

Reciprocity Revisited:
An Exploration of the Parable of the Unjust Manager in Luke 16:1-9¹

Abstract

Today the process of neoliberal economy has become a site of great contention, since it has not only legitimated scarcity, but also has assigned human subjects their given place and purpose. It would seem, however, that the biblical text helps us to confront the power that entraps human agency and creates scarcity as such. This essay explores the Parable of the Unjust Manager in Luke 16:1-9, which presents Luke's overarching vision of economy, attributed to the 'eternal homes' (16:9) and ascribed to the colonial subjects in the Empire. In the Parable, the "dishonest" manager serves as a "broker" or as an "outlaw" between the landowner and the tenants. His remarkable move invites the readers today to become aware of their own myth and construct of economy. This essay combines insights from cultural economics and biblical studies of reciprocity.

Keywords: Reciprocity, Exchange, the Gospel of Luke, the Parable of the Unjust Manager, Decolonization, Economy.

I. Introduction

While economy conveys a norm whereby people live in both a just and sustainable way, the process of economy has been a site of great contention—a place where political and economic gravity becomes condensed between and beyond the 'self' and 'other'. For example, as the globalization of economy becomes a new world order, its own rule and conception has assigned human subjects a status equivalent to that of contenders in open markets.

In this regard, the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman suggests that we adjust ourselves "time-wise" to the globalization of economies.² His suggestion for the national competition makes a simple truism: "Make high school and college education free; make your corporate taxes low, simple and transparent; actively seek out global

¹ This work was supported by the Korea National Research Foundation (NRF- 2013S1A5A8024857).

² Hence, the "flat" economic world has been created by an extremely "unflat" political world whose rationale describes "open markets," "open trade" and "open politics." Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Anchor Books: New York, 2000). Friedman states that the globalization is a new world order, which has now replaced the old Cold War system.

companies; open your economy to competition; speak English; keep your fiscal house in order; and build a consensus around the whole package with labor and management.”³

Subject to the free market economy, however, the recent occasions of Korean economy, both being downgraded and elevated, serves as a reminder how far the people in the Far East have come from the days when hard-working laborers could count on a reasonable degree of economic security. Even a decade ago, when Daewoo Corporation was a widely emulated icon of Korean economy, many of its workers were lifetime employees and also single wage earners supporting their households. On average, they earned a middle-class income of society and used generous retirement benefits at the time. Since then, Korea has grown much richer, but Korean workers and their families have become far less secure. Now the bankruptcy of Daewoo reveals that there is no easy way out from the present dilemmas.

This paper intends to tackle how the economic construct bears on the representation of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in the biblical text and unveil the assumptions brought to the text, exemplifying an interactive process, that is, to read the text in terms of present cultural economic context and to read this context in terms of the text. If the contemporary construct of globalization in which everyone is so interrelated and interconnected, reveals the lack of human agency, is there an economics of life, a theology of ‘self’ and ‘other’ in the Bible? What in the biblical text helps us to confront the power that entraps human agency in the present world? Along this line of questioning and investigating, I attempt to look at the way in which the reciprocal relationship is constructed in the Parable of the Unjust Manager in Luke 16:1-9.

With the rise of modern critical scholarship in the 19th century, several scholars began to suggest that the issues of wealth and poverty play a decisive role in the message of Jesus and the early church.⁴ The swell of scholarship notwithstanding, however, the emphasis is laid only on the use of wealth and possessions, while dismissing the level of interrelated interaction that involves human agents in diverse activities and across various institutions.⁵ If the alleged values of individual property and its appropriation are specifically “Western” virtue, its larger social texture of reciprocal relationship leads to a cross-cultural exploration.

³ Thomas L. Friedman, “Who to Succeed in the Global Era?” in *The New York Times* (June 29, 2005).

⁴ For instance, Richard Horsley explains how the socioeconomic side of Jesus’ message is downplayed. Richard Horsely, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

⁵ In this regard, Moxnes’s insight is revealing when he states that the economy in antiquity is not a separate institution but is interwoven in the rich tapestry of social life, including relations of reciprocity in a village and the structures of patronage among the ruling elites. Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

Henceforth, I will investigate the construct of reciprocity, combining insights from cultural economics and biblical economic studies of economy. Following the preceding discussion, I will further explore the selected parable, the Parable of the Unjust Manager, which presents Luke's overarching vision of economy, attributed to 'the eternal homes' (16:9) and ascribed to the colonial associates in the Empire. The economy of God which Luke juxtaposes to the economy of Rome is a construction embodied in the concrete material reality of the Roman Empire and its economic order.

Much in the same way, listening to the voices of the margins is also significant to me on account of my own interests and context: first as a native of Korea, raised within one of the last territorial possessions of the Japanese Empire with liberation coming only at the mid-twentieth century; second, as a subject of the Soviet-US imperial-colonial formation and its subsequent ethnic divide between north and south; finally, as a part of the global market economy by way of carrying out a neocolonial influence.

This context overlaps my reading of the biblical text. With this introduction, I now turn to the discussion of reciprocity.

II. Exploring the Construct of Reciprocity

The dynamics of economy and its systematic construction are often embedded by way of exchange of products, goods, services, and people. Sahlins categorizes the system of exchange taking three distinctive forms of reciprocity: 1) negative reciprocity, 2) balanced reciprocity, and 3) generalized reciprocity.⁶ These three forms of reciprocity may "exist at the same time but they operate largely in different spatial spheres depending on kinship relations, rank and wealth distinctions, as well as the object of exchange."⁷

Among these three forms, Sahlins puts a greater emphasis on the generalized reciprocity, which is typical between persons in a close relationship. For Sahlins, the household becomes a proper example in this regard. Whether or not the household relation can be an "ideal" exchange, it is Sahlins' contribution presenting the household as a model in cultural economics.⁸

On the other hand, Levi-Strauss turns his attention to the exchange of gift. He observes that the function of the "gift" exchange is not to "promote solidarity within

⁶ Marshall D. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine, 1972), 197-200.

⁷ Stephen Gudemann, *The Anthropology of Economy: Community, Market, and Culture* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2001), 85.

⁸ Based on Sahlins' classification, Havor Moxnes states that Galilean peasants' experience of negative reciprocity was confronted with the generalized reciprocity of the household relations. Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus In His Place : A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, Ky. : Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

social groups but to forge alliances between groups, thus widening the network of sociality to include those who had been potential enemies.”⁹ He views reciprocity as a universal rule or principle of society that governs and even creates society.

More recently, however, Gudeman observes a tension within the reciprocity that is in nature an exchange of inequivalents, “a gesture of commensality not commensuration, yet filled at times with countervailing impulses of competition.”¹⁰ Gudeman argues that the ramification of reciprocity lies “between separation and unity, self-sufficiency and interdependence.”¹¹

While I assume that the issue of reciprocity creates tensions and ambivalence in regard to social relations and the structure of society, I break up the studies on exchange and its broader conception of economy into the two categories as follows: (1) Gifts Economy (2) Divine Economy.

1. Gift Exchange and Reciprocity

Influenced by Durkheim’s functional approach and developed from his groundbreaking fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, Bronislaw Malinowski proposed a study that explains how the different parts of society function in order to meet a variety of needs of persons “by a constant give and take.”¹² His primary study relates to a ceremonial exchange, referred to as the Kula which includes personal ornaments as principal exchanges and food and other utilitarian exchanges as secondary. That Malinowski found “giving for the sake of giving” to be the universal feature for primitive societies is well enunciated in his insistence as follows:

The view that the native can live in a state of individual search for food, or catering for his own household only, in isolation from an interchange of goods, implies a calculating, cold egotism, the possibility of enjoyment by man of utilities for their sake. This view, and all the previously criticized assumptions, ignore the fundamental human impulse to display, to share, to bestow. They ignore the deep tendency to create social ties through the exchange of gifts...Giving for the sake of giving is one of the most important features of Trobriand sociology, and, from its very general and fundamental nature, I submit that it is a universal

⁹ Annette B. Weiner, *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 2 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993), 470.

¹⁰ Gudeman, *The Anthropology*, 92.

¹¹ Gudeman, *The Anthropology*, 88.

¹² Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: G. Routledge & sons; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1961 [1922]), 167. See the discussion of Audrey Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe* (London: Oxford university Press, 1939), 13-16.

feature of all primitive societies.¹³

While Malinowski understood reciprocity as confined to small-scale societies, he still thought of the reciprocal exchanges as economic systems evolving through history from primitive societies through the ancient to modern societies.¹⁴

Malinowski's construct of 'pure gifts' may explain the type of exchange which can be described in terms of altruism. However, the sustained one-way flow of goods derives from the haves only, and there is little expectation of a return. In this regard, the 'pure gifts' create a "followership".

It would seem that Malinowski's construct of pure gifts satisfies the basic needs of the persons, helping the impoverished survive from their hunger. However, the model as such fails to explain the possible rejection of the "gifts" from the receivers by way of deleting the capacity of the individuals. Moreover, the model does not predict the tension between givers and receivers, coercion and voluntary relations.

Hence, Marcel Mauss point out that there is no such thing as "pure" or "free" gifts. Examining the motivation behind the gift in small-scale societies in the Trobriand Islands and in classical texts, Mauss argues in his work, *The Gift*, that the exchange bases itself on the voluntary or spontaneous giving, but on the social obligations. In certain exchanges in Maori in particular, the *Hau*, "the spirit of things," creates an obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate (repay a gift).¹⁵

For instance, the goods distributed by the chief or his son relates to the basic act of recognition—that is, military, juridical, economic, and religious in every sense of the word.¹⁶ In so doing, one recognizes his position and becomes grateful to him. As such, giving becomes an obligation since it helps maintain a person's authority within the social network of relations.

The obligation to receive, on the other hand, is no less constraining. In principle, every gift should be always accepted and even praised. The gift is received with a "burden" attached in this regard. The receiver of the gift acknowledges that he is not equal to the giver. The gift should be reciprocated with interest. The receiver should accept the gift as such and also assume the obligation to repay. In doing so, he can keep his own dignity and location in society. The failure to do so would jeopardize the receiver, leading him into slavery for debt or by ostracizing him out of the community.

¹³ Malinowski, *Argonauts of*, 175. See also Gudeman, *The Anthropology*, 83-84.

¹⁴ Gudeman, *The Anthropology*, 84; Weiner, *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 2, 470.

¹⁵ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 11-12.

¹⁶ Mauss, , *The Gift*, 40.

2. Divine Providence and Reciprocity

Philip O'Hara's monograph, *The Economics of the Basileia tou Theou in Mark* (2003) has grown out of his interest promoting the dialogue between biblical economics and the dominant economic constructs of the present day.¹⁷ For O'Hara, Jesus' *Basileia* is "economics that is different from and juxtaposed to the prevailing economy of Rome and temple, both constituting and utilizing scarcity".¹⁸ O'Hara sees both Rome and the temple as economically articulated institutions whose stories of enmity and purity affect the common people's lands and communities. These institutions "show scarcity, self-righteousness and violence under the flag of the *Pax Romana* and illustrated by Herod and the chief priests".¹⁹ However, the economics of Jesus opposes their values and justifications whether they are the purity restrictions or the honor/shame codes, creating and legitimating scarcity.

According to O'Hara, the Gospel of Mark uncovers the necessary connections between those two institutions and reveals their patterns and structures. O'Hara speaks mainly of the Markan Jesus and the reign of God. Mark's Jesus represents a new community with the disciples and embraces the people in the margin, both Jews and gentiles. Jesus was killed because of his engagement as such, since it exposed the underlying economic values and economic realities.²⁰ While retelling Jesus and the Jesus traditions in his own time, Mark reveals "alternative myths, writing their effects into the Jesus story and its context, both Jesus' and Mark's".²¹

For O'Hara, both Mark and Luke propose the reconstruction of economy unto the systemic level, but they differ on the level of "reward." In the Gospel of Luke, God provides motivations for human patrons to give without expecting a reward "because they will be repaid by God as Patron." However, in the Gospel of Mark, the reward has been given "a hundredfold now" for the community of those who gave up everything for the sake of Jesus and his Gospel (Mark 10:30).

Further, "what in Luke is reconstructed as *almsgiving* is in Mark a *sharing* of whatever is necessary" (Mark 10:21).²² Mark's representation of sharing serves to deconstruct corporate welfare at the expense of peasant scarcity. The reign of God Mark presents is driven "by the spirit into the wilderness" so that it must always be drawing

¹⁷ R. Philip O'Hara, *Economics of the Basileia tou Theou in Mark*, Thesis (Ph. D. in Religion), Vanderbilt University, 2003.

¹⁸ O'Hara, *Economics of the Basileia tou Theou in Mark*, 10.

¹⁹ O'Hara, *Economics of the Basileia tou Theou in Mark*, 24.

²⁰ O'Hara, *Economics of the Basileia tou Theou in Mark*, 190.

²¹ O'Hara, *Economics of the Basileia tou Theou in Mark*, 192.

²² O'Hara, *Economics of the Basileia tou Theou in Mark*, 201.

nearer to the real needs and real community at the mercy and grace of God.

O'Hara employs modern economic theories and their historical evolution. He turns to the Markan text in order to show how another world, another *basileia*, is being shaped by Jesus' words and actions. He chooses the parables of production, feeding and eating stories unveiling opposing values and allegiances and the stories of money and markets. For O'Hara, economy shapes politics, social relationships, and religious values and characters.

While O'Hara draws attention to the Gospel of Mark, I will tackle in the below the Gospel of Luke in light of reciprocity and its construction and ask how Luke's construct of reciprocity pertains to the implementation of the relationship under the Empire. The Parable of the Unjust Manager will be highly exemplified in this regard.

III. Observing the Lukan Construct of Reciprocity

The Parable of an Unjust Manager in the Third Gospel has long created confusion, controversy and embarrassment among the commentators.²³ Although the details of the parable are not extremely complicated, making sense out of the story has been greatly puzzling. The problem stems from the manager's "unorthodox" engagement with the master's household and his obligation as a manager. He not only squanders his master's property, but also uses his last opportunity to reduce the amount of debts the tenants owed his master.

It is tenants who should be grateful for his act of debt cancellation. In the story, however, the master praises this unjust manager, since "he acted cleverly" (16:8). The narrator Jesus also approves his "cleverness" because he has shown the skill how to adapt oneself to what comes in the near future.

What is the nature of the manager's action? Did he sacrifice something of what is legally owed him? What is his cleverness? Why does his master praise him? In order to examine the tensions and ambiguities surrounding the manager's household management and the construct of reciprocity imbedded in the story, I will turn our attention to the narrative texture of the parable.²⁴

1. Where the Narrative Stands

²³ See especially the discussion of William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 233-237.

²⁴ By increasing our reflected awareness of embedded economic relationships, we may visualize the socio-economic world of the narrative. Since narrative criticism itself assumes the identification of social and cultural contexts, it will not be necessary to use a hyphenated label such as socio-narratological approach. Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 74-75.

Luke begins the parable by describing Jesus' audience as the "disciples." Here Jesus seems to turn from the previous controversy with the Pharisees and scribes (15:1-32) and teach his followers. However, this does not mean that Jesus cuts his attention to the theme of the preceding chapters, especially 15:1-32, since he continues his earlier teaching about hospitality.

This becomes clear when we see the way in which Luke connects the present story to the description of the Pharisees who mock Jesus after he delivers the parable (16:14). Jesus' parable provokes a response from the Pharisees who are the "lovers of money" (16:14). In fact, the Pharisees were present and overheard the instruction Jesus gave to the disciples. This can be shown in the following diagram.

<The Flow of the Narrative in chapters 15-16>

	15:1-32	16:1-9
Interlocutors	Jesus & the Pharisees (15:2)	Jesus & the Disciples (16:1)
Audience behind	Disciples (16:1)	Pharisees (16:14)

On the other hand, the ending of the narrative is most responsible for the complication of the parable. Because, while *ho kyrios* is Luke's way of referring to Jesus, the master of the parable is also identified as *ho kyrios*, there have been a lot of debates among commentators about *ho kyrios* in 16: 8a: "The master praised the wicked household manager because he acted cleverly." Joachim Jeremias views this referent as Jesus and argues that the story ends at v. 7. For him, the commendation of v. 8 is Jesus' own interpretation because the master could not possibly praise the manager.²⁵ As such, Jeremias reduces the narrative into a more material text itself, free of narrative complications.

However, Joseph Fitzmyer argues that it is more natural to understand *ho kyrios* in v. 8a as the master of the parable because without v. 8a the story has no ending.²⁶ He calls attention to a need for the narrative closure, whether the closure itself is what one expects or not. Fitzmyer's contribution is to recognize the possibilities of parable's narrative formation. By denying v. 8b as part of the original story, Fitzmyer does not grant a transition from the master (v. 8a) to Jesus (v. 9).

²⁵Cf. Luke 18:6, "And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says.'"

²⁶Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*. Anchor Bible Commentary Series (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 27-28.

2. Boundaries Crossed

The story presents a manager who crosses over the boundaries between the rich and the poor. With regard to the manager as such, John Dominic Crossan views the parable as belonging to a cycle of “trickster-dupe” stories. He employs Heda Jason’s model for such stories as follow: (1) A situation evolves which enables Rascal to play a trick on Dupe; Dupe reveals his foolishness so that Rascal can utilize it (2) Rascal plans a trick (3) Rascal plays a trick (4) Dupe reacts as Rascal wished him to do (5) Dupe has lost; Rascal has won.²⁷

For Crossan, the parable is one of the trickster-dupe stories with the step 4 unused. The master-dupe model relates to the master’s foolishness by allowing a manager-rascal to scatter the master’s own possession. However, the questions arise, since the master already recognizes that his manager has scattered the possessions and continued to do so by reducing the debts the tenants owe to him. How would it be possible that the manager-rascal keeps doing what he was previously accused of?

The manager of the parable reveals the underlying economic realities at work. The story describes the situation of the villagers being in debt vis-à-vis their creditor, that is, their landlord. Since the imperial government and its local collaborators dominate the land, the concentration of land ownership became intensified, and the peasants landless tenants and debtors. Some may have been sold into labor, or imprisoned for their debts (Luke 12:58-9; cf. Matt. 5:25-26; 18:23-35).²⁸ Probably, the manager’s anxiety over his coming possible future reflects this kind of dire economic realities.²⁹

However, the manager has been part of the problems that involve production and redistribution in the Empire. The household slave carries out the “strong pressures toward the centralization of economic goods and the development of the exploitative pattern”.³⁰ No isolated poor and no independent, ‘innocent’ rich lives under the colonial presence.

When the crisis is created, however, he engages a new way of reciprocity, decentralizing the assets of “dishonest wealth.” While his intention is not “giving

²⁷Crossan, 1974: 192-221; H. Jason, 1968: 7; cf. K. E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1983), 95.

²⁸ The impoverished posed an ever-present threat to the empire. The historian Tacitus uses poverty to explain the disorder of Roman imperial society, whether it be civil war or provincial rebellion. See *Histories* 3.47.

²⁹ Crossan notes in this regard that “we are dealing, in other words, with a harsh ideology for an equally harsh ecology, with limited and unstable social unities arising from limited and unstable natural resources.” *The Historical Jesus: the Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 12.

³⁰ Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 211.

without “expecting in return,” his practice is clearly against the growing problem of indebtedness—that is, “dishonest wealth” (16:11). In this respect, Luke intends to draw attention to the grinding poverty and plight of the common people in the first century Palestine

Hence, by reducing the debts, the manager in the parable enters into a reciprocal relationship with his master’s debtors. He becomes their benefactor and, in return, expects them to reciprocate hospitality to himself. By providing hospitality, the manager crosses over the boundary in-between the debtors and their creditor. Thus, Luke’s narrator calls into question the spatial boundary of the household. The manager erases the boundary by continuing to disperse the possessions and interacting with his master’s debtors. He takes advantage of his “now-short-lived” status, using the “lag” time during which he is to make an accounting of his management for his future. If the manager was warned of an approaching crisis, so be the disciples!

Surprisingly, the story reveals similarities with the Parable of the Prodigal Son (15:12-32). First, both the manager and the prodigal son betray a trust in a *kyriarchal* household. Second, while they “scattered” the property, they are either welcomed or praised. Third, for the real readers, both stories are open-ended!

3. Manager as a Middleman

In the parable, the manager takes on the role of intermediary between the debtors and *ho kyrios*. His cleverness consists in perpetuating the cycle of reciprocation. By repeating the cycle of reciprocation, he receives acceptance to the *eternal* homes: “I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes” (v. 4); “When it fails, they may receive you into the eternal homes” (v. 9).³¹

When the manager’s behavior clashes with the “justice” of the Empire, the audience must consider once again what is conveyed through the story. Indeed, the manager of the parable disturbs the system of oppression and exploitations and creates a new dimension of reciprocity under the Empire—that is, an alternative economy over and against the power of “unjust” mammon (16:13). The manager not only legitimates the pervasive interdependence, based on the gifts (for Malinowski) or the generalized reciprocity (for Sahlins), but also reveals the divine economics that leads a way to the

³¹Those who fail to enter the eternal homes accordingly are well enunciated in Luke 13: 28, “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham... and you yourselves thrown out.” cf. Luke 12:48, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.”

Basileia (for O'Hara).

Hence, the construct of reciprocity in the narrative trespasses on the individual relations in a market economy, since it does not allow the separation of the 'self' and 'other'. This kind of economy frees the (neo-)colonial subjects from the construction of power that creates and perpetuates scarcity. The point is not a moral to be on a good economic discipline and earnings, but rather is a straight forward recognition of (comm)unity as a solution.

As such, the manager of the parable serves as the model of a person who refines his own freedom. His freedom leads him to become an active "beneficiary". His move deconstructs the exploitive relationship and also reconstructs the system of "power" and "justice" of the Empire. The narrative does not admit the divide between production and distribution, or costs and benefits. Rather, both are interpenetrating and interdependent for the lives of the people of God.

V. Conclusion

From the various readings of reciprocity, one may find that it is important to be aware of who facilitates the exchange within the Empire. Luke's Jesus introduces the middlemen who cross over the boundaries, such as the person who invites both the rich and the poor to the table (14:15-24), the "dishonest" manager who swings between the landowner and the tenants (16:1-9), and the rich *publicanus*, a chief of the colonial tax collecting system, who disperses his possessions (19:1-10).

Those middlemen, either as "brokers" or as "outlaws," alter the situation for the better.³² They are neither "insensitive" nor "self-sufficient." Because of their moves, the relationship between the 'self' and 'other' become more hybridized, and the flows run more smoothly and intuitively over and against the jagged edges of the system of colonialism and imperialism, as described in Luke 3:5: "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth".³³

Luke's narrative relates to categorical, predominant borderlines that create and justify insufficiency in a zero-sum colonial society. Its governing ethics tends to focus on loyalty rather than on entitlements, on discipline rather than on right—such as the right of the manager to engage the property he is in charge of. However, Luke's re-

³² Moxnes' insight is more revealing in this regard: "The institutionalization and the setting-up of rules is primarily a work of the elite on the basis of their conceptions and visions. Thus the elite form the predominant cultural orientation in society. The result is a strong element of power and hierarchy in the relationship although interwoven with long-range solidarity and provision of meaning." Moxnes, *The Economy*, 38.

³³ Cf. Isaiah, chapter 40.

presentation of the middleman deconstructs the colonial legitimation of the status quo, since it empowers the colonized to maneuver their substantial liberation. The construct of reciprocity in Luke is driven to the real needs of the community. It is through the encounter with the vision that the real readers are now encouraged or even compelled to become aware of their own myth and construct of life and life-together.

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