

**Social justice in employment and remuneration of workers
in Cameroon in the light of the parable of the Workers in
the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15): An African Biblical
Interpretation**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother

Ngo Margaret Ntem

She died on the 24th August 2019 while I was away on research for this thesis at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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Embarking on PhD research entails enormous sacrifice and a collective effort. Research takes a lot of energy and cheerfully broadens the mind. The work has humbled me so exceedingly in an effort to make a contribution to the world of exegesis from an African context. I have added my voice to the voices of others to speak on the issue of social justice in employment and remuneration of workers in Cameroon where getting a job is like finding a pearl of great value. Speaking about social justice from the lenses of Jesus' parable of Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15), the work has enabled me to understand that it takes a humane heart to be able to dispense true justice. Justice therefore becomes relative. To the rich, true justice becomes injustice and to the poor, true justice is like salvation.

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List of abbreviations

ABHA	African Biblical Hermeneutic Approach
ABI	Africa Biblical Interpretation
ATR	African Traditional Religion
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
Rm	Romans
Ja	James
Lk	Luke
Jn	John
Mt	Matthew
Gn	Genesis
Am	Amos
Ac	Acts
1Ki	1Kings
Ezr	Ezra
Lv	Leviticus
Ex	Exodus
Dt	Deuteronomy
ILO	International Labour Organisation
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
CPC	Cameroon Protestant College
JMBC	Joseph Merrick Baptist College
SSC	Social Scientific Criticism
A.D	“anno domini”- In the year of our Lord
PTS	Presbyterian Theological Seminary
n.d.	no date
HCM	Historical critical methods
BCE	before the Common Era
IM	Inculturation method
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
Inter alia	among others
Cf	confer

SSA	Sub Saharan Africa
FAO	Food and agriculture organization
LSCFs	Large scale commercial farms
NWR	North West Region
CDC	Cameroon Development Cooperation
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ITLOS	International Tribunal for the Law of the sea
HIV	Human Immune Virus
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
et al.	and others
FIEs	Foreign Investment Enterprises
FDI	Foreign Development Investment
SGSOC	Sithe Global Sustainable Oils Cameroon
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on Environment
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
CH ₄	Methane
ENAM	National School of Administration and Magistracy
OHADA	Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa
UNECA	United Nations Economic commission for Africa
EU	European Union
CEPCA	Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PAMOL	Lobe Palm Oil Estate
CDC	Cameroon Development Cooperation
UNVDA	Upper Nun Valley Development Association
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
ERNWACA	Education Research Network for West and Central Africa

Summary

The concern for social justice in employment and remuneration of workers is crucial in Africa because the continent has a lot of natural resources and avenues for employment, but the rate of youth unemployment and low remuneration for those who are privileged to find a job has made the question of social justice to become imperative. Agrarian communities in the Mediterranean world of the New Testament were also confronted by the question of social justice as portrayed in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15).

The thesis indicates that many scholars who have dealt with the contemporary and disturbing issue of social justice, using the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15), are Westerners and American scholars and therefore have dealt with questions and spiritual problems that relates to West and America. In response to these readings of the parable, this study is a quest for a biblical theology of social justice in employment and remuneration for Africa and by an African in the light of Matthew 20:1-15 from a Cameroonian perspective using an African biblical interpretation.

The history of interpretation of the parable revealed that many interpreters who have worked on the parable have considered the action of a vineyard owner who paid all his workers the same amount despite the fact that they were employed at different hours of the day as an act of extreme generosity of a very unusual employer. This study adds a further dimension to the aspect of generosity in that the owner took cognisance of the condition of the unemployed and paid them according to need and not merit which is a higher dimension of social justice. Like in the society Jesus describes, Africans live in communities of unfair distribution of resources and this creates an imbalanced society between the privileged and the less-privileged. Therefore, social justice is highly perverted in Africa.

From an empirical point of view, the policy of employment of workers and payment in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) is well constituted. However, some pitfalls are observed at the level of some employments and appointments done from perspectives of regional balancing rather than merit. This is a replica of what the Cameroon government is doing to silence opposition to the central administration.

As an exegetical work, brief explorations are made of other current exegetical methods before deciding on the social scientific and African biblical interpretation methods which are the main methods that are used to read Matthew 20:1-15. The reading of the parable is examined from Jesus' perspective, and not from Matthew the narrator where possible editing might have been effected. While the popular reading of this parable has in many cases been allegorical, the work deals with the parable as an earthly story with an earthly meaning to show that parables are not necessarily fictive stories, but realistic ones.

One of the conclusions of the study is that a large percentage of the twenty-first century African societies are agrarian. Despite the fact that most of the economic potentials of Africa come from agriculture, the continent is still suffering from food shortages because many African leaders have not been fair to their citizens. Endemic corrupt regimes have taken away the treasure of Africa, and allowed their people to suffer. African elites act as bosses instead of being servants to the people. The study of the parable authenticates that the Patron vineyard owner does the hiring of workers himself and he pays the late workers out of need and the early workers out of a fair wage.

An African biblical interpretation of the parable concludes that if this parable was told in an African setting, the vineyard owner would have been someone like an African chief (Fon), a title holder, an African elder or an elite of good standing who shows solidarity with various members of his community. The behaviour of various characters would have coincided with many values of the African context.

Table of contents

Declaration		ii
Dedication		iii
Acknowledgements		iv
List of abbreviations		vii
Summary		ix
Table of contents		xi
1.1	INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	1
1.2	DEFINITION OF TERMS	2
1.2.1	Social justice	3
1.2.2	Employment	3
1.2.3	Remuneration	4
1.2.4	Vineyard	4
1.2.5	African Biblical Interpretation	4
1.3	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS	5
1.4	STATING THE PROBLEM	6
1.5	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	8
1.6	CURRENT RESEARCH	8
1.7	RESEARCH GAP	10
1.8	RESEARCH ITINERARY	10
1.9	CONCLUSION: MAIN HYPOTHESIS	11
2.1	INTRODUCTION	12
2.2	HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	12
2.3	EVALUATING CURRENT RESEARCH ON MATTHEW 20:1-15	22
2.3.1	The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard as allegory	22
2.3.2	The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard as an answer to Jesus’ critics	23
2.3.3	The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard as an embodiment of the socio-economic realities of first-century Palestine	24
2.4	SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF CURRENT RESEARCH	25
2.5	EXPLAINING THE RESEARCH GAP	26
2.6	CONCLUSION	27
3.1	INTRODUCTION	28
3.2	EXEGESIS	28
3.3	CURRENT APPROACHES THAT HAVE BEEN USED IN READING MATTHEW’S GOSPEL	29
3.3.1	Diachronic or historical criticism	30
3.3.2	A text-immanent or synchronic approach	33
3.3.2.1	Narrative criticism of Matthew 20:1-15: Stephen I. Wright	34

3.3.3	A reader-oriented approach	38
3.3.3.1	Liberation criticism of Matthew 20:1-15: Gerald O West	39
3.3.4	Social-scientific criticism	42
3.3.4.1	Models and theories in social-scientific criticism	44
3.3.4.2	Social-scientific criticism of Matthew 20:1-15: Ernest van Eck and John Kloppenborg	45
3.3.5	African Biblical Hermeneutic Approach (ABHA)	47
4.1	INTRODUCTION	50
4.2	THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	51
4.2.1	Social justice in the Jewish context	52
4.2.2	Social justice in Matthew	54
4.3	THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	57
4.3.1	Greek language	57
4.3.2	Honour and shame in Matthew’s gospel	59
4.3.2.1	Honour and shame in Matthew 20:1-15	60
4.3.3	Patronage and Clientism	61
4.3.3.2	Patrons and clients in Matthew’s gospel	64
4.3.3.2	Patron and clients in Matthew 20:1-15	67
4.3.4	Kinship	69
4.3.5	Limited good society	71
4.3.6	First-century dyadic personality	72
4.3.7	Challenge and response	73
4.3.8	Evil eye in the gospels – John H. Elliott	74
4.3.8.1	Evil eye in Matthew 20:1-15	76
4.3.9	External responsibility	78
4.4	THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	78
4.4.1	The Temple in Jerusalem	79
4.4.2	The Law	81
4.5	THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	82
4.5.1	Taxation	82
4.6	THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	83
4.6.1	An advanced agrarian economy	84
4.6.2	Trade economy and commerce	84
4.7	THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	86
4.7.1	The general situation of work	88
4.7.2	Workers and salaries	89

4.7.3	Generosity in Matthew’s gospel.....	90
4.7.4	Generosity in Matthew 20:1-15.....	92
4.8	REALISTIC AND UNREALISTIC FEATURES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN MATTHEW 20:1-15	94
4.8.1	Realistic features that agree with societal social justice	94
4.8.1.1	The hiring of workers from the market place.....	94
4.8.1.2	Wage payment at the end of the day.....	96
4.8.1.3	The owner is a Patron but manages his vineyard.....	97
4.8.2	Unrealistic features that agree with societal social justice	97
4.8.2.1	The excessive number of times of hiring workers	97
4.8.2.2	The level of involvement of the vineyard owner	98
4.8.2.3	The equal pay of all the labourers.....	99
4.9	CONCLUSION.....	99
5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	101
5.2	THE SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	102
5.2.1	African communalism (common initiative groups and family farming)	102
5.2.2	Ethnicity	104
5.2.3	Exploitation of workers	106
5.2.4	Land/boundary disputes.....	108
5.2.5	Disease and ignorance.....	110
5.2.6	Youth unemployment	113
5.2.7	Time management.....	114
5.2.8	Work ethics in traditional Africa	116
5.3	THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT.....	117
5.3.1	Low wages of workers.....	118
5.3.2	High rents imposed by land owners	120
5.3.3	Most of peasant land is being taken over by the rich	121
5.3.4	Lack of chemical fertilizer leading to poor yields	122
5.3.5	Lack of mechanized farming methods	124
5.3.6	Climate change	126
5.3.7	Bad roads (lack of farm to market roads)	128
5.4	THE CULTURAL CONTEXT	130
5.4.1	The impact of ATR on agriculture	131
5.5	THE POLITICAL CONTEXT	132
5.5.1	Concentration of political power (power mongering)	134
5.5.2	Bad governance	135

5.5.3	Bribery and corruption	136
5.5.4	Marginalization of the minority	138
5.5.5	Civil wars in Africa	140
5.6	THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT	142
5.6.1	The quest for spiritual renewal	143
5.6.2	The role of the church	143
5.7	SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT	145
5.7.1	Social justice from an African traditional perspective	146
5.8	EMPLOYMENT AND REMUNERATION OF WORKERS IN CAMEROON ..	148
5.8.1	Social justice in employment in Cameroon (case of PCC)	149
5.8.2	Social justice in the remuneration of workers in Cameroon (the case of the PCC)	150
5.9	READING MATTHEW 20:1-15 FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ..	153
5.9.1	African models for reading Matthew 20:1-15	153
5.9.1.1	The African sense of solidarity	153
5.9.1.2	African sense of human dignity	155
5.9.1.3	African sense of respect and integrity	155
5.9.1.4	African moral values	157
5.9.1.5	African sense of time reckoning	159
5.9.1.6	African means of non-verbal communication	160
5.10	CONCLUSION	161
6.1	INTRODUCTION	162
6.2	SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 20:1-15	163
6.2.1	Honour and shame	163
6.2.2	Kinship application in Matthew 20:8	164
6.2.3	Patronage and clientism in Matthew 20:4, 8 and 9	165
6.2.4	Limited good application in Matthew 20:6	166
6.2.5	Challenge and response in Matthew 20:12	167
6.2.6	Evil eye (πονηρός ὀφθαλμός) in Matthew 20:15	167
6.2.7	External responsibility in Matthew 20:8 and 14	169
6.2.8	Aspects of the theology in Matthew 20:1-15	169
6.2.8.1	Generosity from a theological perspective	169
6.2.8.2	The sin of ingratitude and grumbling Matthew 20:11-12	170
6.3	AFRICAN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION (ABI)	171
6.3.1	African Plantations – Matthew 20:1	172
6.3.2	African solidarity – Matthew 20:3-6	172
6.3.3	Human dignity – Matthew 20:3 and 6	173

6.3.4	Respect and integrity – Matthew 20:8.....	174
6.3.5	African moral values – Matthew 20:3-7.....	175
6.3.6	Time reckoning – Matthew 20:6.....	177
6.3.7	Non-verbal communication – Matthew 3, 6 and 15.....	178
6.4	CONTEXTUALIZING MATTHEW 20:1-15.....	179
6.5	CONCLUSION.....	179
7.1	CONCLUSION.....	182
7.2	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	185
	Bibliography.....	187
	Appendix 1.....	205
	Appendix 2.....	213
	Appendix 3.....	215

Chapter 1

General introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

One outstanding feature of liberation theology is its conviction that Christianity and its basic symbols must be reinterpreted from the perspective of the poor and oppressed in the light of the popular struggles for social justice. This study has been motivated by the fact that social justice is one of the fundamental issues in the Bible, yet it seemed to be in limited supply in Africa in all aspects of life. God desires happiness in the life of all His people, and Jesus exhibited focused concern for the poor and the marginalised; particularly those who belong to the ‘weaker’ social groups. Jesus demonstrates an ethics of love and compassion for those in need. He develops further his teaching towards the goal of social justice in a political formulation in this biblical dictum:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all (Mk 10:42-44).

The maintenance of social justice within a society depends largely on the fairness and strength of its legal system. In this vain, corruption is one of the fundamental causes of poverty and social injustice in most African countries south of the Sahara and in particular, Cameroon, as it violates the legal and moral framework of a society. Excessive luxury by too few people with too much, and the desperate poverty of too many people with too less, are the problems that characterise the present day Cameroon. Jesus addressed the economic manifestation of social injustice by targeting its root in human intentions, that is, the excessive fear for personal security and the resulting greed with regard to material goods in these words: “No one can serve two masters” (Mt 6:24). Therefore the biblical vision for society is rooted in a longing for a perfect community of love and justice.

Cameroon, from an economic perspective, has a booming labour force, but this robust man power has been underutilised due to the provocative unemployment that is experienced in all sectors in the country. Cameroon is largely an agrarian economy with a progressive growing population. Can the magnitude in the youthful population allow for the setting of the

Cameroon equation where there are no diversified economic structures? The weight of primary and especially agricultural activities is dominant, but the weakness of industrialization does not offer mass employment alternatives. Where are the possible and realistic avenues for the absorption of the booming labour force? Those who have the privilege to be employed are not satisfied with their remunerations to the extent that they try to use unorthodox means to add to their pay through corruption. The context of this study is Africa where, because of lack of employment opportunities particularly among youths, even those who work receive a pay that does not meet their needs; many therefore have fallen prey to a work-for-wages spirit rather than job satisfaction.

God is concerned with what men and women do with their gifts, possessions, and money that he indirectly gives to them through inheritance, labour, and gifts from others, and the way in which it is earned (Tucker 2012:4). Furthermore, the employer is not doing the employee a favour when he pays a worker (Rm 4:4). When an employee is not paid the wages he or she deserves, it cries out against the employer and it constitutes theft (Ja 5:4). It might well be said that when labour is hired, a covenant is established between employer and employee, which will be transgressed if its terms are not adhered to. Conversely, once the wage has been agreed on, the employee is to be satisfied with it (Lk 3:14) and is encouraged not just to work for their pay, but to have the employee's best interests at heart (Jn 10:13).

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) is an employer and is expected to consider the principle of fair remuneration for her workers. When a worker does not receive his or her remuneration at the agreed time, the covenant between the worker and the PCC is being broken and God is being robbed. Justice has been served if these biblical principles are adhered to. But there is a more fundamental level of justice which is born out of personal generosity and compassion. It is a reinterpretation of the biblical and societal principles of justice and not a deviation from it. This has been demonstrated by a patron vineyard owner in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15).

1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

This study incorporates certain terms that need an explanation for a better understanding on how they will be used in the work. These terms are social Justice, employment, remuneration, vineyard, and an African Biblical Interpretation.

1.2.1 Social justice

Sorrells (2015:1) defines social justice as referring to both a goal and a process of full and equal participation of individuals and groups within society to meet their mutually defined needs. As a goal, Sorrells continues, is social justice envisioned as equitable access and distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights. The process of reaching the goal of social justice is necessarily participatory, inclusive, and democratic, affirming human diversity and human capacities for agency, creativity, and collaboration to create a more equitable and just world for all. In contemporary conditions of social injustice the inequitable access to resources, rights, power and privilege, resulting in exploitation, exclusion, and genocide like in present day Cameroon, social justice is demanded. Social justice is needed because of the existence of social injustice which is rooted in systemic exclusion, silencing, and dehumanization of individuals and groups based on differences in race, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, religion, language and sexual orientation. It is in the quest to create a more equitable and just world for all that social justice will be used in this work.

1.2.2 Employment

ILO (2018:7) defines employment from a people centred perspective as all persons who work for pay, profit or family gain for at least one hour in the reference week plus the number of persons who are temporarily absent from their jobs.¹ Three different employment conditions are captured by the terminology: “for pay” captures any person who performed some work for wage or salary, in cash or in kind (wage and salaried workers); “for profit” aims to include workers who are self-employed;² and “for family gain” allows for the inclusion of contributing family workers who worked in a family establishment or land-holding. In this study, employment and the employed are used in reference to those who work for pay.

¹ Persons temporarily not at work because of illness or injury, holiday or vacation, strike or lock-out, educational or training leave, maternity or parental leave, reduction in economic activity, temporary disorganisation or suspension of work due to reasons such as bad weather, mechanical or electrical breakdown, or shortage of raw materials or fuels, or other temporary absence with or without leave should be considered as being in paid employment provided they have a formal job attachment.

² Unpaid family workers at work should be considered as being self-employed irrespective of the number of hours worked during the reference period. Equally ILO holds that Persons engaged in the production of economic goals and services for own and household consumption should be considered as being self-employed if such production comprises an important contribution to the total consumption of the household.

1.2.3 Remuneration

Remuneration as a reward for labour³ is an incentive to workers to increase productivity (Okoye & Ogbada 2005:158). Where an organization pays the workers poorly they will be demoralized and may tend to lower their productivity. Therefore management, Okoye and Ogbada argues, should see it as its responsibility to introduce a wage remuneration system that can promote the morale of workers to ensure increased productivity. Ojeleye (2017:36) defines remuneration⁴ as monetary or financial benefits in the form of salaries, wages, bonuses, incentives, allowances, and benefits that is accrued or given to an employee or group of employees by the employer (firm) as a result services rendered by the employee(s), commitment to the organization or reward for employment. Remuneration is used in this study in line with Ojeleye's view as pay or reward given to an individual for work done.

1.2.4 Vineyard

A vineyard, in first-century Palestine, was part of a system of land tenure in which most of the productive land was held by large-scale (elite) owners. Such large estates were converted to viticulture⁵ and dedicated to export crops (Van Eck 2016:147). Van Eck says further that owners of large estates increased their tenure through foreclosures on loans, leading to hostile takeovers of peasant farms. When possible the land so annexed was converted into vineyards so it could produce a product with a higher return than the mixed grains grown by subsistence peasant farmers. Therefore vineyard owners in the first century were associated with wealth and the wealthy. Vineyards, however, required large temporary labour inputs during the agricultural cycle (Van Eck 2016:147). Vineyard is understood in this study as a large scale agricultural establishment that required day-labourers at specific periods of the agricultural circle.

1.2.5 African Biblical Interpretation

African biblical hermeneutics is a methodological resource that makes African social cultural contexts the subject of interpretation; it is the rereading of the Christian scripture from a premeditatedly African perspective. African biblical hermeneutics is contextual since interpretation is always done in a particular context. Specifically, it means that the analysis of

³ Labour itself is the exertion of mental and physical human effort on production activities with a view to ensuring organizational goal and objective (Okoye & Ogbada 2005:158).

⁴ He further identified that the indicators of remuneration include: basic salary, wages, health schemes, pension schemes, transport allowances overtime allowances and responsibility allowances.

⁵ Viticulture is the agricultural practice of growing grape vines.

the biblical text is done from the perspective of an African world-view and culture (Adamo 2015:59). This suggested approach will be used to interpret Matthew 20:1-15.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

The main concern of this study is to examine the role of social justice in employing and paying workers in Cameroon. This is done through the lens of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20:1-15.⁶ Jesus lived in an agonistic society which was characterized by instability, imbalance and contest. It was a society of power struggle and mutual suspicion. Consequently, these values did not fit into Jesus' mission and kingdom principles which he wanted to institute. By using the illustration of what is generally called "the parable of Workers in the Vineyard", this study will contend that Jesus emphasizes the role of social justice which was a redefinition of the agonistic contemporary situation at the time.

The study will give credence to two main aspects from the parable as a justification for Jesus' concern for social justice. The first consideration is that the vineyard owner was particularly conscious about the situation of the unemployed and that may account for the fact that he came to the "angora" again and again to employ workers. There is no indication in the passage that the vineyard owner was desperate for more workers. Second, is the fact that the early and the late employers were paid the same, Jesus redefines an economic payment system which was pay according to work done into pay according to need (intention). The late workers had the ability and the intention to work but nobody employed them. Their input in the work with the new strength knowing that they had only an hour to work would have been great when the early workers were getting tired and resting. Using the illustration of a football match, those who are put in as replacements when some of the first eleven are getting tired are those who sometimes make significant differences in a match.

The significance of this study is to show that an African economy, like that of Cameroon, should put more emphasis on social justice by taking cognizance of the unemployed and give each citizen a chance to make a living. Secondly, this study intends to make an important

⁶ Even though the Greek text (NA27) shows that the periscope ends in verse 16, this work deals with the parable from Jesus' perspective and not Matthew the narrator, thus considers verse 16 as a later addition by the editors to reinforce what has previously been said in Matthew 19:30. Thus from Jesus' perspective, the periscope ends in Matthew 20:1-15.

contribution to the field of New Testament Studies, especially in the area of African Biblical Interpretation (ABI) from a Cameroonian perspective. It is on this basis that a proposed African interpretation to the parable has been suggested. The work will eventually be beneficiary to African theologians and lay persons alike who are interested in reading Scripture and other texts with African lenses.

The main limitation to this work is that studying for a PhD in the University of Pretoria from an African country like Cameroon has its own challenges. First, travelling to South Africa to work with the supervisor is costly. Second, studying at a time that Cameroon is in a civil war since 2016 due the Anglophone crisis and living in the English region has its own challenges of threat to life from stray bullets of military and separatists fighters, constant electricity and internet network failure which culminated to making research and communication difficult.

1.4 STATING THE PROBLEM

Unemployment is a course for concern in Cameroon. The background of this disturbing situation lies in the fact that the educational system in Cameroon, after independence, tailored those students who performed best in pre-secondary institutions to be attracted into grammar secondary schools. Those who were found to be academically weak were directed to enter vocational and technical institutions (which were even lacking in English Cameroon at the time). Other weak learners were sent to learn a trade from a local enterprise. This polarization of education eventually gave rise to a university admission system which gave an upper hand to students who offered the venerated so called “academic programs” over against technical, vocational and agricultural subjects at the secondary school level (Baku 2008:1).

Universities in Cameroon preferred to offer admission rather to those who had done the pure sciences than those who went for vocational and agricultural courses. This bias was borne out of the persistent traditional belief in Cameroon that vocational and technical courses were for the academically weak (Baku 2008:1). On the part of the parents, Che (2007:333) pointed out that the reasons why parents desire an academic education for their children range from social upward mobility to escaping the hardships of rural life to preparing children to ‘deal with’ the world to helping students acquire good manners and become good people. Many parents in non-Western countries consider education worthwhile even if it does not lead to a higher income or a salaried position. In addition, they also felt that a relevant, agrarian-oriented curriculum is less desirable than an academic curriculum, partly because of the prestige associated with the study of academic subjects (Baker 1989:514). Baker says further that, a

technical or vocational educational focus has not historically been a priority in formal, colonial schooling structures in Cameroon.

The mainline churches in Cameroon also went the same way, like the government, by encouraging only grammar education. Education in the Anglophone region of Cameroon was (and still is) heavily influenced by various Christian mission schools, whose primary purpose was to add a moral aspect of religious ideas to education (Baker 1989:334). The early denominational secondary schools, like Saint Joseph's College Sasse in Buea, Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) Bali, and Joseph Merrick Baptist College (JMBC) Ndu were all grammar schools. In fact, Ihims (2003:ix) notes that as Cameroon became independent in the early 1960s, there were only five full-fledged secondary grammar schools and one technical secondary school in all of Cameroon.

The neglect of the educational system to encourage students to focus also on innovative and entrepreneurial specialties has resulted to large amounts of graduates leaving school every year as job seekers rather than job creators. In most cases the type of career which university graduates consider as appropriate for their status are not available, or are reserved for children of the elite class, or reserved for some ethnic groups. Cameroon is now battling with an anomalous situation where many graduates have resorted to the riding of commercial motor cycles popularly known in Cameroon as "Okada" against their wish just because of unemployment. Many young female graduates have abnormally offered themselves as advertisements agents in communication network companies and sale of airtime. When civil protests occur, as was the case of lawyers and teachers in Cameroon in December 2016, these very graduates are the ones who fuel the crowds in protest against the government.

Those who do get employment are hardly satisfied with their salaries earned. In both the public service and the private sector, the problem of status of employees and their equitable remuneration has never been satisfactory. Multiple grievances have been voiced about the poor living and working conditions of workers. Agitations from the different sectors have received relatively very little or no attention (Konings 2004:2). Konings further opines that the deteriorating conditions of workers in Cameroon have negatively affected the morale and commitment of lecturers in particular, who are expected to teach growing numbers of students in deplorable working conditions for little remuneration. To make matters worse, the continuous economic crisis has aggravated the situation with state support for private and

institutional education sector being increasingly withdrawn. This unfortunate situation has become a backup for all failures to pay salaries in the private sector. The increasing conditions of poor services in the public and private sector in Cameroon have negatively affected the moral and commitment of workers.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology that is employed for this study is a combination of two exegetical methods, namely social scientific criticism (SSC) and an African Biblical Interpretation (ABI). The need for this combined method is compelled by the awareness that scripture speaks to people differently, depending on their context. This research on social justice is that of an African context, specifically Cameroon.

1.6 CURRENT RESEARCH

As the title indicates, the issue of this study is social justice in the employment and remuneration of workers in Cameroon in the light of workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-15) using African biblical interpretation is purely exegetical. Several biblical scholars and exegetes have approached the subject of social justice in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard from different perspectives. As indicated by Van Eck & Kloppenborg (2015:1), many of the early interpreters of this parable have employed an allegorical interpretation to the parable. Moreover, Matthew was the first to allegorise the parable by placing it between Matthew 19:30 and Matthew 20:16 (the first last and the last first). By this placing, Van Eck and Kloppenborg hold that Matthew anticipates that the request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Mt 20:20-21), and that Jesus' response (Mt 20:26-28) is focused on the cost of discipleship. Thus their conclusion is that the parable, in its Matthean context, intends to exclude arrogance and ideas of superiority over others in the kingdom.

In the African Bible commentary, the African exegete Adeyemo (2006:1152) is of the opinion that the parable deals with underserved generosity. The practice of employing day-labourers was typical in the Mediterranean world.⁷ He sees the landowner as God and Israel as the vineyard. His conclusion is that the later workers were hired not so much because the

⁷ Adeyemo (2006:1152) is of the opinion that this practice is still common in many parts of the world today. In his Zambian African homeland, he says that many young men and women still gather outside the local labour offices early in the morning. From there, prospective employers come to recruit casual labourers on a daily basis.

landowner was desperate for more workers, but because there were standing there looking for work (Adeyemo 2006:1152).

Hultgren (2000:35) reads the parable allegorically and sees the vineyard owner as God. He contends that the parable illustrates God's way of reigning in grace, and as such there is equal pay for all workers. The late workers who receive pay equal to the early workers are recipients of God's extreme generosity.

Michael Knowles points out that in the parable the vineyard owner offers the same reward to those who served little as to those who served long for the day because God's reign, which obedient disciples acknowledge, is characterised by God's own graciousness and generosity (in Longenecker 2000:304). Hence the vineyard owner is a stand-in for God. Knowles goes further to say that the parable has enjoyed or suffered a long history of imaginative exegesis as interpreted by Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200), who was from about A.D.178 the Bishop of Lyons⁸ and of Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 185-254), the greatest scholar, teacher, and writer of his day.⁹

On their part, Van Eck and Kloppenborg (2015:1) approach the parable from a social scientific perspective using the social values of patronage and clientism, with much attention paid on the actual agricultural practices in the first-century Roman economy. They hold that the kingdom is compared with the actions of a vineyard owner. The owner, in their critical view, is not obviously as many interpreters assume, a stand-in for God, but as noted in Matthew 20:8, he is simply the owner of a vineyard (ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος). They conclude that when read in the context of available contemporary evidence, the owner was one of the wealthy elites who owned large estates and converted them to viticulture¹⁰ which was dedicated to the production of export crops, since only the rich could engage in intensive medium or large scale export oriented farming (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:6). Utilising the remarks of Malina and Rohrbaugh,¹¹ Van Eck and Kloppenborg see the vineyard owner

⁸ The first call to the workers represents the beginning of the created world, while the second symbolizes the Old covenant. The third call represents Christ's ministry. The long lapse of time in which we now live is the fourth call, while the final call symbolizes the end of time (Longenecker 2000:299).

⁹ The first shift of workers signifies the generations from Adam to Noah; the second those from Noah to Abraham; the third those from Abraham to Moses; the fourth those from Moses to Joshua; and the fifth those up to the time of Christ. The householder is God, while the denarius represents salvation (Longenecker 2000:299).

¹⁰ Viticulture is the agricultural practice of cultivating grapevines.

¹¹ The good householder pays all by agreement. However, anything given over and above the agreed-for wage requires a previous patron-client relationship. The patron shows patronage by "giving to this last the same as I

as good who pays all by agreement and this explains why the workers are paid in reverse order, and why the owner, when he recruits those who started working later, does not set a fixed wage. He is recruiting clients, workers with whom he has a long-standing patron-client relationship (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:159).

1.7 RESEARCH GAP

Some researchers have examined social justice using the parable of Workers in the Vineyard, but as far as I know, no one has done so from a Cameroonian perspective. Secondly, no one has used ABI as an exegetical method for this study or a combination of SSC and ABI. The emphasis to most conclusions on the parable has always been on the fact that all were paid the same because of the extreme generosity of a very unusual employer (Hultgren 2000:35). One of the main emphases in this research work is that the owner paid all the same because he took cognisance of the condition of the unemployed which is an aspect of social justice.

1.8 RESEARCH ITINERARY

An important prerequisite in this study as discussed in section 1.3 is to examine the role of social justice in employing and paying workers in Cameroon. The governing principle is an African biblical interpretation of Matthew 20:1-15. This concern has been attended to in seven chapters. Chapter 1 comprises of the general introduction and all its derivatives. Chapter 2 examines the history of the research works that have been carried out on the interpretation of the parable of workers in the vineyard by various scholars. Such history of interpretation has been categorised into three schools of thought namely: The parable as an allegory, as an answer to Jesus' critics and the parable as an embodiment of the socio-economic realities of first-century Palestine.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology. As an exegetical work, various current approaches that have been used in reading Matthew's gospel have been presented and briefly examined. Special consideration has been given to social scientific interpretation and African biblical interpretation which are specifically applicable to this work.

give to you" (Mt 20:14). This is favour as one expects from a patron. Non-clients get merely what is their due, and for this they cast an evil eye (of envy) on the patron. The evil eye does not work, because the patron is good (Van Eck 2015:158-159).

Chapter 4 considers the first-century Mediterranean context for understanding Matthew 20:1-15. This chapter equally defines social scientific models and theories that have been used in the work as a synthesis between social scientific criticism and other historical criticisms. The chapter also delves into the contrasting realistic and unrealistic features of social justice in the parable.

The first research gap is attended to in Chapter 5, which is the African context for the understanding of Matthew 20:1-15. African models and theories have been raised and explained which will be used in Chapter 6 for interpretation. The second and third research gaps are the concern of this chapter which is the African Biblical Interpretation (ABI). Since we are dealing with a “high context” text, special awareness is given to the fact that the road to African biblical interpretation must necessarily pass through social scientific criticism. This is the reason for which this work is a combination of two approaches.

Chapter 7 highlights a brief summary of the whole work as conclusion and recommendations.

1.9 CONCLUSION: MAIN HYPOTHESIS

In reading Matthew 20:1-15 through the lens of “Social justice in employment and remuneration of workers in Cameroon in light of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15): An African Biblical Interpretation”, the study intends to make a contribution to the dire need of Africans to appropriate and read scripture from an African perspective. The work has taken into consideration the fact that there is no final interpretation to a text and since Africans have a context which is different from the Mediterranean context, ABI is imperative. Also, Africa has various cultures which define context but basic understandings are similar in most cultures, therefore the global term “Africa” can be treated as an entity. High unemployment and low remunerations perverts most of African societies due to bribery, corruption and high appetite for power. This work postulates as a hypothesis that a proper discipline to African justice system will drastically reduce need since Africa already has the resources.

Chapter 2

Research history and evaluation

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter takes into consideration a review of some of the accumulated knowledge on how the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in the area of social justice has been interpreted by various scholars in the gospel according to Matthew in general, and specifically in Matthew 20:1-15. The review is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that people learn from, and build on what others have done (Neuman 2006:111). This review seeks to focus on the fact that the vineyard owner's action is strange because he departs from the socially accepted norms of his first-century Palestinian environment. He is a patron with the services of a foreman (Mt 20:8), yet he goes on to do multiple recruitment of workers at the market place by himself, a job that would normally have been done by his foreman. As if that is not enough, at the close of the day he orders the payment of workers in a reversed order beginning with the late workers first and surprising to the workers all receive the same amount. Is there social justice in this astounding kind of behaviour? Is he a good or a bad person?

The first issue that is treated in this Chapter is the wealth of interpretations from various scholars on how the parable has been interpreted from the perspective of the vineyard owner and the workers. The second aspect is evaluating current research on the authenticity of social justice as propounded in the parable. Third, characteristic features in the parable are considered in terms of their realistic and unrealistic nature as presented. The results from the research history is then evaluated and used to compliment the recruitment and remuneration of workers in Cameroon with a focus on the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). Fifth, the research gap is formulated based on the summary of the research history and on the fact that this research is that of an African context. The Chapter ends with a conclusion.

2.2 HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

The past interpretations on the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard have been influenced by one or more of the following questions. The owner of the vineyard has a foreman, should his personal hiring of workers at the marketplace (*ἀγορά*) be seen as normal or abnormal? Why could the owner not calculate his needs better and why were the last hired not seen

earlier (Kistemaker 2007:74, Snodgrass 2008:369)? Who are the workers being hired? Why does the owner not agree with those whom he hired later on a specific amount to be paid? Why does the owner hire workers up to five o'clock? What prompted the owner to order payment of workers from the last ones being hired up to the early workers? Is the owner of the vineyard seen as an allegory for God and the Vineyard as Israel? Is the action of the vineyard owner depicted as positive or negative (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:1)?

The review is done from the early interpreters to the fairly recent ones. Morgan (1953:101) has made a departure from the quick allegorisation of the parable as other interpreters do. He makes a practical interpretation. In his answer to the presumed question, why the owner hired workers up to five o'clock and what prompted him to order his foreman to pay the workers the same, Morgan (1953:101) holds the opinion that there is no question of salvation here. It is wholly one of service. The late workers were no lazy loiterers.¹² They all entered the vineyard when they were called which is emphasised in the case of the last called. Morgan's conclusion is that payment was done based on the fact that for one hour, the last workers were faithful to their given opportunity to work. The ones who were employed early in the morning and borne the heat of the day were faithful to their work as well. The parable for Morgan, therefore illustrates the payment of reward based on fidelity of opportunity given and not on early service. Hence, the action of the vineyard owner is depicted as positive.

Using his allegorical lenses, Lockyer (1963:220) says that the parable is connected directly with the last four verses of the previous chapter and provides an answer to Peter's question in Matthew 9:27: "we have left everything to follow you, what will there be for us?" The parable, in Lockyer's view, indicates the fact that often those repenting late may overtake those who started long before in goodness and service. Hence, it is not the length of service that matters, but the quality of it. When it comes to the distribution of reward for service, Lockyer is convinced that it is the motive that gives credence to service and that acceptable service is determined not by duration but by the spirit behind it. In his conclusion, Lockyer (1963:220) makes allusion to the fact that the vineyard owner is Christ Himself and the vineyard is the services that each individual renders to the Lord.

¹² It was customary for first-century Palestinian day-labourers to wait at the market place to be employed and not to ask for work because it would be considered as shameful and worse of all a double shame if the request for work was rejected by a land owner.

Linnemann (1966:81) cues up with Morgan in asserting that the formula of comparison which introduces the parable should not mislead interpreters to understand the parable as a timeless revelation about the Kingdom of heaven. Instead, the parable must be viewed from the perspective of the historical situation in which it was spoken. Linnemann further notes that it is unusual that a vineyard owner goes out several times in a day to look for workers, more to that, the last time shortly before the end of evening work. Normally in first-century Palestine, an owner estimates how large a labour force he needs and employs them in the morning. In his opinion, the unusual feature depends on the intention of the narrator to contrast the labourers who work all day with those who work for the last hour only.¹³ Linnemann (1966:83) again further says that the payment of wages in the reverse order does not mean that the last should be the first to receive but that all, without exception all should receive a full day's wage. This is a device of the narrator who in this way allows the early workers to be witnesses of the extremely generous payment of the late workers.¹⁴ Linnemann's final word is that despite the grumbling of the early workers, the owner is able to show that justice has been satisfied. What appeared as a breach in the ordered system of justice was indeed goodness and goodness cannot be disapproved.

Hunter (1971:70) follows the line of thought that interprets the parable within the original setting in which it is told, that is, within the perspective of the historical Jesus. He believes that Jesus is answering his critics, the Pharisees, those holier than thou Jews who think that their piety entitles them to a special claim on God's reward. Furthermore, he goes ahead to say that these are the very Jews who complain that Jesus is opening the gates of God's Kingdom to all the undesirable characters like sinners and tax-collectors. Hunter (1971:71) is also confident that the late workers stand for the publicans and sinners. Like Jeremias, Hunter's conclusion on the one hand is that the good employer in the parable represents God.¹⁵

Jeremias' idea like that of Hunter is to place the parable within the original setting in which the parable was told. He believes that the parable is clearly addressed to those who criticise

¹³ From the opinion of Linnemann, an interpreter needs not see the unusual behavior of the owner as a pressing harvest situation because the story does not give any support to such a view.

¹⁴ It is another device of the narrator that the owner is thought of as present during payment of wages, for this was not usual when the steward pays out wages.

¹⁵ On the other hand, that Jesus is not talking about equal pay for equal work done but that the rewards of the kingdom of God are not measured by men's abilities but by their needs.

Jesus and oppose the Good News whom he clearly identifies in the parable as murmurers (Jeremias 1972:38). These murmurers, he identifies (for example) as the Pharisees and teachers of the law who again and again bring charges against Jesus for being a companion of the despised and the outcasts like sinners and tax-collectors (see Luke 19:7). Following this parable, Jeremias affirms that Jesus wants to prove to them how unjustified, hateful, loveless, and unmerciful is their criticism. Repeatedly, Jesus is compelled to justify his conduct and to vindicate the Good News. Jeremias is of the opinion that Jesus' intention is to show how God is like, so good and full of compassion for the poor and one cannot revile God for His goodness and generosity to whoever He wills. In his conclusion, Jeremias holds that the vineyard owner is God.

Boucher (1981:89) is one of the many interpreters who see the parable as an allegory for God's grace. By telling the parable, Boucher is of the opinion that Jesus is showing that God's reign does not follow the orthodox rules of recompense, rather it is spontaneous, unearned, and an overflowing gift. For him, the eleventh-hour workers stand for religious outcasts who are answering Jesus' call to God's reign. The early workers, who grumble that they deserve more, stand for the self-righteous who protest that they merit special reward for excess duties. He concludes his allegorical position with the view that, the protesters stand for the Scribes and Pharisees who speak of merits while the vineyard owner stand for God who speaks of grace.

Donahue (1988:78) finds it comfortable to locate the immediate context of the parable as Matthew's concern for life in the community. He divides the parable into three acts: Act one for him involves the hiring (Mt 20:1-7), act two, the payments (Mt 20:8-11) and Act three is the dialogue between the vineyard owner and the grumbling workers (Mt 20:11-15). He thinks that the constant complain in our society today about welfare is proof that popular morality operates according to the principle of "equal work for equal pay". The grumbling workers are so narrow in their understanding of justice in such a way that it becomes a norm by which they judge other workers. Hence they order the world by their norm which limits the owner's freedom and excludes unexpected generosity.

Inrig (1991:181) has read the parable from daily life in ancient Palestine. He dismisses the idea of allegory from the parable and holds that Jesus wanted his listeners to think about the attitude of the heart with which a disciple should serve Him. In a Palestinian agricultural

society of the first century, Inrig furthermore says that there were no labour unions and therefore workers were paid on daily basis in accordance to the Old Testament (OT) law (Lv 19:13, Dt 24:14-15). There is no indication (in his view) that the early workers have any particular skills or abilities for which there should be more desirable employees than the others. Later workers are sent to work in the vineyard without any contracting agreement but with trust in the vineyard owner's promise to pay what is right. Since a family could not live on less than a denarius a day, Inrig (1991:181) concludes that it is in generosity that the vineyard owner pays them and not what they deserve. What they receive is what they need¹⁶ for their families. Therefore, the vineyard owner is depicted as good.

By following in the footsteps of Hunter and Jeremias, Herzog (1994:84) has placed the parable within the perspective of the world of Jesus' time with the view that the parable presents a scene typical of that world. He divides the parable into two scenes: the hiring Mt 20:1-7) and the payment (Mt 20:8-15) and the action of the vineyard owner (οικοδεσπότης) initiate both scenes. Herzog underscores the fact that even though the owner is pictured as going out to hire the workers, he has a manager which indicates a man of wealth. Herzog's take home is that Jesus told the parable to address his opponents who like the disgruntle workers insist on works and merits.

Placing the parable within the context of the Judean ministry and prior to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Hultgren (2000:35) asserts that the parable is addressed to the disciples. He makes allusion to a similar rabbinic tale¹⁷ which proves that the man who works only two hours receives the same pay as those who work all day long because he does more in two hours than those who labour the whole day. In Jesus' parable, Hultgren thus observes that those who receive equal pay like the early workers are beneficiaries of the extreme generosity of a very unusual employer. Therefore, the vineyard owner who goes out to hire labourers is surely a metaphor for God (see the designation of him as ὁ κύριος) in which Jesus illustrates God's way of reigning in grace. Finally, the parable in Hultgren's view does not make an economic

¹⁶ In Inrig's (1991:181) view, people matter more than profits.

¹⁷ The tale concerns Rabbi Zeira (325 AD) who tells the story of a king who hired many workers, and he noticed that one was especially skillful. He asked the man to accompany him as he walks about. At the end of the day he paid him the same amount as he paid the others. The workers grumbled, "We have been working hard all day long, and this man who laboured two hours receives as much salary as we do". The king said, "it is because he has done more in two hours than you in the entire day" (Hultgren 2000:34-35).

prescription because its outcome is untypical of ordinary life and that is what makes it so memorable.

From a social-scientific perspective, Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101) have noted that the scenario in the passage fits well into the experience of the Mediterranean peasants. The fact that it is harvest time in the story and the people described are standing at the market place means that the people have no land of their own; else they will be busy working. The vineyard owner acts like a typical Mediterranean Patron. In the Mediterranean culture of the first century, no one dare asks for work from a patron. Peasants have to wait for employers to approach them and offer them work. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:102) see the vineyard owner as good because he pays the workers as agreed and anything given above the agreed wage is seen as a previous patron-client relationship.¹⁸ New clients (early workers) get only what they deserve. For them, the evil eye (of envy) caste by the early workers does not work because the patron is good. Since Malina and Rohrbaugh look at the parable from a typical Mediterranean life situation, they conclude like Bailey that the owner is just and good (positive).

Stiller (2005:56) on his part sets the parable within the socio-cultural perspective of first-century Palestinian economy. The urgency to hire workers throughout the day is for Stiller at pressing harvest time when a farmer will have only a few days to harvest the grapes. Therefore, it is not surprising for the owner to return throughout the day to find more workers. Stiller maintains that for the landowner to give those who work less the same as those who work longer violets fair labour management practices. Unfortunately, towards his conclusion, Stiller follows Jeremias by asserting the owner as God. He points out that Jesus wants to show the unmerited generosity by which God calls and welcomes the outcast into the community of faith where all are made equal. At the end, God is seen to be good rather than being unfair.

In her social-historical analysis, Schottroff (2006:210) sees the owner of the vineyard from two perspectives. First, he is one who has the unrestricted right to dispose of his private property as he wills. Schottroff corroborates the idea by pointing out that for freeborn land owners in the Roman society of the first century, there is no superior law, one could use his

¹⁸ The late workers at the vineyard would have been clients who were previously working for the patron and their payment is based on their already established relationship. The patron shows patronage by giving to the last same as the first.

property as he wants. The second perspective is that he is one who exhibits extreme generosity. Schottroff follows the school of thought of Jeremias where the vineyard owner sees a situation of unemployment and decides to be compassionate by giving the late workers a full day's pay.

Kistemaker (2007:72) is more concerned about the theology of the parable. For him, the story points to God who freely gives good gifts to men and women. In this view, the story echoes a line from Psalm 34:5 "Taste and see that the Lord is good." The early workers are told their wage but the later workers are promise a fair wage. Even though the amount is not specified, Kistemaker (2007:72) thinks that the workmen know the reputation of the vineyard owner and they trust that he will not disappoint them at the end of the day. Workers are permitted to eat as many of the grapes as they desire and the owner expects to lose nearly 3% of the yield. Moreover, Kistemaker opines that by hiring workers late in the afternoon, the workers will concentrate their energy to the harvest of the crops to cover up the lost part of the day rather than eating grapes and the owner does not run the risk of losing many grapes. By going to the market place several times, the *οικοδεσπότης* is undoubtedly observing the law of supply and demand (Kistemaker 2007:74). No employer in any business economy will engage more workers than he needs. In actual fact high returns are receive from workers who put in all their energy in half a day or less in working, than those who work for the whole day and spend part of the time resting or eating grapes. In Kistemaker's interpretation, the vineyard owner is not only trustworthy and honest, but also a generous man. He sees God as the vineyard owner who is so good that not only the principle of merit and ability works, but the principle of Grace¹⁹ triumphs in the kingdom of God. The employer pays according to the current needs²⁰ of his workers. He is good and a most benevolent person, Kistemaker concludes.

Voris (2008:108) does not provide an interpretation of his own, but rather draws a conclusion from the interpretation of Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin and Joachim Jeremias from various epochs. In his fifth century interpretation of the parable, Augustine sees those who are

¹⁹ Kistemaker (2007:76) explains that when Jesus taught the parable, he was facing an audience that had been trained in the Jewish doctrine of merit. His contemporaries believed that man must accumulate to his credit numerous good deeds so that he might convert them into rewards before God. In this parable, Jesus shows that God is not interested in making profits. God does not deal with man on the basis of one good deed merits another, but from the fullness of His grace, we have all received one blessing after another (Jn 1:16).

²⁰ The need of the people is what can provide daily bread for the family.

call at the first hour as Abel and the righteous men of his age, those of the third hour as Abraham and the righteous men of his age, those of the sixth hour as Moses and Aaron and the righteous men of his age. Finally the eleventh hour workers, he sees as the end of the world of all Christians. Voris has cited Calvin who was writing at the beginning of the Reformation (15th century) when people were rediscovering the bible and was interested in the stated reason²¹ why Jesus told the story. For Calvin, the first workers are those who become Christians earlier and the late workers were those who are converted to Christ later. The early converts in Calvin's opinion are not to look down on later converts but continue with their work in humility and love because all Christians will receive the same price. Writing in the mid-twentieth century, Jeremias criticises Calvin and places the parable within the original setting in which the parable is told. The vineyard owner provides a living wage to everyone for the sake of compassion on each worker's family. The parable for Jeremias is about God's generosity; hence God is the owner of the vineyard. Voris' conclusion is that, Augustine, Calvin and Jeremias all provide theologically insightful interpretations of their times which are not wrong but only the context of their hearers change.

Bailey (2008:28) prefers to refer to this parable as the parable of the Compassionate Employer because the focus is on the vineyard owner who demonstrates sensitivity and compassion for the unemployed. He follows Jeremias, but prefers to read the parable following the socio-economic realities of first-century Palestine. Bailey holds that by paying all the workers the same wage, the compassionate employer wants to redefine justice as more than equal application of the law (Bailey 2008:363). Justice for him includes respect for the dignity of those in need and a deep concern for their welfare. Again, the compassionate employer in Bailey's view is an example of one who has concern for the unemployed and who shows amazing sensitivity to both their physical needs and self-respect. Finally, Bailey depicts the compassionate employer as a positive symbol.

Snodgrass (2008:364) makes an allusion to a non-canonical source²² to show that Jesus' parable is not farfetched. The realistic feature for Snodgrass in the parable is that the Vineyard owner is probably well-off, but not to the extent that he could leave the oversight of his

²¹ But many who are first will be last and the last will be first (Mt 19:30).

²² Snodgrass draws his inspiration from Josephus in *Antiquities* (Ant.20.219.20) who says that during the time of Herod Agrippa, after the temple was completed, about 18,000 workmen were unemployed. For the workers to continue to feed their families, if anyone worked but for one hour of the day, he at once received his day's wage

vineyard to a manager. He opines as unrealistic, the fact that the number of hiring is excessive and hardly conceivable because of the time involved in going back and forth from the vineyard, unless the vineyard is immediately adjacent to the market. Another unrealistic feature in the view of Snodgrass is the equal payment of all the labourers. He however comes to a consensus that the parable uses every day material, but does not relate an everyday occurrence (Snodgrass 2008:369).

Blomberg (2012:285) follows allegory and makes an appraisal of what Snodgrass (2008:372) has earlier taken note that all workers in the vineyard stand for God's true people. Blomberg considers this rendering from the level of original meaning. The early workers will appear more deserving than others, but all are rewarded equally. For him, the various hours at which the different men begin to work merely illustrate the diverse nature of the citizens of the kingdom. This implies as Blomberg says, that God's people come to repentance at different times in their lives, with various levels of commitment and faithfulness. His conclusion is that the parable presents a striking metaphor of God's grace.

Levine draws his inspiration from a school of thought known as "Revisionist Readings" in which scholars who belong to this school of thought hold that Jesus' parable is not only about salvation, but about practical issues involve in labour relations (Levine 2014:202).

Interestingly, this view which Levine holds, make the vineyard owner (despot) as a member of the exploitative Jewish elite who has deprived peasants of their land and impoverish them. He demands that they pay exorbitant tithes in the temple without considering the fact that the Roman taxation system is also squeezing the peasants already to the point of starvation. To keep the workers from unionizing to protest for his unfair practices, he employs them in different groups and at different times. By insisting that the last be paid first and same amount is a political manoeuvre to sow discord among workers and so prevent them from uniting against him. In this rereading, Jesus' parable becomes a revelation to the peasants about their manipulation. Levine concludes that once the οἰκοδεσπότης (landowner) can be recognise as a member of an oppressing elite class, he is seen as an enemy and his actions and words are open to scrutiny (Levine 2014:203).

Wright (2015:142) is convinced that the activity of the vineyard owner in going many times to recruit in the market place is believable because he needs extra labour and the more he can get the better. He observes that the instructions of the landowner to pay workers the same amount

is seen as an act of justice, which Bailey (2008:355) calls the “compassionate employer.” Wright goes further to say that the owner’s pay policy is good for those who have less opportunity to work, but that it is also a demonstration of power and absolute authority over his hired men. His reverse pay policy²³ for Wright is seen as a deliberate attempt to remind all the workers of his extreme generosity.²⁴ Wright sees like Kistemaker (2007:76) that the complaining first workers are not out of place because they live within a system where payment is in proportion to work expended (Wright 2015:156). Rather than make an assessment of the landowner’s character, Wright concludes that Jesus’ listeners are asked to take note of the fact that the hungry are being fed. Hence the vineyard owner is seen as good and generous.

A recent interpretation to the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is offered by Van Eck (2016:140). He uses the social and economic practices in the agriculture of the Roman economy of the first century to assess the degree of realism in the parable and also points to Jesus’ deliberate confrontation of the audience with what is normal and eventually produces a surprised outcome. He further takes into consideration a land tenure system in first-century Palestine in which most of the productive land is held by large-scale (elite) owners. By pointing to what is, and what is not realistic in the parable, he strengthens his opinion about the non-allegorisation and moralisation of the parable. Thus the vineyard owner for him is not necessarily a stand-in for God, as many have assumed, but he is the owner of the vineyard (ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος) as stated in Matthew 20:8.

Van Eck agrees with Snodgrass (2008:369) that the realistic features in the parable are the recruitment of workers from the market at a time of need by the owner who may not be so wealthy and does the recruitment himself, and the wage paid. Unrealistic features are the excessive number of recruitments,²⁵ and the equal pay of all the workers. The reverse payment in Van Eck’s view is to be understood from the remarks of Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101).²⁶ Following Malina & Rohrbaugh, he explains why the vineyard owner does not

²³ The last to work was to be paid first.

²⁴ This is contrary to Bailey who thinks that the last to work are paid first so as not to humiliate them by just giving them money (Bailey 2008:357).

²⁵ Van Eck (2016:158) follows the evidence of papyri to affirm that Jeremias’ suggestion that at harvest time (vintage period) ripe grapes had to be picked and pressed quickly before they get rotten is the most probable. This urgent process needed a large number of extra workers. If this understanding is followed, the action of vineyard owner becomes realistic.

²⁶ The good householder pays all by agreement. However, anything given over and above the agreed-for-wage requires a previous patron-client relationship. The patron shows patronage by “giving to this last the same as I

pre-arrange the price with later workers because he is recruiting clients, workers with whom he has a long-standing patron-client relationship.²⁷ Therefore, the vineyard owner as patron of the late workers has to pay his clients first Herzog (1994:84), Hunter (1971:70), Linnemann (1966:86), Perrin (1976:117), Donahue (1988:82) and Jeremias (1972:38). His conclusion is that the vineyard owner is not just a good employer, as Jeremias says, but also a patron, offering benefits beyond the strict norms of economic exchange. The owner's assertion, [ἢ] οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὁ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς; (am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?), underscores the fact that he has stepped out of the role of the owner, who thinks only in terms of a strict balance sheet, into the role of a patron/benefactor, whose actions create enduring and effective bonds with his clients, and who is entitled to benefit persons differentially. Van Eck concludes the discussion with the take home message from a social scientific perspective that the parable is a high-context text; where "practical reasons" are not given in the parable. To miss this point is to read the text from an anachronistic perspective.

2.3 EVALUATING CURRENT RESEARCH ON MATTHEW 20:1-15

From the history of interpretation, it is noted that scholars have based their interpretations of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard at three levels. The oldest and popular reading which is also the intention of the narrator of Matthew is allegorical reading. The second group of scholars are concerned with the original setting in which the parable was told. They hold that Jesus, in the parable is answering his critics, these are Pharisees who think that their piety entitled them to a special claim on God's reward. They therefore complain that Jesus is opening the gates of God's Kingdom to all undesirable characters in Israel (Hunter 1971:71). The third class of interpreters are those who read the parable as an embodiment of the socio-economic realities of first-century Palestine. Scholars in this class are more liberal.

2.3.1 The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard as allegory

Horton (2000:678) defines allegory as a literary device in which ideas or moral principles are presented symbolically or metaphorically, often using fictional events and characters. Some of the scholars who valorise as allegory the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard include

give to you" (Mt 20:14). This is favour as one expects from a patron. Non-clients get merely what is their due, and for this they cast an evil eye (of envy) on the patron. The evil eye does not work, because the patron is good.
²⁷ Van Eck indicates that one of the salient features of patron-client relationships was that it entailed a long-range social-interpersonal obligation, which included a strong element of solidarity that was sealed by exchange, couched in terms of interpersonal loyalty and attachment between patrons and clients.

Lockyer (1963:220), Boucher (1981:89), and Blomberg (2012:285). The vineyard owner for Lockyer is Christ Himself and for Boucher (1981:89) is God who has no hour of the day when He is not at work. Wherever He can find those who are willing to work diligently at His service, He hires them. Only Christ (or God) himself, the vineyard owner knows the worth of each labourer and therefore discontent for His rewards for service is unwarranted. Labourers are aware that motive gives character to service, and that acceptable service is determined, not by duration, but by its spirit. Other allegorical interpreters follow this line of thought but Blomberg (2012:282) intimates that equal payment of workers means that there are no degrees of rewards in heaven.

By using allegorical interpretation, Scholars in this school of thought have given the impression that Jesus' parable of Workers in the Vineyard is fiction. It will mean that vineyards and viticulture and the need for labourers were not very practical in the first-century Mediterranean world. Meanwhile Van Eck (2016:146) has indicated from papyri sources that the creation of large estates in Palestine was in full swing in the Hellenistic period. These large estates were converted to viticulture and set aside for export crops²⁸.

2.3.2 The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard as an answer to Jesus' critics

Scholars who follow this school of thought are interested in the original setting in which the parable was told. These scholars among others include Jeremias (1972:38), Herzog (1994:84) and Hunter (1971:70), Linnemann (1966:86), Perrin (1976:117), Donahue (1988:82). Jeremias (1972:38) argues that the original setting of the parable is address to those who publicly criticise and oppose Jesus for being in companion with the outcasts (tax collectors and sinners and the despised). The Pharisees stand as an example of the murmurers who think that their piety qualifies them for special treatment and favour. By giving the workers equal payment, Jeremias shows how Jesus proved to the Pharisees that their criticism is unjustified, loveless and unmerciful. Jesus thus justifies his conduct of being a friend to the despised and therefore exonerates the Good News. Herzog like others follow Jeremias and goes on to say that the disgruntle workers²⁹ who are the first to be employed insist on works and merit. Even though all the scholars in this category have agreed that the parable is Jesus' defence against

²⁸ Van Eck further notes that: "Owners of large estates increased their tenure through foreclosures on loans, leading to hostile takeovers of peasant farms. When possible the land so annexed was converted into vineyards so it could produce a product with a higher return than the mixed grains grown by subsistence peasant farmers" Van Eck (2016:146).

²⁹ Pharisees, scribes, or other opponents.

his historical opponents, each interpreter has developed a distinctive reading of the parable's message.

2.3.3 The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard as an embodiment of the socio-economic realities of first-century Palestine

Scholars who have challenged allegorical interpretation and the reading of the parable as warning to Jesus' critics are interested in reading the parable from the perspective of daily life in ancient Palestine. Inrig (1991:181), Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101), Schottroff (2006:210), Van Eck (2016:152) are some of the scholars who are indebted to reading the parable from the socio-economic realities of first-century Palestine. From his social-historical analysis, Schottroff says that for a free born land owner, there is no superior law, so he has the unrestricted right to dispose of his belonging as he wills. From social scientific criticism, Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101) have read the parable using the patron-client³⁰ model from social relations which was quite visible in the first-century Mediterranean culture. Giving to the last employed (those who are already known clients to the patron) the same as well as the first to be employed is favour which is normally expected from a Patron. None clients get only what is their due. This, for Van Eck (2016:158) explains why the workers are paid in the reverse order, because the owner wants to satisfy his familiar clients first³¹. By the multiple employments, Inrig (1991:181) is of the opinion that the vineyard owner has seen the unemployed workers and desire to help them. This idea of Inrig does not seem to agree with the practice of daily life in ancient Palestine (which he wants to project) where reward for work was according to merit.

Van Eck has demonstrated a good knowledge of the departure from allegorism by indicating that the parable starts with a surprise (Mt 20:1). How can the Kingdom be compared to a vineyard owner, who on many counts is considered to be an untrustworthy character?³²

Affirming the idea of Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101) that what transpires in the parable is based on Patron-client relationship, Van Eck assumes the interpretation of the parable to be seen from a social scientific perspective. He refutes the erroneous interpretation of Borg and

³⁰ Patron-client relationship was a form of dependency relation involving a reciprocal exchange of unavailable goods and services. A society of unfair distribution of resources in the first-century Mediterranean society had created an imbalanced society status between the privileged and non-privileged peasantry (DeSilva 2000:96).

³¹ These late workers might have had a reputation about their Patron that they can trust to work for him without any agreed remuneration; a relationship with a strong element of the mutual exchange of unavailable goods and services.

³² Large estate vineyard for viticulture acquire their land or increase what they already have perhaps through expropriation or default on loans, or through receiving gift estates from conquered lands, or through making a purchase from failing farmers (Van Eck 2016:154).

Crossan who saw the later workers standing at the market place as idling, loitering and lazy base on the owner's question to the five o'clock workers (τί ὧδε ἐστήκατε ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἄργοι; why do you stand here idle all day?). He maintains that the basic meaning in the question of the owner is "not working" or "without work" and not in the pejorative sense of being lazy.³³ Van Eck's last remark is that, the owner is a patron who has defiled the societal norm of payment according to merit and has paid according to need. This action becomes a role model for those who have more than enough.

The scholarship of Inrig, Malina and Rohrbaugh, Schottroff, Van Eck, and others who follow this school of thought (socio-economic realities of first-century Palestine) may seem to have a shortcoming in that, the generosity of the vineyard owner solves the unemployment problem of just one day. Since this is not a daily happening, one wonders how day-labourers can survive in non-harvest seasons.

2.4 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF CURRENT RESEARCH

- Many peasants in the Mediterranean community were poor and live basically from opportunities of daily labour (Snodgrass 2008:370).
- A society that Jesus describes in the parable is that of unfair distribution of resources and this creates an imbalanced society between the privileged and non-privileged peasantry (DeSilva 2000:96).
- Workers who get an employment opportunity to work are expected to be loyal to their employers Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101), thus the owner's reply to one of the grumbling workers; "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?"
- First-century Mediterranean community members live with the reality of high unemployment and it is for this reason that the vineyard owner decides to help (Inrig 1991:181).
- There is no indication in the parable that the employer has any consideration for ethnic or racial discrimination in employing workers for his vineyard.
- Many interpreters are of the opinion that the vineyard owner in the parable has exhibited social justice by paying all his workers the same amount even though they put in various hours of work.

³³ Idling would have been the case if the first-century Mediterranean economy is that of normal full employment, but there is serious under-employment and day labourers are doing "hand-to-mouth" jobs and never certain of daily earnings.

This summary of current research is used to compliment the development of the research gap that has been explained below.

2.5 EXPLAINING THE RESEARCH GAP

From the history of interpretation in section § 2.2 above, one is bound to draw the following conclusions which lead to the formulation of the research gap: 1) Various interpreters of the parable in Matthew 20:1-15 have done so from the perspective of the Western context that handles the spiritual problems and questions of Westerners; 2) interpreters like Jeremias (1972:38), Herzog (1994:84) and Hunter (1971:70), Linnemann (1966:86), Perrin (1976:117), Donahue (1988:82) have pointed to the original setting in which the parable was told. By so doing, they have base their interpretation on historical criticism. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101), Schottroff (2006:210), Van Eck (2016:152) have done an etic reading of the parable using social-scientific criticism; 3) still other interpreters like Herzog, Bailey and Levine are concerned with the socio-economic realities of the first-century Mediterranean world, thus showing that they base their interpretation from a reader-oriented perspective; and 4) most, if not all the interpreters that have been reviewed above are Western and American scholars and their contextual analysis are equally Western which handled the spiritual problems and questions of Westerners.

Therefore, the research gap for this work lies within the following perspectives:

- There is no indication that the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard has been interpreted from an African perspective and particularly from a Cameroonian context.
- Interpreters who have studied this parable have done so by using other epistemological paradigms that are mentioned above other than the African Biblical Hermeneutic Approach (ABHA) based on the on-going African Biblical Interpretation (ABI) method which is the focus of this work.
- Since ABI does not function on its own, the work has employed a combination of two critical methods, that is, social-scientific criticism (SSC) and ABI. It is within these premises that this work lends its credence for a research gap.

2.6 CONCLUSION

It is realised from the history of interpretation above that most interpreters of the parable have paid less attention to the actual agricultural practices of the Palestinian economy of antiquity. From Matthew's narrative of Jesus' parable, one can conclude that it was a privilege in the first century for a worker to have a position of work where he can earn wages. Kistemaker (2007:72) confirms the assertion by insinuating that for an employer to give work to a worker, it is a measure of kindness and an act of grace because many workers would have loved to work and make a living for their families but some have been unfortunate. Peasants looking for work would have been many as seen from the answer of those who were standing at the market all day – because no one hired us (ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς ἐμισθώσατο). When Jesus tells the parable, he faces an audience that is trained in the Jewish doctrine of merit (Kistemaker 2007:76). Even though work and merits are still important values in the Cameroon labour market of the twenty first century, there is still true justice in providing for the needs of those who have little or no work to do in a community of labour scarcity like that of Cameroon. The vineyard owner becomes a model for those elites who are the wealth owners in the community. We now turn to the methodology which is used in this work.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter underscores the road map that this work has taken. The work is an exegetical study, an analysis based on the first-century societal concern for social justice in relation to Matthew's depiction of social justice in the context of employment and remuneration. This concept is then employed in a methodology which is in line with contextualising biblical exegesis from an African perspective. Nyiawung (2013:4) and Adamo (2015:2) have named this contextual exegesis as African Biblical Hermeneutics. From this approach, a method has been developed known as Africa Biblical Interpretation (ABI). This is not to say that African biblical hermeneutics is the only biblical approach, but it is one of the biblical approaches that must be reckoned with, among others that are discussed below. West (n.d.:1) asserts that biblical interpretation in Africa typically consists of three poles: the pole of the biblical text, the pole of the African context, and the pole of appropriation. The work employs the literature based method which is an exegetical research based on material from the library of the University of Pretoria, online published articles, the personal library of Prof. Van Eck, the library of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary and other private libraries. Since the work is based on exegesis, it is necessary to explain what exegesis is all about.

3.2 EXEGESIS

Porter (2002:5) is of the opinion that in biblical studies, the term "exegesis" is used so freely and represents many different things to various scholars. Exegesis has an often synonymous relationship to other words like 'interpretation' and 'hermeneutics'. Broadly speaking, Porter (2002:4) further says that all three terms fall under the discipline of 'heuristics' (Greek = εὐρίσκω), which not only meant 'find' or 'come upon', but could also refer to an intellectual discovery based upon reflection, observation, examination, or investigation). Exegesis is simplified in the perspective of day to day life by Hayes and Holladay (1987: 5) who say that it is a normal activity in which all of us are engaged from day to day. They explain that "Whenever we hear an oral statement or read a written one and seek to understand what has

been said, we are engaging in exegesis.” The word exegesis³⁴ itself is derived from the Greek term ἐξηγέομαι, which literally meant ‘lead out of.’ When applied to written texts the word referred to the ‘reading out’ of the text’s meaning.

3.3 CURRENT APPROACHES THAT HAVE BEEN USED IN READING MATTHEW’S GOSPEL

There is no final interpretation to a text. All interpretation is perspectival because different questions lead to different answers. Porter (2002:16) is emphatic in his view that the most controversial problem in a discussion of the exegetical task of biblical texts is the question of “theology”, and its place within biblical interpretation. It goes without saying that the Bible is considered by many Christians and non-Christians alike as a sacred religious text. He goes further to say that this sacredness implies a number of faith assumptions (Porter 2002:16):

- That in some form, the Bible is thought to record the word(s) of God more so than any other writing.
- That the Bible is considered to embody a truer or better reflection and more accurate representation of reality.
- That the degree of authority attached to the Bible by individuals and communities supersede that of any other literary text.
- Finally that the Bible is ascribed a central role in informing and guiding the faith and practice of individuals and communities.

These faith assumptions play an important part in the interpretative process, because exegetes seek to explain the biblical text from the perspective of their faith communities. Porter’s final word to this fact is that a theologian or an exegete engages in exegesis so as to aid in the contemporization of traditions and doctrines which will continually speak in a new and vital ways to present believers. A text has various aspects of meaning and different types of exegesis can be used to handle them. Therefore an exegete can never hope to present the exegesis of a text as if it were final (Porter 2002:18). This leads to the next section that proceeds with the various exegetical methods that have been used in the interpretation of Matthew’s gospel.

³⁴ For a traditional definition, Porter (2002:5) understands exegesis as the process by which a reader seeks to discover the meaning of a text through an understanding of the original author's intentions in that text. The classic goal of exegesis has been to articulate the meaning of a passage as the original writer intended it to be understood by his or her contemporary audience.

3.3.1 Diachronic or historical criticism

Diachronic³⁵ (δια + χρόνος = changes that have occurred over time). Historical criticism (HC) studies the diachronic development of texts like the synoptic tradition which purport to record historical events by investigating the historical setting in which the text originated. Bailey (2008:1) says that HC deals with the historical setting of a document, the time and place in which it was written, its sources, if any, the events, dates, persons, and places mentioned or implied in the text, etc. Its goal is the writing of a chronological narrative of pertinent events, revealing where possible the nature and interconnection of the events themselves. Historical critics test a given account against several criteria, including such standards as factual accuracy and author's presuppositions. In his lectures on the "Historical critical methods" (HCM), Bailey (2008:1) notes that the history of the HCM has been a history of the four methods within the historical-critical approach. Each method of exegesis grows out of previous ones, being perceived as related to them, yet different from them. This process is likely to continue in the future.

One scholar that has applied the historical critical method extensively to the reading of Matthew is Thomas G. Long. He opines that Matthew has a characteristic feature to alternate between sections of action stories in the ministry of Jesus and sections of teaching and instruction (Long 1997:145). Furthermore, he notes that from Matthew 13, Jesus' style of teaching changes. His instructional methods have shifted and for the first time Jesus begins to teach in parables. According to Long, Matthew's Jesus, as a historical figure, might have shifted to parables because of the fact that many of the people around him closed their ears and stop listening to Him. Jesus has been rejected by many of the people and their leaders and the resistance to Jesus has been growing. Doerksen (1970:7) has also indicated a similar and historical reason for which Jesus speaks in parables.³⁶

Parables are profound for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. Parables for Jesus open up deep insights about the ways of God. Parables unlock the secrets of the kingdom. From the

³⁵ Elliot (1993:128) refers to diachronic as denoting a historical perspective that focuses on underlying and interrelated processes governing a sequence of events over time.

³⁶ It has been shown that some parables were given to illustrate a truth so that the hearers would grasp the meaning more readily. They were stories of common settings and close to the experience of the Palestinian people. But beyond this, when our Lord was asked why He spoke in parables, He responded, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:11; cf. Lk. 8:10; Mk. 4:11, 12). It would seem that Christ's teaching in parables did not come until His rejection by the nation of Israel was becoming clear, and He saw the need to speak in a manner understood by His true followers, but not understood by the mere curious or those who were hostile to His ministry (Mt. 13:13).

perspective of the Matthean Jesus, Long (1997:146) underscores that Jesus begins to teach in parables at this critical point in his ministry because He is turning his attention towards the disciples that is, his own true followers who are prepared to move to a higher level of wisdom. He is experiencing a strong repudiation in his ministry. From Matthew's point of view, Jesus speaks in parables precisely because the people have become hard hearted: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand" (Mt 13:13). The conclusion that one may draw from Long's discussion is that a meaningful interpretation of Matthew has taken the historical context couple with the author's intention³⁷ and probably some extra canonical sources that are related to the text have been taken into consideration. The historical biblical approach is made up of many sub-disciplines (called exegetical methods), according to the questions raised and answers expected. Some of the sub-disciplines are textual criticism, traditional-historical criticism, grammatical criticism, literary criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism.³⁸

Davies and Allison's reading of Matthew 20:1-15 can be considered as a historical-critical reading of the parable. The exegesis of their reading of the text is as follows: The text is divided into two sections, namely Matthew 20:1-7 and 8-15. Since there are no synoptic parallels to this parable, Davies and Allison (1997:66) have assigned the text to the M-source³⁹. They have gone further to say that Matthew 20:16 is only a redactional adaptation from Matthew 19:30, which was never originally part of the parable.

In the view of Davies and Allison, γάρ in Matthew 20:1 has made the parable to be an explanation of the previous Matthew 19:30, and as such, the parable becomes that of eschatological judgement and rewards. The relative pronoun ὅστις (who) in Matthew 20:1 is an indication that the owner does the hiring himself. From an allegorical perspective, the

³⁷ Perhaps the most striking thing about the historical context and the author's intention of Matthew's Gospel which Long (1997:2) points out is that Matthew's intended readers or Matthew's Church appears to have been a congregation of Jews who had become Gentile Christians. The problem that Matthew's church would have been facing was what Long has called "the Gentile question". As Jews, they would have been schooled to avoid Gentiles, to think of Gentiles as pagans, and to preserve their religious and ethnic identity by firmly maintaining the barriers between themselves and the Gentile masses. They believed that God's promises to Israel were pledges made to a select and favoured people. Paradoxically, Matthew's church also believed and trusted Jesus and that the gospel which Jesus taught has centrifugal force (pulling from the centre) like the prophetic tradition in the Old Testament and on the other hand the gospel kept pushing them into the larger world.

³⁸ For a textual-critical analysis of Matthew 20:1-15, see Appendix 1. In Appendix 2 a literal and dynamic translation of Matthew 20:1-15 are presented. The dynamic translation will be used as working text for this study. Word by word analysis of Matthew 20:1-15 is found in Appendix 3.

³⁹ The M-source from the four-source-hypothesis refers to special material that was used only by Matthew (Matthean *Sondergut*) during the composition of his gospel.

vineyard in which the labourers (ἐργάτας) work re-echoes the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1 and Jeremiah 12:10 and these images encourage exegetes to think of the vineyard owner as God and Israel as the workers in the vineyard (Davies & Allison 1997:72). They further opined that the successively shorter description of the first four groups, that is verse 2-5, followed by the more detailed account in the dialogue with the eleventh hour workers, verse 6-9 gives the impression that they are really two groups being compared; those hired earlier in the morning and those hired only for one hour. Blomberg (2012:284) corroborates that the contrast between the two groups of workers being compared is a relative one. It is much like the contrast between the prodigal son and his elder brother in Luke 15:13. Just as the Father loved and wooed both sons with equal tenderness, so the land owner pays equal attention to the labourers.

The idea of some standing in Matthew 20:3 (ἑστῶτας) may not necessarily refer to literal standing but probably to the idea of being present (cf. Mt 16:28). About the eleventh hour- *περὶ δὲ τὴν ἑνδεκάτην* which would be about 5pm, is an interruption of the sequence of hours in the view of Davies and Allison (1997:72). They further insist that the unexpected hour draws attention to itself and hints at more unexpected things to come.

The complaint of the by-standers in Matthew 20:7, “because no one has hired us” (ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς ἐμισθώσατο) may be an indication that unemployment by then was a serious problem, as it is a serious problem now in Cameroon. This situation has been compounded by the marginalisation of the Anglophones which has led to the on-going socio-political crisis of the North West and South West regions in Cameroon. The main issue here in the text however is that men were available who needed work. The early workers are told their wage but the later workers are promise a fair wage. Even though the amount is not specified, Kistemaker (2007:72) thinks that the workmen know the reputation of the vineyard owner and they trust that he will not disappoint them at the end of the day. In Matthew 20:1-7, the owner of the vineyard goes out to look for workers, but in Matthew 20: 8-15, the workers come to him. In Matthew 20:10, *καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ πρῶτοι ἐνόμισαν ὅτι πλεῖον λήμψονται* - And when the first ones came, they thought that they should have received more. This reaction of the first workers is natural in an economic society where the rule is “the more work, the more pay”. Davies and Allison (1997:74) have argued that this is the rule of all economics. They have gone further from the idea that *λαβόντες δὲ ἐγόγγυζον κατὰ τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότης* (but when they had received, they murmured the master of the house). According to Jeremias (1972:137), if

the owner of the vineyard was not there during payment, there would have been noisy complains directed towards the manager, and would have been a difficult situation for the manager to handle since he would have had the same reasoning like the murmurers. The vineyard owner addresses one of the murmurers as friend (ἑταῖρε).⁴⁰ This is as aspect of courtesy on the part of the owner or could simply be that the vineyard owner does not know his name as opposed the protestor who uses no address: οὐχὶ δηναρίου συνεφώνησάς μοι; (Did you not agree with me?). The scene becomes a tribunal as Davies says, in which the accuser becomes the accused. The vineyard owner's motivation to pay the same is that "I am good". Evil eye is lack of generosity, begrudge of generosity.

3.3.2 A text-immanent or synchronic approach

Synchronic⁴¹ (συν + χρόνος) means occurring at a specific point in time. This approach was developed from the 1960s to the 1980s. Text-immanent or synchronic criticism is an approach to a text which has the final form⁴² as its centre of authority. Scholars who are indebted to this approach argue that we cannot retrieve the intention of the author in the text by way of history no matter how accurate we may pretend to be. This approach wants to 'minimize' the influence of the author of the text as well as the effort of the reader in the process of extracting meaning from a biblical text. This approach gives biblical interpretation an inelastic freedom to provide the variety of explanations that it carries. Synchronic exegetes see bible texts like other secular texts well-structured like a work of literary arts resulting from language compilation and meaning is a product of the language. Therefore since language communicates meaning, the texts possible meaning can be established by a study and understanding of the literary devices of that text (the way various authors structure their respective narratives in order to inform their audiences/readers about their realities of their respective communities). The text-immanent approach involves various sub-disciplines which include structural criticism, post structural criticism, rhetorical criticism, and narrative

⁴⁰ Levine (2014:214) thinks that ἑταῖρε is used here to show the dismay of the vineyard owner rather than his kindness. He however notes that Matthew uses "Friend" three times in his Gospel, each time ironically. Apart from the use in 20:13, "friend" (ἑταῖρε) appears in the parable of the wedding banquet, in which the king asks, "Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" (22:12). This friend is then tossed into the outer darkness. In Gethsemane, Jesus says to Judas, "Friend, do what you came here for" (26:50).

⁴¹ Synchronic, literally "at the same time" denoting a holistic perspective on a social system and the interrelations of its several sectors, ecological, economic, social, political and cultural (Elliott 1993:135).

⁴² Dennis L. Stamps explains that "the final form of a biblical text is that form of the text which results from the conclusions of textual criticism, source criticism and tradition criticism. In addition, when biblical critics refer to the final form of a text, they generally mean the complete literary (and canonical) form of the text that a reader reads without necessary reference to the literary origins and development of the text" (Porter 2002:219).

criticism. This study has considered narrative criticism as an example of a method in synchronic approach that has been used to read Matthew's gospel.

3.3.2.1 Narrative criticism of Matthew 20:1-15: Stephen I. Wright

It is a way of interpreting an existing text in its final form in terms of its own story world. Narrative critics don't attempt to understand a text by reconstructing its source, editorial history, setting and audience, author's or editor's intention in writing. Stamps, argues that narrative critics examine the way the narrative components work to create a story (Porter 2002:220). Porter goes further to corroborate the idea of Stamps with that of M.A. Powell who hold that narrative criticism is concerned with how the components of story-telling work together to create narrative coherence.

For narrative critics, it is the place of the reader in making meaning. In a nutshell, narrative critics examine the narrative textual components and how they work together to create a story. In reading a story, they look for the following: order of events, the manner in which they are described, the way in which events are linked and the climax which may often be by way of conflict, the characters and their attitudes, the narrator, literary strategies and the implied readers. Stamps concludes that Narrative criticism acknowledge that a text has many parts (devices, components, etc.), but assumes an internal textual connectedness or integration (Porter 2002:221).

The setting of the parable for Wright (2015:142; see also John n.d.:15) is twofold: the social location⁴³ of the parable and the literary context⁴⁴ within the Matthean text. Wright (2015:142) has argued that the social order consisted of a social structure wherein few estate owners lived in cities and whose holdings were on the increase. For him, there was growing number of peasant small holders who lost their land to these large estate owners and have been relegated to the category of expendables on account of mounting debts burden and increased taxation.

⁴³ John cites Malina and Rohrbaugh who think that the social setting of the parable is a reflection on the social reality of the Mediterranean context and the struggles of the people for making a living in the context of extreme discriminations (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992 :124-125)

⁴⁴ The literary setting of the parable within the narrative structure of the Gospel of Matthew appears to place it in the context of a series of stories of exploitations. While the rich and powerful broaden their horizons through exploitative measures the poor remain dependent on the mercies of the powerful (Wright 2015:142).

The literary context of the parable within the Matthean story line places it immediately prior to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Having left Galilee, Jesus is, in fact, already on the borders of Judea on the last leg of his journey, before entering the city of Jerusalem. The parable (Mt 20:1-15) is presented in the Matthean account after Peter's question about the benefits of discipleship (Mt 19:25-30). The parable is read from three perspectives, namely the hiring of workmen (Mt 20:1-7), the payment of wages (Mt 20:8-10), and the grumbling of the first hour workers (Mt 20:11-15).

Regarding the hiring of workmen, Wright (2015:142) suggests that the activity of the vineyard owner is believable because he needs extra hired hands at this time of the year and the more he gets the better. By going out to the market place several times, he is being proactive as he keeps discovering that he can do with more man power. Linnemann (1966:82) contrasts Wright because for him, the action of the vineyard owner going out several times is unusual and even going out to look for workers shortly before the evening end of work⁴⁵. Linnemann insists that the normal pattern of hiring workers is for the owner to estimate how large a labour force that he needs and engage the corresponding number of day workmen in the morning. By explaining his bone of contention with wright, he goes further to propose that the unusual action of the vineyard owner can be seen as the intention of the narrator to contrast the labourers who worked all day with those who worked for the last hour only⁴⁶. On another level, Linnemann (1966:83) presses on the point that the strange conduct of the vineyard owner is told without any explanation and this built up a strong tension which keeps the listeners' attention on the progress of the story and does not let the question of the reason for the owner's strange behaviour to arise. Wright is however sure that the perseverance and willingness of some day-labourers to wait all day in the market place hoping that someone will hire them is an index of their need for employment nor matter how short term and how much payment⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ Herzog (1994:87) sees the unusual action of the vineyard owner going out himself and not his manager as a cartoon-like feature of the narrative, as part of Jesus' strategy to codify systems of oppression in order to unveil them and make them visible to those who are victimized by those oppressive systems. Herzog thinks further that Jesus then designs a confrontation between two social groups who might never have encountered each other, the elites and the expendables.

⁴⁶ In Matthew 20:1-15, there are five groups of workers, but only the first and last groups really matter in the narrative but the sharp contrast of the first and the last groups have to be mitigated by some sort of intermediaries-those who are hired between the second to the fourth times (Linnemann 1966:82).

⁴⁷ Perhaps, their bargaining power was lost on account of their failure to find work the whole day. All that mattered now was to do the work that came on hand even if that meant not being adequately paid. Furthermore, it could also have been due to the scarcity of work available in relation to its demand. Their situation of need might have made them doubly vulnerable and dependent on the supposed 'goodness' and 'mercy' of the

Concerning the payment of wages, Wright (2015:145) expresses the opinion that the equal payment⁴⁸ policy of the vineyard owner is surprising to the audience. He is the one who instructs his manager to pay the workmen beginning with the last to be hired to the first. This is not something decided just then, but seems to have been settled in his mind from early in the day if not before. There seem to be a clue in verse four when those who are hired at nine o'clock are given the promise, "I will pay you what is right". What is it that is right? Kistemaker (2007:73) is confident that what is right is a fair wage⁴⁹. Even though the amount is not specified, but he thinks that the workmen know the reputation of the vineyard owner and put their trust in him knowing fully well that he will not disappoint them at the end of the day⁵⁰. The fact that the vineyard owner gives each of the workers a full day's pay of one denarius, Wright (2015:145) says that it is an act of justice. Bailey (2008:355) calls the vineyard owner as a compassionate employer. While Wright calls the equal payment policy of the owner as an act of justice. He, on the other hand says that the policy is good for those who have had less opportunity to work, but it is also a total display of power, demonstrating his absolute authority over his hired men. Furthermore, the fact that he calls the last hired to be paid first, so that the longest-working are waiting while all get the same amount (Mt 20:8-10), can be seen as a deliberate attempt to remind all workers of his influence⁵¹. Another narrative

householder although they knew from experience that the interest of the estate owners were merely their own profit as against the pressing need for survival on the part of the workers.

⁴⁸ The equal share policy for those who work and those who did not work had been implemented by David in 1 Samuel 30:21-25: Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Besor ravine. They came out to meet David and the people with him. As David and his men approached, he greeted them. But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers said, "Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go." David replied, "No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us. He has protected us and handed over to us the forces that came against us. Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike." David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this (NIV).

⁴⁹ Another indication in the Mediterranean eye for what is right is cited by Fuller (2012:4) who says, this promise is fair pay (literally, "to give whatever is righteous") and introduces dramatic tension to the story for Jesus' audience as they probably began to wonder, "What will be fair (Hultgren 2000: 37)?" Jesus' audience would have been living in an agrarian society, and were familiar with the economic conditions depicted in his parable. For this reason, those listening to the story would have been captured by Jesus' use of money in his parable and set on edge with the landowner's promise of "whatever is right". To Jesus' audience, "whatever is right" would have been the word *δίκαιος* which has a distinctive religious heritage in Judaism. *δίκαιος* characterizes the man who, under the law, has the correct orientation toward God, who is Himself, *δίκαιος* (Scott 1989:292).

⁵⁰ These workmen were surely aware of the fact that employers were to heed the biblical injunctions not to hold back the wages of a hired man overnight (Lv 19:13) and not to take advantage of a hired man who was poor and needy. "Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the Lord against you and you will be guilty of sin" (Dt 24:15).

⁵¹ Bailey on the other hand has a contrary opinion to that of Wright on the matter of equal payment when he says that the owner takes the last hired into the vineyard even for an hour so that he does not humiliate them by just giving them money (Bailey 2008:359) particularly in a society whose pivotal values are honour and shame.

exegete is Inrig, who opines that the vineyard owner is generous in his payment and he has done so not what the last workers deserved but what they needed because in the view of the owner, people matter more than profits (Inrig 1991:182). Inrig pushes the point further when he notes that the news of the generosity by the owner on the last workers who received one denarius quickly spread down the line to the first workers⁵². The twelve hour workers might have excitedly anticipated receiving a bonanza (a larger income). “If they got one denarius for one hour, then we should get twelve” following payment according to merit. By the time the pay master reached their turn, they might have already spent their bonuses in their minds. Unfortunately, they received each for themselves the same one denarius which was their bargain.

Turning to the grumbling of the first hour workers, Wright feels that, in a society of payment according to merit, for the early workers to challenge a Mediterranean authority about matters of unfair treatment, the audience would have admired them even though no one spoke up to support them (Wright 2015:146). By the terms of their contract, he has done them no wrong but does that mean that he has done true justice in a society where payment was in proportion to work expended? It may be probable to think that the parable focuses its emphasis and point at the end of the story⁵³. He ended the parable with the grumbling of the first hour workers. This is where he wanted to focus his hearers’ attention. The point of the parable for Jesus therefore centres on the reaction of the first hour workers. This picture is emphasized because the reality to which Jesus was pointing involves the unwillingness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law to accept and rejoice in God’s gracious offer of salvation to the lost. Thus, in the parable, it should be noted that no conversation takes place between the landowner and the eleventh hour workers. Yet an extensive one takes place between the landowner and the first hour workers (Matt. 20:11-15). Jesus therefore wanted to focus his hearers’ attention on this conversation. The discrepancy in space between the eleven hour workers and the one hour

⁵² Financial matters are confidential and one will think that they were still confidential in the first century. The information of equal payment might have spread through rumour which was a form of New Testament gossip.

⁵³ The point of the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-15) would be very different if the conclusion read something like this as proposed by Stein: When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the first ones hired and going on to the last.” The workers who were hired first came and each received a denarius. So then, came those who were hired last, they expected to receive less. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they marvelled and said of the landowner, “Truly this is a generous man.” If Jesus had told the parable in this manner, the focus would fall on the end action of generosity. The purpose of the parable would then be to illustrate that God is generous and kind. But Jesus did not teach the parable in this manner.

workers clearly indicates that the point of the parable lies with the eleven hour workers response to the payment of the one hour workers.

3.3.3 A reader-oriented approach

Stanley Fish is the forerunner of social reader-oriented approach who is said to have initiated it in the 1980s (Van Eck 2015:5). He is said to have become convinced that the important factor in the meaning of a text is based in the temporal process of reading the text. One can say it in another way that a text is simply a guide which enables the reader to act and create meaning out of it. Fish also believes that reader-oriented approach focuses mainly on the readers and their relationship with the text to create or generate meaning (Giangiulio 2013:13). For Fish, there is no individualistic response to a text, but rather a product of the work of the interpretative community to which the reader belongs. The interpretative community could be the social group sharing the interpretative strategies a reader brings out of texts when he or she reads them. This interpretative community is the result of institutionalized assumptions from established social groups such as schools, colleges, the church, religions, and the government. These communities dictate “what makes a text a piece of literature and what meanings [readers] are supposed to find in it.” Fish believes that a reader comes to a text already predisposed to interpret it in a certain way depending on the interpretative communities that this reader belongs to. Thus, interpretations can change throughout history, as social, political and religious forces change, evolve, arise, or disintegrate through the passage of time (Giangiulio 2013:21).

Fish was convinced that without a reader, there is no text. With this conviction, he went ahead to declare that every piece of literature depends upon ones subjective reasoning (perception) of which the reader is the master. In reader-oriented approach, the reader looks out for the following:

- What is the text all about?
- What is going on in the text?
- How does the world of the text facilitate and enhance meaning?
- How does the text affect the reader? (West 2015:254)

The reader-oriented approach has it that all texts have three types of owners namely the reader, the author, and the copyright owner⁵⁴ (Nyiauwung 2010:21). This approach also firmly agrees that since the reader plays a fundamental role in the production of meaning and importance, the reader becomes the subject of thought wherein he/she tries to transfer meaning from the passage, its author and its content to the audience, in a different context. In this approach, biblical readers need patience, respect, humility and objectivity because they have to deal with the problem of context, for example, the world of the text, the world of the audience and the world of the reader (like African readers). Exegetical methods that operate within the reader-oriented approach are feminist criticism, materialistic criticism and liberation criticism (Porter 1997:267). Liberation criticism is a socio-economic reading of a text in a liberal way so as to address socio-economic matters such as marginalization, corruption, racism. This study has taken into consideration liberation criticism as an example of a method in reader-oriented approach to read Matthew's gospel.

3.3.3.1 Liberation criticism of Matthew 20:1-15: Gerald O West

Pippin, in Porter (1997:267), has noted that when the world shifted out of the colonial empires of Europe and America in the last half of the twentieth century, multiple marginal voices have become more prevalent. Reading the New Testament is no longer considered a neutral or innocent act because issues of power and domination are being revealed. The New Testament as both an oppressive and liberative text is gaining strength. Liberation criticism, Pippin further says, has arisen in response to the oppressive systems of marginalisation, corruption, racism, classicism and poor governance (as is the case in Africa). The fact that in many third world economies particularly Cameroon where unemployment is at its peak, many casual workers are in constant search for work from where they can make a living.

This is an invitation to re-read Matthew 20:1-15 from a liberative perspective against reigning systems of oppression that dominated Palestine in the time of Jesus. West (2015:251) argues that this text can be read from a socialist world economic order, characterised by the popular saying of Karl Marx: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (Marx 1875). West brings to bear from a liberative perspective, the fact that the workers are disturbed, that after the owner has hired the workers, he instead sends his manager to pay

⁵⁴ Copyright owner is one who has the legal right to reproduce, publish and own or sell the contents and form of a literary piece of work.

them. Why this change? They would have been distressed by the strategy of the manager, isolating the representative of the workers (Mt 20:13), singling him out, refusing to engage with the concerns he brought to the manager on behalf of the other workers who had been working the whole day, and then dismissing him. This “divide and rule” strategy was familiar to them, whenever they raised concerns with those who hired them. But what was most troubling to them was the assertion of the manager that he could act in an arbitrary manner because he had the power to do so (Mt 20:15a). If the owner has a manager, it means that he is an elite who produces crops that can be exported. Such owners of great estates increase their holdings through foreclosures of loans⁵⁵ leading to hostile take overs of peasant farms and if possible, the land so annexed was converted into vineyards so that it could produce higher returns than the mixed grains produced by subsistent peasant farmers (Herzog 11 1994:85). Unable to calculate how many labourers he will need, the owner makes a number of trips to the agora to hire workers. Regular assessment of the number of workers that he still needs also enables the landowner to keep his workers to the minimum necessary to do the work within the designated time period. Furthermore, as West (2015:252) intimates, by hiring small numbers of labourers during the day, the landowner exercises his unilateral power, negotiating only with those hired at the beginning of the day for the minimum daily wage (Herzog 1994:89-90), but leaving the wage for those hired later in the day undisclosed (Mt 20:4, 7).

In a chronic system of unemployment and underemployment, a day-labourer is in no position to insist on a just wage, but to accept “a malnutrition wage” (Herzog 1994:2). The vineyard owner claims to be generous, but Herzog is of the opinion that he is taking advantage of an unemployed work force to meet his work needs by offering them work without a wage agreement” (Herzog 1994:86). By making an invisible absentee landlord visibly present, Jesus is setting up an encounter between elite patrons and peasant workers. By drawing inspiration from Herzog, West has opined that the veto economic power of the vineyard owner is seen in the payment process. Ruiz (2007:22) is confident that by instructing his foreman to start with the most recently hired and to end with those who had laboured in the vineyard all day, the vineyard owner is teaching his employees a lesson about his own power, about their dependence on him, and about the insignificance of their own toil. He defiles protocol by

⁵⁵ In the time of Jesus many peasant farmers had been forced off their land by becoming indebted to wealthy city-based elites from whom they had taken loans in times of economic hardship. When they could not pay back the loans probably because of high interest rates, they lost their land and became day-labourers.

refusing to pay the first-hired labourers first. He makes the first-hired wait and sees the payment of the last hired thereby raising their appetite just to shame them at the end. The curiosity of those who have worked all day demands a response, and so they risk a protest (Mt 20:11-12), with inspiration from the societal norm of principle of equal pay for equal work (Herzog 1994:91-92). The vineyard owner singles out their spokesperson to humiliate him by reminding him of their agreement of one denarius. He knows fully well that day-labourers were never in a position to negotiate anything other than the minimum wage, and then goes on to dismiss their complaints, reiterating his right to do what he pleases with his money-power (Mt 20:14). With this assertion, West (2015:253) agrees with Herzog who thinks that the land that the vineyard owner has taken away from the very peasant farmers who are now his workers belong to him.

From this liberative perspective, Levine (2014:202) also adds his voice that the vineyard owner is a member of the exploitative (Jewish) elite who has robbed the peasants of their land and then impoverished them by demanding that they pay exorbitant tithes to the temple. In collaboration with the Romans, he has no concern that the empire's taxation system is also squeezing people who are already at the verge of starvation. Further, he represents the class that keep peasants impoverished by imposing on them various purity laws that they cannot follow.

Reading the text this way in which the parable is seen as exploiting the marginalized, the vineyard owner can only be seen as an enemy (Levine 2014:202). One can see the economic violence that exists in the text (Herzog 1994:94) which begs for liberation. Finally Van Eck and Kloppenborg (2015:2) have drawn inspiration from Herzog to compliment that the parable is a critique on the codification of the oppression of the peasantry by wealthy landowners in the time of Jesus. Hence, Jesus might have told the parable, to expose the contradiction between the actual situation of the hearers of the parable and God's justice. They have also indicated similar interpretation by Borg (2006:181-183), who raises consciousness about the domination system in Jesus' time.

The passage has been read from a liberative perspective by pointing out the arbitrary and discriminating practices of wealthy vineyard owners, who hire when they like and pay what they like. In this re-reading Levine (2015:203) points out that the vineyard owner insists to pay the last hired first and also paying all the workers the same so as to sow discontent among

the workers and so prevent them from ever uniting to protest his unfair practices. From this perspective, the workers do not receive a just wage; they receive the exploitative minimum daily rate, and no more (West 2015:254). Therefore the landowner represents the exploitative ruling economic elite in the first century. The parable becomes a revelation to the workers who now sense their own manipulation. From this perspective, the vineyard owner is seen as a bad person and there is need to protest and fight for liberation from selfish manipulation of workers.

3.3.4 Social-scientific criticism

Social-scientific criticism (SSC), in the words of Elliott (2011:1), is a sub discipline of exegesis, not a new or independent methodological paradigm. It complements the other sub disciplines of the historical-critical method (textual criticism, literary criticism, rhetorical criticism and the like) by bringing social- scientific scrutiny to bear both on texts and on their geographical, historical, economic, social, political, cultural and religious contexts – referred to by historical critics as the *Sitze-im-Leben*. Since the 1970s, more and more exegetes began using social scientific criticism for the interpretation of biblical texts and the social relations described in them. Elliott, a leading North American exponent of the method gives a useful definition as follows:

Social-scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences. As a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social-scientific criticism investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language intended to communicate between composers and audiences. In this process it studies (1) not only the social aspects of the form and content of texts but also the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process; (2) the correlation of the text's linguistic, literary, theological (ideological), and social dimensions; and (3) the manner in which this textual communication was both a reflection of and a response to a specific social and cultural context—that is, how it was designed to serve as an effective vehicle of social interaction and an instrument of social as well as literary and theological consequence.

(Elliott 1993:7; see also Porter 1997:278)

Malina (2008:6) on the other hand says that SSC operates on the premise that the meaning of a text is rooted in people's enculturation, socialization, interrelationships and interactions. It is an interaction or comparison between first century Palestine and the new context in which biblical interpretation is carried out (e.g. the twenty-first century African context). In social scientific criticism, the issue is about the interpretation of what persons said, did or wrote in a given time. One of the major problems faced by most if not all contemporary biblical interpreters is that ancient texts like those in the Old and New Testament have been described by anthropologists as "high context"⁵⁶ documents (Elliott 1995:10-11) because they were written within the context of the ancient Mediterranean world, and also because it is presumed in such societies that contemporary readers will be able to "fill in the gaps" and read between the lines. Authors of these texts presume a high knowledge of their context on the part of their readers. As a result, little or no background information is given to these texts in order to explain why events occur the way they are described (e.g. the various confrontations between Jesus and religious leaders in the gospels). This is so because authors and original readers of such biblical texts shared the same social systems and experiences.

Unfortunately modern readers most of whom are from 'low context'⁵⁷ societies (like Africa), need knowledge of the missing information in these texts in order to understand the attitudes of the various characters (Elliott 1995:11). The eagerness of these readers to understand as well as to fill in the missing information places them in the position of someone struggling to "sing the Lord's song in a foreign land" (Ps 137:4). In addition, Elliott (2011:2) maintains that modern readers need to be clarified on what knowledge about the social system is presupposed in these ancient texts. Social scientific critics hold that one of the several ways available for making a responsible reading and interpretation of ancient texts is the conventional distinction in anthropology known as "etic" and "emic" readings (Elliott1993:38).

"Etic" according to Elliott (1993:129), is derived from the linguistic category "phonetic" (the science of speech sounds). It is a reading of a text from the position of an outsider or external investigator to the text and its world. It is the analysis of a text from a scholar's point of view

⁵⁶ High context societies are homogenous societies in which contextual knowledge is widely shared by everybody and changes are rare. They expect listeners to know the context (Rohrbaugh 2007:9).

⁵⁷ Low context societies on the contrary often witness technological changes as well as anonymous social relations. Low context societies need more background information in order to understand high context documents (Rohrbaugh 2007:9).

by the use of models and theories. “Emic” on the other hand is derived from the linguistic category “phonemic” (sounds meaningful to native speakers) and identifies information provided by the “natives” account of phenomena as perceived, narrated, and explained according to the experience, folk knowledge and rationalisation of the indigenous narrators in their historical, social, and cultural locations. As a solution to fill in the missing information, social scientists have argued that a reading of ancient texts necessitates anthropological, cross-cultural and social scientific model and theories to avoid the dual risk of ethnocentrism and anachronism (Nyiauwung 2013:31). Ethnocentrism arises from an absence of attentiveness to the ‘foreign, strange’ society and culture in which people produced New Testament texts, and on the other hand anachronism arises from an absence of attentiveness to the ‘pre-industrial’ social and cultural environment in which people lived during the first century CE (Esler 1995:267). Nyiauwung (2013:31) has further cited Rohrbaugh who thinks that a responsible reading of New Testament texts has to be a cross-cultural exercise. To do a cross-cultural reading of a text from a social-scientific perspective is to do an etic reading with the use of models and theories of the Mediterranean world.

3.3.4.1 Models and theories in social-scientific criticism

Models are patterns of relationships among persons, things, and events that we want to study. Said in another way, models are abstract, simplified representations of more complex, real world objects and interactions. Malina (2001:19) argues that these relationships between various persons and groups, or persons and things, as well as the interactions and activities that such persons and groups undertake have to be named and described. He draws inspiration from cultural anthropology to indicate that what we need to be able to understand New Testament writings and the behaviour of the people portrayed in them are adequate models that would enable us to understand cross-culturally. Such adequate models will force us to keep our own meanings and values out of their behaviour, so that we might understand them on their own terms. The purpose of models is to enable and facilitate understanding. I have provided a brief description of the SSC method for analysing a text and determining its social situation. A more comprehensive demonstration of this method is now applied to a text (the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard-Matthew 20:1-15).

3.3.4.2 Social-scientific criticism of Matthew 20:1-15: Ernest van Eck and John Kloppenborg

The parable firstly, according to Van Eck and Kloppenborg (2015:3) takes for granted a system of land tenure in which most of the productive land was held by large-scale (elite) owners. He has indicated that beginning in the First Temple period around 960 BCE and continuing in the Second temple (538 BCE), there was a pronounced shift in the patterns of land tenure from smallholders producing the Mediterranean triad of grain, grapes and olives for subsistence to large estates orientated to large-scale production and export crops. The shift from subsistence farming (polycropping) to monoculture, especially viticulture, was the most labour-intensive of agricultural pursuits, requiring more workers. Van Eck and Kloppenborg (2015:4; see also Van Eck 2016:147) thus explains that vineyards, however, required large temporary labour inputs during the agricultural cycle for the clearing of brushwood, weeding, burning weeds, hoeing and pruning. The most demanding period for extra workers was the vintage period when pickers and treaders were needed in large numbers. Once ripe, grapes had to be picked quickly because they could not be stored for long without rotting. He further notes that extra workers were needed to tread and press the picked grapes within a few days after being harvested. The vintage period thus created an exceptional labour demand and he has cited documented papyri which attest that it was normal to make use of day-labourers to fill this seasonal large demand for labour (cf. Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:100-101). This temporary labour that was recruited in the marketplace comprised of smallholders, who needed to supplement their farm incomes, and unlanded labourers, perhaps displaced peasant farmers.

A second important aspect of viticulture on which Van Eck (2016:147) draws inspiration from documented papyri in the first century is its association with wealth and the wealthy. Viticulture does not only demand high labour costs but also required substantial capital input. Only the wealthy thus could afford to engage in medium and large-scale intensive, export-orientated viticulture. Another aspect of viticulture that is portrayed in Van Eck's reading of the parable is that of owner absenteeism. Owners were seldom involved in the day-to-day management of the vineyard and still less in the recruitment and payment of temporary workers. He goes ahead to ascertain that there are two management figures in the parable: the owner (called an *οικοδεσπότης* in Mt 20:1, and *ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος* in Mt 20:8) and his manager (called *ἐπίτροπος*; Mt 20:8). Concerning the unfamiliar behaviour of the vineyard owner in the parable, Van Eck (2016:151) wonders that as a member of the urban population,

both the owner's presence at and his participation in the activities of the vineyard would have struck the original audience of Jesus in a particular way (cf. Snodgrass 2008:364). Again Van Eck (2016:152) is of the opinion that the multiple recruitment is disturbing since competent and experienced managers (and even owners) knew the size of the labour force required to bring in the yield. Evidently the story does not imagine a labour shortage, since those recruited later report Ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς ἐμισθώσατο (Because no one has hired us; Mt 20:7). He concludes that the multistage recruitment scenario, though rather artificial, is essential to the telling of the parable. Without it there would be no story. The idea of Scott is brought to bear here who suggests that the agreement to pay the workers establishes a patron-client relationship between the owner and the workers (Van Eck 2016:155). From the suggestion of Scott, the patron-client relationship is short lived because the workers are recruited for a day's work, and their obligation to the owner and his to them ceases at the end of the day. This can be justified by the fact that this was an ancient agricultural economy which was characterised by chronic underemployment. At the close of the day the owner instructs his manager to call the workers and pay them in reverse order. A fervent opinion of Van Eck (2016:158) is that the motive why the owner pays the workers in a reverse order lies in his recruitment of those who started working later, by not setting a fixed wage and promising them a wage that is fair or just (δίκαιος). He corroborates his opinion with that of Malina and Rohrbaugh who intimates that:

The good householder pays all by agreement. However, anything given over and above the agreed-for wage requires a previous patron-client relationship. For that reason, the patron shows patronage by giving to the last the same amount as to the first (Mt 20:14). This is favour as one expects from a patron. Non-clients get merely what is their due, and for this they cast an evil eye (of envy) on the patron. The evil eye does not work, because the patron is good.

(Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:101)⁵⁸

⁵⁸ This remark of Malina and Rohrbaugh, as Van Eck says, explains why the workers are paid in reverse order, and why the owner, when he recruits those who started working later, does not set a fixed wage. He is recruiting clients, workers with whom he has a long-standing patron-client relationship. It should be noted that one of the salient features of patron-client relationships was that it entailed a long-range social-interpersonal obligation, which included a strong element of solidarity that was sealed by exchange, based on interpersonal loyalty and attachment between patrons and clients. The owner, as patron of some of the workers, therefore has to pay his clients first. The later workers also trust his patronage when he recruits them without setting an agreed wage (Van Eck 2016:159). This is contrary to the seemingly erroneous idea of Herzog (1994:86) who feels that the workers obey the orders of the land owner because they have no bargaining power. Schottroff (1984:131) had earlier echoed that, "The unemployed are evidently in such a weak position that they go to work without any clear agreement on wages and accept the risk of having the vineyard owner pay them less than they hoped for."

The parable, as Van Eck explains is a high-context text⁵⁹ and that is why “practical reasons” are not given in the parable. To miss this point is to read the text from an anachronistic perspective. The owner of the vineyard is a patron who offers benefits beyond the strict norms of economic exchange. Van Eck (2016:159) quotes the owner’s assertion: “οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὁ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς;” (is it not proper for me to do what I wish with my own?) to underscore the fact that the owner has stepped out of the role of ownership, who thinks only in terms of a strict balance sheet, and into the role of a patron/benefactor, whose actions create enduring and effective bonds with his clients, and who is entitled to award benefits to persons differently. He draws the curtain of this social scientific reading with this theological notion that the owner is described as being δίκαιος. By this pronouncement, the parable therefore stands in the prophetic tradition of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and Jesus himself. In the prophetic tradition, being δίκαιος has the meaning of looking out for the orphan and the widow, that is, for those who are the most vulnerable in society. In Matt 5:6 and 10, being δίκαιος carries the same meaning, namely, that everyone should have enough.

3.3.5 African Biblical Hermeneutic Approach (ABHA)

Biblical exegesis had for a long time in the past been read by Africans from the perspective of the Western lenses who have had to handle spiritual and sociological and contextual concerns of the West. By so doing, the contextual and socio-spiritual problems of Africa were partially or left unaddressed and Africans were bound to read theology and exegesis rather than do theology and exegesis (Green 2009:iii). When people are tuned to ‘read’ theology, they turn to consider texts as foreign, far and remote. When they are engaged in “doing” theology, they appropriate biblical texts and thus use them to their own advantage (Nyirawung & Van Eck 2013:2). The problem could have resulted from the fact, as Dube (2005:126) has stated, that African biblical scholars of the last twenty years were trained in European and American schools and methods. Thanks to the forerunners of African descent like Justine Ukpong (2000), Anum (2001), Adamo (2006), Loba-Mkole (2008) and West (2009), a contextual approach to biblical texts called African Biblical Hermeneutic Approach has been postulated and implemented (Speckman 2016:211). These African forerunners of African Biblical Hermeneutic took to read the Bible from an African context, from African traditions and histories to illuminate the meaning of a text in a communal life (Dube 2005:126). The need

⁵⁹ This is the case with all the New Testament documents when read in a new context like the 21st century Africa.

for this present methodology is compelled by the awareness that Scripture speaks to people differently, depending on their context. Andrew F. Walls describes this awareness as the indigenising principle which states that: “Each community recognises in Scripture that God is speaking to their own situation, which means that (in ABHA) there is the desire to indigenise. To live as a Christian and yet as a member of one’s own culture or society” (Walls 1996:7).

The Bible⁶⁰ has a special place in the hearts and homes of Africans and African Christians (Dube 2005:132), for which African biblical scholars have the desire to do African biblical hermeneutics. Considering the assertion of Bediako (2000:3) that Christianity is a universal religion and that in the 21st century, Africa has become the heart land of Christianity; an African contextual approach to exegesis has become very imperative. The emergence of an African contextual approach in the field of biblical interpretation is due to the fact that ‘traditional’ exegetical approaches have seemed foreign because they do not appear to address the African people in their very context (Nyirawung & Van Eck 2013:2). Speckman (2016:214) has shown interest in the idea of a number of African scholars who have suggested that the “African worldview” should be the plumb line for an ABH (e.g., Adamo, Ukpong, Anum, and Mbiti). He upholds the notion of Ogonnaya (1993:117) who describes the African worldview as “the sense of community, the fact that the life of the individual human person finds meaning and explanation in terms of the structure of relationships within the human community.” In another dimension of African perspective, Speckman (2016:213) has cited Adamo who coined a definition of African cultural hermeneutics:

African cultural hermeneutics in biblical studies is an approach to biblical interpretation that makes social cultural context as subject of interpretation. Specifically it means that analysis of the text is done from the perspective of an African world-view. African Cultural hermeneutics is rereading the Scripture from a premeditated Afrocentric perspective.

⁶⁰ Adamo (2016:7) has cited some of his works that portray Africa and African’s presence in the Bible: “The African wife of Moses” (Adamo 1989:230-237); “Ancient Africa and Genesis 2:10-14” (Adamo 1992a:33-43); “Ethiopia in the Bible” (Adamo 1992b:51-54); “The table of nations in an African context” (Adamo 1993b:2-15); “In search of Africanness in the Bible” (Adamo 2000:20-40); Africa and Africans in the Old Testament (Adamo 2001a); “The African wife of Abraham” (Adamo 2005:455-471); “Images of Cush in the Old Testament: A reflection on African Biblical hermeneutics” (Adamo 2001b:65-74); Africa and Africans in the New Testament (Adamo 2006); “The African wife of Jeroboam” (Adamo 2013a:71-89); “The African wife of Joseph” (Adamo 2013b:409-425), “The nameless African wife of Potiphar and her contribution to ancient Israel” (Adamo 2013c:221-246), “The African queen and examination of 1 Kings 10:1-13” (Adamo 2014a:1-20); and “The African wife of Solomon” (Adamo 2014b:1-20).

This work does not intend to suggest that ABHA is better than other hermeneutic approaches, but it is an alternative approach that paves the way for effective studies in African theology. The African biblical hermeneutic approach focuses on the context of the audience, making use of the results from other methods of exegesis and applying them to the realities of the African context. It takes its roots from the contexts of biblical writings, before emphasising the relevance of the “message” to the African people in their context. It is about how issues raised in the Bible can be interpreted and addressed within the social, cultural and religious context of Africa (Nyiauwung & Van Eck 2013:2). It is a rereading that considers biblical texts as a challenge to African theologians, specifically in this generation of instability where solutions are being sought for, to the various problems that plague African societies especially Cameroon that is currently battling with a civil war orchestrated by the Anglophone crisis. There are two methods that are involved in the use of ABHA: (a) the Inculturation method⁶¹ (IM) and (b) the African Biblical Interpretation method (ABI). This study will employ the second method, the African Biblical Interpretation (ABI) method that will be used in the next chapter for the reading of the main text in the context of social justice in employment and remuneration of workers in Cameroon. The main text to be interpreted is the translated version of Matthew 20:1-15 which has resulted from the analysis and reading of the critical apparatus (Appendix 1). The methods to be used in chapter five and six for the interpretation of the translated text are twofold. First, the Social Scientific interpretation is done which will lead to the African biblical interpretation.

⁶¹ Inculturation refers to a rereading of texts against the contextual background of the present reader.

Chapter 4

The first-century Mediterranean context for understanding Matthew 20:1-15

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to look at the context in which the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard was told, we are aware of Julicher's warning about the point of interest. Two choices present themselves: The interest in the parable as told by Jesus the Galilean peasant or Matthew's version that might have undergone some redaction (Van Eck 2016:4). The choice is in Hedrick (2004: xvi):

If one is interested in the evangelist's understanding of the parable, reading begins with the literary context, but if one is interested in the parable in the context of Jesus' public career some forty years or so earlier than the gospel, reading begins with the parable and ignores the literary setting.

Our concern in this work is to establish the first century Mediterranean context for understanding the vineyard parable from the context of Jesus the Galilean peasant which reflects the social context in His public career around 30 CE (Van Eck 2016:8). Lidija Novakovic once remarked that as responsible interpreters, we should continue to engage in the study of the world behind the text in order to better understand the world of the text and apply it to our lives (Horton 2006:281). To be able to understand the world in which Matthew's Jesus lived and spoke the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, it is necessary to take into consideration the historical, socio-economic, cultural, religious, and the political context of Matthew's community.

There were basically three ways for a man to make his living in first century Palestine: agriculture, fishing, and craftsmanship (working with wood, metal, clay, and leather). Jesus' world in Matthew was an advanced agrarian society that was under the control of the Roman Empire. Van Eck (2009:4) has noted that advanced agrarian societies had two main characteristics: first they were aristocratic in nature, and second, the main "economic" activity was the working of the land (agriculture). Advanced agrarian societies always were divided into the "haves" and the "have-nots" (the rulers and the ruled). The ruling class (elite)

comprised of only two per cent of the population and lived in the cities while the rest of the population, the peasants (the ruled or non-elite), lived in the rural areas. Interestingly, no middleclass existed. The text of the parable under study is a product of a high context society. Therefore knowledge of the historical and cultural world of Jesus is imperative. This Chapter delves into the historical, cultural, socio-economic, religious and political context of Matthew for the study of Matthew 20:1-15 in relation to social justice.

4.2 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

Matthew sets the life of Jesus and his followers within a context of political power. He introduces three imperial figures with titles and attributes of huge authority and power. On the surface level it seems as if Jesus and his followers were totally overwhelmed by the execution of their respective powers. Matthew however overturns their portraits of power with that of powerlessness (Viljoen 2011:1). During this period, Palestine was under Roman colonization (Van Eck 2016:21). This is the context in which Matthew's Jesus speaks the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. Van Eck (2009:4) asserts from a historical perspective that since Palestine in the first century was part of the Roman Empire, Rome claimed sovereignty over land and sea. Esler (1995:27) draws his political inspiration about Palestine from the fact that Herod Antipas who ruled in Galilee at the time of Jesus inherited a territory which, like the rest of the kingdom of Judaea, had been grossly over-taxed in order to support the many undertakings of his father, Herod the Great, both at home and abroad. In addition to this burdensome taxation system on the poor peasants, Rome imposed two basic forms of taxes: the *tributum soli* (land tax) and the *tributum capitis* (poll tax), and non-payment of these taxes were seen as rebellion against Rome (Van Eck 2009:5). Roman rule in Palestine was through the collaboration of native elites who had the responsibility of extracting annual tribute from the peasantry and paying it to Rome. A basic idea to the Roman imperial theology which Van Eck (2009:4) has drawn from Seneca was the claim that Rome ruled its empire because the gods have willed her Emperors to rule an empire without end. The rulers of the Roman Empire were chosen agents of the gods, especially Jupiter, with the task of manifesting the gods' rule, presence, will, and blessings in the Empire⁶². This imperial theology, Van Eck

⁶² Matthew's gospel contests and resists these powers' claims for domination and anticipates an alternative community with the coming of God's Kingdom (βασιλεία) with its authority (ἐξουσία) over all existing powers. Viljoen (2011:1) draws his allusions of dominations from Herod (Mt. 2) and Antipas (Mt. 14) as Roman allies, Vespasian (Mt. 17) and Caesar (Mt. 22) are indirectly mentioned in relation to Roman taxes and Pilate directly in person (Mt. 27). Caesar plays an unseen role in Matthew's narrative, as an "offstage" character.

explains, was bolstered and legitimized especially by the imperial cult (temples, images, rituals and personnel that honoured the emperor).

At the time of Jesus the responsibility of extracting annual tribute from the peasantry and paying it to Rome was that of Herod Antipas in Galilee, and the temple authorities in Judaea and Samaria. It is against this background of a rapidly developing economy already under Herod Antipas that most of the peasants who were indebted because of high taxation lost most of their ancestral lands to the rich elites. The only opportunity for them to care for their families was to hire themselves out as day-labourers to work on the vineyards of the elites either as tenants or as labourers. Esler (1997:28), in citing Peter Garnsey, has documented the repeated food crises which appear to have been endemic to Roman cities. Day-labourers in such an honour-shame society of first century Palestine could only present themselves at the market place while waiting to be employed to work for their daily bread. The elites exercised power, controlled wealth and enjoyed high status. According to Van Eck (2009:4), social control was built on fear, and the relationship between the ruling elite and the ruled (non-elite) was one of power and exploitation. How then was social justice exercised in such a community?

4.2.1 Social justice in the Jewish context

The idea of social justice in Jewish view began with God who is “just”. Their liberation from suffering in Egypt (the Exodus) was not just the “going out” from Egypt, but the whole narrative of the oppression of the Jews. Tripole (2000:4) is convinced that God’s defeat of Pharaoh their oppressor, and the journey to Sinai, where they agreed to be God’s people and accepted His covenant and law was a righteous act. The misery of the Jews is expressed in terms of economic exploitation and social degradation (Dt 26:5-6). In the face of social injustice, God shows his justice by deciding to remove the Jews from the impoverishing situation and leads them out from the Egyptian system.

Tripole (2000:4) further states that, God’s righteous act here is a new creation. What is created is a society having all the usual institutions of a nation of that time: a God (with a house),⁶³ a people with a leader, and a land (promised), and laws. God expressed his justice succinctly in Exodus 19:4-6:

⁶³ That is, the Tabernacle (see Ex 33:7).

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

In Tripole's conclusion, Israel agreed and God formed their society. Israel is shaped by the just God, and will show the nations God's generosity and power. The holy community has a mediating role regarding divine justice.

Still in the light of the justice of God, O'Donovan (1996:69) concurs that God is just and all His judgments are totally right, fair and impartial. He clearly defines good and evil by his revelation in Scripture (Rm 1:18-20). Every culture in the world has its own idea of what is good and what is evil. In Africa, particularly, cultural ideas of good and evil seem important because they determine their acceptability by the community. What really matters in the justice of God is how God defines good and evil. If African community members do what is accepted by the community but is condemned by God, O'Donovan argues that they are liable to just punishment. For example, in some cultures (and governments) killing for revenge is considered as a good thing and even heroic (O'Donovan 1996:69). God in His justice has condemned all forms of murder (Dt 5:17), and even requires the death sentence for a murderer (Gn 9:6). Numbers 14:18 declares that "the Lord is slow in anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished".

Judaism also teaches the importance of justice for all: that slaves are to be treated with humanity; orphans and widows are to be cared for; strangers are to be protected; and even prisoners of war have rights. Brueggemann (2003:223) valorises Amos as the one who articulated the rule of one God over all peoples, one God who has a moral purpose of justice for the whole world. The book of Amos is commonly dated in the middle of the eighth century, about 752 BCE, in the midst of the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II in the northern kingdom and that of King Uzziah (Azariah) in the southern kingdom. Brueggemann (2003:224) further explains that it was clear from the prophecy of Amos that the immense prosperity enjoyed in both kingdoms was based on the disastrous practices of the rich against the poor. Three times Amos utilizes the phrase "justice and righteousness" as the main prophetic concern for social justice in the community (see Am 5:7, 24; 6:12). One among the three calls has become the decisive summon for social justice "But let justice roll on like a

river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Am 5:24). Another Jewish concern for social justice in the law was the Sabbath year legislation which Adams (2014:109) has noted as a call in Deuteronomy 15:1-2 for loan forgiveness every seven years. This benevolent gesture was limited only to members of the covenant community. The understanding behind the loan cancellation⁶⁴ was that during the seventh year (Lv 25:1-7, 20-22) when the land was to lie fallow, an Israelite debtor would not have the means to repay his debt. Permanent cancellation of debts was also a way to help prevent poverty (Dt 15:4a). Social justice was not applied to a foreigner during sabbatical year legislation because he did not let his land lie fallow or suspend his normal source of income for a year as the Israelites did (Adams 2014:109).

In the biblical tradition, the prophetic God demands distributive justice especially for those socially, structurally, and systematically vulnerable: widows and orphans, who lack husbands and fathers in a patriarchal society, and resident aliens, who lack familial protection in a tribal society (Crossan 2010:17). Furthermore throughout almost three centuries (700 BCs-500BCs),⁶⁵ the God of the prophets demanded distributive justice saying: “God does not want ritual prayer, worship, and sacrifice, but rather wants distributive justice, so that God’s people, and especially the most vulnerable members get a fair share of God’s world (Crossan 2010:19)

4.2.2 Social justice in Matthew

The idea of justice, which is synonymous to righteousness, is designated in Greek as δικαιοσύνη. In the Theological dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT), δικαιοσύνη means justice in the sense of distributive justice which is God’s mercy. In Matthew, Welzen (2013:88) argues that the word concerns a threefold loyalty: loyalty to the law⁶⁶, loyalty to fellow people⁶⁷, and loyalty to the will of God⁶⁸. Justice which is loyalty to the law is distributive justice. This is the behaviour to oneself or to another which is strictly in

⁶⁴ The practice of cancelling the entire debt permanently in the seventh year was evidently meant to prepare the Israelites for the practices commanded for the Jubilee (50th) year in which each one was to receive back “his family property” (Lv 25:8-17).

⁶⁵ Crossan (2010:15-19)

⁶⁶ In Matthew 5:20, δικαιοσύνη is a righteousness to the law which should be more than that of the law experts and the Pharisees. The interpretation that most agree on is that the Scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites who claimed to keep the law, but who majored in external minors and did not understand the important spiritual aspect of the law. For our righteousness to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, then, we must avoid hypocrisy and obey the spiritual aspect of the law.

⁶⁷ In Matthew 6:33, δικαιοσύνη is a requirement of loyalty to the people by observing acts of charity.

⁶⁸ In Matthew 5:6, δικαιοσύνη is an expectation to do what God requires, the will of God.

accordance with currently accepted ethical law or as decreed by legal authority (Welzen 2013:89). In this kind of justice, everyone gets what they deserve. This notion of justice warrants that a judge will verify whether conflicting parties stand by the agreements they made, and whether they have done justice to each other in fairness and reasonableness. A judge will penalize any injustice that is done as a breach of the contract (agreement).

Concerning social justice between men and women in Matthew's Gospel, Duling (1995:380-381) is of the opinion that Matthew is considered as the most androcentric of all the Synoptic. Ironically, however, Matthew is the only gospel which portrays women reclining with men for meals. "Sinners," is a group which in Matthew includes women joining Jesus and his disciples in having meals together (Mt 9:9-13). Only in Matthew are women allowed an equal place at the table. Furthermore, Matthew allows for the presence of women identified as "prostitutes" among the followers of Jesus (Mt 21:31-32). In spite of the larger controversy over the "public" behaviour of women, they reclined at table with men. While others continued to think of such practices as dishonourable, Matthew boldly affirms the presence of women accused of promiscuity among the followers of Jesus. Again, Luter and McReynolds (2003:18), in their *Women as Christ's disciples*, understand the so-called Great Commission in Matthew as follows: When Jesus gives his apostles the command to make disciples and witnesses, the closest contextual examples of being a disciple and a witness are the women disciples (Mt 27:56, 61; Mt 28:1-8).⁶⁹ Therefore, it is vitally important to consider the presence and roles of the women seen in the Great Commission context. By specifically highlighting the astute role of women as the only disciples who dare to be present at both the crucifixion (Mt 27:55-56) and burial (Mt 27:61), the first to see that Jesus has been raised (Mt 28:9-10), Matthew is much concerned about social justice in a society that was purely male oriented. This adds enormous dignity to the apparent role of women at the climax of the Gospel of Matthew.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The women who had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for His needs were watching from a distance such as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

⁷⁰ In a patriarchal community, Matthew highlights various women: Mary, Jesus' mother (Mt 1:18-25; 2:13, 19-21); mother and brothers looking for Jesus (Mt 12:46-50); Mary, brothers and sisters (Mt 13:53-56); Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8:14-17); the ruler's daughter (Mt 9:18-19, 23-26); the woman with the haemorrhage (Mt 9:20-22); Jesus' feeding of the five thousand men besides women and children (Mt 14:21; 15:38); the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28); the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Mt 20:20; 27:56); the woman at Bethany (Mt 26:6-13); Pilate's wife (Mt 27:19); the maid who confronted Peter (Mt 26:69); and the women at the cross and tomb (Mt 27:55-56, 61; 28:1-10) including Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, Magdalene and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Shin 2005:156-157).

Matthew also promulgated social justice through the genealogy. Matthew carries the genealogy of Jesus as far back as to Abraham, rather than to David (Mt 1:1). This is significant in the social reading of Matthew because Abraham is shown to be the father of all nations rather than just an ancestor of Israel. From the perspective of social justice, Matthew's genealogy of Jesus' includes four women, namely Tamar, Rehab, Ruth and Bathsheba (Mt 1:3-6).⁷¹ God choose His Son Jesus as a servant, "the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations" (Mt 12:18); and there is the final command of Jesus to his disciples to evangelize all the nations (Mt 28:19). Shin (2005:165) opines that the intention of Matthew 12:18 and 28:19 is that the Gentiles are also beneficiaries of the gospel. Matthew's Jesus demonstrated social justice to these desperate Gentiles when He praised the great faith of the Roman centurion (Mt 8:5-13) whose servant is eventually healed. He also commended the faith of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15: 22-28) whose daughter is healed from a distance.

Kulikovsky (2008:12) reckons social justice in Jesus' parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30) in terms of "merit and reciprocity." The men entrusted with five talents and two talents invested the money and doubled it. They were duly rewarded for their good work. The man entrusted with one talent was lazy and fearful and did nothing with it. His one talent was duly taken away from him for his lack of action.⁷² A favourite proof text of social justice, as noted by Kulikovsky (2008:16), is Matthew 5:6: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice (Gk. δικαιοσύνη), for they will be filled". Furthermore, when grace is shown to others, this is justice because it is a mimic of the grace of God. This is the message of the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23-35). Moreover, the personal nature of the obligation to assist the poor is reinforced by Jesus' command to give covertly: Be careful not to do your "acts of righteousness" before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left

⁷¹ The genealogy which Matthew adopted might have been to prove that Jesus had a human family.

⁷² The merit principle that good deeds will be rewarded while evil deeds will be punished is further reinforced by Paul in Romans 2:6-11: God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (Mt 6:1-4).

Jesus promotes the effort for social justice but urges his disciples not just to orientate their actions towards what is prescribed by the law, but to consider always how best to help their neighbours in poverty. This is clearly seen from the criteria in the Last Judgment: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). The ultimate criterion for Christian life is always to love God and one’s neighbour (Mk 2011:2).

4.3 THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

Carey Oakley (1962:16) has painted a beautiful picture of a cultural world into which Matthew’s Christianity was born. It was a prepared world. The *Pax Romana*⁷³ and its accompanying old religion that was characterized by the fear of demons had failed in its attempt to escape from Fate by magic and astrology; it failed in the craving for communion with God and personal immortality to which the mystery religions bear witness. There was failure in the attempts of philosophy to solve the problems of the universe and of man. These cumulative failures created deeper need in the Greco-Roman world for the Good News where there was hope. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son” (Gl 4:4). The Christian Gospel met the needs of the age, as it has met the needs of men in every age (Oakley 1962:16).

4.3.1 Greek language

Matthew’s Christianity found fertile ground from another cultural perspective because of the language (Greek) that had already been put in place by Alexander the Great after his great subjugation of Palestine and eventual Hellenization beginning in 332 BCE (Hanson & Oakman 1998:80). In conquering the Hellenistic world, the Romans absorbed and adapted the

⁷³ By 27 BCE, at the end of the Roman civil wars, Augustus Caesar stood at the pinnacle of Roman political and social society. His reign ushered in a time of peace and prosperity in the Roman Empire known as the *Pax Romana*. This policy covered a period of about two centuries (ending in 180 CE). Emperors such as Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius oversaw the construction of many public works projects in the Eternal City (Coombes 2007:48). There was extended freedom and prosperity to their citizens, and generally used their power and influence to maintain relative peace (DeSilva 1999:37). While Imperial Rome during the *Pax Romana* had its daily problems such as a deep division between rich and poor, the age of Nero and the Great Fire, the almost constant persecution of Christians, and a difficulty in some provinces of maintaining control of the local populations, the era overall was a peaceful and prosperous one. This policy was in place at the time of Matthew’s community since Palestine was a Roman colony.

Greek language which was the most important facet of that era of civilization. Ekeke (2013:9) explains that Alexander the Great made vernacular Greek (*Koine*) the common tongue of the East to become the “lingua franca” of all his conquered territories. When the Romans took over Palestine from Greece, Greek became the common tongue of the West. This utmost presence of a nearly universal language of communication and exchange of ideas meant that Christians in Matthew’s community could spread Christianity rapidly and used this language in writing and passing on of ideas. In the parable under study, the communication between the owner of the vineyard and the workers would have been made easy by the use of the Greek language.

To make a study of a high context text like Matthew 20:1-15 from a low context society like that of Africa, the use of theories and models of the Mediterranean perspective becomes imperative. Theories and models play an essential role in social scientific criticism, and Carney makes a difference between a theory and a model in the following general principle:

A theory is a basic proposition through which a variety of observations or alternatively statements become explicable. A model, by way of contrast, acts as a link between theories and observations. A model will employ one or more theories to provide a simplified (or an experimental or a generalized or an explanatory) framework which can be brought to bear on some pertinent data. Theories are thus the stepping-stones upon which models are built.

(Carney 1975:8)

Theories and models are important in SSC because they provide *etic*⁷⁴ information because social-scientists use various methods of observation to seek typical and recurring patterns and regularities in human behaviour (*emic* information),⁷⁵ whether behaviour of individuals or groups of humans. Gottwald (1979:785) explains that the terms *emic* and *etic* were coined by a linguist Kenneth Pike, by the use of analogy with the concepts of *phonemic* and *phonetic*. Based on these observations, Dvorak (2007:260) believed that social-scientists then create

⁷⁴ *Etic* information is that which comes from the external investigator or interpreter. It is the explanation (or interpretation) of phenomena as perceived by his or her own social, historical, and cultural location, experience, and available knowledge and the conceptual categories used for analysing these same phenomena (Dvorak 2007:259).

⁷⁵ *Emic* information is that which is supplied by the “natives.” In other words, *emic* information is the explanation (or interpretation) of phenomena as perceived, narrated, and explained according to the experience, folk knowledge, conceptual categories, and rationalizations of the indigenous narrators in their historical, social, and cultural locations (Dvorak 2007:259).

theories (etic information) to explain the patterns they have observed. These theories are then articulated through the use of models.⁷⁶ A model is an abstract simplified representation of some real world object, event, or interaction constructed for the purpose of understanding, control, or prediction (Malina 1981:17; Shin 2005:36). Elliott (1986:7) renders it simply that models are tools for transforming theories into research operations. It is imperative that the different cross-cultural theories that are used in constructing a social scientific model to be used in reading Matthew 20:1-15 are lucidly spelled out. This is in a bid to avoid the unintentional fallacies of ethnocentrism and anachronism in studying social justice in the parable of the vineyard workers. The theories that are put forward for use are also given an explanation. These include the following: Honour and shame as pivotal values in first century Mediterranean world (Malina 1981:25); kinship as a dominant institution in first century Mediterranean society, patronage and clientism (Moxnes 1991:242); first-century dyadic personality (Malina 1981:51); limited good society (Foster 1965:296), challenge and response (Malina 1981:29); evil eye (Elliott 2011:5); and external responsibility and stratification as a model in the Mediterranean society (Lenski 1966:214; Saldarini 1988:35).

4.3.2 Honour and shame in Matthew's gospel

Honour and shame were perceived in the Mediterranean world of the first century as cardinal values. Malina (1981:27-28) upholds that concerns of honour and shame are to be found where authority, gender status, and respect intersect. Authority, in his claim is the ability to control others without force; gender status, he says, refers to the different standards of acceptable behaviour that apply to males and females; and respect refers to the attitude (that) one ought to have toward those who control ones existence for example, humans, gods, God. Where authority, gender status and respect meet, it is there that Malina situates his well-known definition of honour which is: “the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is, one's claim to worth) plus that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group” (Malina 1981:28; Crook 2009:593). Furthermore, when a person perceives that his or her actions do represent the ideals of society, he expects others in that group to acknowledge the fact and the result is a reward of honour or reputation.

⁷⁶ Dvorak (2007:260) has made allusion to Elliot who says that models are essentially “cognitive maps” or conceptual frameworks that organize selected prominent features of social terrain such as patterns of typical behaviour (for instance, at work, at meals, in law courts), social groupings (kin and fictive kin groups, faction, patrons and clients, and such), process of social interaction (for example, buying and selling, employment and payments, oral and written communication, arguments, making contracts), and the like. Such models alert the social traveller to typical and recurrent patterns of everyday social life in given times and places.

Malina identifies two types of honour, namely “ascribed honour” and “acquired honour” (Malina 1981:29; Malina & Neyrey 1991a:27-29). Ascribed honour is the honour with which one is born: by ethnicity, family reputation, gender, wealth, and so on. This honour tends to be less dynamic than acquired honour, which can be won and lost on a daily basis through acts of benefaction and the agonistic contest of challenge and riposte (Crook 2009:593). This socially claim to worth befalls a person not because of any effort or achievement (Malina & Neyrey 1991a:28). Acquired honour on the other hand is the socially recognised claim to worth that a person gets by excelling over others in the social interaction that is called challenge and response (Malina 1981:29).

Shame is a positive symbol. All human beings in the Mediterranean world were expected to have shame. Shame is sensitivity to one’s honour rating and to be perceptive to the opinion of others. A shameless person is one who does not recognise the rules of human interaction and who does not recognise social boundaries. A shameless person has a dishonourable reputation beyond all social doubt. He is outside the boundaries of acceptable moral life and must be denied the normal social courtesies (Malina 1981:44). Certain families and institutions such as first century inn owners, beer joints, actors and prostitutes as a group were irretrievably shameless because they did not respect any lines of exclusivity and therefore were symbols of chaos (Malina 1988a:46).

4.3.2.1 Honour and shame in Matthew 20:1-15

A core value of Mediterranean culture which fits well into the context of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is what has been identified by Pilch (2012:239) as the concern for honour⁷⁷. People who were wealthy in the time of Jesus could gain honour by becoming patrons to the poor and the needy clients in the community. Hence, Matthew presents the vineyard owner in the parable at the time of Jesus as an ideal patron who cares about social justice vis-à-vis the injustices of his community. He has surplus and according to the rules of the culture, he is obliged to share his surplus with those in need. He is free to select those whom he wants to be beneficiaries as if they were family members and the only reason for his

⁷⁷ Honour is defined by Pilch (2012:239, see also Neyrey 2008:88) as a reputation which is derived from someone making a public claim to worth or value and others publicly acknowledging and approving that claim. He says further that the claim can be either explicit or implicit. For example when Pilate asked Jesus, are you the king of the Jews? (Mt 27:11), he was seeking for an explicit claim. In Matthew 21:28-32, a father told his elderly son to go and work in the vineyard today, he said “no” but later went. The father gave the same instructions to the younger son and he said “yes” but never went. The elderly son sought for implicit honour.

choice is “because I want to” (Pilch 2012:287). It was not normal in cultural perspectives for clients to glory in challenging a patron. Oakley (1962:9) is emphatic that in such a society, a man’s value is what he is worth, and no more.

The majority of the people who listened to Jesus’ parable in Matthew experienced very difficult living conditions. According to Horsley (2005:138), there were regular food shortages, peasants worked hard, and were poor. A big socio-economic gap separated the wealthy and the powerful from unskilled day-labourers. These labourers, in Horsley’s view, provided cheap labour which often increases elite wealth. There were very limited opportunities for social improvement among labourers in Matthew’s community. This was the surest road to a high level of peasant indebtedness which forced peasants to operate in ways that benefited the elites. Peasant land was easily taken as a compensation for the debts that they owe (Neyrey & Stewart 2008:63; Stegemann 1999:133). Jesus lived at a time of such increasing indebtedness and many peasants found themselves unable to cope with the increasing rents and taxes. Neyrey and Stewart (2008:63) have specially noted that the combined circumstances of debt, high rents and taxes resulted into increase in tenant farming and an increase in the number of former free peasants being pushed to day-labourers and slavery. It is against this background that Oakman (2008:63) argues that the parable operates as a type of indirect critique of the mounting pressure on peasants.

4.3.3 Patronage and Clientism

Patronage and Clientism in the words of Moxnes are social relationships between individuals based on a strong element of inequality and difference in power. The basic structure of the relationship is an exchange of different and unequal resources. A patron has social, economic and political resources that are needed by the client. In return, a client can give expression of loyalty and honour that are useful for the patron (Moxnes 1991:242)⁷⁸. Forster (1961:1178) goes further to identify two types of contracts, namely those between persons of equal status (colleague contracts or horizontal dyadic relations)⁷⁹, and those between persons of unequal status called patron-client contracts. This study focuses more on the later form of the contract (patron-client contracts). Patron-client systems are socially fixed relations of generalized

⁷⁸ Moxnes (1991:251) again notes that to accept an invitation with no thought of future reciprocity implies acceptance of imbalance of society and this was not seen to be a legitimate relationship.

⁷⁹ In horizontal dyadic relationships between individuals of equal status and power, favours and help are exchanged in time of need, usually of similar quality (Van Eck 1995:171).

reciprocity⁸⁰ between social unequals in which the lower-status person in need (called a client) has his needs met by having recourse for favours to a higher-status, well-situated person (called a patron). By being granted the favour, the client implicitly promises to pay back the patron whenever and however the patron determines (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:388).

Furthermore, the patron, in turn, implicitly promises to be open for further requests at unspecified later times. Such-open ended relations of generalized reciprocity are typical of the relation between the head of a family and its dependents. By entering into a patron-client arrangement, the client relates to his patron as to a superior and more powerful kinsman, while the patron sees to his clients as to his dependents (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:388). Patron-client relationships thus describe the vertical dimension of exchange between higher and lower-status persons (Neyrey 2004:249). The relationship between a patron (landowner) and a client (worker) had its obligations as spelled out by a contract and such contracts never protected the worker or tenant. Being a client is demeaning, but being a client of an important person enhances status (Osiek 2009:144). If the landowner wanted, he could offer more help than what the contract specified. This unmerited favour is called benefaction which was done mainly because landowners were looking for respect and honour and a status report which only his workers or tenants could give him (Landé 1977:xxi).

The people in the ancient Mediterranean world understood themselves as interdependent individuals. Hanson and Oakman (1998:65) have remarked that persons (as individuals and as groups) were embedded in others: at the immediate kinship level, in the head of their family; at a local geographical level, in their neighbourhood or village; and interpersonally, perhaps in one or more powerful patrons. One did not survive on one's own merits, but by being connected to networks such as family, friends, brokers and patrons. This was done as a way of ameliorating the high degree of social stratification that characterized the social world of the New Testament (Neufeld & DeMaris 2010:156). There was a great demarcation between the social status of the elites and the rest of the population. Patrons were therefore elite persons (male or female) who could provide benefits to others on a personal basis because of the combination of superior power, influence, reputation, position, and wealth. In reciprocation

⁸⁰ Malina (1981:80) defines reciprocity as "a sort of implicit, non-legal contractual obligation, unenforceable by any authority apart from one's sense of honour and shame".

for these benefits, patrons (both men and women) could expect to receive honour, information, and political support from clients (Hanson & Oakman 1998:65). Stewart highlights the notion of patronage as a system for exchange of goods and services between people who are not social equals (Neufeld & DeMaris 2010:156). Stewart goes further to say those good patrons promoted their clients' interest.

Personal patronage in the ancient Mediterranean world was not the only form of benefaction. Most public entertainment centres, whether for religious festivals and feasts or local athletic competitions, were “given” to the inhabitants of the city by wealthy benefactors (DeSilva 1999:36). An example of public benefaction in the New Testament is Herod the Great who provided the money for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. In Luke 7:2-5 and Matthew 8:5-13, we find another example of public benefaction:

There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him; this man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.

(Santos 2008:203)

Such public gifts did not make public recipients “clients” of the benefactor. Notwithstanding, the public as a whole was nevertheless still indebted to that benefactor in that the response of the grateful people would consist of the conferral of public honour at prominent public festivals, special seating at games and the provision for a permanent commemoration of the generosity of the giver in the form of honorary inscriptions⁸¹ in special cases and statues (DeSilva 1999:36). It was within this world where many relationships would be characterized in terms of patronage and client relationship, that Jesus' message took shape and that the good news was taken out into the Mediterranean world (DeSilva 1999:38).

With the emergence of the new communities of faith there was a bold transformation of patronage into stewardship (Christian giving). Benefaction within the church was and is a specific gift of God: it is a manifestation of God's patronage of the community, mediated through its members (Rm 12:6-8; Eph 4:7, 11-12). This is the view that DeSilva (1999:69)

⁸¹ Inscriptions across the Mediterranean from North Africa to Greece, Asia and Egypt bear witness to the phenomenon of both personal patronage and public benefaction (DeSilva 1999:36).

holds and he also sees the collection for the poor in the Judean churches as perhaps the most prominent act of benefaction⁸² among the churches in the New Testament (Ac 11:29; Rm 15:26-27; 2 Cor 8-9).

Clients were persons with lesser status who have an obligation to be loyal to a patron over a period of time. Patronage and clientism was a personal relation of some duration entered into voluntarily by two or more persons of unequal status based on differences in social roles and access to power, and involves the reciprocal exchange of different kinds of goods and services of value to each partner (Elliot 1987b:42). What clients had to offer to patrons was first and foremost the pivotal commodity and value in the Mediterranean community which is honour. By praising the benefits of one's patron in the community, the patron's honour and reputation increased, and might have the residual effect of their increased influence (Hanson & Oakman 1998:67). A client could easily have more than one patron usually for different purposes (Hanson & Oakman 1998:67). The ancient world from the classical through the Roman periods was one of greatly limited access to goods. The greater part of the property such as, wealth, and power was concentrated into the hands of the few. For a client to get any access to these goods it was through personal connection rather than bureaucratic channels (DeSilva 1999:33). There is another form of relationship which involves two patrons and DeSilva (1999:33) explains that a patron who provides access to another patron for his or her client has been called a "broker" a classical term for this was ("mediator"). Brokerage was commonplace and expected in public life.

4.3.3.2 Patrons and clients in Matthew's gospel

Matthew's gospel takes into consideration the place of patrons who were the main actors. Powerful patrons in his community are specifically mentioned. He includes Herod (Mt 2) and Antipas (Mt 14) as Roman allies. Vespasian (Mt 17) and Caesar⁸³ (Mt 22) are indirectly mentioned in relation to Roman taxes and Pilate directly in person (Mt 27) as channel of domination by the Roman authorities. Viljoen (2011:1) notes that Matthew contests and resists these powers' claims for domination. The basic idea behind this power drunken patrons stems from Roman imperial theology which claims that Rome ruled its empire because the

⁸²The social understanding of Paul here is not as an act of human patronage and reciprocity, but as God's benefaction working itself out through responsive Christians (2 Cor 9:8-15). God supplies the resources which meet the needs of the Corinthians fully and give them abundance for every good deed.

⁸³ The Caesar plays an unseen role in Matthew's narrative, as an "offstage" character (Viljoen 2011:1).

gods have willed Rome to rule the world. The emperor is regarded as the agent of their Roman sovereignty, presence, and will on earth, and of their blessing that ensures society's well-being (Carter 2001:57).

Other patrons of the aristocratic class who were critical opponents to the followers of Jesus that Matthew mentions often are the Sadducees (Mt 3:7, 16:11, 22:34), the Pharisees (Mt 5:20, 12:2, 22:34), and the scribes (Mt 2:4, 5:20, 12:38). Matthew also includes the elders, who were the patrons of the lay aristocracy (Mt 15:2; 21:23; 26:57). He says further that Jesus' proclamation of God's empire questions the pacified peace of the *Pax Romana* and the community was not to have any faith in the imperial good tidings (Carter 2001:61).

In Matthew, the position of prominent patrons in the community are constantly being threatened by Jesus' teachings and authority and therefore the narrator of the Gospel hangs on the fact that Jesus had to be killed if the patrons had to regain their almost lost authority and integrity from the population. Carter (2001:57) presents Matthew as making a redactive comparison between the patronage of the Roman Emperor and that of Jesus in the following manner:

While the emperor is regarded as the agent of their (Roman) sovereignty, presence, and will on earth, and of their blessing that ensures society's well-being. Significantly, Jesus is also presented in Matthew's Gospel as an agent, chosen to manifest sovereignty, presence, divine will, and blessing for human well-being. But he is not the agent of Rome. He is God's agent. He asserts God's sovereignty, presence, will, and blessing among all humans.

(Carter 2001:57)

Carter is also of the opinion that Matthew's presentation of Jesus challenges imperial claims that the emperor embodies divine sovereignty and presence. The gospel writer thus subverts imperial theology and legitimates a community with an alternative worldview and lifestyle or set of practices. Jesus is presented in Matthew as a true and trustworthy patron who makes a re-interpretation and redefinition of the way patronage was conceived in the society of his day. He is a new patron who has replaced the patrons of Rome and the Temple elite (Van Eck 2013:7). According to Malina (1988:2–32) and Moxnes (1991:241–268) the role of Jesus in the Synoptic should be seen as broker of God patronage, and not as patron. In Matthew 3:2, 4:7 the gospel of Jesus is compared with or replaces the gospels of Rome, and Jesus is

depicted as the Son of God, and not Caesar. Implicit in these parallels, therefore, is that Jesus is also the broker of a new age and kingdom, and not Augustus (Van Eck 2013:7).

Secular patrons struggle to conserve power as much as possible but Jesus gives out power to His subordinates (disciples). He gave authority to his disciples to drive out evil spirits and to cure every kind of disease and sickness (Mt 10:1). For Jesus, true patrons are those who do the will of God and not necessarily those who are wealthy, for He says “seek ye first the kingdom of God... and all other things shall be added” (Mt 6:33).⁸⁴ The authoritative position of Jesus as teacher, healer and miracle worker makes Him a powerful and compassionate patron who does not want His clients to sing his praises in public (Mt 16:20). Viljoen (2011:331) has drawn attention to the fact that on several occasions in the Matthean narrative, Jesus’ authority is claimed and demonstrated. Three times in the gospel Jesus is said to present God’s presence: “They will call Him ‘Emmanuel’, which means ‘God with us’ (Matt. 1:23); where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them” (Matt. 18:20); and “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20). Jesus’ patronage is put to question by the chief priest and the elders who fiercely criticised Him (Matt. 21:23-27). Nevertheless, Jesus’ patronage finds its ultimate expression in the Great Commission where Jesus proclaims: “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). It is ironical that Matthew introduces Herod as the king (of Judea) and then immediately subverts Herod’s position by presenting Jesus as the new born king of the Jews who is worthy to be worshipped (Mt 2:11).

Pilate is presented by Matthew as a patron of very high social standing. He is a governor (Mt 27:2). As Roman provincial governor of Judea, he held judicial power of this province which stood under Roman control (Viljoen 2011:339). Pilate is the most visible face of the Roman occupation and the most powerful human symbol of Roman Empire and domination. This is the reason why chief priests and elders who laid charges against Jesus still had to bring him before Pilate to seek for approval so as to kill him (Matt. 27:12-13).

⁸⁴ Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector in Jericho referred to in Luke 19:1-10, was rich but his community disregarded and hated him. When he encountered Jesus, he became a true patron because he does the will of God (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:132). Zacchaeus gave half of his wealth to the poor (Lk 19:8) who are now his new clients without any thought of reciprocity. It is very likely that Jesus’ follower Levi or Matthew (cf. Mk 2:13-17; Lk 5:27-32; Mt 9) was also in the service of the ruling strata (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:132). Because of this, his community considered him as unclean, a sinner and an outcast. The moment, however, he answered to Jesus’ invitation, he enjoyed the patronage of service like other apostles. Also consider the faith of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-10. These are characteristics of a true patron (the one who does the will of God).

One of the characteristics that clients in the community of Jesus' day have is indebtedness. Stegemann and Stegemann (1999:134), for example, refers to the debt in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18:23-35). A debt of 10 000 talents mentioned in the parable is fantastically high and hardly conceivable among private individuals of this class. Debts of this amount or even higher, probably occurred only in connection with war reparations such as tribute levies for subjugated rulers (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:134).

4.3.3.2 Patron and clients in Matthew 20:1-15

The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is placed in the period when the shift from subsistence farming (polycropping) to monoculture, especially viticulture, was already taking place. This large scale monoculture farming that was structured into vineyards, required large temporary labour inputs during the agricultural cycle for the clearing of brushwood, weeding, burning weeds, hoeing and pruning. Furthermore, the most demanding period for extra workers was the vintage period when pickers and treaders were needed in large numbers. Thus it was necessary to employ day-labourers to fill this seasonal large demand for labour (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:4). This is likely the period that the parable addresses (Kistemaker 2007:72).

The owner of the vineyard as a patron has decided that it is time to harvest his produce. He surely has servants, as Kistemaker observes, who have been working for him throughout the year. Once ripe, grapes had to be picked quickly and could not be stored for long without rotting; thus extra workers were needed to tread and press the picked grapes within a few days after being harvested (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:4). This is where reciprocity counts. Malina (1996:143) describes patron-client relationship as a special type of personal, vertical, dyadic relationship. The owner has the ripe produce but the workers are not enough to do the gathering of the crops nor can he do the work himself. The labourers have the man power and need work so as to take care of their families. This calls for the exchange of unavailable goods and services. In an honour-shame culture of the Mediterranean world all decisions are vested in the hands of the Patron. Labourers need work but cannot dare go to a patron to request for work less they will be seen as trying to tap from where they did not sow.

In Matthew 20:1-15, the patron is the dominant character throughout the parable. The vineyard owner is the one who goes to the "agora" early in morning. As a patron, he does the

negotiations and the hiring himself. The patron is determine to see that the work is done, therefore he goes to the market place at the first hour, the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours, corresponding to 6:00 am through 5:00 pm (Blomberg 2012:281). Contemporary readers would have expected the patron to estimate the labour force that is needed to complete the work and employ all in the morning. The response of Kistemaker (2007:74) is that readers of today cannot apply contemporary understanding to a story of antiquity in the Mediterranean culture else it will amount to an anachronistic⁸⁵ understanding. One of the reasons that Kistemaker has advanced for the behaviour of the patron in employing workers at different periods is that each time new workers come to the vineyard, they bring in fresh energy and there is never a period when the workers are lazy because of fatigue (Kistemaker 2007:74). In this way, there is continuous working and less fruits are eaten.

The patron in the parable is a law abiding person of integrity. He is fully aware of the biblical injunctions in Leviticus 19:13 “Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight”. While the patron is still in control, he instructs his manager to pay the workers their wages. The patron is a trustworthy man because he made an agreement of one denarius each only with the first group of hired worker. In Matthew 20:4, the patron had told those who were employed at 9:00 am that he will pay them whatever is right and nothing said concerning payment to other subsequent workers. The patron is a man of his words as he gives strict instructions to his manager to pay workers beginning from the last to be employed to the first (Kistemaker 2007:74). The patron is known as a generous vineyard owner and his unfamiliar conception in the order of payment brings the last hired to the front of the line and sends the first to the back of the line to watch with expectancy until they would receive their wage (Caneday 2009:38). The decision of the patron to pay all workers the same amount despite the number of hours put in is personal (“I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I give you”; Mt 20:14).

Clients to the patron who need work have a target in mind which is probably to feed their families or themselves for that day. Their standing at the market place is a cultural phenomenon. Day-labourers who need work present themselves early in the morning in anticipation for a job opportunity. Clients who stood at the ‘agora’ for almost the whole day were in the words of Kistemaker “no loafing busybodies who spent their time in gossip” but

⁸⁵ Using present understanding and categories to judge actions and things of antiquity.

were standing in hope for a patron who will engage their services no matter the hour and it came to pass that they were finally employed. Their payment in one way could also be a reward for patience (but those who persevere to the end shall be saved; Mt 10:22). During payment the late workers are treated to a surprise by the order of the patron as they receive each one denarius. It is a happy surprise and they went away joyful and filled with gratitude while the early workers see the situation as unfair and grumbles. The dissatisfied client may go to court, but he does not have a case, because the evidence is against him. He agreed to work a full day for one denarius which he has received. His accusation of injustice is nothing more than a cover for envy and greed (Kistemaker 2007:75). At the end, the patron has introduced a new way of looking at justice. The world's principle of justice is that "more work for more pay" but he departs from this worldly principle and says let grace abound so that those with no work can still be fed. Thus grace supersedes impartial justice and profitable business practices. From an allegorical perspective, Kistemaker's conclusion is that God does not deal with all persons in accordance with the principles of merit, justice and economics. God is not interested in making profits, not even in the principle of one good deed merits another.

4.3.4 Kinship

This social relation is seen by Elliott (1993:131) as a relationship among persons who are related to one another through marriage, or descent, or by sharing a common social or biological ancestor. They have special claim on and responsibility for one another, based on the fiction of constituting a primary group similar to, but not identical with that created by decent and blood ties. In the Mediterranean culture, kinship group provides its members with most of their basic adjustments, so that it forms the typical primary group. Van Eck (1995:206) has cited Malina who opined that it is common to distinguish between four basic social institutions or structures in any society, as a means by which basic human values are realised. These four basic institutions in his postulation are kinship, economics, politics and religion (Malina 1986b:152). In first century Mediterranean world, the institutions of religion, politics and economics are determined by kinship institution (Malina 1988b:8). Therefore kinship was seen as the dominant institution in the first century Mediterranean society. Malina describes this primary institution as follows:

While all human societies presumably witness to kinship institutions, the Mediterranean world treats this institution as primary and focal ... In fact in the whole Mediterranean

world, the centrally located institution maintaining societal existence is kinship and its sets of interlocking rules. The result is the central value of familism. The family or kinship group is central in social organisation; it is the primary focus of personal loyalty and it holds supreme sway over individual life.

(Malina 1989:131)

DeSilva (2000:158) acknowledges that in the ancient world, people were not just taken on their own merits; instead, their merits begin with the merit of their lineage and the reputation of their ancestral house. Mediterranean individuals receive a basic identity from their larger family. Philo had the opinion that kinship was not measured only by blood relation and marriage, but also by similarity of conduct and pursuit of the same objects⁸⁶. For example, a common devotion to Torah was sufficient to make people kin (DeSilva 2000:194). Philo's words are amazingly similar and close to Jesus' thought on kinship for those who belong to the family of God by adoption (Mt 12:48-50). Jesus' words about the relativization⁸⁷ of natural kinship ties and the family created by commitment to a common way of life have multiple resonances and strong preference throughout the Greco-Roman world (DeSilva 2000:195). The application of the roles and ethos of family to people who are not related has been termed by anthropologist as "fictive kinship". DeSilva (2000:195) says that this was prominently at work, for example, in Roman imperial ideology; the whole empire was a household with the emperor as the *pater patriae* (the father of the land), the head of a vastly extended family. This argument of DeSilva where roles and ethics of a family can be applied to people who are not related can find support in the behaviour of the vineyard owner who shows compassion and generosity to none family job seekers and made them to feel at home as if there were part of the family resources .

⁸⁶ Philo further says that kinship was legitimate for people who have one tie affinity, one accepted sign of goodwill, namely the willingness to serve God, and where every word and deed promotes the cause of piety. But for these kinships as we call them, which have come down from ancestors and are based on blood relationships or those derived from marriage and similar causes, let them all be cast aside if they do not seek earnestly the same goal, namely the honour of God which is the indissoluble bond of affection which makes us one. For those who are so minded will receive in exchange kinships of greater dignity and sanctity (DeSilva 2000:194).

⁸⁷ In the Christian movement begun by Jesus, Jesus Himself says that the movement will result in the breaking apart and the remaking of families. He indicates the threats that association with Him poses to natural families. Jesus relativizes family ties where these threatened loyalty to him and His teaching: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me..." (Mt 10:37).

4.3.5 Limited good society

Foster (1965:296), Hammer (1972:255), Van Eck (2011:6), see a limited good society as one in which the broad areas of peasant behaviour are patterned in such fashion as to suggest that peasants view their social, economic, and natural universes, their total environment as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honour, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, exist in finite quantities and are always in short supply, as far as the peasant⁸⁸ is concerned. Further, not only do these and all other “good things” exist in finite and limited quantities, but in addition there is no way directly within peasant power to increase the available quantity. If a peasant views his economic world as one in which Limited Good prevails, and he can progress only at the expense of another, he is usually very near the truth; this is considered as social justice for Foster (1965:298). In Mediterranean communities of the first century, there were no specialised banking systems and wealth was mostly kept in the form of landed property. Customarily, land was not only limited, but it had become increasingly limited, by population expansion and soil deterioration. Because of its scarcity wealth was seen by villagers as equivalent to land. Therefore a peasant works to eat, but not to create wealth (Foster 1965:298). Time and tradition have determined the shares of landed property that each family and each individual holds; these shares are not static, since obviously they do change. The reason for the relative position of each villager is known at any given time, and any significant change calls for explanation or seen as stealing (Malina & Pilch 2008:217). The “rich” were therefore seen by the peasantry as thieves. Van Eck (2011:6) notes that being rich was viewed as exactly the same as being greedy. Being “poor,” on the other hand, was essentially not being able to defend what was yours. To be poor was to be powerless and vulnerable to the greedy who preyed on the weak.

When people however do make improvements in their belongings, they take the necessary precautions to neutralize the achieved imbalances. On the individual-family level, Foster (1965:303) gives two rules which are institutionalised as a way in which a family or individual deals with the problem of real or suspected improvement, he says: First rule is to

⁸⁸ For Foster (1965:296), a peasant sees his existence as determined and limited by the natural and social resources of his village and his immediate environment. Consequently, if “Good” exists in limited amounts which cannot be expanded, and if the system is closed, it follows that an individual or a family can improve a position only at the expense of others. Hence, an apparent relative improvement in someone’s position with respect to any “Good” is viewed as a threat to the entire community. Someone is being deprived, whether he sees it or not. Since there is often uncertainty as to who is losing, obviously any significant improvement becomes a threat not only to an individual or family alone, but as a threat to all individuals and families.

attempt to conceal evidence that might lead to this conclusion, and denies the veracity of suggestions to this effect. Second rule is to meet the charge head-on, admits an improvement in relative position, but shows it has no intention of using this position to the detriment of the village by neutralizing it through ritual expenditures, thereby restoring the *status quo*.

4.3.6 First-century dyadic personality

Dyadic personality is a sense of self, determined by, and dependent upon the perceptions and evaluations of others (Elliott 1993:129). Dyadic personality was characteristic of first century Mediterranean society which was never considered as monadic or individualistic. Dyad persons belong to a society that is group oriented and live a collective way of life⁸⁹ purposely because people in that society derived their identity from the group to which they belonged.⁹⁰ A dyad personality is one that simply needs others continually in order to know who he or she is (Forster 1961:1184; Van Eck 1995:176). It is in such a society that people are often engaged in a kind of mutual assistance, wherein one person's weakness is complemented with another person's strength (Nyiawung (2010:220).

In the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, all vineyard owners in Roman Palestine as elsewhere needed reliable and willing workers. From the perspective of dyadic personality, the owner and his manager, and day-labourers were necessarily interdependent. The issue in the parable that makes the workers to be so dependent on the vineyard owner is financial hardship (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:8). The later workers express this difficulty in Matthew 20:7: "because no one has hired us." In the dyadic relationship that exist between the owner and workers, the owner stepped out of his role as one who thinks only in terms of a strict balance sheet, into the role of a patron or benefactor whose actions create enduring and effective bonds with his workers, and has decided to benefit them equally. The owner knows that the workers need him to survive. He understands the dyad society in which they live and decides to pay same because without it those hired later would not have enough to live on. By doing this, the vineyard owner redefines the notion of dyadic personality in which one person's weakness was complemented with another person's strength in the same fellowship group, to complementing a person's weakness for anyone who is loyal to his duty.

⁸⁹ People in this culture are primarily part of the group in which they find themselves inserted. They exist solely and only because of that group in which they are embedded and without the group, they would cease to be (Malina & Neyrey 1991c:73).

⁹⁰ Day-labourers identified themselves every day by coming to stand at the market place probably in groups while waiting to be employed for the work of the day (Mt 20 :3).

4.3.7 Challenge and response

Challenge and response is a sort of social pattern, a social game, in which persons hassle (tussle) each other according to socially defined rules in order to gain the honour⁹¹ of another (Malina 1993:34). Said in another way, challenge and response is a sort of constant social tug of war, a game of social push and shove, is a form of communication in which messages are transferred from a source to a receiver. Malina (1993:34) opines that the source here is the challenger, while the message is a symbolic tiling (a word, a gift, an invitation) or event (some action) or both. The channels are always public, and the publicity of the message guarantees that the receiving individual will react in some way. Even his non-action is publicly interpreted as a response. Furthermore, challenge-response within the context of honour is a sort of interaction in at least three phases: (1) the challenge⁹² in terms of some action (word, deed, or both) on the part of the challenger; (2) the perception of the message by both the individual to whom it is directed and the public at large; and (3) the reaction of the receiving individual⁹³ and the evaluation of the reaction on the part of the public.

It was not always automatic that attempts to challenge someone will succeed. Those who were challenged were not necessarily helpless in the process. This involves the receiver's behaviour that enables the public to pass a verdict: a grant of honour taken from the receiver of a challenge and awarded to the successful challenger, or a loss of honour by the challenger in favour of the successful recipient of the challenge. Any reaction on the part of the receiver of a challenge comprises his response. Such responses cover a range of reactions, from a "positive" refusal to act, through acceptance of the message, to a "negative" refusal to react. On the other hand, the receiver can accept the challenge message and offer a counter-challenge.

⁹¹ Honour, like all other goods in first-century Mediterranean society, is a limited good. Now since honour is the pivotal value (much like wealth in our society), nearly every interaction with non-family members has undertones of a challenge to honour.

⁹² The challenge is a claim to enter the social space of another. This claim may be positive or negative. A positive reason for entering the social space of another would be to gain some share in that space or to gain a cooperative mutually beneficial foothold. A negative reason would be to dislodge another from that person's social space, either temporarily or permanently (Malina 1993:35).

⁹³ The receiver looks upon the action from the viewpoint of its potential to dishonour his self-esteem and his self-worth. He has to judge whether and how the challenge falls within the socially acknowledged range of such actions, from a simple questioning of self-esteem to an outright attack on self-esteem to a total denial of self-esteem. It is very important to note that the interaction over honour such as the challenge-response game, usually take place mostly between social equals. Therefore the receiver must judge whether he is equal to the challenger, whether the challenger honours him by regarding him as an equal as is implicit in the challenge, or whether the challenger dishonours him by implying equality when there is none, either because the receiver is of a higher status or a lower status (Malina 1993:35).

4.3.8 Evil eye in the gospels – John H. Elliott

The evil eye belief entails the notion that the eye of certain individuals, animals, demons, or gods can be so powerful that a mere glance from it could injure, destroy or kill any human, animal or thing struck by such a glance (Elliott 1992:53, 2011:5). Elliott (1992:53) further advanced that through the power of their eye,⁹⁴ which could operate involuntarily as well as intentionally, such Evil Eye possessors were thought capable of damaging or destroying the life and health, means of sustenance and livelihood, family honour and personal well-being of their unfortunate victims. Moreover, since it was also believed that the eye was the window to the heart and the physical channel of one's innermost dispositions and desires, an evil eye was regarded as an indication of an evil heart and malicious intentions (Elliott 1992:53). Foremost among the malevolent emotions associated with the evil eye was that of envy⁹⁵. The belief in the existence and destructive power of the evil eye pervaded the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean world (Bechmann 2016:29).

The malevolent working of the evil eye demon or humans possessing an evil eye⁹⁶ were attributed to be the cause of sudden illnesses, injuries, loss of children and family, death of cattle, outbreaks of war and social conflict and other disasters (Elliott 2011:5). The fear of evil eye was so dreadful to the extent that being accused of possessing and casting an evil eye had disastrous consequences for the persons accused and for their families and associates (Elliott 2011:7). Evil eye cultures also required that individuals avoid giving the impression of having or casting an Evil Eye. To this end, everyone was expected to be generous⁹⁷ with one's possessions, ready to give to those in need without minimizing or begrudging the gift (Elliott 1992:53). Furthermore, Praise and admiration of others could be taken as a sign of

⁹⁴ Eyes are very important; they are thought to be active. The understanding was that eyes transmit what persons think, wish, and want, good or bad things. "Seeing" was coming from inside to the outside, therefore persons with bad thoughts were seen as persons with an evil eye (Bechmann 2016:30).

⁹⁵ Envy (jealousy or begrudging) which naturally takes root more deeply in the mind than any other passion contaminates the body with evil. When those possessed by envy to this degree let their glance fall upon a person, their eyes which are close to the mind draw from it the evil influence of the passion, then assail the person or persons who encounter their gaze as if with poisoned arrows (Elliott 1992:53). In another dimension, envy, is the displeasure at the assets and success of another, a resentful consciousness of inferiority to the person envied, a sense of impotence to acquire what is desired, and a malevolent wish to harm the envied one or to see him deprived of what he has (Elliott 1992:58).

⁹⁶ The glance and even the presence of such an individual was to be avoided because he or she was thought to harbour hostile intentions and to have the power of injuring and destroying with his/her eye. Foremost among the malevolent emotions associated with the Evil Eye was that of envy, which was also linked with feelings of resentment of another's health, social standing or sudden good fortune, and stinginess or unwillingness to share one's possessions with others, especially those in need (Elliott 1992:53).

⁹⁷ Generosity in this case is assumed as the appropriate contextual implication of the Greek ἀγαθός – good (Mt 20:15b).

Evil Eye envy; therefore it had to be avoided. As a protective measure to ward-off evil eye, Elliott writes:

For warding off the evil eye a vast arsenal of amulets, gestures, devices and expressions were used. Amulets were worn, displayed on the exterior of houses or the interior of shops, or erected on thoroughfares. Protective manual gestures included the *mano fica* (fist with thumb inserted between first and second fingers), the *mano cornuta* (fist with first and last fingers extended horizontally) or the *digitus infamis* (extended middle finger). In addition there were verbal spells, incantations and words of power. One frequent stratagem was to spit three times in the presence of a suspected evil eye possessor, a measure often used in the protection of babies and children.

(Elliott 2011:6)

From a literary contextual setting of the parable, Elliott (2017:169) argues that the parable is situated within the account of Jesus' teaching and ministry in Judea following his departure from Galilee in Matthew 19:1 and preceding his entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21:1-11). The evil eye belief entails the notion that the eye of a person can be so powerful that a mere glance from it could injure, destroy or kill any human, animal or thing struck by such a glance. Elliott (2011:5) asserts that throughout the Mediterranean world, sudden illnesses, injuries, loss of children and family, death of cattle, outbreaks of war and social conflict and other disasters were attributed to the malevolent working of the evil eye demon or to humans possessing an evil eye. It was a common belief in the Mediterranean world that possessors of evil eye were persons with certain peculiarities ranging from blindness in one or both eyes to ocular impairment (crossed eyes, squinting eyes, wandering eye, eyes with double pupils), sunken eye sockets, or even bushy eyebrows that meet. Disfigured, deformed and socially deviant persons were also suspected of possessing and casting the evil eye, as well as people with epilepsy, all strangers and any others who because of their perceived deprivations might have reason to envy the well-being, success and good fortune of others (Elliott 2011:5).

Jesus and his followers, like their Greek and Roman contemporaries, were convinced that the heavenly and earthly realms were populated by potent entities such as spirits (both clean and unclean spirits, angels and demons; Elliott (2016:111)). Jesus and his contemporaries were aware of the efficacious power of incantations, blessings and curses, spells, amulets, and powerful words and gestures. Jesus as part of this community participated in extraordinary healings and mass feeding. He showed superiority over natural forces, altered states of

consciousness by raising some people from death and his ascension to the heavens (Elliott 2016:112). Further still, Mediterranean persons believed that they had to reckon with ghosts, reappearing ancestors, witches and sorcerers, agents of the magical arts, necromancers, soothsayers, diviners, and evil-eyed fascinators. These, in Elliott's view, were known to be part of the natural order and thought to work mysteriously but also effectively to influence human lives and destinies for good or evil. Elliott cites four evil eye references⁹⁸ in the synoptic Gospels as sayings of Jesus: Matthew 6:22-23; Matthew 20:15; Mark 7:22; Luke 11:34-35.

In the review of volume four of Elliott's work, Waetjen (2017:548) states that because an evil eye could be aroused in any circumstance, and because of its fatal consequences, it should be shunned at all costs by cleaving "to the good way." A dreaded disease of leprosy could be caused by the evil eye for refusing to lend things like vessels and tools to a friend. Because of the consequences of evil eye, it was indispensable for people to seek for immunity and protection. Elliott is cited as saying that spoken words especially, blessings, formulas, and adjurations (solemn oaths), were utilized to repel the evil eye and its effects. In addition to that, protective objects, such as phylacteries (amulets or charms), prayer shawls, forehead bands, necklaces, nose and finger rings (with or without a seal) served as magical means of defence.⁹⁹ Horses were protected from the evil eye by hanging a foxtail between their eyes. Actions such as spitting, concealment from public places, and changing or substituting another name were regarded to be effective against the evil eye (Waetjen 2017:548).

4.3.8.1 Evil eye in Matthew 20:1-15

The conclusion to the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is the second of Matthew's references to evil eye after Matthew 6:22-23. Elliott (2017:168) sees the rhetorical question posed by the vineyard owner to a grumbling worker about the generous payment of the last hired workers as the climax of the parable "is your eye evil because I am generous?" (ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου πονηρός ἐστὶν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀγαθός εἰμι;). The evil eye was an aspect of ancient Palestinian everyday life and outlook. While the behaviour of the workers in showing resentment over any perceived preferences given to other workers is typical, the behaviour of

⁹⁸ Paul also explicitly mentions the evil eye in Galatians 3:1 (εἰσκαθεν). He makes further allusions to evil eye belief and behavior in Galatians 4:12-20.

⁹⁹ In later Christianity, Tertullian regarded the custom of women wearing veils to afford protection against the evil eye. Eusebius of Caesarea ascribed the persecution of Christians to the evil eyed demon (Waetjen 2017:548).

the vineyard owner is very untypical of human vineyard owners (Elliott 2017:171). Jesus' listeners would have believed that such behaviour was characteristic of divine largess. Hanging on the notion of limited good that was prevalent in their society, as it is in most peasant communities, they considered that the gain and good fortune of those who were hired last amounted to the loss of the early workers and one person is delegated (implied though not indicated in the text) to speak on behalf of the early workers since no one objected the complain of the speaker. The owner's reply makes a defence of himself and the justness of his action and intimated that the complainants were guilty of having an evil eye (Elliott 2017:174). The intention of the accusation of the first workers is to publicly label, tarnish, disgrace and discredit the accused by shaming them as envious evil eye possessors and thus as individuals who threaten the social welfare and well-being of the entire community (Elliott 2017:191). What particular emotion associated with evil eye fits the disposition of the grumblers and supports the equation of envy to evil eye? In answering this question, Elliott (2017:178-179) refers to Aristotle in his treatise on rhetoric (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.10, 1387b-1388a):

Envy is a disturbing pain aroused by the prosperity of others. We feel it towards our equals (in birth, relationship, age, dispositions, distinction or wealth) not with the idea of getting something for ourselves, but because the other people have it.... We feel envy also if we fall but a little short of having everything.... Ambitious men are more envious than those who are not and small minded men are more envious, for everything seems great to them.... The deeds or possessions which arouse the love of reputation and honour and the desire for fame, and the various gifts of fortune, are almost all subject to envy.... We envy those whose possession or success in a thing is a reproach to us: these are our neighbours and our equals.... We also envy those who have what we ought to have or have got what we did have once. Hence old men envy younger men, and those who have spent much envy those who have spent little on the same thing. And men who have not got a little thing or not got it yet, envy those who have got it quickly.

In the case of the envious first workers in the parable the question is whether the evil eye worked. The owner is said to be ἀγαθός (which literally means good). The goodness of the owner, who is said to be generous, sharply contrasts the πονηρός (or the evil) of the grumblers. In this case generosity is opposed by the grumbler's evil eye. Elliott (2017:175) holds that generosity is regularly the antithesis of an evil eye. One can therefore conclude that the evil eye of the grumbling first workers does not work since the owner is good. Elliott's

thesis in evil eye possession is that envy seeks to deprive while generosity seeks to bestow; envy is destructive while generosity is constructive.

4.3.9 External responsibility

It was believed that people within the Society of Jesus had some social duties towards their peers and the society as members of a dyadic community. This is external control. Jesus' acts on external responsibility clashed with his fellow Jews. He was however rejected because he failed to function in conformity with their expectations. Society expected Jesus' external responsibility of a military messiah but he failed and was condemned to die. Because of external responsibility, people could appeal for help as well as for acts of mercy and compassion. Jesus encouraged external responsibility that was oriented towards sacrificial love. Jeremias (1972:37) raises a number of questions concerning the action of the vineyard owner in Matthew 20:1-15: Why does the master of the estate give the unusual order that all are to receive the same pay? Why does he allow the last to receive a full day's pay for only one hour's work? Is this a piece of purely arbitrary injustice? Far from it; his conclusion is that, it is the behaviour of a large hearted man who is compassionate and full of sympathy for the poor, which said in other words, is his external responsibility.

4.4 THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

In the Greco-Roman world in which Matthew's community existed, there was no separation between the functioning of the state and the performance of religion. Government and religion both functioned, theoretically, to secure the same ends of making life prosperous, meaningful, and happy (Ehrman 2000:26). The gods, he says, brought peace and prosperity and made the state great. In turn, the state sponsored and encouraged the worship of the gods. For this reason, state priesthoods in the Roman Empire were, to use modern terminology, political appointments. Imperial theology, proclaimed by elite personnel, buildings, coins, rituals, festivals, inscriptions and literary works of arts announced that the gods have chosen Rome to rule (Horsley 2005:145). Members of the ruling elite, he continues, served as priests who were drawn from only a few elite families and traditionally associated with Sadducees because of the great prestige of the ancient priestly family of Zaddok (see 1 Ki 1:34; Hanson & Oakman 1998:137).

Judaism was the main religion which was characterised by monotheism, even though Jews were often accused of atheism by Gentiles (non-Jews) because Jews refused to recognise the sovereignty of any other deity except their own (Puskas & Robbins 2011:38). After the failure of the Seleucid dynasty to Hellenise Palestine, monotheism became the hallmark of Jewish religiosity. This monotheistic identity of the Israelites was shown in the interdependent of the God of Israel, the people of Israel and the land of Israel which saw its foundation in the Torah with life shaping commandments (Stegemann and Stegemann 1999:137).¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the most vivid example is the Passover celebration of the exodus from foreign domination in Egypt. As a consolidation of this, Jerusalem rulers had long since centralised their celebration in Jerusalem so that it would associate the formative memory and identity of Israel as a people with the Temple and its priesthood (Puskas & Robbins 2011:26). In Matthew's community the Passover celebration became a time of heightened awareness of their own subjugation by the Romans and therefore an intense yearning to be independent again (Puskas & Robbins 2011:26).

It is worthwhile to note that Matthew presents a Jewish Christian community which was in conflict with the Jewish mainstream religion. It is a community that has been expelled from the synagogues probably for being followers of Jesus (Viljoen 2012:257). Within this Jewish environment, the Matthean group struggled on two fronts. On the one hand they defended themselves against non-Christian Jews who rejected them for accepting Jesus as the Messiah. On the other hand, the Matthean community defended themselves against antinomian¹⁰¹ Christians who set aside the Law in their doctrine and mission (Viljoen 2012:257). In all the religious pursuits in Matthew's community, one can hardly overestimate the importance of the Temple as the site of the divine presence and centre of national and religious identity of Judaism in the Hellenistic-Roman period (Stegemann and Stegemann 1999:139).

4.4.1 The Temple in Jerusalem

The temple of Jerusalem in Jesus' day was not the first Israelite temple of King Solomon (1 Ki 5). Solomon's first temple was destroyed in 587 B C E by King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Ki 25:9; Hanson and Oakman 1998:127). The second temple was founded and finished early in

¹⁰⁰ Striking features of the Torah were the Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, and the three temple pilgrim feasts (Pesach or Passover, Shabuoth or feast of weeks, Sukkoth or feast of booths, circumcision and the regulations regarding taxes, food, and purity).

¹⁰¹ Antinomianism comes from the Greek anti- "against" and *nomos*- "law." Literally, it means "against law." It is used to refer to a doctrine that centres on the belief that grace frees a Christian from the law.

the Persian period (Ezr 6:15) in 520 BCE. It was refurbished by the Hasmoneans and later expanded and remodelled by Herod the Great beginning in about 20 BCE. Therefore Matthew's community lived in the days of Herod's temple. The temple was the most impressive building in Jerusalem, most probably the most impressive in all of Palestine. The entire complex could accommodate 70 000 people during festivals (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:57). The general rule in the temple was to enter through the eastern gate and keep to the right so much that everybody move in the same direction and left the complex by the western gate. The religious reason (that follows their purity law) is that people who are leaving the temple purified do not have to get in contact with the impure ones still coming in. In Jewish mythology, the temple is a reflection of, and also point of contact with the supernatural world (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:58). Non-Jews were limited to the outer court of the Gentiles, while ordinary Jewish men could not move across the court of the priests. The sick and the physically handicapped in any form were ostracized and were bound to remain outside altogether. All these limitations revealed the self-image and value of ancient Judaism (Van den Heever & Scheffler 2001:61).

Peasants in the time of Jesus had a great commitment towards the state and towards the temple. The burden of peasants was three levels of taxation: the Roman tribute, taxes to Herod (and the local elite), and tithes and offerings demanded by the high priesthood situated at the temple in Jerusalem (Van Eck 2016:25-26).¹⁰² The priestly caste status carried the right to agricultural tithes and it remained as steady income for the priestly elite (Van Eck 2016:26). When the temple was eventually destroyed, there was little consternation among Christians in Matthew's community because the temple had been largely appropriated into their theology as a spiritual dwelling place of God. On earth, this spiritual temple consisted of the body of God's people (1 Cor 13:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21), while in heaven, it represented the presence of God into which Jesus had entered (Green & McDonald 2013:205). Matthew applies the temple-service precedent to the case of the disciples by comparing Jesus to the temple and finding Him greater than the temple.¹⁰³ Thus, if Jesus is greater than the temple,

¹⁰² Every Israelite male was expected to pay a half-shekel annual temple tax, except for priests. Those who did not travel to Jerusalem could pay at booths that were set up once in a year in the provinces. Qumran Jews argued that this temple tax was to be paid only once in a life time (Green & McDonald 2013:203).

¹⁰³ A similar argument, as Saldarini (1994:124) points out, is used in Matthew 12:41-42 where the Queen of Sheba's positive reaction to Solomon is contrasted with the Pharisees' rejection of Jesus who is "something greater than Jonah."

then his disciples are justified in serving Him the way priests serve the temple (Saldarini 1994:130).

4.4.2 The Law

Since the Gospel of Matthew comes from a “deviant Jewish group” who believes in Jesus but still identifies itself as part of Israel, it developed its own interpretations of biblical law by articulating a particular vision of life under God¹⁰⁴ (Saldarini 1994:124). Matthew carefully defends his interpretation of the Jewish law and custom by establishing Jesus as the authoritative teacher of the law (Mt 7:28-29), thus Matthew’s treatment of the law¹⁰⁵ fits comfortably within the context of first century Judaism (Saldarini 1994:124). The Sabbath was the most important Jewish practice, and as such the Sabbath was both admired and satirized. Matthew, however, argues against a ritualistic observance of the law¹⁰⁶ (Saldarini 1994:126). The observance of the Sabbath, circumcision¹⁰⁷, dietary laws¹⁰⁸ and purity¹⁰⁹ were the clearest markers of identity in the Jewish community (Wright 2013:315-318). The biblical Sabbath commandment was simple; no work is to be done by persons or animals on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10; Dt 5:14), but there was limited guidance as to what constituted work and the Jews continuously struggled to define work. In Matthew’s community, specific norms for observing the Sabbath were not clear (Viljoen 2015:2) and at times non-observance would have been common.

Matthew’s Jesus therefore disputes with the Pharisees over whether the disciples can pick ears of grain and eat to satisfy their hunger¹¹⁰ and also whether Jesus can cure a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-14). Viljoen (2015:2), in citing Neusner and Schiffman, is of the view that in Pharisaic Judaism the Torah was not limited to the written version. Pharisaic Judaism entertained the concept of a dual Torah, which refers to the written

¹⁰⁴ See Matthew 5:17: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

¹⁰⁵ Matthew’s interpretation of the law as Saldarini (1994:124-25) says, are part of his programme to legitimize his group against the attacks of the community leaders who reject it. Matthew more than any other gospel writer told the story of Jesus as the teacher sent by God with an authority and status higher than any other Jewish teacher.

¹⁰⁶ Some Christian commentators have seen Matthew 12 as an argument against legalism.

¹⁰⁷ The practice of circumcision, however, was not unique to the Israelites. According to Jeremiah 9:25-26, other Semitic groups such as the Edomites, the Ammonites, and the Moabites were also practicing circumcision. The Philistines are called the uncircumcised in a derogatory manner (Wright 2013:312).

¹⁰⁸ From biblical texts that are devoted to food laws (e.g. Lv 11:1-47; Dt 14:2-20), it is clear that the Jewish diet was extremely important and formed another identity marker.

¹⁰⁹ Jews developed distinct strategies for defining, achieving and maintaining purity. This follows from priestly programme presented in Leviticus 18:12-30, and those found in Ezekiel and Deuteronomy.

¹¹⁰ If Jesus and the disciples were walking in the grain field and are being watched by the Pharisees, it would likely mean that they contradicted the prohibition against travelling on the Sabbath (Saldarini 1994:128).

and oral law. The Pharisaic dual Torah implies an oral supplement to the written Torah, which provides guidelines on how to apply the written Torah in daily life. This oral law was preserved through the oral tradition and the rabbis in the community (Viljoen 2015:2). Matthew's view of the law is that while Judaism constructed new societies in the synagogues based on their Torah interpretation, the Matthean community was structured as a church and based their Torah observance on what Jesus had taught them (Viljoen 2015:6). While Judaism was using the Torah as a means to shield themselves off from foreign influences, the Matthean community was inclusive and propagated gentile mission. Matthew points out in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard that the ability of the vineyard owner to desire to pay workers at the end of the day was in accordance to the law (Lv 19:13).

4.5 THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

Matthew's Jesus told his parable in a political context where the elite did not rule meritoriously as a result of democratic election, but rather through the use and abuse of power and hereditary control of land (Van Eck 2016:21). There was no legitimate channel, as Van Eck argues further, for the peasants to participate in political matters. The elites implemented the rule of coercion by using the Roman army and any kind of rebellion was met with immediate and ruthless military intervention. One very unfortunate situation in the judiciary was that the legal system exercised bias towards the elite by employing punishment which was not equal to the crime, but to the social status of the accused (Van Eck 2016:22; Kakwata 2015:4). The governing class of such agrarian societies asserted its rights mainly through levying taxes which was an important aspect of public administration.

4.5.1 Taxation

One important aspect of colonization in the first century was that the annexed power was bound to pay taxes to the ruling power without any political opposition from the citizens of the colonized power. This was most probably also the case with the peasants at the time of Christ that Matthew is referring to, where those who collect tribute demanded whether Jesus does not pay taxes (Mt 17:24-25; 22:17, 19). Collection of taxes was also privatized in the community of Matthew's day. During the Roman period, publicans would bid for the right to collect taxes in a region; they would then keep for themselves some of the money they collected. The privatization of tax collection (Mt 10:3) created incentives for vigorous enforcement officers and shifted some of the risk of non-collection away from the state

(Miller 2012:4). When the tax collectors (Mt 17:24) asked Peter whether his master pays temple tax of half-shekel (two drachma), Peter affirms that Jesus observes normal Jewish practice. At the end of the story, Peter's answer is proven right when Jesus sent Peter to get a four-drachma coin from the mouth of a fish and their due is paid (Mt 17:27). When the temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the yearly temple tax was still collected by the imperial government for the support of the temple of "Jupiter Capitolinus" in Rome (Saldarini 1994:144). Even when Matthew's group (Christians) have been alienated from the Jewish community leaders, the Romans still collected temple tax from all Jews including those Jews who believe in Jesus. To further display Rome's elite power, wealth and status and ensure maximum control over the surrounding territories, there was the elaborate building of cities which serve as a justification for the collection of tribute and taxes (Van Eck 2016:22). Therefore one of the issues that would have made the workers in the vineyard parable to be in want apart from daily food for their families was surely the ability to settle their taxes, because taxes were a burden in that community like others.

4.6 THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

In modern economies, "economy" is usually understood as the division of scarce means among competing ends. It is assumed that people behave economically in that they divide the scarce resources available to achieve certain goals in such a way that the use of these resources remains as small as possible (Stegemann & Stegemann 1995:16). Palestine's economy, much like that of other regions in the Roman Empire, was (advanced) agrarian, based on the fact that they worked as farmers or traders, they manufactured goods and worked in mines (Stegemann & Stegemann 1995:15). The rich elite who controlled the economy had a way of dealing with capital in three main ways; large quantities of money were either loaned for interest, was hoarded as treasure, or better still invested in land (Stegemann & Stegemann 1995:16). An example of this dealing with capital in Matthew's community is Matthew 25:13-30. The master who goes on a journey entrusts his property on his servants. Two of the servants put the money to business and made gain but one hoarded the money for fear of lost. Even though the two who made gain are appreciated and the one who hoarded the money is criticised, these are various and legitimate ways in which capital was dealt with. Thus the main economic activity in Matthew's community was agriculture.

4.6.1 An advanced agrarian economy

An agrarian society, or agricultural society, is any community whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. In an agrarian society, cultivating the land is the primary source of wealth. Green and McDonald (2013:160) have cited Gerhard Lenski whose work has been used by New Testament students to label Roman Palestine as an ‘advanced agrarian’ society. Advanced agrarian societies in their view are characterised by marked social inequality in the form of power and privileges. In the time of Matthew’s Jesus, Hanson and Oakman (1998:98) have highlighted that Caesar and his family had an interest in everything and his estate was overseen in Jesus’ day by local elites like the Herods or Judean high Priests who controlled land and organised agricultural production by means of large estates. Their source of labour was the peasants and artisans (craft persons) in towns who are made to incur debts that they cannot settle and eventually become their slave workers. Gerhard Lenski has offered some eight level of social stratification in an agrarian economy: The rulers, the governing class, the retainer class, merchants, priests, peasants, artisans, and the unclean, degraded, and expendables (Green & McDonald 2013:160). They have argued further that majority of the peasant population in Judea and Galilee worked the land and paid taxes that supported the comfortable life styles of the wealthy. Most peasants were left landless because their lands have been foreclosed through debt mechanisms and taken over by the elites (Green & McDonald 2013:160).

In advanced agrarian societies, more or less than 2% of the total population lived in the cities, while the rest of the population, peasants (the ruled and non-elites) lived in the rural areas (Van Eck 2016:21). Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:6-7) are in accord with this city to rural population ratio when they say that 80 to 90% of the populace in Jesus’ day were involve in agriculture. The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard gives a justification to this large percentage of peasants who depended on working in the estates of the elites to make a living for their families. The great number of people who presented themselves at the ‘agora’ seeking for employment bears testimony to the unemployed situation.

4.6.2 Trade economy and commerce

The gradual shift from polycropping to mono-cropping as the elites got hold of peasant lands by buying or foreclosure in debt mechanisms, *inter alia* resulted into viticulture. The focus now was the production of grapes for wine which was meant for export as the primary crop.

Other crops which might have been consumed locally were grain for food and olives for oil (Green & McDonald 2013:161). Archaeological evidence from Galilee suggests that there was regional trade in clay, pottery, basalt, millstones, and olive oil (Green & McDonald 2013:161). The production of these items might not have been in large scale as wine, but workers were surely needed in their production. Long range trade preferred portable and luxurious goods which were carried overland by caravans of pack animals (Hanson and Oakman 1998:103; see Mt 11:2), while bulky goods like wine and grain were move by water routes whenever possible. Because of the limitation in technology and organisation of production, people of first-century Mediterranean world tend to see the goods of life as in limited supply (Hanson & Oakman 1998:111). Limited good for those people meant that where someone's wealth was to increase, it will be at the expense of other people (Neyrey & Stewart 2008:236). Consequently rich and powerful people were looked upon as robbers and thieves as well as benefactors.

One of the characteristics of ancient trade and commerce was trade by barter markets which function in the villages and towns for every day staple goods. There was evidence that even priests and Pharisees were engaged in trade. Jeremias explains that trade in Jerusalem before 70 CE had reached a stage of development corresponding to town economy. The profession of a merchant was held in great respect. Even priests engaged in commerce (Jeremias 1962:31). One reason why Jerusalem had so much trade was because it was the centre of both political and religious authority during the time of Jesus. Because of the temple, many pilgrims visited the holy city, some depositing private fortunes in the temple treasury, while others came to Jerusalem upon retirement to grow old and die (Jeremias 1962:56). Thus, with these many pilgrims, there were many commercial transactions that occurred in Jerusalem, from the buying and selling of animals (that were in demand for both human consumption and for temple sacrifices) to the purchasing of luxury goods and building materials (Stiles 2011:33).

Today, money controls everything else, but in the first-century Mediterranean world money was subject to elite control because it was a prerogative of the elites (Hanson & Oakman 1998:120). Apart from barter markets, the money economy utilises coins as a medium of exchange. Matthew 10:9 gives a list of the metals that were used in coins in the order of their value (Ferguson 1987:69), namely gold, silver, and copper (bronze). Ferguson (1987:70) suggests that the tribute money of Matthew 22:19 would have been the silver denarius, many of which have been found by archaeologists. Mediterranean coins carried the heard of the

Emperor wearing a wreath and the inscription, for example, “Augustus Tiberius Caesar, son of the deified Augustus”. Such coins were a daily reminder to the subjects that in return for Roman peace and prosperity, they owe taxes. It is very clear from the vineyard parable that the continuous demand for workers is a prelude to an export market economy.

4.7 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

The social context of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is a reflection on the social reality of the first-century Mediterranean setting. The social complexities in ancient societies were reduced to a model of two strata and this dichotomous model was maintained which understood social inequality through the assumption of upper and lower strata or elite and non-elite groups (Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:67). There was basically no middle class. This dichotomy also determined the portion of social privileges and personal possessions as well as legal advantages that one enjoyed. The lifestyle of the elite patrons was one of leisure and plenty (Albl 2009:7). One of Jesus’ parables, the Rich Man and Lazarus, describes “a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day” (Luke 16:19).

The social placing of the parable under study comes from the context of a world wherein there was extreme poverty and exploitation of the masses and lack of work opportunities for ordinary citizens to make a decent living. Day-labourers were victims of an exploitative socio-economic system. Therefore the gracious vineyard owner became an exception in the prevalent order of things in the society in that he did not only provide work opportunities for the labourers without employment, but also he provided a wage that was equal to their needs.

Various scholars who have studied this parable have proposed various views as to the social setting of the parable. Linnemann (1966:86) thinks that the setting was Jesus’ response to his critics regarding his table fellowship with sinners and toll collectors. Donahue (1988:82-83) is of the opinion that the parable was said as the defence of Jesus’ proclamation of God’s love for the outcasts. Herzog (1994:81) believes that the parable was Jesus’ address to the grumbling workers proclaiming God’s grace and goodness, and to those like them, who insisted on works and merit. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101), reading the parable from a social scientific perspective, holds the view that the historical Jesus told the parable as a warning to landowners who were expropriating and exporting the produce of the land. Van

Eck and Kloppenborg (2015:1), at their turn, are convinced that the social setting of the parable should be placed within the perspective of the social and economic practices in the agricultural sector of the Roman economy. This, they argue, is because there is the need to assess the degree of realism of specific details of the parable, and the points at which the narrator deliberately confronts audience expectations with what is “normal” about a narrative artifice that produces a surprising outcome. They have further noted that the fundamental thing which the parable invokes is the ambivalence between the labour market and the balanced reciprocity of the practice of patronage.

Another social setting of the parable is the fact that it was a society of limited good. Foster (1965:296) defines limited good as follow:

Peasants view their social, economic, and natural universe, their total environment, as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honour, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, exist in finite quantities and are always in short supply, as far as the peasant is concerned. Not only do these and all other “good things” exist in finite and limited quantities, but in addition there is no way directly within peasant power to increase the available quantities.

The parable is an interaction of reciprocity between a land owner and peasant labourers. All the things that could make life living for peasants in the community were limited. Since they own little or no land, they had to earn their living through their own labour, by seeking to work in the vineyard of whoever could employ them. They were constantly in danger of hunger or starvation if no one employed them. Because of limited good on the part of the workers who needed food for the families, the vineyard owner went out to the market place several times during the day to hire daily labourers. With every trip, he found groups in need of work, an indication of the great number of people looking for additional work to survive (Mt 20:7; see also the parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32). Since the parable is set at harvest time, some of those hired were likely the landless else they would have been harvesting their own crops (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:101; Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:6) while others were smallholders who needed cash and decided to defer their own harvest (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:6).

It is also worth noting that honour is a limited good. It is similarly scarce like material scarcity such as land. Honour opportunities were all distributed which means that honour gained was

always honour taken from another person (Neufeld & DeMaris 2010:112). Due to this scarcity, there was intense competition and envy which was characteristic of such societies. The early workers in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard could have been envious of the last employed because they had to share the privilege of earning a day's income same with those who worked only for one hour.

4.7.1 The general situation of work

Work was a means by which peasants made a living. While the ruling class regarded their land and the peasants as income for themselves, the peasant saw his land and work as a means of feeding his family and not as a business for profit making. They worked for subsistence and never had a vision of becoming “wealthy” (Neufeld & DeMaris 2010:197). Peasants who were free holders of land work on their land as family unites or as tenants (Neufeld & DeMaris 2010:198). In fact, the identity of a family was closely identified with its ownership of land.¹¹¹

When peasants eventually became landless they lost family bonds and those who could not do craft work became day-labourers or agricultural slaves. For a peasant farmer, land was an entity for family bonding and a means for subsistence. The crafts were held in high esteem in Judaism at the time of Jesus. Every Jew endeavoured to teach their sons a craft, as the well-known rabbinic maxim stated: “He who does not teach his son a craft teaches him robbery” (Jeremias 1962:3).

The busier periods of the year were the sowing and harvesting seasons, the rain giving its rhythm to the calendar (Hamel 1990:126). A somewhat artificial regularity was imposed on the farmer's year by dividing it into six periods of two months each, which corresponded to the presence or absence of rain and the type of activity undertaken:

[T]he sowing season, from mid-Tishri to mid-Kislev; the cold season, from mid-Kislev to mid-Shevat; winter, from mid-Shevat to mid-Nisan, (the time to sow barley and legumes), the harvest season, from mid-Nisan to mid-Siwan; “summer,” a “time to gather

¹¹¹ When King Ahab wanted to buy Naboth's vineyard, Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give you my ancestral heritage” (1 Ki 21:3). This shows that the land was the pride of a family. Surely the family fed themselves from that land.

figs and also a time to dry them in the fields”; finally, from mid-Av to mid-Tishri, the end of the hot days.¹¹²

(Hamel 1990:127)

Workers, who presumably came from distant places, depended on the landowner for their lodging. Day-labourers not attached to the estate of a landowner were subject to periods of unemployment and want. They were hired when large undertakings made their help necessary possibly at harvest time, for ploughing, for transportation, and for construction projects. Unemployment seems to have been high, even at harvest time, when workers would be waiting around town squares at different hours of the day (Hamel 1990:178), as is presumed in Matthew 20:6.

4.7.2 Workers and salaries

For agricultural labour, food seemed to have constituted most of the salary (Hamel 1990:179). In this regard Matthew 10.10 states that “the labourer deserves his keep.” What labourers needed most was food for themselves and their families. This is also the impression given by Luke 15.17 in which the younger son remembers how his father’s hired workers (μισθοι) “have food enough and to spare.” There were harvesters whose salary consisted of the food they could eat while working. From the point of view of the worker, security rather than quantity of income was the most important goal. The ability to command some form of employment meant that a worker could avoid beggary in its many forms and live in limited safety (Hamel 1990:178).

Those who were privileged to work were under the supervision of the master’s son (Mt 21:28 or a trustworthy steward (foreman; Mt 20:8), whose task was primarily to ensure the proper use of labour. Hamel (1990:178) makes a distinction between labourers hired by the day or even the hour who were paid at the end of the day, and workers needed in year-round occupations for instance, hoeing, the care of trees, guarding the crops that were hired by the season or even the year. Poor relatives and neighbours who were allowed by custom to glean in the fields after the harvest had the least secured form of work, whereas workers having long

¹¹² The following months from the Jewish calendar is mentioned by Hamel (1990:127): “Tishri” started from mid-September to mid-October; “Kishlav” from mid-November to mid-December; “Shevat” from mid-January to mid-February; “Nisan” from mid-March to mid-April; “Siwan” from mid-May to mid-June; “Av” from mid-July to mid-August.

term arrangements with landowners were in a situation not very different from that of sharecroppers¹¹³ (tenants). Among the more stable kinds of workers were the diggers, measurers, and guards, whose salary was paid in kind on the threshing floor at harvest time. Such payments were contributions from the owner and sharecropper (Hamel 1990:178). Sharecropping was advantageous to a land owner because it requires less supervision of labour than was the case with hired labourers.

Sharecropping contracts varied widely, according to local custom¹¹⁴ (Hamel 1990:181). One quarter of the harvest was allocated for payment of the land use, one quarter for labour, another quarter for use of tools and animals, and the remainder for seeds. If the land owner provided everything needed (fields, seeds, housing, plough, wood, grain for survival and fodder (animal feed) and paid taxes, the sharecropper received just one fourth of the yield for the work for his family (one fifth in certain cases). There is no evidence of sharecropping in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard since the owner employed labour and paid at the end of the day. He is solely responsible for every detail of the work and also decides what to do with what belongs to him (“Do I have not the right to do what I want with my own money?” Mt 20:15).

4.7.3 Generosity in Matthew’s gospel

Generosity was a highly valued characteristic in people in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Most public works, public festivals and entertainments, and private aid to individuals or groups came through the willingness of generous people of means to spend their wealth on others (DeSilva 1999:40). DeSilva (1999:39) cites Aristotle who defines generosity as “helpfulness toward someone in need, not in return for anything, or for the advantage of the helper himself (or herself), but for that of the person helped.” In this sense, the word highlights the generosity and disposition of the patron, benefactor, or giver.

Kulikovsky (2007:5) understands generosity from the perspective of need, and maintains that the existence of people in need in a world of plenty is fundamentally unjust, and that this warrants preferential treatment for those with the greatest needs. However, it is not at all

¹¹³ Sharecropping is a system where a tenant farmer works the land in exchange for a portion of the crop.

¹¹⁴ Sharecropping is practiced in Cameroon today mostly in areas where cocoa and palms are cultivated. This is commonly referred to as “Two party”; meaning that part of the yield go to the owner of the farm and part go to the worker in a ratio depending on who provided the material needed for the work.

obvious why someone should receive some generous gift in preference to others simply because that person is in need. Even though Mediterranean patrons held the view that gifts are not to be made with a view to having some desired object given in return, their conviction was that gifts were to be made strategically (DeSilva 1999:41). Citing Cicero, DeSilva (1999:41) indicates that good gifts “badly placed are badly given.” Therefore, the giver should scrutinize the person to whom he or she is thinking of giving a gift.¹¹⁵ The recipient should be a virtuous person who will honour the generosity and kindness behind the gift, who would value more the continuing relationship with the giver than any particular gift.

In such a community, receiving a favour or kindness meant incurring very directly a “debt” or “obligation” to respond gratefully, a debt which could not be defaulted. This philosophic notion of generosity argues that gratitude towards one's patrons (or toward public benefactors) was a prominent example in discussions of what it meant to live out the cardinal virtue of justice, a virtue defined as giving to each person what was his or her due. Failure to show gratitude was classed as the worst of crimes, and being censured as an injury against the human race, since ingratitude discourages the very generosity that was so crucial to public life and to personal aid (DeSilva 1999:42). This general notion of responding justly to one's benefactors was not enforced by written laws but rather by unwritten customs and universal practice. It is within this world of understanding that “one good turn deserves another” that Jesus' message took shape and that the good news of God's favour and generosity was taken out into the Mediterranean world.

Since Matthew lived in a community where every generous deed deserves some form of appreciation, he narrates the story of the centurion who came to Jesus seeking for healing for his servant (Mt 8:5-13). Luke's version of the story (Lk 7:2-10) has it that this centurion had constructed a synagogue for the Jews. Matthew is aware that the centurion is a benefactor who has been doing generous works for the community. He is presented as coming to Jesus to ask for healing for his servant. The community is in conformity with the fact that he deserves this as a mark of gratitude for his generosity. Surprisingly, this Roman benefactor shows astonishing humility in his dealings with a Jewish healer, he shows exceptional trust in Jesus' ability to grant him God's favour. The end result is that the Roman centurion receives from

¹¹⁵ Ben Sira advises the following: “If you do a kindness, know to whom you do it, and you will be thanked for your good deeds” (*Sir.* 12: 1). This advice was remembered in the early church (see *Did.* 1.5-6) as a good rule for giving alms and was important form of benefaction (DeSilva 1999:74).

Jesus the gift he needed. The centurion might have seen this healing as a mark of gratitude for his good works to the community because of his community background. Jesus told him to go, “it will be done as you believe.” Jesus makes a reinterpretation of generosity as a reward for faith and belief and not a reward for the good works which looks forward to receiving undeniable gratitude.

The inclusion of Gentiles within the sphere of Jesus’ generosity without any form of reciprocity was something that Jewish listeners could not easily fathom. Jesus goes far beyond the high-water mark of generosity set by Seneca (Hamel 1999:53), which was for virtuous people to consider even giving to the ungrateful, if they had resources to spare after benefitting the virtuous, but Jesus shows the supreme and fullest generosity (not just with what He has to spare) toward those who are his enemies. Matthew shows Jesus bestowing generosity throughout his ministry, through healing diseases or infirmities and delivering people from demonic oppression without distinction, even the restoration of the dead to life (Mt 9: 18-25; Mt 4:23-25; 8:5-17; 9: 18-35).¹¹⁶ Jesus’ ministry of teaching could also be considered a generous gift since good advice and guidance were valued and valuable commodities. When Jesus sends out his disciples, they go out as brokers of Jesus (Mt 10:40-41) they are not giving their services to the population with a view to receiving honour or thanks or service from the recipients of the favours they mediate, but are to give as a response to having receive it themselves from Jesus (Mt 10: 1, 8). Jesus had much to say about beneficence towards the poor as He entreat those who are rich, to sell their possessions and give the money to the poor and be ready for treasure in heaven (Mt 19:21). This is the theological concept that one’s true possessions are what one gives out. It is a way of showing gratitude for favours and generosity that has been received. There is no indication in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20:1-15 that the owner, who is described by (Kistemaker 2007:74) as generous, was seeking for any reciprocity from the late workers who received the same amount of wages as the early workers.

4.7.4 Generosity in Matthew 20:1-15

Mediterranean patrons were very much aware about matters of payment according to merit. It was fair and according to the law to pay wages at the end of the day (Lv 19:13). The first workers who grumbled at the receipt of their payment of one denarius where made to

¹¹⁶ Physicians and healers were considered as benefactors in the Greco-Roman world (Hamel 1999:79).

understand, as the owner responded to the protest, that he has paid them according to his fairness and justice (Mt 20:13) and the last group according to his goodness and generosity (Mt 20:15; see Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:101). Van Eck (2016:159) builds on Jeremias' view that the owner of the vineyard is not just a good employer, as Jeremias would have it, paying the agreed wage to some, but also a patron, offering benefits beyond the strict norms of economic exchange. The owner's assertion, οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὃ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς (Am I not allowed to do what I want with what is mine?) underscores the fact that he has stepped out of the role of the owner who thinks only in terms of a strict balance sheet, into the role of a patron or benefactor whose actions create enduring and effective bonds with his clients, and who is entitled to benefit persons differentially (Van Eck 2016:159).

The owner of the vineyard is unquestionably the central figure in the parable (Jeremias 1972:136). The most outstanding characteristics of the owner are his goodness and generosity, qualities that he has every right to exercise and they came to the climax in Matthew 20:14 and 15. There is no evidence in the parable to show that the workers who were employed last warranted any claim to a full day's wages; they received it entirely due to the goodness of their employer (Jeremias 1972:139). The strange behaviour of the vineyard owner is an invitation for people to pause and think. A vineyard owner who was only concerned with his own profit in the first part of the story has now suddenly become a "good" and "generous" person interested in the welfare of his workers. The extraordinary conduct of the vineyard owner was sufficient to raise questions within the mind of the listeners with regard to the identity of the person. The generosity of the vineyard owner may be noticed in his action that not only overturned the normal expectations but also reversed it.¹¹⁷ From an allegorical perspective, Kistemaker (2007:154) sees the handy work of God in the parable who, as the second section of the story narrates, does not discriminate between people on account of unavailable opportunities. His generosity is for all. He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. The basic needs for support and survival takes precedence over the opportunity afforded by a person. The generosity of the vineyard owner thus overcomes people's expectations, making it possible for him to create new possibilities of relationships.

¹¹⁷ The reversal arrests the expectations of the people because is against the anticipated behaviour, as an owner is never expected to pay more than what is due to a worker as has been opined by Scott (1989:292).

4.8 REALISTIC AND UNREALISTIC FEATURES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN MATTHEW 20:1-15

Realism is a concern for what is factual and a rejection of the impracticable. Snodgrass (2008:369) has noted that the picture which Jesus presents in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard uses some realistic features but others are simply exaggerated and look unrealistic in the eyes of the society of his day. Characters that appear in the parable are not abstract theological figures, but they belong to identifiable social classes or groups in advanced agrarian societies of the Mediterranean world (Herzog: 1994:84). The concern in this section is to attempt an explanation into some of the features in the parable that are real and others that look unrealistic in both the Mediterranean and in the African context. For Snodgrass (2008:369), the dramatic picture that the characters present uses realistic but exaggerated features. It has been noted before that what is generally called the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is considered in this research as something that actually happened within the first century agrarian economy. The interpretations in this research has distance itself from allegorisation of characters. From a cultural perspective, the features that Snodgrass considers as realistic are: the hiring of workers from the market at a time of need, the wage paid, and the owner (who is probably reasonably well-off, but not so wealthy that he leaves oversight of his vineyard to agents) doing the hiring (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:3; Van Eck 2016:145). Unrealistic features are what Snodgrass calls exaggerations and hardly conceivable which include: the excessive number of times that the owner goes out for hiring workers, the level of involvement of the vineyard owner and the equal pay of all the labourers which is the bone of contention in the parable (Snodgrass 2008:369). Each of these features is now examine in turn.

4.8.1 Realistic features that agree with societal social justice

The Easton's bible dictionary says justice is rendering to everyone that which is his due. It has been distinguished from equity such that while justice means merely the doing what positive law demands, equity means the doing of what is fair and right in every separate case.

4.8.1.1 The hiring of workers from the market place

It has already been taken for granted that Jesus told this parable at the time when most of the productive land was held by large scale (elite) owners. There was a progressive shift in land tenure from smallholders producing the Mediterranean grain, grapes and olives for

subsistence to large estates orientated to large-scale production and export crops (Oakman 2008:189). Van Eck & Kloppenborg (2015:10) have cited documentary papyri which show that the creation of large states in Palestine was in full swing in the Hellenistic period. The scenario of hiring day-labourers¹¹⁸ from the market place fits quite well into the experience of the Mediterranean peasants. On the domestic economic ladder, Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:100) say that day-labourers were near the bottom, they were among the poorest persons in the society. Furthermore, the loss of their ancestral land usually meant loss of family and the supporting network. Such persons were often desperate and survival was a bitter struggle. The only possible way was to hire themselves out as day-labourers. In an honour and shame culture like that of the Mediterranean world, day-labourers had no opportunity to go and ask for work from rich patrons because that was considered as trying to reap from where one did not sow (Morgan1953:100). It was normal therefore for day-labourers to present themselves at the market place in anticipation for an employment opportunity.

The shift from subsistence farming (polycropping) to monoculture, especially viticulture, had a profound effect on the structure and nature of labour because vineyards required large temporary labour inputs during the agricultural cycle. Van Eck & Kloppenborg (2015:4) say further that the most demanding period for extra workers was the vintage period¹¹⁹ when pickers and treaders were needed in large numbers. Even though the text does not specify the period, Wright (2015:142) is of the opinion that this is likely the period in which day-labourers are hired to augment the normal work force and bring in the grape harvest before the fruits rot on the vines. This practice was generally accepted in the line of justice. African job seekers, especially in countries with high unemployment like Cameroon have drifted from their villages to the towns in search of a livelihood. Rural urban migration is usually explained in terms of push-pull factors which result from lack of infrastructural facilities, which makes the rural life unattractive. Uddin and Uddin (2013:398) have maintained that youths move to urban areas with the probability of securing lucrative employment in the industries. In addition to this, there is the concentration of social amenities

¹¹⁸ They were usually landless peasants who were either non-inheriting sons or persons who had lost their ancestral lands through debts and drifted into cities and villages looking for work (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:100). Herzog (1994:88) asserts that day-labourers fall into a class of people in advanced agrarian societies known as “the expendables” (unimportant) in which case life was solitary, poor, nasty and short owing to malnutrition, disease and deprivation that haunted them.

¹¹⁹ Once ripe, grapes had to be picked quickly and could not be stored for long without rotting; extra workers thus were needed to tread and press the picked grapes within a few days after being harvested. The vintage period thus created an exceptional labour demand (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:4).

in the urban centres. This meant that the rural areas are neglected in the allocation of social and economic opportunities. Most of the unskilled job seekers who move to towns are equally around motor parks and market areas where they hope to find someone who can offer to them a job opportunity for their daily bread.¹²⁰ In this wise, Africa and the Mediterranean world of the first century could share similar characteristics in matters of peasant employment despite the time lapse.

4.8.1.2 Wage payment at the end of the day

The work day in the Mediterranean setting was about twelve hours, from sunrise to sunset (Ps 104:22-23). The complaints of those who were first hired that they have borne the heat of the day (Mt 20:12) is a pointer to the difficulty of the work and the Palestinian sun (Snodgrass 2008:370). Payment of wages at the end of the day was a routine practice among patrons who hired day labours. Snodgrass (2008:370) has clearly stated that the poverty of the day-labourers was so obvious that the Torah required that they be paid each day at sunset because they needed the money to survive (Lv 19:13; Dt 24:14-15). Schottroff (2006:212) has added that the situation of free farm labourers in Roman Palestine at that time is very realistically presented in this parable. He recollects a similar situation in the book of Ruth. The reapers who work in Boaz's farm and are managed by an overseer (Ruth 2:3-7) are presumably such harvest workers earning daily wages. In Matthew 20:9, the workers who were employed last and worked only for one hour also received a full day's wage of a denarius. It is in generosity that the owner had paid them not what they deserved but what they needed. Apparently, in the view of Inrig (1991:182), people matter more than profits. This coincides with the African sense of human dignity based on the philosophy of live-and let-live, a way of life emphatically centred upon human interests and values, a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human beings. It is not meant to give the impression that an African can easily pay for work that is not well done, but that there is an in-born feeling for one who is in need and the desire to help if the means is there.

¹²⁰ Most African as well as Cameroonian day-labourers do target work in which case the price is made before the labourers start and may not necessarily take them a whole day's work. When their targeted work is finished, they are free to take their money and go. If the situation were in an African economy, some of the workers who were employed later might have finished from another work before coming to the market area.

4.8.1.3 The owner is a Patron but manages his vineyard

An important aspect of viticulture in the 1st century attested by documented papyri is its association with wealth and the wealthy (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:4; Van Eck 2016:148). Furthermore, viticulture did not only demand high labour costs, but also required substantial capital input. Van Eck and Kloppenborg (2015:4) have listed some of the basic requirements for the establishment of a vineyard *inter alia* the installation of irrigation, the erection of fences, the construction of a stone-built field tower for the storing of tools and facilities for pressing and storage, the construction of water wheels, catch basins, storage tanks and a press, the excavation of a treading floor, and the purchase of iron tools and draft animals. It required at least four years of investment in the planting and pruning of the vines before any profit might be realized. This suggests that the owner had the capital for such a long term investment, implying that he was a man of wealth (Stiller 2005:60). Herzog (1994:84), Scott (1989:289) describes the owner as middle-class patron and says this explains why the land owner himself goes to the market to hire labourers for which no elite will perform such a chore. Ironical to this understanding is the fact that although he is pictured as going out to hire workers, he does have a manager, a steward.¹²¹ One wonders that the behaviour of the vineyard owner seem not to tie with other owners who increased their holdings through foreclosures on loans, leading to hostile takeovers of peasant farms which eventually are converted into vineyards so that it could produce a higher product with a higher return than the mixed grains grown by subsistence peasant farmers. In Luke 16:19, Jesus painted the picture of the social class of a Palestinian rich elite who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

4.8.2 Unrealistic features that agree with societal social justice

Listeners of Jesus' parable would have been surprised by some of the features demonstrated by the vineyard owner which show that such features did not quite agree with societal norms. Such unrealistic features that created embarrassments are discussed below.

4.8.2.1 The excessive number of times of hiring workers

Snodgrass (2008:369) affirms that the number of hirings is excessive and hardly conceivable because of the time involved in going back and forth from the vineyard. Managers usually

¹²¹ A steward supervised the numerous servant of a great property while the wealthy owner lived in the city or was absent travelling in pursuit of business (Herzog (1994:85).

know how much labour they need. The same is the case with landowners¹²² (Linnemann 1966:82; Levine 2014:209). That the vineyard owner goes out several times to hire labour gives the impression that the owner could not calculate the number of workers that he needs to accomplish the work. What makes it unrealistic is why the other workers are in the market place but not hired the first time. Could it be that they arrived later because they already worked another job (Levine 2014:209)? Linnemann (1966:82) opines that this unrealistic feature depends on the intention of the narrator to contrast the labourers who worked all day with those who worked for the last hour only. He explains further that the strange conduct¹²³ of the owner is told without any explanation and a strong tension and interest is built up, which keeps the listeners' attention on the progress of the story, and does not let the question of the reason for the owner's strange conduct to arise. The fact that day-labourers are found at the agora at all hours of the day (why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing-Mt 20:6b) depicts a situation of high unemployment (Herzog 1994:86).

4.8.2.2 The level of involvement of the vineyard owner

The vineyard owner in the parable is not only present, but directly involved; he is called *οικοδεσπότης* which means head of a household or master of a household and Stiller (2005:56) says, it is strange that a person of such prestige and wealth would be personally recruiting workers. He is in control of the situation from beginning to the end. He is the dominant character who visits the market place at the break of dawn and hires the labourers. He notices the need for additional workers, and returns repeatedly to the market place for still more employees. He later instructs his manager to pay the workers, and he himself addresses those workers who think that they have been unjustly treated (Kistemaker 2007:73). In hearing the parable, Jesus' initial listeners would have been puzzled because this was not normal practice cognizance of the fact that the owner had the services of a manager. Van Eck and Kloppenborg (2015:6) have made reference to documented papyri to show that it was normal for landowners to function as absentee landlords leaving the operation of their vineyards in the hands of agents and managers (cf. Herzog 1994:85). He stays in the city and follows up other businesses. Herzog (1994:85) argues further that it is unusual that the vineyard owner goes out several times in a day; normally an owner estimates how larger a

¹²² Normally an owner estimates how large a labour force he needs and engage a corresponding number of day-labourers in the morning (Herzog 1994:85).

¹²³ From an oppressive point of view, Herzog (1994:85) argues that the successive trips to the market place are meant to reinforce the unilateral power of the vineyard owner.

labour force that he needs and engages a corresponding number of day-labourers in the morning (cf. also Bailey 2008:358).

4.8.2.3 The equal pay of all the labourers

The equal payment of all labourers for Snodgrass (2008:369) is the very point of the parable because the stress of the parable falls upon this interaction between the vineyard owner and the workers first contracted (Candy 2009:38). Jesus' purpose in the parable is not socio-political. He presents a vineyard owner who is not overturning human employment practices by imposing a new ethic to govern hiring contracts so that all workers should receive the same pay for unequal duration of labour (Candy 2009:38). Candy further notes that the generous vineyard owner has an abnormal order of pay. He brings the last hired to the front of the line and sends the first to the back of the line to watch with expectancy until they would receive their wages, and the exceptional generosity in remunerating the same wage of a denarius to all the later hired workers incites the first employed workers to grumble. It is important to note as Boucher (1981:90) affirms that the workers employed first are not treated unjustly, though it may seem so. They received the day's pay which they and the employer had agreed upon at the outset. Their grumbling had to do with the fact that the last hired put in little service and received the same day's pay. What the grumblers failed to see is that though the last hired have not earned a day's wage, it is given to them out of the owner's generosity. Said in another way, they cannot tolerate the fact that the remuneration of the last hired is an unearned gift (Boucher 1981:91). Schottroff (2006:212) admonishes that the vineyard owner's generosity is exercised within a narrow sphere. He pays the wage that is usual in that locality, and pays it correctly at the end of the work day. The unexpected full day's pay eases the unemployed men's struggle for survival for only one day. Jeremias (1972:37) concludes that the decision of the vineyard owner to pay all the same wage is because of his pity for their poverty. He is a large-hearted man who is compassionate and full of sympathy for the poor. Since this is an abnormal situation, most African employers follow the natural order of payment according to merit.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has been able to explore the historical-cultural, socio-economic, political and religious context of the Mediterranean world which will be used in chapter six to do a social scientific reading of Matthew 20:1-15. Models of the social sciences that have been raised in

this chapter are interpretative tools or lenses, through which we will establish the meaning of what we allow ourselves to see in the text (Elliot 1986:5). These tools are human processes which facilitate an understanding of the text under study. They help in the study of the past because they enable the known to shed light on the unknown. The Mediterranean context of this study will now give rise to the African context.

Chapter 5

The African context for the understanding of Matthew 20:1-15

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the contextual world of Jesus in which the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard was told. The African context is being treated as the referential world in which Matthew 20:1-15 will be interpreted. Every society of people in the world have their own world-view and the world-view of a people is one key to understanding why a particular group of people act the way they do (O'Donovan 1996:3). In discussing African context and values we are not in any way presupposing that all African societies have the same explanation(s) for events and situations. Rather, there are underlying basic similarities that are shared by many African societies. Despite the fact that the first century Mediterranean world is a community of antiquity, there are still some basic similarities¹²⁴ with that of the twenty first century Africa because a large percentage of African societies are agrarian. This study assumes that, even though African societies have a wide variety of peoples whose life ways differ greatly, matters of context are basically similar in Cameroon like in all other countries in Africa particularly south of the Sahara. Contextual matters will enlighten and illuminate the interpretation of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard from an African perspective.

African economies and agricultural systems have been praised for their robust growth rates which offer positive perspectives for economic development and private investment and suggest a process of catching-up with the rest of the world. However, the quality of this growth is ironical because it has a very limited impact on poverty in Africa and does not show a progressive structural transformation of African economies (Anseeum *et al.* 2014:2). The aim of this Chapter is to provide a social, cultural, economic, religious, and the political context of Africa, to situate a number of contemporary issues that animate the African world-view. These issues will be used to understand matters of employment and the remuneration of workers in Cameroon as a follow up to a contextual interpretation of Matthew 20:1-15.

¹²⁴ Similarities here, is not in comparative terms because of the time interval that has elapse between the two communities. Care it taken here not to be anachronistic.

5.2 THE SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In spite of the colonial legacy and post-colonial economic pressures from external interest, African societies have remained distinctively African in character (Sevidzem 2015:45). Several fundamental elements play important roles in the social-historical organization of most African communities whether in rural or urban towns that can enhance or endanger employment and facilitate remuneration opportunities especially in the agricultural sector in Africa. These elements include African communalism (group farming or common initiative groups among women farmers), ethnicity or tribalism (workers are mostly tribe's people of the owner), exploitation of workers, boundary disputes, disease and ignorance, lack of employment, and time management.

5.2.1 African communalism (common initiative groups and family farming)

One of Africa's identities that have existed from the pre-colonial period is African communalism¹²⁵ or solidarity. The forerunners of African religions and philosophies have it that African philosophy which is all encompassing is inbuilt in African communalism through which indigenous Africans expressed communal feelings, world views, moral and cultural values based on closed-knit relationship among their kith and kin within a socio-cultural setting (Etta 2016:302). An African cannot think of human beings without thinking of them in community with one another. As such, any African who is outside of this community will be a non-human. One of the most prominent words that capture the importance of community in Africa is "Ubuntu,"¹²⁶ which designates human beings as individuals-in-community. Ubuntu is a global anthropological truth, in that humans are recognized as social creatures; to be human is to be with others (Tarus & Lowery 2017:306). As one of the fathers of African theology, Mbiti (1990:106) argues that although Africans value individual identity, the corporate (communal) identity surpasses the individual identity. He captures this communal orientation with the now famous dictum, "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." For Mbiti, community¹²⁷ manifests itself with reference to

¹²⁵ Etta (2016:302) defines communalism in African setting as a system which promotes unity, togetherness, brotherliness and cooperation which are vital elements that propel the wheel of globalization.

¹²⁶ The term Ubuntu is a Bantu, or more specifically, Nguni noun describing the essence of being human.

¹²⁷ Community has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical aspect is the people's relationship with their Supreme Being and the spirit world. The horizontal dimensions include relationship between individuals and social groups, that is, clans, individual families, the departed, and the unborn. Death does not destroy community but animates it. One is related to the visible community as well as maintaining relationships with the invisible world (Tarus & Lowery 2017:312).

blood and marital kinship, land, tribal affiliation, clan roots, ritual celebrations, rites of passage and death, and shared oppression and suffering (see Tarus & Lowery 2017:312). There are features of communal orientation in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. There is a probability that the workers who were not satisfied with the behaviour of the owner might have agreed for one person to launch a complain (even though this is not clearly shown in the parable). This is so because none of the workers objected to the complaint that those who worked only for one hour have been made equal to them.

One of such closed-knit relationships is common initiative groups¹²⁸ where African women of particular areas with common goals come together to do group farming as a sort of women empowerment. Membership of the group is strictly determined by the criteria that define the group and afford members rights and loyalty (Etta 2016:304). He argues further that it is essentially a voluntary pooling together of independent and differing efforts and capabilities that makes the group life what it is. Considering that 75% of the Sub Saharan African (SSA) population, including Cameroon, is involved directly or indirectly in farming and related employment, Mayo (2016:1) re-echoed that the strategic role of family (or group) farms in such a transformation is increasingly being recognized by key actors (FAO 2013; 2014). The farms are largely managed by the group who rely mainly on the labour of group members, using their production for both self-consumption and for sale.

Prior to the formation of common initiative groups for farming, most African families already have family farms which are small-scale farms that mainly depend on family labour and produce a significant share of their own food. The first century Mediterranean families depended much on farming on family land for their own food. Naboth told King Ahab that the Lord forbids that he should give out his family land (1 Ki 21:3). Small-scale family farmers have generally been perceived pejoratively and labelled by many experts and scholars as “traditional,” “backward,” or “subsistence farmers,” inferior to the technologically progressive, profit-oriented large scale commercial farms (LSCFs) that are linked to financial inputs and commodity markets (Mayo 2016:2). Family farming is done within a context of popular struggle against land seizure and subordination of their labour to

¹²⁸ Mayo (2016:1) has noted that such collective farming has provoked greater urgency among governments, civil society actors and development agencies to identify public policies that can accelerate agricultural transformation towards achieving food security and nutrition, as well as sustainable and inclusive rural development.

LSCFs. Group and family farms are multi-functional production and consumption units, which meet a range of their consumption and income needs. They are mostly involved in mixed cropping and notably, a large population of those who are involved in group or family farming resides in the countryside (Mayo 2016:3); a situation which is analogous to the Mediterranean community of the first century where peasant farmers lived in a rural setting.

Agriculture cooperatives have been found to play a crucial role in enhancing productivity of smallholding farmers. Being voluntary, democratic and self-controlled business associations, co-operatives offer the institutional framework through which local communities gain control over productive activities from which they derive their livelihoods (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2012, July, p. 2). Such common initiative co-operatives contribute to do food production and distribution, and in supporting long term food security. They offer prospects that individual farmers would not be able to achieve such as helping them to secure land rights and better market opportunities. Smallholder farmers can gain big benefits from agricultural co-operatives including bargaining power and resource sharing that lead to food security and poverty reduction for the peasant masses. Furthermore, common initiative groups help them collectively negotiate better prices for seeds, fertilizer, transport and storage. Consequently, farmers expand market access and capture more of the value chain by getting involved in agro-processing activities.

5.2.2 Ethnicity

Kinship was a very common characteristic in the first-century Mediterranean world where there was considerable hanging on to family members, and most of those who manage their farm estates were family members (cf. the parable of the Prodigal in Lk 15:11-32). It is the elder son in Luke 15:11-32 who manages the father's business. Ethnicity is a social group or category of the population ... set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, culture, or nationality (Sanou 2015:94). He also indicates that ethnicity is a boundary marker that separates one group of people from another. The term "ethnicity" and ethnic group in Africa has frequently absorbed, overlap or replace other concepts such as "race" or "tribe" which have become problematic (Lentz 1995:304).

In sociology, the term "social identity" is used and refers to the part of a person's identity shaped by membership in a group. Membership gives an individual a sense of belonging as

well as conferring norms of group behaviour and values, which the individual will share and conform to, at least to some extent, to be accepted as part of the group (Tarus & Lowery 2017:306). In Christian theology, ethnic diversity is part of the beautiful creation of God. The fall greatly distorted this unique diversity but did not eradicate it (Tarus & Lowery 2017:306). God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (Gen 15:5; 22:17–18) and reminded the Jews to treat the aliens as citizens (Lev 19:34), to love the stranger (Dt 10:18–19), and to be hospitable to the needy stranger (Lev 19:9–10; 23:22). Furthermore, the Jews were explicitly prohibited from oppressing the alien (Ex 23:9; Dt 24:14) or denying them justice (Dt 24:17–18). The prophets too emphasized justice, mercy, and compassion to the alien (e.g., Jr 7:6). Tarus and Lowery (2017:306) also refers to the negative nature of ethnicity, known as “ethnocentrism,” “tribalism,” or “negative ethnicity.” Negative ethnicity erroneously believes that one’s ethnic group is better than the other. More precisely, “tribalism is the attitude and practice of harbouring such a strong feeling of loyalty or bonds to one’s tribe that one excludes or even demonizes those ‘others’ who do not belong to their group” (Tarus & Lowery 2017:306).

Cameroon has a multiplicity of ethnic groups that were already in existence before the period of colonization. As a boundary marker, ethnic groups in Cameroon have experienced a lot of antagonism. Antoine (2016:17) has argued that Cameroon’s transition from a one-party to a multi-party system beginning in the 1990s was merely one ingredient that fertilized existing ethnic antagonisms that were previously dormant or more or less veiled. Ethnicity is seen as a basis for categorization where in-group members (the ruling ethnic group) are engage in corruption by employing more workers in the civil service from their ethnic group not necessarily based on merit, but on ethnic affiliation, as is the case in Cameroon. The present senseless war in Cameroon between the government and the English regions has an ethnic undertone and can be traced back to 1961.

The political elites of two territories with different colonial legacies one, French and the other British agreed on the formation of a federal state. Contrary to expectations, this did not provide for the equal partnership of both parties, let alone for the preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of each, but turned out to be merely a transitory phase to the total integration of the Anglophone regions into a strongly centralised unitary state. Gradually, this created an Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being “marginalised” “exploited” and “assimilated” by the Francophone-dominated state, and even by the Francophone population as a whole.

The persistent use of repressive measures and refusal by the government in power to discuss any related constitutional reforms has forced some patriotic Anglophones to adopt a secessionist stand. Where there is lack of democracy, ethnic diversity complicates governance because ethnic groups competes with each other for political leadership and the distribution of national wealth (Nduku & Tenamwenye 2014:174). In a representative democracy, where the rights of minority groups are upheld, ethnic diversity may lead to a political structure that is more representative (Aghion, in Nduku & Tenamwenye 2014:175). This has failed to take root in contemporary Cameroon. When ethnicity has degenerated into war, the economy of the country is also ruined.

5.2.3 Exploitation of workers

Exploitation in Africa is masterminded by human trafficking for forced labour. This has been a painful reality for African societies for decades where men, women and children are exploited in domestic services, the farming sector, fisheries, and construction sites, among others. Forced labour in Africa is inevitably a result of poverty and traditional forms of servitude such as employing children as domestic servants (Caritas 2016:1). Contemporary victims of forced labour in Africa are mostly exploited in the private economy and often within the informal sector. The most commonly reported types of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation are those members of African societies who are trafficked outside the continent to the Middle East, Europe, Asia and other destinations or within Africa itself where men and women are exploited in the domestic sector, agriculture and various industries there (Caritas 2016:2). Sometimes there is consensus of exploitation by the relevant authorities who prefer to tolerate trafficking of foreigners rather than take action against the traffickers (who are typically their own citizens). Africa has swallowed a lot of domestic exploitation as men and women as well as children are often recruited to be domestic servants, such as cooks, cleaners, gardeners and nannies and their pay package is never commensurate to the work that they do because working hours have no limit. In addition to their predicaments, some of them are often sexually abused (Caritas 2016:2). According to International Labour Organisation's (ILO) regional conference held in Lusaka on 19th and 20th November 2013, forced labour is not defined by the nature of the work being performed (which can be either legal or illegal under national law), but rather by the nature of the

relationship between the person performing the work and the person exacting it. The case of African forced labour has always been the large availability of workers who are poor and vulnerable enough to be easily exploited because they are desperate for work (ILO 2013:12).

Sexual exploitation of African women and girls has become alarming, and is a cause for concern. Contemporary research pertains to the ways in which African women are tricked or coerced into becoming sex workers outside of the African continent. Women will migrate legally to become maids in Middle Eastern households, only to find their passports confiscated and their work very different from that which they expected (ILO 2013:19). The report also indicates that other cases of sex trafficking are said to exist where migrant women know in advance about the kinds of work that they will be doing, but find that work compelled under a contract that resembles debt bondage. When they arrive their destination, they are told that they owe the people who have organised their travel a debt.¹²⁹ They find their freedom of movement constrained until the debt has been repaid. They face threats of supernatural retaliation if they fail to follow orders or to repay their alleged debt, and they may experience threats to both themselves and their family's physical safety if they fail to comply (ILO 2013:20).

Another group that is highly exploited in Africa are domestic workers. Domestic workers in Africa as well as around the world are not protected under general labour laws and are highly vulnerable to exploitation. They are frequently expected to work longer hours and have no right to weekly rest as enjoyed by other workers (Rani & Saluja 2017:18). Furthermore, they have lower wages, fewer benefits, and less legal or social protections. Even though they may work in the protected sphere of a private home, there is growing evidence that domestic workers are exposed to a wide range of unhealthy and hazardous working conditions¹³⁰ (Rani & Saluja 2017:18). Female domestic workers, especially those who live in their employer's home, are susceptible to sexual abuse (Du Toit 2013:97).

What makes domestic workers more vulnerable is that their work usually takes place away from the eyes either of labour inspectors or at times even neighbours, meaning that they are

¹²⁹ The ILO (2013:20) report has specifically cited some Nigerian women who arrive in Italy only to be told that they owe the people who have organized their travel a debt of € 50,000-60,000.

¹³⁰ Most domestic workers are female and exposed to what has been termed 'triple exploitation,' that is, discrimination based on gender as well as class, exasperated by their generally weak position in the labour market, and, in many cases, nationality or race (Rani & Saluja 2017:19).

isolated from potential sources of protection. Given that they are often located far from their personal or familial networks, and in places and amidst people whose languages may be unfamiliar, their isolation is further compounded. Domestic workers are often relatively poor and uneducated, meaning that they have few livelihood options beyond the abusive domestic service that they find themselves in.¹³¹ Immigration status is often linked to remaining in their current employment, which forces them either to accept abuse or face deportation (ILO 2013:20). Exploitation of domestic workers thus seems inevitable. Exploitation makes workers to grumble and there is no job satisfaction. Grumbling is an unjustified characteristic which is found in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard.

5.2.4 Land/boundary disputes

Land dispute is a very critical problem in Africa. For a largely agrarian economy like Africa, land is a very vital commodity. In typical African tradition, lineages, not individuals own land. The rights to use land are allocated by the senior¹³² living male of the lineage or the lineage head (Martin & O'Meara 1986:206). Since land is not meant to be owned privately but rather communally, what people own is its produce. This means that the more labour that a person has, the more land could be worked and the higher the returns (Martin & O'Meara 1986:206). Traditional agrarian systems of subsistence production based on family labour and abundant land for all who seek to work it is being challenged by the commercialization of agriculture and the increasing role of government policies in economic development and population growth. Communal land ownership is fast being replaced by government policy of legal support of the state for land consolidation and registration. Most of those who benefit from this policy are the urban political-administrative elites who have access to government services and subsidies (Martin & O'Meara 1986:337).

Since land remains the most vital means of production in the vast majority peasant households, government policies on land have resulted into land grabbing or the claiming of ownership of common property by domestic elites¹³³ without the permission or consent of the

¹³¹ Some of the domestic abuses may include complaints of mistreatment such as salary not raised after probation, delayed payment of salary, lack of rest, finishing work late, no overtime allowance for working on public holidays, inadequate food or being fed on left-overs, and not being allowed to use household toilet facilities (ILO 2013:21).

¹³² Seniority is a matter of kinship position and not relative age.

¹³³ Domestic or local elite concerns two categories of superior social groups called traditional and modern elites. Traditional elite is an ascribed-high status in the indigenous social hierarchy used to describe notables and

rightful owners (Simo 2011:2). He advanced further that land grabbing has become a veritable threat to the rural economies in the North West Region (NWR) of Cameroon that are increasingly driven by a sort of agrarian capitalism. The phenomenon can be viewed as a new form of material accumulation characterized by self-centeredness and prestige by a minority of privilege citizens or superior social groups. The concept of land grabbing implies some sorts of structural strains which allow local elites to adopt “troublemaking” standards or strategies related to traditional and modern land laws to gain material wealth (Simo 2011:3). This is a similar strategy that was used by the first century Mediterranean elites who made trouble with the peasant farmers who still had land and finally their land was foreclosed and taken over by the elite as compensation (Van Eck 2009:5). State corporations like the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), which is the biggest state-funded agro-industrial complex in Cameroon, has been acquiring huge arable and accessible lands in the hinterlands of the South West and Littoral regions (Simo 2011:3). The phenomenon of land grabbing violates the characteristics of governance at all levels of human life: accountability, predictability, adherence to the rule of law, and human rights. On the other hand, it promotes inter-chiefdom or fondom clashes,¹³⁴ and political sycophancy (flattery). In turn, these land grabbing forces impede development and impair peace, social justice, societal building. Land grabbing impoverishes peasant women and men who constitute the vast majority of inhabitants in the society. Any legitimate traditional ruler (*Fons* as they are called in the North West region of Cameroon) is the custodian of all lands under his jurisdiction. Despite the privileges and prestige inherent in the high social and religious ascribed status of *fons*, the introduction of private property rights through direct buying and selling of the land and the increasing poverty syndrome that affects virtually every *fon* today, makes many of them to abuse their status that is culturally defined rights and duties assigned to their role (Simo 2011:5). Illegitimate occupation of land normally always leads to land disputes.

At the international level, the border dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon on the Bakassi Peninsula is traced to the colonial legacy of arbitrary boundary demarcation by erstwhile or former colonial powers, namely; Britain, Germany and France (Ngara & Tsokwa 2018:61). The two states became entangled in protracted border skirmishes over ownership and

powerful hereditary *Fons*. They also include some retired upper rank administrators, politicians, the military oligarchy, the judiciary, and the intelligentsia (Simo 2011:3).

¹³⁴ Some fondom clashes in the North West Region of Cameroon include the Mbese-Oku ethnic violence caused by land boundary dispute from 14 to 15 February 2007, and the June 1995 ethnic conflict between Bafanji and Balikumbat (Simo 2011:12; Sevidzem 2015:46).

jurisdiction of the Bakassi Peninsula. The discovery of large oil deposit in the Bakassi Peninsula, along with the prospect of large gas reserves in the area reinforced the interests of both countries in the swampy peninsula. As tension heightened between the two countries along the Bakassi borders, the Cameroonian government instituted a legal proceeding against Nigeria at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1994 for violently contesting sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula. After 8 years of hearings before the court of law at the Hague, the ICJ on the 10th October 2002 gave its verdict on the border dispute, ceding Bakassi Peninsula to the Republic of Cameroon (Ngara & Tsokwa 2018:62). This struggle to take ownership of the disputed land took the form of challenge-riposte and only a mediator like the International court of Justice could settle the dispute. In the process of border disputes some lives are lost and this often leads to open war between the disputing countries. The resulting consequence is a disruption in the economic life of vulnerable poor peasants.

Africa has also experienced maritime boundary dispute because of the potentially valuable natural resources located in the disputed maritime area, which could provide much needed sources of wealth to the disputing party that eventually succeeds in establishing a legal claim to such a territory. A case in point is the maritime boundary delimitation between Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire which was caused by the large amount of hydrocarbons that had been discovered in the disputed areas. In 2007 the Jubilee field was discovered by Ghana and subsequently, in 2009, it discovered ten oil fields about 3 nautical miles east of Jubilee oil field, both being developed on behalf of Ghana by Tullow Oil Company and its joint venture partners (Egede & Apaalse 2019:59). The result was a maritime conflict between Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire which was judged by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and settled peacefully. This was a contribution to the international legislation on maritime boundary delimitations emerging from the African region.¹³⁵ When disputes are resolved peacefully, social justice is enhanced.

5.2.5 Disease and ignorance

The impact of the African environment is particularly seen in terms of health. Tropical Africa has a lot of health-related problems, which are aggravated by lack of research, insufficient

¹³⁵ For Egede and Apaalse (2019:59) this decision is important because, first, it is the first maritime boundary delimitation case coming up before the ITLOS that involves two African States. Second, it is the second maritime boundary delimitation case decided by the ITLOS since its establishment in 1996. Third, it is the second case to be decided by a Special Chamber established by the ITLOS at the request of parties and the first of such Special Chambers to deal with maritime boundary delimitation

health facilities and inadequate resources to control or eradicate certain endemic diseases (Martin & O'Meara 1986:33). Furthermore, large areas of the African continent and Cameroon in particular are still affected by malaria which is caused by the anopheles mosquitoes¹³⁶ despite current levels of medical technology and research. Malaria causes a great waste in human lives. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the outbreak of a novel coronavirus (designated as covid-19) constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and cold-like illnesses. This new virus first appeared in Wuhan in the Chinese province of Hubei (Smith 2020:1). Given its fragile public health systems and close ties to China, Africa is vulnerable to the spread of the coronavirus. This respiratory virus has swiftly spread to Africa through travel and person-to-person transmission. Presently More than 1,800 cases have been reported in 44 African countries including Cameroon (Smith 2020:1). People have been subjected to quarantine in their homes. The government of Cameroon on Friday, March 6 confirmed the first case of the Coronavirus in the country. According to a release signed by the Minister of Public Health Dr Malachie Manaouda, a 58-year old French man who arrive Cameroon on February 24 had tested positive of the virus (Journal du Cameroun 06/03/2020). More cases have been tested positive causing a scare. The country is in an imminent lockdown.

Poor sanitation among many African communities spreads numerous bacterial, viral and parasitic infections. Sawyer and Stillwaggon (2010:198) argue that lack of protein, fats, calories and most of the 40-plus micronutrients necessary for human health affect or modulate the immune system in some way and thus affect a person's vulnerability to an infectious disease. Malnutrition undermines the immune system and makes people more susceptible to HIV infection. The frequency of civil wars and armed conflict in Africa has created a large number of refugees and a large transient population (Mambo 2017:13). This movement has seen an increased percentage of individuals infected with the HIV virus contributing to its spread. Refugees who are mostly fleeing war are left impoverished and unable to sustain themselves and have no immediate access to health facilities or treatment. This is the case with refugees fleeing from war in the English speaking regions in Cameroon. With poor nutrition they become susceptible to opportunistic diseases. Soldiers have been

¹³⁶ The tsetse fly is another health hazard which impairs the health of humans through trypanosomiasis, commonly called sleeping sickness on account of the dramatic symptoms which precede death (Martin & O'Meara 1986:33).

found to be among the highest carriers of the HIV virus due to absence from their wives and normal partners at home, coupled with a position which grants them power over other sectors of society, especially women and children (Mambo 2017:13). Raping of women and young girls is common among military personnel during armed conflicts that have occurred in several Sub-Saharan African countries leading to the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

Martin and O'Meara (1986:37) are of the opinion that problems of health and development in African communities are also political. How much of the national budget does each African country spend on health care? Many African leaders spend huge sums every year in acquiring arms which in many cases are meant to fight their own very citizens, destroying their own villages and towns with heavy ammunition and causing their citizens to flee as refugees to neighbouring countries. From 2016, when the government forces in Cameroon responded by opening fire on armless Anglophones who were protesting marginalization by the French dominated rule, the citizens of English Cameroon have lost many homes and property. Many of them have been living in the bushes because of fear of repression and lack of accommodation. The armed response of the Anglophone militias (commonly called "amba" boys) on self-defence fighting government forces has made life and disease unbearable in English Cameroon. The few available health facilities have been burnt down and in some cases patients are burnt with the buildings.

Although the nature of the African climate presents severe challenges to good health, Martin and O'Meara (1986:37) have noted that many of the problems are exacerbated by inappropriate human action caused by inadequate education. The use of contaminated water and poor sanitation, emphasis on curative rather than preventive medicine, and a distinct urban bias in the distribution of health facilities have characterized the policies of African government. Even where health facilities have been given, there are no adequate structures and health personnel. There is a high level of social injustices in handling health related issues in Africa.

In the area of education to create awareness, the proportion of young people as a percentage of the overall population has risen tremendously. Der Veen (2004:255) feels that there is generally poor quality of all types of education in Africa and that is why many Africans are still moving out to foreign countries in the West and America for quality education. The

fighting in many African countries that in most cases is triggered by the fact that aging leaders have remain in power and does not want to give a chance to other leaders have distorted schools in many urban and rural areas. In some cases like the present situation in Anglophone Cameroon, schools have been short down for three years and the government in place is seemingly not making any efforts to resolve the crisis. Children education has largely been frustrated at all levels. While children in French Cameroon are attending school, those in English Cameroon are at home and some have been displaced and some killed because of the ravages of war. In such situations, social justice is greatly abated. Many African politicians have no adequate grasp of politics or sufficient political awareness to provide a sound basis for broadening or diversifying African politics (Der Veen 2004:255). For this reason, mishandlings of political situations often lead to fighting.

5.2.6 Youth unemployment

African youths have the aspirations to become active citizens and to contribute to their countries' development. They have been calling for more rights, more opportunities and for their voices to be heard because the transition into adulthood is to have the right skills and opportunities to access decent work (ILO 2012:2). The report on the Eleven National Events on Youth Employment in the African region that took place in June 2012 in Geneva states that even those youths who do have a job, they are typically underemployed, in part-time or temporary work, and in the informal sector in poor working conditions. This global youth unemployment crisis imposes a heavy cost, both in terms of depletion of human and social capital and loss of opportunities for economic growth for present and future generations (ILO 2012:2). The report further indicates that African countries face the challenge of very high youth populations compared to all other age cohorts and weak capacity and economic growth to create the jobs needed to absorb these youth. There is no enabling environment as well to encourage youths.¹³⁷ In Africa, there is a mismatch between higher education, vocational and professional training and skills development and what the job market actually needs. Schools and universities are providing mass education rather than quality service (ILO 2012:7) and young people are acquiring knowledge where their services are not needed in their communities. On the other hand, African youth are not properly prepared to compete for the

¹³⁷ The ongoing corruption in many African countries, and the lack of good governance and transparency in government structures are said to be encouraging unfair recruitment practices that discourage youth. In DRC and Tunisia, problems of clientism, political nepotism, and tribalism were reported (ILO 2012:5). In like-manner young people in Zimbabwe are losing interest in being educated because wages and salaries are low and unattractive.

limited quantity of jobs available due to under-funded educational, technical and professional systems that fail to respond to labour market needs (ILO 2012:3). Another issue that deprive youths from becoming entrepreneurs and to create jobs for themselves is the complicated and expensive licensing requirements and taxes, inadequate access to business advice.

In Cameroon, the unemployment rate is 30% while that of underemployment stands at 75% (ILO 2013). It is worth noting that Cameroon has a population of over 20 million inhabitants and most of the people belong to the middle class. Interestingly, the working population of Cameroon is about 12 million and only a little over 200,000 people work in the public service. With government being the highest employer, this implies that the other 11.8 million people who are not government employed are a call for concern. Unemployment has become a huge problem, not just in the rural areas, but also in the cities. The huge number of youths entering the labour market in present Africa are forced to make a living for themselves in the informal sector which they are doing with very unpredictable degree of success (Der Veen 2004:256). The situation of unemployment has forced young adults to carry on living with their parents as a matter of economic necessity since without work; they cannot afford a home of their own. As a consequence, young people are sceptical to start a family without income, and without a family, they cannot get access into the adult world. Young adults with no children have no status in their communities from an African perspective (Der Veen 2004:256). The inability for one to become a full member of his community may have serious consequences: Being disappointed and frustrated, some young people turn to drugs or join gangs. Some try to escape their marginal status by pursuing a career in crime or as an armed fighter (the case of “amba” boys in Cameroon). In such conditions, the young people are easy prey for criminals and warlords where it is almost impossible for young men and women to avoid being caught up in fighting in areas worst hit by armed conflicts (Der Veen 2004:256). With the unemployment situation in Africa and particularly Cameroon, many who are leaving school are forced to do menial jobs or just anything that can give them daily bread since they cannot compete in the labour market.

5.2.7 Time management

Time in African traditional life is simply a composition of events which have occurred; those which are taking place now and those which are inevitably or immediately to occur (Mbiti 1990:16, Kanu 2015:129). What is certain to occur, or what falls within the rhythm of natural

phenomena, is in the category of inevitable or potential time. Actual time is therefore what is present and what is past. Time in the African sense evolves. Time moves backward rather than forward and people set their minds not on future things, but mainly on what has taken place (Mbiti 1990:17; Marava 2015:87; Kanu 2015:129). Thus the African understands time as consisting of a long past and a present with virtually no future.¹³⁸ This contrasts with the Western concept of time which is linear, consisting of an indefinite past, the present and infinite future. For the African, the future is absent since it has not been realized (Kanu 2015:129). Furthermore, time is wrapped around activities and events, therefore Africans reckon time from a concrete and specific purpose and not just for the sake of mathematics or in a vacuum. Numerical calendars stretching into the future and in a vacuum are not African, hence what exists for the African are phenomenon calendars in which events which constitute time are reckoned (Kanu 2015:129). For instance, if one is to go to the farm in the morning, it does not matter whether morning is at 6:00 am or 8:00 am, what is important is that he has gone to the farm in the morning because the event of going to the farm has been accomplished.

From an African perspective, if the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard were told in an African setting, it will not be strange for jobs seekers as labourers to be waiting to be employed at 5:00 pm in the evening. What the African would have wanted is the event of being employed and so far as he finally gets the employment, the time does not matter. He will put in his best and make maximum use of the remaining time to work before it is sunset. The work is more important for him than the mathematical time when he started working. In this regard, Kanu (2015:129) cites Mbiti who says that in Africa, man is not a slave to time but makes as much time as he wants. Time draws meaning from the event happening and not the event from the time (Babalola & Alokun 2013:144). In Africa, human beings control and manipulate time. When Westerners, especially from Europe and America, see people sitting down somewhere without, evidently doing anything, they often think that Africans waste their time by just sitting down idle. It is easy to jump to such judgements based on ignorance of what time means to African peoples. Those who are seen sitting down are actually not wasting time, but rather waiting for time or in the process of producing time (Kanu 2015:130). An African will not interpret the action of those who were standing at the *agora*

¹³⁸ This is because the events in the future have not taken place and because there is no adequate verb tenses in African languages to demonstrate references to the future (Babalola & Alokun 2013:144).

for the whole day in the vineyard parable as idling,¹³⁹ because in terms of an African mindset they are looking forward to an event and not the time. Therefore, time makes meaning when it is related to an event.

5.2.8 Work ethics in traditional Africa

Work is held in high esteem in most traditional African societies. Hard work is a virtue and laziness is never encouraged. Ajibade (n.d:2) opines that an African is a very religious person and so it is difficult to divorce any aspect of life from his religion. Since most peasant Africans are farmers and fishermen,¹⁴⁰ work is seen as a religious aspect. Some Africans are known to possess large families because of polygamous marriages and this is done for several reasons:

First, bearing of many children allows for adequate hands in farm and other work. So it is a way of making the family to prosper. Second, it ensures that status and property are passed on from one generation to another and the family becomes extended in space and time. Third, it is a means of providing status and support for women especially in societies where marriage and child bearing is the basic vocation for women. So the more the wives and children the better the man serves directly or indirectly as an employer of labour.

(Ajibade n.d:3)

Africans therefore understand themselves on a fundamental level as being part of, and depended on a network of relationships. In this wise, it is the community that defines the rules and taboos guiding farming, fishing, hunting and other work-related activities for the members of her community and the principle is that the common good takes precedence over the individual good (Ajibade n.d:4). The desire to work in Africa is regulated by the fact that each traditional setting has days for rest when work is to be halted. Ajibade points to other work related values that take their root from African morality. For instance human decency, sense of right and wrong, upright behaviour towards other human beings, avoiding lies telling, kindness, honesty and justice. The sense of justice is expected to be taken along to work places as a work ethics. In traditional African work ethics, one is not waiting for

¹³⁹ When people sit down, doing nothing, they are waiting for time: the planting time, the harvesting time, the festival time and so on. Before that period, they sit down to discuss their personal matters and the affairs of the community because things are done in solidarity with one another.

¹⁴⁰ There were also other professions like medicine men, rain makers, kings and priests, drummers, potters, blacksmiths and other professions (Ajibade n.d:2).

someone to give him work to do. A child is actually born into his or her parent's vocation; he perfects the skills, grows up in it and probably passes it down to his/her posterity. There is also the practice of hiring labourers in very large farms, or in some cases group farming (jointly working in one person's farm and later on move to the next person). It is part of the African worldview to treat the environment in which he finds himself with respect; the African cooperates with nature and does not try to conquer it. There are, for example, taboos against farming neither on certain days nor to cultivate on certain areas of community land or even fish on certain streams (Idang 2015:108).

5.3 THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Traditional African economies are subsistence economies in which the main activity is the production of food for the household and also for exchange (Schneider 1986:180). Food is produced in many ways like keeping of animals (esp. cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens) and tilling of the land with a hoe to plant tropical crops such as palms for oil, maize, millet, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, sorghum, beans and bananas. Some of the subsistence produce is sold so as to acquire other basic necessities. An important feature of market economies is the exchange of goods between persons in a variety of ways. It can take the simple act of barter between two people to the use of money and recently to the use of sophisticated credit techniques such as credit cards (Schneider 1986:189).

Scholars are convinced that over the years the economic situation of Africa has not made much progress. Africa still seems to stand more clearly as a continent in which per capita food supply continues to decline,¹⁴¹ and in which dependence upon relief and food imports grows and becomes a regular and widespread feature of life (Baker 1997:64). Following this state of affairs the future prospects for serious and sustainable growth along existing lines over the coming years look gloomy. Ironically, in terms of natural resources, Africa has enough land for food self-sufficiency and even with the assumptions of low level of inputs, the combined potential productivity of all the 51 countries could feed nearly three times the people in need (Baker 1997:64).

Cameroon in West Africa would have been self-sufficient in food but the continuous population increase has equally increase the need for food. The poor road network has made

¹⁴¹ The average African in 1981 had 10% less food than he/she had in 1971 (Baker 1997:64).

it difficult and expensive to move agricultural products to urban markets. The agricultural policy of Cameroon is also critical because the country is plagued by the history of its colonial past (Delaney 1989:128). The policy destroys the traditional economy and encourages a colonial economy that serves European economic needs, but fails to create a coherent national economy for Cameroon. The economic situation has been aggravated in recent years by the deepening Anglophone crisis that the government neglected since 2016. For three years now the English speaking populations living in the Anglophone regions have experienced serious food shortages due to destruction of their homes and food reserves through the government's scourge earth policy. It will be no over statement to say that if this trend continuous then the anticipated promise by Cameroon's President, Paul Biya, to transform the country's economy from an undeveloped to a developed economy by 2035¹⁴² may only be a dream as population growth is more rapid than economic growth. Some key economic draw backs from an African context are now examined below.

5.3.1 Low wages of workers

McCoy (2008:675) describes wages as hygiene factors that motivate performance, morale, and the ability of employers to attract and retain staff. When pay is low in absolute terms, workers will moonlight to supplement their incomes by providing some services privately or engaging in other income-earning activities. African workers who live in the rural areas tend to supplement their poor wages by engaging non-financial income activities like farming locally grown food. Low wages cause dissatisfaction with the working conditions and this loss of motivation push workers to migrate towards higher earning jobs. With reference to the business dictionary, Sheikh Ali (*et al.* 2013:3) defined working condition as referring to the working environment and all existing circumstances affecting labour in the work place, including job hours, physical aspects, legal rights, responsibility, organizational climate and workload. Working conditions are very important to any organization. If the employees have a negative perception of their working conditions, they are likely to be absent, have stress-related illnesses, and their productivity and commitment tend to be low (Sheikh Ali *et al.* 2013:3).

¹⁴² Speaking during his traditional end of year speech on December 31, 2018, Paul Biya said his slogan of "emergence" refers to a mutation from an underdeveloped to a developed economy.

Another concern for low wage payment in Africa is Chinese firms. The growing presence of Chinese enterprises in Africa has attracted public attention to their employment practices (Veunyeh 2018:62). Veunyeh further indicates that critics, especially the Western and US social media, blame Chinese Foreign Investment Enterprises (FIEs) and Foreign Development Investment(FDI) for hiring a low percentage of local workers (because they import their work force and material from China); for not providing standard working contracts for the few local workers they hire; for paying low wages; having precarious working conditions; for providing little or no training to African workers;¹⁴³ and for not building permanent and long term enterprises that can develop Africa. These pull and push factors for capital flow has made working conditions of workers in Africa very precarious¹⁴⁴ (Veunyeh 2018:62). The situation is further compounded by the fact that workers continue to work with no social security (no pension and no health insurance), no rights to holidays, no protection against unjustified dismissals, without vocational training, with little or no health and safety working conditions. Unfortunately for the poor workers, they receive little or no support from their own governments and they tend to look for different means like strikes and grass field campaigns against their government and state leaders to fight for their working rights.

In Cameroon, most workers try to supplement their low wages by engaging in part time agriculture which is, and will remain the centre of the Cameroon's economy (Delancy 1989:124). Whether this situation of subsistence agriculture is measured by the percentage of the people employed in farming and livestock, or by the proportion of its contribution to the total gross domestic product, or by its significance as a source of export earnings, it remains a fact that agriculture plays a key role in Cameroon. Workers in the Mediterranean world of the first century lived in a situation of exploitation and low wages as well.

¹⁴³ It has been argued that Chinese are sceptical to train African workers because when they decide to train Africans to acquire skilled labour for long term projects, they discovered that most African workers left their companies after the training. African workers expect their wages to be increased after acquiring skills but Chinese managers consider training African workers as favour and not a working right (Veunyeh 2018:65).

¹⁴⁴ This is precarious in the sense that employment is uncertain, unpredictable and risky from the point of view of workers because workers and employers do not sign any official contracts or documents under the Labour Law Systems in African countries, because of language, behaviour and work attitude, lack of trust, short term development plan and lack of skills (Veunyeh 2018:62).

5.3.2 High rents imposed by land owners

The economies of most sub-Saharan African countries are based upon agriculture, but the agricultural sectors are not healthy. Gordon and Gordon (2007:135) indicate that the sector has recorded weak growth rates of agricultural production in general and of food production in particular. They have suggested a number of reasons why agricultural production is weak, some of which include rural urban migration which is an indication that the rural environment is not conducive enough. There is a low level of rural services such as access to water, electricity and deficient infrastructure such as farm to market roads and other marketing channel (Gordon & Gordon 2007:135; Manning 1998:112). Other reasons for this low production include high rents imposed by land owners on rented farm lands. Those who cannot afford to pay for the high rents simply abandon the agricultural sector and look for other means of living. Many African governments like Cameroon lack attention to the important role of African women in African agriculture, especially in food production for domestic consumption. Consequently they fail to adequately assist women farmers to acquire enough land so as to increase their production. High prices in renting farm land has resulted into many farmers working on the same piece of land year-in and year-out leading to over exhaustion of the land's fertility, which has in turn brought the need for improved farming techniques (Manning 1998:113). The increase in rural population means increase in the need for farm land to meet up with the food supply to feed the rural population. Sometimes government policy which favours cattle grazers and restricts the movement of farming families through tax policies and political boundaries have been a cause for farm land shortage (Manning 1998:113). Sevidzem (2015:47) quotes Bujra who believes that the scarcity of land is caused by a rise in the rural population, inequalities between rich and poor or landless farmers, between rich ranchers and poor cattle owners who have caused the search for more land. This search has led to a considerable competition for the scarce resources of land (cultivable and grazing). Amongst pastoral societies in particular, the system of grazing involves the movement of cattle herds from the highlands to the lowlands during the dry season in search of pasture. It is in those lowlands where farmers do their farming because of the fertility of the soil at the lowlands. This has created serious conflicts among farmers and grazers (Sevidzem 2015:47). With the growth of towns, shortages of domestic food appeared (because of limits on land productivity and the emphasis on producing export crops) so that urban Africans came to purchase steadily large quantities of imported food (Manning 1998:113). High prices on rented farm lands that Africa of the twenty-first century is going

through had been the main bargain of peasant farmers in the Mediterranean world of the first century (Rowlandson 1996:275).

5.3.3 Most of peasant land is being taken over by the rich

Many African governments see foreign land investments as a way to enhance agricultural productivity by bringing technological innovation and new infrastructure in principle creating jobs, public revenue, and economic development. But there is a crooked power relationship in land deals negotiated without the consent of affected populations (Ndi & Batterbury 2017:35). Furthermore, the assumption in most cases is that gains will trickle down to the local people through employment on plantations but this is always illusory. The greatest impacts are felt by forest-dependent households, pastoralists, and farmers who are dispossessed from semi-subsistence livelihoods and are usually bypassed. It has been observed that the large-scale acquisition of land by the rich companies, if not properly managed, can threaten the social and economic livelihoods of rural agrarian populations (Ndi & Batterbury 2017:35). In research carried out on Herakles Farms (Sithe Global Sustainable Oils Cameroon, SGSOC) agro-plantation project in Nguti Subdivision of the Southwest region in Cameroon, Ndi and Batterbury (2017:47) have shown how elites in the village of Talangaye played an active role in facilitating land grabbing from peasant villagers.¹⁴⁵ The villagers became dissatisfied with their elites whom they thought would have protected their interest. Worst of all, the crops of the villagers were destroyed by the oil company without any form of compensation.

National law provides some security of occupancy for unregistered house plots and farms, but only to the extent that (limited) compensation is payable for loss of permanent crops or infrastructure when the government requires the land for other purposes (Wily 2011:11). This compensation needs to be done because Cameroonian law fails to acknowledge customary land-holding as amounting to real property interests.

Another concern about rich companies is that they do not have the courtesy to recognise and respect cultural sites¹⁴⁶ like shrines, graveyards, and sacred groves that are of sociocultural

¹⁴⁵ This is because land registration in Cameroon is a remote, complex and expensive process.

¹⁴⁶ In most rural areas of Cameroon land has an enormous cultural significance. For instance, land is perceived as the resting place for ancestors. For this reason, land on which an ancestor is buried is highly valued by the family lineage. Due to this, in some rural areas, though land has emerged to have a commercial value, there are

and symbolic importance.¹⁴⁷ Peasant communities considered this intrusion into private spaces as taboo, disturbing their relations with their ancestors (Ndi & Batterbury 2017:47). In a paper presented at the 2017 World Bank Conference on “Land and Poverty” in Washington, Lucain (2017:4) shows that rural areas in Cameroon have witnessed a rising threat to local people’s land tenure security which had a direct impact on socio-economic development. This could be explained by the fact that 80% of households in rural areas do not own land titles, and can lose their land partially because of the costly process of land registration and/or corruption practices faced during the purchasing and registration process of their land. Moreover, despite the fact that rural women account for close to 60% of the food production, and have agriculture as their only means of income, there is still evidence of gender inequality in regard to land ownership. Consequently, poverty in the rural areas has been commonly catalysed by the difficulty or failure to secure land in these areas (Lucain 2017:4). Poverty has become like a crime because the poor are those least well equipped to defend their interests. This situation has reduced customary land owners to being “squatters on their own lands” (Wily 2011:11). Unfortunately, in matters of land disputes, the powerful always emerge victorious over the weak who are usually the rural poor. Mediterranean peasants suffered a similar fate of defeat in matters of land disputes of their time.

5.3.4 Lack of chemical fertilizer leading to poor yields

In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), traditional farming methods have led to severe nutrient depletion,¹⁴⁸ low crop yields, and poverty, leaving many farming families disappointed. The situation is aggravated by low use of fertilizers by farmers, lack of policy and institutional support, weak fertilizer markets, farmers’ lack of access to credit and inputs, inappropriate fertilizer packaging sizes, deteriorating soil science capacity, and weak agricultural extension (Chianu *et al.* 2012:545). Population increases and land scarcity indicate that food needs in SSA cannot be met through the low-input systems that are based largely on traditional practices; instead, much more will be required from farmers in terms of labour (Mwangi 1996:1). Wallace and Knausenberger (1997:8) are of the opinion that Africa needs to increase

still specific areas with cultural attributes which normally cannot be sold or given out for commercial projects (Lucain 2017:4).

¹⁴⁷ An elder in the village is said to have declared that the tampering of the graves of ancestors, especially by “outsiders” or “foreigners” is an act of violence against the village (Ndi & Batterbury 2017:47).

¹⁴⁸ This is because of the poor natural endowments of African soils aggravated by poor management and sometimes damaging soil practices (Druilhe & Barreiro-Hurlé 2012:1).

its food production, and to accomplish this, the use of chemical fertilizer must increase¹⁴⁹ because organic sources of soil nutrients are not sufficient. The reasons that tend to scare African farmers from using fertilizer are twofold: First, yields and output prices can vary widely on a year-to-year basis, so farmers fear that in any given year their crop income will not be high enough to cover their fertilizer costs. Second, yields vary widely with the climate; rainfall is highly uncertain in SSA; in dry years the crop response to fertilizer can be practically non-existent (Wallace & Knausenberger 1997:8). Furthermore, it is unfortunate that African governments have not invested much in transport infrastructure like roads which would have made the use of fertilizer profitable for many farmers. As a result, transport systems in Africa are often poor or non-existent.

Inputs in Africa cannot move to the farmers, and farmers cannot get their outputs to consumers. Much of the fertilizer supply in many African countries is through donor arrangements, and changes in donor policies and procedures can have dramatic effects on fertilizer use. Some of the reasons for the non-use of fertilizer as identified by Wallace and Knausenberger (1997:10-11) and Mwangi (1996:8) are the high cost of fertilizer, unavailability¹⁵⁰ of fertilizer, limited knowledge about the benefits of fertilizer, and limited information on how to use fertilizer. It may be true as some people have said that Africa already produces more fertilizer than it uses but the cost of acquiring the much needed fertilizer particularly for peasant farmers is still a daunting problem.

Farmers' dependent on chemical fertilizers to boost productivity in Cameroon has become a major concern recently, especially in semi-urban areas where the demand for staple food is on the rise. Over 80% of the nation's food crops are produced by small scale farmers who form the majority of the farming population in Cameroon (Tayoh *et al.* 2016:287). Following a research carried out in Buea-Cameroon concerning local perceptions on chemical fertilizer application, Tayoh (*et al.* 2016:291) discovered that most local farmers discouraged the use

¹⁴⁹ Most SSA countries depend on fertilizer imports, but because of the debt crisis and foreign exchange shortages, a large proportion of fertilizer imports are donor financed which are highly very unpredictable.

¹⁵⁰ Mwangi (1996:8) notes that in most cases farmers' limited access to the right kind of fertilizer at the right time is probably just as important a constraint as prices. Some of the reasons for this high price result from: First, SSA's dependence on fertilizer imports. Second, the small volume of fertilizer that most African countries import; small volumes increase transportation costs and weaken the nations' position in negotiating for lower prices. Third, about one-third of all fertilizer imports in SSA are financed by aid and donors impose conditions (such as limitations on origin, transporters, and fertilizer type) that can lead to excessive marketing costs and margins which ultimately translate into high fertilizer prices. Fourth, the high cost of distribution is also a constraint (Mwangi 1996:11).

of chemical fertilizers on food crops such as vegetables and tubers like yams. They opined that the use of chemical fertilizers on food crops will change the taste of crops and affect the seeds of yam tubers, causing them to decay. Some retailers of agro chemicals disliked the use of chemical fertilizers because of poor and untimely application by farmers which leads to different health problems. Despite the few resistance to the use of chemical fertilizers, many Buea farmers in their research confirmed that chemical fertilizers do increase crop yields. Generally in Cameroon, chemical fertilizer is mostly employed in the farming of export cash crops like cocoa, coffee, banana, rubber and maize. Finally the acquisition and use of chemical fertilizers in Cameroon is still very low and this accounts for the insufficient food production.

5.3.5 Lack of mechanized farming methods

Agricultural mechanization is the application of appropriate tools, implements and machines in farm work by smallholder farmers in Africa with the aim of transforming the livelihoods of rural families by facilitating increased output of higher value products while eliminating the tedious work associated with human muscle-powered¹⁵¹ (human or animal) agricultural production (Sims *et al.* 2016:1). They maintained that agricultural mechanization in its broadest sense can contribute significantly to the development of food systems, as it has the potential to render post-harvest processing and marketing activities and functions more efficient, effective and environmentally friendly. Moreover mechanization, in fact, enables agrarian family members not only to increase farm productivity via production intensification and/or expansion, but also to seek off-farm employment opportunities as a result of the increased time made available to look for and be engaged in such employments (Sims *et al.* 2016:2).

In Africa, mechanization, intensification,¹⁵² and adoption of other modern technologies have all remained at low levels across most of the continent. Africa still depends a lot on humans as the main power source for agricultural production. Much adoption of agricultural

¹⁵¹ The main reason by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to change the power source for crop production from human or animal labour to tractors is because machines have the capacity to expand the area under cultivation, to perform operations at the right time to maximize production potential, to compensate for seasonal labour shortages, to reduce human labour such as hoeing for primary tilling especially in tropical areas where high temperatures and humidity make manual work extremely arduous (Sims *et al.* 2016:1).

¹⁵² Agricultural intensification is defined as the increased application of labour and other inputs per unit of land (intensified use of inputs) and more frequent cropping of land through reducing fallow periods that is the intensified use of land (Diao *et al.* 2016:7).

mechanization through engine-powered machinery and animal traction has been limited to a few areas in SSA, much of which has been on large scale commercial farms (Diao *et al.* 2016:5). The current low level of mechanization and use of hand tools (mainly hoes) has resulted in soil erosion in many regions of Africa. Sims (*et al.* 2016:9) has identified key difficulties that smallholder farmers in Africa face in investing in agricultural machinery:¹⁵³

- **Affordability:** In many countries, agricultural machinery suppliers are only found in the larger towns and cities. Lamentably, small farm holders are often isolated by distance and poor road infrastructure especially feeder roads. More to that there is limited access to sources of financial credit due to reluctance of commercial financial institutions (mainly banks) to extend credit to poor farmers with little collateral.
- **Availability:** Tractors and agricultural machinery can either be imported or locally made, with potential associated problems in both cases. Locally produced machinery is usually low in quality and high in price. This is due to the underdeveloped nature of the machinery manufacturing industry, which in turn is largely the result of poor demand. On the other hand supply chains providing support to owners of tractors and agricultural machinery with spare parts, advice and other services (especially clean fuel) are often underdeveloped and do not easily reach remote rural areas (Sims, Hilmi & Kienzle 2016:11).

Diao (*et al.* 2016:8) cites Pingali who argues that where the potential and demand for aggregate land expansion is limited, increased tractor use by medium and large scale farmers is likely to displace tenant farmers or hired labour provided by landless farmers. There is however little evidence of it occurring in Africa. The labour saving effects of mechanized ploughing is that it significantly reduces the amount of labour required for land preparation and typically results in small decreases in the labour required for weeding and harvesting. Meanwhile hired labour represents a relatively large share of production costs, even smaller farmers are likely to begin to demand mechanization technology when labour cost starts to rise in order to reduce their labour and total production costs (Takeshima 2016:9). Times have evolved with the use of machine power agriculture. First-century Mediterranean vineyard owners also mostly used human labour and animal ploughs.

¹⁵³ Land tenure is one of the most important issues in agriculture. In many countries, a lack of security of tenure severely hinders investment in mechanized agricultural. Land tenure must be secure and guaranteed by the state as well as by local laws and traditions. This gives farmers the security and confidence to invest in mechanization and other production- enhancing inputs.

5.3.6 Climate change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as “a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods” (Awojobi & Tetteh 2017:39). The impacts of climate change in Africa such as drought, flooding,¹⁵⁴ desertification and land degradation are so worrisome that studies have considered the continent as the most vulnerable¹⁵⁵ in the world (Toulmin 2007:16; Awojobi & Tetteh 2017:39). The earth’s climate is determined by a combination of the energy that we receive from the sun and the physical and chemical properties of the earth’s surface and atmosphere.

Toulmin (2007:17) explains that some of the sun’s radiation striking the earth is absorbed by the surface, while the rest is reflected, either escaping into space or becoming trapped by gases in the atmosphere. Trapped radiation is then recycled back to earth, adding extra warmth to the surface, a process called the “greenhouse effect.”¹⁵⁶ The concern over global warming focuses on gases¹⁵⁷ in the atmosphere, which have the capacity to absorb the radiation reflected from the earth’s surface and so trapping heat. Apart from the burning of carbon based fuels, other human activities are the dusty African roads that blow clouds of dust particles into the atmosphere, soot from industrial pollution and soil erosion. Dust particles emitted into the atmosphere from these activities absorb incoming solar radiation leading to warmer conditions (Toulmin 2007:17). The African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) has revealed that deforestation increases the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere, because when forests (which act as major carbon store) are cleared and the trees are either burnt or rot, the stored carbon is released as CO₂ into the atmosphere (AMCEN 2011:11).

¹⁵⁴ Flooding leads to immediate deaths and injuries of people. Infectious diseases like malaria and the exposure of people to toxic substances are other consequences. According the flood portal of European Commissions Joint Research Centre, Institute for Environment and Sustainability (2010), more than 1 million people were affected in over 20 African countries and approximately about 500 lives were lost and over 1.2 million people were displaced from their homes (Gemeda & Sima 2015:258).

¹⁵⁵ Vulnerable not only because of its high exposure to climate change, but also because many African communities lack the capacity to respond or adapt to the impacts of climate change (Toulmin (2007:17).

¹⁵⁶ This is a natural phenomenon which ensures that the amount of energy coming in is balanced by that radiated into space, so maintaining a relatively stable temperature on the earth’s surface.

¹⁵⁷ Such gases include carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄) which are natural and normally present in the atmosphere at atmospheric concentrations that effectively regulate the earth’s temperature. An increase in their concentration has occurred over time due to human activities such as burning carbon-based fuels. This human activity has intensified the greenhouse effect leading to global warming (Toulmin 2007:17).

Agriculture is the largest main economic activity in Africa and provides employment for approximately 60% of the African population. Unfortunately, as Awojobi and Tetteh (2017:40) have argued, climate change is posing considerable risks to the livelihood of the African population: the elongated and heightened droughts in Eastern Africa; exceptional floods in Western Africa; reduction of rainforests in equatorial Africa; and extremely altered weather patterns and climate extreme events threaten agricultural production and food security, health, water and energy security. Climate change has weakened African's capacity to grow and develop. Much of African agriculture's vulnerability to climate change lies in the fact that its agricultural systems remain largely rain-fed and underdeveloped (Toulmin 2007:50). Land use activities such as urbanization and deforestation remove the vegetative cover that absorbs the shortwave radiation, thereby, leading to global warming. Development is a main cause of these land-use changes in Africa. For instance, people cut down trees for economic purpose to expand cities, build houses, and create large-scale farming. The band of West African forests that once extended from Guinea to Cameroon is virtually gone (AMCEN 2011:12). With global warming already impacting on Africa, the concern of farmers is whether they will be able to adapt to climate changes since many African governments have consistently failed to invest much in agriculture (Toulmin 2007:64). With regards to food security and food production, climate is a primary factor for agriculture productivity, such that any environmental change affects plant and animal production (Gemedda & Sima 2015:258). Regrettably, increasing frequency of droughts and floods associated with climate change is making agricultural production to decline and the state of food insecurity and malnutrition will increase.

Cameroon has two principal climatic zones: the equatorial zone and the tropical zone. Agricultural production is predominantly rain-fed, and the semi-extensive farming systems are particularly sensitive to small changes in climatic conditions (Molua 2006:255). He notes that increasing temperatures are linked to increasing dryness and drought, therefore the management of Cameroon's agrarian economy will require a shift toward more drought-resistant crops and varieties, adaptation of planting methods, and implementation of water conservation techniques (Molua 2006:255). In Cameroon there is no routine use of scientific climate forecasts for the agricultural systems, and early warning systems are inadequate. Molua (2006:261) concludes that climate information is obtained from diverse sources that encompass knowledge from grandparents, neighbours in the community, neighbours from other communities, natural indicators (e.g., wind directions), biological indicators (flowering

of bushes, behaviour of birds and other animals), technical staff of various institutions, and some information from radio and television. Despite the numerous challenges that climate change has caused in the agricultural sector, Sounders (*et al.* 2017:69) revealed that food security is guaranteed in most areas in Cameroon especially Buea municipality because of the high diversification of crops cultivated by farmers. Measures that have been taken by farmers to adapt to the changing realities in the Buea municipality include the increase in the use of chemicals in order to mitigate pest-disease attacks on crops, the use of genetically modified hybrid seedlings by some farmers which often mature faster than the traditional maize seeds. Farmers in the first-century Mediterranean world were also victims of some seasonal changes that affected crop production in one way or the other.

5.3.7 Bad roads (lack of farm to market roads)

Agricultural production is important to the economy of developing nations in Africa and Cameroon in particular. It is the major occupation of most peasant inhabitants and provides employment directly or indirectly. Due to the fact that many African nations like Cameroon are basically agrarian, majority of the goods to be transported are mostly agricultural products which are by nature often bulky, low-priced, and highly perishable. Ajiboye and Afolayan (2009:50) suggest that they must be conveyed from their area of production to their zone of consumption with minimum delay and cost. The transportation sector in Africa is dominated by the road sub sector which is based on passenger-traffic movement in most countries and remains the only mode of transport available to subsistence communities and rural dwellers (Bonsu 2014:44). Transport plays a very crucial role because the agricultural process is not yet over until the produce reaches the hands of the final consumer (Ajiboye & Afolayan 2009:50). In effect, transportation affects the basic function of production, distribution, marketing and consumption. Transportation influences the cost of commodity consumed and the purchasing power of the consumers. Road transport has the most complex network and covers a wide range of areas. It's physically convenient, highly flexible and usually the most operationally suitable and readily available means of movement of goods and passenger traffic over short, medium and long distances (Ajiboye & Afolayan 2009:51). The available means of transportation of agricultural produce that are common in Africa include head load, animal traction, boat, canoe, hand trucks, bicycle, motor-cycle (commonly called "okada" in west Africa), taxi, public transport that include, pick-up vans and buses and Lorries (Karema & Irandu 2017:1). Due to poor maintenance, some major roads may be overgrown by

vegetation thereby making them narrow. The consequence is that as deterioration is taking place over time, most African farm to market roads become impassable when it rains. This has been exacerbated by illegal roadside developments, increased roadside farming; and poor land survey (Karema & Irandu 2017:1). This poor state of rural roads has made it difficult for motor vehicles to operate effectively, hence creating a big transport gap which has been bridged by commercial motorcycles (Ajiboye & Afolayan 2009:53; Karema & Irandu 2017:2). It is also worth knowing that poor rural transport systems increase the costs of marketing to and from farm areas, inhibits product flows, limit the spread of information, and increase risk.

In Cameroon, like in many other African countries in West Africa, commercial motorcycles have become a veritable means of transportation for passengers and for luggage as well. The advantages which motorcycles have over other transport modes have accounted for its use in commercial transportation. Motorcycles can reach areas which commercial vehicles maybe cannot reach due to bad roads; there is no road that is too narrow and there is no area too remote for motorcycles to reach (Olubomehin 2012:233; Karema 2015:12). Besides, unlike motor cars, they are able to take passengers to their door steps; they are faster and save time than other means of transportation; they are capable of manoeuvring their way through traffic congestion and they do not stop like commercial vehicles at bus stops to pick passengers. This makes it a very fast means of transport. Small holders of farm produce are easily conveyed from the farm to the home or to market centres with the use of motorcycles.

This fast growing transport industry came with its own disadvantages. Critics of the business maintain that the expansion in the business has increased the number of road accidents in Cameroon. This has led to the loss of lives and in many cases permanent disabilities to victims. There is a lot of recklessness driving because many motorcycle riders are not well trained and they refuse to comply with traffic rules (Olubomehin 2012:235). In addition to this dilemma, they constitute a nuisance on the highways since many of the riders do not obey traffic rules (Olubomehin 2012:236). Their members are also reported to be extremely violent, resorting to jungle justice to get easy passage of their erring members whenever the situation warrants. Despite the disadvantages, commercial motorcycles have provided employment for millions of unemployed youth. Farmers can easily gain some energy to use for farm work by travelling to their farms faster by motorcycles. Many farmers have acquired

such motorcycles which they use for transporting goods from their farms and also engage in commercial ridding when they are not in their farms.

In conclusion, an improved transportation will encourage farmers to work harder in the rural areas for increased production. To add value to their products, reduce spoilage and wastage. To empower the farmers as well as having positive impact on their productivity, income, employment and reduce poverty level in the rural areas since it will be easier to move inputs and workers to farms as well as products to markets and agro-allied industry (Ajiboye & Afolayan 2009:49).

5.4 THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

From a cultural context, Africa is a museum of cultures. Skinner (1997:172) has noted that culture¹⁵⁸ is important for communities with communal living such as Africa because it provides the necessary designs or models for living, indicating what is considered proper, or morally right, or even sane. It provides a body of knowledge and tools by which people adapt to their environment, rules by which they relate to each other. It provides a veritable storehouse of knowledge, beliefs, and formulae through which humans attempt to understand the community and their place within it. Culture tells people what to expect from others in their society and why, thereby furnishing them with a degree of mastery and confidence in most social situations. With these beautiful concerns of the African culture, Skinner (1997:173) opines that African cultures have been one of the reasons why Africa is experiencing very slow development. He says further that the inability of African countries to develop as rapidly as other countries is as much due to cultural perceptions because development actually concerns the rate of cultural change. In actual fact, culture has made Africans never to be immune to fundamental change. The continent is a veritable museum of past and present cultures in all stages of complexity and development (Skinner 1997:173). According to Mbiti (1969:10), African Traditional Religion (ATR) has dominated the thinking of the African people to such an extent that it has shaped their economic activities including agriculture.

¹⁵⁸ Ezedike (2009:455) defines culture as the sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, art, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterize Africans. It can be conceived as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non-material elements that are socially transmitted from one generation to another. African culture, therefore, refers to the whole lot of African heritage.

5.4.1 The impact of ATR on agriculture

Traditional religious influence on agriculture considers the central importance of land. The perspective of the indigenous Bamenda Grass field of Cameroon indicates that land is not only important because many people depend on agriculture for their livelihood, but also because people's ideas about the proper use and ownership of land are often expressed in terms of religion (Lang 2018:61). He explains further that one of the common characteristics of the Grass field's culture is the traditional religious belief that land (which is used for many purposes including farming) is the ownership of the Supreme Being. This explains why traditional functionaries such as *Fons*¹⁵⁹ and earth priests exercise spiritual control over the land. They are responsible for blessing the land before the planting season. In his study of women in the Grassfields of Cameroon, Kaberry (2004: 61) has indicated that the dry season was devoted to the preparation of farm plots. Crops were planted following the onset of the rains in late March. From May to August, farmers were chiefly involved in weeding; and from August to November with harvest. This agricultural cycle was marked by religious observances since farming is considered as a religious act. The entire farming cycle is marked by ritual practices which included libations in anticipation for a good harvest.

The people of Aghem-Wum in the North West Region of Cameroon inculcates the traditional notion that drought, poor harvest, famine and strong winds which negatively affect agricultural results are evidences that the gods are inattentive to their needs because of their disobedience to traditional norms. Therefore rituals for the fertility of crops as well as planting and harvesting are done annually (Chilver & Kaberry 1967:96).

In the Nso fondom of the North West Cameroon, planting and harvesting are preceded by special rituals owing to the fact that agriculture is considered as a religious experience. Indeed the religious tradition of blessing crops in the farms before harvest, offers a glimpse into the longstanding relationship between agriculture and tradition in Nso land. Banadzem (1996:132) and Kaberry (2004: 33) have specified that the Fon of Nso performs farming rituals at the *Kovifem*¹⁶⁰ sacred site and other alters spread across the fondom. At *Kovifem*,

¹⁵⁹ A *Fon* in every Grassfield fondom is called "owner of the land". This ownership of the land by the *Fon* is a result of his supposed connections with mythological founder-ancestors of his fondom. It is the ancestors who are believed to have chosen him and gave power and authority over his subjects. This explains why the *Fon* is sacred and has spiritual authority linked to the farming land and the supernatural spirits that own it (Lang 2018:61).

¹⁶⁰ *Kovifem* is the former site of the palace of Nso which is now considered as a major sacred site and a relic of Nso ancestors. Yearly agricultural rituals begin from this site.

the Fon and his ritual associates performs the major sacrifice to his ancestors to ensure the fertility of all Nso land. Similar smaller rituals are also carried out in different localities at other alters in Nso by lineage heads that have control over farmlands. These are expressions of dependence on the supernatural and of appreciation for good harvest (Kaberry 2004: 64). There exists a lodge in Nso palace called *fai shishwaa*, where apotropaic medicines¹⁶¹ are prepared at irregular intervals during the growth period. The medicines are often distributed at cross-roads and on some farms. At the beginning of the farming season, peasant women who are involved in farming take their hoes to the *fai shishwaa* for blessings (Chilver & Kaberry 1967:103).

Even though traditional religious beliefs have this much influence on agriculture in these few areas in Cameroon which are a representation of similar traditional beliefs in the rest of the country, critics say that traditional religious beliefs and practices carry along with it various taboos and prohibitions constrain production and development of efficient agricultural processes. Kaberry (2004: 65) cites Ampadu who contends that in some ethnic communities in the Grass field of Cameroon some traditional forms of landholding inhibit women from ownership of land despite the key role they play in land cultivation. Another impediment that traditional religion can cause is that sacred sites have the potential of impeding technological advancement like road building and town planning.

5.5 THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

From 1957 onward, political sovereignty was restored to most of Africa almost as quickly as it had been illegitimately seized by European imperialists at the end of the nineteenth century during the scramble for Africa (Winchester 1986:297). Those early days of freedom from colonial rule were charged with a lot of excitement and hope. Gordon and Gordon (2007:70) imagined that the excitement of independence was masked in enormous set of problems¹⁶² that the new leadership had to confront promptly. The emergent rulers who were elected to take over the independent states had a very fragile national unity because the geographical

¹⁶¹ Apotropaic medicine is a concoction of medicines which are intended to ward off evil. When the lodge or (country house) is opened, all farming activities are prohibited until the preparation of the concoctions are over.

¹⁶² There was internal conflict that plagued the parties that assumed leadership at independence. (Gordon & Gordon 2007:70). Many of the newly independent states had rather very weak claims to nationhood, since their political boundaries were artificial and their people were not united by a common historical experience, or by linguistic affinity, nor a shared cultural heritage (Winchester 1986:297). Another divisive issue was that access to positions of power in the government and ruling party and holding offices in government meant access to influencing decisions, to power over resources and to personal profit (Tangri 1985:28-33).

areas ruled by the colonizers were superimposed over diverse cultures, language groups, political entities, and trading areas, with little or no attempt to unify people within the colonies. To that effect, Winchester (1986:297) argues that a sense of community and solidarity among Africans often existed at the local or regional level and there was no allegiance to national unity or was just beginning to develop. Africans felt a sense of belonging to their ethnic groups than to their nation. Gordon and Gordon (2007:70-71) explained further that the reality of African life was heavily oriented towards subsistence farming and tied to the land. Hence, most Africans identified with their village and clan and secondarily to a “tribal” or ethnic group. At independence, subnational or ethnic loyalties were far more important than the new states since there were no national traditions, no national symbols and no national consciousness.¹⁶³ Bayeh (2015:90) and Van Wyk (2007:3) add that the new African states were a remnant of a colonially imposed system that adopted the colonialists’¹⁶⁴ centralized state system which produced ethnic and authoritarian based political culture. Despite the fact that Africans were expecting much from the new states, there were areas of technical expertise like accounting, engineering and health on which the new state was to heavily depend but the colonial powers had provided Africans with little or no training¹⁶⁵ (Gordon & Gordon 2007:71).

The international perception of Africa as a continent of endemic conflict largely overshadows the significant progress made towards more stable, accountable and open political systems. Van Wyk (2007:4) recounts that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report concluded that more African governments are adhering to the rule of law and human rights and, by 2006 two in every five African states were regarded as democracies. Wiseman Nkuhlu is cited as advising that what Africa has to get right in order to claim the 21st century is to improve leadership across the board (Van Wyk 2007:4). Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012:142) maintain that the numerous problems which have been bedevilling African states vis-à-vis ethnic and communal clashes, increasing crime wave,

¹⁶³ While Africans did not necessarily identify with the new state or its leadership, their expectation about what should come from the end of colonialism were high. They wanted education for their children, hospitals and health care, drinkable water, farm to market roads, better prices for their crops, and an instantly better life (Winchester 1986:297; Gordon & Gordon 2007:70-71).

¹⁶⁴ Colonialists were neither interested to flourish the democratic system in Africa nor prepared African states to administer themselves effectively in the post-independence era; instead, they used and threw them. It is clear that the colonial state in Africa was an authoritarian bureaucratic apparatus of control, an instrument of exploitation, and not intended to be a school of democracy (Bayeh 2015:90).

¹⁶⁵ The new leaders themselves had earned their positions as a result of their ability to organize and capitalize upon colonial protest (Gordon & Gordon 2007:70-71).

drug trafficking, and advanced fee fraud have been blamed on ineffective leadership. Leaders take power with limited experience and training in the art and science of directing and effectively managing the affairs of a modern state (Kamuntu 1993:103).

5.5.1 Concentration of political power (power mongering)

Under great pressure to satisfy rising expectations, and being unable to do so, African regimes, one after another eliminated formal parliamentary opposition by adopting a one-party system. The centre of decision-making then frequently shifted from the legislature to the central committee of the party. Winchester (1986:299) argues that in such a system, the civil service, the police, the armed forces and independent judiciary were all brought under close control. This led to a situation where fearful African politicians who aimed to stay in power as long as possible in order to implement their independence programs, sought tenure through extra-constitutional means. Some people are of the opinion that African politics is increasingly patrimonial¹⁶⁶ and spoils-orientated. In patrimonial systems, power is centralized in one individual applying it for his self-interest and loyal supporters are rewarded and selectively favoured. These supporters, or “clients”, are expected to mobilize political support for the incumbent and refer all decision making to the “patron” (Van Wyk 2007:5). Furthermore, African leaders who have made a haven of power for themselves are the primary holders, controllers and distributors of power and resources in a particular institution (i.e. institutional power) and/or territory (i.e. geo-political power). Van Wyk (2007:5-6) includes *inter alia* leaders who gained power by ballots and those who gained power by bullets including warlords, vigilante and rebel leaders. Most African leaders try to justify the centralization of power with the erroneous notion that a strong central government is essential to national unity and economic development (Gordon & Gordon (2007:73). Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012:153) recommend that

[t]he searches for leadership in Africa is a search for social justice, which automatically, eliminates social injustice. The principle of justice is to give each person or group what is his/her due and to demand the contribution of each on the basis of equal consideration. Africans are to learn to deal sincerely and honestly with one another so that the question of mistrust and suspicion amongst the various ethnic groups in the continent would be

¹⁶⁶ Although this type of system occurs elsewhere, it is particularly prevalent in the majority of African states where political power is personal and politics is a type of business as political positions give access to economic resources. Power and the right to rule are located in a powerful individual, not in a traditional political environment (Van Wyk 2007:5).

wiped away. It is only then that any qualified African can be elected into leadership positions without mistrust, suspicion, acrimony or reference to his/her ethnic or religious background.

5.5.2 Bad governance

Governance is defined as the capacity to establish and sustain workable relations between individual actors in order to promote collective goals (Chazan 1992:122). Galadima (1998:117) stated another fundamental rendition of governance as

[a] process of organizing and managing legitimate power structures, entrusted by the people, to provide law and order, protect fundamental human rights, ensure rule of law and due process of law, provide for the basic needs and welfare of the people and the pursuit of their happiness.

Despite after sixty years of political independence, Africa's aspiration and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled (Afegbua & Adejuwon 2012:143). Their opinion is that African leaders have frequently come to their position with limited experience. Failures have also come about largely as a result of, among other things; the progressive distancing of leaders from the masses; inadequate preparation of the leadership that assumed the responsibility to govern their countries. It is former President Obasanjo of Nigeria who is cited to have said that the chaos of governance in Africa emerged primarily as a result of lack of checks and balances in Africa's system of governance. In effect, for some African leaders, their nation ended up being treated as their individual personal property¹⁶⁷ (Afegbua & Adejuwon 2012:143). In addition, a decline in moral values and discipline caused or combined with bad policies, eroded professional standards and ethics and weakened the system of governance. Worthy of note is that poor governance becomes the major challenge and source of Africa's predicament and socio-economic crises. Kew (2005:150) is convinced that almost all African countries share one political fact, namely that their state structures were imposed by imperial powers over a century ago. This imposition of the state structure created a remarkably similar

¹⁶⁷ Kamuntu (1993:103) also observes that political power in Africa in most cases is concentrated in one political party and finally in the hands of one leader. This has made the rise of the supremacy of the office of the President over all organs of government. He says further that most African Presidents enjoy re-election in perpetuity without any competition. Any resistant to the concentration of power in the hands the President is brutally suppressed with greater violations of human rights, resulting in massacres. The result today is that millions of Africans are living out of their country as refugees or have been displaced from their homes. This is the present predicament of the Anglophone population in West Cameroon. Many qualified persons have sought for employment opportunities in foreign countries in search of personal security.

set of dilemmas that Africans have faced across the continent: an ethnic security dilemma,¹⁶⁸ in which ethnic groups are caught in a reciprocal struggle for power to secure the interests of their group. This dilemma was further fuelled by the racist colonial policies of “divide and rule” which reinforced these ethnic identifications, and in many cases the colonialists built political units around ethnic groupings, which also encouraged ethnic political identification (Kew 2005:150). Kew insinuates further that, given this relative strength of ethnicity in comparison to the weak institutionalization of African states, political leaders and supporters alike generally perceived themselves in a security dilemma with members of other ethnic groups vying for control of the state. His conclusion is that all political matters thus came to be viewed first through the ethnic lens and judged fundamentally in regard to how they influenced the balance of power among ethnic groups. This accounts for the reason why only a few African leaders have voluntarily left office because many are representing the interest of their ethnic group. Some have become old and died in office, while others are assassinated or are disposed by military coups (Afegbua & Adejuwon 2012:143). This is testimony of the fact that social justice is a paradox in Africa politics.

Cameroon has had only two presidents from independence in 1961. The two regimes that were masterminded by Ahidjo and later handed over to Paul Biya inherited a kind of clientele structure that employed ruthless maxims to win grass root supports and loyalty from the different regions of the country. These colonial concepts that were inherited initiated inequality, injustice and prejudice that were implemented based on ethnic lines (Ndeh 2015:2). This inherited structure was the surest road to favouritism because those who were co-opted into these regimes considered the wealth and revenue of the state as theirs and the masses were abandoned to languish in poverty. Particular ethnic groups were favoured at the expense of others in terms of appointments and allocation of resources.

5.5.3 Bribery and corruption

Africa has often been spared from untold natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, except for few landslides in pockets of places. In various states of the continent

¹⁶⁸ These dilemmas resulted from the fact that, first; African states were not each primarily the construct of a single hegemonic ethnic group, as was the case in Western Europe or the United States. Several African countries contained groups that could assert authority on independence, but state institutions did not grow out of any indigenous political process of their making. Second in Kew’s (2005:150) postulation, African states had only a handful of years to prepare for independence as organized political units, unlike the centuries over which the European states evolved. Thus, African political elites at the time of independence inherited state institutions that were largely alien, and they had little practical experience governing them under single political entities.

there are myriads of natural endowment like oil, coal, gold, iron-ore, precious stones and others too numerous to be mentioned. Yet, in the midst of these endowments, there is persistent mismanagement, self-interest and unimaginable forms of corruption (Omale & Amana 2014:1). Cameroon, like many African countries, is rife with corruption at all levels that children in primary school have also learned to be corrupt. Nganji (2002:22) proposed that corruption is caused *inter alia* by low salaries¹⁶⁹, non-respect of the laws in force,¹⁷⁰ display of wealth and power, concentration of power in the hands of a few, unrealistic promises, inadequate democracy, impunity enjoyed by some people. Ndeh (2015:6) has pointed out the level of corruption that goes on in the recruitment of workers in the public service in Cameroon. He adds that if one doesn't have a "god father"¹⁷¹ who is a member of government and who knows the house so well then one can hardly be recruited as a public servant. This system has established a kind of framework where the best brains that have no protectors are poor and joblessness in the face of prevailing mediocrity. In the custom and transport sector, attention is drawn to the saying that "with money all things are possible" and those who traffic in human parts or who move with contraband goods, easily play the game with corrupt uniform men and women that are on our highways (Ndeh 2015:6). Hence one can move with the head of a human being or marijuana in his or her car from one part of the country in Cameroons to another, so far as there is money to settle the control check points on the highway. Many vehicles ply the roads in Cameroon without insurance and other official documents because their drivers bribe their way.

The education sector follow the same build-in concepts where principals of most government schools and directors of most professional institutions collect bribe before admitting students into these establishments no matter the performance of these students. The places reserved for the best brains are sold to the rich. These institutions graduate people with high sounding profiles but with little to offer in terms of service. Cameroon has been an oil exporting country but the country has remained poor and underdeveloped because of poor

¹⁶⁹ The economic crisis, currency devaluation and salary-cuts from 1993 brought a lot of hardships on Cameroonians. Even though corruption was veiled somehow before then, but In their quest to maintain their former standards of living, many resorted to receiving bribes, while others misappropriated public funds for their private interests (Nganji 2002:23).

¹⁷⁰ Norms for the award of contracts and recruitments are not followed but people instead bribe to get contracts and to be recruited in services where they might not have expert knowledge (Ndeh2015:6).

¹⁷¹ God father in this sense is a closed person who can protect one's interest. The doctrine of "god fatherism" has destroyed the state machinery because it has perpetuated incompetence and mediocrity in the public service. Those who are appointed may not be the best in terms of quality and experience rather they are those who have protectors in the public service (Ndeh 2015:6).

management¹⁷² (Ndeh 2015:6). Corruption grants the rich and powerful people immunity against prosecution. It negates the comprehensive well-being of humanity. It is evil because it perverts justice and causes the suffering of the majority through the abuse of power (Nganji 2002:ii). One begins to wonder how a country that has inculcated social injustice as a norm is preparing for emergence in 2035.¹⁷³ If there can be any dream at the end of the tunnel, then the government has to create structures that will fight corruption, embezzlement and misappropriation and guarantee accountability and the bottom to top approach of decision making (cf. Ndeh 2015:8).

5.5.4 Marginalization of the minority

Marginalization, in the view of Forbang-Looh (2018:81), deals with putting people in an inferior or peripheral position in such a way that they lack power and thus, cannot influence decisions. In most cases marginalization results from dehumanized oppression of the marginal by those who are at the centre of decision making. Minorities as groups are those who are numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state in a non-dominant position, whose members possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from the rest of the population and who have, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, tradition, religion or languages (Rindap 2014:91). There are many forms of human marginalization, but that which is so endemic to Cameroon is the Anglophone marginalization. An Anglophone is permanently on exile even in his home. Given the linguistic divide between the majority Francophones and the minority Anglophones, this division has proven to be one of the most divisive factors in Cameroonian politics (Dicklitch 2011:160). Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997:207) believes that the root of this problem can be traced back to 1961 when the political elites of two territories with different colonial legacies, one French and the other British, agreed on the formation of a federal state. Contrary to expectations, the cultural heritage and identity of the Anglophones was gradually eroded to the total integration of the Anglophone region into a strongly centralized, unitary state. Moreover, this created an Anglophone consciousness:¹⁷⁴ the feeling

¹⁷² Poor management and corruption is well established in the award of government contracts which Ndeh (2015:6) says are awarded not through tender boards in several occasions. The purported tender boards are just smoke screens where contracts are awarded to girlfriends or other close family relations. This accounts for the poor execution or the non-execution of government contracts. Most at times these contracts are even awarded to companies that do not exist (ghost contractors).

¹⁷³ Cameroon government has a slogan which says that Cameroon will be an emergent country by the year 2035.

¹⁷⁴ After the political liberalisation process in the early 1990s, some members of the English-speaking elite started openly to protest against the supposed subordinate position of the Anglophones and to lay claims for

of being “marginalized,” “exploited,” and “assimilated” by the francophone-dominated state, and even by the francophone population as a whole (Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997:207). In Doh’s (1993:78) opinion

[t]he Anglophone Cameroonian, earlier colonized by the white man is once again a victim of “colonization” but this time, his colonizer is his former partner with whom he served, and were together tormented and exploited by the colonialists. The Anglophone is being given the impression that he is at home but he has to toil very hard to survive.... It is mainly against this black second cousin of colonialism; horizontal colonialism that genuine Cameroon authors ... are struggling.

In an attempt to cope with the Anglophones’ obvious superiority in all things to do with administration, education and business, the Francophone majority decided to implement a post-colonial history of exclusion of Anglophones from state power and resources (Nyamnjoh & Rowlands 1998:322). The Anglophones have suffered from an economic, political, and cultural marginalization in the Republic of Cameroon. This marginalization has helped to create rising disaffection among the Anglophone minority (Dicklitch 2011:160). The waste and bureaucracy of the francophone way are constantly compared with the frugality and efficiency of the Anglophone heritage. What is termed the “zero option” (full secession by Anglophones from the francophone-dominated United Republic of Cameroon) has been articulated most vehemently by the older generation of Anglophone politicians and civil servants (Nyamnjoh & Rowlands 1998:323). The government’s carefree attitude in handling the Anglophone problem (which was formerly denied in government circles) has degenerated into a crisis. The current crisis began on 11 October 2016 in Bamenda when lawyers from the Northwest and the Southwest went on strike.¹⁷⁵ This was closely followed by teachers¹⁷⁶ of English extraction who also went on strike on 21 November 2016 (Crisis Group Africa Report 2017:9). The response of the government was military brutality and repression and the situation was radicalized as the Anglophones took action to shut down all

self-determination and autonomy. In the meantime, the persistent refusal of the Government headed by President Paul Biya to discuss any related constitutional reforms forced some Anglophones to adopt a secessionist stand (Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997:207).

¹⁷⁵ The lawyers demanded the translation into English of the Code of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) and other legal texts. They criticised the “francophonisation” of Common Law jurisdictions, with the appointment to the Anglophone zone of Francophone magistrates who did not understand English or the Common Law.

¹⁷⁶ Teachers complained the lack of Anglophone teachers, the appointment of teachers from French zone who did not have a good command of English to teach in English schools and the failure to respect the “Anglo-Saxon” character of schools and universities in the Anglophone zone.

schools in the North and South west Region and make Monday ghost towns all over the English regions. All attempts by government to create a National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism on 23 January 2017 were already late.¹⁷⁷ However, as the government perceives the crisis as a threat to its survival, it considers intimidation, violent repression and the internet shutdown as a risk worth taking, despite possible pressure from the international community (Crisis Group Africa Report 2017:16). Justifying from the perspective of self-defence, an Anglophone militia has been formed with support from the English Cameroonians in the diaspora to fight government military who are implementing a scourged earth policy on the Anglophone population. Many Anglophones have lost their homes and many have died including the displaced and refugees in neighbouring countries. In a situation of hatred and marginalization, there is no social justice.

5.5.5 Civil wars in Africa

Violent conflicts of one type or another have afflicted Africa and exacted a heavy toll on the continent's societies, politics and economies, robbing them of their developmental potential and democratic possibilities. Elbadawi and Sambanis (2000:1) have visualized that the relatively higher prevalence of war in Africa is not only due to the ethno-linguistic fragmentation of its countries, but rather to high levels of poverty,¹⁷⁸ failed political institutions, and economic dependence on natural resources. Ogu (2014:38) wonders how arms¹⁷⁹ that were originally designed to serve as deterrence against forms of external aggression on territorial sovereignty ever got into the hands of civilians in Africa. He concurs that most of the modern day African states, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia, were created by imperialists with the use of force. In an attempt to maintain peace and order in the conquered territories, the colonialist established from among the African people, military institutions (which did not have a capacity comparable to many other military institutions)

¹⁷⁷ The government announced other measures on 30 March, including the creation of new benches for Common Law at the Supreme Court and new departments at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (Ecole nationale d'administration et de magistrature, ENAM), an increase in the number of English language teachers at ENAM, the recruitment of Anglophone magistrates, the creation of a Common Law department at Francophone universities and provisional authorisation for Anglophone lawyers to act as notaries in the Northwest and the Southwest regions (Crisis Group Africa Report 2017:12-13).

¹⁷⁸ Poor countries will more frequently experience greater conflict and internal war than middle-income or wealthy countries because poor countries are mostly characterized by weak governance, non-inclusive political systems, high levels of corruption, and limited capacity to provide their citizens with basic social services protection of lives and properties, as well as confront the many developmental challenges that they face. This often results in a lack of legitimacy which is regarded as central to state-building (Ogu 2014:44).

¹⁷⁹ Arms are believed to have gained access into the African continent via colonialist activities, and could never have been intended for civilian uses. The current trend of conflict events in Africa shows that civilians are dominant participants in the several conflict situations in Africa (Ogu 2014:38).

and armed them with more sophisticated weapons which can be regarded as the earliest introduction of arms into the continent (Ogu 2014:38). Citing Menzrui, Ogu (2014:41) affirms that, first, African states created by Europeans had very fragile bases, and worse still, the Africans who took over the governing of these states were not experienced. Hence, several post-colonial conflicts in Africa have been caused by failing political will and the lack of capacity by African leaders to properly articulate and deliver good governance. Second, Africans were living without borders; the official creation of boundaries by Europeans confused the already existing systems and institutions in the territories. Third, ethnicity and religion has also been a major conflict cause in Africa and one of the worst ethnic conflicts that Africa has recorded is the 1994 genocide between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups¹⁸⁰ in Rwanda in which more than one million people were slaughtered within one hundred days (Nikuze 2014:1097).

In Cameroon, ethnic conflicts have been recorded again and again. Some include *inter alia* the Mbesa-Oku ethnic violence, caused by land boundary dispute of 14 to 15 February 2007 (Nke 2007:2); the June 1995 ethnic conflict between Bafanji and Balikumbat (Monteh 2018:287) – all in the North West Region of Cameroon. At the moment, the government of Cameroon is at war with its own people of the North and South West Regions (Anglophones). The socio-political crisis that began in October 2016 in the Anglophone North West and South West regions mutated into armed conflict at the end of 2017. International Crisis group Africa reports that about seven armed Anglophone militias are currently in positions of strength in most rural areas in the two restive regions. The security forces reacted slowly, but since mid-2018 have inflicted casualties on the separatists and vice versa. They have not been able, however, to regain full control over rural areas nor prevent repeated separatist attacks in the towns (Crisis Group Africa Report 2019:i). The crisis has become a deadlock, notably that for over three years now thousands of people have been killed and hundreds of thousands have been displaced and close to a million are seeking refuge abroad. The government and the separatists are sticking to their irreconcilable positions. The separatists continue to dream that independence is just around the corner. In

¹⁸⁰ Nikuze (2014:1089) explained that, throughout the pre-colonial period, the Hutus and the Tutsis were one people who spoke the same language and lived amongst each other. When the Belgian colonialists arrived in 1916, they treated the Hutu and the Tutsi as separate groups. The colonial power further polarized the groups by classifying Rwandans into ethnic groups and making it obligatory for them to carry ethnic identity cards classifying people according to their ethnic groups. The Belgians deemed the Tutsi to be superior to the Hutu and thus Tutsis were favoured in administrative positions, education and jobs in the modern sector. This made each group to become suspicious of the other.

Yaoundé, the government still wrongly believes it can make a quick military victory. To this effect, peasant farmers are not free to go to their farms and food is scarce. Numerous lockdowns and ghost towns have prevented workers in the civil service and in the private sector from going to work, and there is general apathy. People are sick and cannot go to hospital because of lack of money and worst of all the regions are heavily militarized and people live in fear. Against this backdrop of on-going conflicts, displacement, and violence, how does one begin to engage in discourses of social justice? (Taylor 2013:16). The children of Anglophone extraction living at home have been out of school for three years, a regrettable situation indeed.

5.6 THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Despite the influence of modernism on the lives of Africans, religion continues to play an important role in socio-economic and political life. Religion permeates all departments of life to such an extent that it is not easy or possible to isolate it. Although the African religious consciousness was initially derived from the practice of traditional religion, Christianity and Islam have given further impetus to this consciousness (Agbiji & Swart 2015:3). For the African, to live is to be caught up in a religious drama (Mbiti 1999:1). It is, therefore, common for Africans to display their religious beliefs and rituals in moments of joy and despair. African expressions, names, activities, symbols, celebrations, work, ideology are loaded with religiosity (Agbiji & Swart 2015:3). Unfortunately, the religiosity of Africa has not influence economic growth and diversification in job growth and social development in order to lift millions of Africans out of poverty (UNECA 2013:4). Whilst the endemic problems of African poverty and corruption should first of all be blamed on the African political elite, the blame also goes to religious leaders (both Christian, Islamic and traditional) who are part of the elite and have done little to stem poverty and corruption (Gifford 2009:250). The notion of material accumulation for personal gain is foreign to African traditional societies. To be wealthy or rich means to be surrounded by many people in a community. It also means to be healthy and ethically sound, and to be in tune with one's creator, ancestors and community (Narayan 2001:40). So it is strange that many religious leaders have also adopted the political strategy of coming to power through corrupt means. As a result, religion has been used in particular instances by politicians, religious leaders and religious communities to foster and sustain the structural reinforcement of poverty and corruption in the continent in a number of ways (Agbiji & Swart 2015:3).

5.6.1 The quest for spiritual renewal

LeMarquand (2000:9) opines that for most of Africa the Bible arrived in the hands of missionaries from the North Atlantic world. The interpretation of the Bible reflected missionary minds which were shaped by that world and which had little understanding of the culture of Africa. Although in some parts of Africa the message of the New Testament as conveyed by the missionaries was received with joy, certain tensions began to emerge. A vivid example for LeMarquand is that of polygyny. Although most missionary societies and the churches which they represented condemned the practice, it did not escape the notice of African readers that many of the great heroes of the faith as implied in the Old Testament had more than one wife. It is easy to note that mission-founded churches and African-founded churches have different emphases particularly in the area of healing. In the opinion of LeMarquand (2000:9), many Africans are in need of healing and have traditionally been accustomed to ask God for healing. They are convinced by the fact that the New Testament is full of healing stories and providences. Aspects of healing in ritual practices (like prayer) were interpreted in terms of concepts of salvation (Nel 2008:36). One of the reasons why the missionary founded churches were not open to healing by prayer and ritual was that their world-view had become apparently scientific. Because of this background, they virtually interpret New Testament healing stories either as spiritual lessons having little to do with prayer for sick bodies, or as a call to found clinics and hospitals which they did. The tension continued because missionaries did not hear the clarion call for spiritual healing in the New Testament which Africans claim to have heard clearly (LeMarquand 2000:9). Hence, African exegesis does not seek to understand the text merely for its own sake, or out of an intellectual curiosity. African exegesis is need-driven and faith oriented. It is, almost explicitly confessional and takes place within the context of African traditional culture and religion.

5.6.2 The role of the church

The church holds as its priority and duty to promote peace through the elimination of prejudice. It is primarily focused to ensure solidarity through promotion of social justice - which refers to God's original intention for human society: a world where basic needs are met, people flourish, and peace¹⁸¹ reigns (Manu 2017:2). To do this, the church tries to rightly emphasize the administration of mercy through identifying the root causes of what

¹⁸¹The church advocates for peace among people stemming from their hearts and conscience. Peace between humans ultimately presupposes peace with God and the recognition of his will (Manu 2017:12).

keeps people poor, violent, hungry, and powerless. One of the vital roles of the church for the achievement of peace and Justice in Africa is that the church teaches good moral and ethical standards. As the forces of division and antagonism seem today to be increasing in strength in Africa, so must the moral responsibility of the Christian church increase (Manu 2017:12).

The socio-political crisis that Cameroon has been experiencing since 2016 has its roots on the marginalisation of the minority English speaking regions by the Francophone majority. A peaceful demonstration by Lawyers and Teachers of English extraction in an attempt to raise awareness for justice for all has spiral into a war which was declared by the President Biya on the 30th November 2017 when he alighted from the plane that brought him back from the African European Union (EU) summit in Ivory Coast (Dah 2019:97). Religious institutions in Cameroon have made several attempts to provide a solution to the problem by the several memoranda that have been addressed to the President providing various ways to handle the problem but all have been ignored. The main religious bodies in Cameroon that have been actively speaking and in response have received threats of prosecution are: (a) The Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda presented a Memorandum to the Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya on the current situation of unrest in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon on the 22nd December 2016 (Dah 2019:145, 160-163). Their suggestion was that the state:

- Should show honesty in the face of the Anglophone problem
- Should implement the 1966 constitution which would satisfy the majority of Anglophone Cameroonians and silence the calls for secession which have characterized the period of unrest.
- Should establish a roadmap by engaging in a constructive dialogue.
- Should respect human rights and finally that there should show justice for all.

(b) The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon PCC issued an official statement of the PCC on the prevailing socio-political situation in Cameroon on the 10th October 2017 which calls on the government of Cameroon to:

- Redefine and control the mission of the armed forces in the two regions in crisis,
- Initiate and announce a national plan for resolving the crisis taking into account its real and profound causes.

- Call on the Amba boys¹⁸² and all armed groups and individuals to value and respect human life, be it their personal lives or that of others.
- Call on Cameroonians to make rational, critical, responsible and prudent use of the social media, through which violence is promoted.

(c) The General Council and governing body of the Cameroon Baptist convention CBC release a statement on Friday 9th December 2016 which condemns the destruction of human life and all forms of cruel and inhuman and degrading treatment of human beings (Dah 2019:196).

(d) The council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon (CEPCA) addressed a Memorandum to the Government of Cameroon through the Prime Minister, head of Government which:

- Condemns all forms of violence and brutality in the North West and South West Regions which led to the loss of human lives.
- Condemns the use of excessive force and inhuman treatment of the civilian population by the forces of law and order.
- Condemns all forms of intimidation or manipulation and brutal arrest aimed at reviving violence and conflict.

Despite the continuous role played by the church in mitigating the crisis, the state apparatus has remained adamant and jettison all suggestions for a solution.

5.7 SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Africa has got several natural providences which are potentials for growth. Yet, large-scale poverty continues to prevail, and the region remains among the most deprived in the world. Not only is the gap between rich and poor extremely wide, justice systems are often inaccessible (Coninck 2013:4). The poor may or may not have any idea about their rights and entitlements. Civic, socio-economic, and political rights are frequently flouted, and conflict is rife. Taylor (2013:12) wonders whether one can really talk about social justice in Africa when the contextual realities are so far removed from the vision that imbued struggles for liberation from political, economic, social, and cultural domination. Notwithstanding, by identifying what is unjust in societies, one is implicitly assuming some understanding of

¹⁸² These are insurgent groups that came up from within the North West and South West Regions for self-defense when war was declared on the English speaking population.

justice. The reality for Taylor (2013:16), where many people are living in situations of intolerable cruelty and deprivation, is that changes in the political and economic processes have not resulted in significant changes or improvements in their daily lives. Consequently, a lot of Africans have been deprived of their obligation to live fully human lives. Nussbaum (2004:13) opines that the prerequisites for living a fully human life, worthy of the dignity of a human being, rather than a subhuman life includes: adequate nutrition, housing, education, protection of bodily integrity, freedom of speech and religious self-expression among others. Moreover, she argues that when it comes to social justice in Africa and democracy, the main issue is who constitutes the nation, meaning, the question of who is recognized as a national, as a citizen, and who is not. The rights conferred by virtue of being a citizen in modern state systems in Africa are not given. The social justice question in Africa has not been able to effectively address problems engendered by social differentiation along class, ethnicity, gender, and other social cleavages that arise or are unresolved¹⁸³ within a nation (Nussbaum 2004:22).

5.7.1 Social justice from an African traditional perspective

The United Nations' (UN) publication on Human Rights and Traditional Justice Systems in Africa affirms that traditional justice systems in Africa are based on oral traditions and are often referred to as "living customary law"¹⁸⁴ (UN 2016:1). These justice systems may operate outside of state control, although in some states they are legally recognized¹⁸⁵ as part of the domestic legal order. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2016:6) defines customary law as:

Traditional and indigenous systems of justice as systems that exist at the local or community level which have not been set up by the State. It can also be seen as a system of justice that usually follows customary law or an uncodified body of rules of behaviour, enforced by sanctions, varying over time.

¹⁸³ The humanitarian crises in Africa provide enough evidence of the impacts on people who flee from violence because of discrimination and persecution and because of economic insecurity. A lot of Africans are living as refugees out of their homeland because of persecution and many of them do not even know the reason for their persecution.

¹⁸⁴ Living customary law is dynamic and flexible because it is based on the circumstances of a particular case and evolving social norms.

¹⁸⁵ Their decisions may be legally binding, but in some types of traditional justice systems the outcome is similar to mediation, where the parties are free to accept or reject the suggested settlement of a dispute. In most cases where traditional justice systems are legally recognized, there are limits on subject matter and personal jurisdiction, although some traditional justice systems have competence to decide serious crimes, including murder (UN 2016:2).

According to the UN report (2016:24), traditional justice system's decisions are made by members of the community whether by the chief or sub chiefs, headman or headwoman, a group of elders who provide leadership for the community, or by direct decision of the community itself in the form of a general assembly. In many cases, adherents of African customary law believe in the impartiality¹⁸⁶ of the chief or king¹⁸⁷ when he exercises his judicial function. Like in the *Nso* clan of Bui Division in North West Cameroon, the Fon or traditional leader (in principle) is prohibited from taking positions in political parties or having political functions in government. The rationale is to reinforce the impartiality of the Fon or his or her sub chiefs, and secure them from the political control of the State or the governing political party (cf. also UN 2016:25). In traditional African society, the interest of the community is sacred; all members of the community have a duty to nurture, protect and preserve the community's interests, which may include the protection of some animals, some designated places, as well as the rights of the individuals (Laleye 2014:168). Any violation is frowned at as a case of abuse or injustice. Any offense committed is considered as an act that violates the rights of an individual(s). Some offenses were, and are already sealed with curses and there is no forgiveness. Offenders have only divinities to contend with. Such offenses include: desecrating sacred places, altering of land boundaries, murder, and incest. This is a traditional way of justice.

Traditional African justice systems also take the form of covenants¹⁸⁸ (an aspect of oath taking). Any criminal suspect is made to stand in front of custodians of tradition or to place his/her hands on a sacred object like the throne of a Fon or staff and declare innocence. Any lies telling may result in instant madness or even death. Kasomo (2010:25) argues that covenants operated more formerly and served as preventive measures against the potential threat of peace and tranquillity. Their intention was to cultivate peace, good relations, mutuality, friendship, respect, and love between people and nature and love between people and spiritual forces. Unfortunately, most of African people have gradually lost confidence in the judicial justice systems probably because of the corrupt nature of the judiciary in Africa. This may account for the fact that a lot of Africa people have taken laws into their hands. It is

¹⁸⁶ Traditional justice systems are generally considered to be less corrupt than formal justice systems.

¹⁸⁷ The authority of the traditional leader derives from his or her status as a respected member of the community and in some cases the position may be inherited (UN 2016:24).

¹⁸⁸ It is bizarre that the judiciary adopted the use of covenants or oaths in the law court by compelling a suspect to swear with a bible or a copy of the Koran in hand and people make covenants in God's name and go forth to tell lies (something which is forbidden in Exodus 20:7) and nothing happens probably because most of the judges themselves are not truthful. A demonstration of knowledge of civil law is not necessarily the truth.

not uncommon to hear that a thief is caught and the population inflicts corporal punishment and waste his life. Some victims of crime are burnt alive. Mob justice has become so rampant and the rationale is the loss of trust in the judiciary that would have been handling such situations.

5.8 EMPLOYMENT AND REMUNERATION OF WORKERS IN CAMEROON

A worker in Cameroon under § 1(2) of the General Provisions of the labour code¹⁸⁹ means any person, irrespective of sex or nationality, who has undertaken to place his services in return for remuneration, under the direction and control of another person, whether an individual or a public or private corporation, considered as the “employer.” The right to work, as the labour code provides, is recognized as a basic right of each citizen. The State therefore makes every effort to help citizens to find and secure their employment. Work is a national duty incumbent on every able-bodied adult citizen.¹⁹⁰ The Cameroon labour code makes it clear without ambiguities that the right to work is a basic right of each citizen. In the Cameroon labour system, one finds it difficult to associate the labour provisions with the actual practice in place. The ability to get work in Cameroon seems to be politically motivated in such a way that most employments and postings both in the public and private sector are based on loyalty to the regime in place than on intellectual ability and meritocracy. This is what Nyamnjoh (1999:107) has observed that the Cameroon system of employing workers has little regard for virtue and meritocracy, and proves to have more room for loyal mediocrity than critical excellence.

In the view of Nyamnjoh (1999:105), Cameroon runs a type of political system that can be referred to as the politics of regional or ethnic balancing. In this system, a worker appointed to high office or merely aspiring to such an office is made to understand that the system, incarnated by the leader is very benevolent, and that the leader is to be thanked for any appointment, while those from other ethnic groups or regions are to blame themselves for the lack of any appointment or for the loss of one. The policy creates the illusion in the elites, and in the masses that everything is possible and that individuals must give the leader total support if they wish to maintain, or climb to high offices and get the favours that go with it. The effect of this policy is to enforce individual or ethnic interest and kill any unity on the basis of common interests and aspirations. In this system, Nyamnjoh (1999:106) further explains that

¹⁸⁹ Cameroun Labour Code Law No. 92/007 of 14 August 1992.

¹⁹⁰ See Section 2, note 1 and 2.

the leader can stay in power and be re-elected repeatedly, without ever having to go out personally to campaign. Hence electing a leader in this system of regional and ethnic balancing is more about testing the popularity of the appointed elites¹⁹¹ in the various regions or ethnic groups.

Another serious problem which is endemic to Cameroon and which seems to paralyse social justice in the employment of workers is bribery and corruption. Competitive entrance examinations into most of the prestigious professional schools in Cameroon seem to be a formality. The language that is understood is that of the highest bidder. Those who have the money are sure to secure a chance for their family members. Government scholarships for the intelligent students have long ceased to exist and therefore merit is no more one of the criteria for employing workers in Cameroon. Gerdes-Cameroon (1999:79) has made investigation on corruption in Cameroon and found out that the poor employment opportunities, the salary slash, the poverty of the people and the poor conditions in which they work, can neither be the cause of, or the justification for corruption. Corruption exists because individuals have not acquired the habit to fight for their rights.

5.8.1 Social justice in employment in Cameroon (case of PCC)

The policy of employment of workers in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) which is a well constituted church, states that: “employment shall be based on merit but however; priority shall always be given to committed Presbyterian Christians who believe in what the PCC stands for” (PCC book of Orders 1995:52). The employment of pastors takes the form of a competitive entrance examination into the lone Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS) Kumba-Cameroon. The PCC as an indigenous church is firmly rooted in the two English speaking regions in Cameroon.¹⁹² The Church as well as other religious bodies that operate in Cameroon has silently adopted the contemporary political syndrome of regional and ethnic balancing in the employment of workers which is a serious threat to social Justice. This idea of regional and ethnic balancing is carefully crafted into the constitution of the PCC, Article 112 on election of Moderator and Synod Clerk which states that “the Moderator and Synod

¹⁹¹ These elites are the ones to convince their people to vote for the leader in place and show how much he loves them by recognizing and appointing one of them, even if there is nothing to show for like basic humanitarian needs like roads, water, light, and health facilities.

¹⁹² Dah (2007:74) has indicated that English speaking Christians who moved to east Cameroon and attended services in the existing Francophone churches faced problems with the French language. From 1973, that marks the gradual beginning of the expansion of the PCC to east Cameroon and now present in all the ten regions.

Clerk shall not be indigenes of one and the same Region of the Country”. It is therefore not an overstatement to say that nominations for these clerical high offices are more about regional affiliation than about merit. In the biblical text under consideration, there is no indication in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15) that the owner has in mind any idea about ethnicity or racial boundaries which could have affected the employment of workers. It is for this reason that he is seen by most interpreters above as just and righteous.

Students who are admitted into the PTS automatically become church workers upon graduation. It goes without saying that the process of selection during the oral interviews that follow the written part of the examination is critically infested with this regional and ethnic balancing syndrome. For this reason, some of the students who perform best in both the written and the orals do not feature in the final list. In this system, the elected officer exhibits qualities like that of a Mediterranean patron of antiquity who gives out appointments and work on the condition that the worker must show total loyalty and sing his praises in private and in public. The one who has an alternative opinion from that of the patron is seen as a deviant and risk losing his work during times of appointments and postings. Hence, social justice is sacrificed at the altar of regional and ethnic balance.

Another threat to social justice in the employment and appointing of workers in the Church is what has come to be known as “Simony”¹⁹³ simply defined as the act of buying and selling of ecclesiastical offices and pardons. Some colleagues in the ministry of the word and sacraments have testified that when they are appointed to an office in the church, a global sum is demanded by the patron in charge as appreciation. Neyrey (2005:467) has expressed a similar idea on “patronage and reciprocity” from the first-century Mediterranean world where a patron gives an appointment or a favour to a worker and expects a balanced reciprocity in the form of money, honour and loyalty.

5.8.2 Social justice in the remuneration of workers in Cameroon (the case of the PCC)

Remunerations or wages as defined by the Cameroun labour code (Part iv, Chap1, Section 61, [1]) as earnings, designated or calculated, capable of being evaluated in terms of money and fixed by mutual agreement or by the provisions or regulations or collective agreements which

¹⁹³ In Acts 8:18, when Simon the sorcerer saw that the Spirit was given to believers in Samaria at the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Peter and John), he offered them money and said, give me also “this ability ... may receive the Holy Spirit”.

are payable by virtue of a contract or employment by an employer to a worker for work done or to be done or for services rendered or to be rendered. The average number of hours put in by a worker in an agricultural economy like Cameroon is eight hours per day.¹⁹⁴ Despite this provision which is expected to provide for a just economic system in Cameroon, Konings (2004:2) asserts that repeated economic crisis in Cameroon has made workers to constantly face regular delays in the payment of their salaries and various allowances and, in some cases, with drastic cuts in the already meagre salaries. Such deteriorating conditions of work negatively affect the morale and commitment of workers, who are expected to work in deplorable working conditions for little remuneration.

The PCC salary policy holds that if one member suffers, all others (workers) share in solidarity. “As much as possible, the PCC shall strive to have a fair and just salary policy which shall cater for all its workers, so that some may not be all right while others suffer” (Book of Orders 1995:51). Apart from the social workers of the PCC who earn wages, a common term used for the remuneration of pastors is the word, “stipend”. The Merriam-Webster’s Intermediate dictionary defines stipend as “a sum of money paid at regular intervals and generally small for services or for expenses” or “a modest allowance”. This may be the justification for the low remunerations paid to PCC Pastors. After her constitutional autonomy from the Basel mission in 1957, the PCC embarked on the process of self-financing. This remarkable venture has once in a while been met with increasing challenges in financing its ministry on a just and equitable basis across all communities. This issue peaked in 1985 when the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon was said to be on fire. In the present years from 2016-2019, the situation of financial challenges has aggravated due to the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon where the PCC is well rooted. Many schools which are a business arm of the Church have been shut-down and workers (teachers) made redundant. Many Congregations are deserted and Christians are in hiding because of insecurity. Thus many pastors are experiencing months of unpaid stipends and their families are bound to go hungry. In this light, Tucker made this biblical observation concerning financial remuneration in his Church, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa:

God is concerned with what men and women do with the gifts, possessions and money that He indirectly gives to them through inheritance, labour, and gifts from others, and

¹⁹⁴ See part v, chapter 1, section 80 (2) of the 1992 Cameroon labour code.

the way in which it is earned. The employer is not doing the employee a favour when he pays him or her (Rm 4:4). When an employee is not paid the wages he or she deserves, it constitutes theft (Ja 5:4). The Bible instructs that those who hire labour should pay a fair wage (Gn 31:12, 13) and pay employees at the time agreed upon (Lv 19:13). Moreover, one might say that when labour is hired a covenant is established between employer and employee, which will be transgressed if its terms are not adhered to.

(Tucker 2014:4)

On the other hand, Tucker (2014:4) notes that once the wage has been agreed on, the employee is to be satisfied with it (Lk 3:14) and is encouraged not just to work for his/her pay, but to have the employer's best interests at heart (Jn 10:13). For this reason, a worker in the PCC is remunerated in accordance with his or her services and capability (1 Cor 3:8). It also means that when a minister does not receive his or her remuneration at the agreed time¹⁹⁵, the covenant between the minister and the church is being broken and God is being robbed. This payment policy¹⁹⁶ in the PCC as well as in other institutions cannot be seen as a direct contradiction to Matthew 20:1–15 because of the fact that the workers in the vineyard all receive the same pay no matter how hard or how long they have worked. The vineyard owner in Matthew 20:1-15 is a compassionate employer who has redefined justice as more than just equal application of the law. Justice, as Bailey (2008:363) says includes the respect and dignity of those in need and a deep concern for their welfare. Since the vineyard owner is generous and good, he pays according to their needs and not according to work done.

PCC workers, therefore are to avoid falling prey to a work-for-pay spirit but to follow the biblical principle as in Colossians 3:23¹⁹⁷ and be careful of envying those who seem to have greater remunerations. In this light, Donahue (1988:78) points out that the grumbling workers are so narrow in their understanding of justice in such a way that it becomes a norm by which they judge other workers, thus limiting the owner's freedom and excluding unexpected generosity.

¹⁹⁵ In the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS) Kumba, late payment of salaries is a routine at the detriment of the workers and complains from workers are never given a thought.

¹⁹⁶ Pay according to work done or Pay according to merit

¹⁹⁷ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for men.

5.9 READING MATTHEW 20:1-15 FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

In section 3.3.5 above, this study took into considering the assertion of Bediako (2000:3) that Christianity is a universal religion and that in the 21st century, Africa has become the heart land of Christianity; an African contextual approach to exegesis has become very imperative. The emergence of an African contextual approach in the field of biblical interpretation is due to the fact that ‘traditional’ exegetical approaches have seemed foreign because they do not appear to address the African people in their very context (Nyiawung & Van Eck 2013:2). It has been noted that theories and models are important in SSC because they provide etic information since social-scientists use various methods of observation to seek typical and recurring patterns and regularities in human behaviour. Africa, as well has pivotal values that define social behaviour as well as regulate human relationship within the society. They help people to conduct a harmonious life, which in turn enhances community life of fulfilment. These social values are models which are suitable for reading biblical texts from an African perspective. We will now proceed in this section to use the models of the African context to read the translated version of Matthew 20:1-15 see Appendix 2.

5.9.1 African models for reading Matthew 20:1-15

Some social values have been identified which are fundamental norms that help to sustain the African communities and the wellbeing of their people. These are African sense of solidarity, African sense of human dignity, African sense of respect and integrity, African moral values, African sense of time, and African means of non-verbal communication.

5.9.1.1 The African sense of solidarity

Life in the African community is based on the philosophy of live-and-let-live. An African sense of solidarity is the concern for one another which is based on the principle that what happens to an individual affects the whole group and what happens to the whole group happens to the individual (Mbiti 1990:106). This concern of African solidarity is vividly illustrated in a popular African proverb which says: “Go the way that many people go; if you go alone, you will have reason to lament” (Davidson 1969:31). The African idea of solidarity depends on personal identification with and within the community.¹⁹⁸ Solidarity is made

¹⁹⁸ The community is the custodian of the individual; hence he/she must go to where the community goes. In the material term of reference, the individual must go to the “community centre” or village square which is a social, political, judicial and religious centre. It is the communal meeting place for political discussions, communal tribunals, sports and games. It is therefore a traditional place of congregation for the entire community. In this

manifest within the community, but outside the community there is no possible life, since a man without lineage is a man without citizenship, without identity, and therefore without a helper. Solidarity offers the African the psychological and ultimate security as it gives its members both physical and ideological identity (Emeakaroha 2002:3). Individual identity is not emphasized at the expense of his community identity in Africa. This is why individualism, as an ideology and principle of life, is not encouraged, even though it is not destroyed. In the words of Steve Biko:

We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence in all we do we always place man first and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action¹⁹⁹ rather than the individualism.

(Biko 1978:42)

Living together and the sense of community of brothers and sisters are the basis of, and the expression of the extended family system in Africa. The rationale behind it is that, the balance of wholesome human relations is seen as an integral part of the balance of nature itself which is a basic prerequisite for material survival in the African world (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor 2013:64). It is said in Africa that the prosperity of a single person does not make a town rich, but the prosperity of the town makes persons rich. By that token, it is not considered repugnant to ask one's neighbour for help if one is struggling to make ends meet. It has been noted above that the individual must go to the "community centre" or village square which is a social, political, judicial and religious centre. It is the communal meeting place for political discussions, communal tribunals, sports and games. It is therefore a traditional place of congregation for the entire community.

sense, important events in and around the community are well known to its members (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor 2013:64).

¹⁹⁹ One of such joint action is the traditional African community attitude to work which made it impossible for traditional Africans to have beggars within the village or clan. When a job had to be done, the whole community turned out with supplies and music and proceeded to sing and dance its way through to the successful conclusion of each particular chore. In this way work was converted into a pleasurable productive pastime (Emeakaroha 2002:3). Generally speaking, Emeakaroha reckoned that the goodwill and brotherly atmosphere, normally inspired and sustained during the work period, by music, justifies its usage but what is more important is the solidarity it fosters.

5.9.1.2 African sense of human dignity

Before the advent of Western civilization and culture to Africa, the sense of brotherhood and hospitality were some of the cardinal values of an indigenous African man. The African man's idea of security and its value depended on personal identification with and within the community (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor 2013:61). In other words, the African social definition of a person displays the human person in subsistent relationship, said in another way, the person as fundamentally "being-with" or "belonging to." Human dignity is to be seen in a community when one is participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community that gives him a sense of belonging.²⁰⁰ Human dignity in Africa is based on the philosophy of live-and let-live. As corroboration to this, Ifemesia (1979:41) affirms that human relation (dignity) in Africa is a way of life emphatically centred upon human interests and values, a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human beings.²⁰¹ People help one another without demanding immediate or an exact equivalent remuneration. Everyone is mindful that each person has something to contribute to the general welfare of the society (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor 2013:65). Human dignity is also seen in the level of communication and intimacy. Onwubiko (1999:20) holds that Africans have the capacity for talking to each other, not for the sake of arriving at a particular conclusion but merely to enjoy the communication for its own sake. Intimacy is a term not exclusive for particular friends but applying to a whole group of people who find themselves together whether through work or resident-requirements. People freely discuss their problems and look for suggestions and solutions together. Therefore, Africans believe that he, who discusses his affairs with others hardly, runs into difficulties or make mistakes in the execution of his plans (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor 2013:65).

5.9.1.3 African sense of respect and integrity

Comparatively, the sense of respect and integrity is to Africa as honour and shame is to first century Mediterranean society. Respect and integrity are status qualifiers because they form the very basis of African identity. In this light, seniority and status conditions respect and integrity because people are identified according to ascribed status or on the basis of some acquired status. In other words, people of status as well as the elderly are those who

²⁰⁰Membership of the community is emphasized more than member's individuality for a society is based more on obligations, than on individual rights and individuals assume their rights in exercise of the obligations, which makes a society a chain of inter-relationships (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor 2013:62).

²⁰¹ Said in another way, human relations are a desire to understand others, their needs and weakness, and their talents and abilities (Obiefuna 2008:10).

inevitably command respect and integrity. Africans place a lot of importance on the concept of hierarchy which is based partly on age and partly on status (Mbiti 1999:200). Often, those who control the ladder of hierarchy are the elderly, title holders, economically powerful and the educated because they are able to offer benevolent services to their communities. Emeakaroha (2002:8) has drawn inspiration from William Canton who says that: “Africans generally have deep and ingrained respect²⁰² for old age, and even when we can find nothing to admire in an old man, we will not easily forget that his grey hairs have earned him right to courtesy and politeness.” The care of the aged, as an African institution, is situated within the family. It is so cherished and so organised that there is no need, in the African setting, for nursing homes for the aged as they do exist today in Europe and America. The idea of old people's home and its introduction into Africa would lead to the abuse of the African sense of and respect for old age. Children prefer to take good care of their old parents by themselves and finally bury them because no one else can give enough attention as much as they can do.²⁰³ The respect for elders also has a corresponding responsibility, on the part of the elders in the spirit of the African proverb which says: “one good turn deserves another.” The reception of respect by the elders is dependent on the execution of that responsibility which is a reciprocal exercise of duties and rights, based on the old-young relationship. This is similar to the Patron – client reciprocity in the Mediterranean context which is a socially fixed relation of generalized reciprocity between social unequals in which the lower-status person in need (called a client) has his needs met by having recourse for favours to a higher-status, well-situated person (called a patron). By being granted the favour, the client implicitly promises to pay back the patron whenever and however the patron determines (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:388).

In Africa and particularly in Cameroon, one of those group of persons who enjoy ascribed and sometimes acquired respect and integrity are Chiefs or Fons as they are called in the North West region of Cameroon. Fons are patrons or earth priests who exercise spiritual control over the land. Hence, a Fon in every Grassfield fendom is called “owner of the land.”

²⁰² Africa elders are respected *et al* for these reasons. They are believed to be the teachers and directors of the young. The words of one's elders are like protection, thus the elders are also believed to say the truth and their words and instructions are heeded to for the promotion of good behaviour among the young. Emeakaroha (2002:8) says further that the elders are taken to be the repository of communal wisdom and therefore they are conceded leadership in the affairs of the people and of the reasons for this is the nearness of the elders to the ancestors.

²⁰³ In an African family, everyone is accommodated. This African sense of accommodation accounts for the reason why, in traditional African culture, the weak and the aged; the incurable, the helpless, the sick are affectionately taken care of in the comforting family atmosphere.

To this effect, Lang (2018:61) opines that this ownership of the land by the Fon is a result of his supposed connections with mythological founder-ancestors²⁰⁴ of his fondom. As custodians of the land, some of the most fertile areas of the land are reserved as the Fon's farm since any hungry person in the land would possibly be fed from the palace.²⁰⁵ For this reason, food is expected to be in abundance in the palace at all times.

5.9.1.4 African moral values

African traditional moral ethics has dual connotation: first, it refers to sets of social rules, values, and norms that guide the conduct of the people in a society; second it refers to the attitude and responses to such norms and rules...embedded in the whole society and aiming at directing the way of life as bad or good in order to live the communal and harmonious life (Husien & Kebede 2017:58). The rationale for moral rules then is to ensure the harmonious co-existence of members of the society through the systematic adjustment of their conflicting interest. Furthermore, the concept of morality in the African traditional society is based on the notion that man is never alone.

Opoku is cited to uphold the view that society is a series of interrelationships in which each one contributes to the welfare and the stability of the community, and avoids that which is disruptive or harmful to the community's life (Husien & Kebede 2017:58). African morality therefore is based on communal living in the sense that it fuses the society into one big whole. As a group oriented people, African societies²⁰⁶ lay great emphasis on strong ethical living which calls on their individuals to be self-discipline. Kinoti (1992:84) asserts that concrete moral values in Africa are those that deal with issues of justice, mutual assistance, truth, decency, respect for the elderly, love, a sense of holiness, compassion, sense of right and wrong, sense of good and bad, faithfulness in keeping to agreements, friendship, honesty, self-control, generosity, protecting women, the young and the poor, avoiding stealing and lies telling. Society itself is the norm for moral behaviour, hence, "an act is right if and only if it also conforms to the rules and regulations established by the community ..." (Mojola 1988:31). Kigongo (1991:24) wonders that in the present African society where there are

²⁰⁴ It is the ancestors who are believed to have chosen him and gave power and authority over his subjects. This explains why the Fons are sacred and have divine authority linked to the farming land and the supernatural spirits that own it (Lang 2018:61).

²⁰⁵ A palace is the official residence of the Fon which is constructed by the community.

²⁰⁶ In African Traditional Society, there is no "me" but "us;" not "my" but "ours." It is within these perspective and context of no "me" but "us" no "my" but "ours" in a given traditional African society that African ethics has been formulated (Mbiti 1969:32).

rapid and profound social changes and fundamental conflicts in people's social experience, one's ability to make choices²⁰⁷ in respect of moral behaviour is of paramount importance. Traditional morality did not prepare Africans for such choices because it emphasised conformity to the status quo and punished non-conformity.

Van der Walt (2003:56) admits that moral and ethical codes are derived from the ancestors and also from the ultimate interest and security of the ethnic group. Even though individuals might operate under national and universal moral codes, their loyalty and allegiance are first to their tribal or ethnic groups. The difference with mainline Christianity is that Christian moral codes (like love) have universal implications²⁰⁸ while African moral codes follow ethnic lines. It should be noted that one feels a sense of sin, shame and guilt mostly and always in terms of the in-group and ethnic community.²⁰⁹ For this reason, Turaki (1997:71) argues that the behaviour, attitudes and practices of individuals and groups within the context of the modern state do not carry with them any strong sense of sin, shame and guilt. It is on account of this that the state's moral and ethical codes are not always adhered to or respected. They are usually considered to be of the outside world; hence they lack legitimacy and authority.

Contemporary urbanisation has not neutralised but strengthened ethnicity. In the urban setting an African is lost in the impersonality of today's relationships from which he takes his refuge in tribal groupings. Tribal identities today play an important role in the competitive struggle for all-too-scarce political and economic assets. And because the goods and services are not distributed freely and equally, but according to ethnic criteria like in Cameroon, ethnicity is regarded as discrimination and as serious injustice (Van der Walt 2003:59). Waruta (1992:134) observes that new groups not based on ethnic relations but on class interests such as the rich, the elite, the military, clergy, teachers associations, taxi drivers unions, motor cycle riders alias "Okada" and so forth, are now on the increase to protect their class interests.

²⁰⁷ Having impinged considerably on the freedom of the individual ... the traditional society left very little room and opportunity for one to make a deliberate rational choice in the realm of ethical conduct (Kigongo 1991:24).

²⁰⁸ In Christianity responsibility and accountability are to God and all fellow human beings. It is not limited to one's own ethnic group. The scope of one's duty has been enlarged to embrace the totality of humanity, transcending tribal values and interests (Van der Walt 2003:58).

²⁰⁹ This is actually a pitfall in African morality because there is no need for universal social concern. The neighbour is narrowly defined as the in-group, while all others may be deceived and exploited as fair game. Justice applies only to the in-group (Van der Walt 2003:58).

These new forms of associations are posing a greater danger and threat to society as a whole than the earlier ethnicity and tribalism.

The African moral value which is based on the concept that man is never alone is very close to dyadic personality in the Mediterranean context. Dyadic personality was characteristic of first century Mediterranean society in which people were never considered as individuals. Dyadic persons belong to a society that is group oriented and live a collective way of life purposely because people in that society derived their identity from the group to which they belonged. People in this culture are primarily part of the group in which they find themselves. They exist solely and only because of that group in which they are embedded and without the group, they would cease to be (Malina & Neyrey 1991c:73).

5.9.1.5 African sense of time reckoning

It has been noted in section 5.2.7 above that the question of time is of little or no academic concern to African people in their traditional life. For them, time is simply a composition of events²¹⁰ which have occurred or which are immediately to occur... The most significant consequence of this is that, according to traditional concepts, time is a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past, a present and virtually no future (Mbiti 1990:16). Emeakaroha (2002:7) argues that when Mbiti talks of time as being of no academic importance among the African people, he is thinking of time in terms of “education” which he, in this context, must be considered as purely western cultural academics. Time on the one hand is also reckoned by such events as the first and second cock-crow, sunrise,²¹¹ sunset, overhead sun, or length of shadow. On the other hand time is socialized and reckoned by meal-times,²¹² wine-tapping times, time to carry water, fetch firewood and of return from the farm. Emeakaroha (2002:8) says further that time is polychronous in the sense that a person can do three or more things within a given period but simultaneously. Linear time thinks of them being done successively. For instance, a woman in a typical Nso village could be doing her cooking, at

²¹⁰ In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe (1958: 11, 19) observes references to time concept on African thought. He wrote that during the planting season, Okonkwo worked daily on his farm from Cock crow until chicken went to roost. Again he says that “the drought continues for eight market weeks...”

²¹¹ The rising of the sun is an event which is recognized by the whole community. It does not matter therefore whether the sun rises at 5:00am or at 7:00 am, so long as it rises. When a person says that he will meet at sun rise, it does not matter whether the meeting takes place at 5:00 am or 7:00am as long as it is during the general period of sunrise. For the people concerned, time is meaningful at the time of the event and not at the mathematical moment (Mbiti 1990:19).

²¹² The use of meal periods does not imply that all eat their meals at exactly the same time, but that everyone has a reasonably accurate idea of what is meant. Meal time is when the food is ready (Emeakaroha 2002:7)

the same time cracking her “eggusi;” she may still within this period attend to her baby and would be prepared to attend to anything that may come up. Some authors have depicted this polychronous concept and use of time in Africa with the image of an African woman who could be pregnant, while at the same time carrying a baby on her back and at the same time carrying a load on her head and her farm tools in hand. Hence, combining responsibilities is an aspect of African culture that is directly influenced by the sense of communalism and of time. Man is not a slave of time; instead he “makes” time as much as he wants²¹³ (Mbiti 1990:19).

5.9.1.6 African means of non-verbal communication

It is often said that action speaks louder than words (Bovee *et al.* 2003:48). Nonverbal communication could be defined as behaviours other than words themselves (non-linguistic phenomena) which form a socio-culturally shared coding system. These behaviours are typically used with intent, typically interpreted as intentional and deployed constantly among members of a socio-cultural community (Leva *et al.* 2017:3). These behaviours, in their views have consensually recognizable interpretations.²¹⁴ Nonverbal gesticulation forms part of communicative behaviour and includes body language such as facial expressions like smiling, frowning, eye contact or different types of physical gestures (Ntuli 2012:21).²¹⁵ Though the use of nonverbal communication codes is, in some cases are arbitrary, Leva *et al.* (2017:3) have argued that such micro expressions as sadness, anger, fear, disgust, contempt, happiness and surprise are universal and form a specific typology of facial expressions that are brief, involuntary and hardly faked.

²¹³ After the post-colonial era, Babalola and Alokun (2013:145) argue that the enlightened and the educated among the African people see in western education, a better way of time consideration. This was as a result of the fact that the new system was more exact and precise. At this period, both African concept of time and (the western, the linear concept of time) were used by the Africans. On this, More (1986: 5-6) wrote that at the period, philosophical discussions on time have been concerned with the distinction between two different notions of temporality, a distinction between subjective time on the one hand and objective time on the other, lived or experienced time from abstract or mathematical time. At the pre literate period, the African people were not empowered with the educational skills of reading and writing. There was no written record of any sort. Their knowledge was transmitted orally from generation to generation. Despite this impediment, the people still calculate time in their own way (Babalola & Alokun 2013:145).

²¹⁴ In interpersonal communication, nonverbal codes are regularly used by communicators to circumstantially telegraph their private thoughts.

²¹⁵ Leva *et al.* (2017:3) are of the opinion that non-verbal communication should not be limited to communicational experiences like body language (kinesics) and touching behaviours (haptics), nonverbal communication should however be extended to systematic processes such as intellectual manipulations of the mind and semiotics (study of signs as elements of communication).

5.10 CONCLUSION

An examination of the social, cultural, economic, religious, and the political context of Africa has demonstrated a number of contemporary issues that animate the African worldview.

Africa is a robust continent with a lot of potentials that can conveniently handle the needs of the growing African population, if well managed. Despite the fact that most of the economic potential of Africa come from agriculture, the continent is still suffering from food shortages. African leaders have not been fair to their African citizens. Corrupt regimes have taken away the treasure of Africa and allowed the people to suffer. God once spoke through the prophet Ezekiel 34:8: “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock”. This biblical dictum seem to be haunting contemporary Africa. Nevertheless, all is not lost. There are hopes that Africa can emerge and catch-up with the rest of the world. The West had done much in colonial times to civilized Africa, but their continuous interference in African affairs is seemingly counterproductive. Finally, African contextual matters which have been taken into consideration in this chapter will enlighten and illuminate the interpretation of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard from an African perspective in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Reading the parable

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter will first take into consideration the social-scientific analysis of Matthew 20:1-15 which is an application from the social scientific models of the Mediterranean context raised in Section 4.2 above. In addition, since the context of this study is that of Africa, the vineyard parable is brought to bear on an African Biblical interpretation as applications of models of the African context to Matthew 20:1-15. It was said earlier in the research methodology in chapter three that this study is a combination of two exegetical methods, namely social-scientific criticism (SSC) and an African Biblical Interpretation (ABI). The need for this combined method is compelled by the awareness that scripture speaks to people differently, depending on their context. Neyrey (1991: xvi), speaking from a historical perspective, likewise states that every historical interpreter approaches the biblical text with some model of society and social interaction in mind. The following dynamic text that has resulted from a literal translation of Matthew 20:1-15 (see Appendix 2) is what is used as a working text for interpretation in this chapter.

¹ Similar then is the kingdom of heaven to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire workmen together into his vineyard. ² And when he had agreed with the workmen of a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And he went out around third hour, he saw others standing in the market place idle; ⁴ and to them he said “you also you go into the vineyard and whatever is right, I will give to you. ⁵ And they went away. And again, he went out about the sixth and also the ninth hour and he did likewise. ⁶ And around the eleventh hour, he went out, and found others standing and he says to them, “why are you standing here all the day idle?” ⁷ They say unto him, “Because no one has hired us.” He says to them, “You go also you into the vineyard.” ⁸ When it was evening, the owner of the vineyard says to his manager, “Call the workmen and pay to them the wages, beginning from the last to the first” ⁹ And those who came around the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius. ¹⁰ And when the first ones came, they thought that they should have received more, they likewise received a denarius each themselves. ¹¹ But when they had received, they murmured the master of the house ¹² saying “these last ones made one hour and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat”. ¹³ And he

answered one of them and said “Friend, I am not doing you wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what is yours and go. I wish to give to these last ones as I also give to you. ¹⁵ Or is it not proper for me to do what I wish with my own? Or is your eye evil because I am good?

(Mt 20:1-15)

6.2 SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

Social Scientific criticism (SSC) investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language intended to communicate between composers and audiences. Elliot (2011:1) specifies that SSC is a sub-discipline of exegesis (specifically historical-criticism), not a new or independent methodological paradigm. It complements the other sub-disciplines of the historical-critical method. Social-scientific criticism (SSC) of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences (Elliot 1993:7). Social scientific models of the Mediterranean context that are applicable to the interpretation of Matthew 20:1-15 are the following as discussed below.

6.2.1 Honour and shame

In the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, the kingdom is compared with the actions of an owner, someone who owns a vineyard (Mt 20:1). The owner, when read in the context of available contemporary evidence, most probably was one of the wealthy sub-elites who owned large estates and converted the land to viticulture dedicated to the production of export crops (Van Eck & Kloppenborg 2015:6). The owner is acting like a typical Mediterranean patron (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:101). Only the wealthy could afford to engage in medium and large-scale intensive, export orientated viticulture, therefore the owner was undoubtedly well-to-do and a person of acquired honour.²¹⁶ Being in a position to employ workers was honourable in itself. In the depiction, all the workers are paid the same amount (Mt 20:10). The behaviour of the vineyard owner in respecting the terms of the agreement with the workers who were hired first by paying each a denarius as agreed was honourable at a time

²¹⁶ Even though the passage does not say how the vineyard owner acquired his land, perhaps through expropriation, or default on loans, or as gift estates from conquered lands or as simple purchase from failing farmers. It will be an exaggeration to suppose that the original audience of the parable would think that the owner was evil and a thief (see Malina 1981:84).

when there was a lot of social exploitation of workers. Justice has been served. In an honour and shame society, the problem of the early workers was not so much about the equal pay that they received, but the honour which they thought that they had by being recruited first which would have been acknowledged in some way either by word of appreciation or in adding their pay. Previously, they had tried to preserve some small honour by not going out to demand for work but rather stand in expectation at the market place (Mt 20:6).

In an attempt by the early workers to ask for what was not in the agreement, they disgraced themselves and carried shame because their request is not granted (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:101). They were attempting to enter the social space of the vineyard owner with a challenge of grumbling (Mt 20:11) but this does not work. The early workers fell into what Bechtel (1991:49) called the “emotional response of shame” because of their inadequacy or failure to live up to societal ideals of staying within their expected limits, trying to reap from where they did not sow. The understanding of the early workers is still payment according to work done which is a centuries-old understanding of justice (Bailey 2008:360). But this is not the case in this text. The parable presents the overpaid, and not the underpaid. This shows that the vineyard owner makes a redefinition of the society’s understanding of justice from payment according to merit to payment according to grace (need). For the vineyard owner, justice is providing for those who are at the verge of facing starvation. He is not only just but also merciful and compassionate which are embellishments to justice (Bailey 2008:361). At the end of the day, the late workers go home happy and the vineyard owner is honoured not only as trustworthy and honest, but also as a generous man (Kistemaker 2007:74). The honourable vineyard owner considers justice to be more than equal application of the law. Justice for him includes respect for the dignity of those in need and a deep concern for their welfare (Bailey 2008:363).

6.2.2 Kinship application in Matthew 20:8

The vineyard owner in the parable in Matthew 20:1-15 treats his workers as members of his family by adoption. All workers are treated the same without any discrimination because he feels for all workers and wants all of them to be fed. He becomes the incarnation of a family head or clan head and considers all his workers as members of the in-group who are legitimate to feed equally from the family resources. He redefines his own kin, not as those born in his own household but rather as whoever accepts to work for him in his vineyard nor

matter the number of hours that are put into the work. This can be compared to Jesus' assertion in Matthew 19:29 that "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life." Faithful and happy workers in the parable become recipients of this hundredfold pay and are committed to love one another completely like any natural family. Grumbling members²¹⁷ of the family who do not want other family members to benefit from the family head are rebuked and are in danger of being expelled from the family.

6.2.3 Patronage and clientism in Matthew 20:4, 8 and 9

The vineyard owner in Matthew 20:1-15 pays his workers as was agreed but the favouritism that is shown to the late workers is not because he wants a status report but because of his generosity. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:101) are of the opinion that anything over and above the agreed wage is indicative of a previous patron-client relationship. The patron shows patronage by giving to the last the same as to the first (Mt 20:14). This is favour that one expects from a patron and non-clients get merely what is their due. In Matthew 20:1, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a patron. Such a patron must have characteristics different from other patrons in the Greco-Roman world. In announcing the arrival of the kingdom, Jesus gathers clients for the kingdom and sets Himself up as a broker.²¹⁸ Malina (1981:81) argues that it was this kind of dyadic relationship as a broker that bothered Jesus' critics when he ate with "sinners and tax-collectors." For Jesus' critics like Pharisees and teachers of the law, Jesus was accepting invitations such as eating with sinners and tax-collectors without looking for possibility of reciprocity, with likely results of imbalance of society (Moxnes 1991:251), he healed many without asking them to follow him (Mt 9:35). The workers in the vineyard parable are privileged to work for a patron who is likened to the kingdom of heaven, as a consequence, they enjoyed the patronage of God Himself and they become clients of the kingdom.

²¹⁷ The early workers who grumbled (Mt 20:11) against the owner of the vineyard can be likened to the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son who refused to forgive the junior brother (Lk 15:28) and refused to celebrate his return. The elder brother was loveless towards his wayward kin (DeSilva 2000:165). By so doing, he breached the kinship ethic by showing no concern of working together with the family members to redeem his kin from the dishonourable lifestyle into which he had fallen. His unforgiving spirit places him in a dangerous position of losing everything.

²¹⁸ Crossan (1991a:60) defines the notion of a broker as one who sustains a double dyadic alliance, one as client to a patron and another as patron to a client. In fact Jesus plays this role of a broker in most of the gospels because he puts prospective clients in touch with the heavenly patron. It is Boissevan (1974:148-149) who makes the difference between a broker and a patron as follows: A patron has resources such as land, goods and power, and always stays ahead of his competitors. A broker, on the other hand is someone who has special contact with someone who has resources like power and land.

6.2.4 Limited good application in Matthew 20:6

In the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, Ruiz (2007:17) sponges on the idea of Bruce J. Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh that day-labourers were economically among the poorest persons in the society. They were usually landless peasants who had lost their ancestral lands and drifted into cities and villages looking for work. Moreover, loss of land usually meant loss of family and the supporting network that implied, such persons were often desperate (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:101). The labourers in the parable are those that had no assured protection and no regular work opportunity and hence, more vulnerable to be deprived of their basic wages even on rare occasions when they do find work to do. The parable presents the severity of the struggle for survival by the indication in Matthew 20:6 that the owner went out about the eleventh hour and still found job seekers who have been standing all day long and doing nothing. The response of the last group that waited all day is that we are here, “because no one has hired us” (Mt. 20:7a). When their turn came, they did not even bother to bargain for a decent wage, but just grabbed the opportunity for work that came their way. Perhaps, their bargaining power was lost on account of their failure to find work the whole day. All that mattered now was to do the work that came on hand even if it meant not being adequately paid. Perhaps, this is an indication of the scarcity of work available in relation to its demand.

Since the main concern of day-labourers was to feed their families, lack of work also meant scarcity of food. Comparing the situation of day-labourers in the Mediterranean world to those of twenty-first-century day-labourers across the United States, the January 2006 Los Angeles Times shows that: Day-labourers regularly suffer employer abuse. Almost half of all day-labourers experienced at least one instance of wage theft. Workplace injuries are common. One in five day-labourers has suffered a work related injury, and more than half of those who were injured did not receive medical care. Police often unfairly target day-labourers insulted and arrested them while they search for employment (Ruiz 2007:21) indicating that honour and respect for human right was in limited supply. In Matthew 20:15, the owner is presented as being generous because he pays all the workers the same. This is because he is seen within the context of a limited-good-society. The owner’s confrontation²¹⁹ with his early workers can be explain in terms of the quest for limited good which is manifested in the form of envy (are you envious because I am generous- Mt 20:15). The

²¹⁹ The protesters advocate for merit while the vineyard owner advocates for grace.

vineyard owner has a vision of a society of limitless material and immaterial goods where one person's gain would not imply another person's expense. In fact he wants a society of little or no anxiety for food. By attempting to transform a society of want of food into a society of abundance through equal payment, his generosity was misinterpreted by the early workers as injustice, even though they received the day's pay which they and their employer had agreed upon at the outset (Boucher 1981:90).

6.2.5 Challenge and response in Matthew 20:12

In the context of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:11), when those who were hired first received their share of the remuneration of one denarius, they began to grumble against the vineyard owner. Then they challenged the owner saying: "These men who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day" (Mt 20:12). The vineyard owner refuses the accusation of injustice and justifies himself with external control. It is generosity or goodness (ἐγὼ ἀγαθός) that has pushed him to do what he is doing. By this, the Vineyard owner gives justification why he is not unjust. He further affirms that his decision to give all the same amount is not misleading because his intension is to provide food for those who would have gone hungry with their families. In appealing to external responsibility, he shifts the blame from himself to action which is beyond his control. Finally, the vineyard owner gives a counter challenge. "Is it not proper for me to do what I wish with my own?" (οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὃ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἔμοῖς;). The challenger who is the spokesperson of the early workers does not offer any response as a negative reciprocity because he accepts the defeat. The point is that when people tend to concentrate on what others are getting, they fail to see their own blessings in life. The verdict of the public is that there is loss of honour by the challenger (the early workers) in favour of the vineyard owner.

6.2.6 Evil eye (πονηρός ὀφθαλμός) in Matthew 20:15

Bearing in mind the characteristics of Evil Eye belief and behaviour as it was practiced in the first century Mediterranean world, evil eye accusation in the parable of Workers in the Vineyard may have shaped its content. From a literary perspective, the overall structure of the parable is situated within the account of Jesus' teaching and ministry in Judaea following his departure from Galilee (19:1) and preceding his entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11). The reference of the Evil Eye in the parable's climax indicates the association of the Evil Eye

with envy. To this effect Elliott (1992:60) outlines the conventional stages in the envy process in the following way: First, an occurrence involving a vineyard owner and fellow hired day-labourers who are on the same social level. Second, an interaction between the labourers and the owner which is witnessed by the persons involved and which allows a comparison of status or treatment made. Third, a comparison is then actually made by the early workers. Fourth, as a result of this comparison, the early workers sense a situation of unfairness or lack of balance in the interaction and a feeling of inferiority and indignation that those who started work in the morning have been cheated or unfairly treated. Fifth, the result is that envy is directed at the one hour workers who are thought to be favourably treated and to the vineyard owner who is thought to be responsible for this unfair treatment, coupled with the malevolent wish that the privileged party (the vineyard owner) be disprivileged and his possessions be destroyed. The lingering of this envious and malicious feeling is hopeless because it is feelings which is not culturally permissible nor acknowledge (Elliott 1992:60). In an evil eye culture like the one in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, such an overt expression of envious and malicious feelings like this (“these men who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day” Mt 20:12) expressed by one of the early workers will be perceived as evidence of possessing an evil eye and will often be challenged with an evil eye accusation meant to expose and denounce the offending individuals (Elliott 1992:60).

It is also important to note about this unusual payment sequence as Elliott (1992:60) says that, the first hired are allowed to witness the prior payment of the last hired. This presented the opportunity for a comparison to be made which would not have taken place had the first been paid first and then left before witnessing the payment of the last hired. Thus the payment sequence is absolutely crucial to the dynamic of the story and this reversal is what elicits the envy. The bone of contention by the grumbling party which leads to envy is that, by making these last equal to us in pay, you the owner, have demeaned and disfavoured us. Their gain entails our loss in dignity and status. This focus on their supposed loss of status and dignity blinded them to the actual goodness of the owner. Finally, with a concluding rhetorical question (“are you envious because I am generous” Mt 20:15b) he contrasts his goodness to the evil of his accusers and exposes them for the evil-eyed enviers that they are. The malicious claim of injustice is discredited and they are exposed to public shame (Elliott 1992:61). One can conclude from the silence and the shame carried by the envious first workers that the evil eye in this particular passage does not work because the compassion and

generosity of the vineyard owner contrasts with the envy of the early workers and goodness overshadows evil. This would have been the final verdict of the public.

6.2.7 External responsibility in Matthew 20:8 and 14

It was believed that people within the Mediterranean Society of Jesus' day had some social duties towards their peers and the society as members of a dyadic community. This was triggered by the Jewish idea of external responsibility. The vineyard owner in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard saw the destitution of day-labourers waiting to get work at the market place for a whole day as the result of the bad social system in which they lived. What the vineyard owner did by paying a full day's wage even to the one hour workers was his responsibility to feed those who were at the verge of starvation. The early workers misunderstood his intention and saw it as some form of injustice in payment. The vineyard owner is compelled by external responsibility to do what he did and will not succumb to any form of judgement by the early workers. His external responsibility clashed with the societal economic notion of pay according to work done. Kulikovsky (2007:5) understands this kind of generosity which is caused by external responsibility, and says that the existence of people in need in a world of plenty is fundamentally unjust, and that this warrants preferential treatment for those with the greatest needs.

6.2.8 Aspects of the theology in Matthew 20:1-15

The purpose of the parable is not to provide a practical guide for corporate economics or the management of a vineyard or an example of how employers, even Christian ones, are to treat their employees (Long 1997:224). Furthermore Long (1997:224) assumes that any company that paid workers hired in December the same wages as those who worked a full twelve months would soon have trouble finding anybody at the jobsite from January to November. The aim however is to fracture the normal and practical patterns of thinking and force readers and listeners to think new thoughts about themselves, about others and about God as Matthew intends the parable to be seen (Long 1997:224). The theology of the parable can be read from the following aspects which are found in the story.

6.2.8.1 Generosity from a theological perspective

The focus and concern of the vineyard owner is always about the workers. The text does not focus on the crops or the profit of the owner. Normally one would have expected the story in

Long's view to say that the vineyard owner hired some workers early in the morning, but when he found out that there was more crops that these early workers could not handle, he went out for more workers (Long 1997:225). The story rather points to the fact that the owner went out for more workers because he found them standing around without work (Mt 20:3, 5, 6). Said in another way, the owner is motivated by their need for work so as to feed themselves and their families, and not his need for workers.²²⁰ This is likened to the character of God who is a gracious father, who does not discriminate between people on account of unavailable opportunities. His generosity is for all. He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. The basic needs for support and survival takes precedence over the opportunity afforded by a person. The generosity of the vineyard owner thus overcomes people's expectations, making it possible for him to create new possibilities of relationships. Jeremias (1972:37) is of the opinion that the vineyard owner feels a sense of pity for the poverty of the late workers that he allows them to be paid a full day's wages. In this case the parable does not depict an arbitrary action, but the behaviour of a large-hearted man who is compassionate and generous, full of sympathy for the poor. Matthew likens the owner to the Kingdom of God because God grants unmerited favour to the less privileged (Candy 2009:37). The parable therefore is about the owner's generosity which cautions against stinginess (cf. Mt 19:16-22; Lk 12:15-21). In Matthew's theology, the vineyard owner is free to do what he wills with what he owns. He uses his freedom to be generous and open wide the floodgates of compassion (cf. Long 1997:226). Generosity is characteristic of a patron and not of an employer. It is about fair treatment rather than injustice. The vineyard owner by his generous act tries to enter into patron-client relationship with everyone whom he encounters irrespective of whether there was a prior negotiation or not.

6.2.8.2 The sin of ingratitude and grumbling Matthew 20:11-12

The notion of limited good, which was so typical of agonistic peasant communities presumes that all goods and resources were in limited and scarce supply so that one's gain could come only at the loss of another person (Malina 2001:81–107). Such a notion builds up unhealthy competition and fuelled feelings of envy toward successful rivals. Van Eck (2011:6) explains that the word for "envy," *invidia*, is a composite of *in* + *videre* and literally means "to overlook." Consequently *invidia* or envy involves the notion of "looking over" something or

²²⁰ Linnemann (1966:82) says that there is no provision in the parable that the vineyard owner was in desperate need of more workers.

someone with the desire to damage or destroy it. Envy is therefore associated with evil eye which has been explained in Section 6.2.6 above. Grumbling comes as an aspect of ingratitude which manifests as three dangers in the service of a disciple. For Inrig (1991:183), the first danger in service economics is the danger of a commercial spirit. He says that our services to God do not make God to be a debtor to his servants; but if we leave God to decide on the reward, we will be overwhelmed by his generosity. The second danger in the view of Inrig is the danger of a competitive spirit. When the eyes of the early workers were focused on what others have received, they were unable to receive their own wages with joy.²²¹ Nothing is more inappropriate in discipleship than comparison and competition. When people become uncomfortable with what the master is doing in the life of others, they are in danger of becoming losers. Inrig (1991:184) proceeds to the third danger in grumbling which is a complaining spirit. When the early workers received their share, they began to grumble against the vineyard owner (Mt 20:11). They deceived themselves by thinking that as contract workers (and the others not), they should have some privileges. If the master is a patron, then he has no favourites. He is the one doing the employment which should rather make workers to be humble. Clients are expected to sing the praises of their patron rather than criticise him and become ungrateful servants.²²² When people focused on their supposed deprivation and lament the cost of their discipleship, they missed the grace and generosity of God (Inrig 1991:185). After exploring the social scientific interpretation of what is generally known as the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, as an African reader, attention is now focused on a cross-cultural reading from an African perspective.

6.3 AFRICAN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION (ABI)

ABI is a rereading that considers biblical texts as a challenge to African theologians, specifically in this generation of instability where solutions are being sought for, to the various problems that plague African societies especially Cameroon that is currently battling with a civil war orchestrated by about half a decade marginalisation of the English minority in Cameroon by the French majority which has resulted into the Anglophone crisis. ABI is a contextual method of biblical criticism that presents a paradigm shift because of the new demands emanating from the various questions raised by Africans in their quest to appropriate biblical texts. Essentially, it seeks to make a to-and-fro move from: reader – text

²²¹ Saul was so delighted in his victory over the Philistines, but when he heard the women praising David more than him, his heart became envious and he sought for David's life (1 Sam. 18:1-16)

²²² It was the continual murmuring and complaining of Israel in the wilderness that aroused God's anger.

– context (as in the “traditional” approaches) to, new context (African) – new text (contextualised text) – new reader (African reader). This section will employ the African context discussed in Chapter 5 above to interpret Matthew 20:1-15.

6.3.1 African Plantations – Matthew 20:1

The equivalence to vineyards in Africa is plantations. Only rich elites in Africa can afford to establish a plantation. Common plantations in Cameroon are rubber, palm oil, cacao, banana, and cotton which are all cash crops meant for export. Most of the plantations are owned by the government and one of the characteristics in the establishment of plantations in Africa is land grabbing.²²³ Simo (2011:4) argues that while traditional and modern elites clearly play significant roles in land grabbing in the NWR today, so too, do national factors and/or government agro-allied industries such as the CDC, PAMOL and UNVDA. The increasing direct participation of the various actors above in the capitalist-oriented economy is linked with the preponderance of commercialization production and the existence of the required economic and political spaces. Contrary to the African sense of human dignity and solidarity, some elites and government companies that are involved in plantation agriculture refuse to pay their workers, leaving them in want. The vineyard owner in Matthew 20:1-15 demonstrates an exemplary character of a humane person and is portrayed as a just and trustworthy person (Kistemaker 2007:74).

6.3.2 African solidarity – Matthew 20:3-6

Viewed from African solidarity, the African idea of meeting at the community centre is analogous to the idea in Matthew 20:3-6 where the vineyard owner went out at the third hour (Mt 20:3), at the sixth hour and the ninth hour (Mt 20:5) and finally the eleventh hour (Mt 20:6) and found people standing at the market place (agora). Most community centres in African villages are equally market places. If the incidence that is described in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard were in an African community, it will be normal that many people, some of whom are also job seekers will be found in the community centres for the

²²³ Simo (2011:2) paints a picture in which Land grabbing has become a veritable threat to the rural economies in the North West Region (NWR) of Cameroon that is increasingly driven by a sort of agrarian capitalism. The phenomenon can be viewed as a new form of material accumulation characterised by self-centredness and prestige by a minority of privilege citizens or superior social groups. The strategies used are market-based rather than resource-based. Thus driving force behind any land deal is personal enrichment and aggrandisement, and does not take into account the changing social, economic and political interests and needs of the peasantry. The politics and governance of land acquisition will change when women and men engage in public discourse and play different roles in decision-making processes and the implementation of such decisions.

whole day. From an African world view, the early worker who expected more during payment but indignantly received the same one denarius and grumbled (Mt 20:11) would have quickly formed a solidarity group for one person to present their grievance. This can be seen from the fact that none of the first workers had a contrary opinion to the complaint of injustice. Many African peasant farmers may be poor like day-labourers in the Mediterranean world but African solidarity has ensured that none in the community should be a beggar (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor 2013:64). The African idea of interdependence is a fundamental principle of life because a tree does not make a forest. This ideology of interdependence recognizes that unity is strength. It promotes discipline, reduces crime and humanizes relations. The action of the vineyard owner to pay those who were hired last the same as those who were hired first (Mt 20:14) coincided with the African sense of solidarity with the less privilege.

6.3.3 Human dignity – Matthew 20:3 and 6

Taking into consideration the sense of human dignity, those job seekers who were standing at the market place in Matthew 20:3, 6 were discussing. When seen from an African world view, they would have been sharing their life experiences with each other and looking for suggestions and solutions together in the process of waiting for a job opportunity. In an African community, this will be a normal pattern with the African sense of free communication. Standing at the market place all day long as noted in Matthew 20:6 is analogous to the situation of high unemployment which is characteristic of Africa where the unemployed are in a weak position and desperate to the extent of accepting any work at any price just to make a living because they have no bargaining power (cf Schottroff 1984:131). Day-labourers in Africa are ready to do such jobs as: construction labourers, gardeners, painters, roofers, house cleaners, carpenter, farm workers, dishwashers, car washers, and cooks (cf Ruiz 2007:21). The vineyard owner behaved more like a good African patron who could help People without demanding immediate or an exact equivalent work. Again, the owner demonstrated the African philosophy of live-and let-live by paying all the workers the same amount (Mt 20:14) so that they can feel a sense of human dignity by realising their meal for the day. Finally, the owner had a humane attitude and made his late workers to feel a sense of belonging.

6.3.4 Respect and integrity – Matthew 20:8

If the vineyard owner were in an African community, he would have been endowed with respect and integrity; he would have possibly been a “Fon.” He is a land owner and needs workers for his farms as a Cameroonian Fon, title holder or elite does. He is so generous by paying his workers who work only for one hour a wage that can feed their families and not necessarily a deserving wage. As traditional leaders in their communities, Fons are endowed with the responsibility to feed those who are in danger of starvation. Fons have the sole authority to be generous as they desire without fear of interrogation (Mt 20:15) so far as it is for the good and service of his people. It is strictly forbidden for subjects to grumble²²⁴ when the Fon speaks and gives out orders. Those who do so are seen as potential dangers to the “throne” of the Fon and are suspects of evil eye carriers. This explains why Fons as African patrons are sacred and have divine authority linked to the land and the supernatural spirits that own it (Lang 2018:61). The vineyard owner in the text questions the prerogative of the grumbler: οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὃ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς; ἢ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου πονηρός ἐστίν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀγαθός εἰμι; Is it not permissible for me to do what I want with things that are mine? Or is your eye evil because I am generous? (Mt 20:15). Conclusively this will mean that if this parable were told in an African setting, the vineyard owner would have been first an elderly²²⁵ person and one with similar characteristics to that of a Fon or other African patron of respect and integrity.

Matthew 20:8 also indicates that the owner had a manager. Most African business owners have managers who employ workers and later on pay their wages. One of the unfortunate situations with employment in Africa is that merit in many cases is not taken into consideration by employers. Some people who are working in private and government structures are doing so not necessarily because they are too qualified to be there, but because, they are family members or tribe’s persons of the director or have been sent there, by someone who knows the director (God-father) or an influential person in the society (Ndeh 2015:6). Some people bribe their way into job positions. Some managers simply keep their workers for many months without pay. On the 19th November 2019, workers of the

One of the common characteristics of the Grassfield culture is the traditional religious belief that land is the ownership of the Supreme Being. This explains why traditional functionaries such as a Fon exercises spiritual control over the land as a representative of the Supreme Being. Hence, to grumble against the Fon’s orders, is to grumble against the Supreme Being.

²²⁵ Strictly speaking the term “elder” may not necessarily refer to an old person, but one who has been charged with special duties such as leader of people, “family head” traditional, religious or political leader. A Fon may be a young man but by his portfolio, he has become an elder.

Cameroon Development Corporation, CDC in Cameroon went on a strike action because of 15 months of unpaid salaries. A substantive cost to employers occurs when financially troubled employees use work hours to deal with personal money matters. The use of time on the job to handle personal issues results in productivity losses (Ali *et al.* 2013:70).

6.3.5 African moral values – Matthew 20:3-7

If the Vineyard parable was told to Africans, it would not have been strange that people who are waiting to be employed present themselves in the village square which is the community centre and discuss together while in the process of waiting. Their discussion may be based on sharing their life experiences and also the latest news and happenings in the community. When they meet, there is nothing like “mind your own business” but they see themselves as one person sharing common problems. When they meet once or twice, they start to see themselves as brothers of a common heritage. If any of them is bereaved or have an occasion to celebrate, others, by dint of the fact they are friends come to condole and to celebrate and an invitation is not needed.

From the African viewpoint, Husien and Kebede (2017:60) affirm that moral principles are primarily concerned with the maintenance of good relationship with others as opposed to the maintenance of justice and individual rights in the West. In Africa what is right is what connects people together; what separate people are wrong. The workers who are called from the “agora” to go to work in Matthew 20:3-7, could easily go and start working without any prior arrangement of the wages because they trusted that their patron will not deceive them. In an African setting this will not be a problem because an elder of that calibre is expected to behave himself particularly towards those who are struggling to survive in life.²²⁶ If he refuses to pay this will become a community matter and everyone will talk about it. Basically, this accounts for the fact that African morality is concerned with the goodness of all human being. Consequently, the essence of goodness and good life in African traditional thought has to do with doing well and not to harm others (Husien & Kebede 2017:60). The generous attitude exhibited by the owner in Matthew 20:14 would have been a very welcomed and recognized way of behaviour in Africa. In Matthew 20:11, the early workers grumbled because the action of the vineyard owner (paying everyone the same) contrasts

²²⁶ What enforces African morality is the awareness that ancestors, who are moral archetypes are watching. In the other word, the significance of the ancestor consists in that they watch over the affairs of the living member of the family; helping, and punishing the delinquent (Aden & Olira 2017:62).

sharply with their natural thoughts and this brought a crisis and confusion. This can be likened to a kind of moral crisis that African morality is facing which contradicts with previous moral code and leads to confusion.²²⁷

Elderly people lament daily that they are meeting strange behaviours that shock them: homosexuality, dishonesty, corruption, crime, violence and many other things which never was. Middle-aged people lament about children they cannot control. The youth complain of a lack of example from the older members of society (Van der Walt 2003:53-54). These unexpected behaviours have amounted to a lot of grumbling about African moral code. Despite the challenges to African morality, we are not however saying that everything black is beautiful (Van der Walt 2003:66). Traditional African morality has weaknesses as well. Therefore one needs to be self-critical and not simply accept everything because it is “traditional.” Times have evolved and Africans must move with the times. Finally, the complainant in Matthew 20:15 is rebuked because the grumbler is standing on the way of a virtuous deeds like generosity. Motlhabi (1986:91, 95) and Van der Walt (2003:53) have drawn attention to the fact that equivalents of the Ten Commandments, like prohibitions to steal, murder, commit adultery, tell lies or deceive, are encountered in the traditional African concept of a virtuous life. Gelfand (1987:65, 82) on his part has categorized both the good qualities of African morality and their vices. The most important virtues are: respect, love, compassion, kindness, generosity, truth, rectitude, humility, self-discipline, forgiveness, mercy, pity, sufficiency, repentance, trust, giving, strength, patience, courage, hard work, unselfishness and the willingness to share whatever one has, no matter how little it may be. The vices which are rejected by traditional society and compared to “shameful deeds” in the Mediterranean context are: abuse, lying, deceit, stealing, adultery, drunkenness, violent quarrelling, pride, jealousy, covetousness, hatred, ingratitude, anger, negligence, weakness, assault, provocation and selfishness.

²²⁷ Eitel (1986:1) describes the present African as someone between two worlds: unable to part with the old and not yet of the new world. In a limbo between these two worlds a dichotomy permeates his moral behaviour. Kinoti (1992:73) draws attention to the same phenomenon by illustrating this situation with this folk tale: A dog was following the general direction of the smell of meat. But when his path divided into two he was not so sure which one would lead him to the meat. In his uncertainty he put his legs astride the two paths and tried to walk along both. He ended up splitting in the middle. Many other people have written in similar ways about the “divided soul” in African morality.

6.3.6 Time reckoning – Matthew 20:6

Concerning time reckoning, from an African setting, the owner of the vineyard who went out to look for workers would have done so in three phases. He would have gone out in the morning at sunrise, and at overhead sun (the whole afternoon period), and at sunset which spans in the whole evening period. The grumbling about the one hour put in by the last workers would not have been the issue, but that they started work at sunset. Workers who begin work at sunset when the heat of the day has cold down are known to do commendable work. African peasant workers are conversant with target work. A person can arrange for work but he decides which period of the day that he will do the work. Morning periods and evenings are most preferable because Africans live in the tropics where the sun is so hot during the overhead sunny day. Those who were employed at sunset would have come in with fresh energy and worked to the satisfaction of the owner. Leviticus 9:11 makes reference to a similar situation: “I have seen something under the sun: the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise...but time and chance happen to them all.” Coming to work in the evening would not have been a surprise to African peasant workers because sunset is still an appropriate period of work. Considering the fact that an African can do two or more things in a given period of time, while the workers were waiting to be employed at the “agora” in the Mediterranean context, a group of Africans waiting to be employed would have been discussing at the village square while sharing in a drink (palm wine), bought by the one who may have the opportunity to have money, because next time another person will buy and all will share. In the opinion of Babalola and Alokun (2013:146), this does not mean that Africans are not time conscious or that they do not value time, or still, that time does not matter to them. This misconception, no doubt, can be as a result of the economic setting among the indigenous Africans. Babalola and Alokun (2013:146) have drawn inspiration from the Igbo people of Nigeria, as portrayed by Chinua Achebe in his “Things Fall Apart.” It is believed that the people always sit down, doing nothing, waiting for time: the planting time, the harvesting time, the festival time and so on. Before planting commences, it looked as if the people are idle, doing nothing, waiting for the planting time to come. At the period, they sit down to discuss their personal matters and the affairs of the community. This situation has been observed by many people who do not understand the socio- economic set up of the people, as idleness and lack of time consciousness. Just Like in any other place in the world, the economic circumstance of the day would dictate the pace of activities.

6.3.7 Non-verbal communication – Matthew 3, 6 and 15

Non-verbal communication is concerned with those issues which happen in the text which are not said but only seen through actions. These could happen due to human action or natural actions. In Matthew 20:3, 6, 15, the people who are standing at the market place and discussing or waiting in that context of a shame culture like that of the Mediterranean world can well be understood by Africans as a non-verbal communication for job seekers. African peasant labourers do not seat in the house and wait for jobs to meet them at home, but equally come to public places and share their wishes and predicaments with others. When the first workers saw that the last ones to be employed have just receive one denarius, they could have quickly communicated their expectations of an additional pay with their eyes as Africans will do. Eventually when their expectations were not meet when they receive their own share of remuneration of one denarius, they could have likely used the same facial non-verbal expressions to communicate a general sense of disapproval, anger, contempt and disgust, which one of them now presented verbally saying: “These who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us...” (Mt 20:12). Again when the first workers complained, they received the response: “Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money or are you envious because I am generous?” The grumblers must have gone away without offering a word as a non-verbal sign of accepting the challenge with no further case of argument. While the early workers could have been going away with a gloomy face of dissatisfaction, the last workers would have been smiling as a non-verbal mode of satisfaction and joy (Mt 20:9). In an African setting, these kinds of gesticulations would have been normal and well expressed.

We have used non-verbal communication that agrees with the African context to read meaning from the text. At this point, suffice it to say that despite these generally agreed mood of non-verbal communications, Aboh (2012:29) argues that every culture and social group has its own body language used for communication. These nonverbal gestures serve a very important communicative tool in Matthew 20:1-15 in the sense that sometimes, a character may not be easily moved to talk. It is through these non-verbal means that ideas, emotions and messages could be passed. This section concludes that users of facial expressions and body language in general should endeavour to be careful in their use of gesture because gestures should not be translated to mean something without clear understanding of the context of usage and the culture of the people.

6.4 CONTEXTUALIZING MATTHEW 20:1-15

It has been noted earlier that each community recognises in scripture that God is speaking to her own situation, which means that there is a desire to indigenise. To live as a Christian and yet as a member of one's own community (Walls 1996:7). The African background has been chosen as the subject of interpretation of this parable. Many Africans living in a world view of poverty caused by the lack of sustainable job opportunities and the exploitation of workers is almost regarded as normal. In such situations, the rights of workers are abused when workers are underpaid or subjected to inhumane conditions without protection. Ukpong (1994:40) says that an African hermeneutic reading is possible only when the study of the African context is taken seriously. He argues that the African context is a social, economic, political and religious context that is complex, multifaceted, and often vexed (Ukpong 2001:152). Also, when one uses the phrase "African context," it is however taken into consideration that Africa has different historical periods, different geographical locations, different cultural groups (Cezula 2015:132). Therefore, one cannot do an exhaustive reading a biblical text like Matthew 20:1-15 in Africa, but a hint into how complex it is.²²⁸

Loba-Mkole (2014:121) writes that remuneration remains the most important means for achieving justice in a work relationship while the just wage is qualified as the legitimate fruit of work. From an African context, S. Muyebe and A. Muyebe have quoted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the right to work and employment (Art. 23), which says that "the right to work²²⁹ and the freedom from unemployment imposes an obligation to the state to design a policy that promotes full, productive and freely chosen employment" (Loba-Mkole 2014:122).

6.5 CONCLUSION

This Chapter has been based on exegesis featuring a combination of two exegetical methods that have been used to read Matthew 20:1-15. The need for this combined method is

²²⁸ For Ukpong, Bible reading in Africa is composed of two currents of academic reading, one following the Western pattern while the other the African pattern of linking the text with the African context (Ukpong 2000:4), and an African biblical reader is interested in putting emphasis on the context of the reader (African) rather than that of the author (Western).

²²⁹ The right to work includes the enjoyment of just and favourable working conditions such as the right to equal remuneration for work of equal value, just and fair remuneration, promotion, freedom from discrimination in the work place, a safe and healthy working environment, reasonable working hours and periodic holidays with pay (Loba-Mkole 2014:122). He says further that in determining fair remuneration, the cost of living, the needs of the workers and their families and the availability of provisions for social security should be considered.

compelled by the awareness that scripture speaks to people differently, depending on their context. In his indigenising principle, Andrew Walls says that, “each community recognises in scripture that God is speaking to their own situation, which means that there is a desire to indigenise, to live as a Christian and yet as a member of one’s own society” (Walls 1996:7).

First, social scientific interpretation has utilized models of the first century Mediterranean context to show that even though the vineyard owner is a member of the rich elites in the community, he swallows his pride and acted in an extraordinary way. He decides to do the hiring of workers himself on five different occasions and at various times. He is considered as a real person and not an allegory. At the end of the work day, he orders his manager to pay all the workers that same amount of one denarius. He pays late workers out of generosity and the early workers a fair wage. This is seen to be a higher level of social justice which other community members could not understand. He is a patron and has no favourites. His simplicity in hiring workers himself should rather make workers to be humble rather than grumble.

Second, African biblical interpretation has been a rereading of Matthew 20:1-15 using the models of the African context. Africa has pivotal values that define social behaviour as well as regulate human relationship within the society. These values help people to conduct a harmonious life, which in turn enhances community life of fulfilment. They include: African sense of solidarity, African sense of human dignity, African sense of respect and integrity, African moral values, African sense of time, African means of non-verbal communication. It has been realized that if the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard were told in an African community, the behaviour of the various characters would have coincided with many values of the African context. Finally, from an African perspective, the vineyard owner would have been seen as an elder who shows solidarity with various members of his community.

Finally, the work has revealed that the high economic growth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa have not been translated into jobs. This has resulted into high unemployment which remains a major development challenge in the continent. Labour force participation rates for the youth are lower among developing countries particularly Cameroon were a civil war resulting from marginalization of the minority English speaking population has made the situation of unemployment worst. Other causes of high youth unemployment include low and inadequate skills, a mismatch between education and training and the job skills the labour market

requires, and jobseekers' lack of experience (African capacity building foundation 2017:60). The capacity to generate employment among possible sectors such as agriculture is limited by constraints such as lack of entrepreneurial skills caused by poor availability of capital to the youths to exploit business opportunities that can generate employment and growth.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 CONCLUSION

This chapter is a recapitulation of the findings in the research on social justice in employment and remuneration of workers in Cameroon in the light of the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-15) as an African biblical interpretation. The chapter reviews Jesus' parable of Workers in the Vineyard in terms of the employment and payments of workers by the vineyard owner in relation to the employment and payment of workers in Cameroon as part and parcel of Africa.

Cameroon has many natural resources and avenues for employment, but the rate of youth unemployment and low remuneration for those who are privileged to find a job has made the question of social justice to become imperative. As stated as research gap in Chapter 1, and identified in section 2.6, many scholars who have dealt with the contemporary and disturbing issue of social justice using the parable of Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-15) are Westerners and American scholars and therefore dealt with questions and spiritual problems of the West and America. So far no one has done so from a Cameroonian perspective which therefore begs for an African biblical interpretation.

From the history of interpretation in Chapter 2, many interpreters who have worked on the parable, like Hunter (1971:71) and Hultgren (2000:5), have considered the action of a vineyard owner who paid all his workers the same amount despite the fact that they were employed at different hours of the day as an act of extreme generosity of a very unusual employer. This work adds a further dimension to the aspect of generosity in that the owner took cognisance of the condition of the unemployed and paid them according to need and not merit. This is a higher dimension of social justice.

A recent interpretation to the parable has been offered by Van Eck (2016:140) who uses the social and economic practices in the agriculture of the Roman economy to point to what is real and what is not realistic in the parable. In this way, he strengthens his opinion that allegorisation and moralisation of the parable is not very imperative. Furthermore, Jesus deliberately confronted his audience with what was normal in society and eventually

produces a surprising outcome. The society that Jesus describes is that in which many peasants in the Mediterranean community were poor and live basically from opportunities of daily labour (Snodgrass 2008:370). It is a society of unfair distribution of resources and this creates an imbalanced society between the privileged and non-privileged peasantry (DeSilva 2000:96). In such a society, social justice was highly perverted.

The results of the evaluation of the history of research on social justice in Matthew 20:1-15 has been used to evaluate social justice in the policy of employment of workers and payment in the PCC which is a well constituted church. Despite the many adherences to the constitution of the PCC, some pitfalls are observed at the level of some appointments done from perspectives of regional balancing rather than merit. This is a replica of what the Cameroon government is doing to silence opposition to the central administration. Another serious threat to social justice in the church is “simony,” the act of silently selling and buying of ecclesiastical offices in some form of patronage and reciprocity. Said in another way, when some appointments are given, the patron in office expects an appreciation in terms of money or goods as reciprocity or singing the praises of the officer-in-charge in public and in private space as was the case in the Mediterranean context. Chapter two concludes that even though work and merit are still important values in the Cameroonian labour market of the twenty first century, there is still little amount of true justice in providing for the needs of those who have little or no work to do in a community of labour scarcity like Cameroon. Hence the biblical vineyard owner becomes a model and a pointer for those elites who are wealth owners in their communities to care for the have-nots.

As an exegetical work, Chapter 3 makes a brief exploration into the various current approaches that have been used in reading Matthew’s gospel such as diachronic or historical criticism, text-immanent or synchronic criticism, and reader-response criticism before giving credence to social scientific criticism and African biblical hermeneutics from which African biblical interpretation as a method has been developed which are the main methods that have been used to read Matthew 20:1-15. A fresh translation of the parable text in Matthew 20:1-15 was done and subsequently used in Chapter 6 for reading the parable. This new translation that utilises the word by word analysis from the original Greek text is indicated in Appendix 2 below.

Chapter 4 prepared the way for an etic reading of the text in Chapter 5. The first century Mediterranean context for understanding Matthew 20:1-15 was investigated using models and theories of the Mediterranean context. The work has investigated the parable story as told by Jesus the Galilean peasant and not from Matthew's version which might have undergone editing processes. Therefore one of Hedrick's choices has been considered where reading begins with the parable and ignores the literary setting (Hedrick 2004: xvi). Models and theories of the Mediterranean context which are interpretive tools or lenses for establishing meaning (Elliot 1986:5) that have been found to be applicable to this parable are: Honour and shame, patronage and clientism, kinship, limited good society, dyadic personality, challenge and response, evil eye and external responsibility.

The first research gap has been effectively addressed in Chapter 5 within the perspective of the African context for understanding Matthew 20:1-15. A large percentage of the twenty first century African societies have been seen to be agrarian. The work has noted that even though African economies have been praised for their boisterous growth rates, it is ironical that this growth rate has not had any reasonable impact on poverty in Africa. The African context employed the socio-cultural, economic, religious and economic framework to situate a number of contemporary issues that animate the African world-view. These issues that have been used to understand matters of employment and remuneration of workers in Cameroon include: African communalism, exploitation of workers, land boundary disputes, disease and ignorance, lack of employment and low wages of workers, most of peasant lands has been bought and taken over by the rich, the concentration of political power (power mongering and bad governance) and time management. African models raised and eventually used in chapter six for reading the parable are: The African sense of solidarity, African sense of human dignity, African sense of respect and integrity, African moral values, African sense of time reckoning and African sense of non-verbal communication. In this vane, the work resolves that despite the fact that most of the economic potentials of Africa come from agriculture, the continent is still suffering from food shortages because many African leaders have not been fair to their citizens. Endemic corrupt regimes have taken away the treasure of Africa and allow their people to suffer.

Finally the second and third research gaps that were hashed in section 2.6 have been addressed in Chapter 6 with the African reading of the parable. It was earlier said that a cross-cultural reading, particularly from an African perspective, must involve first a reading from

the author's context before transmitting into the reader's context which in this case is Africa. This was the necessity for the use of two methods namely SSC and ABI as a fulfilment of the third research gap. The exegesis of the text under study has been carried out in this sixth chapter. First, a social scientific reading which utilised models of the Mediterranean context has shown that even though the vineyard owner is a member of the rich elites in the community, he swallows his pride and act in an extraordinary way. He does the hiring of workers himself and he pays the late workers out of need and the early workers out of a fair wage. This is a higher level of social justice which other community members could not understand. His simplicity should rather make other workers humble rather than grumble because he has no favourites. African biblical interpretation which is the focus of this work has utilised models of the African context mentioned above for exegesis. It was realised that if this parable was told in an African setting, the behaviour of various characters would have coincided with many values of the African context. The vineyard owner would be seen as an African Fon or title holder or an African elder who shows solidarity with various members of his community.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the above, and the final conclusions of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

- Discussions about development depend on people's ability to earn an income either in a formal or informal type of employment, yet very little theologizing is happening in this area in Cameroon which is rather unfortunate. I therefore recommend the following:
- Since the context of this research is Africa where employment challenges are so endemic, guidance counsellors should direct many young first school leavers to go in for technical education for self-employment to avert the embarrassment of lack of jobs.
- Mission schools have for long been involved in secondary and high school grammar education. In this generation of high unemployment in Africa, Churches should redirect some of their educational priorities to technical and vocational education.
- A great part of the employment in Cameroon is taken up by the lay private sector who expects some subvention from the government to assist in employment and remuneration of workers. State subvention has been suspended particularly from lay

private schools colleges and universities causing them to become redundant leaving their employees jobless. This work recommends that the state of Cameroon should reinstate assistance or subventions to private schools, firms and agricultural establishments.

- This work recommends as a matter of priority that African Biblical exegetes should do theology rather than read theology. Africans do not do theology only for the sake of academics, but consider themselves to be part of the larger programme of African theology. Said in another way, African exegesis does not seek to understand the text merely for its own sake, or out of an intellectual curiosity. African exegesis is need-driven and faith oriented. It is almost always explicitly confessional (LeMarquand 2000:13). African biblical study is very imperative so that Africans can get to handle their spiritual problems rather than reading Western theology that handles the spiritual problems of Westerners.
- Finally as a critical research consideration, the Bible is being translated into many local languages or mother tongues in Africa and in some cases the whole Bible (both Old and New Testaments) has been translated like the “Lamnsó” bible of the people of Nso in the North West region in Cameroon. For further research, this work recommends “mother tongue” literary for a better understanding and appreciation of scripture and other literary works.
- The use of an African Biblical Interpretation as (Adamo 2015:47) says is not to condemn other methodologies or to say that the task and the distinctiveness of African Biblical Interpretation is the only legitimate and universal one, but that it is one of the legitimate methodologies. As was said in the work ABI is not in isolation because it interacts and builds on other methods to a certain extent. ABI seeks to decolonise the interpretation of the Bible in the light of African culture and tradition.

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Appendix 1

TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

Textual criticism is the term used to describe the science that seeks to determine the original text of a biblical passage (Thiessen 2002:31). Porter (2002:51) is specific about New Testament textual criticism and defines it as the science and art of assessing the transmission of the New Testament text by evaluating its variations, alterations, and distortions, and then attempting its restoration (its earliest recoverable forms). New Testament (NT) textual criticism examines both external²³⁰ and internal²³¹ evidence against their witnesses.²³² New Testament text critics are also interested in comparing the various known manuscripts and assessing which ones are most reliable. NT manuscripts number more than five thousand and range from as early as the second century CE to as late as the sixteenth century, and they stem from various locations including Egypt, Syria, Byzantium, and Rome (Thiessen 2002:32). It is from the premises of these considerations that a textual criticism of Matthew 20:1-15 has been done so as to provide the most probable text of the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard that is closer to the original.

²³⁰ In weighing a textual variant with regard to external evidence, Karelyne G Ayayo points out that New Testament critics are interested in: 1) the manuscript's age; 2) the manuscript's family; and 3) the manuscript's geographical distribution.

²³¹ In considering internal evidence, textual critics are looking for unintentional scribal errors which might have arisen when scribes misread or misheard a verse. Other accidental errors include spelling mistakes or a subconscious assimilation with another verse. Variants may also reveal intentional modifications, where scribes thought they were correcting the text by spelling out its meaning, attempting to clear up historical or geographical difficulties

²³² NT textual witnesses can be grouped into some general categories as Thiessen (2002:35-38) has indicated:

1. Papyri (125-700 AD) – Some manuscripts of the New Testament consist of texts written in all capital letters on papyrus material. In order to save space and ensure uniformity, many papyri lack spaces between words and contain no punctuation. Some important papyri include the Chester Beatty papyri and the Bodmer papyri.
2. Uncials (300-1000 AD) – Also capital-letter manuscripts of the New Testament, uncials differ from papyri in that they are written on leather or vellum and are compiled in codex (book) form. They may also lack spaces between words. Among the top codices are Codex Sinaiticus (A) and Codex Vaticanus (B).
3. Minuscules (900-1500 AD) – Over time scribes developed a flowing lower case script that enabled them to copy manuscripts more quickly. These lower case New Testament manuscripts, written on vellum, are called minuscules.
4. Lectionaries (after 800 AD) – The early Christians wrote materials for use in worship which were known as lectionaries. In places these lectionaries quote from the New Testament and thus serve as textual witnesses.
5. Versions – During the early centuries of Christianity the New Testament was translated into several languages, including Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. These translations may at times help the textual critic reconstruct the original Greek from which the version was translated.
6. Church fathers – Early Christian theologians known as the church fathers (the study of whom is called “patristics”) wrote much that interacted with the New Testament text. Similar to lectionaries, these materials often contain New Testament quotations.

The edited Greek version of Matthew 20:1-15

The Greek version of Matthew 20:1-15 in Nestle-Aland Greek- English New Testament (27th edition) read as follows:

¹ Ὅμοία γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότῃ, ὅστις ἐξῆλθεν ἅμα πρῶτῳ μισθώσασθαι ἐργάτας εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ. ² συμφωνήσας δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐργατῶν ἐκ δηναρίου τὴν ἡμέραν ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ. ³ καὶ ἐξελθὼν περὶ τρίτην ὥραν εἶδεν ἄλλους ἐστῶτας ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ ἀργοὺς ⁴ καὶ ἐκείνοις εἶπεν· ὑπάγετε καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα, καὶ ὁ ἐὰν ᾖ δίκαιον δώσω ὑμῖν. ⁵ οἱ δὲ ἀπήλθον. πάλιν [δὲ] ἐξελθὼν περὶ ἕκτην καὶ ἐνάτην ὥραν ἐποίησεν ὡσαύτως. ⁶ περὶ δὲ τὴν ἐνδεκάτην ἐξελθὼν εὗρεν ἄλλους ἐστῶτας καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· τί ὧδε ἐστήκατε ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἀργοί; ⁷ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς ἐμισθώσατο. λέγει αὐτοῖς· ὑπάγετε καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα. ⁸ Ὁψίας δὲ γενομένης λέγει ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος τῷ ἐπιτρόπῳ αὐτοῦ· κάλεσον τοὺς ἐργάτας καὶ ἀπόδος αὐτοῖς τὸν μισθὸν ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῶν ἐσχάτων ἕως τῶν πρώτων. ⁹ καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ περὶ τὴν ἐνδεκάτην ὥραν ἔλαβον ἀνὰ δηνάριον. ¹⁰ καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ πρῶτοι ἐνόμισαν ὅτι πλεῖον λήμψονται· καὶ ἔλαβον [τὸ] ἀνὰ δηνάριον καὶ αὐτοί. ¹¹ λαβόντες δὲ ἐγόγγυζον κατὰ τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότου ¹² λέγοντες· οὗτοι οἱ ἔσχατοι μίαν ὥραν ἐποίησαν, καὶ ἴσους ἡμῖν αὐτοὺς ἐποίησας τοῖς βαστάσασιν τὸ βάρος τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τὸν καύσωνα. ¹³ ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς ἐνὶ αὐτῶν εἶπεν· ἐταῖρε, οὐκ ἀδικῶ σε· οὐχὶ δηναρίου συνεφώνησάς μοι; ¹⁴ ἄρον τὸ σὸν καὶ ὕπαγε. θέλω δὲ τοῦτῳ τῷ ἐσχάτῳ δοῦναι ὡς καὶ σοί. ¹⁵ [ἦ] οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὁ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς; ἢ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου πονηρὸς ἐστίν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀγαθὸς εἰμι;

Reading the critical apparatus of Matthew 20:1-15

Matthew 20:3

This verse three has one textual problem. The problem is that of substitution of the Greek word εἶδεν with the word εὗρεν and supported by the witnesses: *D 1424 pc it*.

From external evidence, the witnesses that attest to this substitution are few. Secondly, the first witness is from 6th century and support mostly manuscripts of the Pauline letters. They are from the Western type family and do not have any strong justification for the change of the edited text. From internal evidence εἶδεν is the aorist tense, which means, “he saw” meanwhile εὗρεν is still the aorist, which means, “he found”. This is characteristic of later editors who try to smoothen sentences for easy understanding. The conclusion is that the edited text is preferred.

Matthew 20:4

Matthew 20:4 equally has one textual problem, which is that of the insertion of an additional word (μου) after ἀμπελῶνα. The witnesses that support this variant reading are: \aleph c Θ f13 33. 565. 579. 700 *al it vgct sa mae | txt B D L W 085 f1 R lat sy bo.*

From external evidence, the witnesses that support the edited text of Nestle-Aland are in the majority and uncountable. The variant word μου which is suggested for insertion may be an attempt of an editor to clarify the sentence as “my vineyard.” The shorter and difficult text is preferred as the one, which is closer to the original because it might not have been edited.

Matthew 20:5

Matthew 20:5 has two problems. The first textual problem is that of omission and the second is that of transposition. The witnesses that support the textual omission of δὲ are B W Q 085 F1.13 Rit mae bo | txt \aleph C D L 33.579. 892. In analysing this variant, one realises that the witnesses are few and some come from minuscule that were developed later in the 8th century. From internal evidence δὲ is a conjunction that does not change the sense of the sentence in any way. This variant is seen to be insignificant and is to be ignored.

The second problem is that the words enclosed between the variant signs (ἕκτην καὶ ἐνάτην ὥραν) have a different word order (4, 1-3) in some manuscripts attested by the following witnesses: *D fl*. Other witnesses transpose the word order to be (1, 4, 2, 3) supported by *f pc* witnesses. In the analysis from external evidence, the witnesses that attest to the transposition to 4 1 2 3 are very few and come from the Western family which is not very reliable to textual critics. From internal evidence ἕκτην and ἐνάτην are used as attributive adjectives to qualify the noun ὥραν. On this basis, the variant suggestion for adjectives to be placed at the predicative position does not hold grounds in this sentence. The second group of witnesses suggest the transposition of word order to 4 1 2 3. This idea still places the adjectives in the predicative position which do not agree in this sentence. Therefore the text of Nestle-Aland is preferred.

Matthew 20:6

Matthew 20:6 has two textual problems. The first variant reading is that ὄραν be inserted as an additional word in the text, supported by the following witnesses: *C W f1.13 R it | txt & B D L Θ 085. 700. 892*lat; cyr.* In the discussion, the old Greek did not cherish much repetition of words. The idea to add ὄραν is the idea of a later editor who wants to make the sentence clearer for the easy understanding of his readers. The edited text is a difficult reading which would have been closer to the original manuscripts.

The second textual problem is another insertion of a word ἀργους in the same sentence witnessed by: *C*3 W f1.13 R f h q syp.h | txt & B C2 D L Θ 085. 33. 565. 700. 892.* Again this idea can be explained from internal evidence because the idea of standing in the market place is already an indication that one is unemployed. To add ἀργους which is an idea of being unemployed to the idea of standing which is already in the sentence is meant to ease the sentence for better understanding, this is the work of a later editor. The edited text is the difficult text and is preferred.

Matthew 20:7

This verse has one textual problem. The witnesses listed below suggest that the Greek word μου should be inserted at the end of the sentence. Witnesses: *C³D Z 085 it vg^{ct} sy^c sa mae; Cyr.* Another alternative reading is that καὶ ὁ ἐὰν ἦ δίκαιον λήψεσθε should rather be inserted and witnessed by *C*Wf³ 33 R q sy^c:h (bo^{mss}).* Yet another alternative reading says that other manuscripts include the words καὶ ὁ ἐὰν ... and witnessed by (ut R) *N 565. 1241 al f h | txt & B L Θ f¹ 892*lat bo.*

In the discussion from external evidence, one would realise that most of the witnesses range from just one uncial to mostly minuscule lectionaries and versions. From the perspective of age, they are later with longer and smoother readings. They belong to the Byzantine family which is seen by text critics as less reliable.

From internal evidence, the attempt to add μου at the end of sentence is to clarify the aspect of ownership of the vineyard. μου is the genitive pronoun = of me. When applied in the passage, it is “vineyard of me” or simply “my vineyard”. The other two alternative readings from internal evidence show that the attempt to add καὶ ὁ ἐὰν ἦ δίκαιον λήψεσθε – and

whatever is right... is an idea borrowed from verse 4 by a later editor to clarify the sentence. In conclusion, the edited text is closer to the original.

Matthew 20:8

There is one textual problem in Matthew 20:8. The problem is that the word (αὐτοῖς) following this sign in the text is omitted in some manuscripts by the following witnesses: ⋈ C L Z 085; Or¹ txt B D W Θ f 1.13 33^{vd}R latt sy. The analysis is that majority of the witnesses as seen above support the edited text of Nestle- Aland. The witnesses that call for variant readings are very few and mostly uncials of the Byzantine family. From internal evidence αὐτοῖς is the dative plural which means “them”. In the sentence, the idea is ἀπόδος αὐτοῖς τὸν μισθὸν- pay them their wages. The suggestion to delete the word “them” (so that it reads ‘pay their wages’) is that it may sound some kind of tautology to repeat this emphasis since the workers already expect their pay at the end of the day as was the custom. This is a modern way of constructing an English sentence. The edited text of Nestle-Aland is to be preferred as the most reliable text.

Matthew 20:9

Equally, one textual problem is seen in Matthew 20:9. This is the problem of replacement of words in some manuscripts. The words καὶ ἐλθόντες are replaced with the words ἐλθόντες δὲ by these witnesses: B sy^c sa^{mss} bo^{ms}. Another group of witnesses think that the words to replace are ἐλθόντες οὐθὼν witnessed by D Θ f^{1 s} 33 lat sa^{ms} | txt ⋈ C L Z 085 f¹ R sy^hbo. External evidence shows that most of the witnesses are from various versions translated into several languages. In translation, there is the choice of word from synonymous words. From internal evidence, καὶ, δὲ, οὐν are all conjunctions (and, even, therefore) and are synonymous. It is a matter of choice of the translator which of the conjunctions that he wants to use in his translation. In conclusion, this is not a very serious matter. The words in the edited text are reliable since majority of the witnesses support the edited text.

Matthew 20:10

Matthew 20:10 has three textual problems. The first is replacement of the words καὶ ἐλθόντες with the words ἐλθόντες δὲ witnessed by ⋈ L W Z f¹ R q sy^hbo. Another group of witnesses think that the better replacement is ἐλθόντες δὲ καὶ witnessed by: N pc lat¹ | txt B C D Θ f^{1 s} 33^{vd}pc (e) mae. This very problem has been dealt with in verse 9.

The second textual problem is about replacement of the word *πλεῖον* with the word *πλεῖονα* witnessed by $\aleph C^2 33 R$. There is also a witness who think that the replacement is *πλεῖω* and that witness is *D / txt B C* L N W Z Θ f^{1 13} 579. l 844 pc*. In the discussion, one realises that the witnesses are few from external evidence. On the other hand, internal evidence proves that what the people are expecting is money and money is neuter (*πλεῖον*) singular and that is what they get. *πλεῖω* is neuter plural, but is only an expectation for which they never got. *πλεῖονα* is accusative masculine plural and does not fit into the context of money (a denarius) which is neuter singular. The edited text is maintained.

The third problem is the replacement of the words *τὸ ἀνὰ δηνάριον καὶ αὐτοί* with the words *ἀνὰ δηνάριον καὶ αὐτοί* witnessed by *B*. Another suggested replacement is *τὸ ἀνὰ δηνάριον* witnessed by *085 d*. Yet another replacement is a rearrangement of word order to 4 5 2 3 witnesses *D W f^{1 13} R*. Still another suggested replacement is this word order 4 5 1 2 3 witness *C / txt \aleph L Z Θ 33^{vd}*. The analysis from external evidence show that the one witness that supports the variant reading of *ἀνὰ δηνάριον καὶ αὐτοί* comes from an uncial manuscript of the fourth century (Vaticanus). One witness is not enough. This might have been an unconscious omission of the definite article. Secondly, from internal evidence *τὸ* is an accusative neuter singular definite article referring to a denarius that was earlier agreed. The other two suggested variant readings of rearranging word order does not matter much in Greek since what determines the construction of a sentence in Greeks is “cases and endings” and not order of placing words. The conclusion is that the edited text is preferred.

Matthew 20:12

One textual problem occurs in Matthew 20:12. The problem is that of transposition. The words *ἡμῖν αὐτοῦς* enclosed in the two signs occur in a different order in some manuscripts. There is a change in text from that of the 25th edition (Nestle-Aland 1998:14^{*}) and the suggested word order is not indicated by these witnesses $\aleph D L Z 085 f^{13} 892 pc lat / txt B C W \Theta f^1 33 R c$. External evidence shows that the majority witnesses support the edited text.

Matthew 20:13

There are two textual problems in Matthew 20:13. The first problem is word order (*ἐνὶ αὐτῶν εἶπεν*) occur in a different order in some manuscripts. The word order is (3 1 2) as witnessed by *C L W Z f^{1.3} 33^{vd} R e q sy*. Another suggested word order is (2 1 3) as witnessed by *B / txt \aleph D \Theta 085. 700 pc lat*. There are few witnesses and there seem to be no realistic justification

for the change of word order. In another instance, majority of the witnesses support the edited text of Nestle-Aland as seen from external evidence.

The second problem is that of replacement of the words *συνεφώνησάς μοι* with the words *συνεφώνησάς σοι* witnessed by *L Z 33. 892 pc sy^s sa^{ms} bo*. Even though there are few witnesses to this suggestion, but the problem seem to come from the beginning of that phrase. If *σε* is used at the beginning of the phrase then *μοι* is used at the end so as to give the contrast; but if *με* is used at the beginning, then *σοι* goes to the end (did I not agree with you or did you not agree with me...). One may consider that this must have been an unconscious mistake of a scribe who forgot which word he used at the beginning.

Matthew 20:14

There is one textual problem in this verse. The problem of substitution of *δὲ* with another word *ἐγὼ* as witnessed by *B*. This uncial (Vaticanus) from external evidence is the only witness to this variant reading even though an important manuscript of 4th century from the Alexandrian family that is thought to be fairly reliable. It lacks the wide geographical distribution. From internal evidence, *ἐγὼ* is nominative singular personal pronoun meaning “I” and *δὲ* is a conjunction. It should be noted that *θέλω δὲ* is already a sufficient translation for “and I choose” and *ἐγὼ* will be only an emphasis. The variant reading only wants to smoothen the text which is the work of a modern editor. The edited text is the difficult and reliable passage that is closer to the original.

Matthew 20:15

There are two textual problems in Matthew 20:15. The first problem is that the word [*ἢ*] following the sign is omitted in some manuscripts and supported by the following witnesses: *B D L Z Θ 700 sy^{sc}*. Another alternative reading has the text of the variant printed in Nestle-Aland and the manuscripts that support this idea are: *† txt & C W 085 f¹⁻¹³ 33 R lat syp^{hco}*. In analysing this variant reading from external evidence²³³, most of the witnesses are uncials and a version. From internal evidence, *ἢ* means ‘or’ which is a conjunction and there is another *ἢ*

²³³ Metzger (1994:n.p) has indicated that external support for the presence or absence of *h2* at the beginning of ver. 15 is rather evenly divided, with representative witnesses of the Alexandrian [*B* and *κ*], the Western (*D* and Old Latin), and other (*Θ* and *f1 f13*) texts on opposite sides. From a transcriptional point of view it is more likely that scribes would have dropped the word after *σοι* (In later Greek both *ἢ* and *οἱ* were pronounced "ee") than inserted it. Metzger goes further to justify that “On balance the Committee thought it best to retain the word *h*, but to enclose it within square brackets”.

within the sentence. One may think that the contested ἦ might have been an accident from the scribe since the intended conjunction is found later in the sentence. It is a difficult variant and also difficult to decide (Willker 2015:432).

The second textual problem in this verse is that the words enclosed between the two signs occur in a different order in some manuscripts. The words ὁ θέλω ποιῆσαι occur in the order 3 1 2 as witnessed by the following manuscripts: *C W f¹ R (b f ff²) q sy^h co / txt x B D L Z Θ 085(*) f¹³ 33. 700 pc lat sy^h*. The witnesses that suggest this change of order of words are few from external evidence. Willker (2015:2) points out that the best (primary) manuscripts of Matthew are 01 B L Z 085 sa. It is seen from internal evidence that the manuscripts that have the text of the variant printed in Nestle-Aland as the edited text fall within these best manuscripts. Hence, the text of Nestle- Aland is preferred.

Appendix 2

TRANSLATION OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

Literal translation of Matthew 20:1-15

¹ Similar then is the kingdom of the heaven to a man, a householder who went out together early in the morning to hire workmen into the vineyard of him. ² And when he had agreed with the workmen out of a denarius for a day, he sent them into the vineyard of him. ³ And he went out around third hour, he saw others standing in the market place idle; ⁴ and to them he said “you also you go into the vineyard and what if it is right, I will give to you (pl.). ⁵ and they went away. And again, he went out about sixth and also ninth hour and he did likewise. ⁶ And around the eleventh, he went out, he found others standing and he says to them, “why you standing here all the day idle?” ⁷ They say unto him, “Because no man has hired us.” He says to them, “You go also you into the vineyard.” ⁸ But when it was evening, the owner of the vineyard says to the manager of him, “Call the workmen and pay to them the wages beginning from the last to the first” ⁹ And when they came those around the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius. ¹⁰ And when they came the first ones, they thought that they should have received more, they likewise received a denarius each themselves. ¹¹ But when they had received, they murmured the master of the house. ¹² saying “these last ones made one hour and you have made them equal to us, the ones who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat” ¹³ and he answered one of them and said “Friend, I am not doing you wrong. Did you not agree with me a denarius? ¹⁴ Take yours and go. I wish to give to these last ones as also to you. ¹⁵ or is it not proper for me to do what I wish with my own? Or is the eye of you evil because I am good?”

Dynamic translation of Matthew 20:1-15

¹ Similar then is the kingdom of heaven to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire workmen together into his vineyard. ² And when he had agreed with the workmen of a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And he went out around third hour, he saw others standing in the market place idle; ⁴ and to them he said “you also you go into the vineyard and whatever is right, I will give to you. ⁵ And they went away. And again, he went out about the sixth and also the ninth hour and he did likewise. ⁶ And around the eleventh hour, he went out, and found others standing and he says to them, “why are you standing here all the day idle?” ⁷ They say unto him, “Because no one has hired us.” He says to them, “You

go also you into the vineyard.”⁸ When it was evening, the owner of the vineyard says to his manager, “Call the workmen and pay to them the wages, beginning from the last to the first”⁹ And those who came around the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius.¹⁰ And when the first ones came, they thought that they should have received more, they likewise received a denarius each themselves.¹¹ But when they had received, they murmured the master of the house¹² saying “these last ones made one hour and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat”.¹³ And he answered one of them and said “Friend, I am not doing you wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?¹⁴ Take what is yours and go. I wish to give to these last ones as I also give to you.¹⁵ Or is it not proper for me to do what I wish with my own? Or is your eye evil because I am good?

The above dynamic translation has been used as the working text for this study.

Appendix 3

WORD BY WORD ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 20:1-15

VERS E	WORD	ANALYSIS	LEXICAL FORM	MEANING
Mt 20:1	Ὁμοία	Adject, norm, fem, sing	ὅμοιος	Like, similar, of the same nature.
	γάρ	Conjunct, inference or conti	γάρ	For, then, so, therefore
	ἐστίν	Verb, pres, act, 3 rd per sing	εἰμί	is
	ἡ	Def art, norm, fem, sing	ἡ	The
	βασιλεία	Noun, fem sing	βασιλεία	Kingdom, kingship, rule, royal power
	τῶν	Gen, plu, masc, def. art	ὁ	Of the
	οὐρανῶν	Noun, gen, masc, plu	οὐρανός	Heaven, sky
	ἄνθρωπῳ	Noun, dat, masc, sing	ἄνθρωπος	To a Man, a person
	οἰκοδεσπότη	Noun, masc, sing, dat	οἰκοδεσπότης	Householder, master
	ὅστις	Rel. pron, norm, masc, sing	ὅστις	Who, Whoever, whatever, whichever
	ἐξῆλθεν	Verb, aorist, 3 rd per sing	ἐξέρχομαι	Went out, came out
	ἅμα	Preposition, dat	ἅμα	Together with (dat), at the same time
	πρωῖ	adverb	πρωῖ	In the morning, early
	μισθώσασθαι	Verb, aorist, middle, infinitive	μισθόω	To hire, to let out for hire
	ἐργάτας	Noun, acc, masc, pl	ἐργάτης	Workmen, laborers
	εἰς	Preposition, accusative	εἰς	To, into
	τὸν	Def. art, acc, masc, sing	ὁ	The
	ἀμπελῶνα	Noun, acc, masc, sing, com	ἀμπελῶν	A vineyard
	αὐτοῦ	Pers, pron, 3 rd , gen. masc. sing	αὐτός	His, of him
Mt 20:2	συμφωνήσας	Verb, part, aor, act, norm, masc, sing	συμφωνέω	When he had agreed with, agreed together with
	δὲ	Conjunction coord	δὲ	But, and
	μετὰ	preposition	μετὰ	With (gen), after (acc)
	τῶν	Def, art, gen, masc, plu	ὁ	The
	ἐργατῶν	Noun, gen, masc, plu	ἐργάτης	Laborers, workmen
	ἐκ	Gen, preposition	ἐκ, before a vowel ἐξ,	From, out of, marker of price (for)
	δηναρίου	Noun, gen, neut, sing, com	δηνάριον	Of a denarius
	τὴν	Def, art, acc, fem, sing	ἡ	The
	ἡμέραν	Noun, acc, fem sing	ἡμέρα	A day
	ἀπέστειλεν	Verb, aor, 3 rd pers, sing, ind, active	ἀποστελλω	He sent, he sent off
	αὐτοὺς	Per, pron, acc, masc, plural	αὐτοὺς	them
	εἰς	Preposition, acc	εἰς	To, into

	τὸν	Def, art, acc, sing	ὁ	The
	ἀμπελῶνα	Noun, acc, masc, sing	ἀμπελῶν	A vineyard
	αὐτοῦ.	Pers, pron, gen, masc, sing	αὐτός	His, of him
Mt 20:3	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	ἐξελθὼν	Verb, aor. Act, norm, masc, sing	ἐξέρχομαι	He went out
	περὶ	Preposition, acc	περὶ	Concern, about (gen), around(acc)
	τρίτην	Adject, acc, fem, sing	τρίτη	third
	ὥραν	Noun, acc fem, sing	ὥρα	An hour
	εἶδεν	Verb, aor, act ind, 3 rd per. sing	ὁράω	He saw
	ἄλλους	Adject, acc masc, plural	ἄλλος	Others,
	ἑστῶτας	Verb, act acc, masc, plural	ἵστημι	Standing, standing by
	ἐν	Preposition, dat	ἐν	In
	τῇ	Def art, dat., fem, sing	ἡ	The
	ἀγορᾶ	Noun, dat, fem, sing	ἀγορᾶ	A market place, business center
	ἀργούς	Adject, acc, masc, plural	ἀργος	Idle, inactive, not working
Mt 20:4	καὶ	conjunction	καὶ	And, even, also
	ἐκεῖνοις	Demonstrate, pron, dat, masc, plural	ἐκεῖνος	To them
	εἶπεν	Verb, aor, active, 3 rd per, sing	λέγω	He said
	ὑπάγετε	Verb, pres, imperat, act, 2 nd per, plural	ὑπάγω	You (pl)go, depart
	καὶ	conjunction	καὶ	And, even, also
	ὕμεῖς	Personal, pron, norm, plural	σύ	you
	εἰς	Preposition, acc	εἰς	To, into
	τὸν	Def, art, acc, masc, sing	ὁ	The
	ἀμπελῶνα	Noun, acc, masc, sing	ἀμπελῶν	A vineyard
	καὶ	conjunction	καὶ	And, even, also
	ὃ	Rel, pron, norm, neut, sing	ὃ	Who, which, what
	ἐὰν	particle	ἐὰν	If, whatsoever
	ἢ	Verb, pre, subjunct, 3 rd , per, s	εἰμί	Is, it is
	δίκαιον	Adject, acc, neut, sing	δίκαιος	Right, righteous
	δώσω	Verb, 1 st pers, fut, active indic	δίδωμι	I will give
	ὕμῖν	Pers, pron, dat, plural	σύ	To you (pl)
Mt 20:5	οἱ	Def, art, norm, masc, plural	ὁ	The
	δὲ	Conjunction, coordinating	δὲ	But, and
	ἀπῆλθον.	Verb, aor, act, indi, 3 rd .per, pl	ἀπέρχομαι	They went away, they departed
	πάλιν	adverb	πάλιν	again
	[δὲ]	Conjunction, coordinating	δὲ	But, and

	ἐξελθὼν	Verb, aor, act, norm, masc, sing	ἐξέρχομαι	He went out
	περὶ	Preposition, acc	περὶ	Concerning (acc), about
	ἕκτην	Adjective, acc, fem, sing	ἕκτη	Sixth
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	ἐνάτην	Adjective, acc, fem, sing	ἐνάτη	Ninth
	ὥραν	Noun, acc norm, sing	ὥρα	Hour
	ἐποίησεν	Verb, aor, indi, act, 3 rd , sing	ποιέω	He did, he made
	ὡσαύτως	adverb	ὡσαύτως	Likewise
Mt 20:6	περὶ	Preposition, acc	περὶ	Concerning about, around (acc),
	δὲ	Conjunction, coordinating	δὲ	But, and
	τὴν	Def, art, acc, fem, sing	ὁ	The
	ἐνδεκάτην	Adjective, acc, fem, sing	ἐνδεκάτη	Eleventh
	ἐξελθὼν	Verb, aor, act, norm, masc, sing	ἐξέρχομαι	He went out
	εὗρεν	Verb, aor, indic, 3 rd , singular	εὕρισκω	He found
	ἄλλους	Adject, acc masc, plural	ἄλλος	Others
	ἑστῶτας,	Verb, perf, act, acc, masc, plu.	ἵστημι	Standing, standing by
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	λέγει	Verb, pres, ind, act, 3 rd , sing	λέγω	He says
	αὐτοῖς,	Pers, pron, dat, masc, plural	αὐτός	To them
	Τί	Interog, pron, accu, neut, sing	τίς	Who, which, what, why?
	ᾧδε	adverb	ᾧδε	Here, this place, hither
	ἑστήκατε	Verb, indi, perf, act, 2 nd , per, pl	ἵστημι	Standing, standing by
	ὅλην	Adject, accu, fem, sing	ὅλος	Whole, all
	τὴν	Def, art, accu, fem, sing	ἡ	The
	ἡμέραν	Noun, accu, fem, sing	ἡμέρα	A day
	ἀργοί	Adject, norm, masc, plural	ἀργός	Idle, not working, inactive
Mt 20:7	λέγουσιν	Verb, pres, indi, 3 rd , per, plur	λέγω	They say, they speak
	αὐτῷ,	Pers, pron, dat, masc, sing	αὐτός	To him, unto him
	Ὅτι	Surbordinating, conjunction	Ὅτι	That, because, since
	οὐδεὶς	Adject, norm, masc, sing	οὐδεὶς	No man, no one, none, no
	ἡμᾶς	Pers, pron, accu, plural	ἡμᾶς	Us
	ἐμισθώσατο.	Verb, indi, aor, mid, 3 rd , p, sg	μισθόω	Has hired, has engaged
	λέγει	Vb Pre, ind, act, 3 rd , pers, sing	λέγω	He says, he speaks
	αὐτοῖς,	Pers, pron, dat, masc, plural	αὐτός	To them, unto them
	ὑπάγετε	Vb, pres, imperat, act, 2 nd , p p	ὑπάγω	You go, depart, go
	καὶ	adverb	καὶ	And, even, also
	ὑμεῖς	Pers, pron, norm, plural	σύ	you
	εἰς	Preposition, accusative	εἰς	To, into
	τὸν	Def, art, accu, masc, sing	ὁ	The
	ἀμπελῶνα,	Noun, accus, masc, sing	ἀμπελῶν	A vineyard

Mt 20:8	ὄψιας	Noun, gen, fem, sing	ὄψια	evening	
	δὲ	Conjunct, coordinating	δὲ	But, and, so	
	γενομένης	Vb, part, aor, mid, gen, fem, sg	γίνομαι	When it was, when it became	
	λέγει	Vb, 3 rd per, sing, pre, ind, act	λέγω	He says, he speaks	
	ὁ	Def, art, norm, masc, sing	ὁ	The	
	κύριος	Noun, norm, masc, sing	κύριος	Lord, master, owner	
	τοῦ	Def, art, gen, masc, sing	ὁ	Of the	
	ἀμπελῶνος	Noun, gen, masc, sing	ἀμπελῶν	A vineyard	
	τῷ	Def, art, dat, masc, sing	ὁ	To the	
	ἐπιτρόπῳ	Noun, dat, masc, sing	ἐπίτροπος	Manager, foreman, steward, guard.	
	αὐτοῦ,	Pers, pron, gen, masc, sing	αὐτός	Of him, his, unto his	
	Κάλεσον	Vb, aor, imperat, act, 2 nd , p, s	καλέω	Call, name, address	
	τοὺς	Def, art acc, masc, plural	ὁ	The	
	ἐργάτας	Noun, acc, masc, plural	ἐργάτης	Workers, laborers, workmen	
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also	
	ἀπόδος	Vb, aor, imperat, act, 2 rd , p, s	ἀποδίδωμι	Pay, give, reward	
	αὐτοῖς	Pers, pron, dat, masc, plural	αὐτός	To them, unto them	
	τὸν	Def, art, acc, masc, sing	ὁ	The	
	μισθὸν	Noun, acc, masc, sing	μισθός	Reward, pay, wages, hire	
		ἀρξάμενος	Vb, part, aor, mid, norm, mas, s	ἄρχομαι	Beginning, commencing, starting
		ἀπὸ	Gen, preposition	ἀπὸ	From
τῶν		Def, art, gen, masc, plural	ὁ	Of the, the	
ἐσχάτων		Adject, gen, masc, plural	ἔσχατος	Last, least, end	
ἕως		Preposition, genitive	ἕως	To, until, as far as	
τῶν		Def, art, gen, masc, plural	ὁ	Of the, the	
πρώτων.		Adject, gen, masc, plural	πρῶτος	First, earliest	
Mt 20:9		καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
		ἔλθόντες	Vb, part, aor, act, norm, ms, p	ἔρχομαι	When they came, when they went
		οἱ	Def, art, norm, masc, plural	ὁ	The ones, those
	περὶ	Preposition, accusative	περὶ	About (gen), around (acc), concerning	
	τὴν	Def, art, accu, fem, sing	ἡ	The	
	ἐνδεκάτην	Adject, acc, fem, sing	ἐνδεκάτη	eleventh	
	ῥαν	Noun, acc, fem, sing	ῥα	An hour	
	ἔλαβον	Vb, aor, indi, acti, 3 rd , per. pl	λαμβάνω	They received, they took	
	ἀνὰ	Preposition, accusative	ἀνὰ	Upwards, up, each, everyone	
	δηνάριον.	Noun, acc, neut, sing	δηνάριον	A denarius	
Mt 20:10	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also	

	ἐλθόντες	Vb, part, aor, act, norm, ms, p	ἔρχομαι	When they came, when they went
	οἱ	Def, art, norm, masc, plural	ὁ	The ones, those
	πρῶτοι	Adject, norm, masc, plural	πρῶτος	First ones, earliest
	ἐνόμισαν	Vb, aor, ind, act, 3 rd per, plur	νομίζω	They thought, they supposed, they believed.
	ὅτι	Conjunction, coordinating	ὅτι	That, because, since
	πλεῖον	Adject, acc, neut, plural	πολύς	More, many, much, large, great.
	λήμψονται	Vb, fut, mid, ind, 3 rd , per, plu	λαμβάνω	They should have received
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	ἔλαβον	Vb, aor, indi, acti, 3 rd , per. pl	λαμβάνω	They likewise received, they received as well
	[τὸ]	Def, art, acc, neut, sing	τὸ	The
	ἀνά	Preposition, accusative	ἀνά	Upwards, up, each, everyone
	δηνάριον	Noun, acc, neut, sing	δηνάριον	A denarius
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	αὐτοί.	Pron, intensive, norm, mas, pl	αὐτός	Each themselves
Mt 20:11	λαβόντες	Vb, part, aor, act, norm, mas, pl	λαμβάνω	When they had received
	δὲ	Conjunct, coordinating	δὲ	But, and
	ἐγόγγυζον	Vb, ind, imperf, act, 3 rd , per, pl	γόγγυζω	They murmured, they muttered
	κατὰ	Preposition genitive	κατὰ	Against (gen)
	τοῦ	Def, art, gen, masc, sing	ὁ	Of the
	οικοδεσπότης	Noun, gen, masc, sing	οικοδεσπότης	Householder, master of the house.
Mt 20:12	λέγοντες,	Vb, part, aor, act, norm, mas, pl	λέγω	Saying, speaking
	Οὗτοι	Demonstr, pron, norm, ma, pl	οὗτος	These men, these ones, they
	οἱ	Def, art, norm, masc, plural	ὁ	The
	ἔσχατοι	Adject, norm, masc, plural	ἔσχατος	Last ones
	μίαν	Adject, acc, fem, sing	μία	One
	ᾠραν	Noun, acc, fem, sing	ᾠρα	An hour
	ἐποίησαν,	Vb, indi, aor, act, 3 rd , per, plur	ποιέω	They made, they did
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	ἴσους	Adject, acc, masc, plural	ἴσος	Equal
	ἡμῖν	Pers, pron, dative, plural	ἐγώ	To us, for us
	αὐτοὺς	Pers, pron, acc, masc, plural	αὐτός	Them
	ἐποίησας	Vb, aor, act, indi, 2 nd , per, sg	ποιέω	You (sg) have made
	τοῖς	Def, art, dat, masc, plural	ὁ	The ones, who (demonstrative)
	βαστάσασι	Vb, part, aor, act, dat, mas, pl	βαστάζω	Worked, borne, carried
	τὸ	Def, art, acc, neut, sing	τὸ	The

	βάρος	Noun, acc, neut, sing	βάρος	Burden, weight, hardship
	τῆς	Def, art, gen, fem	ἡ	Of the
	ἡμέρας	Noun, gen, fem, sing	ἡμέρα	A day
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	τὸν	Def, art, acc, masc, sing	ὁ	The
	καύσωνα.	Noun, acc, masc, sing	καύσων	Burning heat, scorching heat
Mt 20:13	ὁ	Def, art, norm, masc, sing	ὁ	The
	δὲ	Conjunction, coordinating	δὲ	But, and
	ἀποκριθεὶς	Vb, part, aor, pass, norm, m, s	ἀποκρίνω	He answered
	ἐνὶ	Card, adj, dat, masc, sing	εἷς	one
	αὐτῶν	Pers, pron, gen, masc, plural	αὐτοῦ	Of them
	εἶπεν	Vb, ind, aor, act, 3 rd , pers, sg	λέγω	Said, spoke,
	Ἐταῖρε,	Noun, voc, masc, sing	ἐταῖρος	Friend, comrade, companion
	οὐκ	adverb	οὐ	No, not
	ἀδικῶ	Vb, ind, pres, act, 1 st , per, sg	ἀδικέω	I do wrong, evil, harm
	σε	Per, pron, acc, sing	σύ	you
	οὐχὶ	participle	οὐχὶ	Not
	δηναρίου	Noun, gen, neut, sing	δηνάριον	A denarius
	συνεφώνησάς	Vb, ind, aor, act, 2 nd , pers, sg	συμφωνέω	Did you agree (together) with, one accord
	μοι	Pers, pron, dat, sing	& ἐγώ	Me
Mt 20:14	ἄρον	Vb, aor, act, imper, 2 nd , per, sg	αἶρω	Take, take away, take up
	τὸ	Def, art, acc, neut, sing	τὸ	The
	σὸν	Poss, adj, acc, neut, sing	σός	Your, yours
	καὶ	Conjunction, coordinating	καὶ	And, even, also
	ὑπάγε	Vb, pres, imper, act, 2 nd , p, sg	ὑπάγω	Go, depart, leave
	θέλω	Vb, pres, act, indi, 1 st , pers, sg	θέλω	I will, I wish, I desire
	δὲ	Conjunction, coordinating	δὲ	But, and
	τούτῳ	Demonst, pron, dat, mas, sg	οὗτος	To this
	τῷ	Rel, pron, dat, masc, sing	ὃς	Who, which
	ἔσχατῳ	adject, dat, masc, sing	ἔσχατος	Last
	δοῦναι	Vb, infin, aor, act	δίδωμι	To give, to grant
	ὡς	Surbordinating, conjunction	ὡς	As, that, how, about
	καὶ	adverb	καὶ	And, even, also
	σοί.	Pers, pron, dat, sing	σύ	To you
Mt 20:15	[ἢ]	Conjunct, coordinating	ἢ	Or
	οὐκ	adverb	οὐ	Not, no
	ἔξεστίν	Vb, pres, ind, act, 3 rd , pers, sg	ἔξεμι	Depart, possible, permit, proper
	μοι	Per, pron, dat, sing	ἐγώ	For me
	ὃ	Rel, pron, acc, neut, sing	ὃ	Who, which, what

θέλω	Vb, pres, act, indi, 1 st , pers, sg	θέλω	I will, I wish, I desire
ποιῆσαι	Vb, infin, aor, act	ποιέω	To do, to make
ἐν	Preposition, dat	ἐν	In (dat), with
τοῖς	Def, art, dat, neut, plural	τὸ	The, this one, that one
ἐμοῖς;	Poss, adj, dat, neut, plural	ἐμός	My, mine, my own
ἢ	Conjunct, coordinating	ἢ	Or
ὁ	Def, art, norm, masc, sing	ὁ	The
ὄφθαλμός	Noun, norm, masc, sing	ὄφθαλμός	An eye
σου	Pers, pron, gen, sing	σύ	Of you, you
πονηρός	Adj, norm, masc, sing	πονηρός	Evil, wicked, vicious, bad
ἐστίν	Vb, pres, ind, 3 rd , pers, sing	εἰμί	Is
ὅτι	Subordinating, conjunction	ὅτι	That, because, since
ἐγὼ	Pers, pron, norm, sing	ἐγὼ	I
ἀγαθός	Adj, norm, masc, sing	ἀγαθός	Good
εἰμι;	Vb, pres, act, ind, 1 st , pers, sg	εἰμι	I am