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People are recognized as poor today if they lack enough resources to live adequately by the accepted living standards of their community. Nearly one billion people, i.e. a fifth of the world's population, are defined as 'the absolute poor', who live below human decency due to malnutrition, illiteracy and disease.<sup>1</sup> Tear Fund statistics indicate that by the year 2000, some 25 per cent of the world's total population will live in poverty.<sup>2</sup> The most severe poverty, however, is found in the so-called 'developing countries'. According to the Worldwatch Institute, a group that studies poverty, about 25 per cent of the people in Asia lived in absolute poverty in the 1980s, about 35 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, and 25 per cent each in North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> In India, for instance, over 600 million live in absolute poverty, and 300 million live below the breadline.<sup>4</sup> In cities like Bombay there are about 5,000 slum colonies, and more than half of Bombay's 10 million plus people live in dehumanizing conditions of poverty, inadequate housing, sanitation and water.<sup>5</sup> The city is also well known for the huge number of homeless children who roam the streets. In Calcutta more than half a million children are forced to child labour, and there are at least 20,000 child prostitutes.<sup>6</sup> Besides these, problems such as war, racism, tribalism, sexism, religious intolerance, malnutrition, unemployment, etc., have threatened divine justice and human dignity throughout the world.

In this situation, what is the relevance of the good news of Jesus Christ to the world at large and to the developing countries in particular? Precisely what is the good news? How can it be appreciated as *good* news by the poor? Who are these poor? Are they only those who lack enough income to live, or has the term 'poor' wider implications? Does the NT in any way answer these questions?<sup>7</sup> A study of some of the Gospel passages which directly refer to the theme of 'good news to the poor' may throw some light on these major issues.

### **The concept of 'poor' in Jewish writings**

Since the NT idea of poverty can be better understood against the background of the OT and of the Judaism of the inter-testamental period (second century BC – first century AD),<sup>8</sup> a study of the concept 'poor', as it occurs in the OT and in other Jewish writings, will precede the study of the same concept in the NT.<sup>9</sup>

#### *The Old Testament understanding of 'poor'*

There are six different Hebrew words to denote 'poor', which is

rendered in Greek mainly by *πτωχός* and seldom by *πενής*. However, the main Hebrew words are *עָנִי*, *דָּל*, and *אֲבִיּוֹן*. The word *עָנִי* denotes a dependent because of his inferior position of answering to the one who demands the answer.<sup>10</sup> When it is used for an economic position, it is combined either with *דָּל* (Ps. 82:3) or with *אֲבִיּוֹן* (Dt. 24:14; Ex. 16:49; 18:12; 22:29). In a more developed usage it denotes a state of lowliness or distress and hence a man in a state of reduced competence and lesser worth. In the Pentateuch *עָנִי* indicates 'without inheritance of one's own' (Ex. 22:24; Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Dt. 15:11; 24:12, 14, 15). They might principally be the Levites, the foreigners, the widows and the orphans.<sup>11</sup>

The Greek word *πτωχός*, when it translates the Hebrew *דָּל*, refers to physical weakness (Gn. 41:19; 2 Sa. 13:4) and to a low and insignificant social status (e.g. Lev. 19:15; 1 Sa. 2:8). The Hebrew term *אֲבִיּוֹן* denotes 'the one who seeks alms', 'the beggar', and hence more generally 'the poor man'. It is also used to refer to the very poor, 'those with no roof over their heads' (1 Sa. 2:8).<sup>12</sup>

The term 'poor' in the OT also has a religious nuance, indicating the attitude of the one who prays to God (Pss. 35:10; 37:4; 40:17; etc.). This is especially true in the post-exilic writings. In Isaiah 51:21 and 54:11, for example, Jerusalem is addressed as *עֲנִיָּה* ('the afflicted one', RSV), and in Isaiah 49:13 the term 'his people' appears in parallel with 'his afflicted' (*עֲנִיָּה*). Israel is described as *עַם עָנִי* ('a humble people') in 2 Samuel 22:28 and Psalm 18:27. In the passages where the term 'poor' has a religious sense, divine promises, not human petitions, are in focus. For example:

*He [i.e. the Lord] has delivered the life of the needy (אֲבִיּוֹן). (Je. 20:13)*

*The poor (עֲנִיִּים) among men shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. (Is. 29:19)*

*The Lord has anointed me to bring the good tidings to the afflicted (עֲנִיִּים). (Is. 61:1)*

Carson observes that God's people were recognized as 'poor', owing to their extreme economic distress, which was often caused by oppression, and in this connection the term 'poor' can also mean 'lowly' or 'humble' (cf. Is. 57:15; 66:12).<sup>13</sup> In lowliness and humility they turn to God in prayer not only for their own need, but also for God's glory. The term attained this religious connotation under the monarchy<sup>14</sup> and became very clear in Psalms. In Amos 4; 6:1-10; Hosea 8; 10:3 'poor' seems to have a socio-economic sense, but in Zechariah 9:9, where the messianic king is described as 'righteous' and 'poor' (*עָנִי*), the spiritual sense of 'humility' is in focus. Zephaniah 3:12 describes God's people, who shall seek refuge in the Name of the Lord, as 'a people humble and lowly (*עָנִי ודָּל*)', thus linking the status of the poor with the spiritual

qualities of humility and lowliness.

### *'Poor' in the Wisdom literature*

The Wisdom literature speaks of the poor mostly in a socio-economic sense. The beggar's life is denounced (Sir. 41:1-4; cf. 38:19), for it is better to die than to beg (Sir. 40:28). Both the rich and the poor were made by God (Pr. 22:2; Sir. 11:14; 13:3, 24). Poverty in the Wisdom books is closely associated with one's moral character: laziness (Pr. 6:6-11), pleasure-seeking (Pr. 21:17; 18:32-33), drunkenness and gluttony (Pr. 23:21) and envy lead one to become poor. One should give heed to the poor and be kind (Sir. 4:8-10; cf. Pr. 31:9). In fact, doing kindness and giving alms are equivalent to sacrifice (Sir. 35:3-4).

### *'Poor' in the Apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha*

Not only Sirach, but some other apocryphal or pseudepigraphal books depict the poor, obviously in the economic sense, as those who need our pity and alms (*T. Issa.* 5:22; *Tob.* 4:7, 16). There is also an eschatological element in the usage of the term 'poor'. For it is said that in the new age poverty will vanish and there will be no more poor (*Sib. Or.* 3.378; 8.208). In this context of belief in God, poverty is linked with hope of final resurrection. Thus, 'those who died in poverty for the Lord's sake shall be made rich' (*T. Jud.* 25:4; cf. *T. Sol.* 10:12). A conflict between the poor and the rich, and between the beggar and the judge, concerning Law and the covenant, is envisaged as occurring on the last day (*Jub.* 23:19). As the end is near, the man of God should comfort the lowly (*i.e.* the poor) among the people (4 *Ez.* 14:13). Such an understanding of 'poor' is not much removed from the religious aspect of the term.

In the *Psalms of Solomon*, supposed to be a first-century BC document, the term 'poor' indicates the people of God whose prayer is heard by him. Consider, for example,

*Who is the hope of the poor and needy, if not you, Lord?*  
(Ps. Sol. 5:11; cf. 15:1)

*Your ears listen to the hopeful prayer of the poor.*  
(Ps. Sol. 18:2)

*God will be merciful to the poor to the joy of Israel.*  
(Ps. Sol. 10:6)

*Tobit* 2:2 refers to poor persons who are mindful of the Lord. This sense of 'poor' is the same as that of עני in the post-exilic psalms and prophecies. Bammel maintains that, materially, πτωχός is here identical with the 'righteous' and 'pious'.

denoting more of an inner quality.<sup>15</sup>

### 'Poor' in Philo

Philo never uses the word *πτωχός* but always *πένης*. In contrast to the LXX, he even translates *אֲנִי* in Leviticus 19:10 and 23:22 by *πένης* instead of *πτωχός* (*Virt.* 90). L. Coenen thinks that by so doing Philo employs the less offensive, politer term for poor, thus making the Bible more suitable for Greek ears.<sup>16</sup> For Philo anyone who works for a daily wage is a needy and poor person (*Spec Leg* IV.195-196). Thus he seems to understand the term 'poor' mainly in an economic sense. Philo does not really seem to present a theology of poverty.

### 'Poor' in the Qumran writings

Since the period of the existence of the Qumran community is generally accepted as being from 150 BC to AD 68,<sup>17</sup> the Qumran writings provide a valuable source for our understanding of the NT. Therefore a study of the concept of 'poor' in Qumran is imperative.

The word 'poor' in the Qumran documents predominantly yields the same religious sense as it does in some of the other Jewish writings. The author of the *Hodayot* ('The Thanksgiving Hymns'), for instance (probably the Teacher of Righteousness), calls himself 'the poor' whose soul has been delivered by God (1QH 5:13f., 16, 18). But the phrases 'all the well-loved poor' in 1QH 5:21 and 'among the poor in spirit' in 1QM 14:7 indicate that a group of people was called 'the poor'. Cf. also

*By the hand of thy poor whom thou has redeemed.*  
(1QM 11:9)

*As he himself [i.e. 'the wicked Priest'] plotted the  
destruction of the poor, so will God condemn him to  
destruction.*  
(1Q<sub>p</sub>Hab 12:5-6; cf. v. 10)

In such passages the term 'poor' refers to all the members of the Qumran community who claimed that they alone reflected the life of the coming age.

Nevertheless, the socio-economic dimension of the term is not missing in Qumran. The members of the community should renounce their private property before they attain full membership in the community (1QS 5:2; 6:19, 22). But such a non-possession of property is not without ethical implications; for those who thus make themselves poor should practise truth and humility, justice and uprightness, and charity and modesty in all their ways (1QS 5:3-4). The implication probably is that one should renounce worldly riches before he concentrates on the study of the Law and attains moral maturity. In 1QH 5:19 the 'poor' appear in parallel with the 'fatherless':

*For thou hast not abandoned the fatherless or despoised*

the poor.

### 'Poor' in first-century Judaism

Bruce Malina, who has studied the understanding of wealth and poverty in the NT world, observes that the terms 'rich' and 'poor' in first-century Mediterranean social systems indicate not so much the economic status as the two poles of society.<sup>18</sup> While on a morally neutral level, says Malina, the rich and the poor marked the extremes of the social body in terms of élite and non-élite status, in a moral context 'rich' referred to those powerful due to greed, avarice and exploitation and 'poor' referred to those who were weak and unable to maintain their honour and dignity in society.<sup>19</sup> By arguing that the vocabulary and system of distinctions in the theology of the Bible worked in kinship and politics,<sup>20</sup> he rightly maintains that the NT concepts of poor and rich took the cultural values of the first century seriously.<sup>21</sup>

In similar vein, P.H. Davids points out that, religiously and socially, the rich people in first-century Judaism were: the observant Jewish leaders, such as high-priestly families who, in practice, oppressed the lower clergy; the landowners who abused their tenants and hired labourers (cf. Jas. 5:1-6); the merchants who controlled much of the economic life of the country; and those who were associated with the Herodians and Romans and whose political power enabled them to increase their wealth in terms of lands.<sup>22</sup> He also shows that while the middle class consisted of artisans, land-owning farmers, merchants, and socially, if not economically, the lower clergy, those who were labelled 'poor' were the peasants or the 'people of the land (עַם הָאֲדָמָה)'.<sup>23</sup> This group included small landowners who were dependent on the harvest for their livelihood, tenant farmers who had to pay their dues to their landlords before providing for their own families, hired labourers, fishermen, carpenters, slaves, both Jewish and Gentile, and beggars.<sup>24</sup> Further, there were scribes who were living, particularly in Jerusalem, entirely on charity or relief.<sup>25</sup> We may also include in this list the travelling evangelists and missionaries (cf. Mt. 10:8-10 par.; Phil. 4:15-18; 2 Thes. 3:8-9; Acts 18:3). Thus, as Davids puts it, the poor in the NT period 'lived on the edge of existence even in the best of times, for to be in an agricultural economy without owning sufficient productive land to provide security is to be economically marginal'.<sup>26</sup>

The 'poor' in the first century were also affected socio-economically by years of famine (cf. Acts 11:28; Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.5), politically by Roman taxes, and religiously by the imposition of tithes which amounted to between 17 and 23 per cent of one's gross income.<sup>27</sup> Their inability to render tithes and to spend time in studying the Law led the religious leaders of Jesus' time to look down upon the poor as 'lax in their observance of the law'.<sup>28</sup> The 'people of the land' thus

were 'poor', at least in the eyes of the Pharisees, more from a religious perspective than on a socio-economic classification. Even the wealthy could be known as 'poor' if they did not follow the Pharisaic concept of purity, but they could be called 'righteous' or 'honourable' if they practised charity (e.g. Abraham and Job – see Jub. and T. Job). At the same time, it was recognized that even with plenty of charity the rich and powerful would tend to oppress the righteous. In other words, in this world, righteousness tended to make one economically poor. Therefore it was eventually accepted that the community of the righteous was in all likelihood the community of the poor and that the righteous poor of this age will reap the reward of their good deeds only in the age to come<sup>29</sup> (cf. above, the post-exilic and Qumran writings).

### Summary

Our evidence shows that in the time of the OT the term 'poor' originally meant those who had no inheritance of their own, those who were in economic need, and also those who had a low and insignificant social status. However, from the period of the monarchy until the inter-testamental period, including up to Jesus' time, the term was strongly applied to those who, in lowliness and humility, lived in dependence on God. This, however, does not mean that the understanding of 'poor' in socio-economic and political terms disappeared. Performing charity was encouraged, though begging was denounced. The religious implication can be clearly seen in Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, *Psalms of Solomon*, and more distinctively in some Qumran writings. Since the 'pious' or 'righteous' were under constant threat at the hands of evil, practically they were oppressed and made humble and hence they were 'poor'. The eschatological idea that the righteous poor of this age will receive their reward for their charitable deeds in the age to come, when God will redress all wrongs, was prevalent in the first century AD.

Now some questions remain: Whom did Jesus have in mind when he used the term 'poor'? What was the good news that he enacted and proclaimed to them? A study of selected NT passages will throw some light on these issues.

### 'Poor' in the New Testament and the good news to them

The word 'poor' is used in the NT about 34 times, in which it translates the Greek word *πτωχός* 31 times, the word *πέννης* once, *πενιχρός* once, and the verb *πτωχεύω* once. There are several passages in the NT which use 'poor' of people who are lowly in social status – the hungry, beggars, the politically powerless – and who have to depend on others' mercy and help to survive (see Mt. 25:34-36, 41-43; Mk. 10:21 par.; 12:41-44; 14:3-9 par.; Lk. 16:20-22; 19:8; Jas. 2:3-6). There are some passages which list the poor along with the physically handicapped, such as the blind, the lame, lepers, the deaf, and

with the dead (see Mt. 11:4-5; Lk. 7:22; 14:13-21; Rev. 3:17). However, the following two passages refer to the Good News as meant for the poor and hence are important for our discussion: Luke 4:18-19 (cf. Mt. 11:4-5; Lk. 7:22) and Matthew 5:3.

### *The idea of 'poor' in Luke 4:18-19*

According to Luke, Jesus' public ministry begins in the Nazareth synagogue with the words of the prophet Isaiah (Is. 61:1-2), which emphasize that it is to the poor that the good news is preached:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach the good news to  
the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*

This quotation is taken from the LXX by Luke with some modifications. The phrase 'to heal the broken-hearted' of Isaiah 61:1LXX is omitted and the expression 'to set at liberty those who are oppressed' is added by Luke from Isaiah 58:6. Instead of 'to declare (καλέσαι) the acceptable year of the Lord' (Is. 61:2LXX), Luke has 'to proclaim (κηρύξαι) the acceptable year of the Lord'.

G.M. Soares-Prabhu argues that Luke's omission of 'broken-hearted' and the addition of 'oppressed' are to prevent a spiritualizing interpretation of the text, for the expression 'to heal the broken-hearted' is open to such spiritualizing and the idea of setting the oppressed free has a strong social thrust.<sup>30</sup> He goes on to say that the social emphasis of the Jubilee year of Leviticus 25, to which the Isaianic prophecy expressly refers, and Luke's deliberate avoidance of spiritualizing the text show that Luke 4:18-19 is to be understood in a strongly social sense. That is, for him, the salvation Jesus announces here is primarily a liberation from the pressures of social, economic and societal oppression.<sup>31</sup>

However, there are several factors which seem to argue against the exclusive social thrust of the passage:

(i) The avoidance of the clause 'to heal (ἰάσθαι) the broken-hearted' is not necessarily in order to prevent the spiritualizing interpretation. Luke always seems to use the verb 'to heal' (both θεραπεύω and ἰάσθαι) to refer to physical healing,<sup>32</sup> and if his main concern in Luke 4:18-19 is the spiritual dimension, then it is natural for him to omit the clause that includes the verb ἰάσθαι.

(ii) The argument that Luke's choice of the phrase 'to set at liberty those who are oppressed' from Isaiah 58:6 is in order to give a strong social thrust is only partly true. In fact, Isaiah 58:6 portrays the agent of oppression as 'wickedness

(עשׂוֹד)', a character, according to the OT, that results from one's failure to have right relationship with God. Therefore the implied spiritual aspect cannot be overlooked. Also, Luke describes in Acts 10:38 the devil as the one who oppresses people. 'Devil' in the Gospels is the same as 'demon' or 'satan', who not only binds people with chronic disease (cf. Lk. 13:16) but also promotes unbelief and falsehood (cf. Mt. 13:19, 39; Jn. 8:44). Deliverance from his dominion is the sign of the presence of the kingdom of God (Lk. 11:20). Moreover, liberty in the NT is not always from social oppression, but also from the bondage of the requirements of the Law (Gal. 1:6-9; 2:7-10; 3:2, 10; 5:1-12), from the dominion of darkness which symbolizes human wickedness (Col. 1:13; cf. Jn. 3:19-21), from the slavery of sin (Jn. 8:34, 36; cf. v. 32), and from lifelong bondage to the power of death (Heb. 2:14-15). Thus it becomes increasingly clear that Jesus' ministry of freeing the oppressed implies freedom from physical as well as spiritual bondage, though we cannot separate one from the other.<sup>34</sup> However, freedom from physical ailments is viewed only as the sign of the presence of the kingdom of God, which is concerned not with food and drink but with the spiritual qualities of righteousness, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17).

(iii) The Greek word used in Luke 4:18 for 'liberty' or 'release' is ἄφεσις. Although this word generally means 'liberty', 'release', 'Jubilee', in Lukan writings it is always followed by ἀμαρτῶν (cf. Lk. 1:77; 3:3; 24:27; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18). T. Holtz rightly suggests that the use of Isaiah 58:6 here is perhaps to stress the idea of forgiveness in ἄφεσις.<sup>35</sup>

(iv) The phrase 'recovering of sight to the blind' in Luke 4:18 can better be understood in the light of Acts 26:18, where Luke metaphorically describes the 'opening of eyes' as 'turning from darkness to light', that is, 'turning from the power of Satan to God', which is further explained as receiving forgiveness of sins and the rightful share of the Gentiles among the holy people of God.<sup>36</sup>

(v) As Jesus identifies himself as the messenger proclaimed by Isaiah, one can hardly overlook the background in Isaiah 61:1-2. In fact this Isaianic passage is a promise and a word of comfort to 'all who mourn in Zion' (Is. 61:3), referring to the humiliation and the poor conditions of Israel in Babylonian exile rather than to a limited group of economically poor within the people.<sup>37,38</sup> If Jesus' main agenda was to liberate prisoners from jail, would he not have sought the immediate release of John the Baptist from prison (cf. Mt 11:2-6)? As in Isaiah 61:3, where the metaphorical usage of 'garland', 'ashes', etc. is quite clear, the same usage is probable in Isaiah 61:2 too. Moreover, the religious interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-3 is already visible in 11Qmelch, which is dated by G. Vermes in the first century BC.<sup>39,40</sup> The expression 'to proclaim liberty to the captives' in 11Qmelch, in association with the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:13), refers to the eschatological judgment rendered by

Melchizedek to the 'holy ones of God' (11Q<sup>me</sup>ch 4, 5, 9). Line 6 says, 'He [*i.e.* Melchizedek] will proclaim liberty for them to free them from the debt of all their iniquities' (*cf.* also 11Q<sup>me</sup>ch 19-20). Similarly, 1QH 18:14 applies Isaiah 61:1 to the work (probably of the Teacher of Righteousness) of bringing glad tidings to 'the contrite of spirit'.

Our evidence thus strongly suggests that even though most of the people in Jesus' time lived in economic poverty and low social status, for some, at least, poverty was caused by their faith commitment to Christ and to divine righteousness. The missionary agenda of Jesus tabulated in Luke 4:18-19 seems to be mainly concerned with the spiritual aspect of poverty, although the social/economic/political dimensions of poverty are not missing. Luke's references to literal poverty warrant this conclusion (Lk. 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:3). This is also confirmed by the connection that exists between Luke 4:18 and 7:22 with the literal application in 7:21<sup>41</sup>. For Luke, then, Jesus' ministry to the poor has two sides: on the one hand, his gospel, having liberating power, is meant for those who are socially/economically/politically in a humiliated position and for those who are physically sick and suffering; and on the other hand, the gospel is set to those who, irrespective of their socio-economic condition, humbly accept their wretchedness before God and decide to live in dependence on him. Jesus' saving work in relation to the physically weak and the suffering seems to be the symbol or sign of the reality of his salvation and forgiveness of sins, available to those who are oppressed by the devil. These two sides of the gospel to the poor, as proclaimed by Jesus, probably constitute the 'sign and reality', or, to borrow Paul's terms, the 'σκία (shadow)' and 'ὄμα (substance)' (*cf.* Col. 2:17) of Jesus' ministry.<sup>42</sup>

Now the question is: what is the good news proclaimed to the poor and expressed in this passage? In the light of the Isaianic passage we can summarize the content of the gospel as follows: God meets in Christ the poor, the imprisoned, the blind and the oppressed. The good news that God takes an interest in them and comes to them in order to release them from their bondage is communicated to the underprivileged in and through Jesus Christ just as it was communicated to the Israelites in exile by Isaiah (Is. 61:3). For Jesus himself became poor (2 Cor. 8:9), belonging to the people of the land, as the son of a carpenter who owned neither land nor a house (*cf.* Mt. 8:20 *par.*)<sup>43</sup>. He accepted tax-collectors, prostitutes and sinners and even ate with them, not only to identify with them but also to transform them. In Pauline terms, Christ brought freedom from the yoke of slavery and the curse of legal obligation by himself becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13-14). By omitting Isaiah's reference to 'the day of vengeance of our God' but retaining the expression 'the year of the Lord's favour', Luke highlights the love and favour of God revealed in Jesus to the poor. The whole work of Jesus, particularly exorcism, was a *sign of the reality* that the kingdom of God had already come to the poor

(Lk. 11:20 = Mt. 21:28; Lk. 17:21). The meaning of the act of freeing the slaves in the Jubilee year is fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus (cf. Lk. 4:21). The same idea is to be seen in the next passage of our inquiry, Luke 6:20 (= Mt. 5:3), to which we now turn.

### *The idea of 'poor' in Luke 6:20*

The first beatitude in the Sermon on the Plain is recorded by Luke as: 'Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God' (Lk. 6:20). Here two major questions arise: (i) Who are the poor referred to here? and (ii) What is the good news offered to them? Soares-Prabhu rightly states that Luke's three beatitudes (Lk. 6:20-21) are not meant to be three independent proclamations, as though the poor, the hungry and the weeping were three different categories of people, but that the three beatitudes are in fact the expression of a single beatitude, i.e. 'the Jesus beatitude', which occurs in Luke 6:20.<sup>44</sup> However, he is wrong in concluding that the primary reference of Jesus' beatitude is surely not religious but social and that Matthew has spiritualized it altogether.<sup>45</sup> He arrives at this conclusion by giving little attention to the religious use of the term עניים in the post-exilic period, though he is aware of such use. Moreover, failure to consider the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings and the Qumran documents, which provide a better background to a first-century Christian document such as the NT, is another reason why he misses the point of Luke 6:20. The following observations also prove that Luke, in the first beatitude, had primarily the spiritual dimension of poverty in mind:

(i) The social interpretation of Luke 6:20 implies that all those who belong to the lowest strata of society can inherit the kingdom of God by virtue of their poverty, an idea foreign to the NT's teaching as a whole.

(ii) It is true that hunger is a kind of suffering faced by the materially poor and that the poor are contrasted in the following woes with the rich and the well-to-do in this world. But there is no *a priori* reason why the terms 'hunger' and 'rich' could not also have been used metaphorically (cf. 'those who hunger and thirst for righteousness' in Mt. 5:6; and in Rev. 3:18 the word 'rich' is used metaphorically to denote the eschatological blessings).

(iii) The use of the second-person plural in Luke 6:20, the distinction of the group addressed from other men in verse 22, and the phrase 'those who hear' which qualifies this group in verse 27, strongly suggest that the poor, the hungry and the weeping indicate a particular group. This group is none other than the band of disciples (cf. 'And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples' in v. 20). They are also persecuted on account of the Son of Man (v. 22). Thus Marshall rightly says that the thought is not simply of those who are literally poor and needy, but of

those who are disciples of Jesus and hence who occupy a pitiable position in the eyes of the world.<sup>46</sup> Mary Beavis argues that the fact that the woes to the rich are also framed in the second person (6:24) mitigates this view. But she admits that 'poor' here seems to include more than just economic 'outcasts'.<sup>47</sup> However, the adversative 'but' expressed by *πλὴν* shows that verses 24-26 form a different unit in which Jesus addresses a different group among the multitude of people (cf. v. 17). According to Nolland, the 'poor' in 6:20 are the literally poor, but the context of their poverty, if not its cause, is that they are disciples of Jesus who are likely to suffer because of their identification with Jesus.<sup>48</sup>

(iv) The promised blessing, as the main part of the good news to the poor, is the inheritance of the kingdom of God. The NT idea of the kingdom of God denotes the eschatological blessing which, though it lies in the future, is already present here and now in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Poverty is mentioned in the Qumran writings in connection with the eschatological inheritance (cf. 1QH 18:12-15; 11Qmelch 4, 5, 19-25, where eschatology is described in terms of God's reign and the salvation that comes to 'the afflicted ones of Zion'). 1QM 11:8-15; CD 1.5:8-9; 4QpPs37 1:9; 1QH 5:16-19, 20-22 say that the Qumranites, to whom the eschatological promises are applicable, have borne the affliction and poverty of the exile period. Nolland rightly suggests: 'This matrix of Qumran thought offers the best point of comparison for the Gospel beatitude.'<sup>49</sup> If so, then the Lukan 'poor' should be understood mainly in spiritual terms, *i.e.* in terms of one's association with Christ.

For Luke, then, the oppressed community is a community which is bent by the oppressive forces in this world because of its faith commitment to the Son of Man. The community's identification with Jesus often results in deprivation of human rights, justice and equality and sets it in a situation where its members are no better than those who are materially poor. Their discipleship makes them realize their need to live in dependence on God and to receive his grace for daily survival. In this sense all Christians come to God as beggars with nothing in their hands.<sup>50</sup> Luke, it seems, has the same idea of 'poor' as we have seen in the post-exilic writings and the Qumran texts. This does not, however, mean that God is indifferent to the sufferings of those who are economically poor. God's love and grace are extended to all places wherever suffering and social injustice are in operation. He works in all human lives whenever hunger, mourning and exploitation prevail.

The moot question here is: how do we understand these two dimensions of God's concern for the poor in the right perspective? This is the question with which many theologians of our day grapple, to the extent that they often end up over-emphasizing one aspect or the other. Our study thus far does

not show that God's act in Christ in the lives of the spiritually poor is superior to his act among the economically poor, or vice versa. Nor does it show that Jesus promises the prosperity of God's kingdom to the literally poor. But it does show that his concern for the materially poor and oppressed is the sign of the presence of his kingdom which will actually be inherited only by those who are spiritually poor, i.e. the disciples of Jesus. In other words, Jesus' acts of charity were visible signs of God's love which is fulfilled in the eschatological salvation, and life is given even now to those who follow him by renouncing the world and making themselves 'poor' (cf. Mt. 19:27-30 = Mk. 10:28-31 = Lk. 18:28-30). Thus, in Jesus' ministry, and also in the ministry of the early Church later on, the concern for the materially needy was a leading factor to express concern for the spiritual needs of the people. While the former addresses the issue at the visible level of human life, the latter addresses at a deeper level, penetrating into the spirit, the human organ that is capable of responding to divine influences. In this sense material and spiritual poverty are interconnected, although the latter is not necessarily the result of the former, as de Santa Ana supposes.<sup>51</sup> Our study below confirms this further.

### *The idea of 'poor' in Matthew 5:3*

The Matthean version of Jesus' beatitude confirms our understanding of the Lukan one. As in Luke, so in Matthew too the beatitude is delivered to the disciples (see Mt. 5:1-2). Matthew's presentation of the first beatitude indicates how it was understood in the first century AD:

*'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'* (Mt.5:3)

Here the question is not: 'who are the poor?', but: 'who are the poor in spirit?' Matthew does not seem to have spiritualized the beatitudes, as most scholars think, for the phrase 'the poor in spirit' has already been known in the Qumran community (1QM 14:7). The idea of the poor in spirit also occurs in some OT passages. For example:

*'I dwell ... also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.'* (Is 57:15)

*'But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble (עָנִי) and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.'* (Is. 66:2)

*It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor (עָנִיִּים) than to divide the spoil with the proud.* (Pr. 16:19)

In the light of such OT passages, poverty of spirit may be described as 'the personal acknowledgement of spiritual bankruptcy. It is the conscious confession of unworth before God. As such it is the deepest form of repentance. It is exemplified by the guilty publican in the corner of the temple:

"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"<sup>52</sup> This is essentially the same as 'those who hunger and thirst for righteousness' (Mt. 5:6) and 'those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake' (Mt. 5:10, where the same blessing given to the poor is pronounced). If in Matthew, as in Luke, the idea of 'poor' is principally related to one's discipleship and faith commitment to Christ, what then is the good news proclaimed to them?

The good news is that now the poor can live in the realm of blessing conferred by God upon them. The nature of the blessing is defined in the second part of each beatitude, and in this beatitude it is the gift of the kingdom of God. The word μακάριος means 'blessed, fortunate, happy, usually in the sense *privileged recipient of divine favour*'.<sup>53</sup> It may refer to a state of divinely given salvation, so that a statement of blessing is in effect a statement predicating salvation.<sup>54</sup> Hence the reference is to the joy of the one who has a share in God's salvation and rule. To 'be blessed' also means to 'be approved, to find approval',<sup>55</sup> and thus the beatitudes speak of the joy that springs out of God's approval of the lowly and the oppressed. This divine favour is manifested in God's act of giving his kingdom to the poor – an act which Jews believed would come at the end-time. This does not mean that the poor will become materially rich by God's approval, but it does mean that the poor come under the loving care and support of the king who is sufficient to meet human needs. What was promised to be given in the future is experienced even here and now in the coming of Jesus.<sup>56</sup> Because of this, Jesus takes precedence over the materially poor, and the eschatological moment takes priority over all (cf. Mt. 26:11; Mk. 14:7; Jn. 12:8). Does this exclude the church's responsibility to the economically poor? By no means. The bestowal of God's kingdom on the poor demands that they adopt kingdom values! The kernel of that value is: love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself (Dt. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18; Lk. 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). Kingdom values are to be expressed in acts of love such as: (i) preaching the good news that God loves humans and has made a supreme sacrifice for their salvation, thus calling them to be reconciled with God, the Provider; and (ii) sharing our wealth with those in need; caring for all who suffer injustice of any kind; supporting and co-operating with those who want to build a better world for humans.<sup>57</sup>

The idea of caring for the poor is envisaged in Matthew's presentation of the apocalyptic vision of the Son of Man in Matthew 25:31-46. C.C. Rowland sees in this scene the Son of Man identifying himself with the poor, the naked, the hungry, the sick, the strangers and the prisoners. Rowland argues that we have a polemic to the effect that blessedness is not attained by searching the heavens but by meeting the needs of the poor, the helpers and the powerless.<sup>58</sup>

So the two dimensions of acts of love indicated above show the holistic nature of blessedness.<sup>59</sup>

### 'Good news to the poor' in John's Gospel

It is commonly assumed that the Gospel of John has little to say on the concept of 'poor'. The word 'poor' (πτωχος) itself occurs only four times in John (Jn. 12:5, 6, 8; 13:29), but the idea that Jesus approaches the poor in love and compassion in order to fulfil their needs can be traced through John.<sup>60</sup> The Johannine Jesus went in search of the outcasts of society, the blind, the lame and the paralysed at the pool of Bethesda, and he healed a retarded and helpless man (Jn. 5:2-9). Jeremias thinks that the conversation between Jesus and this man was occasioned by a request for alms,<sup>61</sup> in which case the man was economically poor.

God's help and favour given in Jesus to the needy is described in John by means of signs (σημεῖα). W. Nicol argues that 'sign' in John, being more than a mere miracle by which the physical needs of the poor were met, has a deeper meaning, even while the original intention of performing a miracle is retained.<sup>62</sup> Just like the OT term *אוֹיֵן*, σημεῖον also refers to 'a symbolical anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality'.<sup>63</sup> This means, as we have shown above, that Jesus' help rendered to the materially poor and socially oppressed is rightly a symbol of his gift of eternal kingdom given to the spiritually poor. In the wedding at Cana, for example, Jesus was present to help the poor family which could not afford enough wine and hence was facing humiliation and embarrassment (2:1-11). However, Jesus' help was not confined to material needs alone; by so helping he revealed the very nature (or 'glory') of God to humans, although it was appreciated only by those who believed (2:11). The focus of the miracle is on Jesus himself as the revealer of God and as the one who transforms the Jewish religious systems and worship.

Jesus' ministry among the Samaritans, who had been neglected and treated with contempt by the Jews and 'Cutheans',<sup>64</sup> and hence can easily be classified as poor and downtrodden, typifies God in his approach to the socially and economically poor (Jn. 4).<sup>65</sup> What was the good news that was offered to them? It was the Word which had become a person to live among them (4:40)! It was Jesus who revealed himself as the Saviour of the world (4:42) and who thus brought them 'liberation from the oppression of contempt' and 'from the prisons of narrow religious traditions' (Rayan).

Jesus' concern for the hungry is well portrayed in the Johannine sign of the feeding of the multitude (6:1-15). Here too the ultimate focus is Jesus, the self-expression of God, and not the experience of having eaten full (6:26-27; cf. 4:13-14); for at the end of the sign Peter could acknowledge Jesus as Christ, the holy one of God (6:69). Similarly, Jesus' identity is

emphasized in other signs, by performing which Jesus demonstrated God's approach and access to the poor and the needy (see 5:14-15; 9:38; 11:25-27; 20:30-31). It is noteworthy that in grasping Jesus' identity, the hungry and the sick in John found their real human identity, and therefore it is no wonder that John records that the *world* has gone after him (12:19).<sup>66</sup> In brief, in John's Gospel Jesus fulfils the needs of the poor not just to give them temporary relief, but primarily to lead them to see God's glory and to be transformed by it.

The fulfilment of physical needs in John is also a pointer to the death and resurrection of Jesus, which, for John, is glorification rather than humiliation or defeat. For instance, in supplying the wine to the wineless, Jesus' 'hour', the allotted time by God for his death and resurrection, is anticipated (2:4); in feeding the multitude, Jesus anticipates his own flesh and blood which will be given for the life of the world (6:51-58). In raising Lazarus, 'Jesus' commitment to the poor finds its final and poignant expression',<sup>67</sup> for it is this sign which finally leads him to stand officially condemned to death (11:45-54, 57). Death on the cross is not only the moment of victory over the oppressor who dominates the world (12:31), but also the final and decisive moment of revealing God's glory to the oppressed (cf. 3:14-15; 12:23-24, 32-33; 13:31-32). Therefore, Rayan is right in concluding that in Jesus' cross the poor of the earth find inspiration, courage and hope.<sup>68</sup> In the final analysis, this is the good news to the poor envisaged by John!

## Conclusion

We have observed that in NT times the word 'poor' meant not merely the economically poor and the socially downtrodden, but also godly people who were low and humble and who lived by their faith in God. Jesus brought good news to them all. Although by his message and mighty acts he literally fed the hungry, healed the sick, and liberated people from the grip of demons and of political and religious oppressors, what he did was only a symbol/sign pointing to the reality of the presence of the eschatological rule of God even now. The NT writers, Matthew and Luke in particular, did not hesitate to recognize Jesus' disciples, who were persecuted for his sake, as 'poor'. For them the disciples had already received with a penitent heart the good news that the kingdom of God had come upon them, i.e. in Jesus God had shown his love to them and helped them in their needs. Thus in Jesus' proclamation the good news to the poor has two sides: God's compassionate presence among the poor to meet their physical needs, and the gift of the eschatological blessings of God given in Jesus to those who make a faith-commitment to him. It is difficult, then, to understand fully the term 'poor' in Jesus' teaching without linking it with discipleship and eschatology, because the effect of the good news lies in the latter and not in the socio-economic condition of the poor. But at the same time the Synoptists,

particularly Matthew, show that the apocalyptic Son of Man identified himself with the naked, the poor, the hungry, the sick and those in prison.

The Gospels hint at the fact that one's encounter with Jesus on the spiritual plane has priority, if not superiority, over one's act of charity to the poor, although the latter often leads to the former. This is brought out more explicitly in the Gospel of John, in which Jesus' concern for the poor and the needy is expressed in the performance of signs. Any attempt by Jesus to help the needy eventually leads the beneficiaries to a greater understanding of himself as the one in whom God meets humans. Thus the holistic understanding of blessedness to those who receive the good news attains more clarity in John. However, for John it is in Jesus' death on the cross that the poor in the world can supremely find courage, hope, and transformation from their low condition.

The same is true with Paul also, at whom we have just hinted. By 'poor', he means the believers in Jerusalem who were in economic need; this need was met by his collection from the Gentile churches. But at the same time he recognizes that all, whether Jews or Gentiles, are slaves to sin and to some form of legal requirement and are thus marginalized and weak in society. The good news for them is that Jesus became a curse for them and delivered them from the curse of the law.

The situation today is not essentially different from that which was prevalent in the first century AD. The Church's involvement in social action should eventually lead her to present Christ, in whom God is meeting humans with love and reconciling them with himself.

- <sup>1</sup> See T. Houston, 'Good news for the poor', *Transformation* 7 (1, 1990): 6; *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 15 (London/Chicago/Sydney/Toronto: World Book, Inc., 1992), pp. 728-9.
- <sup>2</sup> See B.J. Nicholls, 'Introduction: priorities in our common task', in B.J. Nicholls and B.R. Wood (eds.), *Sharing the Good News with the Poor* (Bangalore: Baker Book Trust, 1996), p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> See *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 15, p. 729.
- <sup>4</sup> See P. Johnstone, *Operation World* (Carlisle: OM Publishing, 1993<sup>5</sup>), p. 274.
- <sup>5</sup> See the Editorial in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18 (1994): 99.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Similar questions, along with the question 'Where are the poor?', have been raised in almost all recent studies on the 'good news to the poor'. See particularly V. Samuel and C. Sugden (eds.), *Evangelism and the Poor: A Third World Study Guide* (Bangalore: Partnership in Mission-Asia, rev. edn, 3rd impr., 1987); Houston, op. cit.: 3-8; Mary A. Beavis, "Expecting nothing in return": Luke's picture of the marginalized', *Interpretation* 48 (1994): 357-68, who attempts to clarify the meaning of the socially marginalized portrayed in Luke-Acts without explicitly raising any questions; D.P. Brandt, 'The poor and the lost: a holistic view of poverty'.

Missiology 23 (1995): 259–66; Peter Liu, 'Jesus' proclamation and its fulfilments', in Nicholls and Wood, op. cit., pp. 44–51, who grapples with the issue: what is Jesus' good news to the poor? Cf. P.H. Davids, who observes that Jesus fits into the social situation of first-century Judaism, and H. Kvalbein, who argues that the Jewish idea of 'anāwīm – piety – was taken up by NT scholars and used to explain the background of Jesus and the first Christians: P.H. Davids, 'Rich and poor', in J.B. Green, S. McKnight and I.H. Marshall (eds.), Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), p. 704; H. Kvalbein, 'Jesus and the poor: two texts and a tentative conclusion', Themelios 12.3 (1987): 81.

In Hellenistic writings two words, penēs and ptōchos, have been used. Whereas the former denotes one who has to earn his living due to lack of property, the latter denotes the complete destitution which forces the poor to beg (see F. Hauck, 'πτωχός', TDNT VI, p. 886). Although originally poverty did not have any religious value, in later Greek philosophy it was regarded as a favourable precondition for virtue (see H.-H. Esser, 'πτωχός', NIDNTT 2, p. 821). E. Bammel, 'πτωχός', TDNT VI, p. 888.

See also the excerpt from Christian Witness to the Urban Poor, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Consultation on World Evangelization, Thailand, 1980, as in Samuel and Sugden (eds.), op. cit., p. 46.

Bammel, op. cit., pp. 888–9.

D.A. Carson, The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5–7 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 17.

See Esser, op. cit., pp. 822–3.

Bammel, op. cit., p. 896.

L. Coenen, 'πένης', NIDNTT 2, p. 281.

See G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987<sup>3</sup>), pp. 19–29.

B. Malina, 'Wealth and poverty in the New Testament and its world', Interpretation 41 (1987): 354–67.

Ibid., pp. 357–8.

For example, in Mediterranean village society even the wealthy, 'sonless' women who lost their husbands are referred to as 'poor widows'. They are surely not poor in any economic sense, but in terms of their kinship to the society; see ibid., p. 359.

Ibid., pp. 354, 359, 366–7.

Davids, op. cit., pp. 701–4, esp. 701–2.

Ibid., p. 702.

Ibid. Cf. J. Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 109–19.

Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 111–16.

Davids, op. cit., p. 703.

Ibid., p. 703.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 704. A similar account in terms of the 'audience of Jesus' is given by Liu, op. cit., pp. 47–8.

G. M. Soares-Prabhu, 'Good news to the poor: the social implications of the message of Jesus', Bible Bhashyam 4 (1978): 204.

Ibid.: 205. A similar social thrust to Lk. 4:18f. is given also by G. Mangatt, 'Jesus and the poor', Bible Bhashyam 12 (1986): 157–65, esp. 159–61.

I.H. Marshall, Commentary on Luke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 182, comments that possibly Luke wished to reserve the verb ἰαμαὶ to describe physical healing.

- <sup>33</sup> Dale Schumm finds in Lk. 4:1-19 these four aspects of Jesus' ministry: economic – as implied by 'good news to the poor'; political – as implied by 'release to the captives'; physical – as implied by 'recovering of sight to the blind'; and social – as implied by 'to set at liberty those who are oppressed', before he concludes: 'Jesus ministered to the whole person.' D. Schumm, 'Reconciliation: the mission of the Church', a paper presented in the Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, on 14 March 1996 as the Dr Frank Kline Memorial Lecture, p. 2. Though this is an interesting observation, it misses the spiritual dimension inherent in Jesus' ministry as programmed in Lk. 4:18-19.
- <sup>34</sup> Cited by Marshall, op. cit., p. 184.
- <sup>35</sup> J. Nolland, Luke 1 – 9:20 (WBC, 35A; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1989), p. 197, argues that by the phrase 'to open their eyes', Luke means in Acts 26:18 spiritual sight; cf. also Lk. 6:39; 14: 13, 21, where the parabolic meaning of 'blind' is possible.
- <sup>36</sup> See Kvalbein, op. cit., p. 82.
- <sup>37</sup> Vermes, op. cit., p. 300.
- <sup>38</sup> Nolland, op. cit., p. 197.
- <sup>39</sup> See also Liu, op. cit., pp. 44-51, for such a holistic understanding of Lk. 4:18-19. Liu (p. 45), who observes three kinds of interpretation of the phrase 'release to the captives', concludes that they all share the common hope that the release of the captives would be the very sign of the dawning of the age of salvation.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. also Brandt, op. cit., pp. 259-66.
- <sup>41</sup> For Jesus' complete identification with the poor, see the careful study in M. Vellanickal, 'Jesus, the poor and his gospel to the poor', Bible Bhashyam 9 (1983): 52-64; cf. D. Harris, 'Incarnation as relocation among the poor', Evang. Rev. Theol 18 (1994): 117-27. The revised form of this article, entitled 'Incarnation as a journey to relocation', appears in Nicholls and Wood (eds.), op.cit., pp. 175-88.
- <sup>42</sup> Soares-Prabhu, op. cit., p. 207.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 207, 209; Beavis, op.cit., p. 360. Similarly Mangatt, op. cit., pp. 160-1, maintains that all those who are economically poor, who have been depressed socially and who suffer diseases are the 'poor' in Jesus' beatitude. Against the view that Matthew has spiritualized the beatitude, we have observed above that the term 'poor in spirit' had already been used in the Qumran community and that the idea is found also in the OT.
- <sup>44</sup> Marshall, op. cit., p. 246.
- <sup>45</sup> Beavis, op. cit., p. 360.
- <sup>46</sup> Nolland, op. cit., p. 282. Cf. Rom. 15:25f., where Paul uses the term 'poor' to refer to the saints in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1ff.; 2 Cor. 8:1ff.; 9:1ff.; Gal. 2:10).
- <sup>47</sup> Nolland, op. cit., pp. 282-3.
- <sup>48</sup> Cf. J. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, repr., 1988), p. 221.
- <sup>49</sup> J. de Santa Ana, *Good News to the Poor: The Challenge of the Poor in the History of the Church* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1978), p. 18.
- <sup>50</sup> Carson, op. cit., p. 17; cf. Stott, *Issues*, p. 221.
- <sup>51</sup> See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s. v.
- <sup>52</sup> See Marshall, op. cit., p. 248.
- <sup>53</sup> Carson, op. cit., p. 16.
- <sup>54</sup> Cf. Liu, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
- <sup>55</sup> Cf. Kvalbein, op.cit., p. 86.

- <sup>55</sup> C.C. Rowland, 'Apocalyptic, the poor, and the Gospel of Matthew', *JTS* n.s., 45 (1994): 504-18.
- <sup>56</sup> See J.S. Pobee, *Who are the Poor?: The Beatitudes as a Call to Community* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2nd print., 1988), pp. 66-9, who argues that the 'holistic understanding of blessedness' is like two concentric circles comprised of the sacred and the secular, the former implying an order which is beyond human control but which challenges to perfection, the latter implying an order within the reach of human beings. Cf. also Brandt, *op.cit.*, pp. 259-66.
- <sup>57</sup> See in this connection Samuel Rayan's admirable work, 'Jesus and the poor in the Fourth Gospel', *Bible Bhashyam* 4 (1978): 213-28.
- <sup>58</sup> Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
- <sup>59</sup> W. Nicol, *The Sêmeia in the Fourth Gospel* (NovTSup 32; Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 113-16; the expressions bracketed are mine.
- <sup>60</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978<sup>2</sup>), p. 76; cf. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: John I-XII* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 529f.
- <sup>61</sup> See Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-8.
- <sup>62</sup> Cf. Rayan, *op. cit.*, p. 220, who refers to the backward condition of the Samaritans under the dominion of Rome, the Temple and the landlords.
- <sup>63</sup> Probably Jesus is portrayed in Jn. 12:19 as the leader of the powerless of the land - see Samuel and Sugden (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 5-6.
- <sup>64</sup> Rayan, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*