

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The text of Luke 16:19-31, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (*Λάζαρος*) is one of Jesus' most intriguing parables. The parable is also called the *Dives* and Lazarus. The traditional name, *Dives*, is not actually a name, but instead a word for "rich man" in the text of the Latin Bible, the Vulgate. This celebrated pericope is exclusive or unique to Luke; it is found only in the Gospel of Luke. This text is never recorded or found in the other synoptic gospels. The story is unique among Jesus' parables as it is the only one that depicts a scene in the afterlife. It is the parable of contrasts: poverty and riches, Heaven and Hades, compassion and indifference, and abrupt reversal of fortune. The parable is found or located within the Travel Narrative of Luke (within the centre of the Gospel of Luke, lies a section of Scripture known as "The Travel Narrative" or "The Journey to Jerusalem"). This section of the gospel begins at chapter 9:51-18:14). This parable sits in the context of Jesus criticizing the Pharisees, whom Luke accuses of being "lovers of money" *φιλάργυροι* (16:14). But the parable speaks not only about them; it extends also to Luke's readers, warning them about the blinding, destructive, and dangerous capacities of wealth. The rich man and Lazarus lead two totally opposite forms of existence. One is covered with opulent purple and fine linen; the other is covered in sores. One feasts sumptuously daily; the other desired to eat crumbs from the table to

quench or curb his hunger. One receives the dignity of a burial according to custom; the other is carried off to be with Abraham. After death, their conditions are totally reversed, though the text recounts no action of either character. A great chasm now exists between the two, which cannot be crossed. While Lazarus was taken to the bosom of Abraham, a place of comfort, the Rich man went to hell, a place of torment.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 depicts the extremes of wealth and poverty and examines the problem of the rich-poor dichotomy. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus highlights the dichotomy or the wide gap that exists between the rich and the poor; a chasm created by man's greed, injustice, insensitivity and insatiability. Certainly, wealth and poverty are quality of life issues. Wealth obviously improves it, but poverty undermines the quality of life for everyone in the society, not just only the poor. Poverty generates crime, broken families, drug addiction, illness, illiteracy, poor health, and more poverty.

In Igboland, one easily observes the gap between the rich and the poor. Those who are rich live in affluence, while the poor wallow in abject poverty. The socio-economic gap or situation of these two classes widens everyday. Obviously, while the rich remain in their comfort zone with a disposition of insensitivity and indifference to the poor, the poor, on the other hand, resort to all kinds of crimes or nefarious activities in order to meet up with life's demands and challenges. This shows clearly that poverty is a problem. According to Kelly (2000), Block and Heineke (1975) and Becker (1968), there is a direct correlation between poverty and criminality. All over the world, disparities

between the rich and poor, even in the wealthiest of nations is rising sharply. Fewer people are becoming increasingly successful and wealthy while a disproportionately larger population is also becoming even poorer. Poverty is the primary cause of malnutrition which is a major health problem especially in developing countries, killing thousands of people all over the world on daily basis. The number of people dying for lacking food has been increased rapidly. According to the United Nations (2008), about 25,000 people die every day of hunger or hunger-related causes.

This research, therefore, is a hermeneutical appraisal of Luke 16:19-31 in the context of the luxury of the rich and the plight of the poor, with an application to the contemporary Igbo society

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The parable of the Rich man and Lazarus highlights the dichotomy or the wide gap that exists between the rich and the poor; a chasm created by man's greed, injustice, insensitivity and insatiability. Strengthening this point of view, Malina & Rohrbaugh (2003) remarked that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is a story about the great class disparity in first-century Palestine, about the divide between the urban élite, who controlled all the wealth, power and privilege, and the exploited rural peasantry, who lived in the narrow margin between famine and subsistence.

Hultgren (2008) observed that in spite of technological progress, poverty and the division between the “haves” and “have nots” continue to exist in the world. He asked rhetorically: “Why there is such a large number who need food aid in a world that has sufficient resources” (p.116).

The text of Luke 16:19-31, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, highlights the problem of the rich-poor dichotomy in the society. The worrisome situation that is at the background of the text of Luke 16:19-31, is the problem of poverty in the midst of abundance, and the problem of wealth that ignores poverty and suffering. Another problem that is at the source of the text of Luke 16:19-31 is the horrible inequities that exist between human beings, individually and corporately. The portrait or scenario painted in Luke 16:19-31 is the problem of the rich-poor dichotomy or the economic disparity or the wide gap that exists between the rich and the poor in the society. Actually, this is a vivid description of contemporary Nigerian existential situation, particularly in Igboland. In Nigeria, poverty remains widespread and it is a reality that depicts a lack of food, clothes, education and other basic amenities.

Human persons live amidst an abundance of wealth and resources. There is plenty of food in the world, yet people continue to die of hunger and starvation every day. There is plenty of money in the world, yet people beg in the streets. As a matter of fact, it is inconceivable that abundance or plenitude and poverty can co-exist in close proximity. It is inconceivable to see so many people wallowing in poverty in a country in which there is an abundance of wealth. It is also noted that Nigeria is one of the poor oil rich

countries in the world. Regrettably, Nigeria, which was once one of the fifty richest countries in the world and which has no business being poor, is now one of the twenty five poorest countries globally. What a pity! Ironically, Nigeria's huge wealth, human and mineral resources, is a contradiction of the poverty level. Nigeria is a nation of such incredible wealth but terrorized by poverty, hunger and starvation. There is suffering in the midst of plenty or abundance. Kukak in Kwazu (2012) describing the poverty situation in Nigeria opines:

Nigeria is an enigma wrapped in a puzzle. It is a nation of such incredible wealth, yet it wears poverty like a breastplate; a nation so populated by farmers and farmland, yet hunger stalks the land and the nation cannot feed itself, a nation with so many petrol stations, yet, no fuel,... a nation with so much riches, but no wealth,... a nation with so many office holders, but no leaders, a nation struggling to develop, but not growing” (pp.75-76).

Increasingly, our contemporary Igbo society is divided into the haves and the have-nots. In Igboland, we have different classes or categories of the poor: widows, orphans, the homeless poor, the sick, the abandoned, the unemployed, beggars, the hungry, the oppressed, street children, the most vulnerable people, and generally the people who have no access to social needs. The obvious implication of this wide gap

between the poor and the rich is the high rise of criminality in Igboland. There are now cases of kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, prostitution, Cyber crime, etc.

The most worrisome situation is the fact that the dichotomy or the gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening on daily basis. The dichotomy has become an issue of concern because while the richer are getting richer everyday living in affluence or opulence, the poor are getting poorer everyday living in abject poverty. Another source of worry is the glaring fact that the rich have consciously or unconsciously chosen to be indifferent and insensitive to the plight of the poor. The logic of sharing or wealth redistribution is quite foreign to their mentality.

How can the present poverty situation in Nigeria, particularly in Igbo Society be addressed or remedied? What will be the way forward? Why such prevailing situation in a country that is richly blessed with abundant human and natural resources? How can the gap between the rich and the poor in Igboland be closed or narrowed? How can the text of Scripture be an example? That is, what happened to the *Dives* can happen again. This is the vision and mission of this study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Generally speaking, the overall purpose of this study is to investigate the concise background and hermeneutical appraisal of Luke 16:19-31 in the context of Rich-Poor dichotomy in Igboland. Specific objectives of the research are to:

- a. Investigate and examine the socio-political and economic situations that have contributed immensely to rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland.
- b. Examine critically the luxury of the rich and the plight of the poor in Nigeria with particular reference to Igboland.
- c. Investigate the current effects of the socio-political and economic situations that have contributed immensely to poverty in Igboland.
- d. Identify the causes of the gap between the rich and the poor, and other causes of poverty in Igboland.
- e. Probe the effects of poverty in Nigeria, particularly in Igbo society.
- f. Proffer solutions with a view to closing the chasm between the rich and the poor in Igboland.
- g. Suggest and recommend strategies that could help in poverty alleviation in Igbo Society using Luke 16: 19-31.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is important or significant in many ways. The research is not only an attempt to build on other studies in this regard but will fill what the researcher considers to be a gap or void in the study of the text of Luke 16:19-31 which is an application to Igbo Society.

The work is significant as it will make contribution to knowledge or scholarship as Students of New Testament studies and other researchers will surely use it as a source material.

The study is also expected to be of benefit to a number of groups especially:

The government: as it will create more awareness on the plight of the poor and the scandalous luxury of the rich in the society with a view to moving the government to actions to alleviate poverty.

The Church: as it will make the Church in Nigeria, especially in Igboland, to be more prophetic in denouncing oppression of the poor, criticizing unjust structures that keep people perpetually poor, and thereby making an option for the poor.

The rich: This work will create more awareness and move the rich to action on the plight of the poor, and make them more concerned, caring, loving, and charitable to the poor,

The Poor: This research will be a voice of the voiceless, thereby bringing good news to the poor.

The society at large: When all the above is achieved, the society becomes transformed. There will also be an improved and qualitative living condition for all and sundry.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research basically focuses on the hermeneutical appraisal of Luke 16:19-31 in the context of the rich- poor dichotomy in Igboland. This study is limited only to Luke

16:19-31, applying it to contemporary Igbo Society. Igboland or Igbo society is a geographical and ethnic region occupied by the Igbo of South East of Nigeria. Even though, it should be noted that the Igbo are as well found in some parts of Delta and Rivers States. The Igboland that the research is limited to are Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Ebonyi States of South Eastern Nigeria.

1.6 Methodology

Methodology which is described as the general research strategy is the process used to collect information and data. According to online Business Dictionary (2017), methodology is a system of broad principles or rules from which specific methods or procedures may be derived to interpret or solve different problems within the scope of a particular discipline. Methodology, in other words, is a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline. Online Wikipedia (2017) defines methodology as the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. These methods, described in the methodology, define the means or modes of data collection or, sometimes, how a specific result is to be calculated.

In sourcing materials or data on the subject matter, the researcher used both the primary and secondary sources to obtain information for this study. The primary sources are drawn from personal observation and unstructured questionnaire. The secondary sources include books, magazines, journals, dictionaries, commentaries, articles, newspapers, internet, library sources, and other relevant materials. These sources refer to

reports of a second hand or third hand authors. Unlike primary sources which are usually original and very reliable, secondary sources are mostly characterized by distortions and/or omissions. The research rests on the pericope of the New Testament text of Luke 16:19-31. Firstly, the passage was placed in context. Secondly, an exegesis of the text to determine its contextual, linguistic and cultural meaning so as to understand the overall hermeneutics of the passage was done. Thirdly, the contemporary understanding of the text was investigated. The research work adopted historical, hermeneutical, and descriptive design or approach in the hermeneutical appraisal of Luke 16:19-31 in the context of the rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland. No hypothesis was tested or used.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Hermeneutics: The word hermeneutics is of Greek origin, from ἐρμηνεύω (*hermeneuō*), “to interpret, to explain or translate.” This term, *hermēneuō* (“to interpret”), is used to denote (a) the study and statement of the principles on which a text—for present purposes, the biblical text—is to be understood, or (b) the interpretation of the text in such a way that its message comes home to the reader or hearer. Biblical hermeneutics has traditionally been understood as the study of right principles for understanding the biblical text. Hermeneutics, simply defined, is the science of interpretation.

Luxury: a condition or situation of great comfort, pleasure, ease, and wealth. It is an indulgence in something that provides excess pleasure, satisfaction, or ease.

Luxury is synonymous with opulence, lavishness, sumptuousness, costliness, grandeur, etc.

Plight: A very bad situation that one finds himself or herself in, and is hard to get out of. Simply put, plight is an unpleasant or unfavorable situation from which extrication is difficult. Plight means predicament.

Appraisal: An official evaluation, assessment or estimation of the value, worth or quality of a person or thing. It is the act of judging or estimating the nature or value of someone or something.

Context: The word context, etymologically, comes from from Latin root *contextus* meaning, “to weave together.” *Contextus* is a combination of two Latin words:*con-* ‘together’ and *texere* ‘to weave, to make.’ Context means the background, climate, milieu, environment, framework, setting or situation that surrounds, determines and clarifies the meaning of an event or other occurrence. Simply, context means the situation within which something exists or happens, and that can help explain it.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review has been defined as a written overview of major writings and other sources on a selected area of research which serves as an avenue to study and objectively criticize other researches with the major aim or the purpose of improving on such work. It is a basis for research in every academic field or discipline. Literature review identifies areas of prior scholarship and new ways to interpret, and shed light on any gaps in previous research. It points the way forward for further research. Literature review has four main objectives: (a) it surveys the literature in a chosen area of study, (b) it synthesizes the information in that literature into a summary, (c) it presents the literature in an organized way, and (d) it critically analyses the information gathered by identifying gaps in current knowledge, shows limitations of theories and points of view, reviews areas of controversy, and formulates areas for further research.

In this chapter, the review of some works relevant to the study was carried out. The literature review is thus organized under the following sub-headings:

- i.** The Conceptual Framework
- ii.** The Theoretical Framework
- iii.** Empirical Studies
- iv.** Summary of Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework

In this section, the following concepts were reviewed in relation to the topic, “Hermeneutical appraisal of Luke 16:19-31 in the context of the rich- poor dichotomy in Igboland.” They are as follows:

2.1.1 The Concept of Poor/Poverty

The word poor which etymologically comes from the Greek word *πτωχός, ἡ, ὄν* (*ptóchos*), Latin *pauper*, French *pauvre*, and Hebrew transliteration *anawim, 'ebhyon, dal, `ani, rush*, meaning “economically poor,” “desirous,” “needy,” “oppressed, wretchedness”, weakness, having little money or few possessions, not having enough money for the basic things that people need to live properly, lacking material possessions, meager or less than adequate, lacking money or resources, dispossessed, etc. The word poor is synonymous with beggarly, broke, beggared, famished, pauperized, impecunious, indigent, destitute, impoverished, etc.

The poor as described by O’ Brien (1992) are “those who are oppressed, crushed, and voiceless, those forced onto the very margins of subsistence” (p.8). Umeh (2004) who sees the poor as persons who live from hand to mouth defines them as:

The victims of a corrupt society; they belong to the class of the proletariat struggling for the most basic human rights, the

exploited and plundered social class. Unemployment is the lot of the poor, and even those of them employed are underpaid. They are used as machines by their employers and they are not considered as human beings...They are alienated from their work... Their work is just like what Karl Marx referred to as “forced labour”...The poor are forced labourers, who are condemned to work long hours, but with monthly salaries that are too small to maintain a house pet for a week. The poor go hungry; they live without running water or medical care. The poor live in slums. The poor include also those who have no political power, those regarded as non-entity in the political dispensation of their country. They include those discriminated against because of their sex, religion, colour, race and sexual inclinations. Included among the poor are those spiritually and mentally brainwashed, culturally exploited and discarded. (pp.33-34).

Amaka (2007) contends that there is no conceptual clarity as to the definition of who is poor and the meaning of poverty. Nevertheless, she defines a poor person as:

One who is in need or in want and has less than is necessary for survival and development. Such a person lives a substandard life, often miserable and hapless owing to

uncertainties about procuring basic needs for survival or existence on this planet earth. On the other hand “poverty” could be defined as a “state of lacking adequate food or money” and living from “hand- to- mouth existence.” A state of poverty is characterized by food insecurity, lack of portable water, inadequate access to modern health facilities, inadequate access to education, feeder roads etc. Therefore a state of being poor is state of powerlessness, insecurity and uncertainties. The poor is the marginalized-living at the margin of subsistence on less than one USD (\$1) a day (“Who is Poor and Meaning of Poverty”? para. 2).

According to Obadan as cited in Aluko (2003), “the poor are those who are unable to obtain an adequate income, find a stable job, own property or maintain healthy living conditions” (p.256). Olayemi (1995) describes the poor as those who have no access to the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and decent shelter, and are unable to meet social, economic, and political obligations. World Bank (1996) reveals that the poor earn below the international measurement of one US Dollar per day, which affects their purchasing power to acquire their basic needs.

From the foregoing, it is clear that to be poor means to be in a condition where one’s basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter are not being met. Buttressing this fact, Boff et al (1989) describe the poor as those who suffer from basic economic need, who

are deprived of the material goods necessary to live with any dignity (p.22). As a matter of fact, the concept “Poor” is an adjective related to a state of poverty, low quality, etc. According to World Summit for Social Development (1995), “over one billion people in the world today live under unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries, and particularly in rural areas of low-income Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the least developed countries (“Eradication of Poverty”, para,1). Poverty is a complex, multidimensional, and multifaceted concept which includes economic, political, and social phenomenon, and thus measuring it presents a number of challenges According to Townsend (2006), people can be said to be in poverty “when they are deprived of income and other resources needed to obtain the conditions of life—the diets, material goods, amenities, standards and services— that enable them to play the roles, meet the obligations and participate in the relationships and customs of their society” (p.5).

The World Bank (2008) states that a common method used to measure poverty is based on incomes or consumption levels. That means, a person is considered poor if his or her consumption or income level falls below certain minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the "poverty line.”

The World Bank’s Development Report (2000/2001) maintains that poverty remains a global problem, with 1.2 billion people in the world living on less than \$1 a day, and 2.8 billion living on less than \$2 a day. Poverty, as addressed in the WDR (2000/2001), has four dimensions. These dimensions are: 1) income, 2) health and

education, 3) vulnerability, and 4) powerlessness of those without a voice. According to World Bank Report, poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. Obviously, the indices include lack of access to resources, lack of education and skills, poor health, malnutrition, lack of political freedom and voice, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, political discrimination and marginalization. According to this report, poverty is also evident in poor people's lack of political power and voice and in their vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, personal violence and natural disasters. This report offers a more detailed definition of poverty adaptable to different country conditions. Exhibiting both absolute and relative elements, this constitutes a very broad definition which includes the multi-dimensional character of poverty and the somewhat elusive concept of dignity while emphasizing, more than any of the other definitions discussed, the importance of political and individual freedoms. This report describing poverty from the perspective of deprivation submits:

Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being and comprises many dimensions. To be poor is to be hungry, to lack shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled. Poor people are particularly vulnerable to adverse events outside their control. They are often treated badly by the institutions of state and society and excluded from voice and power in those institutions. Poverty

also encompasses not only material deprivation (measured by an appropriate concept of income or consumption) but also low achievements in education and health, low levels of education and health, vulnerability and exposure to risk—and voicelessness and powerlessness. (p.15).

From the above submission of World Development Report (2000), poverty is pronounced deprivation in well being. But what does wellbeing mean? How do we define it? What are the elements necessary to ensure a decent level of wellbeing? These are not easy questions to answer. Kakwani (2006) explains that from socioeconomic perspective, wellbeing can be defined in terms of basic needs, economic growth, quality of life and welfare. He observes that in any society, some people obviously enjoy higher levels of wellbeing than others. Kakwani views poverty here as the lowest level of wellbeing, which is experienced by those people in society who are so deprived that they are unable to function with dignity. The wellbeing or standard of living is not about the possession of commodities, but it is about living. Wellbeing is about capabilities and achievements.

Kakwani (2006) argues that poverty should be viewed as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as low level of income. Poverty encompasses not only material deprivation (measured by income or consumption) but also many other forms of deprivations in different aspects of life such as unemployment, ill health, lack of education, vulnerability, powerlessness, social exclusion and so on. Her view on poverty contains three quite distinct lines of thought:

(1) Poverty is defined by a poverty line, i.e., the minimum income needed to be able to satisfy minimum basic needs. But income is not the only kind of deprivation people may suffer. Although income deprivation may give rise to several other kinds of deprivations, people may suffer acute deprivation in many aspects of life even if they possess adequate command over commodities. It is the low level of wellbeing which is important rather than low level of income.

(2) Thus, poverty should be viewed as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as low level of income. Poverty encompasses not only material deprivation (measured by income or consumption) but also many other forms of deprivations in different aspects of life such as unemployment, ill health, lack of education, vulnerability, powerlessness, social exclusion and so on. (3) Poverty is present when basic capability failure arises because a person has inadequate command over resources, whether through market or non-market sources. (21).

Kakwani (2006) observes that under the capability deprivation approach, an individual may be defined as poor if he or she lacks basic capabilities. She asks, what are these basic capabilities? How do we identify them? He avers:

This is an issue of value judgment. It depends on how a society prioritizes different capabilities. These priorities may also depend on a country's economic resources. There is no clear-cut formula for determining basic capabilities. Can we describe poverty purely in terms of capability deprivation? Suppose that a millionaire, who has all the economic means to buy anything, has a disease or disability which prevents him from achieving some basic functionings. He or she is surely suffering from a serious capability deprivation in spite of having all the best medical facilities at his or her disposal. Yet, it would be odd to call this millionaire "poor." (p.21).

Corroborating Word Bank Report, Amuguo (2003) submits: "Poverty is the deprivation of elements necessary for human survival. These elements include clean water, food, shelter, health, and self-dignity. The deprivation of self-dignity is simply the denial of individual liberty, natural rights, and political liberty, civil liberty and property rights" (p.1). One is in poverty when he/she lacks the command over basic necessities or basic consumption needs. Okoh (1997) defines poverty as a state of deprivation, in terms of both economic and social indicators, such as income, education, health care, access to food, social status, self-esteem and self-actualization. For Chambers in Aluko (2003), poverty is "the lack of physical necessities, assets and income. It includes, but is more than incomes. Invariably, poverty has both income and non-income dimensions" (p.256).

Substantiating the above view, Meier as cited in Aderonmu and Yakubu (2010), conceived poverty in terms of: Moneylessness and Powerlessness. They contend Moneylessness to be both as an insufficiency of cash and chronic inadequacy of resources of all types to satisfy basic human needs such as nutrition, rest, warmth and body care, while Powerlessness means one's lack of opportunities and choices open to them and whose lives seem to be governed by forces and persons outside their control (i.e. people in positions of authority, or by perceived 'evil forces or 'hard luck').

On the list of the poor, Arinze (1972) adds: "widows, the deserted child, the sick, the suffering and the weak, the unknown students from the rural area who want scholarship for studies, the obscure farmer who runs to the police office for defence against those who encroach on his/her land, the small man who has nobody to speak for him (p.7). Kwazu (2012), commenting on the view of Arinze observed that his view is typically the experience of so many people in developing countries, and that this view is not a comprehensive one. Supplying what is missing in the above view he avers: "The poor are to be understood therefore as members of one social class whose standard of living falls below human expectation and lag behind in most social strata – educationally, socially, and politically. Due to this social lack, they are sometimes treated *as personae non gratae* in their society (p.39).

The elements of lack of participation and exclusion are thus again emphasized, while the possibility that the status of being poor leads to or results from "discrimination" is also put in the forefront.

A definition of poverty which attempts to encompass both the developing and developed country contexts was published in the *Copenhagen Declaration* of the United Nations in 1995. The UN (1995) at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen adopted two definitions of poverty. Absolute poverty which is also called extreme poverty, destitution or penury was defined as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services. According to the standard set by the International Community, "extreme poverty" widely refers to earning below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day, set by the World Bank. In other words, absolute poverty is the total absence of the most basic needs (food, health care, shelter). Overall poverty as quoted in Gordon (2005) was defined as:

Lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of

poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets. (p.3).

It is observed from the above definition that the elements of lack of participation and exclusion are thus emphasized, while the possibility that the status of being poor leads to or results from "discrimination" is also put in the forefront.

One of the broadest contemporary views of poverty is that of the European Commission (2004) which asserts that people are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through low income, poor housing, unemployment, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation.

Commonly, poverty is defined in either relative or absolute terms. Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The concept of absolute poverty is not concerned with broader quality of life issues or with the overall level of inequality in society. The concept therefore fails to recognize that individuals have important social

and cultural needs. This, and similar criticisms, led to the development of the concept of relative poverty. Relative poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society: people are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context. Brown (2014) contends that relative poverty is viewed in relation to the income or consumption of others in the same region. For example, a girl who attends a school where all the other teenagers own smart phones when her parents cannot afford to buy her a cell phone would be experiencing relative poverty; she is poor in relation to those around her. Affirming this point of view, Nobbs (1984) maintains that relative poverty could be seen as the relative deprivation which people suffer from when or because they are unable to enjoy things, which the majority of the people in that particular society enjoy. Relative poverty occurs when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standards as determined by a government that vary from country to country, sometimes within the same country. An important criticism of both concepts is that they are largely concerned with income and consumption. This type of narrow understanding or definition of poverty has led to the emergence of the concept of social exclusion. This new understanding of poverty has contributed significantly towards including multi-faceted indicators of ill-being into the conceptual understanding of poverty.

Chambers (2006) asserts that poverty has five clusters of meanings. The first is income-poverty or what he calls consumption-poverty. The second cluster of meanings is material lack or want. This includes lack of or little wealth and lack or low quality of

other assets such as shelter, clothing, furniture, personal means of transport, radios or television, and so on. This also tends to include no or poor access to services. A third cluster of meanings is what he calls capability deprivation, referring to what we can or cannot do, can or cannot be. This includes but goes beyond material lack or want to include human capabilities, for example skills and physical abilities, and also self-respect in society. The fourth cluster of meanings views poverty from the point of view deprivation with material lack or want.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (1999) views poverty as a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem; and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, portable water, and sanitation; and consequently, has limited chance of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his or her capabilities.

Gutierrez as cited in Dear (2011) makes distinctions between material or real poverty, voluntary poverty and spiritual poverty. Real poverty means privation, or the lack of goods necessary to meet basic human needs. It means inadequate access to education, health care, public services, living wages, and discrimination because of culture, race or gender. Gutierrez reiterates that such poverty is evil; it is a subhuman condition in which the majority of humanity lives today, and it poses a major challenge to every Christian conscience and therefore to spirituality and theological reflection. Spiritual poverty is about a radical openness to the will of God, a radical faith in a

providential God, and a radical trust in a loving God. It is also known as spiritual childhood, from which flows the renunciation of material goods. Relinquishing possessions comes from a desire to be more possessed by God alone and to love and serve God more completely. Voluntary poverty is a conscious protest against injustice by choosing to live together with those who are materially poor. Its inspiration comes from the life of Jesus who entered into solidarity with the human condition in order to help human beings overcome the sin that enslaves and impoverishes them. Voluntary poverty affirms that Christ came to live as a poor person not because poverty itself has any intrinsic value but to criticize and challenge those people and systems that oppress the poor and compromise their God-given dignity. It involves more than detachment, because the point is not to love poverty but to love the poor.

The United Nations' (1998) classical, fundamental and all-embracing definition of poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and cloth a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. Again, The National Policy on Poverty Eradication (2000) defines poverty as a condition of not having enough to eat, poor drinking water, poor nutrition, unfit housing, a high rate of infant mortality, a

low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, inadequate health care, lack of productive assets, lack of economic infrastructures and inability to actively participate in decision making process.

From the above submissions, one easily discovers that defining poor and poverty is not easy. Over the past two decades, there is a growing consensus that poverty can no longer refer to material deprivation only, since it is a multifaceted and multidimensional experience. Today it is widely held that one cannot consider only the economic part of poverty. Poverty is also social, political and cultural. Moreover, it is considered to undermine human rights - economic (the right to work and have an adequate income), social (access to health care and education), political (freedom of thought, expression and association) and cultural (the right to maintain one's cultural identity and be involved in a community's cultural life). Different definitions of poverty adopted over time reflect a shift in thinking from monetary aspects to wider issues such as political participation and social exclusion. Meanwhile, the World Bank uses not only monetary measures of poverty but also context- specific measures applicable to different countries' conditions. The European Commission links material resources and outcomes to social exclusion. The United Nations extends the concept of poverty to include lack of political participation and discrimination.

Since poverty is a multi-dimensional concept which is complex in its origin as well as in its manifestations, there is no universal or generally acceptable definition. But the basic or fundamental truth from the views of these scholars depict poverty as a

situation whereby an individual or a group or community lack the capacity to meet their basic material needs like food, potable water, clothing, shelter, basic healthcare, education, rest, warmth, and other basic services and necessities. The researcher agrees with Onah (2006) who contends that poverty is not only the inability of individuals to afford the above basic needs of life, but reduces the strength and prestige of such individuals to participate in any given activity in the society. Sen as cited in Bloom and Canning (2003) has characterized poverty as a “capability deprivation”, where a person lacks the “subsistence freedoms” he/she needs to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value.

2.1.1.1 The Poor in the Old Testament

The Old Testament texts prefer to speak much on the poor than poverty. According to the Old Testament thought, poverty denotes two important ideas: (a) a lack of economic resources and material goods; and (b) political and legal powerlessness and oppression. The Hebrew transliteration for the poor is the *anawim*, the little ones, originally those overwhelmed by want. In the Old Testament, this group was primarily widows, orphans, strangers as well as refugees, migrants, and immigrants. They are poor and powerless. Their poverty was often the result of unjust oppression. In the Old Testament, the term “the poor,” as Dorr (1992) observed refers to:

Those group of people who are economically deprived, who have no social status, who are treated unjustly by foreign rulers or by the authorities in their own land. These people are

oppressed because they are poor and therefore are at the mercy of the unscrupulous. Furthermore, they are poor because they are oppressed: they have been further impoverished by being cheated and deprived of their rights. Some group of the “poor” are doubly oppressed. They are the people who are at risk not only because they are economically poor, but also because they happen to be widows, orphans, or resident aliens – categories of people who have nobody to defend them against exploitation. (pp.11-12).

2.1.1.2 The Poor in the New Testament

The concept poverty occurs 3 times in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 8:2, 9 Revelation 2:9) and is the translation of *ptocheia* (*ptocheia*,) "to be reduced to a state of beggary or pauperism."The concept poor is used in two senses in the New Testament: the economically poor and the poor in spirit. The economically poor are the destitute, the cripple, the blind, the lame, beggars, and generally those without resources. Poor in spirit is the personal acknowledgment of our spiritual bankruptcy before God. Neyrey (2016) observed that the Greek language has two terms for poor in the New Testament: *penes* (*penes*) and *ptochos* (*ptochos*). *Penes* refers to a person who does manual labor, and so is contrasted with *plousios* (*plousios*), one who does not work. A *ptochos*, however, refers to a person reduced to begging, that is, someone who is destitute of all resources,

especially farm and family. One gives alms to a *ptochos*. A *penes*, who has little wealth yet has “sufficiency,” is not called “poor” in the same sense of the term.

2.1.1.3 Poor/Poverty in the Lens of the Igbo people

The concept poor from Igbo context is *Ogbenye*, which is a composite of two words: *Ogbe*, which means whole or entire, that is, community, and *nye*, meaning to give or to render. From this Igbo etymological point of view, Achunonu (2012) defines the poor as those who are unable to support themselves and thus were supported by the whole community members. This was a popular and accepted practice amongst the *Igbo* people. The poor, therefore, are taken care of by the community in *Igboland*. The traditional *Igbo* man holds that life is not lived alone, rather with others who are one’s fellow pilgrims (pp.32-33). Igbo culture supports an organized welfare system. According to Moghalu (2015), The Igbo has a tradition or practice of setting aside a certain percentage of their yearly income for supporting the poor and the needy. This practice is called *Ibu Iru*, a form of tithing, which helps to keep destitution in check. Corroborating this view, Uchendu (1965) opined, “Community spirit is very strong among the Igbo” (p.34). Again, according to Achunonu (2012):

The communal spirit and solidarity amongst the people in society ensured that none went hungry. Those who were unable to work due to poor health or with generally reduced energy levels and had no person to care for them were taken

care of by the community...The Igbo strongly believe in solidarity with one another in helping each other, sharing problems, in enjoyment of pleasure, and in moments of sorrows. It is a crime to see somebody in serious trouble and not to help the person in the real traditional Igbo culture (27-29).

2.1.1.4 Catholic Social Teaching (The Magisterium) on the Poor/ Poverty

The Catholic Church teaches or proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching. The Catholic Social teaching affirms that all persons, even those on the margins of society, have basic human rights: the right to life and to those things that are necessary to the proper development of life, including faith and family, work and education, housing and health care.

According to Pope Leo XIII in his *Rerum Novarum: Condition of Labor* (1891): “It’s the Church's desire that the poor should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and should better their condition in life; and for this it strives (no.23) . Going further on the dignity of the poor, he submitted that: “when there is a question of protecting the rights of individuals, the poor and helpless have a claim to special consideration. The rich population has many ways of protecting themselves, and stands less in need of help (no.29).

Vatican 11 Document, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World" - *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) showed genuine concern for the poor in the following words:

Faced with a world today where so many people are suffering from want, the council asks individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: "Feed the people dying of hunger, because if you do not feed them you are killing them," and it urges them according to their ability to share and dispose of their goods to help others, above all by giving them aid which will enable them to help and develop themselves (no.69).

At its core, the document asserts the fundamental dignity of each human being, and declares the Church's solidarity with both those who suffer, and those who would comfort the suffering: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ (no. 1).

Paul VI in his *Populorum Progressio*: "On the development of Peoples"(1967) opined:

If someone who has the riches of this world sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17) It is well known how strong

were the words used by the Fathers of the Church to describe the proper attitude of persons who possess anything towards persons in need. To quote Saint Ambrose: “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich. (no.23).

By way of proffering solution, Paul VI said that the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations. Pope John Paul II in his *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) taught that:

A consistent theme of Catholic social teaching is the option or love of preference for the poor. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense numbers of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and those without hope (no.42).

Pope John Paul II (1998) in his Lenten Letter taught as well:

The Church continually combats all forms of poverty, because as Mother, she is concerned that each and every person be able to live fully in dignity as a child of God. He exhorts every Christian, in this Lenten season, to evidence his personal conversion through a concrete sign of love towards

those in need, recognizing in this person the face of Christ and repeating, as if almost face to face: “I was poor, I was marginalized and you welcomed me (no.38).

Pope Benedict XVI, from his own point of view in his *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), expressed concern for the poor in these words:

Feed the hungry’ (cf. Mt 25: 35, 37, 42) is an ethical imperative for the universal Church as she responds to the teachings of her Founder, the Lord Jesus, concerning solidarity and the sharing of goods. Moreover, the elimination of world hunger has also, in the global era, become a requirement for safeguarding the peace and stability of the planet (no.27).

Pope Francis (2013) maintains that:

The times talk to us of so much poverty in the world and this is a scandal. Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an

education, so many poor persons. Poverty today is a cry
(Words of Pope Francis on Poverty, para. 1).

Again, Pope Francis (2013) in his “Address to the Food and Agricultural Organization,” goes beyond expressing genuine concern to proffering practical and concrete solution to the plight of the poor thus:

A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being (Words of Pope Francis on Poverty, para. 3).

The teaching of the catholic Bishops of England and Wales (1996) is very thoughtful, inspiring and revealing. They maintained that people who are poor and vulnerable have a special place in Catholic teaching. According to them, this is what is meant by the preferential option for the poor.

According to “The Ten Themes of Catholic Social Teaching” (2016), the teaching of the Magisterium on the poor and poverty can be summarized thus:

- (1) The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.
- (2) The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation.
- (3) The "option for the poor," is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of

the poor wounds the whole community. The option for the poor is an essential part of society's effort to achieve the common good.

- (4) A healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special attention to those with special needs, to those who are poor and on the margins of society.

2.1.2 The Concept of Rich

There is much more research about the poor than the rich. Nevertheless, the term rich comes from the Greek word *πλούσιος* (*plouísios*), meaning abundance, abounding in natural or material resources, owning a lot of money, property, or valuable possessions, etc. The concept rich, in other words, means to have possession of abundant resources, material goods, property or assets, money in abundance, and significant wealth. Rich implies having more than enough to gratify normal needs or desires. The concept rich is synonymous with affluence, flush, moneyed, wealthy, opulent, costly, expensively elegant, and has got to do with persons having wealth or abundant means at their command.

Corley (2014) defined the rich to mean those people who passed a two-part test: (2). Annual Gross income of \$160,000 or more and, (1). Net liquid assets of \$3,200,000 or more. He goes further to mention some twelve variables that definitively make one a rich person, if one meets all of these 12 tests. They are as follows:

1. You no longer have to work to fund your lifestyle. If you work it is because you want to work, not because you need to work.
2. The unearned income you generate exceeds your living expenses.
3. You can afford to take the number of vacations you want to take during the year, irrespective of what that number is.
4. You can afford any and all healthcare or medical costs that may arise for you, your spouse, or any family members, including the cost of long-term care inside or outside your home.
5. You can afford to purchase new cars for you and your family without relying on bank loans.
6. Even if you got divorced, it would not require that you or your family alter your lifestyle.
7. If you wanted to, you could afford to pay college costs for all of your children or grandchildren without it affecting your lifestyle.
8. You own your home and/or your vacation home outright. You have no mortgages for either.
9. You can afford to meet large, unforeseen expenses, without it affecting your lifestyle.
10. You have no financial constraints on your activities. You can do what you please, when you please, without considering the cost.
11. You have zero debt.

12. You no longer require life insurance, health insurance, or long-term care insurance.

The above indicators show that the rich live in luxury, affluence, opulence, and in abundance. They are simply abounding in wealth. The rich appear costly and expensive.

The concept “rich” and “wealthy” are used interchangeably. The terms, wealthy and rich are both synonymous in terms of money. Both mean having a great deal of money and assets; it means being affluent, prosperous, and well-off.

2.1.3 The Concept of Dichotomy

The term dichotomy is from the Greek word *διχοτομία* (*dichotomía*), from the verb *dichotemnein* (*dichotemnein*), meaning, "dividing in two," or "to split in two." It is a combination of two Greek words, *δίχα* (*dícha*) "in two, asunder" and *temnein* (*temnein*) "to cut," "a cutting, incision." Dichotomy is the division into two usually contradictory parts or opinions; a separation or division into two. It means the division of a class into two disjoint subclasses opposed to each other by contradiction, as the division of the term man into white and not white. A dichotomy is a contrast between two things, especially two opposed ideas, like war and peace, or love and hate. Dichotomy is synonymous with contrast, opposition, irreconcilable difference, gulf, contradiction, separation, clash, division, split, etc.

Goodword (2016) elucidates further, to split something in two is to dichotomize it. Dichotomy is a division or classification into two categories. Anytime you want to distinguish two and only two classes, you are dealing with a dichotomy. According to Slick (2016), a dichotomy is the presentation or a division into two parts. A good example is the division of reality and ideal, theory and practical, the body and soul. It is worthy of note that different disciplines have different conceptual understanding of dichotomy. In the anthropological field of theology and in philosophy, dichotomy is the belief that humans consist of a soul and a body. This stands in contrast to trichotomy.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework has been defined as a group of related ideas that provide guidance, direction or bearing to a research work. According to Jaffee (1998):

Theories provide a framework for making sense of the world. Most things we observe, experience, and study are extremely complex and are caused by a variety of factors. Each and every factor responsible for some event or process cannot be taken into account. We therefore, often unconsciously, rely on a theoretical framework that directs our attention to a very small part of the larger reality. In this way, theories serve to simplify complex processes by offering a set of concepts that allows us to select, categorize, and label various forms of

action and change, and to make inferences about cause and effect (p.2).

Under this theoretical framework, the following theories were reviewed in relation to the topic: Social Class Theory and Theory of Social Stratification.

2.2.1 Structural - Functionalism Theory

This theory states that society in general will always move towards social stability and solidarity, with a wide range of smaller social functions making up the greater whole. The main principle of structural-functionalism are: (a) Societies are complex systems of interrelated and interdependent parts, and each part of a society significantly influences the others, (b) Each part of a society exists because it has a vital function to perform in maintaining the existence or stability of society as a whole; the existence of any part of a society is therefore explained when its function for the whole is identified. In other words, the function of anything, which is assumed to be “beneficial function” explains why a structure exists, (c) The tendency of society is toward stability, harmony, or equilibrium, that is, towards balance, and (d) all social structures contribute to the maintenance of the system. The foundations of structural functionalism were laid by an English philosopher, Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) in the late 19th century, and further developed by American sociologist Robert Merton (1910-2003). David Émile Durkheim (1858 -1917) is a promoter of functionalist theory.

According to structural-functionalists, stratification and inequality are inevitable, necessary, and beneficial to society because it fulfills vital system needs. The layers of society, conceptualized as a pyramid, are the inevitable sorting of unequal people. They ensure that the best people are at the top of the hierarchy and those who are less worthy are at the bottom. Those at the top are given power and rewards because of high abilities, and the high rewards exist to provide incentive for qualified people to do the most important work in high status occupations. Functionalist approach in other words, asserts that global inequality is not a problem at all, but rather benefits society as it produces an incentive structure to motivate highly capable individuals to pursue positions of power. According to this logic, inequality ensures that the most functionally important jobs are filled by the best qualified people. What this point means is that, it makes sense for the C.E.O of a company whose position is more important functionally to make more money than a janitor working for the same company. A job's functional importance is determined by the degree to which the job is unique, meaning whether few other people can perform the same function adequately. Garbage collectors are important to public sanitation, but do not need to be rewarded highly, because little training or talent is required to perform their job. Doctors should be rewarded highly, because great training is required to do their job. For the structural-functionalist, it is logical that society must offer greater rewards for instance, income, vacations, promotion, etc, to motivate the most qualified people to fill the most important positions.

The Davis-Moore hypothesis or theory advanced by Kingsley Davis (1908 – 1997) and Wilbert E. Moore in the article, “Some Principles of Stratification,” which appeared in the *American Sociological Review* published in 1945, and was later extended and refined in Davis’s book *Human Society* (1948), is a central claim within the structural functionalist paradigm, and purports that the unequal distribution of rewards serves a purpose in society. Davis and Moore as cited in Scott (2014) argued:

Unequal social and economic rewards were an ‘unconsciously evolved device’ by which societies ensured that talented individuals were supplied with the motivation to undertake training which would guarantee that important social roles were properly fulfilled. In this way, the most important functions would be performed by the most talented persons, and the greatest rewards go to those positions which required most training and were most important for maintenance of the social system. (p.266).

David and Moore argue further that no society is unstratified, inequality is universal, and that inequality is not only unavoidable, but indeed necessary to the smooth working of society. They ask: Why are some positions in society higher than others? Why do the higher positions carry more status and rewards? The answer they come up

with are: (i) Societies are stratified because inequality fulfills an important need of all social systems. (ii) Society must distribute its members among the various positions in society. (iii) People have to be motivated to fill certain positions and perform their duties. (iv) Filling the positions within a social structure is a basic need of any society. This is accomplished through the unequal distribution of rewards. Davis and Moore contend that in order to function, society must have people working in a variety of professions including physician, teacher, politician, cleaner, and file clerk. Due to the personal ability, extensive training and advanced degrees required for the more specialized positions, people in these professions are rewarded with increased earnings and higher status than those whose positions require less.

Proponents of structural-functionalism point out that the poor play a central role in society and are necessary for several reasons. For example, they argue that we need the poor to do the “dirty” jobs that nobody else wants, particularly given the low wages for working in difficult conditions such as work in many factories and farms. The functionalist perspective views the state of poverty as being helpful in bringing a balance within society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. A structural functionalist would argue that this gap between the rich and the poor is good. More people are becoming qualified for "better" jobs. And these people are being rewarded for their importance in society.

There are several obvious problems with this approach to stratification. According to Scott (2014):

Critics have suggested that the theory is simply an apologia for inequality. Some also maintain that it is tautological (circular), since it proposes that the occupations and other social roles which are most highly rewarded are most important to social stability, and then cites the high levels of reward as evidence of their social importance. What was lacking throughout the lengthy debate, and has yet to be found, is a criterion of 'social importance' that is conceptually independent of the rewards being allocated. (pp.266-267).

Another problem with this view is that it is difficult to determine the functional importance of any job. According to this critique, the engineers in a factory, for example, are just as important as the other workers in the factory who work to ensure the success of a project. In another example, a primary school teacher in the U.S. earns \$30,000 per year, whereas a National Basketball Association player can earn as much as \$25 million per year. Are basketball players more essential to society or more functionally important than teachers? Teachers are equally, if not more, functionally necessary than athletes and movie stars, yet, they receive significantly lower incomes. Thus, Structural-Functionalist approach does not clearly indicate why some positions should worth more than others.

Again, functionalism assumes that the system of social stratification is fair and rational, and that the "best" people end up on top because of their superiority. But in real life, the system does not just work so easily or perfectly like that. For example, some would argue that former U.S. president George W. Bush was not the smartest or most politically talented individual, but he was well connected and born at the top of the stratification system (wealthy American), and therefore was elected to a position with great power—the U.S. presidency. Another problem with this approach is that it assumes that only a few 'chosen' people should have all the power and all the material wealth, rather than distributing it equitably, or distributing it to those who need it most.

2.2.2 Theory of Social Stratification

The Theory of Social Stratification was advanced by Max Weber (1864 - 1920). This theory states that social stratification is a reflection of unequal distribution of power. Weber developed a multidimensional approach to social stratification that reflects the interplay among wealth, prestige and power.

Social stratification has been defined as the division of society into different layers whose members have unequal access to social opportunities and rewards. Social stratification is a society's categorization of people into socio-economic strata, based upon their occupation, income, wealth and social status, or power. The categorization of people by social strata occurs in all societies. According to Parsons (1970), the concept of

social class was first introduced by Plato in his *magnum opus*, *The Republic*. Coby (2001) remarked that Plato divided society into three classes: philosophers, warriors and producers (merchants, craftsmen, etc). This theory according to Gadamer and Smith (1988) was equally supported by Aristotle.

Weber believed that every society is divided into groupings and strata with distinctive life-styles, ideologies, mentalities, attitudes, and views or visions of the world. He equally accepted the fact that every society is divided into distinctive classes. Max Weber, like Karl Marx, begins his analysis of class and social stratification from an economic point of view, arguing that class divisions derive not only from control or lack of control of the means of production, but from economic differences, which have nothing directly to do with property. Max Weber built his approach to social stratification on the analysis developed by Marx, but he modified and elaborated it.

Like Marx, Weber regarded society as characterized by conflicts over power and resources. Weber's theory of social class is based on the view that class divisions and inequalities reflect different life chances in the market and that a person's class position is determined by the job market.

Weber developed a more complex, multidimensional view of society by identifying four different constellations of class:

1. The Upper class, which is the dominant property-owning and commercial class,
2. Petit bourgeoisie (small businessmen and professionals),
3. Middle class (property less white-class workers) and,

4. The manual working class.

Max Weber, a founding father of sociology, formed a three-component theory of stratification in which social difference is determined by class (wealth and income), Prestige or Status, and Power. Class is a person's economic position based on birth and individual achievements. Status is one's social prestige or honour, which may or may not be influenced by class. Power is one's ability to get one's way even in the face of opposition to one's goals. It is the ability to influence Important decision in society. According to Weber, the ability to possess power derives from the individual's ability to control various "social resources". These resources can be anything and everything and might include things like: land, capital, social respect, physical strength, intellectual knowledge, etc.

2.2.3 Social Class Theory

Karl Marx (1818 - 1883), who was one of the first social scientists to focus mainly on social class, advanced The Social Class Theory. Marx's class theory as enshrined in *The Communist Manifesto (1848)* states that:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open

fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes(p. 35).

This view simply put states that ever since human society emerged from its primitive and relatively undifferentiated state, it has remained fundamentally divided between classes who clash in the pursuit of class interests. There are two classes of concern in every society, the ruling and the oppressed class. His main focus on social class was that one's social class dictated one's social life. Basically, Marx meant that if one is in the upper class, life becomes one of leisure and abundance, while those in the lower class lived lives of hardship and poverty. According to Parkin (1979) Marxian class theory asserts that: "an individual's position within a class hierarchy is determined by his or her role in the production process, and that political and ideological consciousness is determined by class position Karl Marx who witnessed Industrial Revolution that transformed Europe observed with dismay that peasants who worked in cities were treated with cruelty and inhumanity as they were subjected to long hours of work with a meager pay. Karl Marx who was shocked by this suffering, subjugation and exploitation began to analyze society and history with a view to effecting a change or transformation. However, Marx famously asserted in the eleventh of his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845) that "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point however is to change it."As a matter of fact, he developed a conflict theory which led him to the

conclusion that the key to human history is class conflict or struggle. He regarded struggle as the law of life and existence.

In each society, as he observed, one group controls the means of production and exploits those who are not in control. Marx opined there was one social element that would determine where one fits in the social class hierarchy: that of who controls the means of production, meaning who owned the resources necessary to produce what people needed to survive. According to Marxist theory, social classes emerged with the development of agriculture and the production of surplus food, a circumstance which allowed one group to become dominant over the rest of society. In a society where every worker owns the means of production, Marx theorized that the state would no longer be necessary and would gradually disappear.

In industrialized or modern societies, the struggle according to Karl Marx is between the bourgeoisie, the small group of capitalists who own the means to produce wealth, and the proletariat, the mass of workers who are exploited by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie are the owners of the means of production: the factories, businesses, and equipment needed to produce wealth. They are the capitalists whose income are based on their exploitation of the proletariat or the workers who create wealth. The proletariat are the workers who earn their livelihood by selling their labour power by being paid a salary or wage for the duration of their labour. In other words, according to Karl Marx, the bourgeoisie play a heroic role by revolutionizing industry and modernizing society. The Bourgeoisie, as well seek to monopolize the benefits of this modernization by

exploiting the propertyless proletariat thereby creating revolutionary tensions. The capitalists also controlled politics; If the workers rebel, the capitalists are able to call on the power of the state to subdue them. When Marx made his observations, capitalism was in its infancy and workers were at the mercy of their employers. Workers had none of what we take for granted today, like, minimum wages, sick leave, the right to social action or strike, social security, workers' union, medical benefits, etc.

Marx was very much uncomfortable with the extreme luxury of the rich (bourgeoisie) and the plight of the poor (proletariat). The bourgeoisie, the capitalists, enjoyed a privileged and powerful position as owners of the means of production and were able to ruthlessly exploit the working class. The land, resources and factories were controlled and owned by the wealthy citizens; thus, the working class had little choice but to work according to the terms dictated by the upper, controlling class. In his *Das Kapital* (1867), Marx opined that the capitalist's profit come from exploiting labor, that is, from underpaying workers for the value that they are actually creating. Marx detested the concept and practice of capitalism; he felt that it only allowed the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer, and as well increases the disparity between the wealthy classes and the labor classes. For Marx, this is the evil of capitalism. The roots of human misery, for Marx, lay in capitalism. According to Johnson (2016), Capitalism is an economic system where the means of production is owned by private individuals. In this system, the economy and the use of resources are controlled by individual business owners and private companies. A capitalist system is also known as free market

enterprise. Consequently, focusing on the plight of the working class, Marx felt it imperative that the class structure of society be changed. Karl Marx saw the ruthless exploitation of the proletariat or the working class as a catalyst for change. Marx couldn't understand why so many people could be wallowing in poverty in a world where there was an abundance of wealth. His answer was simple: capitalism. For him, capitalistic system of the time could and should be destroyed.

The solution that Marx proposed was calling a revolution by the working class. In his work with Fredrick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx stated, 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.' Thus, Marx had called for a workers' revolution where the proletarians would rise up against the bourgeoisie, overthrowing capitalism. Marx condemned capitalism as a system that alienates the masses. Capitalism, according to Marx, is also exploitative, in that, it condemns the proletarians, who own nothing but their labour power, to lives of grinding labour while enabling the capitalists to reap the profits. Essentially, the purpose of capitalism is the accumulation of as much wealth for the owners as possible. The main focus of capitalism is profit. Karl Marx felt that the answer to social inequality was socialism. Marx maintained that the revolution by which socialism would be achieved was ordained by the logic of capitalism itself - competition for profits. And since Capitalism has adopted this world view, it is therefore, sowing the seed of its destruction; hence Marx felt that the prophecy of Capitalism is the prophecy of doom or despair. With this, Marx predicted the fall of capitalism. Hence, he wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*

(1848) , the Bourgeoisie produces its own grave-diggers. The fall of the Bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

However, before the revolution could occur, Marx was of the opinion that the working class first needed to develop what is known as class consciousness. This class consciousness, according to Johnson (2016), is a subjective awareness of common vested interests and the need for collective political action to bring about social change. Simply put, the workers needed to see themselves as one unit and, together, could revolt and change their working conditions. Marx believed that through class consciousness, workers would stand up to their oppressors. Marx contended that armed with this awareness, the end result will be a revolutionary overthrow of the *Bourgeoisie* in which the property of the bourgeoisie is expropriated and class conflict, exploitation, and the state are abolished.

Karl Marx and his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, adopted Hegel's explanation of history as a dialectical process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Hegelian dialectic is usually presented in a threefold manner: a thesis, giving rise to its reaction, an antithesis, which contradicts or negates the thesis, and the tension between the two being resolved by means of a synthesis. The synthesis solves the conflict between the thesis and antithesis by reconciling their common truths and forming a new thesis; thus starting the process over. However, whereas for Hegel, history was the story of spirit's self-realization through human conflict, for Marx it was the story of struggles between classes over material or economic interests and resources. This process as Marx opined must be

grasped dialectically, i.e., as a conflict of opposites. This class struggle, according to Marx, will necessarily lead to "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat," ushering in the advent of a classless society. Pure Communism, which is the end goal of Marxist Socialism, would be the theoretical state of "statelessness" in which an un-governed, classless society lives in perfect order, and all history would have stopped. Communism as defined by Biorseth (2016) is the strictly theoretical system imagined by Karl Marx in which all of society, all of economics and all politics are combined into one, perfect, classless, automatic, government-less system based on common ownership of all economic means of production, and social sameness.

The classless society is thus the final phase of communism where there will be no classes and no class conflicts. The classless society according to Dua (2016) is one in which all the major industries, commercial establishments, banks, transport and communication systems will be collectively owned and their profits collectively shared. An increase in production or wealth or property will never result in an increase in inequality, but will add to the prosperity of all. Medical, educational, commercial, banking, transport, communication and other facilities are made equally available for all. Their main motto will be "service" and not "profit making." All landed property will be in the ownership of the society and cultivation will be carried out on co-operative basis. In the whole economic field there will be no scope for exploitation of any kind.

Marx's theory is still often applied in the field of economics, but has also found application in areas such as housing (as a result of rent gaps), and the use of land. Most

recent sociologists have criticized Marx's theory of class conflict, especially that part of it which asserts the inevitability of working-class revolutions in capitalist societies and the eventual cessation of conflict in a society without classes. The critics, such as Dahrendorf (1959) and Aron (1964), argue that the growing differentiation of functions and the increasing separation between the economic, political, and other spheres in the advanced industrial societies have removed the basis for the coalescence of industrial, political, and ideological conflicts in massive class struggles, and that revolutionary movements have in fact disappeared from these societies. At the same time, they assert that some forms of conflict are unavoidable in any large and complex society and that a society without intergroup conflict, such as Marx envisaged, is sociologically impossible.

Marx Social Class Theory is relevant to contemporary Nigerian society, particularly, Igboland. The two classes in the society: bourgeoisie and the Proletariat, identified by Marx still exist in Igboland. They are *Ogaranya* (the rich) and *Ogbenye* (the poor). The rich own means of production, live in luxury and opulence, while the poor live in poverty. The poor don't have resources and the means of production. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening everyday. There is suffering in the midst of plenty or abundance. Marx wanted to better understand how so many people could be in poverty in a world where there was an abundance of wealth. His answer was simple: capitalism. Marx was very much uncomfortable with the extreme luxury of the rich (bourgeoisie) and the plight of the poor (proletariat). The bourgeoisie, were able to ruthlessly exploit the working class. The land, resources and factories were controlled

and owned by the wealthy citizens; thus, the working class had little choice but to work according to the terms dictated by the upper, controlling class. In his *Das Kapital* (1867), Marx opined that the capitalist's profit come from exploiting labor, that is, from underpaying workers. Certainly, Marx denounced the oppression and exploitation of the poor with vehemence. He fought for the liberation of the poor working class. Karl Marx, in essence, is advocating for liberation theology. The condition of the working class persons in Nigeria needs liberation. Many persons are underpaid and so many are being owed their salary for years. Pensioners are gradually dying as a result of non-payment of salaries and gratuities. There is a high level of poverty in the country that is richly blessed. The dichotomy between the rich and the poor in Marx's epoch is still the same experience of Nigerian contemporary society, particularly, Igboland. The revolution advocated by Marx was to close the wide chasm between the rich and the poor.

A number of theories exist, but for the critical examination of the study, Social Class Theory advanced by Karl Marx was adopted.

2.3 Empirical Studies

The empirical studies of this dissertation will be reviewing books and articles on the luxury of the rich and the plight of the poor in Igboland. Actually, the books and the articles being reviewed will focus on the economic or income inequality or the gap between the rich and the poor. The following works were reviewed:

Kwazu, F. (2012). Developing a Viable Strategy of Solving the Problems of Poverty in the Light of Human Rights: A Case Study of Igboland in Nigeria

The book “Developing a Viable Strategy of Solving the Problems of Poverty in the Light of Human Rights: A Case Study of Igboland in Nigeria” was written by Kwazu, F. C., which was published in 2012. It was published in Frankfurt by Peter Lang. It is a book of 271 pages, divided into three parts, and with five chapters. Part one, structurally, includes chapters one and two, which spans pages 37-119. In this part, he discusses the explication and meaning of poverty and human right. He sees poverty as a multi-dimensional concept which is complex in its origin as well as in its manifestations. Poverty does not lend itself for easy definition because of its complex nature, avalanche of meanings when various perspectives and measurements of each national average poverty level are considered. Poverty could be defined socially, economically, and politically for a better understanding. Thematically, Kwazu defines poverty to “mean hunger, lack of shelter and powerlessness to one’s right of freedom in a given society” (p.42). He further states, “Poverty can be understood as a deprivation due to lack of resources, in both material and non- material, e.g. income, housing, health, education and culture. It is a social exclusion which is inability to participate in societal opportunities because of lack of resources that are customarily available to the population” (p.43). Poverty can take different forms or dimensions: Absolute poverty, relative poverty, subjective poverty, case poverty, capability deprivation, rural poverty, and urban poverty. The book highlights the causes of poverty due to political reasons, population growth or

explosion, inadequate education and employment, environmental problems or degradation, and warfare.

How can poverty be measured? There are multidimensional approaches and views as regards the measurement of poverty. The author, quoting Petrone (2002), contends that poverty could be measured in terms of food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. A person or family is impoverished if they cannot afford (i) enough food to avoid all forms of malnutrition, (ii) enough housing to not freeze in the winter, (iii) enough clothing to satisfy minimum cultural standards of dignity, and (iv) enough medical care so that all members of the family have better than a 50 percent probability of living to age 60(p.54). Here the author quickly observes that this view does not really give a holistic or encompassing definition of poverty since poverty could not be measured only in terms of food, shelter, clothing and medical care. This type or kind of measurement is restricted only to material poverty since poverty is beyond just material needs. The author submits, "one may have shelter, but lag behind in education for instance."

The World Bank method of measuring poverty is based on incomes or consumption levels. In other words, a person is considered poor if his or her consumption or income level falls below the minimum level or the poverty line necessary to meet some basic needs. The authors mentioned Human Poverty Index for developing countries as another approach for measuring poverty, which focuses on living a long and healthy life, having access to education, and a decent standard of living. According to the author,

there are three measures that are the most commonly used, namely: (1) Poverty Headcount,(2) Poverty gap, and (3) Severity of Poverty.

Chapter three, which covers pages 123-170, dwells on the experience of poverty in Igboland and sheds more light on the subject matter. The author gives the Igbo people concept of the poor as *Ogbenye*. Poverty is depicted as *Ubiam*(wretchedness). According to the author, *Umu-Ogbenye or ndi uwa* include the needy, the destitute, orphans, widows, men who never married and who have little or no crops planted. The very poor who have not even a goat or a yam seed are typical *Ogbenye*. Thus the expression, *Ogbenye onu ntu*, the very suffering poor. The expression as a matter of fact, represents extreme poverty. The author observes that the Igbo understanding of poverty is relative and classifies poverty into categories: *Ogbenye* and *Ubiam*. While *Ogbenye* generally denotes and describes one who is poor, *Ubiam* paints a picture of somebody wretched, or who finds himself in an extreme situation of need and lack, under which a human being can hardly hope for the next day. The Igbo see the wealthy – *Ogaranya*- as the mayor or the modern capitalist, who has wives and many children with a number of servants and slaves and a big compound, whereas the poor, *Ogbenye*, in contrast, do not have these in their possession.

On the causes of poverty in Igboland, according the author, the causes of are multiple, and they can be traced to the following factors: (a) Nigerian-Biafran Civil war: The journey to structural poverty in Igboland, as contended by the author, began with Nigerian-Biafran Civil war. The war had some consequences: So enormous are the

effects which categorized a good number of the group into classes of destitute namely, the sick and the infirm, the amputated or the maimed. In Anambra State for instance, some of them were found inhabiting leper colonies with lepers. Many people lost a great deal to the war: their houses, private investments like industries or companies, private documents, and most importantly their families (p.128). Further on economic loss, the author quoted Achebe (1983) who explicitly confirmed that the routing of the Igbo people on the economic aspect continued with banking policies that nullified bank accounts of the people during the war and the indigenization that deprives them of promising business supporters after the war. Thus as a consequence of the war, the Igbo people today suffer from marginalization. Another effect or consequence of the war is the structural discrimination or socio-political exclusion of the Igbo group from certain substantive positions in the nation's administrative set up, such as the Head of State of Nigeria, Head of the Army, or Heads of key federal parastatals, etc. (b) Political Instability in leadership: This is another contributing factor to poverty in Igboland. According to the author, this happens when the political leaders are not elected but selected through the intervention of so called "political godfathers" instead of the masses. And this is not in congruence with ethics in politics. These selected leaders are often under the influence of the "political godfathers." As the author observed, this practice of godfatherism has severally caused a chaotic situation, such as destruction of property and killings. This practice of selecting leaders has fuelled political instability and increased insecurity, crippled the economy, dwarfed the development of the state and worsened the

poverty situation as submitted by the author. (c) **Weak Governance:** This according to the author is a system of centralizing power in the hands of those whose interest in politics is basically selfish. Weak governance results in poor development which causes untold hardship. Weak governance has affected education in Igboland. Another effect of weak governance is government's neglect of roads network in Igboland. (d) **Underemployment:** Many Igbo, despite their industriousness and private businesses, are still jobless and underemployed. They have insufficient paid jobs. And this insufficient income opportunity or rather capability deprivation, has proved to be a source of poverty in Igboland. The simple logic according to the author is this: lack of employment and steady income leads to poverty. (e) **Inadequate Health Services:** The book argues that one achieves practically nothing without good health. It is the healthy that go for education; it is the healthy that are fully eligible as human resources for the development of a nation. Thus poor health impedes the ability for employment. The author draws inference thus: poor health leads to unemployment, whose effect is poverty. Therefore, poor health generally causes poverty. (f) **Environmental Degradation:** This is one of the causes of poverty in Igboland, the authors argued. This environmental degradation can be an ecological disaster, which takes different dimensions such as, flooding, land deforestation, and bush burning. These affect agriculture in no small measure, thereby causing poverty. (g) **Polygamy:** Here, the author observes that although polygamy has socio-cultural and economic reasons in Igbo society whereby farmers needed many hands in agriculture which led to marrying two or three wives, on the other hand, it multiplies

the effects of poverty. Polygamy has some consequences: social, economic, and moral obligations in the up-bringing of children. Therefore the author submits that a poor family that can hardly afford these obligations exposes their children to dangerous life experiences and a condition of poverty. Large families, according to the author, are one of the causes of poverty in Igboland, especially when the parents are irresponsible or jobless.

The author opines that the first group that falls victims of poverty in Igboland are children in rural areas because they have poor access to schools. The poverty situation among some Igbo families, as the author observes, has exposed many children to street hawking. This exposure to hawking is to support their family financially. But according to the author, the harsh conditions and risks to which they are exposed are physically and psychologically harmful and can cause serious social adjustment problems. Emotionally, some of these children are oppressed and maltreated, and their fundamental human rights are often infringed, namely: denial of meals, self-expression, and good schools. The girls among them experience ill-treatment and emotional abuses. House wives are other victims of poverty in Igboland; they are ever dependent on their husbands. The widows are equally victims of poverty because of their plight in some quarters in Igbo society. The author identifies groups that are vulnerable to poverty as: low paid earners, the elderly people, and the sick.

The effects of Poverty in Igboland: Here, the author gives the following as a few socio-economic effects of poverty in Igbo society: (a) poor health (b) human trafficking, and (c) insecurity of life and property.

According to the book, the effort to alleviate poverty in Igboland finds expression in the following areas: (1) Healthcare delivery systems, (2) Adult and non-formal education programme, and (3) Water supply and sanitation project. The author observed the positive contribution that various NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations) are making in Igboland in poverty reduction. The NGOs are divided into three major groups: (a) The International (sometimes called transnational) Non-governmental Organizations known as INGOs, (b) the foreign based NGOs known as FONGOs, and (c) the local NGOs known as LONGOs. According to the author, NGOs in Igboland are the LONGOs, which have provided directly various basic public services to the poor. The NGOs in Igboland operate on the principle of solidarity with rural dwellers, who are poverty-stricken. Through their mini-job creation, a few poor people have got temporary jobs. The author also recognized the role that the Church in Igboland plays in alleviating poverty. Through health services and building of schools, the Church in Igboland liberates people from the shackles of poverty.

Leung, M. (2015). The causes of economic inequality. Retrieved on 25th July, 2016 from <http://sevenpillarsinstitute.org/case-studies/causes-economic-inequality>

Economic inequality which is also known as income inequality, wealth disparity, the gap between the rich and the poor, or wealth and income differences consists of disparities in the distribution of wealth and income. It refers to inequality among groups and individuals within a given society. Economic disparity is seen as the space that divides the rich from the poor. According to Ray, as cited in Ogbeide and Agu (2015), “economic inequality occurs when one individual is given some material choice/resources and another is denied the same thing” (p.443). Economic Inequality focuses on wealth, income, consumption, gender, employment, health variables etc. Economic inequality is a social problem and can hinder a long term growth.

Leung (2015) in her article “The causes of economic inequality” gives some reasons why the gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening. The first contributing factor that Leung gives as a reason for different levels of wealth is difference in income, that is, people are paid different wages. According Leung, there are several reasons why some people are paid millions while some merely earn minimum wage: (i) Wages are determined by labour market Wages and are a function of the market price of skills required for a job. In a free market, the “market price of a skill” is determined by market demand and market supply. (ii) Education which is the second factor, affects wages. Statistics have really shown that Individuals with different levels of education often earn different wages. This is so because the level of education is often proportional to the level of skill. With a higher level of education, a person often has more advanced skills that

few workers are able to offer, justifying a higher wage. In fact, the impact of education on economic inequality is very profound. (iii) Growth in technology widens income gap. On this factor, according to Leung, growth in technology arguably renders joblessness at all skill levels. For unskilled workers, computers and machinery perform a lot of tasks these workers used to do, even more effectively and efficiently. Hence, jobs involving repetitive tasks have largely been eliminated. Skilled workers are not also immune to the nightmare of losing jobs. (iv) Gender which is the fourth factor does contribute to a difference in wages in society and hence economic inequality. (v) Personal factors - It is generally believed that innate abilities play a part in determining the wealth of an individual. Hence, individuals possessing different sets of abilities may have different levels of wealth, leading to economic inequality. Leung argues further, more determined individuals may keep improving themselves and striving for better achievements, which justifies a higher wage.

Economic inequality is a vicious cycle, submitted Leung. It is a vicious circle as the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. Under this condition, there is a wealth concentration in the possession of already-wealthy individuals. The reason is very simple: People who already hold wealth have the resources to invest or to leverage the accumulation of wealth, which creates new wealth. The process of wealth concentration then arguably makes economic inequality a vicious cycle. The effects of wealth concentration may extend to future generations. Children born in a rich family have an economic advantage, because of wealth inherited and possibly education, which may

increase their chances of earning a higher income than their peers. These advantages create another round of the vicious cycle. Piketty (2014) holds the view that inequality will remain as long as the aforementioned wealth concentration process persists through generations, and this unequal distribution of wealth causes social and economic instability. Piketty proposes a global system of progressive wealth taxes to help reduce inequality and avoid the vast majority of wealth coming under the control of a tiny minority.

According to Kuznets' hypothesis as quoted in Keeley (2015), inequality is low in pre-industrial societies, where most people live at subsistence levels. As industrialization begins, however, gaps start to widen thanks to the rising earnings of factory workers compared to those of farmers, and they continue to grow with the emergence of increasing specialization among industrial workers (p.65). What Kuznets is arguing in essence is inequality follows a natural trajectory as economies move further away from their agricultural roots. Kuznets insists that economic growth inevitably creates inequality. Kuznets argued further that gaps start to narrow as the state begins collecting more taxes and distributing them as benefits. This is represented by an inverted U-shape curve called the Kuznets curve.



Kuznets Curve

(Culled from <http://sevenpillarsinstitute.org/case-studies/causes-economic-inequality>)

According to some scholars, a major cause of economic inequality within modern economies is the determination of wages by the capitalist market. In the capitalist market, the wages for jobs are set by supply and demand. If there are many workers willing to do a job for a great amount of time, there is a high supply of labor for that job. If few people need that job done, there is low demand for that type of labor. When there is high supply and low demand for a job, it results in a low wage. Conversely, if there is low supply and high demand (as with particular highly skilled jobs), it will result in a high wage. The gap in wages produces inequality between different types of workers. Increased demand for high-skilled workers adds to a widening wage gap. Companies are investing more heavily in developing a high-skilled workforce, driving wages up for high-skilled workers. This leads to de-emphasizing or automating low-skilled functions, pushing wages for low-skilled workers down. Neckerman and Torche (2007) maintain

that economic inequality can be due to reasons like receiving a whole variety of an unequal earning, wealth or opportunity.

Sutter (2013) opined that the first step to reduce economic inequality is for people to recognize how divided we have become advanced, and he advanced seven ways to narrow the rich-poor gap: (1) Break down the social barriers; (2) Improve public schools; unify them; (3) Raise the minimum wage (policies like a higher minimum wage would help the economy work for everyone); (4) Tax the rich at a reasonable rate; (5) Give workers a voice in their companies; (6) Reign in crazy-huge donations to political campaigns; and (7) Give money to the poor (maybe at random). In addition to the list of Sutter, some economists contended that through nationalization or subsidization of products (providing goods and services that everyone needs cheaply or freely, such as, food, healthcare, and housing, income inequality can be reduced. Also, governments can effectively raise the purchasing power of the poorer members of society, and minimum wage legislation, that is, raising the income of the poorest workers.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review

In this chapter, literature was reviewed under the conceptual framework, theoretical framework, empirical studies, and summary of literature review. In the conceptual framework, the concept poor or poverty does not lend itself for easy definition because it is a multi-dimensional concept which is complex in its origin as well as in its manifestations. These multi-dimensions are conceptualized as follows: Poverty as

material deprivation; powerlessness i.e. lack of opportunities and choices open to the non-poor; poor health and education; isolation reflected in social and political marginalization; lack of assets and insecurity. From a narrow perspective, poor or poverty can be conceptualized as moneylessness or material deprivation, and from a broader perspective, it includes other less materialistic dimensions like powerlessness. The narrow perspective is based on income and consumption definitions. To be poor means to be in a condition where one's basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter are not being met. In short, the poor live a substandard life. These different opinions of scholars show clearly that there are different dimensions of poverty: economic, political, cultural, human, social, and spiritual. Basically, the interest of this work is on the human poverty without losing sight of others. The poor that this study focuses on is the economically disadvantaged, the indigent, less privileged, the needy, etc. The Rich is conceptualized as affluent, moneyed, opulent, wealthy, expensively elegant, costly, etc.

Three theories were reviewed in relation to the topic. They are: Social class Theory by Karl Marx (1818 - 1883), Theory of Social Stratification by Max Weber (1864 - 1920), and Structural- Functionalism theory whose proponents were Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), Robert Merton (1910-2003), and David Émile Durkheim (1858 -1917). The Social class theory is based on the idea that society has two classes of people: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie are the owners of the means of production, such as factories and other businesses, while the proletariat are the exploited property-less wage workers. In each society, one group controls the means of production

and exploits those who are not in control. Marx disagrees that social stratification is functional for a society. Rather, he argues that social stratification benefits some at the expense of others. Marx was very much uncomfortable with the extreme luxury of the rich (bourgeoisie) and the plight of the poor (proletariat). The bourgeoisie, the capitalists, enjoyed a privileged and powerful position as owners of the means of production and were able to ruthlessly exploit the working class. The land, resources and factories were controlled and owned by the wealthy citizens; thus, the working class had little choice but to work according to the terms dictated by the upper, controlling class. Marx pointed to the stark divide between the impoverished working classes who had nothing to sell but their labour, and the capitalist classes who, by virtue of their ownership of the means of production, were able to exploit this labour to their profit.

Marx couldn't understand why so many people could be wallowing in poverty in a world where there was an abundance of wealth. His answer was simple: capitalism. This is also Nigerian experience: poverty in the midst of plenty. Nigeria is a country that is richly blessed yet the citizens are hungry, sick, and in want. Marx believed that it was the exploitation and oppression of the working classes that led to the conflict between classes. Marx equally saw the oppression and the exploitation by the bourgeoisie over the proletariat as the cause of misery, dehumanization, and poverty. This oppression and exploitation keeps widening the chasm or gap between the rich and the poor. In order to class this gap and root out poverty, the solution that Marx proposed was calling a revolution by the working class. In his work with Fredrick Engels, *The Communist*

Manifesto (1848), Marx stated, 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.' This workers' revolution would lead to classless society which will be the final phase of communism where there will be no classes and no class conflicts. No one stratum would control the access to wealth. Everything would be owned equally by everyone. The dictatorship of the proletariat will bring about social and economic justice; then there will be no thesis, anti-thesis and class-war. This would signal the disappearance of the state. In Marxist theory, the bourgeoisie plays a heroic role by revolutionizing industry and modernizing society. However, it also seeks to monopolize the benefits of this modernization by exploiting the propertyless proletariat and thereby creating revolutionary tensions. The end result, according to Marx, will be a final revolution in which the property of the bourgeoisie is expropriated and class conflict, exploitation, and the state are abolished. Marx felt that the answer to social inequality was socialism.

Marx's classless society is very utopian. Such a society has never existed in the past. Again, absolute equality is impossible to achieve. The very statement of Marx - "the history of the hitherto existing society is the history of the class struggles-" makes it evident that he knew that classes had been in existence from the very beginning of history. Critics of Marx argued that his view is too simplistic, as society cannot be based only on two classes which are determined by people being either owners or workers within the means of production. Modern society is much more complex now than Marx foresaw, writing a hundred years ago. Marx's vision did not come true. As societies

modernized and grew larger, the working classes became more educated, acquiring specific job skills and achieving the kind of financial well-being that Marx never thought possible. Instead of increased exploitation, they came under the protection of unions and labor laws. Despite Marx's prediction, capitalism is still thriving.

The Communism advocated by Karl Marx was influenced by Lucan writings. It has often been argued that Karl Marx made use of the Lucan text for his views on communism. Luke is interpreted as striving for a classless society where nobody would be poor or rich. Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-37 come to mind. The early Christians would have sold their property and possessions and distributed their money among all, according to what each needed.

Functionalist perspective views society as a system. A structural functionalist would argue that inequality of wealth serves a necessary purpose in society. They argue that it is inevitable and is beneficial for society. For example, highly qualified people should be given the jobs they are qualified for. Structural Functionalists contend that poverty is needed to bring a balance or equilibrium in the society. For them, we need to have poverty to be able to have rich people. If we have no poverty, there cannot be rich people. They view poverty as a necessary part of society. Functionalists view people who suffer poverty as deserving because they lack the skills to make them reap the rewards of society. According to structural-functionalists, stratification and inequality serve an important function in society. For them, stratification and inequality are necessary, inevitable, and beneficial consequences for the operation of society. However, a conflict

theorist would argue that this in fact creates competition between two different groups; the rich (bourgeoisie) and the poor (proletariat). They believe that inequality of wealth is not inevitable and people are creating this competition.

On the theory of Social Stratification, while Marx's theory of social stratification emphasized that the major cause of social stratification is due to different class groups in the society, especially the two major groups, i.e. Bourgeoisie and Proletariat, Max Weber formulated a three-component theory of stratification, that saw social class as emerging from an interplay among wealth, prestige (status) and power. Sociologist Max Weber, pointed to the importance of not just economic factors in producing and sustaining inequality, but also the influence of power, status and prestige in perpetuating dominant relations. Durkheim, on the other hand, emphasized the functional necessity of social inequality for the well-being of society.

From the empirical studies, it is revealed that the gap between the rich and the poor can be as a result of the following factors: difference in income or wages, wealth concentration in the possession of already-wealthy individuals, the income gap between highly skilled workers and low-skilled or no-skills workers, economic growth, determination of wages by the capitalist market, Labor markets, globalization, technological changes/computerization, education, government sponsored policies or initiatives, taxes, etc.

Some factors have been responsible for poverty in Igboland. For instance, after the Nigerian - Biafran Civil War, Igboland was socially and emotionally destabilized,

severely devastated. Many hospitals, schools, and homes were completely destroyed in the brutal war. Economically, Igboland was impoverished by destruction of economic structures and assets in the land and by stripping them of their property in other parts of the country by the policy of abandoned property. Politically, Igboland was marginalized in the government. Other factors include political instability in leadership, underemployment, weak governance, inadequate health services, environmental degradation, and polygamy. And the groups that are victims of poverty are: children and the widows. While low paid earners, the elderly people, and the sick are the groups that vulnerable to poverty. The socio-economic effects of poverty in Igbo society are: (a) poor health (b) human trafficking, (c) insecurity of life and property, and (d) kidnapping. Through healthcare delivery systems, adult and non-formal education programme, water supply and sanitation project, and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), efforts have been made to alleviate poverty in Igboland.

The research work adopted the Social class Theory by Karl Marx to explain the chasm between the rich and the poor in Nigeria, particularly in Igbo society. As Karl Marx divided society into two main classes – owners of the means of production (Bourgeoisie) and workers/ social labour slaves (proletariat), likewise Igbo society is divided into two main classes: *Umu-Ogbenye*, meaning, the poor, and *Ogaranya* – the wealthy. The rich or the wealthy in typical traditional Igbo culture are seen as belonging to the aristocratic class and possessing according to Nwala (1985) “... many wives and children, large area of land, palm trees and other economic trees, large barn of yam,

slaves and pawns” (p.190). They took titles both within and beyond the village and had great influence in the community. They had overcome the basic economic needs of food, clothing and shelter, and were concerned with social needs of honour, self-esteem and self-actualisation. The poor, *Umu-Ogbenye*, on the other hand, live in misery and abjectivity.

CHAPTER THREE

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF LUKE 16:19-31

3.1 Authorship and Background of the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel according to Luke (*Τὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν εὐαγγέλιον*) is one of the synoptic gospels in the bible. It tells of the origins, birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. According to Green et al (1992) and Utley (2013), the gospel of Luke is the longest of the four Gospel. It is also the only Gospel with a sequel. The gospel of Luke is the only synoptic gospel that has a prologue (1:1-14). In this connection, Mattam (2008) observed, “the third Gospel differs from the others in that it has a prologue where the author explains his literary purpose, method and scope” (p.25). Luke's prologue can also be called an *exordium* (a literary device that was also used by other Greek writers).

The gospel of Luke, as observed by Barclay (1975), Marshall (1979), Mattam (2008), Fitzmyer (1981), and Nolland (1989) is anonymous; nowhere in it does its author reveal his identity, and they contend that tradition unanimously affirms this author to be Luke. Irenaeus (180 A.D) for instance, as quoted in Nolland (1989) asserted: “Luke, Paul’s companion, put down in his book the Gospel which Paul preached” (p.xxxv). Quarles et al (2009) assert, “the strongest evidence for Lukan authorship are the so-called “We passages” in Acts (16:10-17; 20:5; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). The most natural

understanding of these references is that they suggest that the author was a travelling companion of Paul, a view attested as early as Irenaeus (130-200)". (p.259).

From Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3, it can be deduced that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts, addressing both to Theophilus (the narrate). In his opening passage (Lk. 1: 1-4) the author simply states that he intends to "compile a narrative" based upon accounts, and possibly previous narratives, from eyewitnesses and "ministers of the word." It is clear, therefore that the author was not an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus and that he came to faith later. That he claims to have "followed all things closely" in order to produce "an orderly account," suggests that he wished to be taken seriously as both an historian and a theologian. Corroborating this view, Fitzmyer (1981), asserts, "from the Gospel itself, it emerges that the author is not an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus, but that he depends on those who were (1:2). He is rather a second or third- generation Christian" (p.35). The name Luke is only mentioned three times in the New Testament. From these three occurrences, it is evident that Luke was "the beloved physician" (Col 4:14) and a companion of Paul at various times from his second missionary journey to his final imprisonment in Rome, and a loyal friend who remained with the apostle after others had deserted him (Acts 16:10-15, 20:6-21:26; 2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 1:24). It is more than likely that Luke was a Gentile by birth, well educated in Greek culture. And this would make Luke the only Gentile to pen any books of Scripture.

3.1.1 Date and Place of Writing

There is no certainty about the date at which this Gospel could be written. The Gospel according to Luke was probably the last Synoptic Gospel to be written. According to Morris (2002), three dates for this Gospel has been suggested, namely: around AD 63, AD 75-85, and early in the second century. Marshall (1979) maintains, “There are two serious possibilities, a date in the early sixties or a date in the later decades of the first century. The later is the view most commonly held, with AD 80 being suggested as a round figure. This date presupposes that Luke was not dependent on the writings of Josephus (c.AD 93) but that he did write after the fall of Jerusalem” (pp.34-35). Arguing further, Marshall (1979) reasons, “ on the other hand, the complete lack of interest in the fall of Jerusalem in Acts and the way in which that book ends its story before the death of Paul are strong indications of a date before AD 70” (p.35). Corroborating this view, Morris (2002), observed that Acts ends with Paul in prison, and as a matter of fact, if Luke knew of Paul’s release or martyrdom he would probably have mentioned it” (p.24). Fitzmyer (1981) contends that in the prologue to his Gospel Luke speaks of his dependence on eyewitnesses, and on many others who undertook to write accounts of the Christ event before him, and among the latter must be included Mark, whose Gospel was composed about AD 65-70, then the Gospel of Luke should be dated, therefore, later than the Gospel of Mark.

Slick (2016) elucidating further maintained that none of the canonical gospels made mention of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70. This is very significant because Jesus had prophesied concerning the temple when He said, "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down" (Luke 21:6). This prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans sacked Jerusalem and burnt down the temple. The non-inclusion of this significant event into the Gospel suggests that the gospels, at least, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, were written before A.D. 70. Slick (2016) contends that the Acts of the Apostles which was written after the gospel of Luke and by Luke himself also fails to mention this significant event of A.D. 70, which would have been extremely relevant and prophetically important and would require inclusion into Acts, had it occurred before Acts was written. The fact that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is not recorded is very strong evidence that Acts was written before A.D. 70. Having established this fact, it would mean that Luke was written at least before A.D. 63 and possibly before 55 - 59 since Acts is the second in the series of writings by Luke.

As for the place of composition or writing of the Gospel of Luke, Fitzmyer (1981), contends:

It is really anyone's guess. The only thing that seems certain is that it was not written in Palestine. Ancient tradition about the place of composition varies greatly: Achaia, Boeotia, and Rome. Modern attempts to localize the composition

elsewhere are mere guesses: Caesarea, Decapolis, and Asia Minor. In the long run, it is a matter of little concern, because the interpretation of the Lucan Gospel and Acts does not depend on it. (p.57).

3.1.2 Audience/ Recipient and Purpose

Both the purpose of the Gospel and its audience can be found in the prologue (1:1-14). Luke first mentions that many others before him have made an account of the things that have been fulfilled as they were handed down from the first generation. He also says that he cautiously examined everything from the beginning and this led him to write an organized account to Theophilus so that he might know the certainty of what he has been taught. It is obvious that the gospel of Luke is dedicated to Theophilus. The name means "lover of God or friend of God"- (cf. Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1). But a universally acceptable theory is that Theophilus was Luke's patron who helped him to publish Luke-Acts.

Luke's Gospel is targeted to Gentiles. Quarles et al (2009) and Barclay (1975) maintain that Luke wrote for a Gentile audience. Corroborating this point, Fitzmyer (1981) avers:

It is widely held today that Luke has written his Gospel for a Gentile Christian audience, or at least one that was predominantly Gentile Christian. This view is based on Luke's obvious concern to relate his account of the Christ-

event and its sequel to a Greco-Roman literary tradition (e.g. in the prologue of the Gospel), his dedication of his two volumes to a person bearing a Greek name (though it could have been borne by a Jew), and his manifest desire to relate the salvation promised to Israel in the OT to Gentiles or non-Jews. (pp.57-58).

On Luke's purpose in writing the Gospel, while some scholars suggest that Luke set out to make a case for Christianity as not being a threat to the Roman Empire, others make the proposition that Luke-Acts was written to reassure those questioning Jesus' second coming because of its delay. For some scholars, like, Mattill, as cited in Mann (1999), the two-volume Work, Luke-Acts, was specifically designed to aid Paul in his trial before Caesar. According to Quarles et al (2009), "the purpose of the Gospel of Luke is for a defense of the Christian faith, useful for both evangelism and discipleship" (p.256).

3.1.3 Literary Style

Luke is one of the most extensive writers of the New Testament. The style of the Gospel is superior to any New Testament writing except the Letter to the Hebrews. Supporting this view, Utley (2013) contends that Luke writes the most grammatically correct and polished *Koine* Greek of all the New Testament writers, with the possible exception of the author of Hebrews. Greek apparently was his mother tongue. This fact explains why Luke had outstanding command of the Greek language. According to

Morris (2002), linguistically, the Gospel of Luke is written in good classical style, has a strong Hebraic flavor, and it is written in a type of Hellenistic Greek strongly reminiscent of the Septuagint (the translation into Greek of the Hebrew Old Testament). According to scholars, Plummer, for instance, as quoted in Aherne (1910), the Gospel of Luke is the most literary of the Gospels. Luke can be as Hebraistic as the Septuagint, and as free from Hebraisms as Plutarch. He is Hebraistic in describing Hebrew society and Greek when describing Greek society.

3.2 The Poor and the Rich in Lukan Text

Roth (1997) asserts that: “Luke has proportionally more material than the other Gospels dealing with the rich and the poor (p.16). Luke, more than other evangelists, preserves sayings of Jesus about the rich and the poor in the gospel. Corroborating this fact, Pilgrim (1981) states that:

Among the evangelists, Luke preserves by far the greater amount of material dealing with this subject. Obviously it has greater importance for him, not only as a part of the tradition about Jesus, but also as a message for the Christian communities with whom he is in touch and for whom he writes (p.85).

Himes (2005) elucidates further:

The Lukan infancy narratives show a special concern for the ‘anawim,’ people without money and power. In her Magnificat, Mary praises a God who puts down the mighty from their thrones, fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty (Luke 1:52-53). The first proclamation of Jesus’ birth is to people on the margin of society (“Shepherds,” 2:8-14); the sacrifice offered at the presentation is that determined by law for poor people (2:24); Simeon and Anna (a widow) represent faithful and just people (2:25-38). Luke begins the public ministry of Jesus not with the proclamation of the imminence of the kingdom...but with Jesus citing Isaiah 61:1-2, “the good news to the poor” (Luke 4:17-19, cf 7,22). (p.27).

The term 'poor' (πτωχός in Greek) occurs ten times in Luke: 4:18, 6:20, 7:22, 14:13, 14:21, 16:20, 22, 18:22, 19:8, 21:3. This term basically connotes beggar who always has to depend on the help of others for their living. Luke employs this word in two different contexts: 1) as potential receivers of alms and, 2) as the receivers of the gospel and the kingdom of God. John in Roth (1997) uses the term “poor” as a blanket term for all those marginalized in the people. He sees the poor as:

All those who have been rejected on the basis of human standards, but are accepted by God; they, in turn, accept the

prophet. Among them are the crippled, the lame, the blind and deaf, the sexually mutilated, and all those ritually excluded from full participation in the life of the people. The religiously unrighteous are also included, the ‘sinners and tax-agents,’ as well as those women who by virtue of their gender always took a second place within the ritual life of the Jewish community (p.52).

Forbes (2000) opines that undoubtedly, one of the major interests of the third gospel, and one that has often been considered as determinative of Luke’s audience, is a concern for the poor and marginalized. Obviously, while this theme is not unique to Luke, it is more prominent in his gospel. The poor and the marginalized are the prime focus of the gospel and are the new recipients of the kingdom. Brewer (2009) observes that Luke’s Gospel heavily focuses on the presence and condition of the poor, the way in which God viewed those living in poverty, Jesus’ attitudes, actions, and teachings involving the poor, and His warnings regarding their abuse and neglect (p.6). Lehtipuu (2007) puts the subject matter succinctly in this way:

All through the gospel, the Lukan Jesus promises eschatological rewards for the poor; the coming of the Kingdom and the *escaton* (*escaton*) bring relief to them. According to Luke, Jesus begins his public career by proclaiming to have come “to bring good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). This inaugural sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–

30) is commonly considered as Luke's programmatic manifesto, closely connected with his salvation historical scheme. The eschatological promise becomes explicit in the beatitudes where Jesus addresses the poor together with the hungry and the bereaved (Lk 6:20–21). Moreover, the poor and the disabled are the first to be invited to the messianic banquet in the subsequent parable of the Great Supper (Lk 14:21). This is why the rich must distribute their possessions to the poor and take care of them (Lk 14:13; 18:22; 19:8). (p.165).

The gospel of Luke is described as the gospel of the poor. The whole theology of option for the poor finds expression in this gospel. Throughout the gospel, the poor are highlighted, elevated, and given dignity of human base. The gospel makes a preferential option for the poor. The Greek term πτωχός (ptóchos) is the word Luke used to categorize the poor in his gospel. The term πτωχός refers to those who are abjectly poor or utterly destitute. It denotes the economically poor. The Gospel of Luke does not spiritualize the concept of the poor. The concept of the poor has a broad focus in Luke's gospel. Pilgrim (1981) observes:

The poor include those suffering from genuine poverty and need, who are sharply contrasted with the rich and powerful. These poor are promised a radical social reversal of their lot in the coming age. The poor also include the sick and the

possessed, those living on the edge of society, who are offered healing and full acceptance within the fellowship gathered around the healer. They include as well the outcasts and sinners, those excluded socially and religiously because of despised professions and immoral lives, who are welcomed back into the Father's good graces, and offered a new status of full participation in the community gathered around Jesus and his disciples. They include even the disciples of Jesus, who have left all in his service, and who await with eager anticipation the coming deliverance, when the lowly will be exalted and the mighty brought low. (p.83).

The poor are the focus of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke is described as the Gospel of the poor. More than the other Gospels, Luke shows us Jesus paying attention to the poor, the sick, women, the despised, and in general the marginalized. Jesus admonishes his followers not just to invite to their parties the friends and neighbors who can repay them, but to extend their invitations to the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind:

He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a

feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. (Luke 14: 12-14).

The term *πτωχός* occurs fundamentally in three main texts in the Gospel of Luke: 4:18, 6:20 and 7:22. Luke makes it abundantly clear that the poor are a focus of Jesus' ministry. In fact, Luke has special predilection to the poor and is at times hard-hearted towards the rich. In the Gospel of Luke, God's persistent concern for the poor and powerles finds concrete expression in the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-56), the Beatitudes or the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-26), and indeed throughout Luke's Gospel. But Jesus brings it to a point in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31).

3.2.1 The Magnificat or Song of Mary (1:46-55)

The celebrated song of Mary, the great Magnificat, which is exclusive or unique to Luke's Gospel, brings the subject matter to limelight and to a sharper focus. The Magnificat extols God who exalts the lowly and feeds the hungry, while humbling the proud and mighty. The Magnificat introduces the theme of rich and poor:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation

to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away (Luke 1:47-53).

The Magnificat is revolutionary and radical. In the Magnificat, Markquart (2017) observes that God totally changes the order of things. He takes that which is on the bottom turns everything upside down, and puts the bottom on top and the top on the bottom. God revolutionizes the way we think, the way we act, and the way we live. According to Dean (2004), this Song or Magnificat:

While unattested in any other canonical or extra-canonical New Testament writers, draws heavily on Hebrew Bible prophesy, most notably the Song of Hannah (1Samuel2:1-10), also a song of praise sung by the mother of a prophet. Both of these songs hail God's action to lift up the weak, lowly, hungry, and poor while humbling the strong, powerful, full, and rich. God is pictured as a personal champion for the poor, one who lifts them up while defeating the oppressive purposes of the rich. For Mary, in this song, God is very clearly on the side of the poor and powerless.(p.9).

On God's perception of the poor in the Gospel of Luke, Brewer (2009) puts it thus:

At the beginning of Luke's Gospel, Mary rejoices in God through song after receiving the announcement of her pregnancy with the Son of God. Record of her song, the Magnificat, is found in 1:46-55, and she specifically emphasizes the status of the humble and lowly. Mary praises God for choosing to use her as an instrument of blessing in her lowly state (v. 48), exalting those of inferior status (v. 51-56), and filling the hungry with good things along with sending the rich away empty (v. 51-53).⁴² In the first chapter of Luke, the reader is already given a clear indication through Mary's song that the poor are chosen of God and are promised His rewards (pp.6-7).

3.2.2 Jesus' Inaugural Address/Manifesto (Luke 4: 18-21)

Jesus' short sermon at Nazareth (vv. 18-21) thus serves as his mission statement. Here Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 and Isaiah 58:7. In this first recorded sermon, Jesus gives some detail to the nature of His mission. He tells us why He came to earth. The mission of Jesus was to reach out to the poor, to deliver the captives, to restore sight to the blind, and to lift up the downtrodden. Brewer (2009) observes that one of the most significant passages, in which the poor are specifically mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, is Luke 4:18-21:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

This declaration in Luke's Gospel is generally seen as a programmatic statement expressing the purpose of Jesus' ministry. Pilgrim (1981) claims that the phrase 'good news to the poor' in Luke 4:18–19 belongs at the heart and center of the Lukan story, and could be understood as introducing the concept of the 'poor' in terms of the captives, blind, and oppressed. Brewer (2009) indicates that, 'Although this passage does not specifically address the economically poor, one can conclude that people burdened financially were of high priority in Jesus' message of freedom and deliverance' (p.7).

According to Pilgrim (1981), this specific text is extremely significant because recent scholarship sees it as the programmatic text for the Lukan writings. Besides, the text introduces four major emphases of the programmatic text for Luke's writings:

- (1) The announcement of Jesus' ministry as the fulfillment of God's salvation-time,
- (2) a statement about the content of Jesus' ministry based on the quotation from Isaiah,
- (3) the foreshadowing of Jesus' final suffering and rejection, and
- (4)

the foreshadowing of the movement of the gospel movement from Jew to Gentile. (pp.64-65).

3.2.3 The Beatitudes (Luke 6: 20-26)

Luke uses the term *ploutos* to refer to wealth and *πλούσιος* (*Plousios*) to refer to the rich. Dupond in Thomas-D'Sa (2016) sees the rich in Luke as those who abound in resources and do not need to work for a living. They are those who because of their undue attachment to wealth, refuse to heed God's call and let wealth become an obstacle to the Kingdom (18:18-30). Jesus is hard on the rich and powerful in the gospel of Luke. The Gospel begins with a warning for the rich: God puts down the mighty and sends away the rich; he exalts the low and fills the hungry (1:52-53). The clear signal that is quickly sent is that the gospel is targeted to the poor. The sermon on the plain is particularly shocking in this regard. The poor are to be blessed, but there are woes for the rich:

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh." "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your

reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. “But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. “Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.“Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. “Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets (Luke 6:20-24).

The beatitudes give the contrast between the rich and the poor, blessings and woes of the rich and the poor. According to Pilgrim (1981), the beatitudes in the Gospel of Luke are addressed to the poor, the marginalized, the hungry, the weeping, and the persecuted. Comparing the Lukan beatitudes to the Matthean beatitudes, Pilgrim remarked that Matthean version offers a strongly spiritualized interpretation. But in Luke, it is quite different. He asserts:

We find no spiritualizing additions to any of the beatitudes.

The conditions described as blessed belong to the stark realities of life. The people addressed are simply and literally the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the persecuted (p.75).

Dodd (1968), corroborating the above view submits, “Luke’s beatitudes have the external elements of poverty in view... They are characterized by an acute sense of the miseries of the oppressed class, and by the expectation of a reversal of conditions” (p.4). The poor, hungry, mourning and hated people receive from Jesus a great consolation. One day things will be different. The poor and hungry of the world are blessed not because they are

poor and hungry. Poverty is not conceived here as a good thing. It is an evil that should be rooted out. Hatred, poverty, mourning, and hunger are social evils that are not acceptable to God. Their blessing lies in the fact that what they do not have now, they will one day have in the Kingdom of God, which is already theirs, and their fortunes will be reversed. Supporting this point of view, Pilgrim (1981) concludes:

Lukan beatitudes are addressed to people who are literally poor and persecuted. Yet their poverty is blessed within the context of their response to the ministry of Jesus and the call to the kingdom (cf.v.22). Thus it is not just poverty or riches per se that is blessed or condemned, but poverty in the context of trust in God and riches in the context of rejection of God. The two go hand in hand for Luke. Nevertheless, there is still something of the powerful prophetic woes against the exploitive rich that rings loud and clear throughout this passage. (p.77).

It is important to note that Jesus was not consistently critical of the rich. He ate with Levi and other tax collectors in a great feast (5:29). Levi was able to give a banquet after he had supposedly "left everything." Jesus was criticized for attending Levi's banquet —not because of the life-style of wealth, but for associating with "sinful" tax collectors (5:30; 7:34). The tax collector Levi, as a matter of fact, became his disciple. Besides, some well-to-do women provided for Jesus and his apostles out of their

resources (Luke 8:3). Jesus healed the slave of a centurion who was wealthy enough to build a synagogue (7:2, 5, 10). Jesus accepted invitations for banquets from various classes of rich people like the Pharisees (7:36; 11:37) and rulers (14:1, 12). Later, he stayed at the house of Zacchaeus, a rich tax collector (19:2-5). Jesus included both the poor and the rich in his ministry. But the rich are told to give to the poor (3:11). Peter, James, John and Levi "left everything" to be disciples of Jesus (5:11, 28). Jesus' first problem with wealth is that it tends to displace God in the lives of wealthy people. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34). In Luke 7:22, the poor have the good news preached to them. This was in response to John the Baptist's question querying Jesus' identity as "the one who comes." And Jesus answered and said to his messengers: "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them."

3.2.4 The Poor respond to God's invitation (Luke 14:15-24)

The pericope of Luke 14:15-25 is commonly known as the "The Great Banquet." The text reveals in v.16 that: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many." When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to contact the invited guests, telling them that all was ready and that the meal was about to be served. They all began, one after another, to make excuses. Pilgrim (1981) argues that the parable emphasizes the

wealth of those invited to the great banquet, such as ‘the purchase of a field, the purchase of an ox, and marriage dowry. Pilgrim (1981) notes:

When informed of the refusals, he orders his servants to go out into the streets and to bring in the “poor and maimed and blind and lame” (v.21). These poor are undoubtedly those whom Jesus’ himself came to seek, the outcasts and sinners, the persons living on the margins of society. (p.141).

Brewer (2009:9) remarks that this parable shows a great concern for the poor, the marginalized, the needy, and illustrates the obedience displayed by them. This parable as he notes shows that wealth could easily serve as a hindrance to the rich, since it could prevent them from receiving their heavenly reward and from entering the kingdom of God. Pilgrim (1981) concludes:

In this parable, the wealthy reject God’s generous invitation in favor of their own everyday pursuits of profit and pleasure. So the poor become surprised and delighted guests at the royal banquet. In effect, the eschatological reversal between the poor and rich has occurred in the parable. Thus the parable as a whole serves to warn the rich to accept God’s invitation. And that means to invite the poor and maimed and blind and lame to their tables, lest God leave them out at the heavenly banquet. (p.141).

In Luke 7:22, the poor have the good news preached to them. This was in response to John the Baptist's question querying Jesus' identity as "the one who comes." And Jesus answered and said to his messengers: "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them."

3.3 The Acts of the Apostles (Authorship and Background)

The Acts of the Apostles, like the Gospel of Luke, is anonymous, in that the Book of Acts of the Apostles does not specifically identify its author. From Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3, it is clear that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, the physician and traveling companion of Paul wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). The early church consistently identified Luke as the author. Lukan authorship of Acts is affirmed by the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170), the anti Marcionite Prologue to the Gospel of Luke (c. A.D. 160–180), Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Jerome. The early church never seems to have questioned Lukan authorship. Both the gospel and Acts are addressed to one Theophilus. He is called "most excellent" (κράτιστε), a term usually indicating some sort of government official, or at least high social rank. The external affirmation of the Lukan authorship of Acts is corroborated by internal evidence as well. For example, the "we" passages (16:10–17;

20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16) seem to point to Luke as the author. Harrington et al. (1992) remarked that:

The Acts of the Apostles is the second part of the two-volume composition that scholars call Luke-Acts. It is written by the author of The Gospel of Luke...Like the Gospel, Acts has a short prologue which connects this composition to “the first word (*logos*) “ addressed by Luke to his reader-patron Theophilus (Acts 1:1; Luke 1: 1- 4). The Prologue briefly recapitulates the first volume as concerning “ what Jesus said and did” before being taken up into heaven in the sight of his followers. Acts then continues the story of Jesus into the story of the early church, from its birth at Pentecost to its success among the Gentiles all the way to Rome (p. 1).

Chilton (2017) advancing some reasons argued that the author of the Gospel of Luke also authored the book of Acts. First and foremost, the level of detail and precision, writing style, the similar address to Theophilus, as well as the connective clause in the first of Acts connects the two works to the same author. Secondly, the level of Greek used in both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts of Apostles is highly advanced. Due to the high degree of Greek employed in the Gospel and the book of Acts, one can deduce that the author is quite advanced in his education. Thirdly, because of the author’s involvement with the book of Acts, one can deduct from the “we passages” that the

author was a close associate of the apostle Paul. For instance, the author of Acts writes that “When it was decided that we were to sail to Italy, they handed over Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Imperial Regiment” (Acts 27:1).

Witherington (1998) lending support to the above submits:

The view that Luke and Acts were written by two different persons is not much discussed today by scholars because of the considerable linguistic, grammatical, thematic, and theological evidence that these volumes both come from the same hand. Most scholars in fact would argue for the theological and thematic similarity and unity of the two volumes (p.5).

Guthrie (2004) has noted five links between the two books which show common authorship. (1) Both books are dedicated to the same man, Theophilus; (2) Acts refers to the first treatise, which is most naturally understood as the gospel; (3) the books contain strong similarities of language and style; (4) both contain common interests; (5) Acts naturally follows on from Luke’s gospel...It may safely be concluded that the evidence is very strong for linking the two books as the work of one man, a conclusion which few modern scholars would dispute. Strelan (200) observed:

Luke has left us two texts, but they can be read as one continuous narrative – they are both addressed to the same

person, Theophilus; they both portray their central characters in the same way, and they are connected by the theme of the Lordship of Jesus which is arguably at the very heart of the author's thinking (p.3).

In support of the Lukan authorship of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, Marshal (1980) pointed out that Acts of the Apostles is the second part of a two-volume work whose first part is the Gospel of Luke. It is one of the unfortunate effects of the present ordering of the books in the New Testament that it leads us to think of Acts as a separate work on its own. Van Unnik in Marshal (1980) lending his own support to this perspective argued that:

The book of Acts of the Apostles is the confirmation of the Gospel of Luke. In the Gospel, Luke is presenting the saving activity of Jesus and showing its reality. Then in Acts Luke shows how the Church proclaimed and confirmed this salvation. What Acts does in effect is to show how the salvation which was manifested by Jesus during his earthly life in a limited area of country and for a brief period became a reality for increasing numbers of people over a wide geographical area and during an extended period of time. As a result of this, Luke-Acts could be regarded as an evangelistic work which proclaims salvation to its readers (p.20).

Interestingly, there is much debate about who wrote the Acts of the Apostles. The authorship of the book of the Acts of the Apostles is disputed by some scholars. Philip Vielhauer, for instance, as Padilla (2016) observed, argued that the theology of Paul as found in his genuine epistles is strikingly different from that presented in the speeches of Acts. From his own point of view, Kurz, as cited in Karris (1989) observed that scholars see too many differences between Luke's and Paul's description of the same events. They wonder why Acts never mentions Paul's letters and consider his theology to be too different from Paul's for him to have been Paul's disciple. For instance, the "Paul" in Acts makes little direct reference to Paul's major themes of salvation by faith and being "in Christ."

3.3.1 The Poor and the Rich in the Acts of the Apostles

Luke's concern for the rich and the poor continues in the Acts with a greater focus on the unity of the nascent Christian community. Himes (2005) submits:

The early community is one that shares its goods in common and where there is no needy person (2:41-47; 4:32-37), shared possession rather than dispossession is the goal, and almsgiving is stressed (10:2, 4:31; 24:12). Lydia, "the seller of purple," who was a worshipper of God, shows Paul hospitality, an example of good use of resources (16:11-15).
(p.27).

In the Christian community, everything they owned was held in common. People sold their possession and put the proceeds in a common treasure. Acts 4:36-37 gives the example of Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, who sold a field and put the proceeds into the treasury. The two famous passages (2.43–45; 4.32–37), which have been appealed to throughout history as the “normative ideal” of the community of goods for Christians, rather describe the extent of fellowship (*koinōnia*) in Jerusalem community as a part of distinctive Christian identity. Acts also portrays both positive and negative uses of wealth: those who practiced almsgiving and generosity to the poor (9.36; 10.2, 4) and those who gave priority to money over the needs of others (5.1–11; 8.14–24). Allen (2013) avers:

The sharing of material resources in Luke-Acts blesses both the poor and the rich. The blessing for the poor is immediate as they are relieved of the enervation of finding provision. For Luke, the rich face the temptations of greed and making an idol of wealth...The rich have the opportunity to join the movement toward the Realm through sharing their resources. When participating in the community of the Realm, the rich no longer need to be anxious about material provisions for themselves; they have the joy of being in solidarity with a community in which all are secure. (p.25).

Allen (2013) further notes that the above text from the Acts of the Apostles:

Calls for the Congregation to go beyond a charity mentality in which individuals to contribute to the needs of the poor, but instead to enter into economic solidarity and to call for systemic reform of the economic structures that reinforce so much poverty and that justify the ever growing gaps between the wealthy and the poor. (p.26).

3.4 Lukan Themes on Wealth and Poverty

Pilgrim (1981) contends that the Gospel of Luke:

Regards the subject of wealth and poverty as a practical test-case in the Christian realization of good news to the poor. As Jesus himself went to the poor with the good news of the kingdom, so his followers are to do the same. But this is no abstract or theoretical matter for Luke. Rather, it is one that affects among other things the way one regards and uses one's possessions. For the attitude toward one's possessions is a clear sign of whether or not one is fulfilling the mission of Jesus to the poor. (p.85).

The theme of wealth and poverty is widely recognized as being dominant in Luke vis-à-vis the other Gospels. In the Gospel of Luke, the theme of wealth and poverty is intrinsically related to the concern for the poor and marginalized. Pilgrim (1981) asserts:

Luke's message to the poor results in three major themes in his writings regarding wealth and poverty: (i) the call to total surrender of one's possessions, (ii) warnings about the dangers of wealth, and (iii) instructions and exhortations on the right use of one's wealth" (p.86).

Donahue (1988) supporting this view submits:

No NT writings deal more extensively than Luke-Acts with the dangers of wealth, the proper use of possessions, and concern for the poor. As the Christian Churches today become more aware of the gap between rich and poor, as well as of the challenge to discipleship amid economic prosperity, and as they are summoned to an "option for the poor," the message of Luke becomes ever more urgent. (p.174).

We shall now proceed to explain these Lukan themes of: renunciation, dangers of wealth, and the right use of wealth or possessions.

3.4.1 Renunciation (The call to Total Surrender of One's Possessions)

Luke's Gospel is the gospel of absolute renunciation. Renunciation sits at the heart of Christian discipleship. In Luke's so-called "travel narrative" it would seem that the total renunciation of one's wealth is a necessary condition of discipleship. Substantiating this view, Navone (1970) avers:

Only during the Age of Jesus was the renunciation of all property a requirement for discipleship. In the Age of the Church, it was replaced by the willingness to part with one's wealth for the good of the community. Jesus' teaching on renunciation (Lk 14:33) applies for both Ages. In the Age of Jesus it demands the immediate, irrevocable relinquishment of all one's goods on behalf of the poor (Pp.113-114).

To be a disciple meant to leave profession, property and family. Jesus' followers are told to do away with possessions and give to the poor. An austere lifestyle seems to be advocated. Luke has an even more radical expression: "they left everything and followed him" -- καὶ καταγαγόντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἀφέντες πάντα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ- (Luke 5:11). They had to abandon their profession as fishermen, for now they were called to be fishers of men. The disciples must leave all things: "When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Him." Jesus asked of their total dedication. According to Pilgrim (1981), the stress is clearly on everything πάντα (panta). In the same way Levi had to leave his tax office. To follow Jesus meant for these

disciples to leave the profession that had earned them their living. Of every potential disciple, as Pilgrim (1981) observed, Jesus makes the same demand, the renunciation of all he possesses. Without renunciation, it seems impossible to be a disciple of Jesus. Obviously, Luke 14:33 buttresses this point,” therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions” - οὕτως οὖν πᾶς ἐξ ὑμῶν ὃς οὐκ ἀποτάσσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ ὑπάρχουσιν οὐ δύναται εἶναι μου μαθητής. Another text that calls for a total surrender of one’s possession in relation to discipleship is Luke 12:33, “Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys – Πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην· ποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς βαλλάντια μὴ παλαιούμενα, θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ὅπου κλέπτῃς οὐκ ἐγγίζει οὐδὲ σὴς διαφθείρει. In the gospel of Luke renunciation is a qualification for discipleship.

3.4.2 The Dangers of Wealth

As Pilgrim (1981) observes, the concepts of wealth and discipleship seem to conflict with each other in the writings of Luke. According to Evans as quoted in Ottuh (2014):

The use of wealth is the major topic of Luke 16. Wealth can be a blessing or a curse, depending on whether it is used as a means to exercise power, a tool of self-indulgence or a

resource to serve others. Wealth's danger is that it can turn our focus toward our own enjoyment, as the rich fool showed in 12:13-21 and as the rich man of 16:19-31 showed. (p.69).

Wealth can be a source of great blessing or a source of great danger or curse to us, depending on the usage. This is a recurring theme in Scripture generally, and in Jesus' teaching specifically. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus is not against wealth. He is rather concerned with how it is used. Thus, in the gospel of Luke, wealth has its inherent dangers and these are carefully spelt out by Jesus in some texts in the gospel of Luke. The text of the rich young ruler (18:18-25) focuses on the dangers of wealth:

And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these I have observed from my youth." And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who

have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

In response to rich young ruler’s question about inheriting eternal life, Jesus says to him, “Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” – “ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, ἔτι ἔν σοι λείπει πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν [τοῖς] οὐρανοῖς, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι” (Lk. 18:22). But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich - ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας ταῦτα περίλυπος ἐγενήθη, ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα”(v.23). This made Jesus to look at him and say, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (vv.24-25) – “ιδὼν δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ ἰησοῦς [περίλυπον γενόμενον] εἶπεν, πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσπορεύονται· 25 εὐκοπώτερον γὰρ ἐστὶν κάμηλον διὰ τρήματος βελόνης εἰσελθεῖν ἢ πλούσιον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν” (vv.24-25).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is repeatedly portrayed as warning people against the danger of trusting in material wealth and security. Jesus’ first problem with wealth is that it tends to displace God in the lives of wealthy people. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34). But riches and possessions themselves are not viewed as inherently evil. Supporting this point, Green (1997) asserts:

“Although wealth itself is not evil, one can never remain passive or neutral toward it. Wealth masters if it is not mastered” (p.229). On this subject matter, Himes (2005) articulates:

In Luke it is simply “the poor” who are blessed and Luke adds woes against the rich and powerful (6:20, 24-26). Luke presents Jesus in the form of an Old Testament Prophet who takes the side of the widow (7:11-17; 18:1-8), the stranger in the land (10:25-37; 17:16), and those on the margins of society (14:12-13, 21). At the same time Luke articulates some of the harshest warnings about wealth found in the New Testament: the parables of the rich fool (12:13-21), of the unjust steward (16:1-8), and of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31). Though often called the “Gospel of the poor,” Luke really contains far more warnings against the rich and the danger of wealth. There is no glorification or spiritualization of poverty. The good news to the poor is that wealth does not bring divine blessing, and that the fortunes of the rich and the poor will be reversed in the life to come. The Gospel might better be called “sad news for the wealthy” (p.27).

3.4.3 The Right Use of One's wealth

Some parables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke basically focus on the right use of possessions. For instance, in the parable of the rich fool (12:13-21), Jesus criticized stockpiling or hoarding instead of sharing. Jesus admonished that wealth should be used to make friends (Lk 16:9). Strengthening this point of view, Himes (2005), avers:

In the Gospel, riches are evil when they become such a preoccupation that they dominate a person's whole life or when a person attempts to secure the future through them, as in the case of the rich fool (12:16-21). They are also evil, as in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (16:19-31), when they blind people to the suffering neighbor at their doorstep. Discipleship demands renunciation of one's goods and adoption of the itinerant lifestyle of Jesus...Here, proper use possessions through mutual sharing and almsgiving is commended rather than total dispossession. (pp.27-28).

In the gospel of Luke Pilgrim (1981) observes:

Possessions, are a necessary and good gift of God, rightly used...Possessions are to be placed radically in the service of Christian discipleship. Their proper use occurs within the context of agape-love, where caring for the poor, sharing with

those in need, and doing good even to one's enemies receive the highest priority. Accordingly, Luke mounts a massive challenge for wealthy Christians to change their ways and to share their wealth more equitably with others. In particular, he points to Zacchaeus as a model worthy of emulation. Zacchaeus' willingness to share one half of all he possessed with the poor presents the strongest Lukan challenge to the rich. While the rich who hang on to their wealth cannot get through the needle's eye, by giving their wealth to the poor they are making friends for eternity and may yet find a way into the kingdom by the call and grace of God (p.146).

One's resources are not to be privately held and consumed but are to be used as a means of generosity, as a way of showing care to the poor. It is only wealth that is handled with generosity that meets with God's approval. Wealth in Luke must be shared not hoarded, must be redistributed, and must impact positively on people's lives. Jesus tells a parable in this connection to buttress this point of view:

And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my

goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21).

From the testimony of the scripture and from moral stand point, one holds nothing against this man. The bible did not say that his wealth was ill gotten. God blessed his hard work. It was the legitimate produce of his fields. The rich fool was not a fraudster since there is no hint of cheating at all in the bible. Nowhere also is it mentioned that he did something dishonest. But why did God call him fool? He made the mistake of thinking that the huge harvest he recorded belonged to him and perhaps as a result of his hard work. The rich fool failed to realize that everything we have belongs to God, and that, we are only stewards. The rich fool was selfish or egocentric. He forgot about others, only himself existed. In the parable, he used the personal pronoun 'I', six times, and 'my', four times. He was only preoccupied with himself. He was locked up in his own world. The rich fool was not thoughtful of others. The man exhibited excessive attachment to his wealth, he demonstrated exclusive self-interest to it and himself, talking of *my* crops, *my* barns, *my* grain, *my* goods, even *my* soul, so that his future perspective is entirely self-centered and self-indulgent. This is a moral mismanagement of wealth, for the man gave no thought to the needs of others, he did not fulfill his moral responsibility

before God to care for the needs of others. To relieve the poor and the destitute did not, however, enter into his calculations. Here, Jesus is not attacking wealth, but makes the point that wealth must be handled with generosity. Hultgren (2008) notes that the parable:

Provides an example of what one ought not to be like. The person whose identity is tied up with his or her possessions, status, and/or achievements- and is driven by acquiring them- can so easily end up unaware of the call of God and the need of the neighbour. The alternative is a life that is “rich toward God”, one that is devoted to serving God daily, which includes having eyes open to the needs of others. (p.109).

Here friendship with God is seen in economic terms. Obviously, God’s friends who are rich or wealthy provide for God’s friends who are poor. The rich fool’s problem or mistake is that he hoards things for himself, not producing jobs or prosperity for others. This means both that he loves wealth instead of God, and that he is not generous toward the poor.

Again, in Luke 3:11-14, John the Baptist is clearly on the side of the poor. He champions the cause of the poor. He exhorts the gathered crowds:

He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.” Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than is

appointed you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.

Supporting the above submission, Green ((1997) maintains:

Luke, then, calls for economic redistribution on behalf of those in need, and for the wealthy to give without using their wealth to gain status or to place others in their debt. Discipleship demands that one no longer be a slave to wealth or cling to possessions as though they were one’s source of security or social position, and that one gives precedence to the family of God and especially to those in need (p.229).

In the Gospel of Luke, the only healthy use of wealth is in the care of the poor, the abandoned, the less privileged, etc. God has a special interest in the poor. Caring for the poor earns one eternal reward. One’s wealth, which is a powerful tool, becomes an excellent resource when put to the right use. It can, as a matter of fact, help to build many things of use to others.

The following principles emerge from the thought of Luke in his Gospel: (1) God is the owner of everything. 2) We are to be generous with the treasure entrusted to us. 3) We are to prudently manage our treasure. 4) Our treasure can be dangerous if not handled

responsibly before God. Ireland (1992) puts it beautifully well in this way: “While material possessions, particularly in abundance, can pose a serious obstacle to wholehearted discipleship, they can also be put to proper use by the Christian disciple” (p.189). Luke 16:9 sums up the evangelist’s view of money, wealth and possession: it is to be used to make friends with the poor, who will then receive you into the tent of eternity. On this point, Ireland (1992) submits: “In particular, disciples are to use their possessions for the benefit of the poor. While Luke is not the champion of poor, he is still very much concerned about the poor” (p.195).

3.5 Consideration of the Text of Luke 16:19-31

Here, the central focus is the exegesis of the text of Luke 16:19-31. For a logical flow of thought, we shall have a look at first and foremost, the Greek and English versions of the text of Luke 16:19-31, Specific context of this text, Backgrounds and Parallels to the text of Luke 16:19-31, and analysis of the text.

3.5.1 Greek Version of the Text

19 Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος, καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν
καὶ βύσσον εὐφραινόμενος καθ’ ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς. 20 πτωχὸς
δέ τις ὀνόματι Λάζαρος ἐβέβλητο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα αὐτοῦ
εἰλκωμένος 21 καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων
ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου· ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ κύνες ἐρχόμενοι

ἐπέλειχον τὰ ἔλκη αὐτοῦ. 22 ἐγένετο δὲ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν πτωχὸν καὶ ἀπενεχθῆναι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἰς τὸν κόλπον Ἀβραάμ· ἀπέθανεν δὲ καὶ ὁ πλούσιος καὶ ἐτάφη. 23 καὶ ἐν τῷ ἄδη ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, ὑπάρχων ἐν βασάνοις, ὁρᾷ Ἀβραάμ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ Λάζαρον ἐν τοῖς κόλποις αὐτοῦ. 24 καὶ αὐτὸς φωνήσας εἶπεν· πάτερ Ἀβραάμ, ἐλέησόν με καὶ πέμψον Λάζαρον ἵνα βάψῃ τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ δακτύλου αὐτοῦ ὕδατος καὶ καταψύξῃ τὴν γλῶσσάν μου, ὅτι ὀδυνῶμαι ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ. 25 εἶπεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ· τέκνον, μνήσθητι ὅτι ἀπέλαβες τὰ ἀγαθὰ σου ἐν τῇ ζωῇ σου, καὶ Λάζαρος ὁμοίως τὰ κακά· νῦν δὲ ὧδε παρακαλεῖται, σὺ δὲ ὀδυνᾷσαι. 26 καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις μεταξὺ ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται, ὅπως οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι ἔνθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς μὴ δύνωνται, μηδὲ ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαπερῶσιν. 27 εἶπεν δέ· ἐρωτῶ σε οὖν, πάτερ, ἵνα πέμψῃς αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρός μου, 28 ἔχω γὰρ πέντε ἀδελφούς, ὅπως διαμαρτύρηται αὐτοῖς, ἵνα μὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλθωσιν εἰς τὸν τόπον τοῦτον τῆς βασάνου. 29 λέγει δὲ Ἀβραάμ· ἔχουσι Μωϋσέα καὶ τοὺς προφῆτας· ἀκουσάτωσαν αὐτῶν. 30 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· οὐχί, πάτερ Ἀβραάμ, ἀλλ' ἐάν τις ἀπὸ νεκρῶν πορευθῇ πρὸς αὐτοὺς μετανοήσουσιν. 31 εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ· εἰ Μωϋσέως καὶ

τῶν προφητῶν οὐκ ἀκούουσιν, οὐδ' ἐάν τις ἐκ νεκρῶν
ἀναστῆ πεισθήσονται.

3.5.2 English Version of the text

¹⁹“There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Laz'arus, full of sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Laz'arus in his bosom. ²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Laz'arus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Laz'arus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from

there to us.’²⁷ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house,²⁸ for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’²⁹ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’³¹ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

(Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 1946)

3.6 Specific Context of Luke 16:19-31

The parable is mainly directed to the Lucan Pharisees and people like them who are “lovers of money” (16:14). According to Papaioannou (2013), “while the parable is addressed to the disciples (16:19), it was apparently intended for the ears of the Pharisees since they were the ones who were lovers of money and of substantial means” (p.114). In the text of Luke 16:19-31, money is also important. Money thus becomes an issue of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. Through the parable, Jesus attempts to warn against excessive love of money and encourage wise stewardship. Jesus tells two parables directed against the Pharisees’ love for money. The first, traditionally known as the Parable of the Unjust Steward, makes a simple point. Money has no value in itself, but is

to be used in this world to make preparation for the next (16:1–12). Jesus’ second parable is that of the rich man and Lazarus (vv. 19-31). Here only those who respond to God’s Word through Moses and the prophets will be blessed. Even a resurrection miracle cannot convince those who will not believe God’s Word.

3.7 Backgrounds and Parallels to the Text of Luke 16:19-31

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 which has perplexed biblical exegetes for years has long been the focus or subject of controversy, considerable debates, discussions, and interpretations because some scholars consider it to be a parable; others see it as an allegory. What is a parable?

According to Hauge (2013), the English word “parable” is a transliteration of the Greek word *παραβολή*, which is a combination of the verb *βαλλεῖν*, “to throw”, and the preposition *para*, “beside.” Simply put, the term *παραβολή* denotes throwing something beside something else, which has led many to conclude that the parables are a type of comparison (pp.3-4). Supporting this view, Mathew and Chakravorty (2013) submits that literally the word parable means “to throw beside” or “to place beside,” to place together for the purpose of comparing, or making a comparison. Donahue (1988) elucidates, etymologically parable means that one thing is understood in juxtaposition or comparison with another (p.5). Corroborating this view, Brosend (2006) maintains that parables work by making comparison, “casting” (*bolē*) two things “beside” (*Para*) each other. As a matter of fact, something known is compared to something unknown in order

to give understanding of the latter. Perhaps, the simplest definition of a parable, according to Barclay (1999), is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is to say, Jesus used earthly things to lead men’s minds to heavenly things. He believed that there is no mere analogy but an inward affinity between the natural and the spiritual order”(p.12).

The LXX uses *παραβολή* (*parabolē*) to translate the Hebrew word *לְפָשֵׁל* (*māshal*), meaning, “to be like or similar.” Donahue (1988) expounds:

The etymology of this term *לְפָשֵׁל* is unclear but it is used to describe: A wide variety of literary forms, such as proverbs (1Sam.10:12; Prov.1:1, 6;10:1; 26:7- 9), riddles (Judg. 14:10-18), taunt songs (Mic. 2:4; Hab. 2:6), allegories (Isa. 5: 1-7; Ezek. 17: 3-24), and, in the intertestamental literature, long revelatory discourses such as the similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 39—71). (p.5).

In the OT, there are at least seven parables, including the story of the eagles and the vine (Ezek 17:2-10) and Nathan’s parable to David about the poor man and his lamb, concerning David’s adulterous act with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:1-14). The exact number of parables in the NT is disputed, because scholars cannot agree on which forms can be classified as parables. The Greek word *parabolē* occurs 50 times in the NT. And with the

exception of Heb 9:9 and 11:19, all occur in the synoptic gospels. The Greek word παραβολή (*parabolē*) is never used in the fourth gospel; the gospel of John doesn't have story parables. However, the Johannine John uses the term, παροιμία (*paroimia*) meaning, metaphors, images, proverb or figure of speech, and wise sayings or riddles that fit the broader category of *māshal*, such as the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-18) and the True Vine (Jn. 15:1-8), and is similar to *parabolē*.

The parables are the heart of Jesus' teaching. So important was the parable in Jesus' teaching experience that it was said on one occasion that He did not say anything without using a parable (Matt. 13:34). Obviously, Jesus did not limit His teaching to the parabolic method only but a large portion of it is in parables. About one-third of Jesus' teaching is in parables. Corroborating this fact, Lightfoot quoted in Womack (1995) averred:

The parables comprise more than one-third of the recorded teachings of Jesus. The Master of all teachers often puts men to thinking by using pictures. He did not leave principles in the way of life in abstraction, but brought them down within reach of the humble doers (p.18).

There are so many definitions of parable, but one has actually stood the test of time. Writing more than fifty years ago, Dodd (1961) gave a well-known, classic, and much used definition. For him:

At its simplest a parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought. (p.16).

Dodd believed that Jesus used parables to illustrate metaphorically what the kingdom of God was like. Jesus used very concrete illustrations from nature or agrarian life to illustrate what he meant. Sullivan (2007) observed that this useful description above by Dodd brings out clearly four important things about a parable: (1) It is a comparison (a metaphor or simile), (2) Describing something new or unknown in terms of something very familiar (drawn from nature or common experience), (3) With an unexpected twist (arresting in its strangeness), (4) Designed to engage its hearers and prompt some reactions from them (leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its application to tease it into active thought). Womack (1995) from his own perspective gives four important characteristics of the parables of Jesus as: (1) Jesus' parables tell us much about the great storyteller Himself, (2) Jesus' parables dealt with real life situations, (3) Jesus' parables attempted to produce a response in the listeners, and (4) Jesus' parables were simple enough for the simple people and sublime enough for the most intellectual (p.22). Elucidating further, Mickelsen (1963) notes eight major characteristics of parables: (1) plurality of verbs in the past tense; (2) formal comparison; (3) words used literally; (4) one chief point of comparison; (5) particular example or a specific occurrence; (6) imagery kept distinct from the thing signified; (7) story true to

the facts and experiences of life; and 8. explained by telling what the imagery stands for in light of the main points of the story (p.213).

Jesus' parables compare one thing to another. Stein (1994) remarked that the Greek word *parabolē* refers essentially to a "comparison." He pointed out that "the two most basic forms of comparison are the simile and the metaphor. Whereas a metaphor contains an implied comparison or likeness, simile contains a stated likeness. In other words, metaphor suggests a comparison whereas a simile explicitly states such a comparison (p.33). A simile compares things using the term "like" or "as." Some parables begin with the phrase, "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed (Matt.13:31) or The kingdom of heaven is like a leaven" (Matt.13:31, 33) or ten Virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25.1). A metaphor, on the other hand, would compare the disciples, for example, to light or salt, but without the terms "like" or "as." "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

Jesus' use of parables was so masterful, and the kingdom-centered message of his parables so revolutionary, that no other New Testament personality tried to copy this aspect of his teaching. According to Getty-Sullivan (2007), parables are: "one of Jesus' preferred tools to involve hearers in the process of revelation so that they can better perceive the truths of the Gospel and participate more fully in the kingdom of God (p.5). A parable puts the known next to the unknown so that one may learn.

Parables are usually a story or a narrative taken from nature or from everyday human experiences. Voris (2008) asserts that parables are basically narrative stories.

Parables are not allegories or fables. An allegory is simply defined as a figurative application or illustration taken from real historical facts or events. Fable is a short tale that features animals, legendary creatures, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature that are anthropomorphized, that is, given human qualities, such as the ability to speak human language, and that illustrates or leads to a particular moral lesson. It is a story not founded on fact but basically teaches a moral lesson. Schwarzbaum in Young (2008) defines a fable as “a fictitious tale told for the purpose of communicating a certain idea, or a truth of some kind, metaphorically. Fables teach a message through the transparent analogy of actions of gods, heroes, men, animals, and even inanimate objects often furnished by the fabulist with human traits and emotions” (p.16). A good example of fable from the Old Testament, is the fable of trees that choose a king (Judges 9:8-15). A fable differs from a parable in that the latter excludes animals, plants, inanimate objects, and forces of nature as actors that assume speech or other powers of humankind.

A literal interpretation from some scholars makes the text of Luke 16:19-31 into a purely theological discussion of the afterlife. Some scholars as well such as Bedore (2016) view the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man as an historical account rather than as a parable. He gives the following as some reasons why the text of Luke 16:19-31 should be considered a history of two real men and not a parable: (1) Parables are true-to-life, but hypothetical, illustrative stories. The names of specific individuals are never given in

them, but here the names of three men are given; Lazarus, Abraham, and Moses. Also mentioned are the “prophets” who were also real people (“Moses and the prophets”) is a general term for the whole Old Testament that refers to its human authors); (2) It does not have the normal form of a parable with an introduction, analogical story, and application. Instead it is in the form of the narration of a real-life story given for the purpose of illustration; (3) It does not use the principle of comparison in a way that is characteristic of parables; (4) The discussion between the rich man and Abraham is not consistent with the parabolic style found in the Scriptures; (5) It seems obvious that in relating this particular story when He did, the Lord Jesus was using a real-life account that many of those listening to Him that day could readily relate to it because they actually knew, or at least knew of, the two men involved. The rich man’s brothers may have even been in the audience.

For some scholars, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus was an actual event about an actual rich man and an actual person named Lazarus which was related by Jesus to his followers. They argued that in no biblical parable is a person’s name mentioned. Because of the inclusion of the proper name, it has been argued that Jesus is recounting an historical event. Supporters of this view point to a key detail in the story: the use of a personal name (Lazarus) not found in any other parable. By contrast, in all of the other parables, Jesus refers to a central character by a description, such as "a certain man", "a sower", and so forth. Szukalski (2012) expresses this beautifully well:

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 is unique and problematic. It is the only canonical parable referring to a character by a proper name and portraying a scene in the afterlife. The permanent reversal of fortunes at death depicts the rich man in torment in Hades and the poor man in bliss in Abraham's bosom, a reversal that appears to be based solely upon their respective economic standings in life—a disturbing criterion of judgment. This uniqueness has occasioned divergent, even contradictory, conclusions regarding the parable's literary and conceptual background, its unity and authenticity, and its function within the overall Lucan narrative. (p.1).

Kreitzer (1992) corroborating the above view submits:

The mention of a character Lazarus within the parable 16:19, 23, 24, 25, has sent scholars scrambling in search of the meaning or significance of the name. Is it a symbolic name, deliberately chosen by Jesus, or perhaps by the author or redactor of the Gospel? Or is it an allusion, a veiled reference to an historical person? What connection, if any, is there to the Lazarus of John 11? Another problem is the insertion of

the parable within the travel account of 9:51-18:14. For some scholars, it appears that the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus as we now have it comes from Luke's special source, as it has no readily identifiable parallels in the synoptic. (p.139).

Lehtipuu (2007) rightly observed that "earlier scholarship on the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus has largely concentrated on three questions. The first concerns its unity, the second its extra-biblical parallels, and the third its authenticity" (p.11). A scholar, Stigall (2012), has, as well, remarked in this connection that since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, interpretation of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus has revolved around two primary issues: (1) the structure and unity of the parable; and (2) the search for parallels to the parable.

The first historical-critical reading of the parable was that of Jülicher (1899) which focused on the unity of the parable and its original form. He argued forcefully that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus should be divided into two discrete sections: Luke 16:19-26 and Luke 16:27-31. For him, only the first of these two "loosely connected" sections is original to Jesus while the second part of the parable is the addition of a later interpreter. Thus, the second half of the parable must be ignored when interpreting Luke 16:19-31. Jülicher in Stigall (2012) posited, "The parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus produced joy in a life of suffering and fear of the enjoyment of life" (pp.15-16).

As a matter of fact, with this conclusion, the first stream of interpretation, the quest for the original parable of Jesus was set in motion.

Bultmann (1963) was the first to question the parable's authenticity. He maintained Julicher's two-part literary structure of the parable, with a distinctive message expressed in each part. He averred: "vv.19-26 drew upon the Jewish legend consoling the poor and damning the rich. vv.27-31 declared the sufficiency of Moses and the Prophets, a thoroughly Jewish sentiment (cf. Deut. 30:11-14) placed in the mouth of Jesus" (p.203). For Bultmann, as Van Eck (2009) clarifies: "Luke 16:19-26 is a story based on a folkloric account of the reversal of fortunes in the afterlife and Luke 16:27-31 constitutes a polemic against the need for signs to augment the Torah and prophets for revealing the will of God" (p.2). Bultmann, as cited in Hock (1987) asserts: "The Church - with "very great probability" - fashioned the parable from Jewish tradition and put it into the mouth of Jesus" (p.450). In following Bultmann, Smith as cited in Van Eck (2009) argued that "Jesus shifted the meaning of the traditional materials about the afterlife (Luke 16:19-26) to focus on the adequacy of the Torah (Luke 19:27-31)" (p.2). Similarly, Oesterley, as quoted by Van Eck (2009), "was of the opinion that Luke 16:19-25 is addressed to the Pharisees, while Luke 16:27-31 was spoken to correct Sadducean beliefs" (p.2). Cadoux in Van Eck (2009) "saw Luke 16:19-26 as an authentic parable of Jesus that was used in his debate with the Pharisees over the importance of signs (Luke 16:27-31)." (p.2). Thus, Bultmann concludes that the entire story of the rich man and Lazarus was pre-Lukan and could not be traced to either the historical Jesus or the early church. Forbes

(2000) does not support the view of Bultmann separating the parable into two distinct parts. He sees it as a unity. And for him:

The separation of the parable, not only breaks up the dialogue between Abraham and the rich man, it also fails to appreciate that vv.27-31 further illustrate the rich man's character, thus providing a justification for the reversal of fortunes described in vv.19-26. Finally, vv. 27-31 serve to shift the focus away from the afterlife to the earthly situation, thereby enabling the parable to make its point about the proper use of wealth. After all, the concern is not so much to show why people are condemned to punishment, but to exhort the living to a particular course of action (p.184).

Crossan (1973), from his own perspective, toeing the path of Julicher, divided the parable into two parts arguing that the fate of the rich man's five brothers is secondary. Crossan is of the opinion that the ending of the parable vv.27-31 must not be original. For him, it is likely a pre-Lukan, post-resurrectional application. He maintained too, that the literal point of the parable was a striking amoral description of situational reversal between the rich man and Lazarus. Thus, Crossan Submits: ' In fact, the unexpected, unexplained reversal of fortunes is what makes the first part of the story a parable, in which the kingdom's disruptive advent could be metaphorically portrayed and linguistically made present' (p.68).

On the unity of the parable, Herzog (1994), contends, “the parable of the rich man and Lazarus has most often been read as two parables in one: the first parable recounted the reversal of fortunes in the afterlife, while the second defended the adequacy of the Torah to communicate God’s will without the need for “signs” (p.114). Fitzmyer (1983) sees the story of the rich man and Lazarus as a fitting conclusion to the theme of chapter 16. He accepts the exclusiveness of this story to Luke, and being derived by him from his source “L.” According to him, “form-critically considered, the story belongs to the parables of Jesus” (p.1125).

Regarding possible backgrounds to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, there are so many interesting parallels which also depict a reversal of fortunes in the afterlife. In this connection, Gressmann’s (1918) study of Egyptian and Jewish backgrounds or sources has proved to be the most influential parallel in the history of interpretation. Gressmann proposed that the text of Luke 16:19-31 is an adaptation of a popular Egyptian folktale which eventually found its way into Jewish lore via Alexandrian Jews. The dominant story has traditionally been that of Setme and Si-Osiris. According to Bauckham as cited in Jonathan (2014) the story of Setme and his son Si-Osiris is about:

An Egyptian in Amente, the realm of the dead, who was allowed to return to earth as the re-incarnated son of a childless couple. The child is called Si-Osiris. His work was to deal with an Ethiopian magician who was becoming too

powerful for the magician in Egypt. At the age of twelve, he overcame the Ethiopian magician and then returned to Amente. However, before this, he and his father observed the funerals of a rich man who was buried with great ceremony and a poor man who was buried without ceremony or mourning. The observing father claimed that he would rather have the rich man's lot than the poor man's. The son disagreed, and in order to justify his claim, he took his father on a tour of the seven halls of Amente to demonstrate the reversal of fortunes in the afterlife. In Amente, there were three classes of the dead: those whose bad deeds outnumber their good deeds(like the rich man), those whose good deeds outnumber their bad deeds (like the poor man), and those whose good deeds and bad deeds are equal. (p.80).

Gressmann's argument is that Egyptian folktale lies behind the story and offers a sufficient background for understanding the text of Luke 16:19-31. Gressmann in Gowler (2005) argued that the first part of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:16-20 was derived from an Egyptian folktale, that this Egyptian folktale circulated among the Jewish people, and that Jesus thus took this story but created the second half of the parable himself. Jeremias (1972) in a similar fashion proposed that Alexandrian Jews

brought this Egyptian story to Palestine where a Jewish version developed and it became very popular as the story of the poor Torah Scholar and the rich publican Bar Ma'yan, an example of which is found in the Palestinian Talmud. This version of the folktale according to Bauckham as quoted in Jonathan (2014) tells of:

A rich tax collector named Bar Ma'yan and a poor Torah Scholar who lived in Ashkelon. The two men died on the same day. The tax collector was buried with ceremony and style, but the poor's death went unnoticed. A friend of his was troubled by the contrast between the funerals of the two men until he had a dream of the fates of the two men in the afterlife. The rich tax collector is tormented in hell whilst the poor man is in paradise. The impressive funeral of the rich tax collector was his reward for his one good deed in life and the poor man's one sin was punished in life by having a pauper's funeral. The principle is that the righteous are punished for their few sins in this world, so that in the next world they may enjoy only bliss, whereas the wicked receive in this world the reward for their few good deeds, so that in the next world they may justly receive only punishment. (pp.80-81).

Bultmann, as cited by Papaioannou (2013), took a different approach and suggested another Jewish fable as a possible source for the second part of the parable, that is, the possibility of a return from Hades as a means to repentance. This version according to Bultmann narrates :

A godless rich couple lives in a house that has a door leading to hell. Though they have been warned not to tamper with it, curiosity leads the wife to open the door. She is immediately taken to hell. While there, she suffers graphically described torments. A young boy visits hell, where she warns him of her fate and requests that he inform her husband of her sufferings so that he might repent and avoid a similar fate. The husband indeed repents and the story probably functions as a warning to the readers to repent and avoid a sad fate (p.117).

Hock (1987) observed that ‘despite repeated claims that the parable is an adaptation of an Egyptian folktale, it must be said that the parallels between the two are neither as compelling nor as explanatory as these claims suggest’ (p.452). Most importantly for Hock, the folktale fails to clarify the most important element of the parable, that is, the rationale for the reversal of fortunes. He opined, “Accordingly, it is legitimate to cast the comparative net wide enough to include at least the traditional culture of Greco-Roman Society” (p.456). Hock then argued persuasively for a broader

comparative framework, including Hellenistic Roman sources, for interpreting this parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Hock (1987) made a significant departure from the previous interpretive trajectory and called for a recasting of the comparative net. He shifted attention to Greco-Roman parallels using Lucian's texts or dialogues *Gallus* and *Cataplus* as his prime parallels. He maintained that *Gallus* and *Cataplus* can be seen as important comparative texts.

In the *Gallus and Cataplus*, the rich man is the tyrant Megapenthes whereas Micyllus is the poor man. Micyllus is not, like Lazarus, a beggar, but even as a poor artisan, he is still, like the beggar, socially marginal. Both share a similar, if not identical situation and set of experiences. While the parable situates Lazarus at the gate of the rich man's house (v.20), Lucian describes Micyllus as the neighbor of wealthy Simonides and of the tyrant Megapenthes. Moreover, as Lazarus desires what fell from the rich man's table (v.21), so Micyllus is tantalized by the aroma of the meat being prepared for Megapenthes' banquets. And if Lazarus's desires go unfulfilled (v.21), Micyllus goes hungry from early morning. Moreover, if Lazarus has sores (v.20), so Micyllus at least dreads winter's cold and sickness. And while dogs pester Lazarus(v.21), Micyllus must endure the slights, insults, and beatings of the powerful. In otherwords, because of their poverty, neither Lazarus nor Micyllus shares in what were commonly understood to be life's blessings (*ta agaqa*). In fact, in Lucian as in the Parable, the prominent indicators of the blessings of the rich are their clothing and banquets. When Micyllus and the rich tyrant Megapenthes die, they both make the trip to Hades and there was a

reversal of fortunes. Megapenthes, like the rich man in the text of Luke 16:19-31, tries to strike a bargain with Clotho to alter his situation, but to no avail. It was indeed a failed one. In addition to these striking parallels, the *Cataplus* includes a judgement scene which identifies the rationale for their reversal. After their ferry boat ride, Micyllus and Megapenthes appear before Rhadamanthes, the judge of the underworld. He judges each by inspecting the soul for any marks or signs (*stigmata*) that result from doing wicked deeds. Micyllus's judgment is very quick. His soul is pure, and so he is sent to the Isles of the Blessed. In the case of Megapenthes, the matter is very different. His soul is black and blue with stigmata. Megapenthes's soul, however, is stained with corruption. He lived hedonistically and immorally and consequently would be punished accordingly. It is not his wealth which condemns him, but his hedonistic lifestyle.

What do these folktales show? They show that the motif of a reversal of fortune in the afterlife was common among different cultures of the Mediterranean world. There are as well other accounts of revelations of the afterlife. Plato (428–348 bc) tells the story of a soldier, Er the Pamphylian, who is killed in battle but revives several days later. While “dead” Er visits Hades and sees a judgment in which the good go to heaven and the wicked are punished. He is specifically told to return and report what he has seen, presumably to warn the living. Plutarch (ad 46–120) tells a similar story about Thespesius and Clearchus of Soli about Cleonymus. The latter tale has an interesting twist. While in Hades Cleonymus meets another temporary visitor. They agree that, once they return to the land of the living, they will maintain contact with each other. Lucian of Samosata (c.

AD 125 – after AD 180) tells another tale of return. A man called Cleomenes falls ill. But his time has not yet come. In a case of mistaken identity, he is brought to Hades, only to be informed that his neighbor Demyllus should have been brought instead. Cleomenes is therefore sent back and within a few days Demyllus dies.

From the foregoing, we see clearly, therefore, that stories of reversal of fortune at death, as in the parable, as well as revelations from afterlife, as requested in the parable, abounded in the ancient world. We have a very clear background which Jesus' audience would have been aware of and against which the parable can be understood.

Bauckham, as cited in Hauge (2013), caused a destabilization of the scholarly tradition with his article, "The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parables and the Parallels." Giving a comparative analysis of Gressmann's Egyptian folktale and the Jewish version in the Palestinian Talmud, he noted three important points of agreement over and against the parable:

First, in both the Egyptian and Jewish stories, the plot hinges on the contrasted burials of the two men, but in the parable the burials do not play a key role. Second, the reader alone learns of the fate of Lazarus and Dives in the parable, but in the Egyptian and Jewish stories a character within the story receives this revelation. Third, unlike the Egyptian and Jewish stories, there is no explicit reference to the good deeds of Lazarus or the bad deeds of Dives in the parable. (p.26).

Corroborating this view, Jonathan (2014) asserts:

The Egyptian and Jewish stories reveal that the postmortem fate is due to either good deeds outweighing bad ones or vice versa. By contrast, the parable does not refer to either the deeds of the rich man or of Lazarus. The reason for the reversal of fortune is stated clearly in verse 25 “But Abraham replied, “son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony’ (p.82).

Pointing out further difference between the text of Luke and the folkloric backgrounds, Bultmann (1963) averred: “The reversal of fates in Luke functions solely as a consolation to the poor and condemnation of the rich- the leveling of earthly relationships. Furthermore, the burial of the two men plays a significant interpretive role in the folktale, but this is not the case in the parable” (p.204). Papaioannou (2013) from his own point of view submits: “In the folktale, it is the difference in the burial of the two that is reversed at death; in the parable, the contrast is between life and the afterlife. In the folktale the revelation about the afterlife is given through a tour of Amante; there is no tour in the parable. The folktale concept of reincarnation is completely absent from the parable” (p.118). On the Bar Ma’yan legend, Papaioannou (2013) remarked:

The legend suggests that the wicked gain a reward on earth for whatever good they may have done so that on the Day of

Judgment they are fully liable for punishment. Likewise the righteous suffer here for the few sins they have committed so that they may receive a clear record on the Day of Judgment. Such casuistry is missing from the parable (p.118).

Papaioannou (2013) responding to Bultmann's proposition about the godless couple argues that:

It fails to parallel the first part of the parable and can illuminate it only insofar that a revelation about the afterlife serves to bring repentance. In the legend, there is a tour of hell for living persons who return to tell what they have seen; in the parable, a return from the dead is requested, but refused. In the legend, the revelation about the afterlife brings repentance; in the parable, it is emphatically stated that such a revelation, even if granted, would not bring repentance (pp. 118-119).

Bauckham in Jonathan (2014) pointed out further that:

The Egyptian and Jewish stories focus upon the burials of the two men. The contrast is between their burial and their state in the afterlife, while the parable focuses upon the state of the men in the afterlife compared to their life in this world. The Egyptian and Jewish stories speak of the fate of the two men

after death which is given to a character in the story. Conversely, the readers or hearers of the parable learn what happens to the rich man and Lazarus after death. The parable goes even further and raises the possibility of revelation of the postmortem fates of the two men to the rich man's brothers, and then rejects it (Pp.81-82).

Forbes (2000) equally observed that in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, there is no emphasis on the difference in burials, the good deeds/ bad deeds theme is absent, and there is no tour of the underworld, there is a definite refusal to send a messenger from the dead. All these features are present in the Egyptian stories.

It is the common opinion of some scholars that the story of a rich man and a poor man whose fates are reversed in the afterlife is a common folkloric motif found in many stories. According to Jonathan (2014): "it is quite possible that Jesus would have known about the Jewish story as it circulated within first-century Palestine, or indeed may have known other stories which used these motifs" (p.82). Bauckham in Jonathan (2014) cautions: "while the stories might be instructive, it would be a mistake to give them a privileged role in the interpretation of the parable" (p.82). Forbes (2000) remarked that these observed differences would appear to be too great to maintain dependency. It is likely that Jesus could have made use of the folktales during his time, although he provided it with a new conclusion (vv.27-31).

3.8 Analysis of the Text of Luke 16:19-31

According to Utley (2013), the text of Luke 16:19-31, is a highly unusual parable because: (1) It has no introduction, (2) It has no explicit application, and (3) A person is specifically named. Donahue (1988) observed that the narrative of Luke 16:19-31 falls into three major parts: (1) Rich and poor in this life (16:19-21); (2) The death of each protagonist and the reversal of fates in the afterlife (16:22-26); and a parenetic dialogue between Abraham and the rich man over the fate of those still alive (16:27-31). (p.170). Certainly, the narrative is a three-act play. The first act portrays the earthly contrast between the wealthy man and Lazarus. The second act describes the reversal of their conditions in the afterlife. The third act depicts the rich man's request to Father Abraham for a sign so that those still living can avoid his torment, a request that Abraham refused. Obviously, in this story, Jesus paints a powerful dramatic scene of contrasts. According to Armstrong (1967), this parable is par excellence a parable of contrasts: riches and poverty, heaven and Hades, compassion and indifference, inclusion and exclusion, and abrupt reversal of fortune (p.108).

3.8.1 The Rich Man and Lazarus in Life (vv. 19-21)

The narrative begins with the opening formula, “there was a certain rich-man” (Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος) which is reminiscent of 16: 1 and which Luke uses to introduce several other parables in his Gospel. He is a nameless rich man. He is left nameless, perhaps to imply that his name was not “written in heaven” (Lk.10:20). Legend

gives him the names: *Nimeusis* or *Neuēs*, that is, Nineveh, and Fineas or Phineas, in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Sometimes, the rich man is called Dives, but this is simply the Latin for “rich man.” Here is Jesus’ brief description of him which is very clear. Herzog (1994) remarked that “ he is clothed in purple (ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν), the most costly dye, whose use was severely limited even among elites” (p.117). Only kings, princes, nobles and those who were very wealthy could afford them. According to Hendrickx (1986), “in Luke’s thought, this purple mantle is not just expensive, but above all ‘glorious’ (p.200). Fitzmyer (1985) contends that he wears the garments of luxury which “insinuate that he lived like a king” (p.1130). The rich man feasted sumptuously/splendidly everyday (βύσσον εὐφραινόμενος καθ’ ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς). As Herzog (1994) remarked, the rich man eats as he dresses with extravagant excess, not just on special occasions but “everyday. This was a mark of great wealth. The Dives, according to Barclay (199) “lived the life of a glutton, a gourmet and a sybarite” (p.92). For Gowler (2005), he lived a life of conspicuous consumption. The other character is introduced as “and a certain poor man (πτωχὸς δέ τις).

The socio-economic conditions of these two men are drawn in sharp contrast. This poor man is given a name. His name is Lazarus (ὄνοματι Λάζαρος). This is the only instance of a name being given to a character in the parables of Jesus. Some scholars have raised a possible link or connection between this Lazarus and the account of the raising of Lazarus in the Gospel of John Chapter 11. However, the Lazarus in this parable however, is not the Lazarus of Bethany that was raised from the dead in John Chapter 11.

This Lazarus of Luke was poor, a beggar and possibly lamed and diseased. Hendrickx (1986) clarifying this view submits: “It should be noted that the name Lazarus/Eleazar was very common, and therefore could very well have been used independently in Lk 16:19-31 and Jn 11 (p.201). Thus, there is no reason to believe that these two Lazaruses are the same. Snodgrass (2008) adds: “Further, the account in John 11 reports the very incident – resurrection – that the parable precludes. Neither account should be explained on the basis of the other” (p.427). Hendrickx (1986) remarked that the use of the proper name indicates that the poor man is not just ‘anyone’: God knows him and is aware of his need. His name is written in heaven (cf. Luke 10:20). One would have expected the rich man to have a name and the poor man to be anonymous, but here the opposite is true (p.200). Danker in Forbes (2000) considers that: “the naming of Lazarus indicates that he enjoys true personhood, whereas the rich man, despite his worldly affluence, lacks real identity” (p.186). Nolland (1993) pointed out that: “ the naming of the poor man while the rich man remains anonymous already anticipates the coming reversal by reversing the normal anonymity of poverty and the individuating significance of wealth” (p.828). For Barclay (1999): “The name may well be to emphasize the truth that even if the poor righteous man has no other helper, God is his help” (p.92). There is something in a name. A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold (Prov.22:1). The name Lazarus, from the Hebrew, אֱלֵעָזָר, *El’āzār, Eleazar*, means “God is my help.” According to *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (1995), “the name is part of the characterization, because it comes from Eleazar, which means “God helps,” and

therefore foreshadows Lazarus's fate. Tragically, no one else helps Lazarus" (p.316). By contrast with the rich man, Lazarus is a destitute beggar, clothed with ulcerated sores, lying at the gate (ἐβέβλητο πρὸς τὸν πυλῶνα). For his part, Lazarus is quintessentially poor, hungry, and lacking medical care. His sores were open and the only attention they received was from dogs that licked his wounds. He desired to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Hultgren (2000) in this connection observed that:

The phrase 'desired to be fed' (ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι, *epithumōn chortasthēnai*) recalls another at 15:16 (ἐπεθύμει χορτασθῆναι [*epethumei chortasthēnai*], concerning the prodigal son), suggesting "a constant and unfulfilled longing." What he desired amounted to mere scraps that fell from the table. It has been suggested that, in lieu of napkins, people used pieces of bread and then tossed them out. But no evidence is provided for such a practice. In any case, dogs licked the sores of Lazarus. The picture portrayed is probably that of roaming street dogs that detect and taste the "fresh meat" that the sores on Lazarus would represent to them. They wait for his death (for references to dogs that consume the dead, see I Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Ps 16:2; Jer 5:3).

The licking would be very degrading and, if done continually, would prevent the sores from healing (p.112).

On the question of the dogs licking the sores of Lazarus, Forbes (2000) sees differently. He argued: “This should not be taken as a picture of affection, but as an underscoring of the deprivation of Lazarus” (p.187). Some scholars saw this type of scenario as evidence of a sinner being punished by God. This view finds support from Herzog (1994) who argues thus:

More commonly, the dogs are taken to be street dogs, whose licking graphically depicts how vulnerable Lazarus has become. He cannot even defend himself from their actions, which render him more degraded and unclean. This touch may have led the parable’s hearers to conclude that Lazarus was a sinner being punished by God. One recalls the words of the Lord to Ahab, spoken through Elijah: “Thus says the Lord: ‘in the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood.’ ”(1Kings 21:19). The similarity of Lazarus’s fate to the fate of Ahab may have led hearers to assume that both have been punished for their sin. The prophecy also suggests how close to death of Lazarus is. (p.119).

3.8.2 The Rich Man and Lazarus in Eternity (vv. 22-23)

After introducing the two contrasting characters, the parable moves from this life to the next. V.22 introduces the decisive point in the story. Both men died. “It happened that the poor man died” (ἐγένετο δὲ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν πτωχὸν) and the rich man also died (ἀπέθανεν δὲ καὶ ὁ πλούσιος). Blomberg in Forbes (2000) noted that “their deaths are described in reverse order to their lives, possibly to highlight the reversal of fortunes that occurred at this point” (p.188). As the life of Dives and Lazarus is contrasted so is their fate after life. The rich man was simply buried, perhaps accorded a proper and magnificent burial (ἐτάφη). In the words of Hendrickx (1986), he got a first a first-class burial. Herzog (1994) in this regard opined that this “indicates that his entire life was marked by sign of God’s blessing and favour” (p.120). Corroborating this view, Smith as cited in Herzog (2000) stated:” no misfortune happened to the rich man such as could be interpreted as an act of Divine judgment; his life of ease and luxury was followed by honourable “burial” (p.120). By contrast, Lazarus was apparently left unburied. As Fitzmyer (1985) puts it, “left unburied by human beings, he was carried off by heavenly beings” (p.1132).

3.8.3 The Rich Man’s Requests (vv. 24-31)

καὶ ἐν τῷ ἄδη ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, ὑπάρχων ἐν βασάνοις, ὁρᾷ Ἀβραὰμ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ Λάζαρον ἐν τοῖς κόλποις αὐτοῦ (and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom). The rich man is

now in hades while Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham. Sánchez (2016) contends that most of the Old Testament texts referring to Sheol or the underworld (Hades, Tartarus) depict it as a dark, gloomy place where both the good and the evil were relegated to a nebulous, joyless existence. According to Hendrickx (1986): “Hades often refers to the place where all the departed stay; but in the New Testament it seems to be especially the place of punishment and to have become synonymous with Gehenna” (Pp. 202-203). To be in Abraham’s bosom, as Barclay (1999) contended was “the phrase used to describe the highest bliss of paradise” (p.93).

The text or the parable does not give the rationale for the reversal of fortunes. Why was the rich man condemned and Lazarus saved? There is no mention of the morality or piety of the two men in the parable. The parable highlighted clearly the life of opulence vis- a- vis abject poverty. There is nothing in the parable that suggests that Lazarus was pious and good, let alone a Christian believer. And it is not said that one of them was better than the other one in a moral sense. The only moral flaw according to Womack (1995) that we might discern is how the rich man regarded the beggar as less than he was, and thus neglected to help him. The inference, according to scholars like Forbes (2000) is that the rich man was selfish by ignoring the material needs of Lazarus who lay by his gate each day. The rich man is not condemned simply for being rich and well-fed. In this connection, Jonathan (2014) would ask rhetorically: “Does this parable teach that poverty equals piety and, conversely that wealth equal wickedness? This would be tantamount to reading into the text what is not simply there” (p.87). The rich man is condemned because

his good fortune blinded him to the moral responsibility he had toward Lazarus. The rich man failed to take care of the poor, a religious obligation made abundantly clear in the teachings of Moses and the prophets (cf. Deuteronomy 15:7-11, Amos 6:1-14 and Isaiah 58:6-9). Nolland (1993) on his part observed that the rich man “could have been a rich benefactor, but instead his extravagance was focused on his own enjoyment of the good things of life” (P.832). Why was the rich man uncompromisingly condemned? According to Barclay (1975): “The sin of Dives was that he never noticed Lazarus, that he accepted him as part of the landscape and simply thought it perfectly natural and inevitable that Lazarus should lie in pain and hunger while he wallowed in luxury” (p.214). According to Herzog (1994), it is not the rich man’s wealth but his callous lovelessness and impious self-indulgence that are condemned. Goudge as cited by Barclay (1999) opined that: “it was not what Dives did do that got him into gaol; it was what he did not do that got him into hell” (p.98). Barclay (1975) titles this passage, "The Punishment of the Man Who Never Noticed." Lazarus was at his door and he didn't notice. His wealth did not allow him to see the suffering Lazarus. Corroborating this, Donahue (1988) submits that “one of the prime dangers of wealth is that it causes “blindness” (p.171).

The sin of the rich man was that he really ignored the plight of the desperately poor Lazarus who was just outside his gate. The rich man chose to be blind; he chose not to see the suffering all around him; he refused to do anything about it. Jonathan (2014) contended that: “Whilst the parable does not explicitly condemn the rich man, the unmistakable inference is that he had done nothing to alleviate the suffering of a destitute

man outside his own gate” (p.84). And Forbes (2000) in this regard is correct to assert that: “if the rich man’s morality is not at stake, the repentance motif, introduced in vv. 27-31, is superfluous and pointless” (p.192). Lehtipuu (2007) lending support to this perspective submits:

The latter part of the story clearly indicates the fault of the rich man. He did not listen to “Moses and the prophets,” the guides to proper behavior, that is, to the right use of one’s possessions and providing for the poor.¹¹ The earthly conduct of the rich man is in striking contrast, e.g., to “the fast God has chosen,” proclaimed by Isaiah, which is to “. . . share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin” (Isa 58:7). The rich man does the opposite: he is full while the beggar stays hungry, he does not let the beggar at his gate into his house, and does not cover the sores of the poor man.(p.165).

The Old Testament insisted vehemently that the rich aid the poor. Certainly, the Old Testament Prophets, such as Amos, castigated the rich for oppressing the poor and crushing the need. Interestingly, the Old Testament saw wealth as something good but warned the wealthy not to use their position to harm or oppress the poor, needy or less privileged. The rich had an obligation to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. The rich man

in the text of Luke was conspicuously found wanting in this regard. This was his debacle. He is not condemned simply for being rich and well-fed; he is condemned because his good fortune blinded him to the moral responsibility he had toward Lazarus. The rich man failed to take care of the poor, a religious obligation made abundantly clear in the teachings of Moses and the prophets (cf. Deuteronomy 15:7-11, Amos 6:1-14 and Isaiah 58:6-9). Snodgrass (2008) asserts that the parable is “specifically a warning to the wealthy for their neglect of the poor” (p.432-433).

Obviously, since the rich man addressed Lazarus by name, it shows clearly that he knew him very well in life. He does not even have the excuse that he didn't know there was a poor beggar suffering at his door. To make matters worse, the rich man seems to feel that even in death Lazarus should serve him, first, by bringing him some water and, then, by being a messenger to his brothers. On the rich man's first request, Herzog (1994) observed that:

The rich man's “request” is delivered with two imperatives: show mercy and send Lazarus. He is still an elite, issuing orders and having them obeyed. He never asks why he is in the flames, although he does know why Lazarus is with Abraham. To the rich man, Lazarus is self-evidently a servant, a domestic, an errand boy to do Abraham's bidding, so his own demand follows. The rich man's recognition of Lazarus exposes his hardness of heart. Lazarus was not just a

nameless, anonymous beggar at his gate; the rich man knew his name. Whatever his sins may be, the rich man was not blind. He saw and knew Lazarus. But he has not yet perceived that Abraham is both his father and Lazarus' father. Of course, if Abraham is their common ancestor, then they are brothers, kin (p.123).

This request, of course was turned down. Even though the rich man was a descendant of Abraham did not alter his position. The parable attacks the erroneous view or opinion that no descendant of Abraham could be lost. In this connection, Snodgrass (2008) asserts:

That the rich man calls Abraham "father" and Abraham calls him "child" creates an oxymoron: a child of Abraham is in the place of torment. In this way the parable reinforces the warning in Matt 3:8-10; Luke 3:8-9 that no one should presume to say "We have Abraham as father." Rather, the children of Abraham are those who obey Moses and the prophets and share their wealth with the poor (p.430).

Interestingly, Abraham begins his pedagogy of the oppressor: "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. Abraham gives the second reason why the rich man would not be obliged: "And besides all this, between us and you a great

chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us” (καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις μεταξύ ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται, ὅπως οἱ θέλοντες διαβῆναι ἔνθεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς μὴ δύνωνται, μηδὲ ἐκεῖθεν πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαπερῶσιν). This χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται is a divine passive; with the perfect tense highlighting that what stands fixed cannot be bridged. The die is cast. Divine justice is done. God’s judgment is irreversible. The unbridgeable chasm or the wide gulf expresses or shows the irrevocability of God’s judgment. Forbes (2000) suggests that the:

Chasm is meant to contrast the gate (v.20) that the rich man could have passed through to assist Lazarus, but did not. Now Lazarus cannot assist him, for the gate has become a great chasm, a chasm dug by the rich man because of the way in which he lived (p.190).

Hendrickx (1986) observed, “A chasm fixed between persons signifies their definitive separation and not just the immutability of their respective destinies” (p.206). *The New Interpreter's Bible* (1995) remarked that “the chasm that now separates the rich man and Lazarus confirms the finality of the judgment on the rich man” (p.318).

The rich man’s second request still involves the services of Lazarus. He begs Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers about Hades. The rich man now understands that men’s choices must be made before death, and that their decisions

remain after their death. Metzger (2007) wonders what will Lazarus convey to his brothers. He states:

It is unclear what the rich man hopes Lazarus will convey to his brothers. Is Lazarus merely supposed to inform them of the various fates that await persons at death and trust that they will figure out how to avoid holding chambers with flame and torment, or does the rich man wish that Lazarus tell them precisely how to join the patriarch of his side? It is also unclear how Lazarus is to testify (p.148).

His (Lazarus) purpose according to Pilgrim (1981) is to exhort the five brothers to repent, in view of the sixth brother's fate.

Abraham responded again negatively to this second request. There was no need for someone to be sent from the grave to warn his brothers since they already have Moses and the prophets to warn them. In other words, a visitation from beyond the grave would be superfluous and add nothing to the instruction they already access in the law and prophets. This response is congruent with Luke's emphasis on the continuity between Jesus' teaching and that of Moses and the prophets.

The rich man protested, however. He insisted that while men may not heed the Old Testament Scriptures, they could not ignore the message of a man who had returned from the dead. The rich man believes that visitation by Lazarus would inspire repentance on the part of his brothers. Abraham's answer was short and pointed. He responded that if

his five brothers refused to listen to Moses and the Prophets (“Moses and the prophets” is the customary way of referring to the O.T. Scriptures) they would not be convinced by a spectacular appearance from the grave. Responding on why the rich man insisted that Lazarus should be sent to his five brothers, Metzger (2007) submits:

The rich man’s five brothers are firmly entrenched in elite social patterns and behaviors and have grown accustomed to a luxurious lifestyle, radical reorientation will require some persuasion (πεισθήσονται), but Lazarus will not be able to offer anything beyond what is already available (p.152).

Thus, the parable conveys the idea of sufficiency of the Scripture. They must listen to Moses and the prophets which is sufficient to avoid the suffering in Hades. The Scriptures are sufficient and contain the guidance they need. A special revelation from beyond the grave would add nothing to the information they currently possess. The parable reminds us in the words of Snodgrass (2008) that special signs are not required to know the will of God, nor will they convince those who do not wish to obey (p.434). The parable is left open-ended. Will the five brothers repent?

However, the main thrust of the parable comes in the second part where Jesus demolishes popular expectations as reflected in the request of the rich man and emphasizes that (a) supposed revelations from the dead do not bring repentance—Scripture does; (b) any return from the dead will come only through bodily resurrection,

not through any other means; and (c) there are no eyewitnesses with tales from the dead outside the Bible.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RICH-POOR DICHOTOMY IN IGBOLAND

Since the focus of this research is based on the Igbo people, it becomes absolutely important and imperative to give a brief description of Igboland, understand who Ndigbo are, their Cosmology or World-view, culture, belief system, traditional values, etc.

4:1 Igboland and the Igbo People of Nigeria

Igboland or Igbo society is a geographical and ethnic region occupied by the Igbo of South East of Nigeria. They are found in Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Ebonyi States of South East of Nigeria. The Igbo are as well found in some parts of Delta and Rivers States. Igboland is also called *Alaigbo*.

The word Igbo is used for both the people and their language. The leaders of Igbo thought and affairs prefer the use of Ndi-Igbo, which means, Igbo people or members of Igbo race when they want to say anything about the people themselves thereby indicating their distinction from the other races of Nigeria. Some versions, at times, write Ibo or Heebo. According to Ogbajie (1995), “these were used by some foreign writers and Africans who were influenced by them” (p.1). Corroborating this view, Chigere (2001) enlightens, “the word Igbo refers only to a particular race in West Africa. Another phonetical variation of this word is Ibo, a labial change rendered by foreign usage where the pronunciation presents some hazards (p.15). In Modern time, as Uchendu (1965) remarked, the word “Igbo” may be used in three senses to refer to Igbo territory, to the domestic speakers of the language, and to the language spoken by them. According to

Encyclopedia of World Cultures (1996), Igbo-speaking peoples can be divided into five geographically based subcultures: northern Igbo, southern Igbo, western Igbo, eastern Igbo, and northeastern Igbo. Each of these five can be further divided into subgroups based on specific locations and names. The northern or Onitsha Igbo are divided into the Nri-Awka of Onitsha and Awka; the Enugu of Nsukka, Udì, Awgu, and Okigwe; and those of the Onitsha town. The southern or Owerri Igbo are divided into the Isu-Ama of Okigwe, Orlu, and Owerri; the Oratta-Ikwerri of Owerri and Ahoada; the Ohuhu-Ngwa of Aba and Bende; and the Isu-Item of Bende and Okigwe. The western Igbo (Ndi Anioma, as they like to call themselves) are divided into the northern Ika of Ogwashi Uku and Agbor; the southern Ika or Kwale of Kwale; and the Riverrain of Ogwashi Uku, Onitsha, Owerri, and Ahoada. The eastern or Cross River Igbo are divided into the Ada (or Edda) of Afikpo, the Abam-Ohaffia of Bende and Okigwe, and the Aro of Aro. The northeastern Igbo include the Ogu Uku of Abakaliki and Afikpo.

Geographically, according to Uchendu (1965):

The Igbo people are located in southeast Nigeria between latitudes 5 and 7 degrees North of the Equator; and longitudes 6 and 8 degrees East of the Greenwich Meridian where they occupied an area of about 25, 280square kilometers(15,800 square miles). The River Niger, before it enters the Atlantic Ocean through its network of tributaries, which characterize

its delta, divides the Igbo country into two unequal parts with the greater portion lying in southeastern Nigeria (p.1).

Nmah (2014) in this regard opines:

Igboland is bound by a host of other culture groups with significant cultural and linguistic interfaces. These groups include the Edo-speaking and related groups, such as the Bini to the west, Esan to the northwest as well as the Urhobo and Isoko to the southwest. Other groups include the Igala, Idoma, Igede, and Tiv lying to the north, the Ekoi speaking groups of old Ogoja province to the east, the Ibibio speaking groups to the southeast, and the Ogoni and Ijaw speaking groups to the south. (p.44).

Igboland is the home of the Igbo people and it covers most of Southeast Nigeria. This area is divided by the Niger River into two unequal sections – the eastern region (which is the largest) and the Midwestern region. The river, however, has not acted as a barrier to cultural unity; rather it has provided an easy means of communication in an area where many settlements claim different origins. Today's Igbos are also surrounded on all sides by other tribes (the Bini, Warri, Ijaw, Ogoni, Igala, Tiv, Yako and Ibibio).

Basically, the Igbo occupy and belong mainly to Anambra, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, and Enugu states of Nigeria. Chigere (2001) observed that, “some are settled at the border areas of the eastern zone of Nigeria like Ahoada area of Rivers state, Asaba, Ika and

Agbor areas of Delta state” (p.22). The Igboland area falls also within five main vegetation belts namely: mangrove forest, fresh water, swamp forest, rain forest, derived savanna, and guinea savanna. One of the famous Rivers of Nigeria from which Nigeria is identified and called, the River Niger, is found in Igboland. What could be specifically defined as the Igbo political system or country as observed by Nwankwo (1993), covers an area of over 15,800 square miles, with a population of more than thirty million. According to Iroegbu as cited in Okoro (1998), there are certain observable features or things that hold the Igbo together namely, common origin, common world view, common language, shared cultured race, colour and habit, common historical experience and common destiny.

The origin of Ndigbo has for long been shrouded in controversy and continuous academic and intellectual arguments. For some scholars, the origin of Ndigbo remains a myth. The Igbo developed independently like other indigenous African peoples. The Igbo language is not spoken by any other peoples in the world. The Igbo form one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Although they live in scattered groups of villages, they all speak one language. They are one of the three major tribes in Nigeria.

4.1.1 Igbo Cosmology

Obviously, prior to the advent of the European missionaries and their agents of colonialization in Igboland, Ndigbo had a clear belief system, which recognized the existence of Almighty God called Chukwu (The Big God) or Chineke (God that creates)

worshipped through divinities, some of which include Ala (the earth goddess) Amadioha (god of thunder), Ahajioku (god of yam) among others. As the creator of everything, this Chukwu is called Chukwu Abiama. This supreme God keeps watch over his creatures from a distance. He seldom interferes in the affairs of human beings

Basically, Ndigbo see their world as made up to two planes: the physical and the spiritual. Supporting this submission, Uchendu (1965) states that:

The Igbo world is a world peopled by the visible and invisible forces, by the living, the dead and those unborn. It is a world in which all these interact, affecting and modifying behavior, a world that is delicately balanced between opposing forces, each motivated by its self-interest, a world whose survival demands some form of cooperation among its members, although that cooperation may be minimal and even hostile in character. It is a world in which others can be manipulated for the sake of the individual status advancement, the goal of Igbo life (p. 20).

In Igbo religious worldview, the human world is three-dimensional – the sky; the earth, intricately woven with water; and the spirit/ancestral world. Ndichie, ancestors are revered and venerated. In some sub-cultural areas and communities the four Igbo market days- Eke, Orié, Afo and Nkwo including notable rivers, streams, forests, trees and hills were also deified. Unlike major world religions, the Igbo Traditional Religion, like other religious systems in Africa has no known founder; it is native and indigenous to the Igbo people. Igbo. Traditional Religion therefore, is the belief system which has been handed down from one generation to another.

4.1.2 Igbo Culture

Igbo culture (Ọmenala ndị Igbo) are the customs, practices and traditions of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. It comprises ancient practices as well as modern concepts added into the Igbo culture either through evolution or outside influences. These customs and traditions include the Igbo people's visual art, religious beliefs, birth, marriage and death rituals, use of language, music and dance forms, social norms, burial, as well as their attire, cuisine(food) and language dialects. The culture of the Igbo modify the thoughts, speech, actions and artifacts of the Igbo so much that the Igbo are easily distinguished from other ethnic groups. . Ndigbo are very traditional people, there is a strong pull towards preserving inherited ethos and values (also known as omenani or odinani). This manifests in the continued celebration and sustenance of cultural festivals and feasts such as Mmanwu or masquerade festivals in many towns and villages.

4.1.3 The Igbo Traditional Political Institution

Ndigbo had a decentralized system of government. It was a chiefless society, so to speak, which was egalitarian and segmentary in nature. There was no supreme King like Oba and Emirs in the West and North respectively. Thus, it is the wisdom of Ndigbo to say “ *Igbo enwe Eze*” (Igbo people have no King). The Executive, Legislative, and Judicial power were vested in the following institutions, Oha na Eze, the Council of Elders, the Offor title holders, the family, the Ozor title holders, the Age-Grade, the Umuada, and the Chief Priests.

The main political institution among the traditional Ndigbo were the Oha- na Eze, comprising, the Town Assembly, the King or Ruler (Eze), the Council of Elders or Chiefs, and the Age Grade. The King or Ruler had the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial power, but worked closely and decided with his Chiefs. The traditional political system of Ndigbo was republic in nature, there was no separation of power, powers were decentralized, and they operated a democratic system of government.

4.2 Traditional Religious Values of Ndigbo

The totality of Igbo value is anchored on communalism. The Igbo society is patterned on that of egalitarian society in which almost everyone is equal. Gyekye (1996) sees Communalism as:

The doctrine or theory of the community (or, group) is the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society. This idea places emphasis on activity and the success of the wider society, not necessarily to the detriment of the individual, but rather to the well-being of every individual member of society(p.36).

Communalism places emphasis on collectivity, egalitarianism, belongingness etc, which is opposed to individualism. Mbiti (1980) giving his own insight into communalism sees the ‘ existence of the individual as subsumed in the collectiveness of

the community, thus, he said; “I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am’ (p. 108).

The writings of some African scholars such as Nkrumah’s Consciencism, Nyerere’s Ujamaa socialism, as well as Azikiwe’s Neo-welfarism, brings communalism to limelight. As Egwutuorah (2013) observed that communalism allows the community to co-operate and come together to harness their resources together for the good of every body. He further remarked that in a communal society, oneness and the love for one another really exist among the community. According to Madukwe (2010), African communalism (which Igbo society is part of):

Connotes concern for human beings and their well-being. As an offshoot of extended family system where there is interconnectedness among the members of the community, there is care for one by all. There is the bearing of one another’s burden and everyone is his brother’s keeper. There is a mutual assistance for one another. The have help those who do not have so that no one perishes because of want while his next door neighbour lives in affluence. There is sharing of virtually everything (279).

As a matter of fact, Igbo communalism finds expression in living together and sharing responsibilities commonly. In this connection, Egwutuorah (2013) averred that what actually energizes communalism in Igboland are the concepts of extended family (*Ime-nne*) kindred (*Umunna*) village (*Ogbe*) and clan, because at these levels, people live

together and share responsibilities. The spirit of collectivism is the fundamental principle. Igbo communalism is a social system in which Igbo people or Igbo society lives together as a family. Communalism in Igbo society is all about sense of communion and sharing. This enables the society to consider and care for the less privileged of the society.

Anyaehe (2007), reflecting on communalism in the economy of Igbo is of the view that the wealth in a society belongs to the society and that individuals are only custodians of that wealth. Individuals create wealth in collaboration with the society they live in. The society, as a matter of fact, provides the condition for the individual to operate. Hence, there is nothing like individualistic wealth. Though exclusive individual ownership of property was recognized, individuals were expected to accommodate others in the spirit of communalism. The Igbos perceives the community as an integrated family where everyone contributes his quota to the well being of both the individuals and the society. This does not mean common ownership of property, as it is not communism; rather, the owners of property have the responsibility to use their property for the good of the society. It is a welfarist orientation. Igbo culture sees it as morally wrong for one to control wealth without appropriate social responsibility. It is seen as an absurdity.

Igbo communalism entrenches bearing of one another's burden in every aspect of life. It stems from the fact that human existence is necessarily a co-existence with the other persons. No one is an island. No single individual can live or survive on his own. We need one another for growth, support, and success. Human beings are communitarian

Beings. We participate directly or indirectly in the life of one another. Life is participation. Human existence is a life of interdependence on each other. We depend on one another for survival, progress, and help. Consequently, whatever affects one affects the other too. Life is a network of connection. This connection facilitates and makes our existence meaningful and appreciable. It is the wisdom of Igbo to say that “A tree cannot make a forest (*otu osisi anaghi eme ohia*), Unity is strength (*Igwe bu ike*), and Unity gives prestige to the community (*girigiri bu ugwu eze*). Since a tree cannot and will not make a forest in Igbo society, communal system is fostered and energized, and communal values and principles naturally developed within the society. This, of course, does not necessarily negate the individual life of every member of the society. The concern of communalism in Igbo Society is the welfare of the people living in the community. The belief that the success of the society is the success of individual and vice versa, promotes communal value. It bridges the gap that would have existed in Igbo society.

African communalism, which Igbo Society is part of, presupposes co-operative life. There is mutual help among the people. Examples of such communal values include solidarity, caring for others, sharing of joys and sorrows, mutual aid, interdependence, social harmony, reciprocal obligation, etc.

4.3 The Rich-Poor Dichotomy in Contemporary Igboland

Nyerere (1997) contends that:

Poverty is not the real problem of the modern world. For we have the knowledge and resources which could enable us to overcome poverty. The real problem - the thing which creates misery, wars and hatred among men – is the division of mankind into rich and poor. We can see this division at two levels. Within nation states there are a few individuals who have great wealth and whose wealth gives them great power, but the vast majority of the people suffer from varying degrees of poverty and deprivation...And looking at the world as a collection of nation states, we see the same pattern repeated. There are a few wealthy nations which dominate the whole world economically, and therefore politically; and a mass of smaller and poor nations whose destiny, it appears, is to be dominated (p.109).

Saheed (2015) equally remarked that Nigeria is the largest and most populous country in Africa with a population of over 180 million. It is a rich nation with vast or abundant natural and human resources, and even with this, the wealth gap in the country is getting bigger. Nigeria, as Saheed also observed, has revenues of over \$80 billion from oil reserves alone, yet wealth inequality in the country is among one of the worst in the world. This poses a big economic problem.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria in their Pastoral Letter and Communiqué (2000) expressed a deep concern over the widening gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria in the following words:

The gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen. Street beggars are increasing, while joblessness and homelessness no longer make news. While civil servants and teachers receive poor salaries, which are often late in coming, elected officials vote themselves special appropriations, allowances, and other benefits. While the majority of Nigerians are hungry, a few are wallowing in scandalous affluence. There is an apparent reluctance to bring every citizen on board on a very fundamental issue like just wage, family wage, living wage. In exercising our prophetic role, we cannot but denounce the injustices that create the gulfs, splits, and imbalances in our society (no.6).

Inequality is a real problem in Igboland. It is prevalent in Nigeria. The dichotomy between the “haves and the “have-nots is very glaring, with the extravagant lifestyle of a few juxtaposed amongst the slum or squalor of the very many. According to Saheed (2015) corruption and high costs of governance contribute to this rich-poor dichotomy in Nigeria. Corruption and high governance costs hinder economic development in Nigeria. Wealth distribution in the country is unequal. Sagay (2017) reveals that a Nigerian

Senator earns about N29 million a month and over N3 billion a year,” Furthermore, according to him, the basic salary of each senator is N2,484,245.50; hardship allowance, 1,242, 122.70; constituency allowance N4, 968, 509.00; furniture allowance N7, 452, 736.50; newspaper allowance N1, 242, 122.70. “Wardrobe allowance N621,061.37; recess allowance N248, 424.55; accommodation 4,968,509.00; utilities N828,081.83; domestic staff N1,863,184.12; entertainment N828,081.83; personal assistant N621,061.37; vehicle maintenance allowance N1,863,184.12; leave allowance N248,424.55; severance gratuity N7, 425,736.50; and motor vehicle allowance N9, 936,982.00.

What are the main reasons for the rich-poor dichotomy in Nigeria, precisely in Igboland? What are the effects/consequences of this gap or dichotomy between the rich and the poor in the South East zone? As we have the causes, there are also some concomitant effects. This becomes then the mission that this chapter is set out to achieve.

4.3.1 Causes of the Rich-Poor Dichotomy in Igboland

The focus here are the reasons for the growing divide between the rich and the poor in Igboland. The following are some of the identifiable causes of the gap or dichotomy between the rich and the poor in Igbo Society.

4.3.1.1 The Erosion of Igbo Communal Values

Communalism is deeply rooted in Igbo society so much so that it has become part of Igbo culture. Unfortunately, Igbo communal values were eroded with the coming

of modernity. As a matter of fact, modernity brought about rapid development seen in the areas of industrialization, urbanization, civilization, etc, which have removed Igbo people from their culture. Individualism is now enthroned over communalism. What is now obtainable is man alone, everyone is on his own. Wealth is now cherished more than relations. This is against the Igbo proverb – *Nwanne ka ego* (a brother, sister, relation is more valuable than wealth). But on the contrary, wealth is now more valued than relatives. On this point of view Eze (2012) asserts:

The patronage which Igbo communalism enjoyed has been estranged by civilization, urbanization and industrialization. Civilization promotes western ways of life which have changed Igbo worldview on communalism. People live departmentalized life. Relatives, in-laws and friends are expected to visit one another with prior notice and approval. Members of the same yard and neighbours no longer associate as they should in order not to impede on others privacy. Communalism has been eroded by civilization and individualistic life which abhors communal living is entrenched (p. 91).

Okwueze (2003) buttressing the above submission on the negative effect of modernity on Igbo communal values as a result of urbanization averred that:

Urbanization has provided opportunities for people to shift from rural areas to the cities, thus breaking the ties of the traditional

extended family system. Collective responsibility of extended family for the enculturation of a child is fast declining, and individualism is replacing it. (p.90).

Obviously, Western culture and civilization is a serious threat to Igbo communalism. Urbanization has brought about secularization which has helped in no small measure in eroding Igbo cultural heritage. The extended family system has been negatively affected by modernity. Lending support to this view, Madukwe (2010) averred that “the African practice of extended family system whereby an individual becomes fulfilled in life, only in relation to the fulfillment of other members of the extended family, is no longer obtainable today”(p.282).

4.3.1.2 Marginalization by the Federal Government

Igboland or the South east has been neglected by the Federal government for years. The history of the marginalization of Igboland dates back to Nigerian-Biafran civil war. Anele (2015) remarked that the civil war provided haters of Ndigbo within Yakubu Gowon’s administration. After the civil war, there was a coordinated policy of pauperizing the South East. As a matter of fact, the Gowon administration adopted a banking policy that nullified any bank account operated before the war by the Biafrans. Each Igbo depositor of the Nigerian currency could only access a flat sum of twenty pounds, irrespective of the deposit. In addition, the military government promulgated the Enterprises Promotion Decree of 1974, or Indigenization Decree, orchestrated to compel

foreign holders of majority shares of companies operating in Nigeria to hand over a larger percentage of stocks, bonds and shares to indigenous Nigerian business interest. Obviously, the real targets of that decree were the war-weary Biafrans already impoverished by the civil war, the wicked banking policy, and ban on importation of second-hand clothes (okirika) and stockfish. Of course, the Igbo in general did not have the financial wherewithal to benefit from the Indigenization Decree. Moreover, in the public service, most of the jobs and positions in virtually all the sectors of the economy previously occupied by South Easterners were taken over by those from other parts of the country. In addition, landed property owned by the Igbo was declared to be “abandoned property” particularly in Port Harcourt. Ohiri (2013) observed that oppression has been the plight of the Igbo since the cessation of hostilities in 1970, and that the aphorism “politics is the continuation of war by other means” became very pronounced in the dealings with the Igbo under one Nigeria.

The scars of the civil war and its aftermaths are still noticeable or visible in Igboland. In fact, lack of active federal government presence in the South East is very obvious. There are no good roads in the South East. There is epileptic supply of electricity, and there are no industries. Certainly, all these services will provide employment opportunities to people, and will help to narrow the rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland. Talking about infrastructure, Iziguzoro (2016) contends that there is no federal presence in Igboland. There are no good roads there and there are no viable industries owned or situated in the zone by the Federal Government that can cater for the

employment of the teeming youths. Iziguzoro (2016), arguing further, maintains that lack of Federal Government presence in the South-East geopolitical zone is the main reason for the current agitation for the creation of the Biafra republic. He is of the opinion that if there is a strong federal government presence in the South East zone, our youths will not see Biafra as an alternative, while fortune and fame seekers will not capitalize on that to hoodwink our gullible youths. Anele (2015) remarked with dismay that of the six geopolitical zones in the country, the South East has the least number of developmental projects from the federal government. Okorochoa (2017) concurring with this submission contends that it is true that the South-East has been neglected overtime politically, economically, socially and all that. Their roads are impassable; you cannot pass Port Harcourt road, Enugu road, Aba Road, Bayelsa road and all the roads. You can hardly see federal government presence in the South- East, all the things you see are through self help. Even the Onitsha Bridge has been a theoretical talk, fabrications which does not represent realities.

4.3.1.3 Maladministration by Political Office Holders.

Bad governance from the point of view political office holders in the South East is one of the major reasons for the rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland. Many political office holders are corrupt, selfish, greedy, extravagant, and visionless. Lending support to this view, Anuforo (2016) opines that Igbo political leaders have failed to represent the interest of Igbo nation. He remarked that severally, when you talk to people from other

tribes and complain about marginalization many will tell you that the Igbo leaders constitute about 65% problem of the Igbo. The lack of sincerity, transparency, and honesty which exist within the leaders are terrible. The underdevelopment of the south-east today was as a result of corrupt leaders who use the State treasury to run their private businesses. In a State where contracts are being assigned to companies owned by a State governor could be regarded as a mafia state. Unless the south-east governors change their mindset and attitudes towards public funds by judiciously spending the money for the purpose of the budget if not, the south-east states will continue to be perpetually underdeveloped.

The bottom line is that most Igbo political office holders are corrupt. Corruption in Igboland is generally caused by greed, avarice, inordinate desire or quest for wealth accumulation (get-rich-quick-syndrome), excessive materialism, societal pressure, partiality, favoritism, preferential treatment, bias, discrimination, lack of positive values, and real fear of God. Igbo political office holders steal or embezzle funds meant for the development of Igboland. Corruption wrecks economic and social development and increases poverty. It harms everyone but the poor and vulnerable suffer most. Corrupt practices among political office holders has led to poor infrastructure, poor educational system, poor or lack of access to water, sanitation, and decent housing. In this regard, Anele (2015) observes with dismay:

From the administration of Ukpabi Asika to the present governments of the five South Eastern states, financial

rascality, nepotism, indiscipline, corruption, and petty jealousies and visionlessness have remained leitmotifs in Igboland. Governors, commissioners, top civil servants, highly placed judicial officers, traditional rulers and members of the clergy have sacrificed core values of truthfulness, hard work, honesty, integrity, regard for good name, humility and brotherly love embedded in Igbo culture in the pursuit of power and wealth. (p.B1).

Anele (2015) asks rhetorically, how many governors in Igboland, both past and present, can give satisfactory account of how they spent the monies that accrued to their respective states during their tenure? He also observes that governors, federal and state legislators, and other top political office holders become stupendously rich after leaving office. In large parts of Igboland, the roads, health facilities, educational institutions, etc have deteriorated despite the revenue accruing to both the states and local governments.

Corrupt practices among Igbo political office holders have contributed immensely in making South East very backward. The menace called corruption is a big problem not only in the South East/Igboland, but in Nigeria generally speaking. It is indeed a monster, a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society. The effects of corruption in the Nigerian society, especially in Igboland, cannot be overemphasized. Corruption is seen as one of the major impediments to the economic development of the

nation. As a matter of fact, any nation with high level of corruption will certainly experience a poor national development.

Jigbale (2016) contends that the effects of corruption in Nigeria find expression in underdevelopment, lack of basic infrastructure like good road networks, defective leadership outputs, fuel scarcity in an oil producing nation, falling standards of education and work out, mass poverty, and our unenviable position on the list of poor and underdeveloped countries amidst rich natural resources. Dike in Dahida et al (2013) argues, “corruption diverts scarce public resources into private pockets, it weakens good governance; it also threatens democracy and erodes the social and moral fabrics of a country” (p.80). Okorie and Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2014) are of the opinion that corruption encourages kleptocracy, breeds poverty, insecurity, unemployment, and contributes to as well as exacerbates conflicts. Corroborating this submission, Kolawole as quoted in Igbokwe (2016), reveals:

Civil Servants and political appointees in 600 government agencies have pocketed trillions that would have been used to develop our roads, our schools, hospitals, airports, transportation, security, agriculture, manpower, power sector, tourism, petroleum sector in the past sixteen years. If Nigeria had invested wisely in the past sixteen years, Nigeria would have been a world destination today. (p. B3).

CBCN (1999) outlines some of the consequences of corruption in Nigeria as follows:

Corruption has bred gross inefficiency of public institutions and eroded people's confidence in those institutions, including government and its agencies, parastatals, security organizations, the judiciary, schools, hospitals, to name but a few. Corruption has led to diminished productivity in both the public and private sectors. As a result, unemployment has been increasing by leaps and bounds. Corruption has led to diminished productivity in both the public and private sectors. As a result of corruption, the economy has become severely distressed. Corruption has discouraged investment in Nigeria by both foreigners and Nigerians themselves. It has fueled the flight of capital from the country to foreign lands. As a result, unemployment has been increasing by leaps and bounds. There has been galloping inflation, and a severe decline in the quality of life of Nigerians. Corruption has indeed created an acute degree of poverty in Nigeria... Corruption has given Nigeria and Nigerians a bad image in the eyes of the international community. The fact that Nigeria was listed by Transparency International for two

years running as the most corrupt nation on earth should be a cause of great concern (no.4).

Other consequences of corruption according to Oladele (2013) are as follows: corruption promotes poverty; it creates the condition for political instability; corruption contributes to the blanket criminalization of Nigerians, especially the youths (with its capacity to generate poverty and instability, the youth have been systematically hijacked for selfish ends by unscrupulous politicians and ideologues), and corruption promotes the existence of underground/illegal economy (bribes). Dininio, and Kpundeh as quoted in Dahida (2013) averred:

Corruption causes a serious development challenge, in the political sphere; it undermines democracy and good governance by weakening political processes. Corruption in elections subverts accountability and representation in policy making, in the judiciary it suspends the rule of law and in the public service it leads to the unequal distribution of services. (p.80).

Media Advocacy and Development initiative (2013) outlines the following effects of corruption in Nigerian nation as follows: (a) It undermines the national image. (b) It threatens the very survival of a nation as it prevents the provision of basic social amenities for the citizenry. This is so because the money meant for development or

infrastructures is often pocketed by a few thereby making good governance impossible. (c) It has affected our health sectors not to talk of our educational institutions. (d) Corruption gives rise to unemployment and under development. Most infrastructural decay and unsatisfactory provision of amenities can be traced directly or indirectly to corruption. (e) There is a total collapse of power and road net work in the country today due to corrupt attitude of past leaders. (f) It erodes the ethical base of society- as due diligence, excellence, honesty, merit and integrity are discouraged. (g) It engenders mass poverty and thwarts efforts to overcome it. (h) Corruption breeds all kinds of crimes and vandalism: arm robbery, kidnapping, youth agitation etc. (i) It leads to massive brain drain – a great number of Nigeria best brains have been driven to other part of the world where they now spearhead developmental and scientific exploits.

Ayobami (2011) gives some of the effects of corruption on socio-economic development and nation building as follows: (a) diversion of development resources for private gain, (b) misallocation of talent, (c) lost tax revenue, (d) negative impact on quality of infrastructure and public services, and (e) slowing of economic growth. Other consequences of corruption according to Oladele (2013) are: it promotes poverty; it creates the condition for political instability; corruption contributes to the blanket criminalization of Nigerians, especially the youths (with its capacity to generate poverty and instability, the youth have been systematically hijacked for selfish ends by unscrupulous politicians and ideologues), and corruption promotes the existence of underground/illegal economy (bribes).

Recently, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, CBCN (2016), decriing the negative effect of corruption asserts that corruption is a cancer, very dangerous, and a social disease. It states categorically that with corruption Nigeria cannot progress; with corruption everything goes wrong, immorality takes over; retrogression instead of progression takes place. As a matter of fact, in Nigeria, corruption allows the affluent or those with high connection to buy the judiciary or bend the law or government rules in their favour. For these reasons, corruption harms the environment and undermines trust in government. Corruption wrecks economic and social development and increases poverty. It harms everyone but the poor and vulnerable suffer most. As a result of corruption, Igbo nation has become underdeveloped. As a result of corruption, administration or governance in Nigeria is in shambles.

4.3.1.4 Inter-State Discrimination/Segregation within South Eastern Region

Ajomole (2016) contends that the Igbo are sometimes responsible for their own economic woes. An observable pernicious inter-state discrimination/segregation within the South Eastern states has also contributed in no small measure towards the economic inequality status in Igboland. Anele (2015) submits that in the civil service and educational institutions up to the university level, people from different parts of the same state discriminate and fight among themselves. Sometimes, an application for employment or promotion is rejected because the person is from Imo state rather the Enugu state, and vice versa. Anele (2015) giving a concrete instance, recalls how former governor of Abia state, Theodore Orji, committed a very serious blunder when he sacked worker or employees from

other Igbo speaking states in a misguided attempt to ameliorate the unemployment problem in Abia state. Even though, he later reversed the decision after much criticisms and condemnations, but his irrational actions shows or demonstrates that sometimes Ndigbo are their own worst enemies.

4.3.1.5 Lack of Business Investment by Wealthy Igbo in the South East

The Igbo themselves have contributed to economic inequality in Igboland. Ndigbo have a penchant for developing other territories and leaving theirs underdeveloped. Obviously, Ndigbo have neglected their territorial base and preferred foreign territory as their home base thereby making all their investments there to the detriment of the development of South East. Many Igbo millionaires and billionaires have their investment outside Igboland. These investments would have provided job opportunities to the unemployed, improved quality of life, and narrowed the gap between the poor and the rich. Lending support to this submission, Nwodo (2017) urged Ndigbo to bring back their businesses to Igboland which will help to achieve economic greatness and would in turn lead to employment of millions of jobless youths in the geo-political zone. Another factor that is analogous to this point of view is the fact that the poor are not economically empowered by the rich in Igboland. It is very common to see employers paying their employees or workers just peanuts. Simply put, many rich Ndigbo are very selfish, greedy, insensitive, and callous towards their people.

4.3.1.6 Influence of Male Dominance

Igbo Society is a patriarchal society. Ezeaku in Nmah(2003) avers that “ the position of women in this simple culture was “dependence oriented” hence a common address to women as “*ori-aku,*” the consumer of wealth” (p.60). That is to say, according to Nmah Nmah(2003) that “ women do not play a significant role in the production of wealth in the family. They depended on their husbands for their economic welfare” (p.60). Kwazu, (2012) reveals,” In some clans in Ebonyi state, the men often determine jobs for their wives. This right of the men to dictate jobs for their wives keeps their wives ever dependent on their husbands, thus placing them at the risk of poverty” (153). Some men do not allow their wives to engage themselves in economic activities, travelling outside the country on business trips, and running industry. Besides, in Igbo culture, women have the domestic responsibility, *Nwanyi nwe ozi ulo*. As Kwazu, (2012) observes, “ this often prevents them from new privileges and profitable opportunities for jobs than men. It restrains them from escaping from poverty” (p.154). Some cultural practices discriminate against women. In Igbo society, women do not have right of inheritance. This cultural discrimination impoverishes women.

4.4 Effects of Rich-Poor Dichotomy in Igboland

Despite the negative effects of economic inequality, some people see it as socially beneficial to the society. One good effect of economic disparity is that it gives room for competition which is always good for stimulating growth, improving the quality of life

for all members of a society, and it is a necessary part of social progress. According to Colman and Nixon (1988), increasing inequality is not only an inevitable effect of economic growth, but also a necessary condition for growth. Therefore, an economy with a high concentration of income by the wealthy group is more likely to grow faster than one with a more equitable distribution of income. This is the pro inequality argument. Some economists, like Kaldor (1957) as quoted in Birdsong (2015) contends therefore, that wealth disparities are an inevitable part of a successful economy. However, Scanlon (2014) gives some reasons why economic inequality is bad for the society. He argues that economic inequality can give wealthier people an unacceptable degree of control over the lives of others. If wealth is very unevenly distributed in a society, wealthy people often end up in control of many aspects of the lives of poorer citizen over where and how they can work, what they can buy, and in general, what their lives will be like, and economic inequality is a factor that encourages the wealthy to prey and take advantage of the poor. Economic disparity is a problem, and it has so many negative effects in Nigeria particularly in Igboland. Some of the consequences are:

4.4.1 Poverty

In Nigeria, particularly in Igboland, poverty is a real problem. It is very widespread and severe. As a result, people have lack of food, clothes, education and the other basic amenities. Poverty is one of the effects of economic inequality. In many cases, people who have unequal opportunities in life often live in poverty, and people

who live in poverty may be treated unequally. Economic inequality brings about impoverishment. Poverty in Igboland has certain consequences or effects.

4.4.2 Poor Health / Hunger and Malnutrition

Poverty and poor health are inextricably bound together. Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of poor health. Poverty increases the chances of poor health. Poor health in turn traps communities in poverty. Infectious and neglected tropical diseases kill and weaken millions of the poorest and most vulnerable people each year. The poor are more susceptible to ill-health than are the well-off. Poverty occasions poor health. Corroborating this view, Benzeval, Judge, & Whitehead (1995) contend:

Poverty can affect health in a number of ways. Income provides the prerequisites for health, such as shelter, food, warmth, and the ability to participate in society; living in poverty can cause stress and anxiety which can damage people's health; and low income limits peoples' choices and militates against desirable changes in behavior (p.2).

Certainly, high level of infant mortality and low level of life expectancy are the biggest signs of poverty in Igbo Society. Many people do not have access to healthcare or basic medical amenities and have no access to qualified specialists. Many children are not immunized and this sends them to early graves. Poverty directly harms the health of those with low incomes. Poverty causes hunger. Lending support to this view, Kwazu (2012) contends:

The poor health of children in Igboland is partly, either due to poor economic conditions of the parents who can hardly afford hospital bills or who have poor health... Thus these poor parents choose to purchase their medications from chemists who issue drugs, sometimes, wrongly. Children in such families suffer from malnutrition, attributed to inadequate food intake and maternal care due to poverty. (p.161).

Corroborating the above submission, Benzeval, Judge, & Whitehead as quoted in Raphael (2002) opined, “It is one of the greatest of contemporary social injustices that people who live in the most disadvantaged circumstances have more illnesses, more disability and shorter lives than those who are more affluent”(p.1). The impoverished members of society are subject to disproportionate occurrence rates of certain kinds of illnesses. Access to quality health care and healthy food is sometimes limited or unavailable for poor individuals.

4.4.3 Lack of Access to Education

There is a link between poverty and education. Hillestad (2014) contends that children from disadvantaged backgrounds or low-income households are significantly less likely to be successful than their middle and upper class counterparts. With fewer resources and less of a focus on education at home, children growing up in poverty are behind from the very beginning. Hillestad observes that children in poverty often fail to

get an adequate education due to the stress of destitution and their lack of education prevents any rise on the social ladder. In Igboland, where poor children cannot have access to education, those children will remain perpetually illiterates and will be denied of so many opportunities in life. Studies have repeatedly shown that family income is one of the strongest predictors available for measuring success, both in the classroom and later in life. The poor are not able to provide the same educational opportunities for their children as the wealthy are.

4.4.4 Human Trafficking and Prostitution

Human trafficking is an effect of poverty as a result of economic inequality. It has become a business, human beings are commercialized. Trafficking in humans is illegal but it is seen as a means or medium of escaping poverty. Thus, it is now a means of livelihood. This dangerous trend has found its way into Igboland. Kwazu (2012) in accord with this submission averred, “human beings are the goods that are commercially transported. And there cannot be any commercial purpose without any economic interest. Therefore, human trafficking has an economic purpose” (p.162).

The current trend in human trafficking is actually slave trade in a new garb. There are two main streams namely: the trafficking of children for child labour and women mainly for sexual exploitation. Ovosi (2013) throws more on some of the activities and pains of the trafficked persons:

Internally trafficked persons in Nigeria, for example, are reported to be deployed into domestic service: shop

attendance, catering service, head loading, hawking, prostitution etc. Children deployed in households are subjected to about 12 – 18 hours of overburdening work; without good clothing and nutrition, the young victims are also often sexually abused by household members (p.C4).

The victims of this inhuman act are exposed to a lot of dangers: contracting all kinds of diseases, they are exposed to any number of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and to the even more deadly HIV/AIDS virus, pelvic inflammatory diseases, and suffer from psychological and mental breakdown as a result of stress arising from the humiliation and inhuman treatment that they receive on a daily basis.

Poverty predisposes the poor to disease, hunger, deprivation, want, and premature death. Poverty dehumanizes. There is a correlation between poverty and crime. Poverty causes crime. Poverty is an evil that must be rooted out.

4.4.5 Crime /Criminality

Some researches or studies establish a positive correlation between income inequality and crime. According to Birdsong (2015), economically unequal societies have higher crime rates. Corroborating this submission, World Bank Study (2002), asserts that crime rates and inequality are positively correlated. The correlation is causation – inequality induces crime rates. Quinney (1974), McDonald (1976), and Bonger (1916), suggested that the exploitation and oppression of the poor by a powerful and rich minority produces criminal behavior as a primitive form of uprising against the

ruling. Researchers, Stolzenberg, Eitle & D'Alessio, (2006), propose several possible explanations for the inequality-crime correlation. They contend that disadvantaged members of a society may be more likely to suffer from resentment and hostility as a result of their economic position or competition over scarce jobs or resources, resulting in a higher propensity for criminal behavior.

Criminality in Igboland is on the increase. There are cases of kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, assassination, murder, etc., which are very much connected to economic disparity.

4.4.6 Kidnapping/ Abduction/ Hostage-taking

Kidnapping which is a forceful abduction of a human person, holding him or her captive, with the intention of obtaining ransom, has become a tool for economic gain in Igboland. The current wave of kidnapping activities in Nigeria, especially in Igboland, has become worrisome. In fact, kidnapping has assumed a fast thriving industry in Igboland. The Magazine *Encomium* (2014) had this headline: “As kidnappers take over: Wealthy Igbo sons and daughters shun the South East.” The Magazine reported that the five South Eastern states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo are now in the firm grip of kidnappers. And with their brazen and brutal reign, travelling to the villages has become a taboo for most wealthy and well known sons and daughters from that part of the country. The only exceptions are perhaps those with enough money to pay to ‘special security. Ndibe (2014) lamented seriously that the Igbo have never faced a more serious

challenge than the current plight of kidnappers. Consequently, Igbo land, as a matter of fact, is beleaguered, dangerously close to becoming a no-go area.

This nefarious or obnoxious activity is usually carried out by the unemployed youths. Interestingly, the poor can never be kidnapped. The target is usually at the rich or the affluent. Osuji (2011) opined:

Igbo youth go through school and graduate but Igbo elders, having not worked to provide them with jobs have no jobs (unless they go to Yoruba land or Hausa land, other parts of Africa or overseas in search of jobs). Now what would you do, if your people do not care for your welfare? How do you unleash your anger on them? You kidnap those you believe that have some money but ignored your plight and demand ransom payment for their release! This is now what Igbo young men, the disowned and uncared for youths, have resorted to doing (p.B1).

From the above submission, we could see that unemployment and wealth concentration in the hands of the rich are basic causes of kidnapping in Igbo society. Other causes are: quest for prosperity or quick money, get-rich- quick syndrome, etc. Another factor that is at the basis of this dastard act is the fact that some youths are lazy and have taken to kidnapping as a means of livelihood. Besides, our society is one where one's importance is measured by his material acquisition.

4.4.7 Armed Robbery

Almost all the armed robbers that were caught confessed that poverty, which is always the direct product of economic inequality, pushed them into the life of crime.

Corroborating this fact, Ebele (2016) reports:

In place of reform, three members of a gang of armed robbers emerged from various sentences at the Kirikiri Medium Prison in Lagos with vengeance and a penchant for the bizarre. Noted for terrorising the Lagos suburbs of Ijesh, Ikotun, Aguda and Surulere, the suspects identified as Francis Ogbonna, Chisom Joseph and Oloko Raheem identified a desire to right perceived economic inequalities in the society and the impact of economic recession as reasons for embarking on a car-snatching spree (p.C1).

Armed robbery gang has terribly terrorized the South Eastern states. Many cars have been snatched, millions of naira carted away, and regrettably precious lives lost. But it seems the spate of armed robbery in the country is increasing exponentially day by day. This obnoxious activity is carried out by the unemployed persons.

4.4.8 Internet Scams / Cyber crime

An Internet fraud (online scam) is one of the crimes which the youths indulge into so as to make quick money in a bid to wriggle out of poverty. They call these perpetrators

“yahoo boys.” Through Internet services, fraudulent transactions are carried out. Millions of people have been defrauded through this medium.

4.4.9 Political Inequality

Scanlon (2014) opined that economic inequality can undermine the fairness of political institutions. He argues that if politicians must depend on large contributions for their campaigns, they will be more responsive to the interests and demands of wealthy contributors and those who are not rich will not be fairly represented, and consequently, would be ignored. What this implies is that citizens are not politically equal in economically unequal societies. Articulating this point of view, Birdsong (2015) argues that when wealth distribution becomes concentrated in the hands of small individuals, political power, as a matter of fact, tends to become skewed in favor of that small wealthy group. These wealthy groups are able and incentivized to manipulate government in their favor through both legal processes and through corrupt practices. Impoverished or working class groups are simultaneously less able to become educated or participate in the political process as economic means become increasingly scarce. Thus, income disparity or inequality increases political instability: more unequal societies are more politically unstable.

4.5 Closing the Gap between the Rich and the Poor in Igboland

Income inequality is a problem. Sometimes it is a problem created by governance. It is not natural. The good news is that we can fix it or close the gap to an appreciable

level. As economic disparity becomes worse and worse, we must consider solutions to rectify this situation. Strengthening this point of view, Nyerere (1997) submits:

The significance about this division between the rich and the poor is not simply that one man has more food than he can eat, more clothes than he can wear and more houses than he can live in, while others are hungry, unclad and homeless. The significant thing about the division between rich and poor nations is not simply that one has the resources to provide comfort for all its citizens, and the other cannot provide basic services. The reality and depth of the problem arises because the man who is rich has power over the lives of those who are poor, and the rich nation has power over the policies of those who are not rich. And even more important, is that our social and economic system, nationally and internationally, supports these divisions and constantly increases them, so that the rich get ever richer and more powerful, while the poor get relatively poorer and less able to control their own future. (pp.109-110).

Some of the solutions to this rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland would be as follows:

4.5.1 Return to Igbo Traditional Communal Values.

Communalism is opposed to individualism. It is the spirit of collectivism, egalitarianism, and being brothers' keeper. In traditional Igbo culture, Communalism brought about cooperation, sharing and mutual living in the society. This communal living helped in bridging the gap that could exist among members of the society. Communalism pressed it upon those in position to help, to offer such aid to the deserving members of the community. It is the responsibility of the wealthy members of the society to ensure that the unfortunate members are catered and provided for. Sharing and mutual living are promoted to ensure that no gap exists.

4.5.2 Making Education Free or Affordable

Education can help a family climb out of poverty directly by increasing household income, through increasing the productivity of self employed workers. By investing in the school system, people can get the knowledge they need to get a career of their choice. This benefits the economy because they will be contributing their skills while hopefully obtaining a good salary that they can later invest back into the economy. Michael Spence, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, as cited in Smith (2015) found that higher education leads to value-added jobs, which have higher incomes. He argues that education begets higher wages, and must be a priority to end inequality. Failing to provide education directly perpetuates income inequality. One good solution is to make education affordable and accessible to everyone. Education is a tool that empowers people which

will help them change the conditions of their lives. When people are empowered they are equipped with skills and knowledge with which they will be able to earn a living. In this way, they will both be able to get paid employment or start up a business and earn an income. Earning income is the first step towards poverty eradication.

4.5.3 Creating Jobs by investing in Infrastructure

Dorfman (2016) argues that creating jobs by investing in infrastructure will help reduce inequality. He sees infrastructure investment as not only pro-growth, but also pro-poor or at least pro-middle class. He asserts that large scale construction projects will create lots of jobs. Rodrik (2007) opined that historically nothing has worked better than economic growth in enabling societies to improve the life chances of their members, including those at the very bottom. Investing in infrastructure brings about economic growth which helps people move out of poverty, transforms society, creates jobs, and drives human development. Unemployment accounts for so many crimes and criminality in South-East. In fact, job creation will not be only a panacea or solution to crimes, criminality, and other forms of insecurity challenges facing South East region, but will help powerfully in closing the gap between the rich and the poor. When this is done criminality will be at the barest minimum, as there is a correlation between crime and poverty. Uba (2017) corroborating this point of view posited that when you build industries, farms and other necessary infrastructures, you inadvertently create jobs. When you create jobs, you reduce crime, and when you reduce crime,

you improve lives and add more value and quality to the people. When all of these happen at the grassroots level, the state as a whole is uplifted and repositioned. He further buttressed the need for grassroots developments arguing that empowering people who can stand on their own will indirectly raise an army of financially viable society through capacity building.

4.5.4 Making an Option for the Poor

An option for the poor according to Dorr (1995) is not an option for poverty but to opt for people. It is to opt for those economically disadvantaged, politically voiceless, culturally suppressed and religiously brainwashed. Option for the poor is necessary in order to address the issue of injustice. Chukwuemeka (2004) asserts, “ It is to opt for a world, in which hunger, violence, oppression, exploitation, injustice, man’s inhumanity to man and war will not be sources of gain and signs of development...Option for the poor is also an option for the rich to be human in their dealings with the less privileged members of the society”(pp.43-44). Option for the poor is an issue of commitment, a commitment of being with and for the poor. This commitment demands that the Church in Igboland, in this regard, should be more prophetic in playing her role as the voice of the voiceless, condemning every form of oppression, policies, and laws that keep people perpetually poor and oppressed. In fact, when unjust and oppressive structure is changed, lives are changed, and the poor will emerge or wriggle out of poverty.

4.5.5 Sharing of Wealth

Recently, Pope Francis (2014) advocated for redistribution of wealth by the rich. He contends that the rich can help close the economic gap, which is mostly created by greed, by sharing their wealth or money with others. He asserts:

Money is by itself a good instrument, like almost all things at human disposal: it is a tool that broadens our capacities, when economic power is a tool that produces fortunes that people keep to themselves, hiding them from others, it leads to injustice, and it loses its original positive value (p.B1).

4.5.6 Wealth Creation

Some scholars, like, Utomi (2007), are of the opinion that in order to close the gap between the rich and the poor, efforts should be placed on wealth creation rather than wealth redistribution. He averred: “Poverty eradication has to be holistic in approach. Wealth creation rather than distribution must be the paramount ethics. Direct cash transfers are rarely an attractive way to deliver official development assistance” (p.61). Wealth creation promotes hard work. Many people are in poverty out of sheer laziness. 2Thessalonians 3:10 admonishes, “For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If anyone will not work, let him not eat.” Igbo culture abhors laziness. It does not accommodate begging either. Wealth creation assists the poor to change the overall structures within which they live. It looks to their being able to develop strategies

by which they can emerge from poverty. It goes beyond providing food, clothing and shelter to alleviate immediate needs. A Chinese proverb says, “You give a poor man a fish and you feed him for a day. You teach him to fish and you give him an occupation that will feed him for a lifetime.” To create wealth, it is absolutely necessary to create or provide something that is valuable to people, which in turn will cause them to trade labor or something of value for it. In other words, this means providing something to fulfill a need. The greater the need met, the greater the wealth created. The logic of wealth creation demands allowing others to use our wealth to cause it to grow.

4.5.7 Development/ Industrialization of Rural Areas

According to the *Rural Poverty Report* (2011):

Despite massive progress in reducing poverty in some parts of the world over the past couple of decades, there are still about 1.4 billion people living on less than US\$1.25 a day, and close to 1 billion people suffering from hunger. At least 70 per cent of the world’s very poor people are rural, and a large proportion of the poor and hungry are children and young people. (p.16).

Rural poverty, according to *The Rural Poverty Report* (2011), “results from lack of assets, limited economic opportunities and poor education and capabilities, as well as disadvantages rooted in social and political inequalities”(p16). Ijere, as quoted in Ugwuanyi (2013) observed:

Nigerian rural sector which produces 95 percent of the food crops in the country has been traditionally linked with poverty and underdevelopment characteristics that include comparatively poor standard of living as a result of lack of basic amenities like access roads, portable water access to affordable and quality supply, basic health care facilities, electricity, functional primary and secondary education facilities, basic agricultural facilities like irrigation storage facilities and other farm inputs like fertilizer for enhanced rural agricultural activities, industrial centers for promotion of rural industrialization, skills acquisition centers for manpower and skills development, developed market and commerce to enhance rural economic activities and the accompanying income.(p.5).

The gap between the rich and the poor is very glaring in the rural areas. Poverty level is high as well in the rural areas. Ezeah (2005), in this respect asserts: “The Nigerian rural areas are neglected areas, even though social amenities are also not adequate in some urban areas. The situation in the rural areas is far worse and many communities lack basic amenities like good roads, markets, electricity, pipe borne water etc, (p.3). Okoli and Onah (2002) equally observed that the rural areas in Nigeria are characterized by inadequacies of human needs which find expression in the near absence of some basic

infrastructures with its attendant features of degradation and deprivation. In the same connection, Okoli and Onah (2002) remarked: "The privilege of education which, for instance, is supposed to be a birth right of every Nigerian child is an illusion to many poor rural dwellers. In some places, there are no schools at all while in some others the schools are shabby, ill-equipped and poorly staffed" (p.159). Corroborating this view, Abonyi and Nnamani (2011) note thus:

Today, rural poverty persists in Nigeria despite the prosperity created by the country's oil wealth and this is evident in the difficulty experienced by many in satisfying their basic needs for food, water and shelter. Lack of these basic needs has held rural development in Nigeria to ransom. (255).

Abah (2010) opined that the most evident display of Nigeria under-development condition is the rural areas and that the deplorable condition of the Nigerian rural sector is emphatic. As Ugwuanyi (2013) observed:

One major consequence of the rural underdevelopment is urban migration which is daily reducing the active population of the rural areas in Nigeria. In fact, as a consequence of persistent underdevelopment, there has been noticeable high level of rural-urban migration in search of better standard of

living and wider opportunities for meaningful economic and social activities. (p.5).

Nwankwo and Apeh (2006) note another consequence of urban migration: rural-urban migration is dysfunctional not only to rural development but retards the overall national development. Incessant and excessive rural urban migration has brought about a lot of socio-economic difficulties both in the rural and urban areas. Lending support to this view, McCarthy (2004), is of the opinion that excessive urbanization leads to high rate of urban congestion, crime and poor infrastructure such as proper sewage disposal system, safe and portable drinking water, electricity and other amenities, chronic unemployment with the attendant creation of large slums and Shanty towns.

4.5.8 Raising the Minimum Wage

Some scholars are of the opinion that raising the minimum wage would certainly open a window of opportunity for many poor people to improve their lives. For instance, Smith (2015) maintains that raising the minimum wage is the first pragmatic step to reducing income inequality. Schweitzer and Wascher as cited in Neumark (2015) contend that raising the minimum wage reduces the inequality of wages earned by workers and as a way to alleviate rising wage. Konczal (2014) opines that one of the key institutions of the modern economy, the minimum wage, could dramatically reduce the misery of the poor. In other words, he contends that raising the minimum wage reduces poverty and economic inequality. Kakwani (2006) strengthens this point thus:

People want income because it gives them the possession of commodities, which they consume. The higher the income the greater the command people have over commodities. The possession of commodities, which include services, provides people with the means to lead a better life; thus, the possession of commodities or opulence is closely related to the quality of life people lead. But it is only a means to an end (p.20).

4.5.9 Provision of the Basic Necessities

Providing goods and services that everyone needs cheaply or freely, such as, food, healthcare, and decent housing will help bridge the gap or dichotomy between the rich and the poor.

4.5.9.1 Returning Back to God

God, as a matter of necessity, must be part of our lives as a workable solution to rich-poor dichotomy in Igbo Society. Materialism has been enthroned while spirituality is dethroned. Consequently, God is pushed away from our lives while materialism occupies the centre of our being. The evils of materialism are greed, egocentricism, corruption, wickedness, insensitivity, callousness, etc. Obviously, when man becomes enamoured with his wealth or money and his possession

begin to possess him, he becomes insensitive, blind and loses consciousness of the plight of people around him.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE APPLICATION OF LUKE 16:19-31 IN IGBOLAND

This research work, as the title depicts, would not be a good job if it is not applied to contemporary Igbo Society. The application becomes then imperative as it will give the study a bearing and a sharper focus. This chapter will bring out clearly the relevance of Luke 16:19-31 to contemporary Igbo Society and lessons from Luke 16:19-31 for the Igbo.

5.1 Relevance of Luke 16:19-31 to Contemporary Igbo Society.

The text of Luke 16:19-31 challenges our contemporary Igbo Society to make a preferential option for the poor. To make an option for the poor is not to opt for poverty but to commit oneself to acting and living in a way that respects people's human dignity, especially those who are economically disadvantaged. Option for the poor in Nigeria and precisely in Igboland has become imperative as poverty is clearly deep in our country. Option for the poor is an issue of commitment, a commitment of being with and for the poor by all and sundry including the church and other socio-political organizations.

The rich man saw Lazarus' needs and suffering and did nothing about it. That brought condemnation to him. The sociological implication is therefore that since the rich Man was actually condemned for neglecting the poor man, Lazarus, when he could have

been of help, then the contemporary Igbo Society: the government, the Church, socio-political organizations, groups and individuals should not neglect the poor in their midst, but take their stand in the struggle against oppression and poverty. Certainly, when the text of Luke 16:19-31 is seen through the lens of Liberation Theology, this parable admonishes that the poor, the abandoned, the unemployed, the elderly, the widows and orphans, the homeless, and the oppressed should be liberated from the shackles of poverty and abuse of power. According to Gutiérrez, (1973), true liberation has three main dimensions: (a) it involves political and social liberation, which is the elimination of the immediate causes of poverty and injustice, (b) liberation demands the emancipation of the poor, the marginalized, the downtrodden and the oppressed from all those things that limit their capacity to develop themselves freely and in dignity, and (c) liberation theology involves liberation from selfishness and sin, a re-establishment of a relationship with God and with other people.

Obviously, contemporary Igbo – Nigerian nation needs social justice, socio-political, and economic liberation given the enormity of social ills resulting from the rich-poor dichotomy. It is the view of this study that such liberation could be arrived at through radical revolutionary theology of liberation, which can achieve liberation and humanization of the oppressed people in this country. This radical theology of revolution can dismantle unjust political, economic, social, and religious structures that paralyze the poor, the weak, the marginalized, and the less privileged. This revolutionary theology according to Uwalaka in Ukwuegbu (1995):

Would imply confronting and challenging all the unjust social, political, and economic structures that paralyze the poor, the weak and less privileged. It is an appeal to the Church not to compromise with evil nor fraternize with her perpetrators. It is a call for the Church to wear once more her liberating toga and be seen not only to be engaged in diplomatic talking out but to be actively involved in the fight against social and political oppressors. (p.10).

Corroborating this, Madu (2004), submits, “It is a theology of action, a theology that considers the existential situation of man and tries to transform such a situation to the better” (p.116). This radical theology of revolution will dismantle unjust political, economic, social, and religious structures. When this is done, people are liberated and begin to live a qualitative kind of life. This radical revolutionary theology was employed by some prophets of old like Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and other prophets in the Bible, in their struggle against social injustice. It is a theology that takes radical action against evil. Burke (2016) affirms this position thus, “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” In this connection, Nyerere as quoted in Madu (2004) asserts:

Unless we participate actively in the rebellion against those social structures and economic organizations which condemn men to poverty, humiliations and degradation, then the church

will become irrelevant to men and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful. (117).

It is a theology that protests against the forces that perpetrate unjust social structure condemning it with vehemence. The Bible enjoins us: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice” (Prov.31:8-9). In fact, when unjust and oppressive structures are changed, lives are changed, and naturally the poor emerge or wriggle out of poverty.

The rich man could represent anyone who ignores the plight of the poor. Hunter (1960) admonishes:

If a man (says Jesus) cannot be humane with the Old Testament in his hand and Lazarus on his doorstep, nothing - neither a visitant from the other world nor a revelation of the horrors of Hell - will teach him otherwise. Such requests for signs are pure evasions. (p.84).

5.2 Lessons from Luke 16:19-31 for the contemporary Igbo.

The text of Luke 16:19-31, the parable of *Dives* and Lazarus, abounds with so many lessons for the Igbo. Some of the lessons are as follows:

1. The central focus of the text of Luke 16:19-31 is the issue of misuse of wealth, right use of possessions, poverty, and justice.
2. Theological Lessons/Implications. Hendrickx (1986) gives some of the theological lessons/implications from the text of Luke 16:19-31 for the contemporary Igbo:

(a) The story of the rich man and Lazarus does not assert that it is good to have a miserable life here on earth, that it is right for society not to fight poverty, and that it is the Church's task to console people in need by referring to heaven. Neither is it a projection of the fantasies and hostilities of the poor. To read such ideas into the parable would be equally wrong. It starts from the fact that in the world, some have abundance, while others suffer lack. Either our relation to God shows itself in our relation to our fellow human beings, especially to the poor and the oppressed, or it is an illusion; (b) The parable emphasizes the seriousness of the present. What really matters is what we do right now. The story calls man to a real sense of responsibility for the poor and the oppressed; (c) One is not guilty only when one commits evil, but also when one does not act. The rich man's sin consists in the fact that he has not shown any concern, that he has been blind to the

plight of the poor; (d) In Lk 16:19-31 the condemnation does not fall on wealth as such... But the condemnation falls on the lack of community created by barriers of wealth. These barriers of wealth are protected, confirmed, and fortified by the concerted actions of the rich; (e) While the rich man represents upper-class affluence, Lazarus dramatizes the social poverty of the masses (pp. 212-213).

3. Both the contemporary Igbo readers of Jesus' story and indeed readers of all generations are challenged not only to be careful stewards of life's goods and opportunities but also to be their brother's and sister's keepers.
4. Levine (2014) has this to say on this parable; the parable tells us that we do not need supernatural revelation to tell us that we have the poor with us. We do not even need the threats of eternal torture. If we cannot see the poor person at our gate — on the street, in the commercials that come into our homes, in the appeals made in sermons, in the newspapers — then we are lost.
5. Snodgrass (2008) pointed out that the parable is specifically a warning to the wealthy for their neglect of the poor. Scripturally speaking, any evil done against the poor and needy is invariably done against God. "Whoever shuts his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." (Proverbs 21:13).
6. This is the gist of the parable according to Van Eck (2009), "When patrons who have in abundance do not pass through the gate to the poor, a society is created

wherein a chasm so great is brought into existence between rich (the élite) and poor (the peasantry) that it cannot be crossed” (p.8).

7. According to Pilgrim (1981):

The parable does concentrate on the social/economic discrepancies and not moral ones. Moreover, God’s justice and compassion for the poor as poor, apart from their individual piety and his verdict against the rich as rich, is clearly present. Yet, there is more. For how could anyone hear the vivid descriptions of the gross discrepancy in social conditions as anything other than a devastating critique against the rich who exploit the poor and live in selfish luxury, unmindful of the dying beggars at the gate?... The Central focus of the parable is the issue of wealth and poverty and the related theme of justice. The Old Testament is affirmed as the norm for justice which the six brothers have violated (cf. 16:17). Their extravagant wealth and Lazarus’ dire poverty is the condition of inequality which needs rectification. God himself will make things right in the end. That is comfort to the poor and warning to the rich. Yet there is still opportunity for the violators of God’s justice to hear Moses and the prophets and to repent. That is the note on

which the parable ends. Without repentance, however, the fate of the rich is sealed. (pp.116-119).

8. The parable also conveys the idea of sufficiency of the Scripture. The Scriptures are sufficient and contain the guidance that Ndigbo need for their salvation.
9. Snodgrass (2008) contends:

What the parable attacks is a particular kind of wealth, wealth that does not see poverty and suffering. It attacks the idea that possessions are for one's own use and that they are owned without responsibility to God and other people... The parable insists that the poor are brothers and sisters of the wealthy and that the injustice of the juxtaposition of wealth and poverty cannot be tolerated. (p.433).

Snodgrass wants the contemporary Igbo to know that wealth without generosity and stewardship is offensive to God. If we gain wealth, it is a blessing that God has given us, so that we can in turn give it to others. This becomes a powerful lesson for the wealthy Igbo to use their wealth and riches for the service of humanity. The rich in Igboland should be more caring, loving, and charitable. They should share their fortunes with the poor.

10. The theme of great reversal in the text assures that the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized—all those who count for nothing in this world—count very much in

the Kingdom of God. The future holds great promise for them because God cares deeply for them.

11. The text of Luke 16:19-31 shows that (1) material or earthly blessings are uncertain and transitory; (2) that the rich are responsible not only for what they do but also for what they do not do with their wealth; (3) that this present life is the only opportunity we will be given to make preparation for the future; and (4) that the wrong use of wealth or riches disqualifies one from a place in the kingdom of God.

12. Reward and Punishment. The theme of reward and punishment runs across the pages of the Scripture. Our actions will either be rewarded or punished. The book of Apocalypse chapter 22: 12, makes it abundantly clear, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to each person according to what he has done.” The parable of the Rich man and Lazarus is a reminder to Ndigbo that eternal reward and punishment await us after our life here on earth.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which is found in the text of the Gospel of Luke 16:19-31, is unique or exclusive to Luke, and is derived by him from his source “L.” It is recorded only in the gospel of Luke, and it is located within the Travel Narrative of Luke. This text of Luke 16:19-31 sits in the context of Jesus criticizing the Pharisees, whom Luke accuses of being "lovers of money" φιλάργυροι (16:14). It underscores a theme expressed earlier in the Gospel 1:52, “God has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly.” The story is a three-act play. The first act portrays the earthly contrast between the wealthy man and Lazarus. The second act describes the reversal of their conditions in the afterlife. The third act depicts the rich man's request to Father Abraham for a sign so that those still living can avoid his torment, a request that Abraham refused.

The parable is problematic and unique among Jesus’ parables, as it is the only parable that includes named characters: Lazarus and Abraham. More so, it is the only parable that is set in a supernatural context, that is, depicting a scene in the afterlife. It is also the only parable in which a character is named. The poor beggar is called Lazarus (Λάζαρος). Many readers associate this Lucan Lazarus with the Lazarus of the Johannine

gospel (John 11: 1-44). Jesus does not identify the Lazarus of this story or parable, but he could have been any beggar, since Lazarus was a common name during the days of Jesus.

This study asserts that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is one of a subset of seven parables in the Lucan Travel Narrative, and that the majority of Luke 16:19-31 is narrated from the perspective of the dead. The parable makes use of two major narrative motifs which can be paralleled in other ancient literature: (a) a reversal of fortunes experienced by a rich man and a poor man after death, and (b) a dead person's return from the dead with a message for the living. There are possible backgrounds and parallels to the parable in this regard. For instance, one important example is the Egyptian folktale of Setme and Si-Osiris, and together with later Jewish stories or folktales derived from it. From this point of view, the parable is seen as an adaptation of an Egyptian folktale. Hock (1987) shifts attention to Greco-Roman parallels using Lucian's dialogues, *Gallus* and *Cataplus*, as his prime parallels. Certainly, Luke's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is missing a crucial feature which the Egyptian and the rabbinical parallels have, that is, a moral justification for the reversal. In the story of Setme and Si-Osiris, the rich man is punished for his wickedness, and the poor man is rewarded for his righteousness. It is the same in the Talmudic tale. The moral of both stories would seem to be, "Pursue goodness rather than riches, for only the former carries eternal value." But in Luke's story or the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, nothing is said of the rich man's evil deeds/sins or the poor man's piety that earn them their respective rewards. In fact, it seems to be the rich man's wealth itself that damns him, and Lazarus's poverty that earns him eternal bliss or comfort.

The text of Luke 16:19-31 is an illustration of the great class disparity. In fact, what is at the source or background of this text is the issue of economic inequality, that is, the gap between the rich and the poor. Another issue at the background is the problem of poverty in the midst of plenty, wealth that ignores poverty and suffering, and man's insensitivity to the plight of his fellow man. The wide gap between the rich and the poor in Igboland has become an issue of concern and should be closed or bridged. This has become an issue of concern because the gap is widening everyday; while the rich are getting richer living in scandalous opulence, the poor are getting poorer living in abject poverty. There is suffering in the midst of abundance.

After data analysis, it was discovered that the dichotomy or gap between the rich and the poor in Igboland was caused by the erosion of Igbo communal values, marginalization by the Federal Government, maladministration by political office holders, influence of male dominance, inter-state discrimination/segregation within South Eastern region, lack of business investment by wealthy Igbo in the South East, corruption, poor educational system, poor infrastructure, and greed/selfishness, etc. All these factors have contributed in no small measure in impoverishing Igbo nation. These have the following consequences in Igbo Society: poor health/hunger/malnutrition, poor or lack of access to basic education, poor access to water and sanitation, human trafficking/prostitution, crimes such as, kidnapping/abduction/hostage taking, armed robbery, internet/cyber scams, drug trafficking, and social and political discrimination or inequality, and a host of others.

Contributions to Knowledge. The research work has contributed immensely to knowledge or scholarship as it has examined critically the socio-political and economic situations that have contributed to rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland, suggesting and recommending strategies that could help in closing the rich-poor dichotomy in Igbo Society using Luke 16: 19-31. The study has filled what the researcher considers to be a gap or void in the study of the text of Luke 16:19-31 which is an application to Igbo Society. Through this work we have been able to know precisely the rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland, and make this research work serve Igboland. Since no one has written this part of Scripture to serve Igbo Society, it becomes a great contribution to scholarship or knowledge.

6.2 Conclusion

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus highlights the wide gap that exists between the rich and the poor; a chasm created by man's greed, injustice, and insatiability. Increasingly, our contemporary Igbo society is divided into the haves and the have-nots. In Igboland, we have different classes or categories of the poor: widows, orphans, the homeless poor, the sick, the abandoned, the unemployed, beggars, the hungry, the oppressed, street children, the most vulnerable people, and generally the people who have no access to social needs. Based on the findings of this work, the gap or the dichotomy between the rich and the poor in Igboland can be reduced or narrowed through the following: return to Igbo traditional communal values, making education free or affordable and accessible, creating jobs by investing in infrastructure, developing/industrialization of the rural areas, providing goods and services that everyone needs cheaply or freely, such as food, healthcare, and decent housing, wealth creation, making an option for the poor, sharing of wealth, raising the minimum wage, wealth creation through hard work, taxing the rich properly, and turning back to God. The gist of the parable according to Van Eck (2009) is: "When patrons who have in abundance do not pass through the gate to the poor, a society is created wherein a chasm so great is brought into existence between rich (the *élite*) and poor (the peasantry) that it cannot be crossed" (p.8). Therefore, systems, ideologies, structures, policies that are part of the cause of rich-poor dichotomy in Igboland, should be dismantled and opposed with vehemence.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are therefore made:

- a. More job creation by investing in infrastructure, making education free or affordable, and development of the rural areas/ industrialization will help in closing the economic inequality or disparity in Igboland. When this is done criminality would have been reduced at the barest minimum, as there is a correlation between crime and poverty.
- b. That the Church in Nigeria, precisely in Igboland, should be more prophetic in playing her role as the voice of the voiceless, and defender of the defenseless.
- c. That the rich in Igboland should be more caring, loving and charitable. They should share their fortunes with the poor.
- d. The need for the establishment of anti corruption court that will take charge of all criminal cases against corrupt political office holders and administrators.
- e. The need for policies ensuring that all people have adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, ill health, maternity, disability and old age;
- f. Human resource development and improved infrastructural facilities and comprehensive provision for the basic needs of all.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

A research on “*Hermeneutical Appraisal of Luke 16:19-3 in the context of the Rich-Poor dichotomy in Igboland*” is a wide topic that has the potentials of being researched into further, from different perspectives. Further research can be done on:

The reason why Lazarus is the only character to be named in any of Jesus’ parables.

The rationale behind the rich man’s insensitivity to poor Lazarus. In our contemporary Igboland, some rich people are still insensitive to the plight of the poor. More research should be conducted on the insensitivity and indifference of the rich towards the poor in our modern time.

Effective poverty alleviation programme in Igboland.

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