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Dispute with Stoicism in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

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Past scholarship has often treated the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16.19-31) comparatively, seeking to answer questions of origin and integrity by setting it alongside other ancient literature. In particular, much has been made of an Egyptian folktale dealing with the retribution of a rich man and a poor man in the afterlife.[1] Since several stories in the Palestinian Talmud bear similarities with the folktale, it was thought that the Egyptian account had found its way into popular circulation in Palestine, where it was ultimately taken up by Jesus and framed as we have it in our parable.[2] According to this line of interpretation, the parable was originally comprised of two parts, the first deriving from one of these sources (vv. 19-26), and the second possibly from the early church (vv. 27-31).[3] Supposing such a composition, it was thought that the meaning of the parable could be clarified by focusing on the points at

1. Hugo Gressmann, *Vom reichen Mann und armen Lazarus: Eine literargeschichtliche Studie* (Abhandlungen der königlichen preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften phil.-hist. Kl., 7; Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918), was the first to draw attention to this story in relation to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

2. Gressman cites from rabbinic sources seven further tales about retribution in the afterlife. The earliest of these is found in two forms in the Palestinian Talmud (*y. Sanh.* 6.23c; *y. Ḥag*. 2.77d).

3. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke, X–XXIV* (AB, 28; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), p. 1126, summarizes the issue: ‘The two parts of the story [vv. 19-26 and 27-31] have raised a number of questions. The first part is paralleled in other, extrabiblical literature; does it depend on such? What meaning would the second part have prior to Jesus’ own death and resurrection—or at least without reference to them? To what extent does either part of the story go back to Jesus himself?’

which the parable deviated from the Egyptian and Palestinian accounts.[4]

More recently, however, Ronald Hock has questioned the value of these sources for clarifying the actual meaning of the parable, and has proposed, for comparative purposes, the casting of a 'wider net'.[5] Hock broadens the search to include the Greco-Roman milieu, locking in on teachings from Cynic philosophy regarding rich and poor. Focusing on two second-century pieces by Lucian of Samosata (*Gallus* and *Cataplus*), Hock determines that Luke's parable has 'an unmistakeable Cynic color' in its views on wealth and poverty.[6] He concludes that a comparison of the situation in the parable with that in these two works elucidates the criterion for the rich man's sentence—his 'hedonistic use of wealth'.[7]

It is not my aim to continue discussion regarding the criterion for the rich man's judgment. But I propose that there is more to be said about the meaning of the parable in light of a Greco-Roman milieu. In what follows, I shall take up Hock's wider net and cast it once again in the direction of Hellenistic philosophy. It will be argued that, while the parable may share a Cynic viewpoint on the issue of wealth, it also conveys pronounced *resistance* to certain *Stoic* ideas on this issue. As a supporting argument it will further be suggested that the parable reflects elements of rhetorical 'declamation' (*declamatio*), which was in certain circles closely associated with Stoic philosophy. With these substantive and formal features taken together, we shall see that the parable means to interact with Stoicism, though in a way that is subversive to the Stoic

4. A history of this approach up to 1987 can be found in Ronald Hock, 'Lazarus and Micyllus: Greco-Roman Backgrounds to Luke 16:19-31', *JBL* 106 (1987), pp. 447-63 (448-55).

5. Hock, 'Lazarus and Micyllus'. Since Hock's article (1987), several studies have continued the comparative approach. In seeking the parable's meaning, Richard Bauckham, 'The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parable and the Parallels', *NTS* 37 (1991), pp. 225-46, cautions us to take into account all available parallels, not just one or another, and to pay attention to both the parable's differences from and similarities to these parallels. Ferdinand O. Regalado, 'The Jewish Background of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus', *Asia Journal of Theology* 16 (2002), pp. 341-48; and L. Joseph Kreitzer, 'Luke 16:19-31 and 1 Enoch 22', *ExpTim* 103 (1992), pp. 139-42, demonstrate the uniqueness of the parable. Michael J. Gilmour, 'Hints of Homer in Luke 16:19-31', *Didaskalia* 10 (1999), pp. 23-33, demonstrates a similarity in literary motifs between Palestinian and Greek literature. A.E. Cairus, 'The Rich Man and Lazarus: An Apocryphal Interpolation?', *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 9 (2006), pp. 35-45, seeks to determine whether the parable is original to Luke's text.

6. Hock, 'Lazarus and Micyllus', p. 462.

7. Hock, 'Lazarus and Micyllus', p. 460.

ideas evoked. Before turning to these issues, however, we must first review the nature of Luke's audience.

Luke and his Audience

Both methodologically and substantively, audience analyses of Luke's Gospel remain diverse.[8] However, we can make several points about which scholars agree fairly widely. First, whether Theophilus (1.3) is historical or symbolical, Luke represents him as his superior. As such, Theophilus appears to be a member of the educated imperial elite.[9] Secondly, while Luke is writing most directly for individuals such as Theophilus—that is, educated Greek or Roman individuals who have also been instructed in the Jewish Scriptures (1.4)—he probably also writes with consideration for a 'peripheral' audience, even though its constituents are not directly addressed. Thus, we should think of Luke's implied audience in segmented terms, including a contingent comprised of the educated elite, with which he is most directly concerned, but also extending to include any others who are in need of a more secure faith.[10]

Could Luke have expected such an audience to perceive interaction with technical philosophical and rhetorical concepts? We must believe that his primary target audience, the educated contingent, was at least as knowledgeable in the areas of rhetoric and philosophy as he was himself. Stoicism in particular was exceedingly popular in the first century, especially among the wealthy;[11] and rhetoric was the primary focus of

8. For a recent, and extensive, history of research on this topic, see I.J. du Plessis, 'The Lukan Audience—Rediscovered? Some Reactions to Bauckham's Theory', *Neot* 34 (2000), pp. 243-61.

9. Vernon Robbins, 'The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke–Acts', in his *The Social World of Luke–Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 305-32.

10. For possible sub-groups within this group, see François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 1,1–9,50)* (EKKNT, 3/1; Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1989), p. 23.

11. On the popularity and predominance of Stoicism in the first century, see P.A. Brunt, 'Stoicism and the Principate', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 43 (1975), pp. 7-35; Anthony R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography* (London: Batsford, 1987), esp. ch. 5; for its popularity among the wealthy: A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (2 vols.; London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), I, pp. 232-33.

the entire school curriculum.[12] Even Luke's wider audience may not have been left entirely in the dark. Those who had only a basic, or even minimal, education might still have acquired some knowledge of popular Stoic philosophy from the ubiquitous street preachers of the day.[13] We can therefore conclude that a great number of Luke's auditors would have been able to track even subtle allusions to philosophy, even if many of them could not.

Dispute with Stoic Philosophy

It has long been observed that a major theme in Luke–Acts is reversal, reversal not only of the earthly fortunes of the characters depicted,[14] but also of the dominant cultural pattern of contemporary life and thought, insofar as that pattern was seen to oppose the way of Christianity.[15] Over against the religions, philosophies and mores of the Greco-Roman world, the author of Luke–Acts intends to redically reorient his reader to a new and superior way of life, one aligned with the values of the Christian God.

We find one example of this clash of worlds in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. To begin, I suggest that the parable involves a set of topical elements distinctive of Stoic philosophy, namely, the technical concepts of 'good' (ἀγαθόν), 'evil' (κακόν) and 'indifferents' (ἀδιάφορα). To my knowledge, no study of this parable has noted Luke's

12. For a survey of the significance of rhetoric from classical times through the first century, see Duane Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

13. For such individuals, see, for example, Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32 and Lucian's *Peregrinus.*

14. Frederick Danker, *Luke* (Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), lists *inter alia* the following: new sons of Abraham (3.9); the exaltation of Jesus (cf. 4.5-8; 10.18); insiders and outsiders (cf. 4.16-30; 8.19-20; 13.23-30; 8.26-39; 13.26-28); rejectors of Jesus (11.46-51; 13.1-6; 13.34-35; 14.11; 20.9-18); the ignominious are restored (5.1-11, 12-16, 17-26, 27-32; 6.6-11; 7.11-17, 36-50); the ability to hear (8.9-10; 10.21-24); saving and losing one's life (9.23-27); the loss of privileges (13.23-30; 14.16-24); other social reversals (16.19-23; 18.23-30; 17.19; 20.41-44; 23.43). Cf. also the exaltation of the poor and humbling of the rich (cf. 1.51-53; 6.20-26), and the beatitude and woe of 6.20, 24.

15. For a recent, sustained case for this function in Luke–Acts, see C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

use of the terms ἀγαθόν and κακόν (in the plural in v. 25) in relation to Stoicism. But a number of factors suggest such a connection. In the first place, it is significant that, in the neuter, the two words are rather rare, in fact almost entirely absent from Luke's Gospel. The negative, κακόν, is found only once in the singular (23.22), and only here in the plural. The positive term, ἀγαθόν, appears only in two passages as a neuter substantive in Luke's Gospel (1.53; 12.18-19). Moreover, that these terms occur together in 16.25 along with a cluster of related ideas covered topically (to be discussed below), suggests that Luke is evoking the technical, Stoic concepts, albeit, as I shall argue, in a way *subversive* to the Stoic meaning.

The Stoics reserved the terms ἀγαθόν (or plural, ἀγαθά) and κακόν (or plural, κακά) strictly for reference to morality.[16] Since the actual sensation of 'pain' (Latin, *dolor*) was *amoral* in nature, they considered it neither 'good' nor 'bad' (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.49; Seneca, *Ep.* 85.30; cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.29; 5.84; *Off.* 3.105, 117). Accordingly, natural misfortunes—sickness, poverty, earthquakes—could not be called 'bad', since they were not matters of morality. In this regard, the Stoic Seneca asks, 'Why does God sometimes allow evil to befall good men?' Seneca answers: 'Assuredly he does not. Evil of every sort he keeps far from them—sin and crime, evil counsel and schemes of greed, blind lust and avarice intent upon another's goods' (*Prov.* 6.1 [Basore, LCL]; cf. *Prov.* 6.3). Thus, moral goodness was the only goodness and, as such, the only source of happiness (Cicero, *Off.* 2.11). So far as happiness was concerned, neither health and wealth on the one hand, nor pain and misfortune on the other, were of any consequence (*SVF* 3.49; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.4.1-4).[17]

For the Stoics, pain was something one had to come to terms with, however. Fate allots what it will to humans, who can either follow willingly, or be dragged (Seneca, *Prov.* 5.8-9; *Vit. beat.* 15.6). In the vicissitudes of life, one's most advisable option was simply to bear what one was given, or as the Stoics often put it, to 'conform to the universal laws of nature' (Seneca, *Ep.* 90.34; cf. 107.10; *Prov.* 6.6). In this respect, good and bad had to be seen in relation to 'universal nature'

16. So Epictetus: 'Good things are virtues and everything that partakes in the virtues; evils are the opposite' (*Diatr.* 2.9.15 [Oldfather, LCL]). In other words, moral judgments, as made by the governing faculty, are the only things that fall within the 'realm of one's moral purpose' (*Diatr.* 3.7.2-5 [Oldfather, LCL]).

17. For a full discussion of the Stoic view of 'good' and 'bad', see A.A. Long, 'The Stoic Concept of Evil', *Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1968), pp. 329-43.

and the divine 'administration of the world' (*SVF* 3.68; Seneca, *Ep*. 5; Cicero, *Off*. 3.13). That is, conformity with nature, or providence, was good because it was beneficial for a person, and resistance to providence was bad, since it brought no benefit.[18] The Stoic thus defined the 'good' (ἀγαθόν) in terms of both benefit *and* virtue—the two were inextricably bound up with each other (Sextus Empiricus, *Math*. 11.22-26/*SVF* 3.75). A.A. Long points out that any Greek would have accepted the definition of good as 'benefit', but most would not have restricted benefit to its relation to virtue.[19] This view of good and bad is, in that regard, a distinctive of Stoicism.

What, then, do the Stoics call pain, if it is not an 'evil'? From their viewpoint, things such as life, pleasure, health and wealth, and their opposites, death, pain, disease and poverty, do not fall under the category of either 'good' (ἀγαθόν) or 'bad' (κακόν), but rather under the category of 'things indifferent' (substantive, ἀδιάφορα).[20] Thus, when the Roman Stoics speak of *dolor* (pain) (Cicero, *Fin*. 3.49; Seneca, *Ep.* 85.30), or the Greek Stoics of ὀδυνή (pain), they are speaking of what is, to them, 'indifferent'.[21]

To be sure, orthodox Stoicism distinguished two classes of indifferents—'preferables' (προηγμένα) and 'non-preferables' (ἀποπροηγμένα). Yet not all Stoics made this distinction. The Stoic Aristo had 'declared the end of action to be a life of perfect indifference to everything which is neither virtue nor vice; recognizing no distinction whatever in things indifferent, but treating them all alike' (Diogenes Laertius 7.160 [Hicks, LCL]). Moreover, the distinction between preferables and non-preferables appears to have been lost on the broader public, and the educated were often no exception. Cicero, among others, seemed to think that, unless the Stoics wished to accept the Academic view that wealth and the other

18. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, I, p. 374.

19. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, I, p. 374.

20. Which Stobaeus defines most succinctly as 'the things between goods and evils' (τὰ μεταξὺ τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ τῶν κακῶν) (*SVF* 3.70). These four pairs—life and death, pleasure and pain, health and disease, wealth and poverty—are most commonly used to summarize 'the indifferents' (Cf. *SVF* 3.70; 3.117; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.19.13).

21. In Stobaeus's list of the indifferents, λυπή is named as the genus under which numerous species of 'pain', including ὀδυνή, fall (*SVF* 3.394; cf. 3.70; also, 3.95, 3.434; 3.438; 3.570, where λυπή is said not to be an evil for the wise man). On the equivalence of ὀδυνή and *dolor*, see H.G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek–English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 32.

'indifferents' were in fact 'goods', they were required to fall back on Aristo's position.[22] Further examples support this interpretation of the doctrine. For instance, upon report that his estate had been destroyed, the Stoic Persaeus is said to have been mocked by the king: 'Do you see', said he, 'that wealth is not a matter of indifference?' (Diogenes Laertius 7.36 [Hicks, LCL]). We find a similar example of such mockery in Lucian. When a Stoic philosopher, who has just had his nose broken in a brawl of philosophers, cries out that he is 'dying with pain', a detractor responds: 'Just remember, Zenothemis, that you do consider pain of some consequence after all!' (Lucian, *Symp*. 47 [Harmon, LCL]). Combine this unnuanced appropriation of the doctrine of indifferents with a strong doctrine of fate, and it is easy to see how another's poverty could be regarded with utter indifference.

Our parable engages this Stoic system of morality, but, in so doing, deliberately contradicts the Stoic perspective of 'good' and 'bad' things. It is said that, prior to death, the rich man and Lazarus received 'good things' (ἀγαθά) and 'bad things' (κακά) respectively. The rich man received health, wealth, and apparently longer life than Lazarus,[23] who received a lifetime of disease and poverty. Strikingly, these 'things' do not fit under what the Stoics would have called 'good' and 'bad'—for these things are not moral in nature—but they do correspond precisely with the Stoic formula of 'indifferents'—life, health and wealth, and their opposites, death, disease and poverty (pain, too, appears below). In other words, there is *remarkable terminological and thematic overlap with a remarkable reversal of meaning*: everything Abraham has called ἀγαθά and κακά the Stoics would have called 'indifferent'. And we have not just one or two of the items, but the Stoics' whole basic list. Hence, the parable appears to be making a statement over against Stoicism about the nature of the poor man's circumstances: disease, poverty and early death may be a matter of 'indifference' to the Stoics, but as far as the parable is concerned, these things are specifically κακά.

That essentially the whole list of Stoic indifferents is emphasized in relation to the two main characters of the parable is therefore determinative evidence that ἀγαθά and κακά—already rare terms in Luke, and now occurring, not in isolation from each other, but rather *together*—ought to be understood in connection with—or better, in direct opposition to—

22. See Cicero, *Fin.* 4.69-78.

23. Of course, we do not know what their ages were, but, at a literary level, the order of their deaths appears to be making a point about the length of their lives.

Stoicism, and not in the general moral sense of 23.22 (κακόν) and 1.53; 12:18, 19 (ἀγαθά). If an informed auditor would have heard ἀγαθά and κακά this way, this would also be true for the theme of pain. In v. 24, the rich man complains that he '[suffers] pain' (ὀδυνῶμαι) in Hades. In v. 25, Abraham assures him that he will continue to suffer in this way (ὀδυνᾶσαι). This verb, ὀδυνάω, appears in only two other places in the New Testament (Lk. 2.48 and Acts 20.38). Its noun form is ὀδυνή (Latin, *dolor*),[24] which the Stoics placed among the indifferents. The parable uses the same terminology, but, once again, without accepting the Stoic meaning—pain here is surely not an 'indifferent'. In the experience of the rich man, pain is clearly κακά, a reversal of his earlier ἀγαθά.

And so, for Luke, good and bad cannot be restricted to moral terms. Nonetheless, he makes clear that 'good' and 'bad' things do have *implications* for morality. Commentators generally agree that the rich man had misused his wealth, having knowingly left Lazarus in dire need.[25] Ironically, his 'good things' (ἀγαθά) became the material cause of his indictment. Conversely, 'bad things' for Lazarus became the means to a good end. Although we are denied an explicit reason for Lazarus's turn of fortune, Luke's Gospel would have us conclude that it is because righteousness is most easily attained when free from the encumbrances of worldly comforts.[26]

This contextual parley with Stoicism may also suggest some special significance in the rich man's cry for mercy (ἐλέησόν με; v. 24), again with a reversal of the Stoic viewpoint. Included in the Stoics' denunciation of the 'passions' was a ban on the emotion of 'mercy' (ἔλεος; Latin, *misericordia*),[27] which, like the other passions, fell outside the realm of moral judgment and was, accordingly, unbecoming of the wise man. Thus, for many Stoics, any sight that might have evoked pity was to be

24. The noun form appears only in Rom. 9.2 and 1 Tim. 6.10.

25. E.g. Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 157; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, p. 1133; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 1378. Cf. Hock, 'Lazarus and Micyllus', p. 460, on the rich man's 'hedonistic use of wealth'; and Brandon B. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 141-59, esp. p. 159, who argues that the rich man was unaware of Lazarus.

26. See especially the beatitudes, Lk. 6.20-26; and the account of the rich young ruler, Lk. 18.18-29.

27. E.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.20; 4.16; 4.56; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.90, 92; Diogenes Laertius 7.111; Seneca, *Clem.* 2.4-5.

avoided.[28] In this regard Epictetus says: 'if we see a Consul, we say, "Happy man"; if we see an exile, "Poor fellow"; or a poverty-stricken person, "Wretched man, he has nothing with which to get a bite to eat". These, then, are the vicious judgments which we ought to eradicate' (*Diatr.* 3.3.17-18 [Oldfather, LCL]). This viewpoint found wide agreement among the Stoics (e.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.20; 4.16; 4.56; 4.18; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.90, 92; Diogenes Laertius 7.111; Seneca, *Clem.* 2.4-5). But it is a far cry from the perspective of our parable. With perhaps a further reversal of Stoic teaching, we are to understand mercy not as something to be avoided, but as something one is in fact obligated to exercise. For Luke, mercy hardly falls outside the realm of moral choice. The rich man is now left to beg for the mercy that he had wrongly denied to Lazarus.

In sum, it is evident that the parable alludes to a whole set of technical Stoic concepts, making explicit use of the terms ἀγαθά, κακά and ὀδυνᾶν, and covering topically the whole Stoic summary of indifferents. The rather striking overlap between the Stoic formula of indifferents, on the one hand, and the details Luke emphasizes in describing the two main characters in the parable, on the other—life, health and wealth, and death, disease, poverty and pain—provide ample contextual evidence that an educated audience ought to have understood ἀγαθά and κακά in the context of Stoic teaching on good, evil and indifferents. I have also suggested that, within this field of Stoic resonances, the rich man's cry for mercy (ἔλεος) might have been heard as a further swipe at Stoicism. What is most significant about all of these resonances is that we find Luke, rather than endorsing their Stoic meaning, consistently investing them with meaning subversive to their Stoic sense—a maneuver typical in Luke–Acts, where cultural conceptions are constantly turned upside down. Over against the Stoics, Luke here patently affirms the 'goodness' and 'badness', in an inherently amoral sense, of the individuals' earthly conditions. Death, disease, poverty and pain are not 'indifferent', but are explicitly 'bad'; and 'mercy' should be pursued rather than avoided. In what follows, connections with Stoicism should become further evident as we move now beyond the *content* of the parable to an examination of its *form*.

28. However, Seneca (*Clem.* 2.5-6) distinguishes pity (*misericordia*), which is to be avoided, from clemency (*clementia*), which may be permissible.

The Practice of Declamation

The practice of 'declamation' (*declamatio*) comprised the final stage of rhetorical education and embraced all the more elementary skills the student had learned (Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.10.1). In this exercise, the student, or 'declaimer', spoke on an imaginary theme applied to a concrete situation. The situations were devised to simulate judicial (*controversiae*) or deliberative (*suasoriae*) cases in preparation for speaking in the law-court or in the public square (Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.4.41). Throughout the exercise, the student was expected to employ figures of style, such as antithesis, metaphor or irony, and elementary rhetorical exercises, such as speech in character, comparison and contrast, or *chreia*.

Although wary of the rhetorical tricks of the sophists, the Stoics remained actively involved in theoretical discussions about rhetoric, and by the first century their ideas had left a deep impression on rhetorical theory.[29] Apparently many Stoics also practiced declamation, for the elder Seneca (54 BCE–39 CE) preserves a declamatory tradition thoroughly imbued with Stoic philosophy.[30] Among many connections with Stoicism, these declamations emphasize a rejection of the Epicurean view that pleasure constitutes the 'greatest good' (Seneca, *Controv.* 2.6.2), the characteristic Stoic monism in depiction of the cosmos (*Suas.* 1.1, 3, 4, 9-11; *Controv.* 1.1.16; 1.5.2; 1.6.3; 7.1.17), reason as humanity's highest function, and the idea that human life is at once governed by Providence and subject to the vicissitudes of Fortune (*Controv.* 2.2.1; 4. pr. 6).[31] At least two of the collection's declaimers are especially Stoic: Gallio's declamations

29. For evidence of Stoic involvement in oratory: Cicero, *De or.* 1.83; 1.227-230; 3.65-66; *Fin.* 3.3; 4.3-4; Plutarch, *Mor.* 485A; 472A. For a discussion of Stoic influences on Theon's *progymnasmata*, see Georg Reichel, *Quaestiones Progymnasmaticae* (Leipzig: Noske, 1909), pp. 23-30. On Stoic adaptations to earlier rhetorical theory: James R. Butts, 'The Progymnasmata of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary' (unpublished PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986), pp. 6-7. However, the rhetorical style of the Stoics themselves had not always been considered particularly *eloquent*; for which see Cicero, *Brut.* 118-119; *Fin.* 3.3; *De or.* 3.65-66.

30. He compiled extensive memoirs of the declamations made by the great rhetoricians of his day, claiming to have 'heard everyone of great repute in oratory, with the exception of Cicero' (*Controv.* 1. pr. 11 [Winterbottom, LCL]).

31. These connections are listed in Norman T. Pratt, *Seneca's Dramas* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 147-48.

are rife with Stoic terminology,[32] and Fabianus Papirius is identifiable as a 'Stoicizing philosopher'.[33] Classicist Norman Pratt explains the connection between the Stoics and this tradition of declamation not just by the prevalence of Stoic currents in educated circles, but on the basis of the 'rhetoric' that is peculiar to the Stoics—for example, their use of 'paradoxes, apothegms, rational analysis, emotional intensity'—all elements from which declamatory language drew in order to produce its desired effect.[34]

Pratt notes that the general 'humanitarian atmosphere' of these declamations owes its influence to Stoicism as well.[35] The topics of Seneca's declamations often deal with issues of social justice and equity, and especially the topic of rich and poor—an important point in relation to our passage in Luke. That the topic of rich and poor was a favorite among declaimers is stated explicitly by Philostratus (*Vit. soph.* 481), and confirmed by the declamations left to us by Seneca and others.[36]

In sum, we find preserved in Seneca a declamatory tradition in which rhetorical and philosophical elements are inextricably and unapologetically bound up with each other. And particularly important for our purposes, it is *Stoic* philosophy to which rhetoric is wedded. In this tradition, a declamation might treat a *topic* associated with Stoic philosophy, and employ the *vocabulary, themes and ideas* of Stoic philosophy in making the case.

The Forms of Declamation in the Parable

My contention that the parable confronts certain Stoic ideas by subversively employing its terminology and content might be strengthened if we could also find connections with declamatory tradition in terms of the parable's (recognizably unique) form. In what way might the final form of our parable exhibit features characteristic of the genre of declamation, which in Seneca's (basically contemporary) tradition was closely associated

32. Pratt, *Seneca's Dramas*, p. 140.
33. Pratt, *Seneca's Dramas*, p. 148.
34. Pratt, *Seneca's Dramas*, p. 148.
35. Pratt, *Seneca's Dramas*, p. 148.
36. From Seneca, see *Controv.* 2.1; 10.1. Other authors also evince the popularity of the topic of rich versus poor: e.g. Quintilian, *Decl.* 259, 301, 305, 332, 333; Choricius, *Decl.* 5, 6. Cf. also controversies about the injustice of disinheritance (Seneca, *Controv.* 3.3, 4; 4.5; 6.1; 7.1, 3; 8.5; 10.2).

with the Stoics?

Significantly, the *topic* of our parable is among the most popular topics of declamation—rich versus poor.[37] No other New Testament parable pits rich against poor so starkly.

Additionally, the parable contains several *elementary exercises* commonly associated with declamation.[38] (1) It involves pronounced *syncrisis*, or 'comparison of similar or dissimilar things, or of lesser things to greater or greater things to lesser' (Hermogenes, *Prog.* 18).[39] In our parable, the rich man, the 'lesser' of the two, is being compared with Lazarus, the 'greater', in order to underscore the virtue of the second and the vice of the first.

(2) It also exhibits *ethopoeia*, or speech in character (Hermogenes, *Prog.* 20). The relevant character could be either a historical figure or a 'type' character.[40] The rich man represents the second category. However, this parable is unique among New Testament parables in that it also involves a historical individual, Abraham—whom we find in 'character', saying the things one might expect Abraham to say, and doing things Abraham could be expected to do.

(3) The declaimer's chief means of making his case was through the use of 'epigrams', or *sententiae*. These were terse sayings that imparted wisdom of gnomic value. They were used to encapsulate the declaimer's main points and thus served to conclude effectively the divisions of his argument.[41] Their pointed brevity gave them the force of a legal verdict. In our parable, Abraham acts as prosecutor, who makes his case with repeated statements of *sententiae*-like force:

> Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us (vv. 25-26).

37. See above and n. 36.

38. Two of which (*syncrisis* and *ethopoeia*) Hock points out in his article, 'Lazarus and Micyllus', p. 456.

39. Quoted in George Kennedy, *Progymnasmata* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), p. 83.

40. Speech in character, or *ethopoeia,* was in fact highly important in declamation. On its practice, see D.A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 87-105.

41. Of *sententiae*, the elder Seneca provides examples focused on 'fortune, cruelty, the age, riches' (*Controv.* 1. pr. 23). Examples can also be found in Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.5.3; *Rhet. Her.* 4.24; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.21.2.

> But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them' (v. 29).
>
> But he [Abraham] said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead' (v. 31).

It is evident that all of these mean to impart timeless wisdom, and declare, successively, in brief and pointed fashion, a final judgment on the rich man, much like the verdicts of the *sententiae.* Note that all of the Stoic terminology found in the parable (ἀγαθά, κακά and ὀδυνᾶν) is found in the first *sententia*-like statement—Stoic wisdom is overturned by that of Abraham; the 'indifferents' of life, health, wealth, and of death, disease, poverty and pain are really 'good' and 'bad' respectively.

Furthermore, we find in the parable several *stylistic devices* characteristic of declamatory-type rhetoric—though some of these are also typical of the parable form. (1) As in other parables, we find the use of *antonomasia*, or 'the substitution of an appellative, usually a nickname or descriptive epithet, for a proper name'.[42] In this regard, Lazarus's counterpart is given no name, and is instead designated only by the epithet Πλούσιος ('the rich man'), or *Dives*, as he is called in Latin. (2) *Antithesis* is also prominent, as a way of carrying out the *syncrisis*: there is stark contrast between the sumptuous clothing of the rich man, the abject need of the poor man; the ample victuals of the rich man, and the crumbs of Lazarus; the apparent health of the rich man, and the sores of Lazarus. (3) Atypical of the parable form, however, is the forensic nature of the main points. Prosecution of the rich man proceeds with point by point rebuttal, a manner of reasoning typical of declamation. Each of the rich man's three requests implies a desire for extenuation of judgment, as if he is making points for the defense; but against each of these Abraham rejoins with defeating arguments.[43]

While *antonomasia* is typical in biblical parables, the additional devices and exercises noted sufficiently demonstrate the uniqueness of this particular parable among those of the New Testament: in no other New Testament parable do we find this one-to-one *syncrisis* between two

42. I draw this definition from Galen Rowe, 'Style', in S.E. Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period: 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 121-58 (p. 128).

43. This is akin to the technique of 'reasoning by question and answer' (*Rhet. Her.* 4.23-24).

individuals, *ethopoeia* involving a historical character, or the bulleting of forensic-type *sententiae* in the style of point-by-point rebuttal. Nor does any other parable pit rich and poor against each other to the extent that we have it here—and likewise have it, rather frequently, in the declamations. Thus, I suggest that we can account for much of the parable's formal uniqueness if we understand its form to be a corollary of its dispute with Stoic content, as seen above. The parable's central topic is one that was a favorite in declamatory tradition, namely, rich versus poor; it exhibits at least three elementary exercises commonly deployed in declamation, including the encapsulation of its main points with pithy *sententiae*-like statements; and it employs several figures of style. It is true that these features are not each entirely distinctive of declamation. But that we find all of these things *together*—not only the *topical* but also several *formal* elements of declamation (which may be associated with Stoicism), combined with *substantive* interactions with Stoicism—would suggest that we have more than simply isolated and incidental similarities with declamation, but rather a deliberate aim to elicit such a form.[44]

Conclusion

We set out to determine how an educated Greco-Roman (even if somewhat Judaized) audience might have understood the final, unified form of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Viewing the parable from such a perspective, we have bypassed some of the questions asked in earlier comparative studies, such as, 'Is the parable authentic Jesus material?' 'What was its literary exemplar?' and, 'Is it a unity?'. Instead we have looked at the final form of the text, following the line of questioning that asks, 'How might a more general comparative approach help us to hear the parable today as it was heard by a philosophically- and rhetorically-

44. This is not to say that the parable is a *declamation.* It is rather a parable that has been dressed with many of the adornments of declamatory rhetoric, using exercises and figures of style that were all part of the pre-declamatory stages of rhetorical education. Thus, I do not intend to address directly the question whether Luke had received a *formal* declamatory education. *Syncrisis*, *ethopoeia*, and *sententiae* (γνωμαί) were all progymnasmatic exercises covered at the secondary (pre-declamatory) level of rhetorical education. Students who did not complete training in declamation might also have picked up basic techniques by auditing displays of rhetoricians and popular sophists (Theon, *Prog.* 137.22–139.20; cf. Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001], pp. 58, 239).

educated first-century audience?' Such a focus has allowed us to avoid potential distractions arising from more conjectural questions of the parable's development, and to concentrate instead on its meaning for Luke's first auditors.

Although Hock's work has been availing in turning our attention to the Greco-Roman philosophical milieu, we have found that the 'Cynic' connection that may characterize the broader outline of the parable and elucidate the criterion for the rich man's judgment could be supplemented with insights regarding the parable's interaction with certain technical aspects of Stoic philosophy. We have seen that the parable evokes the technical Stoic concepts of ἀγαθόν (good), κακόν (evil), ὀδυνᾶν (suffer pain), and the whole summary of 'indifferents' (life, health and wealth, and their opposites, death, disease and poverty, as well as pain), and makes a probable allusion to the Stoic view on ἔλεος (mercy). Yet, it has become apparent that, in every case, Luke turns the Stoic viewpoint on its head, radically redefining right and wrong and reorienting his philosophically conversant readership with a new life perspective, different from Stoicism and the wisdom of the world. Moreover, it has been suggested that this interaction with Stoic *content* is further accentuated by the fact that the parable is dressed in a *form* of discourse that was, in the tradition preserved by Seneca, closely associated with the Stoics—that of declamation. In short, it would appear that Luke uses a Stoic *form* of address (i.e. declamatory rhetoric and themes) in order to overturn more ironically the Stoic *content* he disputes.

It should go without saying that Luke's use of these features need not indicate that the message of the parable was *influenced* by Stoicism; quite the opposite, Luke was evoking Stoic thought precisely in order to refute it. Nor should it seem strange that Luke would employ the very form of address associated with the group he is trying to contradict. In the history of the literature, writers have found frequent recourse to this maneuver, not least in Luke's own day. We should recall that adopting the literary, rhetorical and even philosophical forms of the opponent was exactly the tack taken by Palestinian Judaism when it offered itself as a superior alternative to Hellenism,[45] as it was also by Christianity in the time of the Apologists.

45. For a discussion, see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), esp. Part III: 'The Encounter and Conflict between Palestinian Judaism and the Spirit of the Hellenistic Age' (pp. 107-254).

Of course, the topic of rich and poor was of concern not only in Greco-Roman declamation, and among the Cynic philosophers, but in other literature as well, including especially the biblical wisdom literature (e.g. Job 29.12-17; Pss. 35.10; 40.17; 140.12; Prov. 22.1-16; 28.1-28; 29.7) and the prophets (e.g. 2 Sam. 12; Isa. 1.23; 10.2; Jer. 5.27-28; Amos 2.6-7). No less can Jesus himself have been a source for Luke's views on the topic, for our parable conveys a message we know to have been central to Jesus' teaching (e.g. Lk. 6.20-23, Q material).[46] Moreover, the parable plays an important part in the larger picture of Luke's biblically- and dominically-based theology of rich and poor, and hardly depends on the content of Stoic declamation *at its essence.* Thus, I do not suggest that Luke adopted the Stoic viewpoint on rich and poor per se, *nor* that he chose to include the topic only because it was often discussed in declamation—as if he started with this form in mind and *then* moved on to related content—*nor even* that the topic of rich and poor was *in itself* unique to declamation. But I *have* suggested that the convergence of this particular topic with other declamatory and Stoic features in the parable must have been more than coincidental—the topic, along with the Stoic substance engaged, lent itself to a declamatory-type form of address. A configuration of this particular topic (rich and poor), content (good, bad, and indifferents) and formal artistry (declamatory rhetorical devices) is obviously unparalleled in the other New Testament parables, and one would be hard put to find them together in any form of discourse other than a declamation or a formal forensic or deliberative speech, for which declamations were preparation.

To conclude, the chief payoff of understanding the parable in relation—or rather in opposition—to Stoicism has been in how it underscores the meaning of Jesus' teaching regarding rich and poor in Luke's Gospel. While speaking in a Stoic-declamatory form of discourse, Luke's Jesus remains far from endorsing the Stoic view that disease, poverty, early death and pain are 'indifferent'. Instead, he designates these things as unfortunate and inherently bad. If one thinks otherwise—like a Stoic—one runs the risk of justifying neglect of the indigent on the basis that their situation is not pitiable, but simply neutral, and, moreover, none of one's business—as we have seen, this is often how the Stoic doctrine of indifferents was construed. Finally, in drawing our attention to wealth and poverty in relation to 'good' and 'bad', this approach has highlighted

46. Not to mention the very fact that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is a *parable*, a form of discourse indisputably used by Jesus.

the point that luxury and lack, while amoral in themselves, do provide an impetus towards certain moral dispositions—that is, moral ‘good’ and ‘evil’—which, as Abraham avers, have critical eternal consequences. And so, as much as Luke disagreed with the Stoic viewpoint on wealth, he would have found himself largely in agreement when they said, ‘The *use* we make of materials is not a matter of indifference’ (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.5.1).