



Early-church praxis: Selling land and possessions – A socio-historical study of Acts 2:45, 4:32–37

**Author:**Mphumezi Hombana¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Research Project Registration:**Project Number:** 2237244**Project Leader:** Mphumezi Hombana **Description:**

This research is part of the research project, 'The Gospels in the New Testament', directed by Prof Mphumezi Hombana, Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria.

Corresponding author:

Mphumezi Hombana, m.hombana@up.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 23 Mar. 2023

Accepted: 15 June 2023

Published: 28 Aug. 2023

How to cite this article:

Hombana, M., 2023, 'Early-church praxis: Selling land and possessions – A socio-historical study of Acts 2:45, 4:32–37', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79(2), a8727. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i2.8727>

Copyright:

© 2023. The Author. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

This article attempts to rethink the early church praxis of selling the land and possessions in response to some of the problems the 1st century church were confronted with. Hence, this article attempts to answer the questions: what were the social, economic, and religious factors that led to the selling of land and possessions in the early church, and what were the implications of this practice for the community, including issues related to exploitation, inequality, and long-term sustainability of resources? This article argues that the church in South Africa must lead the conversation and learn from the early church good example to respond to social ills of our time. This is without undermining the complexities that are part of this programme of action. This article is committed to socio-historical reading of the texts under inquiry as the means to respond to the questions raised in this study.

Contribution: This article seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on issues of land, possessions, and poverty in a South African context. It attempts to explore possible implications on issues that concern this article for churches in South Africa.

Keywords: land; possessions; early church; rich; poor; poverty; inequality; Luke-Acts; socio-historical; socio-economic; Graeco-Roman world; South African Church.

Introduction

The early church is famously known to be the vibrant early Christian movement in so much that it became distinct to other religious institutions of her age. One of the distinctive elements that led to this uniqueness was the communal life she experienced. While there are some similarities between the activities of the early Christians described in Acts and the ideas in Plato's *Critias* (concerning community property) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the early Christian movement had its own unique traits. Early Christian activities were distinguished by their focus on worship, teaching, healing, and evangelism as well as by their emphasis on group cooperation and support for the common good. The communal character of Acts did not result in the abolishment of private property, but rather in a voluntary sharing among neighbours who were driven by love and concern for one another (Johnson 1992:62–63).

Keener (2012) points out that:

[A]lthough Plato's ideal community did not require all members to share everything in common, its guardians did (Plato. Rep. 6.499CD). While others viewed Plato's as someone who approved a state with minimal selfishness (where 'mine' and 'not mine' were mentioned infrequently), where people would treat truly significant things as held in common. (pp. 1015–1016)

This communal life was orchestrated by means of the shared life, through selling of land and possessions to meet the needs of the needy from within the church. This practice no doubt was such an amazing act that it contributed greatly to the spreading of the Gospel (Johnson 1992:58–59; Keener 2013:1177–1179; Wall 2002:504–505). It remained as an act of selflessness and generosity, as believers shared their resources with one another and helped to support the community as a whole (Cooke 2022:269–286). However, on the other hand, it had the potential of being problematic from several perspectives.

The socio-cultural, economic and political context of Luke-Acts

The focus of this section is limited only to the relations between the rich and the poor in the 1st-century Graeco-Roman world(s). Followed by a brief socio-historical context of Acts and with

specific focus on the rich and the poor in relation to the praxis of selling the land and possessions in Luke-Acts. Malina and Neyrey (1991:25–65) claim that numerous factors, such as the political, social, and cultural surroundings of the Roman Empire as well as the predominate religion and spiritual practices of the period, have an impact on the socio-historical setting of Acts. The Roman Empire had a complex political structure that comprised an emperor, governors, and other officials, making it a diverse and complicated society. Cromhout (2020:94–102) asserts that Jews were a significant minority within the Roman Empire, and their religious beliefs and practices were often in tension with those of the wider society. Acts reflects these socio-historical conditions in a number of ways. For example, it portrays the apostles as preaching a message of salvation and redemption that is open to all people, regardless of their background or status within society. This message of universal salvation was in contrast to the exclusivity of many religious and cultural practices in the Roman Empire (Johnson 1992:16–18).

Acts also portrays the apostles as facing persecution and opposition from both religious and political authorities. This reflects the tension between the early Christian Church and the wider society, as well as the political and cultural pressures that shaped the religious landscape of the Roman Empire (Keener 2012:1012–1014). With regard to Acts' social location, it is not so obvious. Hence, Robbins (1991:305) stated that it is not an easy duty to regulate the societal location of Luke-Acts. Esler (1987:1–2) makes this significant observation that Luke attempted to relate to his audience on a religious, social, political, and economic level because he believed the gospel affected every part of life. He composed his gospel under the influence of social and political forces, highlighting the social aspect of the good news as he addressed the issues his community was facing. While Acts makes reference to locations like Jerusalem, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, the Gospel of Luke frequently discusses Palestinian society (Neyrey 1991:x).

In light of the concerns that Luke raises, it can be assumed that the social environment in which his audience resided was an urban setting in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The context was influenced by the Hellenistic city's culture (Moxnes 1994:379). Luke-Acts seems to have been written with a wider audience in mind than just the people of a particular location after reading it and noticing its emphasis on universality. It appears that his writings are particularly suited to the world of gentiles. For Luke, the gentiles were clearly part of God's redemptive work and a concern of Jesus. His gospel is for gentiles and the world in general (Dayton 2009:1130; Moxnes 1991:241–270). A more comprehensive framework for understanding the issue of land sale in Acts is provided by Luke-Acts's social context, urban environment, Hellenistic influence, diverse audience makeup, and emphasis on including gentiles. These characteristics imply that land transactions played a significant role in the social and economic life of the early Christian community, and that the teachings and examples given in Acts would have

addressed the issues and difficulties associated with land ownership and sale.

Another issue with Acts is how heavily it focuses on the needs of the poor in the first half of the book. For example, Moxnes (1988:159–162) notes the following few instances: they 'have all things in common' (2:42–47, 4:32–37); the poor are referred to as having 'need' (2:45, 4:35); the appointment of seven deacons to address injustice in the church's ministry to Hellenistic widows; the exemplary almsgiving ministries of Dorcas (9:36–43) and Cornelius (10:2, 4).

Land and possessions in Luke-Acts

The social, economic, and political systems of the Graeco-Roman civilisation were greatly influenced by the ownership of land and property. Hopkins (1980:101–125) claims that a variety of rules and regulations were used to control the land and its distribution. Land distribution was one of the major policies that the Roman Empire put into place, and it entailed giving conquered territory to troops and veterans. This custom was designed to reward obedient troops and motivate them to settle in recently captured areas. However, it frequently led to an uneven distribution of land, concentrating wealth in the possession of a select few people. Social and economic imbalances were reinforced as a result of this disparity, which had substantial societal ramifications (Fiensy 1991; Horsley 1987; Neyrey 2008; Oakman 1986, 2008; Stegemann & Stegemann 1999:110–125).

Cromhout (2014:527–550) asserts that in the Graeco-Roman civilisation, land taxation was another essential component of land control. Landowner taxes were a key source of income for the empire. However, these taxes were frequently onerous and led to discontent among landowners and farmers. A land tax [*tributum soli*] and a tax on crops [*tributum frumentarium*] were two of the different types of taxes used. These tax laws had an impact on the economy and how land was used and produced for agriculture. The emergence of *latifundia*, vast estates held by affluent landowners, further influenced the dynamics of land ownership. These estates frequently used slave labour, which caused the demise of small-scale farming and the concentration of power and riches among a select few. Inequalities were exacerbated and chances for smaller farmers were diminished as a result of the concentration of land ownership in *latifundia*.

Rohrbaugh (2007:2029) maintains that the Roman Empire also used colonisation as a strategy. To act as military outposts and hubs of Roman culture, colonies were founded in recently conquered areas. These colonies frequently offered land grants and other inducements to get people to settle in these areas. Such measures also influenced patterns of land ownership by facilitating the growth of Roman power and authority over conquered areas. Fiensy (1991:3) points out that some Roman officials implemented agricultural reforms to alleviate some of the issues brought on by unequal land ownership and distribution. The Gracchi brothers, who advocated for land reforms that aimed to allocate public land

to small farmers in the 2nd century BCE, are one famous example. These changes were made in an effort to address problems including landlessness and an excess of land ownership concentration. But putting such reforms into action frequently encountered tremendous opposition and challenges. Carter (2006:1–20) argues that the social, economic, and political systems of the Graeco-Roman world were greatly influenced by land ownership. Land ownership patterns were altered by policies like taxation, *latifundia*, colonisation, and agrarian reforms, which had broad societal repercussions. Jewish people also created their own systems of land possession and ownership, embracing communal ownership forms. Together, these elements produced the intricate system of land control in this historical era.

It has to be noted that in the Graeco-Roman world, attitudes towards land issues varied between the rich and the poor. The rich generally saw land as a symbol of wealth, power, and social status. They viewed it as a commodity to be acquired and accumulated, often through conquest or inheritance. For the wealthy, land ownership was a way to secure their position in society and maintain their political and economic power. On the other hand, the poor often had a very different view of land. According Gardner (2014:515–536), the poor's view on land depended on their unique circumstances and social setting; their thoughts and opinions on land varied in the 1st-century Mediterranean world. It is vital to remember that the impoverished in this time included peasants, urban labourers, slaves, and other outcast people. In the 1st century, the impoverished in the Mediterranean region saw land as a vital resource for their survival, economic prosperity, and social standing. Because of their exclusion from landownership and the concentration of land in the hands of the wealthy, they frequently felt frustrated and a sense of unfairness. The complicated relationship between the poor and their land was influenced by elements like eviction, economic dependence, and cultural value.

Many poor people lived as tenant farmers or sharecroppers, working the land of others in exchange for a portion of the crops. They had little or no ownership of the land they worked and were often at the mercy of their landlords. As a result, they often saw land as a means of survival rather than as a symbol of status or power. Longenecker (2010:247–249) notes that there were also social and political implications to land ownership in the Graeco-Roman world. In many cases, the wealthy were able to use their land ownership to gain political power and influence. They could also use their land to control the movements and actions of the poor, which could lead to social unrest and conflict.

This then, according to Blomberg (2009:91), resulted in serious and gross tensions in this society between the affluent and the poor because of this complex set of social, economic, and political factors. In those days, the gap between the wealthy and the poor was significant, and there were few social programmes or safety nets in place to help those in need.

Land ownership was one of the primary sources of tension between the rich and the poor. The wealthy elites controlled vast amounts of land and property, often acquired through inheritance or conquest (Brueggemann 2002:161–172). The poor, on the other hand, had little access to land and were often forced to work as tenant farmers or labourers on estates owned by the wealthy. In addition to land ownership, there were other economic factors that contributed to tensions between the rich and the poor. Günther (2016:2–22) argues that the Roman economy was heavily dependent on slave labour, which further marginalised the poor and exacerbated economic inequality. The wealthy also held significant power and influence in government, making it difficult for the poor to effect change through political means. These tensions boiled over at various times throughout the 1st century, with uprisings and protests by the poor against the wealthy elites. One notable example was the slave revolt led by Spartacus in 73–71 BCE, which was fuelled in part by the economic inequality and exploitation of the poor (Feilds 2009:5–14).

Land and possessions in Luke-Acts: A close reading of Acts 2:42, 4:32–47

Acts 2:45 is part of a narrative describing the birth of the Christian church on the Day of Pentecost. This verse is part of a larger passage that describes the response of the first believers 'to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost'. After hearing Peter's sermon, which proclaimed Jesus as the promised Messiah and called the people to repentance, many were 'cut to the heart' and asked what they should do. Peter responded by 'telling them to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit'. The response of the new believers was remarkable. Acts 2:44 describes them as being 'together and had everything in common'. They sold their possessions and belongings, and distributed the proceeds to those in need. This sharing of material goods was not mandatory but rather done willingly and generously out of a desire to meet the needs of others.

Perschbacher (1995:249) notes that the Greek word used for 'possessions' in this verse is 'κτήματα' (Acc. Pl. neut n.. from κτήνω) which refers to property or possessions that are acquired through effort or labour. Meanwhile, Parsons and Culy (2008:47) argue that the first word may perhaps refer to real estate, while the second one may refer to possessions in general. This analysis is supported by the *καὶ ... καὶ* [both and] construction, which probably disallows viewing the phrase as a doublet. In either way, the meaning is essentially the same. Because all types of possessions were sold to meet the needs of the community. This suggests that the believers were willing to give up things that they had worked hard to obtain in order to help others. The word 'belongings' comes from the Greek word *ὑπάρξεις* which refers to things that are owned or possessed. This suggests that the believers were willing to give up things that were important or valuable to them. The passage goes on to say that the believers distributed the proceeds 'to all, as any had need'. This means that there

was no favouritism or discrimination in the distribution of resources. The believers were willing to help anyone who was in need, regardless of their social status, ethnicity, or religious background.

According to Bock (2007:152), this verse is significant because it illustrates the spirit of unity and generosity that characterised the early Christian church. The believers saw themselves as part of a larger community and were willing to share their resources to meet the needs of others. This was a radical departure from the individualistic and materialistic values that characterised the Graeco-Roman world at the time. Acts 2:45 describes the voluntary sharing of possessions and resources by the early Christian believers. This sharing was done out of a desire to meet the needs of others and was characterised by generosity and a spirit of unity.

Now as we consider Acts 4:32–37, this passage begins by describing the unity of the early Christian community. The believers were ‘of one heart and soul’, indicating a deep sense of solidarity and shared purpose. This unity was expressed practically through the sharing of possessions and resources, as ‘no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common’. This suggests that the early Christians saw themselves as part of a larger community and were willing to give up individual possessions for the common good (Weiser 1981:13).

As some scholars (Bock 2007:214; Fitzmyer 1998:313–314) have argued that the strength of the apostles’ witness and the grace present in the congregation are both emphasised in verse 33. The spirit of cooperation and charity was a demonstration of the grace and might of God. The voluntary redistribution of wealth, when people who had property sold it and divided the proceeds, is highlighted in verse 34. The apostles would be in charge of a just distribution system, according to verse 35. In verse 36, Barnabas encouraged the community by selling his own field to help those in need. The early Christians’ faith and readiness to make sacrifices for the greater good were demonstrated by their practical charity.

Bruce (1990:160) argues that Acts 4:32–37 is a passage that emphasises the communal life of the early Christian community. The passage highlights the importance of unity, generosity, and the redistribution of wealth to meet the needs of all members of the community. The story of Barnabas serves as an example of the kind of practical generosity that characterised the early Christians. The passage suggests that the early Christians saw their communal life as a manifestation of the grace and power of God working among them. While Barrett (1994:258–259) further notes that Acts 4:38–37 provides a snapshot of the early Christian community’s communal living and devotion to one another. The believers shared everything they had and were committed to the apostles’ teachings, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. This passage shows the practical expression of their faith and their willingness to sacrificially give to those in

need. It also demonstrates the power of the gospel to bring unity and growth even in the face of persecution.

Comparing the socio-cultural, economic and political landscapes of early church and South African church

The focus of this section is an attempt to discuss a comparison between socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of both early church and South African church. This is by no means a detailed study, but a brief overview. The point is to envisage some similarities or rather some possible sameness between the two landscapes. So that, the author may be able to draw some implications for the South African context today. Wright (2019) claims that while the early church developed throughout the Roman Empire, there was intermittent persecution and repression of Christianity. In the beginning, Christians were thought of as a Jewish sect, but as the faith spread, hostilities with the Roman government intensified. Under emperors like Nero, Domitian, and Diocletian, Christians experienced persecution. Bock (2007:30–45) commented that in a profoundly diversified cultural and religious environment, the early church developed. It had elements of Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman culture, and drew people from many social strata. It challenged traditional social norms by emphasising communal life, sharing resources, and fostering equality among believers.

Mazamisa (1991:67–72) describes the background of the South African church and its socio-cultural, economic and political context. This is what he said: the South African church began its’ history from the entrance of European settlers in the 17th century. Since then, it continues to this day. Colonialism, apartheid, and post-apartheid periods all had a considerable impact on the political environment of the South African church. During the colonial era, Christian missionaries helped convert indigenous people, and the church frequently supported the goals of the colonists (Maluleka 2007). It is in the light of this background that Vellem (2016:1–11) provides us with a clear understanding of how one should understand what we mean about South African church. Vellem claims that in the history of the church in South Africa, there are three main models: the Settler, Missionary, and African Initiated. The Settler Model refers to the establishment of congregations by settler communities in South Africa, which later evolved into independent denominations. What sets this model apart from the others is its assumed primary motive for existence. The formation of settler churches was directly linked to the establishment of a refreshment station in Cape Town by Jan van Riebeeck, which was initially intended for trade purposes. Therefore, the settler churches emerged as a result, following the trade interests that prompted the creation of the refreshment station. In contrast, the Missionary and African Initiated models were influenced by different motivations and objectives. Hence, the church in South Africa had a complicated role during apartheid; certain denominations

actively backed the racist regime, while others aggressively opposed it.

It cannot be denied that in recent years attempts have been made to redress the issue of land even though it is a very slow project. Especially, if we take this fact seriously enough, that the African ethical view of life perceives land as an indivisible component within the interconnected fabric of existence, rejecting any attempts to compartmentalise or isolate it into separate dichotomised realms. Churches played significant roles in the campaign against apartheid, and the church showed herself as a significant power particularly from the marginalised societies. The past two decades of democracy in South Africa have taught us valuable lessons, emphasising the significance of engaging in epistemological dialogue as a prophetic opportunity in our current era (Vellem 2016:3).

Both the early church in Acts and the South African church's desire to transform society reflect a concern for social justice and a commitment to meeting the needs of the marginalised and oppressed. They demonstrate a recognition that material possessions can be used to bring about positive change and alleviate suffering. Both examples emphasise the importance of community, solidarity, and sharing resources to create a more just and equitable society. However, it is worth noting that the specific contexts and circumstances of the early church in Acts and the South African church differ significantly. The early church was a small, close-knit community of believers facing persecution and living in a different socio-political context (Bauckham 2006:80–95; Wright 1990). The South African church operates in a diverse society with complex challenges related to race, poverty, and inequality. The strategies and approaches employed by the two may vary accordingly, but the underlying values of justice, compassion, and community are shared concerns.

Implications for the South African Church

Sider (1977:560) tells of an interesting incident. In a meeting of church leaders during the civil rights movement, Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder questioned their approach. While discussing strategies to address housing segregation, Yoder asked if the influential figures they wanted to pressure were active church members. Confused, the clergy did not understand the relevance of his question. Yoder believed that the church should first embody the principles it advocated for in society before calling for change in public policy. In that article Sider warns the church and said that the current movement of churches' concern for global poverty and unfairness in the worldwide economic system runs the risk of making the same error again. It is in the light of this that the author now seeks to address some possible implications for the South African church in today's society.

The community's interactions with its members and the outside world are both summarised in verses 42–47 of this text. In order to demonstrate their adoration of the Messiah,

the early believers shared their goods and frequented the temple. Witherington (1998:162–163) asserts that Acts never depicts a community that has become so closed off to the outer world that it has lost or ignored its responsibility to engage with it. Scholars such as Marshall (1980:83–84) and Witherington (1998:157–159) argue that the selling of land and sharing of possessions in the early church was a practice that had significant social and economic impact. This practice was a way of life adopted by believers as a way to support the growing Christian community, and to ensure that resources were distributed fairly among its members (Ac 2:42–47).

Bock (2007:201–202) argues that in Acts 6:1–7, we see a fairly good example of the Apostles' concerns that resources ought to be distributed fairly as the practice in the early church. However, the implications of this practice are complex, and have been the subject of much debate and discussion. We see here that the issues of racial tensions come to the surface between Grecian Jews complaining that their widows were ill-treated by the Hebraic Jews in the distribution proceedings (Ac 6:1–2). This issue is also accompanied by related motifs such as gender inequality, as we could see here that it seems it is the widows that are depending on this benevolent support of the early church. The very similar issues we are facing in the country to this day. Issues of race, gender inequality and related issues. One way to rethink the selling of land and possessions in the early church in the context of South Africa is to explore how this practice might inform contemporary debates around land redistribution and economic justice.

As Vellem (2016:1–11) contends, from the perspective of black theology of liberation, that the failure to acknowledge the essential connection between land and the well-being of marginalised communities in theological discussions on land constitutes the fundamental flaw in the discourse surrounding land in South Africa. Furthermore, the church in South Africa as one of key stakeholders in the country that owns much of resources has to lead the conversation. It is under same spirit that Makhado (2012:3) made this bold assertion that land holds significant value as the foundation of power and wealth, as well as a catalyst for freedom and prosperity. Within the realm of rural development, the focus lies on promoting land ownership and implementing agrarian reform that tackle gender disparities. This approach serves as a means for individuals to assert their rightful claims and participate in agricultural production, all the while upholding democratic principles.

It is a known factor that our country has had a long history of land dispossession and inequality, with many communities still struggling to regain access to the land that was taken from them during colonialism and apartheid (Boesak 1987). Reconsidering the early church's practice of selling land and possessions provides insights into the impact of resource distribution on social and economic relationships. Motivated by the communal spirit that flourished in the early church could be a motivating factor to create community of equals.

Perhaps this might be a lesson as an attempt to eradicate poverty and share wealth for common good in our country.

This understanding can inform discussions on policy making on issues related to economic justice, redistribution, and reparations in South Africa, fostering strategies for solidarity within the church and society to combat poverty and inequality. Conceivably, the South African church that owns much resources might not need to sell the land and possessions. But rather make use of the land and possessions to eradicate poverty, create communities of equals, and solidarity. In so doing, the church provides life and the spirit of motherhood in our societies as opposed to greed, corruption, and selfish use of land and possession by the small minority at the expense of the majority of South Africans. As we know wealth is healthier when it is a shared commodity; but unshared wealth is a danger to humanity. A good example from the early church is the church utilising sources available to them as they were driven by the communal spirit from within her to transform the livelihood of the poor, marginalised of the 1st-century society.

Conclusion

This article highlights the early church's practice of selling land and possessions to address social problems, emphasising the need for the modern church, particularly in South Africa. The idea is to encourage and challenge the church to lead the conversation and follow the good example from the early church. Promote the sharing of wealth for the common good and be prophetic about it unashamedly. This might possibly be the means to address power imbalances and socio-economic challenges that cause enmity between fellow human beings in every society.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that no financial or personal relationships inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

Author's contributions

M.H. is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author, and the publisher.

References

- Barclay, J.M.G., 2019, 'Early Christianity, mission, and the survival of the poor in the Graeco-Roman World', *Teologisk tidsskrift* 8(4), 243–253. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1893-0271-2019-04-04>
- Barrett, S., 1994, 'Self-enforcing international environmental agreements revisited', *Oxford Economic Papers* 46, 258–259, viewed n.d., from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2663505>.
- Bauchham, R., 2006, *Jesus and the eyewitnesses: The Gospels as eyewitness testimony*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Blomberg, C.L., 1984, 'The Law in Luke-Acts', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 7(22), 53–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X8400702204>
- Blomberg, C.L., 1999, *Neither poverty nor Riches: A biblical theology of possessions*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Blomberg, C.L., 2009, *Jesus & the Gospels: An introduction & survey*, 2nd edn., B&H Academic, Nashville, TN.
- Bock, D.L., 2007, *Acts. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Baker Academic: Baker Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Boesak, A., 1987, *If this is treason, I am guilty*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Bruce, F.F., 1990, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with introduction and Commentary*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Brueggeman, W., 2002, *The land: Place as gift, promise, and challenge in biblical faith*, 2nd edn., Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.
- Brunt, P.A., [1981] 1990, 'The Revenues of Rome', *JRS* 71, 161–172. <https://doi.org/10.2307/299505>
- Brunt, P.A., 1990, 'Publicans in the principate', in P.A. Brunt (ed.), *Roman imperial themes*, pp. 354–432, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Carter, W., 2006, *The Roman empire and the New Testament: An essential guide*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN.
- Combrink, H.J.B., 1996, 'A social scientific perspective on the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1–18)', *Neotestamentica* 30(2), 281–306.
- Cooke, P., 2022, *Chapter 15 Italian Resistance Writing in the Years of the 'Second Republic' From the book The Long Aftermath*, pp. 269–286, Berghahn Books, New York, NY.
- Countryman, L.W., 1980, *The rich Christian in the church of early empire: Contradictions and Accommodations*, Ellen, New York, NY.
- Cromhout, M., 2014, 'Israelite ethnic identity responding to the Roman Imperium in Revelation', in J.B. Tucker & C.A. Baker (eds.), *T&T Clark Handbook to social identity in the New Testament*, pp. 527–550, Bloomsbury, London.
- Cromhout, M., 2020, *An Introduction to the World of Jesus and the Gospels*, New Apostolic Church, Cape Town.
- Dauids, P.H., 1992, 'Rich and poor', in J.B. Green (ed.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the gospels*, pp. 701–710, Westmont, Illinois.
- Dayton, W.T., 2009, 'Luke, Gospel of', in M.C. Tenney (ed.), *The Zondervan encyclopaedia of the Bible*, rev. edn., H-L vol. 3, pp. 1125–1136, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Elliott, J.H., 1987, *Text, situation and strategy: Definitions and methodological considerations. Unpublished class notes composed for a course on "The early church in social-scientific perspective."* University of San Francisco, California, San Francisco.
- Elliott, J.H., 1989, 'Social-scientific study of the Bible and the biblical world', Unpublished paper delivered at an MDiv-seminar at the Department of New Testament Studies (Faculty of Theology, Sec A), University of Pretoria.
- Esler, P.L., 1987, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The social and political motivation of Lucan theology*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.
- Fiensy, D.A., 1991, *The social history of Palestine in the Herodian period*, Lewiston and Lampeter, Mellen.
- Fitzmyer, J.A., 1998, *The Acts of the Apostles. The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries*, Yale University Press, Doubleday, New York, NY.
- Freyne, S., 1980, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian*, Glazier, Notre Dame Press, Wilmington.
- Friesen, S.J. & Scheidel, W., 2009, *The size of the economy and the distribution of income in the Roman empire*, pp. 1–32, viewed n.d., from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1299313.
- Gardner, G.G., 2014, 'Who is rich?: The poor in early rabbinic Judaism', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104(4), 515–536. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jqr.2014.0037>
- Garnsey, P.D.A. & Sailer, R.P., 1987, *The Roman empire: Economy, society and culture*, Duckworth, London.

- Günther, S., 2016, 'Taxation in the Greco-Roman World: The Roman Principate', in *Oxford Handbooks Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935390.013.38>
- Hanks, T.D., 1983, *God so loved the third world*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, NY.
- Hengel, M., 2012, *Property and Riches in the early church*, Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, SCM, London.
- Hopkins, K., 1980, 'Taxes and Trade in the Roman Empire (200 B.C.–A.D. 400)', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 70, 101–125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/299558>.
- Horsley, R.A., 1987, *Jesus and the spiral of violence: Popular resistance in Roman Palestine*, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.
- Jerome, H. & Neyrey, S.J., 2010, 'Social-scientific criticism', in D.E. Aune (ed.), *The Blackwell companion to New Testament*, pp. 178–191, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., London.
- Johnson, T.L., 1992, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Liturgical Press, Minnesota, MN.
- Keener, C.S., 2012, *Acts. An exegetical commentary. Introduction and 1:1–2:47*, vol. 1, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Keener, C.S., 2013, *Acts. An exegetical commentary. Introduction and 1:1–2:47*, vol. 2, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Longenecker, B.W., 2010, *Remember the poor: Paul, poverty, and the Greco-Roman world*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Makhado, R.A., 2012, *South Africa's land reform debate: Progress and challenges*, pp.1–6, viewed 12 May 2023, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255724731_South_Africa's_Land_Reform_Debate_Progress_and_Challenges.
- Malina, B.J. & Neyrey, J.H., 1991, *Honour and shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal values of the Mediterranean world*, Hendrickson, Peabody MA.
- Malina, B.J. & Rohrbaugh, R.L., 1992, *Social-science commentary on the synoptic gospel*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Maluleke, T.S., 2007, 'Postcolonial mission: Oxymoron or new paradigm?', *Swedish Missiological Themes* 95(4), 503–528.
- Marshall, H., 1980, *The Acts of the Apostles. An introduction and commentary*, Inter-Varsity Press, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Mazamisa, W.L., 1991, 'Reading from this place: From Orality to Literacy/Textuality and Back', *Scriptura Special Issue* 9, 67–72. <https://doi.org/10.7833/9-0-1969>
- Meeks, W.A., 1972, 'The man from heaven in Johannine sectarianism', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, 44–72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3262920>
- Meeks, W.A., 1983, *The first urban Christians: The social world of Apostle Paul*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Moxnes, H., 1991, 'Patron-client relations and the new community in Luke-Acts', in J.H. Neyrey (ed.), *The social world of Luke-Acts: Model for interpretation*, pp. 211–240, Hendrickson Publishers, MA.
- Moxnes, H., 1994, 'The social context of Luke's community', *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 48(4), 379–389. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096439404800408>
- Neyrey, J.H., 1991, 'Preface', in J.H. Neyrey (ed.), *The social world of Luke-Acts: Model for interpretation*, pp. ix–xvii, Hendrickson Publishers, MA.
- Neyrey, J.H., 2008, 'Loss of wealth, loss of family, loss of honor: The cultural context of the original Markanism in Q in the social world of the New Testament: Insights & Models', J.H. Neyrey & E.C. Stewart (eds.), pp. 87–102, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA.
- Oakman, D.E., 1986, *Jesus and the economic questions of his day*, Mellen, Lewiston, NY.
- Oakman, D.E., 2008, *Jesus and the peasants*, Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 4, Cascade Books, Eugene.
- Parsons, M.C., 2008, *Acts, IVP*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Perschbacher, W.J., 1995, *New Testament Greek syntax: An illustrated manual*, English, Ancient Greek and Ancient Greek Edition, Moody Publisher, Chicago, IL.
- Parsons, M.C. & Talbert, C.H., 2008, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Paideia Commentary Series, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Ringe, S.H., 1985, *Jesus, Liberation and the Biblical Jubilee*, Fortress, Philadelphia, PA.
- Robbins, V.K., 1975, 'The we-passages in Acts and the ancient sea voyages', *BR* 20, 5–18.
- Rohrbaugh, R.L., 2007, *The New Testament in cross-cultural perspective*, Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 1, Cascade Books, Eugene.
- Scheidel, W. & Friesen, S.J., 2009, 'The size of the economy and the distribution of income in the Roman empire', *JRS* 99, 61–91, here 74.
- Stegemann, E.W. & Stegemann, W., 1999, *The Jesus movement: A social history of its first century*, transl. O.C. Dean, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.
- Van Aarde, A.G., 1992, 'The Evangelium Infantum, the abandonment of children, and the infancy narrative in Matthew 1 and 2 from a social scientific perspective', in E.N. Lovering (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature: Seminar papers 1992*, pp. 435–453, Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA.
- Van Eck, E., 2001, 'Socio-rhetorical interpretation: Theoretical points of departure', *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies* 57(1/2), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v57i1/2.1884>
- Vellem, V., 2016, *Epistemological dialogue as prophetic: A Black theological perspective on the land issue*, pp. 1–11, Scriptura, Stellenbosch.
- Wall, R.W., 2002, 'The Acts of the Apostles', in L.E. Keck (ed.), *The new interpreter's Bible: AC; Introduction to Epistolary literature; Romans; 1 Corinthians*, vol. 10, pp. 504–505, Abingdon, Nashville, TN.
- Witherington, B., 1998, *The Acts of the Apostles: A socio-rhetorical commentary*, W.B. Eerdmans Pub., Grand Rapids, MI.
- Wright, B.J., 2017, *Communal reading in the time of Jesus: A window into early Christian reading practices*, pp. 320–325, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Wright, C.J.H., 1990, *God's people in God's land: Family, land, and property in the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.