MIMESIS AND THE MESSIANIC BANQUET: AN EXAMINATION OF THE NARRATIVE UNITY OF LUKE 14-16

by

ZECHARIAH PRESTON EBERHART

(Under the Direction of Wayne Coppins)

ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore the narrative unity of Luke's central section. While the majority of scholarship emphasizes the disunity of chapters 14-16, this work will pursue the contrary, arguing that not only is there unity between these chapters, but that the parables within this unit address a specific issue within the early Christian community: table-fellowship. Luke's juxtaposition of the Messianic Banquet (13:29-30) with the table-scene at the house of a prominent Pharisee (14:1-25) is evident. Luke, however, never explicitly moves Jesus outside of this location until 17:11. Exploring the parables of 14:16-24, 15:11-32, and 16:19-31, I will show how a narrative-contextual reading of Luke's central section illuminates coherence that has previously been recognized, but not fully developed. This study will argue that this unit functions rhetorically to exhort the audience to host and participate in meals which mimic the messianic banquet, rather than the Greco-Roman convivium.

INDEX WORDS: Convivium, Great Banquet, Prodigal Son, Lazarus, Luke, Narrative Criticism, Parables, Rich Man and Lazarus, Travel Narrative

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DEDICATION

To Dorthy and Lora (more affectionately Nanny and Nana)…Two women who have never left a stranger uninvited to their table and who have demonstrated what true table-fellowship looks like…the Kingdom of God on earth.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Lukan prandial narratives have garnered much attention within New Testament scholarship, and with just cause.[1] Throughout his narrative, Luke[2] utilizes several meal narratives for a variety of rhetorical functions.[3] The literary depiction of meal scenes is not without precedent, as similar narratives are well attested in both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.[4] The utilization of this widespread literary motif is important to note, as

[1] Some of the most important works include Dennis E. Smith, 'Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke' *JBL* 106 (1987), 613-638; Halvor Moxnes, 'Meals and the New Community in Luke,' *Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok*, 51-52 (1986-87) pp. 158-167; Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Hendrickson: Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991); Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14*. SNTSMS (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John Paul Heil, *The Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts: An Audience-Oriented Approach* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1999); Scott Bartchy, 'Table Fellowship', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Green, Joel B., and Scot Mcknight (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 796-800; et al. For a more recent and broader introduction to the various methods of reading meal narratives within the New Testament see: *Meals in the Early Christian World: Social Formation, Experimentation, and Conflict at the Table.* eds. Dennis E. Smith and Hal Taussig (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2012).

[2] By Luke, I am here and forthwith referring to the implied author of the gospel. Wayne Booth introduced the term "implied author" in his work *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). The implied author distinguishes between the real author, and the virtual author of the text. For Booth, the implied author is the one who "chooses consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices" pp.74-75. Booth's category of "implied reader" has since been problematized and there has been a push to distinguish between the implied author, narrator, and inscribed author. For our purposes here, implied author will suffice. For a brief discussion on narrators, see: Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 25-27. For more on the inscribed author see, Vernon Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts" in Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 305-332; For an argument which minimalizes the significance of these distinctions see, Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 35, fn.12.

[3] 5:27-39; 7:36-50; 10:38-42 (presumably); 11:37-54; 14:1-24 (traditionally); 19:1-10 (perhaps); 22:7-38; 24:30-35.

[4] By Greco-Roman here, I am referring to both the culture and era, ca. 300BCE-300CE. There is much variation of these dates within scholarship, as some suggest this is too broad, while others extend this era to 500BCE-500CE. It seems somewhat superfluous to nuance this term much further, as this broad category will be developed more specifically in what follows. I will use this term throughout in relation to literature that emerges in this era as well as the culture and ideology presented in this literature.

the Gospel of Luke should not, and perhaps even more strongly cannot, be read *in vacuo*.[5] It emerges as a product of its environment, a first-century world where Greco-Roman ideologies conflict with the ideologies of the kingdom of God. As the nascent Jesus-communities are attempting to navigate the nebulous waters of living in their own cultural communities while simultaneously participating in this new community, the Gospel writer addresses and responds to problems which arise, offering ways of navigating these competing ideologies.

The prevalence of meal scenes within the Lukan narrative and discourse alone are enough to pique the interest of even the most casual of readers.[6] As Snodgrass, Heil, Smith, et al. have observed, "Eating and meals are major themes in Luke's Gospel. Virtually every chapter contains something relevant to the subject."[7] From beginning to end, Luke has saturated his narrative with references to meals and eating.[8] Early in the narrative, Mary proclaims how God will fill the hungry with good things (1:53); in the penultimate episodes Jesus eats with the disciples at Emmaus and Jerusalem (24:30-49). Jesus eats with his disciples when he calls them (5:27-32), and when he leaves them (24:41-42). Over the course of his ministry Jesus eats with the Pharisees (7:36-50, 11:37-

[5] There remains some skepticism within scholarship as to whether extra-biblical meal narratives are helpful in understanding Luke's meal narratives. Snodgrass suggests that Greco-Roman literature may "have no direct relevance for understanding" the meal narratives in Luke, because "they describe much more elaborate affairs than a dinner with a Pharisee." Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 78-79; cf. François Bovon, *Luke: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*.vol. 2, trans. D. Deer, (Minneapolis Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2013), 337. While I understand this concern, particularly due to the brevity of Luke's narratives in contrast to the lengthy meal narratives of Plato and Xenophon, or the Latin satirists, this does not mean that Luke is not responding to the conventions of a first-century table-fellowship or contrasting the Christian meals with the traditional Greco-Roman convivium.

[6] Chatman's distinction between narrative and discourse is what is intended here. See Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in fiction and film* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1978).

[7] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 307.

[8] For more on the many references to eating with Luke see, J.P. Heil, *Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts, passim.*

54; 14:1-24), with sinners and tax-collectors (5:27-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 19:1-10), with the disciples (5:27-32; 22:7-38; 24:41-42), and with the crowds (9:16). Jesus fasts (4:2), teaches about fasting (5:35), and refrains from fasting (5:33). Jesus rejoices at meals, rebukes at meals, teaches at meals, and prays at meals.[9] The fact that the majority of these scenes are unique to the Lukan narrative suggests intentionality on behalf of the author.[10] The problem arises not with the recognition of these scenes, but in their explication.

THE PROBLEM

Undeniably Luke has situated and/or relocated these stories within the setting of a meal for a particular purpose.[11] The question becomes, what are his purposes in doing so? Do these reflect the historical situations in the life of Jesus?[12] If so, why is Luke the only writer to retain them? If not, why does the author change them? How would Theophilus and the implied audience of the Gospel understand these meal scenes? Are these meal

[9] Jesus teachings at meals have been a matter of much discussion, particularly in relation to the Symposium tradition. Cf. Jacob Neusner, "Two Pictures of the Pharisees: Philosophical Circle or Eating Club," *AthR* 64/4 (1982): 525-38; E. Springs Steele, 'Luke 11:37-54- A Modified Hellenistic Symposium?' *JBL 103/3,* (1984): pp. 379-394; Smith, 'Table Fellowship,' 614-620; Lyle Story, "One Banquet with Many Courses" *JBPR* 4 (2012): 67-93; D. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

[10] Meal Scenes Unique to Luke: 7:36-50 (Meal at Simon's house); 10:38-42 (implied: Mary and Martha's house); 11:37-54 (Pharisee's house); 14:1-25 traditionally (at a ruling Pharisee's house); 19:1-10 (implied: Zacchaeus's house); 24:30-49 (Post-Resurrection appearance with eating).

[11] It is important to note that I am working under the assumption that like most Hellenistic historians, the author of Luke has shaped the sayings to convey his own meaning, not simply the meaning of the original speaker. (cf. Cadbury, "Commentary on the Preface of Luke" in *The Acts of the Apostles,* ed. F.J. Foakes, Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, vol. 2, *Prolegomena II: Criticism,* 489-510) This is not to suggest that the sayings in Luke (primarily of Jesus) are not "historically reliable," but rather the author redacts, shapes, and places them into a specific context for his/her own purposes. This is a common practice among Hellenistic historians. For instance, Lucian writes how speeches allow the historian a chance to "play orator and show your eloquence" with the clarification that what the author writes must suit the character that is speaking. See: *How to Write History,* 58. Within Luke, I am working under the assumption that the author has strategically set the speeches of Jesus in a particular place or order (καθεξῆς 1:3) to aid the reader in interpreting the narrative from a certain vantage point. Discovering that vantage point, however, may be problematic, thus the narrative location and context is essential in acquiring this viewpoint. For a commentary that proposes a similar reading of Luke, Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke,* Sacra Pagina, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 3-10.

[12] Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 161-174, esp. 163.

scenes a fictive, yet practical setting for Jesus's discussions?[13] Is the prandial scene a literary trope which affords the author opportunities to portray Jesus as symposia philosopher,[14] or is there something more to them? The main focus behind each of these nuances is the question of function; how do these scenes function for the author and reader of the text?

This thesis was birthed from an initial investigation of Luke's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31). Over the course of this investigation, it quickly became clear that determining the function of this parable within the narrative of Luke would prove far more problematic and complex than originally anticipated. The immediate setting in ch.16 does not appear to provide sufficient data to explain the parable's function within the text. In the verses which precede the parable (vv.14-18) Jesus speaks of matters which appear disparate from the teachings of the parable. While Luke does provide the audience for the parable (v.14), the teachings do not appear to be connected.

Since the initial setting does not appear to provide the solution to its function, the next step was to examine the location of the parable within Luke's overall narrative framework. The setting of this parable was traced back to the last explicit setting offered in the Lukan narrative, the house of a ruling Pharisee (14:1). Since this parable appears in the context of the Travel Narrative (9:51-19:27),[15] however, where Jesus's movement

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[13] A "literary device to provide a setting for the sayings", J.M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: The Greek Text with Introductions, Notes, and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 188; via, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke.* Anchor Bible Commentary. Vol. 28. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985. 1038.

[14] Smith, 'Table Fellowship' 613-638; Johnson, *Luke*, 225-226*;* Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTSMS 85; Cambridge University Press, 1995), 136-44; Green, *Luke*, 243-245, 540-41.

[15] While the beginning of the travel narrative is evident, the conclusion of the travel narrative used here is by no means a consensus view. This is due in part to terminology, and part due to understanding of the intent. For a reading that ends at 18:14, cf. C.F. Evans, "The Central Section of St. Luke' Gospel" in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in honor of R.H. Lightfoot*, ed. D.E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955),

towards Jerusalem is reiterated on multiple occassions, this setting also appears unlikely.[16] My skepticism was not unwarranted, as several commentaries and works on this text also see these chapters as disparate and unrelated. As I began to explore the intertextures and movements within this narrative, however, the "verbal hooks" and themes present within these chapters, this initially unlikely setting began to seem more plausible, and thus, a more thorough exploration of this section was necessary.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

In the work that follows, two methods will be employed for the purposes of determining the function of these chapters: literary criticism and socio-historical criticism. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary for this investigation, as each method in and of itself is unable to fully tease out the function of a particular text. Each of these methods seeks to answer different questions of the text. These questions, however, are not mutually exclusive but rather they are compatible, illuminating one another, and producing fuller readings and understandings of the text. Thus, an interdependent relationship exists, or should exist, between these approaches.[17]

37-53; for 18:35, cf. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübigen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 365-366; for 18:35, cf. T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas*, KNT 3 (Leipzig, 1920); for 19:10, cf. Marshall, *Luke*; for 19:27/28, cf. Bovon, *Luke;* Fitzmyer, *Luke;* Johnson, *Luke*; for 19:44, cf. James Resseguie, "Point of View in the Central Section of Luke" *JETS*, 25/1, (1982): 41-47; David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Darrell Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994); John T. Carroll, "The Gospel of Luke: A Contemporary Cartography" *Interpretation*, 68/4, (2014): 366-75 (he does not call this a travel narrative, but rather a "transitional" narrative); for 19:46, cf. Frank Matera, "Jesus Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-19:46): A Conflict with Israel", *JSNT* 51 (1993), 57-77; for 19:48, Green, *Luke.*

[16] Narratively, Cf. 9:51, 53; 13:22; 17:11.

[17] This is by no means a novel concept, as several scholars have pointed out the interdependent nature of these methods. For varying examples of this see, Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A literary-cultural approach to the parables in Luke.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); David Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy, and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts*, (New York: P. Lang, 1991); Vernon Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996); For a specific interdisciplinary approach to one of the texts investigated here see: Ernst Wendland, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the Feast In the kingdom of God' (Lk 14:15): Internal and external intertextual influence on the interpretation of Christ's parable of the Great Banquet." *Neotestamentica*, 31/1, (1997), 159-194.

In seeking to determine the function of these parables, literary criticism offers the most rewarding outcome for understanding the connection of a pericope to the entirety. The strength of literary criticism is its concern with the way in which texts work, not only at the level of the evangelists, but also at the level of the reader. Most literary approaches render close and informative readings of the text. Though there are many sub-units of literary criticism, (i.e. structuralism, rhetorical criticism, reader-response criticism, narrative criticism, etc.) each of these are concerned with the way in which the story is told, or the way in which the text works.[18] While these approaches in and of themselves are quite helpful in illuminating the location, function, nuances, and intricacies of a text, unless they are supplemented with additional methods of investigation they can obstruct the more probable reading of it.[19]

A purely narrative reading fails to accentuate the historical context from which the text emerges. Because of this, the answers to the rhetorical or polemical function of a text are limited to only what is found within the text itself and are not extended into the broader first-century world. A narrative reading of the text, however, is invaluable in analyzing how a text is working within the entirety of a related work. Thus, for our purposes here, understanding the function of the parables requires some form of narrative

[18] For a brief introduction to these methods and how they differ from one another see: Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*

[19] The prevalence of this method need not be fully developed nor defended within the body of this text. Narrative Criticism has been employed within New Testament for some time. This form of criticism for New Testament studies was inaugurated by the 1982 seminal work of D. M. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), which has been revised since. Immediately following this work, Fortress Press published additional narrative studies on the gospels including: R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986)*;* Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation,* 2 vols. (Philadelphia and Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986 and 1990). For a more comprehensive bibliography of narrative studies in general as well as within biblical studies see: Mark Allan Powell, *The Bible and Modern Literary Criticism: A Critical Assessment and annotated Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992)*;* For a more recent treatment of narrative criticism within New Testament studies see: James Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2005).

criticism. But the results of a purely literary approach are incomplete. This by no means suggests that these results are fabricated or forced, as some have claimed,[20] but rather that their data is too narrow for a comprehensive, or at least a more complete interpretation. Due to its limitations, narrative criticism cannot stand alone, and must be corroborated with some other form of criticism that takes the historical situation of the author into account. Additional methods which analyze auxiliary data are necessary to supplement this investigation.

To supplement a literary-critical reading of the text, the most natural counterpart is the historical-critical method. In some ways, a historical-critical method has the opposite problem of literary-criticism. Where literary-criticism is perhaps too narrow of an approach, historical-criticism, if not properly limited, offers too much data. Due to the massive amounts of information available, it is necessary to pare this down further, based on the individual text that is being analyzed, as well as the particular questions that arise within an investigation of a text. Since our question here is centered upon the function of a text, the socio-historical method is best suited to our task.[21]

The socio-historical method is concerned with the social situations from which a text emerged, both those of the author and the audience to whom they are writing. As this approach also can be too cumbersome, we will focus particularly on an issue which emerges from a close reading of the text, and examine this issue in more detail. This is

[20] For more on objections to narrative criticism, see, Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism*, 91-98.

[21] The question of context is both a valid and interesting question for this investigation. How does one know definitively the context of the author or reader? While there is always some uncertainty when making such arguments for a text, it does not preclude us from examining the evidence in and around the world from which the text emerges. Recognizing the fluidity of making definitive claims on social contexts in antiquity, Vernon Robbins attempts to assuage this problem by offering the terminology of "social location" as opposed to context. In nuancing "context" with new terminology, "social location" forces the reader to recognize the environs from which the text emerged, and to construct social bases from which a worldview is built. See, Robbins, *Social Location,* 305-332.

why an interdisciplinary approach is not only helpful, but also preferred. After a literary-critical and socio-historical investigation, it becomes clear that a central issue inherent within ch.14-16 is table-fellowship.

OVERVIEW

What follows is the teasing out of this process: Chapter 2 will provide the preliminary results and data for our investigation. After developing this framework, I will then turn to investigating the meal scenes within chapters 14-16. The primary focus will be on three parables, each of which deals with meals and their social and religious implications. Chapter 3 will address the parable of the Great Banquet (14:16-24) and reveal how this parable addresses the social and religious dynamics of this new kingdom of God, offering a paradigm of who is to be included at the table. Chapter 4 will attend to one of Luke's most beloved parables, The Prodigal Son (15:11-32), explicating ways in which this parable too is addressing matters of table-fellowship, particularly in relation to celebration and inclusion. Chapter 5 will explicate Luke's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31), and demonstrate how this parable serves as a final warning to those who fail to espouse and implement the ideology presented in each of the previous two chapters. These parables in 14-16 form a narrative and rhetorical progression on the matter of table fellowship, moving from guests (who), to purpose (how and why), to warning (or else).

In chapters 3-5, our assessment will progress as followed. I will begin by offering a brief overview of scholarship pertaining to the parable. After tracing out the trajectories within scholarship, I will then examine the narrative location of the parable, and discuss how it informs our reading of the text. Once the parable has been situated within in its

literary setting, I will then address aspects of Greco-Roman dining which emerge from the parable, and posit ways in which this background informs our reading of the text. Finally, I will offer a re-reading of the text in light of the previous assessments. Due to the methods employed here, the reader will undoubtedly notice some repetition between sections. While every effort has been made to avoid excessive repetition, my desire to maintain a clear distinction between the two methods unfortunately lends itself to such inconvenience. My hope is that the reader will be able to look past any temporary annoyance and appreciate the attempt at maintaining methodological integrity.

This investigation, by no means, claims to offer the one definitive way of reading Luke's parables. William Herzog, in reference to his own work, offers a helpful corrective to understanding parable studies in general:

> "This work may contribute to the enduring task of understanding the parables, but its proposals cannot dispel the mystery that continues to surround them and mocks the arrogance of anyone foolish enough to believe that he or she has finally discovered their secret." [22]

The proposals here do not discredit the christological and/or theological aspects of these parables, nor do they exhaust the religious and/or social ramifications. Rather, this work seeks to posit potential explanations in regards to the location and function of these parables within the narrative of Luke, as well as to a first-century audience. The goals of this work are twofold: First, I will highlight and explicate narrative connections between three seemingly disparate chapters of Luke's Gospel, drawing attention to both the logical progression and the rhetorical force of reading these chapters as a single literary unit, or at least a group of texts that are connected with each other in significant ways.

[22] William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: WJKP, 1994) p.52.

Second, I will show how the meal scenes within Luke are addressing a specific concern of the early church: dining practices and their social, religious, and eternal implications.

The conclusion of this examination will reveal how chapters 14-16 should be read together as a single unit, and how these chapters address an issue that was present in the text's first-century milieu. The parables within Luke 14-16 exhort the reader to host and participate in meals which mimic the messianic banquet, rather than the Greco-Roman convivium.

CHAPTER TWO

NARRATIVE AND CONTEXTUAL SETTING OF LUKE 14-16

Before investigating the function of the meal narratives in Luke 14-16, it is first necessary to determine whether 14-16 can, and perhaps more appropriately should, be read together. It is then necessary to determine whether Greco-Roman dining practices provide sufficient data to illuminate our reading and understanding of Luke's meal narratives. After exploring each of these, I will attempt to demonstrate why this approach is well suited for the task at hand. As stated previously, the method used in this thesis will consist of a combination of narrative criticism and socio-historical criticism. This is not to suggest that this is the only way for reading parables or the narrative of Luke, but rather, one that is particularly well suited for addressing the questions raised here. [23] Even if the reader disagrees with the methods employed or has reservations concerning this methodological approach, the results should nevertheless illuminate previously ignored

[23] Most parables scholars do not employ this method, as the narrative complicates the parable at the level of the historical Jesus. For Ricouer, understanding the parables is a multi-layered process, one that needs to both take seriously the narrative context, as well as recognize its limitations: "The insertion of the parable into the Gospel-form is both a part of its meaning for us who have received the text from the church, and the beginning of its misunderstanding. This is why we have to interpret the parables both with the help of and against the distortions provided by the ultimate context." Paul Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia 4* (1975): 106. Scott attempts to address this problem within his work, and he suggests that we understand the parables and their literary contexts as "one performance" of the parable. Since the parable can take on many performances or versions, no one performance fully explicates or exhausts the potential for the parable. Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 56. While both of these distinctions are helpful in understanding the problems that arise from a purely narrative reading of texts, they subsequently allow room for interpretations of parables outside of the gospel contexts. This is problematic for several reasons, most notably in that the context provides the lens through which we are to understand the parable. If the parables are taken out of their narrative context, the interpreter is left piecing together a "most probable" setting for the parable as told by the historical Jesus. Thus, the allegorical and or referential aspects of the parable are multiplied exponentially and become uncontrollable.

aspects of Luke's narrative construction and open doors to new ways of reading and understanding the parables within these chapters.

BUILDING A CASE: THE NARRATIVE UNITY OF 14-16

The question of location, where a text appears within the broader narrative, is an essential component to any potential explanation of a text's rhetorical impetus.[24] It appears as though there is a tripartite division within the travel narrative, segmenting the narrative between three explicit mentions of Jesus's movement towards Jerusalem (9:51, 53; 13:22, 17:11).[25] If this second segment, in which chapters 14-16 are located, is read together as a single scene taking place at the home of the ruling (ἀρχόντων) Pharisee, the themes inherit within the entire unit should also serve as an interpretive lens for the parables therein.[26]

In 13:22 we find the second narrative reference to Jesus making his way to Jerusalem.[27] In the introductory teaching of this second phase of the Jerusalem trek, Jesus speaks of a "feast in the kingdom of God," a messianic banquet in which people from every direction will come and take their place (13:28-29). The next specific location

[24] Particularly with parables. Cf. Scott, *Hear then the Parable*, 163.

[25] Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 244-253. Frank Matera, *Journey to Jerusalem*, 58, fn.4 includes references at 18:31, 19:11, and 19:28. I have chosen Brown's distinction for the following reasons: In 18:31, the reference is made in a discourse rather than a narrative portion of the text; in 19:11 I concede that Matera might have a point, though I would differentiate between the purpose of this mention here, since it is not in the same vein as the previous three times within the narrative. The first three instances it is explicitly about Jesus's traveling, not to set up a teaching. For the reference in 19:28, I would argue (similar to Bovon, Fitzmyer, and Johnson), that this marks the end of the "travel" narrative, since Jesus is "going before them into Jerusalem," Matera and others have included the scene at Bethany and Jesus's triumphal entry before arriving at the temple within their treatment of the travel narrative (vv.28-44), though this scene prepares for his entry into to Jerusalem, not necessarily Jesus's journey there.

[26] Cf. Greg Forbes, *The God of Old: The Role of Lukan Parables in the Purpose of Luke's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 113. Though Forbes is arguing for the unity of the three parables in chapter 15 in his work, the same holds true for this work with chapters 14-16.

[27] It is important for the narrator that the audience understands that Jesus is headed to Jerusalem with purpose (9:31; 51). He specifically mentions Jesus's journey three times within the narrative (9:51,53; 13:22; 17:11), and travel is referenced or implied sixteen/seventeen times between narrative and discourse: 9:51, 53, 56, 57; 10:1, 38; 13:22, 31, 33; 14:25; 17:11; 18:31, 35, 36; 19:1, 11, (28).

provided within the narrative occurs in 14:1, where we find Jesus, again, in the home of a prominent Pharisee. With the potential exceptions of Jesus turning to speak to those traveling with him (14:25),[28] and responding to the Pharisees who were angry with him for dining with tax-collectors and sinners (15:1-2), this is the last explicit setting offered by Luke until 17:11.[29] If Jesus is indeed still in the house of the Pharisee from 14:1-17:10, the entire literary unit might be seen as a continuation of the juxtaposition between the messianic banquet and worldly repasts.

It is apparent, both thematically and by proximity, that Luke has juxtaposed the messianic banquet in 13:29-30 with a table scene (14:1-15) and the parable of the *Great Banquet* (14:16-24); it is less obvious that the theme of repast runs throughout the entire subsection, between the two mentions of Jesus's turning toward Jerusalem (13:22-17:10). The thematic correlations and verbal resonances within these chapters, however, support a narrative unity. For instance, in ch.14 the conflicts at the table concern healing/ restoration on the Sabbath and inviting the proper dinner guests. The parables of the

[28] Contra Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 14-21, who agrees with Schleiermacher, and argues that συμπορεύομαι clearly denotes a new audience who is not present at the scene in vv.1-24. While it is true that Luke is addressing a new audience, it is not necessarily true that they are excluded from the scene.

[29] It is clear from other parables within the Travel Narrative (9:51-19:27) that while Luke is often meticulous about providing the specific audience of the parables, he is far less concerned with providing specific locations or time. Luke is careful about providing a specific context (different from setting) for his parables, particularly when it comes to defining the audience. For instance, of the parables in Luke, only four are found outside of this travel narrative (9:51-19:27): *The Two Debtors* (7:41-43), *The Sower* (8:5-8), *The Wicked Tenants* (20:9-18), and *The Fig Tree* (21:29-31). In each of those four parables, Luke provides a definitive setting and a specific audience. In the *Parable of the Two Debtors*, Jesus is in the home of a Pharisee (7:36), and he addresses the parable to his host, Simon (7:41). In the *Parable of the Sower*, Jesus is traveling from town to town, and he addresses the crowd that is coming from the towns to follow him (8:4). The two parables that follow the travel narrative, *The Wicked Tenants* and *The Fig Tree*, both occur at the temple (20:1), with the former being directed at Jesus' opponents (20:1) and the latter being directed towards some of his disciples (21:5). Within the travel narrative, Luke is not as meticulous about providing a specific setting, but he consistently provides a definitive audience. Of the sixteen parables that occur within the travel narrative, only three are given a specific setting: The parables of *The Mustard Seed* (13:18-19) and *Leaven* (13:20-21) both take place while Jesus is teaching in the synagogue (13:10-11). The parable of *The Great Supper* (14:16-24) takes place at the house of a Pharisee (14:1). If we were to take chs.14-16 as being a single unit, that would provide 5 additional parables a definitive setting, at the table of the Pharisee.

"lost/found ones" in ch.15 and the parables concerning the use and abuse of wealth in ch.16 may very well function as part of a continued discussion at the table, similar to Plutarch's table talk concatenation.[30] Throughout these chapters the themes of recovery, restitution, and justice appear with regularity, but most importantly for this reading they all include a parable with a prandial scene. Notice also that the author retains the audience in each of the three parables, which might also suggest coherence. It is thus possible that Luke has organized chapters 14-16 to be read together as a single narrative unit, as part of a longer dinner-table discourse and critique.

Narrative Movement: In order to make this case stronger, it is helpful to look briefly at narrative movement within the travel narrative. When compared to the entirety of the narrative it is evident that the author is less concerned with specific locations in 9:51-19:27. Since Jesus is on the move in these chapters, and the author makes it unmistakably clear to the reader where Jesus is going (9:51; 13:22; 17:11), he tends to omit distinctive locations, focusing rather on the movement towards the end goal of the journey, Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem. Because the narrative is characterized by travel, Luke includes within the narrative several indicators of movement.

Many of these narrative markers that depict movement or a change in scene within the Travel Narrative, however, are not located here. For instance, πορεύομαι which occurs regularly within the narrative portions of Luke's text to indicate movement (i.e. 9:51-53; 10:38; 17:11; 19:28, etc.), only occurs in speech in ch.14-16.[31] The word

[30] Cf. Plutarch, *Table Talk*, where he gathers and records "multiple" scenes concerning the same subject, and locates them in succession.

[31] The verb συμπορεύομαι occurs three times in Luke. The first instance is in 7:11 where it clearly carries a meaning of "movement" though the narrative is what offers this as it occurs in the imperfect tense. The second occurrence is here in 14:25, again occurring in the imperfect, though the narrative context does not necessarily provide the sense of movement in the present. The crowd has followed Jesus (past), and will continue to follow Jesus (future-as Luke is narrating from his present), though they are not necessarily on

ἐρχόμαι is used in various forms to indicate movement in, out, and around locations in the travel narrative (εἰσέρχομαι: 9:52; 10:38; 11:37; 17:12; 19:1; ἐξέρχομαι: 11:53), but it does not occur outside of speech between 14:1 and 17:12. The phrase καὶ ἐγένετο at times signals a change in setting for Luke (i.e. 11:1, 14), and it occurs in 14:1 but not again until 17:11. Outside of the travel narrative, Luke indicates changes in settings and times with a phrase μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν (i.e. 5:17; 8:22) but, again, it does not occur in 14-16. While Luke has utilized several terms and phrases to indicate movement throughout his narrative, he does not use any terms here to indicate that this is the case.

Narrative Hooks/Thematic Similarities: Even if one does not accept that 14-16 are to be read as a single scene, there are several "narrative hooks"[32] which knit these pericopae together, thus forcing us to at least consider its narrative unity. The similarities go back thematically to the messianic banquet (13:28-29). In 14:1-6, Jesus heals a man with dropsy on the Sabbath. As Braun has persuasively argued, the affliction here is important in understanding the rhetorical effect of this scene.[33] While Braun has highlighted the literary tradition of "dropsy" as being symbolic of avarice, it is also possible to see the afflicted man playing a more practical role at the narrative level, while simultaneously maintaining the author's critique of wealth. Already within Luke's narrative, Jesus has proven three times that he has the power to heal on the Sabbath

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the move now. The third occurrence is in 24:15, again occurring in the imperfect, and here again it is a sense of movement, but only because the surrounding narrative provides evidence for the action. So while the imperfect in the other two instances in Luke suggests movement at the level of the narrative, in 14:25 there is no specific evidence from the surrounding narrative to make this claim. Also, three instances of a word in a work is perhaps too limited of a scope to make an all-inclusive claim on the word's use for the author. For further discussion of whether there is a definitive scene change here or not see the discussions of δέ below in chs. 3-5.

[32] I am borrowing the language of "hooks" from Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 454.

[33] Braun argues that the man with dropsy is intentionally added here as the affliction to further support the rhetorical point of chapter 14, being about the conversion of the host. Dropsy, as he shows throughout ancient literature, was at times used as a metaphor for insatiable avarice. See Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric,* 22-42.

(4:31-37, 6:1-9, 13:10-17), with each previous occasion occurring in the synagogue, twice in the presence of the Pharisees (6:1-9; 13:10-17). Jesus has also proven multiple times that he has the power to heal.[34] Yet Luke chooses to include yet another instance where Jesus's authority is challenged on the subject of Sabbath observance. The situation is amplified by the location, the audience, and the subsequent discussion. The watchful eye of the Pharisees confirms that this not simply a healing narrative, but also and primarily a conflict story.[35] Jesus's refusal to allow the afflicted man to leave unrestored not only reveals Jesus's authority over issues pertaining to Sabbath observance, but it also contrasts Jesus's concern for the outsider, over and against the lack of concern shown by the Pharisees. The narrative then segues into a dispute concerning positions of honor (vv.7-14). This perhaps betrays Luke's narrative purpose for the man with dropsy, as he is redefining the positions of honor and belonging at the table (vv.7-11).

The appearance of the man with dropsy at the table provides within the narrative a tangible example of those who are currently excluded from table fellowship but who should be invited (vv. 13-14, 16-24). This conflict story provides the platform for Jesus's critique of the current social structures of repast, which thus segues into Jesus's restructuring of meal etiquette.[36] This radical restructuring makes room at the table for the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame, a list iterated twice by the author in two subsequent teachings of Jesus (vv. 13, 21).

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[34] Before: 4:38-39; 5:12-16; 5:17-26; 6:6-11; 7:1-10; 8:43-48; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; After: 17:11-19; 18:35-43; 22:49-51.

[35] There are several ways in which this text has been understood. Some read this story as a healing narrative, similar to the ones found in 6:6-11 and 13:10-17. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, argues in line with Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), that this story is a pronouncement story, though he acknowledges the conflict within the story. Green, *Luke*, argues that this is a conflict story, though he leaves open the possibility of response to the inbreaking kingdom of God.

[36] Green, *Luke*, 548-54.

In response to Jesus's discourse about places of honor, one at the table speaks of the blessing of those who will be in attendance at the heavenly banquet (14:15). It is possible that Luke is highlighting the crowds' misunderstanding of Jesus's teaching concerning who should be included at the dinner table in the present world, and tells a parable to reaffirm his previous teachings.[37] He might also be using this macarism to transition into discussions concerning the eschatological banquet, having discussed this as recently as 13:28-29.[38] Either way, Jesus responds to the attendee by telling the parable of the Great Banquet (14:16-24) implying that not all of those who are invited to the banquet will attend.[39] This is the first of three parables which involve a banquet or dinner table, each of which addresses the relationships between hosts and guests, either positively or negatively (14:16-24, 15:11-32, 16:19-31).[40] At least one meal occurs in each of these parables, following Jesus's teaching concerning the eschatological banquet and his critique of those who were at the house of the Pharisee vying for places of honor (14:7-14).

Resonances: Aside from the thematic similarities, many commentators have highlighted the resonances between the Prodigal Son (15:11-32) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31). The similarities include: a desire to be filled (15:16; 16:21), contact with impure animals (15:15-16; 16:21), a celebration/feasting (15:23, 24, 29, 32; 16:19),

[37] Cf. Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 14-21.

[38] Or some combination of both: see Scott, *Hear then the Parable,* 163-165*;* Green, *Luke,* 555-557.

[39] Luke's version of this parable is less radicalized and by far less politically loaded than Matthew's version (cf. Matt. 22:1-14). Below, in chapter 3, I will briefly address the location of the Matthean parable, and how that changes the meaning.

[40] Eating is not explicit in the two parables, the Lost Sheep (15:4-7) and Lost Coin (15:8-10), though the celebration (χάρα) there could be indicative of a meal celebration where eating is included. The invitation to rejoice, while implicit, can be understood as a similar invitation to dine together.

father/son (15:11-32, 16:24-25), and clothing as a sign of honor/wealth (15:22; 16:19).[41] While each of these connections in and of themselves are not intended for the same purposes, they do assist the attentive auditor/reader to query the correlations between them.[42] The parable of the Prodigal Son ends as a cliffhanger, with the audience left wondering whether the oldest son will accept the invitation to attend the banquet or not.[43] The Rich man and Lazarus ends with the audience wondering if the brothers will heed the words of Moses and the Prophets. In both parables, the audience is left with a choice. If this unit of chs.14-16 functions holistically, perhaps this is also the case for the end of the parable in ch.14, asking whether the Pharisaic host will invite the proper guests to dinner, as the host of the parable (even if only eventually) has done.

When read in light of its setting and the themes within these chapters, it indeed appears as though the setting offered in 14:1 is the beginning of Luke's broader critique of meal-etiquette among the first-century social elite. The continuation of this discussion within the parables of the Great Banquet, the Prodigal Son, and the Rich Man and Lazarus furthers the theme of contrasting guests at the banquet and pervades the narrative. The Pharisees acknowledge the man with dropsy, tacitly disapproving of his request for restoration; Jesus heals him (14:3-6). Jesus critiques the host for not inviting the poor, crippled, blind and the lame to his meal, then the host of the Great Banquet welcomes this very crowd (14:12-14, 16-24). The older son resents the younger brother, while the father places him in a position of honor at the table (15:11-32). Lazarus lies

[41] Snodgrass, *Stories*, 454; Forbes, *God of Old*, 181, fn 2; Green, *Luke*, 598-610.

[42] For further connections to aid in reading this as a single literary unity, see Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 109, for a number of connections between the parable of the Unjust Steward (16:1-8) and the Prodigal Son. For 15-16 as a single narrative unit see John Nolland, *Luke*, 3 vols. (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989-93) 795-96.

[43] Contra Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 538, who argues that language of the parable, ἔδει as well as οὐκ ἤθελεν, implies that it is too late for the oldest son to accept the invitation. His main argument is that ἔδει indicates that the time has past.

poor, crippled, and lame at the gate of the rich man, a man who continues to feast sumptuously. Abraham receives poor Lazarus in the afterlife, and the rich man is excluded from the meal (16:19-31).

Implications: The verbal hooks, the thematic elements of food and fellowship, together with the narrative "location" as being at the house of the prominent Pharisee at supper, all suggest that there are reasons to read chs.14-16 as a single scene, and that the unity of these texts helps to supply meaning to the parables therein. It is no coincidence that these parables are located where they are in Luke's narrative, in relative succession, each immediately following Jesus discussion of the eschatological banquet with the patriarchs (13:28-29). From the outset of the Gospel, Jesus's mission in Luke is to reverse the situations of the poor and the rich, of the low and the mighty, and to bring about reform to the current social situation (1:52-53, 6:20-26).[44] In this particular narrative unit, inclusion at the dinner table in this world is clearly juxtaposed with inclusion at the eschatological banquet.

The progression of this narrative culminates in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The repeated failure of the rich man to invite poor Lazarus to meal constitutes his repeated failure to host a meal which mimics the messianic banquet. Because he has failed to invite the poor, crippled, [blind] and lame to his meal, his place at the table has been revoked and given to poor Lazarus, the very person he failed to invite. Lazarus obtains the honored position at the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man gleans his

[44] Tannehill reads the Gospel of Luke as tragedy, as Jesus never fully does this in the gospel. See Robert C.Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation,* vol.1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991).

reward only in this world.[45] Because this radical reconstruction of meal etiquette, which is developed in chapters 14 and 15, was not observed in the present world, it finds fulfillment post-mortem. It is not merely the rich man's wealth that causes his permanent position of torment in Hades, but his failure to recognize who really belonged at his table. Thus, Luke's parable works as a vivid depiction of what awaits those who fail to invite the poor, crippled, blind and lame to dine with them.[46]

The appeal for table-fellowship to mimic the eschatological banquet leaves this entire literary unit begging the question, are you inviting the right people to dine with you? In the case of the ruling Pharasaic host, the older brother, and the rich man, the answer is a resounding no. In contrast, each of the parables contains a host that (even if only eventually) gets it right. Matters of guests, invitations, inclusion and exclusion, positions of honor and shame, places at the table, fellowship, community, joy and celebration, all of these themes which are present within these parables, are specifically addressed within the broader first-century conversations of table-fellowship.

BACKGROUNDS: GRECO-ROMAN DINING PRACTICES ca. FIRST-CENTURY

Simply noting these connections, however, does not fully explicate the function or purpose of these chapters within Luke's text. Transitioning now to a discussion concerning ancient dining ideologies, we will discuss aspects of commensality, and explore whether these parallels are helpful in understanding Luke's text or not. In this

[45] Examples of Abraham's bosom as place of honor or heavenly place: *Testament of Abraham*: 20:14; *Jubilees*: 22:26-23:2.

[46] Most commenters read the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus through the lens of 6:20, 24, together with Luke's "Great Reversal" motif, as well as his indictment against wealth. While both of these are undoubtedly true, this thesis is arguing that chapters 14-16 offer a more concrete and definitive reason for this reversal and condemnation.

section, I will summarize literary depictions of dining practices that emerge around the time of Luke's composition. This will not only provide us with a lens through which we might analyze Luke's writing, but it will also inform our understanding of the culture in which the original audience is reading/hearing this text. The purpose of this section is to summarize aspects of extra-biblical first-century dining, particularly aspects shared with this literary unit, which will provide us with a framework to explicate these aspects further in the subsequent chapters as they appear within the individual pericopae.

Jewish and/or Greco-Roman Dining Practices

When it comes to matters of table-fellowship, there is no shortage of literary depictions within first-century literature. Jewish compositions include the infamous Hillel and Shammai debates concerning with whom the Pharisees are allowed to dine (t. Sabb. 1:14-15); the apocryphal *Joseph and Aseneth* reverses the historical xenophobic relationship between Jews and Egyptians, and shows how the Egyptians are not worthy to dine with the Jews (7:1); in the *Letter of Aristeas*, Dorotheus, a special officer, has the specific role of taking care of banquets for the king, particularly seating arrangements and accommodations (183-187); in the Qumran community, we find not only exclusivity in relation to their communal dining practices (1QS 6), but also in relation to those whom they believe will be welcomed to the eschatological banquet (1QSa 2:5-6).[47] While a separate work could be devoted to the explication of these Jewish backgrounds, particularly the topic of who can eat with whom, Greco-Roman literature appears to provide more substantial ideological parallels with this prandial scene.

[47] 1QSa 2:3-9 and 1QM 7:4-5 are perhaps most helpful for understanding why the list of those invited in Luke ch.14 is there, and how their inclusion in the messianic banquet, opposes notions in other Jewish groups as to who is able to participate in the banquet, and fight in the eschatological battle, etc.; the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. See Snodgrass, *Stories,* 301.

In Greco-Roman literature there are the philosophical discussions in the *Symposiums* of Plato and Xenophon;[48] the comedic rants of the first and early second-century Latin satirists, Petronius, Persius, Juvenal, and Lucian, offer an exaggerated, yet simultaneously helpful depictions of first-century commensality and the political dimensions surrounding it;[49] in Plutarch's voluminous *Moralia*, he dedicates a significant section to the *quaestiones conviviales*, discussing several topics as table conversations.[50] To fully explicate each of these works is a task beyond this modest investigation, but it is sufficient to speak in brief about matters pertaining to dining as found in this literature, particularly to highlight the convivial aspects which are either maintained or contrasted within Luke's narrative.[51]

In chapter 14, Luke utilizes multiple terms to refer to dining and banquets.[52] As Braun rightly asserts, "the rather extensive variation in naming dining occasions (φαγεῖν ἄρτον [twice], γάμος, ἄριστον, δεῖπνον [three times], δοχή) covers enough entertainments to give the impression that any and all social meals are under review."[53] Smith avers that the various meals in antiquity should be evaluated not in relation to their differences, but

[48] Plato, *Symposium*; Xenophon: *Symposium*.

[49] Petronius, *Satyricon;* Persius and Juvenal, *Satires*; Lucian, *Symposium.*

[50] Plutarch, *Table Talk*, books 1-9 in *Moralia,*

[51] For further discussion as to the extent to which literature depicts the realities of the first century world, see the discussions of D. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 6-12; John F. Donahue, Toward the Typology of Roman Public Feasting" in *Roman Dining: A Special Issue of American Journal of Philology,* eds.Gold, Barbra K, John F. Donahue. (Baltimore, Maryland; John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 95-114; Hal Taussig, *In the Beginning was the Meal: Social experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2009), 11-20. There is always some discrepancy when one attempts to make claims from the "narrative world" about first-century "reality."

[52] John F. Donahue highlights the various terminology for Roman meals as well, *epulum, cena, convivium, prandium*. Dennis Smith has argued that when you speak of banquet, you speak of the social conventions of all dining in the ancient world. Whether one takes the view of Donahue, Smith, or Braun, it is evident from the literature that meals were an important aspect of first-century thought and life. Because of the prevalence of the various discussions of meals in antiquity, it becomes a viable option for understanding Luke's use of meal scenes. Donahue's views might be more helpful in analyzing the extra-biblical material, though for this investigation, I will use Smith's "ideological banquet" model.

[53] Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 47.

rather by their similarities.[54] Some of the varying social aspects of dining in the Greco-Roman world include: honor and shame, seating positions, segregative commensality, convivial reciprocity, conspicuous consumption, invitation, exclusion, and festive joy.[55] After briefly examining these various facets of meals in antiquity, it will become apparent that the author of Luke is indeed engaging in these first-century conversations concerning table-fellowship, and is subverting the established cultural customs of the Greco-Roman convivium, offering a new paradigm to which his audience is to adhere.

Meals as Social Stratification: Positions of honor and shame at the meal[56]

Where one is seated at the dinner table says much about their position within the social circle. In antiquity, however, there are varying ideas as to where the place of honor is actually located. We find discussions and depictions of this in the *Letter of Aristeas* and Plutarch's *quaestiones conviviales*. In the *Letter of Aristeas*, the king places the position of honor in the center of the room, so he is careful not to alienate and thus shame those seated away from him.[57] In Plutarch, this matter is discussed further and with much more detail. For most Greeks, the first place is the position of honor, for the Persians it is in the central place, for the Romans it is the last place on the middle couch, called the consul's place, and for some Greeks it is the first place in the center couch.[58] The positions of honor, regardless of location, reflect either negatively or positively on both the host and

[54] Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 1-12.

[55] For additional categories of Greco-Roman banqueting see: Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 13-46; John D'Arms, "Performing Culture: Roman Spectacle and the Banquets of the Powerful," in *The Art of Ancient Spectacle,* ed. Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon (Studies in the History of Art 56; Washington/New Haven: National Art Gallery/ Yale University Press, 1999), 301-319; John F. Donahue, "Toward the Typology of Roman Public Feasting" 95-114.

[56] *Letter of Aristeas*, 183-187; Plutarch, *Table Talk,* 1:2-4 (Mor. 615-622); Petronius, *Satyricon,* 27-70; Juvenal, *Satires,* 5:16-19; Luke 14:7-14.

[57] *Letter of Aristeas*, 183-187.

[58] Plutarch, 619. For images of the differences between Greek and Roman banquet halls/dining rooms see, Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 15-17; Carolyn Osiek, "What Kind of Meals did Julia Felix Have? A Case Study of the Archeology of the Banquet" in *Meals in the Early Christian World*, 37-58.

guests of the meal. Where one is seated, in relation to the host and the other guests is indicative of their social status. At imperial banquets, there are reports of the wealthy receiving positions nearer to the emperor, while the less wealthy and poor were relegated to positions further away.[59] Not only did it manifest itself in seating location, but also in the distribution of food. The wealthier guests received greater portions, and better selections of food than did others.[60]

One's location at the table is not only indicative of their social status, but also of their ability to bring honor to the host, and vice versa. In a discussion between whether the host should seat the guests or allow the guests to seat themselves, Plutarch recounts an embarrassing story of a host, Timon, who failed to seat his guests, and narrates the problems that ensue. A man well dressed, better than most in attendance, arrived at the dinner, and after scanning the banquet and observing the lack of order he departs, due to the lack of an available seating position worthy of his title.[61] While the other guests laughed and jovially sent this guest away in a somewhat shameful manner, due to their "enjoyment" of drink, a dispute arose following the meal. In this dispute, the question discussed concerns whether the host should allow freedom for the guests to choose their own seating positions, which contributes to the commensal aspects of the meal, or whether the host should be responsible for providing order to the meal, and thus be sure to give due honor to the guests in attendance.

Plutarch's father brings this charge against Timon, suggesting that instead of haphazardly offering the positions at the banquet, he should have been responsible for the

[59] For a thorough work on the literary depictions of seating positions see, M. Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Value, and Status.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[60] For further discussions of "equality" at the table see D. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 11-12, 54-58, 194-200.

[61] Plutarch, *Moralia,* 615 D, E.

positioning of the guests. In doing so, the host is able to supply proper honor where it belongs by taking age, rank, and other distinctions into account. Plutarch, as the mediating voice in this discussion, suggests that there should be some flexibility in the seating of guests, however, only to the extent to which proper honor is maintained. Much of this is dependent upon the type of guests that are being entertained. If someone hosts a meal with young guests, fellow citizens, and intimates, it is less a matter of orderliness, and more a matter of friendliness. If, however, the guests at the meal are foreigners or learned men, one should "yield something to custom and usage" and "as carefully as possible with place at table, meat, and many a cup" set order as the highest priority. Discussions concerning individual and corporate honor, friendship, and relationship at the table are of great concern in antiquity.[62]

Meals as Social Obligation and Barriers: Segregative Commensality and Reciprocity

In addition to matters of honor and shame, the meal was a means of creating social and economic barriers between those "within" and those "outside." A banquet creates opportunities for social bonding, but also for social ostracization.[63] In antiquity, as it is today, dining is primarily a social event. Plutarch records that the Romans quip about a man after a solitary meal who says, "I have eaten, but not dined today."[64] But it is not just eating with anyone that is important. The audience one eats with is indicative of the type of community to which one belongs. Associating with the "right people," the ὀρθός σύνδειπος as Plutarch articulates, is an important aspect of the convivium.[65] Earlier in his work, Plutarch speaks of Chilion, a man who would not agree to come to the meal

[62] Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist, passim*, but esp. 54-62.
[63] Moxnes, "Meals in the New Community", 158-167.
[64] Plutarch, *Moralia,* 697C.
[65] Ibid.

without first knowing the names of everyone who was invited.[66] For Chilion it is not simply a matter of being invited, but of whether the dinner companions are the "right" sympotists and whether they accurately reflect the social circles to which one belongs.[67] There are not only social ramifications at meals, but also political.

Under this particular social system, honor and shame, the first to be invited are the ones who will bring the most honor to the host. Thus, only those who are of a certain social distinction within the honor and shame system made the invitation list. In order to secure one's honor as host, and thus receive reciprocal benefits from the banquet, one had to insure that their guests were properly taken care of, or better yet entertained. The satirists, so much as their accounts can be relied upon, provide an exotic and exasperating depiction of a first-century banquet.[68] In his imaginative and exhausting account of Trimalchio's banquet, Petronius depicts the seemingly endless buffet provided by the host. It is not simply a matter of food, as food flows freely, but rather a matter of entertainment, one of spectacle. At one point in the meal, hunters arrive, carrying into the banquet hall their weapons and the catch from the hunt.[69] At another, the host accuses the slave of not gutting the pig before cooking it, and as the slave cuts the pig open cooked sausages and other delicacies poured forth.[70] Yet another time, towards the end of the meal, the roof shakes and opens up, and the guests are showered with gifts from the sky, including crowns and expensive perfumes. All the while, as the guests were distracted by the protracting roof and the expensive gifts showered upon them, the slaves were setting

[66] Ibid. 148A.
[67] Ibid.
[68] I am not suggesting that we use the satirists as "historically accurate" depictions of meals, however, their views on convivium nevertheless reflect the opinions of such events by those who are either left outside the banquet, or are disenchanted by the practice.
[69] Petronius, *Satyr.* 40.
[70] Ibid. 49-50.

the next course of the meal, one even more elaborate than the previous.[71] Pliny provides examples of some hosts taking on great debt in order to host such a banquet, knowing that the reciprocal relationship will be worth the cost.[72]

In order to be sure it was worth the cost, the host had to make sure they were inviting the proper guests. Stratification is not purely indicative of seating positions, but also of inclusion and exclusion, and the right to participate in the meal. Invitation, by definition, suggests exclusion. When one is invited, that necessarily means that someone is not invited. In antiquity, who eats with whom is a direct reflection of who can associate with whom in the broader social circles. It is necessary for the host, if they desire to gain honor from the event, to invite the proper people. Thus, the banquet was a social institution employed to both secure and solidify relationships with those who could reciprocate honor; it also functioned as a way of establishing barriers between those inside and those outside.

Meals as Entertainment and Signifiers of Social Status: Conspicuous Consumption

The honor of the host post-banquet must also be taken into account. At convivium, the host that provides the most spectacular of events is often showered with honor by the community.[73] But rarely was food the real concern of the meal. As one ancient suggests, food and beverage were *magis ostentui quam usui servitor* "more for show than nutritional use."[74] Sparing no expense, hosts would do everything in their power to offer a banquet that stimulated not only the sense of taste, but rather an event

[71] Ibid. 60.

[72] Trevor Murphey, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: The Empire in the Encyclopedia.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 64-66.

[73] John D' Arms, 'Performing Culture,' 301-19.

[74] Macrob. *Sat.* 7.5.32, via John D'arms, 'Performing Culture'. This idea of excessive opulence is also the subject of the satires of Petronius and Juvenal as well.

that invoked all of the senses.[75] Thus, banqueting became more than just eating together, but rather it encapsulated various forms of entertainment. Such an occasion can be seen in the above example of Petronius' account of Trimalchio's banquet.[76] This excessive use of wealth to produce an event worth remembering and worthy of honor was seen as a positive aspect within Greco-Roman dining practices. For the purposes of this study, this not only fits within Luke's critique of improper uses of wealth, but specifically his critique of excessive uses of wealth at the expense of those left outside the celebration.

Invitation: Acceptance and Rejection

At most banquets, not only was an invitation sent, but most often it was necessary for attendance. As has been pointed out in reference to Luke's parable of The Great Banquet, some have highlighted the two-fold invitation; where an initial invitation is sent, then a second invitation to confirm. While this may indeed have been one way in which invitations were sent in antiquity, it does not appear to be the only way in which invitations were sent. For instance, in Xenophon's *Symposium,* the invitation is not offered until the day of the event. Callias invites Socrates and others only after a chance encounter with them at the horse-race at the great Panathenaic festival.[77] In Plato's *Symposium,* Agathon invites Socrates the day before.[78] There is also a difference in the means by which one is invited; some are invited orally, some by written invitation.

[75] Murphy, *Pliny the Elder,* 49-73. Murphy speaks of how some would borrow excessive amounts of money and go into excessive debt just to throw a banquet that will be remembered. This fits with the notion that wealth is to be distributed. Behind this ethic lay (morally not only financially) a general principle of the proper use of wealth: to accumulate wealth in order to spend it for the enjoyment of others…was a mark of nobility, and so acceptable-- a traditional way of getting public recognition. See especially pp. 64-68 of Murphy's discussion.

[76] Cf. Petronius, *Sat.*, 27-81.

[77] Xenophon, *Symp*. 3-4.

[78] Plato, *Symp*. 174A.

While there are various ways in which one is invited, the real importance lies in how one responds to the invitation. Only certain people were invited to the banquets. As Lucian suggests, "Nobody invites an enemy or unknown person, nor even a slight acquaintance to dinner."[79] Thus, generally, those invited have some sort of special connection to the host. Of those invited, they generally fall into the following categories: friends, family, similar affiliations or economic status.[80] Because of the close relationship between the host and the invitee, refusal of the invitation carries heavier weight than a stranger who declines an invitation. As D'Arms notes "refusal to appear at a former friends table was an unmistakable sign of [a] fractured friendship."[81] Thus, refusal to attend carries more significance than simple negligence, but has a more forceful and intentional aspect. Where acceptance of the invitation leads to mutual conviviality and to further associations, rejection is the breaking of relationship between the parties, most notably in a loss of honor for the host.

Communal Joy: Joy and Celebration as Banquet Ideology

In addition to matters of honor and shame, and inclusion and exclusion, celebration and joy are considered essential components for any proper banquet.[82] According to Smith, festive joy (εὐφροσύνη) lies at the heart of the meal event, namely enjoyment and celebration.[83] In philosophical discourse of the banquet, terms such as "pleasure" and "good cheer" were similarly used to convey this idea.[84] In fact, festive joy became so closely linked with the banquet that it seems to have been used at times to

[79] Lucian, *Parasite*, 22.

[80] Cf. Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 56-57. He also notes the reciprocal relationship between each of these groups, a matter we will address further below in ch.3.

[81] D'Arms, John. "The Roman *Convivium* and the Idea of Equality" in *Sympotica: A Symposium on the Symposium*, ed. Oswyn Murray, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) 313.

[82] Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 80-85.

[83] Ibid. 30.

[84] Much of Smith's analysis on this topic stems from Robert Louis's work on epigraphs.

mean banquet in itself.[85] As a component of the banquet, the success or failure of such an event could be judged as to whether the occasion promoted festive joy or not.[86] The joy exhibited in these meals was not an individual experience, but rather a corporate one. To ensure the pleasure of all, at least "good will among the participants," one was expected to follow the social etiquette of the meal.

Summary: How Greco-Roman Banquet Ideology informs our Reading of Luke's Text

While the above is by no means an exhaustive representation of Greco-Roman banqueting, each of the aforementioned aspects are found in the parables of Luke 14-16. Issues of honor and shame are at stake in each of these chapters, particularly in matters of seating positions. In each of these chapters Jesus addresses issues of segregative commensality and reciprocal relationships, and the parables reflect a shift in ideology from the things which the Greco-Roman banquet honors, to that which God honors. The guests one invites to these meals are different from the guests of the Greco-Roman banquet. How one uses their wealth at these banquets, both positively and negatively, will be reflected in the two parables in 15 and 16. Invitation and exclusion, as well as acceptance and rejection are particularly noticeable in the parables of 14 and 15, though there is also an exclusionary face

t in the parable in 16. The focus on celebration and its relationship to the community is the key of the parables in chapter 15, but the relationship to fellowship and friendship at the meal could also be found implicitly in each of these parables. Each of these facets will be dealt with in greater detail in the chapters which follow, but there is ample evidence to suggest that the Greco-Roman banquet serves as a valid and valuable

[85] Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist,* 80-81.
[86] Ibid. 80.

background for investigating the ideological banquets found in Luke 14-16. The socio-historical method will further elucidate our narrative readings of the text, providing insight into how and why these texts might be functioning within the narrative, and how the intended audience would have understood them.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we have laid the groundwork for the investigation that follows. This preliminary reading of Luke 14-16 shows that there are several points of contact between these chapters, and that a narrative reading should illuminate their interpretation. A predominant theme shared by these chapters is the presence of a banquet or meal within three parables. In light of this, an investigation into the various aspects of dining in the first-century world was launched. While Jewish backgrounds were addressed briefly, the major points of contact are with the Greco-Roman ideological banquet. Having offered a brief glimpse of literary depictions of dining in and around the first-century, the following chapters will pursue the parables use and redefinition of these dining aspects. Having discussed the narrative unity of Luke 14-16, as well as the ideology of the Greco-Roman banquet as a background, I explained how the limits of each method are buttressed by the findings of the other. It is in the combining of these methods that one is able to more fully paint the picture of Luke's texts. The results explored here will serve as guidelines for the investigations of the individual parables in the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER THREE

REJECTION AND INCLUSION: LUKE 14:16-24

Our investigation begins with one of Luke's most detailed and complex prandial narratives. In chapter 14, Luke shows himself to be "a master of narrative evocation of the Greco-Roman dining scene."[87] While Luke 14 will be examined in its entirety throughout this chapter, primary attention will be given to vv.16-24. The criteria presented in chapter 2 will serve as our matrix for considering and rereading the parable of the Great Banquet. In this chapter I will argue that the juxtaposition between this meal scene and the depiction of the messianic banquet (13:29-30) forces the reader to consider how current banqueting practices ought to reflect those of the messianic banquet, particularly as it relates to who should be invited. I will also show how this pericope functions as the beginning of a larger critique of table-fellowship; a critique that forces the reader to choose which ideology they will adopt.

PREVIOUS TREATMENTS OF LUKE'S PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

The interpretive tradition of this parable is quite static in its conclusions, though the methods by which interpreters arrive at their conclusions are quite different. As van Eck has helpfully highlighted, there are essentially three ways in which interpreters approach this parable: 1) allegorically or theologically; 2) contextually: in terms of its

[87] Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 2.

Lukan context; and 3) historically: as an authentic saying of Jesus.[88] While any categorization risks oversimplification, these categories are helpful in understanding the secondary literature. The primary concern of this work falls in line with the second category. It is helpful, however, to provide the reader with a brief overview of the various methods employed in the interpretation of this parable, as well as introducing the primary questions raised within the interpretive tradition.[89]

Allegorical or Theological

The earliest interpreters of this parable, Irenaeus and Origen, were focused on the Matthean version more so than the Lukan.[90] Origen, in his conflation of both the Matthean and Lukan versions of the banquet parables, identifies the "king" as God, the marriage as the restoration of the church, the servants as the rejected prophets, and the

[88] Ernst van Eck, 'When Patrons are Patrons: A social-scientific and realistic reading of the parable of the feast (Lk.14:16b-23)' HTS Theological Studies, 69 (1), art. 1375, (2013), 1-2. For various attempts to provide an overview of parabolic scholarship see Warren S. Kissinger, *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography*, ATLA Bibliography Series, vol. 4 (Metuchen, New Jersey: American Theological Library Association, 1979), 1-230; Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 89-193; David B. Gowler, *What Are They Saying About the Parables?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000). See also, Archibald M. Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 21-41; Geraint V. Jones, *The Art and Truth of the Parables: A Study in Their Literary Form and Modern Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1964) 1-54; Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 15-26; Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia; Westminster, Press, 1981) 42-81; Klyne Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants: an Inquiry Into Parable Interpretation* (Tübingen: Coronet Books, 1983) 3-26; Brad H. Young, *Jesus and his Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching,* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 20-54; Craig L. Blomberg, "The Parables of Jesus: Current Trends and Needs in Research" in ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research.* NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 231-54; for a more comprehensive bibliography see: Jeffrey T. Tucker, *Example Stories: Perspectives on Four Parables in the Gospel of Luke* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 22-23, n. 14.

[89] This is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the literature, it is only meant to represent the various ways in which this text has been treated. For a fuller treatment on the history of interpretation of this parable see: Kissinger, *Parables,* 336-342; Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables* (Berkeley: University California Press, 1987) pp.153-66; Francis W. Beare, "The Parable of the Guests at the Banquet: A Sketch of the History of Interpretation," in *The Joy of Study: Papers on the New Testament and Related Subjects,* ed. S.E. Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1951), pp.1-14; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary* vol.3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), pp.57-59; Bovon, *Luke,* 374-378; Snodgrass, *Stories,* 308-309; van Eck, 'When Patrons are Patrons,' 1-2; et al.

[90] This is probably indicative of the importance that the Gospel of Matthew played within the early church.

banquet as the "spiritual food of God's mysteries."[91] Turning to the Lukan parable, Ambrose writes that the initial invitees symbolize the Gentiles, the Jews, and the heretics, while the second invitations (presumably also the third) were to the Gentiles who were being welcomed into the church.[92] Augustine allegorically equates Jesus with the host of the banquet, and Israel as the invitees.[93] For Bede and Aquinas, the second and third invitations in the parable address issues within their own contexts concerning the errors of the heathen that need to be brought into (corrected) the church (the dinner party).[94] For Luther and Calvin, the parable is interpreted allegorically to support aspects of their own theological frameworks. For Luther, the banquet is the meal prepared by God through Christ, and the "everything is now ready" of v.17 represents the payment of sins in full, that is, salvation. For Calvin, the parable is clearly in reference to election, and how many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14).[95]

Lukan Context

While there are certainly problems with the early allegorical treatments of the parables, this does not discredit allegory entirely as an interpretive method. This is

[91] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 308; van Eck, 'When Patrons are Patrons,' 1; Luz, *Matthew 21-28.*

[92] Bovon, *Luke,* 375.

[93] via Schaff, *Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 2, The Christian Literature Publishing Co., New York. (Christian Classic Eahereal Library). Cf. Bovon, *Luke,* 375-376; van Eck, 'When Patrons are Patrons,' 1-2; Interesting also to our discussion, Augustine speaks of the convivial nature of this meal, not simply as a ritualistic meal, but one of building community. "The supper of the Lord is the unity of the body of Christ, not only in the sacrament of the altar, but also in the bond of peace." Admittedly, Augustine was using this as a polemic, but it is interesting that he recognizes the unifying language of the meal within the parable. Regrettably, in another sermon, found in *Contra Gaudentium,* Augustine equates the force used within the parable to an analogy of imperial power, where one uses force to bring subjects in, only for the subjects to find happiness in the forced invitation.

[94] Kissinger, *Parables,* 40-43; van Eck, 'When Patrons are Patrons, 1-2. This is an oversimplification of the extent to which the allegory is pressed by Bede and Aquinas, for more on Aquinas' interpretation see Bovon, *Luke,* 376-77.

[95] John Maldonatus, a contemporary to Calvin, interprets the parable similarly. See Kissinger, *Parables,* 56-62.

perhaps where van Eck's categories can become misleading if not clarified.[96] The absence of allegory is not what characterizes the "Lukan context" readings, but rather the consideration of "primarily" the Lukan version of the parable and its relation to its immediate context and the Lukan gospel. Within this category, van Eck helpfully identifies six ways in which this parable has been treated: 1) as salvation history; 2) as an announcement of the kingdom of God to the poor; 3) the grace of God as the main emphasis (symbolized by action of the host); 4) God's grace is the main emphasis, but the invitation requires a decision; 5) a symbol to portray the future eschatological or messianic banquet; and finally 6) a challenge to the Pharisees to reconsider the exclusion of people they deem impure from the cultic sphere.[97]

Salvation History: The salvation history model of interpretation focuses on one of Luke's major themes within the gospel: the inclusion of the Gentiles.[98] This theme is found early and often throughout the Gospel, and appears to be a central theme of Jesus's mission in Luke. If this parable is indeed addressing questions of salvation history, the question becomes, how is Luke treating this inclusion? Is it at the exclusion of the Jews, or is it the inclusion of the Gentiles in addition to Israel?[99] This tightrope is traversed

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[96] van Eck, does not necessarily need to make this distinction in his work, as the interpretations he offers make this fact obvious to the reader. The clarification here is to show how allegory, when used appropriately and responsibly, is a helpful and at times necessary tool for understanding the parables. Since van Eck is arguing for a social-scientific reading of the text, allegory is a less important tool for him, though he does not discredit it.

[97] Ibid., 2.

[98] For Johnson, he sees this as one of the central issues which Luke's narrative addresses, the issue of theodicy. How can God be trustworthy if God did not keep his promises to Israel? To combat this, Luke shows how God fulfilled his promises first to Israel, and only then did he extend his invitation to the Gentiles. Johnson, *Luke*, 8-10.

[99] Many commentators see this first invitation to the religious elite, the second invitation to Israel, including the outcasts, and the third to the Gentiles. For various interpretations of this "salvation-history" model see: Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 175; C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1936); 94; J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus.* Trans. S.H. Hooke, 2nd Ed. (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1963), 64; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1053; Nolland, *Luke*, 759; Bock, *Luke*, 1277; Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Leicester: Apollos/Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 234-235.

throughout the gospel, revealing how God did not abandon his promises to the Jews in the broadening of his mission to the Gentiles, and because of this, God's faithfulness is assured to both groups.[100] For this parable, the three invitations and the timing of the invitations become much more important to the interpretation. For some interpreters of the salvation-history model, Luke's mission to the Gentiles is at the exclusion of the Jews.[101] In this case, the parable becomes an allegory where the first invitees are the Jews, and the two invitations that follow are both to the Gentiles. The parable thus functions as judgment upon Israel for their failure to accept the initial invitation. For others, the first invitees are the Jewish aristocracy who has rejected Jesus, and thus, the second invitation is to the Jews of a lower socio-economic class, and the third to the Gentiles.[102] The problem with a salvation-history model is that is dependent (somewhat) upon the Matthean version of the parable. Matthew's version, as will be addressed below, is in tandem with his parable of the Wicked Tenants, which shapes the way in which the parable is read.[103] In Luke's version, while it is shaped by its juxtaposition with the messianic banquet, its setting is at the table, in the house of a Pharisee. While it is clear that Matthew intends for the reader to read his parable in light of its eschatological context, this is not as evident in Luke's parable.

[100] Johnson, *Luke,* 10; For a fuller discussion on this issue see, Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon,* trans. Wayne Coppins (Waco, Tx; Baylor University Press, 2013) 227-246.

[101] *Contra* Hultgren, who argues that the invitation was simply part of the earlier tradition, and thus the twofold invitation is representative of all, not just one, or multiple groups: *The Parables of Jesus: a Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000) 338.

[102] T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 130; Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes,* 100-102; Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 234-35. *Contra* Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium,* 509.

[103] In light of Luke's model of salvation history presented in Acts 13:44-67; 18:5-6; and 28:23-28, some argue that the parable is clearly about the mission to the Gentiles only.

Announcement of the Kingdom to the Poor: A second way in which interpreters have read Luke's parable is as an announcement of the kingdom to the poor. In light of Luke's entire narrative, and his major concern with the poor, this reading is quite persuasive.[104] From the outset of the Gospel, Luke has characterized Jesus's teaching as being about the filling of the hungry, and the reversal of fortunes between the rich and the impoverished (1:53). But does the immediate context lead to this interpretation? In Luke's text, the parable is narrated as a response to one at the table, presumably addressed to all of those at the table.[105] If this is a parable announcing the kingdom to the poor, it has done so in a backhanded manner. So while the parable does indeed fit within Luke's polemic against the wealthy (i.e. the initial invitees), as it is told against the wealthy and presumably against their assumed positions at the messianic banquet, the audience of the parable does not appear to support this reading.

Grace of God (as symbol of host): A third way in which scholars have read this parable deals with the portrayal of God as the host. If God is the host, this parable is about the grace of God extended to those who were previously uninvited.[106] This, in contrast to the previous discussion with the Pharisaic host, reveals how God does not invite people according to the current social customs of invitation. Rather, God in his grace, opens the invitation to all, and thus because the host is gracious, all attend. While idealistic, this reading does not address those left out at the end.

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[104] See, Pheme Perkins, *Hearing the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 98; Louise Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. L.M. Maloney (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2006), 55.

[105] Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 173-174; Johnson, *Luke*, 231-233; Green, *Luke*, 555-556, et al.

[106] Manson, *Sayings*, 75; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 131.

Grace of God (response to invitation): In light of the previous way of reading the parable, as a way of addressing those left out, a fourth interpretation regards the invitation as the most important aspect of the parable.[107] While God is gracious, in the sense that he extends an invitation to those previously uninvited, the newly invited need to accept the invitation. Because of the failure of the first invitees to accept the invitation, the second and third invitees need to thus learn from the mistakes of the first. The only exclusion in this kingdom is a failure to accept the invitation. While plausible, the parable itself does not appear to offer an option for those invited second and third to the banquet.

Future Eschatological or Messianic Banquet: A fifth way in which this text has been read, is that Luke has used this parable as a symbol of the future eschatological or messianic banquet.[108] This interpretation seems most likely from the narrative of Luke, from both the presence of the macarism in v.15, as well as the depiction of the messianic banquet in 13:28-29. This reading, however, fails to account for the redefinition of dining practices in vv.1-14, and perhaps prematurely closes the door to interpretations of the parable as addressing table-fellowship practices.

Challenge to the Pharisees (Inclusion of people excluded): Finally, the parable has been read as a challenge to the Pharisees, calling the reader to reconsider inclusion and exclusion of the social outcasts which they deem impure or unworthy.[109] In the immediate context of Luke's parable, this appears to be the most promising. The problem with this reading, again, is found in v.15, the macarism to which Jesus is responding. When read in light of the broader setting (vv.1-14), however, this reading seems quite probable.

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[107] Hunter, *Parables*, 85-96.
[108] Stein, *Parables*, 85-86.
[109] Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric,* 174-75; Green, *Luke,* 554-563.

As a Parable of the Historical Jesus

For the most part, treatments of the parable as a product of the historical Jesus do not differ greatly from those who read the parable as Lukan redaction.[110] The major difference, as is evident from the distinction, is the desire to take the parable out of its Lukan context. Interestingly, many of the major themes are still identified in these readings, namely: salvation, treatment of the poor, need for decision and repentance, the eschatological banquet, the defense of the gospel to the outcasts, and mission.[111] Some have even suggested that the setting in Luke is such a good fit for the parable, that it recounts the actual setting in the ministry of Jesus.[112] Whether Luke preserves the more accurate historical situation or not, the parable fits well within the Lukan narrative, and should be interpreted in light of its narrative setting.

Summary: For allegorical interpretations, the parable is not simply juxtaposed with the messianic banquet, but rather is a manifestation of it. The allegory is "clear": God or Jesus is the host, while those who reject the invitation are the Pharisees (Luke) or Israel (Matthew). There are clearly problems inherent within allegorical readings of the text,[113] yet the setting of 14:15 seems to goad the reader toward this type of interpretation. Interpretations which look at the Lukan context are varied, yet their interpretations (for the most part) remain similar. Two overarching features of these interpretations are: 1) the Pharisees are seen as those who are left outside (or those

[110] van Eck, 'When patrons are patrons,' 2.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Scott, *Hear then the Parable*, 163; Manson, *Sayings*, 129; *Contra* Marshall, who argues that the setting goes back to a tradition before Luke, though he does not specifically says it goes back to Jesus, *Luke*, 587; as well as Braun, who argues that Luke crafts the entire scene around this parable in *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, passim.

[113] i.e. synthesizing Luke and Matthew's accounts, making the allegory fit the correlation entirely, not considering the Lukan context as fully as necessary, interpreting the parable in light of anachronistic concerns, perhaps forcing theological motifs not present within the parable, etc.

leaving others outside) and 2) the inclusion of those previously excluded shows the graciousness of God. While each of these interpretations illuminates certain aspects of the parable, there is no one interpretation that has been proven beyond reproach. Each of these readings has elements of the parable or the setting that are unaccounted for, and thus there is still room for a narrative reading of the parable.

NARRATIVE SETTING

The location of Luke's parable of the Great Banquet is far different than Matthew's parable of the Wedding Banquet.[114] Questions concerning the origin of the parable lie outside of the scope of this investigation, but it is worth noting how the contexts in Luke and Matthew differ.[115] Matthew locates his parable of the wedding banquet in the context of Jesus' teaching in the temple, in the midst of his polemic against the religious elite. Luke locates his parable at the table of a Pharisee, presumably

[114] There is much debate within scholarship as to whether Matthew's and Luke's parables constitute a similar parable within the tradition or if they are recording two different parables of Jesus. The similarities between the parables are quite striking, as are their differences. To complicate matters, the Gospel of Thomas (64) contains a similar parable which has more in common with the Lukan parable than the Matthean. Whether one sees these parables as part of the same or varying traditions, it is clear that the Gospel authors' purposes for and uses of the parable are quite different. The scholarly majority appears to favor the Lukan version as being the more original, while at the same time containing redactional activity.

[115] For Matthew, the parable is located after Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem, during Jesus's teachings against the religious elite. The parable is located in tandem with the parable of the Wicked Tenants, which has shaped the way in which the Gospel writer has preserved, edited, and used the parable for his own purposes. The eschatological overtones of the Matthean context offer a different interpretive framework than is found in Luke's location of the parable. For Luke, the location of the parable is set within the Travel Narrative, before Jesus arrival into Jerusalem, and its location is at the home of a ruling Pharisee, at a meal. The context is not Jesus's speaking against the religious elite or the temple, but rather at a dinner table, following his critique of meal practices, and responding to a macarism from one of those in attendance. Though the form of the parable is similar to the Matthean version, its location, and several details are quite different. Because of the change in location and the differences in the details, the Lukan version should be read in its own right without the Matthean version dictating its interpretation. While this may seem simple enough, it is really quite difficult. Both parables are treated together in most works on parables, since they are so similar. And while differences between the parables are highlighted, often their interpretations tend to resemble synthesis rather than separation.

speaking to all of those at the table.[116] Each author provides a narrative context that is essential to their understanding of the parable.[117]

Immediate Setting- vv.1-14: The parable of the Great Banquet is located within Luke's larger critique of table fellowship. This is evident from the setting of the parable, particularly the preceding pericope (14:1-14). In v.1, Jesus is dining at the home of a ruling Pharisee on the Sabbath. Jesus's dining with the Pharisees is a uniquely Lukan event, one that occurs several times throughout his narrative.[118] As discussed previously in ch.2, the man with dropsy serves as a tangible example of those who are currently excluded from table fellowship; an issue that Jesus will discuss in vv.12-14 and continue in vv.16-24. After Jesus heals the man of dropsy, he witnesses the jockeying for positons of honor by the guests at the table (v.7). Both the controversy story and the situation at the table prompt the first parable of this chapter (vv.8-11), a parable that addresses current social structures, and ultimately leads to Jesus's radical restructuring of meal etiquette (vv.12-24).[119]

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[116] Cf. Humphry Palmer, "Just Married, Cannot Come." *Nov.T.* 18, (1976). 253-257. Palmer argues that Luke retains the earlier version, and discusses how the different contexts affect one's interpretation. In Luke, the audience is told "to get them to laugh at themselves" in order to "revise" their attitude. Matthew's is told against his audience, and is "a warning and a threat."

[117] There is still the question of the Lukan version and its relation to the Gospel of Thomas. While there are differences between the two, they are not quite as drastic compared with the Matthean parable. Luke's version of the parable closely resembles the parable found in the Gospel of Thomas (64). Comparing the two parables, however, perhaps occludes the interpretation of Luke's parable. In the Gospel of Thomas, which has no narrative setting, the parable clearly ends with a "warning" to the rich. While the Gospel of Thomas indeed has more similarities with the Lukan parable than the Matthean, and while it might be helpful in recreating a "more original" version of the parable, it is perhaps unhelpful in analyzing Luke's parable. The differences in details, the lack of a narrative location, and the explicit mentioning of wealth in Thomas all provide more of a reason to read Luke's parable on its own merit. This does not discount the possibility that Luke and Thomas both see the parable as functioning in the same way, but it does obfuscate Luke's intentions if we begin with its similarities with the Thomas version. Thus, it is necessary to begin with an analysis of Luke's parable using the criteria established in chapter 2. For discussions of the "original version of the parable" see: Fitzmyer, *Luke,* 1049-1054;Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 161-174; Hultgren, *Parables,* 332-351; van Eck, 'When Patrons are Patrons,' 3-6.

[118] Cf. 7:36-50; 11:37-54.

[119] Green, *Luke,* 548-54.

In his initial parable (vv.8-11), Jesus addresses issues of rank at the table, as well as honor and shame. Regardless of whether this parable is an original parable of Jesus, or if it is a Lukan composition around the independent logion of v.11, Luke has placed this parable within a setting at the table, and a series of teachings concerning banqueting practices. After discussing ways in which those at the table can maintain their honor, Jesus's critique turns to the host of the banquet (v.12a). The issue at hand is the type of guests one should invite. In his critique, Jesus provides lists of those who should and should not be invited to the banquet (vv. 12b-13). The reward for inviting these in the latter list is not reciprocity in the traditional sense, as it would be if the host invited those of the former, but rather it is a reciprocity that is distributed at the resurrection.

This last statement, concerning the resurrection of the righteous, leads one of those at the table to speak up about "the feast of the kingdom of God" (v.15). This macarism (discussed further below) leads to Jesus's telling of the parable of the Great Banquet (vv.16-24). Because of this reference to "the feast of the kingdom of God," most have read this parable in light of the messianic banquet, referenced just prior to this dinner in 13:28-29.[120]

Immediately following this parable, Jesus speaks to the crowds who were traveling with him about matters of discipleship (vv.25-27). Many have suggested that this marks a definitive scene change in the narrative, as Jesus could not possibly be talking to the large crowds while at the Pharisee's house.[121] While implicitly this appears obvious, explicitly Luke does not move Jesus out of the house. Since elsewhere Luke

[120] Contra, Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 174-175; Green, *Luke*, 555-557, who argues that the appeal to the messianic banquet is misguided, and meant to detract from Jesus's previous statements.

[121] Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1060; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 14; Green, *Luke*, 563-566; et al. Johnson, *Luke*, 222-223, does not mention the change of setting, though he reads vv.14-35 together as addressing the same issues, relativizing all relationships and financial matters in response to the prophet.

includes markers of movement within the travel narrative, it is odd that he does not include any of these here. In each of the previous meals with the Pharisees, when it is "obvious" that the conversation at the table was complete, the author still explicitly moves Jesus outside of the house (8:1; 11:53). But this is not the case here. In v.25 Jesus turns to those who were traveling with him. The change in audience is perhaps sufficient to understand these teachings in their own light, but since there is no explicit change in setting, the text could also be read in light of what precedes it.

In vv.25-27, Jesus speaks of "hatred" of one's family, and carrying one's cross. In light of the previous pericope, this might very well be in reference to those hosting dinner parties. If one is not willing to redefine their community by means of table fellowship, that one is not able to be a disciple. If one is not willing to pick up their cross, and suffer social scrutiny for their new choice of dinner guests, that one is not able to be a disciple. While the change in audience redefines our perspectives of the text, this does not mean that the text is not related to the previous material/discussion (cf. 16:1-31).

After these initial statements, Jesus supplements his teaching with two uniquely Lukan parables (vv.28-32), both of which address the issue of the cost of discipleship. Luke ends his second parable with its interpretation; those who do not give up everything they have cannot be disciples (v.33). This could be understood as a slight to the host at the meal, who was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to comprehend Jesus's teaching concerning inviting the right guests; the same group will ridicule him over the issue of dinner guests in 15:1. Thus, Jesus turns to the audience to convey the appropriate response to his teachings of table-fellowship.[122]

[122] Johnson, *Luke*, 228-233, reads these pericopae together as the relativization of all things in life, in response to the prophet. This also fits within Luke's larger theme of acceptance and rejection of the

Whether the material which follows the parable in 14:25-35 should be read in light of the previous text or not is open to question, as there is a change of audience and the pericope functions quite well on its own. What is clear, however, is that there are no explicit markers within the text to suggest that the scene has changed. Because of this, it is at least possible to see some connections between Jesus's conversation with the crowd, and the events that transpire in vv.1-25. This point will become more important as we approach Luke's next two chapters, where matters of table-fellowship persist.

Within its larger narrative setting, the parable of the Great Banquet seems to function as a continuation or elaborated depiction of the messianic banquet (13:28-29). Within its immediate setting, it also seems to function as a critique of the banqueting ideologies of those present at the table (vv.7-14). Jesus's critique is not only of the actions of the attendees, but also of the host. The parable itself solidifies this critique, by either providing a depiction of the messianic banquet, which is drastically different from the current social institution, or by offering a depiction of what table-fellowship should look like in this world, a paradigm which differs from that employed by the Pharisaic host in vv.12-14. Both of these options will be explored in our analysis below.

GRECO-ROMAN DINING PRACTICES AND LUKE 14

Social Stratification: Honor and Shame

In the parables of Luke 14, honor and shame plays an important role. In the first parable (vv.7-11), Jesus notices the jockeying for positions of honor at the table, and tells

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prophet, that unless one is willing to accept the words and invitation of the prophet at all costs, one cannot be a disciple. Lyle Story, ("One Banquet with Many Courses" *JBPR*, 4, (2012), 67-93), reads these two pericopae together as well, though his reading is a bit more nuanced, arguing for each scene in ch.14 as being "table talks" centered around the topic of hospitality. He does directly relate the teachings to table fellowship. In his conclusion, Story speaks of how table-fellowship is a litmus test for the elite (similar to Rohrbaugh, "Pre-Industrial City"), and how Luke treats the messianic banquet as both a present and future reality, "The eschatological banquet is not simply a future apocalyptic event (Luke 14:15), but is a meal with Jesus that has already begun- a meal which shatters all previous barriers." *Ibid*, 91.

a parable. In Luke's dinner scene, as Jesus witnesses the jockeying for positions of honor, he throws a wrench into the traditional understanding of the honor and shame system by offering a new paradigm. Rather than explicitly lambasting this faulty ideology, he re-appropriates it to offer a parable of humility. Instead of jockeying for positions of power, take the lesser seat, so that you might be honored. This runs counter to the first-century honor and shame system, since dining positions are a direct representation of one's honor and status. Why give up your place of honor, as there is a chance you might get stuck there for the remainder of the banquet? In this somewhat subversive critique, Jesus teases out the fault inherent within this system. If one's honor is entirely dependent upon the positioning assigned by the host (v.10), take a position where the host necessarily gives you honor instead of taking it away from you. If you are going to continue to participate in this system and seek honor in this world, Jesus suggests that you take the lower position, in the case that the host does relocate you.

After offering this suggestion to the guests, Jesus adjusts his critique towards the host (vv.12-14). The matter of the critique is convivial reciprocity. Instead of inviting those who will be able to reciprocate the honor served at the meal, Jesus says to invite those who are unable to reciprocate, the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame (v.13). This list is iterated twice by the author, once here and again in the subsequent parable, showing that this is the main thrust of the pericope. The four-fold invitation of the poor, crippled, blind, and lame (v.13) is juxtaposed with the four-fold invitation to the friends, brothers, relatives and rich neighbors (v.12).[123] This might also be juxtaposed with those in attendance at the messianic banquet, who come from the east, west, north, and south

[123] Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 54-61.

(13:29).[124] Luke is laying out the ground rules of this new community of the kingdom of God, and is showing how it differs from the Greco-Roman banqueting ideology. The new community of the kingdom of God re-appropriates the honor and shame system, and realigns it with God as benefactor.[125] Thus whom you invite to meals is still important, only the reason in which you invite them has been altered. Instead of receiving honor and wealth in this world, this form of currency will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous (v.14).

In relation to the patron-client and honor-shame ideologies evoked here, there is clearly a socio-economic element in whom you are to invite. The parable of the Great Banquet shows a host who invites the "proper" guests first; those who are able to reciprocate the invitation. This type of invitation, to those who presumably are able to reciprocate, fits well within the Greco-Roman banqueting ideology. If the host is to receive honor for this banquet, they need to invite those who will raise their honor; guests who share the same or higher social status. Within the parable, however, once the host is rejected, he has lost his place of honor. The dishonor leads him to invite (even if only eventually) the "right" type of guests. For Jesus's parable, the right guests are not the same as those valued within the ideological Greco-Roman banquet. The right guests are not the ones who will achieve honor for the host in this world, but rather at the resurrection of the righteous (v.14). Crossing this barrier into varying socio-economic classes leads us to the second aspect of dining, segregative commensality.

[124] Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 512.

[125] Moxnes, "Meals in the New Community" 166-67; Ibid, "Patron-client Relations and the New community", 257-60; Neyrey, "Ceremonies in Luke-Acts" 373-74 et al.

Segregative Commensality

As mentioned in chapter 2, segregative commensality is a way in which one maintains social groups and creates insiders and outsiders. The new community of the kingdom of God functions similarly, only the social classes are redefined, not by means of financial segregation, but by radical inclusion in this new community. The social circles are not dependent upon one's wealth, but rather are dependent upon ones belonging to the community. Because of this redefinition of classes, the Greco-Roman system, which is exclusionary by nature, stands in stark contrast with the inclusive nature of the kingdom of God. It is clear that Luke is addressing this issue of segregative commensality and its implications for those who are navigating between the two opposing social structures. As Rohrbaugh correctly points out, this idea of commensality is a stark contrast to the way in which they previously lived; there is much at stake:

> "Elite Christians who participated in the socially inclusive Christian community risked being cut off from the prior social networks on which their position depended…It is their friendships, their place of residence, their economic survival (and probably health as well), the well-being of their extended families and even the 'system' of the elite that is at stake."[126]

To participate in the new community, one must rethink their social alignment, not in terms of financial reciprocity, but in terms of their new identity and contributing to this new community. This new community will be known, not for its exclusivity in dining practices, nor for its relation to the Greco-Roman ideology of banqueting, but rather through the inclusion of those who were previously excluded.

In this passage, Luke, through the words of Jesus, is clearly showing his audience how this social institution is to be conducted within this new community. It is not a

[126] Richard Rohrbaugh, "The pre-industrial city in Luke-Acts: urban social relations" in Neyrey, *Social World of Luke-Acts,* 146; via Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 113.

matter of jockeying for positions of honor, creating social borders, and being exclusionary, but rather it is about radical inclusivity. Instead of inviting those who are able to financially reciprocate the invitation, invite those who are unable to pay you back. Instead of worrying about inviting the "proper" guests to elevate your status, ones who have the power to give or take your honor from you, invite the "right" guests, those currently being excluded from such banquets and receive an honor that will not be taken from you. The honor in this new community will be one that lasts, one that will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous, and one that is ascribed by God.

RE-READING THE TEXT

So all of this leads us to the question of, does this reframed literary unit and knowledge of first-century dining practices inform our understanding of the parable. In light of the setting in chapters 14-16, the immediate setting as taking place at the table following Jesus dining critiques (14:1, 7-11), the juxtaposition of the messianic banquet (13:28-29), and in light of honor and shame and segregative commensality, the parable will now be analyzed against this backdrop.

The parable is prompted by a macarism exclaimed by one of those seated at the table (v.15). Is this macarism the original context of the parable, or one crafted by Luke?[127] It appears so natural an introduction to the parable that some presume this is the original setting of the parable as told by the historical Jesus.[128] Whether Luke has crafted a scene around the parable, or recounted the actual historical account is not the primary concern here. The concern is how does the macarism prompt and illuminate the meaning

[127] Luke is fond of using interrupting sayings as introductions to the teachings of Jesus: Cf. 11:27, 45, 12:13, 13:1, 23, 31.

[128] T.W. Manson, *Sayings*, 129; Scott, *Hear then the Parable*, 163; *Contra* Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric*, 62-64.

of the parable? It clearly evokes some sort of messianic banquet imagery, but it also could be seen as a pious response to Jesus's critique of the host.[129] The man utters the blessing in response to what he has just heard. This segues Jesus's conversation from one of instruction to one of parable. This is somewhat confusing in Luke's narrative, as the word παραβολή occurs in v.7 but is not used here.[130] The lack of the word parable before this saying is not enough to suggest that this is not a parable, given that many of the definitive parables are not prefaced as such.

So Jesus begins his parable as a response to the one seated at the table. While the parable is responding to this one attendee's saying, from the context it appears as though Luke intends for the entire audience at the table to be the recipients of the parable. This is clear from the content of the parable in relation to the preceding material, particularly vv.12-14. As audiences prove to be important factors in understanding Luke's parables, this audience should affect the way in which we interpret it.

Introduction- v.16: The parable begins in a typical Lukan fashion, with his characteristic ἄνθρωπός τις.[131] This designation is found multiple times in Luke, particularly in parables, and is a phrase that occurs only within Lukan literature in the

[129] Luke uses macarisms "elsewhere as a means for stereotypically depicting flawed forms of piety as a foil for Jesus corrective teaching (Cf. 11:27)" Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric,* 63-64. For a similar understanding of this macarism, see Green, *Luke,* 554-558; *Contra* Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium,* 510, who argues that the *Die Seligpreisung fungiert also als hermeneutische Rezeptionsanweisung für die folgende Erzählung* ("the beatitude functions as a hermeneutical reception instruction for the following story"). Because of this, Wolter reads this parable in-line with the messianic banquet scene of 13:23-30. While Wolter is at least partially right, the audience, in my opinion, points towards an understanding of the parable closer to that of Braun and Green. This, admittedly, involves making inferences towards the audience, as Luke is less specific here with the person at the table.

[130] In the Travel Narrative, the term parable does not always appear before what should clearly be considered a parable, Cf. 7:41-42; 10:25-36; 13:18-19, 20-21; 16:1-13, 19-31; etc.

[131] The use of τις is a distinct characteristic of the Lukan travel narrative, particularly parables, occurring 39 times between 9:51-19:27: 9:57; 10:25, 30, 31, 33, 38 (2); 11:1 (2), 15, 27, 45; 12:13, 15, 16; 13:1, 6, 23, 31; 14:1, 2, 8, 15, 16, 26; 15:11; 16:1, 19, 20, 30, 31; 17:12; 18:2 (2), 9, 18, 35; 19:8, 12. In many of these instances it is in reference to a parable being told about a "certain" person or at a "certain" place or time.

NT.[132] The specific term used here for the banquet (δεῖπνον) is used previously in Jesus's critique of the host in v.12, when speaking of inviting friends, brothers, relatives or rich neighbors (φίλους, ἀδελφούς, συγγενεῖς, γείτονας πλουσίους). Here it is further described as a large (μεγά) banquet.[133] The word for invitation (κάλεω) is the same term used throughout vv.1-14 to signal ones being invited to dine.[134] It is no coincidence that Luke follows Jesus's radical reconstruction of table-fellowship with a parable concerning a banquet. The question then becomes, what relationship do the two pericopae have to each other? It is clear that there is thematic coherence, given the subjects of invitation (κάλεω) and banqueting (δεῖπνον). In addition to thematic coherence, the setting has also been retained, and this parable comes as a response to a saying that was prompted by Jesus previous teaching. While narratively it is clearly a continuation of the dining scene initiated in 14:1, the thematic coherence also suggests that these pericope should be read together. This is important not only in understanding the target audience of the parable in 14:16-24, but also in considering chapters 15 and 16 as part of this continued scene.

Conflict- vv.17-20: The certain man, the host of the banquet, then sends his servants to retrieve those invited (κάλεω) to the banquet. Much has been made of the two-part invitation to banquet, though as demonstrated in chapter 2 this sort of invitation was among the various types of invitation in antiquity.[135] The importance of the twofold

[132] Luke 10:30; 12:16; 14:2, 16; 15:11; 16:1, 19; 19:12; 20:9, Acts 9:33.

[133] Throughout this work I have used (and will continue to do so) the term "great" as the title of the parable. I have done so not due to my interpretation, but rather due to the uniformity of the title within scholarly tradition. How one translates this word could change how one sees the parable. I have translated it as "large" here which may or may not evoke a different sense than just the "messianic" banquet interpretation. This does not discredit the messianic aspects of the parable, but it perhaps places a different image in the mind of the reader.

[134] κάλεω and variations of it will appear in each of the following chapters.

[135] For more on the double-invitation see: Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 94; Rohrbaugh, "Pre-Industrial City", 141-142; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric,* 100-103*;* Wendland, "Internal and External", 173-182; Green, *Luke,* 558-559.

invitation, narratively, comes in vv.18-20 in the responses by those invited. A christological reading is certainly not out of the question, particularly given Luke's recent interest in the messianic banquet (13:28-29).[136] That having been said, the narrative also allows for this parable to be seen as a continuation of the meal discussions, and perhaps has more practical implications than are often observed.[137] Given its proximity to an actual critique of a dining episode, and its location as the same setting, the servant may simply be representative of a servant sent to bring those invited, and need not, necessarily, represent Jesus's mission as a second invitation.

In v.18 we get not only the first response to the invitation, but also the qualifier of what to expect from the subsequent invitees. They all began making excuses (παραιτεῖσθαι).[138] Note the reasons for rejecting the invitation all include some economic facet.[139] The first rejection is due to the recent acquisition of property, the second the purchase of ten oxen, and the third a recent marriage. The third seems least likely to be financial, though in antiquity, marriage could also be seen as the acquisition of property.[140] In each of these excuses there appears to be some aspect of wealth and the acquisition of property that keeps one from attending the banquet. While I maintain that

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[136] Cf. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes,* 88-113; Donahue, *Gospel in Parables,* 140-146; Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables,* 233-237.

[137] Cf. Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric;* Green, *Luke,* 554-563; van Eck, "When Patrons are Patrons", 6-13.

[138] For more on these excuses, particularly how they relate to the exemptions in Deut. 20:5-8, see: J.D.M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1970), 126-155; James A. Sanders, "The Ethic of Election in Luke's Great Banquet Parable," in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics,* ed. James L. Crenshaw and John T Willis (New York: KTAV, 1974), 245-71; Cf. Paul H. Ballard, "Reasons for Refusing the Great Supper, *JTS* 23 (1972), 341-350. Ballard argues that instead of Deut. 20, the parable is a *midrash* on Deut. 28. Alternatively, for a socio-scientific reading, see van Eck, ""Invitations and Excuses that are not Invitations and Excuses: Gossip in Luke 14:18-20." HTS Theological Studies 68 (1), art. 1243, 1-10. C.W. Carey, "Excuses, Excuses: The Parable of the Banquet (Luke 14:15-24) within the Larger Context of Luke." *IBS* 17 (1995): 177-87, who argues that the three excuses in this parable fit within the Lukan scheme of tripartite excuses (9:57-62, 22:34), which stands in direct opposition to Jesus's call to true discipleship.

[139] Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric,* 73-80; Johnson, *Luke,* 231-33; Green, *Luke,* 559-560.

[140] Cf. Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric,* 73-80.

Luke has crafted the narrative to fit his own ideological aims, as can be seen from the differences of location between Luke and Matthew in their narratives, he is also reliant upon some shared tradition with Matthew, as the parables are too similar to be considered two different parables. A more poignant version of the parable is given at the conclusion of the Gospel of Thomas (64), which recounts a similar parable, and emphasizes the critique of wealth. In the Gospel of Thomas, the parable is about excluding merchants from the banquet, clearly indicating the financial aspects of the excuses. While Luke is less subtle in his critique, it is no less important to recognize these economic factors behind these excuses. [141]

Resolution- vv.21-24: Notice the shift in the identity of the banquet holder when the servant returns. In v.16 the banquet holder is referred to as ἄνθρόπος τις and in v.21 he is referred to as an οἰκοδεσπότης (a house owner).[142] More recently, among socio-scientific readings of the parables there is a trend to suggest that οἰκοδεσπότης would conjure up negative connotations to the audience of the parable. While this might indeed be true at the level of the historical Jesus, as well as in some of the Matthean parables, it seems that Luke has a less ambivalent understanding of the term in this context. Here, simply, one among the social elite is rejected by those in his social circle. His quest for honor is denied by the rejected invitations, and his response dictates

[141] I am not suggesting that Luke uses Thomas, nor that Thomas is dependent upon Luke, but rather that the differences in Thomas suggest that a critique of the "wealthy" is implied, either from an earlier extant version of the parable (oral or written), or Thomas's reading of Luke. Simon Gathercole has argued that Luke is the closest of the Synoptics to Thomas, and that one can say at the very least there is an *indirect* dependence on Luke (more probably a harmony of the gospels) for the production of Thomas's Greek version (not the Coptic). See, Gathercole, "Luke in the Gospel of Thomas" *NTS*, 57/1, (2011): 114-144.

[142]This term occurs only four times in Luke, but each indicates wealth of some sort. Three times this word is used in a teaching of Jesus (12:39; 13:25; 14:21), and once in reference to the owner of the upper room (22:11).

whether he will continue in line with this social system or whether he will abandon it in light of the social system of this new community.[143]

Rather than sulk in his rejection, and subsequently the loss of honor, the house owner tells his servant to go immediately to the streets and alleys and bring in (εἰσάγω) the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. This is the same list iterated to the host of the initial meal (vv.12-14), the ones he should invite to his banquet (δόχη). It is also interesting that the invitation (κάλεω) has shifted to an imperative to bring in these groups of people. After carrying out that which had been ordered (ἐπιτάσσω) there is still place (τόπος) at the table. A second invitation is extended to those in the streets and fences, and the servant is told to compel (ἀναγκάζω) them to enter, so that his house (not the banquet) might be filled.[144] The parable ends with an exclusion of those who rejected the invitation (κάλεω), describing how they will never taste the banquet (δεῖπνον).

Interpretation: The parable works at two levels: 1) in relation to the messianic banquet, mentioned in 13:29-30, and 2) in relation to the immediate setting, 14:1-14, the house of a prominent Pharisee. At the first level, the parable is a more developed depiction of the messianic banquet. It is a meal which invites those who were not previously invited, thus fitting within Luke's larger picture of the inclusion of the Gentiles.[145] The fourfold depictions of those invited (east, west, north south: poor,

[143] Green makes an interesting observation of the rejection at the end of the parable. Rather than seeing it as rejection in the typical sense of leaving those out, he sees it as the host throwing a banquet in which those who previously rejected the invitation would not wish to take a part. Rather than emphasizing the hosts rejection of those who rejected him, the host has realigned his dining community, and thus, is no longer part of his former community. See Green, *Luke*, 562-563.

[144] Cf. Rohrbaugh, who maps a reconstruction of the pre-industrial city, and who sees this second invitation to those who are further away from the inner circle of the city, leading to a radical realignment of social order. It is not just the poor who are invited, but the outcasts, the prostitutes, the beggars, etc. "The Pre-Industrial city in Luke-Acts." 125-149.

[145] Cf. Lk. 2:28-30; 4:15-30; this becomes a much more prominent theme in Acts.

crippled, blind, lame) are perhaps helpful in making this connection.[146] Thematically within the larger narrative of Luke, this parable highlights the rejection of some of the Jews to the message of Jesus, and symbolizes their failed acceptance of the invitation to the banquet. While all of these matters in fact work within the narrative of Luke, they are not the only factors in understanding the parable.

The parable also works at a second level in the text, within its immediate narrative setting. The parable is told at the house of a ruling Pharisee, as a response to one who failed to understand the previous teaching of Jesus concerning his radical reconstitution of table fellowship. Since this parable is a response, it offers a narrative depiction of the reason for including the poor, crippled, blind, and lame to your meals. In each of the following chapters, this question of inclusion at the table will be asked, and the parables will offer a surprising answer.

In light of the Greco-Roman dining aspects, the parable redefines both the honor and shame system, as well as who constitutes "proper" guests. As the host of the parable is rejected by those who would have contributed to his honor in this world, he (even if only eventually) invites the "right" dinner guests. Jesus's instructions to the Pharisaic host which precede the parable redefine proper dining guests, as well as the ideology of honor and shame. In Jesus's redefined banqueting ideology, participation in the new community forces one to reconsider their social alignment, no longer in terms of financial reciprocity, but in terms of their identity within the community. Once this has taken place, honor and shame are no longer attributed to you by others, but rather, it is attributed solely by God. In the parable, the host is slighted by his initial guests, and instead fills his house with those who bring less honor from the world (vv.25-27, 33).

[146] See Green, *Luke,* 532-533.

Despite his initial invitation to those of financial means, those able to reciprocate the invitation, the host (even if only eventually) invites the proper guests, and in doing so he has aligned himself socially with a new group of people. In doing so, the host has attained honor that will not be taken from him; honor that will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous (v.12).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored two things: 1) the narrative setting of the parable, 2) and how Greco-Roman dining practices illuminate this parable, particularly as it relates to honor/shame at the meal and segregative commensality. While the latter is by no means an exhaustive lens through which we are to understand first-century dining practices, these two factors do help illuminate Jesus's critique of the meal prior to the parable (vv.7-14). The juxtaposition of this meal scene, with the discussion of the messianic banquet in 13:28-29 also allows the parable to be read as an elaboration of the messianic banquet. In relation to its immediate setting, the meal at the house of a Pharisee, the parable also functions as a critique of the Greco-Roman convivium. This critique leaves the reader with the question, whether they will continue to host and participate in meals that mimic the Greco-Roman notions of convivium, or whether they will change their perceptions of honor/shame and inclusivity, as does the host in the parable, and host a meal which mimics the messianic banquet.

The narrative will continue this discussion at the table in chapters 15 and 16, at each point, reminding the reader what the meals within the new community should look like. As depicted here, these meals will invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame (14:13, 21). They reflect inclusivity and the reject the traditional understanding of

honor and shame by redefining honor as something that is attributed by God. Rather than inviting guests who are able to reciprocate the invitation, either by financial means or by attributing honor, the parable offers an example of a host that (even if only eventually) gets it right. The jockeying for positions of power (v.7), Jesus's critique of the Pharisaic host's invitees (v.12), and the rejection of the initial invitation in the parable (vv.18-20) reveals the folly inherent within the ideological Greco-Roman banquet. The radical reconstruction of meal etiquette (vv.8-11), the redefinition of guests of honor (vv.13-14), and the second invitation in the parable towards the poor, crippled, blind, and lame (vv. 21-23) reflects the messianic banquet, the re-appropriated honor and shame system (v.14), and the inclusivity by which this new community is to be known.

CHAPTER FOUR

INCLUSION AND REJECTION: LUKE 15:11-32

In this chapter we turn to one of the most famous parables in Luke, the parable of the Prodigal Son. As Marshall states, "Of all the parables this one is perhaps the easiest to interpret in broad outline and yet the most open to a variety of interpretation, dependent on where the main emphasis is thought to lie."[147] Is the emphasis on the prodigal,[148] the father,[149] or the eldest son?[150] In this investigation, we will focus on the dining aspects present within the parable, which involves each of the three characters.[151] Similar to the previous chapter, we will deal with the entirety of Luke 15, though the focus of our investigation will be the parable in vv.11-32. Using the criteria established in chapter 2, I will examine Luke 15:11-32 employing both a narrative and socio-historical method.

PREVIOUS TREATMENTS OF LUKE'S PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The literature germane to this chapter of Luke is extensive to say the least. [152] For the purposes of our investigation, I have categorized the interpretive methods in the

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[147] Marshall, *Luke*, 604.

[148] Green, *Luke*, 577-79;

[149] Jeremias, *Parables*, 128; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1083-86; Marshall, *Luke*, 604; Johnson, *Luke*, 239-242.

[150] C.H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroads, 1984), 275.

[151] Cf. Forbes, *The God of Old*, 127-151, who argues that all three characters play a vital role in the overall understanding of the parable. While Forbes does not use the Greco-Roman meal as a means of interpreting the parable, due to his use of the OT as a background and his emphasis on the theological understanding of the Lukan Sondergut material (see below), he does recognize the various meal images within the parables of Lk.15. Cf. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 139-140.

[152] To give a comprehensive overview of the literature on this parable is beyond the scope of this current work. The secondary material on this parable in particular is quite massive. There is also the question of what to include, and what not to include in a history of interpretation, as this parable has transcended biblical studies and made its way into interpretations of various forms. For a more in depth look at the history of scholarship on this parable see: esp. Tyrell J. Alles, *The Narrative Meaning and*

following categories: allegorical, literary, and cultural.[153] While other categories could be useful, these will suffice to present the majority of the scholarly tradition.

Allegorical

Once again, the earliest interpretations of the parable are primarily allegorical.[154] Tertullian's reading, perhaps the earliest commentary on the parable, sees the parable as clearly allegorical of the relationship between the Pharisaic Jews and the Pagan Gentiles.[155] The distinction is made between those who know God and those who do not. The birthright is that of knowledge of God, where the ignorant and pagan Gentiles have wasted this gift. The citizen to whom the prodigal serves, is clearly the devil, as he tends to demonic swine. Upon his return home, the prodigal receives the gifts of a vesture (the state of Adam pre transgression) a ring (baptism) and a feast (Eucharist). The elder brother is the Pharisaic Jew, who is opposed to the conversion of Gentiles to faith.

Function of the Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32. Thesis (S.T.D.), (Catholic University of America, 2008), pp.1-50; Cf. Kissinger, 351-370; Mikael Parsons, "The Prodigal's Elder Brother: The History and Ethics of Reading Luke 15:11-32," *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 23 (2). (1996), Pp. 147-174; Bovon, *Luke*, 430-438. For a list of references to the parable in literature and art see: Robert W. Baldwin, "A Bibliography of the Prodigal Son Theme in Art and Literature," *Bulletin of Bibliography*, 44 (1987) 167-171.

[153] I have excluded a "historical Jesus" section here for two reasons: 1) The majority of scholars who attempt to read this as a parable of the historical Jesus suggest that either Luke has crafted the entire thing, he has added the ending (which is addressed in redaction section below), or the setting is the actual setting, and their interpretations appear much like contextual readings. 2) I have included a "cultural" section here, which functions as a supplement to a historical Jesus model. None of these categories are "absolutes," as allegory makes it way throughout all of these interpretations, as does literary readings, but they are helpful in at least mapping the trajectory of the conversation.

[154] As has been noted by several commentators, the schools of Alexandria and Antioch employed different methods in interpretation. The allegorical method fits predominantly with the Alexandrian school of thought. For instance, John Chrysostom is famous for his quip in response to the allegorists, "The saying in a parable, wherefore neither is it right to inquire curiously into all things in parables word by word, but when we have learnt the objet for which it was composed, to reap this, and not to busy oneself further." *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew.* For more on the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools see: Robert M. Grant and David Tracy, *A Short History of Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 52-62.

[155] See Alles, *Prodigal Son*, 3-4.

Jerome, in response to questions of the Pope, focuses the majority of his Letter 21 on the elder brother.[156] He identifies the elder brother not as the saints, but rather as Jews, representative of an unrepentant Israel. Israel is distant from the Holy Spirit, out "in the field," and when asking about the music and dancing, they question "why God rejoices at the adoption of the Gentiles."

Ambrose similarly picks up on the distance between the elder brother and his father (as being worldliness) and also sees the younger brother as Gentiles. Instead of identifying the elder brother with the Jews, however, he interprets it as representing any self-righteous Christian.[157] Comparing the elder brother to the Pharisees, who try to justify themselves by means of the law, so too this character represents any Christian who thinks themselves beyond reproach. Thus, the elder brother is not a Jew, but rather a self-righteous Christian who is envious of the repentant sinner.

While the reformers expressed distain for the allegorical method, advocating instead for literal interpretations, this parable seems to lend itself to allegory.[158] Calvin interprets this parable as symbolic of God, and the believers call to rejoice when a sinner repents. He acknowledges that those wishing to see the first-born as the Jewish nation have some argument on their side, however, he thinks that they do not "attend sufficiently to the whole passage."[159] For Calvin, similar to Ambrose, the elder brother serves as a reminder to the faithful to rejoice with God when he receives sinners.

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[156] Jerome, "Letter 21," in *The Letters of Saint Jerome,* trans. Charles Christopher Mierow (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1963), 123-126.

[157] Wailes, *Medieval Allegories,* 243.

[158] Luther likened the allegorizers of Scripture to "clerical jugglers performing monkey tricks" and Calvin called the allegorizing of the Church fathers "idle fooleries." See Luther, *Works* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan et al; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-76) 187-190; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evanglists: Mathew, Mark, and Luke* (vol 2; trans. W. Pringle; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 347.

[159] Calvin, *Harmony,* vol. 2, 349-50.

Literary Critical

Moving forward into the modern era, post-Jülicher, scholars take up the mantle of literary criticism to address the parable. This manifests itself in a variety of ways, most notably in existentialism, redaction criticism, and historical-literary approaches.

Existentialist: The existentialist methods are most prominently represented by Geraint V. Jones, Eta Linnemann, and perhaps most recognizably Dan Otto Via.[160] For the existentialists, the primary concern is that in analyzing the parables from a purely historical and/or literary analysis, we risk losing their timelessness and their message to the reader today. Thus it is necessary not only to understand what the parable meant in its original setting, but also what it says about human experience and existence in the present time. Via says, "in the hands of some of its practitioners, the historical approach threatens to leave the parables in the past with nothing to say to the present."[161] Thus, there was a need to develop a method which reads and understands the parables both within, but also apart from their original contexts. After analyzing the various approaches, Via states, "what is needed is a hermeneutical and literary methodology which can identify the permanently significant element in the parables and can elaborate a means of translating the element without distorting the original intention."[162] His solution to this problem, is to show that the parables should be understood as autonomous aesthetic objects, carefully

[160] Geraint V. Jones, *Art and Truth;* Eta Linnemann, *The Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Dan O. Via, Jr., *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

[161] Via, *Parables,* 22. Jones also contends in his book that "this kind of interpretation is necessary for the kerygmatic as distinguished from the limited and exegetic exposition of the parable, and shows at how many points it touches lives." *Art and Truth,* 173.

[162] Via, *Parables,* 23-24.

organized, self-contained, and coherent literary compositions that possess a life of their own apart from their historical context.[163]

As it relates to this parable, Jones sees the father figure, not as an allegorical figure for God but rather as an analogical figure. He argues that as a father welcomes back his errant son, so too, God welcomes back the repentant sinner.[164] For Jones, this is evident by the way in which the son speaks of sinning against heaven *and* against you (v.18). Since he is sinning against both the heavens and his father, the father cannot represent God. Thus the parable is not purely allegorical, but rather a realistic narrative.

For Linnemann, the parable "interlocks" between the narrator and audience.[165] Since the parable is set up as a response to the Pharisees, and their grumbling against his table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, the characters present at the telling of the parable are represented within. The tax collectors, Jews who have renounced their laws and gone into service with the Gentiles, are represented by the younger brother. The Pharisees are alluded to in the figure of the older brother, as is seen in the words of the elder brother: "I have never disobeyed your command" (v.29). Both the verdict of the narrator and the listener interlock, as both are rebuked for their self-righteous ways. The function of the parable, for Linnemann, is a word from Jesus that finds new meaning with each generation and cultural context which hears it.

Via's literary-existentialist analysis is quite impressive and extensive. He highlights the complexities of the parable, particularly with plot and theme. Ultimately,

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[163] Via, *Parables*.

[164] Against Jones, and others who see the father figure as "not" directly being a depiction of God, many highlight the references to God as father throughout Luke. (Cf. 6:36, 8:51; 9:42; 11:2, 11, 13; 12:30, 32)

[165] This idea of "interlocking" seems to be the lasting contribution from Linnemann's work on the parables.

the existential-theological interpretation points toward the role of the father, who thus points us to God.[166]

While there are clearly problems with a purely aesthetic and/or existentialist reading of the parable, the works of Jones, Linnemann and Via have most definitely complicated the relationship between the brothers and father of the parable. While the existentialist approach attempts to answer the question of the parables relevance today, and somewhat surprisingly offers similar readings as other methods, it unfortunately does so at the expense of the narrative function of the parable. One way in which scholarship pushed back against the existential approach is via redaction criticism.

Redaction Criticism: While redaction criticism is usually employed when dealing with texts which have multiple extant versions, it can also be utilized for any investigation which seeks the author's editorial touch. Redaction criticism seeks to tease out the historical and theological viewpoints of the author by analyzing the composition and positing ways in which the author has shaped and/or framed the traditions handed down to them.[167] Thus, in seeking the function of the parable within the broader literary context, redaction criticism and its proponents serve as great conversation partners for this work.

One of the primary matters of interest within redaction studies of the parable focuses upon the unity of the parable itself. Does Luke recount the entire parable as told by Jesus, or has he interweaved two parables into one? On the one hand, Jack T. Sanders argues that the second half of the parable is clearly added later by Luke, to fit his critique

[166] Via, *Parables,* 165.

[167] For a primer on redaction criticism see: Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1969).

of the Pharisees.[168] His argument is based primarily on grammatical and vocabulary terms. In the first part of the parable (vv.11-24), there are numerous non-Lukan grammatical traits, whereas the second part (vv.25-32) contains specifically Lukan terminology and themes. According to Sanders, it is the only "genuine two-part" parable we have. For Sanders, Luke has added the second part of the parable to take aim at the Pharisees and scribes, which happens to be the audience of the parable (15:1-2).

For Stein, Blomberg, and many commentators, the parable functions as a single, holistic unit.[169] Stein appeals to the "rule of end stress" to support his argument.[170] He begins with the reference to two sons at the beginning of the parable (v.11). Since Jesus is responding to the accusations of the Pharisees and scribes (v.2), the end of the parable fits within the setting. Due to the rule of "end stress," Stein makes the case that the parable is concerned with the confrontation between the father and the elder son, which brings forth the point of the parable. This is one of the parables in which the portrait of God is constantly revealed.[171] Stein argues that the parable is not an allegory, and that the main thrust of the parable is Jesus's teaching his opponents that salvation is available even to

[168] Jack T. Sanders, "Tradition and Redaction in Luke 15.11-32," *NTS* 15 (1969), 433-438.

[169] Perhaps most important to this discussion is Charles E. Carlston, Reminiscence and Redaction in Luke 15:11-32" *JBL* 94, (1975): 368-90. See also, Donahue, *Gospel in Parable,* 156; Scott, *Hear then the Parable,* 104; Hock, *Romancing the Parables,* 16.

[170] To my knowledge, this stress is made popular in the works of Jeremias and his categorization of *doppelgipflige* (double-edged) parables. These "double-edged" parables carry the weight of the interpretation at the end. This term becomes used in parable studies as "end stress" (*Achtergewicht*) and is a widespread category. For this parable, Jeremias applies this reasoning and sees the second half as the emphasis. Cf., Jeremias, *Parables,* 131.

[171] Stein, *Parables,* 115. Stein suggests that the title "the parable of the gracious father" may be a more appropriate title for the parable. Along with Stein, several other scholars title this parable in light of their own way of understanding the parable. For a brief overview of this progression see: T. Burke, "The Parable of the Prodigal Father: An Interpretative Key to the Third Gospel (Luke 15:11-32). *Tyndale Bulletin*. 2013; 64(2): 217-220.

the outcasts.[172] Because of all of these reasons, vv.25-32 are clearly not an addition, but an integral part of the parable.

In addition to concerns with the "unity" of the parable, redaction scholarship has contributed to the ways in which we think of how the gospel writers are using the parables within their narratives. For instance, Drury, Donahue, and Nöel have all written works which seek greater consciousness of the ways in which the gospel writers are using the parables. [173] While not all of them use "redaction" criticism per say, i.e. Nöel uses "narrative" criticism, the interest in the Gospel writer's imprint on the text is worth mentioning here. Perhaps most important to this study is Donahue's recognition of links between chapters 14, 15, and 16.[174] While he does not use the same "connections" used in this argument, he does attempt to show how Luke is linking the parables within these chapters together thematically.[175]

Historico-Literary Criticism: While the term used here is perhaps problematic, it is nevertheless, an appropriate designation. Included in this category are the

[172] Stein argues against allegory for two reasons: First, he argues that the father is not God because of the prodigal's words in vv.18, 21; Second, Stein places great emphasis on the father in his interpretation, his role within the parable, and his graciousness extended to his sons.

[173] John Drury, *The Parables of the Gospels: History and Allegory* (New York: Crossroad, 1985); John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Timothy L. Nöel, 'Parables in Context: Developing a Narrative-Critical Approach to Parables in Luke,' *PhD dissertation* (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Kentucky, 1986).

In his introduction, Drury states his understanding of the importance of literary context for interpreting the parables. Using Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* as an example, he argues that though it is possible to read the parables of 'The Grand Inquisitor" and "The Onion" independent from their literary context, to "understand them fully it is necessary to see them as parts of the narrative development."

[174] Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 158.

[175] Donahue's argument is that chapter 15 continues the motif of chapter 14, the "good news for the outcast," and that these two parables provide a link with the parable in chapter 16, where the Unjust Steward, similarly to the younger son, crosses over the boundaries of morality, but is accepted in the end. This will be teased out further in the analysis of this chapter, as well as the analysis of chapter 16 below.

compendiums of Forbes, Hultgren, and Snodgrass.[176] Each of these interpreters seeks to read the parables at both the historical and literary level. Forbes, who employs a historico-grammatical reading of the Lukan *Sondergut* parables, avers that each of the parables within the travel narrative contain implicit and explicit portraits of the nature and character of God.[177] For Forbes, the OT tradition forms a significant background for this parable. While Forbes is focused primarily on the theological function of Luke's parables, tying them closely to the broader narrative of Luke, his interpretation here focuses on repentance.[178] A second issue which concerns Forbes is the relationship between the eldest son and the Jewish religious leaders.[179] For Forbes, this is clearly Jesus's intent, as well as Luke's, to rebuke those mocking him in v.2.

Hultgren's treatment of this parable recognizes four important points for interpretation: First, the parable represents Jesus's own theology. Second, he recognizes the rule of end stress. Third, the context of the grumbling Pharisees and scribes is necessary for the interpretation of the parable. Fourth, the main concern of the parable is the portrayal of God's unconditional love and forgiveness as represented by the father figure.[180] Similar to Forbes and Hultgren, Snodgrass avers that the purpose of the parable is three-fold: to emphasize the father's compassion, to invite people to celebrate and rejoice, and to defend Jesus's association with sinners.[181] Snodgrass provides several historical and critical materials, including Jewish, Greco-Roman, and social backgrounds

[176] Hultgren, *Parables,* 70-87; Forbes, *God of Old,* 127-151; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 117-143.

[177] Forbes, *God of Old*, 225-307.

[178] Forbes highlights this motif from the OT tradition as found in the stories of Joseph (Gen. 37-50) as well as God's mercy towards the repentant Ephraim (Jer. 31:18-20, Cf. 1 Kgs 8:47-51; Hos. 11:1-9; Ps. 103:13). 130-131.

[179] Forbes, *God of Old,* 145-151.

[180] Hultgren, *Parables,* 70-91.

[181] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 139-141.

of the parable.[182] Elsewhere in his work, Snodgrass rejects Greco-Roman banqueting as a background for Luke's meal scenes, as he sees them as completely different types of works.[183] Because of this, his material on Greco-Roman dining is limited.

Literary-Cultural

One of the most prolific and most idiosyncratic contributors to the study of Lukan parables is Kenneth Bailey.[184] In particular, he has produced several monographs on the parable of the Prodigal Son.[185] Regardless of the methodological flaws inherent within his cultural-literary perspective, his interpretations provide fresh insight into the parables and challenge scholarship to seek new avenues of interpretation. While Bailey perhaps deserves his own section, we will briefly discuss his contributions to the study of this parable.[186]

In his early work, Bailey sought to merge the historical analysis of Dodd and Jeremias with the aesthetic interpretations of the existentialists.[187] His goal was to achieve balance between solid historical analysis and literary criticism. His solution, was that by exploring the cultural milieu of the parables via the perspectives of modern Middle Eastern peasants, we would be able to (at least somewhat) bridge the cultural gap. While Bailey is perhaps overly sanguine about his methodological approach, the results are truly creative and quite innovative. Three helpful elements of Bailey's work are his thorough literary analysis of the parables, his contribution to Middle Eastern backgrounds

[182] Ibid. 119-126.
[183] Ibid. 78-79.
[184] Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* and *Through Peasant Eyes*.
[185] *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973, 2005); *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1992); *Jacob and The Prodigal*: *How Jesus Retold the History of Israel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).
[186] See also Scott, *Hear then the Parable,* 99-125, for an additional literary-cultural approach.
[187] Bailey, *Poet and Peasant,* 15-26.

of the parables, and his "theological clusters," recognition of major theological themes that appear in parables. For this parable, Bailey considers sin, repentance, grace, joy, and sonship as being the "theological cluster" of the parable.[188]

In later treatments of the parable, Bailey turns to the OT, intertextuality, and theology as an interpretive lenses.[189] In his essay "Psalm 23 and Luke 15" Bailey argues that the author of Luke 15 creates his story after reflection upon Psalm 23. While not all of these themes are present in the Prodigal Son, Bailey highlights the following eight motifs inherent within both texts: shepherd, repentance, lost sheep, restoration, love, banquet, female imagery, and Christology.[190] In addition to his reading of Ps. 23, Bailey authored a monograph exploring the similarities between the Jacob saga of Genesis 27-36, where he identifies fifty-one points of comparison between the two narratives.[191] For Bailey, the Jacob saga provides an outline for Jesus parable. In Jesus's narrative, Jacob is the prodigal, where Esau is the self-righteous older brother. In a second monograph, Bailey considers the atonement, and how the parable of the prodigal fits within that theological realm of interpretation. The father's pain in the parable, foreshadows the pain of Jesus on the cross, the agony of rejection.[192]

Summary: While the aforementioned interpretations offer some valid readings of the parable, the setting of the parable is often limited only to its immediate context (vv.1-10). With rare exception do scholars examine the function of the parable within the larger

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[188] Bailey, *Poet and Peasant,* 205.

[189] *Contra* Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium,* 524-525, who argues that OT imagery is unlikely to be understood as the backdrop for Lk. 15, particularly as it relates to God as shepherd imagery.

[190] Idem, "Psalm 23 and Luke 15: A Vision Expanded," *IBS* 12 (1990) 54-71.

[191] Idem, *Jacob and the Prodigal*; Cf. M. D. Goulder, who compares this story with the Joseph story. *Luke: A New Paradigm,* vol. 2 (Sheffield, England: JSNT, 1994), 610-612.

[192] Interestingly, in *Poet and Peasant* Bailey writes about this parable, "Nearly everyone who wrestles seriously with this pericope ends up with a sense of awe at its inexhaustible context." In somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy, this sentence summarizes much of Bailey's scholarship, an attempt to exhaust the inexhaustible parable of the Prodigal son.

narrative, aside from perhaps too quickly drawing on themes inherent within Luke. Allegorical readings of the parable have quite accurately identified the eldest brother as a referent to the actions of the Pharisee's and scribes, yet beyond this their allegorization becomes excessive and at times problematic. Literary-critical approaches, while helpful in illuminating the nuances and intricacies of the parable in its relation to 15:1-10, have left the larger Lukan setting largely unexplored.[193] Existentialist readings of the parable posit ways in which the parable transcends time to speak to the modern reader, yet at times they do so at the expense of the original audience and context. Redaction critical investigations explore the author's editorial work within the parable, and thus supplement the literary focus of this thesis. Yet, previous investigations fail to make the connections explored here. The historico-literary approaches of Snodgrass, Hultgren, and Forbes, which are closer to the interdisciplinary methods used in this analysis, have only briefly mentioned the meal language. Bailey's literary-cultural approach, while innovative and valid, is perhaps too focused on the intertextual markers, and as such, his investigations have lost sight of its function within Luke.[194] Thus, this investigation offers an interpretation which, to my knowledge, has been hinted at, but not previously explored.

NARRATIVE SETTING

The location of this text is essentially the center of the Gospel. Due to its location, particularly in readings which offer a chiastic structure of the travel narrative, some have

[193] An exception to this is Donahue, as noted above, who recognizes connections in chapters 14, 15, and 16. The difference here, however, is that Donahue only traces these connections to the first parable in chapter 16, not to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Cf. Goulder, who sees 14:25-16:13 as a unit addressing the cost of discipleship, *Luke*, 594-627.

[194] Bailey does make reference to its location and function within Luke's travel narrative in his earlier work, *Poet and Peasant*. Reading the travel narrative as a chiastic structure, Bailey sees this parable as an invitation to Israel and extended to the outcasts (14:12-15:32). This finds its chiastic counterpart in 13:1-9, the invitation to Israel. Cf. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

posited that this is the central text of Luke, in short, the Lukan gospel within the Gospel.[195] Due to the importance of this parable within Christian theology, this text has taken on an interpretive life of its own, apart from its narrative location within Luke. Because of this, many of the connections between the preceding and proceeding narratives go unrecognized, or are limited to the margins of scholarly discussions.

Within the narrative of Luke, this parable is located immediately following Jesus's discussion with the crowds concerning discipleship (vv.25-35). Once again, it appears as though the scene has changed, though there are no explicit markers of movement. The conjunction δέ in 15:1 appears to signal a change in scene, as the audience is different and presumably the meal is different, though as will be seen in 16:14 this is not necessarily the case.[196] As such, since the scene has not explicitly changed within the narrative, the setting of the parable could be read as a continuation of the setting in 14:1, with Jesus at the table of the Pharisees, and the meaning of the parables related to the material in the previous chapter.

The chapter begins with the tax collectors and sinners coming to hear (ἀκούειν) Jesus (v.1). This depiction of the tax collectors and sinners coming to listen to Jesus is interesting in light of the conclusion of chapter 14 (14:35b). Jesus concludes his teachings to the crowd on discipleship with the logion concerning hearing (ὁ ἐκων ὦτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω "whoever has ears to hear, [let them] hear"). The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, instead of coming to listen to Jesus, are presented as murmuring (διεγόγγυζον) about him. This depiction is important, as it sets the sinners and tax-collectors in a

[195] *"Evangelium in Envangelio"* William Arndt, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: Concordia Pub., 1956) 350; Ref. in Bailey, *Poet and Peasant,* 158.

[196] For more on this discussion see below in chapter 5 on the use of δέ in 16:14.

position of disciples, where the Pharisees and scribes are, yet again, are presented as the opponents.[197]

The opponents' complaint is somewhat obscure within the immediate setting, as it is directed at Jesus concerning his choice of dining companions. Nowhere in v.1 does it depict Jesus's dining with the sinners and tax-collectors.[198] This charge has been brought against Jesus elsewhere in Luke, by Jesus's opponents, but both contexts were actual meals (5:29-30, 7:34).[199] Thus, this charge would most likely be made in the context of a meal, though there is no meal narrated here. So where does this meal language come from? Perhaps it is meant to be read as a continuation of the previous chapter (at least thematically), where Jesus is dining at the Pharisees home. Whether this factor in and of itself is sufficient evidence to definitively locate this chapter as the same scene in ch.14 might be a stretch, but as a pattern of Luke's repeated use of this critique, this seems most plausible. Regardless of whether one chooses to read this as the same scene or not, the connections between 14:35 and 15:1, the meal discussions of 14:1-25, and the accusation of the Pharisees and scribes in 15:2, make it clear that these texts have some commonality between them. The three parables that follow this setting, vv. 4-7, vv. 8-10, vv. 11-32, are narrated as Jesus's response to his opponents' objections.

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[197] D. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy, Friend*, 2, 254-255. In this work, Gowler problematizes the characterization of the Pharisees throughout Luke. He makes an interesting distinction here, pointing out that the Pharisees' do murmur against Jesus, though the action seems indirect. Regardless of their indirect murmuring, Jesus response is directed towards them.

[198] This factor might also cast some light on the Lukan redactional activity involved in this setting. Many claim that the setting in Luke is also the setting of the historical Jesus, as the setting and the parables that follow fit closely. No one really points out that within the text, the tax-collectors and sinners are not coming to dine with Jesus, but to listen to him. One might be able to argue that the listening here is related to the symposium, where after the dinner people would listen in on the philosophical discussion, but to my knowledge, no one has made this argument.

[199] Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 522-523, points out that this the first use of tax-collectors and sinners in a narrative context, as the other two references are in charges against Jesus (cf. 5:29-30; 7:34).

In the first parable, Jesus begins with an interrogative pronoun, which sets up a hypothetical question to his audience. There has recently been some dispute within scholarship as to whether the answer to this question should be answered affirmatively or not.[200] On the one hand, the way the parable seems to be working within the narrative presumes that the audience would affirm the actions of the man.[201] On the other, the actions of the man do not seem to make sense, as the risk seems to outweigh the reward.[202] Regardless of the logic, it seems most plausible that the audience is supposed to see this man within a positive light. The man searches for this sheep, and upon finding it, he joyfully (χαίρων) picks it up and carries it back to the fold. His joy is amplified, when upon his return, he invites his friends (φίλους) and neighbors (γείτονας) to rejoice with him (αὐτοῖς συνχάρητέ μοι). Interestingly, these are two of the four groups that the host is critiqued for inviting in 14:12. While Luke does not narrate a banquet nor the acceptance of the invitation, the celebration is meant to invoke communal celebration. In v.7, this depiction of communal celebration is then compared with the joy (χαρά) in the heavens when a sinner repents (μετανοοῦνται). This picture of celebration, while clearly

[200] The term shepherd is not used here, though the context of the parable suggests that this is the case. Regardless of the problems with the Pharisees associating with shepherds, the parable itself seems to suggest that a shepherd is meant here. This has led to a several OT references being employed in the understanding of the parable (i.e. Gen. 48:15, 49:24; Ps. 23, 77:20, 80:1, 119:176; Is. 40:40, 53:6, 60:4; Jer. 23:1-4, 50:6; Ezk. 34, Zech. 11:4-17), references in which God appears as shepherd. While this might indeed be part of Luke's thinking, they are perhaps anachronistic. In the time of Jesus, in Palestine, perceptions of shepherds were not as highly valued as they were in the days of nomadic Israel. There are convincing arguments for both sides, and if we were evaluating the parable at the level of the historical Jesus, that might be worth pursuing. Luke, however, has clearly seen the actions of the shepherd/man as an action which mimics the celebration in heaven, thus leading the reader to perceive the shepherd as a positive character.

[201] Cf. Hultgren, *Parables,* 54 and Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 105, who argue that to question the actions of the shepherd is hypocritical and the reader should fill in the gap, focusing rather on the "searching and celebrating" the lost. Cf. George Ramsey, "Plots, Gaps, Repetitions, and Ambiguity in Luke 15" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17, no. 1, (1990): 33-42.

[202] Scott, *Hear then the Parable,* 405; Ernst van Eck, 'In the Kingdom Everybody has Enough: A Social-Scientific and Realistic reading of the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4-6)' *HTS Theological Studies,* 67 (3), Art 1067, 1-10.

containing theological resonances, is also a depiction of the ideal banquet within the Greco-Roman world.

In the second parable, quite similar to the preceding, a woman loses a drachma, and searches thoroughly to find it. One difference between the parables is the immediate reaction to finding the lost thing. Instead of rejoicing immediately, she invites (συνκαλεῖ) her friends (φίλους) and neighbors (γείτονας) to rejoice with her (συνχάρητέ μοι). This emphasizes the communal aspect of this celebration, and is once again used as a comparison to the scene in heaven.

GRECO-ROMAN DINING PRACTICES

Of the several connections with Greco-Roman banqueting practices in ch. 15, two especially noteworthy parallels are conspicuous consumption and festive celebration (ἐυφραίνεσθαι).

Conspicuous Consumption: Negative (Prodigal, Eldest Son) and Positive (Father)

In the Greco-Roman dining ideology, conspicuous consumption was a way in which a host vied for honor. Not only was a host lauded for profligately spending to ensure an entertaining event for the guests, but the primary reason for doing so was to insure the reciprocation of honor for themselves. Within the parable of the Prodigal Son, there are two ways in which conspicuous consumption is portrayed: negatively and positively.

One the one hand, the prodigal takes his father's possessions and squanders his possessions in wild living. Rather than this frivolous spending resulting in reciprocating honor, it leaves the prodigal without a place to eat. Whether this is meant to invoke a banqueting ideology or not is debatable, as there is no specific meal language in the

initial frivolity of the prodigal, but the end result of this public display of wealth is a loss of honor and a lack of place at the table. After spending his wealth, he is left alone, without food, and working among the pigs. The prodigal's actions are further debased by his older brother, when he speaks of the squandering of wealth on prostitutes. As will be discussed below, there is some question as to how the older brother knows this, but within the text, the profligate actions of the prodigal are clearly not commendable. His public display of wealth does not lead him to a position of honor, but rather it leads him to ultimate dishonor, starving, without a place at the table, and working in the fields tending pigs.

On the other hand, when the prodigal returns the father throws a banquet, clothes the son in honorary garb, and kills the fattened calf. The occasion was one of celebration (discussed below), and this banquet is littered with depictions of conspicuous consumption. Not only does he offer the prodigal all the garb of an honored guest, but he makes sure that everyone knows about this feast, and throws a banquet worthy to be remembered. The difference between the ideology presented here and that of the Greco-Roman banquets, was that the slaughtering of the fattened calf was meant not for the honor of the host, but rather for the honor of the guest. This leads to the eldest son's frustration with the situation, as he is angered that his father has not allowed him such an occasion for celebration and displaying wealth.

Joy and Celebration:

The idea of communal, festive celebration is a much lauded facet of the Greco-Roman banqueting ideology as well. In each of the parables within ch.15, such communal

celebration is included.[203] When the man finds his sheep, it is a cause for joy and rejoicing, and he invites friends and neighbors to partake in the celebration. Similarly, in the parable of the lost coin, the woman invites her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her. Again, the question of whether these are banquets or simply reasons for celebration are debatable, however, the call to communal joy is an element of the Greco-Roman banquet that is lauded.

Within the parable of the Prodigal Son, the banquet which the father hosts is clearly meant to invoke communal celebration. The father is clearly the one most excited for this reunion with his son, but his imperative "to celebrate" is meant for all of those gathered. This also heightens the refusal of the eldest son to enter, as he is taking away from the celebration of the banquet.

RE-READING THE TEXT

Introduction- v.11: The parable begins with another use of τις ἄνθρωπός, a uniquely Lukan trait.[204] But the τις ἄνθρωπός is not the only character introduced here, as he is said to have δύο υἱούς. As to the unity of the parable, this introduction is either helpful or problematic.[205] Regardless of its origin, whether it is original or part of Lukan redaction, the introduction provides the characters within the Lukan parable, and the second son is represented in each of the first two verses (cf. the plural αὐτοῖς in v.12).

[203] The Greek words for rejoice and celebrate are different here (χάρα and ἐυφραίνω). This is not detrimental to my argument, however, as ἐυφραίνω is certainly linked with dining, and the context of a complaint about Jesus's dining companions, as well as the relationship between the first two parables and he third suggest a communal celebration, particularly if the celebration in heaven is likened to the messianic banquet imagery of 13:28-29 and 14:15.

[204] Luke 10:30; 12:16; 14:2, 16; 15:11; 16:1, 19; 19:12; 20:9, Acts 9:33

[205] If the parable is indeed two parables formed into one, the introduction can be taken out of the first part of the parable, and the two halves can be read separately. If the parable is a single parable, the introduction would not need to be considered redactional.

The Younger Son- vv.12-20a: The younger (νεώτερος) son begins with an imperative to his father, δός μοι τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος τῆς οὐσίας. Whether this imperative is a request or a command can be debated, but it is clear that the younger son is disrespectful of the father. The younger son is not in the position to make such a demand, and as the younger, his share would be lesser than that of the elder brother.[206] Within the parable, the father grants the request of the son, dividing his βίον (inheritance, life) between them (αὐτοῖς, plural). The presence of the eldest son is not only at the end of the parable, but is present from the beginning.

In v.13, shortly after receiving his portion, he gathers all his things, departs for a distant country,[207] and squanders (διεσκόρπισεν cf. 16:1) the inheritance, in dissolute living (ἀσώτως ζῶν). This act of conspicuous consumption is one that proves detrimental to the cause of the younger son. Whether this abuse of wealth should be attributed to youthful ignorance or attempts at gaining honor, the lavish and selfish use of wealth is a negative experience here. His use of wealth and seeking individual pleasure leads to a situation of desperation, as the severe famine (λιμὸς ἰσχυρά) drives him to tend to pigs, the ultimate sign of dishonor (vv.14-15).

After squandering his wealth, famine arrives, and the prodigal begins to be in need (ἤρξατο ὑστερεῖσθαι). In order to supplement his lack of wealth, he begins working for a citizen of that country (πολιτῶν τῆς χώρας), where he is sent to the fields to feed (βόσκειν) the pigs. In this dishonorable position, the unclean and disgraced prodigal recognizes the differences between his father's table and those outside his country. In

[206] For more on the laws within this pericope, see J.D.M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1970).

[207] This "distant country" in early allegorical interpretations is generally understood as out "among the Gentiles" which is further supported by his work among the pigs in vv.15-16.

v.16, the prodigal longs for the pods of the pigs, but is given nothing. Ruminating about the table of his father, he is struck by the disparity of the opposing situations. At his father's table, even the servants have surplus, where here, the pigs eat better than he does.[208] In a distant country, his lavish spending and uncleanliness have left him uninvited, disgraced, and starving.

Attempting to remedy his situation, the younger son begins to rehearse his concession speech. In v.18, the prodigal begins with contrition, admitting his sin against God and against his father.[209] Recognizing his disgrace, the prodigal requests reinstatement; not as an honored guest, but rather as a slave (v.19). Most people see this as the connection to repentance in the previous two parables (vv.4-7, 8-10), though notice repentance is not explicit. He seeks a position at his father's table, recognizing that even the worst position there is better than he has found in the distant country. After rehearsing this speech, he returns home (v.20a).[210]

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[208] Cf. The discussion below on the Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus, where the dogs (perhaps) eat better than poor Lazarus.

[209] Stein uses this phrase to show that this parable is not an allegory for God. Cf. *Parables*, 115.

[210] For many interpreters, the actions of the prodigal here reflect the central message of this parable: repentance. The prodigal admits that he has sinned, and returns in a contrite manner. While v.21 does seem to make a strong case for this being the purpose of the parable, repentance is not explicit here. Part of the reason for interpreting the parable this way comes from a narrative reading. Repentance is the "explanation" of the celebration in heaven in the previous two parables (vv.7,10), and also a recurring theme throughout the Gospel. Luke has concerned himself with repentance throughout his narrative, and he will continue to do so throughout Acts: cf. διανοία: Lk.1:51, 10:27; μετάνοια: Lk 3:3, 8; 5:32; 15:7; 24:47; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 13:24; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20; μετανοέω: 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 16:30; 17:3, 4; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20. Since it appears that repentance is alluded to, and is present in the preceding parables, this is why most interpreters attribute this to Luke's broader theme of repentance. But while Luke uses repentance throughout his narrative, and does so with some proficiency, he does not include repentance language here. Why would Luke omit the use of this word here that he uses with regularly, if this was the focus of the parable? While the prodigal does admit his sinfulness to his father upon his return (v.21), this is but a brief clip of his rehearsed speech in vv.18-19. Notice, however, the situation that leads the prodigal home; it is not his sudden sense of guilt, but rather his lack of food (v.16). His realization is not that he has sinned, but rather that his father's servants have food to spare, while he starves. The situation that leads the prodigal home is not his desire to be reunited with his father, but rather his desire to eat. An interpretation that does not emphasize repentance can still emphasize the graciousness with which the father restores the prodigal, without the prodigal's "repentance" upon his return. Whether repentance is to be implied from the previous parables, it seems that Luke would have included it specifically here if this

The Father- vv.20b-24: As the prodigal returns, we are reintroduced to the father character (v.20a). The father, seeing his son at a distance, is moved to compassion (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη)[211] and runs to greet him,[212] throwing his arms around him and kissing him. The (younger) son begins his speech, speaking of his unworthiness to be called his (father) son (κληθῆναι υἱός σου), but he is interrupted before he can finish (v.21). Whether this implies that he finished the speech or not can be debated, but the reaction of the father is one of dismissiveness or disregard for the son's speech.[213]

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was the case. Cf. Ramsey, "Plots, Gaps, Repetitions, and Ambiguity in Luke 15", 37-41, who acknowledges the contextual aspects in the previous parables, but who cautions against a premature linking of repentance to this parable from the interior monologue alone. See also, Bailey, *Poet and Peasant,* 173-80.

[211] Menken argues that Luke places σπλαγχνίζομαι and its variant forms as the center piece in each text in which he uses it: See, M. J. J. Menken, "The Position of σπλάγχνα σπλαγχνίζεσθαι in the Gospel of Luke" *Novum Testamentum* 30, 2 (1988). Menken's article is a response to Smit Sibinga, who sees the central verb in this pericope as ἀναστάς.

The verb σπλάγχνιζομαι is most often a characteristic of Jesus within the Gospels, the exceptions being in Luke 10:33 and here in 15:20. This has led some to interpret the characters within the parables who show this type of compassion as being representative of Jesus. While this is certainly a viable option, particularly in light of Zechariah's use of the noun σπλάγχνα in 1:78-80 as a reference to God, it need not be the only way in which the parable is functioning for the author. In fact, this interpretation requires some exegetical gymnastics as the reader is forced to build an argument from Matthew and Mark's use of the term, as well as read two uniquely Lukan parables as being a definitive representation of Jesus, in light of the verb only being used once within the narrative as a characteristic (7:13). I am not suggesting that the term did not have christological and/or theological resonances within the early church, I think it did, but that a narrative reading provides an equally valid alternative interpretation of it.

[212] Many scholars have pointed out the "dishonorable" aspect of the father running. E.g. Jeremias, *Parables,* 130; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Socio-Scientific Commentary,* 372; Linemann, *Parable,* 77; Donahue, *Gospel as Parables,* 155; Nolland, *Luke,* 785; Scott, *Hear then the Parable,* 117; Hultgren, *Parables,* 78; et al. I am inclined to agree with Hock, "Romancing the Parables" 16-17, who highlights a static nature to uncritically accept this aspect, following Jeremias. Additionally Hock suggests that too much of a concern with explaining every detail (Hock argues against a Jewish background, though the same could be said for Greco-Roman as well) occludes us from adequately understanding the parable's meaning. While this is ultimately a circular argument, as Hock himself focuses his argument around one term, it is a helpful corrective to a somewhat static means of interpretation. Cf. Snodgrass, who shares a similar concern (at times).

[213] Most interpreters suggest that either the whole speech is implied and that only the first part is necessary to carry out its meaning, or that the father interrupts the son here because his opening statement of repentance is good enough. This is problematic, particularly in light of the fact that repentance is not explicitly mentioned here. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant,* 183, suggests that the son does not complete his statement because the son is overcome by the welcome arms of the father. This too is problematic, because it betrays the characterization within the story. Cf. Ramsey, "Luke 15" 35-36, who argues that the father interrupts the son, not because of what the prodigal has said, but rather as an expression of the fullness of his joy. The father is so happy to have the son back that it does not matter what he says; the welcome reception of his son is not conditional.

The father's initial action is not to ridicule him, rather it is to take action to prepare a banquet: to restore his son to a position of honor (v.22- robe, ring, sandals), to make preparations for the meal (v. 23- kill fattened calf), to host a meal worthy of honor and to celebrate (v.23-φαγόντες εὐφρανθῶμεν), and to make sure everyone knows "his" son (v.24- ὁ υἱός μου) has returned from ostracization to commensality, from exclusion to a place of honor, from death to life, from lost to found. The meal is not marked by segregative commensality, but an open invitation; an invitation to communal joy and celebration. After the host has set these in motion, he and subsequently the people at the feast begin to celebrate (εὐφραίνεσθαι).

We find in the parable of the prodigal son, a detailed depiction of the rejoicing that was alluded to in the previous two parables. Here, conspicuous consumption functions positively, and the festive joy which the father/host desires for his audience is for the honored guest.[214] Both of these aspects are praiseworthy at Greco-Roman banquets, though for different reasons. In this instance, the conspicuous consumption is not for the honor of the host, but rather for the honor of the guest, and for the purpose of convivial celebration. This celebration not only enhances the relationships of those included, but is focused on the restoration of one previously excluded from the meal. Regardless of whether the ostracization was the prodigal's own doing or not, the result is the same. The meal is intended to evoke communal celebration, in this case, for the restoration of the lost son. It is not just the father who celebrates his appearance at the table, but it is all of those gathered.

[214] For the actions of the father toward to prodigal upon his return as representing a change of status see: Jeremias, *Parables,* 130; Marshall, *Luke,* 610; Young, *Parables,* 146-47; Scott, *Hear then the Parable,* 118; Hultgren, *Parables,* 79.

The Eldest Son- vv.25-30: While the story of celebration appears a fitting place to end the parable, particularly in light of the preceding parables, there are still two things the parable has failed to adequately address: 1) the third character from the introduction, and 2) the setting of the parable within Luke's context. In v.25 we are re-introduced to the older brother, who was only mentioned in passing in vv.11-12. The elder brother was in the field at the time of the celebration.[215] As he approaches the house (ἐρχόμενος ἤγγισεν τῇ οἰκιᾳ) he hears the celebration. Curious as to the occasion, he asks one of the servants the meaning of the celebration (v.26). The servant informs him that the celebration is due to the safe return (ἀπολαμβάνω) of his younger brother (v.27).[216] Overcome by his anger (ὠργίσθη),[217] he refuses to enter (οὐκ ἤθελεν εἰσελθεῖν)[218] into the celebration, which leads the father to go out to invite him (παρακάλει ἀυτόν).

In vv.29-30 we get the frustrations of the older brother to the father's invitation. The eldest son speaks of having slaved (δουλεύω) for many years, and never once has he disobeyed his father's orders (οὐδέποτε ἐντολήν σου παρῆλθον) and in reward for his service he has not received special treatment. While the first part is perhaps an over exaggeration of the truth, the point is clear that from his perspective his service and faithfulness have been carried out above and beyond reproach, and in comparison to his

[215] Many of the early allegorists interpreted this image as a way of showing how the Pharisees had themselves become distant from God, (e.g. Tertullian and Jerome).

[216] For Hock, this verse functions as the crux of the parable, particularly as it relates to the verb ἀπολαμβάνω- to "get back" rather than "return." He notices this verb scattered throughout Greco-Roman romances, and draws on similar narratives in Greco-Roman literature. Ἀπολαμβάνω in v.17 amplifies this narrative, and the actions of the father, as they are likened to one who is reunited with a lost loved one presumed dead. Thus, the death to life and lost and found aspects are not figurative language, but appropriate literary responses for the characters in the parable. See, "Romancing the Parables," 15-25. *Contra* Fitzmyer, *Luke,* 1090; Wolter, *Das Lukasevanglium,* 537-538.

[217] The anger of the eldest son is clearly an inappropriate response for the situation, and contrary to expectations of the celebratory cultural convention. Cf. Hock, "Romancing the Parables," 23; Ramsey, "Luke 15", 36.

[218] The actions of the eldest son and father correspond here: not entering: going out, no desire/wish to attend: invitation, see Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium,* 537-538.

younger brother, he has not been treated fairly. His complaint is thus not about the way in which his father has treated him, but rather, the way in which his father has treated his brother. The eldest son's complaint only makes sense when seen as a comparative to the way in which the younger brother is being treated now. He goes so far as to distance himself from his brother, by calling him "this son of yours" (ὁ υἱος σου οὗτος) in v.30.[219] After distancing himself, he highlights the prodigal's actions, stating how he has literally "eaten up" or "devoured" (καταφάγειν)[220] the patrimony with prostitutes, and his reward upon arrival is the consumption of the fatted calf! Despite his past transgressions, which are somehow known or inferred by this brother, the prodigal has received the place of honor, he has been restored to this community, and he is the occasion for joyful celebration. In comparison, the eldest son, whose transgressions are few if any, is not offered the means of a joyful celebration, but rather is simply extended an invitation to join in the festive occasion.

Conclusion- vv.31-32: The father responds to each of the concerns expressed by the eldest son. The first thing he does, is reassure him of his position of honor. The eldest does not lose his place of honor, but rather the father reaffirms his place beside the host. In showing his place as "always" (πάντοτε) being with him, he has not lost his place at the table (v.31a). The elevation of the younger son to a place of honor does not necessitate the loss of honor on behalf of the eldest. Second, the honor due to the host is shared by the eldest, since he is at his side, and everything that belongs to the father is his

[219] Green, *Luke*, 585-586, who sees the statement of the eldest "this son of yours" as distancing, while the father's statement of "this brother of yours" as an invitation to restoration.

[220] Here the eldest son uses a different verb than the one used by the narrator in v.13. In v.13 the verb is διασκόρπιζω, in v.30 the verb is καταφάγω. Whether this shows the intensifying of the eldest son's complaint or not, it might bring to light the differences in perspective of the prodigal's actions as seen by the narrator and the character. For more on this see, Ramsey, "Luke 15," 36-37.

(πάντα τὰ ἐμὰ σά ἐστιν- v.31b). Third, he gives the reason for the celebration (εὐφρανθῆναι), not as the replacement of the eldest, but because the situation of the younger son necessitated it (ἔδει- v.32). His return and subsequent reinstatement to the community and family, "this brother of yours" (ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος) corresponds with a resurrection. The thing which was dead and lost, is now alive and found. The prodigal's return to the fold necessitated the actions of the father, to host a banquet and communal celebration. Because of the assurance of honor, a share in the honor of the host, as well as the necessity for communal celebration and joy, the eldest is again extended an invitation. The invitation of the father here is not closed as some have suggested, but rather it is open, and the reader is left to decide whether the oldest son (they) will attend.[221]

In the words of the father we see the explicit response of Jesus to the grumbling of the Pharisees (v.2). Jesus's concludes with a parable, that leaves no doubt to its application. The sinners and tax-collectors, i.e. the lost and found, are indeed worth celebrating and worthy of inclusion. It is not to the determent of ones honor to celebrate such individuals, but rather in doing so we are sharing in the honor of the host.

Interpretation: Luke 15 continues the theme of redefining dining customs within the new community. While chapter 14 redefines who one is to invite to the banquet, chapter 15 redefines the how and why of such banquets. In each of these three parables the banquet imagery is one of communal celebration, an aspect of Greco-Roman dining that is highly regarded. These celebrations on earth are compared to the celebration in heaven over the repentance of one sinner (vv.7, 10). As such, the banquets of the parables are reflections of the banquets in the heavens. In the parable of the prodigal son, the

[221] Contra Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 538, who sees this as a definitive rejection, not a decision to be reversed at later time.

banquet is a place of communal celebration and restoration. The father restores the prodigal to a place of honor, invites others to celebrate, and in a positive display of conspicuous consumption, slaughters the fattened calf. This not only contributes to the communal celebration, but it also shows the intentional use of wealth for honor. This differs from the Greco-Roman notions of conspicuous consumption, as the honor of this scene is not solely on the father, but rather it is for the sake of his restored son.

The banquet not only contributes to communal celebration, but it also becomes a place of division. When guests fail to understand the new rules by which the community is to adhere, these banquets appear foolish. In hosting a meal which mimics the messianic banquet, the father is seen by the eldest as being unreasonable and perhaps even dishonorable. The opinion of the eldest is that in celebrating the prodigal, the one who brought shame upon himself, the father has not used his wealth to secure his own honor. In some sense, the eldest sees the father as committing the same atrocity as the prodigal, wasting resources without securing one's position and honor within the community. Instead, the eldest argues that he should have been afforded the opportunity to host a banquet which brings honor to the household, a banquet that solidifies honor through the building of relationships and the celebration with friends. The father assures the eldest that there is no honor lost, but that the restoration of the prodigal was an event that necessitated celebration. This banquet far outweighs the social ramifications of the Greco-Roman world, because it is a banquet which mimics the celebration in heaven.

If we read this parable in light of its larger literary unit, the father has invited the "proper" guests to the banquet, and the parable answers the how and why of banqueting in the new community: How is one to banquet? Through the restoration of the outcasts,

through dismantling segregative commensality, and by hosting an occasion which leads to communal celebration. Why do this? In order to mimic the celebration of heaven. The eldest son is then left with the choice, whether he will participate in this new banquet or not. This is Jesus's response to the Pharisees and scribes grumbling about his dining companions, that even though they have failed to grasp the dining practices of the new community, they may still adopt this ideology and join the celebration.

CONCLUSIONS

Reading the parables of Luke 15 in light of a broader literary and cultural matrix not only emphasizes the literary and thematic correlations between chapters 14-16, but also reveals the convivial aspects and language within the text. The parable works at two levels. At the immediate level of the narrative, the parable functions as Jesus's response to the murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes. Within the broader narrative, the parable of the prodigal son is a continuation of the convivial conversations of chapter 14, as Jesus continues to redefine proper dining practices for the new community.

The two aspects of convivium discussed in the chapter were conspicuous consumption and communal celebration. Both of these factors are lauded within the Greco-Roman ideological banquet, and both aspects are directly related to the host's honor. In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus offers both positive and negative examples of consumption. The two sons represent negative consumption, while the actions of the father are commended. The father's correct use of wealth is for the honor of the prodigal, which is in opposition to the Greco-Roman understanding of conspicuous consumption. This celebration was "necessary" as the lost has now been found. In this chapter, the "lost" things are restored to the fold, and because of this, a communal

celebration is hosted by the "finder." This communal celebration is compared to the celebration in the heavens within the first two parables, as is the implied case for the third. Thus, the actions of the father could be understood as an example of one who hosts a meal which mimics the messianic banquet. The invitation to the eldest son, who (at least within the parable) rejects the father's dining practices, is not simply an invitation to join the celebration, but rather an invitation to a new ideology. The ramifications for those who refuse to adopt this ideology, are then played out in the subsequent chapter, in the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31).

CHAPTER FIVE

A MEMORABLE MEAL NARRATIVE: LUKE 16:19-31

In this chapter, we now turn to the text that prompted this investigation, Luke's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. This parable is a significant yet underappreciated parable within scholarship, one that has existed in relative stasis until recently. Since Jülicher's designation of this parable as a *Beispielerzählung* (example story), scholarship has predominantly employed this taxonomy as an interpretive lens.[222] This parable has received minimal treatment among parable scholars, even being excluded from one of the most significant works on Lukan parables.[223] When commentators address it, interpretations tend to be rather uniform and/or too parochial. Most interpretations focus on two narrative aspects of the parable: Luke's portrayal of the divine reversal and/or the rich man's misuse of wealth.[224] Most commentators also note the rich man's failure to invite Lazarus to banquet as being the criterion for his placement in Hades, but this is often understood more broadly as the failure of the rich man to use his wealth correctly.

[222] A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2 Vol. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr; 1910). Example story: This designation is generally considered to go back to Jülicher, and was furthered by Bultmann. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 177-8. This designation is still prevalent in New Testament research, particularly related to the Lukan parables of the Good Samaritan (10:30-35), The Rich Fool (12:16-20), The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31), and The Pharisee and Tax-Collector (18:9-14). More recently, Jeffrey Tucker has challenged this nomenclature, suggesting (and I believe rightly so) that the distinction between parable and example story is often too precarious of a distinction made by scholars, and does not hold up when tested. See Tucker, *Example Stories.* See also, Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*.

[223] Particularly of note is its cursory treatment by Kenneth Bailey's *Poet and Peasant*, and its absence from his work *Through Peasant Eyes*. This parable also receives considerably less treatment than other Lukan "example stories," most notably the Prodigal Son and Good Samaritan. More recently, however, a collection of monographs have emerged, devoted to exploring correlations between this parable and various Greco-Roman literatures, particularly related to afterlife imagery. See Matthew Hauge, *The Biblical Tour of Hell.* (T&T Clark, New York, 2013); Outi Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus.* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[224] Most commentators maintain these two points of comparison without much further elucidation: Fitzmyer, Marshall, Nolland, etc. When it is read contextually, it is generally paralleled thematically or chiastically with the parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21). Cf. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 79-85.

While it is evident that the themes in the parable betray Luke's convictions concerning one's proper use of wealth and of a divine reversal, the question remains, are these the only concerns the parable addresses?[225] Does the harrowing depiction of the rich man's experience in Hades simply reinforce themes Luke has already gone to great lengths to characterize *passim*? While the themes of wealth and reversal pervade the wider narrative, Luke's specific parable is unique in many ways.[226] A narrative-contextual reading of the parable reveals how Luke utilizes the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as a bookend paraenetic; an exhortation at the conclusion of his wider polemic, that functions not only to further motivate the audience towards proper treatment of the poor and marginalized, but does so particularly in relation to repasts.

PREVIOUS TREATMENTS OF LUKE'S PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS[227]

Previous scholarship on this parable has utilized three salient methods in interpretation: source criticism, narrative criticism, and socio-scientific criticism.[228] The

[225] Luke's concern with wealth is clearly seen in: 12:16-21, 12:33-34; 14:33, 18:18-29; 19:1-10; the divine reversal is portrayed in: the Magnificat, 1:46-55 as well as the Beatitudes of 6:20-26. The prevalence of these two dominating themes in Luke is perhaps why there has been so much uniformity in its interpretation.

[226] Lazarus is the only character within any parable to be given a name. There have been several attempts at trying to locate the origin of this name, none more satisfactory than the other. Most attempts either play on the meaning of the name Lazarus "God saves" or they try and link it to Abraham's servant Eliazar or to John's Lazarus from John 11. Because Lazarus has a name, throughout history there have been attempts to give the rich man a name. That is why this parable is sometimes referred to as Lazarus and Dives (the Latin for wealth).Whatever the origin of the names, it does not make a great deal of difference in its interpretation. The uniqueness of the parable is not merely the character's name, but also the depiction of the afterlife, the appearance of Abraham, the invocation of Moses and the prophets as a sign, the refusal of Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead, etc.

[227] For a more exhaustive look at the scholarship on this parable see: Kissinger, *Parables*, 371-376; Lehtipu, *Afterlife*, 11-42; Hauge, *Biblical Tour of Hell*, 3-34.

[228] While the search for Luke's source has been the prevailing theme of scholarship on this parable, it is omitted here. Source criticism, while offering interesting readings of this parable, has failed to come up with a single "concrete" source. The works of Bauckman and Lehtipu, address how death and afterlife imagery is fluid throughout the first-century world, within both Jewish and Greco-Roman

following assessment will provide an overview of the narrative and socio-scientific explorations of this parable, briefly summarizing works on this pericope, and exploring potential ways in which their conclusions might be expanded. This will also situate this work within a particular matrix of scholarship, revealing the nuances of this argument in dialogue with previous works.

Narrative-critical approaches. Luke Timothy Johnson, Joel Green, Robert Tannehill, et al, have utilized narrative-critical approaches in their analyses of Luke's gospel.[229] Johnson's narrative reading of Luke illuminates many thematic commonalities between this parable and Luke's narrative (i.e. prophetic, polemic, reversal, resurrection, etc.). For Johnson, the parable functions as a polemic against the avaricious Pharisees, a correction to their misunderstanding of Moses and the Prophets, and an example of the rejection of the Pharisees from Abraham's bosom.[230] Green, who shares a similar literary division as is argued below, sees a similar function for the parable as Johnson, though he highlights more of the verbal connections with the parable and its immediate co-text (i.e. the parable of the Prodigal Son).[231] Green, like Johnson, ultimately sees this parable as a

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literature, and thus makes the search for a definitive source perhaps an unattainable goal. While there are many similarities with this parable and other ancient sources, arguing for a definitive source becomes problematic. Often times interpreters employing source criticism end up importing interpretations from their potential sources onto Luke's parable, thus it is unbeneficial to the goal here.

[229] Johnson, *Luke*; Green, *Luke*; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*; For additional narrative readings of Luke that focus on narrative aspects of Luke see: J.A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1992); J.D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Luke: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1991); J.M. Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1991).

While the primary concern of these works lies outside the scope of a single pericope, their analysis of Luke as a whole is quite persuasive. Beginning with Luke's designation of his book as a "narrative" (διήγεσις- 1:1) and Luke's specific ordering (καθεξῆς) of his account, it is clear that narrative criticism illuminates many facets of Luke's narrative. The impetus of this method lies not only in what the author says, but where they say it. Cf. Johnson, *Luke*, 5.

[230] Johnson, *Luke*, 254-257.

[231] Green argues that this entire literary unit (13:10-17:10) concerns itself with who will enter the kingdom of God.

continued polemic against the Pharisees. While each of these readings are persuasive, and additionally fit well within both readings of Luke's narrative, they note but fail to tease out some of the verbal connections within this section, reading this parable somewhat independently of chapters 14-15. As a whole, narrative readings of Luke are quite persuasive; but narrative readings can overlook themes present within smaller literary units due to their broader lens. Both Johnson and Green note the presence of table-fellowship language, and highlight some of the connections between chapters 14-16, but they fail to tease out these connections or explain how they illuminate this literary unit. This is in part due to their concern with the whole of the text, but also an interpretive tradition that regards these chapters as independent thoughts. Thus, a closer reading is necessary to determine how this parable functions in relation to its immediate co-text.[232]

Socio-scientific approaches: More recently, scholarship has utilized socio-scientific methods as a paradigm for the interpretation of this parable. Moxnes, examining the role of meal narratives in Luke, employs a social anthropological method for his reading of Luke's meal scenes. Moxnes adduces that the meal narratives in Luke function as both barrier breakers and community builders.[233] Jesus's critique of the social hierarchy related to meals is indicative of his new community, where generalized reciprocity is rewarded by God. Thus, this parable exemplifies those who failed to join in the generalized reciprocity of God.[234]

[232] T.L. Nöel develops a narrative-critical method for interpreting the parables in Luke. While many have highlighted the problematic features of his dissertation, his investigation nonetheless revealed the advantages of such an approach and, perhaps most importantly, it elucidated the importance of interpreting the parables within their own context. The parables both inform and are informed by the broader narrative. See, T.L. Nöel, 'Parables in Context'.

[233] Moxnes, "Meals and the New Community", 158-167.

[234] Ibid.

Herzog, utilizing Pablo Friere's paradigm of "pedagogy of the oppressed," reads this parable as subversive speech. For Herzog, the parable subverts the sacred legitimization used by the elite. The ideology which the parable subverts is the false notion that one's social and economic status are directly related to one's religious piety and standing with God. Rather than allowing this false pretense to continue burgeoning, Jesus, as a pedagogue of the oppressed, exposes and corrects this faulty legitimization of oppression. The reversal of fates is truly indicative of God's new community, and supplants previous misunderstandings of God's justice.[235]

Socio-scientific investigations have succeeded in shedding new light on Luke's parable.[236] The problem, however, with a purely socio-scientific method is that it fails to take into account Luke's placement of the parable within his narrative framework. While Moxnes is successful in illuminating the function of meal narratives in Luke and in the first-century world, he reads the text thematically rather than narratively, thus missing Luke's narrative keys and rhetorical force. Herzog's approach, while intriguing, is more interested with the parable as told by the historical Jesus rather than Luke's parable. These interpretations miss the narrative mark, because they neglect the verbal connections within the surrounding co-text, connections that have been highlighted throughout this work. While the socio-scientific method has successfully posited potential ways in which Luke's parable addresses social constructs in the first-century, it fails to explain how the parable is functioning within the narrative. Thus it should be

[235] Herzog, *Parables,* 114-130.

[236] For additional Socio-Scientific approaches to this parable see: Malina, *New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology,* (John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1981)*;* Ernest Van Eck, "When Patrons are not Patrons: A socio-scientific reading of the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus" HTS Theological Studies, vol: 69, issue: 1, (2013), 1-11.

buttressed with a narrative analysis, making both the socio-historical approach more compelling and filling in the weak spaces, discussed above, in narrative analysis.

Summary: Many commentators note the failure of the rich man to share his meal with poor Lazarus as being the ultimate criterion for his condemnation. This fact is evident from the parable itself and this point is made, in some fashion, in each of the aforementioned approaches. Unfortunately, this is where most analyses fall short, prematurely attributing the rich man's condemnation to Luke's broader critique of wealth and possessions without taking note of the plethora of verbal connections within the more immediate co-text. While it is indisputable that Luke utilizes this parable as part of his ideological critique of wealth and possessions, the text can and should also be read alongside Luke's more specific concern with table-fellowship and his critique of social hierarchy associated with the first-century dining practices. It appears as though these alternative subthemes and contextual markers within Luke's narrative, while they have been acknowledged in footnotes, have been relegated to the margins and are absent from the body of these interpretations. Thus, a new investigation into the parable's placement within the Lukan composition and the sociological implications for a first-century audience will prove fertile for this exciting yet relatively fallow field.

NARRATIVE SETTING

The location of the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus became the starting point of this entire investigation. In 16:1, immediately following Jesus's parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tells a parable to his disciples. Once again, we do not have any markers of movement, only the conjunction δέ (Cf. 14:25 and 15:1). Unlike the two previous instances, where a change in audience seems to suggest a change in setting, in 16:14 δέ

links this pericope with the preceding narrative. One could argue that the verbs preceding the conjunction δέ are helpful in changing the scene (συνεπορεύοντο, ἦσαν, ἤκουον) but in each case the verb occurs in the same imperfect tense. Obviously, the Pharisees are responding here to the previous parable which they ἤκουον (heard), thus δέ clearly does not change the scene, but rather connects it to the previous material.

Following the parable to the disciples (vv.1-13), this parable is part of Jesus's response to the ἐξεμυκτήριζον (mocking) Pharisees, who Luke further depicts, rather sardonically, in v.14 as φιλάργυροι ὑπάρχοντες (lovers of possessions/money). This depiction explains their negative response to the previous parable (vv.1-9) which concludes with Jesus's declaration that you cannot serve both God and mammon (v.13), as well as giving the reason for Jesus's second parable in vv.19-31. While Luke is often meticulous in his specification of the audience for parables (especially in the travel narrative) here there is a bit of narrative inconsistency.[237] The Pharisees are obviously present when Jesus tells his parable to the disciples as seen in their response, so why does Luke have Jesus tell the first parable to his disciples only, instead of a broader audience who are present? In specifying an audience, Luke employs a narrative key towards understanding the purpose and interpretation of the parable for the auditor/reader.[238] It is not that the disciples are not present when Jesus tells this second parable, but rather Jesus is telling the parable as part of his response to the mocking of the Pharisees; their reaction to Jesus's discussion of the dichotomy of serving God and Mammon.

[237] An exception being 19:11 where it is a broad distinction of those who thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

[238] See T.L. Nöel, "Parables in Context" for more on the idea of the audience being a narrative indicator for interpretation.

Thus, the parable seems to be a response to the Pharisees, but there is still a problem with the progression. Jesus begins with a critique of the Pharisees' ideology (v.15). The things which the Pharisees value greatly, money and honor in the eyes of others, both of which are of great worth in the honor-shame society, are the very things that are detestable before God. God knows the heart, and as such, those who place high value in the honor and shame system are at odds with the concerns of God. While Jesus's critique of the ideology of the Pharisees is not unique here, it does not necessarily seem to correlate with vv.16-18 which follow.

In vv.16-17, Jesus speaks of the Law and the prophets, and points out that while the kingdom of God has been proclaimed since John, not one diacritical mark (κεραίαν) from the law will be taken out. While this seems like an odd place for a discussion of the law, it becomes even more confusing in v.18, where we find the lone reference to divorce in the gospel of Luke. While divorce and the law are related, and the things which God values can be seen in both issues, they do not appear to be hermetically related to the sneering of the Pharisees, nor to the parable which follows.

While the parable addresses the values of God over that of humans, and specifically mentions Moses and the Prophets, the narrative progression of this parable is the scene which has been taking place since 14:1. The theme of banqueting and the failures of the elite to host banquets which include the poor, crippled, blind, and lame suggest that this parable functions not only at the micro level, as a response to the Pharisees concerning wealth, but also at the macro level, as a fitting conclusion to this longer discourse concerning table fellowship. While this parable serves as a critique of wealth, it is a much more specific critique of wealth than is often recognized.

GRECO-ROMAN BANQUETING

Segregative Commensality

In a world of honor and shame, the first to be invited are the ones who will gain the most honor for the host. This is understandable within an honor and shame social system. The new community of the kingdom of God, however, does not function like this. Thus the Greco-Roman system, which is exclusionary by nature, stands in stark contrast with the inclusive nature of the messianic banquet. While it is clear that Luke is addressing this notion of radical economic segregation in this parable, he is also addressing the idea of segregative commensality and its implications for those associated with the kingdom of God. The ones who heed the words of Moses and the prophets will not fall victim to this false sense of security that comes with only inviting the most honorable of guests. Rather, they will take part in this new community of the kingdom of God by inviting those who were previously excluded.

Throughout this literary unit, Luke is vehemently and unabashedly challenging contemporary notions of invitation and commensality, particularly as it relates to one's social status. Instead he offers that this new community will be characterized by something the Greco-Roman honor/shame system cannot offer. Luke's voice is clearly the minority position. The inclusion of the man with dropsy, the Prodigal, and poor Lazarus all reject first-century notions of honorable table-guests. Not only are these characters included, but in the case of the Prodigal and Lazarus, they receive positions of honor. Against Jewish notions of commensality, all three of these characters are impure by means of the law. The man with dropsy and Lazarus both have skin afflictions which make them impure (Lev.13, Deut. 24). The Prodigal and Lazarus both come into contact

with unclean animals.[239] It is clear that Lazarus' social and economic status are lower than the rich man, and might also presumably be the case for the man with dropsy in ch.14. Either way, neither are invited to the initial meal. The Prodigal has renounced and wasted his family inheritance, desiring simply to be a servant in his father's household, so he also is not "worthy" of being at the table.

Yet it is the man with dropsy who is restored by means of Jesus's healing. It is the poor, crippled, blind, and lame that are invited to the Great Banquet. It is the father who restores the Prodigal, regardless of his impurities and his past transgressions. It is Abraham who takes up dear Lazarus when the rich man fails to acknowledge him. In each instance the excluded are restored via the actions of Jesus, the host of the Great Banquet, the father, and Abraham. The questions of one's purity and social status are discarded when the host desires inclusion. And as such, the host is ultimately in charge of placing people in positions of honor.

Conspicuous Consumption

The fact that poor Lazarus begs for scraps that fall from the table is not only an indication of his lowly status, but also an indictment of the scraps continually falling from the Rich Man's table. The scraps that fall from Rich Man's table are not simply excess, but they are excess for the sake of gaining his own honor. Conspicuous consumption would lead to honor of the host in Greco-Roman system, but Luke reveals here how that honor is useless in the new community. Conspicuous consumption in this new community is not profligately disseminating of your wealth for the sake of spectacle, but rather is about extending invitations to the poor, crippled, blind, and lame to come

[239] For more on Dogs and Pigs as unclean, see Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2011), 32-53.

and dine at your table. The new community of the kingdom of God is not concerned with the same social dynamics as the Greco-Roman honor/shame system, but rather it is to be characterized as inclusive table-fellowship, the paragon of which is the messianic banquet.

Thus, against the backdrop of first-century conversations surrounding meal etiquette and invitation, this entire literary unit holistically functions as part of the wider critique and subsequently a redefinition of table-fellowship. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus functions as an *enargeia*, a rhetorically vivid and memorable depiction, and its function here is to exhort the reader to heed this new paradigm of table-fellowship, one that takes care of those who should be protected in Moses and the Prophets. In this literary unit Luke redefines community and honorable guests, he rejects segregative commensality, and urges the reader to stop with their conspicuous consumption.

RE-READING THE PARABLE

Having posited a broader literary division and examined aspects of the Greco-Roman banqueting ideology, it is time to explicate Luke's parable. If we broaden the literary division, picking up the setting from 14:1, recognizing the audience as the avaricious Pharisees (16:14), and if we read this parable as a continued critique and redefinition of table-fellowship, the language of the parable is quite revealing toward this end.

Rich Man- v. 19: This parable also begins in a typical Lukan fashion, with his characteristic τις ἄνθρωπός. Five of the nine times in which Luke uses this designation occur within the parameters of chapters 14-16. In this instance, Luke characterizes the man as rich (πλούσιος), substantiates that claim by referencing his two types of clothing

(πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον), most likely imported,[240] and accentuates it with his "sumptuous daily feasting" (εὐφραινόμενος καθ' ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς). Luke uses the verb εὐφραίνω six times within his gospel, with five of the six instances occurring between chapters 14-16.[241] The scene is amplified even further within the narrative, by the fact that Luke has the father in the parable of the prodigal son εὐφραίνω at the return of his younger son, while this man εὐφραίνω daily![242] In contrast to the parable of the prodigal son, this celebratory meal is done at the expense of the outcast, rather than in honor of them. When read against the backdrop of Roman convivium, where banqueting was seen as a spectacle, where food was "more for show than for nutritional use," and food and drink were paraded around as exhibits, this rich man not only lived in luxury, but his conspicuous consumption of wealth was no doubt used in order to reinforce his status.[243] This is emphasized by the contrast with poor Lazarus, where he begs for scraps of food. It is likely that the profligate rich man hosted meals resembling that of the Roman banquet, disseminating food without abandon, sparing no expense, in order to reinforce his position among the economic elite. Due to the spectacular aspects of this meal, and its purpose in reinforcing social elitism, it is also probable that this is all taking place where Lazarus could clearly see everything.[244]

Poor Lazarus-vv.20-21: In contrast to the rich man, Luke depicts the conditions of poor Lazarus using a similar narrative structure. This strengthens the contrast between the two characters, while simultaneously preparing the reader for the reversal to follow. Luke

[240] Fitzmyer, *Luke,* 1130-31.
[241] Lk. 12:19; 15:23, 24, 29, 32; 16:19.
[242] Johnson, *Luke,* 252; for more on excessive opulence see, Petronius, *Satyricon,* "The Dinner at Trimalchio's"; Juvenal, *Satires,* 11.120-160.
[243] See John H D'Arms, "Performing Culture," 301-19.
[244] Havlor Moxes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2004), 89.

characterizes Lazarus as poor (πτωχός), with his clothes being sores (εἱλκωμένος) and his stomach empty. Luke dramatizes this disparity by adding that Lazarus longed to be satisfied (ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι) by what fell from the rich man's table. The portrait painted here clearly reveals the economic disparity between the two parties, but even more dramatically the social dynamics between those invited to meals, and those left outside. While those invited feast sumptuously, those uninvited watch longingly, constantly being reminded of their social inferiority. This same description (ἐπεθύμει χορτασθῆναι) is used by Luke to characterize the dire situation of the Prodigal Son before his return (15:16). In using πτωχός, Luke also engages his prophetic/fulfillment motif, from the blessings in 6:21. The attentive auditor would most likely recognize the situation of poor Lazarus, and associate it with the very people Jesus blessed in his Sermon on the Plain.

As if this were not enough, the depiction of the economic disparity between the two men, Luke further emphasizes the "unworthiness" of poor Lazarus by adding an additional element of uncleanness. In somewhat graphic nature, Luke depicts the sores of Lazarus as being licked by dogs (οἱ κύνες ἐρχόμενοι ἐπέλειχον). Some have sanguinely offered that this is more humane, as the dogs offer comfort to poor Lazarus. This is simply not the case. The dogs add to the disparity by making Lazarus unclean. The characterization is consistent within this literary unit, as Luke depicts the Prodigal as living among the pigs, another unclean animal. The graphic depiction of the two characters is a rhetorical device for Luke, as vivid depiction is one of the most important tools in the rhetorician's arsenal.[245] The dogs both serve in adding to the suffering of Lazarus, as the scavengers anticipate his death, but they also serve as indicators of the

[245] Cf. D'Arms, *Performing Culture*, 301-19.

situation of Lazarus, a situation of dire straits. Even the dogs eat better than poor Lazarus in this narrative.[246]

Reversal of Situations- vv.22-23: Now that Luke has set the scene, it is time to play the reversal card which the audience expects. In this performance, the positions of the two men are reversed. The inevitability and inescapabilty of death have already been explored by Luke in 12:16-21. Lazarus dies, where he is subsequently carried up by the angels and placed at Abraham's side.[247] The appearance of Abraham evokes for the reader the messianic banquet addressed in 13:28-29 (and 14:15).[248] Not only does the appearance of Abraham evoke a meal scene, but the position of Lazarus at Abraham's side is a dining position. This is an ideological depiction of the true reversal of places of honor.[249] The rich man dies as well, where he is buried. Presumably, the rich man receives the fanfare of a wealthy elite at his funeral, and also a proper burial, as opposed to Lazarus who is not even buried.[250] This situation is reversed, however, in their depictions in Hades.[251] Where the rich man feasted sumptuously in this world, Lazarus gets the position of honor at the messianic banquet (13:29-30).[252] Where Lazarus was in a place of torment, constantly watching the rich man feast from his gate, the rich man is

[246] 1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; 21:24 are examples of dogs consuming the bodies of the dead.

[247] Several commentators draw parallels between Lazarus's ascension and the ascension of Elijah and Enoch. Most notably, Nickelsburg, Riches, the Rich and God's Judgment in 1 Enoch 92-105 and the Gospel According to Luke" *NTS 25*, 1979, 324-344; Cf. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 559-560.

[248] For examples of Abraham's bosom as place of honor or heavenly place see: Jubilees: 22:26-23:2; Test. of Abr.:20:14.

[249] Matthew Roller, quite convincingly, examines how literary depictions of dining positions more closely reflect ideological rather than historical representations of ancient dining positions. Here, it could be argued that Lazarus' position at Abraham's side is one of the ideological reversal that Luke is depicting. See *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome.*

[250] Fitzmyer, *Luke,* 1132.

[251] Hades is used elsewhere in Luke, in the context of unresponsive cities and those who fail to repent (10:10-15). This is most likely where the notions of piety get imported into Luke's parable, from within Luke.

[252] There are several potential resonances as to how Luke might be using this imagery. 1) Resting with the ancestors (1 Kings 1:21; 2:10; 4 Macc. 13:17); 2) a place of intimacy (John 1:18); and perhaps most appropriately in this context, 3) a place of honor at the right of the host of the banquet (John 13).

consigned to a place of torment, suffering, watching Lazarus dine with Abraham. A similar reversal, though not quite as vivid, is shown in the parables of the Great Banquet (14:15-24) and the Prodigal Son (15:11-32).[253]

Plea for Mercy- vv.24-26: The plea for mercy (ἐλέος) is both heart-wrenching and manipulative. On the one hand, it appears as though the rich man's plea is earnest, and comes as a direct result of his agony.[254] On the other, he appeals to Abraham from a positon of entitlement and authority.[255] The rich man gives orders to Abraham, and he does so out of an entitled position of a child of Abraham.[256] In typical Lukan fashion, he has fulfilled the prophecy of John's prophetic message (3:8-9), where some will use their title as Abraham's children and be rejected. The ax has come down on the unfruitful tree, and the rich man no longer holds a position of authority from which to command others. The high have been made low (1:52-53) Even after acknowledging him as a son (τέκνον) Abraham is not persuaded by the request, and his dialogue reveals the reason for this reversal. The blessings in life were afforded the rich man, while Lazarus received the adverse. It is here that many interpretations of the parable try and import meaning as to why the reversal happens, as being related to piety. But the piety of the two men is never mentioned in the parable.[257] It was rich man's opulent life and regular feasting,

[253] In the Great Banquet, those who were initially invited, do not get to taste the banquet (14:24). Instead, it is the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame who get to share with the host. In the Prodigal Son, the younger son is restored to fellowship with the father through εὐφραίνω, while the eldest son is left standing outside of the εὐφραίνω (15:28, 32).

[254] Bock, *Luke,* 1370-1373.

[255] Johnson, *Luke,* 254-257; Green, *Luke,* 607-610;

[256] Johnson, *Luke,* 254-257; Green, *Luke,* 607-608;

[257] Unlike the Egyptian tale of Setme and Si-Osiris, where the situations in the afterlife are a direct reflections of the deeds of the rich and poor in this life. This parallel was introduced in the work of Hugo Gressmann, *Von reichen Mann und armen Lazarus: Eine literargeschichtliche Studie* (Abhandlungen der königlichen preussichen Akademie der Wissenschaft phil.-hist. KL. 7; Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaftern, 1918) and dominated the literature on this parable for some time. For more on the influence of Gressmann's work within the scholarly tradition on this parable see: Hauge, *Tour of Hell,* 3-34; Lehtipuu, *Afterlife Imagery,* 12-18.

neglecting the needy, that are the means to his demise. Abraham serves as arbiter, giving voice to poor Lazarus who does not speak in the parable. Abraham reciprocates the hospitality of the rich man, banqueting while others are in torment. Abraham even utilizes the language of "us" when speaking of himself and Lazarus, sharpening the contrast between those at the messianic banquet, and those on the opposite end of the great chasm. The rich man's failure to include poor Lazarus at his table, has left him excluded in the afterlife.

Second Request and Conclusion-vv. 27-31: The rich man's second appeal to Abraham, again, is shrouded in ambiguity. On the one hand, it appears as though the rich man has reformed from his pretentiousness and is now advocating for the sake of his brothers, those still alive. On the other, he adheres yet again to the social structures of the world from whence he came.[258] If the rich man has indeed reformed, his appeal is justifiable. If not, his coercion is characteristic of the rich, who seek refuge and affirmation in their relationships with the elite. His concern is only for those who shared in his hospitality and concern on earth, his wealthy companions, who were able to reciprocate hospitality, concern, and wealth.[259] While many commentators have advocated for the second reading here, perhaps for consistency within the characterization of the rich man, it amplifies the rhetorical effect if the rich man does reform, yet is still unable to change his situation post-mortem.

Abraham's insistence on the authority of the law and the prophets iterates what Luke has mentioned just prior to the parable (vv.16-17). Those who are alive must adhere to the immutable law and the prophets, lest their abjuration lead to Hades and they end up

[258] See van Eck, "When Patrons are not Patrons"
[259] Cf. Luke 14:12-14

on the wrong side of the chasm. Indemnity is not awarded through Abrahamic lineage alone (3:8-9), but rather through ones adherence to the justice permeating within the law and the prophets. Abraham's repudiation of the rich man's requests solidifies the importance for the author. Bauckham argues that this is what sets Luke's parable apart from other ancient parallels, the lack of one returning from the dead.[260] This no doubt has resonances with Luke's post-resurrection audiences, where one has been raised from the dead and still some do not believe.[261]

Luke's concern is clear. The plethora of axioms to care for the poor, present within the law and the prophets, are being neglected in pursuit of one's own honor in this world. The ones who are neglecting these axioms hold in high regard the very things which God detests (16:15). The same scriptures from which the rich man appeals to for Abrahamic association, these are the very scriptures that condemn him. Luke, thus, uses the dialogue with the dead as a means of engaging in a dialogue with the living. The vivid depiction of the afterlife functions as both and warning and exhortation to the reader; take up the justice of the prophets, or else you will end up like *Dives*. The dialogue between Abraham and the rich man cuts right to the heart of Luke's audience. Those still unpersuaded as to whether this new concept of inclusive table-fellowship is representative of the kingdom of God, they are offered a vivid and harsh reality as to what awaits those who neglect the poor and reject them from their table. Within the parable, the five remaining brothers are left with a choice: listen to the law and the prophets, or end up in eternal torment. Luke's narrative makes it quite clear to the audience how they can achieve this: invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame

[260] Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses.* **(**Leiden, Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 1998).

[261] Johnson, *Luke,* 254-257.

to dine with you (14:17-24). Welcome the prodigal and join in the celebration (15:11-32). Stop holding onto the things which God detests (16:15), especially when that leads to neglecting the poor and hungry who are lying at your gate (16:19-31). This parable functions as a bookend paraenetic for the author, who pleads with his audience to stop neglecting matters of justice for the sake of opulence and power. Stop wasting food for spectacle and worldly honor. Stop with your segregative commensality and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame to dine with you. By doing this, one adheres to the law and the prophets and avoids their place on the opposite side of the chasm.

CONCLUSIONS

Luke's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus functions as a bookend paraenetic, an exhortation to the audience to adopt banqueting ideology of the new community. The text itself is located within a literary unit concerning dining practices and inclusion at the table (ch.14-16). While I have argued for a single literary unit here, it is not necessary for the reader to accept this as a single unit to acknowledge that there are clearly more commonalities and correlations between these texts than has been previously recognized. The progressions of the text also suggest this, and as such, this parable functions as a strong and emphatic conclusion to Luke's larger polemic. In relation to the Greco-Roman banquet, this parable addresses issues of conspicuous consumption and segregative commensality, and challenges the Greco-Roman notions associated with these aspects. In this new community of the kingdom of God, conventional notions of conspicuous consumption and segregative commensality function not as symbols of honor, but rather they result in the eternal judgment of the rich man. The parable functions within this literary unit as a bookend paraenetic, an exhortation at the conclusion of a larger polemic

that challenges the reader to adopt this new ideology and to host and participate in meals which mimic the messianic banquet, rather than the Greco-Roman convivium.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

The first two chapters of this thesis laid out the framework of our investigation. A preliminary exploration, which was initially concerned with examining the function of Luke's parable of the Rich man and Lazarus, burgeoned into a broader investigation of chapters 14-16. A close reading of the text revealed that the last explicit setting within the text was located in 14:1. The relationship between this setting and the parable was then pursued, which illuminated a plethora of "thematic hooks" and the verbal resonances between these chapters. A central concern within these chapters is dining practices, as Jesus responds to situations with (14:7-24) and criticism by (15:1-2, 16:14) the Pharisees. Jesus's responses include discussions of positions of honor and shame, places at the table, guests, invitations, inclusion and exclusion, fellowship, community, and joy and celebration. Each of these aspects of dining are discussed within Greco-Roman literature, and as such, a brief survey of this banquet ideology was conducted.

After setting the table, chapters 3-5 teased out the implications of the preliminary investigation. Luke 14, which includes the parable of the Great Banquet, discusses matters of the messianic banquet, honor and shame, as well as segregative commensality. The juxtaposition of this meal at the house of the Pharisee with Jesus's previous reference to the messianic banquet (13:28-29) is noticeable, though there also appears to be a social element of dining practices as it relates to the new community. Jesus relocates discussions of honor and shame from this world to the eternal, and he redefines who

constitutes proper guests. This redefining of table practices continues throughout the following two chapters. In the parable of the prodigal son, Luke addresses issues of conspicuous consumption and communal celebration. Jesus offers both positive (the father) and negative (the sons) examples of conspicuous consumption as it relates to the dining practices in the new community. Jesus also highlights the celebratory aspect of these banquets, the rejoicing and joy that takes place, and how conspicuous consumption should contribute to this atmosphere. The reason(s) for celebration is due to the restoration of the lost back into the fold, of the dishonored to a position of honor, and thus contrasts the Greco-Roman ideology concerning proper guests. The refusal of the eldest to attend the banquet is representative of his failure to understand the re-appropriated banqueting ideology of the new community. This type of banquet is likened to the celebration in the heavens (15:7 and10), and thus the father hosts a meal which mimics the messianic banquet. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus details the ramifications for those who fail to adopt this new ideology. This memorable meal narrative addresses matters of segregative commensality and conspicuous consumption, as well as the eternal consequences of maintaining these principles as they are currently configured within the Greco-Roman model.

The narrative and rhetorical progression of these chapters is what is most striking. All three of these parables are addressed to the Pharisees. The progression of the teachings, from the identification of proper dining guests (14:12-24), to the purpose of hosting such meals (15:7, 10, 31-32), to finally a vivid and descriptive warning against those who fail to adopt this new ideology (16:19-31), suggests that these scenes function

as part of a single discourse. The memorable meal narrative of the rich man and Lazarus plays an important role, as it ties the rhetorical bow on this literary unit.

Aside from the rhetorical progression and the thematic correlations, within this narrative Luke never explicitly moves Jesus from the house of the Pharisee in 14:1, though he has done so on previous occasions where it seems implicit (8:1, 11:52-54; cf. 14:25, 15:1). If Luke indeed intends for this scene to be read together, it functions similarly as Plutarch's *Table Talk,* where the author groups thematic discussions together and puts them in conversation with one another. It is not necessary, however, for the reader to accept chapters 14-16 as a single scene to see the thematic correlations and the progression in Jesus' discussion. The glaring differences between Plutarch's *Table Talk* and Luke's meal at the Pharisee's home is that in Luke Jesus is the only philosophical voice at the table; but this does at least place Luke, and perhaps Luke's Jesus, within the broader first-century discussions of table-fellowship and meal etiquette in antiquity.

Implications: Turning now to the implications of this study and its potential for future New Testament scholarship. I will begin with the contributions to Luke-Acts studies, then speak more broadly about potential application to studies of the Gospels and early Christianity. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of this study and posit ways in which future works might continue to build on this thesis.

Luke-Acts Studies: This thesis contributes to Luke-Acts studies in a variety of ways. Most prominently, it challenges atomistic readings of these parables and chapters by highlighting the literary connections and logical progressions inherent within them. While previous works have highlighted connections between the various sections of this argument, (i.e. recognizing connections between 14:1-15:32; 15:1-16:31; 14:1-24 and

16:19-31; etc.) few have teased out these resonances to show literary unity.[262] But again, the claim that the setting of 14:1 remains unchanged through 16:31 need not be maintained for the reader to acknowledge the literary and thematic coherence of these chapters. While these texts have been evaluated individually to emphasize connections between Luke's prandial scenes and the Greco-Roman ideological banquet (i.e. Smith, Moxnes, Braun, Taussig, etc.), few have read these parables as working together for a particular rhetorical purpose. Additionally, this thesis contributes to the ever increasing discussions on the narrative structure of Luke's Travel Narrative. If 14-16 are read together as a single scene, perhaps this provides support for the threefold literary division.

Additionally, this unit opens the door to discussions concerning the ways in which the early Jesus-communities attempted to navigate the waters between cultural expectation, and life within the new community. The issue of meal etiquette, and the question of who can eat with whom, become much more pronounced and a focal point of contention in the book of Acts. Luke, here, is showing how the new community should conduct their meals, and how these practices are distinct from the Greco-Roman banqueting ideology. This issue is of particular importance in understanding Acts 15, the

[262] At the conclusion of this work, I have recently become aware of two works that apparently argue for a similar structure, but I have yet to read these myself. According to Holgate, (*Prodigality, Liberality, and Meanness in the parable of the Prodigal Son: A Greco-Roman Perspective of Luke 15:11-32.* JSNTS 187 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Pres, 1999]) 78) B.E. Beck ("Luke's Structure" in *Christian Character in the Gospel of Luke* [London: Epworth Press, 1989] 145-169) argues that the parables from 14-16 form a unit, in which Luke 16 combines the themes of 14 and 15, picking up the progression as I have shown here. If Holgate represents this argument correctly, however, Beck does not suggest meals as the common theme, and instead reads these pericopae in light of the evils of the Pharisees: "wealth, arrogance, the interpretation of the law against the advantage of those in need, hostility to sinners, contrasted with their welcome in the kingdom of God as expressed by Jesus, and the need to hear the call to repent." Holgate also compares Farrar (*The Gospel According to St. Luke* [CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893], xliii) who places the parables between 14:15-16:31 in the same collection.

problems with table-fellowship within the early church, and ultimately the decisions made by the Jerusalem council.

Gospel Studies: In relation to gospel studies, this thesis shows how meal narratives are not simply useful in historical and ritualistic depictions of early Christian meals, but rather they are useful in analyses of the gospel writers' rhetorical intentions and redactional activity. While Smith, Taussig, et al. have contributed greatly in reconstructing the early Christian meals from a historical and ritualistic perspective, less has been done by way of analyzing the literary and rhetorical aspects for the gospel writers. Alongside works that focus on reconstructing the early Christian meal, future studies might wish to address the prandial scenes within the gospels from a literary and rhetorical perspective.

Limitations of this Study: There are several limitations of this study, but two of the more prominent involve the narrow scopes of the investigation: 1) the texts investigated, and 2) the methods employed. Lukan prandial narratives have a variety of rhetorical functions within the text. As was demonstrated here, there are perhaps more commonalities between these scenes than have been previously explored. Future works may extend this investigation into the prandial scenes in 5:27-39; 7:36-50; 10:38-42; 11:37-54; 19:1-10; 22:7-38; and 24:30-35.Additionally, this thesis offered only a brief glimpse of Jewish prandial backgrounds. Similar to the Greco-Roman connections, further study on the Jewish backgrounds would provide more points of contact, not only within this scene, but within each of the Lukan prandial scenes as well.

Concluding Remarks: In the end, this thesis is but a single voice within a much larger conversation concerning the Gospel of Luke. Heeding Herzog's warning, I am not

foolish enough to suggest that this is the one, or even the "most correct" reading of the parables of Luke 14-16. Additionally, this narrative and socio-historical reading does not discredit the theological aspects of these parables. This work offers yet another voice to the conversation, and adds a new perspective in understanding the parables in the hopes of further illuminating their secrets.

If nothing else, this investigation has complicated the somewhat static treatment of these texts as atomistic pericopae. The narrative hooks and thematic correlations between these chapters force us to query the relationship between them. In this investigation, these connections point towards a reading of the parable that emphasizes the dining aspects, and Luke's rhetorical force behind them. Within his narrative, Luke 14-16 can be read as a polemic against some of the values of Greco-Roman dining practices and as an exhortation to the reader to adjust their table-fellowship ideology. Luke 14-16 challenges the reader to choose whether they will host and participate in meals which mimic the messianic banquet, or whether they will continue to mimic in the Greco-Roman convivium.

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