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THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTOLOGY OF THE IDENTITY OF THE POOR MAN  
IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Theology

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The identity of the poor man in the teaching of Jesus has long been a point of contention amongst scholars. Some have understood the poor man terminology to have been understood in a purely spiritual sense. The cue for this has been taken from Matthew's first beatitude where the term "poor" is really given the spiritual interpretation "poor in spirit," while Luke has the simple word "poor." Others have contended that the term must primarily be understood according to the secular Greek usage of the term in all its socio-economic meaning--referring to one who is destitute, a beggar. This, it is argued, thus highlights the absolute grace of God.

Since Jesus used terms related to poverty of himself, it becomes imperative that a thorough understanding of the background of the poor man motif be reached in order to see what implications it has for Christology. This is fundamental. For it is only when we have a full understanding of Christ's mission as he saw it that we can fully appreciate his message to us today.

Studies have been carried out in times past on the poor man motif in the Old Testament. The results of these have varied and few have deemed it necessary to suggest any implications their conclusions might have for the Gospels. Consequently, investigations of the motif in the New Testament area have been negligible and generally disappointing. For this reason, I have undertaken this study of the poor man motif, particularly as it appertains to the Messianic role as Jesus himself understood it.



It is proposed only to deal with the motif as it directly touches on the words and works of Jesus. It would not be possible in the scope of this thesis to cover all the implications that the motif may have for every aspect of Jesus' life and teaching.

In order to deal with the subject adequately, it will be necessary to make a thorough study of the motif in the Old Testament and in relevant literature of the intertestamental period. The results of this will then be related to those sections of Jesus' teaching which speak directly of the poor man. After examining references to the poor elsewhere in the New Testament in order to see what light they may throw on the motif, we shall examine some of the wider aspects of the motif. This should lead us to some conclusions as to the identity of the poor man, thus allowing us to examine the motif in its relation to Jesus' mission. From this we shall be able to arrive at the implications the motif has for Christology, particularly as it touches upon the Suffering Servant concept, Jesus' use of the title "Son of man" and messianism as a whole.

Associated with this problem is the relation of the poor man to the "holy one" (קדוש), the "pious man" (צדיק), and the "righteous one" (ישר) as these terms are used in the psalms and especially in the Psalms. The complexity of these problems has been aptly stated recently by Coert Nybeersdam:

As economic and social terms, the biblical vocabulary of poverty speaks about human conditions and situations that are inimical to the realization of man's true meaning and destiny. But viewed theologically, and perhaps, morally, this same vocabulary refers to a human state and attitude that is the prime requisite for man's fellowship with God and, therefore, for the realization of his true meaning and destiny. This is



## CHAPTER II

### THE POOR MAN MOTIF IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD

The problems that face us in a study of the poor man motif in the Old Testament are many. Not the least of these is the matter of terminology. For the different terms used of the poor man can in one context have a purely socio-economic meaning and in another a thoroughly religious meaning, although the two may never be entirely separated. In fact, this is probably the basic problem faced by exegetes: Do the terms used for the poor man indicate distress of an economic and social order or a spiritual attitude of meekness and humility? Connected with this is the problem of the Old Testament's attitude to poverty and riches: Are riches good or evil? Does poverty become an ideal to the extent that voluntary poverty is advocated? Is true spiritual life regarded as attainable only through material poverty? Moreover, do the poor become a special class, or group, or even movement which carried over into New Testament times? Associated with this problem is the relation of the poor man to the "holy one" (שׁוֹרֵק), the "pious man" (רַשֵׁיט), and the "righteous one" (קַדְשׁ) as these terms are used in the prophets and especially in the Psalms. The complexity of these problems has been aptly stated recently by Coert Rylaarsdam:

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This is the real "problem of poverty" for the interpreter of the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

A solution to these problems is necessary. Besides, we need to find out to what measure the poor man was the predecessor of the Pharisee or of the Qumran sectarian, or the precursor of the disciples of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> It is then necessary to discover the relationship of Jesus to all of these and, particularly, to see to what extent this motif has colored his concept of his role as Messiah.

#### Terminology of the Poor Man Motif

Before proceeding further it is necessary to examine the Hebrew vocabulary for the poor man motif. The most important words for this study are the related terms **עָנָה** and **עָנָה**, both of which derive from the verb **עָנָה**. This derivative has generally been taken to mean: "to be bowed down," "to be afflicted."<sup>3</sup> Birkeland, however, is not wholly satisfied with this meaning and widens it to denote anything that deviates in a negative direction from the normal position--the normal position for a man being that of **עָנָה**,

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<sup>1</sup>Coert Rylaarsdam, "Poverty and the Poor in the Bible," Pastoral Psychology, XIX (March 1968), 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>As suggested by Robert Martin-Achard, "Yahwe et les 'anawim,'" Theologische Zeitschrift, XXI (1965), 349.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, editors, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 776. They list this as the meaning of **עָנָה**III. Other identical stems are listed (pp. 772-777) as **עָנָה**I, "to answer, respond"; **עָנָה**II, "to be occupied, busied"; and **עָנָה**IV, "to sing." Jacques Dupont, Les Beatitudes (Paris: Gabalda et Cie Editeurs, c.1969), II, 26, also takes the meaning of **עָנָה**III as "be abased, bowed down."



"righteousness."<sup>4</sup> He defines  $\text{הָנַח}$ , therefore, as denoting "a position of weakened power, capability and worth."<sup>5</sup> This comes closer to the general meaning possible in the various contexts in which the verb is found. But recently it has been argued by L. Delekat that there are only two separate  $\text{הָנַח}$ -stems, the one meaning "to sing" and the other "to turn to," "to be accomodating." From this latter root Delekat takes the meaning of  $\text{הָנַח}$  to have been originally "servant."<sup>6</sup> However, on the basis of the various references quoted both by him and Birkeland, it seems best to define the general basic meaning of  $\text{הָנַח}$  as "to be in a position of inferiority."

With the basic meaning of its root verb thus established, it would follow that  $\text{הָנִיחַ}$  means "one who is in a position of inferiority" and consequently a person who, by comparison, may be "poor," "powerless," "afflicted." The word expresses a relationship rather than a state.<sup>7</sup> The  $\text{הָנִיחַ}$ , when in a state of poverty, sickness, or distress of any kind, becomes "the wretched man" "the afflicted one"

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<sup>4</sup>Harris Birkeland, 'Ani und 'Anaw in den Psalmen (Oslo: I Kommisjon Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1933), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>L. Delekat, "Zum Hebräischen Wörterbuch," Vetus Testamentum, XIV (1964), 14-42. This corresponds to some degree with the position already taken by Ernst Bammel in " $\text{πτωχός}$ ,  $\text{πτωχία}$ ,  $\text{πτωχός}$ ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1968), VI, 888. Bammel's contention is that  $\text{πτωχός}$  means being in an inferior position in the face of one who demands an answer, and that  $\text{πτωχός}$  is the "hearer."

<sup>7</sup>In agreement with Bammel, VI, 888.



as compared with the man who is seemingly blessed with health, wealth and happiness. He is the "oppressed" in relation to the oppressor. Delekat's contention that 'עָבֵד originally had the meaning of "bondman," "servant" is interesting in view of the close relation of this poor man motif with the ebed-theme found in Deutero-Isaiah and in the Psalms. He finds a remnant of this idea in those texts where 'עָבֵד is used to describe the relationship of Israel to Yahweh (Is. 49:13; Ps. 72:21; 74:19), who as the worker and beneficiary under the covenant of God's land, is really God's servant.<sup>8</sup> 'עָבֵד is certainly a covenant term, as we shall see; but if Delekat is correct, the word has certainly lost this servant concept as its basic meaning, particularly in the relationship of one individual to another under the covenant. There the basic meaning appears to be one of being wrongly treated by another and only thus having been made inferior (for example, Ex. 22:22-24). Moreover, such an expression as found in Deut. 24:14, "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is an 'עָבֵד," would be redundant if "servant" were the basic meaning of 'עָבֵד.

The term 'עָבֵד is frequently coupled with both אֶבְרִי וְאֶרֶבִי, and in the legal sections of the Old Testament it comes to mean "one without basic possessions"; that is, one who does not have sufficient possessions to make his own living and must, therefore, either hire himself out as a servant, or receive charity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Delekat, XIV, 42-44.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Ex. 22:24; Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Deut. 15:11; 24:12,14,15. See also Delekat, XIV, 35.



Thus the עָנִי can be one who is socially and economically depressed. Consequently, he is often associated with those who have no inheritance or are economically poor. That includes sojourners, widows and fatherless,<sup>10</sup> the hungry and homeless (Is. 58:7), and even those who are unable to work and must rely on charity, such as the blind and lame (for example, Job 29:15). However, while the עָנִי may be a "poor man," economically speaking, that is not necessarily its meaning. Nor is this where the emphasis lies. For the term עָנִי is also associated in a different direction with the "righteous" (צַדִּיק), the "pious" (חָסֵד), the "holy" (קָדוֹשׁ) and the "contrite in spirit" (נִכְהָרֵי לֵב).

Moreover, we need to look also at the terms placed in opposition to עָנִי. Thus we find that the עָנִי is contrasted not with the "rich," but with the "violent," "wicked man" (רָשָׁע).<sup>11</sup> Thus עָנִי comes to be the "righteous" in contrast to the "wicked." He is "humble" in contrast to the "haughty" (Ps. 18:28; Zech. 9:9). He is "godly" in contrast to the "godless" (Job 36:13), and the "oppressed" in the face of the "oppressor."

It is important to note that while the עָנִי very often belongs to the economically poor, his poverty is never regarded as punishment

<sup>10</sup>E.g. Ex. 22:20-23; Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Is. 10:2; Zech. 7:10; Job 29:12; et al.

<sup>11</sup>Forcefully asserted already by Sigmund Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien I: Awān und die Individuellen Klagepsalmen (Kristiania: In Kommission bei Jacob Dybward, 1921), p. 117. Cf. also Bammel, VI, 888; A. Kuschke, "Arm und Reich im Alten Testament mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der nachexilischen Zeit," Zeitschrift Für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVII (1939), 49.



for a sinful and wicked life. This is so in spite of the belief current at the time that any kind of misfortune was God's way of punishing the evildoer.<sup>12</sup> The only reason given for the unfortunate circumstances of the אֲנִי is that he has been wrongfully treated, reduced to wretchedness, and dispossessed by the wicked. The אֲנִי is always the cause of the suffering of the אֲנִי.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the discussion of the meaning of this word has revolved around the point whether the word originally has a socio-economic or a religious meaning. Some have argued that it was a socio-economic term prior to the exile, but that after the exile it took on moral and religious meaning.<sup>14</sup> But Mowinckel has satisfactorily demonstrated that these two aspects of the term are inseparable and have been so from the beginning. He argues this partly on the basis of his understanding of the root meaning of אֲנִי: "to be bowed down." He maintains that being bowed down is the sign of outer and inner humility in religion. More important is his argument that the social, economic and religious ideas of the Israelites are inseparably associated with one another under the Sinaitic Covenant. Every

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. Proverbs and Job.

<sup>13</sup>This conclusion has been reached also by others, e.g. Bammel, VI, 888; Dupont, II, 29. Birkeland's suggestion that the אֲנִי must have been less than "good" to have become "wretched" (p. 8) has been refuted by Kuschke, LVII, 48-49.

<sup>14</sup>For a description of the various views expressed on this see especially J. van der Ploeg, "Les Pauvres D'Israël et Leur Piété," Oudtestamentische Studiën, VII (1950), 236-270, and Paul van den Berghe, "'Ani et 'Anaw Dans Les Psaumes," in Le Psautier: Ses Origines, Ses Problèmes Littéraires, Son Influence, Études présentées aux XIIe Journées Bibliques (29-31 août 1960), éditées par Robert De Langhe (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1962), pp. 273-295.



man has a right to a happy life and his share of the promised land in the protection of his "brother" and of the covenant. Whoever breaks this covenant relationship becomes an "evildoer" and a "sinner." The  $\text{אָנִי}$  is the one who suffers at the hand of this evildoer and, therefore, in contrast to the  $\text{עֲשֵׂה$ , the covenant-breaker, the  $\text{אָנִי}$  is regarded as essentially "righteous" ( $\text{קִדְּוָה}$ ). In the covenant community, it is the guardians of the covenant--God and his representative, the king--who are to restore the  $\text{אָנִי}$  and to recognize his  $\text{קִדְּוָה}$ . Consequently the  $\text{אָנִי}$  will claim this divine restoration and, as such, he is "pious."<sup>15</sup>

Thus we come to the deeper meaning of  $\text{אָנִי}$ : he is one who is caused to be inferior by the evildoer. As such he may be economically poor and made wretched; he may be the "persecuted," the "sufferer," the "oppressed." Instead of meeting violence and oppression by further violence, he seeks justice under the covenant, restoration by God or God's representatives. He has this legal claim as a worthy member of the covenant to share in the blessings of the covenant-promises. When this justice is not forthcoming from God's elected representatives then he appeals directly to God in worship and prayer. Thus  $\text{אָנִי}$  comes to mean also a person in the position of praying, one who is "humble before God (Zeph. 2:3; 3:12; Zech. 9:9; Ps. 18:28; Prov. 3:34)."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Mowinckel, pp. 113, 116-117. He is followed here by Kuschke, pp. 49-50.

<sup>16</sup>See Kuschke, LVII, 50-52.



Another term which is very important to the poor man motif is **אָנָּן**, obviously also coming from the basic root-verb **אָנָּן**. This word is found only in the plural except in the case of Num. 12:3, a text which is generally regarded as a late addition. The plural is found 20 times:<sup>17</sup> 5 times in the prophets (Amos 2:7; Is. 11:4; 29:19; 61:1; Zeph. 2:3), 3 times in the Book of Proverbs (3:34; 14:21; 16:19), and 12 times in the Psalms (9:13; 10:12,17; 22:27; 25:9<sup>2</sup>; 34:3; 37:11; 69:33; 76:10; 147:6; 149:4). That it is a different word from **אָנָּן**, bearing a more religious content, has been argued by some scholars following Alfred Rahlfs who takes it to mean "humble" over against **אָנָּן** meaning "wretched." On the basis of this supposed difference, Rahlfs and others have attempted to date those psalms and passages containing **אָנָּן** as exilic or post-exilic in contrast to **אָנָּן** used generally in the pre-exilic or post-exilic literature.<sup>18</sup> Yet this argument is, as Delekat puts it, "offensichtlich falsch"<sup>19</sup> since, as we have seen, **אָנָּן** can also mean "humble"

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<sup>17</sup>According to Solomon Mandelkern, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae (Lipsiae: Veit et Comp., 1896), ad loc. It appears 19 times according to Alfred Rahlfs, אָנָּן und אָנָּן in den Psalmen (Leipzig: Druck von August Pries, 1891), p. 3, who is followed by Birkeland, p. 1. This is a result of the confusion in the Massoretic text over the two terms **אָנָּן** and **אָנָּן**.

<sup>18</sup>E.g. Martin-Archard, XXI, 350. Only the first chapter of Rahlf's work has been available to me (cited above). I am also dependent on various other authors for his views, especially Birkeland, pp. 23-25; but also Van der Ploeg, VII, 237; Delekat, XIV, 45; and Johann Jakob Stamm, "Ein Vierteljahrhundert Psalmenforschung," Theologische Rundschau. Neue Folge, XXIII (1955), 55-60.

<sup>19</sup>Delekat, XIV, 44.



and is also found in some of the writings of exilic or post-exilic times, while יָנַץ is also found in pre-exilic prophets (Amos 2:7; Is. 11:4; Zeph. 2:3).

Both יָנַץ and יָנַץ come from the same root-verb, and there is no clear indication of any difference of meaning in them. Moreover, the Massoretes appear to be confused over whether to use יָנַץ or יָנַץ. Consequently, we notice 4 times where there are Qere corrections of the Ketib from יָנַץ to יָנַץ (Is. 32:7; Amos 8:4; Ps. 9:19; and Job 24:4) and 5 times where יָנַץ is corrected to יָנַץ (Ps. 9:13; 10:12; Prov. 3:34; 14:21; and 16:19). The Qere must have understood these two words differently in spite of the fact that in Psalms 9 and 10, originally one complete alphabetical psalm, the two words in the plural are used quite indiscriminately. Birkeland suggests that scribal error appears to be behind the confusion, that scribes were influenced by their Aramaic dialect sometimes to change the yodh to a waw.<sup>20</sup> Yet this does not answer all the problems; and it is likely that Delekat is right in suggesting that יָנַץ was originally the plural of יָנַץ, and that laxity in the use of yodh and waw developed later.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, for our purposes, the meaning of יָנַץ will be exactly the same as יָנַץ with its various nuances.

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<sup>20</sup>Birkeland, pp. 14-20. It is interesting to note here that the scribe of the "War Scroll" of Qumran, while distinguishing clearly between other letters of the alphabet, uses the yodh and waw interchangeable. See E. L. Sukenik, editor, The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, the Magnes Press, c.1955), p. 35.

<sup>21</sup>Delekat, XIV, 46-47.



Another important word is אָבִיּוֹן, found 61 times in the Old Testament--twice in the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 23:6,11), 6 times in Deuteronomy (15:4,7<sup>2</sup>; 9:11<sup>2</sup>; 24:14), 16 times in the prophets, 24 times in the Psalms, 10 times in Proverbs and Job, and once in Esther (9:22). The fact that the bulk of the references are found in the psalms of lament gives an indication of its meaning in general usage. It derives from the stem אָבַח which means "to be willing," "to wish," "to desire" in Hebrew and Arabic dialects. Accepting this as the stem for אָבִיּוֹן, Birkeland then assumes that in the primitive way of thinking "to wish" really expresses "to wish to have." From this he finds the basic meaning of אָבִיּוֹן to be "one who wishes to have," that is, one who has a constant and actual need in one way or another, hence "needy."<sup>22</sup> This assumption has been generally accepted and reiterated since then by scholars. It is accepted to some extent even by Paul Humbert, who, while demonstrating that אָבִיּוֹן is not to be confused as regards to meaning with the word "poor" agrees that אָבִיּוֹן is a poor man considered first of all under his aspect of begging. According to him, therefore, אָבִיּוֹן is to be translated as "beggar."<sup>23</sup> Yet in all the 51 instances that is found in the Old Testament, not once does it mean "wish to have."

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<sup>22</sup>Birkeland, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup>Paul Humbert, "Le mot biblique 'ebyon," Revue D'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, XXXII (1952), 2,6. He is followed by Bammel, VI, 888. Kuschke simply reiterates Birkeland's argument, LVII, 53. Albert Gelin, The Poor of Yahweh, translated by Kathryn Sullivan (Collegetville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, c.1964), following Humbert, gives it the meaning "covetous man," pp. 19-20.



It always implies a "willingness to listen and obey." In fact, the verb **שָׁמַע** is coupled with **אָזְנָה** either as a qualifying infinitive or in synonymous parallelism no less than 18 times.<sup>24</sup> Further, is often used with the negative to express Yahweh's unwillingness to break the covenant made with his people, and also of men unwilling to break the covenant relationship with one another.<sup>25</sup> This has implications for the meaning of the word **אֲזַיְוֹן**. It is a covenant word which is very closely connected to **אָזְנָה** and **אָזְנָה**. This relationship is further demonstrated by the fact that it is coupled with **אָזְנָה** in the stereotyped formula, **אָזְנָה וְאֲזַיְוֹן**, some 18 times.<sup>26</sup> In this close relationship it takes on by association generally the same meaning as **אָזְנָה**--one who has been dispossessed and consequently made poor. And as with **אָזְנָה** and **אָזְנָה**, being a covenant term, it never loses its religious coloring although it may often be used in a predominantly socio-economic sense. Thus in the Book of the

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<sup>24</sup> Lev. 26:21; Deut. 23:6; Joshua 24:10; Judg. 11:17; 19:25; 20:13; 2 Sam. 13:14, 16; 1 Kings 20:8; Is. 1:19; 28:12; 30:9; 42:24; Ezek. 3:72; 20:8. Note especially the parallelism in Ps. 81:12: "But my people did not listen ( **שָׁמַע** ) to my voice, but Israel was not willing to obey ( **לֹא-אָזְנָה** ) me." At least another 23 instances imply the idea of listening to a request and obeying it. Indeed, it follows that the reference in 2 Sam. 6:10 to David not being willing "to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David" implies disobedience on his part. Cf. also Matt. 23:37 for this same Semitic thought: "And you would not."

<sup>25</sup> Cf. especially 2 Chron. 21:7: "Yahweh was unwilling ( **לֹא-אָזְנָה** ) to destroy the house of David because of the covenant which he had made with David." Also, Deut. 10:10; 29:19; 2 Kings 8:19; 13:23; 24:4. Into this covenant relationship may come also 1 Sam. 26:23; 22:17; 31:4; 1 Chron. 10:4.

<sup>26</sup> Deut. 24:14; Jer. 22:16; Ezek. 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; Ps. 35:10; 37:14; 40:18; 70:6; 74:21; 96:1; 109:16,22; Prov. 31:9; Job 24:14.



Covenant the אָבִיּוֹן is associated with the innocent and righteous (נָקִי, אֲצִדִיק) as opposed to the wicked (לְשָׁע) who seeks to pervert justice, to make false charges and to bribe officials (Ex. 23: 6-8). In the next few verses the אָבִיּוֹן is clearly depicted as one dispossessed (23:10-11). Similarly also in the eighth-century prophet Amos the אֲצִדִיק and the אָבִיּוֹן are made parallel to each other (2:6; 5:12). But in the historical development the term comes to be synonymous to some degree with "poor man" (for example, Deut. 15:4,7,9,11; 24:14; 1 Sam. 2:8; and Job 31:19), and as such is even contrasted with the rich (עֲשִׂירִי) in Ps. 49:3.

Nevertheless the moral implications of this word must not be underestimated as it generally has been; and it must be granted that the religious coloring of the word is foremost in the majority of the psalms, as we shall see. It is not true exegesis to read back into the Hebrew the meaning given by the Septuagint translation; nor can we assume an etymology which does not stand up to analysis. Therefore, the אָבִיּוֹן is essentially neither "one who wishes to have" nor a "beggar," but a man whose right has not been upheld under the covenant, a man who is oppressed and dispossessed in spite of the covenant relationship. He may well have been unwise or unfortunate but he who takes advantage of him in his circumstance is his evil oppressor. Hence it develops as a covenant term for "the innocent poor man," the "dispossessed," similar in meaning to אָבִיּוֹן and אָבִיּוֹן.

Belonging also to this special group of covenant terms is אָבִיּוֹן. Deriving from אָבִיּוֹן, "to hang," "to be low," "to be weak," אָבִיּוֹן has this basic meaning of "one who is weak," "one who is brought



low." He is the "weak one" in the things that count as power-- wealth, political influence, intrigue, and to a less degree, physical strength. Consequently, he is an easy prey for the oppressor, and as such joins the fellowship of the עָנִי and the אֶבְיָוִן. However, is given a more socio-economic tone in that Jeremiah, for instance, uses this term to denote those people who owned nothing at the time of the exile and who were left behind by the Babylonians to be vine-dressers and ploughmen (Jer. 39:10; 40:7; 52:15,16; compare 2 Kings 24:15; 25:12). The word הֶלֶל is also used in contrast to the rich. But this use is found almost entirely in the Wisdom literature (Job 34:19; Prov. 10:15; 19:4; 22:16; 28:8,11; and Ruth 3:10). It is also contrasted with the "great" (גָּדוֹל-Lev. 19:15) and generally with the wicked together with עָנִי and אֶבְיָוִן. It is, in fact, used in such close association with עָנִי and אֶבְיָוִן that the stereotyped phrase, עָנִי וְאֶבְיָוִן, sometimes changes to הֶלֶל וְאֶבְיָוִן (Ps. 72:13; 82:4) and even to עָנִי וְהֶלֶל (Zeph. 3:12). Thus הֶלֶל will generally have the same shades of meaning as עָנִי and אֶבְיָוִן.<sup>27</sup>

The words dealt with so far constitute the vocabulary for the poor man motif, but there are a few associated words which must be mentioned. שָׁרֵף is one of these. It is found in Psalm 82 in an important series of couplets (verses 3,4.):

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless (הֶלֶל וְיָתוֹם),  
 Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute (עָנִי וְרָשׁ),  
 Rescue the weak and the dispossessed (הֶלֶל וְאֶבְיָוִן).

<sup>27</sup>Birkeland finds no essential difference between הֶלֶל and עָנִי p. 23, and Kuschke follows him in this view, LVII, 52.



In an incidental way, it is also associated with עָנִי in Prov. 14:20,21 and with צָר in the parallel verses of Prov. 17:5 and 14:31. The שָׁרֵף also is one who is oppressed (Prov. 13:23; 17:5; 29:13; Eccl. 5:7) but also despised (Prov. 14:20; 19:7). The word is generally used as a neutral term indicating a "poor man" as opposed to the rich (1 Sam. 18:23; 2 Sam. 12:1-4; Prov. 10:4; 13:7,8; 14:20; 18:23; 22:2,7; 28:6). Another term is מִדָּבָר , which is found only in Ps. 9:10; 10:18; 74:21; and Prov. 26:28 and which means "one who is crushed," "oppressed." It differs from עָנִי only in emphasis.<sup>28</sup> Closely associated is אֶלְכָּה meaning "unfortunate one." It is found only in Ps. 10:8,10,14. The phrase נִשְׁפָּל-רֵיחַ , "humble in spirit," is connected only to עָנִי in the saying: "It is better to be humble of spirit with the עָנִי, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov. 16:19). Elsewhere this phrase is found in Prov. 29:23 and Is. 57:15, and the word נִשְׁפָּל , "humble one," is generally used of one who is humble in contrast to the proud (compare 2 Sam. 6:22; Ps. 138:6; Job 5:11; Mal. 2:9). Two words which do not fit into this poor man motif at all are מְצַדֵּק and אֶלְכָּה . מְצַדֵּק is one who is "dependent," "needy" but not totally indigent. It is a neutral term found only in Ecclesiastes (4:13; 9:15<sup>2</sup>; 9:16). מְצַדֵּק strictly means "needy," "one who lacks." It is used of one who lacks wealth (for example, Eccl. 6:1), but it is generally found in the Book of Proverbs to express a lack of understanding.

<sup>28</sup>In agreement with Birkeland, p. 23.



On the basis of this examination of the revelant vocabulary, we find ourselves at variance with statements often made that the theological aspect of the terms was a gradual development from their purely socio-economic function. We find this common concept clearly expressed by Rylaarsdam:

When we ponder the story of the development of the terms it becomes very clear that the development is an organic one. That is, their function as theological symbols is one that merged very gradually, almost imperceptibly, out of their function as socio-economic terms. Thus, in the oldest strata of the Bible one can often read references to the poor and their poverty in an uncluttered, descriptive way. But very quickly, notably in the Book of Psalms, this is complicated by the introduction of the theological factor.<sup>29</sup>

First of all, we have seen that these terms are covenant terms. That is, they are used to describe those who are wrongly treated according to the covenant laws and are consequently dispossessed and reduced, in many cases, to poverty. In the covenant relationship this is a moral and theological matter at the same time it becomes a socio-economic one, although the two aspects may rarely be separated. Moreover, it must also be recognized that in the oldest prophetic writing, the Book of Amos, the terms for the poor man are strongly theological. It is, of course, natural to expect that in the legal codes it would not be the theological aspect which is emphasized but the socio-economic one. This also must be taken into consideration.

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<sup>29</sup> Rylaarsdam, XIX, 13. Cf. also Gelin, p. 26.



## Various Views Concerning the Poor Man

Since the end of the nineteenth century there have been many different views concerning the real significance of this group of oppressed and dispossessed people whom we shall call for want of a better term, "the poor." Heinrich Graetz held that the poor as a group began as disciples gathered by Isaiah and were imbued with his spirit of gentleness, patience and resignation to God. Consequently they were called the "gentle ones" (  $\text{דְּבָרֵי הַיְשָׁרִים}$  ) and "the poor" (  $\text{דְּבָרֵי הַפְּתוּרִים}$  ,  $\text{דְּבָרֵי הַיְשָׁרִים}$  ).<sup>30</sup> They became a strong party in opposition to the court faction at the time of Manasseh but were severely persecuted under his cruel reign.<sup>31</sup> They were present again during the reign of Josiah and helped with his reforms,<sup>32</sup> and they became the nucleus of a new party of the faithful formed during the exile. It was this party which was responsible for the penitential psalms.<sup>33</sup> Ernest Renan held a similar view. For him these poor became a fixed pietistic party at the time of King Hezekiah, the predecessors of the Pharisees.<sup>34</sup> They became an influential power under Hezekiah but lost out to the aristocratic party when Manasseh came to the throne.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, c.1891), I, 253.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., I, 283.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., I, 286.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., I, 337.

<sup>34</sup> Ernest Renan, History of the People of Israel (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), III, 31-40.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., III, 103-105.



Their voice is heard in the later prophets, but it is in the exile that they become the most influential: "The anawim, hitherto a persecuted minority, were henceforth the whole of Israel."<sup>36</sup>

Shortly after the works of Graetz and Renan, two well-known works on the poor were published. Isadore Loeb, in his La littérature des pauvres dans la Bible,<sup>37</sup> saw the poor as a class of pious and humble Jews, formed during the exile, who claimed to be the servant of Jahweh destined to atone for the sins of the Jewish people and to suffer for them in order to merit their deliverance. They were responsible for the greatest part of the psalms, Deutero-Isaiah, and most of the songs inserted in the historical books. The most significant point of Loeb's study is his connection of the class of poor with the עֲבָרֵי יְהוָה motif of Deutero-Isaiah. The other work has already been mentioned, עָנָו וְעָנָוִים in den Psalmen, by Alfred Rahlfs. According to him, differences of opinion during the exile led to the formation of a party of pious men who believed that the exile had come upon them because Israel had not humbled herself before the will of Yahweh. They, therefore, insisted on doing this themselves as a party. For this reason they called themselves the עָנָוִים, the "humble ones." In their task as the עָבָרֵי יְהוָה they also saw themselves as being the עֲבָרֵי יְהוָה.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., III, 321.

<sup>37</sup>Published in Paris, 1892. As this work was not available to me, I am dependent on Van der Pleog, VII, 237, and Van den Berghe, p. 284, for information.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Birkeland's review of Rahlfs theories, pp. 23-24.



A popular presentation of the poor man motif, although it was almost entirely dependent on previous statements, was that of Rudolf Kittel. He saw the עֲנִי'ים party as being formed during the exile from the lower economic and social ranks. They therefore called themselves "the poor," אֲכִיזוֹנִים, and "the needy," עֲנִי'ים but because of their piety and meekness they were also known as the עֲנִי'ים. In the post-exilic period they ranked as the defenders of the non-legalistic party and of Messianic expectation. Kittel saw the Israelites as divided into two distinct groups at this time, those who were worldly and godless, and those who were the pious and true to Yahweh. These latter became the חֲסִידִים, and from these the Pharisees later broke away to form their own party, when the חֲסִידִים became worldly. Meanwhile, Kittel believed, the real עֲנִי'ים, the "quiet of the land," continued on and were the forerunners of the early Christians.<sup>39</sup>

Important work on this theme was carried out by A. Causse. In his book of 1922, Les Pauvres d'Israël,<sup>40</sup> Causse stressed the sociological aspect of the motif, although he made no distinction between the "poor" and the "righteous." Highly significant is his

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<sup>39</sup>Rudolf Kittel, The Religion of the People of Israel, translated by R. Caryl Micklem (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1925), pp. 212-216. See also his excursus, "Die Armen und Elenden im Psalter," Die Psalmen, dritte und vierte Auflage, in Kommentar zum Alten Testament, herausgegeben von Ernst Sellin (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner School, c.1922), XIII, 284-288. See also Van den Berghe, p. 280.

<sup>40</sup>A Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël (Prophetes, Psalmistes, Messianistes), (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, J. Gabalda et Cie, 1922).



contention that the poor were those who remained faithful to the patriarchal ideal and who consequently lost out through the disintegration of the family and clan solidarity with the growth of the power of the monarchy.<sup>41</sup> He regarded the Psalter as being the "Book of the Poor," written by the poor for the poor. It is a post-exilic book, although some of the psalms are more ancient.<sup>42</sup> The *D'İyy*, according to Causse, saw themselves as the true people of Israel, a real brotherhood, a spiritual family, who candidly loved their poverty and found fulfilment in it.<sup>43</sup> Causse was not ready to say that they became a definite party but were at least a strong religious movement. In his later book<sup>44</sup> he accepted to some degree Mowinckel's idea that the enemies of the poor in the psalms may have been sorcerers, a view which he had previously rejected.<sup>45</sup> But he contended that this concept was gradually lost, and the enemies of the poor were later understood in the sphere of ethics and social life as the rich and mighty.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-31.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 81-135.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>44</sup>A. Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique A La Communaute Religieuse: Le Probleme Sociologique de la Religion D'Israel (Paris: Libraire Felix Alcan, 1937).

<sup>45</sup>A. Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 103.

<sup>46</sup>A. Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique, pp. 243-248. Cf. also the critiques of Causse by Birkeland, pp. 27-28; Van der Ploeg, VII, 239; Van den Berghe, p. 284; and Stamm, XXIII, 56.



Sigmund Mowinckel has contributed many facets to this motif besides the one already mentioned. One of these was the idea that, like the Babylonian lamentations, the psalms of individual lament were magical formulae composed by the faithful poor who were under the spells of sorcerers and sought God's help. On this basis the sorcerer was the enemy of the poor man, and the poor man's suffering was sickness caused by the sorcerer.<sup>47</sup> Strong criticism of this theory later led Mowinckel to modify it considerably. He strongly rejected the belief current at the time that the poor constituted a party. Rather, they were simply the pious in general, the sick and suffering, those needing any kind of help, and also the actual poor who came along to thank-offering feasts according to custom (Ps. 22: 27; 69:33; 34:9).<sup>48</sup> Mowinckel believed that the prophets were usually people without possessions and in need, and so they readily spoke up on behalf of the economically and socially depressed lower class. The same must be said, he claimed, for the psalmists who depicted themselves as humble and pious in contrast to the wicked upper class. For this view Mowinckel was largely dependent on Causse.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien I. Cf. also Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, translated by D. R. Ap-Thomas (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), II, 2-8.

<sup>48</sup>Sigmund Mowinckel, "Psalmenstudien VI: Die Psalmdichter," (1924), Psalmenstudien (Amsterdam: Verlag P. Schippers, 1961), II, 59-60.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., II, 60-64. Also, Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, II, 91-92.



Mowinckel's student and disciples, Harris Birkeland, followed his master in maintaining that the poor never formed a particular party. He also developed the thesis that in the majority of cases the  $\text{אֲנִי}$  in the psalms speak of the sick and unfortunate troubled by the evil powers of the sorcerers.<sup>50</sup> However, in his second book of the same year he quickly modified his views and admitted that the sufferings of the poor man could also be caused by a permanent situation of poverty. With this came his thesis that the enemy of the poor man need not be understood as the sorcerer, but as national enemies of Israel.<sup>51</sup>

Albert Gelin, in The Poor of Yahweh, a book that is often more fervently devotional than scholarly, held that the biblical vocabulary of poverty underwent a spiritual transformation with Zephaniah. Terms which had previously denoted only actual poverty came to depict man before God in the "religious attitude of client."<sup>52</sup> Thus there developed a mystical lineage of Israel, the  $\text{אֲנִי}$ , including Jeremiah, the author of the Book of Job, the psalmists, and culminating in Mary. The faithful  $\text{אֲנִי}$  gradually became a community of "church" from which various sectarian groups were derived; for

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<sup>50</sup> 'Ani und 'Anaw in den Psalmen.

<sup>51</sup> Harris Birkeland, Die Feinde des Individuums in der Israelitischen Psalmenliteratur: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Semitischen Literatur und Religionsgeschichte (Oslo: Grøndahl & Søn's Forlag, 1933). Birkeland answers his critics in his later book, The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms (Oslo: I Kommissjon Hos Jacob Dybward, c.1955). Cf. Van der Ploeg, VII, 239-240, and Van den Berghe, p. 289.

<sup>52</sup> Gelin, p. 112.



instance, the Pharisees and the sect of Qumran. While the **ענינות** in the period of the psalmists had no love for their poverty and sought earthly retribution,<sup>53</sup> a transition came at the threshold of the New Testament with the Qumran sect's realization that "true spiritual poverty can never exist without material poverty."<sup>54</sup> Gelin also asserted that the Suffering Servant songs of Deutero-Isaiah played an important part in the poor man motif, showing how the emphasis on messianism was changing from the Messiah-King to the Messiah-Prophet among the **ענינות**.<sup>55</sup> Through the influence of these passages, Gelin suggested, the ideal of humility became a part of the messianic figure fulfilled by Christ. Thus Jesus became the great Poor Man espousing actual poverty as a value whereby spiritual poverty finds growth.<sup>56</sup>

It is the ideas of these writers which must now be examined on the basis of Scripture. The hypotheses made by some, particularly Gelin, will carry us over into ensuing chapters.

#### The Poor Man and Kingship

At the beginning of their history the Israelites were semi-nomadic shepherds and cattle-breeders who had been admitted into

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 74. This assertion of Gelin will be examined below.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-82.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 112.



Egypt at a time of famine. They had settled in the fertile Nile Delta where they increased in strength and numbers. They were becoming too powerful for the Pharaohs of the Nineteenth Dynasty (ca. 1310-1200) and these pharaohs needed cheap labor in order to carry out their huge building program, particularly at their new capital at Raamses. So the Israelites together with other foreign elements were pressed into service.<sup>57</sup> In this way they became, right at the beginning of their history, a people poor and oppressed.

It was from this period of the Nineteenth Dynasty in Egypt that a group of hymns and prayers stand out as being quite different from the usual priestly and official texts of Egyptian religion. Whereas the usual texts are boastful and complacent as the worshipper claims reward for his good deeds, these hymns and prayers are striking for their spirit of humility and dependence upon their gods. These worshippers call themselves the "humble men," the "helpless ones," the "silent" and the "poor" and seek the aid of the gods against the mighty, the proud and the rich.<sup>58</sup> A hymn of gratitude from this period to Amon-Re, the God of Thebes, is striking for its similarity to later Israelite psalms. The petitioner prays to Amon-Re

Who comes at the voice of the poor and distressed,  
who gives breath (to) him who is weak.

. . . . .

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. G. E. Wright, "The Book of Exodus," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1962), II, 190-191.

<sup>58</sup> Battiscombe Gunn, "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt," Journal of Egyptian Archeology, III (1916), 82.



Thou art Amon, the lord of the silent man, who comes  
at the voice of the poor man. If I call to thee when  
I am distressed thou comest and thou rescuest me,  
Thou givest breath (to) him who is weak;  
thou rescuest him who is imprisoned.<sup>59</sup>

In another inscription found on a shrine at Turin the god is ad-  
dressed as

That beloved god who hearkens to humble entreaties,  
Who stretches forth his hand to the humble,  
Who saves the wearied.<sup>60</sup>

Another manuscript from this period also shows the humble submissive-  
ness of a worshiper to his god. In this, the worshiper pleads with  
Amon to be the vizier of the poor man, to see that the poor man is  
vindicated in spite of those who seek bribes from him under the  
guise of court fees. "May the poor man surpass the rich," he  
cries.<sup>61</sup> Gunn concludes that we have here evidence of a popular  
religious development during this Dynasty. It was found in the  
general literature of the time but was especially appealing to the  
poor, who saw their gods as their only helpers in their need. He  
suggests also that this religious phenomenon may have been the re-  
sult of Semitic influence.<sup>62</sup> If this were so, we could then assume

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<sup>59</sup>James B. Pritchard, "Grace for a God's Mercy," Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (3rd edition with supplement; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, c.1969), p. 380, lines 3,4,14,15.

<sup>60</sup>Gunn, III, 91, 92.

<sup>61</sup>Pritchard, "A Prayer for Help in Court," p. 380. Cf. also Chester C. McGown, "The Beatitudes in the Light of Ancient Ideals," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLVI, (1927), 54, 55.

<sup>62</sup>Gunn, III, 93.



that already before the exodus, the Israelite religion strongly bore the concept of a gracious and merciful God who looks after the poor and oppressed. However, this is only conjecture. Nevertheless, the least that can be said is that here we have the concept of a personal God who delivers those who are in need, particularly those oppressed by the evildoer. Such a concept is found also in Mesopotamia and among the ancient Canaanites.

When Moses is called by Yahweh to lead the exodus of the oppressed Israelites from Egypt, Yahweh tells him: "I promise that I will bring you out of the affliction (  $\text{?} \text{?}$  ) of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites. . . ." (Ex. 3:17). And after some forty years of nomadic existence in the Sinai Desert, the Israelites finally settle in the promised land, conscious that Yahweh has fulfilled his promise to them and graciously given each of them a share in this land. When they settled in this new land they at first retained the absolute social equality and democracy known during their nomadic period. This was retained as long as the old system of family and tribal solidarity remained untouched. In this system, the elders of the clan directed the life of the community. They rendered justice at the gate, presided over sacrifices, and led the people in combat in the case of war. But they did this only on the basis of the acceptance of the other men of the clan who had the same rights, for they were all equal and members of the same race with Yahweh as their covenant God.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Cf. Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 14-17. Also, Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, c.1961), I, 4-23.



In such a tightly knit group each man had concern for his brother and the group was obliged to protect its weaker and less fortunate members.

With the growth in numbers and the coming of the monarchy, there was a breakdown in this family and tribal solidarity. Ties gradually shifted from the clan to the king, centralization tended to destroy the power of local authorities, and the weak and unfortunate began to find themselves without protection from the greedy. These changes must have been felt already in the reign of Saul, who spent most of his reign in fruitless fighting against the Philistines. This alone helped to add to those without family. But Saul also began a practice which was undoubtedly followed to a much greater degree by those kings which followed, particularly Solomon. This practice was to confiscate fields and vineyards to give them to his soldiers (1 Sam. 22:7; compare 1 Sam. 8:14). Samuel is depicted as warning against the dangers of kingship in terms which mean an annihilation of the old concept of equality and democracy. Their sons and daughters will become servants of the royal household and their property will either be taken from them or reduced by taxation (1 Sam. 8:10-18). It was inevitable that this should happen, and with the disruption of the old order the avaricious soon grabbed opportunities to oppress those who were left without protection. The clan elders lost their authority as the king became more powerful and set up officials around him to judge the causes of men at the gate. But in comparison to the old system of clan elders seeing to the problems within their own clans this proved highly inadequate.



It was about this time that the vocabulary of the poor man motif became popular. This vocabulary was used to express the evil causes of poverty--oppression, affliction, and weakness through lack of protection or help from the brother. They were socio-economic terms inasmuch as ill-treatment often led to poverty, but they were theological terms inasmuch as they involved the transgression of the covenant laws by the oppressor. The upholder of the covenant was Yahweh, and consequently victims of covenant transgressions would appeal to Yahweh when his representatives, the clan elders and eventually the king, proved incapable of giving justice. This led to a new religious emphasis: with the breakdown of the covenant community, religious expression became more individualized. This phenomenon was to grow as time went on.<sup>64</sup>

Kingship from its beginning had a religious basis. David, in particular, was very careful to make clear to the people that he was anointed by Yahweh and had been established as his representative. The king's victories are Yahweh's victories. He is judge and exercises for all the members of the people the justice of Yahweh.<sup>65</sup> But the king is also the religious leader of the people and as such he presides over the sacrifices and cultic ceremonies. The presence of Yahweh in the city of David symbolized by the presence of the ark

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<sup>64</sup>Cf. the individual expressions in the Psalms and Ezek. 18:2. Also, John Wick Bowman, "Travelling the Christian Way--The Beatitudes," Review and Expositor, LIV (1957), 380; Rylaarsdam, XIX, 16, 17.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. 1 Kings 3:16-23; 2 Kings 8:1-6. Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 32.



of Yahweh which David finally led into his city (2 Sam. 6:12-19). With the building of the Temple under Solomon, worship and cult gradually became centralized with a corresponding lessening of popular religious life. This, too, was a contributing factor to the breakdown of community responsibility.<sup>66</sup>

As the representative of Yahweh, the king was to bear Yahweh's righteousness and justice to the people. This gave him a special responsibility towards the weak, the oppressed and the poor. The protection which the orphan, the widow and the stranger had as their covenant claim in the clan was now the responsibility of the king. This responsibility should have been fundamental to the Israelite kings since it was not only basic to Yahweh religion but such was also the prime responsibility of kings and leaders of other nations.

Among other nations, kings and leaders were regarded as having a special responsibility towards the weak, afflicted and oppressed. Thus, from the Middle Kingdom of Egypt (20th-18th Century B.C.), there comes a fascinating document, "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant." In this story a peasant who has been wronged appeals to the Chief Steward who is regarded as "the father of the orphan, the husband of the widow, the brother of the divorcee, and the apron of him that is motherless."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 33, 34.

<sup>67</sup>Pritchard, p. 408, lines 63-64.



Another instance of the relationship of a king to the poor is found in the Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1700 B.C.). This was set up by Hammurabi in order that justice might prevail and that the strong might not oppress the weak. The emphasis in this Code is not on equal justice as this is generally understood in the Western world but on the protection of the weaker ones of society, as a shepherd cares for the weaker sheep in his flock. This comes out clearly in the Epilogue of the Code:

They prospered under my protection;  
 I always governed them in peace;  
 I sheltered them in my wisdom.  
 In order that the strong might not oppress the weak,  
 that justice might be dealt the orphan (and) the widow . . .  
 I set (it) up in order to administer the law of the land,  
 to prescribe the ordinances of the land,  
 to give justice to the oppressed.

This Code gives us a clue as to what was meant in the Semitic world by justice. The Graeco-Roman world guaranteed equal justice to everyone without distinction, but in practice this amounted to the protection of the tranquility of those who have possessions. By way of contrast the Semitic world practised an "equalizing" justice whereby the weak and oppressed were to be protected, and those who abused their power or riches in order to exploit those without defence were to be dealt with. This was and remained the central criterion for the just king (compare Psalm 82; Dan. 4:24).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Pritchard, Epilogue xxiv:50-75, p. 178.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. Dupont, p. 55.



Moreover, for the Israelite kings there were examples of such justice closer to home. The ancient Canaanite kings were to guarantee and sustain justice in their city-states in this way. In the Ugaritic legend of King Keret, the king is confronted by his own son Yassib who reproaches him:

You do not judge the case of the widow,  
 You do not give judgment to the oppressed,  
 You do not expel those who rob the poor,  
 At your feet you do not give the fatherless to eat,  
 (nor) the widow behind your back.<sup>70</sup>

He then asks Keret to abdicate because he has failed thus in his royal duty. Similarly, in the legend of Aqat, King Denel's normal functions are described: "He decided the case of the widow, he upholds the suit of the orphan."<sup>71</sup> Here again the signs of a righteous king are his readiness to protect and to uphold the cause of the weaker members of society. It is likely that Psalm 82 depicts the God of Israel, "The Most High," as having destroyed the gods and kings of Canaan by allowing Israel to conquer their city-states because they had not fulfilled their primary function of protecting the weak and the oppressed.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>As quoted by E. Hammershaimb, "On the Ethics of the Old Testament Prophets," Congress Volume: Oxford 1959, in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, c.1960), VII, 91, lines 45-51. Cf. also Pritchard, p. 149; Dupont, pp. 59-60; John Gray, "Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," Volume du Congres, Geneve 1965, in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, c.1966), XV, 172-173.

<sup>71</sup>Gray, XV, 172.

<sup>72</sup>In agreement with Rylaarsdam, XIX, 14.



Since kings were the representatives of their gods, and even in some cases their visible incarnations, it was natural to expect that the gods themselves were fundamentally concerned about the protection of the poor, as we have already seen in the case of Egypt. This is evident also in Assyria in a hymn to the Sun-god Shamash dating from the reign of Ashurbanipal (668-633 B.C.), where Shamash is celebrated as the avenger of right, the protector of the poor and needy, of those oppressed, and of widows and orphans.<sup>73</sup> Other gods and goddesses are described in similar ways. For instance, at the Babylonian New Year Festival, the goddess Beltiya is praised as one

Who impoverishes the rich, who causes the poor to become wealthy,  
 Who fells the enemy who does not fear her divinity,  
 Who releases the prisoner, grabs the hand of the fallen—  
 Bless the slave who blesses you!  
 Decree the destiny for the king who reveres you!<sup>74</sup>

All this must have had some influence on the Israelite kings. Yet the Israelites did not merely follow the custom set by other cultures of the Near East in their concern for the weak and oppressed. Such concern and responsibility toward the weaker brethren was already an integral part of the covenant relationship. The Israelite kings were kings of Yahweh who had a covenant with his people, and the kings as his representatives were to be the guardians of that covenant.

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<sup>73</sup>See Pritchard, "Hymn to the Sun-god," p. 389; Dupont, p. 57.

<sup>74</sup>Pritchard, "Temple Program for the New Year's Festivals at Babylon," p. 332, lines 258-263.



When Israelite kingship was instituted, the intimate relationship of the king to Yahweh was symbolized by the ceremony of anointing. This had the significance of setting the king apart as inviolable and imbued with the spirit of Yahweh. This anointing was strictly a religious ceremony following the ancient custom of anointing that which was to be set apart for God (compare Gen. 28:18; 31:13; 35:14; Ex. 29:36; 30:26; 40:10). The king was known, therefore, as the **הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְשֻׁחַ**, "Yahweh's Anointed One" (for example, 1 Sam. 24:7,11; 26:9,11,16,23; 2 Sam. 1:14,16; 19:22; Lam. 4:20; Is. 2:35; Ps. 132:17; 1 Sam. 2:10). He was set apart to be Yahweh's special representative.<sup>75</sup> As such, he was also the chief religious authority in the nation and carried out the functions of high priest (compare 2 Sam. 6:14-20; 24:25; 1 Kings 8:22,54,63; 12:32-33).<sup>76</sup>

The intimate relationship of Yahweh to the king and the king's representative quality are further expressed in the analogy of the relationship of father to son. In 2 Sam. 7:14, this relationship is expressed in regard to the Davidic dynasty and this is later found again in the Psalms (Ps. 2:7; 89:26,27). Such divine sonship was probably applied to the king in the double sense of representation. He was to represent Yahweh to the people of Israel, and he was also to represent his people to Yahweh. This is further

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<sup>75</sup>Cf. C. R. North, "The Religious Aspects of Hebrew Kingship," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, L (1932), 13-16.

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Julian Morgenstern, "A Chapter in the History of the High-Priesthood," The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, LV (1938), 10-11.



indicated by the fact that Israel had been described as Yahweh's son (Ex. 4:22,23; Hos. 11:1; Jer. 31:9; Deut. 32:6).<sup>77</sup> Kingship in Israel was incorporated into a covenant relationship whereby the king was to exercise justice on behalf of the people in accordance with the old covenant laws (Deut. 17:18; 1 Sam. 10:25; 2 Sam. 3:21; 5:3; 1 Kings 12:1; 2 Kings 11:17). As priest he was to represent the people to Yahweh, and as guardian of the covenant laws he was to represent Yahweh to the people.<sup>78</sup> The responsibility of the king to the poor, the weak and oppressed was, therefore, in both areas of representation. He was to represent them before Yahweh, as well as representing Yahweh in giving them justice and protection from the wicked.

#### The Poor Man and the Prophets

To see that the kings were reminded of their duty, a new and creative phenomenon arose in the persons of the prophets, for whom the covenant faith was basic to Israel's life and well-being. It was only under such a unique democratic kingship that prophets could arise and wield such influence as they did. When David took Uriah's wife it was not without reason that the prophet Nathan described his wrongdoing in terms of a rich man oppressing a poor man (although the word  $\psi\kappa\gamma$  is used here, 2 Sam. 12:1-6). Such injustice was repulsive to a just king. In the light of the king's responsibility

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<sup>77</sup>Cf. North, L, 25-27.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Ibid., L, 37.



to protect the rights of his people, the sin of King Ahab in coveting Naboth's vineyard was in complete contradiction to his duty. This brought upon him the wrath of Yahweh as the prophet Elijah was quick to point out. Only by humbling himself before Yahweh is Ahab saved from dying the ignominious death of one rejected from the covenant community of Israel (1 Kings 21).

By the eighth century B.C., there had grown up in Israel a privileged class which had benefited through growth of trade, war and greed. Included in this class were the merchants and officials and warriors of the king. Injustices and oppression which were not checked added to the growing division between the rich and the poor.<sup>79</sup> The prophet Amos arose to protest against the luxury and revelry of the rich who used their riches and power only to oppress and exploit those less fortunate. He addresses this merchant class as oppressors and swindlers:

Hear this, you who trample upon the dispossessed ( אֲכִיּוֹן ),  
 and bring to an end the afflicted of the land ( עֲנִיִּים - אֶרֶץ ),  
 saying, "When will the new moon be over,  
 that we may sell grain?  
 And the sabbath,  
 that we may offer wheat for sale,  
 that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great,  
 and deal deceitfully with false balances,  
 that we may buy the weak ( דֵּבִילִים ) for silver  
 and sell the dispossessed ( אֲכִיּוֹן ) for a pair of sandals,  
 and sell the refuse of the wheat?"<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Roland de Vaux mentions how this inequality in the standards of living is so evident through excavations. Whereas 10th century houses are all of the same size and arrangements, 8th century houses on the same site are striking for their contrast: "The rich houses are bigger and better built and in a different quarter from that where the poor houses huddle together." de Vaux, I, 72-73.

<sup>80</sup> Amos 8:4; cf. 4:1-3. The translation used in this thesis will



He warns them that such rapacity and exploitation would mean their destruction. They will be carried away captive to a strange land and will have no opportunity for enjoying their ill-gotten gains (3:11,13-15; 5:11; 6:14). The royal officers who have the duty of rendering justice at the gate are likewise condemned. For they sell their judgments for bribes, and so afflict the צדִיקִים and will not listen to the cause of the innocent poor ( יְדֹנְיָם, 5:12).

Because the leaders of Israel have completely reversed the primary function of justice, to protect and care for the weak and less fortunate, the same condemnation must come upon them as came upon the Canaanite city-states of old referred to in Psalm 82. As in that Psalm, Yahweh calls the divine council together, this time to witness the condemnation (3:9-11). Together with other nations Israel is condemned to destruction by Yahweh:

"For three transgressions of Israel,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;  
because they sell the righteous ( צדִיקִים ) for silver;  
and the innocent poor ( יְדֹנְיָם ) for a pair of shoes--  
they that trample the head of the weak ( הַרְזִים ) into the  
dust of the earth,  
and turn aside the way afflicted ( יַעֲנִי ). . . 81

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generally be based on the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Verse numbering, however, will be in accordance with the original text.

<sup>81</sup>Amos 2:6-7. It is interesting to note here how close Amos comes to the thought of some of the Psalms. On the basis of this similarity Arvid S. Kapelrud has recently suggested that Amos was dependent on many of these psalms for his ideas. Hence a much earlier date must be given to these psalms than has been done by the majority of scholars. See Arvid S. Kapelrud, "New Ideas in Amos," Volume du Congres, Geneve 1965, in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, XV, 204-205.



However one translates the vocabulary of the poor man motif, the emphasis in these terms is never on poverty in contrast to riches, but rather on innocence in contrast to injustice, on weakness in contrast to power, on affliction in contrast to oppression. This is particularly so of the word  $\text{יָבֵשׁ}$  which is twice used in parallelism with  $\text{יָדָה}$  (2:6; 5:12). Nor is the emphasis on the goodness of the poor man. He is righteous and good only in relation to the evil and unrighteousness of the oppressor. Yahweh's concern is for mercy and justice. The poor become his special concern because they have been deprived of their rights to the blessings guaranteed to them under the covenant.<sup>82</sup> Since these blessings are also material, it is impossible to make any real distinction here between economic and religious aspects of Amos' message. In fact, the two aspects are generally inseparable in Israelite thought. Wealth and good health were always considered blessings from Yahweh, as a sign of his love, and the lack of these things was never regarded in any way as preferable. That is further demonstrated by the fact that the time of deliverance of Yahweh's people is pictured in terms of material prosperity for all (9:13-15).

The rich are condemned, therefore, not because they are rich but because they have not reflected Yahweh's covenant love to their fellowmen, and indeed, have even thwarted the action of Yahweh's

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<sup>82</sup>This point is missed by Van der Ploeg, who is more concerned to point out the economic nature of the poor, VII, 244. It is taken up by Gelin, p. 19, and also by Martin-Achard, XXI, 352.



love for his people out of their greed and avarice.<sup>83</sup> Yahweh's concern is that his justice be practised and so the cry of the prophet is continually heard: "Seek the Lord and live . . . you who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth" (5:6,7; compare 5:4,14); "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream" (5:24). Without this justice their worship with its sacrifices and tithes and sacred pomp is useless and even an affront to Yahweh (4:4-5; 5:21-24). Israel needs to return to the old patriarchal ideals, to the simple life of the desert wandering (5:25), where one learns to have respect for one another and of one's dependence upon Yahweh, bound together by faithfulness as the covenant community.<sup>84</sup>

Some years after Amos, when the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria was much more imminent, another prophet, Hosea, arose to warn and condemn. Hosea's central theme was Yahweh's covenant love for his people, and their repudiation of that covenant relation with Yahweh. Hosea does not get down to the specifics of the poor man motif and does not use any of its terminology as Amos did, but the same concern for the covenant relationship is there. Israel is "a trader, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress" (12:8). Hosea also condemns the corruptions of the priests and prophets (4:4-10), the degeneracy of the cult (4:11-14), and

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<sup>83</sup>See Kuschke, LVII, 39.

<sup>84</sup>See Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 52-54.



the wickedness of the kings and leaders (5:1; 7:3-7; 8:1-14; 9:15-17). He even went so far as to condemn the whole institution of the kingdom with its kings and princes and priests and prophets as evil because it had led to the repudiation of the covenant relationship. He believed it necessary that all this be destroyed in order that they might get back to the old covenant relationship as they knew it in the desert. In the desert there will be reconciliation (2:14) and Israel will return to the simple desert life dwelling in tents (12:9-10). The ideal of the covenant relationship will begin again in messianic renewal, and once more the people will say: "Thou art my God" (2:24; 14:5-7).<sup>85</sup>

In Judah the same cry is heard somewhat later uttered by the prophet Isaiah. While Isaiah speaks the same message in regard to the poor man as Amos, he differs from Amos in that he has all the appearance of being one of the nobility, having easy access to the king. Yet Isaiah's message is even sharper in its denunciations of the king and the king's officers. He denounces the princes as rebels and thieves who seek bribes rather than defend the orphans and widows (1:23). Consequently, they will be judged:

Yahweh enters into judgment  
with the elders and princes of his people  
"It is you who have devoured the vineyard,  
the spoil of the afflicted ( עֲנִי ) is in your houses.  
What do you mean by crushing my people,  
by grinding the face of the afflicted ( עֲנִי )?"  
says the Lord God of hosts.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-57.

<sup>86</sup> Is. 3:14-15.



Like Amos (4:1-3), he condemns them together with their women (3:16-26) whose vanity and impiety are so manifestly part of the current spirit of pride and godlessness. They trust in man and despise their God. In one of his characteristic puns Isaiah dramatically displays the contrary nature of Judah (5:7), for Yahweh has looked for **צְדָקָה** (justice) but there is only **דְּשָׁחָה** (bloodshed), he looked for **צְדָקָה** (righteousness) but he gets only a **קָוָה** (a cry)! There is no end to the greed and graft and corruption of the leaders and officials of the country (5:8-23). They have even changed the laws to suit themselves:

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees,  
 and the writers who keep writing oppression,  
 to turn aside the weak (**דְּשָׁחָה**) from justice  
 and to rob the afflicted (**קָוָה**) of my people of their  
 right  
 that widows may be their spoil,  
 and that they may make the fatherless their prey!<sup>87</sup>

Even those oppressed are led astray by their oppressors (9:15,  
 16):

For those who lead this people lead them astray,  
 and those who are led by them are swallowed up.  
 Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men,  
 and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows;  
 for every one is godless and an evildoer,  
 and every mouth speaks folly.

Such a statement rules out a mechanical coupling of "poor" and "pious." Yet there is a definite connection between "afflicted" (**דְּשָׁחָה**) and "my people" (**עַמִּי**, Yahweh's). This clearly points out once again that it is not the inherent goodness of the

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<sup>87</sup>Is. 10:1-2; cf. also Kuschke, LVII, 41.



afflicted that moves Yahweh to come to their aid, but simply the fact that they are his people in covenant with him who are being unjustly treated and therefore have the need to call on him. In contrast to the oppressor they are "righteous."

Yet in the messianic passages, where the king is spoken of ideally (9:6-7) and the desert becomes a fruitful field (32:15-20), the poor and afflicted become those who find joy in Yahweh and exult him for delivering them from oppression and injustice (29:19).<sup>88</sup> The piety of the poor man is never highlighted here. The emphasis is on the grace and mercy of God who through his representative will judge the weak with righteousness and decide with equity for the afflicted of the land (11:4). The poor man is understood here simply as the man who looks to Yahweh and Yahweh's representative, the anointed one, for justice. Thus in the so-called apocalyptic section (Isaiah 24 to 27), a psalm of thanksgiving is included celebrating the power and justice of Yahweh who takes care of his people: "For thou hast been a stronghold to the weak (  $\text{צָרָה}$  ), a stronghold to the innocent poor man (  $\text{אֶת־יְדֵי־יָסוּרִים}$  ) in his distress" (25:4). Here the poor man is really the people of Israel whose members have realized their helplessness in the face of the enemy, have called on Yahweh, and Yahweh has come to their aid and made

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<sup>88</sup>This passage has often been regarded as coming later from a disciple of Isaiah. However, whether authentic or not, the spirit of this saying is still present in Isaiah. Cf. Van der Ploeg, VII, 246; Herbert Donner, Israel Under den Völkern: Die Stellung der Klassischen Propheten des 8. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Aussenpolitik der Könige von Israel und Juda (Leiden: E. J. Brill, c.1964), p. 158.



them victorious. Similar is the prayer for full deliverance in 26:1-6. There the oppressed and weak are made victorious by Yahweh, they are a nation which keeps faith with him, they trust in him forever.

In the Eastern countries the accession of a new king was heralded as "good news." In this "good news" all the hopes for an ideal reign were expressed, wherein all those who are wretched would find goodness. An example of this is found in Egypt, heralding the accession of Ramses IV to the throne (ca. 1162-1157 B.C.):

A happy day! Heaven and earth are in joy, for thou art the great lord of Egypt.

They who were fled have come (back) to their towns; they who were hidden have come forth (again).

They who were hungry are sated and gay; they who were thirsty are drunken.

They who were naked are clothed in fine line, they who were dirty are clad in white.

They who were in prison are set free; they who were fettered are in joy. The troublemakers in this land have become peaceful . . . .<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, in the messianic sections in Isaiah "good news" of a new reign are given in this way. But when the actual rule of the king did not measure up to the "good news" proclaimed, the hope became the future ideal. So the messianic hope gradually developed. Such messianic sections as Is. 9:1-6 and 11:1-4, for instance, must be understood in this light, as also must the messianic overtones in the message sent to the Philistines (14:30,32). But it is always the poor, the weak and oppressed, who figure in the "good news" as

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<sup>89</sup>Pritchard, "Joy at the Accession of Ramses IV," pp. 378-379. cf. Dupont, pp. 60, 61.



those who will receive justice and protection against the oppressor in the new reign. These are not necessarily pious and God-fearing but persons who have been unjustly treated according to the covenant. According to 29:18-21 they have looked to Yahweh for help, and when he vindicates them, they obtain fresh joy in him. As such, they are spiritually a step above those who are mentioned together with them, the deaf who shall hear the words of a book and the blind who out of their gloom and darkness shall see. The latter are persons who have been ignorant of Yahweh's will (compare 29:9-12).

The wisdom poem of Is. 32:1-8, which is regarded by some as coming from the circle of Isaiah's disciples,<sup>90</sup> or of the later wisdom writers,<sup>91</sup> describes the blessings to be gained for a country where a righteous king reigns. The ideal king will reign in righteousness with justice and mercy. The will of Yahweh will be understood and followed. Eyes will see, ears will hear, the rash will make good judgment, and the stammerer will speak clearly. Those who afflict the poor man will no longer be regarded as noble men. Here again it is simply a matter of those unjustly treated receiving justice.

The cry for justice is represented also by the prophet Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah and one who was almost certainly influenced by the country preaching of Amos. He, too, raised his voice against

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<sup>90</sup>S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh, translated by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 174.

<sup>91</sup>R. B. Y. Scott, "The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), V, 342.



the greedy oppressors who took over the hereditary family properties to make themselves great land-owners (Micah 2:1-2). He likewise condemned the rulers of Judah who do not know justice, "who hate the good and love the evil," and who consume the people to satisfy their own desires (3:1-3). Love of possessions has corrupted leadership in every phase of life: "Its heads give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for hire, its prophets divine for money" (3:11; compare 6:10-12). In such a vacuum of justice and godliness, Micah also gave expression to the messianic hope for a righteous and merciful shepherd (5:2-4).

The Scythian invasion of Palestine (630-625 B.C.) prompted the Jerusalem prophet Zephaniah to rise up and pronounce judgment on the evil and corruption of Jerusalem's officials, judges, prophets, and priests (3:3-6). Zephaniah was not, like Amos and Micah, a country prophet come to the wicked city, but rather like Isaiah, a man of the city and probably a member of the nobility. His great-great-grandfather had been Hezekiah, king of Judah. Therefore, Zephaniah had no personal grudge against the rich and powerful but was moved to speak out in the face of imminent judgment. Yet in the midst of the wicked and shameless nation he sees a group of people who do the will of Yahweh, "the humble of the land" (עֲנֵי הָאָרֶץ). He urges these people to continue to seek the Lord, to seek righteousness and humility (עֲנֵי) so that they might escape the day of the wrath of Yahweh (2:3). It is this holy remnant which shall be left after Yahweh has destroyed "the proudly exultant ones" and "the haughty" (3:11):



For I will leave in the midst of you  
 a people humble and lowly (  $\text{זָרִי} \text{ 'נְיָ } \text{ )}$ .  
 They shall seek refuge in the name of Yahweh,  
 those who are left in Israel;  
 they shall do no wrong  
 and utter no lies,  
 nor shall there be found in their mouth  
 a deceitful tongue.  
 For they shall pasture and lie down,  
 and none shall make them afraid.<sup>92</sup>

Thus Zephaniah unreservedly gives to the poor man terminology a thoroughly religious content. However, this is no abrupt transition as those would have it who have seen these words as originally being only socio-economic terms,<sup>93</sup> but is the inevitable development of their religious basis in the covenant. Zephaniah also goes further than Amos and Isaiah in coupling the poor man with the idea of a holy remnant (2:7), as a people obedient to Yahweh.

Jeremiah, a younger contemporary of Zephaniah, is also disgusted with the greed and corruption which leaves the innocent poor unjustly treated and oppressed by the great and rich (2:34; 5:28). He does not hesitate to hurl invectives against the kings for not carrying out their primary duty of governing the people with justice and righteousness and delivering from the hands of the oppressor "him who has been robbed." Their job is to protect the alien, the fatherless and the widow, not to harm them and shed innocent blood (21:12; 22:3). His strongest condemnation is reserved for king

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<sup>92</sup>Zeph. 3:12,13.

<sup>93</sup>As held, for instance, by Van der Ploeg, VII, 248-249; Gelin, p. 30. Gelin's claims, however, are unfortunately influenced by his desire to find a spiritual basis for the monastic vow of poverty.



Jehoiakim (22:13-19) who, in shedding innocent blood and in practising oppression and violence, has been the very opposite of what a king should be. He was very unlike his father Josiah who did justice and righteousness and judged the cause of the oppressed and innocent poor man (עֲנִי וְאֶבְיָוֹן, 22:16). Because Jehoiakim has been the oppressor of the weak instead of their defender, he himself will be given the burial of one disowned and dispossessed (22:18,19). But the time will come when Yahweh will change all this. He will make a new covenant with his people and will forget their sins, and they will keep his commandments (31:31-34).

While Zephaniah had stressed only the religious aspect of the poor man motif, Jeremiah appears to go to the other extreme. Jer. 5:4 is always quoted as an instance where the prophets could be as critical of the poor as of the rich and powerful.<sup>94</sup> In the context Jeremiah sees himself searching in vain for an upright man. Then he says to himself: "These are only the weak (דַּבְּרֵי חַיִּל), they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the Lord, the law of their God. I will go to the great (דַּבְּרֵי גָּד) and speak to them . . . ." But they are all unrighteous. Jeremiah gives a thoroughly socio-economic stress to the word here as is quite evident also in 39:10 where the עֲנֵי הַיָּדָיִם הַלֵּזִים are the "poor people who possessed nothing" (compare 40:7; 52:15,16).

Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, a prophet of the exile, uses the phrase עֲנִי וְאֶבְיָוֹן as a technical term for the oppressed. In 16:49 one

<sup>94</sup>E.g. Van der Ploeg, VII, 248; Kuschke, LVII, 40, 41.



of the sins of Sodom has been that it has not come to the aid of its עֲוֹנוֹ וְאֵיבֹתָיו. In his doctrine of individual sin deserving individual punishment, Ezekiel describes the evil man as oppressing the עֲנִי וְאֵיבֹתָיו (18:12). The corruption prevailing among all the people is enumerated by Ezekiel in terms of greed and oppression, and it is the people of the land who oppress the עֲנִי וְאֵיבֹתָיו by violence and robbery and lawlessness (22:29). The exile is certainly a judgment for such lawlessness. But a man can escape further punishment by now turning to the covenant law of Yahweh and living according to it.

In Deutero-Isaiah the poor man motif takes on a new dimension. For it is in the suffering of the Babylonian Exile that the whole people of Israel become the poor and oppressed in both the religious and economic sense. Deutero-Isaiah begins with the traditional cry of "good news" proclaimed at the accession of a king. But the king now is Yahweh himself who will "feed his flock like a shepherd" and "gather the lambs in his arms" and "gently lead those that are with young" (Is. 40:9-11). Yahweh himself will come as the righteous king to bring judgment on the oppressors of his people. For beside the physical sufferings of the exile, they have also experienced the loss of their temple and their cult. So in personal and national humiliation they learn the lesson of the oppressed.<sup>95</sup> In their suffering they must turn to Yahweh in utter dependence upon him, for "they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength" (40:31).

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<sup>95</sup>Rose Eileen, "The Spirit of the Anawim," Contemporary New Testament Studies, edited by Sister Rosalie Ryan (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, c.1965), p. 70.



As their king, Yahweh promises that the very desert will become a fruitful garden (41:17-20);

When the oppressed and innocent poor (אֲנִי וְעַמִּי הַדְּלוֹתִים) seek water and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I Yahweh will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

These messianic "good news" continue to be proclaimed to Israel, as again in 49:10-13 where Yahweh is depicted as having compassion on his people, his afflicted (אֲנִי וְעַמִּי הַדְּלוֹתִים, verse 13). He comes to the people of Jerusalem, the afflicted (אֲנִי וְעַמִּי הַדְּלוֹתִים) who have drunk with the cup of suffering to plead their cause (51:21,22; compare 54:11). So the poor are the people of Israel who, being oppressed and afflicted, are dependent upon Yahweh, and as such they can be called the Servant of Yahweh (41:8,9; 43:10; 44:1,2,21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:7). Such a term, of course, requires and presupposes a response on the part of his people. So Israel, as the poor man and as the Ebed Yahweh, is in reality confined to those who "wait for the Lord" (41:31), who seek after him (51:10) and "who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law" (51:7).<sup>96</sup>

This picture of Israel as the poor man who trusts in Yahweh for deliverance, who is Yahweh's Servant to carry out his will, forms the background for the more individualized Suffering Servant of the Servant Songs (Is. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13; 53:12). This Suffering Servant is depicted as a kind of "super-poorman" who knows suffering and rejection in its worst form and finally dies for the

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<sup>96</sup>Cf. Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique, pp. 241, 242.



sins of many, so that many might be accounted righteous. His task is to "bring forth justice to the nations." But he will do this not by preaching on street-corners, but by his faithfulness and concern for the "bruised reed" and the "dimly burning wick." However, in his desire to bring back and gather the people of Israel to Yahweh he labors in vain. So Yahweh widens the scope of his mission to embrace all mankind in the Second Song.

The Third Song reveals some of the insults and indignities to which the Servant is subjected. Here the Servant, like the poor man in the psalms of individual lament, expresses his complete confidence that Yahweh will uphold the afflicted one and vindicate him. The apex of righteous suffering is reached in the Fourth Song, where, after being despised and rejected by men and having known oppression and affliction, the Servant dies vicariously for the many. And even though he dies, in spite of his innocence, the death of evil oppressors<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>I believe this is the meaning of Is. 53:9 which reads: "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death although he had done no violence . . . ." This is a difficult verse, and most commentators regard it as corrupt. Nevertheless, the contrast is between the innocence of the Servant and the violence and deceit of the "wicked" and the "rich man." The rich are often connected with the wicked in their tyranny and oppression of the afflicted and innocent poor man. Yet, since "wicked" is in the plural, one would expect "rich" to be plural also. For a discussion of the problem, see James Mullenburg, "The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66," The Interpreter's Bible, V, 626-627. The innocence of the Servant here would tend to rule out the people of Israel from consideration for the title as they are often regarded as sinful. Cf. 40:2; 42:24; 43:24; etc. See on this point Harry M. Orlinsky, "The So-called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah," in Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah, in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, c.1967), XIV, 23-24.



he will be exalted and lifted up by Yahweh. It is particularly in this Fourth Song that the Servant is described in terms of the poor man.<sup>98</sup>

Much discussion has been generated by the question: Who is the Ebed Yahweh?<sup>99</sup> The discussion will continue. However, there are some important points here in regard to the poor man motif. The Servant is depicted as a combination prophet-king since his task is to establish justice ( עֲדָלָה ) and to proclaim the will of Yahweh. In this sense he is to represent Yahweh, who already has been promised as coming as king to do these things. In his task as Yehweh's representative he will come not with power and force but to win people by the power of speech. He will be gentle with the weak and oppressed, but when his justice and message of truth are opposed, he himself becomes the oppressed. In this way he suffers vicariously for his people, giving himself up as a sin offering (53:10). He is finally vindicated by Yahweh who will deliver all the oppressed of his people. Thus the Servant becomes the messianic means for the vindication of the poor and at the same time the first-fruits of such exaltation.

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. especially Is. 53:4,7 where the verb עָדַל is used.

<sup>99</sup> For the discussion of the subject see Christopher R. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study (2nd edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1956); H. H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament (2nd edition, revised; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, c.1965); W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957); Mowinckel, He That Cometh, pp. 187-257; and North's excellent summary, "The Servant of the Lord," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1962), IV, 292-294.



In the third part of the Book of Isaiah, and closely related to the Servant Songs, is the familiar passage of Is. 61:1-2, where the afflicted are again put into the center of the picture of the inauguration of the messianic kingdom.<sup>100</sup> There the prophet describes himself:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
 because the Lord has anointed me  
 to bring good news to the afflicted (עֲבֹרֵי יָדַי);  
 he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,  
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
 and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
 and the day of vengeance of our God;  
 to comfort all who mourn . . . .

Again, it is the poor man who will finally be vindicated with the beginning of the messianic rule. Then he will receive peace, liberty and consolation. It will be a time of joy, for no longer will there be any oppressor to trouble them (compare 65:25), for it will be the time of judgment for them (61:2; 66:5). At this time it will be the poor man to whom Yahweh turns and with whom Yahweh dwells (57:15), with him who is "humble and contrite in spirit (עָנִי וְיִגְדָה - רַגְלִי) and trembles at my word" (66:2). The dependence of the poor man upon Yahweh becomes the ideal for the people of the messianic kingdom.

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<sup>100</sup>For instance, Mowinckel, He That Cometh, pp. 254-255, sees a "distinct and striking linguistic similarity" and "marked spiritual affinity" between the Servant Songs and the prophetic descriptions of himself here, implying that they were probably written by the same hand, that is, by Trito-Isaiah. This is probably the case, but there is also a close affinity here with the whole accession theme of Deutero-Isaiah.



The prophecies of Zechariah (chapters 1 to 8), mainly concerned with the rebuilding of the temple after the return from exile, contains one conventional reference to the poor man. The rebuilding of the temple<sup>101</sup> was regarded as a necessary prelude to the coming of the messianic kingdom so high in the hopes of the people at this time. In this kingdom they will live once again in the covenant relationship of obedience to Yahweh and in service to one another, showing kindness and mercy to each other, and not oppressing the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the afflicted ( צַדִּיק , 7:10).

By the time that the oracles in Zechariah 9 to 14 were written (probably about the time of the campaigns of Alexander the Great, c.330 B.C.), the unfulfilled messianic hope had reached a high pitch, bordering on despair. The returned exiles were only a little flock whose leaders had let them down. It is at such a stage of frustrated hope that the prophetic tends to blend into the apocalyptic. In this situation we find one of the most important instances of the poor man motif in prophetic literature, that of the messianic king entering Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9-10):

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
 Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
 Lo, your king comes to you;  
 righteous and saved is he ( צַדִּיק וְנוֹשֵׁעַ ),  
 afflicted ( צַדִּיק ) and riding on an ass,  
 on a colt the foal of an ass.

Before such a hymn of welcome can be understood, it must be recognised that there are a number of ideas which have been brought

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<sup>101</sup> Completed 516 B.C., Ezra 6:15.



together here. First of all, the reference to the king riding upon a young ass may signify to some degree the humility of the king and his desire for peace in contrast to coming on a horse, the animal of war.<sup>102</sup> But the more obvious explanation is that the ass was the traditional mount for the tribal leaders and early kings (Gen. 49:10-11; Judg. 5:10; 10:4; 12:14; 2 Sam. 19:26-27). The significance of this is clearly that the Messiah is expected to come like the patriarchs of old and lead his people in justice and righteousness. This is the patriarchal ideal found so often in the prophets. For such a leader the main concern will not be to gain power and force through wars but grant peace to his people.

Another influence came to bear on this picture, namely, that of the Suffering Servant motif of Deutero-Isaiah. The king here is pictured as "saved, rescued." This נִשָּׁאֵן is a Niphal participle. Like the Suffering Servant the messianic king here is entirely dependent on Yahweh for rescuing him and vindicating him. Such dependence is expressed in Is. 45:21-25. More important are the references to the king being "righteous" and "afflicted," forms from the Suffering Servant in the Fourth Song. The Servant is known there as "the righteous one" (Is. 53:11) and is esteemed smitten of God and "afflicted" ( נִשָּׁאֵן, Is. 53:7). It is possible also, as Paul Lamarche has pointed out,<sup>103</sup> to see a number of parallels

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<sup>102</sup>Views mentioned by Benedikt Otzen, Studien über Deutero-sacharja (Copenhagen: Prostant Apud Munksgaard, c.1964), p. 140.

<sup>103</sup>Paul Lamarche, Zacharie IX-XIV: Structure Litteraire et Messianisme (Paris: Librairie LeCoffre, J. Gabalda et Cie, Editeurs, 1961), pp. 131-133.



between Zech. 9:9-10 and the First Servant Song (Is. 42:1-4). And I believe we can go further than this and see, with Lamarche, the influence of the four Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah on four similar passages concerning the king. Like the First Servant Song, the person of the king is presented in Zech. 9:9-10. Like the Second Song, 11:4-14 deals with the efforts of the leader to save his people who do not accept him (compare Is. 49:1-4). The third and fourth passages of Zechariah (12:10-13:1 and 13:7-9) deal with the death of the shepherd which finally brings his people to remorse and repentance in much the same way as the Fourth Servant Song (Is. 52:13-53:12). "He was wounded for our transgressions" (Is. 53:5) becomes "they look on him whom they have pierced" in Zechariah 12:10.<sup>104</sup> The "afflicted of the flock" ( אֲנִי הַצֹּדֵק ) in 11:7,11 may refer to a small faithful group who know the word of Yahweh (11:11), and who have been "afflicted" ( אֲנִי הַצֹּדֵק ) for want of a shepherd (Zech. 10:2).<sup>105</sup>

The Book of Daniel was written in the turmoil of the Maccabean wars. The messianic hope had turned apocalyptic, and the Messiah was now seen as coming out of times of persecution and suffering as "one like a son of man" (Dan. 7:13) to rule his everlasting kingdom with "the saints of the Most High" (7:18,27). But first there will be kings who will persecute and "wear out the saints of the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 139-140.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. F. F. Bruce, "The Book of Zechariah and the Passion Narrative," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XLIII (1960-1961), 342-346.



Most High" (7:18,27). But first there will be kings who will persecute and "wear out the saints of the Most High" (7:25). Yet the faithful will stand firm and will even convert many to understanding in spite of their being persecuted "by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder" (11:33-35). Finally, there will be deliverance for the faithful, even from the dead, and they will shine as the stars in the sky, particularly those who turn many to righteousness (12:1-4).

In these times of tyranny all in Israel are the oppressed, so the poor man terminology loses its significance. It is found only once in the Book of Daniel (4:24), where Daniel gives advice to Nebuchadnezzar that by practising righteousness and showing mercy to the oppressed (  $\text{בְּעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה}$  ) he may prolong his sanity. Otherwise, the faithful are known as the "saints" (  $\text{קְדוֹשִׁים}$  ) or the "wise" (  $\text{חֲכָמִים}$  ). These wise who will shine and turn many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3) are reminiscent of the Suffering Servant who "deals wisely" (Is. 52:13), is a light to the nations (Is. 49:6), and makes many to be accounted righteous (Is. 53:11). The same theme of suffering and vindication is found in both pictures, and it is probable that Daniel's visions were influenced somewhat by the Suffering Servant motif.<sup>106</sup>

In the prophetic writings we have been able to observe the growth of the poor man motif. The "poor man" is the weak and the

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<sup>106</sup>F. F. Bruce, "Qumran and Early Christianity," New Testament Studies, II (1955-1956), 176; and D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 BC-AD 100 (London: SCM Press Ltd, c.1964), pp. 337-338.



oppressed and the mistreated, and only in consequence is he economically poor and needy. In his oppression he turns to Yahweh. From this point he becomes the faithful and righteous, humble before Yahweh as he seeks justice and protection from the violence of the wicked. This is no abrupt transition but a gradual and natural development which comes about because the poor man terminology is essentially covenant language. On this basis there can be no real separation of the religious aspect of the poor man motif from its socio-economic aspect. The two are integrally connected. Under this motif of oppression and injustice, essential messianism has its birth. Messianism is central to the poor man's search for justice and righteousness. But the Messiah is seen as coming to the whole man. His bringing of justice and righteousness means freedom of faith as well as opportunity to prosper and live equally under God with his fellowman. The messianic community will be a society where the weak are protected and the unfortunate are cared for. But because of continuing wickedness in the face of which anyone who is good is oppressed, and because oppression and suffering purifies, the Messiah himself is seen as coming out of oppression and affliction as one afflicted, an 'אָפֵּט . At the same time, this Messiah is regarded as divine by association through the double yearning of the poor man for a righteous king to reign under Yahweh, and for Yahweh himself to reign directly. All this takes on deeper significance in the Psalter, as we shall see.



### The Poor and the Law

The three main law codes, the Covenant, Deuteronomic, and Holiness Codes, all seek to legislate in the interests of the poor man. The oldest of these is the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:22-23:33). This is generally dated soon after the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan, although it is acknowledged that its present form may come from the end of David's or during Solomon's reign.<sup>107</sup> An indication of revision during the monarchy is evidenced by references to bribes and officials.<sup>108</sup>

The laws dealing with oppression (22:20-26) do not have recourse to a human court but are entirely dependent upon each man keeping them according to his conscience, although they do carry curses upon the evildoer. By means of these curses the hearer is reminded that Yahweh himself is the judge and can condemn and punish. The laws show that Yahweh's compassion for the helpless rises above legal logic and that his justice is merciful.<sup>109</sup> He expects the same from man. Thus, that which was formerly patriarchal custom and the general practice which members of the clan had among themselves is here

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<sup>107</sup> See W. J. Harrelson, "Law in the OT," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1962), III, 83, 84; Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 68. Norman W. Porteous, "The Care of the Poor in the Old Testament," Living the Mystery: Collected Essays (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, c.1967), pp. 145-147, finds no reason for dating the Code any later than the period of the settlement.

<sup>108</sup> Officials took the place of the elders at the gate during the monarchy.

<sup>109</sup> Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 72; Albrecht Alt, Essays on Old Testament History and Religion, translated by R. A. Wilson (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. c.1966), p. 148.



legislated in this casuistic way. The **עָנִי**, the afflicted one, is not to be charged any interest, for this would only be taking advantage of a brother in his misfortune (22:24). One who afflicts a widow or orphan is threatened that Yahweh will destroy him. In turn his wives will become widows and his children orphans (22:21-23).

In this section dealing with honesty in law-suits (23:1-8), warnings are made against perverting justice and oppressing the "weak" (**בְּיָד**, verse 3); or "your innocent poor man" (**אִישׁ צָדִיק וְעָנִי**, verse 6). **אִישׁ צָדִיק וְעָנִי** is mentioned here with the innocent and righteous and this probably colors its meaning, although in the next section, the law of the seventh year (23:10,11), **אִישׁ צָדִיק וְעָנִי** is used more in the sense of "one dispossessed," "one without property" (verse 11). The word therefore indicates not simply one who experiences poverty but one who has been deprived of his rightful share of the land. The land, after all, belongs to Yahweh, and he has given it to all his children.<sup>110</sup> That the people might be reminded of this fact was probably the original purpose of the fallow year. In the light of Yahweh's ownership of the land, debts and obligations which an individual had incurred during the previous six years in the cultivation of the land were abrogated.<sup>111</sup> This situation of debt and oppression, and particularly that of being dispossessed of one's family land, only became common during the monarchy. Consequently, it is likely that this part of the Covenant Code came from that period.

<sup>110</sup> Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 77.

<sup>111</sup> Alt, p. 165; followed by Kuschke, LVII, 36.



The Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 12 to 26), is even more concerned with the widow, the fatherless, the poor and oppressed. It represents the teaching of the Covenant Code as it has developed in sermonic style up to the time of its recovery under the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22:8-10). Consequently, it bears the influence of the changed social situation under the monarchy and seeks to deal with injustices which have come about through this change. It seeks to restrain the power and wealth of the king and to recall him to obedience to Yahweh "that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren" (Deut. 17:18-20)<sup>112</sup> It seeks to legislate for integrity in court procedures (Deut. 16:18-20; 19:15-20) as well as regulating assistance for the poor.

There is evident in this Code a desire to return to the old familial solidarity of early times when Israel was like a family. Therefore, the integrity of the poor man is to be upheld and he is to be shown mercy and kindness (Deut. 24:10-13), even to the extent of giving him what he needs without hope for return because of the closeness of the year of release (Deut. 15:9-10).<sup>113</sup> And in times of feasts, at the family rejoicings and religious festivals, the dispossessed, the widow and the fatherless, the Levite and the stranger are to be invited to take part and share in the good things in conformity to the old custom of clan gatherings (Deut. 14:22-27).

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<sup>112</sup>Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 68, 69; Kuschke, LVII, 43; Van der Ploeg, VII, 251.

<sup>113</sup>Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique, pp. 161, 163; Rylaarsdam, XIX, 18.



Other legislation was set down to alleviate the situation of the dispossessed, such as allowing them to eat the grapes and the grain from their neighbour's land, provided they did not carry the produce off with them (23:24-25) and to glean what was left over after harvest (24:19-22). Moreover, these dispossessed were to have the exclusive use of the tithe of produce consecrated to Yahweh every three years (14:28,29). So a definite attempt was being made to put the disinherited back into the picture of the familial or clan environment where justice would not be a matter of legal logic but of brotherly love and concern, just as Yahweh had had concern for them when he brought them out of Egypt.

The emphasis on this legislation in the Deuteronomic Code indicates that there was a growing problem at this time caused by the change in the social and economic structure. Not only was there a growth in the power and influence of the ruling and merchant classes, but the burden of state taxes was unequal and unjust and a real threat to the economic freedom of the rural peasant. Consequently, he was often forced to borrow and even in some cases to sell himself into slavery. Furthermore, as Von Rad suggests, when a year of release arrived, "it was he [the peasant] alone who had to bear the burden of this ordinance whilst the financial side of the economy experienced no interruption."<sup>114</sup> The Code attempted to relieve this grave situation. To the Levites and sojourners who had no inheritance there were added the widow and orphan who would have had

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<sup>114</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Deuteronomy: A Commentary (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1966), p. 106.



difficulty in working their ancestral plots to pay the taxes. They were an easy prey for the greedy and the oppressor. Included were others who through misfortune, affliction or oppression were dispossessed. All of these had become known as the **אֲנִי וְאֶבְיֹוֹן** (15:11; 24:14). They were not simply the "dispossessed," the "afflicted." In having their property taken from them, they had been treated unjustly, and so Yahweh would hear their cry.<sup>115</sup> The right of every member of the covenant people to share in and enjoy the fruits of their promised land given as an inheritance must be maintained. This must be the implication of Deut. 15:4: "But there shall be no dispossessed ( **אֲנִי וְאֶבְיֹוֹן** ) among you (for Yahweh will surely bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess)." Then the following verses have more force, since they deal with the unjust situation of the dispossessed. His "brothers" are to open their hands to him and to help him in his need (15:7-11) and thus partially correct the injustice done to him by their society. As the community has wronged him, so the community must make good (verse 11):

For the dispossessed ( **אֲנִי וְאֶבְיֹוֹן** ) will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to your afflicted one and to your dispossessed one ( **אֲנִי וְאֶבְיֹוֹן** ) in your land.

To take advantage of such a man's depressed situation and oppress him in any way would cause him to cry to Yahweh against his oppressor (24:12-15). Yahweh will certainly come to his defense for he takes special care of the disinherited.

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<sup>115</sup>Porteous, p. 149.



An attempt to get around the problem of ancestral property being sold to pay debts was made again in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17 to 26) which was assembled following the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.<sup>116</sup> Regulations were set down whereby every fifty years, the Jubilee Year, all fields and houses which had been alienated would return to their original owners, except the town houses which had to be redeemed within a year after their sale (Leviticus 25). This way a man might give up his familial land temporarily to reduce a debt, but eventually it would return to him. The only problem was that this Jubilee Year remained a pious dream. It was never put into practice.<sup>117</sup> Other than that, the Holiness Code repeats the prescriptions for leaving the gleaning of the harvest for the afflicted and for the sojourner ( **וְלַעֲרֵב וְלַגֵּר**, Lev. 19:10; 23:22) and also for being just in judgment towards the weak ( **צַדִּיק**, Lev. 19:15).

Of course, in the law it is to be expected that the focus would be on poverty per se. The plea of the law is a social one: alleviate and correct the unjust and unhealthy state of the poor and dispossessed. Certainly, poverty and lack are regarded here as unhealthy and contrary to God's plan as it was also by the prophets. The religious aspect is played down but it is still present in the concept of justice--Yahweh's and the brother's--which involved love more than logic. It is also involved in the concept of the covenant relationship between God and man in which God is seen ultimately as

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<sup>116</sup>Harrelson, III, 149.

<sup>117</sup>De Vaux, I, 175-177; Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 78-80.



the owner of everything and man as dependent upon him. Obedience in this relationship means continued blessing in that land which Yahweh has given. Therefore Yahweh is always ready to come to the aid of the oppressed when they cry out to him.

#### The Poor Man in the Wisdom Literature

When we come to the Wisdom literature we find that poverty is sometimes spoken about in disparaging terms. But there is also a new vocabulary for poverty here which may signify that there are secular terms for poverty to be distinguished from the more religious vocabulary of the poor man motif. This has been claimed by Kuschke<sup>118</sup> and denied by Van der Ploeg.<sup>119</sup> An examination of the terms as found in the Book of Proverbs where most of the new vocabulary is concentrated should lead us to the correct answer.

In turning to the normal vocabulary for the poor man motif as it is found in the Book of Proverbs, therefore, one would think that since poverty here is dealt with more from a secular viewpoint than is found in the prophets, a word like אֲדָנָי, which most scholars have taken as having the more secular meaning, would be prominent here. But אֲדָנָי is found only 4 times, over against 8 occurrences of עָנִי, עָנָה and 14 of אֲדָנָי. Of those 4 times, at least 3 (14:31; 30:14; 31:9) are in the context of warnings against oppression and injustice; and in 3 of them (30:14; 31:9; 31:20) אֲדָנָי

<sup>118</sup>Kuschke, LVII, 44-47.

<sup>119</sup>Van der Ploeg, VII, 253-258.



is coupled with  $\text{עָנִי}$ . This means that  $\text{אֲנִי עָנִי}$  has exactly the same meaning here as found in the prophets, one who has become poor or dispossessed through the greed or oppression of another. The same is true about  $\text{עָנָה}$  which is found 3 times in the context of warning against oppression (22:22; 30:14; 31:9), 2 in the sense of "humble" as opposed to the "proud" (3:34; 16:19), and 3 times the meaning is more neutral (15:15; 31:20; 14:21. 14:21 is only incidentally associated with  $\text{עָנָה}$  of verse 20.) The term  $\text{עָנָה}$  is clearly used in the Book of Proverbs in the sense of "weak and helpless." It also is prominent in warnings against oppression and injustice (14:31; 22:16,22; 28:3,11,15; 29:7,14) and is used in contrast to the rich (10:15; 28:11; 19:4). To help the helpless  $\text{עָנָה}$  is to lend to Yahweh (19:17) and to insure blessings (22:9). He who denies such help will himself be denied it (21:13). Two interesting references clearly distinguish between the socially poor man ( $\text{עָנִי}$ ), and the helpless man ( $\text{עָנָה}$ ). Prov. 28:3 reads: "A  $\text{עָנִי}$  who oppresses the  $\text{עָנָה}$  is a beating rain that leaves no food." And Prov. 10:15 says that while the rich man's wealth is his strength, the ruin of the helpless  $\text{עָנָה}$  is their poverty ( $\text{עָנָה}$ ). Thus we find that these terms continue to be used of the afflicted, the oppressed and the helpless who are under Yahweh's special protection. Nowhere are these terms used in a derogatory sense.

The same cannot be said for the derivatives of  $\text{עָנָה}$  and  $\text{עָנָה}$ . Poverty, indicated by  $\text{עָנָה}$  and its derivatives, is regarded as the result of laziness (6:11; 10:4; 24:34; 28:19; 20:13), of foolishness (13:18), and of gluttony (23:21). It can also be destructive



in that it causes ruin (10:15), misery (31:7), and may also lead to theft and the profaning of God's name (30:8). Generally, the word  $\text{שָׁרֵפ}$  indicates a man who is purely and simply poor in the socio-economic sense, and as such is often contrasted to the rich (13:7,8; 14:20; 18:23; 19:1,22; 22:2,7; 28:3,6). In his poverty he may also be a man who shows integrity (19:1), yet he is hated by friends and neighbours (14:20; 19:7). He needs to receive charity (28:27) and to be treated with dignity (God is his Maker, 17:5). He is also subject to oppression because of his vulnerable state (13:23; 29:13).<sup>120</sup> From this it becomes clear that  $\text{שָׁרֵפ}$  and its derivatives have rather a secular and, consequently, negative emphasis which is not found in the vocabulary of the poor man motif. This we have to grant to Kuschke over against Van der Ploeg.<sup>121</sup> The same must be said also of  $\text{נָדָר}$  and its derivatives. For  $\text{נָדָר}$  can mean here simply "one having need" (Prov. 12:9) but is understood more often as "one who lacks understanding" (Prov. 6:32; 7:7; 9:4,16; 11:12; 12:11).  $\text{בְּיָחֶסֶר}$  is "want" caused by petty thriftiness (Prov. 11:24), talkativeness (14:23), foolishness (21:5), pleasure (21:17), and laziness (6:11; 24:34).<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Cf. treatments of this word in Kuschke, LVII, 45; Van der Ploeg, VII, 256, 257; and Jesus Maria Liaño, "Los pobres en el Antiguo Testamento," Estudios Biblicos, XXV (1966), 121-123.

<sup>121</sup> Van der Ploeg's statement that  $\text{אֶבְיָוִן}$  is more akin to as a purely social term for "poor" does not bear up under investigation. Consequently his claim that  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{אֶבְיָוִן}$  are so often associated because  $\text{אֶבְיָוִן}$  furnishes the meaning of "poor" which  $\text{עָנִי}$  does not express sufficiently is quite wrong. See VII, 258.

<sup>122</sup> Kuschke, LVII, 45-46.



So we find ourselves in agreement with Kuschke that in Wisdom literature terms for poverty are found which are both neutral and secular and must be distinguished from the terms of the poor man motif.

In the Book of Job the traditional stand of the wise men that the wicked will be punished and those who fear God will be vindicated is critically questioned. In this the poor man again plays the role of the man who is oppressed and afflicted unjustly. The message of this book is that there is no simple arithmetic of divine justice and that both God and man are more complicated in their actions than popular wisdom teaching likes to assume. The conventional lines of thought are represented by Job's protagonists, as in 5:11,15,16:

He sets on high those who are lowly,  
and those who mourn are lifted to safety.  
. . . . .  
But he saves the fatherless from their mounn,  
the oppressed (אֲבֵיֹתָם) from the hand of the mighty.  
so the weak (חַלְוֵי) have hope,  
and the injustice shuts her mouth.

Job criticises their viewpoint and gives a devastating description of the misery of the poor man who is completely at the mercy of the wicked and godless oppressor, 24:1-4:

Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty,  
and why do those who know him never see his days?  
Men remove landmarks;  
they seize flocks and pasture them.  
They drive away the ass of the fatherless;  
they take the widow's ox for a pledge.  
They thrust the dispossessed (אֲבֵיֹתָם) off the road;  
the afflicted of the land (אֲבֵיֹתָם - אֲבֵיֹתָם) all hide themselves.

And so the poor man is exploited. His lands have been taken from him, and he is left cold, naked and hungry. His children are sold



into slavery and he is deprived of just wages by the oppressor. For the little that he may still own the poor man is murdered and robbed without redress (24:5-14). Yet "God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power." He gives them security and they are exalted before they die (24:22-24). So the argument continues.

Job claims that he was righteous in the way he upheld the cause of the oppressed and delivered the afflicted (29:11-16; 30:25-26; 31:16-23), yet he himself came to know "days of affliction" (עֲנִיּוֹת, 30:16,27). But his protagonists remain unshaken, and Elihu repeats that God always gives the עֲנִיּוֹת their right and the רָשָׁע is destroyed (36:5-7). The afflicted may have had to be purified of transgressions and so God delivers the "afflicted by their affliction: (עֲנִי כְּעֲנִי'וֹ, 26:15).

During the interplay of the dialog in Job, the poor man comes out first and foremost as the helpless one who is sorely oppressed by the wicked and godless. He appears to be completely at their mercy with no redress at all. But insofar as he is the one being oppressed and treated unjustly he is the innocent and righteous one to whose aid, according to the conventional line, God will surely come. This is more implied than said, although the עֲנִיּוֹת are mentioned in association with the צַדִּיק in contrast to the רָשָׁע (36:6-7). However, in accordance with the theme of Job, the poor man is by consequence socially and economically poor, a wretched, and unhappy man.



## The Poor Man in the Psalms

In our examination of the poor man motif in the Psalms, we are confronted with a problem. We have here a literature which in its individual parts has been divorced from its original environment, and probably has been altered and polished to suit the need for general use in worship in many situations in Israel's history. Consequently, date and authorship of the Psalms are impossible to ascertain, although attempts have been made, particularly in studies of the poor man motif. Thus, for instance, Causse has held that the Psalter has been written by the poor and for the poor. Poverty has been for them "the marvellously fertile terrain on which they have planted the most beautiful flowers of religious poetry."<sup>123</sup> Yet Causse's valid assertion that the sincere piety expressed in the Psalms is neither clerical nor ritual but has arisen out of the pious faith of the ordinary man should act as a restraint to those who would emphasize the purely cultic use of these psalms. Attempts made to find a particular cultic basis for the majority of the psalms have led to theories of a New Year Festival at which took place either the Festival of Yahweh's Enthronement according to Mowinckel,<sup>124</sup> or a Covenant Festival of Yahweh, according to Artur Weiser.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 96. Cf. also pp. 81-83.

<sup>124</sup> Mowinckel, He That Cometh, pp. 81-86.

<sup>125</sup> Artur Weiser, The Psalms: A Commentary, translated from the German by Herbert Hartwell (London: SCM Press Ltd, c.1962), pp. 27-29. For a summary of the idea of the New Year Festival and its supposed connection with the autumn festival see Hans-Joachim Kraus,



Related to his idea of Yahweh's annual enthronement at the New Year Festival, Mowinckel has also claimed that there was a kind of re-enactment of the enthronement of the king. In this re-enactment, the king symbolically suffers on behalf of the people and is raised up again, renewed in strength by Yahweh. The king is seen as "the channel through which Yahweh's blessings flow to the people, being conveyed primarily through his cultic functions."<sup>126</sup> Parallels for this idea were found in the original Canaanite Harvest Festival with its idea of the dying and rising God, and with Babylonian practices. This theory has been further developed and modified by Aubrey Johnson who sees the king as "a potential extension of the personality of Yahweh" and is thus described as Yahweh's Son, Servant and Messiah. His suffering of defeat and rejection and then deliverance by Yahweh as a kind of rebirth in the annual festival is seen as the origin of such concepts as the Suffering Servant and the humble Messiah.<sup>127</sup> While these scholars highlight aspects in the inter-relation of Yahweh, king, and people important for our study, many of the ideas expressed cannot be satisfactorily substantiated. Therefore, Kraus is correct in warning against adopting theories and principles seeking

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Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament, translated by Geoffrey Buswell (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, c.1966), pp. 7-9, 15-18, 61-67.

<sup>126</sup> Mowinckel, He That Cometh, p. 89.

<sup>127</sup> Aubrey R. Johnson, "Living Issues in Biblical Scholarship: Divine Kingship and the Old Testament," Expository Times, LXII (1950-1951), 39-42. See also Aubrey R. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955).



to co-ordinate the great complex variety of details on worship scattered throughout the Old Testament.<sup>128</sup>

Of the poor man terminology in the Psalms 'עָנִי, עָנָו is found 40 times, אֶבְיָוִן 22 times, לָצֵד is used only 5 times and נָדָה and הִלָּצָה occur only 3 times each. All these words are used of the worshiper to express his position of affliction and oppression, his wretched state before God. They are often used synonymously and in association with such passive terms as "righteous," and "godly," and are usually placed in contrast to the "wicked," "the proud" or the oppressor. An example of all this is readily given in the acrostic poem spanning Psalms 9 and 10. In this poem alone the writer includes himself under the category of "one who is crushed" ( נָדָה , 9:10; 10:18), "the unfortunate" ( הִלָּצָה , 10:8,10,14), "the afflicted" (עָנִי or עָנָו , 9:13,19; 10:2,9,12,17) and the "dispossessed" (אֶבְיָוִן , 9:19). He is also "innocent" (10:8) and one who trusts in Yahweh and seeks after him (9:11). For him Yahweh is the just king "enthroned forever" (9:8), and through him justice is established for all (9:5,9). Therefore Yahweh is the refuge for the oppressed (9:10) who will avenge them (9:13), deliver them from their troubles (9:15), and give them courage against their enemy (9:17,18). This enemy (אֲדָמָה) is seen variously as the "nations" ( גוֹיִם , 9:6,16,18,20,21; 10:16), the "wicked" אֲשֶׁר , 9:6,17,18; 10:2,3,13,15), and the "evildoer" (עָוֵר , 10:15). There are obviously two different strata in this poem which led the Massoretes to divide it into two psalms.

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<sup>128</sup>Kraus, Worship in Israel, p. 208.



Thus Psalm 9 is predominantly a national psalm, while Psalm 10 is is rather an individual lament. In the latter the enemy is described in more personal terms as a godless oppressor arrogantly oppressing the weak and helpless. He can hardly be regarded as some foreign nation. He is greedy for gain and godless, and yet he prospers and is quite confident that he will continue to do so. He believes he can do what he likes, for there is no God to punish him (10:3-11):

His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression;  
 under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.  
 He sits in ambush in the villages;  
 in the hiding places he murders the innocent.  
 his eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate (אֶזְרוּחַ),  
 he lurks in secret like a lion in his covert;  
 he lurks that he may seize the afflicted ( 'אֲנִי ),  
 he seizes the afflicted ( 'אֲנִי ) when he draws him into his net.  
 The unfortunate ( אֶזְרוּחַ ) is crushed, sinks down,  
 and falls by his might.  
 He thinks in his heart, "God has forgotten,  
 he has hidden his face, he will never see it."

It is significant to note that the poor man always has an enemy, who is sometimes described as wild animals (22:13-17; 74:19), as malicious witnesses (35:11), as "those who seek to snatch away my life" (40:15), as a band of ruthless and violent men, and generally as the wicked, the evildoer, the oppressor, or the arrogant. The poor man's enemy is sometimes seen as a group of evil men who surround him, plotting against him, seeking his death; they band together and bear false witness against him. Sometimes they hunt him like a wild beast and set all kinds of traps for him to catch him and destroy him. This is what G. W. Anderson has aptly called "on the one hand a confusing variety and on the other hand a conventional



monotony."<sup>129</sup> The use of stock phrases sometimes accounts for this monotony. Theories have been put forth that these enemies are essentially sorcerers who have cast their evil spells on the afflicted (Mowinckel), or that they are national enemies of Israel--either powerful foreign nations or their leaders who tyrannize Israel's king (Birkeland).<sup>130</sup> But while there may be some truth in both of these claims, there are other equally valid possibilities. Generally, the enemies of the poor man are just the same as they were in the prophets--the rich, the powerful, the arrogant, the oppressor, who use their power to take advantage of the weaker. They ridicule the simple faith of the believer who accepts the credo that the righteous will be blessed and the wicked destroyed by Yahweh. In his state of weakness and helplessness, the poor man fears sickness or famine or other misfortune, for then he knows he becomes so very vulnerable to the wicked. Falsehood and deceit come so easily to the evildoer, and the righteous man can do nothing but call upon Yahweh to vindicate him.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> George W. Anderson, "Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms," Bulletin of John Rylands Library, XLVIII (1965-1966), 20.

<sup>130</sup> Supra, notes 47 and 51.

<sup>131</sup> For fuller discussions of this theme, see Birkeland, Die Feinde des Individuums; Birkeland, The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms; Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, II, 2-8; A. R. Johnson, "The Psalms," The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research, Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study, edited by H. H. Rowley, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 171-203; Anderson, XLVIII, 18-29; Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 99; and Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique, pp. 244-247.



We need to remember, however, that these psalms have been used at different times and for varying occasions and consequently may have lost some of their original meaning and content. Originally, there may have been references to specific afflictions and specific men who caused them. Psalm 14, for instance, may have been a petition seeking deliverance for Israel, symbolized by the "afflicted" ( אָפֵי ), from the oppression of a godless nation.<sup>132</sup> Then again, this may have been a threat directed against the leading circles of Israel who in their godlessness and greed were riding roughshod over all, impoverishing the afflicted and eating up God's people "as they eat bread" (verse 4).<sup>133</sup> Whatever the situation, however, Yahweh is still the refuge of the afflicted. He is with the righteous and will deliver them.

The sufferings of the afflicted also appear in great variety. Many afflictions are caused by oppressors (10:2,8-13; 37:14; 107:39). They have caught him in their net (9:16,17; 25:15; 35:7,8). He has been robbed of his possessions (12:6). He has to contend with the worry of their false accusations (68:5-7) and unjust judgments. Very often the afflicted depicts his suffering as a grave sickness (22:7-9) which only turns his friends from him (41:10) and causes him to be mocked at (41:4,6). Surely he is guilty of some iniquity to have had so much trouble! (41:5; 40:12). The idea of sickness and suffering must have been caused by some definite offence

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<sup>132</sup>Birkeland, Die Feinde des Individuums, pp. 53-57.

<sup>133</sup>Weiser, p. 164.



against God is often present.<sup>134</sup> Suffering and affliction were regarded as a lessening of life, and so the fear of death was always present. The afflicted is conscious of being close to Sheol (9:14; 18:5,6; 22:16; 88:4-13) and already engulfed by the waters of the Underworld (69:2-3,15,16).<sup>135</sup> Sometimes it is simply living in fear of oppression and persecution which is the poor man's affliction, particularly the fear of those who "trust in their wealth and boast in the abundance of their riches" (49:7). Their riches give them power. Yet they are apart from God; hence, advises the psalmist, "be not afraid when one becomes rich" for "when he dies he will carry nothing away" (49:17). Very often the poor man's affliction is a whole combination of things such as false witnesses, scorners, evildoers, creditors, sin and sickness. They are inseparable from each other (40:12):

For evils have encompassed me without number;  
my iniquities have overtaken me till I cannot see;  
they are more than the hairs on my head; my heart fails me.

Poverty may indirectly be a contributing factor, but this is never regarded as the basic cause of the wretchedness of the afflicted.<sup>136</sup> Even when sickness and closeness to death are very prominent, the poor man's enemy is still there. This is strongly evident, for instance, in Psalm 22. The worshiper there was cast down into the depths of suffering. He was so close to death that

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<sup>134</sup> Kraus, p. 219.

<sup>135</sup> Johnson, "The Psalms," p. 171.

<sup>136</sup> Against Van der Ploeg, VII, 262.



the avaricious stood ready to divide his garments among them (verse 19). He had lost weight so that he could count all his bones (verse 18). He had no strength (verse 16). And as sickness was regarded as a punishment from God, he was shunned and mocked by all men (verses 7 to 9).<sup>137</sup> These mockers form part of his enemies. But there are others who are described as "bulls of Bashan" (verse 13), as a "roaring lion" (verse 14), as "dogs" (verses 17,21) and as "wild oxen" (verse 23). This reminds us of Amos 4:1, where the wives of the rich oppressors are called "cows of Bashan." These wild animals are probably the typical oppressors of the afflicted who wait to take over his property in payment for debts when he is sick. A sick man in debt is very vulnerable and, knowing the greed of his oppressors, he has much to fear. But God has answered his prayers and has raised him to health once more. God has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted one ( עָנָה וְיָנִיחַ, verse 25). Therefore, he who has been afflicted gives thanks with a thanksgiving offering inviting his less fortunate friends, the afflicted ones ( דָּוָה וְיָנִיחַ, verse 27), to share with him the thanksgiving meal according to custom (Deut. 12:17-19; 16:11,14).

It is possible also to understand this "sickness" of Psalm 22 more as anxiety and fear in the face of the oppressors. The worshiper would then have been mocked and despised for his lack of courage. He would then be, as he himself says, "a worm, and no man" (verse 7). Harris Birkeland, while first interpreting the worshiper's

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<sup>137</sup>Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 123; Birkeland, 'Ani und 'Anaw in den Psalmen, p. 40.



affliction as physical sickness, soon changed his interpretation to being the fear of the king in the face of foreign aggressors, the

אֲנִי. <sup>138</sup> There are certain references in the Psalms which lend credence to this view, particularly verses 28 to 32 where Yahweh is seen as ruling over the nations, that is, through his Anointed, as Birkeland explains. The similarities of this Psalm and some other psalms of lament with the Suffering Servant Songs should also be noted. <sup>139</sup> The possibility of this interpretation should not be ruled out, particularly in the light of the New Testament understanding of it. However, the important point is that the afflicted one has put his trust in Yahweh, and Yahweh has vindicated him before his enemies.

Justice is a constant theme of the poor man in the Psalms. His cry is for his rights to be held and his own righteousness to be acknowledged. <sup>140</sup> When he does not gain this justice from his fellowmen he appeals to Yahweh who will come to his aid and vindicate him. The worldly and rich man, on the other hand, resents the

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<sup>138</sup> Birkeland held that the affliction was sickness in his 'Ani und 'Anaw in den Psalmen, pp. 38-46, changing it to a "psychic suffering" in the Die Feinde des Individuums, pp. 216-228, published later that same year.

<sup>139</sup> See Otzen's discussion in regard to the אֲנִי-King of Zech. 9:9, pp. 136-140. There is no reason to take this further and see this as a cultic-psalm referring to the assumed dying and rising of the king in the cult-drama of the New Year Festival as proposed by the Scandinavian school. Cf. Johnson, Sacral Kingship, pp. 102-104; Otzen, p. 180; Mowinckel, He That Cometh, pp. 234-237.

<sup>140</sup> Johs. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), I-II, 348-349.



law for it compromises his independence. But the poor man is a man of the law for here he finds his strength and shield. Yet sometimes the covenant law does not protect him very well. Psalm 35 is a case in point. The psalmist seeks salvation from Yahweh who delivers the afflicted ( 'ִנְיָ and )ִנְיָ, verse 10) from the despoiler. He has been put on trial at which false witnesses have accused him of things he knows nothing about (verses 11,20,21):

For they do not speak peace,  
but against those who are quiet in the land  
they conceive words of deceit.  
They open wide their mouths against me;  
they say, "Aha, Aha!  
our eyes have seen it!"

Thus the false witnesses show their unthankfulness to him. For when they were sick, he had grieved and prayed for them as a friend and brother (verses 12-14).<sup>141</sup> Now they hate him without a cause (verse 19). So his only recourse is to call upon Yahweh to judge his cause and to vindicate him according to his righteousness (verses 23,23).

The afflicted one ( 'ִנְיָ, verse 30) of Psalm 69 is in the same predicament. He has been accused of stealing and he is asked to restore what he has not taken. Already, like the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah, he has been smitten and afflicted by God (verses 27,30). This may be sickness which his accusers regard as God's

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<sup>141</sup>We cannot draw from this that the petitioner's own affliction was sickness as does Hans Schmidt, Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 49) (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1928), pp. 36, 37.



indication of his guilt.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, once again the psalmist can only turn to Yahweh from whom nothing is hidden (verse 6). The psalmist believes that it has been his fervent piety and righteousness which aroused the envy and hatred of the wicked and which has led them to hate him without a cause. But Yahweh will deliver him that he may offer thanks and praise, and that the afflicted (אֲדֹנָיִם verse 33) may see it and be assured. A similar situation is found in Psalm 109 where the psalmist calls himself אֲדֹנָיִם (verse 22) and sees Yahweh as his advocate, "for he stands at the right hand of the אֲדֹנָיִם, to save him from those who condemn him to death" (verse 31).

The fact that the righteous suffer and the wicked appear to prosper was an impenetrable mystery to the poor man. But the faith of the poor man held steadfastly to the conviction that Yahweh would rise up and destroy the evildoer with his fearful arm and give to the afflicted and oppressed the final victory, blessing them with prosperity and the possession of the land.<sup>143</sup> Yahweh is always the righteous judge; the vindicator of the oppressed. When Israel becomes oppressed in war, they call on Yahweh to render them justice. For he saw them as the אֲדֹנָיִם in Egypt and brought them to the promised land (Ps. 68:11), he is the "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows" (68:6). He establishes judgment to save "all

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>143</sup> Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 116-119; Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique, pp. 256-258.



the oppressed of the earth" ( כָּל-עֲנִי אֶרֶץ, Ps. 76:10) which means that Yahweh would also be against them if they were the oppressor.<sup>144</sup> This theme of justice is central to the poor man motif in the Psalms. Consequently, the emphasis always remains on the justice and righteousness of God and not on the faith of the afflicted. The piety, innocence, and righteousness of the poor man is evident only insofar as the petitioners often claim to be innocent and righteous over against the wicked. But this never becomes the main point. The poor call on Yahweh because he is just and merciful, and the protector of the weak and helpless, not because of their piety.<sup>145</sup>

When justice and retribution were long in coming, the afflicted did not give up hope in Yahweh but were reminded that Yahweh will surely bring forth their vindication as the light and their right as the noonday (Ps. 37:6). "Fret not yourself," they were told (37:8-15),

for the wicked shall be cut off;  
 but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land.  
 Yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more;  
 though you look well at his place, he will not be there.  
 But the afflicted ( עֲנִי ) shall possess the land,  
 and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.  
 The wicked plots against the righteous,  
 and gnashes his teeth at him;  
 But the Lord laughs at the wicked,  
 for he sees his day is coming.  
 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows,  
 to bring down the afflicted and oppressed ( עֲנִי וְאֶת-כָּל-יֹסֵף ),  
 to slay those who walk uprightly;  
 their sword shall enter their own heart,  
 and their bows shall be broken.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Dupont, II, 69-70.

<sup>145</sup> In agreement with Martin-Achard, XXI, 351-352.



When this hope was not quickly fulfilled, the oppressed looked to the last times, the day of Yahweh, when the powerful would be humbled and trampled underfoot as they had always done to the afflicted. The wicked will be cast out the land of the living. But the righteous oppressed will be exalted, and the righteousness of Yahweh will be proclaimed forever. This longing for justice and retribution was paving the way for the doctrine of the resurrection and life eternal.<sup>146</sup>

It is very noticeable in the Psalms that the poor man motif is often used in connection with a group of worshipers. This has led to the theory that there was a definite party of the poor ( the  $\text{ד'יָגָו}$ ) existing in Israel who were in direct opposition to the aristocratic party of the rich and powerful, known by the  $\text{אֲנָשֵׁי חַיִל}$  party as the "wicked." But the evidence does not lead us this far. It speaks only of the cult-community, the congregation, which is sometimes addressed as "the afflicted," "the oppressed," "the humble," and also as "the righteous" even in those psalms of individual lament and thanksgiving (Ps. 22:25,26; 32:11; 34:2,9, 17,18; 69:32,33; 107:41,42). It appears that these psalms of thanksgiving were also sung by the worshiping congregation as a whole. The congregation could join in with the psalmist and regard themselves as the "afflicted," also needing Yahweh's protection and aid in the face of wickedness and evil. This, of course, comes out more clearly in the so-called community psalms.

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<sup>146</sup>Cf. Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 132-133; Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique, pp. 257-258. Also Kuschke, LVII, 55.



In Psalm 12, for instance, the worshipers obviously regard themselves as the only faithful to be found among the sons of men because there is so much deceit and falsehood everywhere (verses 1-2). In order to escape this oppression and wickedness they turn to God as the **עֲנִיִּים** and the **אֲנִיּוֹנִים** (verse 6). In Psalm 74, the congregation (**עַמֶּךָ**, verse 2), bewailing the destruction of the Temple,<sup>147</sup> pleads with God not to forget them, his dove, his "afflicted ones" (**עֲנִיִּים**, verse 19),<sup>148</sup> but to remember his covenant with them. Their cry is the familiar one: "Let not the crushed (**דָּבַח**) be put to shame, but let the **עֲנִי וְאֲנִיּוֹן** praise thy name" (verse 21). An individual lament like Psalm 140 closes with an obvious reference to the congregation (verses 12,13):

I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted (**עֲנִי**),  
and executes justice for the oppressed (**אֲנִיּוֹן**).  
Surely the righteous one shall give thanks to thy name;  
the upright one shall dwell in thy presence.

Similarly, in the psalms of praise the congregation is clearly associated with the afflicted in contrast to the wicked. An example of this is found in Ps. 147:6: "The Lord lifts up the **עֲנִיִּים**, he casts the wicked to the ground." We see this again in Ps. 149:4 where "people" and "afflicted" are in synonymous parallelism: "For the Lord takes pleasure in his people, he adorns the **עֲנִיִּים** with victory."

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<sup>147</sup>Weiser, p. 518.

<sup>148</sup>This is the only time that the dove is connected so closely with the poor man motif. The dove is a symbol in the Old Testament for innocence, simplicity and love (Hos. 7:11; Song of Songs 2:14; 5:2; 6:9; cf. Matt. 10:16), and the moaning of a dove was a figure



From this it becomes clear that the poor man terminology takes on deeper spiritual meaning in the Psalms. The poor man is not only the righteous one in that he is unjustly treated by the wicked. He is the humble one over against the proud princes and kings of the earth (Ps. 76:9,12; 107:39-41; 113:7-9). He is the godly and upright man over against the godless evildoer. Moreover, because of the very nature of the Psalms he is generally seen in the position of worship, being in the Temple praying to Yahweh. To attempt to reconstruct the socio-economic Sitz im Leben of these psalms is no longer useful. The psalms have been polished through much use. It is not always possible to ascertain what the social status of the original composer may have been. All that can be said about some of the psalmists is that they were not men of wealth, power or influence, because they were afflicted and oppressed. But they are not necessarily, therefore, stricken with poverty and want. Poverty itself is never an issue. The issue is always oppression, affliction, false accusation. Sickness is only an issue insofar as it is connected to the others. The rich are not denounced per se but only insofar as they oppress, lie, deceive, and tyrannize. It is conceivable, therefore, that as time went on and the worshiping congregation used the poor man terminology in its liturgy, the worshipers would see themselves as the "poor man" in their humility before God in worship whether they were socially poor or not.

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for crying to God for justice and forgiveness (Is. 38:14; 59:11; Ezek. 7:16; cf. Nah. 2:7). Here it depicts the helplessness and innocence of Israel.



This point is evident in many of these psalms. Let us take, for example, Psalm 34. This is a thanksgiving Psalm recited in the congregation. The thankful psalmist proclaims to the congregation: "This <sup>יְיָ</sup> cried and Yahweh heard him and saved him out of all his troubles" (verse 7). And what Yahweh has done for him, he can do for all those present, so "let the <sup>ד'יְיָ</sup> hear and be glad" (verse 3). He then paints his picture of a "poor man" (verses 18 to 20):

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears  
and delivers them out of all their troubles.  
The Lord is near to the broken-hearted,  
and saves the crushed in spirit.  
Many are the afflictions of the righteous one;  
but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

The poor man portrays a very realistic attitude to affliction. Righteousness does not help a man to escape suffering. On the contrary, it may very well be the reason why a man suffers. But true happiness and joy can come through suffering and affliction when a person turns to God, seeking his help, and experiences his abiding nearness. Only he who is broken-hearted and crushed in spirit will experience what the nearness of God can really mean.<sup>149</sup>

It thus develops in the Psalms that the afflicted are the pious insofar as they see themselves to be the servants of God, as his righteous and upright ones, and insofar as they put their trust in him. But while they may realize that affliction has helped to purify their faith, suffering is never looked upon as a blessed state nor

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<sup>149</sup>Weiser, p. 299. Birkeland's desperate attempt to make Psalm 34 into a national psalm (The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms, pp. 35-36), with the <sup>ד'יְיָ</sup> as Israel and the <sup>ד'יְיָ</sup> as gentiles is thoroughly unconvincing.



is poverty ever seen as an ideal. Nor are they poor voluntarily. If they were poor it was simply because of unfortunate circumstances over which they had no control, or because of the greed of others against which they cried out to God. Wealth and prosperity are always for them the signs of God's blessing (Ps. 37:11).<sup>150</sup> While these afflicted may worship together as a kind of a "spiritual fraternity,"<sup>151</sup> there is no evidence that they ever were a party or formed any kind of organization. The Psalms certainly show no evidence that they became a social movement.<sup>152</sup> Their fellowship was simply in suffering and oppression, as well as in the common dependence upon Yahweh. Thus the term "afflicted" could at different times refer to an individual, to a group, or to the whole nation of Israel.

Influenced by the prophets, the psalmists also had looked for the fulfilment of their hopes for justice, righteousness, and peaceful prosperity in Yahweh's Anointed, the king. If their present king did not fulfil their hopes then they waited for another. Their hopes became the messianic ideal. But the king, who represented Yahweh on earth, had the grave responsibility to be a righteous and wise ruler, and thus carry out the justice which Yahweh offers.

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<sup>150</sup> Against Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, pp. 100-101.

<sup>151</sup> Causse, Du Groupe Ethnique, p. 259.

<sup>152</sup> Against Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël, p. 85; and in agreement with Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalmen, in Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament. (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, c.1960), XV, 83.



Commenting on Psalm 72, a royal psalm, A. R. Johnson makes an important point:

The nation cannot be expected to be righteous and therefore prosperous, if the king does not prove to be righteous; and, as we learn from the opening line of the psalm, he cannot do this in his own strength; but is ultimately dependent upon Yahweh.<sup>153</sup>

The king was Yahweh's Anointed One, his special representative. On his enthronement the king became Yahweh's Son (Ps. 2:7; compare 2 Sam. 7:14), his royal son (Ps. 72:1). Because Yahweh has a special concern for the weak and afflicted, so the king is expected to reflect this same concern. Consequently, in Psalm 72, the people pray that the king may show this divine righteousness (verses 1,2,4):

Give the king thy justice, O God,  
and thy righteousness to the royal son!  
May he judge thy people with righteousness;  
and thine afflicted ( עֲנִיִּים ) with justice!  
May he defend the cause of the afflicted of the people ( עֲנִיֵּי-עַם ),  
give deliverance to the oppressed one ( אֶבְיֹן )  
and crush the oppressor!

Then they continue on in confidence that he will have dominion over all the land and its inhabitants with kings and nations subject to him because he acts in righteousness. Then Yahweh is with him (verses 12 to 14):

For he delivers the oppressed one ( אֶבְיֹן ) when he calls,  
the afflicted one ( עֲנִי ), and him who has no helper.  
He has pity on the weak and the oppressed ( הֵבֵל וְאֶבְיֹן ),  
and saves the lives of the oppressed ones ( אֶבְיֹנִים ).  
From oppression and violence he redeems their life,  
and precious is their blood in his sight.

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<sup>153</sup> Johnson, Sacral Kingship, p. 11.



The one requirement of the king is to mirror the righteousness of God. He is to transmit to his people Yahweh's promises, his blessings and his power. In a very full sense he is, therefore, to represent Yahweh to the people. But in a very real sense he is called to represent the people to Yahweh too. As such, he intercedes with Yahweh on the people's behalf as Yahweh's servant (Ps. 132:10; 89:4,51). As such he bears the suffering and humiliation of the nation in himself before Yahweh. In this sense he becomes the "afflicted one" himself, pleading deliverance from his afflictions. This is brought out in Psalm 89 where the king is depicted in his double role. As the representative of Yahweh, he is Yahweh's first-born son (verse 28), and so he can address God as "my Father" (verse 27). As the representative of his people before Yahweh, he is the suffering Servant pleading to be delivered from scorn and humiliation (verses 39 to 52).<sup>154</sup> Into this context should also be recalled the royal interpretation of Psalm 22. Even if we discount this interpretation it must certainly be granted that there is a close connection between the Davidic king, the Suffering Servant, and the righteous afflicted one in all these psalms. For this reason the association of the Psalter both with Jesus' kingship and with his suffering is readily understandable.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24, 108. If with North, Zeitschrift, L, 26, we regard the Psalm as composite and the last verses as exilic, the interpretation of a suffering Messiah must still remain.



We sum up. In the Psalms we have found that the "poor man" is the man who suffers unjustly not so much from material poverty but from oppression, affliction, or persecution. In this state he turns to Yahweh, knowing that it is only from Yahweh that he can be judged righteously and receive vindication and retribution. The poor man finds himself weak and helpless before the rich and powerful, but he finds strength in the Lord. Because of this reliance upon Yahweh he is depicted as righteous, upright, godly, and humble. When the nation suffers and turns to God for help, it turns to him as the afflicted one, the poor man. In oneness with his people and as their representative, the king becomes the afflicted one before Yahweh. He suffers on their behalf and intercedes on their behalf before Yahweh. In the development and use of the Psalms this has become the messianic ideal. But also, the messianic king will be Yahweh's representative to the afflicted in showing Yahweh's righteousness and justice and mercy, giving protection to the weak and oppressed, and setting the perfect example of righteousness. The royal Messiah will suffer on their behalf and intercede for them, but he will also lead them in the fulfilment of Yahweh's promises to possess the land and rejoice in abundant prosperity (Ps. 37:11).

#### The Poor Man Terminology in the Septuagint

As we move into the Greek speaking world, the poor man motif becomes considerably more complicated in that a vocabulary is used which has a basically different emphasis. Whereas the Hebrew vocabulary for the motif is originally theologically based in the



covenant and emphasizes helplessness and oppression, the Greek vocabulary chosen by the Septuagint translators is entirely secular and stresses material poverty. This naturally leads to a certain amount of confusion in the expression of the poor man motif.

For the main Hebrew words of our motif ( עָנִי, עָנָו, אֲבִיּוֹן, צָר ) the Septuagint translators come up with πτωχός, πένης, πρᾶύς, and ταπεινός. These are the important words although they do use a number of others such as ἰνδηνός (poor, impoverished), ἀβθενής (weak, sick), ἀδύνατος (powerless), ἐπιδεσμένος (a person in need), et cetera. The above four important words, however, are also used to translate words related to our motif such as צָר and אֲבִיּוֹן, as well as those words which are neutral or negative in meaning and therefore not part of our poor man motif, such as עָנָו and עָנִי. Nevertheless, רִדְדָה is translated in various ways but never by πτωχός, πένης, πρᾶύς, or ταπεινός.

In the Greek world of that time these words had well-defined meanings. Πτωχός originally comes from the root πτώβδην, "to bow down timorously," "to cower with fear," and in practice comes to mean "beggar." That is, the πτωχός is a man who is without possessions, completely destitute, and forced to seek the help of others by begging. It was quite alien to the Greek world to think of a πτωχός as being under the special divine protection, nor could he expect any help from the gods in time of social conflict.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>155</sup>Friedrich Hauck, "πτωχός, πτωχεία, πτωχεύω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, VI, 886-887. Cf. also Dupont, Les Beatitudes, II, 21-22; H. Clavier, "L'Acces au Royaume de Dieu," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, XXII (1942),



**Πένυς** differs from **πτωχός** in that it denotes one who simply has few possessions and has to work for his living.

is related to **πένονται**, "to work hard," and was applied to the laboring class, craftsmen and small peasants. They are the "poor" in contrast to the "rich" in that they work for wages while the rich live on their income without working. The difference between **πτωχός** and **πένυς** is shown in a statement by Aristophanes (Ploutos 552-554):

The life of the beggar (**πτωχῶν**) consists of living without having anything; the life of the poor man (**πένυτος**) consists of living thriftily and applying himself to his work; he does not have too much, but he does not lack what he really needs.<sup>156</sup>

**πραΐς** denotes a person who is "mild," "friendly," "gentle," "pleasant" as opposed to one who is "rough," "hard," "violent." The Septuagint translators may have chosen this word for **יָגֵן** because it often has the sense of the calm acceptance of fate or human injustice.<sup>157</sup> **ταπεινός** has the meaning of "humble," "lowly," "insignificant," "weak," "dejected," and even "modest."<sup>158</sup>

An analysis of the use of these Greek words in translating the Hebrew vocabulary of the poor man motif reveals no consistency. The four Greek words are used interchangeably in translating the

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17; Edwin Hatch, Essays in Biblical Greek (Oxford: Clarendon Press, c.1889), p. 73.

<sup>156</sup> See Hatch, p. 73; Dupont, Les Beatitudes, II, 21; Friedrich Hauck, "**πένυς, πένυχος**," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, VI, 37-38.

<sup>157</sup> Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz, "**πραΐς, πραΐτος**," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, VI, 645, 647.

<sup>158</sup> Walter Grundmann, "**ταπεινός, ταπεινώσις**," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, c.1969), VIII, 3.



Hebrew words. There is no indication anywhere of an attempt to retain the distinctive meanings of the word in secular Greek, except to some degree in the case of *πραῦς* which is used to translate only *אָנִי* and *אָנִי* in certain instances. An indication of how interchangeable the words can be is given in Psalms 9 and 10, which the Septuagint takes as one psalm, Psalm 9. In verse 10 *אָנִי* is translated as *πένης*, but then in verse 13 *אָנִי* is also translated by *πένης*. In verse 19 *πτωχός* is used for *אָנִי*, while *πένης* is retained for *אָנִי*. Yet in verse 23 (10:2) *אָנִי* is translated with *πτωχός*. Verse 29 (10:8) finds *אָנִי* translated with *πένης* and in the next verse the two instances of *אָנִי* are again translated with *πτωχός*. In verse 31 (10:10) *אָנִי* is again *πένης*, as is also *אָנִי* in verse 33 (10:12). However, in verse 35 (10:14) *אָנִי* becomes *πτωχός* and *πένης* is retained for *אָנִי* in verse 38 (10:17). In verse 39 (10:18) *אָנִי*, previously translated by *πένης* (verse 10), is now translated by *κατενός*. The only possible distinction noticeable here is the attempt to retain a distinction between *אָנִי* and *אָנִי*, although this distinction is not generally retained elsewhere as the following comparison of translations shows:<sup>159</sup>

	Times	πτωχός	πένης	κατενός	πραῦς	others
<i>אָנִי</i>	75	38	14	8	5	10
<i>אָנִי</i>	20	4	3	5	8	—
<i>אָנִי</i>	61	11	30	2	—	18
<i>אָנִי</i>	46	20	8	3	—	15
<i>אָנִי</i>	22	9	7	1	—	5
<i>אָנִי</i>	4	—	4	—	—	—
<i>אָנִי</i>	11	—	—	—	—	11

<sup>159</sup>Based on the table of comparisons and the study made by Liaño, XXV, 162-166.



From the table it is clear that there are no real distinctions made but that the translators had preferences:  $\pi\tau\omega\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$  for  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{עָנִי}$ ,  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\varsigma$  for  $\text{עָנִי}$ , and  $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\varsigma$  for  $\text{עָנִי}$ . It is also clear that they made some endeavor to distinguish between  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{עָנִי}$  in accordance with the tradition at that time, although this distinction is not always retained. There may be evidence in some instances that the translators are sometimes translating according to their interpretation of the meaning. Evidence for this is seen, first of all, in the use of other words or phrases such as  $\acute{\alpha}\beta\theta\epsilon\iota\eta\varsigma$ ,  $\acute{\alpha}\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , and  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\rho\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\kappa\alpha\tau\iota\varsigma$ .<sup>160</sup> But it may also be seen in the use made of  $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\varsigma$  and  $\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$  in translating only  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{עָנִי}$ .

In turning to other Greek translations of the Old Testament we find little evidence of consistency. For example, in Ps. 11(12):5, both  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{עָנִי}$  are translated by the Septuagint and by Symmachus with  $\pi\tau\omega\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$ , and by Aquila with  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\varsigma$ ; in Is. 66:2  $\text{עָנִי}$  is translated  $\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$  by the Septuagint,  $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\varsigma$  by Aquila,  $\pi\tau\omega\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$  by Symmachus, and  $\beta\upsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\tau\rho\iota\mu\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\nu$  by Theodotion.<sup>161</sup> H. J. Schoeps, in studying the translation of the Ebionite Symmachus, has found that Symmachus always translates  $\text{עָנִי}$  with  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\varsigma$  and also, for the most part,  $\text{עָנִי}$ . But the word  $\pi\tau\omega\lambda\acute{o}\varsigma$  is a translation of  $\text{עָנִי}$  13 times and of  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{עָנִי}$  once each.

<sup>160</sup>Cf. Joseph Ziegler, Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaias (Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), p. 83.

<sup>161</sup>See Hatch, p. 75 for further examples.



Since  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$  was still the word connected with the Ebionite Christians, Symmachus may have regarded  $\text{אֲבִיּוֹן}$  as too degrading a term to be translated by the Ebionite name, but regarded  $\text{עָנִי}$  as having a more religious connotation. This becomes more evident in his translation of special passages such as Zech. 9:9, Is. 11:4 and 66:2, in all of which  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$  appears as the term denoting the Ebionite fellowship or their Messiah.<sup>162</sup>

Important inferences can be made on the basis of all this. First of all, the main Greek words  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$ ,  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\varsigma$ ,  $\pi\pi\acute{\rho}\iota\varsigma$  and  $\tau\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$  form a group closely corresponding to the group of Hebrew words forming the poor man motif,  $\text{עָנִי}$ ,  $\text{עֲנָו}$ ,  $\text{אֲבִיּוֹן}$ , and  $\text{בְּדָל}$ . Because the translators assumed that the Hebrew words referred to one and the same class of people with very little distinction in terms, they followed suit and used these four words in the same way to refer to the same class.<sup>163</sup> To a large degree, therefore, they became interchangeable with one another and belong to one another by association. Consequently, the terms lost much of their original Classical Greek meaning and took on, at least in Jewish circles, to some degree the meaning the equivalent terms had in the Old Testament. The Septuagint translation, therefore, cannot be used as a criterion for the meaning of words like  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{אֲבִיּוֹן}$ , but rather the contrary is the case. All this, as well

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<sup>162</sup> Hans Joachim Schoeps, Theologie und Geschichte des Juden-Christentums (Tübingen: Verlag J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], c.1949), pp. 352-355.

<sup>163</sup> Hatch, pp. 75, 76.



as the evidence of other Greek translations of the Old Testament, must be indicative of how these terms were used at the time of the New Testament. This was bound to be the cause of some confusion as the early Church moved into the Hellenistic world where there was the confrontation of the variant meanings of this poor man vocabulary.

The study of the poor man motif in the Old Testament leads us to a number of important conclusions which have a bearing on the the motif in the New Testament and subsequent implications for Christology. First of all, material poverty is not the important element or the motif. "Poor man" is therefore really a misnomer, although the weak, afflicted and oppressed were obviously mostly poor by consequences. They were certainly less powerful than their enemy, the evildoer, and usually without defence. They were the oppressed and afflicted before the oppressor and the greedy who had more power either by political influence or wealth. So justice is the cry. But it is more than simply asking for their due. They realize that they are entirely dependent upon Yahweh's mercy and everlasting kindness to come to their aid and bring them to righteousness.

Basic to the whole motif is the covenant relationship. As with all relationship based on familial or fellowship ties, when all observe the rules of the relationship there is benefit and blessing for all. But when a section of that fellowship does not keep the rules those who are still committed to the fellowship are at a grave disadvantage. They become the easy prey of the greedy and powerful. This is the dilemma of the poor man. It is in the covenant



relationship that the poor man terminology has its essential force and meaning. On this basis such terms as  $\text{שָׁרֵף}$  and its derivatives, while loosely related to the poor man terminology, do not belong to the motif, being neutral and secular terms for poverty.

It is quite clear, moreover, that the ethico-theological and socio-economic aspects of the motif are inseparable. Therefore it is not correct to speak of the terminology as sometimes having an economic meaning and sometimes a spiritual meaning. A development is noticeable in emphasis as we move into the Psalms but this is because it is generally the poor man himself speaking who is concerned to point out his innocence and his reliance upon Yahweh. Therefore, insofar as the emphasis is turned to the poor man's approach to Yahweh, he becomes by implication the humble, the obedient, the righteous. This has been evident right from the beginning in a terms like  $\text{עָנִי}$  and  $\text{אֲנִי עָנִי}$ . But the emphasis even here is still on the poor man's need for justice and the fact that only Yahweh can finally give this to him graciously.

When the monarchy was introduced, the king, as Yahweh's representative to the people and also as the people's representative to Yahweh, was the natural defender of justice and the protector and helper of the weak and oppressed. Yet too often the king was either inaccessible and surrounded by corrupt officials or he was the oppressor himself. He was the oppressor indirectly when he employed corrupt officials at the gate and when his unequal taxation put a great burden on small farmers and those who had suffered misfortune so that they were often at the mercy of avaricious creditors. But



there are also evidences of a king being the oppressor directly. The typical example of this is the case of Ahab taking Naboth's vineyard by confiscation after his false witnesses had accused Naboth at the gate and had him stoned to death. In the longing for a just and righteous king messianism was nourished. In fact, messianism finds its basic core in the poor man's cry for justice. It is a blend of his hoping for an ideal king in his own situation in life and his realization that Yahweh is finally the only one who can fulfil that ideal and bring justice and righteousness.

The Day of Yahweh then becomes the day of vindication, when Yahweh himself will rule, and will destroy the wicked oppressor, manifesting his mercy and righteousness in favor of the afflicted and oppressed, the weak and the helpless. Then the poor man will be the true Israel, living in peace and prosperity in the kingdom of God. But from his own experience the poor man has seen that righteousness and suffering go together. It is always the righteous who are persecuted and oppressed, so it was logical to expect that the righteous Messiah would have to suffer too. He would be a Suffering Servant for his people, willingly giving himself for them, but always remaining righteous in his obedience to Yahweh.

These hopes and ideals were no party program. There is no evidence that there was an  $\Delta^{\prime}jy$  party in Old Testament times which had consolidated their forces against the party of the wicked. Certainly, people with common needs, a common faith and common ideals must have felt they were a spiritual brotherhood, the heirs of the new covenant kingdom, but there are no signs of organization. Nor was poverty



part of their ideal. They hoped for material prosperity governed by a spiritual relationship with God and their fellowmen, a hope which was partly to be fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah.

The literature of the intertestamental period provides a bridge between the thought world of the New Testament. It is through the study of this literature that we are able to gauge whether the poor man's lot had changed; and, if so, what impact this might have had on the teaching of Jesus.

#### The Poor Man's Lot in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

The words of Jesus ben Sirach (ca. 190 B.C.) has much in common with the Book of Proverbs and other wisdom literature, including the exhortation for the poor man. The confusion in the use of this vocabulary which already in regard to the Septuagint is compounded when the most frequent word used is עֲשֵׂה (21 times), and it has four other translations: עָשָׂה (5 times), עָשָׂה (5 times), עָשָׂה (5 times), and עָשָׂה (once each). Consequently, it refers to a man who is dependent on him to a man who is afflicted and in distress. עָשָׂה is found only 3 times, but it translates 3 different Hebrew words: עָשָׂה, עָשָׂה, and עָשָׂה, and generally refers to a man who is dependent on the rich. עָשָׂה occurs only twice, translating עָשָׂה and עָשָׂה, but עָשָׂה is also found, occurring 5 times, translating עָשָׂה. עָשָׂה occurs 9 times and translates

For a study of the social aspects, see Abraham Greenberg, "The Social Aspects of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1941), 122-140.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD AS BACKGROUND OF THE POOR MAN MOTIF

The literature of the intertestamental period provides a bridge to the thought world of the New Testament. It is through the study of this literature that we are able to gauge whether the poor man motif has changed; and, if so, what impact this might have had on the teaching of Jesus.

#### The Poor Man Motif in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha<sup>1</sup>

The Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (ca. 190 B.C.) has much in common with the Book of Proverbs and other Wisdom literature, including its vocabulary for the poor man. The confusion in the use of this vocabulary noted already in regard to the Septuagint is compounded here. The most frequent word used is *πτωχός* (23 times), and it has been used to translate *צַדִּיק* (6 times), *עָנִי* (5 times), *אֶבְיָוֹן* (twice), and *הַבְּיָוֹן* and *שֶׁחַר* (once each). Consequently, it ranges in meaning from a beggar dependent on alms to a man who is afflicted and oppressed. *Πένυς* is found only 4 times, but it translates 3 different Hebrew words, *צַדִּיק*, *עָנִי*, and *שֶׁחַר*, and generally refers to a poor man in contrast to the rich. *Πρωτός* occurs only twice, translating *עָנִי* and *בְּיָוֹן*, but *Πρωτίτης* is also found, occurring 6 times, usually for *הַבְּיָוֹן*. *Ταπεινός* occurs 9 times and translates

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<sup>1</sup>For a brief summary on the social aspects, see Abraham Cronbach, "The Social Ideals of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," Hebrew Union College Annual, XVIII (1944), 122-148.



כֶּן 4 times and שֶׁנִּי once.<sup>2</sup> It is evident particularly with the use of πρᾶνός and ταπεινός that there is a conscious desire to interpret the original Hebrew terms according to their context. Otherwise there has been no attempt to differentiate in meaning between different Hebrew words except, perhaps, in the case of שֶׁנִּי.

One of the striking characteristics of the Wisdom of Sirach is the antithesis between rich and poor. Sirach sees nothing wrong with riches if they are free from sin (13:24), but this does not prevent him from making a devastating attack on the rich and those who seek their favors. He devotes a whole chapter (13) to denouncing the rich as proud, godless, and greedy, determined to oppress the poor. The antithesis between rich and poor is made irreconcilable:

What fellowship has a wolf with a lamb?

No more has a sinner with a godly man.

What peace is there between a hyena and a dog?

And what peace between a rich man and a poor man (πρᾶνός, שֶׁנִּי)?

Wild asses in the wilderness are the prey of lions;

likewise the helpless (πτωχός, שֶׁנִּי) are pasture for the rich.

Humility (ταπεινότης, שֶׁנִּי) is an abomination to a proud man;

likewise a poor man (πτωχός, שֶׁנִּי) is an abomination to a rich one.

When a rich man totters, he is steadied by his friends,

but when a helpless man (ταπεινός, שֶׁנִּי) falls, he is pushed away by friends.<sup>3</sup>

So it continues. The reader is warned to have nothing to do with a rich man on the grounds that "he will exploit you if you can be of

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jesus Maria Liaño, "Los pobres en el Antiguo Testamento," Estudios Bíblicos, XXV (1966), 167.

<sup>3</sup>13:17-21. Quotations from the Apocrypha are based on The Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957).



use to him" (13:4), and "he will drain your resources and will not care" (13:5). Already prior to this, Sirach has warned the reader against getting involved with powerful and rich men because, as he implies, the law will always be on the side of those who have the greater resources (8:1-2). This is a constant theme in Sirach and reflects the social injustice of his day. For no matter how hard a man works, the rich get still richer and the poor get poorer (31:3, 4). The love of money is society's cancer. How much more blessed, therefore, is a rich man who is found blameless (31:5-11)! But it is the rich man's greed and lack of mercy which rules out any possibility of his worship being pleasing to God. For "like one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the man who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor" (πενήτων, 34:20. Compare verses 18 to 22). Whereas the "prayer of a poor man (πτωχός) goes from his lips to the ears of God, and his judgment comes speedily" (21:5).

In comparison to the arrogance and greed of the rich man, the poor man is righteous and godly. Being unjustly treated and oppressed, he comes under God's protection and is pleasing to him. God hears his prayers and will turn the tables in his favor (10:14, 15):

The Lord has cast down the thrones of rulers,  
and has seated the lowly (πραΐς, דַּבְּיָוָה) in their place.  
The Lord has plucked up the roots of the nations,  
and has planted the humble (ταπεινοί) in their place.

The Greek translation here gives a definite spiritual interpretation to the original Hebrew and thus binds the weak and oppressed with those humble before God. For the naturally humble state of the



oppressed and helpless becomes a religious virtue since God is glorified by the humble (ταπεινός, 3:20). Therefore a wise man will humble himself so that he might find favor in the sight of the Lord (3:18). Thus the important virtue to seek after is humility (πραΰτης, πλγ, 1:27; 3:17; 4:8; 10:28). This is definitely looked upon as a religious virtue signifying living in humble obedience and dependence upon God.<sup>4</sup> God is the upholder of justice, and when the helpless man is oppressed God comes to his aid (πτωχός, ζη, 35:13). God cannot be bribed and so the fatherless and the widow can expect justice from him. He will vindicate their cause and destroy their oppressors (35:17-18):

The prayer of the helpless (ζη, ταπεινός) pierces the clouds, and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord; he will not desist until the Most High visits him, and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment. And the Lord will not delay, neither will he be patient to them, till he crushes the loins of the unmerciful and repays vengeance on the nations . . . .

The justice and mercy of God still remain prominent, and it is in this context that the humility of the poor man must be seen.

Since the poor man is under God's special protection, Sirach advises that the requests for help of the helpless and afflicted should not be rejected. God hears his prayers for retribution. The wise man will rather answer the afflicted with humility, deliver the oppressed from the evildoer, judge a case impartially, and help

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Josef Haspecker, Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach: Ihre Religiöse Struktur und Ihre Literarische und Doktrinäre Bedeutung (Rom: Päpstliches Bibelinstitut, c.1967), p. 327.



the fatherless and widows (4:1-10, 7:32; 29:8,9). This charity, however, is to be limited to godly men--another indication of the spiritual connotation given to the poor man motif: "Do good to the humble (*ταπεινός*) but do not give to the ungodly" (12:5).

In the later Wisdom of Solomon, the poor man (*πένυς*) is mentioned only once. But he is described as a "righteous poor man" who is oppressed by fellow Jews turned apostate. They wish only to have a good time and so to please themselves. They therefore resent the righteous man who by his obedient life is a reproach to them. So they decide to oppress and persecute him together with widows and the aged. The description of the lot of the righteous man is then given (2:10-5:23). It is couched in terms which are clearly borrowed from the Septuagint translation of the Fourth Servant Song of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>5</sup> The description given here of the righteous man is the picture of the poor man seen primarily as one oppressed because of his faith.

The *עֶבֶד יְהוָה* in Isaiah 52 and 53 is translated by the Septuagint as *παῖς κυρίου*. This is exactly what the righteous man is called in 2:13. But while *παῖς* in Isaiah means "servant," the author of the Wisdom of Solomon has understood it as "son" (*υἱός*). So the wicked lie in wait for him because he opposes their evil (2:12), because he professes to have knowledge of God, and claims God as his

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<sup>5</sup>M. Jack Suggs, "Wisdom of Solomon 2:10-5: A Homily Based on the Fourth Servant Song," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXVI (1957), 26-33. See also W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias in The Servant of God, (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 53.



father (2:16) as a *υἱὸς θεοῦ* (2:18). Like the Suffering Servant the righteous man is condemned to a shameful death by the wicked (2:18). Yet the hope of all the righteous is "full of immortality" (3:4). They will shine forth in the time of visitation (3:7) and they will judge the nations and have dominion over people (3:8). The righteous one who is dead shall judge the wicked who are still alive (4:16) and shall stand forth with great boldness (5:1), so that the wicked are astonished at the unexpected nature of his salvation (*Παραδοξὸς τῆς σωτηρίας*). The righteous man is numbered among the saints (5:5), and shall live forever (5:15). The idea of the vicarious suffering found in the Fourth Servant Song has given way to the idea of vindication and judgment. Such is the picture of the righteous poor man. It is significant that the author has brought together concepts from the Servant Songs and the Psalms.

In the Psalms of Solomon, composed between 63 and 30 B.C.,<sup>6</sup> we again find the poor man as the victim of oppression and affliction. In this situation the psalmists call upon God as the "refuge of the needy" (*πτωχός*, Ps. Sol. 5:2),<sup>7</sup> the "hope of the needy and the poor" (*πτωχὸς καὶ πένης*, 5:13; 15:2; 18:3), the one who "makes glad the soul of the humble one" (*ταπεινός*, 5:14). In Ps. Sol. 10:7, the *πτωχοί* are identified with the *δούλοι*, indicating the spiritual

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<sup>6</sup> Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, translated by Peter Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, c.1965), p. 613.

<sup>7</sup> Verse numberings and quotations are according to Ryle and James, The Psalms of Solomon (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1891).



significance of the terms. The psalmists and the worshipers are thought of more as the meek and humble before God than as being part of the socially poor class. A spiritual man is a quiet soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$  ἡβύχιος) who hates unrighteousness and works peace (12:6). The term  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  is quite clearly used in these Psalms as a synonym for  $\epsilon\delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$  as this was done in the Wisdom of Solomon. The  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{\alpha}\iota$  are the children of God, the true Israel (10:7,8), who depend upon God to lift them out of their afflictions and to fulfil his promises for them. They trust in God and even look upon their afflictions as a necessary means of being cleansed from sin for "he that prepareth his back for stripes shall be cleansed; for the Lord is gracious unto such as patiently abide chastening" (10:1-2; compare 16:11).

The question of material poverty does arise although it is by no means prominent in these Psalms.<sup>8</sup> But there is no cry for the necessities of life, simply the statement of faith that God will always provide them with what is sufficient (5:19-21):

Blessed is the man whom God remembereth with sufficiency  
convenient for him.

If a man abound beyond measure, he sinneth.

Sufficient is a moderate provision with righteousness; and  
herein is the blessing of the Lord, that a man be satisfied  
in righteousness.

They that fear the Lord rejoice in prosperity, and thy  
loving kindness is upon Israel in thy kingdom.

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<sup>8</sup>In agreement with Ernst Bammel, " $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ,  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{\epsilon}\iota\alpha$ ,  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1968), VI, 896.



If they must suffer the affliction of poverty it is taken as being part of the testing they must undergo to find mercy (16:14-15).

Such implicit faith is the predominant theme of all these Psalms. God is always with the faithful and he will not abandon them in their distress but bring them through so that they might know his mercy (10:7-8; 16:12-15). It is on the basis of their implicit trust in God that they waited and hoped for the Messiah. This messianic hope is expressed not in the precise intellectual conceptions of the rabbis but with the enthusiasm of a fervent faith. The Messiah will vindicate their cause. He will disinherit the sinners and destroy their proud spirit. He will destroy the ungodly nations and convict sinners in the thoughts of their hearts (17:25-27). But he will gather together a holy people knowing that they are all the "sons of God" (*υιοὶ Θεοῦ* , 17:30. Compare Wisd. Sol. 2:18). He will judge the nations and rule over them as a righteous king, the Lord Messiah (*Χριστὸς κύριος*) himself (17:31-36). But it will not be by the might of the armies or of wealth or of war that he will rule; but, like the messianic king of Zech. 9:9, he will rule in the spirit of the poor man, in humility, with mercy and with the word of his mouth (17:37-39).<sup>9</sup> Here the two aspects of Old Testament messianism are completely blended, namely, the direct reign of Yahweh and his rule through his Anointed, for, as the psalmist puts it, "the Lord himself is his king" (17:38).

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. A. Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël (Prophetes, Psaumistes, Messianistes) (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, J. Gabalda et Cie, 1922), 162.



The piety of the poor man expressed in these Psalms of Solomon shows no signs of the legalistic nature of the Pharisees of the time of Jesus. It is doubtful whether the authors could have therefore been Pharisees. Similar concepts found in the Qumran writings make Eissfeldt's suggestion that they come from the Essenes more probable.<sup>10</sup> However, the very nature of these Psalms does not allow us to place the poor man into any special group but simply to note that the "poor man" is a term which the pious and faithful at this time have readily taken for themselves. They have done this not to depict their lack of material possessions but to illustrate their approach to and dependence upon God for his mercy. As the poor, their hope of final vindication is through the Messiah.

The main theme running through the composite Book of Enoch (for the most part ca. 100-75 B.C.)<sup>11</sup> is the great hope of the poor man that the time will come when the righteous will possess the land and the wicked will be destroyed. Because the righteous are seen here as persecuted and oppressed, we must regard this work as coming from those who would regard themselves as belonging to our motif even though they are called the "lowly" only twice (96:5; 108:7). In both places this term is certainly regarded as being synonymous with "righteous." The sinners are in control and the righteous are without defence in their hands. The righteous complain

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<sup>10</sup>Eissfeldt, p. 613. This suggestion also made by Bammel, VI, 896.

<sup>11</sup>Eissfeldt, p. 619.



to the rulers, but they do not listen. Rather,

they helped those who robbed us and devoured us and those who made us few; and they concealed their oppression, and they did not remove from us the yoke of those that devoured us and dispersed us and murdered us, and they concealed their murder, and remembered not that they had lifted up their hands against us.<sup>12</sup>

This lack of justice which they experienced as individuals and sometimes as a nation will be changed when the Righteous One shall appear before the eyes of the righteous (38:2). Then the "kings of the earth" and the "strong who possess the land" shall no longer be powerful and exalted. They will be destroyed, and the righteous and holy shall take their place under the leadership of the Righteous One, the Elect, the Son of man, God's Messiah (38:1-5; 48:8-10). This hope for retribution and justice is a continuing refrain throughout the work (38:5; 46:4; 48:8; 62:6-16).

Into this context fits the list of woes against the godless rich. The rich are outrightly condemned because they have trusted in their riches and have forgotten God (94:8). They will be judged also because they have committed blasphemy, unrighteousness and oppression (94:6; 96:4; 97:8). The rich are well-to-do because they have used evil means to obtain their wealth. The sinner and the rich man are synonymous.<sup>13</sup> It is the same old story of "treading underfoot the lowly with their might" (96:5) in order to get what

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<sup>12</sup> Enoch 103:5, according to the translation of R. H. Charles, The Book of Enoch. (London: SPCK, 1970), p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Implied by Causse, p. 144; Bammel, VI, 896; Ernst Percy, Die Botschaft Jesu: Eine Traditionskritische und Exegetische Untersuchung (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1953), pp. 66-67.



they want. They shall have their reward (96:6,7):

Woe to you, lying witnesses,  
 And to those who weigh out injustice,  
 For suddenly shall ye perish.  
 Woe to you, sinners, for ye persecute the righteous;  
 For ye shall be delivered up and persecuted because of injustice,  
 And heavy shall be its yoke upon you.

Because desire of riches and luxuries had led to so much wickedness, it would not be surprising if some of the oppressed began to regard possessions as diabolic. However, there is no indication that asceticism was practised by them. Nor is there any ideal of poverty.<sup>14</sup> The statement that the humble "who love God . . . loved neither gold nor silver nor any of the good things which are in the world" (108: 8) means only that their faith in God was all-important to them, and that they were willing to forgo these things and even be tortured for the sake of obedience to God. This obedient attitude has become by this time the fundamental spirit of the poor man in the face of oppression.

Yet evil and corruption continue. There is no justice because there are no righteous rulers. Scornful and impious men rule, as the author of the Assumption of Moses laments about 4 B.C. They are "treacherous men, self-pleasers," "devourers of the goods of the poor (pauperum bonorum comestores) saying that they do so on the grounds of their justice, but (in reality) to destroy them" (7:3-6). The writer is probably referring partly to the outside powers of

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<sup>14</sup>As claimed by Causse, p. 154. Cf. Percy, p. 67.



Rome and Herod, but he certainly also includes the Jews who have forsaken their God and the law (8:1-5).

There are other references to the poor man in the pseudepigraphical literature. For instance, in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs there are general exhortations to showing generosity to the poor and oppressed (Test. Issachar 3:8; 5:2; 7:5; Test. Joseph 3:5). The idea is expressed that the poor man (πένυς), if he is free from envy, is closer to God than others (Test. Gad 7:6). More important is the idea that the poor man will be blessed in the new age (Test. Judah 25:4):

And they who have died in grief shall arise in joy,  
 And they who were poor (πτωχοί) for the Lord's sake shall be made rich,  
 And they who were put to death for the Lord's sake shall awake to life.

4 Ezra 14:13 tells us that it is the man of God, the Messiah, who will lift up the poor when the end is near. This Messiah, seen as a military figure, is to come to bring punishment and vindication.<sup>15</sup> The Testament of Dan, however, describes the Messiah as reigning in "humility and poverty" (ἐν ταπεινώσει καὶ πτωχείᾳ, 5:13) and as the "Savior of the Gentiles," "true and long-suffering, meek and lowly" (πραῶς καὶ ταπεινός, 6:9). However, these last references at least in all probability bear the influence of Matt. 11:28-30 and the Gospels generally.

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Stone, "The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra," Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, edited by Jacob Neusner, in Studies in the History of Religions (Leiden: E. J. Brill, c.1968), XIV, 296.



Mention must also be made of Five Syriac Psalms which are similar to the Psalms of Solomon in piety and format and are regarded as pre-Christian.<sup>16</sup> Here the poor and the meek are associated with the righteous and the pious in their being delivered by God from the wicked (Syr. Ps. 2:34,35). According to Noth, the Hebrew words would have been  $\text{פֶּדְיָה}$  (poor) and  $\text{דַּלִּים}$  (meek).<sup>17</sup> Delcor finds that Syriac Psalms 2 to 5 belong to the literature of the Essenes because of the parallels with Qumran literature.<sup>18</sup> There certainly are strong associations which are more Essene in character than Pharisaic. But the same can be said of the Psalms of Solomon and even the Wisdom of Solomon. What has often been regarded as the invective of the Pharisees against their Sadducean foes is simply the traditional expletive against those who afflict and oppress. The accusations Jesus later made against the Pharisees in the Gospels clearly puts them into the category of the poor man's enemy. They are the wicked, as described in this literature.

While the Pharisees and the poor man may have originally come from the same milieu, the Pharisees must quickly have become a group apart. On the other hand, there is no evidence that there ever was a "poor man" party. The evidence is against any political activity by the poor man. Rather, he is pictured as turning to God to bring

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Eissfeldt, p. 611; and M. Delcor, "Cinq Nouveaux Psaumes Esseniens?" Revue de Qumran, I (1958-1959), 87.

<sup>17</sup>Martin Noth, "Die fünf syrisch überlieferten apocryphen Psalmen," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLVIII (1930), 17-18.

<sup>18</sup>Delcor, I, 96.



him justice and to vindicate his cause. In contrast to the Zealot, he is depicted as a peacemaker, seeing no advantage in wars at all and looking to the coming Messiah who will come in meekness and in peace. If the poor man of this literature would have joined any party at all it would have been the Essenes, but the motif is generally free of the asceticism which that group encouraged. It appears that the "poor man" developed into a religious movement which up to this time defied organization and remained the "silent minority" expressing only their trust and reliance not upon man and his organizations but upon God alone.

#### The Poor Man Motif and the Rabbis

If the attitude of the Pharisees is to be found anywhere it is in the Rabbinic literature.<sup>19</sup> In this literature we move into a different atmosphere. We are no longer confronted by the living hope of a popular faith but rather by the precision of dogma and intellectual analysis. In this atmosphere there is no interest in the poor man motif. The terminology of our motif almost disappears. The word אֲבִיּוֹן does not occur and הֵלֵל is used only rarely. עָנִי appears to take on the meaning only of one who is socially poor, and עָנָו is used only of the "meek" and "humble."<sup>20</sup> In their place are found הִסְתַּנֵּן and הִסְתַּנּוּת, or some other word taken from

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, c.1948), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bammel, VI, 894.



Wisdom literature, like קִשְׁוֹן (Prov. 22:29, "one who is obscure").

The rabbinical understanding of this vocabulary is illustrated in

Leviticus Rabbah 34:6:

Eight designations were given to the poor man: 'Ani, ebyon, misken, rash, dal, dak, mak, helek. "Ani" means literally, poor! He is called "ebyon" because he longs (metha'eb) for everything; "misken" because he is despised by all, as it says, The poor man's (misken) wisdom is despised (Eccl. IX, 16); "rash" because he is dispossessed (mithroshesh) of property; "dal" because he is detached (meduldal) from property; "dak" because he is crushed (medukdak)-- he sees a thing and cannot eat it, he sees a thing and cannot taste it, he sees a thing and cannot drink it; "mak" because he is lowly (mak) before everyone, like a kind of lowest threshold.<sup>21</sup>

For example, in the Targum of Isaiah,<sup>22</sup> we find no real sympathy for the poor man. The extant vocabulary is simply translated by the derogatory Wisdom terms קִשְׁוֹן (4 times) and קִשְׁוֹן (12 times) or by the more religious term קִשְׁוֹן (7 times). The Suffering Servant is identified with the Messiah, but the Messiah is one who will triumph over the heathen and all the enemies of God's people. All the suffering attributed to the Servant in Isaiah 53 is transferred by the Targum to the enemies of Israel or to those who have been misled, as for instance in the comment on Is. 53:4:

Then he shall pray on behalf of our transgressions and our iniquities shall be pardoned for his sake, though we were accounted smitten, stricken from before the Lord, and afflicted.<sup>23</sup>

The Servant-Messiah remains unscathed and triumphant. There is no

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<sup>21</sup> Mishnah Rabbah: Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices, edited by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1939), p. 431.

<sup>22</sup> The Targum of Isaiah, edited with a translation by J. F. Stenning (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 180.



vicarious suffering and atoning death here. Other rabbinical interpretations of Isaiah 53 are similar in that while a righteous person suffers, this suffering is not vicarious.<sup>24</sup>

The emphasis in the Rabbis is always on material poverty as a situation which every man abhors. Poverty outweighs all the other troubles put together. "He who is crushed by poverty is like one to whom all the troubles of the world cling and upon whom all the curses of Deuteronomy have descended" (Exodus Rabbah 31:14).<sup>25</sup>

But a rich man should use his possessions in the service of his fellow man in order to gain merit. For this base reason he should give alms to the poor. For the lack of this religious duty "entails twenty-four curses" (Leviticus Rabbah 34:11). But in spite of the lack of understanding of the poor man motif, there could still be this idea of the poor being pious, albeit against the traditional backdrop of the question: "Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?" (Exodus Rabbah 31:5):

In this world the wicked are rich and prosperous and secure, whilst the righteous are poor; but in the World to come, when God will open for the righteous the treasures of Paradise, then will the wicked who have eaten the fruits of interest and usury bite their flesh with their teeth . . . . They will then wail: "We would rather have been workmen and carried burdens on our shoulders, or slaves, than that this should happen to us. . . ." When Israel asked God: "Who are thy people?" The reply was: "The poor," for it says, For the Lord hath comforted His people and hath compassion upon His poor (Is. XLIV, 13) . . . .

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<sup>24</sup> Christopher R. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study (2nd edition; Oxford: University Press, 1956), p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. also A. Abrahams, Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First Series (1917). Reprinted with new matter together with Second Series (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., c.1967), pp. 114-115.



He protects none but the poor, as it says: That the Lord hath founded Zion and in her shall the poor of His people take refuge (Is. XIV, 32).

The writer later contends that while the rich man may have many friends, the poor man according to Is. 66:2 has God, and when he returns to Zion, "it will be the poor who will first receive his mercy" (Exodus Rabbah 31:13). This shows clearly that following on from the canonical Psalter the idea persisted that the poor were the pious and that they would receive their reward in the Messianic age. This, of course, was always to be understood in the context of their continued suffering in spite of their cries to God for deliverance.<sup>26</sup>

#### The Poor Man Motif in Qumran

A group of people, tired of the evil and oppression, feeling that the whole world was in the grip of satanic forces, and believing themselves to be the faithful remnant of Israel, went out into the desert to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his Kingdom. They were following the ancient ideal of the prophets. They believed that they could truly live the covenant relationship only by returning to the desert. These Essenes settled on the shore of the Dead Sea around 130 B.C.,<sup>27</sup> regarding themselves as a Community of the Poor.

As in the Old Testament, so also in the writings of this Qumran Community there is no clear distinction between the terms אֲבִי, ,

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<sup>26</sup>Cf. Percy, pp. 74-77.

<sup>27</sup>Eissfeldt, p. 642.



עני , ענו , or even לש . For instance, in the Hodayot the author calls himself נפש עני (1QH v,13), נפש עני ולש (v,14), and then אכ"ן (v,16), נפש אכ"ן (v,18) and לש (v,20). These terms occur within a matter of seven lines and with no real difference in meaning. The author also uses the plural, אכ"ן (v,22) and ענו"ם (XVIII, 14), by which he appears to designate members of the Community. As usual, the context of these terms is suffering and oppression.

It has generally be asserted that the Qumran Community knew itself to be the "Community of the Poor." But the use of the poor man terminology does not always indicate this. In the Damascus Document the member of this covenant community is encouraged to help the עני (אכ"ן) and the stranger (VI,21). Prior to this, members are exhorted to separate themselves from the wicked, the "sons of the Pit," and from "unclean riches of iniquity" obtained by vow or curse, or by stealing from the "poor of His people" ( עני עמו ), by preying on widows and murdering the fatherless (VI,15.16).<sup>28</sup> These references must be understood in the whole context of the oppression of the poor by the wicked. In the ordinances of the Damascus Document the עני (אכ"ן) are included among the aged and dying, the fugitive, the prisoner, a virgin without kin, and the girl no one wants to marry. That is to say, they belong to those who are to receive support from the Community (XIV,14). In these places there is no indication that these terms may refer to the Community itself. It simply fits into

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<sup>28</sup>Quotations in this thesis of Qumran literature will follow the translation in A. Dupont-Sommer, The Essene Writings From Qumran, translated by G. Vermes (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, c.1961).



the whole pattern of the ancient ideal, which the Community was seeking to restore in the desert, whereby everyone would be taken care of in the covenant clan relationship in which each man loves his brother as himself (VI,20). Yet the Community identifies itself with the "poor of the flock" (XIX,9), a phrase borrowed from Zech. 11:11.<sup>29</sup>

The "poor" as a designation for the Community becomes clearer in other passages. In the Hodayoth, the psalmist praises God for his care and protection of the orphan and the destitute ( ש ר ). He thanks him that he has set his food "in the midst of the עניי, and in the midst of them that are quick unto righteousness, to cause all the poor of Grace ( אכני' קד ) to rise from the tumult together" (V,20-22). This may be a reference to the Community but it is not yet clear enough.<sup>30</sup> The same must be said of XVIII,14, where the author, probably the Teacher of Righteousness himself, thanks God that he, a creature of clay, is the one chosen to announce the good tidings to the עניי as the fulfilment of Is. 61:1-2. Yet if, indeed it is the Teacher of Righteousness speaking, he would be referring to the Community as the עניי.<sup>31</sup> Turning to the War Scroll there can be very little doubt that the אכני' of XI,9 refers to the Community: it is by their hand that God will bring down the bands of

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<sup>29</sup>Cf. Bammel, VI, 897; and Percy, p. 80.

<sup>30</sup>Other translations are possible here, as has been pointed out by Leander E. Keck, "The Poor Among the Saints in Jewish Christianity and Qumran," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVII (1966), 72-73.

<sup>31</sup>Dupont-Sommer is convinced that only the Teacher of Righteousness can be speaking here, p. 252.



Belial, and by the "broken in spirit" (נכא' לוח) will destroy the wicked (X,10).<sup>32</sup> These terms are clearly synonyms and fit in well also with ענני' לוח, the "poor in spirit" of XIV,7, and תמימי' לוח the "perfect in spirit" of VII,5. God will destroy the wicked but he will use his oppressed for this: "Thou wilt deliver the enemies of all the lands into the hand of the poor, and by the hand of them that are bent in the dust wilt Thou humble the valiant of the peoples" (1QM XI, 13). In this battle God will be in the midst of the אכנינים (1QM XIII,14), which the context clearly shows to be the Qumran Community.<sup>33</sup> The same must be said of the אכנינים in the Habakkuk Commentary where they have been attacked by the Wicked Priest who has robbed them of their goods and seeks to destroy them (1QpHab XII,3.6.10). אכנינים is the typical expression in these references used to designate the Community but it nevertheless cannot yet be regarded as a proper name for it.<sup>34</sup> But in the Commentary on Psalm 37 it becomes such, for there the עננים (Ps. 37:11) are the Congregation of the Poor ( ענה האכנינים, I,9; II,10). Clearly, therefore, the members of the Qumran Community regarded themselves as "the Poor." But the question remains: In what sense were they "the Poor"?

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<sup>32</sup>Keck's arguments against designating the Community as "Poor" here are unconvincing. See LVII, 70-71.

<sup>33</sup>Even Keck accepts this one, LVII, 71.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Menahem Mansoor, The Thanksgiving Hymns: Translated and Annotated with an Introduction (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, c.1961), pp. 50, 51; and Hans-Joachim Kandler, "Die Bedeutung der Armut im Schrifttum von Chirbet Qumran," Judaica, XIII (1957), 198.



Before answering that question, it will be necessary to look more closely at the reference to the עני' לל of the War Scroll (1QM XIV,7). This phrase has been interpreted variously as "voluntarily poor,"<sup>35</sup> "oppressed in spirit,"<sup>36</sup> those who lack courage,"<sup>37</sup> as well as "poor" or "humble in spirit." Some of these interpretations are clearly based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of עני and to some degree also of the use of לל as a complement to an adjective.<sup>38</sup> Even if the reading is עי, since the writing of the copyist is not clear here, the context shows that holiness and humility before God and not poverty are the issues. In this hymn (1QM XIV) the Community praises God for giving them the victory over their enemies by giving strength to them who without it would be men of feeble hands and shaking knees (XIV,4-7). The reference is to their complete trust and reliance on God, and as such they, the עני' לל, will punish the "hardened heart." The "perfect of the way" will destroy "all the wicked nations." This double antithesis clearly shows that the עני' לל, are those who are God's covenant people, obedient and submissive to him. That they are his people is borne

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<sup>35</sup> Kurt Schubert, "The Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts," The Scrolls and the New Testament, edited by Krister Stendahl (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1957), p. 122.

<sup>36</sup> Helmer Ringgren, The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls, translated by Emilio T. Sander (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c.1963), p. 142.

<sup>37</sup> Ernest Best, "Matthew V.3," New Testament Studies, VII (1960-1961), 257.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. arguments against Best's interpretation by Simon Legasse, "Les Pauvres en Esprit et les 'Volontaires' de Qumran," New Testament Studies, VIII (1961-1962), 340.



out by what follows. The Community describes itself as God's remnant, faithful to His Covenant (XIV,8-10), God's holy people (XIV,12). There is no reference to poverty here. The phrase עֲנִי לֵוִי must therefore be taken as a religious term designating those who have submitted humbly to God.<sup>39</sup>

This religious note is, of course, confirmed by the actual meanings of the words. עֲנִי, עָנָו are never strictly the "poor" but the "afflicted," but in general usage have developed to mean "the afflicted who seeks help from God." The context of affliction and persecution is certainly evident everywhere in the Qumran literature as is also the Community's reliance upon God for his aid.<sup>40</sup> The addition of לֵוִי only adds to the spiritual meaning. The spiritual meaning is further indicated by the association of לֵוִי with עֲנוּהָ . עֲנוּהָ can never mean poverty but always denotes "humility." Thus the Community Rule speaks about a man remaining unclean as long as he stays obdurate; but "by the spirit of uprightness and humility shall his iniquity be atoned" ( כִּרְוַח יוֹשֵׁר וְעֲנוּהָ , IQS III, 8). Similarly, in IQS IV,3 the Spirit of light, in contrast to the Spirit of darkness, enlightens the heart of man and sets in it "the spirit of humility ( לֵוִי עֲנוּהָ ) and forbearance, of abundant mercy and eternal goodness, of understanding and intelligence . . . ."

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<sup>39</sup>In agreement with Jacques Dupont, "Les πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι de Matthieu 5,3 et le עֲנִי לֵוִי de Qumran," Neutestamentliche Aufsätze: Festschrift für Prof. Josef Schmid zum 70. Geburtstag, herausgegeben von J. Blinzler, O. Kuss, F. Mussner (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, c.1963), p. 57.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Legasse, VIII, 343-344.



These are the virtues together with truth, charity, and justice which are always associated with **הַיְיָ** (1QS II,24; V,3.25; XI,1). These are also the attributes associated with the **הַלֵּל 'וְנָע**, those who are humble before God and filled with his Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

We can expect from our understanding of **הַלֵּל 'וְנָע** that the members of the Qumran Community regarded themselves as the "poor" in a thoroughly religious sense. But it has been argued that the Community took this name "because they practised full community of goods in their settlement and because contempt for money was one of their chief principles."<sup>42</sup> It is true that the people in the Community voluntarily and freely gave up their personal possessions to share them with the rest. This practice was certainly not dictated by any ideal of poverty but rather by the idea of unity and fraternity in the Covenant. It was dominated by a desire to remove the odious distinctions between rich and poor and to recreate the ideal relationship of the clan of ancient times in expectation of the messianic age.<sup>43</sup> It is, therefore, significant that when the Qumran literature does speak of the economic arrangements of the Community there are no references to the Community as "the Poor." Rather, when the designation is used it is usually in a spiritual context and does not touch on the shared life at all.<sup>44</sup> So the designation

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<sup>41</sup>Dupont, pp. 59-62.

<sup>42</sup>Schubert, p. 122. Cf. also Percy, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup>1QS III,2; V,1-6.14.20; IX,8. Cf. Legasse, VIII, 341; Kandler, XIII, 205-206; Bammel, VI, 898.

<sup>44</sup>Keck, LVII, 67.



can hardly be used primarily in a physical sense. The spiritual content of the designation is evident in the Hodayoth when the psalmist uses the various terms of himself and of the Community as those who in their helplessness have cried to God and have been saved by him.

This spiritual aspect is particularly evident in the phrase "poor of grace" (אֲבִי'וֹן חֶסֶד, 1QH V, 21-22). They are the people whom God encompasses with his mercy and protection. They are the defenceless who have sought God as their defender. These terms of the poor man motif were used by the Community of themselves because of their covenant implications. By these terms they wished to indicate their reliance upon God and their confidence in the special protection which God offers to those who are unjustly treated under the Covenant.

Qumran parallels of thought with the Old Testament Psalms and the prophetic writings are many. Attention has also been drawn to the interesting parallels in the teachings of Jesus. For instance, F. M. Cross, Jr., points to the way Psalm 37 is interpreted by the Qumran Community as referring to themselves, the Congregation of the Poor, who will inherit the New Jerusalem. Similarly, Jesus later in his Beatitudes interprets the Psalm to refer to the Christian community where the "poor shall inherit the Kingdom of God."<sup>45</sup> As the Teacher of Righteousness views himself as the one sent to announce the good tidings to the **ד'ינן** in accordance with Is. 61:1-2

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<sup>45</sup> Frank Moore Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., c.1958), pp. 61, 62, and 67n.



(1QH XVIII,14), so Jesus later did the same (Luke 4:18). Significantly, this same herald of good tidings in Is. 52:7 is identified in 11QMelchizedek I,18 as the Messiah.<sup>46</sup> As Jesus later applied Psalm 22 to himself so also had the Teacher of Righteousness before him (1QH II,34 and V,13.14), identifying himself with the 'ִי of that Psalm who is surrounded by threatening lions, the victim of powerful men, but who has been delivered by God.<sup>47</sup> In the light of this is it very important to take note of another parallel between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus. The Teacher of Righteousness as the representative of his Community before God in the messianic sense, sees himself as the poor man par excellence. He is the representative of his people, the poor. In a similar way, does not Jesus the Messiah come representing his people, the "poor in spirit" in being "meek and lowly," the poor man par excellence?

Because of the description of the Community as "the Poor" and because of the numerous parallels with Christianity, attempts have been made to prove that the Qumran Community was a congregation of Jewish-Christians known in later times as the Ebionites. The main proponent of this view has been J. L. Teicher who believes that he has found "irrefutable evidence of the Christian origin of the Damascus Fragments and the kindred Scrolls."<sup>48</sup> But the majority

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<sup>46</sup> M. De Jonge and A. S. Van der Woude, "11QMelchizedek and the New Testament," New Testament Studies, XII (1965-1966), 307; and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXVI (1967), 30.

<sup>47</sup> Dupont, p. 59.

<sup>48</sup> J. L. Teicher, "The Damascus Fragments and the Origin of the



of scholars rightly reject this view as the evidence points to a strictly Jewish sect.<sup>49</sup>

#### The Cultural Environment at the Time of Jesus

Jesus began his ministry at a time when the great social tensions which had begun in the Maccabean age had subsided and the various religious and political parties had set their patterns. For the mass of the people the popularity of these parties had waned. The Pharisees' concern was for the ritual purity and they despised anyone less pure than themselves. Now that the masses had helped them gain political influence, they despised these  $\Psi\text{.}\text{S}\text{.}\text{I}\text{I}^{\text{-}}\text{I}\text{I}$ , "people of the land." The Sadducees were the aristocracy and had no interest in the lower classes. The popularity of the Essenes, which had been a movement of the masses, had declined when their messianic expectations were not fulfilled immediately. The Zealots were extremists and were not likely to gain any great following, while the moderate Herodians were only a small minority.

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Jewish-Christian Sect," Journal of Jewish Studies, II (1950-1951), 124. Other articles by Teicher: "The Dead Sea Scrolls--Documents of the Jewish Christian Sect of Ebionites," Journal of Jewish Studies, II (1950-1951), 67-99; and "Restoration of the 'Damascus Fragments': XIV, 12-16," Journal of Jewish Studies, III (1952), 87-88.

<sup>49</sup>E.g. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Qumran Scrolls, the Ebionites, and their Literature," Theological Studies, XVI (1955), 335-372; and Hans Joachim Schoeps, "Handelt es sich wirklich um Ebionitisch Dokumente?" Zeitschrift für Religions--und Geistesgeschichte, III, (1951), 322-328.



It is true that if Jesus had had close associations with any of these parties it would have been with the Essenes, as we have noticed from the few parallels between Jesus' teachings and those of the Qumran Community. But Jesus took a number of positions which put him outside the strictures of any party. The spirit of the Word of God was most important to him; and so his attitude to the law of the Sabbath, his criticism of the cleansing rites, his eating and drinking with publicans and sinners were offensive to both the Pharisees and the Essenes.<sup>50</sup>

As we have seen, it is by no means certain, in spite of Matthew Black,<sup>51</sup> that works like the Psalms of Solomon originated with the Pharisees. While the Psalms of Solomon show a spirit of humility and trust in God, the Pharisees relied upon their conformity to the Law. As is clear from the Gospels and the rabbinical writings the Pharisees' prime conception of religion was one of scrupulous adherence to legalistic traditions as set forth by the scribes. They were a lay movement like the Essenes, and Joachim Jeremias believes that both parties had their origins in the **מַתְבֵּילִים** of Maccabean times and organized their communities in similar ways.<sup>52</sup> However, the differences between these two parties are significant, particularly

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, translated by Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1960), p. 43.

<sup>51</sup> Matthew Black, "Pharisees," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1962), III, 777. Black claims: "Fortunately there is no doubt about the Pharisaic authorship of the Psalms of Solomon . . . doctrinally one of the most important of the Pharisaic and anti-Sadducean documents of this century."

<sup>52</sup> Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An



in regard to the poor man motif. This motif is contrary to Pharisaic pride and to their ideas of perfection by the Law. This is confirmed by Jesus' reproach to them for loading men with their legalism and making sure the prophets stay dead (Luke 11:45-50). It was among the prophets that the poor man motif had developed.

It is possible that there were those Pharisees who could look at the whole of revelation and be more concerned about showing <sup>700</sup> "loving kindness," than criticism of those who did not reach their standards of perfection. Hillel the Elder would undoubtedly be classed as one of them. Since his early years were spent in poverty, he remained sensitive to the needs of the poor and considered them especially beloved of God. He was renowned for his humility, one of the more famous statements being: "My humiliation is my exaltation; my exaltation is my humiliation."<sup>53</sup>

Since oppression and injustice are among the main points of the poor man motif, it was often men of despised trades such as herdsmen, tax-collectors and publicans who were the "poor" at the time of Jesus. According to the scribal laws these men were deprived of their rights and ostracized. Jesus sat down and ate with these and announced the Good News to them.<sup>54</sup> The enemy of the poor man here is the Pharisee.

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Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c.1969), pp. 259-260.

<sup>53</sup> Nahum N. Glatzer, Hillel the Elder: The Emergence of Classical Judaism (Washington: B'Nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, c.1956), pp. 42-45.

<sup>54</sup> Jeremias, pp. 311-312.



The great majority of the people at the time of Jesus were classified by the Pharisees as the "people of the land." It was to these common people that Jesus made his appeal. They were despised and discriminated against by the Pharisees, who regarded them as immoral and irreligious. They would not allow their testimony to be admitted in court; nor would they eat with them or marry one of them.<sup>55</sup> No doubt, many of these despised were God-fearing and humble and sought aid and retribution from God against these injustices. But they were the oppressed and as such they were "the poor." For these people who were like "sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36) Jesus brought the message of Good News also.

Poverty as such, of course, was still an important issue; and, as we have seen, the Pharisees had certain rules in regard to doing charity to alleviate poverty. Because it was regarded as particularly meritorious to give alms within the Holy City, Jerusalem was a center of mendicancy.<sup>56</sup> It was also customary to give something to the poor at the time of the Passover (John 13:29). All this must also be taken into consideration as we study the use of terminology for "poor" in the teachings of Jesus.

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<sup>55</sup> Bruce Manning Metzger, The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1965), pp. 45, 46.

<sup>56</sup> Jeremias, pp. 116-117.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE POOR MAN MOTIF IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

When we come to examine the poor man motif in the New Testament, we are struck by the relatively rare use of the terms **πτωχός**, **πραΰς**, **ταπεινός**, or **πένυς**. In fact, **πένυς** is not used at all in the Gospels, being found only once in the entire New Testament, and that in a quotation from the Psalms, at 2 Cor. 9:9. **Ταπεινός** is found in the Gospels only once in Matthew and once in Luke, although the verb **ταπεινώ** is recorded 5 times (twice in Matthew and 3 times in Luke). In the Epistles both **ταπεινός** and its verb are found 6 times each.<sup>1</sup> **πραΰς** occurs in Matthew 3 times and once in 1 Peter.<sup>2</sup> **πτωχός**, the usual term for the poor, rates highest, being mentioned 5 times in Mark, 5 in Matthew, 10 in Luke, 4 in John and 10 times elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> The striking feature about the word **πτωχός** is that, in the Gospels, it is found predominantly in the discourses of Jesus and only rarely in the narrative passages. This point is emphasized by the fact that, while **πτωχός** appears 8 times in material peculiar to Luke, it is not found at all in Acts.

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<sup>1</sup> **Ταπεινός**: Matt. 11:29; Luke 1:52; Rom. 12:16; 2 Cor. 7:6; 10:1; James 1:9; 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5. **ταπεινώ**: Matt. 18:4; 23:12; Luke 3:5; 14:11; 18:14; 2 Cor. 11:7; 12:21; Phil. 2:8; 4:12; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 5:5; 11:29; 21:5; 1 Peter 3:4.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 10:21; 12:42; 14:5,7; Matt. 5:3; 11:5; 19:21; 26:9,11; Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 10:13,21; 16:20,22; 19:8; 21:3; John 12:5,6,8; 13:29; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 2:10; 4:9; James 2:2,3,5,6; Rev. 3:17; 13:16. **πτωχεύω** is found only in 2 Cor. 8:9 and **πτωχεία** in 2 Cor. 8:2,9 and Rev. 2:9.



The significance of the poor man motif for Jesus, however, is not always found in his use of the terminology of the motif. Also, terms like *πτωχός* are often used in a purely socio-economic sense as the object of charity. It will be necessary to find out, though, how much this terminology has been colored by the poor man motif, or, vice versa, how much the motif may have been changed by the contemporary understanding of the terminology. We turn now to the most significant use of *πτωχός* in the teaching of Jesus. It is found in the Beatitudes.

#### The Beatitudes

The beatitudes are found in the more elaborate form as nine consecutive blessings introducing the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew (5:3-12). In Luke, only four of these are recorded as introducing the Sermon on the Plain (6:20-23).<sup>4</sup> Luke adds four corresponding woes (6:24-26). The beatitude finds its literary type in the Old Testament blessings common both in wisdom and apocalyptic literature.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Jindrich Manek, "On the Mount--On the Plain (Mt. v 1--Lk. vi 17)," Novum Testamentum, IX (1967), 124-131, offers the fascinating suggestion that Matthew spoke of the Sermon on the Mount because a mountain was traditionally the place for divine revelation and because of such passages as Is. 2:2-3a and Ps. 72:16, while Luke preferred the plain as the symbol of the new age according to Is. 40:4.

<sup>5</sup>For lists of such blessings, see Tomas Arvedson, Das Mysterium Christi: Eine Studie zu Mt. 11:25-30 (Arbeiten und Mitteilungen aus dem neutestamentliche Seminar zu Uppsala, herausgegeben von Anton Fridrichson, VII) (Uppsala: A. B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1937), pp. 99-100; and Klaus Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method, translated from the 2nd German edition by S. M. Cupitt (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1969), p. 7.



In the Gospels, this literary form is also found a number of times spoken by Jesus, generally in an eschatological teaching context.<sup>6</sup> On this basis the Beatitudes must be regarded as more than a list of virtues to be kept by Christ's followers. Rather, they offer eschatological teaching, a message about the kingdom of God which is close at hand. Placed at the beginning of the Sermon they indicate, as Arvedson correctly infers, a kind of invitation to become Christ's disciples and receive the Kingdom as a possession.<sup>7</sup> The implications of this will become evident.

Joachim Jeremias sees the Sitz im Leben of the beatitudes as either pre-baptismal or post-baptismal instruction in the early Church, the beatitudes being the kerygma and the rest of the Sermon being the didache.<sup>8</sup> But I believe we must push back further to Jesus himself here and view these beatitudes as a substantial unit proclaimed by Jesus himself as an invitation to discipleship and reception of the Kingdom of God. It is a startling invitation in that it is directed not to the "righteous" but to the "poor." This is fully in keeping with the invitation as expressed elsewhere by Jesus. He has come not to call the righteous but sinners (Matt. 9:13). It is not the wise and understanding but babes to whom the Kingdom

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<sup>6</sup>E.g. Matt. 11:6=Luke 7:23; Matt. 13:16=Luke 10:23; Matt. 24:46=Luke 12:(37,38)43; Matt. 16:17; Luke 1:45; 14:14; 23:29. Luke 11:28 fits better into the "Wisdom" category.

<sup>7</sup>Arvedson, p. 225.

<sup>8</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Sermon on the Mount (London: The Athlone Press, c.1961), pp. 23, 24, 30.



is revealed (Matt. 11:25-27). It is the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son over whose recovery heaven rejoices (Luke 15). So in these beatitudes it is the poor man who receives the invitation.<sup>9</sup>

In the leading beatitude, Matthew's version (5:3) speaks of the "poor in spirit" whereas Luke mentions only the "poor" (6:20). It has been generally argued that τῷ πνεύματι, is a Matthean interpretation in line with his catechetical concerns,<sup>10</sup> or that τῷ πνεύματι is an unnatural way of expression and therefore not original.<sup>11</sup> The τῷ πνεύματι has also been rejected, together with τὴν δίκην οὐρανῶν in Matthew 5:6, on the grounds that it upsets the probable rhythm of the original Aramaic.<sup>12</sup> Further, it is commonly stated that Luke would not have deliberately excluded the τῷ πνεύματι from his version if it had been in his original source, so therefore the original must have been simply οἱ πτωχοί.<sup>13</sup> However, the

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Johannes Weiss, Die Predigt Jesu vom Reich Gottes, (3rd edition; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 128-129.

<sup>10</sup>Koch, pp. 40-41; and Jacques Dupont, "L'Interpretation des Beatitudes," Foi et Vie, LXV, No. 4 (1966), 27.

<sup>11</sup>Ernst Percy, Die Botschaft Jesu: Eine Traditions-kritische und Exegetische Untersuchung (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1953), p. 43. Jacques Dupont agrees with his argument here in spite of the evidence of Qumran in his "Les πτωχοὶ τοῦ πνεύματος de Matthieu 5,3 et le πῶς ἵσχυ de Qumran," Neutestamentliche Aufsätze: Festschrift für Prof. Josef Schmid zum 70. Geburtstag, herausgegeben von J. Blinzler, O. Kuss, F. Mussner (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, c.1963), p. 53.

<sup>12</sup>Chester C. McGown, "The Beatitudes in the Light of the Ancient Ideals," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLVI (1927), 58.

<sup>13</sup>Weiss, p. 183; and Jacques Dupont, Les Beatitudes: La Probleme Litteraire--Les deux versions du Sermon sur la montagne et des Beatitudes (Bruges: Abbaye de Saint-Andre, p. 214. This work will henceforth be described as Les Beatitudes, I.



use of עני' לרל, the Hebrew equivalent of πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι in Qumran literature (1QM XIV,7) has shown us that Matthew's version was not so unusual in Palestine of that time and may very well have been used by Jesus originally. Even without the Qumran example, its Hebrew Old Testament context, as well as its solid background in the poor man motif, is very evident from the similarity of such phrases as כָּרַךְ-רִיחַ, "crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:19, οἱ ταπεινοὶ τῷ πνεύματι in LXX Ps. 33:19), Πᾶν-ἕψυψ', "humble in spirit" (Is. 57:15; Prov. 16:10; 29:23), and particularly Πᾶν-Πᾶν-ἕψυψ' "humble and contrite in spirit" (Is. 66:2, οἱ ταπεινοὶ καὶ ὑβούχιοι in the LXX). In spite of Percy's remarks to the contrary,<sup>14</sup> these are very close analogies to Matthew's οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι.<sup>15</sup> In fact, this Greek phrase becomes comprehensible only when its semitic background is understood. It is quite possible that Luke left it out of his version because he was writing to Gentile Christians who may not have understood it.<sup>16</sup> But it is more likely that his source contained nothing more than πτωχοί', thus allowing him to contrast it more

<sup>14</sup>Percy, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup>David Flusser is probably correct in seeing this phrase as a contraction of the phrase in Is. 66:2. Cf. his "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit . . ." Israel Exploration Journal, X (1960), 5.

<sup>16</sup>B. C. Butler, The Originality of St. Matthew: A Critique of the Two-Document Hypothesis (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), pp. 31-32, offers three reasons why Luke would have omitted τῷ πνεύματι: (a) He is interested in the problems of literal wealth and poverty; (b) He would recoil from such a phrase which might seem to downgrade the gift of the Spirit; (c) Since he wished to contrast "poor" with "rich," "in spirit" was only a hindrance. I find only the first one convincing.



readily with *πλούσιοι*. It is quite possible, therefore, that Matthew and Luke were dependent on two different sources for the beatitudes.

Whatever the original wording, the meaning remains the same. It refers not to those lacking courage in the face of persecution,<sup>17</sup> but to the oppressed and afflicted as in the Old Testament. It refers to those who are humble and helpless before God and who seek after justice and righteousness. They are the persecuted and despised who can only find help and deliverance in God.

It is true that the socio-economic aspect of poverty may be present here but insofar as it cannot be separated from the spiritual understanding of the term.<sup>18</sup> Luke's contrast of *πτωχοί* with *πλούσιοι* seems to emphasize this socio-economic aspect and thus stresses not so much the idea of need for deliverance by God as the need to trust in God rather than riches. This is a typical Lucan emphasis and is really an extension of the original meaning. Or, as Dupont puts it, the eschatological tension which characterized the first proclamation of the beatitudes has lost its vigor in Luke's version.<sup>19</sup> It could be argued that the "poor" are looked upon by

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<sup>17</sup> Ernest Best, "Matthew v.3," New Testament Studies, VII (1960-1961), 257.

<sup>18</sup> Gunther Bornkamm has a tendency to overemphasize the socio-economic aspect and does not take into account sufficiently the history and development of the poor man motif. See his Jesus of Nazareth, translated by Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1960), p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> Dupont, Foi et Vie, LXV, 35.



by Luke as the oppressed in contrast to the "rich" as the oppressors, particularly if we think of the rich Sadducees who were tainted with heathenism, or the money-loving Pharisees. But this would not be in line with Luke's use of this contrast elsewhere. It is likely that Luke had in mind the particular situation of the Church for which he was writing, a Church possibly made up of people who were economically not well-off.<sup>20</sup>

The emphasis is clearly on the spiritual aspect of poverty. The idea of  $\eta\upsilon\chi\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\tau\alpha\varsigma$ , of a spirit of humble submission to God and his will, is certainly inherent in the motif.<sup>21</sup> But the stress of this beatitude is not to be placed on the faith of the recipient of the blessing. While the poor do make a claim and seek after their rights, and may even wait upon the Lord, the accent is put on the grace of God who comes to fulfil his promises to those who are disinherited and helpless, to those who realize they are totally incapable of helping themselves in their need.<sup>22</sup> This sense is evidently behind the use of the Greek word  $\piτωχός$  here. It strictly means "beggar," a person conscious of his emptiness and uselessness.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Weiss, p. 182; and Hans-Joachim Degenhardt, Lukas Evangelist der Armen: Besitz und Besitzverzicht in den Lukanischen Schriften, eine traditions--und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung (Stuttgart: Verlag Kath. Bibelwerk, c.1965), pp. 50-51.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Dupont, Neutestamentliche Aufsätze, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> In agreement with Percy, pp. 86-89; and Martin Dibelius, "Das Soziale Motiv im Neuen Testament," in Botschaft und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], c.1953), I, 190.



This word has been used rather than the more moderate **πένυς**. The **πένυς** would still have something to cling to, the **πτωχός** does not.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the poor are blessed not because of their virtue or piety but because God in his mercy is now fulfilling his promises.

In the Old Testament the poor man was generally found among the lower social classes. This may have been even more so at the time of Jesus. These persons were still the afflicted and oppressed and helpless, probably more in a social and religious sense than an economic one.

As we have seen, it was from the pious poor that the Pharisees had originated during the Maccabean era. But they now called themselves **δίκαιοι** rather than **πτωχοί**. With their strictness toward the Law and their intolerant and loveless attitude toward others, they, in turn, had become the oppressors. Because of their "righteousness" the Pharisees expected the kingdom of God to come to them. In startling contrast, Jesus announced it as coming to the **πτωχοί**. These were the very ones the Pharisees had rejected and despised. They were the publicans and sinners who were not in a position to fulfil the prescribed requirements of "righteousness," because their calling brought them into contact with heathen and thus ensnared them in a permanent uncleanness. They were the **עֲמֻקֵּי-קֶרֶן**, those regarded as accursed because they "do not know the law" (John 7:49)

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Vittorio Macchioro, "The Meaning of the First Beatitude," Journal of Religion, XII (1932), 46-48.



and because they lacked the means for regular temple visits and offerings. While their depressed social position often may have been aggravated through want and poverty, they were occasionally, like Zacchaeus and other publicans, wealthy people. Again, the decisive factor was not economic but religious.<sup>24</sup> They suffered from what was virtually a religious oppression, a factor which is very significant for the poor man motif in the teaching of Jesus. Even though the *πτωχοί* are rarely described in moral terms, they are still those who in their affliction hold fast to hope in God. This is the decisive difference between them and the Pharisees. Just as others may trust in their wealth, the Pharisees trusted in their piety and righteousness. The poor put their trust in God.

We can, therefore, see the poor in a socio-economic sense as country folk of Galilee and Judea, as the lower priesthood, farmers, artisans and the like,<sup>25</sup> or even as outcasts, demoniacs, lepers, Gentiles, women and children, and "bad" people.<sup>26</sup> Yet the religious aspect can never be forgotten. They are the spiritual descendents of the *דלֵיִץ* of the Psalms and the prophets. They are the oppressed, the suffering and the helpless, whom God has promised to deliver.

The message of this first beatitude, with its announcement that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor, was clearly the proclamation of the beginning of the messianic era. Just as in ancient times

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<sup>24</sup> See Weiss, pp. 129-131, 183-184.

<sup>25</sup> John Wick Bowman, Jesus' Teaching in its Environment (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, c.1963), p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Bornkamm, p. 79.



the "good news" of a golden era was announced at the enthronement of a king. So here God's Good News is announced in terms of the "lists" of messianic works set down particularly by Isaiah (Is. 29: 18-19; 35:18-19; 35:5-6) and by his disciple (Is. 61:1-3). The first beatitude is clearly the fulfilment of the first messianic work mentioned in Is. 61:1: "The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted" ( *πρωχους* in the LXX). The afflicted and oppressed who waited in earnest for the Messiah would have recognized the implications of these words and prepared themselves for the kingdom through repentance as suggested in Mark's summary statement of Jesus' preaching (Mark 1:15). They would have been reminded of the other messianic prophecies of Isaiah, particularly the many appropriate words of Is. 52:7:

How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of him who brings good tidings,  
who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good,  
who publishes salvation,  
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

This messianic announcement, always suggested an end to suffering and oppression and the beginning of a time of joy and peace. This is why Jesus announced that the poor were blessed because the kingdom of heaven belonged to them. In other words, they would now be able to enjoy it and share in it by anticipation, although they would not fully receive this kingdom prepared for them until the day of judgment (Matt. 25:34)<sup>27</sup> This is the eschatological tension into

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jacques Dupont, Les Beattitudes (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie Editeurs, c.1969), II, 118-122.



which they were now entering, the state of preparedness in waiting for the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13).

Matthew's second beatitude, in which those who mourn are promised consolation (5:4), addresses itself to the same group as in the first beatitude. "Those who mourn" is simply a description of "the poor." They mourn because they are oppressed and afflicted; hence they seek the consolation of God's reign of justice, mercy and peace. This phrase is also taken over from the messianic proclamation of Is. 61:1-3. There the announcement of the messianic kingdom is given also "to comfort all who mourn." The mourning of the afflicted will be heard and they will receive from God the peace and comfort they have craved, whereas the wicked who have oppressed them will know only restlessness and insecurity (Is. 57:18-21). This was a favorite theme of Deutero-Isaiah (as is evident also from Is. 49:13 and 66:12-13). It was always used to express the deliverance of the afflicted from oppression. The "consolation" is mentioned also in Luke 2:25 where we are told that aged Simeon "was looking for the consolation of Israel." In a similar phrase we are told that Joseph of Arimathea "was looking for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:51).<sup>28</sup>

Luke's version of this beatitude, which he gives as his third, is somewhat different: "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh" (Luke 6:21). T. W. Manson holds that the sharp contrasts

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<sup>28</sup>The word "consolation," Dupont believes, had become almost a technical term for the eschatological good, *ibid.*, II, 114.



here between present and future indicate the genuineness of Luke's version; Matthew, he says, softened the strong words unnecessarily. Manson took Ps. 137:1-4 and Psalm 126 as the background for the beatitude indicating the longing of the saints for the kingdom of God and their joy at its perfection.<sup>29</sup> But Luke's use of the verb *πενθεῖν* in the corresponding woe, when he says that those who laugh now shall mourn and weep (6:25) would indicate that he knew the beatitude also in the form found in Matthew. Matthew's version appears to be the more original because of its relation to Is. 61: 1-3, which, as we know from the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (Luke 4:16-30), and his answer to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:2-6), was regarded by Jesus as of the utmost significance for his mission and ministry.

The third beatitude according to Matthew, "Blessed are the *πραῖς*," is not found in Luke. It is regarded by some as being a later addition. This conclusion is based on a number of reasons. First of all, Luke does not have it. Second, there is confusion over the place of the beatitude in the series. Some manuscripts place it immediately after the first beatitude, others after the second. T. W. Manson sees this uncertainty about the place of a verse as a sign of interpolation. He also adds a third reason: the thought is not very original since it seems to be manufactured out of Ps. 37:11.<sup>30</sup> Dupont discards it also on the grounds of its similarity

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<sup>29</sup>T. W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Luke Arranged with Introduction and Commentary (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1949), p. 48.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 152.



to the beatitude of the poor. In the Hebrew  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$  would have been  $\text{ד'ג'ג'ג}$  and  $\text{פראפ'ס}$ ,  $\text{ד'ג'ג'ג}$ , words which as we have seen, have basically the same meaning. Dupont, therefore, puts the addition of this verse down to Matthew's "catechetical preoccupation."<sup>31</sup>

However, there are reasons for retaining this verse as a genuine saying of Jesus. The fact that the beatitude is based on Ps. 37:11 does not interrupt the flow of thought here at all. Instead, it adds to it. David Flusser has correctly pointed out that similar ideas were often placed together as a kind of midrash on the main verse. His two examples come very close to our first three beatitudes: (1) The Mekhilta, a Tannaite midrash on Exodus 20:21, brings together Num. 12:3; Is. 57:15; 61:1; 66:2 and Ps. 51:17, and (2) One of the Hodayoth of Qumran (1QH XVIII, 14-15) brings together in the same way Is. 61:1-2; 66:2; and 52:7. Flusser therefore argues that in Matt. 5:3-5, the first and third beatitudes should be placed together as some manuscripts indicate, and the first should then be taken as a midrash on the third.<sup>32</sup>

It is probably better to take both of them as a midrash on Isaiah 61, since the focus must be on Jesus' fulfilment of that chapter. Jesus may have included this third beatitude in order to bring a fulness to the poor man motif, and because Ps. 37:11 was familiar

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<sup>31</sup>Dupont, Les Beatitudes, I, 251-257. Klaus Koch, however, believes that Matthew probably found the verse together with other Scripture quotations in his source but that it probably is not a genuine word of Jesus, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup>Flusser, X, 1-13.



as a messianic promise. This is indicated by its use in Enoch 5:7-8, where it is said that in the Messianic age the elect will be humble and will inherit the earth.<sup>33</sup>

There is no contradiction between receiving the kingdom of God and inheriting the earth. The use of both of these terms may serve to incorporate the fulness of the Messianic promises of Isaiah about a new heaven and a new earth (Is. 65:17 and 66:22). It also exhibits the eschatological tension found in the Messianic promises generally. Possession of the land is part of the Good News of Is. 61:1-3 as the context clearly shows (Is. 60:21 and 61:2).<sup>34</sup>

The close tie of the first three beatitudes to the poor man motif and Isaiah 61 is equalled by the fourth: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). The connection with the poor man motif is seen immediately in Is. 49:10-13; 55:1-5; 65:13-15 and Ps. 42:2.

The poor man often suffers physical hunger and thirst and this is a symbol of his dependence on God and need for his help (for example, Ps. 107:1-9; Is. 32:6-7; 58:7,10). But it is clear that in this beatitude the hunger and thirst are figurative and stand for the poor man's desire for his rights, for relief from affliction and

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<sup>33</sup> J. W. Bowman's contention that there is progression of thought here from an initial awareness of one's need ( $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$ ,  $\text{I}\nu$ ) to the settled attitude of trust in God alone ( $\pi\pi\alpha\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$ ,  $\text{I}\nu$ ) is not accurate. In semitic thinking the two terms would have been regarded as synonymous. See his article "An Exposition of the Beatitudes," Journal of Bible and Religion, XV (1947), 165.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Julius Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Matthaus, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch: Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, c.1936 1964 ), II, 43.



oppression. This is exactly what is meant here by their vindication by God.<sup>35</sup> This is what is promised in Is. 61:3, "that they may be called oaks of righteousness" (πίτυ, δίκαιοσύνη). The phrase τὴν δίκαιοσύνην in Matt. 5:6, which is omitted in Luke's version (6:21), is so much an integral part of semitic thought and the poor man motif that it is difficult to accept the thought that it is simply a spiritualizing addition of Matthew.<sup>36</sup> The satisfaction the poor man receives is his "righteousness," the vindication of his rights by God, which comes with the advent of the kingdom of God. Clearly, these first four beatitudes are all speaking of one and the same thing: the new age is beginning in which God reigns over a kingdom which belongs to those who are disinherited and oppressed.

The next three beatitudes, found only in Matthew, pose a problem. They appear to change from an eschatological emphasis, noted in the first four beatitudes, to an ethical one. For this reason, some scholars have seen fit to regard them as later additions which only intrude into the eschatological mood.<sup>37</sup> However, before passing judgment we need to examine what relationship, if any, each of these beatitudes has with the earlier ones.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Matthew Black, "The Beatitudes," Expository Times, LXIV (1952-1953), 126.

<sup>36</sup> Dupont, Foi et Vie, LXV, 28, believes Matthew added the word because it is a favorite of his (cf. 3:15; 21:32; 5:24,48; 6:33). Percy, p. 82, rejects τὴν δίκαιοσύνην because he wrongly assumes the hungering and thirsting to be physical.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Weiss, p. 187; and Dupont, Foi et Vie, LXV, 30.



"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" could very well be taken as a "wisdom" blessing because of its similarity with Prov. 14:21 and 17:5c LXX. The former states that he who is "merciful to the poor is most blessed" (LXX: ἔλεων δὲ πτωχοῦς μακαριώτός) and the latter says: "He who is compassionate shall obtain mercy" (ὁδὲ ἐπιεπλήγησόμενος ἐλεηθήσεται). Combined, they add up to our beatitude. However, in its context within the Sermon on the Mount, this beatitude may have a different meaning. The mercy of God was a part of the eschatological hope in the poor man motif as we see from Is. 49:13: "The Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted (ⲔⲡⲚ; ⲓⲛⲓⲮ compare Is. 14:1; 54:7; Jer. 12:15; 33:26; Ezek. 39:25; Zech. 1:16). He is merciful to the poor man and shows him how to be merciful, too, as in Ps. 25:9,10:

He leads the humble (ⲔⲓⲛⲓⲮ, πρᾶξις ) in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love (ⲧⲡⲛ, ἔλεος ) and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

The poor man in the Psalms was always seeking the mercy of God; he, in turn, was expected to show mercy toward his fellowmen. This was all part of the covenant relationship on the basis of which the poor man sought justice and right (compare Ps. 25:6; 40:11; 69:16; 79:8). R. H. Gundry may therefore be correct when he claims that this beatitude was patterned on a correct rendering of the Hebrew text of Ps. 18:26: ⲧⲡⲛⲓⲛ ⲧⲓⲡⲛⲓⲛ, "With the merciful thou dost show mercy."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Robert Horton Gundry, The Use of the Old Testament in St.



By the time of Jesus, of course, the term  $\gamma\acute{\omicron}\nu\eta$  had become a technical term associated to some degree with the poor man motif. With this in mind, it is reasonable to place  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\eta\mu\acute{\omicron}\nu\epsilon\varsigma$  together with  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{\omicron}\iota$ ,  $\pi\epsilon\upsilon\theta\omicron\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ , and  $\pi\rho\alpha\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  as descriptive names for the poor. "Shall obtain mercy," then, is part of the eschatological hope to be fulfilled now with the coming of the kingdom.

The next beatitude fits into the same pattern. The "pure in heart" ( $\theta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\acute{\omicron}\iota\ \tau\eta\ \kappa\alpha\rho\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , Matt. 5:8) is the description in Psalm 24 of the man who faithfully seeks God in worship. He who is "pure in heart" will "receive a blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of his salvation." Such are those who "seek the face of God" (Ps. 24:4-6). The striving for vindication from God and the purity of heart in contrast to the ritual purity of their oppressors is all part of the poor man motif (compare Ps. 51:12; 73:1; 18:27). In the Old Testament to "see the face of" someone meant to be permitted to come into his presence, to be heard by him, and thus be vindicated. Thus, to "see the king's face" was to come into his presence (2 Sam. 14:24,28,32), and this is obviously the meaning also behind Prov. 22:11: "He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend." This metaphor was used also of God. Thus Job yearns for the time when he will "see God" (Job 19:26); and the upright are promised that they shall behold the face of God (Ps. 11:7; 17:15). Thus Jesus promises



that the pure in heart "shall see God" now (Matt. 5:8). With the coming of the kingdom they are now to enter into God's presence and to be vindicated by him.

The seventh beatitude (Matt. 5:9), "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God," must also be understood eschatologically. This is the implication of the phrase, "sons of God." Deut. 14:1 uses this term for the people of Israel. But in their disobedience to God they lose that name. Therefore Hosea promises that when they turn to God again they will be known as "sons of the living God" (2:1). In the Wisdom of Solomon (2:18), the *πένυς δίκαιος* claims to be a "son of God" and is persecuted for it. In the Psalms of Solomon the idea develops that the Messiah will gather together a holy people, knowing them all to be "sons of God" (17:30). So the peacemakers, those who "seek peace and pursue it" (Ps. 34:15), and take a stand for what is right and just (compare Prov. 10:10 LXX: "he that reproves boldly is a peacemaker," *εἰρηνοποιεῖ*?) are now to be gathered together as the people of the Messianic age.

Matthew's eighth beatitude (5:10) introduces the theme of persecution and, with its promise of the kingdom of heaven to those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, it is closely connected with the first beatitude. This recall may be intentional to indicate the unity of all the ideas incorporated in these beatitudes.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Dupont, Les Beatitudes, I, 224.



The poor are also the persecuted. Oppression and persecution have always been a predominant theme in the poor man motif; and so it is only to be expected here.

In Matthew's next beatitude this persecution of the poor is described as reviling them (*ὀνειδίζωβιν*), and uttering all kinds of evil against them falsely (*πάντων πονηρὸν καθ' ἑμῶν ψευδομένοι*). In Luke's parallel beatitude (Luke 6:22), the persecution is described as "hatred" (*μισήωβιν*), "exclusion" (*ἄφορίωβιν*), "reviling" (*ὀνειδίζωβιν*), and "casting out one's name as evil" (*ἐκβάλωβιν τὸ ὄνομα ἑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν*). The common element in both versions is "reviling" and this bears the imprint of Is. 51:7, where he who is addressed as one who knows righteousness, and is later called "an afflicted one" (*πενεπινομένη*, 51:21), is encouraged to "fear not the reproach (*ὀνειδισμόν*) of men," and not to be dismayed at their revilings. The *ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης* of Matt. 5:10 may be an allusion to those who "know righteousness."<sup>40</sup>

But in this beatitude there is an obvious attempt to draw in more of the variety of the persecution traditionally known to the poor man, particularly in the Psalms (compare Ps. 69:7-13; 42:11; 102:9; 22:7; 39:9; Jer. 20:8; 15:15). The Matthean phrase "to utter all kinds of evil falsely" and the Lucan "to cast out one's name as evil," may be two different translations of an original Aramaic phrase. They also echo the common complaint of the poor man in the Psalms (109:2-3, 20; 71:10; 35:11) against his oppressors. Luke's

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., I, 71.



"hatred" is a part of that same motif (for example, Ps. 18:17,20,40; 25:19; 35:19; 38:19; 69:4,14). Luke's other form of persecution, "exclusion" has often been taken as meaning "being excluded from the synagogue" (John 9:22; 12:12,42; 16:2). But ἀφορίζω can be a general term to denote exclusion without proper juridical form, that is, treating people as "impure."<sup>41</sup>

If our description of the poor man has been correct, this is exactly what has already been happening to the hearers of Jesus; those regarded as publicans and sinners were excluded by the Pharisees as being impure. We do not have to look to a deliberate policy on Jewish-Christianity as emanated from Jamnia<sup>42</sup> to describe this term.

A new aspect is brought into the circumstance of persecution when the reason is given for such oppression. To his ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης (verse 10) Matthew adds ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ (verse 11), which Luke parallels with ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (6:22). In line with the understanding of δικαιοσύνη in verse 6, ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης in verse 10 would mean that they are persecuted for the sake of the right cause, their own and others. This was a common reason for persecuting the poor man in the Psalms. This is also the meaning implied in the reference to this beatitude, in 1 Peter 3:14. Indeed, the fact that this beatitude is quoted in 1 Peter 3:14 is a further indication that

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. Dupont, Les Beatitudes, II, 289; also Les Beatitudes, I, 230-231.

<sup>42</sup>W. D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: University Press, c.1964), p. 297.



the verse was well known and that for the "sake of righteousness" was not simply a Matthean addition.<sup>43</sup> 1 Peter 4:13,14 also shows real affinity with Matthew 5:11-12 since it speaks of suffering reproach for the name of Christ.

Matthew's final beatitude changes the expression from *ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης* to *ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ*. Thus to suffer for the right cause is going to mean suffering for Christ. The two are drawn together in an intimate relationship. The idea of vindication from suffering and persecution is implied in Luke's significant use of the phrase "for the sake of the Son of man" (6:22). As we have seen, there is a relationship between the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and the Son of man in Dan. 7:13. Those who suffer for his sake can be assured that they will share in his kingdom, a kingdom "that shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14). It is impossible to decide with any certainty whether Matthew or Luke has preserved the original wording. T. W. Manson decides for Luke on the grounds that Matthew tends to alter "Son of man" to the personal pronoun elsewhere (Matt. 16:21) and so may have done so here.<sup>44</sup> But one can quote cases also where Matthew uses the term "Son of man" while Luke has the personal pronoun (for example, Matt. 19:28=Luke 22:9; Matt. 20:28=Luke 18:27). In fact, the term "Son of man" fits better into the context of the

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<sup>43</sup> Against Manson, p. 151; and Dupont, Les Beatitudes, I, 224; and Dupont, Foi et Vie, LXV, 29. It is true that Matthew uses the word *δικαιοσύνη* seven times while Luke uses it only once (1:75) and Mark not at all. But the reason for this may simply be that he retained it from his original source as meaningful while the others omitted it as unintelligible for Gentile Christians.

<sup>44</sup> Manson, p. 48.



persecution and the idea of vindication inherent in this messianic proclamation.<sup>45</sup>

The beatitudes close with an exhortation to "rejoice and be glad" (Matt. 5:12; compare Luke 6:23). This is the eschatological joy and gladness often spoken of in the Psalms and Prophets, particularly Isaiah. The time of the Messiah will be a time of joy and exultation (Is. 29:19; 35:10; 65:19). It will be a time to turn from mourning to gladness (Is. 61:3,7,10). The faithful will be reviled and excluded for the Lord's sake, but even in the midst of this it will be a time to rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad (Is. 66:5,10). The hostility of men only tends to draw the benevolence of God to those who have suffered in his name. With this idea we have been brought full circle back to Isaiah 61. The good news has been proclaimed to the poor, the advent of the kingdom has been announced!

From this we see that it is not necessary to project these beatitudes of persecution into the later situations of the Christian Church. Bultmann's argument that Matt. 5:10-12 and Luke 6:22-23 are "a new element of the tradition" arising ex eventu out of the persecution which the early Church later experienced<sup>46</sup> is not convincing. As we have noted, the persecution and oppression of the poor man was always an essential part of the motif. There is a change in

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Dupont, Les Beatitudes, I, 240-242.

<sup>46</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, translated by John Marsh (revised edition; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, c.1963), pp. 109-110.



form to the second person and a more detailed presentation. The latter is not a sign of later tradition. Rather, it intensifies its meaning and importance and draws the beatitudes to a climax giving them at the same time a necessary directness and spontaneity.<sup>47</sup> There is no reason why this should not go back to Jesus himself.

The differences between the Matthean and Lucan accounts of the beatitudes cannot be quickly set aside due to Matthew's tendency to add interpretative or catechetical material. Brevity is not necessarily a sign of genuineness.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the catechetical concerns of Matthew have been overplayed. As we have shown, the beatitudes peculiar to Matthew still retain the eschatological blessing of the earlier beatitudes and consequently the emphasis still remains on the second half of the sentences. If the first half of these sentences does recognize terms for entry into the kingdom, it is only secondary. Essentially, these are just further descriptions of the poor man, a picture which fits very well into the motif in the Old Testament. These descriptions may also have fitted the people to whom Jesus addressed this proclamation of good news. They were people who had been led to doubt their claim on the kingdom of God because they were not ritually pure. They were babes as far as the law was concerned; consequently they were denied their *δικαιοσύνη* and were persecuted because of it. They were excluded from the

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. David Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (London: University of London, The Athlone Press, 1956), pp. 196-201.

<sup>48</sup>Against Jeremias, p. 17.



fellowship of those claiming the kingdom for themselves. Yet they looked to God for justice and humbly sought mercy and vindication from God. Matthew's beatitudes are essentially the Good News that the Messiah has come and that God gives his kingdom to those who are poor.

The opposition to the scribes and Pharisees in these beatitudes and in other sayings of Jesus must not be underestimated. This comes out in the beatitude of the persecuted in both Matthew and Luke, but it must be understood as the background for all the beatitudes. The religious leaders called themselves the righteous ones, the pious ones, and the pure. But this was only external. They did not remain true to what they professed. In contrast, Jesus describes those whom the Pharisees excluded as the truly righteous, pious and pure. This contrast is carried on throughout the Sermon on the Mount, particularly on the question of the Law.<sup>49</sup>

Luke, who was writing to Gentile Christians, felt it necessary to direct Jesus' message to them in their situation. Consequently, he or his source changed the contrast to that between the rich and the poor. Essentially, the contrast remains the same: a contrast between those who put their trust in possessions and in themselves and those who put their trust in God. The eschatological hope remains but it is made into a startling contrast between the present situation and the future hope. With these differences, the brevity

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<sup>49</sup> The contrast here was not primarily between Christian community and Synagogue as Davies asserts, pp. 289-290, but between the official Synagogue religion and those they excluded, the "poor in spirit."



of the beatitudes, the addition of contrasting woes, and the use of the direct address, Luke has arrived at a vivid and legitimate extension of the message of Jesus.<sup>50</sup>

Luke probably found also the woes in his source and brought them into line with his beatitudes. This is indicated by the fact that he has introduced the Sermon as being spoken only to the disciples of Jesus. At the same time these woes are expressed also in the second person.<sup>51</sup> Degenhardt believes that a study of word analysis is against a Lucan composition and shows that Luke leaned on an old Palestinian tradition.<sup>52</sup> The fact that "woes" are often found in the sayings of Jesus would indicate that they were part of the tradition coupled with the beatitudes and originating with Jesus. Matthew either did not have them in his source or simply omitted them.

The beatitudes comprise a unit. They are variations on a theme: "Good News for the poor! The kingdom of God is for them! For the Messianic reign is about to begin!" All the beatitudes have expressed this same theme. All the promises of old will be fulfilled for them. For the kingdom of God means for them consolation, inheritance, vindication, mercy, being heard by God, gathered together as the sons of God in his kingdom. The message is one and the same, but they are seen from different aspects.<sup>53</sup> These were not simply

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<sup>50</sup>Cf. Koch's treatment of the characteristic points of view of the Evangelists, pp. 59-62.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. Dupont, Foi et Vie, LXV, 31.

<sup>52</sup>Degenhardt, p. 51.

<sup>53</sup>In agreement with Maria Knepper, "Die 'Armen' der Bergpredigt



isolated sayings of Jesus collected together by a careful editor.<sup>54</sup> They make up a single proclamation, based on the promise of Isaiah 61. The beatitudes are announced as the fulfilment of that promise. As we have seen, this was particularly noticeable in the first four beatitudes and to a lesser degree also of the last one. The reason why this proclamation is framed in blessings may have been suggested by Is. 61:8,9: "I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them . . . . All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed."<sup>55</sup>

In Isaiah 61 we face the fundamental theme of the preaching of Jesus, for he identifies himself as the messenger sent by God to announce the Good News to the poor. His message is simply: "Your God reigns" (compare Is. 40:9; 52:7). It signifies for the poor man the end of suffering and oppression and the beginning of an era of joy and gladness because God is taking over.<sup>56</sup> Jesus hereby defines his mission: he is the messenger of the Good News, the eschatological prophet. But he is more. He has been "anointed" to bring these Good News to the poor and in this sense he is the "Messiah" but not yet strictly in the Davidic sense. The rule he has announced

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Jesus," Bibel und Kirche, VIII, (January 1953), 24; and Jean Danielou, "Blessed are the Poor," Contemporary New Testament Studies, edited by Sister Rosalie Ryan (Collegetown, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, c.1965), p. 208.

<sup>54</sup> Martin Dibelius, The Sermon on the Mount (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1940), p. 105.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Jon E. Murray, "The Beatitudes," Interpretation, I (1947), 375

<sup>56</sup> Dupont, Foi et Vie, LXV, 34.



is the reign of God. That reign only becomes manifest through him. He is the herald and the pledge. His words are not separable from his acts. With his preaching and parables, his miracles and deeds, his conduct toward the poor, the oppressed, the sick and the sinners, the Reign of God becomes a reality. This kingship is a reign of pure grace. It does not wish to dominate but to serve.<sup>57</sup>

#### The Answer to John the Baptist

That Jesus certainly understood his messianic role in terms of exulting and vindicating the poor man, of bringing him the Good News of salvation and demonstrating that salvation, is seen in his answer to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:26 and Luke 7:18-23).<sup>58</sup> As we noted in the beatitudes, the thrust of Jesus' message and work is patterned on the lists of messianic works found in Is. 29:18-19; 35:5-6; and 61:1-3. It was in these terms that Jesus interpreted his role to John the Baptist.

John was a relative of Jesus and had grown up in the same atmosphere of the **אֲנָשֵׁי דְאִיִּי**, the poor, first of all under his devout parents<sup>59</sup> and later in the wilderness (Luke 1:80). It is likely that in the wilderness John at least became acquainted with the

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<sup>57</sup>Dupont, Les Beatitudes, II, 137-140, 380.

<sup>58</sup>Bultmann's attempt to regard this event as the product of the early Christian community as part of their supposed polemic against the disciples of John, pp. 23-24, lacks evidence.

<sup>59</sup>Cf. Walther Sattler, "Die Anawim im Zeitalter Jesus Christi," Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher zum 70. Geburtstag 26. Januar 1927 (Tübingen: Verlag von T. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], c.1927), p.6.



thought and practice of the Qumran Community who knew themselves as the congregation of the Poor. Like them, John held to a strong eschatological hope. Like them he followed the Mosaic purity laws and like them he saw himself as the "Preparer of the Way" of the Lord out in the desert, according to Is. 40:3-5.<sup>60</sup> But while John announced the coming of the Lord and called the people to prepare themselves for this coming, he saw the Coming One primarily as a terrible Judge who would be the vindicator of the righteous and oppressed. He would gather his wheat into his granary and burn the chaff as useless. The tree without fruit would be cut down. Genuine repentance is the only way to escape the coming wrath (Luke 3:8-9, 15-17).

By the time John was imprisoned in the military stronghold of Machaerus, Jesus had begun his ministry. His words and deeds were becoming well known. What John heard about Jesus' ministry did not correspond to his messianic expectations; hence his question to Jesus through his disciples: "Are you he who is to come or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3; Luke 7:19-20). Jesus' answer was to refer to his miracles and message as messianic. He did not explicitly declare himself to be the coming Messiah but it is quite clear that he regarded his miracles as proof of his messiahship and proof also that the messianic era had already begun in him.

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<sup>60</sup>Cf. John 1:23 and IQS VIII, 12-14. The Synoptic Gospels do not mention that John made this claim of himself (cf. Mark 1:2-3; Matt. 3:3, Luke 3:4-6).



The messianic works mentioned by Jesus follow closely the lists in Isaiah 29, 35, and 61. But Jesus shows that his ministry surpasses the prophetic expectations. He does so by adding references to his cleansing of lepers and raising of the dead. Matthew has prepared for this saying of Jesus by narrating some of the miracles of Jesus in the previous chapters: τυφλοί, 9:27-31; χωλοί, 8:5-13 and 9:1-8; λεπροί, 8:2-4; κωφοί, 9:32-33; νεκροί, 9:18-26. Πτωχοί may be illustrated by the call of Matthew, the meal with the tax-collectors, and the ensuing conversation (9:9-17), as well as the whole Sermon on the Mount.<sup>61</sup> To this may be added also the action of sending out the Twelve with the authority to cast our unclean spirits and to heal the sick (Matthew 10).

Introducing the sending out of the Twelve is highly significant in that Matthew notes that when Jesus saw the crowd he had compassion for them "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." While this is a reference to Zech. 10:2, it is likely that Matthew also had in mind the promise of Is. 40:11:

He will feed his flock like a shepherd,  
 he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
 he will carry them in his bosom  
 and gently lead those that are with young.

This is what he who was to come would accomplish. This is the kind of Messiah John the Baptist should have been expecting.

Luke does not prepare for Jesus' answer to John the Baptist so well as Matthew. So he has to insert an extra verse after John's

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<sup>61</sup>Cf. Weiss, p. 129.



question. This verse states that Jesus performed many miracles "in that hour" before the eyes of John's disciples (Luke 7:21). Prior to this he has listed only the two miracles of the healing of the centurion's servant and the raising from the dead of the widow's son at Nain (7:1-17). In the latter account the astonishment of the people is expressed in the words: "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" (7:16). This could well be a reference to Is. 40:9. If so, it implies an answer to John the Baptist.

In the lists of messianic works in Isaiah we have noticed a blend of the physical and spiritual in the understanding of such terms as deaf, lame, and dumb, with a predominance on the spiritual, particularly in Is. 29:18-19. Jesus, however, appears to have interpreted these as being predominantly physical. But this is so because the emphasis is on his messianic action. The response to faith is always there. Moreover, at the end of his list of miracles, and as the climax to them all, Jesus places the words from Is. 61:1: *πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται*. This is the decisive sign which interprets all the others<sup>62</sup> and blends the physical and the spiritual, the deed and the word, into a unified whole. All this adds up to one thing: Jesus is he who was to come. The reign of God has begun in him. This was the theme of his inaugural sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19) as also of his beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23).

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<sup>62</sup>Dupont, *Foi et Vie*, LXV, 33; and Ernst Bammel, "*πτωχός, πτωκεία, πτωκείω*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1968), VI, 903.



In regard to the "poor" in this context, it is clear that they are those who in their need look to God for deliverance. In the accounts of the miracles their needs are physical. They believe that Jesus has the power of God to deliver them. They are the humble ones who are ready to accept the fact that in Jesus, God has visited his people as he had promised in Is. 40:9. The Good News for them consisted primarily in acts of mercy and love and not in judgment as John the Baptist and his followers had assumed. This is further indicated by Jesus' use of another beatitude: "Blessed is he who takes no offence at me" (Matt. 11:6 and Luke 7:23).

#### The Rich Young Man

The only use of  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$  which is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels is found in the story of the rich young man (Mark 10:17-22; Matt. 19:16-22; Luke 18:18-23). In this story, the rich young man asks Jesus what is required of him in order to inherit eternal life. He believes he has kept all the commandments. So Jesus tells him to sell his possessions and give the money to the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\iota$ . The  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\iota$  in this passage appear to play no significant role. They are only to be the recipients of charity. But it could possibly be argued here that the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\acute{o}\iota$  are the community of Christ's followers who have pooled their possessions and that the rich young man is asked to do the same if he wishes to join Christ's followers. References in the Pauline letters (for example, Gal. 2:10) to the poor in Jerusalem have been understood by some as referring to the Christian



congregation there.<sup>63</sup> Luke 8:3 may suggest this procedure as it speaks of those following Jesus as providing for the group out of their possessions. However, there is no evidence in the Gospels from which we could conclude that the Christian community was so named.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the exhortation to sell one's possessions and give alms in Luke 12:33 is addressed to the Christian community itself and therefore indicates an act of charity rather than such common sharing as Luke mentions in Acts 4:32-37.

The real significance of the story of the rich young man for our study is not in the use of the term  $\pi\rho\upsilon\chi\acute{o}\varsigma$  but in the message Jesus desired to convey to the rich young man. What was the main point of this? Percy contended it was the incompatibility of riches with a share in the kingdom of God.<sup>65</sup> Lohmeyer similarly held that, in line with the poor man motif, Jesus was requiring that in order to enter the kingdom of God, which is promised to the poor, a man must first become poor.<sup>66</sup> However, the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) warns against such a material view of poverty. The danger of interpreting the poor man motif too much from a socio-economic point of view leads to an inflexible and legalistic understanding of the kingdom.

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<sup>63</sup>Infra, Chapter V.

<sup>64</sup>In agreement with Degenhardt, p. 145.

<sup>65</sup>Percy, p. 93.

<sup>66</sup>Ernst Lohmeyer, Galiläa und Jerusalem (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1936), p. 65.



The real point of the story is that those who enter the kingdom of God, and so inherit eternal life will do so because they have become "poor in spirit." They have joined those who see God as the answer to their needs and are ready to put themselves completely in God's hands. They become the poor, not necessarily in the socio-economic sense, but in the spiritual sense of this reliance upon God for final deliverance to eternal life. Strict observance of the Torah was no good if this only threw a man back on his own goodness. The answer to becoming a true child of God and receiving the kingdom lay rather in becoming a poor man or being like a *παισίον*.

It is important to note in this connection that both Matthew and Luke retain the order found in Mark of having the story of the rich young man follow the account of Jesus blessing the children. For it is there that Jesus observes how a man must become like a child in order to enter the kingdom (Mark 10:13-16; Matt. 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17). In making this observation the tertium comparationis for Jesus was not the innocence of the children, or their simplicity, or their humility. Nor can we say it was a lack of ulterior motives on their part. It can not mean only a total absence of pretension or even their confidence or receptivity. Nowhere in the Old Testament or in any of the literature of the intertestamental period can we find any particular virtues attributed to children. They are usually known for their insignificance, their lack of courage or their weakness. In Qumran literature, children are classed together with the blind and the lame and the unclean (1QMVII, 3-6; 4QDb).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Dupont, Les Beatitudes, II, 145-148.



Jesus accepts the child as it is, imperfect, insignificant in knowledge and understanding and says that to such belongs the kingdom of God. He does so in the same way that he has spoken of the kingdom of God as belonging to the poor and oppressed. It belongs to them not because of what they have done but because of what they have lacked. There is a definite contrast here with those who thought the kingdom of God would belong to them because of their strict observance of the Law. The emphasis is always that the coming of the kingdom of God is an act of God's grace. It is purely a divine gift. The tertium comparationis, therefore, is really the helplessness of the child and its consequent utter dependence. This is what a man must become before God in order to enter the Kingdom. This also is what is meant by Matt. 18:4: "Whoever humbles (ταπεινωθεῖ) himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Humility here is not exalted as a virtue, as having a meritorious character, but simply describes the disposition of utter dependence on God.<sup>68</sup> Jesus applied this acid test to the rich young man and found him wanting. He had not become poor in spirit.

In all three accounts of the story of the rich young man there follows the statement about the danger of riches and the rewards of discipleship. The predominance of dominical sayings regarding the

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<sup>68</sup>Cf. Ibid., II, 159-181. While Dupont tends to emphasize only the insignificance and helplessness of a child, a child's dependence is an inseparable part of the picture, just as it is with the poor and oppressed. Part of the whole motif is the willingness to accept in the spirit of reliance. Cf. Howard C. Kee, "Becoming a Child in



danger of riches, found mainly in Luke, is significant. Jesus saw in riches a very real hindrance to the absolute nature of depending on God for daily bread. Those who have forsaken everything are promised a hundredfold now and then eternal life in the future (Mark 10: 28-31; Matt. 19:27-30; Luke 18:28-30). It is very difficult to say whether Jesus' promise of reward was any more explicit than that, even though Mark adds a description of earthly blessings.<sup>69</sup>

Matthew has brought into this context a promise by Jesus that in the *παλιγγενεσία*, when the Son of man sits on his throne of glory, those who have followed him will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). Luke has a similar logion spoken by Jesus at the Passover meal (Luke 22:28-30). The promise to the poor man in his oppression and persecution had always been that he would be vindicated. This note of vindication is the theme of Daniel 7 where, in a judgment scene, God gives dominion, glory and kingdom to the Son of man and to the saints of the Most High (Dan. 7:13-14, 26-27). This is the picture here also. In the Wisdom of Solomon, this vindication has been put in the after-life where the righteous who have been oppressed will judge their wicked oppressors (Wisd. Sol. 4:16). So in Matt. 19:28 also those who have put up with suffering and persecution, who have been poor, shall

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the Gospel of Thomas," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXII (1963), 307. Frederick A. Schilling's contention that the pericope means that one should embrace the kingdom of God as one would embrace a child is entertaining but not true to context. See his essay, "What Means the Saying about Receiving the Kingdom of God as a Little Child? Mark x.15; Lk. xviii:17," Expository Times, LXXVII (1965-1966), 57.

<sup>69</sup>In agreement with Bultmann, pp. 110-111.



experience their vindication and shall judge together with the Vindicated One, the Son of man, Jesus Christ himself.<sup>70</sup>

#### Antitheses Between Rich and Poor

In this section we must deal with a number of pericopes, found almost entirely in Luke, which establish a definite contrast between the rich and the poor. It will be necessary to examine each one of these and then seek to determine whether these are genuine words of Jesus or whether they have been modified by the Evangelist. Once this has been determined, it will be necessary to see the relationship of these antitheses to the poor man motif.

The only pericope not peculiar to Luke is the story of the poor widow (χήρα πτωχή) who contributes her penny in the treasury (γασοφυλακερον) in spite of her extreme poverty (Mark 12:41-44= Luke 21:1-4). This was a contribution not for poor-relief, which was collected by the temple attendants in special boxes, but for the temple worship.<sup>71</sup> Her action is seen against the background of the rich giving their gifts to the treasury.. Jesus commends her action saying that her gift is far more important since she gave out of what she lacked, while the rich gave out of their abundance. Luke follows Mark very closely here, retaining Jesus' reference to

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<sup>70</sup> Bultmann, p. 159, may be correct in asserting that the reference to the Twelve as judges of Israel in the end-time is a formulation of the early Church. Nevertheless, it is very likely that the theme of vindication together with the Son of man goes back to a genuine saying of Jesus.

<sup>71</sup> See Degenhardt, p. 96.



ἡ χήρα αὐτῆ ἡ πτωχή (Mark 12:43; Luke 21:3) but changing Mark's earlier description of the widow as πτωχή το πεινχρά (Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2). He also deepens the contrast between the rich and the poor. For while Mark has Jesus watching the crowd, many of whom were rich, Luke refers simply to the rich. Matthew does not record the story.

This incident of the poor widow offers a triple contrast. At first glance it seems to be simply a contrast between rich and poor, the popular belief that the small sacrifice of the poor is more pleasing to God than the extravagance of the rich.<sup>72</sup> But it goes deeper than that. The widow's action stands in contrast to the scribes who go about seeking honor and prestige and who "devour widow's houses and for a pretence make long prayers" (Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47). Instead of using their legal skills to protect widows, they were using them to play on their ignorance to get whatever they could from them in their helpless state. The scribe is depicted here as the oppressor of the poor, and this contrast colors the story of the poor widow and her contribution. The widow is already the righteous one in contrast to the powerful rich who use their riches to oppress (compare Sirach 13). But Jesus draws in a third contrast. The woman has given her gift as an offering symbolizing her personal devotion to God. This devotion has led her to present to God all she has at her disposal without thinking of herself. This radical devotion is held up before the disciples as a contrast to the skin-deep piety of the scribes and rabbis.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See Bultmann, pp. 32-33.

<sup>73</sup> Degenhardt, p. 96.



The strong polemic against the rich is a recurring theme in Luke's Gospel. Mentioned already in Luke 1:53; 6:24-26; and 8:14, it really begins in earnest with the story of the rich fool (12:13-21) and carries through to Chapter 19. The story of the rich fool is introduced by a request put to Jesus that he intervene in a matter of property inheritance. Jesus curtly refuses, because the request implies that earthly possessions are the all-important thing in life. This is in direct contradiction to his message that the inheritance of the kingdom of God is the all-important thing and the present life must be totally related to that.<sup>74</sup> The parable then follows to illustrate how a *πλούσιος* who looks for security in his wealth, is nothing but a fool (verse 20) or, in other words, a godless person (compare Ps. 14:1). He has sought after riches instead of after God. In doing so he loses in death not only the earthly riches which he has made the goal of his whole life and which are perishable, but also the heavenly riches of the kingdom of God which endure forever (Luke 12:33-34).

The kingdom of God belongs to the poor, and the poor are those who are not anxious about earthly riches but put the kingdom first. For this reason the parable is followed by the pericope on anxiety about earthly things (12:22-30) and later by the parable of the wise steward (12:35-48).

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<sup>74</sup>In agreement with Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, (revised edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1963), p. 165. Manson p. 271, omits this vital fact. Percy, p. 91 denies it.



This whole chapter indicates the application of the "poor-man" theology of the Psalms: that God is the ruler of all things, that a man must turn to God first, and that God will bless him with righteousness and prosperity. This poor man motif is given emphasis in verse 32: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." This verse draws on such Old Testament promises to the poor as Is. 23:3-4; Ezek. 34:11-16; and Dan. 7:27. The use of the word "little" emphasizes not so much the size but the fact that in the worldly views they are "insignificant," being without the influence and power which possessions usually give.<sup>75</sup> To this verse is added what may be a Lucan extension of Jesus' original message: "Sell your possessions and give alms" (verse 33). This appears as an echo of Jesus' words to the rich young man (Mark 10:21; Matt. 19:21; Luke 18:22) which dealt with a concrete situation and was not a general demand. It should be noted that the disciples did not sell their possessions but simply left them for the sake of the kingdom (Mark 10:28). The implication is that they could return to them when necessary, as they did from time to time. Here (Luke 12:33) a complete and irrevocable separation is called for which would only be meaningful in the special situation of sharing all things in common as this was practised in the early Church (Acts 2:45; 4:34-35).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Cf. Degenhardt, p. 86; Karl Bornhäuser, Der Christ und seine Habe nach der Neuen Testament: Eine soziologische Studie, in Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie (Gütersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1936), XXXVIII, No. 3, 39-41.

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Degenhardt, p. 87.



In Luke 14, which depicts Jesus dining with a ruler who was a Pharisee, we have two references to the poor. These references do not directly place the poor in contrast to the rich but they do shed light on the proper attitude toward possessions and power. In the address on banquets, Jesus tells his host that he should invite to his banquets also the *πτωχοί, ἀνκλήροι, χωλοί, τυφλοί* (14:13). For all practical purposes, these same words are repeated in the parable of the great supper which follows (14:21).

In the light of the beatitudes, Jesus' answer to John the Baptist and his Sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4:18-30), one can only understand this list as referring to those to whom the kingdom of God belongs, those who are the poor in spirit.<sup>77</sup> The address on banquets (Luke 14:12-14) then takes on deeper meaning than appears at first glance.

Originally, it was not simply an exhortation to charitable hospitality. Nor was it simply a suggestion to share hospitality with those of a lower spiritual level, that is, with those who were spiritually poor, maimed, lame and blind.<sup>78</sup> Rather, Jesus was asking his hearers to renew their covenant relationship with their fellowmen in accordance with Deut. 14:29 while there was time. For the messianic age was upon them. Like John the Baptist before him, Jesus was saying to the Pharisees: "Bear fruits that befit repentance" (Luke 3:8), but he was saying it in a different way. He

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Bammel, VI, 906.

<sup>78</sup> As Manson would have it, p. 280.



was telling them to cast aside their pride and in all humility see those whom they had despised and oppressed, the poor in spirit, as God's children, too, and to learn true dependence upon God from them.

The time was close for judgment. Such judgment would be carried out by those very people, the *δικαιοί* in the life to come. For "the righteous man (*δικαίος*) who has died will condemn the ungodly who are living" (Wis. Sol. 4:16). The resurrection of the *δικαιοί* in Luke 14:14 is an obvious reference to the judgment scene in Wis. Sol. 5:1-6:

Then the righteous man will stand with great confidence  
in the presence of those who have afflicted him,  
and those who make light of his labors.  
When they see him, they will be shaken with dreadful fear,  
and they will be amazed at his unexpected salvation.  
They will speak to one another in repentance,  
and in anguish of spirit they will groan, and say,  
"This is the man we once held in derision  
and made a byword of reproach—we fools!  
We thought that his life was madness  
and that his end was without honor.  
Why has he been numbered among the sons of God?  
And why is his lot among the saints?  
So it was we who strayed from the way of truth . . . ."

As Luke reports this logion, its strong eschatological warning does not readily come to the fore. It may be that his concern here was to direct the words of Jesus more to the Church leaders of his time. They should concern themselves also about the poor and sinful and accept them into their fellowship without expecting anything in return. Thus the social aspect at first appears to be predominant in Luke's reporting.<sup>79</sup> But the fact that it is connected,

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<sup>79</sup> Degenhardt, p. 101.



on the one hand, with the teaching on humility (Luke 14:7-11) and, on the other, with the messianic banquet (Luke 14:15-24) implies that it originally had a more complete form and consequently the deeper meaning suggested.

The parable of the great supper (Luke 14:15-24), is paralleled by Matt. 22:1-14, although Matthew's version appears to have undergone some slight changes. One of these changes is that Matthew leaves out the reference to the poor, maimed, lame and blind and therefore has the servants going out only twice. Luke's text is probably closer to the original words of Jesus.<sup>80</sup> The eschatological warning is not as veiled here as in the previous logion. Those invited to the supper are obviously the people of Israel who reject the invitation to the Messianic banquet. The invitation is then given to the poor, that is, to those whom official Judaism had rejected from their society and fellowship, the  $\zeta\eta\tau\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ , publicans and sinners, the true  $\epsilon\lambda\theta\iota\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma$ . Those compelled to come in, the strangers outside the city, are the Gentiles to whom the Good News finally goes. At the end of the parable, the angry words of the host who wishes to have nothing to do with those first invited is a strong warning to the Pharisees that it may already be too late to receive the kingdom.<sup>81</sup>

Passing reference must be made to the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-15) if only because it begins with  $\alpha\lambda\theta\epsilon\pi\omega\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$

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<sup>80</sup> Dupont, Les Beatitudes, II, 259-262; Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, pp. 67-69; Degenhardt, p. 103.

<sup>81</sup> Degenhardt, pp. 102-104.



ἁν πλούσιος . However, the rich man himself appears to play only an insignificant role in the parable and its message. There is no stigma attached to this rich man as there is in the following parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Many interpretations have been offered for the parable of the Unjust Steward which may answer some of the problems of this complex parable but rarely answer all. It may well be that oppression and the vindication of the oppressed is the underlying motif similar to that found in Luke 14:12-14.

If this is the case, the interpretation follows smoothly.<sup>82</sup> The rich man is God who is the owner of all things. The steward stands for those who have leadership and authority. They have the responsibility to use the resources God has given them in a purposeful and fruitful way. But they misuse his goods and take more for themselves than is their due. In doing so they oppress the poor, the "debtors." These poor have no option but to cry to God for deliverance and vindication. These are the charges brought against the steward. Because God delivers the oppressed when he calls (Ps. 72:12-14; compare Sir. 4:1-6), so those oppressing the poor are

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<sup>82</sup>As it is not possible to deal with this parable here in detail, only a summary interpretation is given. Detailed explanations can be drawn from Degenhardt, pp. 117-126; Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, pp. 45-48, 181-182; Manson, pp. 293-294; Martin H. Scharlemann, Proclaiming the Parables (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, c.1963), pp. 80-94; Paul Gachter, "The Parable of the Dishonest Steward after Oriental Conceptions," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XII (1950), 121-131; Duncan M. Derrett, "Fresh Light on St. Luke XVI," New Testament Studies, VII (1960-1961), 198-219; Hans Kosmala, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward in the Light of Qumran," Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute, III, edited by Hans Kosmala et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, c.1964), 114-121.



given notice that their responsibility is about to be taken from them. This is the warning of impending judgment. In the face of this, the steward of the parable acts wisely.

Knowing that his future life is more important than present riches, he makes amends, cuts out his profit and thus makes up to those he has been defrauding. He knows he will now be received by them, and they will no longer bring judgment against him. Since he has changed his ways in view of impending judgment he is commended by his master for his action.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, the parable teaches, God commends those who in these last times repent and change their ways, making amends to those whom they oppressed. They are to make friends<sup>84</sup> by paying back what they have taken from them falsely (the unrighteous mammon, verse 9).<sup>85</sup> Thus, while unrighteous mammon is not going to deliver them from judgment (compare Zeph. 1:18), those towards whom they have now acted righteously, their friends, will receive them into their eternal homes to share their glory with the (compare Wisd. Sol. 3:1-8; 5:15; Enoch 39:1-5). The next verses (10 to 13) follow on with further applications of the parable. Verses 10 to 11 say in effect: "If you have not been a good steward of earthly riches then how can you

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<sup>83</sup>This must be understood as a genuine commendation, not as a false cover-up, as Derrett explains it, VII, 216-217.

<sup>84</sup>Cf. Matt. 5:25-26, and Luke 12:57-59 where the debtor rather than the oppressor is called upon to make friends.

<sup>85</sup>According to the usual explanation in Derrett, VII, 218.



be entrusted with heavenly riches?" Verse 12 reiterates this in different words: "If you cannot be faithful with someone else's inheritance, how can you expect to receive the eternal inheritance promised to you?" (compare Luke 19:12-17). Verse 13 makes the final application: the steward repents and changes from serving mammon to serving God. This is what everyone should do while there is still time.

The message, whether directed to the disciples (19:1) or Pharisees (19:14) or both, simply speaks of the proper stewardship of earthly possessions and this is given greater urgency in the face of impending judgment. Luke was concerned that the Christian Church particularly see the urgency of freeing itself from the grip of material possession; hence he has Jesus address only the disciples.<sup>86</sup>

The parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) gives us a further indication of how Luke has extended the poor man motif, as used by Jesus, into a direct contrast between rich and poor. In this parable, the πλούσιος enjoys life on earth to the full but goes to spend eternity in torment. The πτωχός (called such in verses 20,22), on the other hand, knows poverty, hunger and sickness in this life, but when he dies, he is carried by angels to Abraham's side.

No special guilt is ascribed to the rich man, nor any merit to the poor man. No point is made of the failure of the rich man in relation to the poor. The message, according to Luke, is the false

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<sup>86</sup>Cf. Degenhardt's interpretation of this, pp. 120, 218.



security of riches which leads to alienation from God and the consequences of such alienation.<sup>87</sup> This is further emphasized by the attitude of the five brothers (Luke 16:27-31).<sup>88</sup>

The parable originally would have had a deeper meaning. Luke treats this parable the same way as he does the beatitudes. The story has been abbreviated to bring the rich and poor into sharper contrast. Lazarus, however, still bears some of the marks of the poor man of the beatitudes: he is poor, he hungers, and he is finally comforted (παράκλησις, verse 25; compare Matt. 5:4), sitting at Abraham's side at the heavenly feast. Poor Lazarus receives the kingdom of God. But the rich man in his selfishness and greed has not shown the fruits of his religion in recognizing his responsibility to his fellowmen. It is by his actions that he will be judged. This parable should be read in connection with Isaiah 58 and the parable of the Last Judgment in Matt. 25:31-46.<sup>89</sup>

Jesus addressed the parable to the Pharisees, "lovers of money" (Luke 16:14,15), who regarded themselves as the children of Abraham (Luke 3:8). He used it to point out to them that it is not they who will be sitting at Abraham's side in the kingdom of God but those

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<sup>87</sup> Bammel, VI, 906; Robert Koch, "die Wertung des Besitzes in Lukasevangelium," Biblica, XXXVIII (1957), 163. Percy, pp. 94-105, sees the parable as a call to repentance to the rich, that they must either choose between this world or the kingdom of God, according to the Jewish idea that if you have your reward in this life, you may not have it in the life to come.

<sup>88</sup> Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, p. 186, sees the main thrust of the parable as a warning of impending judgment addressed to men like the five brothers. Hence, he believes, the parable is really the story of the six brothers.

<sup>89</sup> Dupont, Les Beatitudes, II, 48.



whom they despised. This is a call to repentance in the face of impending judgment. Luke has not really changed the meaning of the parable but has directed it to the pressing problem in the Gentile Church, the matter of earthly possessions.

The story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 breaks the strong polemic against the rich found in Luke and shows that even a rich man can be the poor man who receives the kingdom of God. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector (19:2) and a "sinner" (19:7) who recognizes his need for the mercy of God. His distress is spiritual, just as the fact of his being rejected as a sinner is real. Jesus brings to him the Good News as to one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel (19:10; compare Ezek. 34:15-16; Matt. 10:6; 15:24). Zacchaeus' response is to give half of his wealth to the *πτωχοί* and to vow to pay back fourfold to any whom he may have defrauded (19:8). Regarding the kingdom of God as of more importance than riches is exemplary for Luke. Thus it is evident that a man can conceivably remain wealthy while being also a "poor man." He, too, even though he is a "sinner," is a son of Abraham (19:9).

Throughout all these stories and parables we have seen Luke's favorite theme come through: Riches are a curse! Renounce them for the sake of the Kingdom! Renounce them lest they separate you from God! It is only when a man places the kingdom first and can say "No" to earthly treasures that his salvation is possible. Torment in Hades is the destiny of him who "lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21; 16:23). Therefore it is better for a man to get rid of it: "Sell your possessions and give alms"



(Luke 12:33). But at all costs he is advised: "Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

But it is a renunciation of its power and influence and not of its use as we learn from the parable of the Unjust Steward (16:1-13) and the story of Zacchaeus (19:1-10). Nor does the Christ of Luke's Gospel condemn the use of riches. His circle of friends usually contained wealthy people, some of whom supported him financially (8:2-3; 10:38-39). Jesus dined with the rich (for example, 19:1-10). He never spoke against possessions as such and even promised the disciples material blessings as a reward for putting the kingdom first (18:29-30). His attitude to possessions was purely religious and not economically or socially based.<sup>90</sup> It was putting riches before God that Jesus condemned.

The oft-repeated admonition to give alms and do charity (14:13, 21; 18:22; 19:8) comes not so much from Luke's concern for the poor as from his concern for the salvation of the possessor. A sincere concern for one's fellowman and the use of wealth on their behalf is a sure sign of a man's relation to God. For that reason Luke encourages almsgiving.

The story of the anointing of Jesus (Mark 14:3-9) is omitted by Luke because of its ambivalent attitude towards charity.<sup>91</sup> From Acts 4:34 we see that Luke saw the early Church as the fulfillment of the promise of Deut. 15:4. The Church was the new Israel

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<sup>90</sup>Koch, XXXVIII, 154.

<sup>91</sup>Bammel, VI, 907.



living according to the new Covenant of which brotherly love was the guiding principle.<sup>92</sup>

#### Related Terminology

A study of the Septuaginttranslation of the words used in the poor man motif has shown us that there was very little distinction in meaning between *πτωχός*, *πένης*, *πραῦς*, and *ταπεινός*. These words were used interchangeably to translate the main Hebrew words. We could expect therefore to find the influence of the poor man motif also in *πραῦς* and *ταπεινός* as used in the Gospels.

We have already encountered the word *πραῦς* in one of the beatitudes (Matt. 5:5), where we noticed its close relationship to *πτωχός*. This of course is very significant for the use of this term in Matt. 11:29 together with *ταπεινός* where Jesus used both terms of himself. Elsewhere *πραῦς* is found only in Matt. 21:5, a quotation from Zech. 9:9. These will be studied below in relation to Jesus' mission. Otherwise *πραῦς* is found only in 1 Peter 3:4 where it describes a "gentle and quiet spirit" (*τοῦ πραέος καὶ ἡδύχιου πνεύματος*). This is very close to the description of the God-fearing man as *ταπεινὸς καὶ ἡδύχιος* in Is. 66:2. The noun *πραΰτης* is not found in the Gospels at all, although used in the Pauline writing some eight times, in James twice, and once in 1 Peter. While influenced by its use in the Septuagint, the noun generally has the meaning of "meekness," "gentleness," as in Hellenistic Judaism.

<sup>92</sup>Degenhardt, p. 180; Hans Frhr v. Campenhausen, Die Askese im Urchristentum (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], c.1949), p. 18.

<sup>93</sup>C. Spicq, "Benignité, Mansuétude, Douceur, Clémence,"



In the Magnificat of Luke 1:46-55 **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΣ** is used once (verse 52) and **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΩΒΙΣ** is also found once (verse 48). The language and form here are strongly dependent on the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10). They follow in the same tradition of the poor man before God giving thanks for some gift in the traditional terms of God exalting the lowly and delivering the oppressed and afflicted. The same polemic of the poor man against the powerful oppressor is evident here in true Old Testament fashion (1:51-53):

He has shown strength in his arm,  
 He has scattered the proud (**ὑπερηφάνους**) in the  
 imagination of their hearts,  
 he has put down the mighty (**δυνατάς**) from their thrones,  
 and exalted the lowly (**ὑψώβεν ταπεινάς**),  
 he has filled the hungry (**πεινῶντας**) with good things,  
 and the rich (**πλουτοῦντας**) he has sent empty away.

This is very much "poor man" theology, reminiscent of Ps. 34:1-11; 107:9, 147:61, and the beatitudes. Similarly, in the opening verses of the Magnificat, "rejoicing" (**ἠγαλιάβεν**) is the messianic "joy and gladness" promised in Isaiah, particularly in Is. 61:10. The **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΩΒΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΔΟΥΛΗΣ** of verse 48 is an exact quotation of the prayer of Hannah beseeching God to look on her "affliction" (1 Sam. 1:11). It is the typical stance of the poor man before God. And the rest of the verse, "henceforth all generations will call me blessed," recalls Isaiah 61 (verse 9):

Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
 and their offspring in the midst of the peoples;  
 all who see them shall acknowledge them,  
 that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.



The whole Magnificat, in fact, is a mosaic of Old Testament messianic hopes as expressed in the poor man motif.

The humbling of the exalted and the exalting of the humble, mentioned in the Magnificat, continues to be a familiar theme and appears to be carried over from the Wisdom literature (for example, Prov. 18:12; 29:23; 25:6-7). This is particularly evident at Luke 14:11 in Jesus' parable on taking the lowest seat at a marriage feast. The saying is drawn from Prov. 25:6-7:

Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence  
or stand in the place of the great;  
for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"  
than to be put lower in the presence of the prince.

But the eschatological tone of this whole chapter in Luke suggests that Jesus gives a much deeper meaning to the saying than simply offering practical advice concerning table manners. It is more than a wisdom saying. It is, together with the address on banquets (14:12-14) and the parable of the great supper (14:15-24), a warning to prepare now to stand before the heavenly king on the last day.<sup>94</sup>

Humbling oneself (ὁ ταπεινῶν) is the position of the poor man before God.

The same proverbial saying is found also in Luke 18:14 where it is the "moral" of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (18:9-14). The poor man motif is rather prominent in the whole chapter. For the story of the two men who went to the temple to

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<sup>94</sup>Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, pp. 192-193; Walter Grundmann, "ταπεινός, ταπεινώσις", Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhauser Verlag, c.1969), VII, 16.



pray, is preceded by the parable of the Unjust Judge (18:1-8). This encourages patient and continual praying on the assurance that God will vindicate his oppressed elect who cry out to him day and night. Thus the poor man motif is very evident. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is followed by the passage on the need to become as a *παισίον* in order to enter the kingdom (18:15-17). There is stress, therefore, on the point that man needs to recognize his nothingness before God, that he is dependent solely upon God's grace. (compare Matt. 18:4). This was the position of the publican in the parable. He had taken the stance of the poor man before God in accordance with the example of the writer of Psalm 51 who sought God's mercy acknowledging that the acceptable sacrifice to God is a broken and humbled heart (*καρδίαν βυττετριμμένην καὶ τεταπεινωμένην*, Ps. 50:17 LXX).

The eschatological content and meaning of this proverb was probably influenced by Ezek. 21:31 where this saying is found in a context of judgment on the wicked prince of Israel. This is surely what Jesus had in mind when he used this saying in his discourse condemning the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:12)<sup>95</sup> There it is preceded by an explanatory exhortation: "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (verse 11). In a way, Jesus was making a contrast here between the Pharisees who chose to be called "Rabbi," "Master," and himself who chose to be known as *πρῶτος καὶ ταπεινός* (Matt. 11:29), or as a Servant (compare Matt. 20:26-28).

<sup>95</sup>Gundry, XVIII, 85.



We can now conclude that the related terms *πράϊς* and *ταπεινός* are still very much part of the poor man motif in the teaching of Jesus and that they are used particularly to describe the poor man's attitude to God.

#### Different Emphases in Matthew and Luke

The central theme of the poor man motif is a cry for justice and deliverance from affliction and oppression. It includes the hope that the Messiah will come to change all this. When all this has been accomplished, the motif loses its reason for further existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the motif does not come through very strongly in the Gospels. It is simply not mentioned apart from the words of Jesus and a few Old Testament quotations. The fact that the words of our motif are basically pre-resurrection terms is the reason why none of these words are found in Acts.

The Gospels were, of course, written for the Post-Resurrection Church. The deliverance of God's people has been accomplished, their hope has been fulfilled. Jesus is now *Χριστός* and *κύριος* and his followers are the redeemed sons of God. A term like *πτωχός* is no longer meaningful except as part of the history or in its strictly socio-economic meaning. The Gospel writers naturally had to deal with the motif as it affected their proclamation of Jesus' message to the Christian Church living and working in the new age.

Mark and John overcome the problem quite easily by leaving out the words of the poor man motif except for *πτωχός*. Both use the word only in connection with charity, where it can be taken in a purely socio-economic sense.



Matthew has been concerned to retain some of the references containing the poor man motif because, being a Jewish-Christian writing to Jewish-Christians, he felt this was important for a full understanding of the Gospel message. He even retained two references which describe Jesus in terms of the poor man: Jesus' self-designation as *πραῦς καὶ ταπεινὸς τῆ καρδίας* (Matt. 11:29) and the quotation from Zech. 9:9 describing Jesus as *πραῦς* (Matt. 21:5). Such references might have been meaningless and confusing to Gentile Christians.

In the Gospel of Luke, we can notice a greater disintegration of the poor man motif than in Matthew, even though Luke has related more of the sayings of Jesus containing the motif than any of the other Gospel writers. There are two reasons for this. First of all, Luke shows a definite concern for passing on the sayings of Jesus, as he receives them in his sources without making any substantial changes in the wording. Secondly, either because he did not fully understand the poor man motif himself or because he regarded it as irrelevant for his readers, he made subtle changes to the meaning of Jesus' sayings with regard to the poor.

He retained these sayings, setting them out in such a way as to give them more of a socio-economic coloring. He applied them more to the practical situations of the early Church as he knew it. His great concern was that a man should renounce his possessions and give them to the poor. Yet it is clear that the poor were not so important to Luke.<sup>96</sup> His great concern was that a man should cast

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<sup>96</sup>In agreement with Bammel, VI, 907.



aside anything that might alienate him from God. In this context, he saw riches as the great alienator; and consequently he frequently contrasted the rich with the socially poor.

In light of this, it is likely that Luke regarded the sharing of possessions, as was practised in the Church at Jerusalem, as an ideal situation (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 5:1-11) and had this in mind as he wrote his Gospel. For sharing gave priority to the kingdom of God and took care of those in the fellowship who were in need. This was no ascetic ideal,<sup>97</sup> but a very practical desire to overcome the dangers of riches. Degenhardt has shown that the words concerning denouncing riches are generally addressed to the *μάθηται* as distinct from the *λαός*. On this basis, he suggests that the *μάθηται* are to be seen as the Church leaders and the *λαός* as the congregation. Luke, therefore, was concerned with having the leaders set the example by their attitude to riches. They should not expect to live comfortably while others were in need.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>Against Campenhausen, p. 18.

<sup>98</sup>Degenhardt, pp. 215-216.



## CHAPTER V

### REFERENCES TO THE POOR ELSEWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### In the Acts of the Apostles

As has already been mentioned, the Acts of the Apostles does not use the vocabulary of the poor man motif at all. It does, however, mention that the congregation at Jerusalem held all things in common. It is necessary to examine these passages briefly to see what relevance they have for the poor man motif.

The passages with which we are concerned are Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37; 5:1-11. These texts speak of the early Christians in Jerusalem as sharing all things with one another, selling their possessions and distributing the proceeds to those who have need. Acts 4:34 alludes to Deut. 15:4 to indicate that the Christian community was interested in fulfilling the covenant ideal of a brotherly relationship with one another whereby no one would be needy (ἐνδεδής). Such common sharing of the proceeds from property sales was purely voluntary (5:4) and it is likely that some may simply have put their possessions at the disposal of the Church while retaining ownership.<sup>1</sup>

There is no evidence here whatsoever that poverty itself became an ideal, or that the surrender of all possessions was regarded

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Joachim Degenhardt, Lukas Evangelist Der Armen: Besitz und Besitzverzicht in den Lukanischen Sebriften, eine traditions-und redaktionsgeschichtlicher Untersuchung (Stuttgart: Verlag Kath. Bibelwerk, c.1965), p. 171.



as an unconditional duty of the primitive Christian faith.<sup>2</sup> The story of Ananias and Sapphira is told (5:1-11) not to indicate that whoever does not wish to be poor offends God and thereby does not belong to the "saints,"<sup>3</sup> but just the opposite. It is told to point out the voluntary nature of the giving which was to be done out of brotherly love, and not out of duty. If all Christians would have embarked on such a radical program of selling all they had and sharing the proceeds, problems would have arisen. Families with children would hardly have sold their homes in which they lived. Moreover, Acts 12:12 shows that there were good Christians who retained their homes but made them available for the gathering of Church members.<sup>4</sup>

It has been suggested that the large congregation at Jerusalem was for the most part made up of Galilean followers of Jesus who had already been poor and needy in their own district. Now, after the resurrection, they had flocked to Jerusalem to be near the Mount of Olives where they were expecting the Messiah to return in glory. Nobody thought of working because they expected the Parousia to happen at any time. Those who had possessions readily sold them and shared the proceeds, since they would soon have no need of them.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Against Ernst Lohmeyer, Galiläa und Jerusalem (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1936), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>Degenhardt, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup>Johannes Leipoldt, "Jesus ist Armer Leute Kind," in Von den Mysterium zur Kirche: Gesammelte Aufsätze (Hamburg Bergstedt: Herbert Reich Evang. Verlag GmbH, c.1962), p. 268; and Otto Bauernfeind, Die Apostelgeschichte, in Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament (Leipzig: A Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, c. 1939), V, 87.



It has also been suggested that the properties sold were mainly burial places at Jerusalem which people had acquired for themselves in order to be close by when the Messiah came. Since the Messiah had already come, these were no longer necessary.<sup>6</sup>

While these suggestions may contain some truth, much of this willingness to share must be attributed to the fact that they were living in the joy of the resurrection miracle. They regarded themselves as the children of the kingdom living according to the new covenant (Acts 4:33). This resurrection joy was the vital difference this sharing community had over the Qumran community. It was only to be expected that many of the sick and afflicted who came to them from the surrounding towns in order to be healed (Acts 5:15-16), would have stayed on, both to take part in the fellowship and to seek help in rehabilitation.

In light of this resurrection joy and enthusiasm, it is unlikely that the early Christians called themselves the πτωχοί. Such a designation would infer that they were the oppressed awaiting their vindication from God. They had already been vindicated. There is no indication that poverty was regarded as an ideal. They would not therefore, have taken this name for themselves in its purely social sense. It is possible, though, that if they understood the term πτωχοί as a term implying humility before God, they could have used it as a self-designation. Luke surely would have mentioned it

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<sup>6</sup>Karl Bornhäuser, Der Christ und Seine Habe noch dem Neuen Testament: Eine soziologische studie, in Beiträge zur Förderung christliche Theologie (Gütersloh: Vorlag. C. Bertelsmann, 1936), XXXVIII, No. 3, 45-46; and Degenhardt, p. 171.



if they had.<sup>7</sup> But it is impossible to show any connection between this primitive Jerusalem congregation and the later Ebionites.<sup>8</sup> The Ebionite sect was a later development which grew out of a different situation and was probably influenced by non-Christian movements.<sup>9</sup>

#### In the Pauline Epistles

Paul's use of *πτωχός* in Gal. 2:10 and Rom. 15:26 has been regarded as significant for the understanding of the primitive Christian Church in Jerusalem. The *πτωχοί* in both texts are the recipients of the collection which Paul advocated and promoted in his mission congregation.

Since he had already instructed the people about his offering (1 Cor. 16:1), Paul spoke only of remembering the *πτωχοί* at Gal. 2:10. In Rom. 15:26, these *πτωχοί* are further defined as *πτωχοὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ*. This has been taken as a formulaic self-designation of the church in Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> It is true that the

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<sup>7</sup>Leander E. Keck, "The Poor Among the Saints in the New Testament," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVI (1965), 103-105.

<sup>8</sup>Against Lohmeyer, pp. 64-65; and Hans Joachim Schoeps, Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church, translated by Douglas R. A. Hare (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c.1969), p. 102.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. the treatment of this matter by Leander E. Keck, "The Poor Among the Saints in Jewish Christianity and Qumran," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVII (1966), pp. 58-66.

<sup>10</sup>E.g. Ernst Bammel, "*πτωχός, πτωχεΐα*", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Publishing Company, c.1968), VI, 909. Cf. the highly tenuous theory built on this idea by J. L. Teicher, "The Damascus Fragments and the



emergency of famine relief may have passed by the time these references were written, but it is not necessary to explain the as a title. It is likely that within the growing congregation at Jerusalem, poverty was always a problem and there was a need for continual help. This is evidenced by the need to instal persons with responsibility for the equitable distribution of daily rations (Acts 6:1-6).

It is very likely, therefore, that Paul saw the spiritual benefits generated by the initial collection for famine relief and developed the practice in his mission work.<sup>11</sup> By πτωχοί he still meant the needy and destitute, and this is the only way the Gentile members would have understood him.<sup>12</sup>

The use of πτωχός elsewhere in the Pauline epistles only confirms the point made that Paul does not use the word as part of the poor man motif. In Gal. 4:9, the word has a derogatory sense. There Paul speaks of τὰ ἀβθενή καὶ πτωχολογία to which some of the Galatians wanted to become slaves instead of realizing their sonship in God (Gal. 4:6-7). In 2 Cor. 6:10, πτωχός is used as a synonym for "having nothing" and is used in a purely socio-economic sense in order to establish a contrast with the spiritual meaning of "making many rich" (πλουτίζοντες) and "possessing everything" (πάντα κατέχοντες). The same must be said of the reference to the

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Origin of the Jewish Christian Sect," Journal of Jewish Studies, II, (1950-1951), 126-130.

<sup>11</sup> See Keith F. Nickle, The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., c.1966), passim.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Keck, Zeitschrift, LVI, 122-127.



poverty of Christ in 2 Cor. 8:9.<sup>13</sup> In this passage, Paul has made an appeal for his collection and has referred to the churches in Macedonia, which gave liberally in spite of their extreme *πτωχεία*. He then goes a step further and reminds the Corinthians of the sacrifice Christ has made for them: "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor (*ἐπτώχευθεν*), so that by his poverty (*πτωχεία*) you might become rich." Poverty here is used to signify the whole physical aspect of the incarnation coming under the conditions of human existence. It has the same sense as he "emptied himself" in Phil. 2:7.<sup>14</sup>

While Paul's use of the word *πτωχός* bears no evidence of the poor man motif at all, his use of *πραΰτης* does. The word *πραΰτης* in its Old Testament sense described the attitude of the poor man in his relationship to God. It signifies humility, the attitude of humble obedience and dependence upon God. This was how the word was used in the Wisdom of Sirach (1:27; 3:47; 4:8; 6:28) and also in the Qumran literature, which speaks of the "spirit of humility" (*קליות*, IQS III,8; IV;3).<sup>15</sup> This is exactly how *πραΰτης* is to be understood in the Pauline epistles. It is not simply a matter of meekness and gentleness but a matter of love which is engendered by the mercy of God toward those who are dependent upon him. This dependence upon God rules out pride and arrogance. It opens the way

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<sup>13</sup>Bammel, VI, 910.

<sup>14</sup>Fred B. Craddock, "The Poverty of Christ: An Investigation of II Corinthians 8.9," Interpretation, XXII (1968), 165-166.

<sup>15</sup>Supra, pp. 118-119.



to a humble and understanding attitude towards one's fellowman. These points are brought out particularly in 1 Cor. 4:21 and Gal. 6:1. The latter deals with correcting an erring brother, a duty which is to be carried out with firmness but in a manner which is the very opposite of pride; namely in humility (compare Tim. 2:25).<sup>16</sup> It is significant also that *πραΰτης* is regarded as a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23; compare also 1 Cor. 4:21; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:2) as it was in Qumran.

The most important passage using *πραΰτης* is found in 2 Cor. 10:1. There Paul, who has been accused by the Corinthians of acting like a *ταπεινός* when he is with them, appeals to the *πραΰτης καὶ ἐπιεικείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*. This appears to be an echo of Matt. 11:29 where Jesus referred to himself as *πραῦς καὶ ταπεινὸς τῆ καρδίας*. The humility and lowliness of Christ is certainly the point in both these references. This is stressed by Paul in that he appeals to the *πραΰτης* of Christ in order to justify his coming to the Corinthians as a *ταπεινός*, a term which had a rather derogatory meaning for Greek-speaking people.<sup>17</sup>

The word *ἐπιεικεία* generally has the meaning of "forebearance," "mildness." It is used to describe the kind and merciful attitude of a loving God (1 Sam. 12:22; Ps. 85:5; Wisd. Sol. 12:18; Bar. 2:27;

<sup>16</sup>Cf. C. Spicq, "Benignité, Mansuétude, Douceur, Clémence," *Revue Biblique*, LIV (1947), 330.

<sup>17</sup>Stefan Rehl, Das Problem des Demut in der profan-griechischen Literatur im Vergleich zu Septuaginta und Neuen Testament (Münster: Aschendorff, c.1961), p. 175.



Dan. 3:42; 4:27; 2 Macc. 2:22; 10:4), or gracious king (Esther 3:13; 8:12, 2 Macc. 9:27; 3 Macc. 3:15; 7:6). But it is found also in a very significant passage in the Wisdom of Solomon (2:19). There the term is applied to the one who is described as a **ΠΕΝΗΣ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ** (2:10), who is opposed to the ungodly. Since the **ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ** has boasted that God is his Father, the ungodly decide to test his **ἑπιεικεία** and endurance (**ἀνεξικακία**, 2:18-20):

If the righteous man is God's son, he will help him.  
 And will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.  
 Let us test him, with insult and torture,  
 that we may find out how steadfast (**ἑπιεικεία**) he is,  
 and make trial of his forbearance.  
 Let us condemn him to a shameful death  
 for, according to what he says, he will be protected.

The **ΠΕΝΗΣ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ** of the Wisdom of Solomon was evidently being regarded by this time as a picture and description of Jesus Christ. He was thought to be the **ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ** par excellence (compare Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14). This is also confirmed by Matt. 27:40-43 and parallels, where the wording of the crucifixion scene appears to have been influenced by Wisd. Sol. 2:16-20. Undoubtedly, therefore, Paul had in mind the humble submission of Christ to the will of the Father. Thus **ἑπιεικεία** means, "a humble, patient, steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace and maltreatment without hatred and malice, trusting God in spite of it all."<sup>18</sup> Such selfless humility and obedience to the will of God which Christ portrayed was what Paul was seeking to emulate in being **ταπεινός**

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<sup>18</sup>Ragnar Leivestad, "The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ, II Cor. x.1," New Testament Studies, XII (1965-1966), 158.



among the Corinthians. In this sense Paul saw Christ as the Poor Man par excellence.

The use of **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΣ** elsewhere in the Pauline writings bears the imprint of the poor man motif. Thus in 2 Cor. 7:6, where Paul has been speaking about their being afflicted (**θλιβόμενοι**) at every turn, he remarks that God, who comforts the **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΥΣ**, had comforted them (compare Is. 49:13, **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΙ**, **יְדַבֵּר**). The **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΣ** is clearly the poor man who humbly seeks his deliverance from God.

In a similar way, we should understand the puzzling phrase in Rom. 2:16 and translate: "Do not have exalted opinions, but be influenced by humble thoughts," (**ΤΟΙΣ ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΙΣ**). As the meaning of **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΣ** has been colored by the poor man motif, so has the related vocabulary such as **ΤΑΠΙΝΩ** (2 Cor. 11:7; 12:21; Phil. 2:8; 4:12), **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΩΒΙΣ** (Phil. 3:21) and **ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΦΡΟΒΥΝΗ** (Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12) except in Col. 2:18,23).

Another Christological passage bearing strongly the poor man motif is Phil. 2:6-11. This passage, probably part of a primitive baptismal liturgy,<sup>19</sup> speaks of Christ "humbling himself" (**ἐταπεινώσεν ἑαυτόν**) and being obedient even unto death. Hence God exalted (**ὑπερύψωσεν**) him. This is the picture of the afflicted and oppressed who was obedient to God and so was vindicated by him. The picture appears to be influenced partly by Dan. 7:13 in that Christ is found in the "form of a man" (**ὁμοίωματι ὡς ἀνθρώπου**). Compare Dan. 7:13 LXX: **ὡς υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενος** ).

<sup>19</sup>David M. Stanley, "The Theme of the Servant of Yahweh in



But the main influence comes from the Suffering Servant motif of Deutero-Isaiah. The *ἐκένωθεν* and *ἐταπείνωθεν* recall the humbling of the Suffering Servant depicted in all the Servant Songs, particularly in Is. 53:3,11,12. Christ takes upon himself the "form of a servant" (*μορφὴν δούλου*, verse 7). There is a close parallel between *ὑπερύψωθεν* of the exultation (verse 9) and the *ὑποθήβεται* of Is. 52:13. The causal connection between Christ's humiliation and his exaltation, expressed by *διό* (verse 9), may correspond to the *διὰ τούτο* of Is. 53:12 showing how closely this hymn is patterned on the conceptions of the Suffering Servant.<sup>20</sup>

Other allusions to Christ as the Suffering Servant have been found in Paul's letters. In 1 Cor. 15:3-4, Paul expressly refers to the tradition he has handed on as of first importance; namely, "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures." The nearest Old Testament allusion is in Is. 53:4-12. Again, in Rom. 4:25, Paul speaks of Christ being delivered up (*παραδοθέν*) for our transgressions, an expression which finds its origin in Is. 53:12 (LXX). This characteristic use of the verb (*παραδίδοναι*) elsewhere in Paul (1 Cor. 11:23; Gal. 2:20, Rom. 8:32; Eph. 5:2), as also the reference to Christ's obedience" in Romans 5:19, shows the further influence of the Servant motif.<sup>21</sup>

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Primitive Christian Soteriology, and its Transposition by St. Paul," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XVI (1954), 424.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., XVI, 422.

<sup>21</sup> David Michael Stanley, Christ's Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology (Romae: E. Pontificio Instituto Biblico, c.1961), p. 14n.



The same has been said of Rom. 5:6-8.<sup>22</sup> H. J. Schoeps also finds allusions to the Suffering Servant passages in the use of the verb ἑξαγοράζειν to characterize Christ's deed of ransoming (Gal. 3:13; 4:5). He detects an echo of Is. 52:3 in Rom. 3:24.<sup>23</sup> All these allusions would indicate that the early Christian community as well as Paul took it for granted that Christ was to be understood as the Suffering Servant.

We can now say that the poor man motif is still found in Paul's writings, but it only reaches us indirectly through the humiliation and sufferings of Christ. Paul has spoken of the πτωχία of Christ (2 Cor. 8:9), of his πραύτης καὶ ἐπισείκεια (2 Cor. 10:1) and of his "humbling" himself (Phil. 2:8). All these add up to Christ being the Poor Man par excellence in Paul's Christology. It is through imitating Christ that a person becomes the poor man, the ταπεινός. It is in this concept of imitation that Paul saw himself not only as the ταπεινός but also as the Suffering Servant.<sup>24</sup> It is understandable that the poor man motif has not come out more directly, since the motif was not generally popular nor understood by rabbinic Judaism. It was a motif known more readily in folk piety.

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<sup>22</sup>Lucien Cerfaux, The Spiritual Journey of Saint Paul, translated by John C. Guinness (New York: Sheed and Ward, c.1968), p. 127.

<sup>23</sup>H. J. Schoeps, Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1961). p. 136.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Gal. 1:15-16; Acts 13:45-48; 26:12-18; Is. 49:1-6; 42:7,16. Cf. also Rom. 10:15-16; 15:21-24; 2 Cor. 6:1-10; 5:17-21. See Stanley, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XVI, 416-418.



## In the Letter of James

The letter of James contains a number of references to the poor, particularly in contrast to the rich (1:9-11; 2:1-7; 5:1-6). James reveals a deep sympathy with the poor and is very polemical against the rich. It is not always clear whether he is thinking primarily of the social aspects or whether the spiritual attitude is basic to his thought. Because he expresses his sympathy with the poor so unrestrictedly, one easily gains the impression that, as Dibelius has said, he regards being poor and being Christian as almost identical.<sup>25</sup> In order to understand the writer's attitude to the poor, we must first look at his polemic against the rich (5:1-6).

In this passage, the *πλουτίοι* as a class are warned of the coming judgment, when their rusting riches will be evidence against them of their greed and selfishness. The vindication of those whom the rich have defrauded and oppressed is soon to take place. Then the rich will get what they deserve, for they have condemned and murdered the righteous man. There is no reference to any religious profession of the rich. If some of them are Christians, they are not addressed as such here. The purpose of this polemic is to dissuade Christians from setting any high value on wealth and riches.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Dibelius, Der Brief des Jakobus, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, 8 Auflage, herausgegeben von Heinrich Greeven, begründet von Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, c.1956), XV, 43.

<sup>26</sup> James Hardy Ropes, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1916), p. 282.



For some of those addressed by this letter have obviously tended to do just that (4:13-17; 2:1-7).

In order to build this polemic, James has drawn on much of the rhetoric against the rich and powerful which he found in the Old Testament, in the intertestamental literature, and also in such words of Jesus as are given in Luke 6:24-25. James 5:2-3 calls to mind the admonition to make proper use of riches as indicated in Sir. 29:9-11.

Help a poor man for the commandments sake,  
and because of his need do not send him away empty.  
Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend,  
and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost.  
Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of  
the Most High,  
and it will profit you more than gold.

The rich of James 5:1-6 have not taken this advice. They will be judged accordingly (compare also Enoch 94:7-11; 96:4-8; 97:3-10; 98:4-16; 99:11-16; 100:6-13; 103:5-8).

The accusation of withholding wages from workers (5:4) calls to mind the familiar warning against the vice as given in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5; Tobit 4:14). The theme that the rich condemn and kill the <sup>δίκαιος</sup> (5:6) may well have been taken from the familiar passage in Wis. Sol. 2:10-20. But the picture of the rich condemning the poor and the oppressed before judges who have been bribed and having them put to death is a familiar one (compare Enoch 99:15; 103:11-15; Ps. 37:32; Is. 57:1).

In light of the fact that the <sup>πένες</sup> <sup>δίκαιος</sup> of Wisd. Sol. 2:10 was sometimes identified with Jesus in the early Church, James may be



referring to Jesus here as the righteous one. But the point is not important. James is interested only in portraying the rich as the wicked oppressors of the poor and righteous. And for this they will soon receive judgment. His portrayal of the rich has been created strictly in terms of the poor man motif. It is obvious that he and the recipients of his letter have had bitter experiences with the rich and see themselves as the oppressed. This is evident from James' exhortation to patience and endurance under suffering in view of the nearness of the Lord's coming (5:7-11).

In light of such strong feelings against rich oppressors, the exhortation against partiality (2:1-7) becomes comprehensible. Evidently the Christians to whom James was writing had been giving too much attention to the rich, probably because more of the rich were beginning to seek entry into the Church at this time.<sup>27</sup> But they had been doing this at the expense of the poor. James may have had in mind an assembly held for judgment in which two strangers, one rich, one poor, are to be tried.<sup>28</sup> For the language is certainly that of the court: *δικακρίνειν* is sometimes used as a legal term for "rendering a decision" (compare 1 Cor. 6:5) and *κριτικὸν διαλογισμῶν πομπῶν* expresses the idea of judges who are biased.<sup>29</sup> However, it is more

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<sup>27</sup> Bammel, VI, 911.

<sup>28</sup> Roy Bowen Ward, "Partiality in the Assembly: James 2:2-4," Harvard Theological Review, LXII (1969), 94.

<sup>29</sup> *διαλογισμός*, too, can be a legal term for "decision." Thus our phrase could be translated: "judges who give corrupt decisions" according to Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and



likely that James was using this legal language figuratively for a purpose; he thereby wished to imply that they were doing the very thing they deplored in the rich (2:6). They were oppressing the poor.

James makes no clear distinction here between the **πτωχός** as a socially poor man and the "poor in spirit." But he does suggest that, as far as he is concerned, the **πλούσιος** is always tainted with evil and oppression and the **πτωχός** is godly and pious. For after all, he says, referring to Matt. 5:3, God has chosen the **πτωχοὶ τῷ κόσμῳ** to be **πλούσιοι ἐν πίστει** and heirs of the kingdom. (2:5).

In making no clear distinction, James has, of course, remained in line with the poor man motif of the Old Testament. James would not deny the possibility that a rich man could become a Christian, nor would he affirm that every poor man had been chosen.<sup>30</sup> That is clear from his addition of "promised to those who love him" (2:5).

An indication that James saw the **πτωχός** and **πλούσιος** primarily from a religious point of view is given in James 1:9-11. There it is the **ταπεινός** who is contrasted with the **πλούσιος**. The term **ταπεινός** implies not the outward condition but the inner disposition of the poor man's dependence upon God, as the use of the term in James 4:6-10 shows.<sup>31</sup>

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adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 185.

<sup>30</sup>Ropes, pp. 193-194.

<sup>31</sup>In agreement with Dibelius, XV, 81; against Ropes, p. 145;



The exaltation of the **ταπεινός** is that he has received the Good News that the kingdom of God belongs to him. He is, so to speak, the valley of Isaiah 40 which has been exalted by the coming Messiah. The rich man is the exalted mountain which is brought low (Is. 40:4 LXX: **ταπεινωθήβεται**) by the Messiah. This thought has led James to think of those who trust in their riches as being like grass which withers (Is. 40:6-8). The point of the statement is a warning to those in the Christian community who are too absorbed in the pursuit of wealth and fail to put God first. This theme is prominent throughout the letter (2:1-7; 4:13-17; 5:1-6).

Dibelius finds in the letter of James a strongly pietistic attitude with its denial of the world and mistrust of "worldly" affairs. It contains warnings against pride and its admonition to humble oneself before God (4:1-4; 1:27; 4:13-16; 4:6-10).<sup>32</sup> He speaks of James':

patriarchalisch-pietistische Armenethik, seine pauperistische Reichtumsfeindschaft, seine apokalyptische Erwartung baldiger Strafe für die— wie in der "Armenliteratur" ohne weiteres als gottlos geltenden—Reichen.<sup>33</sup>

While it is true that James was strongly influenced in his thinking by the poor man motif, his polemic against the rich is no mere ritual. It was called forth by the particular problem confronting

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and Ernst Percy, Die Botschaft Jesu: Eine Traditionskritische und Exegetische Untersuchung (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1953), p. 72.

<sup>32</sup>Dibelius, XV, 43.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., XV, 44.



James in the Christian community to which he was writing. James reacted strongly to the Christians' desire to identify with the worldly rather than the godly, and with their being tempted by power and status and wealth. But there is no evidence here of a pietistic desire to escape from the world, nor any sign of incipient Ebionitism.<sup>34</sup> There is no evidence that James could have been the forerunner of the later Ebionites.<sup>35</sup> James, having saturated his mind with the thoughts of prophetic and Wisdom literature, has simply used its terminology in dealing with the problems of his time.

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<sup>34</sup>In agreement with Bammel, VI, 911; and Keck, Zeitschrift, LVI, 117.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Lohmeyer, p. 62.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE IDENTITY OF THE POOR MAN

#### IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

##### The Relation of the Poor Man to Poverty and Piety

Jesus has not left us with a clear cut answer as to his concept of the poor man. When he speaks of giving to the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota'$  he obviously uses this term in a socio-economic sense. But when he says that the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota'$  are blessed because the kingdom of God is theirs, he is using this term in a more specialized sense of "poor in spirit."

It is not easy to separate the two in every instance. A case in point is the answer to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23). Jesus gave his reply strictly in terms of the lists of messianic works recorded in Isaiah 29, 35, and 61, which can readily be taken figuratively referring to those who yearn for the coming Messiah. But the context in both Matthew and Luke refers us to those who were physically and socially beggars ( $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota'$ ). These are the recipients of the Good News and of the physical blessing of healing. Yet the words clearly intend to draw attention to the fact that Christ was the Messiah come to deliver those who cried out to God in their need.

How much did actual poverty influence the poor man motif in Jesus' teaching? We know that Jesus came from a poor family. He warned those who wished to follow him that he had nowhere to lay his head (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58), and that he often depended on charity



(Luke 8:1-3).<sup>1</sup> These facts together with the directives Jesus gave his disciples when he sent them out to proclaim the Good News (Mark 6:8-11; Matt. 10:5-14; Luke 9:1-5) have been used to indicate that Jesus looked upon poverty as an ideal. For Jesus sent the disciples out with "no bread, no bag, no money in their belts" (Mark 6:8). This has been understood as a continuous apostolic ideal of poverty, just as Jesus is said to have followed poverty as a way of life.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, while Jesus himself may have been poor and regarded riches as a danger to a full commitment to him, he enjoyed many things which prosperity brings. His enemies called him a "glutton and a drunkard" (Matt. 11:19), because he was often seen at banquets and celebrations. It is striking how often the evangelists describe him as sitting at table. This was all for a purpose. The messianic age was Good News, a time for celebration and rejoicing, not for fasting and asceticism. This was all an indication that, in the kingdom of God, the faithful would sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29; compare Luke 14:15; 22:18). The disciples of Jesus cannot fast as long as the bridegroom is with them (Mark 2:18-19).<sup>3</sup>

Not all of Jesus' disciples were poor. James and John, with their father Zebedee, were doing well enough in the fishing industry to employ hired servants (Mark 1:20). Matthew, the customs official,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c.1969), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Gelin, The Poor of Yahweh, translated by Kathryn Sullivan (Collegetown, Minn.: The Liturgical Press c.1964), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>Hans Frhr. v. Campenhausen, Die Askese im Urchristentum



would hardly have been poor. His job may have been despised, but it was lucrative (Matt. 9:9).

There were Galilean women who provided for Jesus and his disciples out of their possessions. One of these was the wife of the steward<sup>4</sup> of Herod Antipas (Luke 8:1-3). The centurion in Capernaum whom Jesus praised for his faith was obviously a wealthy man, since he had built a synagogue (Luke 7:5). Besides these, Mary, Martha and Lazarus must have been sufficiently well-off, since Mary used ointment worth 300 denarii (John 12:1-5). Furthermore, in Luke 19:1-10, we recall, Jesus announced salvation had come to the house of wealthy Zacchaeus. While Zacchaeus had offered to give half his wealth to the poor, he was not to renounce it. Nor were the disciples ever requested to renounce their possessions. In fact, because they had forsaken them for a time, they were promised even more by the way of riches in this life (Mark 10:30).<sup>5</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus did not idealize poverty. When Jesus spoke about renunciation it was always from the point of view of putting the kingdom of God first. It was never meant as a legislative renunciation of possessions per se. It was never such in

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(Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], c.1949), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *ἐπίτροπος*, a word designating a high office, and its consequent wealth. It can also mean "manager," "governor," "procurator," "guardian." Cf. Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 303.

<sup>5</sup> J. Leipoldt, "Jesus und die Armen," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXVII (1917), 800-803.



the Lucan passages; and in Matthew renunciation involved marriage rather than wealth (Matt. 19:10-12). Instead of exalting poverty, Jesus saw it as part of the imperfections of this life which will be done away with in the kingdom of God. Already in this age those to whom the kingdom belongs will show by their deeds that they are God's chosen. They will show the same loving concern for their fellowmen in need as God has shown them. To fail to show these kingdom signs is to be rejected as unworthy of the kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46).<sup>6</sup>

Jesus' concern was never for poverty per se. He began no poverty program and no social revolution. His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). His concern was to inaugurate the kingdom. This meant answering the cries of the afflicted and oppressed and fulfilling their needs by giving them assurance of eternal salvation and calling those who were chosen to enter it. The chosen ones are the poor. That does not necessarily mean those who are socially or economically poor, but those who feel the need for God's help and deliverance. This point is inescapable; and that is where the poor man motif relates to piety.

The poor man is "pious" in so far as he in all sincerity and earnestness seeks God's help. Thus, for example, in the miracles of healing listed by Matthew prior to Jesus' answer to John the Baptist, the request for help is always there, either directly or implicitly. The leper's request: "Lord, if you will, you can make

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. Leander E. Keck, "The Poor Among the Saints in the New Testament," Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVI (1965), 108-116.



me clean" is answered by a simple "I will; be clean." (Matt. 8:2). The centurion's simple statement in faith: "Lord, my servant is lying paralysed at home, in terrible distress," receives the quick response, "I will come and heal him" (Matt. 8:6-7).

The same must be said of the other miracles in chapters 8 to 10. The cry to God for help, no matter how weak or strong, is enough to mark a man as a poor man to whom the kingdom is given. Or, as Jesus expressed it elsewhere, to become like a child before God is to receive the kingdom. The man who recognizes his smallness, his real dependence on aid, his incapacity to get on in life by himself, and so turns to God, has become like a child before God and receives his blessing.<sup>7</sup> This is the meaning of this act of faith.

Such an act of faith can make no claim. No prominence is even given to the piety of the poor man in the teaching of Jesus. It is the grace of God which is all-important. A man who turns to God in need is not asked to show his credentials of faith. The love of God simply reaches out to him. This is the message of the prodigal son and the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin (Luke 15). A claim of piety for the kingdom is to deny the grace of God. This was the mistake of the Pharisees. Consequently, the kingdom is given to the poor, to publicans and sinners, instead of to them.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Günther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, translated by Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, c.1960), p. 84.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Dibelius, "Das Soziale Motiv in Neuen Testament" in Botschaft und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], c.1953), pp. 191-192.



The **עֲנֻיִם** as a Group at the Time of Jesus

It has long been held that a group or a movement of the **עֲנֻיִם** was active at the time of Jesus. Causse even speaks of an **עֲנֻיִם** party which took its place alongside the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots.<sup>9</sup> These **עֲנֻיִם** are generally believed to be the spiritual descendants of the pious of the Psalms (for example, Ps. 34:3), or the "quiet in the land" (Ps. 35:20). These pious of the Psalms had later become known as **מִרְיָסֵי**, a strongly pious party in the time of the Maccabees.

When the **מִרְיָסֵי** became too politically minded and engaged in political intrigue, those more religiously minded separated themselves from this party and formed their own. They were called the Pharisees or Separatists<sup>10</sup> and probably had a strong popular following originally. But their increasingly proud aloofness, their ostentatious display of piety, and particularly, their narrow, crippling legalism led to a disenchantment with the popular masses. Many among the masses were still pious and godfearing but were despised by the scribes and Pharisees for their laxity in regard to the law. These pious and godfearing people therefore became known separately as the "quiet in the land," the **עֲנֻיִם**. The Pharisees condescendingly called them the **עַמֵּי הַמִּצְדִּיקִים**, or, even worse, "publicans and sinners."

<sup>9</sup>A. Causse, Les Pauvres d'Israël (Prophetes, Psalmistes, Messianistes) (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, J. Gabalda et Cie, 1922) p. 137.

<sup>10</sup>Their name probably deriving from **שָׁלַח**, "to separate." See Rudolf Kittel, The Religion of the People of Israel, translated by R. Caryl Micklem (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1925), p. 214.



To the **ד'ינן** belonged many of the country folk of Galilee and Judea. They continued in the piety of the Psalms and cherished the messianic promises of the prophets. Quietly they waited for the Messiah to come and deliver their people. The deep piety of Mary and Joseph may illustrate the religious attitude of the **ד'ינן** in Galilee. The Galileans generally were held to be strong and tough in their practice and morals even though they were not able to keep many of the existing regulations of Jerusalem and Judea.<sup>11</sup>

One would have expected Jesus to have gained a greater following among the Galileans if he were representing an actual **ד'ינן** party; but this was not the case (Mark 6:1-6; Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 10:13-16). However, many of Jesus' leading disciples were Galileans. The outstanding Messianic hymn which Luke has placed in the mouth of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) certainly bears all the marks of **ד'ינן** piety and hope. It is rich in the poor man motif of the Old Testament.

Into the circle of the **ד'ינן** would fit also John the Baptist and his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah's thanksgiving hymn (Luke 1:68-79) undoubtedly portrays accurately the kind of **ד'ינן** piety that was current among the lower priesthood at that time. The fact that a great many of the priests in Jerusalem became Christians (Acts 6:7) may indicate that the lower priesthood was strongly represented among the **ד'ינן**.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ernst Lohmeyer, Galiläa und Jerusalem (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936), p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> Walther Sattler, "Die Anawim im Zeitalter Jesu Christi," Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher zum 70 Geburtstag 26. Januar 1927. (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], c.1927), p. 6.



The piety of the Psalms would naturally mean more to the priesthood than to the Pharisees who regarded the Law as supreme. And while the Pharisees would only accept the prophecy if it confirmed the Law, the priests remained open to the promises of the prophetic books. John came forth from a priestly home and began preaching like one of the prophets of old. His popularity shows how insignificant was the influence of the Pharisees on the general population at this time. As Jesus pointed out, their fathers had killed the prophets, but they themselves wanted to bury them! (Luke 11:47-48).<sup>13</sup>

The  $\Delta^{\prime}\iota\lambda\gamma$  were waiting for the redemption which the Messiah would bring. Walther Sattler has suggested that the word  $\kappa\rho\upsilon\delta\epsilon\chi\epsilon\theta\alpha\iota$  ( $\kappa\rho\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\alpha\nu$ ), "to wait for" had become almost a technical term expressing the eschatological hope of the  $\Delta^{\prime}\iota\lambda\gamma$ .<sup>14</sup> The New Testament does mention a number of  $\kappa\rho\upsilon\delta\epsilon\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$ . There was old Simeon who was waiting for the consolation of Israel ( $\epsilon\delta\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\nu\pi\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \delta\iota\kappa\omicron\nu\epsilon\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\upsilon\lambda\alpha\beta\acute{\eta}\varsigma,\ \kappa\rho\upsilon\delta\epsilon\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma\ \pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\kappa\lambda\eta\tau\iota\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \text{I}\beta\rho\alpha\eta\lambda$ , Luke 2:25). His greeting of the newborn Savior is a composite of messianic passages taken from Isaiah (40:5; 52:10; 42:6; 49:6; 25:7; 46:13).

The Book of Isaiah, rich in the poor man motif, was obviously a favorite with the  $\Delta^{\prime}\iota\lambda\gamma$  as it was with both Jesus and John the Baptist. Another  $\kappa\rho\upsilon\delta\epsilon\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\eta$  mentioned was Anna the prophetess, eighty years' old, who gathered about her "all those who were looking

<sup>13</sup> Cf. T. W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Luke Arranged with Introduction and Commentary (London: SCM Press Ltd., c.1949), p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> Sattler, pp. 8, 11.



for the redemption of Jerusalem" (*πᾶν τοῦς προδεδχομένοις*  
*λότρωβις Ἰερουδαλήμ*, Luke 2:38; compare Is. 52:9). Joseph of Arimathea  
 was also a *προδεδχομένω*s as well as a respected member of the  
 Council (Mark 15:43 and Luke 23:51). The question of John the  
 Baptist: "Shall we look for another?" (*προδδοκῶμεν*, Luke 7:19;  
 Matt. 11:3) may also be referring to the particular hope of the

*δ' ἰσραήλ* .

There were others who have been regarded as belonging to the  
*δ' ἰσραήλ* . The shepherds of Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-14), were obviously  
 godfearing men, as were also the disciples from Emmaus who hoped for  
 the redeemer of Israel (Luke 24:13-35).<sup>15</sup>

The people mentioned as probably having been members of the  
*δ' ἰσραήλ* came from the lower classes of society, such as shepherds,  
 artisans, farmers, lower priests, country folk. Jesus referred to  
 them as *πτωχοί* . But there is no evidence anywhere that he was  
 addressing a certain class or party or even any organized group.  
 Nor is there any evidence outside of the New Testament which would  
 lead us to believe that the *δ' ἰσραήλ* were an organized religious  
 group of any kind. But there is every reason to believe that a  
 spiritual movement existed among the people which we have designated  
 as the *δ' ἰσραήλ* . It was made up of faithful and devout people who  
 continued to use the normal channels of worship in Judaism and had  
 no organization of their own. Earlier, some of them had rebelled

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<sup>15</sup> Causse, p. 137; Kittel, p. 216.



against hypocritical official Judaism and formed themselves into the sect known as the Essenes.

Jesus did not, therefore, call a certain group or class or organization into the kingdom of God. He called the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota'$ , those who looked for the kingdom of God, who cried out to God in their need. We may call them  $\text{ד'ןןן}$ . But they were made up of persons from every class and group and party, forming a communio sanctorum, a kind of invisible church. The Christian Church was to be drawn from all these ranks and even from the party of the Pharisees (compare Acts 15:5 and 21:20).

However, we shall see that the passage is meaningful and relevant as a whole in the light of the following text.

The text is divided up into three stretches by Edward Gordon, who found the same basic schema in Sirach 51. These both contain a prayer of thanksgiving (Sir. 51:1-12 and Matt. 11:25-26), the exaltation of God (Sir. 51:13-22 and Matt. 11:27), and the appeal to the lowly (Sir. 51:23-30 and Matt. 11:28-30).<sup>2</sup> He found the same basic schema elsewhere and assumed that there was a common form on which both Matthew 11 and Sirach 51 were dependent. He did not believe that Matthew was directly dependent on Sirach.<sup>2</sup>

Gordon therefore came to the conclusion that Matt. 11:25-30 must be regarded as a unit, and that Matthew found it in this form

<sup>2</sup>Edward Gordon, *Augustine's Sermons: Unpublished Latin Texts* (London: Duckworth, 1961), pp. 290-292.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 290-291.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE POOR MAN MOTIF IN RELATION TO JESUS' MISSION

#### Matthew 11:25-30

The complex Christological passage, Matt. 11:25-30, is important for our understanding of Jesus' messianism. This logion has been accorded a background in the Wisdom literature, in the Old Testament and in Hellenism. Its various parts have at one time or another been rejected as not being genuine, according to the particular stance of the interpreter. However, we shall see that the passage becomes meaningful and relevant as a whole in the light of the poor man motif.

The logion was divided up into three strophes by Eduard Norden, who found the same basic schema in Sirach 51. Thus both contain a Prayer of Thanksgiving (Sir. 51:1-12 and Matt. 11:25-26), the receiving of Wisdom (Sir. 51:13-22 and Matt. 11:27), and the appeal to the ignorant (Sir. 51:23-30 and Matt. 11:28-30).<sup>1</sup> He found the same basic schema elsewhere and assumed that there was a common form on which both Matthew 11 and Sirach 51 were dependent. He did not believe that Matthew was directly dependent on Sirach.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Eduard Norden, Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte Religiöser Rede (Leipzig: Verlag B. G. Teubner, c.1913), pp. 280-282.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 290-293.



in the Q source. Nevertheless, he held that it could not have originated with Jesus, since he would not have operated with such forms and ideas of theosophical mysticism.<sup>3</sup> It was, therefore, a protest of the early Church against the Hellenistic gnosis.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, Norden made the mistake of looking forward to later literature for his types instead of seeking the background of the form in earlier writings. He ignored the Old Testament background of the thoughts and ideas expressed both in Matthew and Sirach.

This error is magnified by Martin Dibelius who used the Matthean passage to illustrate his theory of mythology in the New Testament. Hence, the later Hellenistic parallels mentioned by Norden were important to him so that he could conclude:

Here is proclaimed the typical saving gospel of Gnosis. The form of the Redeemer in this gospel, however, is of divine nature and cosmic form--a mythological being.<sup>5</sup>

Dibelius was followed to some degree by Rudolf Bultmann. But Bultmann was not content to see any unity in the logion. For while he agreed with Dibelius that Matt. 11:27 was an Hellenistic revelation saying, he believed 11:28-30 to be a quotation from Jewish Wisdom literature.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 303-304.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 306-308.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1965), p. 282.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, translated by John Marsh (revised edition; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, c.1963), pp. 159-160.



Tomas Arvedson proposed that Matt. 11:25-30 had originated in a liturgical setting intended for a celebration of the Mysteries, the center of which was the enthronement of Christ.<sup>7</sup> But this theory, too, erred in finding its basis in later Hellenistic religious developments. It did not take seriously the proto-types found in earlier literature.<sup>8</sup>

This error has now been underscored by the discovery of a Psalm scroll at Qumran (known as 11QPsa), containing an actual Hebrew prototype of Sir. 51:13-30. Sirach 51 obviously has removed the offensiveness of its prototype wherein Wisdom, personalized as a woman, was spoken of in erotic language.<sup>9</sup> Yet the discovery of the form makes it necessary to rule out Arvedson's liturgical theory.

The fact that Matt. 11:28-30 has no Lucan parallel has often been taken to show that it is not genuine, the argument being that Luke would not have omitted it.<sup>10</sup> However, an argumentum e silentio is tenuous at best. Also, very questionable is the argument against

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<sup>7</sup> Tomas Arvedson, Das Mysterium Christi: Eine Studie zu Mt. 11: 25-30 (Arbeiten und Mitteilungen aus dem neutestamentliche Seminar zu Uppsala), herausgegeben von Anton Fridrichson, VII (Uppsala: A--B Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1937), p. 108.

<sup>8</sup> For a more complete survey of select literature on this passage, see Hans Dieter Betz, "The Logion of the Easy Yoke and of Rest. (Matt. 11:28-30)," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXVI (1967), 10-17.

<sup>9</sup> See J. A. Sanders, The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, c.1967), pp. 112-117.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Betz, LXXXVI, 19; Bultmann, p. 159; Georg Strecker, Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, c.1962), p. 172; M. Jack Suggs, Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, c.1970), p. 79.



its genuineness on the grounds that a parallel is found in Logion 90 of the Gospel of Thomas, independent of the other two strophes.<sup>11</sup> Arguments based on differences of thought will be dealt with as we study the text in detail.

The first strophe (11:25-26) follows the very familiar pattern of a thanksgiving psalm, with its themes of praise and thanks to God for the deliverance and vindication of the godly poor in the face of the wicked (compare Psalms 9; 34; 54:5; 75; 138). Here the wicked are the *βοφοὶ καὶ βουετοί* and the godly are the *νῆπιοί*. The form has even closer parallels to the introductory formulae of some of the Qumran thanksgiving hymns. These, too, are often polemically motivated and are related to the reception of a divine revelation, as in our strophe. Thus, for instance, we read (1QH XI, 15-17):

I give thee thanks, I give thee thanks, O Adonai!  
I will exalt Thee, O my Rock!

.....  
For Thou hast made me know the secret of truth  
and hast revealed thy wonders to me,  
and I have contemplated the depth of Thy mysteries  
unto all the sons of Grace.

In another psalm (1QH V, 11-13) the psalmist speaks as if God had hidden the revelation within him until the time of salvation:

For Thou O God, hast hidden me  
from before the sons of men,  
and hadst sealed up Thy Law within me  
until the time of the revealing of Thy salvation to me.

This bears a resemblance to the second Servant Song of Isaiah (49: 1-7), where the Servant is described as being hidden by God until he

<sup>11</sup> Betz, LXXXVI, 19; Suggs, p. 79.



is revealed as a light to the nations. It is possible that the same thought is behind this saying of Jesus, for the next strophe speaks of the Father being revealed through the Son.

On these grounds, the **ταῦτα** of verse 25 can be explained as referring to this revelation in Jesus himself which is now hidden from the "wise and understanding." In any case, the strophe must be understood on the basis of Isaiah 29. For in verse 14, judgment is pronounced on the wise and understanding in the words of the Septuagint: ἀπολῶ τὴν σοφίαν τῶν σοφῶν, καὶ τὴν βύνην τῶν βυνητῶν κρύψω. Then in verses 18 and 19 comes the promise of the revelation of the Good News to those who are obviously the νήπιοί: the deaf, the blind, the afflicted, and the poor.

Certainly it cannot be argued that this first strophe is dependent upon Sir. 51:1-12, since the only resemblance they bear is in the opening word of address ἑξομολογούμεναι. Otherwise Sir. 51:1-12 is simply a typical thanksgiving psalm. A much greater resemblance can be found in Dan. 2:25 (LXX). Cerfaux has pointed out the many points of contact between Dan. 2:18-30 and Matt. 11:25-26.<sup>12</sup> It is possible that the passage in Daniel contributed to Jesus' thought. But Cerfaux's theory of dependence breaks down in that the first strophe then bears no real relationship to the following strophes. The reference to σοφία καὶ βύνης in Dan. 2:21 is not compelling since it speaks of revealing knowledge to them rather than hiding it. The phrase is a common one in the Old Testament.

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<sup>12</sup>Lucien Cerfaux, "Les Sources Scripturaires de Mt., XI, 25-30," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, XXX (1954), 741-744.



In Matthew, the "wise and understanding" are generally understood to be the scribes and Pharisees with whom Jesus was in constant conflict. But the context here would suggest a wider group: those who reject the ministry of Jesus. The "babes" are those who are open to the revelation of God in Jesus, not being bound by the sophisticated teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. These "infants" are quite obviously the same as the *πτωχοί* who receive the Good News. The word *νήπιοι* is taken over from its use in the Psalms, particularly Ps. 116:6 where it is synonymous with *πτωχοί*. There, too, the salvation of the *νήπιος* is described as an *ἐνάντησις* (verse 7). Otherwise, it is the Law of God which gives wisdom and understanding to the simple (Ps. 19:8; 119; 130).<sup>13</sup>

The "good will" (*εὐδοκία*, verse 26) is the gracious action of God toward the afflicted and oppressed. It puts all the stress on the gracious action of God toward them and not on the spiritual disposition of the *νήπιοι*.<sup>14</sup> This is clear from the use of the verb in Luke 12:32. God's gracious act consists in this, that God gives his revelation to the simple instead of to the wise. He gives his kingdom to the poor instead of the spiritually elite in Israel. But this "goodwill" of the Father is also directed to the revelation in Jesus, as becomes clear in verse 27. Three times the verb *εὐδοκῶ* is used in Matthew's Gospel. In each case it is used in connection

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jacques Dupont, *Les Beatitudes*, (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie Editeurs, c.1969), II, 199-201.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 214-217.



with Jesus being portrayed as the Suffering Servant of Is. 42:1-4. Thus, the Isaiah passage is cited in extenso at Matt. 12:18-21. It is used in part in the divine attestation of the Son at his baptism (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5).<sup>15</sup>

We are led into the second strophe (Matt. 11:27) by the concept of revelation of the kingdom of God unveiled in Jesus' preaching and action. It is revealed only to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see (Mark 4:12); that is, to babes, to the poor in spirit.<sup>16</sup> This revelation is now described in terms of knowledge handed down by the Father to the Son. This "knowledge" is thoroughly semitic and bears no relation to Hellenistic ideas at all. The concept of God "knowing" someone means that he has chosen that person for a specific task in his plan of redemption. Thus the chosen people of Israel is the only nation God has known (Amos 3:25; Hosea 13:5). God chooses special representatives whom he "knows" from the beginning; and they know him. Thus Moses (Ex. 33:12), Jeremiah (1:5) and the Suffering Servant (Is. 49:1) are "known" by God.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, to "know" God is not to have an esoteric religious experience but it is, in the language of the Old Testament,

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<sup>15</sup> Cerfaux, "Les Sources Scripturaires de Mt., XI, 25-30," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, XXXI (1955), 334.

<sup>16</sup> Julius Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch: Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk (Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, c.1936 1964 ), II, 150.

<sup>17</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus: An Examination of the Presuppositions of New Testament Theology (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1954), p. 92.



to respond to God's election in faith and obedience. Thus disobedient Israel "did not know" God (Is. 1:3; Jer. 2:8; 8:7). In the preaching of the prophets this "knowledge of God" becomes part of the eschatological hope (Jer. 31:34). When the Messiah comes he will bear the "spirit" of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (Is. 11:2). With the setting up of his kingdom, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Is. 11:9).<sup>18</sup> Thus the concepts of knowledge and revelation became closely connected with God's plan of redemption through his Messiah. Therefore it was only to be expected that an eschatologically conscious community like the Qumran sect would be very concerned about "knowledge."<sup>19</sup> So was the early Church (compare the Gospel of John).

Both aspects of this eschatological knowledge—to be known by God and to know God—were found in Jesus. The Father knew the Son by choosing him to be the Messiah in terms of the Suffering Servant (Is. 42:1).

The heavenly Father was the only one who could authorize the Son's mission; hence Jesus could say: "No one knows the Son except the Father" (Matt. 11:27). This recognition of his mission does not come from men except in a roundabout way. The fact that Jesus was despised and rejected by them only confirms his function as the Suffering Servant (Is. 53:3).<sup>20</sup> This task is further confirmed in

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 93; Schniewind, II, 152.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Menahem Mansoor, The Thanksgiving Hymns: Translated and Annotated with an Introduction (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, c.1961), pp. 65-74.

<sup>20</sup> Fuller, p. 92.



Jesus' statement that he knows the Father and will pass on this knowledge to those ready to receive it: "No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (verse 27). This is precisely what was said of the Suffering Servant: "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous" (Is. 53:11). The fact that Jesus speaks of himself as the Son instead of the Servant is readily accounted for in terms of the development of the Servant motif in Wisdom of Solomon 2 and 5. There, as we have seen, the Servant is depicted as the righteous poor man who "professes to have knowledge of God and calls himself the *παῖς κυρίου*" (2:13), who "boasts that God is his Father" (2:16). This *πῖς δίκαιος* is then referred to as *υἱὸς θεοῦ* (2:18). Thus the transition had already been made prior to New Testament times and was well understood by Jesus and his contemporaries.<sup>21</sup>

Revelation and knowledge mean the same in the first two strophes. Both are exhibited by Jesus, in whose person and message and mission the kingdom of God breaks forth among men. It is the Messianic Age which Jesus was not only proclaiming but also bringing into being. It is an Age when the afflicted and the oppressed receive righteousness, justice and peace. All this was being achieved through Jesus, who was to be the poor man's representative, not only in affliction and oppression but also in vindication. Through this sacrifice, he would make many to be accounted righteous. He would be the poor man par excellence.

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<sup>21</sup>Suggs, p. 92.



This is exactly what Jesus is saying in the final strophe (11:28-30). It is by following the one who is *πραῦς καὶ ταπεινὸς τῆ καρδία* that the burden of affliction and oppression is lifted and men find rest for their souls. This point would be overlooked if we interpreted this strophe purely in terms of wisdom.

A comparison of Matt. 11:28-30 with Sir. 51:23-30 shows many similarities. Both begin as an invitation (Matt. 11:28 and Sir. 51:23); both make the requests to take on the yoke (Matt. 11:29 and Sir. 51:26) and to learn of the speaker; both promise rest (Matt. 11:28,29 and Sir. 51:27).<sup>22</sup> Such similarities can also be found in Sir. 6:24-31; 24:19-22; Prov. 8:4-21; 1:20-33. The number of these similarities is striking. It would be simple to follow Suggs and see Jesus as Wisdom personified.<sup>23</sup>

Since "knowledge" and "wisdom" are very closely connected, it is very likely that Suggs is correct. For we are told of Moses, who "knew" God, that wisdom "entered the soul of a servant of the Lord" (*εἰς ψυχὴν θεράποντος κυρίου*, Wisd. Sol. 10:16). Since Jesus has the special "knowledge" of God, he too is the wisdom of God. However, there is one fundamental difference which has not been accounted for. Wisdom is always spoken of in exalted terms. But Jesus comes as one who is humble and lowly. Even Arvedson acknowledged this as a difficulty.<sup>24</sup> So, while this saying in Matt. 11:28-30 is dependent on

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<sup>22</sup>Norden, p. 283; Arvedson p. 94.

<sup>23</sup>Suggs, pp. 106-107.

<sup>24</sup>Arvedson, p. 94.



Sirach 51 for more than mere vocabulary,<sup>25</sup> we must look elsewhere for its deeper meaning.

We need to find a background where the three main aspects of this strophe, the "humble and lowly one" the "rest" and the "easy yoke" can stand in proper relationship to each other. W. D. Davies has tried to do this by pointing to Qumran. Finding a similar concept of knowledge, he suggested that the invitation of Christ in our strophe was strangely reminiscent of Scroll of the Rule (1QS X,23-XI.2).<sup>26</sup> But the reminiscence is not very strong; it says nothing of "rest" or of a "yoke."

Jesus promised rest to those who came to him. This is the same as promising peace and security to afflicted and oppressed. Moses hoped for the safety of a faithful co-leader for the march into the promised land. Aaron had proven unfaithful. So Yahweh promises Moses: "My presence will go with you and I will give you rest." The land of Canaan gave the Israelites their happiness and security; hence it was a land of rest (Deut. 3:20, 12:9-10; 25:19; 28:65; Joshua 1:13; Ps. 95:11). This concept was gradually idealized. It expressed not only the idea of dwelling in security and prosperity but also of the final blessedness of the promised Messianic age.<sup>27</sup> Thus Jeremiah calls his people to faithfulness and

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<sup>25</sup> As suggested by Cerfaux, XXXI, 340; Schniewind, II, 154; and A. M. Hunter "Crux Criticorum--Matt. XI.25-30--A Re-appraisal," New Testament Studies, VII (1961-1962), 248-249.

<sup>26</sup> W. D. Davies, "Knowledge in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew 11:25-30," in Christian Origins and Judaism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1962), pp. 143-144.

<sup>27</sup> Arvedson, p. 201.



Jesus is basically an obedient discipleship. It means following in the footsteps of the Master. But there is a contrast here to all other yokes of instruction. The yoke of Jesus is easy. It is an easy yoke in that it brings rest and leads to salvation and blessing. Because of its goal, the kingdom of God, the yoke of Jesus makes everything easier to bear.<sup>28</sup> Other yokes remain a continual burden.

The kind of discipleship Jesus calls men to, means, being like him, a poor man. But it is not simply a call to follow a certain behavior. It is a call, as in the beatitudes, to enter the kingdom of God, to belong to the Messianic people. Jesus may have been thinking of Zeph. 3:12 when he called himself a *πρᾶν καὶ ταπεινός*, for this was the name given to the people of the Messianic kingdom. It was to be a people humble and lowly who would "seek refuge in the name of the Lord." By giving himself this designation, Jesus was going further than implying his ability to sympathise with the afflicted and oppressed. He was saying that he was a poor man himself. Those who would follow him would enter his kingdom. They would come under his rule.

The picture of the Suffering Servant which colors this whole saying is appropriate here too. This self-description of Jesus must call to mind the picture of the poor man par excellence of the Old Testament as described in such passages as Is. 42:2-3; and 53:1-9. The Suffering Servant would teach "him that is weary" (Is. 50:4) by word and example. The disciple would learn from him obedience and

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<sup>28</sup> Johannes Baptista Bauer, "Das milde Joch und die Ruhe, Matt. 11,28-30," Theologische Zeitschrift, XVII (1961), 102.



submission to God in spite of oppression (Is. 50:5-9). Jesus obviously saw himself as this Suffering Servant in terms of the poor man.

We find, therefore, that Jesus saw his mission in terms of the poor man motif. His mission is messianic in that he announces the Good News of the kingdom to the poor. He brings that kingdom into being by his deeds and by his revelation of the Father. The miracles he has performed are merely signs that the kingdom is present and that the restoration to righteousness of the afflicted and oppressed has begun in Jesus, the Messiah. But Jesus evidently saw his basic role as Messiah that of being the poor man's representative before God. This involved his becoming the poor man par excellence by fulfilling the role of the Suffering Servant. This meant he would vindicate the righteous and deliver the oppressed. Then he would return in glory to condemn the ungodly (Wisd. Sol. 4:16-5:8). But as such, his mission also involved calling those who would receive him, the humble and lowly, into the kingdom. This is the main thrust of Matt. 11:25-30.

#### The Anointing at Bethany

What has been called the most important πτωχός passage in Mark<sup>29</sup> is found in the account of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany (Mark 14:3-9; Matt. 26:6-13; John 12:1-8). When Jesus is anointed

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<sup>29</sup> Ernst Bammel, "πτωχός, πτωχία, πτωχύνω" Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Erdmann's Publishing Company, c.1969), VI, 903.



with the costly ointment, the objection is voiced that this ointment could have been sold and the money given to the *πτωχοί*. Mark makes it quite indefinite as to who the objectors are. Matthew puts the blame on the disciples, John states that Judas Iscariot asked the question, explaining "not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it." (John 12:6; compare 13:29). Luke has an account of the anointing of Jesus but he gives it a different point. He depicts the forgiveness which Jesus gives to a penitent sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50). There is some similarity between Luke's account and that found in John, but Luke probably omitted the reference to the *πτωχοί* since such an item would not coincide with his stress on almsgiving. If Luke's account is of the same incident, he placed it much earlier in the ministry of Jesus. The other three evangelists have the event happening just prior to the Passover and Jesus' betrayal.

In the latter context, Jesus answers their objection: "You always have the *πτωχοί* with you, but you will not always have me" (Matt. 26:11 John 12:8). Mark (14:7) inserts an explanatory phrase: "and whenever you will, you can do good to them." This saying is surely an echo of Deut. 15:11: "For the poor ( *אֲבֹנִים* ) will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor ( *לְאֹנִים וְלְעָבְדֵי* ), in the land." This passage from Deuteronomy appears to emphasize the spontaneous action of the individual to help the poor man when confronted by his need. Jesus may have had this in mind in his response to the objection of the disciples. Thereby,



he was interpreting the woman's act of love as the supreme charity, the spontaneous action to help the poor man in his affliction. This was a genuine response to the Deuteronomic code.

That poor man was Jesus himself. This point is made by the verses prior to the pericope (Mark 14:1-2; Matt. 26:1-5; John 11:55-57). The chief priests and scribes are mentioned as seeking to arrest Jesus by stealth and to kill him. Also, the verses which follow in Mark 14:10-11 and Matt. 26:14-16 speak of the betrayal by Judas Iscariot. Jesus is the poor man afflicted and oppressed, about to suffer at the hands of the wicked as commonly described in the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms.

It is significant also that in Matthew's Gospel this pericope follows the parable of the last judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). There those who inherit the kingdom are those who have done charity to Jesus in that they have helped the needy: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." The close relationship between the poor man and Jesus is surely brought out in this parable.

Jesus praises the woman's action and describes it as a *καλὸν ἔργον*, an anointing for burial (Mark 11:6,8). This woman had understood that Jesus was about to suffer at the hands of the wicked, and this was her response. The disciples had failed to do this. While they had expressed concern for the *πτωχοί*, the woman had not hesitated to put her concern for the *πτωχός* par excellence into action. Therefore this action would be remembered (Mark 14:9).



The suggestion by F. W. Danker<sup>30</sup> that Psalm 40 may be the pattern on which Mark 14:1-25 is arranged is certainly a possibility; for this gives in a nutshell the picture of the poor man and his suffering at the hand of the wicked, his betrayal by a friend, and his eventual vindication. But the pericope itself indicates that Jesus saw himself as the poor man, par excellence. Professor Danker has correctly pointed out that the contrast in Mark 14:7 is not in the words *πτωχός* and *ἐμέ*, but in *πάντοτε* and *οὐ πάντοτε*.<sup>31</sup> Only then can the verse be understood. Otherwise Jesus would seem to be depreciating charity which he had previously recommended. Jesus as the poor man par excellence, is here seen giving charity his full blessing.

#### Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem

Our initial interest in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is Matthew's reference to Jesus as *πραΰς*, using a quotation of Zech. 9:9 (Matt. 21:5). While all the Gospels contain an account of this event (Mark 11:1-10; Matt. 21:1-9; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19), only John and Matthew have the quotation. John, however, leaves out the reference to the king being *πραΰς*. The term does not fit into John's Christology. Our concern is to discover Jesus' own understanding of his entry into Jerusalem and also that of the crowd which welcomed him.

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<sup>30</sup> Frederick W. Danker, "The Literary Unity of Mark 14:1-25," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXXV (1966), 467-472.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., LXXXV, 469.



have been the prophecies of Isaiah. Zech. 9:9 very likely would have been interpreted in line with the Isaianic promises. It is not without reason, therefore, that both Matthew and John do not begin the quotation of Zechariah as it reads: Χαῖρε βεθέδρα θυγάτηρ Σιών (Zech. 9:9). Matthew changed it to εἰπάτε τῇ θυγατρὶ Σιών (21:5) in line with the messianic promise in Is. 62:11. John altered it to μὴ φοβᾶ, θυγάτηρ Σιών in accordance with the messianic proclamation of the Good News in Is. 40:9. Of course, these may simply be the interpretations of the early Church. But it is probable that they actually echo the messianism in vogue at the time of Jesus or as it was understood by Jesus himself. That Jesus understood his messianic role primarily in terms of the Isaianic passages has been attested to throughout this thesis.

That Matthew understood Zech. 9:9 in terms of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah may be indicated by his omission of δίκαιος καὶ βέβαιος (LXX). Such an omission serves to emphasize πραῦς<sup>34</sup> which should be understood as "afflicted" or "suffering" rather than "meek" as in Greek culture. This is in line with the original understanding of Zech. 9:9 which, as we have seen,<sup>35</sup> has been influenced by the Suffering Servant motif. The whole point of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem revolves around this idea of his being the ἴδ, the

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347; and Wolfgang Trilling, "Der Einzug in Jerusalem: Mt. 21:1-17," Neutestamentliche Aufsätze: Festschrift für Prof. Josef Schmid zum 70 Geburtstag, herausgegeben von T. Blinzler, O. Kuss, F. Mussner (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, c.1963), p. 304.

<sup>34</sup>Gundry, XVIII, 120; Trilling, p. 304.

<sup>35</sup>Supra, pp. 53-55.



messianic king, he must first be the suffering king. Such suffering is on their behalf that he might also bring about their vindication and exaltation. Here again, we have the picture of the poor man par excellence. His entry into Jerusalem at this time stresses his total obedience to the will of the Father in the face of suffering.<sup>36</sup> This is the faith of the poor man as depicted in the Psalms.

The exclamation of the people outside of Jerusalem in the words of the Hallel of Psalm 118 is the welcome song for the Messiah. It was believed that the Psalm had been composed when David became king and would be recited again when the Messiah appeared.<sup>37</sup> This is shown also by the prediction of Jesus when he spoke of his coming again as judge of the world (Matt. 23:39; Luke 13:35). Then those who rejected him now would receive him as Messiah in the words of the Hallel Psalm (118:26). The believers (Luke 19:37) receive Jesus as that Messiah as he enters Jerusalem.

#### The Motif as it Relates to Other Christological Passages

After his resurrection, Jesus spoke to his disciples and reminded them that what had happened had been according to God's plan (Luke 24:44). We will now look briefly at some of the psalms as used by Jesus in relation to the poor man motif.

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<sup>36</sup> Schniewind, II, 212.

<sup>37</sup> David Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (London: University of London, The Athlone Press, 1956), pp. 20-23. Cf. Gundry, XVIII, 40-43.



The words of Jesus to the disciples in Gethsemene: "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death" (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34) are reminiscent of Ps. 4:6,12 and 43:5. Both of these psalms are a cry for vindication from the oppression and taunts of the wicked (compare Ps. 42:8,10; 43:1-2).

The cry of Jesus from the cross in the opening words of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), is another cry of the poor man. But understood in the context of the Psalm, it is a cry not of despair but of confidence that God will deliver and vindicate his afflicted one (ἰ.ψ, κτωχός, Ps. 22:25). The note of triumph in this Psalm (verse 21) may be echoed in the words of the risen Christ that he will triumphantly proclaim to his brethren God's vindication of him (Matt. 28:10).<sup>39</sup> The influence of this Psalm on the early Church can be seen from the number of times it is alluded to in the passion narrative.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Andre Rose, "L'Influence des psaumes sur les Annonces et les Récits de la Passion et de la Résurrection dans les Évangiles," in Le Psautier: Ses Origines, Ses Problèmes Littéraires, Son Influence, Études présentées aux XIIe Journées Bibliques (29-31 août 1960) éditées par Robert De Langhe (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1962), pp. 312, 330.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTOLOGY

#### The Suffering Servant Concept in Jesus' Thought

It is not our purpose here to make a thorough examination of the question whether Jesus identified himself with the Suffering Servant. We have already found evidence of Jesus casting himself in that role. Our purpose now is to look briefly at the passages which are generally believed to show the influence of the Suffering Servant concept on Jesus' thought. Then we shall examine them in the light of the poor man motif.

In the first place, it must be noted that the Sufferer of the Servant Songs (Is. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13; 53:12) was identified as the Messiah by the time of Jesus. This is evident particularly from the Targum on Isaiah, where the Servant is regarded as the Messiah who will triumph over the heathen and all the enemies of God's people.<sup>1</sup> Although this Servant Messiah would perform prophetic tasks, he was understood to be essentially a royal Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

We must look first to the baptism of Jesus for an understanding of Jesus' role as the Suffering Servant. All evangelists mention

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Christopher R. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study (2nd edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 11; W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc. 1957), pp. 66-71.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. V. de Leeuw, "Le Serviteur de Jahvé Figure Royale ou Prophétique?" Recherches Bibliques: L'Attente du Messie, edited



the voice from heaven which said: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11; compare Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22; John 1:34). This has been taken by some scholars as a reference to Ps. 2:7, whereby Jesus' Messiahship as King would be proclaimed. Others take it as a reference to the first Servant Song, Is. 42:1. The only connection the saying has with Ps. 2:7 is the phrase: *ὁ υἱὸς μου*, whereas, if we change *υἱός* to *παῖς* we would almost have a quotation of Is. 42:1 as presented in Matt. 12:18. Now on the basis of the popularity of Wisdom of Solomon 2 to 5 at this time as an alternative description of the Suffering Servant, such a change presents no problems. As is obvious in Wisdom of Solomon 2 to 5, the two words were used interchangeably.<sup>3</sup> This is also evident in Acts 4:27 where a quotation of Ps. 2:1-2 is followed by a reference to Jesus as *παῖς* rather than as *υἱός*. The word *παῖς* is used to describe Jesus also in Acts 3:13,26; 4:30), and the idea of the Suffering Servant behind this term is evident. Acts 4:27 would teach us, therefore, not only that the words *υἱός* and *παῖς* were used interchangeably but also that Is. 42:1 and Ps. 2:7 were understood as interpreting each other. The words of the Voice from heaven may therefore be a conflation.<sup>4</sup> The descent of the Spirit

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by L. Cerfaux et al. ([Paris]: Desclee de Brouwer, c.1954), pp. 51-56.

<sup>3</sup>The significance of this we have noted already in regard to Matt. 11:25-30. See Supra, p. 220.

<sup>4</sup>In agreement with Robert Horton Gundry, The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope, in Supplement to Novum Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, c.1967), XVIII, 29. Cf. also I. Howard Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A reconsideration of Mark I.11," New Testament Studies, XV (1968-1969), 326-336.



however, makes it clear that Jesus' royal sonship is to be understood in terms of the Spirit-endowed Servant of Isaiah.<sup>5</sup>

With this double divine authorization, Jesus now has before him the task of being God's royal representative and also the Suffering Servant. This means that Jesus had the task of proclaiming the kingdom and overcoming the enemies of that kingdom through suffering and death. That Jesus later referred to baptism only in terms of suffering and death (Mark 10:38 and Luke 12:50) indicates that he interpreted his own baptism in this way.<sup>6</sup> This appears also to be the significance of the remark of Jesus to the three disciples after the transfiguration. In the transfiguration, the Voice from heaven reiterates almost exactly the authorization given to Jesus at his baptism. We are told, "As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man should have risen from the dead." (Mark 9:9; Matt. 17:9). The command to silence here was given because the way of suffering and death could have been misinterpreted before the actual time of the Passion.

Following Jesus' baptism is the account of his temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). The reference to the wild beasts in Mark 1:13 recalls the suffering of the poor

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<sup>5</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus: An Examination of the Presuppositions of New Testament Theology (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1954), p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Oscar Cullman, The Christology of the New Testament, translated by Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1959), p. 67.



man in Psalm 22 who is surrounded by wild beasts. In Jewish thought, at the time of Jesus, temptation was regarded as a necessary testing for a servant of the Lord. Thus Sirach counsels: "My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation" (Sir. 2:1). Israel's forty years in the wilderness was regarded as a time of testing (Wisdom of Solomon 11). Therefore, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was not only necessary to prove him worthy of being the Servant but also prepared him as a representative of the true Israel. The words of Satan: *εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ* once again remind us of the words of the wicked speaking of the *παῖς κυρίου* in Wisd. Sol. 2:18: *εἰ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ δίκαιος υἱὸς θεοῦ.*

References to the Servant Songs in the Gospels are rare. According to Luke 22:37, Jesus refers to Is. 53:12, saying that this scripture would have to be fulfilled in him. Many scholars unnecessarily reject this as a Lucan addition.<sup>7</sup> The words of institution of the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:24; Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:24) all report that Jesus announced he would shed his blood "for many" (*ὕπὲρ πολλῶν, ὑπὲρ ἑμῶν, or περὶ πολλῶν*). This is very close to the idea of representation as found in Is. 53:5, 10-12. Also, the idea of the "new covenant" probably refers to the task of the Servant of reestablishing the covenant between God and his people (Is. 42:6; 49:8).<sup>8</sup>

The five prophecies Jesus makes of his suffering as the Son of man (Mark 8:31; 9:12; 9:31; 10:33-34; 10:45), certainly reflect the

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-65.



influence either of the psalms of individual lament or of the Servant Songs of Isaiah.<sup>9</sup> It is probably a combination of the two, as is evident in the passion narratives generally. Mark 10:45 (see Matt. 20:28) in particular with its ransom prediction and servant motif is hard to explain satisfactorily in any other way than as referring to Is. 53:10-12. The word *λύτρον* is a loose rendering of *דָּמָא* (Is. 53:10).<sup>10</sup>

Other allusions to the Servant Songs can be found in the Gospels. The fact they are simply references may in itself be a sign of authenticity as Vincent Taylor has pointed out:

The broad fact that the passages are allusions rather than quotations is significant. When later writers read back their own ideas into an earlier time, they are not, as a rule, content with echoes, and it is probable that the Servant conception would be much more obvious in the Gospel tradition if it were not an authentic element which goes back to Jesus Himself.<sup>11</sup>

Now while we can say that the Suffering Servant concept was present and important in Jesus' thought, we cannot say it was central. If we look only at the references and allusions to the prophecies of Isaiah, and the words of Jesus are studded with them, we find that that chapters 29, 35, and 61 are also important for understanding Jesus' mission. This leads us to a significant understanding of that

<sup>9</sup> Usually taken as allusions to Isaiah 53. Cf. Gundry, XVIII, 39; Fuller, pp. 55-57; George Johnston, "The Servant Image in the New Testament," Theology Today, XV (1958-1959), 324.

<sup>10</sup> Gundry, XVIII, 39-40; Fuller, p. 57; Cf. Cullman, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Vincent Taylor, Jesus and His Sacrifice: A Study of the Passion Sayings in the Gospels (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, c.1951), pp. 47-48. Cf. Johnston, XV, 323.



mission. In Deutero-Isaiah, Israel is regarded as the poor man, afflicted and oppressed, who turns to Yahweh for help and vindication. Likewise, Israel is called the Servant of Yahweh. Both terms are used collectively particularly of those who "wait for the Lord."<sup>12</sup> Mingled with these general references to Israel as the poor man and the Servant are the Servant Songs which speak of an individual representative Servant. This representative Servant becomes the means by which Israel as a whole can become righteous. Jesus took this role upon himself and in doing so he also took on the wider role of being the representative poor man. As such he would be the means whereby the deliverance and exaltation of the poor would be wrought. Cullmann is correct in seeing in the Servant a "principle of representation in a progressive reduction."<sup>13</sup> The same must be said of the poor man motif.

#### Jesus' Use of the Title "Son of Man"

We have noted that Jesus has taken both the Suffering Servant concept and the poor man motif and has applied them to himself, designating himself as the representative Servant and poor man. He does the same thing with the "Son of man" title. In some places in the Old Testament the phrase "Son of man" is used simply to mean mankind, humanity. It is used this way in Is. 51:12; and 56:2 and in some of the Psalms (8:4; 80:17; 146:3 and 144:3). In two of these

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<sup>12</sup> Supra, pp. 48-50.

<sup>13</sup> Cullmann, pp. 54-55.



Psalms (80:17; 146:3), the term may refer to the king, but this does not allow us to regard it generally as a royal title.<sup>14</sup>

In Ezekiel, the term is used of the prophet himself and means little more than "man." Nevertheless, the term is given meaning and content by the tasks which Ezekiel as the son of man has to perform. Filled with God's spirit he is the watchman of Israel sent to a rebellious nation. He not only announces disaster but must also pronounce God's judgment over Israel. He must even take difficulties, privation and suffering upon himself to be a sign for Israel. But he also prophesies the resurrection of Israel and the coming glory.<sup>15</sup>

In the apocalyptic literature, the term "Son of man" develops into a somewhat symbolic designation for afflicted Israel. Dan. 7:13 refers to "one like a son of man" coming out of persecution and suffering triumphant and victorious. This "man" is looked upon as the representative of the true Israel, "the people of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:27). It came to be understood messianically as the one who would vindicate his people and bring them to exaltation and triumph. The Son of man figures also in the Book of Enoch where it has developed into a pre-existent divine being (48:2; 62:7) who will be revealed on the final day. He appears to deliver the elect from persecution (62:7-11). Those who have oppressed the elect

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<sup>14</sup>Against Ivan Engnell, A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament, translated from the Swedish and edited by John T. Willis with the Collaboration of Helmer Ringgren (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, c.1969), p. 237.

<sup>15</sup>See Edward Schweizer, "The Son of Man Again," New Testament Studies, IX (1962-1963), 256-261.



will be judged by him (46:4; 62:11; 69:27). Then he will rule in glory (69:29; 62:14). This Son of man is also referred to as "the Righteous and Elect One" (53:6), "the Lord's Anointed" (48:10; 52:4) and the "Light of the Gentiles" (48:4). Both these apocalyptic writings show the influence of the Servant motif in Deutero-Isaiah. In both, the Son of man is pictured as the vindicator of the afflicted and oppressed. In other words, the Son of man is seen here as the representative and the vindicator of the poor man.

It is obvious that the term has developed in apocalyptic literature into the title for the poor man's vindicator in times of much suffering and oppression. The hope for retribution and justice, particularly in the Book of Enoch, is a continuous theme in this apocalyptic literature. The way Jesus used this title of himself must therefore be understood within this framework. But the term "Son of man" is an inclusive term. We cannot take the picture of the Son of man out of the Book of Enoch and say this is the figure Jesus sought to emulate. Nor can we say he saw himself only as the Danielic or Ezekielic Son of man. Such exclusiveness is not found in Jesus' thoughts anywhere, nor was it natural to Judaism at the time of Jesus. The Gospels themselves, whether we take them as portraying the thinking of Jesus or the thinking of the early Christians, are witness enough to that.

Jesus therefore, used the title "Son of man" inclusively. As the poor man's representative he too had to suffer. This is evident in the Son of man passion sayings (Mark 8:31; 9:9; 9:12; 9:31; 10:33; 10:45; 14:21; 14:41 and parallels). We have noted the influence of



the Servant motif on these sayings. But we must also recognise the influence of the psalms which speak of being oppressed by the wicked. Thus, "being delivered into the hands of sinners" (Luke 24:7; Matt. 26:45; Mark 44:41) probably bears the double influence of Is. 53:6, 11,12 and Ps. 71:4; 140:4,9. For the use of the verb *παρδιδόναι* we can also turn to a number of psalms of individual lament (Ps. 27:12; 119:121; 140:9; 118:18). Other influences on the passion sayings can be traced to Psalms 22, 89, and 118.<sup>16</sup>

As the poor man's representative, Jesus would triumph and as his vindicator he would come in glory to judge the wicked and ungodly, as the poor man's oppressor. Thus the "future" Son of man sayings (Mark 8:38; compare Matt. 16:27; Luke 9:26) point out that those who will not side with the vindicator cannot expect to share in the glory. Matthew's quotation of Ps. 62:13 (Matt. 16:27) must be understood in this way, too. Matthew adds the note of national hope to the vindication theme in Matt. 24:30 (compare Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27). The pericope at Luke 22:69-70 (compare Mark 14:62; Matt. 20:64) may be influenced by the picture of the righteous one who is exalted and returns to judge the wicked (Wisd. Sol. 4:16-5:8). The warnings about the coming of vindication and judgment by the Son of man (Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:24; Matt. 24:37,39,44; Luke 17:26-30; Luke 12:40) are calls to make sure that they are found as those who wait for the Lord,

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<sup>16</sup> Andre Rose, "L'Influence des psaumes sur les Annonces et les Récits de la Passion et de la Résurrection dans les Évangiles," Le Psautier: Ses Origines, Ses Problèmes Littéraires, Son Influence, Études présentées aux XIIe Journées Bibliques (29;31 août 1960), éditées par Robert De Langhe (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1962), pp. 299-310.



as those to be vindicated rather than those to be judged. Matthew's parable of the tares (13:37-43) with its allusion to Wisd. Sol. 3: 7-8, sees the Son of man, the exalted *Σίκυος*, condemning the wicked so that the sons of the kingdom, the *Σίκυιοι* may be delivered.

The "present" Son of man sayings fit into the same motif. Jesus as the Son of man is the poor man's representative and deliverer at the present time as well as in his Second Coming. Thus, by healing and forgiveness (Mark 2:10), he has authority to bring deliverance to the poor man from his suffering and from the legalistic restrictions of the Pharisees (Mark 2:28). This authority has been given him in his baptism and confessed by him in Matt. 11:25-30. As the poor man's representative, he is poor (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58); and as his deliverer he celebrates with him the messianic joy (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). Matthew's and Luke's account of the sin against the Holy Spirit can only be understood as a modification based on the reference to "sons of men" in Mark 3:28. The reference should be understood as a parallel to 1 Sam. 2:25.

#### Royal Messianism and Jesus

The idea of kingship is basic to the whole concept of messianism. It is therefore unnatural to seek divisions between the various messianic concepts. Designations such as Messiah, Son of man, Son of God, Son of David, and Suffering Servant are not mutually exclusive. The idea of kingship is found in all of them to a greater or lesser degree. It is true that certain elements in Judaism hoped for a certain king of Messiah; that is, for one who would be predominantly a



powerful king, or a powerful judge of the wicked, or something else. But the fact remained that the Messiah would be a king.

Kingship is also fundamental to Jesus' understanding of his role. He announces the Good News that the promised king is about to begin his rule. He inaugurates that kingdom by his words and deeds as the King. His miracles of healing and his announcement of Good News to the poor are indications that his reign has begun.

But while it has begun, it is still "not yet." Those to whom the kingdom belongs enter into this state of tension. For their deliverance is not yet complete, and their king has not yet been exalted. So far, their King is a Suffering Messiah, suffering on their behalf, in order that through him the faithful might be exalted. The idea of a king suffering for the nation was not foreign to Judaism. We find the idea in such royal psalms as Psalm 2 and 89. It is also evident in the Suffering Servant motif of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>17</sup> That Jesus understood himself to be such a suffering royal Messiah is seen from his entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:5) and his response to Peter at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 27-33).

Here again the theme of suffering and humiliation leading on to deliverance and exaltation is the predominant theme. Jesus is the king who brings deliverance to the poor man. It is the poor man who acknowledges his kingship as the Son of David (Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:15). It is through his king's exaltation that the poor man, too, will be exalted.

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. Engnell, p. 236; W. D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: University Press, c.1964), pp. 37-39.



Jesus as the Poor Man par excellence

We have seen Jesus come as the Messiah to the poor man, the man who faithfully and patiently waits on God. Jesus had come, bringing the poor man the Good News that the kingdom of God is his. He then went about giving it to the poor man through his preaching and healing ministry. In Jesus himself the kingdom of God was coming into being. Through him the poor man received consolation, an inheritance. He was made righteous, he obtained God's mercy and dwelt in his presence and he became one of God's sons who will be vindicated. This kingdom is God's gracious gift to the needy and helpless, to those who had turned to God for help.

The task Jesus had to fulfil by bringing in the kingdom involved justice, deliverance from affliction and oppression, retribution and recompense, vindication and exaltation of the poor man. It involved the judgment of the wicked. How was this to be done? It could not be accomplished through force and violence. That was what the wicked had been doing all along. The way of the poor man was to turn the other cheek. That was the way Jesus himself chose.

The way of the poor man meant undergoing the same affliction, oppression and persecution the poor man had always known. It meant humility and lowliness, suffering and death. But Jesus as the poor man's representative would show that the way led through humiliation and death to exaltation and life. Those who followed him would partake in his exaltation and glory. Therefore, Jesus called all who felt the burden of suffering and oppression to take his yoke upon them for he was THE poor man, the poor man par excellence.



We have seen how Jesus lived this role as the poor man in terms of the poor sufferer of the psalms and the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. But this role of poor man par excellence also involved bringing about his final vindication of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked. This was the inevitable consequence of living out the role of the poor man according to Scripture. The wicked and godless would bring judgment on themselves and the poor man would be vindicated through resurrection and immortality. Jesus proved that God's promises are kept. He became the first-fruits of the promise and opened the way for all to be made righteous in him. As the exalted poor man par excellence, he now rules in the kingdom of God sharing the heavenly banquet with the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind. That is to say, the poor in spirit rejoice in his presence, having experienced their vindication and exaltation through him.



## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

Our examination of the poor man motif from its beginning in the history of Isarel to its use by Jesus is now complete. In conclusion, it would be well to consider as a whole the development that has emerged.

At the beginning we noted that the terminology of the poor man motif is to be understood in terms of the covenant relationship, even though it is also used of man in his socio-economic distress. This covenant context has given the words about the poor a religious coloring from the beginning of the history of Israel as a people. There are other words, not so common, which could refer to poverty in a purely secular sense, but these are not part of the motif. It should be borne in mind that, while we refer to the words of the poor man motif as having a "religious" coloring, this in no way denies the socio-economic aspect. As these terms were understood in the Old Testament the claim of the covenant and the cry for righteousness generally included the socio-economic situation of the poor man. He was destitute, dispossessed, afflicted, and oppressed. His economic position was of vital concern in the use of the motif, particularly at the beginning. However, since the Scriptures deal with Heilsgeschichte, the religious and moral aspect of poverty is always present in the terminology of poverty. In fact, this religious aspect may very well have dictated the choice of the words of the motif.



The religious and moral aspects of the motif grew as the problems of injustice and oppression remained and the yearning for righteousness deepened. This is noticeable, particularly in the Psalms, where the poor man is not only the afflicted one; he is also humble, godly and righteous. In the Psalms, oppression, affliction and false accusation are at issue rather than economic poverty as such.

Out of this oppression and affliction of the poor man has come the messianic hope. The more the poor man suffered unjustly, the more he turned to Yahweh and looked to him for justice and righteousness. From Yahweh he expected to receive vindication and retribution at the proper time. At first this justice was to come through Yahweh's representatives, the kings. When these proved to be inadequate or unfaithful, the messianic hope developed. Its fulfillment was projected into the future. Gradually, when the suffering and oppression of Israel as a whole intensified and the motif came to be used of Israel as a nation, the Messianic King, too, was depicted as one who would be afflicted and oppressed as well as humble and obedient before God. The righteous suffer, so the righteous Messiah would have to suffer. He would be a Suffering Servant for his people. This aspect comes to the fore in the psalms about the kings, the concept of the Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah, the **יְהוָה**-King of Zech. 9:9 as well as in the Danielic Son of man. Sometimes the royal aspect of Messianism faded into the background as in the case of the Suffering Servant and the Son of man. Nevertheless, the fact that he would be God's representative in bringing about



vindication and retribution for his people was always there. Equally present was the idea that this Messianic figure would be the true representative of God's faithful ones, the afflicted and oppressed who waited for the Lord.

These messianic ideas were not lost in the intertestamental period. Rather, they developed in intensity along a number of different lines. The Wisdom of Solomon saw the righteous poor man as finally vindicated after death and as bringing condemnation on the wicked in the life hereafter. He is seen as a kind of first fruit of all the righteous poor. The Psalms of Solomon see the poor and afflicted vindicated by their Messiah who will rule in the spirit of the poor man, in humility and with mercy. The Book of Enoch develops the idea of the Son of man coming to vindicate the righteous. In the Qumran Sect, which can be described as a "Messianic" community since its purpose was to wait deliverance in the desert, the idea of vindication and retribution is very strong. Its members call themselves the "Congregation of the Poor"; and their spiritual leader, the Teacher of Righteousness, is depicted in terms of a representative sufferer, a poor man par excellence. It is evident throughout this period that the pious and faithful took the term "poor man" as a self-designation.

Into this milieu came Jesus, identifying himself with the poor and coming as their Messiah. It is clear that Jesus carried on the motif from the Old Testament. The words *πτωχός, πρᾶνός, ταπεινός* are to be understood strictly in accordance with the meaning of their Hebrew counterparts, ענין, נָדָב, אֶבְיָוֹן, and עֲנִי. As it is



clear from the beatitudes and from Jesus' answer to John the Baptist, the *πτωχοί* are those afflicted and oppressed who seek deliverance from God. That deliverance Jesus has come to announce. In fact, he has come both to announce the Good News of the kingdom of God to the poor and to make manifest the reign of God through himself. Thus, he is the poor man's Messiah.

It has become evident that much of the teaching of Jesus must now be understood with the poor man motif in mind. This was shown even in our interpretation of Luke's antitheses between rich and poor. Beneath the Lucan social stress we have been able to discover Jesus' warnings to men to repent and become poor in spirit lest they be condemned as the wicked.

Echoes of the poor man motif were also found in the letters of Paul and James. But since the vindication of the poor man has already been fulfilled in the resurrection, the motif does not play an important part. Paul uses it mainly in reference to Jesus as the poor man par excellence, while James still echoes the Old Testament concept of the motif.

In Matt. 11:25-30 and in the account of the anointing at Bethany we have seen how Jesus actually designated himself as the poor man. This was also evident in his action of entering Jerusalem on an ass in fulfillment of Zech. 9:9. Jesus saw his basic role as that of being the poor man's representative before God, the poor man par excellence. As the righteous and oppressed one, he had come to vindicate the righteous and to deliver the oppressed. It is clear that he saw this messianic role in terms of the suffering righteous king



who truly represented his people, in terms of the Suffering Servant and in terms of the representative Son of man. It is only under this rubric that all of these various aspects of Christology can be brought together into an harmonious whole. We have also found that many of the problems connected with the various aspects of Christology, particularly those attached to the Son of man concept, are easily explained and understood in light of this motif.

Through this study we have come to see how an important motif running right through the Old Testament comes to its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The poor man, he who is afflicted and oppressed, is finally vindicated and exalted in Christ. Jesus, as the poor man par excellence, is the first fruit of the poor man's yearning for deliverance and retribution. He is also the means by which the poor man receives his vindication and the fulfilment of his hopes. It is through his role as poor man par excellence that Jesus became the poor man's Messiah, bringing the rule of God into the lives of men.

The study of this motif must lead us now to a fuller appreciation of all the sayings of Jesus as they apply to our day. For while the resurrection of Jesus Christ points to our own resurrection we still live in the tension of promise and fulfilment. The One who has come and vindicated the afflicted and oppressed is to come again to vindicate his own by judging the wicked and by bringing about the final exaltation of the poor man.



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