THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF A *TOPOS* (LUKE 12:13-34)

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Commentators on Luke 12:13-34 have not done justice to v. 15, Jesus' warning against covetousness. Two shortcomings, in particular, have been an overly narrow focus in identifying the tradition of moral instruction behind this verse and the relationship of the verse to the larger section, vv. 13-34.

Most often, attention has been drawn to Jewish instruction on greed, such as Sirach 11:18-19 LXX and Testament of Judah 18-19, to illuminate our text.[1] The purpose of this article is to introduce ancient Greek and Latin deliberations on greed into the discussion and to demonstrate Luke's awareness of the conventions used in those deliberations. That πλεονεξία was a common *topos* in moral instruction which may be relevant to our understanding has either not been recognized,[2] or, when the pagan material has been adduced, its importance has not been fully exploited.[3]

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[1] The fullest treatment is E.W. Seng, "Der reiche Tor: Eine Untersuchung von Lk xii 16-21 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung form- und motivgeschichtlicher Aspekte," *NovT* 10 (1978) 136-55, followed by F.W. Horn, *Glaube und Handeln in der Theologie des Lukas* (GTA 26; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 61; already in W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (THKNT 3; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961) 257; J. Dupont, *Les béatitudes* (ÉB; Paris: Gabalda, 1973) 3.113, 118; J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (RNT; Pustet: Regensburg, 1977) 398. 1 Enoch 97.8–10 has also come under discussion, for example, by M. Klinghardt, *Gesetz und Volk Gottes. Das lukanische Verständnis des Gesetzes nach Herkunft, Funktion und seinem Ort in der Geschichte des Urchristentums* (WUNT 2.32; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988) 46-49.

[2] A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke* (ICC; New York: Scribner, 1902) 323; I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 522; D.P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (SNTU B.6; Linz: SNTU, 1982) 139-40; E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Luke* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984; German orig. 1982) 207: J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1985) 2.970.

[3] Horn, *Glaube und Handeln*, 60; L. Schottroff and W. Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor* (New York: Orbis, 1986; German orig. 1978) 96-98; L.T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina Series 3; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991) 198; J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (WBC 35B; Dallas: Word, 1993) 695.

Despite one judgment that the warning against covetousness "does not quite fit either the question [v. 14] or the narrative that follows,"[4] the Parable of the Rich Fool (vv. 16-21) is generally thought to illustrate or comment on v. 15.[5] The connection of vv. 16-21 to vv. 22-34, however, has been more difficult to discern: the latter is sometimes regarded as a contrast to what precedes,[6] or, on the contrary, as logically connected to it,[7] or is not discussed at all.[8] The argument has indeed been made that the entire section, vv. 13-34, should be seen a coherent unit created by Luke out of traditional material available to him. In this redactional approach to the larger unit, stress is laid on the importance of Luke's formulation of v. 15b as an anticipation of vv. 16-20 and on v. 21, which summarizes in anticipation the conclusion to the larger section, viz. vv. 33-34.[9] On this reading, which appears to me correct, there is a logical unity that can be discerned in vv. 13-34, but the identification of that unity does not sufficiently appreciate the extent to which the entire text is shot through with items from the *topos* on greed.

In what follows, I shall first give attention to this *topos*, emphasizing those elements in it which are reflected in the Lukan text, and shall then turn briefly to vv. 13-34.

The topos περὶ πλεονεξίας

By *topos* I mean a fairly systematic treatment of a topic of moral instruction which uses clichés, maxims, short definitions, etc., rather than the latter themselves. A particular writer's immediate purpose in writing on the topic may cause him to give preference to certain elements in such standardized presentations of the topic, or his own philosophic perspective may determine the individual viewpoint from which he treats the topic.[10] The discussion of πλεονεξία that follows is limited in that

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[4] Schweizer, *The Good News according to Luke*, 207. See also Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 139, who thinks that vv. 13-21 "constitute a manifest interruption and lend themselves to be treated in isolation."

[5] Plummer, *Gospel according to Luke*, 323; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2.971; Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor*, 141; Horn, *Glaube und Handeln*, 61-63.

[6] Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 525.

[7] Plummer, *Gospel according to Luke*, 325.

[8] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2.975.

[9] Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3.183-85; Horn, *Glaube und Handeln*, 58-68.

[10] See H. Wankel, "Alle Menschen müssen sterben," *Hermes* 111 (1983) 129-54; A.J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Library of Early Christianity 4; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 144-45. For bibliography, see Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," *ANRW* 2.26.1, 320 n. 252.

it does not take note of the individual differences between the authors cited; for our restricted purpose it is sufficient to identify the themes that appear with some regularity in the discussions of covetousness. For the sake of convenience, Dio Chrysostom's *Oration* 17, which catches many of the themes in which we are interested, will serve as representative of such discussions.[11]

Dio begins his treatment of covetousness by apologizing for saying things everyone knows; his goal, however, is not to inform but to make people change by choosing a better way of life (1-6). Everyone knows that covetousness "is neither expedient nor honorable, but the cause of the greatest evils" (6), not only to oneself, but to one's neighbor as well (7). There are thus two aspects to covetousness, the personal and the social.

A social vice

Dio turns first to the social dimension of the vice. He uses a modified form of Euripides, *The Phoenician Maidens* 531-40, to sketch the antithesis between covetousness and equality (ἰσότης) (8-9), the latter establishing "a common bond of friendship and peace for all toward one another," whereas quarrels, internal strife, and wars are due to nothing else then the desire for more (τὴν τοῦ πλείονος ἐπιθυμίαν), with the result that each side is deprived even of a sufficiency (10).[12] The gods exemplify the quality of keeping to one's own place (11), and there are many ancient and modern examples of the dire consequences of greed (12-15). That God by his very nature punishes the covetous is illustrated by examples from Spartan and Athenian history (16-17).

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[11] The Loeb Classical Library editions and translations of all ancient authors will be used, where available. For discussions of covetousness and wealth, see G. Delling, "πλεονέκτης, κτλ.," *TDNT* 6.266-74; F. Hauck and W. Kasch, "πλοῦτος, κτλ.," *TDNT* 6.318-32, neither of which, however, gives a clear picture of the *topos* as such. For further identification of passages which deal with covetousness and wealth, see the relevant indices in A. Oltramare, *Les origines de la diatribe romaine* (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1926) and L. Paquet, *Les cyniques grecs. Fragments et témoignages* (Collection Philosophica 4; rev., corr. and amended ed.; Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1988). An extensive discussion of covetousness is to be found in D.A. Holgate, "Prodigality, Liberality and Meanness in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. A Greco-Roman Perspective on Luke 15:11-32," Ph.D. Diss., Rhodes University (South Africa), 1993, esp. 70-109. For the vice in Latin literature, see esp. Horace, *Satire* 1.1, and the commentary on it by H. Herter: "Zur ersten Satire des Horaz," *RhM* 94 (1951) 1-42.

[12] On the philosophical ideal of ἰσότης, see Delling, "πλεονέκτης," 267-68.

The proper use of wealth, and superfluity

Dio then turns to consider the personal side of covetousness, beginning with some comments on wealth and its uses (18). It is this personal dimension that is of greatest interest to us, and contains themes that will be highlighted because of their relevance to our Lukan text.

As in the case of health, so in that of wealth, it is of advantage to sacrifice a part, for "what exceeds the right proportion (τὸ γὰρ πλέον . . . τοῦ συμμέτρου) is very troublesome" (18). Dio will return to the right proportion as it has to do with the body and its care, but for the moment he distinguishes between proper and improper wealth, a subject that naturally belongs to treatments of covetousness.

Wealth in proper proportion (μέτριος) is put to use (ἔχων τὴν χρείαν). The notion that wealth is to be put to practical use (χρεία), to meet human need (also χρεία), appears frequently in discussions of wealth and covetousness. For Plutarch, wealth is noble when used for human needs; indeed, natural wealth has a boundary, drawn around it by χρεία as by a compass.[13] Epicurus sharpened the matter further by requiring that human need be reduced to the bare essentials: "one does not become rich by adding superfluities (τὰ περιττά) to one's substance, but by cutting away much from what one needs."[14] Human needs are met when those things necessary (τὰ ἀναγκαῖα) are taken care of; anything more is superfluous (τὸ περιττόν).

One has always to be on guard, for "the craving of the superfluous (τὰ περιττά) follows close on the use of the necessities (τῇ χρείᾳ τῶν ἀναγκαίων),"[15] and the superfluities serve luxury and pleasure.[16] Plutarch does not think that it is poverty that ails a person with such a craving, but rather

> insatiability and avarice, arising from the presence in him of a false and unreflecting judgement; and unless someone removes this, like a tapeworm, from his mind (τῆς ψυχῆς), he will never cease to need superfluities—that is, to want what he does not need (δεόμενοι τῶν περιττῶν, τουτέστιν ἐπιθυμοῦντες ὧν οὐ δέονται).[17]

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[13] See *Pericles* 16.6; *On Love of Wealth* 524F, 527B.

[14] According to Stobaeus, *Anthology* 3.17.6 (3.502, 4-6 W.-H.). See also Plutarch, *Comparison of Aristides and Cato* 4.2: Self-sufficiency, which requires no private superfluities (τὰ περιττά), is a boon to public service.

[15] Plutarch, *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* 159E. See also *Solon* 2.3 for the contrast between τὰ περιττά and the χρεία τῶν ἀναγκαίων.

[16] Philo, *On Joseph* 243; cf. Plutarch, *On Love of Wealth* 527B-D; Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.84 (5.762, 12 W.-H.).

[17] Plutarch, *On Love of Wealth* 524D. See E.N. O'Neil, "De cupiditate divitiarum (*Moralia* 523C-528D)," in *Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (ed. H.D. Betz; SCHNT 4; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978) 314. See also Seneca, *Epistle* 4.11, "It is the

Wealth in the right proportion (μέτριος), on the other hand, does not cause grief (λυπεῖ) to those who possess it, Dio says, but makes their lives easier and free from want. But if wealth becomes excessive, it causes far more anxieties (τὰς φροντίδας) and distress (λυπηρά) than that which passes for pleasures (τῆς δοκούσης ἡδονῆς).

Pleasure, and anxiety

It is natural that wealth be associated with the pleasures it makes possible, and the moralists lost no opportunity to link covetousness and wealth with the hedonistic life.[18] In the Cynic summary of the vicious life as φιλόδοξος, φιλήδονος and φιλοχρήματος, the two are linked,[19] and they frequently appear together in other philosophers with a moral interest.[20] For Plutarch, it is a misuse of wealth to indulge one's proclivities to pleasure.[21]

The philosophers took great delight in pointing out the irony that chasing after wealth results in a miserable life.[22] A few illustrations will suffice. Ps.-Lucian (*The Cynic* 8) claims that in the pursuit of pleasure, "you choose to have worries and troubles rather than to live a carefree life. For those many costly provisions for happiness, in which you take such pride, come to you only at the cost of great misery and hardship." Seneca (*Epistle* 115.16) exclaims:

> What tears and toil does money wring from us! Greed is wretched in that which it craves and wretched in that which it wins! Think besides of the daily worry (*sollicitudines*) which afflicts every possessor in proportion to the measure of his gain! The possession of riches means even greater agony of spirit (*maiore tormento*) than the acquisition of riches.[23]

Wealth, however obtained, causes grief. Palladas (according to *Greek Anthology* 9.394) did not know what to do with it: "Gold, father of flatterers,

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superfluous things (*supervacua*) for which men sweat,—superfluous things that wear our togas threadbare, that free us to grow old in camp, that dash us upon foreign shores. That which is enough is ready to hand."

[18] See Holgate, "Prodigality, Liberality and Meanness," 122-26.

[19] E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 4.84; Ps.-Lucian, *The Cynic* 18. See G.A. Gerhard, *Phoinix von Kolophon* (Leipzig-Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1909) 58-59.

[20] E.g., Seneca, *Epistle* 110.15; Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.84, 92 (5.765, 7; 767, 10 W.-H.); and Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.71; *De Finibus* 2.27; 3.75; *The Laws* 1.51.

[21] *On Love of Wealth* 527A-D.

[22] See H.D. Betz, *Essays on the Sermon of the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 104-18, who treats Matt. 6:25-34 and discusses anxiety, but paints with a broad brush and does not relate anxiety specifically to discussions of covetousness and wealth.

[23] See also Seneca, *Consolation to Polybius* 9.5; *On Benefits* 7.2.4, on which see M. Billerbeck, *Der Kyniker Demetrius. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der frühkaiserzeitlichen Popularphilosophie*

son of pain and care, it is fear to have thee and pain not to have thee." The wise person therefore does not contemplate a future devoted to seeking riches, but

> rejoices in the present, and puts no faith in the future; for he who leans on uncertainties can have no sure support. Free, however, from the anxieties that rack the mind, there is nothing that he hopes for or covets, and content with what he has, he does not plunge into what is doubtful.[24]

And according to a widely circulated anecdote, Anacreon came to a decision soon after acquiring wealth. Returning a gift of gold he had received the preceding day, he said, "I hate the gift which forces me to stay awake at night."[25]

Covetousness and the night

Night as a time spent in worrying about wealth or when the covetous person steals from his neighbor appears often.[26] Juvenal (*Satire* 14.295-97) sketches the picture of a man who, mad for profit, sails into the teeth of a storm: "Poor wretch (*infelix*)! on this very night perchance he will be cast out amid broken timbers and engulfed by the waves, clutching his money-belt with his left hand or his teeth." Dio Chrysostom (*Oration* 16.8) similarly warns,

> You misguided man (ὦ μάταιε)! even if everything else turns out as your heart wishes, yet what assurance have you of living even till the morrow, and not being suddenly, in the midst of everything, torn from your fancied blessing? Consequently, this is the first thing about which you should be in painful anxiety and fear (λυπεῖσθαι καὶ δεδιέναι).[27]

Dio in this oration deals with pain (λύπη), and he does not here speak specifically of wealth or covetousness and their attendant pleasures. But his "fancied blessing (δοκούντων ἀγαθῶν)" would accommodate the

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(Philosophia Antiqua 36; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979) 24, for other references in Seneca. Cf. Juvenal, *Satire* 14.304, "it is misery to have the guardianship of a great fortune."

[24] Seneca, *On Benefits* 7.2.6.

[25] According to Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.91 (5.767, 1-4 W.-H.); see also *Gnomologium Vaticanum* 72 Sternbach, and the references there for other places where the anecdote appears in the gnomological tradition. A slightly different version appears in Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.78 (5.759, 12-760, 2 W.-H.). See also *Anthology* 4.84 (5.765, 6 W.-H.) for the φροντίδες αἰσχραί among those things which attend riches, and 4.90 (5.766, 16-21 W.-H.).

[26] For the former, see Gregory Nazianzen, *Poems* 1.2, 13-14 (PG 37, 865), on which see U. Bauckmann, *Gregor von Nazianz: Gegen die Habsucht (Carmen 1, 2, 28)* (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums, N.F. 2.6; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1988); see also Horace, *Satire* 1.1.70-79; Plutarch, *On Love of Wealth* 524B; Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 4.96. On the latter, see Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates* 585B.

[27] For the uncertainty of wealth, see Lucian, *The Ship* 25-27.

"fancied pleasure (τῆς δοκούσης ἡδονῆς)" which is surpassed by the anxieties (τὰς φροντίδας) and distress (λυπηρά) caused by excessive wealth.

Material needs

Dio next brings into the discussion the body, a prime example of the proper proportion (τὸ σύμμετρον) and harmony that would be destroyed by overreaching (πλεονεκτεῖν). We have received a small portion (μέτρον) of life from the gods and should live accordingly, not as though we were going to live for a thousand years (20). As a host who has invited fifteen guests to a banquet does not prepare for five hundred or a thousand, so we should know that the needs of the body (τὰς τοῦ σώματος χρείας) are easily counted: we need clothing, shelter and food (21). This reduction of human needs, characteristically Cynic, functioned widely in popular philosophy in antithesis to covetousness, wealth and luxury.[28] Nature and the gods may have given us the entire earth to enjoy, but we are not to use everything (οὐχ . . . χρώμεθα ἅπασι), but only such as each of us needs most.[29]

Despite knowing this, however, in our greed we gather (συνάγοντες) supplies as if for an army, the majority of people in fact having in their hearts a whole army of desires (τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν). As for clothing, people do wear the right size, but they all desire (real) property (οὐσίαν) much too large for their needs.[30]

The insatiability of covetousness

Dio concludes (22) by citing the example of Croesus, who, wishing to expose the insatiable greed of people, invited them to take whatever they wished from his storehouses. They cut a ridiculous figure as, loaded

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[28] See R. Vischer, *Das Einfache Leben. Wort- und motivgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu einem Wertbegriff der antiken Literatur* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965) esp. 60-88. For major discussions, see Musonius Rufus, Fragments 18A, 18B (on food) and 19 (on clothing and shelter), on which see A.C. van Geytenbeek, *Musonius Rufus and Greek Diatribe* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1963) 96-118; Ps.-Lucian, *The Cynic*; cf. Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 33.7.

[29] Ps.-Lucian, *The Cynic* 5, 7. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.60, and the references gathered in *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum* (ed. A.S. Pease; repr.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968) 2.690-91, dealing with the notion that we receive all benefits from the gods.

[30] See Juvenal, *Satire* 14.140-72. Commenting on T. Ben. 6.2, H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge (*The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. A Commentary* [SVTP 8; Leiden: E.J. Brill 1985] 427) point to passages in the wisdom literature where συνάγειν is used to describe the wicked man's gathering of riches (e.g., Sirach 31:1). Holgate ("Prodigality, Liberality and Meanness," 119, draws attention to Plutarch, *On the Delays of the Divine*

down with gold and twisted out of shape by the weight of their new acquisitions, they stumbled about. Certain people, Dio charges, are equally ridiculous because of their πλεονεξία. The insatiability of covetousness is one of the most commonly criticized characteristics of the vice, which explains why Dio ends his discourse on covetousness at its high point with the ridicule characteristic of the diatribe.[31]

The topos *in Luke 12:13-34*

We now return to our Lukan text simply to note the relevance of the *topos* on covetousness without going into exegetical detail, but rather confining ourselves to the flow of the narrative. It is not surprising that Luke should show an awareness of the *topos*, for elsewhere in Luke-Acts he evinces an interest in other qualities of concern to the moral philosophers, e.g., δικαιοσύνη (Acts 17:31; with ἐγκράτεια in 24:25), σωφροσύνη (Acts 26:25; with παρρησία in v. 26)[32]; φιλανθρωπία (Acts 28:2; φιλανθρώπως, Acts 27:3); φιλοφρόνως (Acts 28:7); the description of the disciples as φίλοι (Acts 10:24; 27:3),[33] the view that friends have all things in common and are of one soul (Acts 4:32),[34] etc. These appear for the most part in Acts, but it is not insignificant for our purposes that the Greek proverb, "The rich have many consolations," appears in Luke 6:24, and that the Parable of the Prodigal Son is replete with the language and themes belonging to the discussion of the (ab)use of wealth.[35]

Vengeance 563D, of a moneygrubber who did not collect (συνήγαγεν) a large fortune (οὐσίαν), but did acquire in brief space a considerable reputation for wickedness. See also Menander, Fragment 250 Koerte (= 301 Kock).

[31] For insatiability, see Horace, *Ode* 3.16, 42; *Epistle* 1.2.55-56, 146-48, 155-57; Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.84 (5.672, 12-15 W.-H.); Seneca, *Epistle* 115.17; Plutarch, *On Love of Wealth* 523E-524D; Juvenal, *Satire* 14.125, 138-51. On gathering from everywhere, see Euripides, Fragment 419 Nauck; Seneca, *Epistle* 110.14; Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 4.95; Ps.-Lucian, *The Cynic* 8, and see Gerhard, *Phoinix von Kolophon*, 12-13.

[32] For the context, see A.J. Malherbe, "'Not in a Corner': Early Christian Apologetic in Acts 26:26," *The Second Century* 5 (1985/86) 193-210 (= Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989] 147-83).

[33] Cf. also Luke 12:4, and see G. Stählin, "φίλος, κτλ.," *TDNT* 9.159-64.

[34] See A.C. Mitchell, "The Social Function of Friendship in Acts 2:44-47 and 4:32-37," *JBL* 111 (1992) 255-72. For other popular philosophical conventions, see K.L. Cukrowski, "Pagan Polemic and Lukan Apologetic: The Function of Acts 20:17-38," Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1994.

[35] For the proverb, see Plato, *The Republic* 329E, and for the thought, Cicero, *On Old Age* 3.8. Musonius Rufus, Fragment 17 (93, 7-9 Hobein = 110, 20 Lutz), thinks the thought erroneous. On the Prodigal Son, see Holgate, "Prodigality, Liberality and Meanness."

The setting (8:9-18; 12:3-12)

We begin by observing some similarities between Luke 12:2-34 and 8:9-18, Luke's interpretation and application of the Parable of the Sower. For Luke, the seed is the word that is preached, the mysteries once the prerogatives of the disciples alone. Of concern to him is the way the word is appropriated by those who hear it. One class of hearers are those who hear the word, but as they go on, are choked ὑπὸ μεριμνῶν καὶ πλούτου καὶ ἡδονῶν τοῦ βίου (v. 14). The word is to be preached openly, so that it can be received in a manner that will result in bearing fruit (vv. 16-18).

The same elements appear in chapter 12, where they are treated more fully, almost as a commentary on 8:9-18. In 12:2-12 Jesus deals with the conduct of those who proclaim the word. He affirms the public nature of the proclamation (vv. 2-3), and then seeks to allay the fears of his φίλοι (vv. 4, 5, 7). As sparrows enjoy God's protection, how much more do they. As they preach, confess and defend, they are not to be anxious (μὴ μεριμνήσητε), for God through the Holy Spirit will provide them with what they are to say (vv. 11-12).

The setting for our passage (vv. 13-34) is therefore the preaching of the word, the fear and anxiety that attend it, and God's calming of the disciples' fear. Our text deals with the same issues, but now as they have to do with the lives of those who receive the word.

The superfluity of covetousness (12:13-15)

Our text begins with someone from the crowd asking Jesus to divide his and his brother's inheritance between them, a request Jesus denies (vv. 13-14). Jesus considers the request to be ignobly motivated, for he responds with a warning against covetousness, and provides a reason for the warning, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ περισσεύειν τινὶ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων (v. 15). Translators and commentators have had difficulty in translating this clause because of the awkward syntax and the opaqueness of the thought. Τὸ περισσεύειν is most frequently translated as "abundance" (e.g. by NRSV and NIV) and less frequently as something like "more than enough" (e.g., REV). In light of our identification above of the concern with superfluities (τὰ περιττά) when speaking of covetousness, it is likely that this is what τὸ περισσεύειν means here, and that the thought expressed is that found frequently in our *topos*: superfluities by definition exceed what is necessary for life. Understood thus, the clause would read, "because one's life is not dependent on

the superfluities of one's possessions."[36] Two further considerations support such a translation: (1) The Parable of the Rich Fool that immediately follows illustrates what is in mind here, and (2) the conclusion of the larger section (v. 30) explicitly speaks of what is needed (ὅτι χρῄζετε τούτων), thus representing the second bracket of an *inclusio* which contains what is in effect a characterization of πλεονεξία.

Insatiability and hedonism (12:16-21)

The Parable of the Rich Fool uses the Lukan device of the soliloquy,[37] thus offering Luke's reflection on the subjective dimension of covetousness. The rich man's greed is insatiable: in a quandary about where to gather his crops (ποῦ συνάξω τοὺς καρπούς μου;), he decides to tear down his barns, build larger ones, and there gather all his grain and goods (συνάξω ἐκεῖ τὸν σίτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθά μου) (vv. 17-18). This is the attitude of the typical self-centered (μου), acquisitive covetous man given to gathering (συνάγειν) superfluities.

Secure in his possessions, he turns inward, assuring his soul that he has many goods laid up for many years to come (v. 19). As that which is addressed, ψυχή here stands for the entire person, the self in its totality.[38] The soul (ψυχή) and life (ζωή) are related in Greek thought, the former being the cause of the latter, and in the Old Testament, natural man is called a ψυχὴ ζῶσα (e.g., Gen. 2:7,19), so the suggestion that ζωή in v. 15 and ψυχή in vv. 19-20 are synonymous is not without merit.[39] The point at issue is whether the human self is dependent on an overabundance of material possessions. Plutarch, we saw, thought it necessary to remove this wrong judgment from the soul in order to

[36] Cf. Luke 21:4, the rich give ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς, the widow gave πάντα τὸν βίον ὃν εἶχεν. Luke maintains the traditional distinction: ζωή is life *intensive* (*vita qua vivimus*), the antithesis to death; βίος is life *extensive* (*vita quam vivimus*), here, the means by which that life is sustained. Thus R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (9th ed., 1880; repr.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 91.

[37] On this and Luke's other uses of the device (12:42-46; 15:11-32; 16:1-8; 18:1-5; 20:9-16), see P. Sellew, "Interior Monologue as a Narrative Device in the Parables of Luke," *JBL* 111 (1992) 239-53.

[38] See G. Dautzenberg, *Sein Leben Bewahren. Ψυχή in den Herrenworten der Evangelien* (SANT 14; Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1966) 90. For addressing the soul, see Chariton, *Chaeres and Callirhoe* 3.2, καρτέρησον, ψυχή, προθεμίαν σύντομον, ἵνα τὸν πλείω χρόνον ἀπολαύσῃς ἀσφαλοῦς ἡδονῆς, referred to by F. Field, *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1899) 64.

[39] R. Bultmann, "ζάω, κτλ.," *TDNT* 2.832-37. At 861 n. 241 Bultmann considers the two synonymous in vv. 15 and 20, but there is no good reason why v. 19 should not also be included.

be free from superfluities. Luke approaches the matter differently, but still uses the themes from the *topos* on covetousness.

Luke represents the insatiably covetous rich man as a hedonist. The man calls on his soul to take its rest, eat, drink, be merry (ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου). With some variations, this motto was widely associated with the licentious or hedonistic life that held out no prospect for existence after death.[40] Εὐφραίνεσθαι is a favorite Lukan word, and the fact that ἀνάπαυσις appears in Sirach 11:19, in connection with the covetous man, may lead to the surmise that Luke has now expressed himself partly in terms derived from his Jewish background.[41] Εὐφραίνεσθαι appears, however, in one variation of the motto,[42] and is also used elsewhere of the dissolute life.[43] What is important for our present purpose is that Luke, in line with the *topos* on covetousness, describes the man, insatiable for possessions, as a hedonist.

We noticed above the stress on the foolishness of depending on the uncertainty of wealth, sometimes expressed in an exclamation or an exclamation beginning with a vocative (*infelix*!, ὦ μάταιε!), and warning that everything might be lost before the night had passed. So also Luke, with equal sharpness, has the rich man interrupted: "Fool (ἄφρων)! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (v. 20).[44] It is God who interrupts, and the asseveration that follows is in fact a threat of judgment.

Dio, too, thought that the divine punished the covetous. But there is a difference. What is really at stake appears from the concluding statement (v. 21): "So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God (μὴ εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν)." Whereas the *topos* focuses on the social and subjective aspects of the vice, for Luke its viciousness consists in being self-centered (θησαυρίζων ἑαυτῷ) and not finding the goal of the endeavor to be rich in being rich towards God (μὴ εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν). Θησαυρίζων and πλουτῶν are here synonymous, the latter describing benevolent action that gains a treasure with God. That

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[40] See A.J. Malherbe, "The Beasts at Ephesus," *JBL* 87 (1968) 76-77 (= *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 84-85), and the extensive collection of references in W. Ameling, "ΦΑΓΩΜΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΩΜΕΝ," *ZPE* 60 (1985) 35-43.

[41] See Dupont, *Les béatitudes*, 3.47-50, 174 n. 2.

[42] See Ameling, "ΦΑΓΩΜΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΩΜΕΝ," 39-41.

[43] See Euripides, *Alcestis* 780-87; Ps.-Diogenes, *Epistle* 32.2; Aelian, *Miscellaneous Stories* 1.32; 2.18.

[44] See Horace, *Satire* 2.3.159: The covetous man is a fool and madman (*stultus et insanus*). Ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτί may be an addition to the tradition Luke had received (cf. Luke 17:34; Acts 27:23).

appears from vv. 33-34, which v. 21 anticipates.[45] The pagan *topos* also knows of using wealth for the benefit of others, e.g., Hecaton of Rhodes as quoted by Cicero (*De officiis* 3.63):

> But that depends on our purpose in seeking prosperity: for we do not aim to be rich for ourselves alone but for our children, relatives, friends, and, above all, for our country. For the private fortunes of individuals are the wealth of the state.

A noble attitude indeed, but the crucial distinction is that the formulation of this altruism is εἰς τὸ κοινὸν πλουτεῖν,[46] while for Luke it is εἰς θεόν.

Anxieties about basic needs (12:22-32)

Luke continues the argument against covetousness by taking up the theme of anxiety, which in the *topos* was closely related to pleasure. Because (διὰ τοῦτο) of the fatal end of hedonism, as exemplified in the Parable of the Rich Fool, the disciples are not to be anxious (μὴ μεριμνᾶτε τῇ ψυχῇ) about what to eat or with what to clothe their bodies, for the soul is greater than food and the body than clothing.[47] The ravens, fed by God, are an object lesson. Anxiety does not prolong life, so why be anxious? God clothes the fields with lilies and grass, quite ephemeral in nature; how much more will he take care of the disciples? They should not seek what to eat and drink, nor be anxious.

Dio Chrysostom reflected on material needs when discussing covetousness, and so does Luke, but once again they approach the matter differently. For Dio, the thing to do was to attain the proper proportion and reduce material needs to an absolute minimum. For Luke, it is God who knows that they need these things (v. 30), and he will provide. What is required of them is that they have faith (cf. ὀλιγόπιστοι, v. 28) and see the kingdom—their needs will be met by God, not through some rigorous self-abnegation which reduces their needs to manageable proportions. They need not fear, for their Father is pleased to give them the kingdom they should seek.

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[45] See Horn, *Glaube und Handeln*, 65, who refers to Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments* 104; *On the Special Laws* 4.73, for wealth in heaven. See also 1 Tim. 6:18-19.

[46] See Lucian, *Saturnalia* 24; Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius* 4.8; cf. Euripides, *Orestes* 394.

[47] Cf. Luke 10:41-42, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία ἢ ἑνός; 21:34, μεριμναὶ βιωτικαί.

The true treasure (12:33-34)

The section ends paraenetically. It had begun (v. 15) with the correction of a misunderstanding behind covetousness, that one's life depends on a superabundance of possessions, and had rejected the acquisitiveness of the rich man and the seeking by the disciples who have little faith. The conclusion is dramatically opposed: the disciples are to *sell* their possessions and give alms. That this explicit social dimension is so briefly treated in comparison with Dio and other moralists does not diminish its importance. This act, which is completely contrary to covetousness, will be their treasure, in heaven, and there will be their hearts. Luke's treatment of the *topos* ends on a more elevated note than Dio's ridicule.

Conclusion

Luke makes use of the *topos* on covetousness to expound on part of his explanation and application of the Parable of the Sower, which speaks of the proclamation of the word and the threat that anxieties, wealth and pleasure pose for those who receive it. The same concerns are present in 12:2-34. The first part (vv. 2-12) of this section calms the fear of the disciples as they preach and encourages them not to be anxious, for the Holy Spirit will provide them with what they need. The *topos* comes into play especially in vv. 13-34, for it allows Luke to write in terms widely known in his day. The similarities to the popular conventions associated with covetousness are numerous and striking. Equally striking is the way Luke has placed his own theological imprint on those conventions, in the process Christianizing the *topos*.