” for our reading of the text reflects on the one hand, the concerns of the present context, on the other, it reflects the wider sociological and historical background of the text. The concerns of our context and the text’s wider background converged at chapter 5, a meeting-point of the text and social contexts (horizons). The results follow below. However, before we spell them out, a summary of discussions and conclusions is necessary.

We started off with a concern about the problem of begging and dependency among urban African people in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. We particularised our concern to the Xhosa speaking beggars of Grahamstown. It became clear during our discussion, that while there was need for a biblical input in development, there lacked an adequate interpretive method for the context of development. Therefore, attempts at reading the text for development, it was found, should address this issue if they are to be credible. The Bible’s potential to empower was tested at the following places: (i) Amaoti Funda Wenze Bible Study Group (1992-1993) (ii) Ukuphuhlisa Project of Grahamstown (1994-1996) (iii) The ZCC experience (1996-1999). None of the above used formal developmental theories as their foundation. However, in analysing these situations, the alternative theory of development, with its focus on dependency and empowerment, came into play.

In addressing the methodological question in chapter 2, we chose the contextual approach as the most appropriate method for our purposes. We concluded that in order for us to do justice to our reflection, certain analytical categories would have to be agreed upon as the standard of our reflection. These were summed up under three major headings (i) “contradictions” (ii) “the ideal” (iii) the “method”, all of which arose from our discussion of the contextual approach and the theory of development.

The theory of development was to undergird even our reflection on beggars and miracles while it was explicitly used in the reading of Acts 3-4.

The next two chapters, 3&4 respectively, provided a reflection on the topics of beggars and miracles. Beggars were presented as a problem both in antiquity and today. Healing miracles were presented as a solution, particularly in the Christian context. Miracles, according to the text, transformed and created new possibilities, eg. reintegration into society. Begging on the other hand, was a social burden which led to social isolation. These two chapters were meant to inform our reading of the text. However, throughout the reflection, we remained conscious of the fact that in order for the story of the crippled beggar to make sense today, "miracle" had to be understood relatively; in other words, a miracle could be viewed as any change effected inspite of ourselves and against all odds, which can be attributed to the divine. Thus today, a miracle could also refer to the actualisation of a vision or the transformation of a situation that had seemed impossible to transform.

In chapter 5 then, the text was read with the help of categories established in chapter 2 and the background information generated in chapters 3&4. As already mentioned above, the "horizons" of the text's author, the first reader and the present reader of the text converged at this point. This was not intended to suggest that the author wrote to solve a similar situation in his time. In fact, we will never know this since the author can never be present to provide such a detail (this being "semantic wealth", according to Croatto). What we are certain of is our concern, namely to find a solution to the problem of beggars in our present context. The background generated in chapters 3&4 provided us with what Croatto (1983) refers to as a "reservoir of meaning". Two important points emerged from this chapter: first, a confirmation of our hypothesis following a reading of Acts 3:1-10; secondly, the emergence of ideas suggesting human development.

Having summarised our discussions and conclusions, we now return to the conclusions of the entire study:

\* A contextual reading is not necessarily a non-academic reading. The important fact about it is that the text should be weaved into the context. A suitable model must be developed for each context.

\* There is no uniform policy of treatment for beggars in antiquity. This meant that beggars were largely marginalised and there was no attempt to integrate them into the society. However, the transformation of beggars both during the time of Jesus and in the early church can be seen as one way of integrating them into the church.

\* While miracles served to integrate the physically sick and marginalised in antiquity, they can also provide a vision for social transformation today. They provide what Korten (1990:124) calls "social energy" for the underdeveloped.

\* If the text encompasses both problem and solution for the physically disabled, then it must provide an answer for the "otherwise" disabled. Alms are not a solution; transformation or the ability to provide "legs" to the underdeveloped releases human potential. It also became clear that dependency is not part of divine plan; on the contrary, a better quality of life, as seen in the work of Jesus and that of the early church, is the essence of "salvation".

\* Having discovered the above, it became apparent that there is need for a hermeneutics of development, an area which biblical scholars have not yet ventured into. The urgent need to prove our hypothesis precluded such a task while an "interim" hermeneutic was used in the study. Future research should focus in this area.

Given this, what does it imply for HD in the post-apartheid South Africa? Two things are very important: (i) South Africa will not have made a new beginning with poverty and beggars increasing. A new start implies an overhaul of socio-economic conditions (cf Speckman 1998:216-217), the pivotal point of daily life. Whether historical or ideal, this at least is an important lesson Acts 1-5 teaches us (ii) The problem cannot be left unattended for it overshadows any good that might have been brought about by the political change. However, the solution does not lie in being reactionary but in being proactive. This means that mechanism that will facilitate a process of transformation has to be put in place.

We have seen above, that if sustainability is to be achieved, the solution lies not in chopping down more forests (Korten 1990) or in digging up more mines or in inventing more ozone-threatening chemicals or in pumping more money into the hands of corrupt

project managers in the name of development. The solution lies in investing in people and in transforming the social structures. This is what Korten and others refer to as human or people centered development.

In Acts, this means a transformation of human situations, devising a vision for life and a rigorous application of that vision. This has become clear in the enthusiasm of the crowd and the apostles. It would trivialise this study if we were to confine it to a specific vision for the South African context. However, lessons from Amawoti, the ZCC and Grahamstown have shown that it is possible for people to start small, from nowhere, and move on to bigger things. This in developmental language, is known as a 'micro-foundation' (cf chapter 2).

The experiences referred to are experiences in which individuals and whole groups are empowered. In all cases, the Bible has been foundational. On the one hand, the Bible has admittedly, provided "refuge passages" for sufferers, thus creating "apocalyptic" tendencies. On the other, it has inspired critical thinking and has been a mobilising factor among the down-trodden. Part of that critical thinking has been seen in the fight for a right to live in the land God has created (according to Gen.1:1) and had declared good (Gen.1:31) for "his" creatures to inhabit. It is in this respect that Mutambara's (1992) theology of development, based on Genesis 1, should be understood. But this is only a tiny aspect of a theology of Human Development. Much of the New Testament teaching dwells on "doing" and "freeing" or "releasing" one's potential. This is certainly the case in the writings of Luke, eg. Acts 20:33-35, 2:43-47, Luke 4:18-20, Luke 7:22 to mention but a few.

This strengthens the need for human development as it is a guaranteed path towards a "takeover" of the forces of production. Taking over the forces of production does not always mean the kind of revolt that was started by the Bolsheviks (1922), nor will it always mean the ideal take-over by the workers of the world, as envisaged in Karl Marx's philosophy. In fact, Korten (1990) has already demonstrated that fifty years after its implementation by the international community, the programme of development still had not achieved its goal, namely, economic growth. Instead, the targets of the programme have become poorer and much less developed.

The problem according to Korten, lies in overemphasis on economic growth. Without human development, it is not possible to achieve economic growth. It is like "putting

the cart before the horse". We need only look at the priority list of some of the world's leading industrialised countries. Yet, it is also true that without some economic resources, HD does not happen easily.<sup>352</sup> The fate of the RDP in South Africa is a good example of this.

While on the RDP, it must be mentioned albeit in passing, that the RDP was a good programme. However, two things happened which led to its demise: (i) it was incorrectly tied to bureaucracy. No developmental programme can succeed when it is tied to bureaucracy. It loses its developmental thrust while it becomes an ideological instrument. Had the RDP survived longer, this would have become explicit and it would have died a "natural death" as corruption within the programme increased. Common forms of corruption are: lack of accountability, theft, fraudulence, nepotism, embezzlement. There were already signs of this in the RDP, according to newspaper reports of the two plus years of its existence. (ii) While in theory, the RDP was meant to develop the human potential, in practice, it focused on the material aspect, eg. building of homes, roads, providing employment, etc. In a sense, there was an element of idealism, given the state of the South African economy at the end of the apartheid era which immediately succeeded the RDP. Those charged with the task of implementing the vision probably misunderstood it. This misunderstanding is nevertheless, clear in the way the RDP was made an "economy driven programme" rather than a people-driven vision. Consequently, when the economic conditions changed for worse in the country, the RDP vision got "smothered".

What is needed is a programme which is driven by the people themselves. In line with the alternative theory of development which focuses on micro-contexts, such a programme should reflect their cultural values and their goals. The problem of South Africa however, is that society is not a homogenous entity. There are a plethora of cultures and cultural values. If development were to be undertaken on a general assumption that "Africans" need to be developed, implementation would be a problem. Each

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<sup>352</sup>This does not refer to charity, regardless of its magnitude, ie. whether it is offered by the rich nations or it is internal on a small scale basis among the undeveloped people. In Acts, we have seen that what we know as charity, which is in fact, equivalent to almsgiving, is not the basis of socio-economic relations. Rather, it is used to provide relief to the deserving members of the community and it is intended as a temporary measure. The problem of appointing deacons (Acts 6) to continue the Jewish tradition is a separate issue which should teach us much about the apostles' mind on the issue.

cultural group has specific ways of doing things and different priorities; these need to be taken cognisance of.

In Coetzee's (1989, 1992) theory of development, the micro-situation is ideal for a start in development. According to Coetzee's theory, it is in the local situation where success or failure is detected. In chapter 2, we showed what this means in an African context: What a person turns out to be in society depends on what the person has been socialised into in a local situation. What a community becomes or is able to contribute depends on the progress made by its members in respect of its values. This does not deny the role of international forces in influencing the local situation, as we often hear for example, in relation to globalisation in South Africa. However, the point made in Korten's book is that a well-organised community analyses and establishes in what way the international forces affect its progress. Otherwise, it continues with a vision that helps it to undermine and break down the stifling forces.

Korten also warns that the 'oppressed' cannot rely on the tools of the 'oppressor' for their liberation. The same point is made by Mosala (1989) in a different context—he warns that the oppressed will not be liberated by the hermeneutics of the West for as long as they are steeped in the methods of westerners.

Our reading of Acts 3:1-10 has emphasised the need to develop a relevant hermeneutic for development. A reading of texts contextually should not be "spontaneous". It should be part of a carefully planned "project". This will ensure that texts chosen for study are well researched and that a contextual study of the Bible is not only about confirming "popular ignorance". Our study has also foregrounded the need to establish workable intervention strategies at a local or micro-level. There exists on the one hand the Masakhane programme in South Africa. On the other, there is need to establish "micro-development-management" structures, a concept which needs further exploration. For example, local religious communities, in collusion with political organisations, could transform the concept of "street committees" which was popular in the 1980s in SA, into such management structures. The task of such committees would be to develop and manage development and democracy related programmes. This will ensure the replacement of alms with legs and the emergence of vision-centered and productive communities. A healthy nation should not have idle people and beggars; nor should it live on alms from international sympathisers. It should motivate for productivity. A contextually read text is one of the sources of that motivation.

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