

A Cultural-Literary Reading of Luke's Parables

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Abstract

This inquiry combines consideration of the Context Group's emphases regarding the honour and shame culture of first-century Palestine with careful analysis of ten narrative parables of Luke's Jesus in order to allow the proposed cultural setting to form an appropriate background for reading and understanding the stories and, in turn, to use the parables as material for assessing the adequacy or inadequacy of the Context Group's models. In this way the cultural context is in dialogue with the literary text, the cultural context facilitating a non-anachronistic and non-ethnocentric approach to Luke's narratives, and the literary text serving as a means to evaluate the stereotypical models often taken as a given starting point for hermeneutical reflection. This exploration demonstrates that the emphasis of each particular Context Group model is often too limited in its scope and frequently at odds with the cultural orientation of the parables, thereby highlighting the value of using the literary text to refine the cultural models in question and to restrict the chances of misleading readings. This study shows how dialogue between social-scientific modelling and careful textual interpretation has the potential to enhance both the understanding of the cultural map and the significance of the written word.

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Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	Anchor Bible Dictionary
<i>AJT</i>	Asia Journal of Theology
<i>Bib</i>	Biblica
<i>BibInt</i>	Biblical Interpretation
<i>BTB</i>	Biblical Theology Bulletin
<i>CBQ</i>	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
<i>CCL</i>	Corpus Christianorum Latinorum
<i>CSSA</i>	Cambridge Studies and Papers in Social Anthropology
<i>CSSCA</i>	Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology
<i>CUP</i>	Cambridge University Press
<i>EvQ</i>	Evangelical Quarterly
<i>ExpTim</i>	Expository Times
<i>FFF</i>	Foundations and Facets Forum
<i>GBS</i>	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	Interpretation
<i>JBL</i>	Journal of Biblical Literature
<i>JETS</i>	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
<i>JSNT</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
<i>JSOT</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
<i>JSOTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	Journal of Theological Studies

LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LTPM	Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs
NBI	New Blackfriars
<i>Neot</i>	Neotestamentica
NIB	New Interpreters Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NTS</i>	New Testament Studies
<i>NovT</i>	Novum Testamentum
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
<i>RB</i>	Revue Biblique
<i>ResQ</i>	Restoration Quarterly
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCM	Student Christian Movement
<i>SJT</i>	Scottish Journal of Theology
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPCK	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
SPS	Sacra Pagina Series
<i>TS</i>	Theological Studies
<i>VC</i>	Vigiliae Christianae
WB	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	Westminster Theological Journal

Chapter One

Introduction

Recent decades have seen significant developments with regard to the interpretation of Jesus' parables and in the use of social-scientific tools for the understanding of biblical texts. The purpose of this inquiry is to combine a consideration of one particular strand of social-scientific research, namely the approach and emphases of the Context Group regarding the honour and shame culture of first-century Palestine, with a careful analysis of ten narrative parables of Luke's Jesus. The intention is to allow the proposed cultural setting to form an appropriate background for reading and understanding the stories and, in turn, to use the parables as material for assessing the adequacy or inadequacy of the Context Group's models. In this way the cultural context finds itself in dialogue with the literary text, the cultural context facilitating a non-anachronistic and non-ethnocentric approach to Luke's narratives, and the literary text serving as a means to evaluate the stereotypical models often taken as a given starting point for hermeneutical reflection.

The extensive work developed over recent decades on social-scientific angles of approach to biblical interpretation has encouraged readers to investigate texts as social and cultural documents encompassing social, political and economic issues as well as religious and theological ones. From within this broad area of study has emerged the use of cross-cultural

anthropology in order to provide outlines and to generate models of how people would have related to one another, to their institutions and to their God in first-century Palestine, and at the heart of this research stands the Context Group, a group of scholars who have taken their inspiration from the initial ground-breaking work of Bruce Malina in his *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (1981) and led the way in the search for and development of stereotypical cultural models against which the New Testament may be read.

The work of the Context Group is both deconstructive and constructive in nature. From a deconstructive point of view it accentuates the dangers of anachronism and ethnocentrism, the peril of making assumptions about the meaning of texts originating in ancient agrarian societies based on a cultural outlook and experience deriving from the very different time and context of non-agrarian, post-industrial twenty-first century northern Europe or North America (Malina 1993; Esler 1994:19-36; Horrell 1999:12-15). As Malina and Rohrbaugh stress in their introduction and commentary on John's Gospel, the distance separating the contemporary reader of the Bible from the time of its composition is not only temporal and conceptual, but also social. Social structures, roles and values are all quite different (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:2). The critical appreciation of the foreignness of the biblical documents and the accompanying exhortation to readers to question the assumptions and preconceptions with which they read paves the way for what is termed a "considerate reading" (Malina and Pilch 2006:1-9). This seeks to re-examine texts in the light of their original social setting and places them in the framework of an honour and shame culture. The initial outline of this approach is set out in Malina's *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (1981), which investigates honour and shame as pivotal values in the Mediterranean of the first century, before proceeding to explore

four specific areas of human life and interaction: personality, limited good, kinship and marriage and purity.

It is noteworthy that the subtitle Malina gives his book refers to “insights” from cultural anthropology, which suggests a means of opening up alternative points of entry into and perspectives on New Testament texts, and there is little doubt that Malina and the Context Group have made a significant contribution to the reshaping of biblical criticism, even if it is only insofar as forcing interpreters to question their own preconceptions. This raises, however, the key question posed in this thesis, which is whether the insights have become an inflexible, overarching model imposed on the text, the result being that the text is read and interpreted in the light of the stereotypical model rather than used as a means of questioning, interacting with and refining that model. Are the cultural emphases developed by the Context Group informative and insightful in seeking the meaning of texts or are they too limiting and prescriptive, allowing little room for alternative understandings? To what extent do the models inform the text and to what extent is the text permitted to inform, question and even reshape the model?

This study proposes to investigate these questions by means of careful analysis and interpretation of ten narrative parables in Luke’s Gospel. The methodology for reading the parables distances itself from allegorical approaches (Blomberg 1990), from overtly theological understandings (Bailey 1976; 1980; 2008) and from more recent metaphorical stances (Funk 1966; 1994; Crossan 1980; 1988; 1992; Scott 1989) and adopts instead a non-metaphorical approach which interprets the narratives as depictions of issues, dilemmas, struggles and relationships current in first-century Palestine. The parables are read in the light of specific models articulated as part of the overarching honour and shame cultural framework proposed by members of the Context Group. This allows each story to be informed by insights emanating

from cross-cultural research, but simultaneously also facilitates a questioning of the emphases place upon those models. In this way a dialogue is set up between the model and the parable. The narrative parables are particularly appropriate for this purpose, for they portray individuals relating to others in both normative and unanticipated ways, which both confirm and subvert cultural expectations.

The parable interpretations proposed in the course of this study acknowledge and offer critical comment on the contributions made by Bailey, Scott and Herzog (Bailey 1976; 1980; 2008; Scott 1989; Herzog 1994). The reason for selecting these three leading parable scholars is twofold. First, the fact that they are all significant contributors to recent parable research means that it is both imperative and illuminating to engage with their work. While Herzog has written on most of the parables considered in this thesis, Bailey and Scott have dealt thoroughly with them all. Second, all three of them, in the course of their parable readings, devote considerable attention to cultural factors affecting the narratives, making them ideal dialogue partners for a study of the parables which is both literary and cultural in intent. Rohrbaugh, an actual member of the Context Group, has also provided readings of some of the parables from the perspective of honour and shame (Rohrbaugh 2006), and his work is commented upon in the readings proposed in subsequent chapters. What differs in the approach presented here, however, is the sustained cultural anthropological focus on parables in Luke's Gospel, which permits an assessment of the Context Group's models in the light of Luke's Jesus and which seeks to be in dialogue with those models rather than using them to produce conclusions that are determinedly theological (Bailey), kingdom-orientated (Scott) or socio-economic and political (Herzog).

The first part of this study comprises two chapters dedicated to the broader disciplines of social-scientific criticism and parable interpretation in order to provide the necessary background

for the detailed analysis of models and parables in the second part. Chapter Two places the cross-cultural anthropology methodology of the Context Group in its wider setting of social-scientific approaches to the Bible and examines issues involved in cross-cultural analysis and the use of models before presenting an outline of the Context Group's honour and shame schema.

Chapter Three assesses the history of parable interpretation structured around four crucial questions: What is a parable? How does a parable mean? What are the parables about? Where is the parables' locus of meaning? In the light of this it is proposed that parables function as a lens through which the social world can be glimpsed and analysed. They are to be seen, therefore, not as allegories, metaphors or conveyors of moral or theological points, but as skilfully crafted narratives portraying some of the realities of the first-century world of Palestine. What is accentuated here is that Luke's narrative parables do not point beyond themselves to some other reality, but deal with the reality of human relationships, with all their struggles and fragility, in social situations akin to those being depicted in the stories themselves.

The second part of the thesis turns the focus on five particular models which form a significant part of the honour and shame framework, each chapter assessing, by means of close readings of relevant parables, the legitimacy and value of the way in which the model is presented and emphasized by members of the Context Group. Each chapter assumes the same format, commencing with an outline and discussion of the specific model under scrutiny. This is followed by a critique of the interpretations advanced by three leading scholars who incorporate cultural factors into their analyses – Bailey, whose literary-cultural approach provides some helpful insights, but whose conclusions tend towards allegorisation and the making of theological points (Bailey 1976; 1980; 2008); Scott, whose literary-metaphorical approach is ultimately hampered by a determination to see all parables as metaphorical constructs about the kingdom of

God (Scott 1989), and Herzog, whose socio-economic and socio-political approach highlights the oppressive features of the honour and shame culture, but whose conclusion remains exclusively bound to his own hermeneutic of subversion (Herzog 1994). This critique sets the scene for a detailed and close reading of two parables in Luke's Gospel whose content is relevant to the model under discussion. In some concluding remarks each parable is briefly juxtaposed with a narrative from the Hebrew Bible. The purpose of this literary feature of the study is to present the reader with an opportunity to understand the given parable in the light of an alternative narrative text rooted in the Hebrew tradition. The choice of each Hebrew Bible text is made on grounds of relevance to and resonances with the theme and content of the specific parable under discussion. Placing two narratives side by side in this way is intended to create and elicit for the reader further potential meaning beyond what might be obviously available without this juxtaposition. These concluding remarks on each parable are followed by a final assessment of the parables' impact on the model under scrutiny.

Chapter Four explores the theme of family and gender relationships with specific attention to the emphasis on patriarchy with its authority and power; on the sexual division of labour and the question of public and private space, and on the status of widows. The parables relevant to these issues are The Father and the Two Lost Sons (Luke 15:11b-32) and The Dynamic Widow (Luke 18:2-5). Chapter Five is concerned with hospitality, the distinction between friend and stranger and the different aspects of reciprocity – generalised, balanced and negative. The parables investigated here are The Stranger in the Midst (Luke 11:5-8) and The Writing on the Wall (Luke 14:16-23). Chapter Six probes the issue of wealth and poverty and pays particular attention to the theory of limited good and the way in which wealth and poverty are related. The Wealthy Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20) and The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) are the

parables considered here. Chapter Seven is devoted to the notion of patronage, analyses the relationships between patrons, clients and brokers and looks at how God may be understood as patron. The Survivor Client (Luke 16:1-8a) and The Resisting Clients (Luke 19:11b-27) provide the narratives which help to explore this model. Chapter Eight focuses on purity and pollution and on the role religion and the Jerusalem temple play in defining the hierarchy of the clean and unclean in first-century Judaism, The parables investigated in relation to these issues are The Four Fools (Luke 10:30b-35) and The Temple and the Two Estranged Brothers (Luke 18:10-13).

Once the different models and parables have been considered a final concluding chapter summarises the conclusions drawn in the course of the discussion and makes suggestions concerning further work to be undertaken.

The importance of this study lies in the way the dialogue between the Context Group and parable exploration creates the possibility for a more accurate and insightful understanding of Luke's Jesus in first-century Palestine, recognising that this task must precede and form the basis of any coherent attempt to interpret the meaning and relevance of Jesus for today. The questions "Who was Jesus?" and what was the focus of his teaching?" are indispensable for informing the way the question "Who is Jesus? is considered, for otherwise there is the inherent danger that he becomes a figure removed from his own historical setting and vulnerable to being made into something he was not. Though any interpretation is necessarily subjective and incorporates the worldview and experience of the interpreter, the use of cross-cultural anthropology within the broader discipline of social-scientific criticism seeks to minimize this subjective impact and forms part of the historical-critical task of seeking to uncover Jesus' original context and significance. The parables too, though not the precise words of Jesus, offer insights into his teaching, delivered with purpose and intent (Snodgrass 2000:27). The open-endedness of any

story invites multiple readings and this is especially true of Jesus' parables and will inevitably continue to be the case. What this inquiry seeks to do is to raise questions about certain strands of parable interpretation which have masked and distorted investigation of the original narratives, in the belief that in being set free from the tendencies to allegorise or to identify the primary male authority figure as God, or to see the stories almost exclusively as depictions of the kingdom of God, the parables provide clearer insight into the person and convictions of Jesus. In combining a critical approach to the Context Group's use of cross-cultural anthropology with critical readings of the parables it is the intention that this thesis may make a meaningful contribution not only to these two respective fields of research, but more broadly to the significance of the first-century Jesus and his intentional story-telling.

Part I

Cultural Anthropology and Parable Interpretation

Chapter Two

Cultural Anthropology and the Context Group

2.1 Introduction

As the introductory chapter outlined, the purpose of this study is to consider the relationship between certain narrative parables in Luke's Gospel and the cultural scripts provided by members of the Context Group, both in terms of how parable interpretation may be informed by models derived from cross-cultural anthropological research and in terms of how the parables provide a basis for assessing the value of these models and the respective emphases they generate. An examination of the Context Group's work in general is, therefore, indispensable for paving the way towards a more in-depth analysis of individual themes and parables in the second part of the thesis. Attention is directed in this chapter to a broad assessment of the significant contribution to the field of biblical studies made over the last thirty years by Malina and other members of the Context Group, such as Neyrey (1991), Rohrbaugh (1978), Pilch (1998) and Elliott (1993), whose central concern is to liberate biblical interpretation from anachronistic and ethnocentric tendencies by the deployment of cross-cultural anthropological comparison, using insights gained from investigation of ancient and modern Mediterranean agrarian communities, deemed to reflect more accurately than modern industrial cultures the worldview of first-century Palestine.

Since the publication of Malina's groundbreaking work *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (1981), in which, under the overarching model of what he terms the pivotal values of honour and shame, he explores the cultural models of first-century personality, limited good, kinship and marriage and the rules of purity, he and other group members have produced a number of books and articles, often in collaboration with each other, covering a wide diversity of subjects, ranging from commentaries (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992; 1998; Malina and Pilch 2000; 2006) to in-depth analyses of particular features of specific biblical books, including Luke (Esler 1987), Luke-Acts (Neyrey 1991), Matthew (Neyrey 1998) and 1 Peter (Elliott 1990); from exploration of specific themes, such as the kingdom of God (Malina 2001), witchcraft (Malina and Neyrey 1988), the crucifixion (Neyrey 1994), patronage (Malina 1988), illness (Pilch 1991) and gossip (Rohrbaugh 2006) to reflections on individual parables (Rohrbaugh 2006). Despite being members of the same group Esler emphasises that they encompass a diversity of viewpoint and stresses that they are not all "Malina clones" (Esler 2004:53). Even if they do not all speak with one voice on every issue, they are nevertheless fully committed to the value of developing models from cross-cultural comparison in order to furnish fresh insights into biblical texts. Before proceeding to a more detailed exposition and critique of the Context Group's contribution, however, it is necessary to situate their work within the broader context of social-scientific approaches to biblical interpretation.

2.2 Social-Scientific Approaches to Biblical Criticism

In his guide to social-scientific criticism Elliott proposes the following definition which serves to identify several key components of the discipline,

Social-scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social-sciences (Elliott 1993:7).

While this hermeneutical approach clearly sits within the broader sphere of historical-critical methods which acknowledge that the text belongs to a very different era and culture from today's interpreter, Elliott emphasises that it is to be seen as complementary to other ways of reading, such as literary criticism (Elliott 1993:7). Its distinctive contribution, however, lies both in the description and analysis of what is to be found not only in the text, but behind the text, so that primary questions become: What was it like to be a peasant in first-century Palestinian society? What were the expectations laid upon individuals and families by the society in which they lived? What were the pivotal values and social pressures that guided action and behaviour? Textual analysis, therefore, becomes not only an investigation of what characters say and do, but of the motivational focus propelling their words and actions, a task which, as Malina proposes, is rendered all the more difficult because the Bible comes from a high context society in which there is little need for matters to be explicitly spelled out on account of people generally understanding what is happening and what is expected, a scenario which stands in stark contrast to the more low context societies of today's North America and northern Europe (Malina 2001:2-5). The task of overcoming the gulf between past and present and of achieving more accurate readings of texts is addressed by using social science disciplines, of which cross-cultural comparative anthropology is one (Malina 2001:6-10).

Elliott, followed by Lawrence, distinguishes five specific categories within the field of social-scientific biblical criticism (Elliott 1993:28-20; Lawrence 2003:7). The first of these functions by describing rather than analysing certain features of ancient society, an approach

adopted by Jeremias in *Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus* (1968) and by Stamburgh and Balch in *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (1986). The second is also primarily historical in intent, seeking to construct social histories, yet without using social theory or models, evident in Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism* (1974) and Schottroff and Stegemann's *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor* (1986). It is in the third category that social theory and models are deliberately employed in order to explore the social forces instrumental in the emergence of social institutions, examples of which are Meeks' *The First Urban Christians* (1983) and Theissen's *The First Followers of Jesus* (1978). The development of cultural scripts from cross-cultural anthropological analysis by members of the Context Group constitutes the fourth group, while the fifth comprises investigations of specific texts, including Belo's *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (1981); Moxnes' *The Economy of the Kingdom* (1988), and Neyrey's *The Social World of Luke-Acts* (1991). As Lawrence points out, it is really only the last three categories which use sociology and anthropology in an explicit way (Lawrence 2005:7).

2.3 Cultural Anthropology and the Context Group

Now that the Context Group has been situated within the broader field of social-scientific criticism the focus narrows to a more in-depth description and critique of the group's overarching approach. The point of departure is the recognition that the culture and society of the New Testament documents are quite foreign to industrialised North American and northern European interpreters and so, in order to avoid falling into the trap of anachronistic and ethnocentric readings, it is essential to acknowledge the otherness of distant cultures (Lawrence 2004:9-25), at the same time recognising that the interpreter's worldview is not the norm but, from the standpoint of those outside the interpreter's culture, simply a further example of otherness

(Lawrence 2004:20). Osiek, in her assessment of social-scientific approaches to the New Testament, underlines the way in which developments in a whole range of areas in recent centuries, including the fields of technology, philosophy, politics, economics and psychology, have led to present-day readers inhabiting a wholly different world of meaning from those in the pages of the New Testament (Osiek 1984:24). Comprehending first-century Palestinian culture requires, then, the crossing of a bridge from one world to another, a bridge, which, as Rohrbaugh indicates, comprises a number of obstacles to understanding, including the availability of language, the desire to maintain a threatened identity, different means of communicating and ways of seeing the individual and community, assumptions of human similarity and cognitive style (Rohrbaugh 2006:1-17). Since it is impossible to travel back in time to first-century Palestine (Osiek 1984:25), cross-cultural anthropology becomes the means by which such obstacles may be negotiated, the starting point for which are anthropological studies of the Mediterranean, drawn initially from the publications of Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany (1966), which form the basis for developing abstract models designed to be heuristic tools for the investigation of biblical texts (Esler 1994:12-13). The work of the Context Group focuses predominantly on the significance of a culture of honour and shame, but recognises that this operates within the broader socio-political context of a highly stratified society, explored in Rohrbaugh's proposal that Jesus himself is a village artisan (Rohrbaugh 2006:19-30). In order to situate honour and shame within this larger picture attention turns first to the model of social stratification.

Social Stratification

The political, economic and class structures of first-century Palestinian society can only be properly understood if they are first recognised as part of an ancient agrarian empire, distant in

time and culture from twenty-first century northern European contexts. In recent years, as more exploration of agrarian societies has taken place, scholars have used this research to investigate aspects of the biblical world from a more appropriate sociological and cultural perspective. Saldarini's work on the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees (1988), Herzog on Jesus' Parables (1994), and Crossan (1991) and Herzog (2005) on the historical Jesus are all prominent examples, and they draw extensively on the work of Lenski (1966), Kautsky (1982), Eisenstadt (1969), Sjoberg (1965) and Carney (1975).

Agrarian societies can be distinguished from the horticultural societies which precede them and industrial societies which succeed them. Historically the invention of the wheel and the plough provided for more efficient methods of farming than was the case in horticultural societies, though the economy was still founded on agriculture. As farming techniques developed agricultural life moved from purely subsistence farming to the generating of surpluses, which could then be taxed by a small but powerful elite who lived a life of relative luxury and controlled the economic system of redistribution of resources away from the poor in the direction of the wealthy. This led to a demarcation between the urban centres, where the elite lived, and the village context of the peasants, whose chief priority was survival (Carney 1975:100-102). On the one hand there is what Belo calls the "class-state" which takes the surplus for itself, while, on the other hand, there is the village peasant community based on kinship relations (Belo 1981:60). While the elite practise redistribution, the villagers practise reciprocity (Carney 1975:167). As Lenski makes clear, this controlled economy is in the hands of the governing elite, in their positions of power and privilege usually as a result of military conquest (Lenski 1966:192-197) and maintaining the status quo with the help of the retainer class.

The class system in an agrarian empire is fundamentally different from that of an industrial society, for, in the first place, it is highly stratified with a small elite and a large peasantry, and,

second, it has no middle class with independent power, the retainer class being dependent on the governing class (Saldarini 1988:38). To appreciate fully the extent of this social stratification it is helpful to outline the nine categories proposed by Lenski (1966:210-296) and to relate this system to the situation in first-century Palestine (Saldarini 1988:39-45).

Lenski divides the classes into five upper and four lower. At the top is the ruler, the autocrat with considerable powers, such as the Roman emperor who controls the empire through the giving of gifts and the taxing of the masses. In second place, below the ruler, comes the governing class, about 1-2% of the population, made up of client kings such as Herod Antipas, or governors such as Pontius Pilate, or the religious hierarchy, such as the chief priests. In third place is the retainer class, about 5% of the population, comprising soldiers, bureaucrats and religious leaders such as the scribes, these retainers existing to carry out the business required by the governing class and always vulnerable to being replaced (Saldarini 1988:41). In fourth place is to be found the merchant class, not highly regarded, since commerce, though necessary, is not highly valued, while in fifth place comes the priestly class, the priests and Levites involved in running the Jerusalem temple and its worship.

Crossing the boundary from the upper to the lower classes, in sixth place are the peasants who work the land and who live rurally, who are powerless and are taxed at considerable rates ranging between thirty and seventy percent of their produce. Below them, in seventh place, comes the artisan class, possibly peasants forced off their land and working for their survival in the urban centres. Jesus and the fishermen belong to this stratum. In eighth place is the unclean class, such as tanners, and in ninth place are to be found the expendables, about 5-10% of the population, landless itinerant people for whom one option is banditry.

This sketching of the economic, political and social structures of typical agrarian empires facilitates a more accurate perspective on first-century Palestine. From the macro-social scale

attention now turns to the micro-social level of personal relationships in an honour and shame culture.

Honour and Shame

An appropriate point of departure is Pitt-Rivers' definition of honour,

Honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society, It is his estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also the acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognised by society, his right to pride (Pitt-Rivers 1966:21).

Honour relates to recognition in three areas of life: power, sexual status and religion. As such it is derived from the capacity to control others (power); from the performance of appropriate gender roles (sexual status), and from the position held on the ladder of social hierarchy, at the top of which is God (religion) (Osiek 1984:25). Honour comes from two sources and is dependent not only on how an individual, family or community sees itself, but also on whether there is broader public recognition of status or achievement. Honour is reputation and is understood as being either ascribed or acquired (Malina 1981:25-50; Malina and Neyrey 1991:25-46; Rohrbaugh 2010:117-120). Ascribed honour is respect granted by the family or by the state and relates to birth – the status of the family into which a person is born, what gender the person is and, if male, whether he is the first-born and heir or not. In the political sphere honour is ascribed through designation to high office (Neyrey 1998:15-16) and, as Osiek notes, it is ascribed honour that is the most secure source of reputation in antiquity (Osiek 1984:25). Acquired honour stems from personal achievements acknowledged and recognised by others. Agrarian societies are acutely

agonistic, manifesting perpetual competitiveness in which males engage in order to secure or extend their status and reputation, largely through the game of challenge and riposte (Malina 1981:34-39; Neyrey 1998:16).

Shame is to be understood in two ways. On the one hand, it is a negative term defining the very antithesis of honour and expresses a public loss of face and reputation. Such shame could be the result of losing out in a physical or verbal competition or challenge or it could be the consequence of female infidelity in bringing a household into disrepute (Neyrey 1998:30-32). On the other hand, shame is a positive concept which denotes a careful sensitivity towards the cultural requirements of appropriate action and is often defined as the honourable behaviour of women living out the non-public, non-aggressive, chaste role expected of them by society, for it is through chastity and fidelity that the woman maintains and contributes to the honour of the family.

Following his introduction to the use of cultural anthropology in his *New Testament World* (1981) Malina dedicates the rest of the work to identifying and exploring specific features of the honour and shame code, paying particular attention to the themes of dyadic personality as opposed to individualism; to wealth, poverty and the notion of limited good; to kinship, marital and gender relationships, and to purity and defilement. Over the last thirty years Malina and others have continued to explore these and other aspects of honour and shame societies, including patrons and clients (Malina 1996:143-175; Elliott 1996:144-156); economics (Oakman 1996:126-143); the urban environment (Rohrbaugh 1996:107-125); the countryside (Oakman 1991:151-179); the significance of food and meals (Neyrey 1991:361-387); sickness and healing (Pilch 1991:181-209) and hospitality (Malina 1996:228-235; Rohrbaugh 2006:77-88).

As set out in the introduction to this thesis, the chapters forming the second part of the study focus in turn on the following five different aspects of the pivotal value of honour and shame in

agrarian Mediterranean societies: family and gender relationships, hospitality, wealth and poverty, patrons and clients and purity and pollution. This allows for more in-depth analysis of the respective themes, both in relation to evidence gleaned from historical and cultural anthropological sources and in relation to relevant parables in Luke's Gospel which can be judged to explore the same social dimensions and settings.

2.4 Assessing the Context Group's Approach

From a hermeneutical point of view the Context Group's deployment of cross-cultural anthropology makes a significant contribution to the discipline of biblical criticism. It not only assists interpreters in recognising that the attitudes and values of first-century Palestinian society are quite different from the worldview of present day readers (Horrell 1999:14; Lawrence 2003:21), thus making considerable progress towards the intended goal of reducing anachronistic and ethnocentric readings, but, in the process, also encourages interpreters to adopt a more humble attitude in acknowledging that theirs is not the cultural norm against which all other cultures should be measured (Lawrence 2004:20). As Rohrbaugh comments, the aim should be to enter into a cross-cultural conversation in which the conversation partners discover as much as possible about the other's culture while also avoiding the tendency to project the distinctive features of their own culture onto the conversation (Rohrbaugh 2006:185-188). The result of this "considerate" approach to interpretation (Malina and Pilch 2006:1) is a more sceptical attitude to formerly widespread accepted readings of biblical texts and the generation of new points of entry into the biblical world which allow for fresh insights and alternative perspectives. This may be illustrated from recent work done by members of the Context Group on Paul's letters and on the Gospels.

One recent example of an undermining of predominantly anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretation comes from Malina and Pilch's *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (2006) in which the authors reject the notion that Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, usually taken to be uncircumcised non-Jews, and emphasise instead his role in sociological terms as a "change agent" among those with Israelite beliefs and customs (Malina and Pilch 2006:1-25). Recognising that the Israelite faith of Paul's day was very different from the Judaism of today, and working on the basis that the terms "Jew" and "Gentile" in Paul's letters are misleading translations and should be replaced by the more accurate "Judaean" and "Greek", Judeans being those who practise the customs of Judaea, and Greeks being those who practise the customs of the Hellenists and who share the Greek language in common with others across the Mediterranean, Malina and Pilch argue that the name "Judaean" designates Israelites living in Judea, while the term "Greek" refers to Israelites living outside Judaea who share Hellenistic values, customs and language (Malina and Pilch 2006:371-373). It follows, then, that it is to Israelites living among non-Israelite peoples outside Judaea that Paul is an apostle and change agent. In the first place Paul has been the one to innovate change among Israelites beyond Judea on the basis of belief in the approaching kingdom of God and the death and resurrection of Jesus. Following this his letters constitute an information exchange relation by which he seeks to maintain and develop the new social identity of these Jesus-groups in the light of the initial innovation. Paul is thus understood to be primarily concerned not with theology but with establishing and maintaining the group identity (Malina and Pilch 2006:335).

Lying behind the thesis of Malina and Pilch is the sociological model of change agents, who have a number of distinct tasks. Initially they are required to make a group aware of alternative perspectives, persuading group leaders that pursuing the new path or goal is worthwhile. Following the introduction of the innovation, change agents then seek to develop and maintain an

information exchange relation in order to support the group in their new social identity. As part of this process they attempt to diagnose problems empathetically, creating an intent to change within the group and a subsequent progression from intent to action, before moving to the penultimate stage of stabilising the new orientation or behaviour of the group through reinforcement of the original message, and then on to the final termination of the relationship once the group is in a position to maintain and renew itself from within and no longer needs to depend on the change agent for support (Malina and Pilch 2006:335-337). It is against this model of the change agent that Malina and Pilch read the activity and letters of Paul, thus depicting him not simply as a theologian and pastor, but as playing a key role in the formation of a social identity for the new Jesus-groups with which he is involved.

An example of “considerate” reading of the Gospels, of careful interpretation which uncovers anachronistic and ethnocentric hermeneutical tendencies and seeks to read the texts in terms of their original social setting comes from the pen of Rohrbaugh, who has brought together a number of articles in a collection which pushes the notions of honour and shame to the front of the stage, and which, in the process, has significant Christological implications in reassessing Jesus’ status, words and actions. Rohrbaugh’s presentation of Jesus as a village artisan (Rohrbaugh 2006:19-30), his treatment of several of the parables against the backdrop not only of honour and shame, but also of deeply embedded social stratification (Rohrbaugh 2006:89-123) and his readings of the Nazareth sermon (Rohrbaugh 2006:31-44) and of the Zacchaeus encounter (Rohrbaugh 2006:77-88) all provide evidence of a fresh look at biblical texts from a social point of view and force the reader to ask questions of previously dominant perspectives.

There is no doubt, then, that the Context Group continues to provoke thoughtful reflection on the assumptions with which readers approach the New Testament, at the same time as proposing alternative models which encourage interpreters to see the biblical material as social

texts. Nevertheless the stance and work of the Context Group have not been without their critics and have generated debate among scholars in a number of areas, especially with regard to the use of cultural anthropology, to the overarching model of honour and shame and to the value of models in general. So it is to these matters that the discussion now turns.

The Context Group and Cultural Anthropology

In order to make an assessment of the way in which the Context Group interacts and engages with cultural anthropology it is helpful to see their work against the background of changing theoretical stances to culture itself, as set out by Tanner (1997:38-58), who points up some of the criticisms levelled at modern understandings of culture and cultural anthropology from a more post-modern perspective. Tanner outlines six major criticisms of what she terms the post 1920s modern approach: the charge of inattention to historical process, which ignores investigation into how a culture developed its character and simply takes it as a given – “already formed and finished” (Tanner 1997:40); the argument against seeing cultures as internally consistent wholes, recognising that the anthropologist’s desire for consistency and for neat frameworks can distort a far more diverse and contradictory reality; the argument against presumed consensus among members of the same group, acknowledging the dangers of assuming universality of belief by generalising from a small sample; the argument against culture as a principle of social order, since order is established and maintained by the powerful elite; the argument against the primacy of cultural stability, on the grounds that change and innovation are a natural part of culture, arising out of social processes and pressures; and the argument against cultures as sharply bounded, self-contained units, since there is complexity and diversity not only

within culture, but also at the boundaries and the intersecting with other groups and other cultures.

The points that Tanner makes are well supported from evidence gleaned from investigation of first-century Palestine and of New Testament texts. With regard to the significance of history it is hard to over-emphasise the importance of historical processes on the formation of first-century Israelites, given the focus on possession of land and the way in which it had been taken away from them by different empires – Babylonian, Persian and Greek – until they found themselves occupied by the Romans. In relation to the fragmentation and diversity of culture within a specific group it is important to acknowledge the inevitable paucity of evidence available from the poor, from the illiterate and from women, partly because their voice is regarded as being of little significance and partly because their illiteracy means no written records. Since in antiquity only a tiny minority could read or write, all documents dating from the biblical era contain the inherent tendency of representing the views, concerns and achievements of the literate powerful elite. The lives of the poor and disadvantaged are lost in the same way as the stories of women remain largely untold as a result of their marginalisation (Mullen 1994:29-33). That social order is established and maintained by the forces of power rather than culture is illustrated by the significance attached to purity and pollution by the ruling elite in first-century Jerusalem, who use laws concerning cleanness and uncleanness to elevate the functions of the Temple and the priesthood and to extract resources from the poor for their own benefit by means of Temple taxation, an issue explored more fully in chapter eight. The notion of instability and change within culture is well focused in the parable of the Father and Two Lost Sons (Luke 15:11b-32), which depicts two sons pushing at the boundaries of patriarchy and unsettling the status quo, a story given closer attention in chapter four, and the blurred edges of cultures can be detected in the way in which rural meets urban in the interaction of villagers with city occupants, a matter in

the background of the parable of The Writing on the Wall (Luke 14:16-23), explored in chapter five.

When the Context Group's use of cultural anthropology is set alongside the criticisms articulated by Tanner, which emerge largely from the dangers of seeing culture as a unified whole, some overlap begins to surface between what she outlines and criticisms that have been levelled at the Context Group from other sources. With regard to the use of the Mediterranean as source material for comparison with a first-century agrarian setting, one of the major criticisms of the Context Group is a lack of engagement with the diversity of Mediterranean cultures, both geographically and temporally. Horrell and Downing both point to the generalising tendency of the models which suggest both a single Mediterranean culture rather than a series of cultures (Horrell 1999:15) and an implicit assumption that Mediterranean culture two thousand years ago was the same as it is today (Horrell 1999:15). Downing deems this problem to be the result, at least in part, of inadequate engagement with Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany, who openly acknowledge an absence of uniformity across different parts of the Mediterranean, citing as an example the variations in understanding of what constitutes male and female honour (Downing 2000:23-24; Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers 1992:6).

Our aim in treating the Mediterranean as a whole was epistemological only and we never attempted to define it geographically. Thus when mention is made of "the Mediterranean concept of honor" we recognize that it indicates a tendency to associate masculine honor with female sexual purity only rather vaguely, for there are areas near the Mediterranean where this connection is not made at all, for example certain areas of northern Spain or the Mزاب or Ouled Nail of Algeria, and that in any case there is considerable variation within what is loosely termed so (Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers 1992:6).

It is noticeable in fact that members of the Context Group make little reference to the sources of Mediterranean culture as evidence for their models, beginning with the abstract model rather than with evidence lying at the foundation of the model, and so an important element of the investigation in the following chapters will be an exploration of both historical and anthropological source material which has a bearing on the formulation of each model proposed.

It is noteworthy, for example, that the model of limited good, which features so prominently in their work, is derived not from the Mediterranean, but from Central America, with no justification offered for venturing beyond the Mediterranean area in this instance.

The problem of temporal distance between the first-century and the twentieth-century Mediterranean region (Judge 1980:201-217) raises the question as to whether it is assuming too much to import facets of a culture back into a distant period of history, particularly if, as Osiek points out, use is being made of social science theories which are essentially modern constructions (Osiek 1984:5). The dangers of making a direct correlation between a present-day rural Greek community, for example, and first-century Palestine are obvious, for there is no certainty that, even if the first-century Greek community resembled first-century Palestine, its present-day culture is not extensively different from two thousand years ago. Despite acknowledging the significance of the temporal divide and the impossibility of anthropologists immersing themselves in a past historical situation, Mullen holds, nevertheless, that cultural anthropology can offer insights as part of an interdisciplinary process including the disciplines of archaeology, history and biblical scholarship (Mullen 2004:23-24). Indeed Neyrey makes considerable use of ancient rhetorical sources in conjunction with insights from cultural anthropology in seeking to build up a more secure picture of culture in New Testament times. Evidence of this is to be found particularly in his work on honour and shame in Matthew's Gospel (Neyrey 1998), though it must always be borne in mind that, just as anthropological

research is necessarily limited to certain groups or communities, so quotation from ancient sources, philosophical or otherwise, is bound to be partial.

Beyond the issues of temporal and geographical distance lies a further debate, the question of whether anthropological research is essentially reductionist in nature (Osiek 1984:5-6), by which is meant that it looks for human social explanations of phenomena and excludes the possibility of the transcendent, leading to a conflict between theology and anthropology. This, however, is not the intended purpose of anthropology, which seeks not to dismiss religion and religious experience, but to understand it in its social context (Elliott 1993:90-91). Malina argues strongly against the criticism of reductionism on the grounds that explanations of social phenomena from different perspectives are always only partial and do not exclude the possibility of religious interpretation (Malina 1982:237).

It is worth citing here two examples from the Context Group which provide evidence of a non-reductionist approach and underline the ways in which religion is embedded in society. The first of these is Pilch's positive and creative approach in the area of Altered States of Consciousness, which, far from reducing so-called religious experiences or intimations of transcendence to pathological or infantile explanations (Pilch 2002:105), takes seriously the evidence for altered states of consciousness in cross-cultural psychology arguing for an understanding of Jesus as a shaman or holy man (Pilch 2002:113). The second example alludes back to Malina and Pilch's portrayal of Paul as a change agent seeking to persuade people to enter into and then maintain a new social identity as members of the Jesus-group (Malina and Pilch 2006). Though they use sociological definitions and categories in order to understand the process, it is a process which stems from the religious reality of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and of his death and resurrection.

Though there is in the work of the Context Group the inherent danger of assuming too much, of paying too little attention to cultural diversity, both temporal and geographical, and of neglecting detail in the search for broad models, their approach is intended to have a heuristic purpose and to be an open-ended means of undermining preconceptions, provoking reflection and offering fresh insights which enable readers to engage more fully with the biblical text because they are engaging more deeply with the biblical world. The onus is on readers to adopt the same kind of critical stance towards the Context Group's formulations that the latter demonstrate towards what they would term "inconsiderate" appreciation of the text.

The Context Group and Honour and Shame

However influential members of the Context Group have been in presenting and promoting honour and shame as pivotal values in first-century Palestine, questions have been raised in relation to various aspects of the proposal: its centrality, its distinctiveness, its definition and its sources. This last question of sources in cross-cultural anthropological research in the Mediterranean has already been addressed in the previous section so the focus of attention here turns to the other three issues.

With regard to centrality Downing, while accepting that the honour and shame code is a relevant perspective, is doubtful that it is always dominant (Downing 2000:21). In his critique of Neyrey's reading of the Lukan Beatitudes (Neyrey 1995:139-158) Downing contends that the achieving of honour is not always the primary preoccupation of individuals, since living even as a dishonourable slave may be regarded as preferable to not living at all, wealth and livelihood thought of as more significant than honour, and poverty deemed to be the main goal in the search for the good life, as in the Cynic tradition (Downing 2000:37-42). Coming at the issue from the

angle of anthropology Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany have shown that an overconcentration on honour and shame diminishes or even excludes the dynamic of grace, a point they seek to correct in their later volume *Honour and Grace in Anthropology* (1992).

On the question of distinctiveness, the Context Group argues that those who inhabit an honour and shame culture have a quite different worldview from twenty-first century northern European and North American populations, leading them to argue for the foreignness of biblical culture. While there are undoubtedly cultural features which can appear alien to today's reader, such as the fear of the evil eye, found in Mediterranean contexts but somewhat strange to a northern European (Esler 2004:46-61), and while a publication such as Malina's *Windows on the World of Jesus: Time Travel to Ancient Judea* (1993) is extremely helpful in providing a number of scenarios illustrating clashes between cultural preconceptions, Downing has made the point that the honour and shame culture may not be as alien as is proposed (Downing 2000:21). This is an issue worth exploring briefly with respect to the models under investigation in this study, for a moment's reflection demonstrates that the models as they are outlined are not wholly foreign. The model of family and gender relationships draws a sharper distinction between gender roles than would be evident in northern European societies of today, but the latter are still marked by inequalities in the workplace, both with regard to pay and to promotion opportunities, and there still remain strong expectations of women in relation to the household and to childcare. The model of hospitality raises the question of balanced reciprocity which is still a feature of modern day giving and receiving of gifts and favours, where the recipient feels an obligation to reciprocate. The model of wealth and poverty outlines the theory of limited good, as opposed to a presumed modern understanding of limitless supply of goods, but the global financial crisis of recent years has served as a reminder that wealth is not without limit and that increased wealth for some leads to increased poverty for others. The model of patronage in which patrons and

clients enter into an unbalanced but mutually helpful relationship is present in gaining access to employment opportunities by means of personal contacts. The model of purity which establishes hierarchies and clear boundaries between insiders and outsiders is evidenced in derogatory language used of those perceived to be “other”. So even a very cursory perusal of the five major models examined in the course of this study demonstrates that there are at the very least points of contact and understanding between the so-called alien and foreign honour and shame culture of first-century and today’s northern Europe.

With respect to the question of definition Lawrence and Ling both voice criticism over the way in which honour and shame are defined by Malina, both of whom take issue with the presentation of a predominantly agonistic view in which the gaining of honour by competitive activity holds sway over more humble virtuous behaviour. Throughout her study Lawrence contests Malina’s honour precedence with her view of honour virtue, but it is in her treatment of challenge-riposte that she mounts a sustained critique, making reference to evidence of non-agonistic tendencies in certain Mediterranean cultures as well as in Graeco-Roman society and in the world of Judaism (Lawrence 2003:166-177). For his part Ling argues for a dual presence in agrarian societies of both cooperation and competition (Ling 2004:227), a conclusion he draws on the basis of Ortner’s cultural investigation of Sherpa Buddhism, relating her findings to the social world of first-century Judaeans along the lines of the piety associated with virtuoso religion and its ascetic and non-agonistic practices (Ling 2004:227-258).

The Context Group and the Use of Models

The final area requiring discussion is the use of models, such a central feature of the Context Group’s approach to biblical hermeneutics, which, according to Carney, enables the values of the

matters under discussion and of the one offering analysis to be openly acknowledged (Carney 1975:xiv). A model is a framework or an outline of characteristics, a means of mapping the territory under analysis, of organising and categorising raw material into a pattern. Malina proposes the following definition. A model is

an abstract, simplified representation of some real world object, event or interaction, constructed for the purpose of understanding, control or prediction (Malina 1983:14).

Since the use of models lies at the heart of this methodology it is necessary to consider both the purpose and function of models and the criticisms that are levelled at their use.

In the first place the model provides an openly and honestly acknowledged point of entry for the study of a particular text, as the above reference to Carney indicates. Esler points out that all exegetes use models, so the question which arises is not whether a model is true or false, but whether it is appropriate or not (Esler 1994:12-13; 1995:4). For interpreters to recognise that they are inevitably employing models in their research is not only a constant reminder of the dangers of ethnocentrism and anachronism (see Carney above on Marxism and capitalism) but also of the fact that they themselves are reading from a particular perspective. The primary model or map that informs this study is the honour and shame model of agrarian societies, allowing a consideration of the parables from this point of view. The model and the text are brought into dialogue with one another, so that each is given the opportunity to enlighten and test out the other.

The model also provides a pattern or typology. It is necessarily abstract, drawing out a general mode of behaviour and interaction (Esler 1987:11; Elliott 1993:46), and it is the general that is important because it is this that allows and facilitates comparison and contrast. Bungalows,

cottages, semi-detached residences, mansions and flats are all more detailed and individualised subsets of the generic “house” which offers an overarching term or model for larger scale comparison and contrast with other entities. In a similar way the key theme or model of honour and shame represents and encompasses a number of different facets of behaviour and interaction which all relate in one way or another to the values of honour and shame. However, it is this larger scale model which facilitates comparison with other types of society. This does not mean that the individual aspects are either ignored or irrelevant, but it does enable recognition that there is a broad outline to a culture or society which gives the society its own sense of identity and distinguishes it from other cultures (Carney 1975:7).

Scholars are aware of not claiming too much for the model, which is essentially heuristic (Esler 1995:4; Elliott 1993:44) and therefore a means of discovery, a tool for excavating beneath the surface and a hypothesis to be tested. It is significant to note that each of the chapters in *The New Testament World* (Malina 1981) exploring different elements of the honour and shame culture concludes with a section entitled “Testing the Hypothesis”, demonstrating that a heuristic approach is not about making the evidence fit the model, but allowing the text to respond and even ask questions concerning the appropriateness of the model. A relevant example of this is to be found in the significant role that the notion of challenge and riposte plays in an honour and shame culture. This will be explored in greater depth in due course, but it is worth mentioning at this point because it is often proposed that a challenge and riposte interaction takes place between two social equals (Malina and Neyrey 1991:29-32). Yet dialogues between Jesus, regarded as a lowly peasant (Saldarini 1988:43-44), and more elevated members of the establishment are also labelled as challenge and riposte encounters (Malina and Neyrey 1991:49-52), raising the question as to whether challenge and riposte scenarios are for social equals alone. The heuristic model can be accepted, rejected or modified in accordance with the outcome of the investigation.

Alongside the heuristic function of the model sits its explanatory role (Elliott 1993:33-34). Its purpose is not simply descriptive, for it exists to clarify the reasons why things are as they are and the nature of their significance. The honour and shame model, then, does not, for example, simply state the imbalance between the wealthy and the poor, but investigates how the culture understands the world's resources in terms of limited good, the notion that there is a finite supply of goods, be it money or honour, such that if one person's possessions increase another's inevitably decline (Malina 1981:71-93; Esler 1994:34-35). Similarly, invitations to a feast (Luke 14:16-23) are not simply about having a party with friends, but constitute an attempt to cement status among the elite. In this way the model and individual aspects of it enable the reader to get behind the text to understand the social meaning of a given series of interactions.

The use of models in social-scientific enquiry is, as Esler notes, inevitable since all readers approach texts with their own presuppositions and worldview. However, certain specific criticisms have been levelled at the ways in which these models are used, criticisms requiring careful consideration and response.

One significant criticism maintains that models are too abstract and general, leading to a diminishing of the specific. This is Carroll's concern with sociological analysis of Old Testament prophecy, which, he believes, has a tendency to render the particularity of the biblical text subservient to the overarching model imposed on it (Carroll 1989:203-225). Undoubtedly there is an inevitable obscuring of detail when the focus of attention is on the overall pattern or scheme (Lawrence 2005:14), but this does not necessarily mean the loss of the individual. If the model is viewed heuristically it generates the possibility of questions about how individual aspects do or do not fit into the more abstract pattern, and this can be achieved by keeping an eye on both the broader canvas and the smaller brush strokes. Rohrbaugh maintains that the issue lies not so much in abstraction per se, but in the levels of abstraction – the higher the level of abstraction,

the more general is the pattern of behaviour described, the lower the level of abstraction, the more historically particular is the focus (Rohrbaugh 1987:23-33). As Elliott points out the way forward is to select carefully the appropriate model to be used (Elliott 1993:96) and so the approach pursued in this study fuses the more general cultural maps with the more historical features peculiar to first-century Palestine. Two examples will suffice. The consideration of the parable of The Four Fools (Luke 10:30-35) draws together the larger canvas of purity and pollution with the specific dynamics of the Jerusalem temple purity system, while the reading of the parable of The Writing on the Wall (Luke 14:16-23) holds in tension both the general features of reciprocity and the particular environment of a pre-industrial Palestine city. This kind of approach merges insights gained from cross-cultural comparison and specific data found in the text.

A further criticism proposes that models are too simplified and insufficiently nuanced, focusing too explicitly on cultural norms (Tidball 1983:20-21), the danger being that cultural mapping runs the risk of assuming that individuals, given their cultural context, act as a matter of course in certain anticipated ways. Scholars have, for example, been keen to draw the distinction between pre-industrial dyadic, collectivist cultures and industrialised individualistic cultures (Esler 1994:29-31; Malina 1996:41-56; Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:343-345) and, in general, this may hold true, but it does not mean that there is no room for individualism within collectivism. The more nuanced approach of Rohrbaugh (2002:27-39) clarifies this. It is important not to underestimate the complexity of life, a point to which Overholt draws attention under the heading of “the contradictoriness of social life” (Overholt 1996:8-9). Following Geertz (1973:144-145) Overholt pinpoints the tensions between culture (the system of meaning), social structures (the arena of social interaction) and personality structure (the individual) which provoke change. Human beings find themselves caught up in dilemmas, faced with having to

make choices where culture, society and the individual may be in conflict with one another. It is not, then, simply a question of whether people conform or not to their culture, but rather a matter of how decisions are made and courses of action identified and adopted given the interrelationship between culture, society and the individual. The younger son (Luke 15:11b-32) may well understand that his primary cultural responsibility is towards his father and the family household, but when he recognises that the social context makes it unlikely that in the future there will be adequate resources for both him and his older brother to thrive or even survive, then he has to make a decision about his future.

Voices are also to be heard highlighting the dangers of making the data fit the model, an ever-present issue when starting from outside the text. Tidball raises three particular objections in this regard: that often there is too little evidence in the text for the drawing of conclusions; that there are no means of acquiring further information about the first century since it is impossible to conduct field research across the temporal divide, and that there is a tendency towards the drawing of too many parallels on the basis of only a few similarities (1983:20-21). Tidball's concern that too much is being claimed in the conclusions drawn leads to the charge of eisegesis, of reading into the text rather than extracting what is there (exegesis), but here it must be acknowledged that the distinction between exegesis and eisegesis is not always as obvious as it may seem. It has already been noted that the readers inevitably approach a text from their own particular angle and model informed by the experiences, interests and questions which preoccupy them, so there is no totally objective way of interpreting a text and no means of allowing the text simply to speak for itself. The reader is both exegete and eisegete simultaneously. Nevertheless, for all the questions about the relationship between interpreter and text, the issues of the procrustean bed (Elliott 1993:94) persist. As Elliott maintains, there is always the danger of "forcing material into 'cookie-cutter molds'" (Elliott (1993:94), so what he argues for is an

intellectual honesty which not only acknowledges the subjectivity of approach, but which also endeavours to make explicit the model or procedure being adopted, so that these can be critiqued and, in the process, accepted, rejected or modified. The model is, then, candidly proposed as a heuristic tool with the hope that it will advance research in the specific discipline.

A final challenge raises the question of emic and etic approaches and exposes the issue of imposing models or frameworks on a given culture from outside. In opposition to a model-orientated point of departure, Garrett (1992) proposes an interpretative method which focuses on the emic, on what those who belong to the culture and are immersed in it have to say about it in all its particularity. While there is undoubtedly much to be gained from an ethnography sketched by native people, this does not diminish the importance of etic frameworks as a means to understanding, as Esler makes clear in his critique of Garrett (Esler 1995:5-8). His chief criticism is that interpretative approaches concentrate so heavily on the particular that no framework emerges to facilitate cross-cultural comparison (see also Descola 1992:108). It is important, then, to recognise the value of the etic alongside the emic. In the first place, people caught up in their own culture cannot easily stand outside it and offer a more objective understanding of it, and, secondly, the etic is significant for communicating the findings, for they need to be comprehended in categories of thought that make sense to the interpreter. So it is the relating of the emic and etic which offers a sound basis from which appropriate models may emerge.

The debate over the value of using models is crystallised in the discussion between Horrell and Esler following Esler's review of Horrell's *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Horrell 1996). In his response to Esler's review Horrell continues to highlight the dangers of a model-based approach to social-scientific interpretation of the Bible on the grounds that the generalised model tends to impose on the text a view of expected typical behaviour which discounts the possibility of diverse human reaction and response (Horrell

2000:84). To support his argument Horrell provides a critique of Esler's own interpretation of Paul's account of his visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2:1-10 which is read in terms of the model of challenge and response (Esler 1998:127-140). Horrell contests that Esler's view that Paul goes to Jerusalem not in search of approval from the Jerusalem leaders, but, in taking with him an uncircumcised Gentile, presents an agonistic challenge to those in authority, is a reading founded not on the text but on the model-based understanding of what a typical Mediterranean man would do (Horrell 2000:91-92). In response Esler argues that models still represent the best option since they help to bridge the cultural distance between interpreter and text and because of the impracticality of first-hand observation and cultural immersion along the lines of Garrett's interpretivism (Garrett 1992). He then proceeds to a defence of his analysis of Galatians 2:1-10, maintaining that reading the passage in the light of challenge and response offers an opportunity to think about the text in a way not dictated by present-day North Atlantic modes of thought and to ask whether indeed this is a plausible way of understanding the incident (Esler 2000:107-113). Esler contends that his use of models goes hand in hand with detailed exegesis of the text which is substantiated by his discovery that the giving of the right hand in fellowship (Galatians 2:9) is, on the evidence of Josephus and the Septuagint, not a sign of friendship, but a means of the victor offering peace to a defeated opponent, understood ironically by Paul in this setting (Esler 2000:112-113).

Elsewhere, in drawing to a conclusion his discussion of the use of social-scientific models Esler makes the following point,

No ontological status is accorded to the models; they are seen merely as heuristic tools. Either they throw up a set of new and interesting questions, which the texts themselves must answer, or they do

not. Models which do not have this result will be discarded and replaced by others. Social-scientific modelling yields insight rather than necessarily embodying truth. (Esler 1994:7)

It is in the claiming of too much for models that the dangers lurk. They are not the end, but a means towards the goal of a fuller understanding of the world of first-century Palestine in general, and, with regard to this study, of the parables in particular. They ask the questions to which the texts are invited to make their reply.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to accomplish several goals. It has situated the cross-cultural comparative approach of the Context Group in the broader setting of social-scientific interpretation of the biblical text; it has presented the two overarching models deployed by the Context Group, and it has provided a critical assessment of cultural anthropology, the understanding of honour and shame as the pivotal values of first-century Mediterranean culture, and the use of models in general, features so central to the methodology of the Context Group. In doing so this discussion paves the way for a closer analysis both of some of the parables in Luke's Gospel and the cultural emphases of the Context Group which provide potential models for interpretation of the Gospels. It has become clear that, while there is evident value in the work of members of the Context Group, it is important to regard their approach and their findings not as a conclusion, far less as the final word, but as a starting point which provides a context with which to explore the text itself and offers questions to assist that investigation, to illuminate the given passages and elicit meaning. In the same way that the next chapter on parable research highlights the importance of allowing the story to speak for itself and of refraining from imposing

meaning by means of allegorisation and use of the immediate literary context, cultural models cannot be permitted to dictate meaning, but are to be used to offer insights for more in-depth reflection by the interpreter. What is required is a dialogue between the model and the text, in which careful attention is paid to what motivates and precipitates the words and actions of the characters, so that it becomes clear to what extent the expected typical behaviour anticipated by the model is evident or absent and to what degree the model may be held to be a valuable tool, both for interpretation of the individual text and of the Gospel story as a whole.

Chapter Three

Interpreting the Parables

3.1 Introduction

Central to this study is an investigation of ten narrative parables in Luke's Gospel and the way in which they may be used as a means to assess the validity and usefulness of the honour and shame cultural framework posited by the Context Group and the emphases that the members of the Context Group attribute to different aspects of this overarching model. It is important, therefore, that right from the outset there is clarity concerning the approach to the parable readings adopted in subsequent chapters. As a result the purpose of this chapter is to discuss a number of points integral to parable research, so that conclusions may be drawn with regard to the approach advanced here and that this approach may be situated in the broader context of parable hermeneutics. The discussion falls into four parts: a consideration of what may be understood by "parable"; an examination of the relation between parable and figurative language, which asks how the parable means and to what extent the story refers to something beyond itself; an appraisal of what these referents might be, paying particular attention to how the referent "kingdom of God" may be interpreted, and, finally, an enquiry into whether the locus of meaning is to be sought primarily in the original historical context or rather in the parable's direct relevance to today, a question focused by looking at the relative merits of historical-critical and

literary-critical approaches and an exploration of whether parables restrict themselves to making a single point or inherently contain the possibility of multiple readings. The chapter then concludes with an outline of the choices and decisions made with respect to the treatment of the parables in this thesis.

3.2 What is a Parable?

A number of the sayings and stories in the Synoptic Gospels which are commonly held to be parables are in fact not given this designation in the text itself, a fact which is often evident in the narratives in Luke's Gospel (10:30-35; 11:5-8; 14:16-23; 16:1-8a; 16:19-31). The lack of such a title or description, however, has not prevented these stories from being categorised in one way or another as parables, and, since many of them manifest the same kind of plot structure as those introduced in the text as parables, the use or not of the word "parable" does not appear in itself to be of great significance. Acknowledging, then, that the word "parable" is used both in specific contexts at the start of narratives (Luke 15:3; 18:1; 18:9; 19:11; 20:9) and more generally in referring to Jesus' stories, it calls for some examination and definition.

The Greek term παραβολή comprises the preposition παρά, meaning "alongside" and βάλλω meaning "throw, cast or place", and in the Septuagint is used to translate the Hebrew *mashal*, meaning "to be like or similar" (Donahue 1988:5; Scott 1989:9). The term suggests some kind of comparison, whereby one idea or theme is laid alongside or compared with another. Investigation into the varied meanings of the Hebrew *mashal* and the Aramaic *mathla* (Jeremias 1972:20; Scott 1989:13) show that they denote in the Old Testament a wide variety of figurative forms of speech, including riddles, proverbs, fables and symbols.

According to Jülicher (1888) the parable genre in the New Testament Gospels manifests three different types, which he termed the similitude (*Gleichnis*), the parable proper (*Fabel*) and the example story (*Beispiel Erzählung*) (Hedrick 2004:68). Others, such as Linnemann and Lambrecht add a fourth type - allegory (Linnemann 1966:5; Lambrecht 1981:8), but the issue of allegory will be dealt with extensively in the next section, so here attention is concentrated on Jülicher's three types. Boucher distinguishes between the three, proposing that a similitude concisely and briefly "narrates a typical or recurrent event from real life" (Boucher 1983:19), usually using the present tense, and she proceeds to illustrate this with the example of the story of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10) where the explicit comparison is made between the finding of a coin and heaven's joy at one individual's repentance. She identifies a parable proper as a larger narrative focusing not on a recurrent but rather a single fictitious event (Boucher 1983:21), and here she cites as an example the story of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8) which is deemed to demonstrate the need to pray for release from oppression. Boucher then distinguishes between the similitude and parable proper on the one hand and the exemplary story on the other hand, the former providing "an analogy between two very different things" (Boucher 1983:22) and the latter serving as an example of a general principle, and here she follows Jülicher's classification of four example stories (Luke 10:29-37; 12:16-21; 16:19-31; 18:9-14 (Boucher 1983:23)). Boucher is not alone in drawing on Jülicher's formal categorisation of parables (see also Linnemann 1966; Lambrecht 1981; Via 1967), but a couple of questions concerning this categorisation need to be raised at this point, the first relating to form and the second to content.

With regard to form the category of example stories has been brought into question, most strikingly in the work of Funk and Crossan on the story of the Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35) (Funk 1966:199-222; Crossan 1992:55-64). They both assert that the thrust of the narrative lies not in the call to emulate the good neighbourly attitude of the Samaritan but in the metaphorical

juxtaposition of the Samaritan and the term “Good” (Crossan 1992: 64) and of the Samaritan and the injured man’s view from the ditch (Funk 1966:214). The key point is that the Samaritan is not just any neighbour but an enemy figure who shockingly transcends expected cultural boundaries. More in-depth exploration of this understanding of metaphor will be considered in the next section. At this juncture it is sufficient to recognise that the four so-called example stories are not necessarily universally held to be illustrations of clearly identifiable behaviour which is to be emulated or avoided. This point will become all the more clear in the readings offered later in this study.

Tolbert makes the point that categories may “obscure rather than enlighten the texts under study” (Tolbert 1979:17) thus requiring the abandonment of categorisation altogether. She offers her own definition:

A parable is that short, unified story, embedded in a longer gospel narrative, that one chooses (or tradition has chosen) for various reasons to call a parable (Tolbert 1979:17).

This may appear far too general, omitting any notion of comparison at all, since the term parable has lost any sense of precise or technical meaning and has simply become a word associated with stories of Jesus, though Tolbert may be correct to question whether the parables can be neatly categorised in the way suggested above. Indeed Scott’s survey of the word παραβολή in Luke’s Gospel finds three distinct uses: it denotes a proverb (4:23; 5:36; 6:13); it introduces a story by making clear the point of the narrative in advance (14:7; 18:1; 18:9; 19:11); it illustrates a saying (12:15-16; 13:5-6; 15:1-3) (Scott 1989:28). Scott not only undermines the categories already referred to, but demonstrates that each Gospel understands parables in a different way and that

the Gospel writers can be very directive in interpreting the story for the reader, thus emptying it of its *mashal*-like character, namely the need for interpretation (Scott 1989:28).

With regard to content it is important to note that the narratives cited by Boucher include the interpretative frames, probably given to them by the Gospel writers themselves (Jeremias 1972; Scott 1989; Hedrick 2004:10-14). Even if they belong to the original setting the point is that they lie outside the story and, if taken as the definitive interpretation, restrict the freedom of the story to mean anything else, so the interpreter is confronted with a decision to make – to read in the light of the interpretative frame which controls the interpretation by giving some indication of what the narrative is supposed to be about (Schottroff 2006:103-104) or to detach the story from the frame, thus creating doubt about what the parable is actually being compared with. Do the readers of Luke's Gospel allow themselves to be guided by Luke's interpretation or do they focus on the story itself? Whichever option is selected, it is important to acknowledge that the narratives as they exist now have passed through a number of stages of transmission, of which Lambrecht identifies four key ones. There is the initial context of Jesus' life and work in which he speaks in terms of his hearers' own concrete situations and dilemmas. This is followed by a period of post-crucifixion oral transmission when the stories become used for missionary and ecclesiological purposes, explanations are added and the process of allegorisation begins. Subsequently the stories gradually take written form and become more fixed before they are placed finally in the Gospels and used to promote the author's own purposes (Lambrecht 1981:12-14, see also Jeremias 1972:113).

Scott properly emphasises the importance of the stories' initial orality, and hence he seeks the reconstruction, not of the original words but of the originating structure of the parable (Scott 1989:35-40), which he proceeds to employ in his own interpretations. He recognises that the stories would have been performed on numerous occasions and that although the precise words

themselves may have changed, the structure would have remained reasonably constant, meaning, of course, that when the parables in Luke's Gospel are being read they are Luke's performances. The Gospel writer's influence lies not only in the interpretative frameworks, but in the way Luke performs the parable's structure, and so the reader needs to be aware that discounting the framework surrounding a parable does not remove Luke's own understanding or reading of it. Scott's focus on orality and originating structures is helpful in that it highlights the point that narrative fictions, though embedded in a context, whether oral or written, are in fact independent of any one specific context. In opposition to Jeremias' preoccupation with the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees (Scott 1989:42) Scott recognises that there would be multiple recountings of a particular story in different contexts in Jesus' life, in different post-crucifixion oral contexts and even in different written contexts, as is clearly seen from the multiple attestations of certain parables in two or more Gospels, including the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The principal disadvantage, not of the notion but of a methodology which uses an originating structure for any given parable is that it negates the diversity and uniqueness of the written texts as they now exist. The reduction to a kind of lowest common denominator means that the creative focus of the individual Gospel author is lost, though, in fairness to Scott, where multiple attestations exist he does consider the performances of the different authors, even if his own reading focuses on the originating structure drawn from them. While this provides a clear single text with which to work, there still remains an inevitable loss of performance individuality.

With this in mind the readings in this study draw on the actual texts found in Luke's Gospel. Other versions of the same story are taken into account, but it is Luke's version with its own literary features which provides the basis for interpretation. The interpretative frames are discounted for two reasons: first, because there are occasions when they seem to conflict with the import of the story itself and clearly seem to have been added for missiological or ecclesiological

purposes, for example in the story of the Dynamic Widow (Luke 18:1-8), and second, because the nature of story means that it is essential to allow it to stand on its own and tell its own tale. This is not to decontextualise the parable but to shift it from the narrower confines of religious and ecclesiological meaning and to listen carefully to it in the broader context of the culture and society of first-century Palestine.

3.3 How does a Parable Mean?

Figurative Language

Having considered what a parable is, attention now turns to an analysis of how it means, that is, how it communicates, how it functions? Three definitions of parable will serve as a point of entry for addressing this question.

The parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought (Dodd 1961:16).

Every parable is a story; this story conveys a lesson, so that the parable has a double meaning, the story and the lesson; the parable's purpose is to effect a change in the hearer, to lead to decision or action; and the lesson always is religious or moral (Boucher 1983:19).

A parable is a mashal that employs a short narrative fiction to reference a transcendent symbol (Scott 1989:8).

While these three definitions differ in some respects, the one thing that they hold in common and which is widely held among those involved in parable research is that parables are referential (McGaughy 2007:9-11). Dodd signals this by his use of the terms metaphor and simile; Boucher proposes the double meaning of story and lesson, and Scott deploys the language of referencing. If parables are referential, therefore, and if they deliberately use figurative language in order to refer to something outside the story, how is this achieved? This brings to the surface the inevitable question of allegory and metaphor.

Allegory

Hedrick offers the following understanding of allegory:

An allegory as a literary form is a text that says one thing but intends that something else be understood. In the allegory nothing is what it appears to be. Elements in the allegory are ciphers with hidden meanings, which are not derivable from the words themselves; only in the imagination of the author or reader do these elements become other things. In one sense an allegory contains extended multiple metaphors, which deliberately equate numerous objects, persons and actions with other things outside the allegorical text. Thus, a deliberate allegory actually represents many different things in the guise of other things (Hedrick 2004:7-8).

Over the course of the last century allegorical readings of parables have been severely questioned by many scholars, a process initiated by Jülicher. Until the end of the nineteenth century allegorical interpretations abounded, one of the most notable of these being Augustine's understanding of the parable of the Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35), where the wounded man is held

to be Adam; Jerusalem is equated with the heavenly city; the thieves are the devil; the priest and Levite represent the Old Testament law; the Samaritan is Christ; the inn stands for the church and the innkeeper is the Apostle Paul (*Quaestiones Evangeliorum* II. 19, cited in Blomberg 1990:31; Dodd 1961:13-14). Jülicher argues that such allegorisation is alien to Jesus' parables (Jülicher 1899:203-322) and in order to counteract it he proposes that each parable contains only one point of reference and that this is a moral point with a broad application. Though Jülicher has been criticised on the grounds that his morals reflect nineteenth-century German Protestantism rather than first-century Judaism (Perrin 1976:96) and because he seems to draw too heavily from Aristotle, placing Jesus in effect in an ancient Greek schoolroom (Perrin 1976:95), his contribution nevertheless succeeded in shaping a much more critical perspective on the nature of allegory, a perspective that has been taken up by many scholars since and which has highlighted a number of problems relating to allegorical interpretation of the parables.

Criticism of allegorical approaches begins with the identification of an element of hiddenness in an allegory, which results in the story not being understood on its own terms, but existing purely to conceal some other message (Linnemann 1966:7; Via 1967:7), a message which can only be decoded if the interpreter knows or has explained what the narrative is supposed to be referencing. To understand the parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9) as an allegory, for example, the listener needs to be told what the different types of soil represent, since there is no way of knowing this from the story itself. Furthermore, once the allegorical key is understood the initial story becomes irrelevant (Via 1967:20) and the narrative may be discarded because its sole purpose is to point to the fixed meaning of the allegory. So the story of the Sower is expendable because the listener knows that it is not really about a sower, but about how the words of Jesus are accepted or rejected. In this way the story is denied the possibility of meaning something else and potential is closed down.

From a literary point of view the allegorical interpretation deprives the story of its plot since the identification of certain fixed points of reference switches the focus away from a dynamic flow of events and experiences to a static series of figures or ideas. The parable of the Sower thus becomes an appraisal of four kinds of typical listener rather than a narrative which moves from one experience of sowing and harvest to another. Similarly the story of the Father and Two Sons (Luke 15:11b-32) becomes a representation of attitudes held by God (the father), the Pharisees (the elder brother) and sinners (the younger son), rather than a narrative with its own inner dynamic movement and plot in which choices are made and consequences reaped. From a more historical and sociological angle allegorical interpretation removes the story from its original social context (Herzog 1994:9-14; Schottroff 2006:90), and it is in this connection that Herzog describes much interpretation of the parables not only as allegorical, but theological (Herzog 1994:12), by which he means that the figure of God is read into what are essentially intended as depictions of social issues in Jesus' context. Parables become theological statements rather than stories about human fathers, landowners, shepherds, kings and judges because of the tendency to equate the male authority figure in the narrative with God, even if the actions of this character suggest that God is foolish (Luke 16:1-8a) or violent (Luke 20:9-16) or unjust and obnoxious (Luke 18:2-5).

Alongside these criticisms run also the dangers of oversubjectivity (Donahue 1988:12; Blomberg 1990:31), anachronism (Blomberg 1990:31) and overelaboration (Jeremias 1972:19), all of which are evident in the example cited above from Augustine. Nevertheless, while many scholars have become increasingly wary of the pitfalls of allegorical interpretations, Blomberg, though acknowledging the dangers of extravagance and anachronism (Blomberg 1990:31), has been a leading voice in arguing for the continued validity of allegorical reading, raising the following important issues.

A point that cannot be lightly dismissed is the presence of allegorical readings emanating from those who dismiss them. Blomberg cites as examples two of the major figures of twentieth-century parable criticism, Dodd and Jeremias, both of whom embrace Jülicher's search for a single metaphorical meaning to each parable, but who nevertheless resort on occasion to allegorisation (Blomberg 1990:42; Dodd 1961:93-98; Jeremias 1972:128). Further to this Blomberg raises the question of definitions, maintaining that allegory and metaphor are not distinct literary categories opposed to each other, where allegories contain multiple points of reference and metaphors only one, but that it is the case that allegories are a kind of use of metaphor. In this he agrees with Boucher's proposal that "the definition of allegory, then is simply an extended metaphor in narratory form" (Boucher 1983:30). Though it could be argued that this is simply a debate about semantics, it does serve to underline the figurative, referential quality of both allegory and metaphor. Moreover, responding to the argument that allegory may be dismissed because it is prescriptive in indicating how the story is to be read and appropriated, thus closing down any open-endedness, Blomberg argues that in fact one of the major advantages of allegory is that once the allegory is understood the meaning is clear and stable (Blomberg 1990:52-53).

Taken together, these criticisms and defence of allegory clarify two of its major characteristics. The first of these is the multiple points of reference between story and interpretation; the second is the direction of transfer of meaning, which is from referent to story with an inevitable downgrading of the narrative's impact and freedom. It is as if the solution is already known, rendering the question redundant. These two aspects are integral to the discussion of metaphor too.

Metaphor

The last century has witnessed two specific movements with regard to understanding the parables as metaphor. The first came as a response to what Jülicher perceived to be the extravagant allegorisation of narratives. His primary aim was to replace multiple correspondences between people and objects within the story and people and objects lying outside the story with one single point of reference, each parable eliciting one meaning which amounts to a universal moral principle. The parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is, for example, about performance-related reward (Jülicher 1899:495) and the parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-8a) is concerned with present wisdom ensuring a positive future (Jülicher 1899:511). Dodd and Jeremias follow this one-point metaphorical approach, but reject the notion of a universal moral, replacing this instead with the search for a meaning in Jesus' own particular historical context and drawing extensively on the tools of form criticism for this purpose. For them the parables are metaphors for the kingdom of God as that is understood in Jesus' lifetime.

While Jülicher, Dodd and Jeremias have made huge contributions to parable research, a couple of issues regarding one-point approaches require attention. The first is that different interpreters propose different points, there being no consensus over what the single point of reference might be. Moreover, such subjectivity is always going to be a response defined by the personality and social context of the interpreter, as noted above in relation to Jülicher. The second issue is that, in a not dissimilar way to allegory, the identification of a single overarching point tends to render the story itself redundant, for once the meaning has been identified transference of meaning takes place in the direction of referent to story. If, as Jülicher suggests, the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31) is about inculcating a sense of joy in suffering and of fear in pleasure (Jülicher 1899:638) then there is no longer any need for the narrative.

The second movement in reading parables as metaphor took a quite different direction and developed out of the work of Fuchs (1964) and Linnemann (1966) on the significance of language as language event (*Sprachereignis*), on language as performative, as possessing the potential of having creative impact on its hearers. Thus the telling of a story makes possible a change in perception or orientation, and from this emerges, principally in the work of Wilder (1964), Funk (1966) and Crossan (1992), a new definition of metaphor, pointing not to something already known, but creating new meaning as the listener participates in it.

A true metaphor or symbol is more than a sign, it is a bearer of reality to which it refers. The hearer not only learns about the reality, he participates in it. He is invaded by it. Here lies the power and fatefulness of art. Jesus' speech had the character not of instruction and ideas but of compelling imagination, of spell, of mythical shock and transformation (Wilder 1964:84).

Crossan likewise emphasises the notion of participation. He describes parables as poetic metaphors (Crossan 1992:21) in which the purpose of the metaphor is not to conceal or ornament or even to illustrate, since nothing new is being offered to the hearer in these cases. For Crossan the key is participation, for it is in engaging with the story that it comes alive. The metaphor articulates a referent with newness, so "remove the metaphor and you lose the referent" (Crossan 1992:12). To engage with the story is to enter upon a journey into the unknown, not into what is already perceived and understood. So metaphors are not illustrations of existing understandings whereby information precedes participation, but function rather in terms of creating participation, with the result that participation precedes information. (Crossan 1992:14)

How, then, does the metaphor engage the hearer and open up new vistas of understanding? Funk maintains that the key to this lies in the juxtaposition of the everyday with the strange, this

very juxtaposition provoking a shock for the listeners, drawing them into a new perception of reality.

In sum the parables as pieces of everydayness have an unexpected “turn” in them which looks through the commonplace to a new view of reality. This “turn” may be overt in the form of a surprising development in the narrative, an extravagant exaggeration, a paradox; or it may lurk below the surface in the so-called transference of judgement for which the parable calls. In either case the listener is led through the parable into a strange world where everything is familiar yet radically different (Funk 1966:161).

Funk demonstrates this in his analysis of the parable of the Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35) where the shock arises from the rupturing of the everyday conventional attitude towards Samaritans by this enemy’s generous response (Funk 1966:199-222; 1982:29-34).

In this alternative view of metaphor the story itself remains indispensable. It does not create meaning on only one occasion but each time engagement with it takes place. So while Jülicher, Dodd and Jeremias use metaphor in order to reduce meaning to one single point, Wilder, Funk and Crossan understand it as providing potential for multiple interpretations.

Non-Figurative Language

This discussion of allegory and metaphor demonstrates that, on the whole, interpreters of the parables see them in terms of figurative language, the reader being expected to look through them to some meaning beyond rather than to consider carefully the content of the narrative. Even the more modern understanding of metaphor with its focus on the essential significance of the story

itself still sees the narrative as being instrumental for glimpsing and grasping a new reality. This view is not held universally, however, with two recent leading proponents, Hedrick and Herzog, arguing for non-figurative approaches.

Hedrick holds parables to be “brief, realistic narrative fictions freely invented from observations of typical first-century Palestinian peasant life” (Hedrick 2004:83). He does not deny categorically that they might be referential, but argues that any such references must come from within the text itself. He dismisses the comparative frames and interpretations as coming from early post-crucifixion usage of Jesus’ stories, maintaining that just because a parable is introduced with the words: “the kingdom of God is like...” does not mean that the original intention was to use figurative language to describe the nature of the kingdom (Hedrick 2004:84). Hedrick believes that the stories are designed to draw readers into the world of the parable, in order that it resonates with them and evokes a response. For today’s reader this is achieved by careful and deliberate exploration of each line of the plot and by seeking to understand it initially in terms of its first-century Palestinian context, before responding from a twenty-first century angle (Hedrick 1994:89-95). In this way Hedrick holds together both plausible original meanings and a much more subjective and open-ended interpretation from today. For him a parable lacks specific conclusions and raises questions and issues to which readers seek responses in the process of interacting with it (Hedrick 2004:85).

Herzog also takes the parables to be narratives depicting Palestinian society in the first century, but he focuses directly on the socio-economic political issues of the time. His starting point is Jesus’ crucifixion as a political rebel, which suggests that there must have been something subversive about his teaching which caused the Jerusalem authorities to feel threatened (Herzog 1994:9). The parables are stories in which the hearers see reflected their own oppressive social conditions, producing a process of conscientisation and empowerment of the

poor in a similar way to Paulo Freire's work among the peasants of twentieth-century Brazil (Herzog 1994:16-29). Herzog rejects the notion of parables as revealing spiritual truths on the grounds that such a storyteller would not be deemed a dangerous subversive. He also rejects a figurative or referential understanding of the parables which removes them to the sphere of religion. In doing so he refuses to interpret the parables' authority figures as God and reads them as human beings from the first century caught up in the social, economic, political and religious questions, dilemmas, traps and conflicts of their day. The narratives, then, are not about spiritual notions of the kingdom of God, but about the reality of living in an oppressive social context.

The contributions of Hedrick and Herzog both offer a non-metaphorical way of approaching the parables. For them the stories propose neither a picture or concept that is already defined, as is the case with Dodd's and Jeremias' view of the kingdom of God, nor the creation of a new understanding of the kingdom of God as some religious experience, as is the case with Funk, Crossan and Scott. Rather the parables are a means of depicting people's lives for them, so that they understand their own experience with greater clarity and purpose. While Hedrick's approach is open to precisely Herzog's criticism that the telling of poetic fictions would not have precipitated Jesus' death, Herzog is vulnerable to the attack of focusing only on parables with an overt socio-economic theme. The so-called nature parables are not discussed (Hultgren 2000:18). Both claim that their readings are non-referential, that the parables are not intended to point beyond themselves, yet both claim also that the narratives depict first-century Palestinian peasant society. It is not, therefore, that the parables are totally non-referential, but that they refer to the reality of lived experience in an existing social world, rather than to some moral precept or religious concept. For Hedrick and Herzog the parables reference what is known but what is perhaps not fully recognised or appreciated, rather than what is not known.

The debate about figurative and non-figurative language invites further investigation into what it is that is being referenced in the parables, to which attention now turns.

3.3 What are the Parables about?

The Kingdom of God

As already noted, the term “parable” suggests that one thing is being laid alongside something else. The use of allegory and metaphor clearly coincides with a comparative or referential understanding of the genre and the referent is usually identified as the kingdom of God.

I shall try to show that not only the parables which explicitly referred to the Kingdom of God, but many others do in fact bear upon this idea, and that a study of them throws important light on its meaning (Dodd 1961:28).

Many have followed in Dodd’s footsteps, (Boucher 1983:59; Breech 1983:66-74; Funk 1982:3; Crossan 1992:23-26; Perrin 1976:1; Scott 1981:5-22; Scott 1989:56-62; Tolbert 1979:116; Via 1967:104-105), but this then leads on to a further question: how is the kingdom of God to be understood?

Dodd’s use of the word “idea” to describe the kingdom of God is a helpful place to start, since for Dodd and Jeremias the kingdom of God is a concept identified in terms of an eschatological event present in the person of Jesus. For Dodd this is realised eschatology (Dodd

1961:29-61), while for Jeremias it is an event in process – now and not yet (Jeremias 1972:115-229). The difficulty with such an ideational view, however, lies in not being able to pin it down to a particular idea or concept. Hedrick is well aware of this, pointing out the diversity of statements about the kingdom of God found in the New Testament. The kingdom lies in the imminent future; it is a present reality; it is a concrete hope for the future of Israel; it is a spiritual reality; the kingdom is received; it is entered; there are signs of it; there are no evident signs of its arrival; it is the outcome of God's activity; it can be affected by human activity (Hedrick 1994:75-76 with references). The problem with relating the parables to an ideational concept of the kingdom of God is that it leads to attempts to fit the interpretation into an overarching notion of the general teaching of Jesus. Indeed it is telling that Dodd admits himself to finding it impossible to find a connection between the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:23-35) and the idea of the kingdom of God (Dodd 1961:28).

An alternative to understanding kingdom as concept is to see it as symbol, a move made by Perrin (1976:29-32) drawing on Wheelwright's definition of a symbol,

A symbol, in general, is a relatively stable and repeatable element of perceptual experience, standing for some larger meaning or set of meanings which cannot be given, or not fully given, in perceptual experience itself (Wheelwright 1968:130).

Wheelwright distinguishes between steno-symbols, which have a one-to-one relation with what they symbolise, and tensive symbols, whose meaning cannot be exhausted by any single referent. Perrin takes the kingdom of God to be a tensive symbol which cannot be tied down to any one particular meaning or idea (Perrin 1976:30-31), and Scott builds on this in relation to the parables (Scott 1981:11-17). Recognising that Jesus does not define the kingdom of God in discursive

language, but tells stories instead, stories which Scott reads as metaphors, in Funk's use of the term, parables thus become a means of defining what the kingdom of God might be. No longer are the narratives perceived as illustrating an already defined concept, but as giving meaning to an open-ended symbol. Yet, the symbol, the kingdom of God, does serve to qualify the parables, a point that Scott acknowledges from Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1975:119ff), in that it is the kingdom of God which makes the parables religious (Scott 1989: 62).

Crossan also maintains that the parables are about the kingdom of God, viewing them as an expression of Jesus' own experience of God (Crossan 1992:22). In them Jesus is communicating his experience of God in a prophetic way which understands eschatology not in terms of an event, past or future, but as a permanent challenge to the world. Crossan's interpretation of the parables is then guided by the pattern of Advent – Reversal – Action (Crossan 1992:36) taking as paradigmatic the parables of the Treasure (Matthew 13:44); the Pearl (Matthew 13:45) and the Great Fish (*Thomas* 8). He undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to parable research, but he does lay himself open to the criticism of interpreting the parables within his pattern and understanding of the kingdom, namely the Advent – Reversal – Action trajectory, and finds himself in conflict with the understanding of symbol as tensive. Indeed the parable of the Treasure provides a good example of this tension, for Crossan sees in it his three-fold pattern, which is precisely what he wishes to see in it. In doing so he ignores questions regarding the morality of hiding and then taking possession of treasure which belongs to someone else, while Scott, on the other hand, does explore the issues relating to the ethical demands of the situation, and thereby opens up a debate about choice, decisions and the kingdom of God (Scott 2001:54). Whereas Scott examines the story closely in order to arrive at an insight into what the kingdom of God means, Crossan begins the other way round. For him the kingdom is about the world being turned upside down – and the parable of the Treasure illustrates this.

These understandings of the kingdom of God, as concept, as symbol or as existential challenge all have a primarily religious focus. In contrast to this, Schottroff (2006) and Malina (2001) are concerned to provide a more socio-political perspective. Schottroff draws attention to the ways in which metaphors present in the parables have tended to lose their concreteness in the course of an ecclesiological interpretation which replaces the “gospel to the poor” with the demand for “obedience to authority” (Schottroff 2006:86-89). One of the means of accomplishing this, she maintains, is by identifying the authority figures in the parables with God, who exacts punishment on the disobedient (Matthew 22:1-13; 25:14-30), a process by which potentially liberating stories for the poor and oppressed become a means of control for the powerful. Schottroff describes five traditional Christian strategies for avoiding the gospel of the poor in the New Testament: perceiving greed as an individual moral failure; presuming the gospel of the poor means giving alms; presuming that Jesus’ command to surrender possessions was intended only for the limited circle of his disciples; spiritualising the gospel of the poor, and ignoring or reinterpreting the tradition of eschatological repentance in the New Testament (Schottroff 2006:88-89). In relation to the parables she argues that appropriate social-historical interpretation means,

taking the fictional narratives of the parables seriously in their relationship to the world of real life, and giving a nonmetaphorical interpretation to central contents that are de-radicalized by metaphorization (Schottroff 2006:85).

The parables do not reveal a wholly other spiritual realm, but the world of the Roman empire (Schottroff 2006:102).

Likewise for Malina the kingdom of God is primarily a political term which finds its meaning in the social context of first-century Palestine occupied by the Romans. God's kingdom is then understood as replacing the kingdom of Caesar (Malina 2001:34-35).

Beyond Kingdom to Culture

Schottroff and Malina help to broaden the understanding of the kingdom of God so that it is seen as holding together the religious with the social, political and economic, thus expanding the horizon of parable interpretation beyond the narrow confines of one dimension of life, namely the spiritual, to the whole of life. So it is at this point that the term "culture" becomes important because it speaks of a total worldview, encompassing how individuals and groups see their lives in relation to one another as well as to God and how they assess the kind of behaviour expected of them – what is conventional and what is subversive. Bailey's interpretations of parables in Luke's Gospel seek to draw on insights into Palestinian culture, many of which are instructive (Bailey 1976; 1980), though one of the drawbacks is the drive to extract a number of theological meanings from each parable in his conclusions which are often dictated by taking the authority figure to be a representation of God. Unfortunately this results in the theological reading overshadowing the cultural insights.

Where is the Parables' locus of meaning?

Interpretation of the parables raises two further significant questions. What did they mean then, that is, in their original setting? What do they mean now in twenty-first century contexts? It

has usually been the case that interpreters have emphasised one or other of these approaches, so it is important to review critically how these have been handled in order to inform the methodological stance of this present study. In this section, then, analysis is offered, first of historical-critical angles, and second of more literary-critical stances.

Searching for the Origins – The Historical-Critical Approach

The historical-critical approach is epitomised by the work of Dodd and Jeremias. Developing Jülicher's insights and appropriating form-critical techniques they set out in search of the *Sitz im Leben* of the original parables of Jesus, venturing beyond the *Sitz im Leben* of their Gospel contexts. For Dodd this setting is the challenge of the arrival of the kingdom in the person of Jesus, and the value of his insight and skill in reconstruction is lent considerable weight by the remarkable congruency between his version of the parable of the Vineyard Tenants (Mark 12:1-12) and that found in the *Gospel of Thomas* uncovered sometime after the publication of Dodd's proposal.

Jeremias' work, similarly, is reconstructive, using his philological skills to forge a way back to the original voice of Jesus. At the same time he draws attention to the ten following principles of transformation that occurred between the original telling of the parables and their present setting in the Gospel narrative: translation into Greek; representational changes in the move to Hellenistic settings; embellishment; the influence of Old Testament and folk themes; the change of audience; hortatory use replacing eschatological immediacy; the influence of the church's situation with the delay of the parousia and an increasingly missionary perspective; allegorisation; the collecting together of parables; the setting of the parables in a secondary context in the Gospel narrative with added introductory formulae and conclusions (Jeremias

1972:23-114). For Jeremias the original setting is a context of conflict between Jesus and the religious hierarchy of his day (Jeremias 1972:11,38).

Crossan (1992) and Herzog (1994) are two other major interpreters who have focused on the historical Jesus in their work on the parables. Crossan brings to the interpretative task insights into the literary aspects of the narratives, thereby broadening the approach of Dodd and Jeremias. His primary emphasis nevertheless remains with getting back to the historical Jesus. For him it is essential that Jesus is the author of the parables, comprising, as they do, Jesus' experience of God (Crossan 1992:22), and all the parables are brought under the scheme of how Crossan deems Jesus to have understood the kingdom. Herzog's approach is somewhat different, in that he moves away from a more exclusively religious interpretation and analyses the stories in terms of Roman occupation of first-century Palestine and of the collaboration between the Jewish hierarchy and the Romans. For him Jesus is a "pedagogue of the oppressed" (Herzog 1994), drawing people into a more acute awareness of their plight and the injustice of it, and so with Herzog emerges the important impact of the distinctive sociological branch of the historical-critical method. Once again, as with Crossan, Jeremias and Dodd, there is an over-arching theme which holds together the selected parables, since in one way or another they all focus on socio-economic exploitation and the need for liberation.

This brief summary of some of the protagonists of the historical-critical method is sufficient to allow an assessment of its relative advantages and disadvantages. There are three principal gains. In the first place the parables are recognised as being rooted in a particular and distinctive historical context. Reconstructions of the parables and their original settings are inevitably hypothetical (Perrin 1976:98-99), but they do belong not only to first-century Palestine, but to the tradition of the historical Jesus, even if they manifest different layers of interpretation. Historical criticism thus acknowledges the considerable differences in time, place and culture between

today's reader and Jesus' own audience, helping to diminish the dangers of anachronism. In addition to this the parables so explored provide insights into the historical Jesus, assisting the development of a greater understanding of him and his work. Herzog in particular has made the connection between Jesus' parables and his death, drawing more explicit attention to the subversive elements of Jesus' teaching and helping to make sense of the outcome of his public work. Furthermore, the broadening of the historical approach to take into consideration sociological and cultural models allows for a wider perspective not only on first-century Palestine as a whole, but also on the parables as revealing elements of the way that society and culture function.

At the same time a number of criticisms have been levelled at the historical approach, led initially by Via (1967). Since he believes that the very nature of the Gospels is non-biographical it means that it is impossible to discern the original meaning or application of the parables. Reconstructions are too hypothetical to be used as reliable originals (Via 1967:21), a point taken up by Tolbert who also notes that hypothetical reconstructions are a "thorny issue" (Tolbert 1979:27), though she recognises too that they are inevitable if what is being sought is the historical Jesus. If this is not the case, she concurs with Via in recommending the use of extant versions of the text. Further to this Via argues that the exclusively historical approach ignores the common nature of humanity across the centuries (Via 1967:22), though it may be assuming too much to regard human experience as common and universal across time and culture. While many aspects of life may be similar or even the same, there can be huge variances in the way people in different cultures understand themselves. Cultural anthropological research in recent decades (Malina 1981) shows that it is not safe to assume that Jesus and his contemporaries saw themselves in the same way as today's northern Europeans see themselves. Indeed a recent article

on Jesus' self-understanding suggests that Jesus would view his existence in a very different way from a post-industrial individual (Rohrbaugh 2002).

Via also points out the danger that, if read historically, the text can end up saying nothing to the present day (Via 1967:22-23), with the result that the endeavour becomes historical rather than hermeneutical. This is undoubtedly a potential consequence, but need not necessarily be the case. To take the example of Herzog once again, it is clear that in drawing on Paulo Freire's methodology among the poor of Brazil this not only informs his reading of the parables, but furnishes insights which can serve to conscientise other similarly oppressed communities in today's world and, at the same time, challenge the oppressors, be they local or foreign. If the parables of Jesus are held to be in some way authoritative statements about how God sees the world, or perhaps more generally, about what is right and acceptable and what is wrong and needs to be changed, then they possess within them the power to promote and enact change. In this way stories of the past inform the present. Finally Via contends that the historical focus ignores the aesthetic literary qualities of the parables, which are lost once the idea, message or setting of the parable is discerned (Via 1967:24). More needs to be said about this in the next section, but for the present it is sufficient to indicate that this is not an uncommon criticism (Perrin 1976:106).

Two further points should be made in addition to Via's comments, both of which have to do with the freedom and individuality of the parables. In the first place, the historical approach tends to place and then interpret the stories within an overarching framework or understanding of Jesus' teaching, be this his view of the kingdom or of society. Consequently the ideas drawn from the parables are those that fit the interpreter's scheme, which then acts as a hermeneutical control mechanism and does not leave the individual parables free to be about something else. In the

second place, the emphasis lies on finding one particular point in the narrative which becomes the definitive statement of what it is about and so meaning is again tied down, rather than opened up.

In the light of these comments on the search for original meaning, attention now turns to a consideration of a more literary perspective.

Focusing on the Story – The Literary-Critical Approach

Parables are literary creations, a fact that has been increasingly recognised in recent times, Crossan referring to them as poetic metaphors (1991), Hedrick as poetic fictions (1994), Via as aesthetic objects (1967). The considerable contributions of Wilder and Funk on the purpose and function of metaphor, as discussed above, point to the significance of the ways in which language is used in narrative in order to create meaning, but the groundbreaking work on literary-critical readings of the parables belongs to Via (1967), who does not simply offer a critique of the predominantly historical approach, but proceeds to an analysis of the parables as aesthetic works of art which hold meaning within themselves. Their meaning is not dependent on their author, but, like any other work of art, they have an independence and autonomy of their own. It is not what they refer to that gives them meaning, but what they are in themselves (Via 1967: 88-93). In fact Via does concede that there is an element of referencing in the parables, in that they are part of “Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God” (Via 1967:95), but the focus is clearly on the internal dynamics of the narrative and the way in which the story asks existential questions of the reader. Via is not concerned with what the parables may have meant in the first century. As art they speak on their own terms in different contexts, inviting the reader to grasp hold of authentic existence, so the parables are ultimately about what it means to be a human being. The characters, in human encounters, make choices, thereby gaining or losing existence (Via 1967:41). Via

demonstrates his methodology with interpretations of what he terms “comic” parables whose plots move upward towards well-being, and “tragic” parables which move downwards towards catastrophe and isolation (Via 1967:96).

This literary-critical approach, with its greater degree of focus on the plot and on characterisation means that the narrative is read as story with an enhanced capacity to “resonate” with the reader (Hedrick 2004:84-85, 89-99), resulting in an increased potential for the story to be perceived as relevant and applicable to today. It also creates the possibility and recognises the value of multiple points or meanings, as Tolbert maintains in her suggestion that the interpreter becomes a creator in the hermeneutical process,

In interpreting a parable three elements interact: the parable story itself, the context within which the story is viewed, and the insight, sensitivity, understanding and concerns of the individual interpreter (Tolbert 1979: 69).

Via’s approach promotes the significance of story and of the meaning of existence. Yet here also lies the major criticism of his approach, for his actual interpretations tend simply to reiterate long-standing established readings of the parables, a good example of which is his treatment of the parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) which he understands in the usual individualistic way of the third servant wasting his opportunity (Via 1967: 113-122). Greater attention to the socio-historical features of the text, however, suggest that other questions concerning existence arise, relating to survival and exploitation and to a more corporate understanding of humanity and the systemic problems of the world, which exist today just as much as in the first century (Schottroff 2006:81-89). In this instance reading without history seems to diminish rather than enhance what the text offers.

3.6 Conclusion - Method of Proceeding

In the light of this discussion of the principal issues regarding parable interpretation the question of the approach which informs the readings proposed in this thesis now arises. What follows, then, is an outline of the stance adopted, illustrated for the purposes of clarity by Luke's version of the parable of the Vineyard Tenants (Luke 20:9b-16a).

In terms of form and content the parables are understood as narratives which juxtapose story and reality, that is, they provide depictions of real life in first-century Palestine which resonate with the audience because the latter can recognise elements of the story as being true to their own experience and to the experience of their fellow women and men. The parables do not, therefore, purport to be about some particular theological or religious entity, but are grounded in the common everyday life of the hearers and are designed to challenge and encourage the audience to reflect carefully and thoughtfully on their own existence and on the way the world works. So, since the parables are essentially stories inviting listeners to discern the truth of their own situations and since the very nature of story is of something open to interpretation, the narratives must be allowed to stand free of any interpretative frame which might close down avenues of thought or even distort the flow of the account (Hedrick 1994). In the readings that follow, then, the focus falls on the actual words of the parable itself and not on meanings imposed by the Gospel author either before or following the narrative sequence. Nevertheless there is recognition of the individuality and artistry of the author's composition, so there is no search for the original words or an originating structure. It is the parables of Luke's Jesus which are under investigation. In the parable of the Vineyard Tenants this method of proceeding would mean that the story is to be understood as depicting the issues of absentee landlords exercising power over tenants and the way in which the rebellion of exploited workers can lead to the escalation of violence (Marshall

1978:726; Crossan 1992:94; Horsley 1993:28-58; Scott 2007:27-29). The parable concludes at Luke 20:17a before the response of the audience and before the Christological point about the rejected keystone is made, and comparison with other versions in Matthew, Mark and *Thomas* facilitates an appreciation of the distinctive features of Luke's account (Carlston 1975:81; Sellew 1992:248-249; Hultgren 2000:375-378).

With regard to figurative and non-figurative interpretations this study rejects allegorical readings for the reasons outlined earlier in the chapter, namely that they diminish the significance of the story's plot, of its dynamics and immediacy and of its original social context. The focus is directed instead towards a combination of the kind of non-figurative approaches espoused by Hedrick (1994) and Herzog (1994), which see the narrative as depicting the world as it is, with the metaphorical understanding of Funk (1966), which juxtaposes the everyday with the strange in order to draw listeners into a new perception of reality. In exploring Luke 20:9b-16a, therefore, the interpreter would avoid the allegorical reading in which the landowner is held to be God, the servants to be the prophets of Israel, the tenants to be the leaders of Israel and the son to be Jesus (Snodgrass 2008:292-295), and recognise instead that the story is primarily about the escalation of violence which occurs in systems of oppression such as predominated in first-century Palestine (Hester 1992:27-57; Herzog 1994:98-113). Into the midst of this familiar setting comes the feature that seems not to fit, the sending by the father of his own son, an action which turns the powerful absentee landowner into a vulnerable individual, who, wisely or unwisely, invests much of himself and his family into the matter by running the risk of injury to his son.

On the question of meaning and referential language the interpretations in this thesis differ quite markedly from those which tend to depict or explore some facet of the Kingdom of God (McGaughy 2007:7-13), whether this is understood as an evolutionary principle (Jülicher 1899);

as an experience realised in the present Dodd (1961); as a partially realised state to be brought to fulfilment in the future (Jeremias 1972; Kümmel 1957; Beasley-Murray 1986); as a concept given meaning by the parable itself (Funk 1966; Perrin 1976; Scott 1981), or as a more socio-political entity in opposition to the rule of Rome (Malina 2001). In contrast to the notion that the narratives illustrate or define some kind of religious truth it is proposed in this study that the parables are more than stories about God and the kingdom of God. They are depictions of Jesus' society, narratives examining the way people live in relation to one another in the private as well as public sphere. They deal with questions of expected and unexpected behaviour, the degree to which people respond conventionally and unconventionally, and they ask questions of the predominant social attitudes. This is not to sideline God and the religious, but to see them as elements embedded in society along with kinship, politics and economics (Malina 2001:16). The question is not so much whether Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God, but whether he challenges the cultural assumptions and norms of his day. A parable then becomes a story of some recognisable social situation laid alongside the culture of the day, thereby inviting a more critical interaction with that culture. This being the case, the parable of the Vineyard Tenants is not read as a story about salvation history, the rejection of Jesus and God's ultimate victory, but as an invitation to reflect both on the way one act of human violence can lead to a series of increasingly destructive events and on the apparent futility of non-peaceful rebellion.

Regarding the final issue of historical criticism and literary criticism, what emerges from the discussion above is that there is much to be gained from both historical-critical and literary-critical approaches. On the one hand the historical angle grounds the parables in Jesus' context, even if it is impossible to know with any certainty what the original intended meanings may have been. Moreover it emphasises the great differences that exist between the first-century setting of the stories and the twenty-first century experience of today's post-industrial society reader,

helping to overcome any tendency to read the text purely in the light of a modern northern European culture. On the other hand literary analysis inspires a close reading of the plot and the characters and invites questions concerning their motivation and emotions and how they see the world and respond to it, drawing today's readers into the story, so that they too sense the challenges and opportunities. Together they offer the possibility of enhanced interpretation, for the historical perspective places the parables in a particular social location and cultural context, while the literary perspective provides the means for the reader to engage with the story in a participatory and imaginative way. The tale of the Vineyard Tenants reveals the exploitative setting of first-century Palestine and the conflicts that can arise in that kind of situation and at the same time invites the reader into an encounter with the issues of power and control on the one hand and of frustration and oppression on the other.

In summary, then, this study regards the narrative parables in Luke's Gospel as open-ended stories of Luke's Jesus about different aspects of life in first-century Palestine. They are not to be read as allegories depicting something other than the content of the story, nor do they refer to some notion or concept of the Kingdom of God. They are both historical artefacts, which reveal something about the society and culture of that time and place, and literary creations, which encourage the reader into an encounter with the text.

Part II

Narrative Parables in Luke's Gospel and the Context Group

Chapter Four

Family and Gender Relationships

4.1 Introduction

Central to the investigation of any social context, whether modern or ancient, is the question of kinship, of what it means to be part of a family group which provides a sense of identity and belonging, solidarity and mutual support, the arena where the concepts of honour and shame play a highly significant role in the shaping of behaviour and relations with other members of the family as well as those beyond the immediate household. It is unsurprising, therefore, that explorations of the culture and social setting of first-century Palestine, both by members of the Context Group and others, devote considerable attention to matters of family and gender (DeSilva 2000; Guijjaró 1997; Hanson 1996; Malina 1981, 2001; MacDonald 2010; Moxnes 1997; Neyrey 1998), making it the appropriate starting point for this study's enquiry into the way the parables in Luke's Gospel relate to the honour and shame code promulgated by the Context Group. This chapter begins, then, with an assessment of the model of family life and gender roles proposed by the Context Group on the basis of material from Mediterranean ethnography, Graeco-Roman sources and Jewish evidence, with the purpose of ascertaining whether that model offers an adequate portrayal of kinship and gender in first-century Palestine. The model is examined at three levels: family-centredness, the role of the father and gender roles, before the

discussion proceeds to a reading of two parables in Luke's Gospel, both of which centre on family and gender issues, The Father and the Two Lost Sons (Luke 15:11b-32) and The Dynamic Widow (Luke 18:2-5), in order to consider the degree to which they conform to or depart from the emphases of the Context Group model.

4.2 Family and Gender – The Model

Family-Centredness

The honour and shame model developed by members of the Context Group claims that social status and reputation are bound up primarily with the family (Malina 1981:94-102; Neyrey 1998:15), fundamental to which is the notion that honour acquired in the past becomes the family's ascribed honour which is then handed down through the generations. Hence the significance of ancestry (Neyrey 1998:21-22, 97-99) indicating the family's pedigree, and the symbolic importance of blood, highlighted in Campbell's research into the Sarakatsani people (Campbell 1966:144). The commitment to handing on honour, tradition and land from generation to generation (McVann 1998:75-79) instils within the kinship group an instinct for preserving and defending the family's status and reputation. It is this significant in-group from which individual identity and worth is derived by conforming to the in-group's expectations, while a sharp distinction is then drawn between the in-group (in this case the family) and the out-group (those beyond the family) (Scott 1989:427), the former demanding conformity, loyalty and cooperation (Plutarch *On Fraternal Affection* 17; DeSilva 2000:166-173; Pilch 1998:35), the latter representing an opposition with which to compete and not to be trusted (Malina 1981:33).

Though the family is undoubtedly an important focal point within agrarian society, the danger of this somewhat oversimplified model fails to recognise a more complex picture. Osiek and Balch point out that family values are not necessarily viewed as being of sole or ultimate significance, indicating that in Rome it is the state, in Greece it is philosophy, and in Judaism it is God which hold primary status (Osiek and Balch 1997:125). Rohrbaugh, in his analysis of Luke 15:11b-32, argues that the in-group extends beyond the family to the village and that therefore the honour of the village community is of paramount significance (Rohrbaugh 1997:145-17; Lawrence 2003:251). Moreover, he emphasises how stories of sibling rivalries prominent throughout the Hebrew Bible as well as in the parable of Luke 15:11b-32 demonstrate a lack of cooperation within the family (Rohrbaugh 1997:147), while Guijarro notes that the pressure of severe social-stratification leads to loss of wealth and land for peasants in first-century Palestine, making it more difficult for families to remain together, causing instability and hastening kinship disintegration (Guijarro 1997:46). Taking these points seriously affords a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how families are shaped.

The Role of the Father

According to the Context Group's model it is the father who, along with the mother (McVann 1998:76) is responsible for maintaining the family's honour, commanding respect and obedience from the rest of the household and passing wisdom on to the younger generation. The father serves as protector, required, along with the other male relatives, to ensure the security of the females in the family (Goodman 2007:224) and to guard against women from outside (Hanson and Oakman 1998:25). He is the *paterfamilias*, the head of the household, with considerable legal power (Goodman 2007:217; Bartchy 2008:165), charged with providing

stability within the family and within society. So while the mother is deemed to be the compassionate parent, the father is an authoritarian figure responsible for disciplining and punishing children and instilling in them an attitude of subservience (Pilch 1998:145-147)

Once again, while there is no denying that first-century Palestine is undoubtedly a patriarchal society in which fathers play a key role, closer investigation reveals a more complex situation. As Goodman demonstrates in his analysis of family life, the autocracy of the father, far from providing stability, can potentially lead to instability in the household, due to the tensions that arise from the sons' consequent lack of autonomy and control over their own lives, the expectations of subservience becoming stifling rather than liberating (Goodman 2007:218). If it is not clear that that patriarchal role always provides stability, neither is it necessarily the case that paternal and maternal roles can be so easily distinguished. Though mothers might often play a more predominant loving and compassionate role and express their emotions more overtly, fathers are not without the capacity to feel and to respond with affection, as Lahurd argues strongly in her consideration of Luke 15:11b-32 from the standpoint of modern Yemeni society (Lahurd 2002:246-268). It seems unwise, therefore, to draw too rigid a distinction between authoritarianism and compassion. Moreover, relatively low life-expectancy means the death of many fathers before the children reach adulthood, creating fatherless families in which the widow becomes head (Rawson 1986:18).

Gender Roles

The honour and shame model maintains a sharp distinction (Lawrence 2003:261) on the one hand between appropriate and inappropriate male and female sexual behaviour, and, on the other hand, between the conventional sphere of activity of men and women (Malina 1981:42-47;

Neyrey 1994:77-91; 2003:69-102). A woman's honour is defined by both a negative and positive understanding of "shame". As a positive value it denotes an attitude of modesty and of sexual restraint and exclusivity towards her husband, so shame in this sense reveals compliance with and sensitivity to conventional social expectations of women. As a negative value it marks the dishonour and disrepute that adulterous activity causes both for the woman and for her male relatives, who are responsible for protecting her from other men's aggressive sexual behaviour. A man, on the other hand, may acquire honour through the "conquest" of a married woman, a clear sexual double standard. (Neyrey 1998:196) Campbell observes this in the expectations placed upon Greek Sarakatsani women,

The quality required of women in relation to honour is shame, particularly sexual shame. Subjectively the woman's sexual shame is not simply a fear of external sanctions; it is an instinctive revulsion from sexual activity, an attempt in dress, movement, and attitude, to disguise the fact that she possesses the physical attributes of her sex (Campbell 1966:146).

and similar evidence concerning distinct gender roles is to be found in the anthropological work of Peristiany (1966:181-184), Bourdieu (1966:221-226), Zeid (1966:253-254), Pitt-Rivers (1977:71-80) and Sjoberg (1960:151,163-168).

Male and female honour is also connected with the different spheres to which men and women are supposed to belong, with men operating in the public sphere where reputations are enhanced by public acclaim, while women remain in private, domestic space, occupying themselves with the raising of children and safeguarding the reputation of the family through subservience and loyalty (Osiek and Pouya 2010:47). This public/private separation is clearly laid out in a number of Jewish and Graeco-Roman sources, including the following:

There are the kinds of labour which a woman performs for her husband: she grinds flour, bakes bread, does laundry, prepares meals, feeds her child, makes the bed, works in wool (*m.Ketub*, 5.5).

Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action – all these are suitable to men both in war and peace. The women are best suited to the indoor life (Philo *Special Laws* 3.169).

Before anything else I should speak about the occupations by which a household is maintained. They should be divided in the usual manner, namely, to the husband should be assigned those which have to do with agriculture, commerce, and the affairs of the city; to the wife those which have to do with spinning and the preparation of food, in short, those of a domestic nature (Hierocles *On Duties* 4.28.21).

To the man it is shameful rather to stay indoors than to attend to the work outside. If a man acts contrary to the nature God has given him, possibly his defiance is detected by the gods and he is punished for neglecting his own work or meddling with his wife's (Xenophon *Oeconomicus* 7:30-31).

However, ancient sources also offer an alternative understanding of gender relationships. Downing, sharply critical of the generalised and simplified approach of Malina, Neyrey, Pilch and Esler, cites Plutarch's *On the Bravery of Women* 242EF to demonstrate a more diverse situation where women are admired and respected for their political courage (Downing 2000:25). In a similar vein Crook shows how women are honoured for attributes other than sexual exclusiveness, namely for their wit, courage, aggression and loyalty to the state, citing examples

from Plutarch and Valerius Maximus, the latter being particularly pertinent to this discussion because it focuses on three different women defending themselves at court (Crook 2009:605-608), and DeSilva points out Xenophon's view in his *Oeconomicus* that, though the husband is still dominant, the husband and wife relationship is built upon partnership (DeSilva 2000:182). While some women may be acclaimed for fulfilling the honourable role anticipated of men, Wikan stresses that they do not necessarily conform to the male conception of honour and can possess their own court of opinion where values other than chastity are more highly prized (Wikan 1984:639). Moreover, Lawrence maintains that through the use of persuasion and gossip women have their own means of exerting power and influence (Lawrence 2003:281-282), for, though severely condemned by ancient writers such as Plutarch (Plutarch *Moralia* 6.519F), gossip is a means in a non-literate society for communicating information and for enhancing and destroying reputations (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:366-367) and so can become a tool of the powerless.

With regard to the division of space along gender lines a number of scholars demonstrate that the public sphere is not exclusively male territory, not least in relation to work on the land, especially at harvest-time: from Schottroff, who cites the vivid example from Poseidonius, the Greek philosopher, of pregnant women working in the fields (Schottroff 1994:99), to Horsley, who makes the point that for peasant families in first-century Galilee it was a question of both men and women working outside in the field (Horsley 1995:200), to Sjoberg, who makes the same point, but distinguishes between the elite and non-elite (Sjoberg 1960:169). On the issue of the inclusion of women at public meals, Corley investigates emerging differences in Greek and Roman practices, noting the contrast between the Greek retention of the tradition of women not eating in public with men and the Roman move to a more inclusive table sharing (Corley 1993:24-36), and in a more general exploration of the family home, Osiek, Balch and Moxnes

note that the household is more than a private place, for it is also the setting where business is often transacted (Osiek and Balch 1997:10) and the workplace for both women and men (Moxnes 2010:97).

The same kind of diversity in the female gender role is also evident with regard to widows. On the one hand, widows are highly dependent for their survival on male members of the family, to whom the inheritance passes (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:423). If they are left with no male relatives to support them life becomes extremely precarious for them. On the other hand widowhood can entail a degree of liberation. No longer required to play the conventional submissive private role, a widow is released into the public sphere, where she may, as a surrogate male, take on a position of overt power (Pitt-Rivers 1977:80-81), even as nominal leader of the household (Sjoberg 1960:165-166).

The complex and diverse picture of family life and gender roles which emerges from this discussion demonstrates the inadequacy of the overarching model set out by members of the Context Group and provides a more balanced basis from which to investigate whether the two parables under discussion in this chapter reflect rigid stereotypes or more nuanced family and gender dynamics. The absence of women from public sight and dialogue in Luke 15:11b-32 underscores the point that this is a story about a family where patriarchy holds sway, but nevertheless raises questions about how that patriarchy functions, not least in a context where female voices are not heard, while the widow in Luke 18:2-5, who may be a victim of circumstance in a male world, is nonetheless also a liberated woman who, in the public realm, is prepared to take on a male authority figure and win. These parables are now considered in some detail.

4.3 The Parable of the Father and the Two Lost Sons (Luke 15:11b-32)

4.3.1 *Critique of Bailey and Scott*

Bailey's title "The Father and the Two Lost Sons" (Bailey 1976:158) indicates that for him the parable concerns two rebellious sons who both behave in an insulting manner towards their father, the younger by requesting and squandering his share of the inheritance, the elder by his refusal to participate in the homecoming party for his brother. The father's response to this is defined as a demonstration of "love in humility" (Bailey 1976:206), which accepts the younger back as a son rather than as a hired servant, and which appeals to the elder to be reconciled with his brother. In the course of his reading Bailey presents a careful analysis of the legal situation with regard to inheritance, thus clarifying the parable's cultural context as well as demonstrating the outrageous nature of the younger son's desire for his share of the inheritance while his father is still alive. His interpretation also draws attention to the striking contrast between the concepts of servanthood and sonship, for, while the two brothers see themselves as fulfilling the role of servant, their father urges them to see themselves as sons and full members of the family.

In response to Bailey's analysis, however, two specific yet interrelated criticisms surface, the first being his characterisation of the father, whose response to both sons he presents in terms of gracious, forgiving love, thus diminishing the notion of foolishness, which, as will be seen below, may well contribute to the malfunctioning of the whole family (Rohrbaugh 1997:141-164). The question is whether the father responds to his dishonouring by his sons with an intentional demonstration of his love and affection for them, or whether he is such a weak and foolish father and head of household that he exercises no control over them and fails to command their respect at all. It seems clear that Bailey's understanding of the father's behaviour is dictated,

not so much by the internal dynamics of the narrative as by his view that the father represents a forgiving, loving God, for though he states that the parable is not an allegory, he does suggest that, though the father is not God, he nevertheless acts in a way characteristic of God, with the result that the father's values are controlled by the values attributed to God (Bailey 1976:159). The second criticism concerns Bailey's tendency to draw out unjustified theological significance from the narrative (Snodgrass 2008:137). This is unsurprising since his starting point is the assumption that this parable encapsulates the essence of the Gospel, and it manifests itself at several different points: in his consideration of the "Christological Implications of the Homecoming Scene" he detects the theme of atonement (Bailey 1976:190); in the giving of the robe there is eschatological significance (Bailey 1976:185); in his conclusion he lays emphasis on the concepts of sin, repentance and grace (Bailey 1976:205). Not only is it arguable whether these theological themes are actually present, the result of such an interpretative method is to direct the reader beyond the narrative itself, diminishing the significance of the characters in the setting of their own human story.

Scott places the parable in the context of stories of brothers in the Hebrew Bible where the younger more rebellious sons are granted preferential treatment and status over their more dutiful older brothers (Scott 1989:99-125), noting that, whereas the parable has been used to contrast the rejection of faithless Israel (depicted by the elder brother) with the acceptance of faithful Gentiles and, later, Christians (portrayed by the younger brother), the outcome in the narrative is the inclusion of both sons, demonstrating that both are chosen, thus providing the basis for Scott's ethic of universalism (Scott 1989:122-125). His reading demonstrates an understanding of the Hebrew Bible context; a careful reading of the father's handling of his elder son; a recognition that the second part of the tale is not merely an appendage, but actually transforms the story, and a clear rejection of allegorical tendencies inherent in identifying the two sons with people outside

the story. Yet, while there is much to commend Scott's approach, it is not without its critics. Snodgrass acknowledges that the parable is not an attack on the Pharisees, but argues that Scott's conclusion of universalism ignores and is out of tune with the significance of judgement and separation apparent elsewhere in the parables (Snodgrass 2008:135). Snodgrass is also dismissive of Scott's focus on the mother's absence and the suggestion of maternal metaphors in the story which endow the father with maternal characteristics (Scott 1989:115, 117; Snodgrass 2008:137), a point he is clearly right to question, for the affection which marks the father's welcome of his wayward son is not confined to mothers alone, as Lahurd indicates in her exploration of the story in the midst of Yemeni culture (Lahurd 2002:263). Moreover, neither is the provision of food exclusive to mothers, as the story itself underscores in the father's capacity for feeding both his hired servants on a regular basis and a whole crowd of people at a time of celebration. Nevertheless, as the reading that follows will suggest, it is not appropriate to discount too easily the absence of the mother, which could turn out to be significant after all.

4.3.2 The Setting of the Parable

Before proceeding to a close reading of the text itself four preliminary issues require clarification: the literary setting of the parable in Luke's Gospel; the question of allegorical interpretations; the unity of the text, and the structure of the plot.

The Literary Context

Luke offers no direct or specific application to the parable (Fitzmyer 1985:1084), which is unique to him, so any implied meaning is not spelled out for the reader. Though some have

discerned connections with the two parables in Luke 16 on the grounds of linguistic similarities between Luke 15:13 and 16:1 and between Luke 15:16 and 16:21 (Austin 1985:307-315; Kilgallen 1997:369-376), the literary context which has tended to guide interpretation is the setting of Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, which is provoking opposition from Pharisees and scribes (15:1-2) (Barton 2000:199-216) along with the two preceding parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (15:3-10), to which attention turns first.

For Luke the emphasis seems to lie on the twin themes of joy at finding what was lost and of repentance, themes common to all three stories in Luke 15. Indeed it is suggested that Luke adds the language of lost and found in verses 24 and 32 (Breech 1983:185; Fitzmyer 1985:1090) in a seemingly deliberate move to unify the three narratives. It is perhaps due to this commonality of vocabulary that Luke 15:11b-32 tends to be read in the light of the application found in 15:7 and 15:9, driving the reader to an interpretation focused on repentance. This calls for a note of caution, since the stories of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin are not about repentance at all (sheep and coins do not repent), but about searching and finding. In his application Luke turns the stories on their head. Moreover, the story of the family is neither about searching and finding (the younger son returns home, he is not found by a search party), nor necessarily about repentance (Scott 1989:116; Breech 1983:195) (The reasons for the son's return will be considered in the course of the reading that follows). Despite attempts by Luke to draw out some common themes, more careful examination suggests that the third story does not fit comfortably with the first two, either in relation to the focus on seeking or to the proclamation about repentance.

The other dimension of Luke's literary context is the issue of Jesus' table fellowship (15:1-2). For many scholars the three succeeding parables are little more than illustrations of Jesus' own public work among sinners and outcasts, leading to Christological readings (Creed 1930:197; Jeremias 1972:132). While there seems little doubt that a key feature of Jesus' life and

work is his inclusive table companionship (Crossan 1992:261-264) such illustrative readings tend to diminish the power of parables to be dynamic, multifaceted, engaging stories. Both with regard to its preceding parables and to the literary setting of the whole chapter it would seem to be an act of suffocation to tie meaning down to some less than convincing common theme or illustrative purpose. One of the major features of this study is to liberate the parables from their immediate literary context in order to let them speak for themselves and to free them from interpretation which is unsustainable in relation to the inner dynamics of the stories themselves. It is precisely this method which is pursued in this reading.

Allegorical Interpretations

Traditionally the parable of Luke 15:11b-32 has been understood allegorically. Though there is considerable consistency in holding the father to represent God or Jesus, there have, however, been varying identities attributed to the two sons, Tissot draws attention to four specific identifications: first, the older son represents the angels and the younger son humanity; second, the older stands for the righteous and the younger for sinners; third, the older is understood as Israel and the younger as the Gentiles, and fourth, the older is the Christian rigorist and the younger the less legalistic believer (Tissot 1978:366; Wailes 1987:236-245). Blomberg (1990:177) points out that none of these interpretations reflects the situation of Luke 15:1-2 which has led to the most common identification, cited so confidently by Hunter,

Beyond doubt, in the mind of Jesus the father stood for God, the elder brother for the scribes and Pharisees, and the prodigal for publicans and sinners (Hunter 1960:61).

For some the focal point of the story is the prodigal and his so-called repentance (Via 1967:164), while for others it is the father's (God's) love (Jeremias 1972:128-131; Marshall 1978:604; Fitzmyer 1985:1085). Bailey maintains initially that the parable is not an allegory, but, as has been seen, then ultimately suggests that God is symbolised by the father (Bailey 1976:159). Such allegorical readings are not totally without problems, however, and are open to question at three levels. First, within the story itself the younger son declares that he has sinned against both heaven (God) and his own father, suggesting that God is a separate entity from the human protagonist (Evans 1990:589). Second, allegorical readings focusing particularly on the loving compassion of the father display an anachronistic misunderstanding of a character who acts foolishly and thus contributes to bringing the whole family into disrepute, hardly amounting to a positive representation of God (Bailey 1976:165-166). Third, allegorical meanings give prominence to theological interpretations and concepts, which undermine the intrinsic value of a story about a family and village in its own specific first-century cultural and social setting (Rohrbaugh 1997; Derrett 1970) or of a story which may be understood as a psychological drama about the breakdown of relationships and reconciliation (Jones 1964:167-205; Breech 1983:184-212; Ford 1997:90-114). This is the ever-present difficulty regarding allegory, for it leads to meaning being controlled and imposed from outside the text itself, rendering the story little more than an illustration of a preconceived point or series of points. Reading beyond the confines of allegory allows the story to function as story.

The Unity of the Parable

Questions have been raised over the relationship between the first half of the parable (15:11-24) and the second half (15:25-32), including Wellhausen's proposal (Fitzmyer 1985:1084) that

the second half is an addition to an original story about the younger son's departure and return and Sander's suggestion that with this addition Luke turns the parable into an attack on the scribes and Pharisees (Sanders 1968-69:433-438). Fitzmyer counters this with the argument that the allegorical interpretation identifying the scribes and Pharisees with the older son emerges not from the expanding of the story, but from its being situated in the context of 15:1-2 (Fitzmyer 1985:1085). There seems to be no persuasive reason for treating the second half as a later addition, particularly since the opening line explicitly claims this to be a story not merely about a father or about two brothers or about two sons, but about a father *and* his two sons (Via 1967:163). Moreover the father and the two sons feature throughout the whole narrative, either in the foreground or in the background, making this a parable about a first-century family. Hence the reading that follows takes the narrative as an integrated unity.

The Structure of the Plot

The reading of the parable proposed in this chapter, then, is restricted to the narrative itself; avoids the allegorical search for specific representations outside the text, and seeks to situate the story in the context of first-century Palestinian family and village life. The plot is understood to be structured into the following five scenes: 11b-12; 13-16; 17-19; 20-24; 25-32, guided by the use of the verb δίδωμι, which plays the critical dual role of moving the action forward and revealing the character of the protagonists. There is symmetry in the appearance of the verb. In the first and fourth scenes it is used in the imperative – the younger son commands his father (v.12) and the father commands his slaves (v.22). It is of note that the father does not command his sons. In the second and fifth scenes the verb is deployed in the negative – the younger son in his hunger is *given* nothing to eat (v.16) and the older sons bemoans the fact that he has never

been *given* a goat to hold a feast with his friends. (v.29). Each usage of the verb is highly significant, because it declares or changes the status of one or both of the brothers. In their being given their inheritance they find themselves in possession of a greater degree of independence than had hitherto been the case. Yet they never ultimately break free from their dependence on others, whether on citizens of another country or on their father's providing for them. Revealed then in this fourfold use of δίδωμι is a deep sense of vulnerability, and not only with regard to the two sons, but also to the father, whose response to the first δός renders him insecure and launches the whole plot. With these preliminary issues in mind the following reading of the parable is proposed.

4.3.3 Reading the Parable of The Father and the Two Lost Sons

Scene One At Home Together (15:11b-12)

The opening lines of the narrative make it clear that the story is not only about a patriarchal household, but about a family where the focus is exclusively on the male gender. The father has two sons and there is no mention of a mother or any sisters, which may not be surprising since the story is set in the predominantly patriarchal culture of first-century Palestine. Nevertheless, the fact that women are not mentioned does not mean that they do not exist, simply that they are not deemed significant enough to be given a voice. What the reader is overtly presented with, however, is a set of four relationships: the father with the younger son; the father with the older son; the father with both sons together, and, finally, the brothers' relationship to each other. All four of these dynamics are explored in the plot at one point or another in a scenario that would not be unfamiliar to a first-century audience steeped in the ancient narratives of Abraham and

Isaac and their families (Genesis 12-50) It would be fully anticipated that the initial statement, “A man had two sons” (15:11b) would send hearers in the direction of texts in the Hebrew Bible which focus on brothers, whether this be the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 33 (Bailey 1997:54-72) or of Joseph, his brothers and Pharaoh in Genesis 37-50 (Drury 1985:144) or of the rebellious sons in Deuteronomy 21 (Brown 1998:391-405; Derrett 1976:100-125).

In terms of the Abraham story the patriarch finds himself in the midst of a conflict concerning his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, played out between their mothers, Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16, 21). In terms of the Isaac narrative another patriarch in his old age, is duped into transferring the birthright from Esau to Jacob, a plot instigated by his wife, Rebekah. (Genesis 27) In both stories there is a single patriarchal figure, fraternal conflict, the emergence of superior status for the younger son, all of which can be detected in the Luke story. Of even greater interest, however, is the prominence in these narratives given to the roles of Sarah, Hagar and Rebekah, who, openly or secretly, direct the plot by the exercise of power over Abraham and Isaac respectively. At the very least this raises questions for the parable’s audience: “Where are the women? What is the mother’s role in all this? What are the mothers’ roles?” Such questions do, of course, take the reader off into the realm of speculation and so should be treated with caution, but it is important, nevertheless, to recognise the existence of these issues and the possibility that the two sons have the same father, but different mothers.

The action of the parable is set in motion, not by the father, but by the younger son, who demands (δός) his share of the inheritance. It is this demand, coupled with the father’s acquiescent response, which offers insight into the nature of the family, the character of the father and the precarious position in which he allows himself to be placed. While many commentators see in him an over-indulgent, generous, loving father (Via 1967:172; Borsch 1988:40), an interpretation which may well be informed by first identifying the father allegorically as a

representation of God, others, reading with a greater degree of cultural awareness, understand this as a story about a dysfunctional family. Though some hold that to request an inheritance while the father is still living is not unusual (Donahue 1988:153; Nolland 1993:782), most view it as tantamount to wishing the father dead already (Derrett 1967:59; Bailey 1976:161-169; Scott 1989:111; Rohrbaugh 1997:150), thus dishonouring the father (Rohrbaugh 1997:151) and revealing that family relationships are difficult. Bailey also points out that the older son would be expected to protect his father's interests by protesting at his brother's request and by seeking reconciliation between the younger son and his father. (Bailey 1976:168) This does not happen and the older son receives his inheritance too, so while the sons behave dishonourably, the father acts foolishly, giving his βίον, his very livelihood, into his sons' hands.

Derrett's careful analysis of laws concerning inheritance demonstrates that a father could allocate his estate while still alive, but that the recipients had no right of disposition (Derrett 1970:104-112). Jewish tradition, however, warns fathers that it is unwise to hand over property, thereby relinquishing status as head of the household,

To a son or wife, to a brother or friend, do not give power over yourself, as long as you live; and do not give your property to another, lest you change your mind and must ask for it. While you are still alive and have breath in you, do not let anyone take your place. For it is better that your children should ask from you than that you should look to the hands of your sons. Excel in all that you do; bring no stain on your honour. At the time when you end the days of your life, in the hour of death, distribute your inheritance (Sirach 33:19-23).

In Rohrbaugh's words,

The father who does not wait is a fool. He has given his place as head of the family to a son and thereby destroyed his own honour and authority (Rohrbaugh 1997:150-151).

It seems that for this family to be at home together is not a positive experience and the break-up of any existing family solidarity is imminent.

Scene Two *An Alien in a Foreign Land (15:13-16)*

Having secured his share of the inheritance the younger son leaves home. Various suggestions have been advanced to explain the motivation of his departure. Linnemann proposes that emigration was normal and explains the existence of the large Jewish diaspora (Linnemann 1966:75; Donahue 1988:153), but ignores questions about the degree to which individuals rather than families may have emigrated and the extent to which the diaspora grew from within itself. Schottroff puts it down to economic reasons (Schottroff 2006:140), but the family seems to be relatively secure financially and is able to afford a feast. Beavis makes the intriguing suggestion that the son suffers from child abuse and needs to escape. (Beavis 2002:98-122). She acknowledges that this is unlikely to be the author's original intention, but offers it largely as a way of reading the text in the twenty-first century (Beavis 2002:100). It does, however, have the virtue of focusing the issue in relation to the family, and it is probably in the strained tensions of home life that the cause is to be found. The son may well leave home in an attempt to discover where he belongs. In doing so he puts himself outside the family and village networks, essentially isolating himself, an alien in a foreign land.

This whole scene is not simply a narrative device explaining how the son wastes his money and then, destitute, decides to head back home. It contains a number of features depicting the

themes of estrangement and alienation, linking these to loss of health and loss of identity. As Breech, Fitzmyer and Stiller indicate, the phrase ζῶν ἄσώτως (15:13) not only describes the way the son spends his money, but points to a deeper sense of unease, disease or unwellness. To live ἄσώτως is to live as incurably ill, as consumed by addiction (Breech 1983:192-193). It is to behave in an unhealthy or “unsaving” manner (Fitzmyer 1985:1088; Stiller 2005:115). The point is clear. The son is unwell, not at home or at one with himself, because his relationships, by which in a dyadic or polyadic culture he is defined, revolve around taking advantage of his father and his father’s wealth. He alienates himself, making himself penniless in the process.

It is at this point that the famine strikes. The famine is not the cause of the son’s poverty (Breech 1983:192), for it hits when the money has gone and serves to make his circumstances all the more precarious. There is, however, a deeper meaning to the famine, for it alludes to certain narratives in the Hebrew Bible, where famines provide the catalyst for migration to foreign places (Genesis 12, 26, 41, 42; Ruth 1). In the parable the younger son is already in foreign territory, but now he joins himself (ἐκολλήθη 15:15) to a citizen of that land, with the status of an indentured servant (Harrill 1996:714-717) and taking a further step across the ethnic boundary (Scott 1989:114). The famine is not so much a turning point as a further descent down the slope to alienation and loss of identity, culminating in his being sent to feed pigs with carob pods.

To feed pigs is an unthinkable occupation for a Jew, who knows that “none may rear swine anywhere” and that “cursed be the man who would breed swine, and cursed be the man who would teach his son Grecian wisdom” (Scott 1989:114). This is Gentile activity. Worse is to come, however, when the son ends up wishing he could eat what the pigs themselves eat. According to Scott (Scott 1989:115) this reduces him to an animal. To eat what the pigs consume would be to identify himself with the unclean animal itself. From moving among Gentiles he would in a sense become one. The sense of alienation from family, village, wealth, God and

religion is all but complete and symbolised in the carob pods themselves, the mention of which recalls the rabbinic saying,

When the Israelites are reduced to eating carob pods, then they repent (cited in Manson 1957:288).

This scene concludes with the statement that “no-one gave him anything”. In this use of the verb δίδωμι it is clear that the younger son has travelled a long way from the δός of the opening (15:12), where he almost seems to be in control of events, through to utter dependence, degradation, rejection and alienation. He is worth less than the pigs. He belongs nowhere, not even among the swine.

Scene Three In Search of Bread (15:17-19)

The younger son’s plight is now extreme. It is now not merely a question of a loss of identity, but of the loss of life. He needs to do something in order to ensure his survival. The phrase εἰς ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἐλθὼν (15:17) is often regarded as a turning point in terms of repentance. The wayward sinner recognises the error of his ways and decides to return home with humility to seek his father’s forgiveness (Fitzmyer 1985:1085, 1089; Marshall 1978:604, 609; Via 1967:169, 173; Lambrecht 1981:46-47; Schottroff 2006:141-142; Culpepper 1995:302; Wenham 1989:110; Stein 1981:120), but does the son repent or is his plan motivated by the need to survive, an interpretation adopted by Breech (1983:194) and Scott (1989:116), among others (Bailey 1992:131; Borsch 1988:41)? It is easy to see how a narrower religious reading can dominate once the whole parable is taken as an allegory, but the construction of the soliloquy itself suggests that the son’s action is survival-driven. It begins with the reflection that his father’s hired servants not

only have enough bread, but have it in abundance – in stark contrast to the famine (λιμὸς) which describes the son’s plight (15:17). It concludes with his intended request to his father –“Make (ποιήσόν 15:19) me as one of your hired servants”. The son wishes to be as one of the hired servants, insofar as that will give him an abundance of bread. This is the only scene in which the verb δίδωμι does not occur. The son cleverly avoids the direct language of “Give me bread”, but his imagined command amounts to the same thing. δός is replaced by ποιήσόν and it is still an order. It means the same, but the language appears softer and more contrite. If this is indeed the son’s strategy, then his declaration of unworthiness seems to be merely a tactic by which he can persuade his father to arrive at his intended outcome. Having been successful in extracting his share of the inheritance from his father he must be confident of getting his own way again.

Scene Four Reconnecting (15:20-24)

The son’s return home precipitates a series of reconnections – with his father, with the family household, and with the village. It is a misreading of the text to suggest that the father is looking out for his son, taking the first step towards reconciliation (Scott 1989:117). He sees his son from a distance and responds at this point with compassion in a fashion which in some quarters is deemed to be quite subversive of conventional cultural expectations. For some he violates his own patriarchal honour by running (Bailey 1976:181; Scott 1989:117; Talbert 1988:150), by kissing with maternal affection (Scott 1989:117) and by declining to test the sincerity of his son’s speech (Talbert 1988:150), while for Lahurd, however, it is not out of the ordinary for a father to demonstrate affection (Lahurd 2002:263). It is sometimes suggested that the father interrupts his son’s speech before he arrives at his proposed solution that he become a hired hand (Marshall 1978:610; Scott 1989:117; Fitzmyer 1985:1089), but the absence of this

final part of his prepared words finds a more appropriate explanation in the son's deliberate omission of it. Having seen his father's initial response he perhaps feels no need to be quite so contrite and extreme, for the evidence is that his father has already welcomed him back as a dear son. In fact the anticipated imperative from son to father (ποίησόν) is replaced by a series of imperatives from father to slaves. It is significant that the father does not speak to the son, but only concerning him. He does not order his son, only his slaves.

In obedience to their master's orders the slaves reconnect the son with the wider household, reinstating him. Marshall discusses Rengstorf's suggestion that the robe brought out is the previous robe, proposing this to be some sort of reinvestiture ceremony (Rengstorf 1967:39-51; Marshall 1978:606), but it is generally held that *πρώτην* (v 22) means the best robe, symbolic of restored honour. The shoes are a sign of a free man and the ring indicates authority (Talbert 1988:150). In the command to give (*δότε* 15:22) the ring the change of status is confirmed, just as the giving (*δος*) of the inheritance changed the situation. The final command is to sacrifice the fatted calf for a feast which, because of the quantity of meat, would presumably be for the whole village. Bailey and Rohrbaugh take the banquet to be a means of enacting reconciliation between the family and the whole village, reconciliation required because the younger son's behaviour is deemed to be responsible for having brought the whole village into disrepute (Bailey 1976:178-182; Rohrbaugh 1997:151). The party serves as a means of reintegrating the son, but does not need to be seen as an act of reconciliation, not least because in an agonistic culture the other village families will have seen their status increase relative to this shamed family. In all this the younger son is a passive recipient. He is dressed by the slaves and the feast is provided for him. In alien territory he was not given food to eat, but, reconnected with his family, where he belongs, he is given all he needs. He was indeed correct in believing that there was an abundance of bread to be had back home (15:17).

Reconnected with his father, with the family household and with the village the younger son may be, but there is no reconnection with his older brother, who, strangely, is unaware of all the activity and is apparently not sent for by his father.

Scene Five At Home Together – Again (15:25-32)

There is in this final scene something of a repetition of the father's encounter with the younger son, with the distance between the older son and the house and the father's movement away from the house to meet the son, who is dishonouring him by not entering the banquet (Forbes 2000:142). To this may be added the affectionate use of τέκνον (15:31) (Fitzmyer 1985:1091) which mirrors the fervent kissing of the younger son (15:20). More significant than these similarities, however, are three questions which predominate in seeking to understand the scene: First, why does the older son not know about the party? Second, what is the cause of the older brother's anger? Third, what happens in the end? Each question is addressed in turn.

Unable to explain how it is that the older son does not know of the party, it has been suggested that it is simply a necessary element in the narrative if the story is to work (Linnemann 1966:79, 10). This is an inadequate and unsatisfactory response and undermines the skill and competence of the storyteller. It is indeed astonishing that the father does not send for the older brother, an omission which reveals that the relationship between father and son is at the very least strained. The son has been working in the fields for the sake of the family estate, doing the responsible and honourable thing. The contrast, then, between the homecomings of the two sons is illuminating. The younger returns to his father (15:20) while the elder returns to the house (15:25). Whereas the younger son and father relate to each other in the inheritance request, the homecoming and the party, the older son relates more to the household or estate, in which he

considers himself a servant of his father (15:29). The emphasis on the father-younger son relationship is given added weight by the use of verb *θύω* on three occasions (15:23,27,30) to describe the sacrificing of the calf, recalling Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. If this stresses the intimacy between the younger son and his father, then perhaps the older son sees himself as the rejected Ishmael?

A number of proposals have been made to identify the cause of the older son's anger. He might be annoyed at the expenditure on the party (Manson 1957:290); at the money lost to the family by the younger son's prodigality and the injury done to the father in particular (Breech 1983:203-204); at the father's favouritism (Talbert 1988:150); at the way in which his brother's return jeopardises the total value of his own inheritance, since the brother will now have to be provided for (Marshall 1978:612; Scott 1989:120). All of these may play a role, but the essential problem seems to be the different ways in which the father relates to his sons and the conflict that arises as a result. The key verb is once again *δίδωμι* (15:29). The father has never *given* him a special party. It is recognised that both sons have been given their inheritance, but, while there is a spontaneous response to the younger son's dishonourable behaviour, there has never been a spontaneous "giving" in response to the older son's honourable obedience and serving of the estate. While the younger son has been treated as an individual with an independent identity, the older son is simply an extension of his father. He is subsumed in his father with no fraternal relationship. He even refers to his brother as "your son" (15:30) rather than "my brother" and goes on to label him as some kind of deviant, accusing him of devouring the father's living, an ironic phrase since the younger son's return brings the father back to life.

Open-ended conclusions are a characteristic of the parables, and this is certainly the case with this story where the audience is left with the question: what happens next? More specific to this narrative is the issue of whether the older son will go into the party and meet his brother, and,

if he does, whether the outcome will be reconciliation or the trading of insults. It is the prerogative of readers to supply their own ending and, at the same time, not to claim that the parable itself gives the conclusion. Scott falls into this trap with his proposal that the story subverts the mytheme of preference for the younger son, familiar from the Hebrew Bible, by suggesting that the father's final speech amounts to a reassurance that both sons are chosen (Scott 1989:122-125). This argues for a family unity for which there is no evidence in the text. The picture remains unresolved. The audience does not know if the younger son has genuinely changed in any way. The father seems unable to relate to the two sons together. The older son is still fuming at the course of events, and there is a sharp dividing line between the two brothers. One is inside, the recipient of "given" food, newly clothed with a ring of authority on his finger. The other describes himself in terms of a servant, is dirty and hungry from his work in the fields, readily insults his brother and stands outside. This is not a depiction which furnishes optimism for a more positive future.

4.3.4 Concluding Remarks

The parable explores the issue of boundaries at two levels, beyond the family and within it. The younger son's departure and life away from the family household allow him to address the question: Where do I belong? If initially he feels that the place for him to be is not in the family home or village, he finds that independent living in a foreign land concludes disastrously as he increasingly becomes an outsider, socially, economically and religiously. He is not a well man, not at home with himself (ἀσώτως 15:13). His return renders him an insider again as he rejoins the in-group where he is whole (ὕγιαίνοντα 15:27). Yet this return "to his father" (15:18, 20) reveals the boundaries and divisions that continue to exist within the family with continued

sibling rivalry and no sign of reconciliation and where nobody seems equipped to bring the family together into a harmonious unit. The brothers never appear together and the father relates to only one of them at a time. The patriarch manifests woeful inadequacy in leadership of the household and family.

The story of Ruth and Naomi is an equally rich and intriguing narrative, which, juxtaposed with the parable, provides an alternative and illuminating angle of approach with which to read the story. There are a number of parallels which pinpoint tensions inherent in both plots. In Naomi's story there is also departure, a movement away from the ancestral home, driven in her case by the search for food and survival. The move to Moab is of questionable wisdom, since Moab does not come highly recommended (Deuteronomy 23:2-4; Numbers 25:1-4, Gunn and Fewell 1990:69-70). In fact it turns out to be a disaster with the deaths of all three male members of the family leaving behind three widows, and close reading of the text suggests that Naomi may feel responsible (Gunn and Fewell 1990:72). The return home to Bethlehem, to where she belongs, provides an opportunity for survival as she uses Ruth to secure her own future. Yet there is something sinister and unsettling about the conclusion, for when Ruth gives birth the women of Bethlehem declare that "a son is born to Naomi" (Ruth 4:17). Whose child is this? Does he belong to the mother, Ruth, or to the surrogate mother, Naomi? As the narrative draws to a close the question is posed: Is Ruth the Moabite simply going to acquiesce and be a diligent, obedient servant subsumed in the identity of her mother-in-law?

Readers are left to reflect that being where Naomi is represents an insecure place to be. First there is famine, second there is death, and third there is the usurping of maternal status. Nevertheless there is no doubt that she is a survivor. She sees what needs to be done and what can be done and makes it happen, manifesting a strength of character which imposes itself on situations. In stark contrast to the father in the parable she offers leadership and direction. If the

father's foolishness is ultimately destructive of family life, then Naomi's clearsighted, skilful and decisive approach produces a situation of creativity – the birth of a child and a future to anticipate.

When these narratives are set side by side in this manner a contrast emerges between male inadequacy and the failure of a patriarchal household on the one hand and female assertiveness and the more positive future of a matriarchal community on the other hand. Thus compared, the absence of women in the parable, emphasised by Schottroff (2006:143), could be seen as the source of the family's problem. Luke, in a profoundly subversive way, seems to be ridiculing the inability of a patriarchal family to negotiate its way through tensions and conflicts. Such an interpretation gains force when the parable is seen in the context of Luke 14-16. In the parable of the Writing on the Wall (14:16-23) the host acts decisively to forge new relationships. In the parable of the Survivor Client (16:1-8a) the steward responds equally decisively to secure his future in new relationships. The creation of new dynamics and new relationships which might cross established boundaries is beyond this father and this family. The father's final declaration (15:31-32) is all about the retention of the status quo. It seems, then, that Luke is asking questions about how patriarchal families function or malfunction. Might he even be suggesting that what they require is a more prominent role for women?

4.4 The Parable of the Dynamic Widow (Luke 18:2-5)

4.4.1 Critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog

Bailey's handling of this narrative (1980:127-141; 2008:261-268) draws heavily on a comparison with Ben Sirach 35:15-19, which he designates a "prototype" of the parable in

question (Bailey 1980:127), pointing out the obvious points of similarity between them: the figures of a judge and a widow and the theme of prayer, which provides the immediate literary context for Luke's parable (Luke 18:1, 6-8). Though careful to recognise the dissimilarities too, the points in common lead Bailey to interpret the episode of the widow and the judge in the light of Luke's surrounding verses on persistence in prayer and eventual vindication, so the story's significance is to be found in the example of a heroic woman who perseveres in prayer until God's vindication is delivered. In so doing Bailey displays an awareness of the social dynamics of the encounter, emphasising the shame of the judge and the vulnerability of the widow, who, in coming to court, traverses the boundary into public male space. He then proceeds to deal with the inappropriate allegorical identification of God with an unjust judge by means of the *qal wahomer* argument, from the lesser to the greater, so if the shameful judge furnishes vindication, then the honourable God will do so all the more. It seems dubious, however, whether the notion of *qal wahomer* is applicable here, for, as Herzog indicates, it is not a question of "from the lesser to the greater", but of an absolute opposite (Herzog 1994:218). Indeed the whole question of allegory is problematic, for allegorisation of the judge renders God unjust and dishonourable and allegorisation of the widow as the elect awaiting God's vindication turns her into a sinner in need of acquittal (Bailey 1980:139) rather than a courageous woman striving for justice. Indeed Bailey's approach, in which the reading of the parable is clearly controlled by its wider literary context, diminishes the narrative's capacity to elicit its own meanings. A tale about a shameful judge and a widow seeking justice stands in its own right as a presentation of separation, hierarchy and division at the heart of social reality. It is not a theological insight into prayer.

Scott also relates the parable to Sirach 35, though here it is not prayer that is the focus, but the representation of God as a just judge (Scott 1989:175-187), the parable being an "anti-metaphor" since the judge is an inadequate metaphor for God. Scott removes the story from its

Lukan context and turns the spotlight on the confrontation between the judge and widow, the latter viewed as an archetype of poverty in need of protection (Scott 1989:180), who encroaches on the judge's social space. She is an object of shame threatening his honour (Scott 1989:182), while the judge remains shameless throughout, acting finally only out of convenience, the thrust of the story being found in the encounter in which the judge becomes the widow's opponent (Scott 1989:183) as she persists with her case. It is this persistence which provides Scott with a metaphor for the kingdom "which keeps coming, keeps battering down, regardless of honor or justice" (Scott 1989:187). In liberating it from its immediate literary setting and focusing attention on the social dynamics of the story's encounter and the honour and shame issues involved Scott provides a helpful reading of the parable, though his conclusion concerning the meaning of the story, which results from his search for some identifiable reference to the kingdom, produces a somewhat vague result. Moreover, it is an interpretation that presents an overly stereotypical view of the widow as an archetypal figure of poverty and helplessness in need of protection. Scott cites a number of examples of the need to support widows, but pays no attention to the possibility of this widow not being poor, yet she appears far from helpless, manifesting courage and feistiness, even if this is unconventional (Cotter 2005:328-343).

Herzog, like Scott, confines his attention to the parable itself, but focuses primarily on the corrupt nature of the judicial system (Herzog 1994:215-232). Taking this to be a Jewish court (on the grounds that the singular "God" suggests Judaism) he argues that the judge belongs to the urban elite who reconstruct the Torah in their own interests, rather than for the procurement of justice, while the widow, oppressed by this system, responds with courage by telling the truth about the Torah and justice (Herzog 1994:230), implying that the oppressed must refuse to give in to the system. Herzog provides a clear social context for this encounter and presents a characteristic socio-economic perspective centring on issues of oppression and justice which fit

appropriately with the characters of the judge and widow. His interpretation of the judge's final acquiescence provokes questions, however, for he proposes that it is in the judge's own interests to comply with the widow's demands, since he cannot run the risk of the widow continually exposing the unjust functioning of his court. For him it is better to be done with the case and move on. This disregards a prominent danger for the judge, however, for to concede to the widow may jeopardise his future with the elite, for whom he then ceases to be a trustworthy partner. The motivation behind the judge's action will be a crucial aspect of the reading that follows, which focuses on whether the judge acts in his own interests or in the interests of the widow and whether there is any tangible undermining of the corrupt system.

In the light of this appraisal of the interpretations of Bailey, Scott and Herzog attention now turns to a closer examination of the parable itself.

4.4.2 The Setting of the Parable

The parable of Luke 18:2-5 is set in the context of the eschatological discourse which begins in 17:20. Though there is no evidence from the story itself that it is about prayer, Luke understands it in this way (18:1) and uses it to exhort his community to persevere in the face of persecution it is experiencing, persecution which does not fit easily into Jesus' context (Hedrick 1994:187; Freed 1987:39-40). On the one hand a number of interpreters follow Luke's own reading and identify the theme of the parable as persistent prayer (Linnemann 1961:188; Bailey 1980:141; Fitzmyer 1985:1177; Boucher 1983:121), though the problem with this is, as Herzog points out (Herzog 1994:218-219), the depiction of God as *κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας*. The principle applied is that of *qal wahomer*, of the lesser to the greater, which would mean in this instance that if an unjust judge responds to repeated petition, how much more will a just God. Not only does

this raise the question of whether this is a helpful image for God, but, even if it is followed, it still leaves God open to the moral objection of divine intervention or non-intervention depending on the quantity of prayer offered. On the other hand the parable has been treated as depicting the pursuit of social justice (Herzog 1994:215-232; Hendrickx 1986:231-232; Reid 2000:25-33; 2002:284-294; Cotter 2005:328-343; Curkpatrick 2002:107-121; Matthews, Shelley, Scheele 2002:46-70).

It is evident, then, that the parable is vulnerable to be understood in terms of the application given it in its surrounding verses rather than being allowed to tell its own story and open up avenues of interpretation from its own text. The often used title of The Unjust Judge comes from 18:6 and lies outside the story, but is regarded as the starting point for discerning the judge's true character, rather than this being informed by a careful consideration of how the judge and narrator describe him. The principle adopted in relation to this parable is in line with the general approach to all the parables under discussion, namely that the story should be allowed to stand on its own and speak for itself, even if the meaning or theme is ambiguous or difficult to discern. So the study proceeds to a closer analysis of the narrator's story found in 18:2-5.

4.4.3 Reading the Parable of the Dynamic Widow

The parable is given an urban setting, the public arena of a courtroom where direct contact, with its own dynamics of power and vulnerability, occurs between the two characters. This reading centres on these dynamics and particularly on how these are played out in the relationship between the judge and the widow.

Introducing the Judge (18:2)

The judge, quite likely a member of the urban elite and a powerful figure in the community because of his public role, is introduced with an explicit statement about his character, an assessment which he confirms as accurate in his soliloquy in 18:4. Two questions concerning him arise, however. First: Is he a Jew or Gentile? Second: Is his character being portrayed in a negative or positive light? In order to tackle both these questions it is necessary to focus directly on the meaning of τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρέπόμενος (18:2). A decision about whether he is a Jew or not cannot be determined solely on the use of κριτής as opposed to γραμματεὺς, since κριτής is found elsewhere in Luke in clearly Jewish contexts (11:19; 12:14)

Interpreters have mainly tended towards a negative view of a Jewish judge, drawing on evidence from the Hebrew Bible as well as other non-biblical sources (Scott 1989:178-180; Bailey 1980:131-132; Marshall 1978:672; Herzog 1994: 221-225; Donahue 1988:181). A starting point for this argument is often Jehoshaphat's instruction that newly-appointed judges in Judah act justly and honestly (2 Chronicles 19:6-7). For a Jew to fear God is to respect Torah and ensure that judgements are made in line with the law and judgement of God and not for the judge's personal gain nor in the interests of those who can afford to offer bribes. Corruption was a recurring problem, however, indicated by Amos' prophecy of the eighth century BCE (Amos 2:6-7a; 5:10-12) but also by Edersheim's appraisal of first-century Palestine which points out that Jerusalem judges were often called Robber-Judges (*Dayyaney Gezeloth*) as opposed to Judges of Prohibition (*Dayyeney Gezeroth*), their real title (Edersheim 1896 II:287, cited in Bailey 1980:131). This negative understanding of the judge depends also on the translation of ἐντρέπω, usually given as "respect". However, in the light of its meaning in the active voice "to

make ashamed” and of the context of an honour and shame society it seems more appropriate to adopt a translation of “to be made ashamed” or “to feel shame” (Bailey 1980:132) or “failing in a sense of honour” (Spicq 1961:63, cited in Scott 1989:179).

In contrast Hedrick offers a much more positive view of the judge. Drawing on Derrett’s suggestion that the widow goes to a Gentile rather than a Jewish judge (Derrett 1971-72:180), Hedrick proposes that this man is not corrupt but simply not religious. He does not believe in God and so can be quite naturally described as having no fear of God, nor any sense of having to fulfil the requirements of Torah (Hedrick 1994:195). He proceeds, with reference to positive uses of the verb in LXX, to argue for an understanding of ἐντρέπω as impartiality, meaning that “the judge refused to be intimidated by anyone” (Hedrick 1994:196). Finally, in the context of the parable itself he finds it strange that the judge would admit even to himself how uncaring and corrupt he is, and equally strange that he does not dispose of the widow’s case much sooner if he simply wants to make life more comfortable for himself.

These last two points do not stand up to scrutiny since it is quite possible that a corrupt judge might act in this way. If he is indeed unjust and taking bribes from the widow’s adversary he will be quite aware of his own dishonour and will not want to find in her favour. It is precisely his corruption which means that the case remains open and the widow returns again and again. While no definitive answer can be given as to whether this is a Jewish or Gentile judge, at the linguistic level it is important to note that Luke also uses ἐντρέπω in the parable of the Vineyard Tenants (20:13) where the meaning clearly relates to the respect and honour expected to be shown to the owner’s son. A translation of “impartiality” makes little sense there.

Hedrick’s contribution is valuable insofar as it directs the reader to the story itself and away from interpreting it in the light of the description κριτῆς τῆς ἀδικίας of 18:6 which lies outside the story. Nevertheless it seems more likely that, be he Jew or Gentile, τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος

καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος is a negative rather than positive assessment of his character, particularly given the prevailing culture of unjust judges in Jerusalem in the first century. Certainly Luke himself subscribes to this point of view, as the κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας of 18:6 indicates.

Introducing the Widow (18:3)

In a carefully constructed sentence which balances 18:2 the widow is described as coming repeatedly (imperfect ἦρχετο) in search of justice. The nature of the case is not given, though it seems reasonable to assume that it relates to widowhood. The woman may well be destitute because she has lost the husband who provided for her and because proper provision is not forthcoming from her husband's estate (Jeremias 1972:153; Scott 1989:180; Herzog 1994:225-226), presumably being blocked by her ἀντιδικός. Her poverty and isolation are revealed by the fact that she has no male relative to serve as advocate for her. She must represent herself in the male sphere of the courtroom.

It is important to place this parable in the context of Torah, which requires that widows, along with orphans and foreigners receive special care because of their vulnerable position (Exodus 22:21-24). However, it may be assuming too much to characterise this woman as poor and vulnerable in this stereotypical way. There is no description in the parable of her character, nor of her circumstances. All that is mentioned is her action, which leads Cotter to argue that the story is about a feisty widow (Cotter 2005:328-343), noting that a meek widow would not keep pestering a judge with threatening behaviour. As such she is an unconventional woman who can afford to act shamefully because she has nothing to lose. Cotter's reading thus emphasises the widow's courage, but it still assumes a sense of her desperation and poverty. While this is

perhaps the more likely scenario, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the widow's preoccupation is not with survival in poverty, but with justice.

Whether the widow is desperately poor or not it is justice that she demands. She goes to a single judge – it was not ideal but not unusual for a judge to preside alone (Scott 1989:184) – in pursuit of this goal. ἐκδίκησόν can mean both “avenge” and “settle a case”. Hedrick argues for “avenge” (Hedrick 1994:199) which fits in neatly with his view of a strident demanding woman who is the opposite of the stereotypical acquiescing widow, while the predominant understanding is “settle a case” or “enacting justice” (Scott 1989:182; Bailey 1980:133; Herzog 1994:225; Marshall 1978:672), which equally supports their overall reading.

Stand Off and Resolution (18:4-5)

The story then takes the reader through an interval during which the judge refuses to hear the case or find in favour of the widow. Ultimately he changes his mind and imparts his reasoning by means of an interior monologue, a narrative device used by Luke at defining points in various parables in order to reveal the characters' self-understanding and to pinpoint the dilemma before them (Sellew 1992:239-253).

Before considering what precipitates this reversal of attitude it is worth highlighting the way in which the text emphasises the huge gulf between the judge and widow. The judge sits in a position of power in a place of privilege and control where people are in need of him. The widow, on the other hand, is vulnerable and “not at home” in this courtroom, the threshold of which she is required to cross because she needs the judge. This is not simply a story about a desperate widow and a dishonourable judge. It is about how men wield power over women and how women are often dependent on men for justice and opportunity, and in a very subtle way this

struggle is played out in the speech pattern of the judge and widow. While the widow uses direct speech and thereby declares openly and publicly her vulnerability and her predicament, the judge uses only interior speech which conceals from the public his true thoughts and motives, refusing to expose himself, wielding power over those around him by keeping them in ignorance. Speech and the withholding of speech reveal who controls the situation and how the power game is played. In the end even the widow herself is none the wiser as to why the judge has heard the case.

What then is the cause of his change of mind? This hinges on how ὑπωπιόζῃ is understood. Literally it relates to boxing language, meaning “to strike under the eye” or “to give a black eye”. Some opt for the widow’s threat of physical violence (Hedrick 1994:200); others prefer the milder metaphorical sense of “wearing down” (Jeremias 1972:154; Linnemann 1961:185; Marshall 1978:673; Scott:1989 185). Translating it as “to blacken one’s face” Derrett suggests that it describes the destroying of a person’s name or reputation (Derrett 1971-72:190; Catchpole 1977:89). Malina and Rohrbaugh pursue this same line, noting the irony

that this judge who is described in verse two as being shameless, incapable of sensing the meaning of his conduct towards others, and who pridefully acknowledges that he is such a person (v 4) is finally willing to admit that his “face” could be in trouble if he cannot get rid of the troublesome widow (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:299).

Developing Malina and Rohrbaugh’s insight it becomes clear that, in the course of being challenged and pestered by a vulnerable widow, the judge undergoes a kind of conversion experience. He regards himself as invulnerable to what others say or think about him. He has no sense of shame. He believes he lives outside the honour and shame culture of his day. Yet he

comes to realise that he is not as indifferent as he thought. This widow is gradually making him feel that he does care about his reputation. So he hears the case and grants her justice. In so doing he disposes of the danger she represents and upholds Torah, at the same time taking the risk of standing in opposition to the widow's adversary, who may well have been bribing him and be a fellow member of the elite. The judge makes himself vulnerable by "going over" to the side of the oppressed and "burning his bridges" with the oppressors.

4.4.4 Concluding Remarks

However this parable is understood it is evident that a change occurs in the judge and that this results from a courageous widow's commitment to justice. This is not a new story, as a brief consideration of the often overlooked episode of Tamar and Judah in Genesis 38 demonstrates. In this much longer narrative the reader is given far more information about the reasons and motives of the characters than is the case in the parable. Nevertheless the underlying themes of power, control, injustice, vulnerability, persistence and truth are common to both, such that the parable can be seen to reflect and possibly even allude to Genesis 38.

Tamar is a widow struggling for survival. Her life is shaped and controlled by Judah who holds her responsible (wrongly) for the deaths of two of his sons. Judah abandons any sense of responsibility towards Tamar, sending her back to her parental home. This is the end of the story as far as he sees it, but not for Tamar, who devises a trick which exposes Judah's promiscuity and his injustice towards her. When faced with the truth of his behaviour he confesses his mistreatment of Tamar who now finds security in the birth of two sons.

Breaking all the rules of social responsibility (Tamar) breached the walls of the prison to which Judah had consigned her and punctured the patriarch's veneer of righteousness (Gunn and Fewell 1993:44).

Central to these two stories are widows who will not be denied justice and security, who subvert male control and expose male vulnerability and who are courageous enough to enter the public sphere in order to do so.

4.5 Conclusion

The introduction to this chapter outlined the complexity of family and gender relationships in first-century Palestine compared to the stereotyped model of the Context Group, and the parables discussed mirror some of this complexity. They belong to a patriarchal society where women play minimal public roles or are at the mercy of a male hierarchical figure, where sibling relationships are difficult and where male authoritarianism is diminished by challenges from other characters. Though threat and fragility are discernibly present, however, ultimately there is no critical break with the predominant culture.

In Luke 15:11b-32 the authority of the *paterfamilias* and the stability of the family is cracked, but not broken. Though there is no resolution of the family conflict, neither is there total breakdown. In the end the household is as it was in the beginning. Contrary to evidence in Luke of signs of conflict within families caused by discipleship of Jesus (Luke 12:51-53; 14:26-27), in this story there is no final break with the family. To the question: "Where do I belong?" comes the answer: "At home in the patriarchal fold." In Luke 18:2-5 there are signs of some subversive activity. The widow's courage and tenacity undermine the status quo of corruption and pose a

challenge to the judge, though she still remains dependent on the male world for her desired outcome. In the judge, however, emerges a character who moves from indifference to a dyadic culture defining his status to compliance with an honour and shame code which does require recognition from the public. To the question: "Does it matter how others perceive me?" is heard the reply: "Yes." Past codes of practice and mutually-beneficial relationships are under threat and destabilised in favour of a more honourable future determined by a wider public than the in-group of friends. Amid this fragility the honour and shame code is upheld. On this evidence, then, whereas the male characters uphold the status quo, it appears that it is the female character of the widow who manifests the greatest tendency to be subversive.

Chapter Five

Hospitality

5.1 Introduction

Understood from a twenty-first century northern European perspective the concept of hospitality is quite broad, encompassing both the sharing of time and food among mutual friends as well as the inviting and accepting of strangers or less familiar acquaintances into the host's home. Developing Pitt-Rivers' cross-cultural investigation of hospitality (Pitt-Rivers 1977:94-112), however, Malina, among other members of the Context Group, narrows the definition considerably, maintaining that in first-century Palestine hospitality excludes the notion of entertaining family and friends and describes the process by which strangers become guests (Malina 1996:228-234; 1998:11-118), a process which is deeply entrenched in the culture of honour and shame and which involves a series of dynamics including the threat posed by the stranger, the potential for agonistic activity and the requirement to abide by certain rules of reciprocity set down for host and stranger alike. The conversion of strangers into guests, thereby providing them with some status, recognition and honour in a context which is foreign to them, lies at the heart of Rohrbaugh's recent examination of the Jesus and Zacchaeus narrative (Luke 19:1-10) (Rohrbaugh 2006:77-88). This draws heavily on Malina's model and will therefore form part of the initial assessment of the model, but the question arises as to whether this is simply an

isolated example which purports to support Malina's view of hospitality and honour or whether further evidence can be gleaned from Luke's parables in support of his thesis. Following a preliminary appraisal of Malina's model, therefore, this chapter proceeds to an analysis of two parables where the focus is on strangers, outsiders, guests, meals and friendship. Reading the parables of The Stranger in the Midst (Luke 11:5-8) and The Writing on the Wall (Luke 14:16-23) will then serve as a means for determining whether Malina's definition of hospitality is accurate or too narrow, whether it reflects the content of the stories or underestimates the complexity of how hospitality is to be understood.

5.2 Hospitality – The Model

Drawing on the work of Pitt-Rivers on the law of hospitality (Pitt-Rivers 1977) Malina proposes a model which describes three stages of the process by which strangers are turned into guests (Malina 1996; 1998). In broad outline these three phases involve an initial evaluation and testing of the stranger, followed by the stranger taking on the role of guest, before finally leaving the host as friend or enemy. In terms of evaluating the stranger Malina points out that, as an outsider on the inside (Malina 1996:229) who will return to being on the outside, the stranger requires a patron, a personal bond with a community member, in order to gain any status within the new setting. The stranger is looked upon with distrust and suspicion as an invading presence issuing a challenge to the new community, whose strongest representative is put forward to defeat the challenger. If the stranger defeats the community representative the stranger becomes regarded as superior to the whole community and is treated with honour and respect. Malina holds that there are three types of stranger: the one who is afforded status and recognition on account of defeating the community's best challenger; the one who requires a local patron as the

result of being defeated by the community's representative, and the one who is simply ignored and treated as a barbarian and outlaw (Malina 1996:231).

Once strangers are regarded as guests they are expected to conform to certain rules of hospitality. They must honour the host, refraining from any hostile or insulting behaviour; they must not attempt to usurp the role of the host, and they are bound to accept what is offered in terms of food and hospitality. Hosts are likewise to refrain from insults and hostility; they are to protect their guests' honour, and to ensure that guests are treated with regard to their social status and reputation (Malina 1996:232-233; Pitt-Rivers 1977:108-111). Of note here is the sense of reciprocity in relation to how host and guest are expected to behave towards one another, though hospitality does not involve reciprocal invitations between individuals (Malina 1996:233). Nor does such reciprocity obscure the distinction between the roles of host and guest, the host ordaining and the guest complying (Pitt-Rivers 1977:107). By the point of departure the stranger's status has changed, either into that of friend or enemy. If the result is friendship the stranger will publicly praise the host. If the outcome is enmity the stranger will seek revenge (Malina 1996:233-234; 1998:117).

A significant example of the way in which this model of hospitality has been used in New Testament interpretation is Rohrbaugh's reading of the Jesus and Zacchaeus story (Luke 19:1-10) (Rohrbaugh 2006:77-88). Rejecting the notion that this is a tale about repentance on the grounds that repentance is never mentioned (Rohrbaugh 2006:78) and that Zacchaeus' response to the grumbling of an accusing crowd is in the present tense, thus suggesting that he already acts generously towards the poor (Rohrbaugh 2006:78), Rohrbaugh argues that this generosity provides Zacchaeus with a considerable degree of acquired honour, enabling him to serve as protective patron to Jesus who comes as an outsider and stranger to Jericho and whose honour is at stake for mixing with tax collectors and sinners. The story therefore becomes a narrative in

which a wealthy, generous and honourable host turns Jesus from criticised stranger to honourable guest. By defending his own honour Zacchaeus defends the honour of Jesus (Rohrbaugh 2006:88). So Rohrbaugh sees here evidence of significant features of Malina's model. With regard to the need of a stranger for a local patron Zacchaeus claims the status to serve as patron to Jesus. With regard to the testing of the stranger in order to assess any challenge or threat to the community Rohrbaugh interprets the grumbling of the crowd as suggestive of a negative response to Jesus' acceptability in the community. With regard to the host's obligation to protect the guest Zacchaeus finds himself in the position of having to protect Jesus' honour, which he does by asserting his own honour (Rohrbaugh 2006:84-85).

Rohrbaugh's reading provides a valuable alternative to predominant analyses of the story, situating it in its original social context rather than allowing too much emphasis to be placed on theological issues. There are, however, several difficulties with this interpretation. It proposes that Zacchaeus claims to be honourable, yet it is the public who declare what status individuals have, and in this instance the crowd's grumbling clearly points to disapproval rather than approval of the tax collector. Furthermore, the grumbling of the crowd is not necessarily to be viewed as a community response to the threat of Jesus' presence. The fact that there is a crowd in the first place suggests intrigue and interest rather than hostility, demonstrating that it is not that Jesus is unacceptable in the village, but that his attitude to the tax collector is deemed offensive. Finally, the notion that Jesus' honour is protected by the asserting of a tax collector's honour runs contrary to the perspective that Luke's Jesus is subverting the definition of honour by mixing with tax collectors and sinners, accepting them despite their lowly reputation in society rather than because of their elevated status (Luke 7:36-50; 15:1-2).

This assessment of Rohrbaugh's reading demonstrates the dangers of seeking to make the story fit the model, but beyond this it is important to scrutinise more closely Malina's

overarching model and to ask the following questions which arise at the different stages of the process. Does the stranger in need of hospitality always have to be viewed as a challenge or threat? How is the concept of reciprocity to be understood? Is there always a status change outcome? To these three issues the discussion now turns.

Malina's view that the arrival of a stranger poses a challenge or threat stems from a stance which understands the obtaining of honour in terms of precedence in an agonistic worldview. As Lawrence points out in her examination of Malina's models, Malina tends to believe that every action beyond the setting of family or close friendship is regarded as a challenge to honour (Lawrence 2003:144; Malina 1981:30), a view which is central to Rohrbaugh's reading of the Zacchaeus story too. Hence hospitality for Malina is to be seen as fulfilling a competitive function in which the game of challenge and riposte is played out. That this definition of hospitality is open to dispute is evident from two alternative understandings espoused respectively by Lawrence and Moxnes. On the one hand Lawrence posits a more virtuous altruistic definition (Lawrence 2003:175), citing hospitality as an example of non-agonistic behaviour (Lawrence 2003:171) with reference both to Graeco-Roman traditions of gods, disguised as strangers, expecting and then rewarding generous hospitality (Lawrence 2003:172-173) and to laws and stories from the Jewish tradition concerning the importance of welcoming the stranger (Leviticus 25:35-38; Deuteronomy 10:18,19; Genesis 18:1-8) (Lawrence 2003:177). This view is lent added weight by evidence from cultural anthropology, which, while recognising that Mediterranean societies often function along competitive lines, also uncovers less agonistic dimensions. In her article on traditional Sicily Maria Pia di Bella points out the sacred duty of providing hospitality and protection for strangers (Maria Pia di Bella 1992:151), and in his work on the Iqar'iyen in the Rif (Morocco) Jamous stresses that even within the context of a predominantly agonistic society belief in the divine force of Baraka has a considerable role to

play in limiting violence and promoting peace between hostile strangers (Jamous 1992:167-191. On the other hand Moxnes broadens the definition from Malina's narrow focus on how strangers are treated to a wider understanding of the reciprocal exchange of resources (Moxnes 1988:127-138). In the course of his investigation of Luke 14 he proposes that there are two alternative focal points for hospitality – reciprocity between equals or redistribution from the rich to the poor (Moxnes 1988:129), arguing that Luke's Jesus promotes a system where hospitality is offered and the excluded are included without any expectation of reciprocity (Moxnes 1988:132).

Moxnes' contribution highlights the issue of reciprocity, the second stage in Malina's process of strangers becoming guests and the point at which host and guest reciprocate respect and fulfil their allotted roles (Malina 1996:232-233). Since this is a central feature of the hospitality model it is important to recognise that reciprocity extends beyond a mere exchange in which the participants abide by a prescribed code and that it involves a more complex system of hidden motives and tacit understandings than Malina suggests. Sahlins, in his exploration of human social relations in antiquity (Sahlins 1972), focuses on different forms of reciprocity as a means of understanding social interaction, maintaining that there are three kinds of reciprocity. The first is "generalised reciprocity" in which needs of family or friends are met through a generosity which expects no immediate equivalent response, there being no time limit on reciprocation. The second is "balanced reciprocity" which occurs among those beyond kinship and friendship networks and which does require an equivalence of value in giving and receiving. The third is "negative reciprocity" which seeks to procure something for nothing from strangers or enemies by violent or non-violent means (Sahlins 1972:193-195; Moxnes 1988:34-35; Neyrey 1991:371-373). Even in the context of family and friends there is expectation of some return at a given point, for, as Mauss proposes, the object given is inalienable, that is, it is connected to the giver who is to some extent giving away something of himself (Mauss 1966:33). The act of

giving, then, establishes or strengthens an interpersonal bond, and though the giving may appear to be voluntary, it does in fact mask an obligation to reciprocate (Mauss 1966:41-42), thus representing a challenge to the recipient.

The theme of reciprocity and friendship is taken up by Pitt-Rivers in a more recent contribution which seeks to take seriously the notion of honour and grace and where he takes issue with Mauss on precisely the point of the obligation to reciprocate. In his essay on *The Place of Grace in Anthropology* (1992) he acknowledges his indebtedness to Mauss (Pitt-Rivers 1992:235), but then argues that the concept and experience of grace extends beyond the realm of obligation and reciprocity as understood by Mauss (Pitt-Rivers 1992:231).

Grace is inspired by the notion of something over and above what is due economically, legally or morally; it is neither foreseeable, predictable by reasoning, nor subject to guarantee. It stands outside the system of reciprocal services (Pitt-Rivers 1992:231).

According to Pitt-Rivers grace is “the essence of friendship” (Pitt-Rivers 1992:239). The key thing here is not that there is no mutual giving and receiving, but the motivation that inspires the giving and reciprocating. Friendship always involves mutuality, for it encompasses both disinterested altruism and the self-interested desire for the other to be interested in oneself. Yet grace and friendship entail the notion of responding out of freedom rather than out of obligation.

The same combination of selflessness and mutuality is to be found in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Friendship requires both selfless altruism,

A bad man considers himself in all he does, and the more so the worse he is....; a good man acts from a sense of what is noble, and the better he is the more he so acts, and he considers his friend's interest, disregarding his own (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.8.1168a LCL 549).

and a sense of mutual understanding, sharing and commitment,

Friends have one soul between them

Friends' goods are common property

Amity is equality

The knee is nearer than the shin (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.8.1168b LCL 549-551).

These insights serve as a reminder that the whole issue of reciprocity is more complex than Malina suggests.

Turning to the final stage of Malina's hospitality process, by which the stranger is deemed to have changed from stranger to friend or enemy, it is once again worth noting Moxnes' reflections on Luke 14 regarding reciprocity and redistribution, recognising that the adoption of generalised reciprocity which requires no reciprocation on the part of the outsiders, simply reinforces the asymmetry typical of the patron and client relationship (Moxnes 1988:137). In effect there is no status change, either at the economic or social level since neither are they integrated into a new inclusive community, nor is there any alteration to facilitate their capacity to reciprocate. It seems that Malina's notion that the stranger is transformed remains a little optimistic.

Investigation of Malina's model, therefore, reveals a conception of hospitality which is both narrow and heavily focused on a competitive, agonistic worldview. With this preliminary appraisal in mind the discussion moves to an exploration of two parables in Luke's Gospel which deal with hospitality offered to strangers and outsiders, whether this be a lone visitor to a village

(Luke 11:5-8) or a larger group of those who lie well beyond a wealthy in-group with their reciprocating practices (Luke 14:16-23). Close readings of these parables are intended to facilitate a more considered appraisal of how Luke's Jesus understands hospitality and how accurate Malina's model proves to be.

5.3 The Parable of the Stranger in the Midst (Luke 11:5-8)

5.3.1 Critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog

The key to Bailey's understanding of the parable lies in his linguistic analysis of ἀναδεία (Bailey 1976:119-133). He begins by rejecting the common translation of "persistence" on the grounds that there is no evidence of persistence in the request being made. This leads him to a careful examination of αἰδώς which he maintains can be understood as a positive (sense of shame) or negative (lack of sense of shame) term (Bailey 1976:131-133). Taking it as negative he suggests that it is turned into a positive concept by the alpha privative, thus producing the translation "avoidance of shame" (Bailey 1976:133). In terms of the parable, then, the sleeping friend responds to the request in order to avoid bringing shame upon himself, because the culture would deem it shameful not to provide for the needs of a friend and fellow villager. For Bailey, therefore, the crux is the integrity of the sleeping friend, which represents and is illustrative of God's integrity, which will always respond positively to prayer (Bailey 1976:133). In this way the friend in search of bread is regarded as a praying petitioner and the sleeping friend is identified as God.

This approach is open to criticism at different levels. In terms of the linguistic issues Herzog applauds Bailey for understanding ἀναδεία in terms of the cultural context of the parable, but

wonders why the narrator would feel the need to add the alpha privative when αἰδώς can also have the positive meaning of “sense of shame” (Herzog 1994:203). In addition to this it is clear that Bailey’s conclusion is driven ultimately by theological rather than social or cultural concerns. Since he adopts the view that the sleeping friend represents God his action must be read positively in order that a view of God’s goodness is safeguarded. Furthermore the interpretation is bound by the Lukan context of the parable rather than by the actual scene depicted, whereby the parable’s location within teachings about prayer restricts Bailey’s focus to this very theme with a consequent loss of attention to the inner dynamics of the story. Finally Bailey’s preoccupation with ἀναδεία leads to neglect of the final contrast between friendship and avoidance of shame failing to recognise that is not simply that the sleeping friend grants the request in order to avoid shame, but that he does not do it for reasons of friendship.

For Scott the parable’s central feature is the way in which village hospitality serves as a metaphor for the kingdom (Scott 1989:86-92). In contrast to Bailey he takes up the opposition between friendship, defined as selflessness, and shamelessness or avoidance of shame, understood as self-interested fear of disgrace (Scott 1989:90-91). The honour and shame code is seen to win out over friendship, but what matters is that in the end village hospitality is provided. Hence the outcome overrides the surprise that this happens through a self-centred motive rather than a seemingly altruistic one (Scott 1989:91-92). Scott’s contribution, as with Bailey’s, is positive in tackling head on the fact that ἀναδεία is in some way connected to shamelessness and the honour and shame code, but his interpretation does have drawbacks. Concerned with the positive outcome that village solidarity is respected and exercised Scott runs the risk of arguing that the end justifies the means and that the attitude and motivation are not what matters. He also seems to remove the notion of friendship from the honour and shame code, whereas it would presumably be deemed honourable to behave as a friend towards a friend in need. In fact Scott

cites Aristotle (Scott 1989:90) on the importance and positive function of friendship, but the connection is not then made to honourable behaviour. Finally, there is a tendency in Scott's reading towards an unbalanced view of village life, understanding it in terms of a rather idealistic community of solidarity and cooperation, neglecting the more agonistic, competitive and self-preservational dimensions of such groups (Foster 1967:296; Diaz and Potter 1967:163; Diaz 1967:51; Oakman 1991:159, 175), a tendency motivated more likely than not by Scott's need to see in the parable a positive representation of the kingdom.

Herzog (1994:194-214; 2005:208-212) draws attention to the hospitality of the village community as an example of the moral economy of the peasant (Herzog 1994:203-207; Scott 1976), connecting this, however, with a somewhat different understanding of friendship. On the hospitality front he cites the example of Abraham in Genesis 18:1-21 (Herzog 1994:211) as the epitome of honourable behaviour in relation to strangers, but in terms of friendship he suggests that selflessness, mutual care and altruism were diminishing in occupied first-century Palestine in the face of self-serving patron-client networks from which the poor were increasingly excluded on the grounds of having nothing much to bring to such relationships (Herzog 1994:211). His proposal, therefore, maintains that the elite and poor function according to different codes of honour: the elite along the lines of self-serving patron-client connections and the poor along the lines of mutual solidarity. His analysis of ἀναιδέϊα suggests that it relates to the shamelessness of breaking honour and shame boundaries (Herzog 1994:212-213), leading to his claim that the action of village solidarity in the parable is shameless from the standpoint of the elite, because it is not considered an honourable use of resources in elite circles to direct them towards others in need (Herzog 1994:214).

Herzog's identification of ἀναιδέϊα with boundary-breaking activity is a significant contribution to the understanding of this parable, and will be of use in the reading offered

subsequently. However, his use of this finding in relation to the meaning of the narrative is suspect, for it is defining shamelessness from the angle of the elite. Herzog's general approach is, of course, a socio-economic one, and so he tends to see everything in terms of tensions and struggles between rich and poor, but it seems unwarranted to depict this story about a non-elite village scene as a judgement by the elite on the poor. An additional criticism follows from this, that Herzog places too much emphasis on defining friendship in terms of the patron-client model.

It is evident that, though Bailey, Scott and Herzog all take seriously the cultural aspects of the story, their final interpretation is controlled by their overall model or perspective, be it theological, kingdom-defining or socio-economic. It is not that it is wrong or even avoidable to have a dominant hermeneutical approach. The problems arise, however, when too much weight is given to the model, and to making things fit the model, and insufficient attention is paid to the characters' motives and the internal dynamics at play in the narrative itself.

5.3.2 The Setting of the Parable

Before outlining an alternative reading of the parable three preliminary issues need to be addressed: the context of the story in Luke's Gospel; the structure of the narrative, and the point at which the parable finishes. These are fundamental questions which have considerable bearing on how the parable is interpreted.

The Context in Luke

It is frequently assumed that the key to understanding this parable lies in its immediate literary context of teaching on prayer. (Blomberg 1990:274-277; Boucher 1981:118-120; Caird

1977:152; Creed 1930:155; Donahue 1988:185; Fitzmyer 1985:910; Jeremias 1972:157-159; Marshall 1978:462) The preceding verses (11:1-4) consist of Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer and the succeeding ones (11:9-14) deal with God's response to persistent petitioning. Support for this approach is deemed to be found in a so-called parallel or twin text about prayer in Luke 18:1-8 (Blomberg 1990:275; Catchpole 1983:411-413; Creed 1930:155; Donahue 1988:185), where similar vocabulary is employed (μή μοι κόπους παρέχε (11:7) and διὰ γε τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον (18:5). Indeed Luke 11:5-8 is frequently read in the light of Luke 18:1-8 with the result that not only is Luke 11:5-8 held to be about prayer, but about persistence in prayer.

Several problems arise with this. First, it is a wholly unwarranted assertion that the parable focuses on persistence at all (Bailey 1976:127; Derrett 1978:83; Johnson 1979:123-131; Scott 1989:89). There is no internal evidence for this, there being no suggestion that the friend in search of bread has to badger his sleeping friend into meeting his need. Second, it assumes that the parable in Luke 18:2-5 is itself about prayer, which is not necessarily the case, as is argued in the previous chapter. Third, despite its immediate context, there is no reason to presume that the parable in Luke 11:5-8 deals with the subject of prayer or even with relating to God. Taken alone the narrative considers what happens when a traveller seeks hospitality and it is this event which becomes the catalyst for the villagers' response. Moreover, this same theme of travelling and hospitality is to be found in the wider context of Luke's narrative, particularly from Luke 9:51, including the Samaritan rejection (9:51-56); the call to discipleship (9:57-62); the sending out of the seventy (10:1-24); the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho (10:25-37), and the hospitality at the home of Mary and Martha (10:38-42). Given both this broader context and the internal subject matter of the parable the focus seems to be on hospitality rather than on prayer.

The Structure of the Narrative

The chief issue concerning the narrative structure is whether the hypothetical question is contained in 11:5-6 or 11:5-7. If verses 5 and 6 set up the situation, then verse 7 marks the initial response of the sleeping friend which is then reversed in verse 8 (Boucher 1981:119; Donahue 1988:185; Schottroff 2006:188-190). If, however, the hypothesis extends to verse 7 then there is only one stage in the response. For Jeremias the issue is settled on the basis of the cultural expectation that nobody would ever respond negatively to such a request, and so the response comes in verse 8. (Jeremias 1972:158), though against this runs the argument that too much weight should not be attributed to an over-idealistic view of village solidarity and hospitality, as noted above. Nevertheless three reasons suggest that verses 5-7 are to be seen as the question followed by the reply in verse 8. First is the use of the subjunctive εἰπῆ. (11:7). The syntax is complex throughout the first three verses (Evans 1990:485), but the use of the subjunctive mood at this point lends weight to its being part of the hypothesis. Second, the excuse in verse 7 is unpersuasive, even rather ridiculous, and therefore is to be dismissed as an improbable response (Bailey 1976:124). For Hultgren it constitutes precisely what the reply would not be (Hultgren 2000:229). Third, verse 8 is better understood as an emphatic reply to the question rather than a reported change of mind (Jeremias 1972:158). Verse 8, then, provides the conclusion which is significant not just for the response of the sleeping friend, but, more significantly, for the motive behind his response.

The Extent of the Parable

The preceding discussion proposes that verse 8 brings the parable to an end. This requires further clarification, however, and calls for some comment because of the λέγω ὑμῖν at the beginning of the verse. It will be argued in relation to other parables, notably Luke 14:16-23 and Luke 18:10-13, that the same phrase, λέγω ὑμῖν, introduces the application or a comment on the parable and therefore does not belong to the story itself. Clearly it is to be understood that this is the voice of Jesus addressing his audience, but it is oversimplistic to maintain that in all occurrences of λέγω ὑμῖν the text is moving from parable to application. While this is evidently true in such cases as Luke 15:7 and 15:10 (Fitzmyer 1985:912) and is debatable in relation to Luke 14:24 (Braun 1995:121-126) and Luke 18:14, in the present case of Luke 11:8 the λέγω ὑμῖν introduces the climax of the narrative. It serves to provide a momentary pause in the storytelling before the final action is pronounced. Far from offering a clearly identifiable application it sets up for the audience the teasing question of the contrast between action motivated by friendship or by shamelessness, which is the focal point of the story and which is lost in the subsequent verses (11:9-11) as they sidestep the issue of motive and concentrate simply on asking and receiving.

Discussion of these three preliminary points leads to the conclusion that the response outlined in verse 8 is to be regarded as the climax of the story, which is not about prayer but about friendship, honour and shame and the motivation behind the sleeping friend's action. It is, then, these aspects which will form the focus of the reading that follows, in which the parable is allowed to stand on its own and is not subject to interpretation from its immediate literary context.

5.3.3 *Reading the Parable of the Stranger in the Midst (Luke 11:5-8)*

Though the parable consists of only four verses it comprises three distinct parts. Verses 5 and 6 set up the problem caused by the arrival of a stranger in the village, a traveller off the road, who nevertheless has some connection with a friend in the village, who finds he lacks sufficient food to offer appropriate hospitality. Verse 7 outlines a potential rejection of the request by the sleeping friend, before verse 8 both indicates the actual response, dismissing the negative attitude of verse 7, and, more significantly, focusing attention on the motivation behind the gift. The parable, then, may be viewed as containing three specific movements. The first is the arrival of the traveller in the village; the second is the requesting friend's brief journey in the direction of his fellow villager to ask for bread, and the third is the movement of food from the sleeping villager to his friend and to the stranger.

To see the narrative in terms of these three movements is particularly illuminating because it introduces the reader to a series of relationships: the friendship between the stranger and the first friend; the friendship between the requesting villager and the sleeping villager, and then, of particular significance with regard to this interpretation, the relationship between the travelling stranger and the sleeping villager, which remains a distant and anonymous one. While the one making the request relates as friend to both the traveller and the sleeping one, the latter finds himself in a more complex network whereby he is relating both to someone he knows as a friend and fellow member of the village and to a stranger who comes from beyond the boundary of the immediate village community. The question arises, therefore, as to whether the sleeping friend's priority lies with the intra-village or the extra-village dimension. Is his preoccupation with village solidarity (Bailey 1976; Scott 1989) or with relating to an outsider (Herzog 1994)? Though the provision of food achieves both these ends, the crux of the parable lies in the motivation outlined

in verse 8, which suggests that it is the impact on the stranger which takes precedence. This conclusion is informed by analysis both of the text itself and of cultural anthropological research on the theme of honour and shame in relation to hospitality by scholars such as Sahlins (1972), Mauss (1966), Moxnes (1988), Pitt-Rivers (1992) and Peristiany (1966), as the following reading indicates.

The Request for Assistance (11:5-6)

The opening of the parable clearly lays the initial emphasis on the relationship between two friends living in the same village. The one finds himself in the embarrassing situation of not being able to provide the required hospitality for another of his friends. On the one hand, as interpreters point out, it is a question of honour both for the individual and for the village to offer appropriate hospitality (Pitt-Rivers 1966:56; Jeremias 1972:157; Bailey 1976:120-121; Scott 1989:87; Herzog 1994:201; Stiller 2005:91), not least in the light of Abraham's example and the Deuteronomic codes (Herzog 1994:210-211). On the other hand, individuals' poverty can confront them with an awkward choice, for, as Sahlins indicates, the acuteness of self-preservation can mean that families hold on to what they have (Sahlins 1972:214) or that it is deemed a better insurance policy to support others in need, so that the favour will be returned when dire straits strike them, a point addressed by Pitt-Rivers in his vivid example from France (Pitt-Rivers 1992:232-233).

The parable's narrative does not dwell on the dilemmas facing poorer communities with regard to offering hospitality, but assumes that this needs to happen, even in the middle of the night. The fact that the stranger is travelling at night is understood either as being normal, since this would avoid walking during the heat of the day (Plummer 1900:298; Creed 1930:158;

Marshall 1978: 464) or as being unusual (Bailey 1976:121), but it may well be at the literary level that the time of night is significant because it emphasises the sense of disturbance. The activity of the day is over, the village is still and families are shut up in their own homes.

So the key issue, at this stage of the story at least, is to understand the cultural expectations with regard to the giving and receiving of gifts or the lending of assistance when requested between two friends inhabiting the same village. It is to be noted that φίλος is used four times in these few verses and fifteen times in Luke, far more than in Matthew and Mark (Moxnes 1988:70), suggesting that friendship is an important concept for Luke in general and in this passage in particular. It is necessary, therefore, to explore the relationship between friendship and gift-giving and the concept of reciprocity as set out in the discussion of the work of Sahlins, Mauss and Pitt-Rivers in the initial part of this chapter.

Reading the parable in the light of Sahlins' model of reciprocity suggests that the relationship between the two village friends and the giving and receiving of bread and anything else that is needed (11:8) is based on generalised reciprocity. As friends, the gift is given or the service provided with no immediate expectation of reciprocation. However, as Mauss points out, there is still likely to be a perceived obligation to reciprocate at some point. The object given is inalienable, that is, it is connected to the giver who is to some extent giving away something of himself (Mauss 1966:33). The act of giving, then, establishes or strengthens an interpersonal bond, and though the giving may appear to be voluntary, it does in fact mask an obligation to reciprocate (Mauss 1966:41-42), thus representing a challenge to the recipient.

This obligation to reciprocate and the challenge it entails is contested by Pitt-Rivers, however. As indicated above, in his work on friendship, grace and reciprocity, he concludes that the central issue is that of motivation, whether the response is made from the standpoint of freedom or obligation (Pitt-Rivers 1992:231-235). There is mutuality and reciprocity in

friendship, but what matters is the intention that lies behind the relationship. This is significant with regard to the parable, since it directs attention to the question of what motivates the gift-giving of the sleeping friend. Is he driven by a sense of mutual obligation or by something beyond this?

The Rejected Response (11:7)

Though Schottroff maintains that the τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν of verse 5 “expects neither swift refusal nor agreements, but reflection on whether the hearers would make such urgent demands or not” (Schottroff 2006:189), the predominant view among scholars is that this introduction sets up a question to which the anticipated answer is: “Unthinkable” (Jeremias 1972:158; Bailey 1976:121; Scott 1989:91; Herzog 1994:202; Culpepper 1995:236; Stiller 2005:94-95). The cultural requirement to offer hospitality and to be in solidarity with other members of the village community makes it impossible to conceive of a negative response from the sleeping friend. Verse 7 is therefore understood as being the continuation of the hypothetical scenario begun in verses 5 and 6. It will be recalled from earlier in this discussion that village solidarity and hospitality towards strangers are not necessarily foregone conclusions in a situation of poverty and acute need, and so it is not impossible that Schottroff’s notion of reflection could be accurate, though it would be a reflection on deciding whether or not to help out. The predominant reading gains support from two further angles, however: first, the use of the subjunctive εἴπη which renders the response something less than emphatic, and, second, the ridiculous nature of the excuse offered (Stiller 2005:95). In a situation requiring an urgent need to be met the argument that it is impossible to be disturbed is unconvincing.

While the excuse may lack credibility, it nevertheless plays an important role with regard to the visual imagery of the parable, for it depicts the disturbance of a second boundary in the narrative. The first line to be crossed is that between the village and what lies beyond it, accomplished by the traveller's arrival. The second boundary lies between the family home and the rest of the village, and at this point the door is shut, the boundary line is clearly identifiable and not yet crossed, though the expectation is that the door will be opened and the threshold traversed. This boundary crossing is significant, for it holds the key to understanding the climax and conclusion of verse 8.

The Shameless Response (11:8)

The interpolation of λέγω ὑμῖν lends weight to what is now presented as the actual response of the sleeping friend, and, in so doing, serves as further support for treating verse 7 as an inconceivable reaction. The parable is not offering an initial negative response followed by a change of mind (Scott 1989:91) but a rejected course of action, followed by the acceptable one. Nor is the story simply concerned with the fact that the sleeping friend fulfils his friend's request. Rather it focuses on the motivation behind the help offered. It is not friendship but ἀναίδεῖα that counts, which calls for a brief investigation of the meaning of ἀναίδεῖα αὐτοῦ – what ἀναίδεῖα is and to whom it belongs.

Though some scholars hold ἀναίδεῖα to be a positive term denoting the avoidance of shame (Bailey 1976:128-133; Johnson 1979:123-131; Nolland 1993:624-627), Waetjen concluding that this is the first occasion when the term is used in a positive sense against a previous history of overriding negative use (Waetjen 2001:703-721), the weight of evidence concerning usage suggests that it is indeed negative, although Snodgrass sees Luke 11:8 as the catalyst for future

positive use of the word (Snodgrass 1997:505-513; 2008:443). With regard to which character ἀναδεία describes there are those who maintain that it refers to the sleeping friend (Bailey 1976:125-133; Huffard 1978:156; Scott 1989:89-91; Culpepper 1995:236), the reasons for this stance being, as outlined by Hultgren, the need of the sleeping friend to avoid the potential shame which would arise out of failing to fulfil the requirements of hospitality and the view that it is this man who, as the central figure in the story, represents God and God's responsiveness to prayer (Hultgren 2000:230). On the other hand many, including Hultgren, propose that ἀναδεία qualifies the requesting friend who acts with shamelessness or troublesome persistence (Hultgren 2000:231; Oesterley 1936:221-222; Perkins 1981:194-195; Smith 1937:147; Wenham 1989:181; Liefeld 2000:251).

The meaning of ἀναδεία is "shamelessness" (Catchpole 1983:409-411; Bailey 1976:125-127), though it is often translated as the "boldness" (NIV) or "persistence" (NRSV) of the requesting friend, translations which arise from the context of prayer. It is inconceivable that God could be characterised in such negative terms as "shamelessness", so the ἀναδεία is attached to the petitioner, whose shamelessness is then interpreted either as boldness (Derrett 1978:83; Blomberg 1990:276) in bringing his request at midnight or as persistence in continuing to demand an answer (Schottroff 2006:190).

There are several problems with this. First, it is not necessarily the case that making a request at midnight is inappropriate. Second, as noted above, there is no evidence in the story for persistence. Third, ἀναδεία does not mean persistence, but shamelessness (Marshall 1978:465). These problems dissolve once the context of prayer ceases to control the parable's meaning and ἀναδεία is attributed to the sleeping friend, which makes more sense, for then the ἀναδεία αὐτοῦ is parallel to φίλον αὐτοῦ and provides the contrast in motivation. There remains,

however, the problem of understanding what is meant by the villager's shamelessness and why it is contrasted with friendship.

Though the earlier critique raised questions about Herzog's ultimate interpretation of the parable, the present reading draws on the valuable groundwork of his analysis and identification of ἀναιδέϊα as being concerned with the crossing, even violation, of social boundaries and expected behaviour (Herzog 1994:213). The sleeping friend's behaviour does seem to suggest a freedom to cross boundaries and to exceed limits. Not only does he refuse to be restricted by the inconvenient time of day or the degree of need. More significantly he is not limited by the bonds of friendship or by the solidarity of group attachment (Stegemann 2002:57) - his response is not "for the sake" of his friend, but because of the need to provide food for the stranger. Neither is he limited by the fact that the stranger is an outsider in relation to himself and to the village.

The juxtaposition of friendship and shamelessness in verse 8 indicates that the focus is directed towards the stranger in the midst rather than the fellow villager. In anthropological terms the sleeping friend ventures beyond the system of generalised reciprocity. If his response is not for the sake of his friend, but for the sake of someone he does not know, has never met, and possibly will never see, there is no sense of reciprocal obligation. It is quite possible that the requesting friend may feel an obligation to reciprocate the gift of bread, but the sleeping friend's shamelessness is defined by his rejection of any kind of reciprocity in favour of extending anonymous hospitality to an outsider from across the border.

5.3.4 Concluding Remarks

It is illuminating to set alongside this parable a story from the Hebrew Bible about a stranger in the midst – the narrative of Naaman and Elisha in 2 Kings 5. Though played out on an

international canvas, it too deals with issues of hospitality (the choice between acceptance and rejection); the crossing of boundaries (both ethnic and social), and reciprocity. The allusion to the story in Luke 4:27 strengthens the appropriateness of the comparison.

Naaman is a multiple boundary-breaker. He is a foreigner, unclean with leprosy and, as commander of the army, the opposition (5:1). Yet there is an ambiguity about him, for he is also an instrument of God, a piece of information which is suggestive for the ensuing story, for the reader is confronted with the question: Is this simply a story about Naaman's restoration to physical wholeness or, more subtly, about Naaman once again figuring as the instrument of God, transgressing and undermining political, religious and social frontiers? At the political level Naaman's arrival is viewed by the king of Israel as a threat (5:7). The political establishment get themselves into a tangle which, without Elisha's intervention, risks ending in another war. At the religious level the unclean Naaman is made well by a foreign prophet who also grants Naaman a dispensation in his worship of Rimmon (5:18-19). At the social level the protagonists find themselves following, even obeying, the instructions or advice of those of lower social status: Naaman travels to Israel at the suggestion of a foreign slave girl (5:2-3); the king of Israel's dilemma is solved by Elisha, and it is Naaman's servants who convince their outraged master to do as the foreign prophet commands (5:13).

At the heart of all this boundary-crossing lies a considerable degree of fragility, for at any point this story can go wrong if there is refusal to traverse these borders. If Naaman dismisses the voice of a foreign slave girl the action is not even initiated. If Elisha does not intervene the king remains trapped in the challenge of reciprocating the gift of the king of Aram. If Naaman remains indignant at being healed from a distance the consequence could well spill over from the personal to the political. The climax is then provided by Elisha's rejection of reciprocity. Naaman sets out with the notion of balanced reciprocity – the gifts are considered to balance the healing of a

valuable asset. Elisha meets Naaman's need, but rejects any reciprocal payment. The final boundary is crossed.

When this brief exploration of 2 Kings 5 is juxtaposed with the parable in Luke 11:5-8 what emerges is a clear focus on the challenges presented by the arrival of an outsider. 2 Kings 5, as with the parable, may be construed as dealing with ἀναιδέϊα – and on two counts: first, Naaman is prepared to disengage himself sufficiently from his own status-driven self-image in order to receive Elisha's gift; second, Elisha is not only willing to extend his reach beyond Israel to a foreigner, and a conquering foreigner at that, but in doing so to reject the honourable exchange of gifts and venture beyond reciprocity.

Confirmation that the parable may appropriately be read as an exploration of how to respond to the Stranger in the Midst emerges from the wider context of the parable, most notably the rejection in Samaria (Luke 9:51-56) and the instructions to the seventy (Luke 10:1-12). Both these passages deal with hospitality extended or refused to God's representatives or instruments. If Naaman is understood as God's instrument, perhaps the stranger who arrives at midnight is also to be read as God's representative – the one who challenges the boundaries and anticipates a response which goes beyond the honour and shame code of strict reciprocity, be it generalised or balanced.

5.4 The Parable of the Writing on the Wall (Luke 14:16-23)

A further parable that encompasses the themes of hospitality and reciprocity is to be found in Luke 14:16-23, to which attention now turns.

5.4.1 Critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog

Bailey offers some typically helpful insights into the cultural setting of the parable with information about custom and practices relating to shared meals and invitations in a first-century context (Bailey 1980:88-113). All this plays a subordinate role, however, to his essentially theological reading which takes as its starting point the so-called messianic banquet passage of Isaiah 25:6-9 (Bailey 1980:88-93) which, according to Bailey, announces both God's victory and the inclusion of the Gentiles. The initially invited guests' rejection of the host, which precipitates the inclusion of further guests allegorically identified as Gentiles, is deemed to symbolise the rejection of Jesus (Bailey 1980:110-111). This is not an uncommon line of interpretation based on salvation history, but it contains a number of problems. These include the prevailing of theological concepts over the social context, such that the dynamics of the narrative are dictated by the allegorical interpretation, rather than being allowed to produce their own story, as well as the difficulty of justifying the Christological identification of the host with Jesus. Jesus does not belong to the social elite, nor does it appear to be the pattern of his public work that he engages with the elite first and then, upon rejection, turns his attention to the non-elite of Israel and the Gentiles. Furthermore Bailey's emphasis on what he calls the host's grace in issuing further invitations (Bailey 1980:111) disregards the stated emotion of the host, the key motivating factors in the second set of invitations being his anger and the desire to have a full house (Luke 14:23) (Breech 1983:133-134; Schottroff 2006:50). Importing grace into the parable diverts attention towards theology and away from the protagonist's actual emotions. Finally, it must be questioned whether Isaiah 25, which is a song of victory over Israel's enemies, holds any relevance for a parable about invitations to a great dinner, rejected by some and accepted by others.

In Scott's interpretation "the meal stands for the kingdom, and admittance to the meal defines those who are saved" (Scott 1989:172). Though he detects no direct allusion to Isaiah 25:6-9, he nevertheless claims that it provides the background mytheme of celebrating God's victory over his enemies, which is then subverted by the parable. The host is powerless to take vengeance on those who have snubbed him and so engages in downward mobility, the loss of honour accruing from joining "the shameless poor" (Scott 1989:174), offering an alternative vision of the kingdom based on the inversion of the honour and shame code. It is difficult, however, to draw any decisive conclusions about the host's change of status, since inviting members of the poorer classes to a meal which is already prepared does not necessarily mean that his long-term future resides with them. A second comment is also required with regard to Scott's originating structure, which collapses the two further invitations in Luke into one (Scott 1989:161). It is well understood that his intention is to search the parallel texts in Luke, Matthew and *Thomas* to discern an original structure, but in this instance this implies the loss of a significant aspect of Luke's social reality. As will be seen in the reading that follows, there is evidence that the final two sets of guests come from two distinct parts of the city (Rohrbaugh 1991:144-145; Braun 1995:81-97), making it clear that this takes place in an urban context, not a village one (Scott 1989:173). Such details are significant in discerning the specific cultural context in which the drama is played out.

Herzog focuses on what he deems to be a theme of reversal in the parable - "the inclusion of the lost means the exclusion of the original guests" (Herzog 2005:207). Drawing on the image of the messianic banquet in Isaiah 25:6-9, the narrative becomes a "great banquet from below" (Herzog 2005:208). The original guests are understood as members of the Jewish elite who reject God, who consequently judges and excludes them, Luke 14:24 being the key verse which confirms the exclusion. Herzog's proposal is a surprising contradiction of his usual approach to

parable research, in which he eschews “theological” interpretation (Herzog 1994:9-29), for, despite acknowledging the cultural insights of Bailey and Rohrbaugh, he is drawn into a theological reading highly dependent on Luke 14:24 and the notion of reversal. Such a reading is questionable on the grounds that Luke 14:24 lies outside the parable, as is discussed in the next part of this chapter, and that the argument that the inclusion of the poor amounts to the exclusion of the elite is unconvincing, since the latter are not excluded, but exclude themselves. It is the host who is rejected, not the guests, and the poor are only included because the meal is ready and the host wants a full house. It would seem that Herzog is searching for a reversal theme which fits his socio-economic model, but which is not substantiated by the parable itself.

5.4.2 The Setting of the Parable

Following on from this critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog, but before proceeding to a close reading of the narrative, two preliminary issues need to be addressed: first, a brief consideration of the three extant versions of the parable in the Gospels and, second, the context in Luke.

The Parable in Luke 14:16-23, Matthew 22:1-14 and Thomas 64

Comparison of these three versions is instructive because it assists in the identification of key themes peculiar to each account. All three share the outline of a host inviting guests to a banquet or dinner, invitations which are rejected by one set of guests and consequently extended to others, but beyond this central core there are numerous differences. These similarities and differences have led some to conclude that the versions in Matthew and Luke emanate from Q

(Conzelmann 1960:111; Hendrickx 1986:131; Donahue 1988:93; Jones 1995:401), and others to take the view that they come from their own respective traditions, M and L (Dodd 1961:91; Jeremias 1972:63; Linnemann 1966:166; Davies and Allison III 1997:194). With regard to the account in *Thomas* there is likewise a division of opinion between those who see a dependence on the versions in Matthew or Luke (Grant and Freedman 1960:170) and those who argue for independence (Jeremias 1972:24; Patterson 1992:77-78; Funk 1993:352).

Matthew's version is often held to be furthest from the original, making out of the story an allegory of salvation history, importing elements from the parable of the vineyard tenants and adding the sections about the wedding garment and the destruction of the city (Scott 1989:162-163; Crossan 1992:69; Swartley 1997:179-180). In Matthew the dinner is elevated to a royal wedding banquet hosted by the king; the invitations are sent out by a number of servants; the refusals are not accompanied by excuses and the king is angered by these refusals. *Thomas* also carries the theme of judgement and condemnation, but in his case it is directed at businessmen and merchants. Contrary to Matthew the meal is a more modest affair, there is no mention of the host's anger and there are four excuses. Luke is similar to *Thomas* regarding the scale of the meal and the singular servant, but has three excuses rather than four, and Luke mirrors Matthew in mentioning the host's anger. The two distinguishing characteristics of Luke's version, however, are the identification of those to be invited off the streets – the poor, maimed, blind and lame, often regarded as an insertion from Luke 14:12 (Breech 1983:119) and the extending of an additional invitation to those just beyond the city gate (Rohrbaugh 1991:144). This means that the final image Luke presents is of an unanticipated yet clearly identifiable alternative community gathered around a feast, a stark contrast to the note of judgement that provides the final picture in Matthew and *Thomas*.

The Context in Luke

The broader context of the parable in Luke is instruction about table etiquette for guests (14:7-11) and for hosts (14:12-14), while the immediate setting is provided by the introductory comment in 14:15 and concluding remark in 14:24. Verse 14:15 forms a link from the general advice of 14:12-14 (Braun 1995:62) to the specific story of 14:16-23, and the consequence of the beatitude is to bring to the fore the idea of feasting and the kingdom, which for some interpreters shapes the meaning of the parable around the messianic banquet (Bailey 1980:88-93; Blomberg 1990: 233-234; Donahue 1988:140).

Verse 14:24 is held by some to be integral to the parable (Braun 1995:121-126), such that the speaker is the host, while for others it stands outside the parable and is a comment directed by Jesus to his audience (Creed 1930:192; Jeremias 1972:177). Three reasons are advanced in favour of this latter stance. First, the use of ὑμῖν indicates a plural audience rather than a singular slave (14:23). Second, λέγω ὑμῖν is a Lukan expression (Jeremias 1972:45; Fitzmyer 1985:1052; Scott 1989:257) which tends to indicate Jesus' speech (Braun 1995:123). Third, the statement interpreted as a threat or insult to those who rejected the initial invitation makes little sense on the lips of the host, since they were the ones who decided not to come and so are hardly likely to be troubled by his wounded pride (Creed 1930:192). Braun counters this view with the suggestion that Luke inherited the λέγω ὑμῖν application formula from Q and transferred it to the host without altering it, in a similar way to Luke 19:26 (Braun 1995:124-125). In addition he argues that 14:24 is not to be seen as a threat to those who refused the invitation, but as a statement which confirms the host's economic conversion. They will not taste his dinner because he is severing contact with them and aligning himself with the poor and marginalised (Braun 1995:122). The problem with Braun's first point is that it suggests careless redaction by Luke.

The problem with the second point is the assumption that the final guest list represents the new community to which the host now belongs. While it is not impossible that the host is irrevocably burning his bridges with the elite, it is perhaps too bold a conclusion. It is the judgement here, therefore, that 14:24 is a comment on the parable rather than the host's final statement. Having ascertained the boundaries of the parable the following reading is proposed.

5.4.3 Reading the Parable of the Writing on the Wall

The narrative plot progresses through three distinct phases. First, the host sends out his slave to call the invited to the meal (14:16-17). Second, these guests make their excuses (14:18-20). Third, in anger the host sends his slave out on two further occasions – to bring in the poor, maimed, blind and lame, and then those from further afield (14:21-23).

The First Invitations (14:16-17)

Since it is a commonplace among many scholars to read Luke's parable as an allegory (Manson 1957:129; Bailey 1980:88-113; Drury 1985:124; Donahue 1988:143-146; Talbert 1988:197-198), it is often assumed that the host represents God (Manson 1957:129; Reiser 1997:242). This line of argument is severely undermined, however, by the fact that the host in 14:16 does precisely what Jesus has instructed hosts not to do in 14:12-13, namely not to invite their fellow elite who possess the resources to reciprocate the hospitality. Such an inconsistency within a matter of a few verses would suggest illogicality and incongruity in Luke's storytelling. This problem does not arise, however, if, as is the case here, a non-allegorical reading focused on the social and cultural dimensions of the story's first-century setting is pursued.

Whereas some see a connection between this narrative and the Bar Ma'jan story (Jeremias 1972:179; Schottroff 2006:51), suggesting that the host is rejected because he is an upstart wealthy tax collector attempting to ingratiate himself with the elite, others are content to see him simply as a wealthy member of the urban elite (Scott 1989:169; Rohrbaugh 1991:139; Braun 1995:98-100). Identified initially as ἄνθρωπος τις, he is also a κύριος with slaves (14:21-22) and an οἰκοδεσπότης (Braun 1995:73), who is organising a δείπνον μέγα to which he is inviting πολλούς (14:16) with purchasing power. This is clearly a man of means (Schottroff and Stegemann 1986:100-102; Rohrbaugh 1991:137-147).

The parable locates the host and his guests in an urban setting (Rohrbaugh 1991; Braun 1995). As Sjoberg points out, this is where the elite would spend much of their time, for although their wealth came from ownership of land and exploitation of rural communities, the city offered them protection from bandits (Sjoberg 1960:113), solidarity with their fellow elite (Sjoberg 1960:114), and a means of governing the series of villages connected to the city (Sjoberg 1960:114). Security and solidarity were found not only by inhabiting urban areas in general, but by occupying the central area walled off from outlying parts in order to minimise contact with the non-elite (Sjoberg 1960:97-99). It is precisely this desire for solidarity and security which motivates the host to hold a great dinner, for this provides him with an opportunity to embed himself more deeply within elite society by means of an honourable display of wealth and hospitality (Braun 1995:100) and by engaging his peers in the game of balanced reciprocity (Braun 1995:104-105; Neyrey 1991:362-363). As noted previously in reference to the work of Sahlins (1972), balanced reciprocity requires that a gift of equivalent value be returned to the giver, which means that the initial gift or invitation poses a challenge to the recipient. So, as Mauss indicates, gift-giving entails a competitive element (Mauss 1966:37), for the

unreciprocated gift renders the recipients inferior (Mauss 1966:65), reducing their status and degree of honour.

It is clear that this dinner is not simply an occasion to bring people together for a friendly social gathering, but primarily an attempt by the host to elevate himself and his reputation among his fellow elite, carving out for himself a social niche which offers him security. He does this by challenging his guests to respond, first by coming to the meal and then by reciprocating the invitation in due course (Braun 1995:105-106). It is this challenge that provides the explanation for the two-step invitation. Though it has been suggested that it is no surprise that the guests cannot come since they have not been given adequate warning (Crossan 1992:71), this ignores the customary issuing of double invitations, (Creed 1930:191; Bailey 1980:94-95; Rohrbaugh 1991:141; Braun 1995:103), which allowed time between the advance invitation and the final summoning for guests to discover who else had been invited and whether it would harm their social status to be seen in their company (Rohrbaugh 1991), a line supported by the following comment by Plutarch

(Chilion) showed most excellent judgement when he received his invitation yesterday, in not agreeing to come until he had learned the name of every person invited (Plutarch *Septem sapientum convivium* 148A).

He needs assurance that they will be

“the right kind of guests” (Plutarch *Septem sapientum convivium* 147E).

This social convention means that the host will not be certain of his guests' attendance until they respond to the final summons. Hosting a meal is evidently not without risk.

The Excuses (14:28-20)

The significance of the three excuses receives different interpretations. Linnemann suggests that the guests are not excusing themselves, but informing their host that they will be late because of the tasks still to be accomplished (Linnemann 1966:89). Derrett and Ballard propose a connection with Deuteronomy 20:5-7 and the call to holy war (Derrett 1970:129-136; Ballard 1972:341-350), though it is difficult to detect a meaningful link between engaging in war and sharing around a common table (Fitzmyer 1985:1056; Braun 1995:80). Braun discerns in the excuses a preoccupation with acquisitiveness and the owning of property, clearly seen in the first two guests and, Braun maintains, evident also in the marriage excuse, since marriage can be understood as taking ownership of a woman (Braun 1995:73-80). Seeking to make sense of the excuses, however, is to miss the point, for they are ridiculous lies (Bailey 1980:95). Nobody purchases land without prior inspection, or even one yoke of oxen without testing them out. In a patriarchal society nobody uses his wife as an excuse, insulting his host by rendering him less important than a woman (Hultgren 2000:337; Herzog 2005:206). The excuses are not intended to be taken seriously in themselves, for that would make the guests appear foolish. They are meant as a deliberate rejection of the occasion and of the host.

At first glance this seems to be a rejection and snubbing of the host alone, but the matter is more complex and ambiguous than this, if proper weight is accorded to the comments made above about the two-step invitation system. If the guests have taken time to check out the identity of the other invitees and found that the guest list does not match up to their requirements, then

they are separating themselves off not only from the host but from one another. The meaning of ἅπὸ μιᾶς (14:18) is unclear, with readings ranging from “with one voice” and “with one opinion” to “all alike” and “at the same time” (Fitzmyer 1985:1055), but it does not denote solidarity in snubbing the host so much as the fact that they all make excuses. The consequence is the snubbing of the host, but the cause is division among the elite. The result is not only the isolation of the host, but the fragmentation of the peer group.

The Alternative Community (14:21-23)

The slave’s report that none of the invited guests are coming provokes understandable anger from the host. Yet this strong emotional response passes largely unnoticed in attempts to explain the host’s subsequent action. The motivation behind bringing in the poor is held to be grace, not vengeance (Bailey 1980:100), a counter-insult (Scott 1989:172), exclusion of the elite (Herzog 2005:207-208), or conversion to the poor (Braun 1995:113-121). The picture presented in the parable, however, is of an angry man who directs his slave to go immediately and find others to eat the meal. This is not a course of action over which he deliberates before coming to a considered conclusion, and it may well be a decision that he ultimately regrets. In the heat of the moment he makes an undeniably bold move which may well have certain consequences for his future social position.

The alternative community comprises non-elites living in the πλατείας and ῥύμας of the city, those parts beyond the central areas inhabited by the elite, but still within the city walls, (Braun 1995:81-88) and then also those living along the ὁδοὺς and φραγμοὺς, just beyond the city boundary (Rohrbaugh 1991:140-146). Since these are the utterly poor, destitute and impure it has been suggested that such an extraordinary example of social boundary crossing would elicit a

high degree of reticence from those being called, resulting in the need to compel (ἀνάγκασον) them to come in (Fitzmyer 1985:1057; Rohrbaugh 1991:145) While this seems perfectly plausible, the use of ἀνάγκασον might equally be attributed to the host's anger and frustration and to his goal of filling his house.

Braun contends that by the end of the story the host has undergone a social conversion, breaking away from the ranks of the elite and associating himself with the non-elite (see also Green 1997:554-563 and Tannehill 1992:2:1603-1616). In cultural anthropological terms the meal changes from a ceremony, which confirms group values and membership, to a ritual, which marks the crossing of boundary lines (Braun 1995:121). This reading is suspect on two grounds, however. First, it takes insufficient account of the emotionally-charged motivation of the host. It is his anger that precipitates his action and which outweighs considerations regarding his honour and status. Second, it suggests that this connection with the non-elite is going to extend beyond the dinner. There is no indication in the parable whether this is the case or not, but it is quite plausible to interpret the final actions as a short-term use of the poor in order to fill his house. Admittedly this is an outrageous step given the social stratification of first-century Palestine, but, rather than demonstrating unequivocally that the host has crossed over to the non-elite, it depicts the vulnerability of the man and the uncertainty regarding his status. The parable leaves the issue unresolved as to whom this man now belongs. His very identity is in question.

5.4.4 Concluding Remarks

Attempts are made to connect this parable with Isaiah 25:6-9, but much more is to be gained from a comparison with the story of Belshazzar's feast in Daniel 5. A number of parallels are immediately evident. Belshazzar holds a feast for the elite members of his kingdom, in

anthropological terms, a ceremony which is a means of confirming status (Neyrey 1991:361-387). Interestingly, however, it is in seeking to emphasise his power and sovereignty by using the temple vessels (5:2-4), symbolic of the conquest of Israel and of Israel's God, that the turning point comes. The writing on the wall provokes considerable fear in Belshazzar, exposing his vulnerability, to the extent that he turns for help to the outsider and exile, Daniel, (5:13ff) who announces the fragility and end of the kingdom. (5:24-30). Daniel 5, then, is about a feast that goes wrong, concluding in a totally unanticipated way. It is a narrative that contains very similar elements and themes to the parable in Luke 14:16-23 – feasting, vulnerability, threatened identity, change in status, disorientation and significant outsiders.

Central to the narrative in Daniel 5 is the encounter between Belshazzar and Daniel. Hitherto Daniel has been ignored by the king (Fewell 1991:103), but now he is potentially useful. So he enters into an exchange of balanced reciprocity (5:16), offering Daniel a reward in return for his expertise. Daniel refuses this initially (5:17), but ultimately accepts the elevation in status conferred by Belshazzar. (5:29). As the feasting draws to a close, the empire is crumbling, the honour and power of the elite are under threat, and, in contrast to all this, the outsider is ultimately recognised and honoured for his intrinsic value.

The story of the parable does not take place on such a grand level, but in its way it is just as dramatic, for while it leaves open the question about the host's new identity and while his action is motivated by anger and frustration rather than collected thought, the consequence is that the outsiders, the poor and destitute, are not just thrown the odd coin in alms, but are given a taste of a different status. This is no longer a house from which they are excluded or in which they perform the menial tasks, but a house where they recline at table and eat the good things. The writing on the wall emerging from the parable is that a certain blurring of the edges is occurring. Group solidarity among the elite is less secure. Lines of demarcation between wealthy and poor

are less clear. Identity and group attachment are less certain. Once the dinner is over, even if the host seeks to re-establish himself with the elite and even if the final guests never enjoy such quality food again, the possibility of more inclusive table fellowship, so significant in Luke's presentation of Jesus, lies deep within the memory.

5.5 Conclusion

The question posed at the outset of this chapter was how the two parables under investigation relate to the theme of hospitality, and particularly to Malina's model with its bias towards the threat of the stranger and the requirement to respond in a competitive fashion in order to uphold any honour and status being challenged. While both parables clearly deal not only with the providing of sustenance, but also with the entertaining of outsiders, neither of them treats the strangers in an agonistic way. Contrary to the notion of securing territorial borders and testing the stranger, the interpretations presented in the course of this discussion demonstrate that the focus of the narratives is on boundary-breaking, by which the insider moves in the direction of the outsider, rather than the reverse. In *The Stranger in the Midst* (Luke 11:5-8) it is a preoccupation with the need of the stranger that predominates, rather than merely helping out a local friend, and in *The Writing on the Wall* (Luke 14:16-23) it is the image of the poor traipsing across the city to populate the house of a wealthy man which catches the imagination, as a rejected member of the elite abandons the conventions of in-group reciprocity and takes the initiative in inviting outsiders. Significantly both stories are concerned with individuals, who, momentarily at least, venture beyond established forms of reciprocity, the consequences of which are far from certain. The sleeping friend and the host find themselves caught up in unexpected circumstances demanding immediate and decisive responses. What is particularly striking in *The Writing on the*

Wall is the movement of the host from calculated action to an impetuous, emotional response as his initial plans to organise an orderly meal with a closely controlled guest list turn into a desire, driven by anger, to have a full house of those with whom he has no specific relationship. The actions of the sleeping friend and host respectively take them beyond their original group attachment in the direction of outsiders, against whom they refuse to discriminate. This movement both necessitates a re-evaluation of their own identity, and leads to an undermining of social norms, thereby exposing a certain fragility within the social structures of the day, and in the process what emerges is a broader, more-inclusive and less agonistic picture of hospitality than that for which Malina's model allows.

Chapter Six

Wealth and Poverty

6.1 Introduction

Wealth and poverty are essentially relative terms and therefore define not so much an absolute condition as positions on a wide spectrum, extending from the very rich at one end to the destitute at the other, a point underscored by the very use of stratification language to describe economic status in agrarian societies in general and in first-century Palestine in particular (Herzog 1994:53-73; Rohrbaugh 2006:19-30; Saldarini 1988:35-49). For members of the Context Group, however, wealth and poverty are not to be understood solely in economic terms, but as an integral part of the honour and shame code, in which to be called “rich” is a moral and social statement denoting greed and the power to deprive others of what belongs to them, while to be called “poor” is an indication of an inability to sustain and defend a given status in society (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:400). Central to increase and decrease in wealth is, they propose, the idea of limited good, whereby one person’s gain necessarily entails another’s loss (Malina 1981:71-93; 2001:97-111; Neyrey 1998:122-127; Neyrey and Rohrbaugh 2001:464-483; Rohrbaugh 2006:109-123), and so the purpose of this chapter is to assess initially how appropriate the model of limited good is for an understanding of wealth and poverty, before proceeding to an investigation of two parables in Luke’s Gospel which have as their primary

focus the economic status of the protagonists, with the intention of ascertaining the degree to which they uphold or subvert the Context Group's view of wealth and poverty and, in particular, of limited good. The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) depicts the extremes of wealth and poverty and examines the relationship between rich and poor, while the Wealthy Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20) poses questions about the capacity of wealth to offer security, well-being and freedom. Together these two narratives afford the opportunity to enquire into how Luke's Jesus understands wealth and poverty in the context of the first-century culture of honour and shame.

6.2 Wealth and Poverty - The Model

The starting point for the Context Group's focus on limited good is Foster's formulation drawn from his work in Tzinzuntzan, Mexico, in which he suggests that all goods exist in limited supply.

Broad areas of peasant behaviour are patterned in such a fashion as to suggest that peasants view their social, economic and natural universes, their total environment, as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship, love, manliness and honour, respect and status, power and influence exist in finite quantities and are always in short supply... Not only do these and all other good things exist in finite quantities, but also in addition there is no way directly within the peasant power to increase the available quantities (Foster 1964:294).

Malina takes a leading role in developing from this a model which delineates a clear distinction between the prevalent attitude in contemporary North American and northern European societies,

which believes goods to be in unlimited supply, and the proposal that in agrarian societies such as first-century Palestine, wealth and other goods are limited, citing Aristotle in support.

For the amount of such property sufficient in itself for a good life is not unlimited (Aristotle *Politics* III.9 1256b; LCL).

What follows from this is that the notion of an expanding economy in which the availability of valuable assets increases, thus making possible a general rise in living standards, does not apply, since goods do not simply multiply across the board, but remain largely the same in quantity, the consequence being that a larger slice of the cake for some necessarily entails a reduced portion for others. The distribution of wealth and the nature of life itself therefore becomes a zero-sum game (Neyrey 1998:22), the inevitable consequence of this perception of life as a process where gain is always balanced by loss, being the emergence of envy, which necessarily threatens social cohesion and peace (Malina 2001:105; Neyrey 1998:16-20), as Cicero indicates.

People are especially envious of their equals, or of those once beneath them, when they feel themselves left behind and fret at the other's upward flight (Cicero *On the Orator* 2.52.209).

Since peasants are fearful of losing what they already possess, whether this is defined purely in economic or more generally in broader social terms, their overriding preoccupation centres on keeping their feet on the same rung of the ladder. They therefore adopt a defensive strategy focused on maintaining their existing social status rather than seeking to improve upon it (Malina 1981:84; Oakman 1991:159). Moreover, the presumption that one person's wealth increases at the expense of another's becomes responsible for the view that wealth itself is inherently evil, for

those of means manifest greed, according to Plutarch's treatise *On Love of Wealth* (Malina 2001:108-109), and those who make money are deemed to be stealing from others, as St Jerome's comment suggests,

Every rich person is a thief or the heir of a thief. (St Jerome, *In Hieremiam II*, V,2,CCL 74, p. 61).

Wealth and poverty, then, become more than purely economic terms and are inextricably bound up with the honour and shame code and the ability or inability to retain social status. They are not absolute terms indicating purchasing power, but relative concepts, poverty defining a decrease in status and wealth defining an increase in status. Hence a beggar who has always been a beggar and remains a beggar is not understood to be poor (Malina 1981:85).

The terms "rich" and "poor", therefore are better translated "greedy" and "socially unfortunate". Fundamentally, the words describe a social condition relative to one's neighbours. The poor are those who cannot be given a grant of honour, hence socially weak, while the rich are greedy, the shamelessly strong" (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:401).

This brief outline of the limited good model recognises that in agrarian contexts, such as first-century Palestine, people live with little or no expectation of increasing their means. Life is about subsistence and survival, where the notion of economic growth is quite anachronistic. Yet it is a model which is subject to criticism at several levels, for there are questions about whether goods are in fact limited, whether the response to scarcity is necessarily agonistic and competitive, whether wealth is to be understood as inherently evil and whether it is appropriate to broaden the definition of rich and poor beyond the economic sphere.

The view that goods are in limited supply is forcefully contested by Lawrence on the grounds that there are certain aspects of life where gain is not necessarily counterbalanced by loss (Lawrence 2003:210-216). There is, for example, no consequential loss of health for one individual, simply because another is healthy, and a fruitful harvest which creates produce is not in itself to the advantage of one and to the detriment of another, though there may be discrimination and inequality in its distribution. While life may be lived out in a context of scarcity, this does not mean that all goods are limited. Moreover, the response to scarcity does not necessarily entail the agonistic or defensive response proposed by Malina. Gregory offers an alternative model based on what he calls “the expectation of circumstantially balanced reciprocity” which signifies a process by which it is anticipated that those having more material goods will share with those having fewer. So, while the model of limited good is deemed to function by depriving others, thereby inducing envy, Gregory’s thesis offers a more positive system of solidarity and sharing which promotes peaceful relations within the peasant community (Gregory 1975:74), which Lawrence sees as coinciding with the prophetic tradition in Judaism that consistently urges the rich not to exploit the poor, but to live justly and with compassion (Lawrence 2003:216-217).

Ling too disputes that the response to scarcity has to be competitive and is highly critical of what he terms Malina’s tendency towards an oversimplified monochrome view of peasant society, arguing instead that agrarian societies manifest both cooperation and competition (Ling 2004:227). Following an assessment of peasant societies Ling proposes that a particularly religious response to the social world is to be found in the notion of “virtuoso religion”, a concept developed by Ortner (1989), whereby individuals and groups dissociate themselves from their social context, even to the extent of radical withdrawal, adopting asceticism and a rigorous commitment to religious tradition (Ling 2004:240-250).

The theory that wealth is inherently evil because in essence it is greed is not a perception that is held by all in antiquity. While the prophetic tradition in Judaism condemns abusive practices of the wealthy, as noted above, wealth itself can be understood as a reward from God (Lawrence 2003:217), and even when the connection between righteousness and prosperity and between sin and loss is severely brought into question in the book of Job, there is no condemnation of Job for being rich. On the contrary he is understood to be the recipient of God's blessing (Job 1:1-12). This more positive view of wealth extends beyond Judaism to Graeco-Roman society too, where the rich display their honour and status through the flaunting of their means. Since honour is only honour if it is publicly recognised, wealth needs to be displayed in one way or another – by the purchasing and ownership of land; by inviting to meals fellow members of the elite class; by the quality of clothing worn by members of the family; by general conspicuous consumption, as Aristotle indicates,

[T]hey are ostentatious and pretentious, ostentatious because of luxury and display of their prosperity, pretentious and vulgar because all are used to spending their time doing whatever they like and admire and because they think everyone else has the same values they do....This is the reason for what Simonides said about the wise and rich to the wife of Hieron when she asked whether it was better to be rich or wise: "To be rich"; for he said one sees the wise waiting at the doors of the rich (Aristotle *Rhetoric*. 2.16.1-3).

Plutarch emphasises the importance of wealth openly displayed.

With no one to look on, wealth becomes sightless indeed and bereft of radiance. For when the rich man dines with his wife or intimates he lets his tables of citrus-wood and golden beakers rest in

peace and uses common furnishings, and his wife attends it without her gold and purple and dressed in plain attire. But when a banquet – that is a spectacle and a show – is got up and the drama of wealth brought on, “out of the ships he fetches the urns and tripods” [Iliad 23.259], the repositories of the lamps are given no rest, the cups are changed, the cup-bearers are made to put on new attire, nothing is left undisturbed, gold, silver, or jewelled plate, the owners thus confessing that their wealth is for others (Plutarch *On Love of Wealth* 528B).

Turning finally to the definition of wealth and poverty it must be questioned whether Malina, in his attempt to set this theme in an overarching context of honour and shame, does not diminish the economic realities of the rich and, more particularly, the poor. Are wealth and poverty simply part of a sociological model of status or an economic reality? By accepting Foster’s proposal that the notion of limited good includes aspects of life beyond land and money and by extending the theory beyond the peasant population to include all classes (Malina 1981:82-85) there is a tendency to lose focus on the larger picture of social stratification and its impact on those living in a context where economic means play a significant role in the survival of individuals and families, an aspect of Luke’s Gospel considered by both Rohrbaugh (2006:109-123) and Esler (1987:164-200).

Rohrbaugh, in his reading of the Parable of the Talents/Pounds, draws attention to the importance of understanding how peasants relate not just to one another but to the wider context of exchange relations exploited by the wealthy. Esler’s socio-redaction analysis of Luke’s Gospel broadens the context from rural peasant society to the rich and poor of urban Roman cities (Esler 1987:171) which, he proposes, the Gospel is designed to address. Though his redactional approach directs attention away from the rural setting of Jesus to the urban environment of Luke’s community, his focus on social stratification is applicable to both and is significant for the

way in which he expands it beyond the single concept of status, which dominates the limited good theory, to include three variables – economic class, status and power (Esler 1987:172). In the course of his investigation Esler indicates the importance of careful translation of Greek terms, emphasising that the word *πτωχὸς*, important for this study since it is used twice in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:20, 22), should be translated not simply as “poor” but more accurately as “beggar” (Esler 1987:164,180), thus underscoring the precarious and degraded position of such people.

This view finds support from Neyrey (Neyrey 1998:171) who emphasises the difference between the two Greek terms usually translated as “poor”, *πένης* and *πτωχὸς*, both of which may be contrasted with *πλούσιος*, *πένης* depicting a manual labourer, who, through working, is able to eke out a living, *πτωχὸς*, on the other hand, describing one reduced to begging, a person who has lost any standing in society, who has no means, no family or any social connections which might offer at least minimal status or honour. The *πτωχὸς* often ends up destitute as a result of loss of land to the *πλούσιος*. Luz provides this succinct distinction:

“Poor”, according to Semitic usage, means indeed not only those who are lacking in money, but more comprehensively, the oppressed, miserable, dependent, humiliated.....the translation by the Greek word *πτωχὸς*, the strongest available Greek word for social poverty, speaks in favour of this interpretation. The basic rule is: The *πένης* has to work, the *πτωχὸς* has to beg (Luz 1981: 231 cited in Neyrey 1998:171).

While Malina’s definition of wealth and poverty suggests that both rich and poor are still involved in the process of acquiring or defending their honour regardless of their economic

resources, the contributions of Rohrbaugh, Esler and Neyrey underline the point that wealth and poverty are very much an economic reality which should not be minimised by broader concepts relating to the defence of honour and status.

What emerges from this discussion is a more complex series of perceptions regarding wealth and poverty than is allowed for by the model of limited good espoused by Malina. In Gregory's and Ling's criticisms of Malina's approach a clear line is drawn between a competitive, agonistic society marked by envy and greed on the one hand and a more altruistic, eirenic and perhaps also idealistic social and religious context defined by grace, generosity and mutual sharing on the one hand and ascetic practices on the other. For Lawrence, of course, this is the distinction between the honour precedence code promoted by Malina and her honour virtue outlook. (Lawrence 2003:181). Whether it is the case that Malina is too negative or that Lawrence is too idealistic, the reality seems to lie in the profound social stratification which separates the elite from the non-elite, the economically wealthy from the economically poor. While the sociological model of limited good may at points be suspect, what it does emphasise is the relationship between wealth and poverty in a society where for many the experience of limitedness or scarcity is significant. It is not only the division between the rich and the poor, but the way in which the wealth of some is connected to the poverty of others which lies behind the parables of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and of the Wealthy Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20) to which attention now turns.

6.3 The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

6.3.1 Critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog

Bailey's interpretation focuses on how the rich man and Lazarus respond to the respective provenance of these two extremes, not by considering the social context, but primarily from a theological point of view, the rich man receiving his wealth from a bountiful God, Lazarus existing in poverty because his rich neighbour neglects to share his good things. The inequality and injustice of such a disparity in wealth distribution is not condemned, but identified as a part of reality in which this kind of thing simply happens (Bailey 2008:396), though the human characters who participate in this unfair world are held to account and risk judgement and reversal. While the rich man is condemned, Lazarus is lauded for his eloquent silence and his humility in bearing his suffering with such fortitude (Bailey 2008:396).

Bailey's reading offers a graphic presentation of the sharp divide between the two characters and the reversal which ensues, the latter being lent added weight by his noting that the rich man's plea for mercy (Luke 16:24) mirrors the beggar's same appeal in Luke 18:38, but his approach does contain some problematic features. There is a clear inconsistency in handling the question of the source of the rich man's wealth and Lazarus' poverty, for while Bailey argues that God is responsible for the rich man's "good things", he holds the rich man responsible for Lazarus' "bad things", thereby conveniently excusing God from any responsibility for Lazarus' plight. If God controls the rich man's wealth and the reversal of post-mortem fortunes for both characters, why is God not connected with Lazarus' life of destitution? Bailey makes little attempt to examine the systemic injustice being played out in this story, which is not simply about judgement and reversal for individuals, but an attack on social inequality (Bauckham 1991:225-246; Wright

2000:217-239; Herzog 1994:114-130), a stance which inevitably colours his somewhat inadequate characterisation of Lazarus as patient and long-suffering, kind and gentle, living in harmony with the animals of the street (Bailey 2008:386), and compassionate towards his thirsty former neighbour now on the other side of the chasm (Bailey 2008:392). This portrayal of a desperate beggar tends towards an idealisation of his character for which there is no evidence in the text and which diminishes the harsh reality of his situation. Lazarus does not have his sores licked by the street dogs because they are being compassionate towards him, but because he is weak and vulnerable and unable to fend them off (Scott 1989:151; Snodgrass 2008:425). He does not refuse to utter a word because he is pleasantly self-effacing, but because he is effectively silenced by a social order that leaves him powerless and voiceless (Herzog 1994:128).

Following a careful examination of the whole parable Scott concludes that the second part (Luke 16:27-31) is Luke's addition intended to highlight the lack of Jewish belief in Jesus' messiahship and to raise the question of belief in the resurrection (Scott 1989:146). It is, however, the theme of wealth and poverty which provides the primary focus of his interpretation and the way in which this relates to the situation reversal at the heart of the story. Scott's reading of similar Egyptian and Jewish tales of reversal, such as those of Si Osiris and Bar Ma'jan, collected together by Gressmann (1918), reveals a disconnection between the characters concerned, whereas in this narrative the proximity of Lazarus to the rich man establishes a link between them. In this way the parable subverts the mytheme that separates rich from poor and replaces it with the metaphor of the gate, through which the wealthy can choose to pass in order to be in solidarity with the poor (Scott 1989:158-159). Scott not only offers a helpful analysis of the parable's structure, but produces a reading which is perceptive in its appreciation of similar narratives of reversal and which recognises the significance of social relationships in the whole matter of wealth and poverty. The gate becomes a strong image of the dividing line which can

become a point of connection, unity and hope if it is acknowledged as such. The value of Scott's contribution is noted by Herzog, though the latter is critical that the social scripts are not more fully explored (Herzog 1994:116) and believes that Scott is inaccurate in thinking that the rich man might become Lazarus' patron (Scott 1989:151), suggesting that if the social scripts were considered more closely they would indicate that, as a beggar, Lazarus is beyond being recognised as a client (Herzog 1994:120).

It is unsurprising, given his comments on Scott's reading of *The Rich Man and Lazarus*, that Herzog's focus is on the social and economic scripts lying behind the two protagonists (Herzog 1994:114-130). In his treatment of what he calls "Jesus' pastoral parable on the Palestinian economy" (Herzog 1994:128) he investigates what lies behind the situations in which the rich man and the beggar find themselves. They are representative figures of a socially stratified society in which the poor become ever poorer as a result of oppression and neglect by the wealthy (Herzog 1994:128), and in which social divisions are legitimised by the religious notion that the wealthy are divinely blessed while the poor are divinely cursed and by the adoption of a predominantly purity reading of the Torah (Herzog 1994:125). The parable destabilises the association of wealth with honour and status and God's blessing by the unanticipated post-mortem reversal which sees the unclean, destitute beggar welcomed by Abraham and the rich man rejected (Herzog 1994:129-130).

Herzog broadens the perspective of the parable beyond individuals to the social classes represented by the two figures, and, in so doing, offers a clear picture of systemic inequality and injustice. At the same time he dismisses moral interpretations which attempt to remove the focus from the wealth of the rich man and from the poverty of Lazarus, and which direct attention rather to the former's callousness and the latter's humility as the reasons for their respective condemnation and reward (Herzog 1994:127). In opposition to this Herzog underlines that the

point at issue is wealth and poverty and that these are the consequence of the rich taking advantage of the poor (Herzog 1994:128).

The danger of this approach is that it sees the characters primarily as representatives of social classes, and, while this results in a detailed portrayal of the socio-economic climate of first-century Palestine, it may also diminish an appreciation of people's individual experience. Furthermore, Herzog's reading focuses on the assumption that the rich will be rewarded and the unclean poor condemned in the afterlife, an assumption which he deems is being subverted in the parable. Though parallel Egyptian and Jewish tales of status reversal in the afterlife tend to contain a moral element, it is also the case that they often revolve around issues of wealth and poverty too, so the reversal Herzog identifies as subversion may not be totally unexpected and may even be understood as compensation. Though Herzog is critical of attempts which seek to reduce the focus on wealth and poverty by directing attention to the moral behaviour of the characters concerned, the way in which people respond to each other at the economic level is also a moral issue.

Once again the priorities of Bailey, Scott and Herzog are clearly visible in their reading of this parable, and so with the above critique in mind attention turns to the narrative itself.

6.3.2 The Setting of the Parable

There are two issues requiring attention before the story is considered in detail. The first is the question of similar tales in comparative sources. The second concerns the unity of the text in Luke.

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is placed in the context of questions about wealth and stewardship. It appears only in Luke, though interpreters have explored links with other texts,

such as I Enoch (Grensted 1914-15; Griffiths 1993; Kreitzer 1992);, Egyptian and Jewish tales of fortune reversal (Bauckham 1991) and Graeco-Roman sources (Hock 1987; Hughes 1993). However, significant differences, such as the lack of focus on the importance of burials and the lack of revelation of the facts to those still alive, seem to suggest that there is no reason for not regarding it as a creation in its own right (Hultgren 2000:111; Snodgrass 2008:427; Bauckham 1991:225-246). Two of these tales are particularly pertinent. The first is the Egyptian narrative of Si Osiris (Scott 1989:156) which tells of the unanticipated outcomes for a rich and a poor man following death, the expectation being that the rich man will continue to be rewarded while the poor man continues to suffer. The failure of this to materialise indicates that reward and punishment post-death are dependent not on wealth, but on the balancing of good and bad deeds pre-death, forcing the listener to re-evaluate not only assumptions about the relationship between life before and after death, but also common perceptions of wealth and status before death. Since the rich man's life has been dominated more by bad deeds than good deeds, the connection between upright moral behaviour and riches no longer holds, suggesting that wealth is not, therefore, the direct result of ethical living.

The second narrative comes from the Palestinian Talmud and juxtaposes a devout holy man and a village tax collector named Bar Ma'jan (Scott 1989:157). The story turns on the recognition that each of these receives on dying. The holy man is not properly mourned, despite the fact that he seems to have committed only one error during his lifetime, while Bar Ma'jan is deeply mourned on account of his generous act of inviting the poor to his banquet once the elite had snubbed him. Again there is reversal in the afterlife, the tax collector suffering, the holy man enjoying paradise. As with the previous story, it is not simply a question of the rewarding of good deeds and the punishing of bad deeds in the afterlife. Rather the tale encourages the listener to reconsider perceptions of what is to be valued in life, to seek to discern the truth beneath the

superficial and clearly visible actions of an individual. These stories, then, are not simply about judgement at death. More significantly they subvert particular ways of understanding God, life, honour and social status. This, as shall be seen, applies equally to Luke's story.

Moving to the question of the parable's unity, there has been a tendency by some to divide the Lukan narrative into two parts, 16:19-26 focusing on the reversal of fortunes post death and based on traditional folktales, and 16:27-31, relating to the adequacy of Torah and the prophets to guide life's choices and decisions. Bultmann maintains that the second half of the narrative is in conflict with the first half (1976:178); Jeremias regards 16:27-31 as Jesus' addition to an original folktale in order to present a story about six brothers, designed to warn of impending judgement (Jeremias 1972:186), and Crossan, highlighting connections with Luke 24, dismisses the latter verses as pointing to lack of belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and so restricts the parable to 16:19-26, and sees it as a story about reversal (Crossan 1992:65-66). Scott too focuses primarily on the first part (Scott 1989:148-155). Of recent interpreters Herzog, Hultgren and Snodgrass in particular discuss the parable as a unity, detecting no conflict between the two halves of the narrative (Herzog 1994:114-130; Hultgren 2000:115; Snodgrass 2008:427-428).

It is the intention in the reading that follows to see the parable as one story. This is not to dismiss the notion that there is some dependency on traditional folklore, nor that Luke's unit may have been arrived at by a polemical addition about resurrection, for Crossan's arguments here are persuasive, but, even if the story has been constructed out of different parts, it displays an internal unity and coherence which is significant for its meaning. The rich man's five brothers are an important element, and for three reasons. First, the rich man's concern for them signals a recognition that there was something wrong in his life. He notes the need for repentance (Snodgrass 2008:430; Lehtipuu 1999:94-95). Second, they transport the listeners back to life before death and to the world of the audience's present circumstances. Third, they help to

underline the point that this story is not so much about reversal as about relationships, both within and beyond the family. Attention now turns, then, to the three scenes of the parable itself.

6.3.3 Reading the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Scene One On Opposite Sides of the Gate (16:19-22)

The reader is immediately drawn into the story by the stark and vivid contrast in the depiction of the rich man and Lazarus. The scene invites a response which engages all the senses. Visually there is the magnificent, expensive clothing worn by the πλούσιος (Marshall 1978:635; Hultgren 2000:112) which contrasts with the sores covering Lazarus' body, and between them stands the gate separating and defining those on the inside and the isolated individual begging on the outside, this gate which opens to allow the rich man out and to let in fellow members of the urban elite to participate in conspicuous consumption, but which remains closed to Lazarus. Aurally the audience is presented, on the one hand, with the sounds of people sharing table fellowship together, making merry (εὐφροινόμενος), of laughter and chatter, of the clattering of utensils, and, on the other hand, with the noises of Lazarus' empty stomach and the sound of dogs licking at his sores. With regard to the sense of touch the rich man can feel his expensive clothing and throws down the bread which he uses to wipe his hands (Jeremias 1972:184; Marshall 1978:636), whereas Lazarus is prey to the attentions of street dogs and has been placed (ἐβέβλητο, literally thrown down) where he is, dependent on others carrying him from place to place. Finally, in relation to the senses of taste and smell, there is the contrast between the rich enjoying the odour and taste of food which is theirs for the taking, while Lazarus smells the feast, but actually provides a food of sorts for the dogs, who, of course, possess their own scent.

Engaging in such a sensually-sensitive way with the first scene drives home the deep divide between the πλούσιος and the πτωχός.

With regard to this parable Crossan maintains that:

Its literal point was a strikingly amoral description of situational reversal between the rich man and Lazarus. Its metaphorical point was the reversal of expectation and situation, of value and judgement, which is the concomitant of the Kingdom's advent (Crossan 1992:66).

Such an interpretation seems inappropriate in the light of the conclusion drawn from the investigation into wealth and poverty at the beginning of this chapter. The contrast between the rich man and Lazarus is not an amoral appraisal of the way things are, but serves rather to draw attention to the connection between them. In a profoundly socially stratified context the rich man is πλούσιος because of his and his family's neglect and exploitation of others, reducing the latter finally to the shame of destitute beggars, πτωχοί. In this parable it is social inequality that is under judgement, along with the lack of action to remedy injustice (Rohrbaugh 1975:77-85; Wright 2000:230-232), a state of affairs that may have arisen through Lazarus' descent from being a peasant to a day labourer and then finally to a beggar (Herzog 1994:119-120). In order to prevent this decline Lazarus requires a wealthy patron who has not been forthcoming. Perhaps he is placed at the rich man's gate as a reminder to the latter that he refused to take him on as his client. He certainly knows Lazarus' name (Luke 16:24).

It has often been noted that this is the only parable where a character has a proper name, leading some to make a connection with the Lazarus of John 11, suggesting that Luke's parable is based on the raising of Lazarus (Dunkerley 1959:321-327; Bretherton 1993:169-173), though this is dismissed by Snodgrass on the grounds that there is no resurrection in Luke's parable

(Snodgrass 2008:437). The name Lazarus means “helped by God”, in which Lorenzen sees the significance that God is Lazarus’ only hope (Lorenzen 1975:39-43), though this is debatable since God has clearly not helped Lazarus to avoid his present predicament. The Greek Λάζαρος shares the same root consonants as the Hebrew Eliezer who appears as Abraham’s slave in Genesis 15:2 (Marshall 1978:635). Derrett takes Lazarus, then, to allude to midrashic stories of Eliezer being sent by Abraham to check on Jewish hospitality towards strangers and the poor (1960-61:364-380).

Following a different line of interpretation from Derrett yet staying with the narrative of Genesis 15 two things stand out about Eliezer. He is not a direct descendent of Abraham and he is a slave from Damascus. He is therefore an outsider and excluded from being heir (Genesis 15:4). He does not belong! Later in the story Abraham is told that in years to come his descendents will become slaves in foreign territory (15:13). Abraham’s family, then, will one day know the experience of Eliezer. Yet hope will arise and they will be given a new land (15:18-21). So Genesis 15 progresses from the rejection of an individual foreign slave, Eliezer, as heir, to the corporate experience of slavery in Egypt, then to liberation from oppression and finally to the granting of new land. Similarly, Lazarus, the rejected outsider with no inheritance to count his own, stands as an individual example of the many forced off their own land and into destitution. Yet the only hope, it seems, lies in the future beyond death. If God is Lazarus’ helper it is in picking up the pieces after Lazarus has died. There is no pre-mortem hope or intervention. Both the πλούσιος and the πτωχὸς die in their respective states of wealth and poverty.

Scene Two On Opposite Sides of the Chasm (16:23-26)

Following their deaths the rich man and Lazarus find themselves in Hades. Herzog describes this “like a waiting place where righteous and sinners alike are gathered after death but separated from one another” (Herzog 1994:122). It is evidently a place which offers comfort to some and discomfort to others and where judgements cannot be revoked. What it seems to provide in the plot of this story is an environment for learning, for it is here that the rich man finally “sees” Lazarus and begins to relate to him, even if this is only superficially. The phrase ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ is significant, for it suggests the rich man is now prepared to see beyond himself, albeit too late. Had he been able to “raise his eyes” to the Lazarus sitting at his gate he might not be on the wrong side of the chasm.

The reversal in the rich man’s situation is striking. He now asks for mercy when before it was others who begged at his gate; he now needs Lazarus to come to his aid when previously Lazarus was surplus to requirements, nothing but a scar on the landscape; he now requests a simple drop of water when before there was nothing lacking at his table. One thing has not changed, however. He still assumes a sense of power and authority over Lazarus, expecting him to respond to his needs (Herzog 1994:123; Hultgren 2000:114) His experience has not taught him humility. Ironically he can now see a reason for entering into a patron-client relationship with Lazarus, though he no longer has anything to offer him.

Abraham’s response to the rich man’s request (Luke 16:25) requires careful attention, for on the surface it appears to suggest that Lazarus’ and the rich man’s fortunes are reversed but that these are not the consequence of past behaviour (Scott 1989:154). This stance, however, fails to take seriously the relationship between rich and poor highlighted in the treatment of the limited good model in the introduction to this chapter. If Lazarus has received τὰ κακά it is because the

rich man has received (or taken) τὰ ἄγαθά. The rich man has prospered at the expense of Lazarus, or, at least, at the expense of those like Lazarus. What Scott fails to recognise is that wealth and poverty are always connected, that they are held together by an implicit morality. So the chasm, like the gate, serves not only as an impenetrable divide which polarises and distances Lazarus and the rich man from each other, but also as a symbolic set of scales heavily tilted in the direction of one or the other.

Scene Three Looking After the Family (16:27-31)

Unsuccessful in procuring any respite for himself the rich man turns his attention to his family, asking Abraham to send Lazarus to warn them about what has happened to him. Herzog notes that the rich man is still blind in failing to recognise Lazarus as a brother, confining himself instead to solidarity with his own kin and class (Herzog 1994:124). He is still trying to live behind the gate. Presumably he envisages that Lazarus will appear in a dream or vision to his brothers and convey to them their brother's circumstances, thus prompting a change in their attitude (μετανοήσουσιν). It is not that the miracle of a dead person returning to earth will have the required impact, since all that does is to produce a sense of awe and wonder. It is surely the message that is conveyed by such an appearance which, it is hoped, will precipitate some kind of conversion. The problem with this however, is that the brothers' conversion would be based on self-preservation and securing some desired future for themselves, rather than on any altruistic grounds.

The story leaves the audience with the question: How will the brothers ever know what happened to the rich man and Lazarus? The parable deliberately does not deal with this question for the very reason that if they did know, their subsequent actions would be dictated by an

egotistical approach to their own futures instead of a radical reappraisal of how they relate to those usually outside their sphere of interest and beyond their circle of solidarity. The key to saving the rich man's family from self-interest lies, according to Abraham, in the teaching of Torah and the prophets, in their concern for just and compassionate treatment of those in need, epitomised in the words of Micah 6:8.

6.3.4 Concluding Remarks

At various points in the parable its meaning may be illuminated by a comparison with the Joseph story of Genesis 37-50. A number of similarities emerge. The rich man regards Abraham as his ancestral father, which is also the case for Joseph. He is marked out by his extravagant clothing, in a similar way to Joseph, who is presented with two special robes, firstly by his father and secondly by Pharaoh. The rich man is separated from his brothers who seem to be living still with their father, while Joseph is thrown out by his brothers on account of his arrogance and their envy. The rich man's concern is to seek to save his family by awakening them to the consequences of their actions. Joseph's attitude, when his brothers come to Egypt in search of food, is to get them to own the truth of their previous plan of fratricide and their action of selling their own brother for silver.

Amid all these similarities, however, one stark difference stands out. In the parable the rich man is not reunited with his family. This is significant when the parable is considered in the light of the Joseph narrative, for what leads to Joseph's reconciliation with his family are the following three things: first, there is the stewardship of the land's resources, such authority being invested in him by Pharaoh himself; second, there is an openness to provide for those suffering from the famine in other lands, in this instance Canaan; third, there is the pursuit of honesty and the

resulting confession and repentance. The rich man, on the other hand, finds himself well-clothed, living in palatial surroundings, but his gate is closed to those who need his wise stewardship and patronage. His wealth is on show for all to see, but not for all to share. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is the story of Joseph gone awry.

6.4 The Parable of the Wealthy Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20)

6.4.1 Critique of Bailey and Scott

Interpreting the parable in the light of its immediate context of a dispute over inheritance Bailey sees the story as driving home the theological message that all things belong to God (Bailey 1980:57-73; 2008:298-308). Both the bounty of the land and life itself are divine gifts which require responsible stewardship (Bailey 2008:307) and which might be withdrawn by God at any point (Bailey 2008:306). The wealthy landowner makes the mistake of thinking he can secure his own survival and prosperity, but the acquisition of wealth leaves him an isolated figure with no relationship either with fellow human beings or with God (Bailey 2008:304). This reading not only emphasises the illusory nature of ownership (Wright 2000:221-224) but also identifies the significance of relationship in this narrative, drawing attention to the rich man's soliloquy, which is so full of first person singular pronouns and a preoccupation with self that it suggests loneliness and isolation. The man is a poor rich fool (Reid 1901-2:567-568). In response to this Snodgrass makes the minor point that this is to presume too much simply from a soliloquy (Snodgrass 2008:398). A much more significant criticism, however, concerns Bailey's concentration on theology at the expense of proper investigation of the social context, for the origin of the abundance of crops is simply held to be God, with no recognition of those who work

the land and thereby enhance its fertility, the consequence being that the whole arena of relations between landowners and labourers and the inequalities between rich and poor are not addressed. Furthermore, this theological point of view manifests an unreliability and inconsistency in the way in which God is presented, since, as the one in control, the power that gives life and abundance and the one who takes life, God leaves evidence of bias towards those who are wealthy and against those who are poor. Moreover, such an interpretation is based on the mistranslation of Luke 12:20, which, as Beavis points out, is not in the passive mood, but depicts an active “they” who will demand the man’s soul (Beavis 1997:65-66). It is, therefore, not at all clear that God is the agent of death (Snodgrass 2008:398), somewhat undercutting Bailey’s line of argument.

Scott takes as his point of departure the same perspective of God’s gift of life and harvest that dominates Bailey’s reading (Scott 1989:127-140), though he proceeds to understand the narrative, not as an example story, but, in line with his general approach to the parables, as a metaphor for the kingdom, this metaphor being not only the harvest but the good the harvest offers to the community (Scott 1989:139). At stake, then, is the correct disposal of wealth and goods. Scott draws on Sirach 31:5-11 in identifying that the purpose of wealth lies in acts of charity, and on the figure of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) as one who manages abundant harvests wisely for the common good, and Derrett too sees an allusion to the Joseph narrative (Derrett 1978:111). The problem with the rich landowner in the parable is that he fails to recognise his responsibility towards the wider community and so mismanages the miracle of the harvest (Scott 1989:140). In the course of his analysis Scott pays due attention to the social context of wealth and poverty, of abundance and scarcity, referring both to the perception of a limited good society which requires a sharing of goods (Scott 1989:137) and to the anti-Epicurean perspective of Judaism (Scott 1989:136). Two specific elements of his reading, however, have been recently

disputed by Snodgrass, one being the notion of a harvest metaphor (Snodgrass 2008:397) on the grounds that the word “harvest” is not actually present in the text, the other being a debatable allusion to the Joseph story (Snodgrass 2008:399). With regard to the issue of harvest, though it is not made explicit, it does seem reasonable to assume that an abundance of crops constitutes either a single or series of good harvests. With regard to the Joseph allusion, however, Snodgrass’ point that Joseph is not managing a miracle, but demonstrating remarkable administrative skills does have some validity, not least since Joseph is not dealing simply with his own wealth, but organising the wider community so that it can resource itself during the years of scarcity.

With this critique of Bailey and Scott in mind the discussion proceeds to a reading of the parable of the Wealthy Landowner.

6.4.2 The Setting of the Parable

Whereas the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is found only in Luke, the parable of the Wealthy Landowner, seems to appear in two different versions, in Luke 12:16b-20 and the *Gospel of Thomas* 63. Two interpreters in particular maintain that *Thomas* 63 is the original. Crossan argues that Luke takes over the *Thomas* narrative and moralises it (Crossan 1974:78-79), while Hedrick, having previously held Luke to be more original (Hedrick 1994:148-151), has changed his mind, suggesting that Luke substituted *Thomas*’ “so that I lack nothing” with Sirach 11:19a “I have found rest and now I shall feast on my goods” (Luke 12:19a) and then added “eat, drink and be merry (Luke 12:19b) (Hedrick 2004:96). Scott takes Luke to be the earlier version (Scott 1989:130-131) and Grant and Freedman, along with Wilson, take *Thomas* to be an abbreviation of Luke (Grant and Freedman 1960:169; Wilson 1960:69), while Hultgren maintains

that there are enough differences between the versions to argue that they emanate from quite separate traditions (Hultgren 2000:105).

Clearly both narratives revolve around the plans of a rich man with regard to his wealth, and both conclude with the man's death. There are, nevertheless, differences. *Thomas* has a simple statement about the man making provision for the future ("so that I lack nothing"). Equally terse is the information that he dies. Luke, on the other hand, describes not only the rich man's planning for years to come, but the ease and enjoyment he foresees for himself, and the man's death results from an explicit condemnation of this attitude (Luke 12:20). While the two versions may have emerged from a single original story it is interesting to note that, if the reference in *Thomas* to the rich man's death is removed, the *Thomas* version sits quite easily as a prologue to Luke's parable. *Thomas* describes the rich man investing his wealth in land and agriculture in order to develop his wealth and provide security and comfort for himself. At this point it is simply a question of intention and planning. The Lukan version depicts the planning coming to fruition and the response of the landowner to his bountiful harvest. If the two stories are put together in this way it is possible to discern an original longer parable dealing with intention and then response. It could be argued that the split occurred because *Thomas* is more interested in examining the intention of developing wealth and security, while Luke focuses more on a particular chosen lifestyle.

In line with the whole of this investigation, which is dealing with parables in Luke's Gospel, the exploration of this story concentrates on Luke's version. Two further points need to be addressed, however, before proceeding to a reading of the narrative. First, it is important to be aware that Luke places this parable in the larger context of an appeal to Jesus concerning the disposal of an inheritance (Luke 12:13-15). Certain scholars read the parable in the light of this context (Jeremias 1972:164-165; Bailey 1980:57-73; Stiller 2005:98-108) and clearly inheritance

relates to wealth and potential greed. The intention here, however, is to deal solely with the story itself and to explore its internal dynamics, rather than understand it simply as an illustration of Jesus' more general comments on wealth. Second, the parable is understood to extend from 12:16b to 12:20. Hedrick maintains that the story concludes at verse 12:19 on the grounds that 12:20 condemns the rich man and is Luke's response to the narrative rather than part of the dramatic action (Hedrick 1994:95). The "divine pronouncement" is, however, a judgement not on the story, but on the rich man. It is actually addressed to him within the context of his life, and so belongs properly inside the narrative. Furthermore, God does indeed function as an actor in the plot, in a not dissimilar way to Abraham in Luke 16:19-31. There seems, then, no reason to eliminate 12:20. On the contrary, it provides the parable with its sharply critical conclusion.

6.4.3 Reading the Parable of the Wealthy Landowner

The presentation of the πλούσιος in the opening statement of the parable is skilfully done, for it makes an immediate and direct connection between land and wealth. It is the χῶρα (estate, property) (Marshall 1978:523) which symbolises the man's wealth and which will enable him to become yet wealthier. Initially the story seems to be about an individual and his harvest, but the juxtaposition of πλούσιος and χῶρα in a society where wealth is scarce inevitably raises questions for the listener about rich landowners increasing their means through dispossessing small peasant landowners struggling with debt (Beavis 1997:64; Oakman 1991:157,168). The πλούσιος is obviously a member of the elite and his gain is at the expense of others. So hiding in the shadows of this scene are those disgruntled, even angry, tenant farmers whose land once failed them and brought them into debt, while now it produces abundantly for its present owner.

This, then, provides the socio-economic background for the landowner's plans. At the same time, however, it is important to appreciate the philosophical context of the Wisdom tradition into which the story fits. The relevance of Sirach and 1 Enoch is not hard to see:

There is a man who is rich through his diligence and self-denial, and this is the reward allotted to him: when he says, 'I have found rest, and now I shall enjoy my goods!' he does not know how much time will pass until he leaves them to others and dies (Sirach 11:18-19).

Woe unto you who gain silver and gold by unjust means; you will then say, 'We have grown rich and accumulated goods, we have acquired everything that we have desired. So now let us do whatever we like; for we have gathered silver, we have filled our treasuries (with money) like water. And many are the laborers in our houses.' Your lies flow like water. For your wealth shall not endure but it shall take off from you quickly for you have acquired it all unjustly, and you shall be given over to a great curse (1 Enoch 97:8-10).

The passage from Sirach cites clearly the ephemeral nature of life. 1 Enoch is far more moralistic in tone, warning against acquisitiveness and of eventual condemnation (Nickelsburg 1978-79:324-332). The rich landowner of the parable is insensitive to such wisdom and plans an easy life for himself (Luke 12:17-19).

Hedrick, who, as already noted, dismisses 12:20 from the story, interprets the rich man as an incompetent farmer who becomes a figure of ridicule for the audience. He bases this on the landowner's inability to foresee an abundant harvest on the horizon and on his subsequent decision to pull down barns with no time to replace them with others (Hedrick 1994:159-162). His remarks on these two issues may be pertinent, though they are disputed by Snodgrass

(Snodgrass 2008:398), but Hedrick fails to understand the socio-economic context which would suggest anger rather than laughter as a more obvious response to the rich man.

The separation between the wealthy landowner and the poorer members of his society is cleverly depicted in two specific ways. In the first place, the whole of Luke 12:17-19 forms an interior dialogue where he speaks with himself and with nobody else. In the second place, there is excessive use of the first person singular (Stiller 2005:104; Donahue 1988:177-178; Bailey 1980: 66). Together these two features not only suggest self-centredness, but complete isolation. He appears not to be in any meaningful relationship with anybody. He even eats and drinks alone. What matters is what he possesses – χώρα, ἀποθήκας, σῖτον, τὰ ἀγαθὰ.

The conclusion to the parable is an interruption. A voice from outside, God's voice, cuts across the rich man's speaking to himself, though it is left in the hands of the listener to decide whether he actually hears. The address, ἄφρων, contains echoes of Psalm 14:1. Scott remarks that the landowner's attitude and actions are foolish in that they are a denial of God's existence (Scott 1989:137). A more careful look at the whole of Psalm 14, however, relates this foolishness to injustice and dismissive treatment of the poor,

Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
 who eat up my people as they eat bread,
 and do not call upon the Lord?
 There they shall be in great terror,
 for God is with the company of the righteous.
 You would confound the plans of the poor,
 but the Lord is their refuge. (Psalm 14:4-6)

The consequence of the man's foolishness is his death (12:20). ἀπαίτουσιν (they will demand – the word used for the return of a loan (Bailey 1980:67)) is often translated and interpreted as a divine passive, suggesting that God is the agent of the man's death (Fitzmyer 1985:974; Bailey 1980:67; Donahue 1988:178) Beavis, however, rejects the need to turn this into a passive and identifies the “they” who demand the man's life as those taking revenge for the ways in which he has exploited them (Beavis 1997:65-66). They are now demanding repayment of the loan they have given this rich man and the wealthy in general, this loan which consists of their land and their labour. It is payback time. The rich man is foolish insofar as he has not recognised this as a potential outcome of his actions. Like a dictator who spends all his time looking over his shoulder to see where the next threat is coming from, this man has isolated himself into a position of considerable vulnerability. He is foolish to have done so. He is doubly foolish not to recognise that he is simply pushing the limits beyond breaking point. The plan to create more extensive storage space, which will be to the benefit of the landowner when the price of wheat rises, is the last straw for the “they” who will continue to suffer as a consequence.

6.4.4 Concluding Remarks

Reading this parable in the context of an honour and shame culture where wealth is scarce and may be understood in terms of greed and as the result of unjust exploitation, it becomes clear that there is a critical prophetic edge to its content. This is evident not only in God's interruption of the rich man's soliloquy, however, but prior to this in the language and imagery of 12:18, the central verse of the story where the terms “pulling down” and “building” are central – καθελὼ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας καὶ μείζονας οἰκοδομήσω. Bailey notes that this is “classical prophetic

language” (Bailey 1980:65) which is found in the call of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:10), but he fails to develop its significance.

A closer look at Jeremiah reveals that the vocabulary of “pulling down” and “building” appears on a number of different occasions running through the book (1:10; 12:14-17; 18:7,9; 24:6; 31:28,38,40; 42:10; 45:4). Four specific features emerge from these texts. First, it is God who is the initiator and with whom authority resides. Second, the images announce the threat or reality of judgement on wickedness and, for the nation of Judah, exile. Third, there is the possibility of hope and a new future if a positive response is forthcoming from the people. Fourth, this promise of renewal is God’s compassionate offering of a new covenant.

In using this language of his own plans and ambitions the rich landowner usurps God and dismisses God’s authority. Moreover, he twists the language of prophecy, intended to challenge, undermine and destroy wickedness, so that it becomes the vocabulary of greed. The rich man is in the process of subverting the tradition of Israelite prophecy when God interrupts and subverts this subversion. God’s warning is that the landowner is about to reap the consequences of his own actions. Ironically it is his life that will now be pulled down. He will lose the land and be exiled from life, while the land itself passes into the hands of others. His failure to exercise proper stewardship seals his demise.

6.5 Conclusion

The discussion of the limited good society in the introduction to this chapter concluded that, despite disputes over certain aspects of the model, it nevertheless serves to underline the general picture of scarcity in first-century Palestine and the sense of both divisions and connection between rich and poor. A gulf exists between those with means and those without which results

from the wealthy gaining at the expense of the poor, through neglect, injustice and exploitation. Here certainly there seems to be evidence of Malina's honour precedence model. The two parables explored in the light of this context present vivid portrayals of this reality, but offer only limited subversion of the status quo.

Both stories exploit the notion of neglect grounded in the inability to see or notice the experience of others. The rich man in Luke 16:19-31 fails to see Lazarus as his neighbour, either before or after death, while awareness of and concern for his family persists. The wealthy landowner in Luke 12:16b-20 is so preoccupied with his own future that he remains blind and numb to those around him who would benefit from a sharing of his goods in the present. Neither their living nor their dying changes anything. Lazarus may find himself eventually in the honourable position at the side of Abraham, but this is only after he has died, and there is little evidence to suggest that the rich man's brothers will live any differently, not least since they have no way of knowing about the torment that potentially awaits them. The landowner dies and presumably leaves his inheritance to his family, so the poor do not stand to benefit. There is certainly no obvious status reversal for those still living. Yet there is a glimmer of light in the reminder of the prophetic tradition and its call to compassion in both parables, evident in Abraham's words to the rich man and in the allusions to Jeremiah and Psalm 14 in the story of the wealthy landowner.

Brueggemann explores the way in which the failure to notice and the numbness of the elite is essential to the maintaining of their power and status. Once the rich begin to feel compassion for the poor the boat is rocked and dangerous destabilising of the status quo is likely to ensue (Brueggemann 2001:88). The parables explored here amount to an expression of that compassion which sees, notices and shares the oppressiveness of contemporary power arrangements and speaks out against them. It is no accident that Abraham and God respectively break the silence

and speak the truth into the numbness of indifference. It is no accident, either, that the parables are concerned with death, for the powerful, be they individuals or empires, believe they can continue for ever. Divine interruption announces the possibility of the end of the old order and the emerging of a new beginning.

The prophet brings to public expression the dread of endings, the collapse of our self-madness, the barriers and pecking orders that secure us at each other's expense, and the fearful practice of eating off the table of a hungry brother or sister (Brueggemann 2001:46).

The two parables do indeed bring to "public expression" the divisions of a context where the wealthy hold precedence. In so doing perhaps they also hint at a prophetic vision of an alternative society where Lawrence's honour virtue might hold sway.

Chapter Seven

Patrons and Clients

7.1 Introduction

In an assessment of such a highly stratified society as first-century Palestine one of the key questions which surfaces is how the elite and non-elite relate to each other. Evidence from cross-cultural analysis (Campbell 1964; Carney 1975; Gellner and Waterbury 1977; Saller 1982) and from historical investigation of Roman society (Wallace-Hadrill 1989) suggests that it is the system of patronage which often not only facilitates such interaction, but which also provides some mutual benefit for both parties. The significance of patron-client relationships for the study of the New Testament has not gone unnoticed by members of the Context Group, who have responded in two ways, first, by using the lens of patronage to offer insights into some of the Gospel narratives, the most striking being the treatment of the Roman Centurion in Luke 7:1-10 (Moxnes 1991:241-268), and, second, by extrapolating the model in order to present God as a patron figure and Jesus as broker. Neyrey offers an example of this in his recent treatment of John's Gospel (Neyrey 2007:271-291). In the course of this chapter, then, a survey is offered of the patron-client model and a critique provided of the direction in which it has been taken by Context Group members. This is followed by readings of two of Luke's parables which exhibit elements of patron-client relationships, the parables of The Survivor Client (Luke 16:1-8a) and

The Resisting Clients (Luke 19:11b-27), and which assist in responding to the question: Does Luke's Jesus reveal a positive understanding of patronage, which can also support the idea of an analogy with divine patronage, or are the webs of patron-client relationships more negative, exploitative and fragile?

7.2 Patrons and Clients - The Model

The following definition from Landé provides a helpful point of departure:

A patron-client relationship is a vertical dyadic alliance i.e. an alliance between two persons of unequal status, power or resources each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally someone superior or inferior to himself (Landé 1977:20).

Despite the gulf in social status the relationship offers mutual benefit. Indeed it is because of this imbalance that the association becomes a system of exchange. The patron provides support for his client, be this the provision of food, money, security or legal support, and in return he receives an enhanced reputation for generous benefaction along with the loyalty of the client (Hanson and Oakman 1998:73; Stewart 2010:158-160). In the Roman setting the honouring of a patron manifests itself in one way through the custom of the *salutatio*, the daily appearance of the clients at the patron's home in order to offer respect and deference and to see what service they might do for their patron (Hanson and Oakman 1998:73). Saller points out that the *salutatio* was also a marker of status for the clients, their relative honour depending on the order in which they were received (Saller 1989:57). From the point of view of the patrons it was not necessarily the quality of the relationship which mattered, but the quantity of clients (Wallace-Hadrill 1989:64), and

treatment of clients could be demeaning and humiliating, possibly in order to underline the client's inferiority. (Goodman 2007:233). Seneca offers this criticism of the behaviour of some patrons at a *salutatio*.

How many are there who keep away their clients by staying asleep, or by self-indulgence, or by being rude? How many are there who rush off on a pretence of urgent business after torturing the client by a long wait? How many avoid going through an atrium packed with clients and escape through a concealed door, as if it were not ruder to deceive than to exclude? How many, still hung-over and half-asleep from last night's drinking, will yawn disdainfully at men who have interrupted their own sleep in order to wait upon his awakening, and will mumble a greeting through half-open lips, bestowing the right name only after it has been whispered to them? (Seneca *Dialogues*.10.14.4).

Scholars have delineated the basic characteristics of patron-client relationships along the following lines. They are based on an asymmetrical relationship between parties of different social status, but incorporate a sense of interpersonal loyalty and obligation which is expected to be of some duration. There is a reciprocal exchange of goods, designed in part to furnish the patron with a greater degree of honour (Oakes 2010:178) and favouritism is often present, while there is an understanding that the arrangement is entered into on a voluntary basis (Saller 1989:49; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984:48-49; Westbrook 2005:211). At a superficial level these terms suggest a positive, or at the very least, a neutral relationship furnishing mutual benefit, but scratching a little beneath the surface reveals a more complex picture, highlighted by Garnsey and Woolf, who, in focusing on the rural poor in the Roman world, emphasise that becoming clients amounts to a survival strategy and a relationship into which they enter from a position of

distinct vulnerability (Garnsey and Woolf 1989:157-158), a powerlessness depicted vividly in the words of Seneca above. Before proceeding to further investigation of some of the more negative features of patronage, however, it is important to consider the approach of the Context Group, since that investigation will facilitate a critique of their stance.

As mentioned above, certain members of the Context Group develop a particular emphasis in their use of the patron-client model for interpretation of the New Testament, understanding it not only in terms of relationships between human beings, but also between God and humans. Malina discerns the hierarchical asymmetry of patronage in Palestinian landowner and tenant relationships where the power resides in the hands of the one who owns the land and retains control of employment and the produce (Malina 2003:389), but he ventures further than this in adopting the model as a means of understanding God's relationship with humankind. Noting the etymological connection between patron and fatherhood (Latin *pater*) and putting this alongside the designation of God as Father in the New Testament, as well as the use of grace and favour language which belongs both to the setting of patronage and to God's activity in the New Testament, he holds God to be the ultimate patron who gives graciously of his resources (Malina 1988:2-32; 1998:151-155).

Moxnes follows in the same vein in his analysis of patrons and clients in Luke's Gospel. Though he refers briefly to several of the parables depicting this arrangement, including the two under discussion in this chapter, his initial focus is the story of the Roman Centurion in Luke 7:1-10 in which the centurion serves as benefactor and patron to the village, but defers to the greater authority of Jesus (Moxnes 1991:252-254; see also Elliott 1996:145-146). Moxnes pursues his thesis further, distinguishing between the positive brokerage of Jesus and the inadequate brokerage of the Pharisees and the wealthy. Jesus, as the true broker, facilitates access to God, who is patron of the poor, offering an alternative kind of patronage and benefaction based on

servanthood rather than exploitation (Moxnes 1991:257-260), what Moxnes terms the “transformation of patron-client relations” (Moxnes 1991:265).

Neyrey is likewise of the persuasion, not only that God can be understood in terms of patronage, but that, as the title of his article states, God as benefactor and patron provides the major cultural mode for interpreting the deity in Greco-Roman antiquity (Neyrey 2005:465-492). He pursues the same analogy in his reading of John’s Gospel, where Jesus, as the door (John 10:7,9), is the broker belonging to two worlds, that of God the patron and that of the disciples, the clients. Jesus becomes the bridge, the mediator between God and the disciples, who should honour the Father and patron and display loyalty and fidelity. Neyrey emphasises the unity that Jesus shares on the one hand with God the patron (John 10:30) and on the other hand with the people (John 15:1-10) (Neyrey 2007:271-291).

What becomes clear from this brief survey is that members of the Context Group have not been content to limit the use of the patron-client model to asymmetrical relationships between human beings, but have sought to develop it into an analogy of divine-human interaction. The chief problem with this process, and one which renders it ultimately unconvincing, lies in the way the analogy has become distant from the original pattern of patronage, inaccurately glossing over some of the stark realities of hierarchical human social settings. Insufficient attention is paid to the negative exploitative elements of patronage systems where the imbalance in power and motive between patron and client is significant and needs to be exposed. Evidence of this tendency is found in the work of Neyrey, Malina and Moxnes itself. In his article on Jesus as broker in John’s Gospel Neyrey admits the presence of coercion and exploitation from patrons towards their clients, but simply leaves it as a passing comment in the footnote and proceeds to ignore this aspect of the model (Neyrey 2007:273). Both Malina and Moxnes cite Luke 7:1-10 as a prime example of patronage, the Roman centurion being a highly respected benefactor in his

local village, providing a synagogue for the local community (Malina 2003:390; Moxnes 1991:252-253). Yet behind this stands the larger context of Roman occupation, which receives no mention. The centurion is only in a position to be a generous benefactor in the first place because of systemic oppression. Moxnes displays a similar reluctance to explore the issues of social stratification and power imbalance in references made to what he terms patron-client parables in Luke's Gospel (Luke 12:43-46; 16:1-8a; 19:11-27), simply citing them as examples of patron-client relationships rather than examining the complex nature of the associations themselves (Moxnes 1991:253). The readings of the latter two parables in this chapter seek to provide a corrective to this superficial approach.

The key features of the patron-client model outlined above suggest that, despite the asymmetry and imbalance in power, there is nevertheless a degree of mutual benefit to be derived for both parties. While this may partially be the case, what such a formulation disguises is the precarious reality of the situation in which the clients find themselves. So a degree of scepticism is required which calls into question how much the client actually benefits from a system which is designed to foster and reinforce inequality, thus maintaining the status quo, a point that has not gone unnoticed by scholars, as in the work of Gilmore, who suggests that

patronage relations provide a consistent ideological support for social inequality and dependency throughout the Mediterranean area (Gilmore 1987:192-193).

For the poor patronage counts as one among a number of survival strategies, as Garnsey and Woolf explore in their article to which reference is made above. While kinship ties, neighbours and fellow villagers might be a source of assistance based on horizontal solidarity, patrons are more powerful and possess more resources. However, they offer only a vertical relationship

which demands dependency and draws clients into a preoccupation with the relationship with their patron at the expense of solidarity with their fellow poor and marginalised (Garnsey and Woolf 1989:153; Osiek and Balch 1997:49-54). Inevitably the patrons pull the strings and retain the power, so that the whole arrangement becomes not merely an asymmetrical relationship but a form of social control, not least since a scarcity of resources means the patron has the power to refuse as well as to provide (Wallace-Hadrill 1989:72-73; Batten 2010:168-169). Furthermore, benefaction, from the perspective of Jayakumar in his appraisal of the patronage system, is designed not to relieve poverty, but to naturalise the inequalities, furnishing a justification of dominance (Jayakumar 2008:237-254).

The plight of the poor not only renders them powerless relative to the patron, but also undermines the notion of the voluntary nature of the patron-client relationship. Eisenstadt and Roniger note how such arrangements can combine coercion and exploitation on the one hand with voluntary relations and mutual obligations on the other hand (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984:49), but a poor peasant driven by the need for survival does not become a client entirely out of voluntary choice, but because this may appear to be the only solution (Drummond 1989:109). So it is important to keep in view that while patrons and clients might both benefit from the association, there are nevertheless severe limits to the mutual and voluntary nature of an arrangement which reinforces social inequality. It is for this reason that Crossan entitles his chapter on the morality of patronage “Slave and Patron” (Crossan 1991:43), drawing on Carney’s appraisal of the issue,

The ugly fact was that, given the low level of technology in antiquity, someone had to go without – without proper family life, material sufficiency, basic human dignity and life space – in order to generate a surplus. Absolute power over another human being, the incontrovertible right to treat

another as a human instrument or an object of one's passions dehumanizes both parties. That is what slavery, any form of slavery, means. As an institution it perfectly complements patronage. Together, these two practices go far to account for the authoritarianism in antiquity's societies, with their spectrums of hierarchical statuses (Carney 1975:214-215).

Much of the moral complexity of patronage in antiquity outlined above is lost once it is developed into a model for God's relationship with humanity, focusing on divine benefaction and favour towards those who are exclusive members of God's community, thus rendering the model suspect and unbalanced. Furthermore the divinisation of the model shifts attention away from the impact of patron-client relations in first-century Palestine, the immediate setting for Jesus' public work and the context in which he utters his parables. In turning now to two of these narratives in Luke's Gospel which, it is maintained, can be interpreted in the light of patron-client associations, it will be possible to make a clearer assessment of the perceptions of Luke's Jesus with regard to the system of patronage and its consequences for those caught up in it.

7.3 The Parable of the Survivor Client (Luke 16:1-8a)

7.3.1 Critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog

Bailey adopts his usual allegorical stance with regard to this parable (Bailey 1976:86-110; 2008:332-342), noting a number of similarities with Luke 15 (Bailey 1976:109), which nudge him towards an interpretation focused on what he holds to be the common themes of the two stories: God, sin, grace and salvation (Bailey 2008:332). The master represents God, who generously, not foolishly, refrains from jailing his steward initially and continues to extend his

mercy following the steward's action in reducing the debts. The steward is a sinner who fails to repent and instead throws himself on the master's mercy not once, but twice. Once again Bailey falls prey to the usual criticisms of allegorisation. Since he has decided in advance that the master figure is a portrayal of God his characterisation of the master is dictated by his view of God rather than by the internal evidence of the narrative. Hence the master can only be generous and merciful, not foolish. Moreover such allegorisation removes the story from its immediate social setting, with the result that questions regarding patrons and clients, such as exploitation, indebtedness and survival are cast aside as irrelevant. This aside, the remarkable flaw in Bailey's reading lies not in the correspondences he notes between Luke 15 and Luke 16:1-8a, but in his failure to recognise that while the younger son is deemed to repent and return to his father in the former, in the latter the steward persists in cheating his master. In theological terms this means that God's grace and salvation produce no change in the sinner, who simply continues to behave inappropriately, failing to entertain the notion of repentance, which is itself a strong Lukan theme.

Scott's angle of approach provides a clear corrective to Bailey, focusing on the social context of patron-client relations and the audience's response to the protagonists (Scott 1989:255-266). In what he calls an accounting story between a patron and a client it is assumed that, given the general exploitation of the non-elite, the peasant hearers would be anti-master and pro-steward (Scott 1989:260-261). Following Via's suggestion Scott presents the steward as a rogue getting even with his master (Via 1967:159; Scott 1989:263). The problem posed by the parable is how to understand the kingdom, because the steward's dishonesty, though praised by the master, is simply not acceptable as a value of the kingdom (Scott 1989:264-266). While Scott's interpretation raises this question, it offers little clarity in terms of an answer, rendering it, according to Snodgrass, of little use (Snodgrass 2008:409). Scott runs into problems when he

feels compelled to fit the story into the framework of the kingdom. His prior investigation of the narrative, adopting a reading from the perspective of the poor peasant class, has considerable merit, though it is debatable whether the steward is appropriately characterised as a rogue, since a rogue does not command or invite the trust of anyone, and this steward's intention is to make friends for the purposes of his future security.

Herzog is critical of Bailey's focus on the generous mercy of the master and the guilt of the steward (Herzog 1994:243) and, similarly to Scott, reads the text from the perspective of the non-elite in a social world controlled by absentee patron landowners who exploit peasant tenant farmers (Herzog 1994:233-258). He notes that the steward occupies the precarious position of having to satisfy those both above and below him, while the master is presented as a particularly wealthy individual doing business with merchants (note the quantity of goods) (Herzog 1994:240) and concealing usurious interest payments in the total amount of debt. The steward's future is put at risk by an accusation emanating from the peasant gossip mechanism, a so-called weapon of the weak, but he shows himself sufficiently quick-witted in removing the portion of interest from the debts, thereby portraying his master in an honourable, law-abiding and generous light and posing the question for the master as to whether he should rethink and hold on to a steward demonstrating such remarkable shrewdness. Herzog goes on to conclude that this is a story depicting the weak being successful in forcing a temporary reduction in debt (Herzog 1994:252-258). To maintain this conclusion, though clearly an attractive reading for the oppressed, does, however, appear somewhat speculative, since the initial accusation may just as well have come from envious competitors or from a previous employee. Neither is it evident that the reduction in payment amounts to hidden interest. While Herzog's reading provides an intriguing alternative that takes seriously the social context and the perspective of the poor, it is nevertheless an interpretation which removes the focus from the main characters with their

dilemmas and their action to those on the periphery. As a result the morality of the master is severely questioned on account of his wealth, while the morality of the steward is not investigated.

7.3.2 The Setting of the Parable

Two specific issues arise regarding the context of this parable: first, how it relates to what precedes it and, second, how it concludes. Luke places the story of the Survivor Client directly after that of The Father and the Two Lost Sons (Luke 15:11b-32). They sit comfortably side by side for they both depict village scenes and village dynamics, though the latter focuses on family life while the former deals with master-steward or patron-client relationships in the sphere of employment and business. Coutts detects a common theme of repentance and forgiveness, arguing that the steward is reinstated by the master, but this parallel breaks down since he is praised, not given his job back (Coutts 1949:54-60). Donahue discerns ten points of similarity, including vocabulary, between the two, which encourages him to understand the second in terms of the first. Hence he holds Luke 16:1-8a to be about a foolish master, just as Luke 15:11b-32 is about a foolish father. Their folly, in the eyes of the world, is the forgiveness they exercise (Donahue 1988:167-168), though there is no explicit mention of forgiveness at all in the parable of the Survivor Client. The master figure is understood to be analogous to God, revealing once again the common tendency towards allegorisation, interpreting one of the protagonists as God or Jesus, a tendency which, as has been seen elsewhere, creates more difficulties than it solves, not least because it fails to take the parable as a story in its own right and removes it from the social context it depicts. Nevertheless, though Donahue's eventual interpretation may be suspect, his comparison of the two parables does demonstrate Luke's careful compositional technique.

Concerning the conclusion of the parable it is widely held that interpretative comments have been added in attempts to make sense of such a puzzling story (Dodd 1961:26). What is not so universally accepted, however, is where the applications for the story begin. Jeremias (1972:45-48) and Crossan (1992:106-107) maintain that the narrative comes to a close at 16:7, suggesting that ὁ κύριος of 16:8a is Jesus, on the grounds that the master would not commend a dishonest steward who has just tricked him out of his profits. It is true that such praise appears rather implausible, but the question then arises as to why the master of the story would not respond in this way when Jesus does, which seems even less plausible. Others propose that the concluding verse is 16:8a (Bailey 1976:102-106; Donahue 1988:162-163; Scott 1989:256-260; Herzog 1994:233-236; Hendrickx 1986:192-193; Loader 1980:518-532; Kloppenborg 1989:474-495; Parrott 1991:499-515) on the grounds that the master's response rounds off a narrative which would otherwise be left hanging with no conclusion. It is also pointed out that the ὁ κύριος of 16:8a relates back to the same ὁ κύριος of 16:3,5. so there is no need to understand the reference in 16:8a as being to Jesus. Though it is clearly surprising that a master praises his steward's dishonesty, it is not unusual for a parable to subvert the anticipated, and in the context of this parable, it may well be designed to make the hearer think.

The καὶ ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω in 16:9 obviously leads into a comment outside of the story (Hultgren 2000:148), which leaves the question of 16:8b, regarded by some as the application of the parable (Jeremias 1972:182; Marshall 1978:621; Lee 1997:520-528). This too seems to be an interpretative statement which seeks to give a reason why the steward has been commended, and proposes a contrast between the morality of "the world" and "the people of God" (υἱοὺς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου and υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός). It would be strange to place such words on the lips of

the master of the story and they sit much more easily as a direct point addressed to Jesus' audience, or, more likely, to Luke's community.

Since the purpose of this examination of the parables is to treat them as self-standing stories and to resist understanding them only in the light of the applications given them in the text, the reading that follows concentrates on Luke 16:1-8a, taking the master's response to his steward as the conclusion.

7.3.3 Reading the Parable of the Survivor Client

Scene One The Challenge (16:1-2)

The first scene introduces the protagonist, the rich man (πλούσιος) and his steward (οἰκονόμος) and sets up what is often regarded as “the accounting”, but which might more appropriately be called “the challenge”. The wealthy man, possibly to be understood as a negative figure on account of his wealth (Kloppenborg 1989:487-488; Combrink 1996:281-306) and quite probably an absentee landowner (Scott 1989:260), employs a steward to run his affairs. Though some have proposed that the οἰκονόμος be understood as a slave (Beavis 1992:37-54; Udoh 2009:311-335), the fact that he is dismissed rather than sold (Bailey 1976:92); that he assumes he will possess some freedom in seeking hospitality among others (Landry and May 2000:296), along with the degree of responsibility he bears, suggests that Mann is more accurate in regarding him as a commodities manager responsible for making deals and profits for his employer (Mann 1990-91:234-235). Together they find themselves in precisely the patron-client relationship outlined above in which there is interdependence and mutual gain, but still hierarchy, inequality and vulnerability. The landowner can use the steward to make profits from the land

while at the same time distancing himself from those he exploits. The steward benefits from his position as a paid employee and by taking a cut of the profits (Herzog 1994:240-244), but his position is made more complex by being both client and patron, client to the rich master and patron to those who work the land, making him, in effect, a broker.

There is a further character or group of characters who are responsible for the series of events taking place at all, namely the one (for convenience the singular will now be used in this discussion) who makes the initial charge against the steward and whose identity remains hidden behind the passive *διεβλήθη*. Perhaps the author's intention is to deflect attention away from this element in the story in order to heighten the focus on the subsequent responses of the master and the steward. It seems more likely, however, that the audience is being encouraged to dwell for a moment on this point and to ask themselves who this character may be. The use of the passive creates a sense of "anyone". Since the person is not identified he could be anyone, and members of the audience may be familiar with circumstances where they can identify who this "anyone" is. As Marshall points out, *διάβαλλω* means "to bring charges with hostile intent" with no implication that they are either true or false (Marshall 1978:617), which suggests not merely an act of protest carried out by those being exploited, but, more likely, a degree of challenge and competition. It may be that one or more characters have determined to get rid of this steward in order to usurp his position, a far from impossible scenario. Perhaps a fellow servant in the master's household has his eye on the job.

The charge brought to the master, therefore, constitutes a challenge, a significant feature of the honour and shame culture in which the story is set. Acquiring honour was often achieved by means of a challenge-riposte exchange in which two people of similar social status seek to increase their own personal honour by outdoing the other. The exchange is initiated by one challenging the other with a word or gesture or action, positive or negative (Malina 2003:334),

which has the potential to undermine the other's honour. This is followed by a riposte that seeks to deal adequately with the challenge or returns a heightened challenge to the initial challenger. The verdict of winner and loser is made by the public (Malina and Neyrey 1991:131). What seems to be happening in this story is that the steward is being challenged and his reputation threatened by someone who successfully persuades or convinces the master to be his mouthpiece. The steward is accused of διασκορπίζων τὰ ὑπάρχοντα of the master (16:1), which cleverly draws the master into the affair as an interested party. Whether διασκορπίζων refers to inefficiency (Crossan 1992:107) or misappropriation of funds (Jeremias 1972:181) it is the master's funds and profits that are in question, and so he acts, calling his steward to produce the accounts and informing him of his dismissal. Though the steward has lost his job, the challenge-riposte game is still on. He does not deny the charge, for that would simply be to offer a defence. Instead he determines to respond by going on the offensive and seeking to outdo the challenge voiced by his master. The accounting is his opportunity to put his own challenge back both to his employer and to the challenger, who, if he eventually takes over the steward's position, will find himself dealing with the same peasants as the present steward.

Scene Two The Riposte (16:3-7)

The steward's soliloquy, a not uncommon feature of Luke's parables, stands in stark contrast to his master's previous behaviour, for before he acts the steward reflects on his options and then makes his choice. In literary terms the soliloquy slows down the plot and highlights the steward's capacity for agile thinking. The rich man, on the other hand, makes and announces his decision to dismiss the steward on the basis of an unsubstantiated charge and before he has even seen the accounts. Indeed, while the steward conjures up a means of securing his survival, the rich man is

presented as something of a fool. Not only does he respond to the charge rather than the evidence, he also proves himself to be incompetent in allowing himself to be defrauded without realising it in the first place. Finally, he is slow to make public the steward's dismissal, thus giving the latter the opportunity to manipulate the figures in the accounts.

The soliloquy reveals the steward's motivation (Parrott 1991:499-515) and is significant for two further reasons. First, it indicates that the steward wants to avoid the "shame" of begging (ἐπαίτειν ἀισχύνομαι), which is important because it indicates that shame and honour lie at the heart of this story. The steward is seeking an honourable way out and must find a means of establishing some degree of honour in the challenge he throws back at his employer. Second, his internal speech indicates the reason for the course of action he is about to take in seeking to secure his future survival by forging friendships with those from whom he has previously exacted payment of debts. It is vital not to lose sight of this when considering what he proceeds to do with the accounts. His focus is on establishing new relationships for the future rather than preserving old ones from the past. As his master had called him in (φωνήσας 16:2) now the steward fulfils the role of master and patron, summoning the debtors (προσκαλεσάμενος 16:5). A number of theories have been proposed concerning the reduction of debts.

Derrett suggests that the amount of reduction represents the interest on deferred payments that would have been written into the original account in order to conceal the usury which was illegal according to Torah. So the debtor ends up paying the correct amount, but not the interest, depriving the master of considerable profit, but removing the dishonest usury, so that he is seen as righteous (Derrett 1970:48-77; Wright 2000:224-230). Following this argument Brown maintains that the parable is therefore an indictment of usury (Brown 1992:121-145). Fitzmyer understands the interest element to be the steward's commission which he now forgoes (Fitzmyer

1964:23-42). Both Derrett and Fitzmyer are at pains to show that the steward is not dishonest and is therefore worthy of praise at the conclusion of the story.

Bailey's objection to Derrett's proposal is based on the fact that it implicates the master in dishonesty and unrighteousness. He suggests that the steward reduces the bills so that the debtors will appreciate the master's assumed generosity, a stance taken also by Landry and May (Landry and May 2000:309). The master will then enjoy the ensuing praise and increase in reputation, understand the advantages of being viewed as generous and forgive his steward (Bailey 1976:107). While Derrett and Fitzmyer seem preoccupied with protecting the steward's integrity, Bailey is determined to paint a positive image of the master – something he is required to do because he is working on the prior assumption that the master represents God.

All three of these proposals focus on the character of the steward or master and seek to justify their actions in one way or another. However, the text itself is not so concerned with their honesty or dishonesty, but with the steward's survival and how he secures a future for himself which is not totally devoid of honour. It is his wisdom that is praised, not his honesty or dishonesty (Ireland 1992:5-47). He needs to survive and make his riposte and does so by reducing debts. In patron-client language he offers favours to his clients in the expectation of the reciprocated favour of hospitality and friendship. In so doing he deprives the master who has challenged him of not insignificant sums and makes a considerable and weighty response in the challenge-riposte exchange, leaving the ball firmly back in the court of the rich man.

Scene Three The Outcome (16:8a)

Pursuing the challenge-riposte exchange through to its conclusion, or its next stage at least, the master is now required to reply. The steward's actions are clearly in the public domain, since

news of such significant debt reduction would undoubtedly travel swiftly, and so the rich man must make his response. Though no indication is given about re-employment of the steward, the master does commend him, thereby implicitly acknowledging the quality and force of the riposte. He has refused to lie down meekly and has begun to manufacture his own future survival. Some have seen the master's commendation of his steward's action as ironic (Fletcher 1963:15-30; Porter 1990:127-153), but this fails to recognise the significance of the fact that the master's praise is given in reported speech, not in direct speech, thus removing it from the private sphere of one to one conversation to the public acknowledgement required by the honour and shame game of challenge-riposte.

Ultimately the outcome is left open and uncertain, a strange, even comic, tale, offered to encourage reflection on the way the world often functions without satisfactory solutions (Beutner 2007:59-63). The listener is given the assurance neither that the steward is welcomed by those whose debts he has reduced, nor that he has convinced the master he should have his job back. However, the story does conclude with the commendation of the steward and therefore his victory in terms of honour and reputation. His action has impressed.

Who, then, is the loser in this story? It is not the wealthy landowner whose position and status in society enables him simply to dismiss this episode, and perhaps learn from it. It is, rather, the one who brought the charge in the first place in the hope of finding favour with the master. Having made the original challenge he has been outdone by the agility and courage of the steward. Even if he rises to the vacant position of steward he is likely to find his predecessor prepared to try and outwit him on future occasions from his home among the peasants.

7.3.4 Concluding Remarks

The parable of the Survivor Client or Crafty Steward (Drury 1985:148) leaves various questions unresolved. The master's commendation provides a surprising twist at the end, but fails to mention whether his steward will now keep his job. Forgiveness is not pronounced, but then neither does the steward repent. Equally there is no assurance that he does enough to receive the protection and friendship of those whose debts have been reduced. What is more certain, however, is that the steward has succeeded in maintaining or even increasing his honour and reputation. This much can be gleaned from the master's praise. The steward has at the very least created the possibility of future survival. Via expresses it well:

Thus we see an internally connected movement from threatening crisis, through decisive response, to an improved situation. The image of man is that of a being who is capable of recognising that he is in a crisis and of laying hold on the situation in such a way as to overcome the threat (Via 1967:157-158).

The steward is depicted as being always one step ahead of those around him, an image that is paralleled in the story of Rahab and the Israelite spies (Joshua 2). As a prostitute she too has something of a suspect past, but then prostitution is often about surviving in a world which abuses, exploits and oppresses. Rahab calculates how she is going to survive the threat of Israelite invasion confronting Jericho, so shrewdly she manipulates the action, sending her own king's men on a wild goose chase (Joshua 2:5-7) and then flattering the Israelite spies (Joshua 2:8-14). In so doing she manufactures a win-win situation for herself, for her betrayal of the king is secret, so if Jericho withstands the attack her future is secure. Similarly her pact with the spies provides

for her safety if Jericho falls. Furthermore, in the midst of this intrigue she finds herself switching from role of patron to client. As patron she furnishes the favours the Israelite clients are seeking. Ultimately, however, she will be dependent on protection afforded her by her new patrons, the Israelites. In a similar way the steward of the parable comes to the conclusion that his survival too depends on making the transition from one network of relationships to another.

7.4 The Parable of the Resisting Clients (Luke 19:12b-27)

7.4.1 Critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog

The Christological reading adopted by Bailey draws on the source material of Archelaus' expedition to Rome to persuade Caesar to make him king of Judaea (Josephus *Jewish War* II.1-38, 80-111; *Antiquities of the Jews* 17.208-249, 299-320) and takes the wealthy nobleman to represent Jesus, who requires faithfulness and loyalty in the time before his return (Bailey 2008:397-409). Underlined here is the risk involved in remaining loyal to the nobleman who may or may not return with regal authority. The first two servants are lauded for displaying such confidence in the future (Bailey 2008:401), while the third servant manifests a fear of demonstrating allegiance in case the master does not return, the latter's insulting of his master being taken to be the perspective of the servant rather than the reality (Bailey 2008:405). This interpretation, while still overtly allegorical, shifts the focus away from the usual theme of stewardship onto that of loyalty and faithfulness in the face of an uncertain future. Nevertheless the Christological approach does distort the content by imposing a positive portrayal of the master not borne out by the narrative. The figure behind the master, whether Archelaus or Antipas, is not a generous patron but an oppressive tyrant, and the challenge uttered by the third

servant is not denied but repeated by the master, so cannot simply be dismissed as the perspective of the servant. In sum, what Bailey ends up with is a reading which removes the story from its immediate social setting and glosses over its negative features.

Following an assessment of the two versions of this parable in Matthew and Luke and a putative reconstruction of an originating structure for the narrative, Scott believes that the key to the interpretation lies in the response of the third servant (Scott 1989:217-235). Acknowledging that, given the social context of hierarchical exploitation the audience is likely to sympathise with the third man, Scott argues against the notion that the master accepts the harsh description levelled at him, believing that the “refusal to take back the talent implies a rejection of that image” (Scott 1989:234), thus leaving the reader to decide whose viewpoint to trust – the master’s or the servant’s. Drawing on the work of McGaughey (McGaughey 1975:235-245; Scott 1989:231-235), which takes the third servant’s action to be symbolic of Israel’s protection of the sacred tradition along with this servant’s accusation against the master as a reflection of post-exilic complaints against God, a point taken up also by Lambrecht and Wright (Lambrecht 1992:234-236; Wright 1996:631-639), Scott maintains that the parable invites a response to how the future is to be claimed – by playing safe and preserving the gift or by taking the risk of acting boldly out of freedom rather than fear (Scott 1989:232-235).

Scott’s search for an originating structure inevitably results in the loss of Luke’s particular performance with its own specific perspectives and details, such as the nobleman’s journey and return and the wrapping of the money in a napkin rather than the burying of it. That aside, his kingdom-oriented interpretation, which poses a choice between a fear-driven preservation of tradition and the embracing with freedom of a new future, is so general as to have lost its grounding in the story of two individuals who pursue the same wealth-making policies of their master, while a third refuses to engage in such activity. Contrary to Scott’s view that the third

servant chooses the safe option, he does in fact take the huge risk of confronting his master and of paying the price for speaking the truth as he sees it.

The title Herzog gives to this parable, *The Vulnerability of the Whistle-Blower*, indicates that it is from the very angle of a courageous third servant that he approaches the narrative (Herzog 1994:150-168), and in this he broadly follows the thinking of Rohrbaugh who sees it as a “text of terror” in which the poor are mistreated, concluding that in the accusation levelled at the master lies a warning to the wealthy who engage in exploitation (Rohrbaugh 2006:109-123). Both are committed to a careful socio-economic appraisal of the parable’s setting, rejecting a reading from the viewpoint of the elite in favour of an appreciation of the plight of the poor, though Herzog’s conclusion differs from Rohrbaugh’s in focusing more on the third servant who, as a household retainer client, is an essential part of the patron-client system left to decide whether he should identify predominantly with the patron and master or with the peasant population. “What would happen if retainers refused to carry out their assigned tasks?” Herzog asks (Herzog 1994:167).

7.4.2 The Setting of the Parable

Luke positions this parable at the conclusion to his travel narrative (Luke 9:51-19:48) as Jesus moves ever closer to Jerusalem. The preceding verses deal with Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus in Jericho (Luke 19:1-10). Luke 19:11 then provides a transition and reason for the telling of the parable, which is to diminish expectations of the imminent arrival of the kingdom following the heightened anticipation of people on hearing the words: σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετω (Luke 19:9). Clearly Luke, or some previous author, has decided to interpret the parable of the minas in terms of the delay of the parousia, an angle of approach adopted by many interpreters (Dodd 1961:115; Jeremias 1972:59; Marshall 1978:702; Lambrecht

1981:188-189; Boucher 1983:143), though Johnson argues that Luke is actually announcing the immediate emergence of the kingdom (Johnson 1982:139-159). The story itself, however, is far richer than this, being both more evocative and provocative with regard to the social and political climate of Jesus' day. To consider it simply as an allegory about the parousia (a story which it is unlikely Jesus would have uttered himself), or to view it only in terms of stewardship (Flusser 1989:9-25), is to diminish its power and significance for a first-century audience in Palestine, exploited as they were by Roman occupation and members of the Jewish elite. In order to allow it to make its fullest impact the story needs to be taken on its own and not understood purely in religious terms or in the light of Luke's immediate context.

Two versions of this parable exist in the Synoptic Gospels, here in Luke and in Matthew 25:14-30. (There is a third version from the Gospel of the Nazoreans on which Eusebius comments (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:386)). The textual similarities between Matthew and Luke suggest that there was perhaps one original story, which some attribute to Q (Donahue 1988:105; Lambrecht 1981:19, 167-168), though the distinctive divergences have led others to suggest provenance from independent sources (Dodd 1961:108; Jeremias 1972:59-60; Boucher 1983:146; Snodgrass 2008:531). As Wohlgemut indicates, it is important to recognise that Luke's story is different from Matthew's account.

Matthew has three initial servants who are given talents in graded amounts (5, 2 and 1); Luke has ten servants given one *mina* each. Matthew's profitable servants are told they will be put over 'many things', Luke's are given command of cities. Such discrepancies prompt several scholars to suggest that the story came to the Evangelists via independent Matthean and Lukan traditions. If this is the case, the parable's presence in multiple strands of tradition is an initial indication of a relatively early origin (Wohlgemut 1997:104-105).

The most striking difference between Matthew and Luke is the presence in Luke of a second narrative strand which can be detached from the story of the minas. This consists of 19:12b, 14-15a, 27 and has been identified as the throne claimant story (Jeremias 1972:59; Weinert 1977:505-514; Boucher 1983:147) which will be considered in more detail in the subsequent reading of the parable. Here it is simply noted that this is to be seen, not as an intrusion into a parable about entrusting money to servants, nor as a clumsy merging of two stories, for such thinking undermines Luke's skill as a storyteller. It is not that he is careless in bringing two stories together, but that he is careful in weaving one, the parable of the minas, into the social, political context of Roman occupation and client kings, thus, as will be seen, providing two levels on which the whole can be read. It is precisely because it rounds off both levels of the narratives that 19:27 is taken to be the conclusion of the story, though it is conceded that 19:26 appears to be a free-floating phrase that may have been added from elsewhere.

7.4.3 Reading the Parable of the Resisting Clients

Scene One Departure and Return (19:12b-15)

As indicated above, the Parable of the Resisting Clients presents the hearer with a very clever intertwining of two levels of patron-client relationship. The nobleman (ἐὺγενὴς) clearly already fulfils the role of patron in respect of the ten slaves he summons. They are his clients, or retainers (Herzog 1994:155-157), who act as brokers between himself and those who work the land for his profit. This man heads off on a journey to claim a kingdom in order to increase his power and extend his patronage. In turn, however, he also is a client, a client king entrusted with

responsibility by a higher authority for governing. The patron, then, is also a client and dependent on his own patron for maintaining his power and control.

Luke's version of the parable, therefore, holds in tension both the local sphere of a master's relationship with his retainers or slaves (the focus of Matthew 25:14-30) and the more global political context of the Roman empire with the emperor as ultimate patron with whom client kings around the empire seek favour. A number of scholars (Jeremias 1972:59; Marshall 1978:701; Crossan 1992:100-101; Scott 1989:223; Culpepper 1995:362-364) discern in this story an historical allusion to Jewish kings claiming power, from Herod the Great (Josephus *Jewish War I*.279-285) to Archelaus and Antipas (*Jewish War II*. 15, 18) and Agrippa (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18. 244), and there is indeed a remarkable similarity between Luke's account and the story of Archelaus, who travelled to Rome after Herod's death to claim the vacant throne (Schultz 2007:105-127). He was opposed by a deputation of Jews, who succeeded in persuading Caesar Augustus to limit the scope of Archelaus' kingdom, and the violence alluded to at the conclusion to Luke's narrative (19:27) reflects Archelaus' extremely vicious tendencies, which included the killing of three thousand Jews in the Temple precincts.

Having noted the presence of the throne claimant narrative in Luke's version, interpreters then often proceed to put it to one side and focus in on the part of the story that deals with the master and three servants, reading it as a version of Matthew's parable (Matthew 25:14-30), an unfortunate tendency since it limits attention to the parochial and neglects exploration of the impact of Roman occupation and Roman client kings on the non-elite Jewish population. Culpepper argues strongly against this and concentrates exclusively on the theme of the greedy, vengeful king, who serves as an antitype for Jesus (Culpepper 1995:361). As a result of concentrating on the character of the king, Culpepper's reading tends to skim over the central part of the story which focuses on what the servants do with the money they are given. This first scene

describes not only the departure and return of the nobleman, but uses this journey to create time and space in the plot during which the servants are expected to invest and make profits. Having summoned the servants once to give them the minas, now the nobleman calls them again for a reckoning or accounting. In the meantime his status has changed, for he has achieved increased power and authority. The question is now whether his servants have taken advantage of this opportunity to prove themselves and to enhance their own profile and prospects.

Scene Two The Accounting (19:16-23)

The accounting is the moment when the truth is revealed or even exposed. In this instance the truth relates not only to what the servants have done or not done during the nobleman's absence, but more significantly to the characters of both the servants and the rich man. Existentially they are defined by their actions. The first two servants are rewarded for their business acumen. They have grasped the opportunity to show their master what they can do in achieving returns for him. At this point it is important to note that this money is still regarded as belonging to the nobleman (ἡ μὲν σου 19:16,18) and how, in a clever attitude of self-effacing deference, the servants opt for the passive voice, which serves to underline the way in which these two characters are buying into their master's attitude and behaviour. The purpose is to make money, to accumulate wealth. Both are rewarded with jurisdiction over a number of cities, which neatly ties this episode to the purpose of the nobleman's journey, but also provides a stark point of conflict between these two servants and those who have opposed and presumably continue to oppose the king.

The response of the third servant stands in bold contrast to that of the previous two. What is to be made of his action of wrapping up the mina; of expressing his fear, and of the accusation he

levels at the nobleman? Moreover, what truth does this reveal about himself, his master and the system in which he lives? The predominant interpretation of this parable has tended to ignore or minimise the significance of the third servant's outburst against his master and to disregard especially the fact that the king does not dispute its validity. The likely reason for doing so is to protect the notion of God's integrity, justice and generosity, for often the king is understood as being analogous to God or Jesus. This is certainly the case with Dodd, who takes the original purpose of the parable to be a judgement against complacent Pharisees who refuse to let go of their notion of "scrupulous discipline" and take risks that Jesus invites of them (Dodd 1961:111-113; Jeremias 1972:61-62). For some the final execution is to be seen as divine vengeance on those who reject Jesus (Creed 1930:235; Weinert 1977:505-514; Sanders 1981:660-668). Others too find fault with the third servant. Donahue suggests that he acts out of the fear of failure and maintains that the master is not harsh, but generous (Donahue 1988:108). Via proposes that the third servant wants to avoid the risk of trading in the market place, noting that he is paralysed by his anxiety and attempts to shift the blame for his fear and inactivity onto his master (Via 1967:119). For Via this is a tragic parable of a man who refuses to take risks and take responsibility, thereby rejecting the opportunity to create meaning for his existence. Scott concludes in a similar vein, claiming that the future is to be invested in and embraced, rather than hidden away from (Scott 1989:234). Finally, Wohlgemut, in arguing against Rohrbaugh, points out that fear militates against defiance and that it is fear not defiance that motivates the servant (Wohlgemut 1997:115-116).

This negative attitude towards the third servant ranges across all three issues raised above. With regard to his fear, this is interpreted as inadequate courage to take risks. With regard to the wrapping up of the mina, this is viewed as being highly imprudent since he will be held responsible for any loss that occurs. Hiding it in the ground would remove this burden (Scott

1989:228). With regard to his outspoken attack on the master, this is understood as not fully appreciating the latter's generosity in giving him the chance to make more of himself.

There is, however, an alternative way of depicting the third servant's character, which grounds him firmly in the patron-client and limited good society of the first century. His fear is genuine; his courage in refusing to conform and in speaking out is phenomenal, and his concealing of the mina in a cloth serves to underline his willingness to take responsibility for himself and for his actions amid the precarious vulnerability of his situation. This servant is protesting against the oppressive greed of the nobleman or master (Fortna 1992:211-227; Ford 1997:32-46; Schottroff 2006:181-187), and of his fellow servants, all of whom buy into the system of unjust wealth accumulation. As Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:384-386), Rohrbaugh (1993:32-39), Herzog (1994:150-168) and McKenna (1995:113-126) point out, this story is not to be interpreted within the context of a modern day capitalist society with its notion of unlimited good, but against the background of a limited good society, where one person's gain is another's loss. The truth of the system is revealed by the courage of this one converted whistleblower (Herzog 1994:167-168), who risks everything by his protest and now counts himself among those who have objected to his master and awaits his fate.

Scene Three The Judgement (19:24-27)

The plot reaches its climax with two words of judgement pronounced by the king. The first of these is directed at the third servant. He loses the mina that was never his in the first place. The authenticity of 19:25, the spontaneous protest, is disputed (Marshall 1978:708), but, if accepted, it serves to emphasis the astonishment and restlessness of the neighbours with regard to wealth

accumulation. Perhaps emboldened by the third servant's courage the bystanders now feel able to voice their protest.

The second judgement brings the story back to those who have not yet been properly dealt with following their opposition to the nobleman's rise to power. Those who stand in the way of greedy, powerful members of the elite will be crushed, even if they stand together in solidarity. The parable does indeed conclude on a tragic note, not, as Via would have it, the tragic failure of an individual to grasp the opportunity to define himself existentially, but the tragic consequences of a system which fails to make room for protest and snuffs out the existence of anyone who is courageous enough to define and reveal the truth.

7.4.4 Concluding Remarks

Read in this way the parable of the Resisting Clients pronounces judgement not on the individual servant who refuses to do business with his master's mina, but on the master himself. In the voices of protest of a delegation to Rome and in the voice of an individual servant who stands up to his master, some dare to utter the truth and to say "No", rendering themselves vulnerable to violent consequences. It is a story which has the potential to transport the listening peasants of Jesus' day back to the story of Naboth's Vineyard (I Kings 21). Here too the action is played out in the political sphere. King Ahab, in thrall to his greed, desires Naboth's vineyard. Naboth, on the grounds that it is his ancestral inheritance, has the courage to say "No", believing perhaps that Ahab might understand his reasoning. Jezebel, however, refuses to accept this as the final outcome. She and Ahab are not to be denied. Her words to the sulking Ahab are poignant and pertinent, both to her story and to the parable in Luke: "Do you now govern Israel?" (I Kings 21:7a). For Jezebel this is not about a vineyard only, but about power and control and crushing

resistance, so she proceeds to manufacture Naboth's death. Ahab then takes possession of the vineyard without enquiring into the circumstances surrounding the death or reflecting on the consequences for Naboth's family. Crucially, however, the truth will not remain concealed. The prophet Elijah summons Ahab to an "accounting" and confronts him with the judgement.

Jezebel's question: "Do you now govern Israel?" might equally be found on the lips of the first two servants in the parable: "Do you not have the power to do as you wish, to obtain what you desire, to make judgements according to your whim?" The question posed by the third servant comes from a different angle: "Do you not imagine that there might be an alternative way to govern and a different model for your kingdom?" His voice is, of course, as weak as Naboth's, and so he must wait in hope, vain or otherwise, for divine judgement and vindication.

7.5 Conclusion

Both the parables in Luke 16:1-8a and Luke 19:12b-27 offer vivid depictions of patron-client relations in first-century Palestine, with the issues of power, control and greed on the one hand, and of vulnerability, precariousness and survival on the other. Whether the focus is a wealthy landowner and his relationship with his tenant farmers or the grander political map of Roman emperors and client kings, what lies at the heart of the matter is land and who controls it. This is made all the clearer by considering the connections with two significant stories from Israel's tradition, the stories of Rahab and of Naboth's Vineyard, which themselves revolve around land ownership, greed and control.

At the outset of this chapter the question posed concerned the degree to which these narratives support a positive view of patronage in the human interaction of first-century Palestinian society, which in turn would help to substantiate the Context Group's proposal of

defining God's relationship with humanity in patron-client terms. The evidence from the readings proposed above indicates that they do not present such a positive picture. The steward in the first story finds himself seeking to survive in the midst of serving as client to his master and patron and as patron to his peasant clients, while in the second narrative the third servant courageously resists pressure to multiply the wealth of his greedy patron and master, but is expected to have to count the cost for what is regarded as subversive disobedience. While it is important to add that this does not mean that the two clients have no choice at all and are not utterly trapped, for there is the option of courageous rebellion, what it does make clear is that the power structures are so defined that the clients are dependent for their survival on the response of their patron, and these two parables offer contrasting outcomes in this regard, one lenient and the other vicious. Together they reflect a reality which emphasises and reinforces the separation between patrons and clients, rather than the mutuality which binds them to one another, suggesting that, if this is extrapolated theologically to the scenario of the divine relationship with humankind, the predominant image which results is not the Context Group's portrayal of generous benefaction, but of greedy exploitation.

Chapter Eight

Purity and Pollution

8.1 Introduction

If the system of patronage reviewed in the previous chapter is largely about the use and abuse of power in human relationships, then purity and pollution, the final area under investigation in this study, is concerned primarily with the issues of identity, belonging and order. Systems of boundary markers define who and what is clean and unclean, pure and impure, inside and outside, honourable and shameful (Pilch 1998:170). In antiquity such notions played a significant role in Graeco-Roman societies, as DeSilva has shown (DeSilva 2000:249-253), but for the majority of the inhabitants of first-century Palestine the primary understanding of purity relates to the holiness of God, focused in the words of the Torah, particularly in Leviticus 11-26 and in the practices of the Jerusalem temple. In seeking to appreciate the *meaning* of the purity system of Judaism, rather than simply acknowledging its existence, members of the Context Group have taken as their point of departure the cultural anthropological work of Douglas in her *Purity and Danger* (2002). From this Malina develops a model of purity (Malina 1981:122-152) on which he and others subsequently draw in their interpretation of the Gospels and other parts of the New Testament, most notably Neyrey in his treatment of the Gospels of Mark and Luke (Neyrey 1986; 1991). Such readings conclude that Jesus draws new maps, thereby not destroying the system of

purity, but redefining it along lines of greater inclusiveness. There are still outsiders and insiders, but this is dependent, not on adherence to the established distinction between clean and unclean, but on where people stand in relation to Jesus as God's prophet and covenant leader (Neyrey 1991:299). This chapter, then, begins with a consideration of the meaning of purity and pollution and the use of the model set out by the Context Group, before turning to two parables in Luke's Gospel which have as their focus the relationship between human beings in the context of the temple and the Torah, namely the parable of The Four Fools (Luke 10:30b-35) and the parable of The Temple and the Two Estranged Brothers (Luke 18:10-13), asking whether or not they support the view that Luke's Jesus is "turning the world upside down" by inviting a greater inclusiveness and focus on himself (Neyrey 1991:297-302).

8.2 Purity and Pollution – The Model

Neyrey proposes the following definition:

"Purity", then, is the orderly system whereby people perceive that certain things belong in certain places at certain times. "Purity" is the abstract way of indicating what fits, what is appropriate, and what is in place. "Purity" refers to a system, a coherent and detailed drawing of lines in the world to peg, classify and structure that world. "Purity" is a cultural map which indicates "a place for everything and everything in its place" (Neyrey 1991:275).

This definition draws on the work of Douglas, who understands the concept of dirt as "matter out of place" (Douglas 2002:44). Purity exists where there is order, where clear lines of demarcation distinguishing what belongs from what does not belong in any given sphere remain intact and are

not transgressed. Conversely, when such boundaries are violated pollution and disorder occur (DeSilva 2000:243), as the following simple example from contemporary everyday life illustrates. While food remains on the plate it is deemed to be in the correct and appropriate place and is therefore clean, but when it falls and lands on the carpet it causes a “mark” or “stain” and spoils the picture because it should not be there. Dirt is therefore a relative term, as Neyrey indicates (Neyrey 1996:88). When this notion is transferred onto the larger map of human culture the concept of purity is believed to give meaning, direction and structure to society, providing human beings with a system which provides a means of understanding and defining what it is to be human and what it means to belong to a particular human group (Countryman 2007:10).

Douglas develops her insights in relation to Judaism in two particular ways. First she examines the laws of Leviticus (Douglas 2002:51-71) and the relationship between purity and divine holiness, understood as God’s being separate and set apart, and God’s creation of order, wholeness, completeness and perfection (Douglas 2002:62). The general command of Leviticus 19:2 “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” requires that individuals conform to the class to which they belong, for holiness demands that different classes not be confused (Douglas 2002:67), so central to the notions of holiness and purity is the idea of separation. Second, in her investigation of laws regarding the human body, for example, leprosy and menstruation, Douglas discerns a connection between the human and social body. Preoccupation with the surface of the body, with skin and orifices, and with what goes in and what comes out of those orifices, reveals concern about social boundaries and the need to retain the identity of a group or nation, not least when this identity is under threat.

The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious...When rituals express anxiety about the body’s

orifices, the sociological counterpart of this anxiety is a care to protect the political and cultural unity of a minority group. The Israelites were always in their history a hard-pressed minority. In their beliefs all the bodily issues were polluting: blood, pus, excreta, semen, etc. The threatened boundaries of their body politic would be well mirrored in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body (Douglas 2002:142, 153).

Malina and Neyrey take Douglas's insights about boundaries, categorisation and separation and put them alongside the purity maps of first-century Judaism, which provided people with a means of locating themselves in relation to God and their neighbours. Neyrey cites four maps – of places, persons, things and times (Neyrey 1996:92), of which the first two are particularly significant for the purposes of the present discussion.

There are ten degrees of holiness: The Land of Israel is holier than any other land...The walled cities (of the land of Israel) are still more holy...Within the walls (of Jerusalem) is still more holy...The temple Mount is still more holy...The rampart is still more holy...The Court of the Women is still more holy...The court of the Israelites is still more holy...The Court of the Priests is still more holy...Between the Porch and the Altar is still more holy...The Sanctuary is still more holy...The holy of holies is still more holy... (*m. Kelim* 1.6-9).

The second is the map of people, taken from the Tosefta *Megillah*, which ranks from the most to the least holy:

1. Priests
2. Levites
3. Israelites

4. Converts
5. Freed Slaves
6. Disqualified priests
7. Netzins (temple slaves)
8. Mamzers (bastards)
9. Those with damaged testicles
10. Those without a penis (t. Meg.2.7.)

What is important about these two maps or lists is not only the tightly structured hierarchy, but the centrality of the temple and the priesthood. It is in the holy of holies that God, in absolute purity and holiness, is deemed to dwell, and it is the high priest alone who may enter the holy of holies, and even then only on the Day of Atonement each year. The temple is, of course, the focal point of the people of Israel, where, through sacrifices, indebtedness to God is acquitted and relationship to the divine restored.

Although it is Malina who is primarily responsible for shaping Douglas' work into a coherent model for use in biblical studies (Malina 1981:122-152), it is Neyrey who makes particular use of the model, initially in his interpretation of Mark's Gospel, using the purity maps of Judaism to demonstrate how, in his interaction with issues of purity and pollution, Jesus mixes with the unclean, fails to observe sacred times and places, such as the Sabbath and the Temple, and flouts rules concerning food and table fellowship (Neyrey 1986). A similar portrayal of Jesus emerges from Neyrey's subsequent consideration of purity in Luke (Neyrey 1991:285-294), where Jesus is depicted as redrawing the purity maps of Judaism. Concerning places Jesus at times disregards the temple (Luke 19:51-56), the holy city (Luke 19:41-44) and the land (Luke 9:51-56); concerning times Jesus is held to violate the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11; 13:10-17) and fails

to observe days of fasting (Luke 5:33-35); concerning the body he allows himself to come into contact with unclean lepers (Luke 5:13), menstruants (Luke 8:43-48) and a sinful woman (Luke 7:38). As in his previous work on Mark, Neyrey argues that Jesus refuses to adopt any defensive strategy to the issue of purity (Neyrey 1991:289), making himself vulnerable to defilement by his transgression of established boundary markers. Yet Jesus reverses this process, for instead of contracting uncleanness himself, he transmits purity and wholeness to the unclean and the unwell (Neyrey 1991:291). In this way Jesus fulfils the function of what Malina terms a “limit breaker”, a designated person who crosses the boundary between pure and impure without belonging to the sphere of pollution (Malina 1986:143-154). Even if Jesus is a limit breaker, however, Neyrey maintains that he is not so much a rebel as a reformer, not rejecting the notion of maps, but seeking to redraw them in order to make God’s covenant community a more inclusive body (Neyrey 1991:292).

There is much to be commended in the way Malina and Neyrey develop the cultural anthropological insights of Douglas for understanding the concepts of purity and pollution in biblical texts. Malina’s model creates an accessible means of adapting Douglas’ work, not only with regard to the existence of purity regulations, but also in the ways they are used and shaped to give meaning to a culture and a sense of identity to its people. In his use of this model Neyrey provides a helpful picture of how Luke’s Jesus fits into and then modifies the culture of his day. There are, however, three areas where the depiction of Jesus’ role is open to dispute.

The first of these is Jesus’ role as healer. With regard to the healing stories in Luke Neyrey places the emphasis on the purifying of uncleanness, bringing individuals not only to physical wholeness, but reintegrating them back into their society (Neyrey 1991:291-292). It is debatable, however, whether this interpretation always does justice to the narratives in question, and Jesus’ encounter with the haemorrhaging woman in Luke 8:42b-28 provides a case in point. Frequently

this story is understood as the cleansing of an impure outsider, a good example of which is Love's exploration of Matthew's version (Matthew 9:20-22), in which he relates the whole episode to the purity maps of Judaism, citing the work of Douglas, Malina, Neyrey and Pilch, and making the connection between the boundaries of the human body and the social body of Judaism. In touching the woman Jesus crosses the traditional lines of purity and puts himself at odds with the temple system, for her uncleanness constitutes a threat to the purity of the temple (Love 2002:85-101).

Weissenrieder, on the other hand, in her reading of Luke's version of the story, rejects the ritualistic implications of the woman's illness in favour of a medical healing (Weissenrieder 2002:207-222). In Luke's omission from Mark of the terms "plague" and "fountain of blood" Weissenrieder discerns the removal of any link to the purity code of Leviticus 12-15 and proposes that this, along with the absence of purity language in Luke (Weissenrieder 2002:214) and the reference to the woman's impoverished circumstances, switches the focus to the severity of the illness rather than uncleanness (Weissenrieder 2002:217). Since this woman is near to death it is from her dire physical and social circumstances as an impoverished dying woman that she is healed. Weissenrieder's analysis provides a timely reminder of the dangers of seeing everything through one particular lens, in this instance the lens of purity, a point borne out in a further example from Luke in the parable of the Great Dinner and its preceding verses (Luke 14:12-23), where there is no indication that the poor, crippled, blind and lame are required to undergo any purificatory healing, but are welcome in the state in which they already find themselves.

The second area of contention concerns the depiction of Jesus' relationship with the Pharisees and what it means to be an observant Jew. Neyrey argues that Jesus would be expected to be defensive in seeking to avoid all contact with impurity (Neyrey 1986:105), which suggests a

particular perception of the Pharisees as inflexible and intransigent, a view with which DeSilva takes issue, noting that the key lay not in avoiding uncleanness, but in knowing how to deal with it when such contact occurred (DeSilva 2000:275). This does not indicate that the Pharisees did not consider matters of cultic purity to be of intense significance, especially with regard to tithing, domestic meals and Sabbath observance, as Neusner makes clear in his assessment of the different portrayals of the Pharisees in the Rabbinic sources and the New Testament (Neusner 2007:311-313), but interpreters have to be careful not to read in opposition and conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus which is not necessarily present. Asking what is actually known about the Pharisees Scott Green concludes that the notion of their being the primary Jewish opponents of Jesus is open to question (Scott Green 2007:423), a finding supported by Levine, who, though acknowledging that Luke's Jesus has some harsh things to say to and about the Pharisees, points out that they do open their table to Jesus on three occasions (Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-54; 14:1-24) and refuse to humiliate their guest (Levine 2007:129), such table fellowship furnishing evidence that they do not deem his associating with the unclean to compromise their opinions and practices (Levine 2007:120). With a close reading of the relevant texts in Luke Levine counters historical prejudices against the Pharisees (see also Heschel 2007:353) and provides a salutary warning against promoting too rigid a distinction between them and Jesus (Neyrey 1996:93-84).

The third area of debate revolves around the question of whether Jesus is to be seen as a reformer extending the boundaries of inclusiveness in relation to the temple purity system (Neyrey 1991) or as a prophet calling to account the temple as a domination system. Concentration on purity maps tends to conceal the economic function of the temple and the way purity concerns are deployed as a tool to legitimise and sustain that domination (Herzog 2000:112-123). Solomon's extravagant construction was inextricably connected with legitimising the nation state, royal ideology and the prosperity of his dynasty (I Kings 8,9). Similarly Herod

sought to bolster his position and power by rebuilding the Jerusalem temple, described at length by Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* 15.380-425). What enabled Solomon and Herod to pursue their building plans and what allowed the Jerusalem priesthood to wield influence and control over the people, enriching themselves at the people's expense, was the hold that the notion of temple had over the surrounding population. It was in the temple that God found his earthly residence, the God, as the Torah declares, to whom Israel is indebted for its very existence, for its release from Egyptian captivity and for its own land and identity. Such indebtedness was discharged by the rendering of sacrifices and the payment of tithes or taxes to the temple. The non-payment of tithes, on account of inability or refusal to pay, left individuals in debt, and consequently unclean. It nullified the efficacy of any sacrifice and was believed to threaten the fertility of their land. The emphasis laid on the connection between payment of tithes, purity and land fertility, already evident in texts such as Haggai 1:7-11; 2:10-19, became a big stick with which to coerce people to pay into the temple coffers, to the obvious advantage of the temple authorities and disadvantage of the peasants (Herzog 2000:122-123).

It is clear, therefore, that the issue of purity had far-reaching consequences for the population of Palestine in Jesus' day. It went way beyond the level of social and political interaction, dictating who might associate with whom and who might marry whom. It was not simply about boundaries which gave people their identity and consolidated the honour of the family. It was also about religious and economic ideologies and structures designed to apply pressure on the vulnerable to ensure a redistribution of wealth from those on the periphery who worked the land to those at the centre of Israel's elite society, most notably those who profited from the temple. The question to be addressed by the interpretation of the parables in Luke 10:30b-35 and Luke 18:10-13 is whether they simply confine themselves to an extending of

purity boundaries or whether they seek, implicitly or explicitly, to undermine the whole system with its devastating economic impact.

8.3 The Parable of the Four Fools (Luke 10:30b-35)

8.3.1 Critique of Bailey and Scott

Bailey interprets this parable (1980:33-56; 2008:284-297) in relation to the context in which it is set in Luke's Gospel, noting the way Jesus shifts the lawyer's major question from the somewhat static definition of "who is my neighbour?" to the more dynamic and interactive "to whom must I become a neighbour?" (Bailey 2008:296). He then proceeds to a close reading of the text which emphasises the contrast between the failure of the two temple-focused Jewish characters to embrace the risk of defilement contracted from attending to a potential corpse (2008:293) and the courage of the Samaritan in caring for the wounded man, putting himself in danger of possible community vengeance (Bailey 2008:295). Bailey combines an ethical and Christological reading, the thrust of the story being the ethical demand for compassion towards anyone in need, which is the response of the true neighbour, in this case the Samaritan, who is taken to be Jesus (Bailey 2008:297). There is no denying that there is an ethical element to the narrative, but the difficulty with focusing almost exclusively on its ethical and Christological dimensions is the diluting of the religious and cultural issues at stake. Bailey makes mention of the dilemmas confronting the priest and Levite over purity and defilement, but becomes so preoccupied with the compassionate response of the Samaritan and seeing in that response the activity of Jesus that any critique of the temple ideology remains unexplored. What Bailey calls for in relation to the priest and Levite is more of a sympathetic understanding of their

predicament, even suggesting that they are victims of the system (Bailey 1980:45), rather than anything approaching condemnation.

Scott differs fundamentally from Bailey, first, in his reading of the parable as a metaphor of the kingdom, rather than as an example story, and, second, in exhibiting far less sympathy for the action of the priest and Levite (Scott 1989:189-202). According to Scott these two have no excuse for neglecting the injured man, since there would be no defilement accruing from dealing with a neglected corpse (Scott 1989:196) and, as members of the privileged temple elite, they are viewed negatively by the peasant population, who reject their behaviour. Unable to identify with the priest and Levite on the one hand and with the hated Samaritan on the other hand, the hearers are left looking at the story from the point of view of the man lying at the side of the road (Scott 1989:199). The anticipated pattern of Jews helping others is turned on its head, driving home the message that the kingdom cannot be defined along religious boundary lines distinguishing insiders from outsiders (Scott 1989:202).

In response to this Snodgrass dismisses the idea that the parable is a metaphor on the grounds that there is no mention of the kingdom and that it does not point to any reality other than the compassion of a Samaritan (Snodgrass 2008:352). Hendrickx, for whom the parable remains an example story, is similarly dismissive of metaphorical readings, wondering how listeners are supposed to infer that a story is about a kingdom which is not explicitly mentioned (Hendrickx 1986:92). It is the case that Scott's metaphorical approach always runs the risk of seeing something implicit in a story which is not immediately obvious or tangible, but it does invite a deeper analysis of the narrative and encourages listeners to see beyond the superficial and explicit, and in this instance there would seem to be some significance to be found in the juxtaposition of two elite temple characters and a foreign Samaritan. It is not simply that the Samaritan is compassionate, but that the compassionate one is a Samaritan. It is not simply that

the priest and Levite belong to the hierarchy of Israel, but that they are caught up in the whole system of purity and pollution. On this occasion, then, far from venturing too far into the metaphorical, Scott does not appear to explore fully enough the system that the priest and Levite represent.

8.3.2 The Setting of the Parable

The Parable of the Four Fools, unique to Luke's Gospel, is situated towards the beginning of the Lukan travel narrative (Luke 9:51-19:28). Appropriately enough it is a story about journeys set in the larger framework of Jesus' own journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) and follows the account of the successful mission of the seventy (10:1-20) and the Samaritan rejection of Jesus and his company (9:51-56). The more immediate context of the parable is a conversation between Jesus and a lawyer (νομικός) in which for Luke the story serves to define the identity of neighbours and the content of neighbourly activity. Though the method adopted in this study is to concentrate on the story itself, exploring it on its own terms and with its own autonomy, as opposed to allowing Luke's redactional interests to colour the interpretation, it is nevertheless important to recognise the degree to which this parable has been read in the light of the narrative in which it is embedded. Interpreters often take their cue from the questions "Who is my neighbour?" (10:29) and "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? (10:36) leading to a focus on the question of eternal life (Keesmaat 2000:276-282), or on the legal issues regarding love for neighbour and purity confronting the priest and Levite (Bauckham 1998:475-489), or on social identity (Esler 2002:185-205) or on reading the story itself as an illustration or example of neighbourly love (Jülicher 1899:596; Jeremias 1972:204). Though Jeremias draws attention to the impact of the

Samaritan's presence in the narrative, the focus remains on the pattern of compassionate, all-embracing love to be followed. The hearer should seek to emulate the Samaritan's example.

The point being made here is that reading a parable as an illustration or example of a particular facet of moral instruction directs the emphasis towards the point being illustrated and away from the dynamics of the story itself. So the answer to the question "Who is my neighbour?" becomes the essential and controlling theme, emptying the story of much of its provocative and creative power. The narrative becomes far more creative if allowed to stand on its own and invite the listener into it as a participant. This is the direction Funk takes, understanding parables as metaphors which enable the audience, through imaginative participation, to question the reality with which they are familiar. The parables then possess the potential to become earth-shattering events that promote new meaning and ways of comprehending the world or the kingdom of God (Funk 1966:161-162). The key starting point for Funk in relation to Luke 10:30b-35 is the listener's identification with the injured man or victim lying in the ditch, dependent on his arch enemy. This participation sets the imagination running, questioning long-held beliefs and practices about human relationships. So the starting point becomes: "What does my world look like, having taken part in this story?" rather than "What instruction does this story give me about how I should live?" The latter looks to tie down an answer, while the former raises questions.

The reading that follows, as with all the other readings in this study, focuses on the internal dynamics of the story itself, thus seeking to facilitate the kind of imaginative participation proposed by Funk and likewise by Crossan, who emphasises the capacity for parables to call into question and even overturn long-held values (Crossan 1972:285-307). This does not mean that Jesus did not tell this or any other story in the context of longer conversations. It would seem highly unlikely that he told stories in a vacuum. It does mean, however, that an attempt is being

made to allow stories to be stories with all their open-endedness and loose ends rather than seeing them purely as providing answers to questions. So the discussion moves to the parable itself.

8.3.3 Reading the Parable of the Four Fools

Scene One The First Fool (10:30b)

Though the story begins in a conventional enough manner with the introduction of the ἄνθρωπός τις, questions immediately surface concerning the man's identity. It is frequently assumed that he is Jewish, either because a Jewish audience would expect this, unless told otherwise (Scott 1989:194; Bailey 1980:42) or because the Samaritan's action is understood as a deliberate crossing of cultural, political and religious boundaries (Funk 1982:32-33) or because the priest and Levite are clearly Jewish and it is their response to a fellow Jew that is under fire. While the burden of proof might fall on those who want to question the man's Jewish roots, it is important to acknowledge that the text offers no clear identification, a point taken up by Esler as being significant for the lawyer in deciding whether the priest has an obligation to come to the injured man's assistance (Esler 2002:188-195).

Hedrick too argues forcefully for the man's anonymity, drawing attention to the discrepancy between the labelling of the other three characters and the non-labelling of the initial traveller (Hedrick 1994:103). He seeks to substantiate his argument by referring to the man's condition as he lies half-dead in the road, Stripped of his clothes and presumably left so injured that he is unable to speak, he is unidentifiable, for, as Bailey points out, it is his mode of dress and his accent that would indicate to which ethnic or religious community he belongs (Bailey 1980:42-43). Bailey's point is well made (providing it can be safely assumed that the man cannot indeed

speak) and focuses attention on the first traveller's loss of identity, but that does not mean that he does not have an identity in the first place. The ληστές do not injure him and remove his clothes in order to render him anonymous, but for their own personal gain. The result is not so much anonymity as life-threatening vulnerability and isolation.

While recognising the possibility that the ἄνθρωπος τις may not be a Jew, it is nevertheless clear that the journey he is making is in Jewish territory. It is frequently noted that Jerusalem was where the priests served in the temple and Jericho was where many of them lived when not on duty. It is also often mentioned that Jericho, known as the city of a thousand palms (Josephus *Jewish Wars* 4.8.3), was taken at the beginning of the Israelite conquest of Canaan and that the seventeen mile road from Jerusalem to Jericho (a descent of 3520 feet) was notoriously dangerous for banditry and robbery (Hultgren 2000:96). The fuller implications of these last points are, however, often left unexplored.

Mention of Jericho reverberates with the notion of conquest and occupation and serves to remind first-century listeners of Israel's transition from conqueror and occupier to conquered and occupied. The fall of Jericho is the catalyst in the story of Israel's settlement in Canaan. By the first century CE it has become closely connected with what it means to be an oppressed people. Not only is Israel now occupied by Roman forces, but, as indicated in the introduction to this chapter, finds itself oppressed by the temple regime. Both of these are symbolically and functionally connected with Jericho in the presence there of King Herod's summer palace (Stiller 2005:76) and of the Jerusalem priesthood. Jericho, then, is a constant reminder of oppression and oppressiveness and thus contains significant symbolic meaning for this story.

Though the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is widely held to be extremely dangerous, the question rarely asked is: What is this man, Jewish or non-Jewish, doing, making this journey in isolation? Is this not utter foolishness? If, as Donahue suggests, the fate of an unaccompanied

traveller is almost anticipated (Donahue 1988:130) it seems that this man can fully expect to be pounced upon as the result of making himself so vulnerable. Hence this ἄνθρωπός τις is designated as the first fool, and he is the first fool because he is followed by three others who do precisely the same thing. Various responses are offered to the question about with whom the listener identifies in this narrative. Scott holds the point of identification to be with the hero – the one who helps, the Samaritan (Scott 1989:194), while Funk believes that a first-century audience is more likely to identify with the attacked man (Funk 1982:32). The question arises, however, as to what extent this man is a victim of circumstances beyond his control, or a victim of his own foolishness. The listeners may indeed find themselves in sympathy with his predicament, but they know also that he should not have been travelling alone, that he only has himself to blame. They know too that, from time to time at least, they engage in the same or similar kinds of foolish activity. What emerges, therefore, in this first scene is a picture of solitude. On his own a man travels a lonely road, vulnerable to attack. He is set upon and abandoned by robbers. He is separated even from his clothing and, close to death, he waits in terrifying isolation.

Scene Two The Second and Third Fools (10:31-32)

To listeners familiar with the Jerusalem to Jericho road it comes as no surprise to find a priest and Levite travelling that way, since many priests and Levites lived in Jericho. Priests and Levites were an integral part of the temple system of purity, separation and hierarchy, as discussed above. It is not unexpected (though not condoned), then, that for reasons of defilement they distance themselves from an injured man who is possibly dead, since their whole life revolves around separateness, distinctiveness and the retention of clear boundaries. Such spatial distancing is clearly emphasised in the καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ἀντιπαρήλθεν which reveals a

deliberate seeing or recognition of the man lying on one side of the road, which informs their decision to keep to the other side. Simultaneously the reader is presented with a picture both of separation and unity. The priest and Levite distance themselves from a man with whom they are bound together in their mutual foolishness, for they too are travelling alone. Indeed it has been suggested that one of the reasons for their hasty departure is their fear of being attacked themselves (Scott 2001:60). If this is accurate then they too recognise that they are potentially in the same boat as the injured man and need to protect themselves.

This is unlikely to be the sole reason for their failure to care for the injured man, however. The fact that the second and third fools are deliberately labelled priest and Levite connects them to the temple and suggests that the issue of purity and pollution is significant. The question is whether they are justified in fleeing the scene on grounds of the danger of ritual defilement from contact with the man lying on the road. Bauckham stresses the dilemma for the priest and Levite, caught between the command to love their neighbour (Leviticus 19:18), on the one hand, and to avoid the risk of ritual pollution through touching a corpse (Leviticus 21:1-4), on the other hand (Bauckham 1998:475-489), while Esler concentrates on the issue of the injured man's ethnicity, arguing that Leviticus 21:1-4 only prohibits contact with corpses from among the priest's own people, meaning that, if the injured man is a Gentile, contact is not forbidden. The non-identification of the injured man adds complexity to the legal scenario being painted for the lawyer by Jesus (Esler 2002:191-192). Scott (1989:195-197) proposes that the answer to this question depends on whether Torah or tradition is being followed. The Torah makes it clear that ritual defilement results from contact with the corpse of anyone outside the family, though within the people of Israel,

No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his relatives, except for his nearest kin: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother, likewise, for a virgin sister, close to him because she has no husband, he may defile himself for her. But he shall not defile himself as a husband among his people and so profane himself (Leviticus 21:1b-4).

and the rule is even stricter for a high priest,

He shall not go where there is a dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother (Leviticus 21:11).

The Mishnah, on the other hand, contradicts this with regard to neglected corpses discovered on a journey.

A high priest or a Nazarite may not contact uncleanness because of their (dead) kindred, but they may contact uncleanness because of a neglected corpse. If they were on a journey and found a neglected corpse, R Eliezer says: The high priest may contact uncleanness but the Nazarite may not contact uncleanness (*m.Nazir* 7.1).

If the Torah is being followed the priest and Levite act correctly in avoiding potential defilement. If the tradition of Mishnah and Talmud holds sway they are expected to assist the wounded man. This contrast between Torah and tradition leads Scott to make the following suggestion about conflict within first-century Jewish society,

The exception of the neglected corpse is not in the Torah but in the tradition, in the Mishnah and Talmud. Maybe the priest and Levite as Sadducees follow the Torah strictly and are seeking to

avoid any defilement. But from the point of view of a Jewish peasant, this passing-by would play on their dislike and disapproval of priests. And for Pharisees it would show how their tradition was superior. Since the priesthood belonged to the upper stratum of Jewish society, the rural prejudice against an urban elite and the anticlerical sentiment of the day would have reinforced the negative image of the priest and Levite (Scott 1989:197).

It could be argued that the man is not a corpse, though the priest and Levite have no way of making a judgement on this without venturing closer. This, however, entails the risk of defilement if he is indeed dead, and it is the consequence of this risk that the priest in particular will want to avoid – the consequences of humiliation and of the time-consuming and costly process of restoring ritual purity. As Bailey points out, in avoiding contamination the priest protects himself and his family (Bailey 1980:45). It is ironic that such risks are avoided in the course of a journey which itself is essentially risky and potentially life-threatening.

Scene Three The Fourth Fool (10:33-35)

The identification of the fourth traveller as a Samaritan jars with the expectations of the audience who are anticipating an Israelite layman (Gourges 1998:709-713; Hultgren 2000:98; Esler 2002:193). Following the cold indifference of members of the temple hierarchy who occupy the first two positions on the purity map (see introduction to the chapter) it is not unreasonable to assume that it will be an ordinary Jew who will respond appropriately to the situation, thereby intensifying the implicit criticism already levelled at the priest and Levite and, beyond or through them, at the whole system of purity connected with the temple. The impact of the Samaritan is not only shocking to the audience, but serves also to broaden the theme of purity

and boundaries. No longer is this parable simply about the marginalisation of members of the Jewish population by the religious and politically elite in Jerusalem, it is about the marginalisation of a whole people by another people, of Samaritans by Jews. What this radically outrageous narrative does is to juxtapose and bring together in some kind of unity the marginalised Samaritans and the marginalised Jews.

Jeremias documents the history of the conflict between Samaritans and Jews (Jeremias 1969:352-358). Following the conquest of the northern kingdom of Samaria by Assyria in 722 BCE and the subsequent assimilation of non-Israelite customs and practices, Jews from the southern kingdom began to regard Samaritans as foreign pagans. The Jews could not accept the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, destroyed in 128 BCE by John Hyrcanus, and early in the first century CE the Samaritans desecrated the Jerusalem temple by scattering human bones throughout it (Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.2.2). The Mishnah makes clear the hatred and conflict between the two communities:

He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like to one who eats the flesh of swine (*m. Sheb.* 8:10).

It is significant to hold this background of hostility in mind in order to grasp the strangeness of the Samaritan's action, characterised as compassion. He sees the injured man and ἐσπλαγχνίσθη. Brueggemann defines this as allowing one's innards to embrace the feeling or situation of another. It is about the embodying of another's experience and being at one with him or her (Brueggemann 2001:89). This notion of compassion is highly significant, for it is not simply a case of pity (Scott 1989:197) or of feeling sorry for the wounded man, but reaches far deeper to a sense of solidarity. It is helpful here to contrast the notion of condescension with compassion. Condescension maintains within it a stance of distance and superiority. The priest

and Levite continue to regard themselves as different from the first traveller and a rung or two higher on the ladder and they remain indifferent to and unmoved by the common humanity and foolishness they share with him. Compassion, on the other hand, recognises an essential unity which binds people to one another in solidarity. In this instance the Samaritan finds himself moved not only by the distressing circumstances of the injured man, but also by the recognition that he too has been foolish enough to take this road alone, making himself vulnerable to the same consequences of attack and injury or even death.

Yet the compassion works not only at this individual level, but symbolically at the corporate level too. The marginalised Samaritan is bound in solidarity with another marginalised individual, sidelined by the purity specialists because of the potential impurity and contamination he bears. Moreover, he is also connected with marginalised Jewish peasants whose lives are diminished by living in the long shadow cast by the temple and its purity system. Consequently the criticism comes not only from outside the story, that is, from those listening in the audience who make their own judgement on the priest and Levite, but more significantly from within the narrative as the Samaritan's compassion threatens the dominant culture.

The ones who pass by, obviously carriers of the dominant tradition, are numbed, indifferent and do not notice. The Samaritan expresses a new way that displaces the old arrangements in which outcasts are simply out. The replacing of numbness with compassion, that is, the end of cynical indifference and the beginning of noticed pain, signals a social revolution...Thus the stories [Luke 10:30b-35 and Luke 15:11b-32], if seen as radically dismantling criticism, bring together *the internalisation of pain* and *external transformation*. The capacity to feel the hurt of the marginal people means an end to all social arrangements that nullified pain by a remarkable depth of numbness (Brueggemann 2001:90-91).

The irony is that, while the priest and Levite insulate themselves in their state of ritual purity, it is the Samaritan who offers the true sacrifice. Donahue (1988:132) follows Derrett (Derrett 1970:220) in recognising that oil and wine serve not only a medicinal purpose, but are used also in temple sacrifices. (Leviticus 23:13). This instruction about oil and wine is given in the larger context of harvest offerings required to satisfy God following entry into the land of Canaan (Leviticus 23:9-14). The Samaritan's use of oil and wine can therefore be understood as a prophetic subversion indicating that God really desires, not sacrifices, but compassion. (Hosea 6:6; Isaiah 58:5-9). So the Samaritan subverts expectation and convention. His presence in the parable is in itself shocking and his compassionate response is disconcerting, for, as Crossan stresses, the listeners are forced to recognise that, in this instance, compassionate and Samaritan belong together, shattering conventional ideas of a despised enemy (Crossan 1992:64).

The story concludes with the extension of the Samaritan's initial response. In a way reminiscent of the return of Judean captives to their rightful place in 2 Chronicles 28:9-15, this individual Samaritan provides for the rehabilitation of the injured man by transporting him and finding accommodation for him at an inn. It is at this point that the narrative comes full circle and anxiety begins to surface once again in the audience, for first-century inns and innkeepers had a poor reputation (Bailey 1980:53-54; Oakman 2008:133-135), a point which Longenecker makes central to his interpretation, in which he sees a disreputable innkeeper being rehabilitated by the responsibility he takes for the injured man (Longenecker 2009:422-447), though there is no evidence within the story for the actual exercise of this care. Appropriately enough the *πανδοχεύς* literally means "one who receives all", suggesting a vivid contrast between the strictly-defined courts of the temple and the inn which does not discriminate, but accepts everyone. This poor reputation of innkeepers renders the wounded man vulnerable once again, particularly in the absence of the departed Samaritan (Oakman 2008:136). As setting off alone on

the precarious journey from Jerusalem to Jericho entailed risk and vulnerability, so now the story concludes with the same individual at the mercy of an innkeeper who may or may not believe that the Samaritan will return to pay the debt.

8.3.4 Concluding Remarks

A key feature of the Parable of the Four Fools is the theme of isolation and insulation, evident in the characters of the story and a reflection of the purity system of first-century Israel where all know their place and where barriers are erected in order to keep the structures secure. The significance of the Samaritan lies in his transcending of these barriers by rejecting any concern to protect himself from the dangers of defilement or robbery, and by embracing solidarity and compassion. In crossing boundaries the Samaritan transfers the focus from the idolising of separation and definition to the ideal of unity and acceptance.

Though far from a strict parallel, it is illuminating to reflect on the relationship between this parable and the story of Jonah in the Hebrew Bible. It too is a tale set in the context of travelling and features Jonah, God's representative, as an isolated figure, in the boat, in the fish and awaiting the outcome of Nineveh's repentance. He runs away (1:3), tantamount to crossing to the other side of the road, in order to steer clear of responsibility, refusing to go where divine compassion would have him go. Jonah does not wish to be made to look a fool by God's compassionate response to Nineveh's repentance (4:1-3). The fundamental question which lies behind the story, however, is this: "Why Nineveh?" Why should God be interested in renewing a distant Gentile population through judgement, repentance and compassion? Why can God not satisfy himself with his own people? Jonah fully comprehends God's compassionate nature (4:2). The shattering subversive aspect of the whole tale, though, is not simply divine compassion, but

divine compassion for outsiders, deliberately intended to change and renew lives. Jonah fears being made to look a fool, but his eventual obedience becomes the dynamic catalyst for bringing the people of Nineveh to their senses. In the course of the tale Jonah moves from the one who crosses over to the other side to the one who speaks truthfully for God. In the Parable of the Four Fools it is not simply that the Samaritan is included in God's perspective, but that he embodies God's compassion. In prophetically subversive style the Samaritan speaks for God.

8.4 The Parable of the Temple and the Two Estranged Brothers (Luke 18:10-13)

8.4.1 Critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog

In interpreting the parable in the light of the introductory statement in Luke 18:9, Bailey focuses on the theme of righteousness and dismisses any notion that the narrative is about prayer (Bailey 1980:142-156; 2008:343-354). For him the story is about justification by faith (Bailey 2008:350), depicting a tax collector who throws himself on the mercy of God and who is made righteous as a result, in contrast to a self-righteous Pharisee whose words amount not to a prayer, but to self-advertising and derogatory comments on others (Bailey 2008:348). In support of his reading Bailey connects the parable to Isaiah 66:1-6, viewing it as an updating of that prophetic passage (Bailey 2008:350-353), a process which, however tenuous the links may be deemed to be, does mean that the self-righteous one and the humble one are seen primarily as worshippers, rather than as representatives of particular groups. The outcome of this is the avoidance of any specific condemnation of Pharisaism, an ever-present danger in this parable, as well as in more general reading of negative attitudes and behaviour attributed to the Pharisees in the Gospels, a danger because, as Schottroff maintains, the identification of Pharisaism with dishonesty and

self-righteousness is inadequate, both in terms of Jesus' own historical context and because it has led over the centuries to violent anti-semitism (Schottroff 2006:9-11). On the other hand, however, Bailey's interpretation is heavily dependent on the verses that lie outside the parable, with the consequence that the context of Luke 18:9 and 18:14 controls the meaning, removing the focus from the temple scene and the juxtaposition of two characters clearly identified as a Pharisee and a tax collector, major players in the social setting of first-century Palestine, who are simply dissolved into representatives of self-righteousness and humility.

In contrast Scott's reading (Scott 1989:93-98) rejects the relevance of Luke 18:9 and 18:14b since they lie outside the parable, arguing that 18:9 leads to a prejudging of the story which culminates in anti-pharisaic and anti-semitic approaches, an unwarranted angle because the Pharisee's prayer is quite proper and acceptable, issuing from piety not self-righteousness (Scott 1989:95-96). The picture presented, therefore, is of the temple system, where insiders and outsiders are separated along purity lines, which are then turned inside out by the conclusion of Luke 18:14a and the acceptance of the tax collector, thereby demonstrating the impossibility of being able to predict who are insiders and who are outsiders. For Scott this provides a metaphor for the kingdom in the reversal of expectations and the disappearance of identities defined by the temple purity system (Scott 1989:97), a call to reassess identity that turns expectation on its head taken up also by Crossan and Beutner (Crossan 1988:82-84; Beutner 2007:15-20). This emphasis on the temple setting and the issue of purity provides a helpful contribution, though Scott's interpretation is heavily dependent on the reversal announced in Luke 18:14a, which, as is argued by Hedrick (1994:234-235) and Downing (2000:98-99), lies outside the parable and is a comment on it, in a not dissimilar way to Luke 18:9 and 18:14b. Furthermore the shock of the reversal only makes sense if the Pharisee's prayer is deemed to be appropriate and acceptable. Though other attempts have been made to portray the Pharisee's prayer positively (Friedrichsen 2005:89-119;

Evans 1994:342-355), the latter noting similarities with Deuteronomy 26, Snodgrass is quite dismissive of this suggestion, arguing that the connections are somewhat tenuous (Snodgrass 2008:471-472), while both Hedrick and Downing view both the Pharisee and the tax collector as negative characters or caricatures (Downing 2000:78-101; Hedrick 1994:227-235).

Herzog's approach to the parable is similar to Scott's in terms of his careful appreciation of the Temple setting and the purity issues at stake (Herzog 1994:173-193). He differs, however, in his analysis of the protagonists, both of whom he designates as toll collectors. The Pharisee is a retainer of the temple system whose role is to remind people of their obligations to tithe and pay the temple tax in order to participate in the redemptive media of the temple and maintain a positive relationship with God. His prayer is neither acceptable as genuine piety (Scott 1989:95-96) nor a caricature (Downing 2000:99), but a condemnation of the other toll collector, caught up in a retainer relationship himself with wealthier tax collectors, for whom he extorts money from the population. Herzog proposes, then, that the scene constitutes a challenge and riposte encounter in which the toll collector, on hearing the Pharisee's shaming of him (the claim), responds with a cry for mercy (the challenge), to which Jesus replies with the pronouncement of acceptance (the riposte) (Herzog 1994:192). In this way the whole system of the temple with its monopoly on the means of redemption, the role of the priesthood and the exploitation of the population is undermined.

Clearly Herzog's investigation of the social system forming the background to the parable is of value and worth, though there would seem to be a number of problems with his interpretation. It is questionable whether the Pharisees played the kind of retainer role on behalf of the temple hierarchy that is envisaged here. Firm information about Pharisaic life, beyond the importance to them of purity exercised in table fellowship, tithing and Sabbath observance, is largely lacking (Levine 2007:113-130; Scott Green 2007:409-423), and there seems to be little to substantiate

such an overt and exploitative political role. Evidence is also lacking for the suggestion that the toll collector is able to hear the Pharisee's so-called shaming of him, which undermines the challenge and riposte conclusion. Even if this is the case, Herzog's use of the challenge and riposte framework appears considerably forced since Jesus is not part of the encounter or story and so cannot offer a riposte in the way that challenge and riposte settings are usually expected to proceed (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:334-335). It seems, therefore, that in order to arrive at the desired conclusion, Herzog takes, first, his understanding of the temple domination system and fits the Pharisee into that scenario, and then, second, the model of challenge and riposte and ties the protagonists' soliloquies into that formula. Ultimately this only serves to undermine his reading.

8.4.2 The Setting of the Parable

The parable of the Temple and the Two Estranged Brothers (Luke 18:10-13) is more explicitly related to the Jerusalem temple than the parable of the Four Fools. Though it is also about insiders and outsiders and where people stand on the map of purity and pollution, the focus here is not the contrast between the priesthood, Jewish laity and foreign enemies, but the contrast between a Pharisee dedicated to the system of purity and a toll collector whose function renders him unclean. This contrast will be investigated further in the reading that follows, but it is important to note it at this point, since often the story is read superficially as an example of arrogance and humility (Hultgren 2000:126). Indeed Luke encourages such an interpretation by the framing he gives the tale in 18:9 and 18:14. The message he is illustrating is the reversal in the anticipated divine attitude to self-confident piety and sincere humility, thus emptying the narrative itself of its power and questions.

Though some regard it possible that 18:9 was part of the tradition taken over by Luke (Jeremias 1972:93; Linnemann 1966:64), it is more likely to have been created by Luke himself in order to shape interpretation of the parable (Hultgren 2000:120; Snodgrass 2008:470), and 18:14b is widely held to be a saying that Luke has added (Hultgren 2000:125). However, more debate surrounds the status of 18:14a and whether this lies inside or outside the story. The λέγω ὑμῖν suggests that it constitutes an interpretative comment by Luke or by Jesus, and therefore stands outside the dynamics of the actual story, the view held by Hedrick (Hedrick 1994:214-227), though he is very much in the minority. Others simply do not address the issue or argue that only the λέγω ὑμῖν is an insertion into the parable (Herzog 1994:175). It is not difficult to understand the tendency to include 18:14a, for it provides a conclusion to the story which otherwise is left hanging in the air with no obvious discernible literal or metaphorical point. The problem with 18:14a, however, is not only that it does not belong inside the story, but also that it makes a judgement on the characters of which they are totally unaware. The Pharisee shows no indication of knowing his behaviour has been brought into question and the toll collector demonstrates no sense of relief at having been forgiven. If there is reversal then presumably it only makes sense if the characters themselves understand what has occurred and what is expected of them. In this instance neither displays any evidence of having undergone a change.

This reading, therefore, restricts the parable to the story itself, found in Luke 18:10-13, and proposes that there is no conclusion and that in effect it is not really a story with a plot at all. It is, rather, a picture which the listener is invited to ponder, recognising that pictures do not have beginnings and endings, but simply depict scenes to be explored. So these verses paint a picture of a Pharisee and a toll collector in the temple and invite listeners to allow the scene to speak to them, knowing what they do about Pharisees, toll collectors and the temple system.

8.4.3 Reading the Parable of the Temple and the Two Estranged Brothers

Surveying the Broader Canvas (18:10)

Since there is no development of plot in this parable it makes sense to consider the wider picture before narrowing the focus on the Pharisee (Φαρισαῖος) and the one identified as a toll collector (τελώνης), as opposed to a tax collector (Donahue 1977:39-61). Farris' recommendation that the reader recognise the temple (ἱερόν) as a third character in the tale is insightful for two reasons (Farris 1997:23). First, the temple plays a prominent role not only in the life of the Pharisee, but in the lives of many of the first-century audience, as the introduction to the chapter indicates. The temple does not operate simply as background scenery but is evocative of the whole temple system which provokes strong emotional responses from those whose lives are controlled and diminished by it (Scott 1989:94). Second, it is the perspective of this reading that the picture centres on the relationship between each of the characters and the temple system of purity and pollution, rather than on the relationship between the Pharisee and the toll collector. Much of the thrust for understanding the parable as a contrast between the two men comes from the reversal of fortunes suggested in 18:14a, but, as already discussed, this stands outside the picture and it is the picture itself that is being explored.

The Pharisee and the toll collector function not merely as individuals, but as representative figures, and care must be taken in defining their roles in first-century Palestine. This is particularly acute with regard to the Pharisees who are frequently read through the negative lens of Gospel polemic and opposition to Jesus. Indeed the traditional understanding of the parable is of Pharisaic arrogance and condescension, a view encouraged by Luke's framing. In seeking to counteract this, a number of scholars stress the high regard in which the Pharisees were held

(Donahue 1988:188-189; Scott 1989:95-96; Hedrick 1994:214-215; Farris 1997:26). It is usual to draw on Josephus' positive remarks (*Antiquities of the Jews* 13:9,6; 14:5; 18:1,3-4) to substantiate this argument, so it is worth bearing in mind that, while they may be a balancing corrective to the more prevalent New Testament view, they should not be regarded as totally objective. What is clear is that the Pharisees had close links to the temple and purity system and that, just as the temple functioned as a religious, social, economic and political institution, so did the Pharisees. Neusner defines them as a table-fellowship sect that

required keeping everywhere the laws of ritual purity that normally apply in the Jerusalem Temple, so Pharisees ate their private meals in the same condition of ritual purity as did the priests of the holy cult (Neusner 1979:67).

While the Pharisees focused on purity issues and found themselves at home in the temple, the toll collectors were deemed to be unclean because they earned their living through contact with and by working for the Romans. Toll collectors were not necessarily wealthy and functioned by purchasing a contract to collect tolls and then recouping the money and making some profit, often by cheating people. This, of course, made them unpopular on two counts: first, for consorting with the enemy of Rome, and second, for cheating fellow Jews (Freyne 1980:192). Not only unpopular, a toll collector was also regarded as a sinner whose sinfulness comprised five specific elements according to Stiller:

- a. He has defrauded his people.
- b. He associated with the Gentiles in this evil scheme of toll gathering.

- c. It would be interpreted that he has robbed the temple of its due taxes by forcing people to pay taxes rather than tithes.
- d. By so doing he is complicit in forcing his people into a life of impurity because their tithe was not paid.
- e. He ends up supporting the Roman occupation rather than the Jewish system (Stiller 2005:144).

So, as the Pharisee and the toll collector stand in the temple, the audience begins to make its response, even before any words are uttered. Strong emotions are evoked because of the issues of debt, purity and oppression that these two representative figures embody for the hearers.

Focusing in on the Pharisee (18:11-12)

With prior understandings of the audience in mind attention turns now to focus directly on the Pharisee offering his prayer. Debate surrounds the πρὸς ἑαυτὸν and whether it modifies σταθεῖς or προσήυχετο. Some hold the Pharisee to be standing on his own, thus emphasising the degree of separation from others (Jeremias 1972:140; Bailey 1980:147; Scott 1989:94); others regard the Pharisee as making a private prayer (Linnemann 1966:143; Fitzmyer 1985:1186; Donahue 1988:188; Hedrick 1994:217). Ultimately it probably makes very little impact on the story, for, whether the Pharisee stands separately or not, the μακρόθεν of 18:13 stresses the purity gulf between him and the toll collector, and whether or not others in the temple hear the Pharisee, the key issue is that the audience is privy both to his prayer and the toll collector's. It is the content of the prayers which is of primary significance.

The Pharisee's prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving and in line with what would be expected from a highly regarded devout member of society. It contains similarities to a prayer from the Talmud:

I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou hast set my portion with those who sit in the Beth ha-Midrash [the house of study] and Thou hast not set my portion with those who sit in [street] corners for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise early for frivolous talk; I labour and they labour, but I labour and receive a reward and they labour and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world and they run to the pit of destruction (*b.Ber.28b*).

The striking point about this and the Pharisee's prayer is the way lines are drawn and distinctions made. The Pharisee regards himself as being different and living on the correct side of the boundary line from others, deeming himself to be some kind of faithful remnant and in a minority of the ritually pure. The first part of the prayer is cast in the negative, suggesting that οἱ λοιποὶ should be viewed in a negative light. He then gives examples of what he is not – ἄρπαγες – robbers, ἄδικοι – reprobates – μοιχοί – adulterers. Hedrick points out how together these break both religious obligations of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:3-11) and community obligations (Exodus 20:12-17) (Hedrick 1994:220-21). Bailey seeks to link the three examples of immorality to the toll collector, both grammatically and in terms of content (Bailey 1980:150-151), and though this works in relation to theft and lawlessness it works less well with adultery (μοιχοί), unless adultery is understood metaphorically as consorting with Rome, but Bailey does not argue this.

Turning to the positive features of the prayer, the Pharisee emphasises his fasting and payment of tithes. Fasting twice a week constitutes far more than is required by Torah, which calls for one fast day a year on the Day of Atonement. Tithing all things ensures that any potential uncleanness arising from the acquisition of previously untithed produce is counteracted (Hedrick 1994:223). While the Pharisee's tithing demonstrates his scrupulousness in keeping the rules and in his devotion to the temple, its mention here serves to underline the pressure exerted on the peasant population by the temple system and the contrast between what Pharisaical purity demands and what the toll collector represents. Borg identifies three major temple taxes: the annual "wave offering" of first fruits at one to three percent of produce; the annual first ten percent tithe for the priests and Levites, and a second tithe used for other purposes in the six years between sabbatical years (Borg 1998:32). Non-payment of these requirements was held to render producers impure, and non-payment occurred since the population could not escape Roman taxation and could not then always afford the temple dues. In this way the temple system contributed both to impurity and debt and to the consequent loss of land among the peasantry (Horsley 1987:29). The tithing that appears, on the surface, to be a highly commendable activity of the Pharisee reveals something more sinister and oppressive about the temple. If listeners find themselves applauding the Pharisee's behaviour they might also be wishing that they had the means to do likewise.

Focusing in on the Toll Collector (18:13)

While the Pharisee encourages people to pay their temple dues and, in so doing, avoid pollution, the toll collector demands from them money for Rome, rendering himself both despised and unclean. He remains μακρόθεν – at a distance. He adopts a stance of contrition and

mourning, refusing to lift his head and beating his breast, recognising his sin, his impure state and his need of forgiveness. Interpreters note the contrast between the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and this parable, not least in the fact that the toll collector in the temple shows no sign of making reparation for the cheating of his fellow citizens (Crossan 1992:67; Hedrick 1994:226; Farris 1997:29). The picture presented depicts a lack of energy and a powerlessness to change his own circumstances. Here stands a man who is lost, paralysed by his grief and trapped in a situation for which he is partly responsible, for, though he has opted for toll collecting, he is caught up in a system which controls him economically, psychologically and religiously.

8.4.4 Concluding Remarks

There is no *denouement* to this story. It is painted on a canvas to be gazed at by those who are willing to be drawn into the scene and consider where they stand in relation to the two protagonists featured. One possibility open to the audience is to draw a purity line between the characters, from the extreme purity of the Pharisee to the uncleanness of the toll collector, and to place themselves somewhere between the two. A second possibility, however, is to recognise the intense sadness and despair of the scene and to sympathise or even empathise with the grief of the toll collector, trapped with no easy way out.

To read it in this way is to set the parable alongside the tale of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16) and to ask questions not only of human behaviour, but, more significantly, of how divine activity is understood. Genesis 4:1-16 is a story of two brothers who find themselves separated from and in conflict with one another as the result of what are perceived to be adequate and inadequate offerings. No clear reason is given for God's rejection of Cain's contribution. The "Why?" is never answered, and the result is Cain's grief ("his countenance fell" Genesis 4:5) and

anger, trapped as he is in a situation in which he feels rejected and dismissed, separated from his God and from his brother. His response is violence, which is duly punished, but which is the only course of action he feels he can adopt as a result of the violence of rejection meted out to him. Rejection of a harvest offering thus leads ultimately to loss of land.

Listeners to Jesus' parable would all too readily recognise the link between rejection and loss of land and livelihood. It is not the God of Cain who speaks directly to them, but the elite of the temple system, who, in the name of God, reject those whose offering is deemed inadequate because of its size or because of the uncleanness of the one making it. It is not God punishing one man's violence, but the temple hierarchy imposing a burden of taxation that results in borrowing, debt, foreclosure and loss of land. Two brothers, Cain and Abel, and two other brothers of Israel, a Pharisee and a toll collector, find themselves pushed apart by what is perceived to be divinely ordained as pure or polluted, as adequate or inadequate. The toll collector is overcome with grief and Cain is possessed with anger, but together they are asking the questions: How did all this happen? Where does the blame lie? Who speaks for God?

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter began with the question of whether the two parables under discussion support Neyrey's contention that Luke's Jesus is extending the purity maps of Judaism, making them more inclusive. The result of these readings suggests a mixed response. In the Parable of the Four Fools (Luke 10:30b-35) the fact that it is a Samaritan who embodies compassion suggests the promoting of a new common humanity in a solidarity which cuts across boundaries of religion and race, pushing back the frontiers of exclusion. At the same time, however, the parable ventures beyond this and provides a stinging criticism of the temple hierarchy, as the

representatives of God's temple withdraw into their own circle of purity, suggesting an implicit criticism of the whole way in which the temple system functions. The Parable of the Temple and the Two Estranged Brothers (Luke 18:10-13), on the other hand, paints an uncertain picture of what is being said about the purity code, since there is no clear conclusion presented in the scene itself. Two individuals are to be found in the temple precincts offering their prayers, one exuding confidence and security, the other apparently miserable to the point of grieving, but any evidence for a change in status is absent. Nevertheless, the Pharisee's pride over his tithing and the toll collector's occupation point to the issue of economics, the Pharisee caught up in the whole system of temple control over the people, the toll collector revealing the trap in which some find themselves caught in seeking to earn a living. The fact that he does not offer reparation merely underlines the sense of helplessness and powerlessness he feels in seeking to liberate himself.

Together, then, these parables suggest a more radical degree of subversion than Neyrey proposes, for they strike at the very heart of the purity system as it is controlled by the temple elite, in whose hands purity and pollution have become an economic issue. Those unable to pay their temple tax and tithes are rendered impure, and so the temple, in exacting such financial demands, makes it harder, not easier, for people to fulfil the requirements of purity. They are forced to live permanently in an alienated state from God. Impurity resulting from indebtedness needs God's forgiveness which is only available at the cost of obedience to the temple and its redemptive media, and this is controlled by the priesthood.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

The central purpose of this study has been to combine a consideration of the Context Group's emphases regarding the honour and shame culture of first-century Palestine with a careful analysis of ten narrative parables of Luke's Jesus in order to allow the proposed cultural setting to form an appropriate background for reading and understanding the stories and, in turn, to use the parables as material for assessing the adequacy or inadequacy of the Context Group's models. In this way the cultural context has been in dialogue with the literary text, the cultural context facilitating a non-anachronistic and non-ethnocentric approach to Luke's narratives, and the literary text serving as a means to evaluate the stereotypical models often taken as a given starting point for hermeneutical reflection.

In order to provide the necessary background for more detailed analysis of the honour and shame culture and of the narrative parables selected as being particularly relevant to specific features of this culture, the first part of the study looked initially at the significance of cultural anthropology and its use by the Context Group within the broader discipline of social-scientific biblical criticism, before progressing to focus on parable interpretation. The evaluation of the Context Group's approach acknowledged the Group's valuable work in opening up alternative ways of looking at ancient texts and in compelling interpreters to question the cultural assumptions and preconceptions which they bring to a text, assumptions and preconceptions

which often fail to recognize the foreign nature of ancient documents. This failure leads potentially to anachronistic and ethnocentric readings which then bear little relation to the original context and the meaning these texts would have held for the population of first-century Palestine.

However, the Context Group's approach raises questions in three specific areas. The first of these concerns their stance against shifting understandings of what culture is and the tendency of the Group not to engage with the issues of geographical and temporal diversity, leading to the danger of presenting the culture of first-century Palestine as a unified whole. The second question relates to the Context Group's depiction of honour and shame, querying its centrality, distinctiveness and definition. Examination of the evidence suggests that, while concepts of honour and shame are clearly significant, they are not always to be assumed as being the dominant driving force behind behaviour and action; that some aspects of the honour and shame culture are not so very distinctive or different from twenty-first century northern European culture, and that honour and shame are not always to be defined in terms of agonistic activity, but are also related to the values of cooperation and virtue. The third area revolves around the use of models, for, though it is important to acknowledge their inevitability; their potential usefulness in providing general patterns; their value as a heuristic device, and their explanatory focus, it is also clear that models can be too abstract and general, too simplified and insufficiently nuanced, and, if not handled carefully, can be used to make the data fit the model and to impose inaccurate frameworks on a culture from the outside.

This exploration has highlighted that the value of Context Group's approach lies both in its exposing of interpretation that is anachronistic and ethnocentric and in its usefulness as a heuristic tool for a renewed investigation of the New Testament in its own social setting, but has

recognised the dangers which emerge when models and patterns do not permit diversity. Hence the importance of scrutinising each model independently as pursued in part two of the thesis.

The second element of part one discussed the main issues involved in parable interpretation, paying particular attention to what a parable is, how it means, what the parables are about and where the locus of meaning is to be found. This laid the foundation for an approach which regards the narrative parables in Luke's Gospel as open-ended stories of Luke's Jesus focusing on a variety of aspects of life in first-century Palestine. They are not to be taken as referring to some moral or theological truth, nor to the kingdom of God, nor as allegories. They are both historical statements about the society and culture of their original setting and literary creations which invite and encourage the reader into an encounter with the text.

Following clarification of methodological issues regarding cultural anthropology and parable interpretation the second part of the study considered models forming part of an honour and shame society. This consisted of five chapters, all of which followed the same pattern of an introductory outlining and assessment of the given model, before proceeding to a critique of Bailey, Scott and Herzog, then to a close reading of two parables, both of which were related to Hebrew texts held to illuminate further the significance of the parables. The final part of each of these chapters comprised a conclusion which appraised the value of the Context Group's use of the model under scrutiny.

Chapter Four examined the complexity of family and gender relationships in first-century Palestine in contrast to the Context Group's stereotypical model, and the parables of The Father and the Two Lost Sons (Luke 15:11b-32) and of The Dynamic Widow (Luke 18:2-5) were seen to reflect some of this complexity, thus exposing the model as too rigid. Though patriarchy, family-centredness and an imbalance of power in gender roles are key aspects of life in the world of first-century Palestine, there is evidence too of a more nuanced picture, of a lack of patriarchal

authoritarianism; of sons intent on exploring modes of relationship to their father other than obedience and subservience; of a widow who manifests an inner sense of freedom and liberation in a determined public struggle for her rights, and of a public judicial figure who finds that the demonstration of male power may not be the only or even best way of achieving honour. What emerges is some evidence of subversive activity towards male power and hierarchy exposing some fragility in the patriarchal structures of the New Testament world.

Chapter Five dealt with the issue of hospitality and, in contrast to the Context Group's model with its focus on the threat of the stranger and the consequent requirement to respond in a competitive fashion in order to uphold any honour and status being challenged, it discovered that both the parables of The Stranger in the Midst (Luke 11:5-8) and of The Writing on the Wall (Luke 14:16-23) present strangers being treated in a far from agonistic manner. On the contrary the focus is on boundary-breaking, by which the insiders move in the direction of the outsiders, rather than the reverse, venturing beyond established forms of reciprocity into unknown territory beyond their original group attachment. In the process a broader, more inclusive and less agonistic picture of hospitality emerges than that for which the Context Group's model allows, a picture which is highly significant for the way in which it undermines social norms, exposes a certain fragility within the social structures of the day and calls for a reassessment of individual and corporate identity.

Chapter Six focused on the theme of wealth and poverty and, with some reservations concerning the model of limited good advanced by the Context Group, nevertheless acknowledged its value in emphasising both the reality of scarcity in first-century Palestine and the relationship between the wealth of the rich and the poverty of the poor, the former benefiting at the expense of the latter. The readings of the parables of The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and of The Wealthy Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20) provided support for this model, not

only in their depiction of extreme wealth and greed contrasted with dire poverty, but in their portrayal of the insensitive indifference of the wealthy to the plight of others. It is into this numbness that Abraham and God speak in the respective parables, exposing the social and economic divisions that arise from the competitive desire to gain at another's expense.

Chapter Seven considered patron-client relations in first-century Palestine and asked whether there is evidence for a positive view of patronage which would substantiate the Context Group's suggestion that God's relationship with humankind could be defined in terms of patrons and clients. Interpretation of the parables of The Survivor Client (Luke 16:1-8a) and of The Resisting Clients (Luke 19:12b-27) discerned, however, a negative picture in which the clients are trapped in an unbalanced power relationship in which they are utterly dependent on the action of their patron for their survival and welfare. The narratives were seen to reflect a society which emphasises and reinforces the separation between patrons and clients, rather than the mutuality which binds them to one another, leading to the conclusion that a theological extrapolation to the divine-human relationship results in an image of greedy exploitation as opposed to the Context Group's portrayal of generous benefaction.

Chapter Eight discussed the topic of purity and pollution and Neyrey's contention that Luke's Jesus is extending the purity maps of Judaism to make them more inclusive. An assessment was made in the light of the parables of The Four Fools (Luke 10:30b-35) and of The Temple and the Two Estranged Brothers (Luke 18:10-13) which drew the conclusion that both stories suggest a more radical degree of subversion than Neyrey proposes, since they are directed, at least in part, at the very heart of the purity system, maintained and controlled by a temple elite who have turned purity and pollution into an economic issue. The fact that inability to pay the temple tax and tithes endows uncleanness means that the temple, in exacting such financial demands, makes it harder, not easier, for people to fulfil the requirements of purity, leaving them

to live permanently in an alienated state from God. Such indebtedness and alienation is overcome only through the redemptive media of the temple, controlled by the priesthood, for their own financial gain, and so, implicit in the characterisation and setting of these two parables is the exposing of this system and an attack on those who control the issue of purity and pollution, rather than Neyrey's more neutral extension of purity maps.

When considered as a whole, then, it becomes clear that the models proposed by members of the Context Group and investigated in the course of this research provide an insightful heuristic tool for exploration of first-century Palestinian society and of New Testament texts, inviting readers to be aware of and to question their own cultural perceptions in the process of interpretation and offering alternative perspectives with which to engage in a more "considerate" reading. Indeed one of the major contributions of the Commentaries on the New Testament, authored by Malina, Rohrbaugh and Pilch, is the inclusion of "Reading Scenarios" which outline relevant social and cultural views in order to assist in the interpretative task and which help to clarify and make explicit the models being used. The models, whether pertaining to family and gender relationships, hospitality, wealth and poverty, patronage or purity and pollution, become a means of focusing on particular social aspects of the written text, in this case the narrative parables in Luke's Gospel, and provide an angle of approach which facilitates discovery of the social context of the Gospels and the significance of Jesus' teaching, as understood by Luke. The parables do not need to be read metaphorically, but are stories designed to encourage listeners to see their world more perceptively and ask questions concerning the appropriateness of the way things are, thus revealing to the reader much about the culture and society of the New Testament world.

It has also become clear, however, that the models presented by the Context Group must not be seen as conclusions, but as initial points of departure which require testing and further

research, along the lines pursued in this study. The picture built up over the course of part two demonstrates that the focus and emphasis of each particular Context Group model is often too narrow and limited in its scope and frequently at odds with the cultural orientation of the parables, which underscores the value of using the literary text in order to refine the cultural models in question and to restrict the chances of misleading readings. What this study has shown is the importance of dialogue between social-scientific modelling and careful literary interpretation of texts, a dialogue which has the potential ultimately to enhance both the understanding of the cultural map and the significance of the written word. In order for this to be the case, however, it is necessary to take seriously the implications arising from this inquiry in relation to three areas: the approach to culture; the approach to parables in the Gospels, and the approach to relevant interpretation of the biblical text for today's world.

With regard to culture and cultural anthropology it is important to recognise the opportunities for gaining insight from engaging with those whose cultures share a considerable affinity with the biblical world: where, for example, the significance for a woman of conceiving and bearing a child, the trauma and loss of status arising from not being able to do so, and the assumption that, if this is the case, there is something wrong with her, not with her partner, enables a closer encounter with the biblical world of Sarah, Hannah and Elizabeth. Similarly, encountering a young man, formerly deprived of an education on grounds of poverty, who finds work with a wealthy householder and who is then sent to school by his employer, reveals a greater appreciation of patron and client relationships. Likewise appreciating that this same young man, whose role is to keep the house clean, spends some of his very limited resources on having his own shoes shined, depicts a clearer understanding of hierarchical social structures.

Whereas engagement and participation in other cultures may facilitate an appreciation that for some the biblical world is not at all foreign, the question also arises as to how foreign the honour and shame culture is to contemporary northern Europeans. While accepting that all cultures possess their own unique points of distinctiveness and recognising that there are considerable differences between the social world of the Gospels and contemporary northern European societies, any claim about the strangeness of other cultures needs to be accompanied by a careful assessment of the reader's own culture, not least since extensive migration over recent decades has led to the development of a very diverse range of cultures in the receiving nations. Insightful investigation of the cultures, not simply of a supposedly single uniform culture, present in any northern European state or in North America, may elicit both divergences and similarities with the Context Group's focus on honour and shame and thereby assist in informing further refinement of the models proposed.

With regard to parable research an aspect which calls for further exploration is the non-metaphorical reading of texts. This study has demonstrated the value of interpreting narratives in terms of their own immediate social setting, thus focusing on the social, economic, political and religious issues of those living in first-century agrarian Palestine and providing an insight into Jesus' comment on his own society. An area worth pursuing is what the meaning of other parables, not least the nature parables, might look like if they were removed from a metaphor-based hermeneutic and seen more as expressions of the way the world is for first-century listeners. So, for example, how might the parable of The Sower (Mark 4:1-9) be read as a statement about the world of Jesus, rather than as referring to people represented by the different kinds of soil? Would the parables of The Mustard Seed and The Leaven (Matthew 13:31-33) become meaningless if they were to be seen in a non-metaphorical way or does this pattern of reading have potential beyond the narrative parables in the Gospels?

With regard to relevant interpretation of passages for today's contexts it is to be recognised that for the biblical interpreter parable exploration has two dimensions: first, the investigation of what the story refers to in its own time and setting, and, second, the impact the narrative has on its readers in the course of reading it (Stein 2000:38). The first aspect begins with a close reading of the text along the lines pursued throughout this study in order to discover not only the possible theme of the parable, but also to gain greater insight into the Jesus of first-century Palestine, thereby guarding against turning Jesus into a twenty-first century northern European who is deemed to have all the answers for issues and contexts with which he would not be familiar.

Once the central focus of the parable has been ascertained the hermeneutical task in crossing the bridge to today's world may take different forms, depending on the context in which the reader is situated. In certain settings such as Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia, where contemporary cultures are more akin to the world of the New Testament, it can be relatively straightforward to see the connections between parable narratives and readers' current experience, as is demonstrated in articles by Ukpong on Luke 16:1-13 (Ukpong 1996), by Igboin on Luke 16:19-31 (Igboin 2005), by Folarin on Matthew 25:14-30/Luke 19:12-27 (Folarin 2008) and by Park on Luke 15:11-32 (Park 2009). On the other hand, in contexts such as northern Europe, where the predominant features of culture and society are likely to be very different from the time of Jesus, the hermeneutical task is not performed by making direct correspondences between the parable's protagonists and fictional characters in a proposed modern equivalent, but by examining how the story raises social and personal issues which are relevant to twenty-first century lives. The parable of the Survivor Client (Luke 16:1-8a), for example, when understood in terms of surviving against the odds, might be a point of entry for discussing the way prostitution often results from a survival instinct and therefore requires understanding and societal change rather than condemnation.

While careful exploration of a parable in its own setting allows themes to emerge and provides a basis for open-ended reflection on how those themes surface today, this may be combined with the impact which is made on the reader in the course of engaging with and participating in the story. This impact frequently occurs as an emotional response and is facilitated by the range of emotions depicted in the narrative parables, from the fear of a surviving client and of resisting clients, to the frustration and anger of an ill-treated widow, of a snubbed host and of an older brother who knows all about his younger brother's scheming, from the depression of a toll collector and the anxiety of an injured man in a ditch, whose well-being depends on a foreigner, to an individual's dependency on village neighbours, the despair of Lazarus and the self-satisfaction of a wealthy farmer. Furthermore the fact that these emotions arise predominantly from individuals relating to one other indicates that the narrative parables are constantly inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of their own relationships and the roles that power and vulnerability play in human interaction.

In the course of this study it has become clear that an essential prerequisite for approaching the parables and the world of the New Testament is the interpreter's determination to develop an increasing degree of awareness – awareness of self and the tendency to draw on assumptions and preconceptions that may be inaccurate or too limiting, and awareness of others and differences in culture, experience and understanding across time and place. It is, however, not simply a question of bringing a heightened awareness to bear on the interpretation of texts, but of recognising that the New Testament documents themselves, and the narrative parables in particular, hold within them the potential to draw readers into ever more insightful awareness of their own situations, of the contexts of others, and of their own reading perspective. It is when parables are permitted to develop within their readers the art of awareness, the art of listening intently and perceptively both to the familiarity of self and the strangeness of others, that they come more vividly to life.

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