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Justin David Strong

The Fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

A New Foundation for the Study of Parables

BRILL | Ferdinand Schöningh

The Fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

Studies in Cultural Contexts of the Bible

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For Slaves

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Preface

The authors of fable books are never far from their readers. They are gentle teachers and rebellious upstarts, patriotic poets and subversive gadflies, itinerant sophists and restless captives, lettered elites and destitute day laborers. Through their prefaces and prologues, the author crafts his persona, paints the fable background, establishes his relationship to "you" his reader, and lays out the framework through which to read his work. I feel that I donned more of these mantels in the production of these books than I care to admit—certainly not always the illustrious ones I would aspire to wear.

These books were written together as my doctoral dissertation at the University of Notre Dame between the Autumn of 2017 and the Spring of 2019. After more than a year of going almost untouched, they were heavily revised and expanded into the present shape at the end of 2020 in Mainz. Though I could not work on them in the period between for reasons of health, disaster, and plague, they were not gathering dust. Since the dissertation, I have carried this manuscript, shuffled together with my immigration papers, on several harrowing trans-continental moves—some voluntary, others not. It spent many lock-down months with me in a London basement, was worked over in a Berlin hotel, on a Mediterranean island, in a Midwestern home, atop a statue in an empty Trafalgar Square, and in a comfortable office from which I now write. I am grateful to finally deposit the manuscript now in publication after such a delay.

The research was done in one of the best library facilities in the world for theology and biblical studies at the University of Notre Dame. It was also done in fits and starts during the year afterward with almost no library access. The benefits of both appear on these pages. Had I not been so limited at one stage, I would not have been forced to read works in the public domain, where I discovered some of my forerunners in Gottlob Christian Storr and Hugo Grotius. Between them and Adolf Jülicher, I have not a bad cloud of witnesses for advancing a thesis provocative in the author's century.

In the course of my discussions, I engage with many earlier interpreters of the "parables," though perhaps not as many as one might expect. Though I know their work and hold it in high regard, I have carved a different path. When I do address parable scholarship, it is often because I find it an obstacle rather than an aid. Although I contend with parable scholars, I hope that I have done so without contentiousness. Those parable books that I cite the most often, I do so not because I disagree with them any more than others, but because they are my favorites. While my bags hemorrhaged many items along the way, of the

few possessions I did not sell when writing these pages, their books were there to carve into my shoulder as I carried them over many months.

Times like these remind one of what they are grateful for, and what I wish to express the most are my feelings of gratitude. I am grateful to the inspiring and enriching Notre Dame community, to my fellow students, to the support staff of the theology department, the graduate school, and the Hesburgh Library, and to the faculty. For agreeing to pass me, thanks are due to my dissertation committee, comprised of John T. Fitzgerald, Cilliers Breytenbach, Mary Rose D'Angelo, Blake Leyerle, and John P. Meier. I am grateful to Jim and Mary VanderKam, for their mentorship both spiritual and professional, for helping me make it through the flood, and for meeting the flood of requests for letters of support thereafter. I am especially grateful for the support of my supervisor, John Fitzgerald, who shepherded me through not only the dissertation phase but the five years of my doctoral program. I am grateful for his continued support even now as I find my way.

The 2019–2020 academic year was a challenging time to be a visiting professor, but the *Stippvisite* at Durham University afforded me the opportunity to indebt myself to scholars off of the American continent. Many have gone out of their way to support me, including John Barclay and Francis Watson at Durham, George van Kooten at Cambridge University, Kasper Bro Larson at Aarhus University, Peter Tomson at KU Leuven, Ernest van Eck at the University of Pretoria, and Annette Potgieter at Hugenote Kollege. Words fail to express my gratitude to Carys Williams, who has kept me on my feet, pressing through this past year from across an ocean. To my family for their love and support, I am especially grateful in this most liminal stage of my life, career, and the world. To the editors and reviewers for the Studies in Cultural Contexts of the Bible series, I am grateful for the invitation to publish this manuscript and for permission to publish the contents of both books together.

During the final phase of revision, I benefited from the warm welcome by the community at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz. I am especially grateful to Ruben Zimmermann for the immense effort to get me to Mainz in the first place during a global pandemic and for his steadfast support of my research during these months. The fabulous conversations with him as I completed my manuscript have helped to sharpen many arguments on these pages.

I am grateful for the invitations to lecture on the content of this book at a number of venues during its preparation, including the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, both national and international, the European Association of Biblical Studies, the conference: "What's So Funny? Discovering and Interpreting Humor in the Ancient World" at The Ohio State University,

from Cilliers Breytenbach to the New Testament colloquium at the Humboldt University of Berlin, from the members of the Parables and the Partings of the Ways project to the conference: "The Power of Parables: Narrating Religion in Late Antiquity" at the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology, from Jacob P.B. Mortensen to the conference: "The Gospel of Mark and Genre: Micro and Macro" at the University of Aarhus, from George van Kooten to the New Testament Seminar of the University of Cambridge, from Esther Kobel to the Neutestamentliche Sozietät of the University of Mainz, and from my former colleagues to the New Testament seminar at the University of Durham.

Lastly, fable books record the inclinations of many readers to respond to the author—scrawled in the gaps of the manuscripts. Should the muse inspire, don't hesitate to write.

The Author

Figures

Figure 1 Painting on the Aesop Cup. A fox converses with Aesop. Painter of Bologna 417. Gregorian Etruscan Museum, the Vatican, inventory number 16552. Dated between 460–430 BCE. Image available here: https://catalogo.museivaticani.va/index.php/Detail/objects/MV.16552.0.0. Figure drawing of the painting by Francois Lissarrangue in "Aesop, between Man and Beast." 76

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Abbreviations

The abbreviations for journals, series, and ancient texts follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL, 2014.

BOOK I

A New Foundation for the Study of Parables

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The parables of Jesus of Nazareth have always been a popular topic of biblical criticism. The scholarly viewpoint on these timeless and moving vignettes preserved in the Gospels has been that they represent a key piece of the historical Jesus's original message and reflect his creative genius. For this reason, biblical scholarship has devoted the lion's share of its energies to resolving their interpretive issues, unlocking their "original" forms and meanings, and constructing a portrait of Jesus from his parables. With these goals in mind, the search for context has focused on Jesus's Jewish background and situated the parables in the world of first-century Palestine. This work has been important, worthwhile, and shed much light on the parables, but it has also imposed some rigid limitations. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the backgrounds of the evangelists or to relevant literature outside of a largely pre-defined corpus. The focus of this project is to leave the pack of parable studies to engage them from several novel directions.

1.1 The Problems

This project offers an explanation for some remarkable curiosities about the parables attributed to Jesus in the gospels. The first of these is ultimately of a historical nature and pertains to the genre typically called "parable." All three of the Synoptic Gospels depict Jesus teaching with parables. Furthermore, every source used by Matthew and Luke—Mark, Q, M, and L—contains parables in its depiction of Jesus's teaching. For these and other reasons, New Testament scholars consider it axiomatic that the historical Jesus taught in parables. Indeed, the parable is often viewed as the most characteristic genre of Jesus's teaching.[1] At the same time, according to the standard scholarly assessment, this is also unprecedented. Jesus is the first figure in recorded history to use

1 Charles Hedrick, for example, writes in the first paragraph of his book, "In fact, virtually everyone thinks Jesus' stories constitute his characteristic form of discourse" (Charles W. Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables: Jesus and His Modern Critics* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004], 1). Likewise, Gerd Theißen and Annette Merz begin their chapter on the parables of the historical Jesus: "It is commonly held that the parable is the characteristic form of Jesus teaching," "Landläufig gelten die Gleichnisse als die charakteristische Form der Lehre Jesu" (*Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch*, 4th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011], 286;

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the parable as his preferred didactic medium. Our next reference to teaching in parables does not arrive until the rabbinic materials centuries later, and yet, by the time of the Talmud, it is clear that the parable has become a popular Jewish genre.

This peculiar and unique position of Jesus is noted eagerly and often in many studies on the parables. Joachim Jeremias informs us: "Jesus's parables are something entirely new. In all the rabbinic literature, not a single parable has come down to us from the period before Jesus."[2] Bernard Brandon Scott observes: "There is no contemporaneous evidence of parable tellers at the time of Jesus,"[3] "Jesus and the rabbis developed and employed a genre of *mashal* not evidenced in the Hebrew Bible.... The absence of parables attributable to the Pharisees should stand as an initial warning to those who would equate Jesus's parables with the later rabbinic parables."[4] Likewise, Klyne Snodgrass writes: "Little evidence exists that prior to Jesus anyone was telling narrative parables,"[5] and Luise Schottroff: "The literary form 'parable' belongs to the history of post-biblical parable culture. It is not yet found in the First Testament."[6] The peculiarity of Jesus's parable telling is also noted by scholars focusing on the later rabbinic parables, such as Jacob Neusner:

> As to such similitudes as *servant/master, tower/war, lost sheep/lost coin*, the thief, faithful servant, children at play, leaven, seed growing of itself, treasure in the field, pearl of great price, fish net, house builder, fig tree, returning householder, prodigal son, unjust steward, two sons, and the like—we have nothing of the same sort. It is true that later rabbinic materials make use of similitudes. But the Pharisaic stratum is notably lacking in them.[7]

John Dominic Crossan, discussing Neusner's observation, draws from it that "with the basic semantics of Jesus's stories, we are already within a most

---

an English translation is available: *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998]). Unless stated otherwise, translations from German are my own.

2 Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Scribner, 1972), 12. When I am quoting Jeremias in English, it is from this edition.

3 Bernard Brandon Scott, *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2001), 15.

4 Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 8.

5 Klyne Snodgrass, "Are the Parables Still the Bedrock of the Jesus Tradition?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 15 (2017): 131–46, here 143.

6 "Die literarische Form 'Gleichnis' gehört in die Geschichte nachbiblischer jüdischer Gleichniskultur. Sie ist so noch nicht im Ersten Testament zu finden" (Luise Schottroff, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* [Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2005], 137).

7 Jacob Neusner, "Types and Forms in Ancient Jewish Literature: Some Comparisons," *HR* 11 (1972): 354–90, here 376, emphasis original.

unusual phenomenon [and his parables] must be understood against this even more fundamental linguistic originality and generic creativity."[8] On historical grounds and on literary grounds, the idea that Jesus of Nazareth could be the first figure in history to use a new genre called the parable is a most implausible scenario. Despite this fact, for scholars of every stripe, it has remained the unquestioned consensus for generations. On these pages, I break from this remarkable *status quaestionis*. I will demonstrate that the parables of Jesus are not as unique as is commonly asserted but have their home in a common first-century historical and literary milieu.

The second remarkable curiosity has to do with the parables themselves. By taking the parables preserved by the Gospels as a corpus of their own, we immediately observe that their distribution between the Gospels is rather uneven. The first thing that jumps out is that most agree the Gospel of John contains no parables at all![9] By the standard tally, in the Gospel of Mark we find a total of seven parables.[10] The Q-source, or Double Tradition material, likewise has five or seven. Matthew copies all but one of the Markan and Q-source parables, and to these he adds around eight, mostly very short parables of his own. In Luke, however, we find a startling difference. The parables in Luke's Gospel total around thirty in all, and of these more than half are not taken from the other Gospels but are found in Luke alone. These parables unique to Luke, we call the "L" parables.[11]

The distribution of the parables among the Gospels is remarkable and amplified by which of them belong to the L parables. Among them are the most popular of the Christian tradition, including the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–35),

8 John Dominic Crossan, *Cliffs of Fall: Paradox and Polyvalence in the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 18; Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70*, SFSHJ 202–204 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999). Crossan points out that Neusner says nothing at all about parables in his landmark three-volume work.

9 While here is not the place to discuss it, Ruben Zimmermann is right to challenge this consensus; see Ruben Zimmermann, "Are There Parables in John? It Is Time to Revisit the Question," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 9 (2011): 243–76; *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 129, 333–360.

10 The Gospel of Mark contains numerous comparisons that are borderline cases, though whether they should count as proverbs, similes, or parables need not detain us at this point. On these borderline cases see Justin David Strong, "*Mythos*: The Markan 'Parables' and Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Fable and Comparison." forthcoming in *In Genres of Mark—Reading Mark's Gospel from Micro and Macro Perspectives*, ed. Jacob P.B. Mortensen, Studia Aarhusiana Neotestamentica (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming).

11 As John Meier has noted, the very large number found in L is "curiosity pricking" (John P. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*, vol. 5 of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* [New York: Yale University Press, 2016], 194).

the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). The L parables also contain some of the most puzzling, including the Dishonest or Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1–8)—that parable about the man who lies and cheats his employer and then is praised for being so conniving. These most famous and most peculiar parables of Jesus are gathered among a sizable quantity of others unique to Luke. The impressive list of Lukan parables includes: the Two Debtors (7:41–42), the Good Samaritan (10:30–35), the Friend at Midnight (11:5–10), the Rich Fool (12:15–21), the Fig Tree (13:6–9), the Place at the Table (14:8–11), the Tower Builder and Warring King (14:28–35), the Lost Coin (15:8–10), the Prodigal Son (15:11–32), the Crafty Steward (16:1–8), the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31), the Worthless Slaves (17:7–10), the Judge and the Widow (18:1–8), the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9–14), and perhaps others like the Great Dinner (14:16–24) and the Pounds (19:11–27). Viewed collectively, these L parables do not offer any immediate explanation for their number or how Luke alone preserves them. Comparing them to the parables in the other Gospels, we may note that the L parables are also rather different, and yet they bear a striking resemblance to one another. We will explore these differences later, which extend far beyond the superficial to fundamental issues of interpretation, characters, themes, plots, contents, style, and vocabulary. How did this happen and what are we to make of this unique L parable tradition?

One way to conceive of these books is the outflow of the answer to these two enigmas: whence Jesus's putatively unique use of parables, and why are so many, including all the classics, in Luke's Gospel alone?

1.2 The Answer

The answer to both puzzles is found in an ancient but humble genre called the fable. It is at the time of Jesus and the Gospels that we find a veritable renaissance of the ancient fable.[12] Rather than positing that Jesus came like a bolt from the blue to teach in a new genre we now call "parable," I will show that

12 With this metaphor of a renaissance, I am highlighting that it is during the early Imperial Roman period that we find the appearance of the paradigmatic fable texts and fable authors, including Phaedrus, Babrius, the Augustana Collection, and the *Life of Aesop*, among works significant in the history of the fable such as the early *progymnasmata*. Like the Medieval Renaissance, this is not to imply that there was nothing going on before or after with the ancient fable. Quite the contrary, fables are found in dozens of sources before and after this time. The genre stretches as far back as history allows, though it is from around the early Imperial Roman period that the most important surviving

the contemporary fable offers a straightforward and compelling historical and literary milieu in which to situate Jesus's parable telling. As to the L parables, I will demonstrate that they are identical to the known first-century fable literature in terms of their form, content, ethics, function, interpretation, organization, characters, etcetera—and thus, the L parables should be regarded as fables. I will argue that Luke is especially informed by the ancient fable and Aesopic tradition in his gospel, which manifests itself in the L parables most of all. I will argue that the L parables found their way into the Gospel of Luke from a collection, which resembled fable collections of the day, and which was a common means of transmitting fables. This source I call the Lukan Fable Collection.

While to the modern reader, the idea of a fable conjures up notions of children's stories of talking animals, much of this undertaking will be devoted to reintroducing the reader to the ancient fable. On these pages, I draw from the hundreds of examples and the numerous contexts of their use in antiquity. Bringing this new historical and literary context to bear on the parables of Jesus and the L parables specifically, will demand that we reconceive of how we understand both the parable and the fable.

After establishing the essential heuristic value in interpreting parables from the fable context, later chapters will explore the many and far-reaching implications that come with applying the fable background to the parables of Jesus. We will explore a host of new parallel primary literature and new methodologies from fable studies. We will fill the once-empty room of parable tellers with a chorus of fabulists and set the Lukan Jesus among them. We will take the lonely cast of the parables—servants, masters, thieves, children, treasure finders, fishermen, kings, house builders, prodigal sons, crafty stewards, fools, widows, judges, friends, and neighbors—and find company for one and all. We will recover the first-century approach for how the parables of Jesus were told, read, and interpreted. We will find a new first-century Christian text and describe its origins and social location. The implications of this project bring together concerns of biblical scholarship, Classics, fable scholarship, folklore, and history. To the extent that the teaching of Jesus and his parables in particular lay claim to a cornerstone of Western thought, the present work gives this foundation a firm tug in a new direction. As the next section will demonstrate, for contextualizing Jesus's parables, the guild of biblical scholarship has left the fable essentially untouched.

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collections in Greek and Latin come down to us. All of these above-named texts are introduced below.

1.3 Scholarship from Jülicher Onward

Given the largely pioneering nature of this project, surveys of the relevant secondary literature will be given during each of the chapters, as necessary. Here I will cover the presence of the fable in the history of New Testament parable interpretation since around the year 1900. We need not tarry long on parable scholarship because, as we will see, there has been scarcely any engagement with the fables that will be relevant to this project since Adolf Jülicher, one hundred and twenty years ago.

1.3.1 *Parable Scholarship*

The industry of parables scholarship has achieved such a level of self-replication that it is now standard fare for new monographs merely to cite older parables books to reach their conclusions rather than dwelling on the primary materials. The amount of scholarship on the parables is so notoriously mammoth that one can speak of it only in terms of waves or stages. There are many monographs devoted to single parables, and many monograph-length bibliographies.[13]

Whether knowingly or unknowingly, the new books on the parables of Jesus that appear each year are influenced by Adolf Jülicher's two-volume *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*.[14] Volume one appeared in 1888, and the second volume,

13 For example, here is a bibliography of parable bibliographies: John P. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*, 377–86; John S. Kloppenborg, "Parables," Oxford Bibliographies, DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780195393361-0045; Ulrich Mell, "Die Neutestamentliche Gleichnisforschung 100 Jahre nach Adolf Jülicher," *TRu* 76 (2011): 37–81; 78 (2013): 431–61; Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 812–57; David B. Gowler, *What Are They Saying About the Parables?* (New York: Paulist, 2000), 139–47; Watson E. Mills, *Parables*, vol. 4 of *Bibliographies on the Life and Teachings of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1999); Warren S. Kissinger, *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography*, ATLA Bibliography Series 4 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1979). John Dominic Crossan, "Basic Bibliography for Parables Research," *Semeia* 1 (1974): 236–74. The bibliography in Meier is the most up to date. Kloppenborg's is the most up-to-date annotated bibliography. Snodgrass's bibliography was not updated from the first edition of his book in 2008. Kissinger's bibliography, even if outdated, at around one thousand entries, is still the most comprehensive.

14 Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1899). The first volume actually appeared in a kind of advanced release already in 1886. The first volume also went through another edition in 1910. For the subsequent publication history see Ulrich Mell, "Die Publikationsgeschicthe von Adolf Jülicher, Die Gleichnisreden Jesu," in *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu 1899–1999: Beiträge zum Dialog mit Adolf Jülicher*, ed. Ulrich Mell, BZNW 103 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 1–3.

together with a slightly revised volume one, appeared in 1899. Though it has never been translated into English, it was Jülicher's weighty tome that shifted subsequent scholarship away from interpreting parables in the allegorical manner that prevailed since Patristic times. In its stead was the view that each parable had a single broadest point of moral application. According to Jülicher, this is achieved in a parable, which sets something familiar alongside the unfamiliar, in a third referent called the *tertium comparationis*. We will encounter Jülicher regularly in the course of this project, so here we need only note a few essentials. To his landmark work, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, parable scholars attribute the industry of parable studies that we know today. The idea that parables had a single point, if not original to Jülicher, reached ubiquitous acceptance because of him. Jülicher's insights filtered into the Anglophone world especially through C. H. Dodd, and a few later German works in translation.

Following Jülicher, a few key stages in the history of interpretation are worth noting. The course of research in the twentieth century would be steered especially by two highly influential studies on the parables, one by C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, in 1936,[15] and the other by Joachim Jeremias, whose 1947 *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* has since gone through at least eleven editions.[16] To speak in broad terms, Dodd's contribution was to take the results of Jülicher's single point of moral application and to give this an eschatological edge. The moral point of application for Dodd required that it be historically grounded by an application rooted in the eschatological message of Jesus: "the kingdom of God." This tight association, verging on tautology today, between the parables of Jesus and the kingdom of God, is owed to Dodd. From Dodd we also see the beginning of what replaced the vacuum left when Jülicher ousted the allegory: the parable as metaphor.[17] Though the next author used it more fully, Dodd also makes extended use of form criticism in an attempt to reach the preliterary stages of the parables.

Joachim Jeremias, who says in his foreword that his work is heavily influenced by Dodd, gave us what is the quintessential twentieth-century form-critical discussion of the parables.[18] Jeremias started by working in the opposite direction as Dodd, showing the ways the early Church redacted the parables before working backward to Jesus. While the idea that one could recover the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus through the parables certainly preceded him, it was

15 C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1936).

16 Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011).

17 Dodd, *Parables*, 16.

18 Jeremias, *Parables*, 9.

Jeremias who used form criticism most thoroughly and influentially to argue that the parables preserve the very voice, if not the *ipsissima verba*, the very words of Jesus. As with the promise of form criticism generally, the parables dangled before the form critic the promised carrot that continues to motivate even those who no longer hold form criticism in such high esteem. For form critics, this is the belief that if only we could sharpen our tools and use them with sufficient surgical precision, the parables offer the exegete access to the very mind of Jesus—the pure essence of his message.

Jeremias is representative of the much broader phenomenon of historical Jesus-questers during the twentieth century, who seized on the parables as a reliable means of inquiry: "The student of the parables of Jesus, as they have been transmitted to us in the first three Gospels, may be confident that he stands upon a particularly firm historical foundation. The parables are a fragment of the original rock of tradition."[19] If form criticism has fallen out of vogue, this belief about what the parables promise has not diminished. A preeminent contemporary Jesus scholar such as James Charlesworth can write matter-of-factly, "The parables are like windows into Jesus' mind,"[20] and authors with more theological interests such as Robert Farrar Capon, assume the same: "If we want to hear [Jesus's] actual ticking mind, we can hardly do better than to study his parabolic words and acts."[21] One could argue that it was also the result of the worthwhile quest to recover Jesus's "Jewishness" that cemented the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and the "Jewish" backgrounds of first-century Palestine as the horizons for scholarly inquiry into the parables. With the exclusion of the occasional renegade, biblical scholars of every stripe agree that the parables tradition is authentic, without justifying this conclusion by the same measure of evidence expected of other Jesus traditions.

After Jeremias a number of approaches to the parables proliferated.[22] A variety of literary-critical methods were popularized, beginning perhaps with Dan Via, *The Parables: Their Literary & Existential Dimensions*, followed by such scholars as Robert Funk, who makes ample use of "parable as metaphor," and

19 Jeremias, *Parables*, 11.

20 James H. Charlesworth, "The Historical Jesus: How to Ask Questions and Remain Inquisitive," in *How to Study the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 of *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 91–128, here 110.

21 Robert Farrar Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 9.

22 The best summary of these many approaches is Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables*, 1–179.

Crossan, who arguably popularized structuralist approaches.[23] Since around the time of the third quest for the historical Jesus, there has also been a resurging interest in comparing parables to those of the later rabbis.[24]

1.3.2 *Parable and Fable*

In stark contrast to the mountain of publications on Jesus's parables—articles, monographs, encyclopedias, compendia, and so on—those offering any comparison with the contemporary fables do not amount to a molehill. This next group of literature captures well the *status quaestionis*: exploratory articles, pages of ponderings, passing mentions, and complete omissions. To this day, Jülicher's *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, published now well over a century ago, remains the most thorough investigation into the relationship between parable and fable. After completing a brief review of literature on "parable and fable," we shall return to Jülicher's discussion of fable.

Since the time of Jülicher, the study of the fable as it could conceivably relate to the parable has been almost exclusively the sphere of Germanic scholarship, and then usually from literary critics interested in the fable.[25] Reinhard Dithmar's literary-critical work on fable makes glancing passes at the question. His *Fabeln, Parabeln und Gleichnisse* is mostly a collection of primary material under these three headings rather than a comparison of them, though Dithmar does discuss the difficulty of defining the parable in a few pages.[26] In terms

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23 Dan Otto Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). For Crossan, see *Cliffs of Fall*, and *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1973), and his reply to Via: "Structuralist Analysis and the Parables of Jesus, a Reply to D. O. Via, Jr.," *Semeia* 1 (1974): 192–221.

24 This was popular also during the days of Jülicher, and again with Rudolf Bultmann, but many were quick to point out that the centuries between these corpora is insurmountable. This criticism stands for Bultmann's *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* as a whole, which often compares the Jesus tradition to later rabbinic materials with no concern for the time discrepancy. This is true with "biographical apothegms" (57), the *Streitgespräche*, "controversy dialogues" (41), proverbs (106–108), and the parables and similitudes are no exception (the discussion begins on 179, but 201–205 especially) (Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh [Oxford: Blackwell, 1963]).

25 In the present work, though I will not always spell them out or label them, I employ several complementary approaches to genre. So far as possible, I rely on ancient discussions to direct us. While for some ancient genres, the ancient theory does not match closely to the realia, this is not true of the fable. The hundreds of ancient fable examples and its remarkable stability over the centuries confirm what the ancient theory tells us.

26 Reinhard Dithmar, *Fabeln, Parabeln und Gleichnisse* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbucher, 1970), 27–30.

of literary theory, Dithmar's *Die Fabel*, now in its eighth edition, is the best summary of the genre for our purposes.[27] This monograph contains a chapter comparing fable to a handful of neighboring genres, including parable.[28] As far as literary criticism is concerned, this is the best discussion of the relationship between parable and fable as well. Dithmar shows some acquaintance with parable scholarship, quoting Jülicher regularly, and citing other New Testament scholars such as Rudolf Bultmann. Dithmar concludes the chapter with the following result: "Despite the many attempts to differentiate them paradigmatically, paradigms that are often in contradiction with each other, there is no fundamental or universal difference between fable and parable."[29] In Chapter 2, we will confront these contradicting paradigms and artificial distinctions used to divide parable and fable noted by Dithmar.

Though unknown to parable scholarship, Gert-Jan van Dijk is one of the most important fable scholars alive today and his work is essential to this project. We will become more familiar with van Dijk along the way, but we may cite an observation he makes almost in passing after cataloging some thousand ancient passages. Van Dijk notes that there are valid reasons modern literary theorists use to distinguish the fable from a host of other genres including "comparisons," "similes," "animal stories," "fairy tales," "exempla," "myth," "allegory," and so on. But on parable, he states matter-of-factly, "A fundamental difference between fable and parable does not exist."[30]

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27 Kurt Erlemann, Irmgard Nickel-Bacon, and Anika Loose follow a similar literary critical path to Dithmar. Though the title might lead one to believe their goal is to compare the three—Gleichnis, Fabel, and Parabel—these are essentially the three categories as they are divvied up among the authors. Most of the book is also not especially interested in New Testament exegesis but is concerned more with modern theory of the genres and the use of these forms in modern religious education. But, the first part by Erlemann, "Biblich-theologische Gleichnisauslegung," provides a useful and rich summary of some relevant subjects. In particular, the chapter "Vielfalt der Formen und Begriffswirrwarr," if nothing else, accomplishes the task of describing the dizzying confusion and many problems defining "parable," the concept of a "pure" form, how the genre relates to other literary forms, the validity of any distinction between them, and so on (Erlemann, "Biblich-theologische Gleichnisauslegung," in *Gleichnisse—Fabeln—Parabeln*, 29–51).

28 Reinhard Dithmar, *Die Fabel: Geschichte, Struktur, Didaktik*, 4th ed. (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1974), 81–98.

29 "Trotz der vielen Unterscheidungsversuche mit Paradigmata, die sich oft widersprechen, gibt es keinen Unterschied zwischen Fabel und Parabel, der als grundsätzlich und allgemeingültig gelten kann" (Dithmar, *Die Fabel*, 98).

30 Gert-Jan van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi: Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature: With a Study of the Theory and Terminology of the Genre*, Mnemosyne 166 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 36.

From those using the parable as point of departure, the most detailed account of the history of the genre from antiquity until the present is found in a one-hundred-page article by Renate von Heydebrand.[31] Von Heydebrand was a literary critic and so, like van Dijk, her work is essentially unknown to biblical scholars. We will encounter von Heydebrand again, but for now we may note one of her introductory reflections on the relationship between the two supposedly distinct genres: "Anyone who wants to begin a history of the parable as a genre from antiquity must find a way to dodge the fable or must abide by the other, Jewish-oriental tradition, from which the Christian tradition emerges."[32] Though her study is not ostensibly concerned with the parable as it relates to the fable, she notes the difficult task that she must revisit often: how parable and fable might (and might not) be distinguished through history if one wishes to give a full account of the parable. Von Heydebrand perhaps also signals a problematic view that bifurcates the semitic world from the non-semitic.

Given the output of biblical scholarship in general, and on parables in particular, comparisons between parable and fable in this guild are shockingly few. Three articles by Francois Vouga on similar topics have explored the issue.[33] Vouga largely keeps with the Germanic tradition of applying models of literary theory to make generic comparisons between parable and fable. He does not cite any actual fables in his work, and he does not treat any particular parable in depth.[34] That said, Vouga stands out as one of less than a handful of biblical critics who recognize the place of parable and fable in the Hellenistic tradition, and the relevance of fable for the parables of Jesus. He concludes, following Jülicher below, that narrative parables are fables.

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31 Renate von Heydebrand, "Parabel: Geschichte eines Begriffs zwischen Rhetorik, Poetik und Hermeneutik," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 34 (1991): 27–122.

32 "Wer also schon in der Antike mit einer Geschichte der Parabel als Gattung beginnen will, muß auf die Fabel ausweichen oder er muß sich an die zweite, die jüdisch-orientalische Tradition halten, aus der die christliche hervorgeht" (von Heydebrand, "Parabel," 49).

33 Francois Vouga, "Zur form- und redaktionsgeschichtlichen Definition der Gattungen: Gleichnis, Parabel/Fabel, Beispielerzählungen," in *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu 1899–1999*, 75–95; "Die Parabeln Jesu und die Fabeln Äsops. Ein Beitrag zur Gleichnisforschung und zur Problematik der Literalisierung der Erzählungen der Jesus-Tradition," *WD* 26 (2001): 149–64; "Formgeschichtliche Überlegungen zu den Gleichnissen und zu den Fabeln der Jesus-Tradition auf dem Hintergrund der hellenistischen Literaturgeschichte," in *The Four Gospels: Festschrift for Frans Neirynck*, ed. Frans van Segbroeck, et. al., BETL 100 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 173–87.

34 For this, his argument is fairly criticized by Ruben Zimmermann (*Puzzling the Parables*, 129).

To date, Mary Ann Beavis has published the most important article bringing insights in any detail from the ancient fables to the parables of Jesus.[35] Apart from Jülicher's magnum opus a century earlier, Beavis's article is the most significant treatment of the relationship between parable and fable, yet it has not received the attention it deserves. Beavis first recaps Jülicher's comparison of parable and fable. She then provides a brief overview of the history of the fable as she understands it. She notes the fable's place in education in the first century CE by quoting from Quintilian and Theon, including citing the definition of fable offered by the latter.[36] While Vouga did not provide examples, Beavis offers several "human fables" that invite comparison with the Gospels, and she notes similarities of content, theme, surprise and irony, and secondary morals and applications. After making some comparisons between specific parables and specific fables, she moves on to briefly discuss "Jesus as Fabulist" before suggesting some implications. Here she discusses how interpreting parable and fable related to the trend at that time in parables scholarship to use structural models, and how the parables of Jesus would fit into ancient literary criticism and popular culture. She concludes that the Synoptic parables would have been intended to be interpreted just as many fables, and that Jesus's audience would recognize them as such. The article concludes with an appendix cataloguing the fable-like morals she observes in the Synoptic parables.[37] I cannot heap enough praise on Beavis for this article and the critique here should be read in light of this. To begin with, perhaps the biggest fault to find is that Beavis attempts to cover a completely impractical amount of material in the span of a single article. A comparison between parable and fable demands that one be able to quote many fables in order to establish the overlap, and while Beavis does give a sample, she could not be expected to fill the entire article with fable examples. Beavis also does not interact with fable

35 Mary Ann Beavis, "Parable and Fable," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 473–98.

36 On this definition, see 5.7.

37 Unfortunately, Beavis has only occasionally mentioned fables in her later work. Her article in *JBL* a couple of years later fruitfully engages with the character Aesop and treats characterization in the fables, but fables are largely in the background: Mary Ann Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–8)," *JBL* 111 (1992): 37–54. Her insights on parable and fable scarcely appear in her later parable scholarship. In her article, "The Parable of the Foolish Landowner," in *Jesus and His Parables*, ed. George Shillington (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 55–68, she cites her article on fables only in note 62 to point out an oversight therein, and in note 5 of "Joy in Heaven, Sorrow on Earth (Luke 15.10)" in Mary Ann Beavis, ed., *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work and Wisdom* (London: Sheffield; New York: Continuum, 2002), 39–45, where she points out what she believes is the *epimythium* of the three parables of Luke 15.

scholarship, except to cite the primary editions and the Loeb volume containing the fables of Babrius and Phaedrus. In addition to the standard works available at the time, since Beavis's article, several foundational publications on the ancient fable (and the parables) have appeared that will be considered in the course of this project.

Among longer studies on the parables, the most significant interaction with the ancient fable is in David Flusser's book, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse und der Gleichniserzähler Jesus*.[38] In his chapter on the origin and prehistory of the parable, Flusser identified the "Jewish parable" as arising from the uses of comparison and example in Hellenistic education and popular philosophy.[39] Among these traditions, Flusser notes the Aesopic fable. He thus regards the Jewish parable as a separate genre from the "Aesopic fable" and other Greek examples, but nevertheless arising from them. As he does throughout his oeuvre, Flusser argues for a high degree of continuity between Jesus and the rabbinic period materials.[40] He observes that in the rabbinic period: "Fables were popular with the rabbis."[41] He assumes from this fact that Jesus must have known and told fables, too.[42] Flusser identifies and discusses the passing references to fables in the gospel Double Tradition and Jesus's characterization of Herod as a fox.[43] On the whole, Flusser displays a refreshing appreciation for the fable and should be applauded for not being dismissive of the fable, which is now widespread among New Testament scholars. Rather than speculating that the genre was invented by Jesus or from an earlier Jewish context of which we have no record, Flusser considers earlier precedents surviving in Greek literature, including the fable. That said, Flusser discusses fables almost entirely from a theoretical basis and in short, scattered passages through the book. He draws some overdetermined lines between "Aesopic fables" and parables by means of Lessing's fable theory.[44] Indeed, his sole inroad into the ancient fable

38 David Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse und der Gleichniserzähler Jesus, 1. Teil Das Wesen der Gleichnisse* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981).

39 Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 141–60.

40 He is on the defense over this issue from the beginning (Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 18–19).

41 "Fabeln waren bei den Rabbinen beliebt" (Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 153, and also discussed on 49). See further, Chapter 6.

42 Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 51–52, 153–54.

43 Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 153. The double tradition passages are Luke 7:24 // Matt 11:7; Luke 7:32 // Matt 11:17. See also David Flusser, "Aesop's Miser and the Parable of the Talents," in *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod (New York: Paulist, 1989), 9–25.

44 Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, e.g. 44–60, 289–90. I highlight the problems with using Lessing, for example, in 12.3.

appears to be via Lessing.[45] Flusser engages with no academic literature on the fable in the two hundred years since. The most serious issue is what is omitted. Flusser does not appear to be aware of first-century fables or fable collections. He cites a total of just five Greek fables from seemingly arbitrary indexes and shows no signs of knowing how to access or work with fable material. The comparison of parables and fables is only an ancillary concern of Flusser's book. That it remains the most thorough comparison of parables and fables among the countless parable books is indicative of the unfortunate state of the field.

A closely related subject to fables themselves is *The Life of Aesop* (occasionally *The Aesop Romance*), which has received increasing attention as of late. While scattered references could be found here or there before, Beavis was one of the forerunners who made use of this biography of Aesop in her 1992 *JBL* article.[46] The 1998 volume, *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, contains two essays relating the gospels to the *Life of Aesop*.[47] As late as this 1998 piece, Richard Pervo was still able to subtitle his article, "Introducing the *Life of Aesop*" and assume that biblical scholars would be unfamiliar with it. At this same time, Lawrence Wills published a monograph on the genre of gospels wherein *The Life of Aesop* is a central *comparandum*.[48] Several more articles and a book have also appeared in recent years.[49] It may be that biblical

45 Flusser describes Lessing as one of his great teachers in the foreword (Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 15).

46 Beavis, "Ancient Slavery."

47 Richard I. Pervo, "A Nihilist Fabula: Introducing *The Life of Aesop*," in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. Ronald F. Hock, J. Bradley Chance, and Judith Perkins, SBLSS 6 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 77–120; Whitney Shiner, "Creating Plot in Episodic Narratives: The *Life of Aesop* and the Gospel of Mark" in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, 155–76.

48 Lawrence M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (London: Routledge, 1997).

49 K. Edwin Bryant, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave: Death and Resurrection of the Oppressed in the Epistle to the Romans*, BibInt 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Steve Reece, "'Aesop,' 'Q' and 'Luke,'" *NTS* 62 (2016): 357–77; Mario Andreassi, "The Life of Aesop and the Gospels: Literary Motifs and Narrative Mechanisms," in *Holy Men and Charlatans in the Ancient Novel*, ed. Stelios Panayotakis, Gareth Schmeling, and Michael Paschalis (Gröningen: Barkhuis, 2015), 151–66; David F. Watson, "The Life of Aesop and the Gospel of Mark: Two Ancient Approaches to Elite Values," *JBL* 129 (2010): 699–716; Scott S. Elliott, "'Witless in Your Own Cause': Divine Plots and Fractured Characters in *The Life of Aesop* and the Gospel of Mark," *R&T* 12 (2005): 397–418; Mauro Pesce and Adriana Destro, "La lavanda dei piedi di Gv 13,1–20, il Romanzo di Esopo e i Saturnalia di Macrobio," *Bib* 80 (1999): 240–49; Margaret Froelich and Thomas E. Phillips, "Throw the Blasphemer off a Cliff: Luke 4.16–30 in Light of *The Life of Aesop*," *NTS* 65 (2019): 21–32.

scholars and their classicist counterparts have finally begun to take notice of this important text.[50]

Within the last ten and even five years, a trickle of articles and chapters have begun to appear that make comparisons between fables and the parables of the Gospels, mostly from the ancient educational context. Matthew Hauge's book chapter, "Fabulous Parables: The Storytelling Tradition in the Synoptic Gospels," devotes much of the article to a literature review of modern parables research, and then briefly addresses how parables may relate to the fable in ancient educational curricula (see Chapter 5).[51] Hauge offers a brief overview of some of the preliminary issues of the comparison between parable and fable, and general information about the Greek fable as it might relate to the Synoptic parables tradition, though no investigation into any particular parable is made. Coming down a similar path is Mikeal Parsons, who pointed out how well the definition of fable used in the *progymnasmata* would work for the parables of Jesus.[52] Parsons expresses surprise that no one has done further work on it. He answered his own call in a book co-authored by Michael Martin on the *progymnasmata* and the New Testament.[53] They devote a chapter to the fable exercise in the *progymnasmata*, comparing it with the New Testament parables. They are limited to comparing parable and fable along rhetorical lines and by constraints of space, but they point out that it is problematic to suppose Jesus "preached a form of a parable for which there was no genre parallel in the ancient Mediterranean world generally or Jewish religious culture specifically."[54] Though it appeared some years earlier, Parsons and Martin overlook Joshua Stigall's 2012 "test case" article. There, Stigall argues that the parable of the Rich Fool and its context in Luke 12 reflect an exercise on the fable

50 We will discuss this in much greater detail in Chapter 2.

51 Matthew Ryan Hauge, "Fabulous Parables: The Storytelling Tradition in the Synoptic Gospels," in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, ed. Matthew Ryan Hauge and Andrew W. Pitts, LNTS 533 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 89–105.

52 Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 21–22. Klyne Snodgrass makes the same observation about this definition from ancient rhetorical training, on which, see 5.7 (Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 8).

53 Mikeal C. Parsons and Michael W. Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament: The Influence of Elementary Greek Composition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018). Their book appeared after I had done my research and completed most of the present books, however I cite their chapter at the most relevant places. While the present undertaking is obviously much broader in scope than their chapter, I note its significance as an example of biblical scholars beginning to think along these lines again.

54 Parsons and Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 62.

from the *progymnasmata*.[55] Michael Wojciechowski attempts to cover Aesopic connections to the entire New Testament in ten pages.[56] William Alexander Ross's and Steve Reece's recent articles demonstrate a very minor but potentially very significant point, showing that the Lukan Jesus quotes a line from an Aesopic fable (see 8.3).[57]

Apart from these articles and chapter-length pieces, there is still another class of scattered references made up of those who seem to ponder the relevance of the fable to the parable in a few pages or less. In the span of about eight pages, Wolfgang Harnisch makes a number of incisive points about Jülicher's discussion of fable. He opens the door for much broader and sweeping comparisons between fable and parable, but he does not walk through it.[58] Charles Hedrick spends about four pages comparing "Aesop's Fables and Jesus's Parables,"[59] but no more. In his expansive commentary, Klyne Snodgrass also devotes about two pages to discussing Aesop's fables, though he is dismissive of their relevance to the parables on the basis of a number of common misunderstandings addressed in the next chapters.[60] In Klaus Berger's remarkable article, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament,"[61] every genre under the sun is covered, including fable. Although it occupies a single page, Berger states matter-of-factly the relationship of fable to the New Testament parables in one sentence, "If one follows this definition of fable, then the New Testament parables would fall under it, whose content consists of a sequence of events."[62] The other relevant group of passing mentions are those scholars

55 Joshua J. Stigall, "The Progymnasmata and Characterization in Luke's Parables: The Parable of the Rich Fool as a Test Case," *PRSt* 39 (2012): 349–60.

56 Michael Wojciechowski, "Aesopic Tradition in the New Testament," *JGRChJ* 5 (2008): 99–109.

57 William Alexander Ross, "'Ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ': Luke, Aesop, and Reading Scripture," *NovT* 58 (2016): 369–79; Steve Reece, "'Aesop', 'Q' and 'Luke'" 62 (2016): 357–77. The authors disagree about the direction of dependence, whether Jesus upon the fable or the fable upon Jesus. See the discussions of these articles in 8.3. As part of a discussion of potential educational connections with Aesop in Luke, Ross and Reece receive a short discussion by Mattias Becker (*Lukas und Dion von Prusa: Das lukanische Doppelwerk im Kontext paganer Bildungsdiskurse*, Studies in Cultural Contexts of the Bible 3 [Paderborn: Brill, 2020], 78–85).

58 Wolfgang Harnisch, *Die Gleichniserzählungen Jesu: Eine hermeneutische Einführung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 97–105.

59 Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 18–22.

60 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 49–50.

61 Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," *ARNW* II.25.2:1031–1432.

62 "Folgt man dieser Definition von Fabel, so würden darunter die neutestamentlichen Gleichnisse fallen, deren lnhalt ein Geschehensablauf ist" (Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," 1075).

who assert that parables and fables are genres far apart. Graham Stanton, for example, claims that "Aesop's fables were well known, but they are very different from the parables of Jesus."[63] This claim among biblical scholars is widely asserted but never demonstrated.

There are several more passing references to fables, found in any number of parable books. These will be addressed as they are relevant in the coming chapters. Given his importance, we can cite Jeremias's passing mention as an illustrative example:

> Jesus' parables are something entirely new … It is among the sayings of Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai (d.c. AD 80) that we first meet with a parable. As its imagery resembles one of Jesus' parables, we may well ask whether Jesus' model (together with other factors, such as Greek animal fables) did not have an important influence on the rabbi's adopting parables as a narrative form.[64]

Jeremias ponders whether the later rabbis were not influenced by Greek fables but holds that Jesus was immune to this supposedly Hellenistic tinge. Still other works that one would expect to cite the fable make no mention of it.[65]

As this survey of the literature has made clear, a monograph-length study comparing the parable to the fable has never been written.[66] It is a subject

63 Graham Stanton, "Message and Miracles," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 56–71, here 62. So also Snodgrass, who claims, "In the Greco-Roman world there are narrative parables as early as the fifth century B.C., although they are not numerous apart from Aesop's fables, which are pretty far from Jesus' parables" (Snodgrass, "Are the Parables Still the Bedrock of the Jesus Tradition?," 142). The text that Snodgrass claims is a "parable" from the fifth century BCE is Cyrus's *fable* in Herodotus, *Hist*. 1.141, which we will discuss later on (see Chapter 8 note 71).

64 Jeremias, *Parables*, 12.

65 Amos Wilder's landmark book on rhetorical criticism and the Gospels, which rightly points out the inattention of New Testament critics to rhetoric, and which includes a chapter on parable, remains silent on the fable (Amos Niven Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964]). So, too, will one search in vain for anything about the fable in the one thousand pages of Stanley Porter's *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). Similarly, Richard Hidary's landmark study, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). These three books mark significant achievements in the study of classical rhetoric as it applies to ancient Judaism and Christianity. They also signify that the fable, despite its widespread use in ancient rhetoric, continues to fly under the radar in even the most relevant literature.

66 An edited volume taking up some issues in the study of parables and fables, to which I am a contributor, is set to appear sometime in the future: Jonathan Pater, Martijn

that has been studiously ignored. The last parable commentary to devote more than a handful of pages to this subject was Jülicher's *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* from 1899. The fact is that very few scholars today, parables specialists included, have had any exposure to the ancient fable.

1.3.3 *Jülicher's "Parabeln"*

A preliminary sketch of Jülicher's treatment of the fable will serve as the conclusion of this history of scholarship and a segue into a preview of coming chapters. Even though his work is often regarded as the foundation of modern parable studies, Jülicher's writings survive primarily through their reception in later works. His views on the relationship between the parable and fable have become particularly neglected. As any parable specialist and most New Testament critics can readily testify, one of Jülicher's essential legacies was his classic distinction, still commonly used today, between three different classes or forms of parables: rendered into English generally as simile, parable, and example story; in the original German as "Gleichnis," "Parabel," and "Beispielerzählung." What is unknown, even to many parable specialists, is that by the second group, "Parabel," Jülicher means "fable."[67] This is not my interpretation; Jülicher says so himself at the conclusion of his study in plain German:

> Drei Klassen sind unter den synoptischen „Parabeln" zu unterscheiden, von denen zwei eine frei erfundene Erzählung, eine eine allgemein anerkannte Erfahrung aus dem Gebiet des täglichen Lebens bieten. Letztere ist das Gleichnis, die anderen sind die Parabel im engeren Sinne, *das heißt die Fabel* im Dienst religiöser Ideen und die Beispielerzählung.[68]
>
> Three classes of synoptic "parables" are distinguishable, out of which two offer a fictitious narrative, and one a generally recognizable occurrence from the sphere of daily life. The last one is the simile, the others are the parable in the narrow sense, *that means the fable* in the service of religious ideas, and the example story.

Stoutjesdijk, and Albertina Oegema, eds., *Overcoming Dichotomies: Parables, Fables, and Similes in the Graeco-Roman World*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming). My contribution is based on aspects of Chapter 12 and Chapter 13: Justin David Strong, "How to Interpret Parables in Light of the Fable: The Promythium and Epimythium," in *Overcoming Dichotomies*.

67 That one of Jülicher's *sub*-categories of "parables" was also being rendered by "parable," should have tipped us off.

68 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:117 (italics mine).

This passage appears at the conclusion of the first large part of *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, "Das Wesen der Gleichnisreden Jesu,"[69] during which Jülicher spends many pages comparing parable and fable. He does not mince words: "The majority of Jesus's παραβολαί that have a narrative form are fables, like those of Stesichorus and Aesop."[70]

Though Jülicher uses "Parabel" throughout the work, he qualifies the term in several different ways, each of which emphasize that he thinks "fable" is preferable. Not long after the quotation just provided, we find him using "parable" in quotation marks, "Die 'Parabeln' Jesu,"[71] suggesting he is using the term only for convenience, when "Fabel" would be better. When Jülicher introduces his third and controversial category, the Beispielerzählung, he does so by differentiating it from the first two: the Beispielerzählung "are neither similes, nor parables (fables) in our sense."[72] On this occasion, Jülicher uses the term "Parabel" but specifies that he means "fable" by placing the latter in parentheses. Still a third strategy Jülicher uses is to hyphenate it as "Fabel-Parabel."[73] Much earlier in the chapter, before he has begun to reflect on the relationship of parable to fable, Jülicher simply lists the three categories in passing as Gleichnis, Fabel, and Beispielerzählung: "In reality [the παραβολαί] are—that is *were*, before the eager hand came to work them over—quite different indeed, simile, fable, example story."[74]

Jülicher's choice of vocabulary is not simply one of terminology; he discusses the parable in light of the fable at great length, mentioning the fable already on page fifty and continues to refer to fable materials throughout the monograph.[75] Jülicher goes on to show how the many false divisions other scholars make do not hold up to scrutiny, and he warns that the most dangerous of all are those who divide the two genres for personal theological reasons.[76] After spelling out what he means by fable through his detailed historical investigation

69 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:24–121.

70 "Die Mehrzahl der παραβολαί Jesu, die erzählende Form tragen, sind Fabeln, wie die des Stesichoros und des Aesop" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:98).

71 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:103, also 105.

72 "sind weder Gleichnisse, noch Parabeln (Fabeln) in unsern Sinn" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:112).

73 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:105, 113.

74 "… in Wirklichkeit sind sie—resp. waren sie, ehe die Hand eifriger Ueberarbeiter an sie kam—recht verschiedenes zwar, Gleichnisse, Fabeln, Beispielerzählungen …" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:49).

75 Though, frustratingly, he does not use the ancient fables for comparison during the actual exegesis of Jesus's parables. The present study is the first to accomplish this.

76 "Gefährlicher indess ist der Widerstand aus theologischen Motiven" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100).

and his engagement with the preeminent fable theorists of his day, he concludes, "whoever accepts this explanation of the fable will no longer contrast Jesus's narrative παραβολαί with the fables,"[77] and "Christ told at least a portion of his parables, just as every fable originally would have been told."[78]

Given that Jülicher sees not just continuity but synonymity between the parable and fable, it is also worth observing what he thinks the difference is between the fables of Jesus and those of others such as Aesop: "The best way to distinguish between the fable and our parables is to point out the tone in which they are told. The parables of Jesus are always serious and noble, while the fable often lapses into the comic, even burlesque and vulgar."[79] On this point, Jülicher could not be more mistaken. The comic, burlesque, and vulgar in the parables of Jesus will be highlighted later on.

Finally, it is worth noting here that while Jülicher was the last to make an extensive comparison between parables and fables, he was not the first to do so. He did not arrive at this position on his own but drew heavily from such important figures as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Gottlob Christian Storr. If few have been terribly eager to work through Jülicher's century-old 700-page book in German, fewer still have had the wherewithal to read earlier Enlightenment works, especially in academic Latin.[80] When the following chapters have primed us with sufficient background in the fable to follow their discussions, we will dig beneath Jülicher's foundation. We will find there that Storr, too, concluded that parables are fables and that Jülicher's parable theory is based on Lessing's fable.

On these pages, I pick up where Jülicher left off with the fable one hundred and twenty years ago and take here the next step. When I am not making a comparison between the two concepts such that it would cause confusion, I will refer to parables such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Crafty Steward, the Rich Fool, and the Judge and the Widow, as "fables." I use the term

77 "Wer diese Ausführungen über die Fabel anerkennt, wird sich der Gleichsetzung der erzählenden παραβολαί Jesu mit den Fabeln nicht mehr widersetzen" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100).

78 "Christus hat mindestens einen Teil einer Parabeln so erzählt, wie ursprünglich jede Fabel erzählt worden" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:104).

79 "Am ehesten würde behufs der Unterscheidung der Fabel von unsern Parabeln auf den Ton, in dem sie gehalten sind, gewiesen werden können, Jesu Parabeln immer ernst und vornehm, während die Fabel oft ins Komische, sogar ins Burleske und Gemeine verfallen ist" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100–101).

80 Storr is absent even from compendious parable reference works such as *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu* (Ruben Zimmermann and Detlev Dormeyer, eds., *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu* [Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2007]). Storr is discussed in 8.2.3 and Lessing especially in 12.3.

"fable" not simply for the sake of philology, or as a rhetorical maneuver, but as a tool to think with—to begin to ruminate on how we conceive of the two words, "parable" and "fable," to make us conscious of what we mean by them, what associations we have with them, and what sort of person would utter them. Not least of all, by using the term "fable" throughout, we will begin to grow accustomed to saying "the fables of Jesus."

1.4 The Structure of the Study

Book I, A New Foundation for the Study of Parables, fills in the backstory. I introduce the ancient fable context of the "parable" and provide here the requisite foundation for this and future studies on "parables" in this context. This groundwork laid, I arrive at a synthesis of "parable" and "fable" in the concluding chapter of Book I. The precious few already well-versed in the ancient fable may wish to begin directly from Chapter 6 or Chapter 7. Those less familiar with the ancient fable should complete Chapter 2 before making any dips into Book II. In Book II, The Fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, I build from the foundation of Book I, situating the Lukan fables within the ancient fable context. Book II thus demonstrates the synthesis of Book I, while drawing out the many and far-reaching implications for the gospel fables.

Book I continues with Chapters 2–7. In Chapter 2, we embark on an exploration of the world of the ancient fable, both the primary and the secondary literature. I begin by dismantling a few key misunderstandings about ancient fables that have been stumbling blocks in parables scholarship until now. Next, I provide surveys of some important secondary literature on fables and identify several of the challenges involved in making use of this scholarship. This will serve the dual goal of bringing biblical scholars up to speed on how to use this scholarship and signaling some reasons why few have come down this path before.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce the most relevant fable literature from the Archaic period through the early centuries CE, providing a detailed picture of the fable as a literary phenomenon. Chapter 3 covers the primary literature from as far back as our Near Eastern and Greek written sources allow through the Hellenistic period. Chapter 4 covers the most important fable collections contemporary with Jesus and the gospels. I introduce authors and materials essentially unknown to biblical scholarship, including Phaedrus, Babrius, and the Augustana Collection. Together, these chapters lay the groundwork for the comparison of first-century Jews and early Christians with the ancient fable, fable collections, and fable tellers.

Chapter 5 considers the special role of fables in Graeco-Roman education. This educational setting offers essential context for how a literate person in antiquity, especial the author of Luke's Gospel, would be trained to read, interpret, redact, and compose fables. These materials provide further attestation to the ubiquity of the fable while highlighting the conspicuous absence of the "parable." The chapter concludes with a discussion of how to define the fable, making use of the ancient definition from the educational setting as our point of departure.

In Chapter 6, we turn to the intersection of the ancient fable with Judaism in the rabbinic period. This chapter is intended especially for fable scholars, who do not encounter semitic texts in the standard works of the field. Here I identify the fable tradition in the Hebrew and Aramaic sources, including how the *mashal* ("fable") was conceived in the rabbinic period, a corpus of *mishlay shualim* "fox parables," and Jewish Aesop imitators. I highlight the semitic origins of the fable and suggest dispensing with the term "parable" when referring to the *meshalim* of the rabbis.

With all of these new materials and contexts in view, I arrive at a synthesis of "parable" and "fable" in Chapter 7. I describe the fundamental conundrums that current parable scholarship and parable theory have left unsolved and identify the ancient fable as the answer. I conclude that the Greek word παραβολή (*parabolē*) is used in the Synoptic Gospels as an umbrella term that encompasses numerous genres. Under this umbrella, the most significant genre is the ancient fable. Thus, the most characteristic genre of Jesus is the fable.

Book II, The Fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, consists of Chapters 8–16. In Chapter 8, now equipped with all the requisite background, we excavate beneath Jülicher to enter the debates on "parable" and "fable" before scholars forgot the fable. We will find that important early critical biblical scholars, too, recognized Jesus's "parables" to be fables. From there we perform a quick sweep through the Middle Ages, across linguistic environments that possess no two distinct terms for "parables" and "fables," and witness the crosspollination of terms used for "parable" and "fable." We then arrive at territory familiar to biblical scholars in the Gospel of Thomas, which possesses a fable tradition all its own and some easily identifiable Aesopic fables within it. From there we reach our destination, the Gospel of Luke. Here I identify a number of uncanny overlaps between the special Lukan passages and Aesopic materials, including a case of Jesus reciting an iamb from a fable.

In Chapter 9, I identify the aforementioned Lukan passages with Aesopic connections as part of a broader interest in characterizing Jesus as a fable teller. I address the heavy authorial presence that accompanies the genre, and the long pre-gospel heritage of the fable teller. I introduce the antipodal fable

telling personas current in the first century: the slave and the sophist. I then apply this fable teller background to the Lukan narrative to establish where and how it manifests. I draw specific attention to the parallels between the prophetic function of Wicked Tenants and the fables at the conclusion of *The Life of Aesop*.

In Chapter 10, I describe the form, structure, genre markers, and plots of ancient fables in order to identify the same in the Lukan fables. This comparison will be accomplished especially with the aid of Morten Nøjgaard's important study of the fable form, which will supply us with some of the vocabulary of fable theory useful for parable scholarship. I then compare the techniques Luke would have learned for composing, expanding, and compressing fables with the gospel fable materials.

Chapter 11 offers readings of several Lukan fables from the fable genre perspective. I bring in the hundreds of contemporary examples to illuminate how we should understand the characters and plots featured in Luke. I focus on fables that highlight controversial matters among parable scholars to show how the fable resolves these problems. Fables about crafty characters are brought to bear on the dubious ethics recommended in the Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1–13). Comic and vulgar fables and those featuring women and widows contextualize the characters and comedy of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8). The Rich Fool (Luke 12:15–21) is set among a company of other fables about gods censuring humans to show that Luke pays no mind to matters of realism and possibility. Showing the synonymity of the texts compared in this chapter demonstrates once more that they are all fables.

Chapter 12 and Chapter 13 introduce how ancient fables communicated their lessons through the use of framing devices called the *promythium* and *epimythium*. I acquaint the reader with these literary devices—their origin, style, contents, and function—so that they can be recognized easily when encountered in the gospels. I demonstrate that the method used to interpret parables for the last century is based on outdated parable theory. Since these framing devices are a hallmark of the fable tradition, going back at least to the Greek Archaic period, these chapters reinforce the view that the operative genre is the fable. In Chapter 13, I apply this background to issues of parable interpretation through several case studies in the Lukan fables. I demonstrate thereby how the Lukan fables should be interpreted.

Chapter 14 and Chapter 15 evaluate how so many unique fables found their way into the Lukan Gospel. These chapters lend support to a surprisingly mainstream source-critical position: that Luke possessed a "parable" collection. By making the minor lexical shift to describe this source as a fable collection, I will demonstrate that Luke had a written collection of Jesus's fables at hand. I

compare the putative source to the other fable collections known around the end of the first century CE. In Chapter 14, I compare the literary features of the Lukan Fable Collection to other first-century collections. In Chapter 15, I do the philological legwork to evaluate this source-critical possibility. I then propose a Sitz im Leben for the Lukan Fable Collection in early Christian catechesis.

Chapter 16 closes the study by pointing beyond the fables in the Gospel according to Luke. Having made available this treasury of new primary and secondary fable literature, I identify the open doors for future research on the other Gospels, Paul, the historical Jesus, early Judaism, the early Church, and indeed, fable scholarship as well. I conclude this study on the fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke with a look back on the ways it has altered our perspective on the Lukan Gospel, Jesus, and his fables.

CHAPTER 2

Fable First Principles

2.1 Introduction

The overarching goal of the next few chapters is to orient the reader to the world of the ancient fable. Together, they will allow us to see that the development and use of the fable around the turn of the Era offers a straightforward and compelling milieu for the fables of Jesus in the Gospels. In the present chapter, I will begin by laying out three "myths about the fable" (2.2): first, the fable is a genre for children; second, fables are rooted in Greek and Roman thought in contrast to a Jewish genre called the parable; and third, the fable is a genre of impossible stories about talking animals. After we rectify these views, in section 2.3 we will discuss common "myths about the parable." Having deconstructed these various myths, we will be able to build an understanding of the relation between the ancient fable and our modern notion of "parable" on a level foundation. The next section (2.4) introduces some major fable scholars, publications of fable scholarship, and the systems of working with ancient fables. These will be introduced topically through several fundamental obstacles that stand in the way of doing scholarship on the ancient fable. By the end of this section, the reader will be oriented to the scholarly tools available for their own investigations and have a partial answer as to why so few biblical scholars have tread this path before.

2.2 Myths about the Fable

2.2.1 *Children's Literature*

To the modern reader, Aesop is a household name, and with this comes a presumed and misleading familiarity. To the average person and to the average biblical scholar, "the roles Aesop has played have been as a children's storyteller and as a clothes-horse for Victorian morals."[1] This perspective and the other myths discussed here have proven to be a substantial hindrance to making an impartial comparison between the fables of Jesus and fables generally. With references to fables in Greek literature extending back to Hesiod (fl. 700 BCE) and Aesop at least to the fifth century BCE, the exclusive association of fables

1 Robert Temple and Olivia Temple, *Aesop: The Complete Fables* (London: Penguin, 1998), ix.

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with children's literature is relatively recent. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the archdeacon Edmund Arwaker published a book of fables and, anticipating the objections of his audience, writes at the opening of his collection: "I am sensible, that, with some, the very name of Fables, is enough to bring any Work, to which it is prefix'd, into Contempt, as a thing of no Use or Value; or at best, but a Childish Entertainment."[2] Against the view that they are children's stories, in his preface, Arwaker invites the reader to notice how the same type of speech was used in the Old Testament. He cites the fable that Nathan the prophet told to David (2 Sam 12), and the persuasiveness of the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam 14).[3]

The fable has indeed been used since antiquity to educate the young. We see this already in Plato (*Resp*. 2.376e–377a) and in the famous educators of the early centuries CE. This use of the fable for education will be discussed briefly later in 3.3.2 and is the subject of Chapter 5. Here it is important simply to note that the use of fables in the education of children led to a prejudice against the fable as *merely* children's literature. As a result of this prejudice, some readers may turn up their noses at the fable, and this modern phenomenon already happened in antiquity. Throughout this work, I will lean so far as possible on ancient points of view and cite ancient analogs to modern perspectives. The modern inclination to be dismissive of the fable is found already in an episode in Philostratus. Here Apollonius of Tyana disabuses his students of their unjustified hostility toward the fable:

> [Apollonius:] "Is there something called myth/fable-talk" (μυθολογία)? Yes, indeed," said Menippus, "that which the poets praise." [Apollonius:] "And what do you think regarding Aesop?" He replied, "A teller of myth (μυθολόγον) and teller of every sort of fable" (λογοποιὸν πάντα). [Apollonius:] "Which kind of myth is wise" (σοφοί)? Menippus replied, "Those of the poets, since they are recited as if they were fact." [Apollonius:] "And what then of Aesop's?" Menippus replied, "Frogs, donkeys, and nonsense for old women and children to chew on is all they are." "Yet to me," Apollonius replied, "Those of Aesop seem more useful for wisdom" (σοφίαν). (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll*. 5.14.1–2 [trans. mine])[4]

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2 Edmund Arwaker, *Truth in Fiction: Or, Morality in Masquerade. A Collection of Two Hundred Twenty Five Select Fables of Aesop, and Other Authors. Done into English Verse* (London: Black-Swan, 1708), ii.

3 Arwaker, *Truth in Fiction*, iv–v.

4 The correct translation of terms such as μῦθος, λόγος, and their compounds like μυθολόγον will be addressed in 5.7.2. What Menippus means by referring to the fable as a genre for "old women" just might have something to say about the γραώδεις μύθους in 1 Tim 4:7. See further, Chapter 9.

Apollonius goes on to describe the superior merits of Aesop vis-à-vis the more highly esteemed poets. He argues that Aesop is more devoted to the truth than they, how Aesop's fables are superior for inculcating morals, and how fables are more transparent in not attempting to give a false sense of reality (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.14.2–3).[5] He describes Aesop "like one who from cheap food sets a beautiful feast, from matters of little account he teaches great things" (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.14.2 [trans. mine]). Apollonius reminisces on learning from Aesop as a child and concludes the discussion by observing that the very critiques with which people railed against Aesop fit the esteemed poets rather than him: "Those myths (μῦθος) that we were deprecating are not the fables of Aesop, rather those more dramatic and those the poets repeat" (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.16.1 [trans. mine]).[6]

Let us foreground this fact: from antiquity until recent centuries, when the association of fables solely with literature for children solidified, fables were a ubiquitous genre read by and addressed to all ages. As we will discuss in greater detail below, our earliest examples of fables appear in high literature, rhetorical treatises, and many of our earliest collections beginning around the turn of the Era are likewise intended for adult readers.[7] While some ancients clearly viewed fables with a certain scorn, I urge modern readers to learn from the lesson of Menippus.

2.2.2 *Jews Tell Parables, Greeks Tell Fables*

In many ways the second myth about the fable is tied up in the intractable debates about Judaism and its relationship to Hellenism, especially the "Jewishness" of Jesus. Well-intentioned as it may be to rescue a dominical,

5 Apollonius's recognition here that an Aesopic fable is known to be an untrue story and yet is capable of depicting truth very well (ὁ δ᾽ ἐπαγγέλλων λόγον, ὅν ὡς ἐστι ψευδὴς πᾶς οἶδεν, αὐτὸ τὸ μὴ περὶ ἀληθινῶν ἐρεῖν ἀληθεύει [Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.14.3]) is a defining feature of the fable that will be important later on.

6 The didactic tone of the episode is part of a sub-plot of educating Menippus. As Graeme Miles and Kristoffel Demoen demonstrate, Philostratus's discussions of Aesop here and in *Imag*. 1.3 share an interest in the educational function of fables ("In Praise of the Fable: The Philostratean Aesop," *Hermes* 137 [2009]: 28–44). Though Aesop the character is not mentioned, also note the discussion between Damis and Apollonius of the fable of the Lion in the Cave (Perry 142) at *Vit. Apoll.* 7.30.2. This is neither the first nor the last time an esteemed figure will discuss fables with disciples while being held in prison. In this case, Apollonius is eventually freed.

7 In his *Or.* 7.207a–d, emperor Julian appears to distinguish "fable" (αἶνος), which is for adults, from other kinds of "myth" (μῦθος), which are for children (or perhaps better, childish adults). Later in the same passage, Julian uses μῦθος as an umbrella term to refer to what we call fable, as well as the concept of myth in the broad sense.

pure Jewish stream of thought, such a procedure is unwarranted here.[8] I will simply outline the contours of this myth here. As the standard opinion goes, Jesus is a mile marker of Judaism on a trajectory from the Old Testament to the rabbis of the Talmud, and he spun together *meshalim* similar to those we see in the Hebrew Bible and in the later rabbis. There are two fundamental problems with this thesis. The first problem is that we can count on one hand the "parables" in the entire Hebrew Bible. If we wish to maintain the distinction, with the same hand one can also add a few Hebrew Bible fables (3.2.1). As we learned in the introduction, there is scarcely any tradition of narrative *meshalim* in the Hebrew Bible or early Judaism that Jesus could have used as his point of departure.[9] This is a fact that parable specialists are fond of stating. A more complex explanation is demanded if one wishes to maintain this appeal to Hebrew Scripture, for otherwise Jesus emerges from nowhere with a substantial repertoire of parables centuries ahead of the earliest rabbinic document containing them.

The second problem is the belief that the rabbis tell parables and not fables. Chapter 6 will discuss this issue in detail. Here we may already note that in rabbinic Hebrew (and Aramaic), there are not two words for "parable" and "fable," rather they are the same: משל *mashal* (מתלא *mathla*). That there is just one term in the rabbinic corpus used for both of them is a strong indication that our two concepts were not divided in ancient Judaism. Though scarcely discussed even by fable specialists, the paradigmatic Greek fables of Aesop have also been transmitted through Hebrew and Syriac.[10] No distinction is made between these fables and the others. They are called ܡܬܠܐ ܕܐܝܣܦܘܣ

8 I follow what has become the standard view that "to Hellenize or not to Hellenize" was not an option on the table (so Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox], 37). Judaism and Christianity in the first century were unavoidably Hellenistic religions in fundamental ways. On the table are questions of how and how far, but it is also essential to recognize that Hellenization was often not elective. Hellenistic thought, practice, and so on were often adopted simply by participating in the Mediterranean world and could be so thoroughly adopted in Jewish culture that they could be understood as Jewish regardless of their possible Hellenistic origins. For an example of ancient Jews using Hellenistic frameworks to assert the ethnic superiority of the Jews, see Justin David Strong, "Aristotle and Hippocrates in the Book of Jubilees," *JSJ* 48 (2017): 309–30.

9 We will return to this point in Chapter 6 and the synthesis in 7.2.

10 The author, a certain "Syntipas" will be discussed briefly below. The only edition and complete translation of the Syriac is Bruno Lefèvre, *Une version syriaque des Fables d'Ésope:* conservée *dans huit manuscrits* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1939). Laura Gibbs provides an English translation; however, she appears to be working from the Greek Syntipas rather than a Syriac version and her enumerations do not match Lefèvre (*Aesop's Fables* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008]).

(*mathla d-yosypos*). It is noteworthy as well that the rabbis who are famous for telling *meshalim* in rabbinic literature are famous not for "parables" as we would recognize them, but for what we think of as fables. The famous historical occasions on which the Talmud records a *mashal* being delivered are especially fables, often known elsewhere in Greek and Latin sources. These same rabbis, famous for their *meshalim*, are also, in character, suspicious in their resemblance to the trickster wit Aesop who we will encounter below. Rabbis who know *meshalim* are often described knowing many *mishlay shualim*, "fox parables/fables" as well.

Another problem with this myth is the supposed Greek association with fables. Babrius, an author of Greek fables whom we will meet in 3.5.2 below, begins his second book of fables by informing the reader about an ethnic origin of the genre: "Fable, son of King Alexander, is the invention of the Syrians of old, who lived in the days of Ninus and Belus…."[11] In other words, this author, composing in Greek, informs us that the fable is a Semitic genre. Thus, the matter is not an either-or question—either "Greek" or "Semitic." In the words of Ben Edwin Perry, arguably the most preeminent classical fable scholar of the twentieth century, the fable is a "Graeco-Semitic"[12] genre.

2.2.3 *"Realistic" People and "Impossible" Talking Beasts*

The third myth concerning the fable, chargeable once more to our presumption of familiarity with Aesop and fables, is the belief that a fable is an impossible story involving talking animals. This oft-repeated generalization has made its way into the guild of biblical scholars, such as the highly-influential *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, which simply claims that the distinction between a "parable" and a "fable" is that the parable is "realistic" while the fable contains "narrative content breaks out of the real world of experience."[13] Since I hold Ruben Zimmmerman's work in high regard and because it represents the view expressed in the influential *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesus*, this view is important to address here *in nuce*:

> Apart from the fact that in early antiquity fables are mostly written in rhyming poetry and parables composed in prose, the crucial difference is that the

11 Belus, the father of Ninus, is the mythical first king of the ancient Assyrians.

12 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxi.

13 "Erzählhandlung die reale Erfahrungswelt sprengt" (Ruben Zimmermann, "Eine Leseanleitung zum Kompendium," in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 3–46, here 25).

> parable is "realistic" whereas fables present anthropomorphized animals, plants, or objects.[14]

There is much to correct in this brief statement about fables, which contains many assumptions shared with other leading authorities on Jesus's "parables."[15] While there are several collections in verse, the largest collection of fables we have is in prose and, normally, so are those fables found within prose narratives. Applying post-Enlightenment notions of realism to ancient fiction is anachronistic.[16] More to the point, fables regularly contain "realistic" stories of ordinary people rather than animals, while plenty of "parables" break out of real-world experience as well.[17]

Here and there, this myth of the fable even makes an appearance in certain fable scholarship. There is, for example, some confusing double-speak about what characters the fable contains in Lloyd W. Daly's introduction to the fables:

> The fables are, as everyone knows, beast stories in which the beasts not only talk but also behave in other ways very much like humans … but there are other kinds, and the distinction is of no significance. Some fables, such as that of *the Thieving Boy and His Mother* (Perry 200), have only human characters. Far from being highly moral stories, the fables are not always even conducive for moralizing.

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14 Ruben Zimmermann, "Fable. III New Testament," *EBR* 8:650. Zimmermann doubles down on this elsewhere: "According to Vouga, fables are, in addition to animal and plant fables, also human stories with several fictional roles. However, he provides support for this only with references to the parables of Jesus, so his argument is weakened by circular reasoning" (*Puzzling the Parables of Jesus*, 129). While one can certainly fault Vouga for providing no examples of human fables, Zimmermann's comment gives the impression that he is unfamiliar with ancient fables.

15 Between the penning of this chapter in my dissertation manuscript and this book, Zimmermann has taken a sharp turn to remedy this situation, and has reevaluated his assessment in forthcoming articles. There he will note that many of these distinctions he previously argued for are problematic, e.g.: Ruben Zimmermann, "The Fables according to Babrius and New Testament Parables" in *Overcoming Dichotomies*.

16 Modern notions of "realistic" and "impossible" map poorly onto ancient texts, see especially Stefan Feddern, *Der antike Fiktionalitätsdiskurs* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). On the modern invention of this paradigm, see Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). Most parable scholars reject this criterion of realism, e.g., Mary Ann Tolbert, "Realism as a literary phenomenon came to full bloom during the nineteenth century in the Western world and still dominates the scene. Surely it is, then anachronistic to speak of the presence of realism, in the modern sense, in the parables" (*Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 89). See the discussions of other aspects of this issue in 5.8 and 11.5.

17 On unrealistic "parables", see 11.5.

> The fable of *The Boys and the Butcher* (Perry 66) presents two juvenile delinquents of antiquity stealing from a butcher.[18]

Here Daly testifies to the veracity of the stereotype about fables, that they are, "as everyone knows, beast stories" in which animals speak; but then, in nearly the same breath, Daly notes fables involving only people. At the beginning of the next paragraph when he moves on from the subject, Daly illustrates the point that fables are not always "highly moral stories" appropriate for children, by citing another human fable as evidence. The few fable scholars and classicists working on the fable find themselves batting away this cliché about talking animals in fables time and again. The following catena of quotations is illustrative:

> Confusion of animal story with Aesopic fable, and the resulting tendency to think of the latter in terms of the former, have prevailed in the minds of students of the fable ever since the time of Grimm and are responsible for many misconceptions.[19]

> This may be explained by a combination of, on the one hand, the common misconceptions that all fables are about animals, plants, or inanimate objects and have a moral purpose, and, on the other hand, the equally universal aversion to everything which smacks of didacticism—the use of fables in education has a long history. However, any fable collection will show the untenability of a reduction of the fable characters to animals, plants, and objects.[20]

> A few scholars have tried to restrict fables to stories about animals, which has met with general scepticism: too many non-animal stories which otherwise look and behave like fables survive, even within paradigmatic corpora like that of Aesop.[21]

> Jacob Grimm was wrong if he only allowed animals as *dramatis personae* in the fable and referred to inanimate objects as the domain of the fairy tale. To understand "fable" as "animal fable" demands an indefensible narrowness. The domain of comparison, the pictured element of fable, covers the entire natural world, animate and inanimate, the world of people and the world of the gods.[22]

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18 Lloyd W. Daly, *Aesop without Morals: The Famous Fables and a Life of Aesop* (New York: Yoseloff, 1961), 16–17.

19 Ben Edwin Perry, "Fable," *Studium Generale* 12 (1959): 17–37, here 20.

20 Gert-Jan van Dijk, "Ἐκ τῶν μύθων ἄρξασθαι. Greek Fable Theory after Aristotle: Characters and Characteristics," in *Greek Literary Theory after Aristotle: A Collection of Papers in Honour of D.M. Schenkeveld*, ed. J. G. J. Abbenes, S. R. Slings, and I. Sluiter (Amsterdam: V. U. University Press, 1995), 235–58, here 236.

21 Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 59–60.

22 "Jacob Grimm hat unrecht, wenn er nur Tiere als Akteure in der Fabel dulden will und die toten Gegenstände in das Märchen verweist. Die Fabel als Tierfabel zu verstehen,

> Our idea of the fable comes, in fact, from the collections of La Fontaine and his continuers starting from the 17th century, who mainly collected fables with animals taking part … Our idea of the fable as an animalistic genre comes from certain collections of the modern era.[23]

How this state of affairs came to be in the Medieval and Modern periods will come up once more in our discussion of Phaedrus (3.5.3), in the history of scholarship before we forgot our fables (Chapter 8), and there will be space below to dive deeper into the matter of what characteristics define the fable (5.7). What we can say here for certain is that at the turn of the Era, scores of fables survive that have nothing to do with animals, but simply describe the quotidian lives of ordinary people. These human fables will be compared with Jesus's at length in Book II.

There is no better way to disprove this myth than with examples. Since the fable corpus is unfamiliar to layperson and scholar alike, throughout this book I will endeavor to allow the primary sources to speak for themselves by quoting many examples throughout. To do so is take a page from a medieval Aesop collection, which emphasizes that "Examples are best precepts."[24] Here are the five opening fables of Babrius, who wrote the most important collection of Greek fables around the end of the first century CE:[25]

> *Fab*. 1: A man came on a mountain to hunt, skilled in shooting with the bow. All the animals turned to flight and were full of fear as they fled. Only the lion had the courage to challenge the man to fight with him. "Wait," said the man to him, "don't be so fast, nor count on victory; first get acquainted with my messenger; after that you'll know what's best for you to do." Then standing a short distance away he let fly an arrow, and the arrow buried itself in the lion's soft belly. Fear overcame the lion and he dashed away in flight to the lonely glens. Not far away stood a fox, who told him to pick up his courage and make a stand. But the lion replied: "You're not going to fool me, nor catch me in a trap; when he sends me

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bedeutet eine unstatthafte Verengung; denn die Vergleichssphäre, der Bildteil der Fabel, umfaßt die ganze belebte und unbelebte Natur, die Menschen- und Götterwelt" (Dithmar, *Die Fabel*, 110).

23 Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, rev. by Francisco Rodríguez Adrados and Gert-Jan van Dijk, 3 vols., Mnemosyne 201, 207, 236 (Leiden: Brill, 1999–2003), 1:1 (the first sentence of the book), 17.

24 The full quotation begins the title page and accompanies an illustration: "Examples are best Precepts: And a Tale Adorn'd with Sculpture better may prevaile To make Men lesser Beasts than all the store of tedious volumes vext the World before" (John Ogilby, *The Fables of Aesop* [London: Thomas Roycroft, 1651]).

25 All translations of Babrius (and Phaedrus) are taken from Babrius and Phaedrus, *Fables*, trans. Ben Edwin Perry, LCL 436 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965). For more on Babrius, see 3.5.2.

such a stinging messenger as this, I know without waiting any longer how formidable he is in his own person."

Fab. 2: A farmer while digging trenches in his vineyard lost his mattock and thereafter began a search to find out whether some one of the rustics present with him had stolen it. Each one denied having taken it. Not knowing what to do next, he brought all his servants into the city for the purpose of putting them under oath before the gods; for people suppose that those among the gods who are simpletons live in the country, and that those who dwell within the city-walls are unerring and observe everything that goes on. When they had entered the gates of the city and were bathing their feet at a fountain, after laying aside their wallets, a public crier began to call out that a thousand drachmas would be paid for information revealing the whereabouts of property that had been stolen from the god's temple. When the farmer heard this, he said: "How useless for me to have come! How could this god know about other thieves, when he doesn't know who those were who stole his own property? Instead, he is offering money in the hope of finding some man who knows about them."

Fab. 3: Once a goatherd had need to call in the she-goats, in order to drive them into the fold, and as he called some of them came, but others lingered. Down in the ravine one of the disobedient goats was still cropping the fragrant leaves of goatswort and mastich when the goatherd hit her horn with a stone thrown from a distance and broke it off. Then he entreated her: "Don't, I beg you, goat and fellow-slave, in the name of Pan who watches o'er these glens, don't, friend goat, betray me to the master. I didn't mean to throw that stone so straight," "And how," said she, "am I to hide a deed that is self-evident? My horn shouts out the truth, even though I hold my tongue."

Fab. 4: A fisherman drew in the net which he had cast a short time before and, as luck would have it, it was full of all kinds of delectable fish. But the little ones fled to the bottom of the net and slipped out through its many meshes, whereas the big ones were caught and lay stretched out in the boat.
It's one way to be insured and out of trouble, to be small; but you will seldom see a man who enjoys a great reputation and has the luck to evade all risks.

Fab. 5: A fight took place between two cocks of the Tanagraean breed, whose spirit, they say, is like that of men. The one that was worsted, being covered with wounds, ducked into a corner of the house overcome by shame; the other without delay leaped upon the housetop and flapping his wings crowed loudly. But an eagle lifted him off the roof and flew away with him. Then the other cock proceeded to mount the hens with impunity, having got a better reward for his defeat than his rival for the victory.
[*You too, man, never be boastful when fortune elevates you above another. Many have been saved by the very fact of not succeeding.*][26]

26 The translation of *Fab*. 5 is adapted from Perry.

We may note the characters in these fables. Talking animals appear only in the first and third fable, while the rest are "realistic." Only human actors appear in the second fable, the fourth fable features a human character and fish doing nothing extraordinary, and the fifth features animals behaving as animals do.

In his day, Jülicher complained against other parable scholars who, "Love to denigrate the fable as something beneath the parable, exaggerating the former as if it it only depicts the grossest impossibilities—speaking, thinking, animals endowed with free will, as opposed to the parable, which they claim never exceeds the limits of possibility and truth. But fable and 'animal fable' are not the same thing."[27] He attributes the efforts to distinguish "parables" from fables on this basis of "realism" to dangerous theological motivations.[28] The first five fables in Babrius are intended to be an illustrative sample of what is found throughout the corpus. We can, however, also find long strings of fables describing perfectly "realistic" scenes with no talking animals to be found. Here are eight fables in the order they appear in the most ancient surviving recension of fables in prose, the Augustana Collection:[29]

> 53 The children of a farmer were fighting. And after many attempts, not being able to persuade them with words to change their behavior, the farmer thought it necessary to achieve this through action, and he commanded them to bring a bundle of rods. So, making it they brought it to him. First, he exhorted them to break the rods bound together. But, even with all their might, they were unable. Second, untying the bundle, he gave to (each of) them one rod. When they easily broke them, he said, "Truly then also you, o children, if you are of one mind, you will be unconquerable, but if you fight, you will be easily overcome.
> *The fable shows that harmony is a good guarantee of strength as strife is of vulnerability.* (trans. mine)

> 54 On hearing the snails sizzling in the pan, a farmer's young son cruelly remarked, "How can you sing, miserable creatures, when your own houses are burning!"
> *The story shows that anything that is done at an inappropriate time is subject to criticism.*

27 "Da liebt man es die Fabel tief unter die Parabel herabzusetzen, sofern jene die gröbsten Unmöglichkeiten zur Schau trage, redende, denkende, mit freiem Willen begabte Tiere, wogegen die Parabel nie die Grenzen des Möglichen, der Wahrheit überschrete. Nun ist aber Fabel und Tierfabel nicht ens" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100).

28 "Gefährlicher indess ist der Widerstand aus theologischen Motiven," "More dangerous, however, is the resistance from theological motives" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100).

29 For more about the Augustana Collection, see 3.5.1. Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Augustana Collection are those of Daly, *Aesop without Morals*. When I revise Daly's translation, I will indicate my doing so.

Fables 55–58 are presented in full in 11.4. *Fable* 55 is about a widow and her overworked maidservants. *Fable* 56 is about a witch brewing potions. *Fable* 57 is about an elderly woman who was tricked by a doctor and taken to court. *Fable* 58 is about a poor woman and her fowl.

> 59 A marten found its way into a bronze foundry and began to lick at a file that lay there. Her tongue was rubbed raw, and the blood began to flow freely. She was so delighted to think that she was getting something out of the iron that she lost her tongue altogether.
> *The story is told of those who harm themselves through their own greed.*

> 60 An old man once cut some wood and was carrying it a great distance down the road, and as he grew weary, laid down his burden and called upon Death to come. Death appeared and inquired why he had summon him, to which the fearful old man replied, "In order to get you to take up my burden!"
> *The story shows that every man is fond of life even though he may be in trouble.* (trans. adapted from Daly)

> 61 A farmer found gold as he was digging in the earth, and after that he began putting a wreath on the statue of Mother Earth every day to show his gratitude for her kindness. When Fortune saw this, she said, "You simpleton, why do you ascribe to Mother Earth the gifts I gave you because I wanted you to be rich? If your circumstances change and your wealth is spent upon evil purposes, then you won't blame Mother Earth but Fortune!"
> *The fable teaches us that we must recognize our benefactor and show our gratitude to him.* (trans. adapted from Daly)

From these fables, the claim that "the crucial difference is that the parable is 'realistic' whereas fables present anthropomorphized animals, plants, or objects," clearly does not hold up.[30] There is no indication in any ancient fable collection that their contents are divided by "realistic" and "unrealistic" stories.

To take stock of just a couple parallels here already, Babrius's fourth fable about the fisherman who casts his net and captures all sorts of fish has been a rare exception in that it has been noticed by a few parable scholars.[31] Scott draws comparisons between this fable and the Dragnet found in Matthew (Matt 13:47–50), and especially the version in Thomas (Gos. Thom. 8) that may be dependent on it.[32] David Flusser recognizes this parallel between Matthew's Dragnet and Babrius, *Fab*. 4, but simply insists that "the similarity between this

30 Zimmermann, "Fable," 8:650. As for how helpful it is to describe parables as "realistic," see 11.5.

31 This is the one fable that Jülicher discusses in the actual exegesis (rather than theory) of Jesus's fables (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2:563).

32 *Hear Then the Parable*, 314–16.

fable and the parables of Jesus is surely only a coincidence."[33] No justification is offered for why it would be a coincidence.[34] Snodgrass, too, observes the parallel and then states: "The relevance for Jesus' parable [Matthew's version] is minimal."[35] Again, he offers no justification for this appraisal. Fables 55–58 from the Augustana Collection, which feature widows and women going to court have a number of affinities with the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8), and yet no scholar has ever cited it as a helpful *comparandum* for the Lukan fable. From these two examples, it is clear that early fables collections, which contain hundreds of fables, have been dismissed with a wave of the hand or gone untouched by biblical scholars. There are many unbeaten paths awaiting exploration.

We have seen now that the ancient collections of Babrius and the Augustana contain many fables that center on the "realistic" actions of human beings. We may also appeal to how the ancients describe using talking animals as a litmus test of the fable. Aelius Theon,[36] a first-century educator and paradigmatic author of *progymnasmata*,[37] whom we will encounter often in this investigation, says the following about the fable:

> Fables are called Aesopic and Libyan or Sybaritic and Phrygian …, but if there is not any qualification to indicate the type, we commonly call it "Aesopic." Those who say that some are composed about talking animals,[38] while others human beings, that some are impossible, while others are possible, seem to me to make a silly distinction. (Theon, *Prog.* 4 [trans. mine])[39]

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33 "Die Ähnlichkeit zwischen dieser Fabel und dem Gleichnis Jesu ist sicher nur zufällig" (Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 62).

34 Flusser's unstated reason is presumably that it would contradict his previous statement that "in the received parables of Jesus there are no examples that are, in principle, Aesopic fables," "in den uns erhaltenen Gleichnissen Jesu kommt zwar kein solches vor, welches im Grund eine äesopsche Fabel ist" (*Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 52).

35 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 483.

36 For the recent challenge to dating Theon to the first century CE, see the discussion in Chapter 5.

37 *Progymnasmata* are preliminary rhetorical exercises, typically used in the later part of the secondary and tertiary periods of education. See the discussion of the *progymnasmata* and Theon in Chapter 5.

38 The Greek is ἀλόγοις ζῴοις, "speechless animals," but Theon means of course that the animals are normally speechless but are given voice in the fable. This is clear from others who describe the animals as "mute" or "speechless" with reference to their ability to speak in the fable. See the quotations below of Aphthonius, the scholion in Aristophanes's *Birds*, and P.Mich. 6.

39 Unless otherwise stated, I am using the enumeration and translation of George A. Kennedy for the progymnasmatists (*Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, WGRW 10 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003]).

Already in the first century, Theon addresses many of the modern misunderstandings quoted above. From Theon's assessment, it is clear that attempting to make distinctions among fables goes back to the first century, and so too can we speak of a tradition of specialists like Theon pointing out that the distinctions do not hold water. We will discuss the fables of the progymnasmata and their relevance for this myth at length in 5.6.

Finally, to decisively eliminate the view that fables are devoted to talking beasts, we can survey the *Vita* of the man himself: Aesop. Outside of the Gospels, the closest analog to a narrative about a famous "parable" teller is the *Life of Aesop* (see further 4.4). Here, too, we may simply take stock of what sorts of characters appear in the fables told by the protagonist therein. Depending on how one tallies them,[40] there are about a dozen fables in the narrative. Of these merely two or three are about talking animals. Here are two examples of fables from the *Vita*:

> A farmer, who had grown old in the country and had never seen the city, begged his children to let him go and see the city before he died. They hitched the donkeys to the wagon themselves and told him: "Just drive them, and they'll take you to the city." On the way a storm came up, it got dark, the donkeys lost their way and came to a place surrounded by cliffs. Seeing the danger he was in, he said, "Oh, Zeus, what wrong have I done that I should die in this way, without even horses, but only these miserable donkeys, to blame it on? "And so it is," says Aesop to the Delphians, "that I am annoyed to die not at the hands of reputable men but of miserable slaves." (*Vit. Aes.* 140 [trans. Daly]; Perry 381)

> Aesop said, "Once when the animals all spoke the same language, a mouse made friends with a frog and invited him to dinner. He took him into a very well-stocked storeroom where there was bread, meat, cheese, olives, figs. And he said: 'Eat.' When he had helped himself generously, the frog said: 'You must come to my house for dinner, too, and let me give you a good reception.' He took the mouse to his pool and said: 'Dive in." But the mouse said: 'I don't know to dive.' The frog said: 'I'll teach you.' And he tied the mouse's foot to his own with a string and jumped into the pool, pulling the mouse with him. As the mouse drowned, he said: 'Even though I'm dead, I'll pay you off.' Just as he said this, the frog dove under and drowned him. As the mouse lay floating on the water, a water bird carried him off with the frog tied to him, and when he had finished eating the mouse he got his claws into the frog. This is the way the mouse punished the frog. Just so, gentlemen, if I die, I will be your doom. The Lydians, the Babylonians, and practically the whole of Greece will reap the harvest of my death." (*Vit. Aes.* 133 [trans. Daly]; Perry 384)

40 Perry numbers 379–388. I will introduce fable enumerations, including Perry's, in section 2.4.3. See also the key to Perry numbers.

In *The Life*, the eight or so fables about people are introduced merely as "a fable," if they receive any introduction at all. The few fables containing speaking animals, such as the one quoted above, are introduced with a similar formula to render them "possible:" "when animals talked the same language as people …" (*Vit. Aes*. 99), "Once when animals all spoke the same language …" (*Vit. Aes.* 133).[41] In the biography of Aesop, the most famous fable teller, fables about talking animals are the exception rather than the rule.

For this perhaps surprising distribution in the *Life of Aesop*, we may find some clarity in a study by Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, who analyzes the later fable collections to hunt down early, Hellenistic fables embedded in them.[42] In the conclusion of his study, Adrados offers a tally of the characters in Hellenistic period fables: of animals he counts a total of nineteen. Mixed fables, with human beings and animals he counts five.[43] Human fables (sometimes including gods), he tallies a total of sixteen.[44] Adrados observes the remarkable distribution when compared to the still earlier collection of Demetrius of Phalerum from the fourth century BCE (3.4.1), in which there were only two human anecdotes, noting the precipitous increase in human fables during the Hellenistic period. In other words, the distribution of the characters in the fable was changing with more and more anthropocentric fables appearing as we approach the Roman period. To complete this picture, we may note this phenomenon is matched by an inverse trend in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. During this time, the fable collections from the Roman period were ransacked for beast tales. The fables of animals were copied, the fables with human characters were not.[45] While we cannot pinpoint the zenith of the human fables, it appears to be during the late Hellenistic or early Roman period. Fable scholars assume that we possess just a fraction of the fables that were written down or composed orally from antiquity. Of this fraction that

41 This introductory phrase may, in fact, be an effort to render these fables "realistic," since they are set in the Golden Age when talking animals were "possible."

42 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:529.

43 This is without distinguishing between these mixed fables in which the animals behave in mundane ways and those in which they have speech.

44 As I will point out here, and again later, the presence of deities is no means to divide "parable" and fable since the Lukan fables also contain gods and the supernatural: i.e., the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21), and in the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31).

45 We can witness this process in action during the eleventh century, when a Syriac version of the fables was copied into a Greek version. Since we have both the *Vorlage* and the dependent copy, we can see that the copy gave "considerable preference to animal fables" (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2.423). See further the discussion of the transmission history of Phaedrus in 3.5.3.

survives, it is possible that we have lost a disproportional number of human fables simply by virtue of the trend to associate fables with animals.

In sum, the belief that fables should be divided into impossible or possible stories, those about animals and those about people, is a misconception that Theon felt compelled to refute in the first century CE. Modern fable scholars who have devoted their careers to ancient fables, such as Perry, van Dijk, and Adrados, continue to refute this myth today. The ancient fables that have come down to us regularly featuring the daily lives of people, with no animals in sight.[46]

2.3 Myths about the Parable

Showing that Jesus "parables" belong to the fable tradition carries implications not just for biblical scholarship but also for fable scholarship. The recovery of new Greek sources of fables from the first century, albeit under our nose for the past two thousand years, would be front-page news for fable scholars. To prove their intimate association with Jesus would also surely attract the attention of a new audience to fable scholarship and folklorists. One might justifiably ask then why fable scholars have not taken note of the "parables" of the Jesus tradition.

46 McGaughy has attempted to provide tabulations for the characters in the Babrian fables, but these are problematic. He states, "Animals are not the only participants in Babrian fables; humans, gods, natural forces, plants, and inanimate characters also appear. Animals are the chief participants in 62 of the 143 fab1es (43%), humans in 24 (17%), and a mixture of both in 49 (34%). Natural forces, plants and inanimate characters are the major participants in 6 (4%) and appear in 3 others. While supernatural figures are the sole characters in only 3 of the fables (2%), they occur along with other participants in 17 more" (Lane C. McGaughy, "Pagan Hellenistic Literature: The Babrian Fables," SBLSP 11 [1977]: 205–14, here 206). The issues with these tabulations are, first, that McGaughy does not explain what he means by "chief participants." Second, it seems that he is unaware of the Babrian fables surviving in the prose paraphrase, as this does not seem to figure in his tabulations. Third, these percentages do not attempt to give us any tabulation of how many of the fables featuring animals include them simply behaving in a mundane way alongside human characters. In other words, he identifies fables in which animals are present, but without clarifying if they contain animals that speak. Compared to the first-century versions of other ancient fable collections, the ratio of speaking non-human beings to humans appears to be the highest in Babrius's fables. Perhaps because of the brevity of the article, McGaughy also introduces Babrius with several broad claims that fable scholars would emphasize have only tenuous support, and he also takes sides on a couple of fundamental issues without acknowledging the debates over them in fable scholarship.

The reasons that fable scholars have scarcely looked at Jesus's fables are rather similar to the reasons biblical scholars have not made use of fables scholarship: there is an artificial disciplinary division, there is a steep learning curve to break into the guild, and, similarly to Aesop, there is a problem of presumed familiarity. The presumed familiarity of some members of the public with Jesus and the Bible is something the biblical scholar knows all too well. Many have strong beliefs *about* the Bible without being very familiar with the contents, which leads to hasty generalizations and misinformation, in this case, about the Gospel fables. A few examples of this will suffice to explain the present situation.

The artificial division of the disciplines is best illustrated by the indisputable parallels between a couple of specific fables of Jesus attested in the fable tradition that fable scholars have left untouched. The fable of the Fisherman and the Fish that some have compared to Matthew and Thomas is one among a cluster of fables involving fishermen with numerous iterations (Babrius, *Fab*. 6, Perry 13 [Chambry 23 with variants], Perry 18 [Chambry 26 with variants], Perry 26 [Chambry 27 with variants], Perry 282 [Chambry 25 with variants]).[47] Well-known as it is, one scarcely finds any mention of the gospel version in the discussions of fable scholars. We find this also with a fable in Thomas known to have Greek analogs, The Dog in the Manger (Gos. Thom. 102). The version found in the Gospel of Thomas is the earliest recorded. As far as I am aware, the Thomasine version has never been discussed by fable scholars, and the only reference to it appears in Adrados's index;[48] though even in the index, Thomas's version is not discussed.[49] Despite the early version in Thomas, this fable is indexed only among those late examples of the Medieval period (Perry 702).

Though it occurs very seldom, a few fable scholars have attempted to address the relationship between fable and parable with reference to Jesus. The famed humanist philosopher, H. J. Blackham, briefly discusses "parable" in order to distinguish it from the "fable" in his monograph, *The Fable as Literature*.[50] He first suggests that Jotham's fable (Judg 9:8–15) is the sole example attested in

47 How to decode these references is explained in section 2.4.3.

48 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 3:614.

49 In Grubmüller's index (number 301), which attempts to give as much primary and secondary literature as there is, Thomas's version is absent (Gerd Dicke, and Klaus Grubmüller, *Die Fabeln des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit: Ein Katalog der deutschen Versionen und ihrer lateinischen Entsprechungen* [Munich: Fink, 1987], 350–52).

50 Harold John Blackham, *The Fable as Literature* (London: Athlone, 1985).

the Old Testament,[51] and follows this by distinguishing it from the genre of Nathan's "parable" told to David (2 Sam 12:1–7):

> "It is invented by Nathan for his purpose, and used and done with, which is what marks the parable; it is ancillary, brought in to explain or illustrate a particular point, dependent; not remaining an independent statement in narrative form for general application, as a fable does."[52]

Later on, Blackham attempts to make his distinction more succinctly: "A parable is a story used in the exposition of a conception—'The kingdom of heaven is like …' A fable is a story invented or adapted to generate a conception, or to expand, refashion, refine or reinforce a conception;"[53] "fable is independent and general, parable particular and *ad hoc*."[54] The functional definition Blackham gives for the parable is almost precisely the functional definition of *the fable* described in the influential opinion of Karl Meuli:

> "The original lively fable" did not exist to convey a universal truth of general application but was rather "the diplomatic intermediary of a wholly specific, acute truth that should directly encounter *a particular hearer* at *a particular point in time*, that should be effective immediately on *a particular concrete occasion*."[55]

In other words, Blackham and Meuli use the same criterion to distinguish parables and fables, but they assign the parable and the fable to the opposite position of the other.[56] As Dithmar noted earlier, paradigmatic distinctions such as this do not hold up and scholars who attempt to make them are often in

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51 Blackham, *The Fable as Literature*, xiii. As we will see 3.2.1, there are at least a few more examples in the Bible.

52 Blackham, *The Fable as Literature*, xvi.

53 Blackham, *The Fable as Literature*, 187.

54 Blackham, *The Fable as Literature*, 186.

55 "Die ursprüngliche lebendige Fabel" did not exist to convey a universal truth of general application but was rather "der diplomatische Vermittler einer ganz speziellen, sozusagen akuten Wahrheit, die einen bestimmten Hörer in einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt unmittelbar treffen, im einzelnen konkreten Fall unmittelbar wirken soll" (Karl Meuli, "Herkunft und Wesen der Fabel," *Schweiz Archiv für Volkskunde* 50 [1954]: 65–88, here 77 [trans. mine]). This essay may be more easily located in his collected works: Karl Meuli, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Thomas Gelzer, 2 vols. (Basel: Schwabe, 1975); the quotation here is found on 2:743.

56 David Flusser's means of dividing "parable" and "fable" is the same (see Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 60). What is more explicit in Flusser, is that he draws this understanding from Ephraim Lessing's fable theory (Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 52–56). Lessing's fable theory, as we will see in 12.3, is problematic.

contradiction with each other.[57] Much like the Gospel "parables," and Luke's especially, Aesop's fables were also placed into such occasional contexts, both in Phaedrus and the *Life of Aesop*.[58] If an occasional nature makes a parable, then Phaedrus and the *Life of Aesop* depict Aesop speaking parables rather than fables. Whether we would follow Blackham or Meuli, the contradictory paradigms would demand that either Aesop speaks in parables, or Jesus speaks in fables.

As the preceding sections have demonstrated, myths and misunderstandings about fables (and "parables") have led to biblical scholarship dismissing the fable with a wave of the hand. These problematic distinctions between "parable" and "fable" have prevented parable and fable scholarship from capitalizing on important insights of the other field. The appraisal of the field of fable scholarship in the next section will offer some much-needed orientation.

2.4 The Fable in Modern Secondary Literature

Before turning to the primary literature in the next chapters, here I will introduce the important secondary literature to give some orientation for how to work with ancient fables and for those who wish to explore fables for their own research. This survey is important not just for accomplishing these goals, but also to give some further indications of why an undertaking like this one has not been attempted before.

Since recent generations of scholarship on the New Testament and early Christianity have often taken their cues from the canons of Classics scholarship, it is not the least surprising that biblical scholars would be unaware of work on the fable. Essentially, it is only the most recent generation of classical scholars, and a small minority thereof, that has deemed the fables and Aesop materials worthy of study. As recently as 2011, in her award-winning monograph, Leslie Kurke put the problem this way: "In the case of the Aesop materials, I confront the situation of an ancient tradition whose parameters and transmission are fiendishly complicated and difficult, and simultaneously largely unfamiliar to

57 "Trotz der vielen Unterscheidungsversuche mit Paradigmata, die sich oft widersprechen, gibt es keinen Unterschied zwischen Fabel und Parabel, der als grundsätzlich und allgemeingültig gelten kann" (Dithmar, *Die Fabel*, 98).

58 With respect to the Gospel "parables," biblical scholars also acknowledge that, generally speaking, the discrete narrative contexts in which this or that "parable" is spoken are the literary creations of the evangelists (much like the *Life of Aesop*). This is one of the lasting contributions of Via's *The Parables*, 77.

most professional classicists."[59] If even classicists are largely unaware of the corpus into which we are setting out in the coming chapters, it is easy to understand why biblical scholars have either missed this material entirely or made hasty generalizations about it when speaking of their relevance to the "parables" of Jesus. We are plumbing the depths of uncharted waters.

The Aesop materials are not included along with Homer, Plato, and Aristotle within the canons of the classicist's education because the fable and Aesopic literature are not deemed to have literary aspirations or artistic merit. Fables are regularly stereotyped as only a rudimentary sort of literature, written by novices and aimed at the lower stratum of society. The same reason that fables have been left unexamined is probably the same as why there is growing attention to them: they represent non-elite discourses. The emerging interest in the fable from some corners of classical studies is surely related to current efforts to recover literature rising from anything other than the upper crust of ancient society. For those in the guild of biblical scholarship with similar interests in recovering non-elite voices, the Aesop materials and fables are an appropriate avenue for doing so.[60] Much like the stories in the Gospels and the Gospels themselves, the early Christian narrative writings share with the *Aesopica* a quality that we might call *vulgaires lettres*.[61] The ancient fable and Aesop literature represent a liminal corpus as we have it, set down in writing, but reflecting a popular tradition with wide currency, circulating broadly in oral tradition

59 Leslie Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2–3. Kurke's monograph has received universal acclaim, winning the American Philological Association's Charles J. Goodwin Award of Merit in 2012. Kurke is here referring to the Aesopic tradition as a whole, including *The Life of Aesop*. While the Aesopic corpus and fables are not coterminous in a few important ways, her point is just as applicable to the present undertaking.

60 On this subject, see Chapter 9. The majority, including the ancient authors, describe the fable with certain low associations. For an alternative perspective that sees the fables coopting the low genre to reinforce the prevailing power structures, see Cara Tess Jordan, "Voicing Power through the Other: Elite Appropriations of Fable in the 1st–3rd Centuries CE" (Ph.D., diss. University of Toronto, 2013). See also Edward Champlin's theory on the true identity of Phaedrus discussed in 3.5.3 below. In my view, Christos A. Zafiropoulos, is right in describing the debate about whether fables are "low" or "high," subvert or reinforce traditional morals, as a false dichotomy (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables: The Augustana Collection* [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 41–42).

61 It is worth noting that Phaedrus, very conscious of this fact, attempts to rise above it with clear ambitions to literary achievement. To what degree the Gospel writers aspired to *Hochliteratur* is intractably bound up with how we understand the genre "gospel" itself: whether they should be categories as *bioi* or something else. To my mind, the Gospel of Luke has ambitions similar to Phaedrus in attempting to elevate the standard set by his forebears in Mark and Q or Matthew.

apart from the formal rhetorical, educational, and poetic settings through which it has come down to us.

The challenges identified by Kurke are further amplified when encountering the primary and secondary literature on ancient fables, which are not the least bit welcoming to the outsider. For the biblical scholar interested in the applicability of the ancient fable to the "parables" of Jesus, the problem begins with navigating the esoteric and labyrinthine secondary literature, which emulates in certain ways the state of the primary. For a short monograph-length introduction to the field and a treatment of the following subjects, one can do no better than Niklas Holzberg's *Die antike Fabel: Eine Einführung*, now in its third edition,[62] with a superb English translation of the second edition by Christine Jackson-Holzberg.[63] For most, Holzberg's included bibliographies will suffice, but for an extensive bibliography of fable scholarship between the 1880s and 1982, see Pack Carnes, *Fable Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography.*[64]

In the following pages I will provide a digest of the essential secondary literature while using the landmark works as *exempla* for the fundamental problems one encounters in engaging with this scholarship.

2.4.1 *Ben Edwin Perry and the Language Barricades*

Perhaps the most essential work in ancient fable scholarship is the magnum opus of Ben Edwin Perry, his *Aesopica: A Series of Texts Relating to Aesop or Ascribed to Him or Closely Connected with the Literary Tradition that Bears His Name: Collected and Critically Edited, in Part Translated from Oriental Languages, with a Commentary and Historical Essay*. Volume 1: *Greek and Latin Texts*.[65] Published in 1952, it remains the most important of several editions of the ancient Aesopic fables. Perry's *Aesopica* catalogues and edits 725 Greek and Latin fables, two recensions of the *Life of Aesop* available to him and for one of which it is the *editio princeps*. It includes stemmata for reconstructing recensions, various essays and all else listed in the imposing title. Nothing in the volume is translated into a modern language. The primary texts are left untranslated and after the English preface, Perry composes all the prose of

62 Niklas Holzberg, *Die antike Fabel: Eine Einführung*, 3rd ed. (Darmstadt: WBG, 2012).

63 Niklas Holzberg, *The Ancient Fable: An Introduction*, trans. Christine Jackson-Holzberg, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

64 Pack Carnes, *Fable Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1985). Carnes provides a total of 1,457 annotated entries.

65 Ben Edwin Perry, *Greek and Latin Texts*, vol. 1 of *Aesopica: A Series of Texts Relating to Aesop or Ascribed to Him or Closely Connected with the Literary Tradition That Bears His Name, Collected and Critically Edited, in Part Translated from Oriental Languages, with a Commentary and Historical Essay* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952).

this 750-page work solely in academic Latin. As the title indicates, this volume was intended to be part of a series (four volumes), possibly to include English translations, but Perry died in 1968 before completing any more than this initial volume. Throughout the present work, fables will often be cited by Perry's index number, one of the standard enumerations of the ancient fable.[66]

Though there is no hint that it can be used as such in either work, Perry's *Babrius and Phaedrus*, published in the Loeb Classical Library series shortly before his death, is the Rosetta Stone for some of his *Aesopica*. In standard Loeb practice, Perry provides English introductions and translations of the two key fable authors not translated in his *Aesopica*: Babrius and Phaedrus.[67] Of equal importance as these editions of Babrius and Phaedrus, Perry includes a nearly 200-page appendix in which he provides English summaries, paraphrases, or translations for all the fables in his *Aesopica*, organized by their Perry index number.[68] He also includes a collation of all of these fables with the numerations of the other standard editions at the time, including Chambry, Crusius, Daly, Halm, and so on.[69] Perry's other English publications, which are many, are often helpful to decode the Latin of his *Aesopica* as well.[70]

Unfortunately, this practice of providing the primary literature without translations and composing commentary and introductions in Latin prose is not exclusive to Perry's *Aesopica* but *de rigeur* in fable scholarship. Essential nineteenth-century scholarship on fables, such as Otto Crusius's work on

66 For a key to Perry's enumerations, see the back matter. I will plant a few more reminders of this in the coming pages.

67 Perry's translations are very readable, a balance between interpretation and literal translation, but occasionally leaning more toward the former than one might prefer.

68 *Caveat lector*, these are summaries or paraphrases and often not translations! Thus, Perry still does not make it too easy for us. The summaries are helpful for getting a sense of the contents, but one must still translate the Greek or Latin directly from his *Aesopica*. To make matters still more complicated, Perry occasionally uses the translations from Daly's *Aesop without Morals* in this appendix. In this case they are not summaries or paraphrases, but proper translations; they should be cited, however, as Daly's translations rather than Perry's and one must be vigilant to note when it is one or the other.

69 On Chambry and Halm, see section 2.4.3. On Daly, see 2.2.2 above, on Crusius, see note 71 below.

70 Since Perry revises his position on certain issues later in his career, his *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop* is helpful but must be used with caution (Ben Edwin Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop*, Philological Monographs 7 [Haverford, PA: American Philological Association, 1936]). His article in *Studium Generale,* which post-dates his *Aesopica*, is quite in-depth and helpful for gaining familiarity with Perry's though in English (Perry, "Fable").

Babrius, is in Latin prose,[71] and unfortunately, a significant amount of scholarship from around the turn of the twentieth century remains standard for study of the fables.[72] Perhaps less expected is that fable scholars continue publishing their essential works in academic Latin, from the editions of the prose recensions by Chambry (1925, 1926) and Hausrath (1940, 1956),[73] to the current standard critical edition of Babrius in the Teubner series by Maria Jagoda Luzzatto and Antonio La Penna (1986).[74] The Luzzatto and La Penna edition of Babrius, begins with 105 pages of prolegomena in Latin prose, divided into five chapters, and to add insult to injury, no table of contents is provided.[75]

No one with any reasonable appraisal of the guild of biblical scholars would accuse its members of an unwillingness to gain facility in an excessive number of foreign languages, but the problem does not end with Latin. Fable scholarship is published in a host of modern languages as well; not just the usual German (e.g., Holzberg, Karla), French (e.g., Chambry, Nøjgaard, Papathomopoulis), and the aforementioned Latin (e.g., Perry, Crusius, Halm, Lachmann, and so on), but in Italian (e.g. Boldrini, Ferrari, Luzzatto, La Penna, Jedrkiewicz), Spanish (e.g. Adrados), and Modern Greek (e.g. Konstantakos, Papathomopoulis, Stephanis). In light of this fact, the continued use of academic Latin is, perhaps, not a matter of sophistry and scholarly gatekeeping, but practicality in desperation.

A few concrete examples of how these language barricades have affected (or not had the effect they should) the study of these materials by biblical scholars are in order. In 1975, Luzzatto published an article in Italian in which she argues that Babrius had read the Septuagint and imitated its style in his fables.[76] So far as I am aware, no biblical scholar until now has taken notice of the possibility that we have an undetected first-century author of Greek fables influenced

71 Otto Crusius, "*De Babrii aetate*," *Leipziger Studien zur classischen Philologie*, ed. G. Curtis L. Lange and O. Ribbeck H. Lipsius (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1879), 2:125–248. The standard edition of Babrius, before that of Luzzatto and La Penna (on, which see 4.1) was Otto Crusius, *Babrii Fabulae Aesopeae* (Leipsig: Teubner, 1897). Crusius enumerations are still used for the Babrian Prose Paraphrase.

72 See section 2.4.3 for many examples.

73 Émile Chambry, ed., *Aesopi Fabulae*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1925–1926); August Hausrath, H. Haas, and Herbert Hunger, eds., *Fabulae Aesopicae soluta oratione conscriptae*, vol. 1 of *Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1940–1956). Herbert Hunger revised fascicle 2 in 1959 and fascicle 1 in 1970.

74 Maria Jagoda Luzzatto and Antonio La Penna, eds., *Babrii Mythiambi Aesopei*, BSGRT (Leipzig: Teubner, 1986).

75 Luzzatto and La Penna, *Babrii Mythiambi Aesopei*, vi–cx.

76 Maria Jagoda Luzzatto, "La cultura letteraria di Babrio," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, Classe di Lettere e Filosofia 5 (1975): 17–97.

by the Septuagint.[77] The second concrete example is *The Life of Aesop*, which remains on the periphery of gospel scholarship in part because of the lack of English translations. Wills, for example, found it necessary to translate *The Life of Aesop* in its entirety as part of his monograph on the gospel genre.[78] If the cost of entry for writing a monograph on any new subject in our field (with no guarantee of success) requires the time, desire, energy, and skill to translate an entire ancient work roughly as long as a gospel in order to even begin, then it is not surprising that many have counted the cost of the ancient fable and looked elsewhere. Third, Ioannis Konstantakos has recently produced a 1360-page study on the *Tale of Ahiqar* and its Greek reception.[79] For biblical scholars interested in the intermingling of Near Eastern and Hellenistic cultures generally and the influence of *The Tale* on specific biblical texts such as Tobit specifically, this is a highly relevant study. The potential Near Eastern antecedents of the *mashal* and the Ahiqar materials lying in the background of the *Life of Aesop* discussed in his 600-page third volume would also be useful to many. The publication of this study in Modern Greek guarantees that few can read it.

2.4.2 *Francisco Rodríguez Adrados and Weighty Tomes*

Essential works of fable scholarship are often extremely long. After Perry, the most important work on the ancient fable in the twentieth century is by the prolific classicist Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, whose *Historia de la fábula greco-latina* was published between 1979 and 1987.[80] As one may glean from the title, this work is written in Spanish. While the intrepid researcher may bite the bullet for one of his many important articles or a short monograph in Spanish, Adrados's *Historia de la fábula greco-latina* dwarfs Konstantakos's page-count at over 3000 pages, spread across three volumes. Fortunately, *Historia de la*

77 For a discussion of Babrius and the Bible, see 4.1.4.

78 Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel*.

79 Ioannis Konstantakos, *Γένεση και αφηγηματικό υλικό*, vol. 1 of *Ακίχαρος: Η Διήγηση του Αχικάρ στην αρχαία Ελλάδα* [*Origins and Narrative Material*, vol. 1 of *Akicharos: The Tale of Ahiqar in Ancient Greece*]; *Από τον Δημόκριτο στους Περιπατητικούς*, vol 2. of *Ακίχαρος: Η Διήγηση του Αχικάρ στην αρχαία Ελλάδα* [*From Democritus to the Peripatetics*, vol 2 of *Akicharos: The Tale of Ahiqar in Ancient Greece*]; *ἡ Διήγηση τοῦ Ἀχικὰρ καὶ ἡ Μυθιστορία τοῦ Αἰσώπου*, vol 3 of *Ακίχαρος: Η Διήγηση του Αχικάρ στην αρχαία Ελλάδα* [*The Tale of Ahiqar and the Life of Aesop*, vol. 3 of *Akicharos: The Tale of Ahiqar in Ancient Greece*] (Athens, Stigmi, 2008–2013). We can be grateful at least for the lengthy review article of the third volume by Zafiropoulos: Christos A. Zafiropoulos, "Ahiqar, His Tale, and the Vita Aesopi," *Scrinium* 10 (2014): 479–95.

80 Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, *Historia de la fábula greco-latina*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Complutense University Press, 1979–1987).

fábula greco-latina has been translated into English and was updated between 1999 and 2003, but the unenviable task of translating this goliath work was not a total success.[81] Particularly when dealing with fable *argot*, which Adrados sometimes brings in from French to Spanish, the translator's wooden English can easily lead to confusion unless one can read through the palimpsest back to the French. Apart from the language barrier and the length, there is also a problem with the revisions. Between the first and second volume and the Spanish and English translation, Adrados regularly states that, in addition to expanding the details, he has also modified his views.[82] It is often unclear how he has modified them, meaning the reader can never be entirely certain that they have Adrados's view completely straight. Despite these challenges, Adrados's work is essential and provides the largest systematic treatment of the ancient fables, especially the history of their collection.

The second reason that Adrados's work is significant is that his views do not depend on Perry as the views of many others do.[83] Their differences include their definitions of a fable, the reconstruction of the various primary materials, their dates, Sitz im Leben, and their transmission. As Adrados argues in so many words, certain foundational conclusions reached in Perry's work require a degree of unwarranted positivism. Adrados's own views, regularly idiosyncratic and sometimes dismissed as speculative or overly positivist by other fable specialists, nevertheless provide a helpful balance and interlocutor to Perry. The welcome translation of *Historia de la fábula greco-latina*, probably

81 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*. As the reviews indicate, the English translation is frequently quite poor and sometimes unintelligible. A working knowledge of Spanish, even via Latin, can be helpful in these cases.

82 E.g., Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:467.

83 Adrados can regularly be found scolding fable scholars who do not take account of his theories, e.g.: "If Perry and Nøjgaard had read my article on the Rylands Papyrus carefully, they would have seen that this is exactly what I had proposed before they did so" (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:66); "Without using my article, which he does cite in his bibliography, however, in 1967 Nøjgaard in turn attempted to establish the bases of the relationship between the collections" (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:72). One also gets a sense of the quality of the English translation from that quotation. As part of the "Discussion" section in Martin Litchfield West, "The Ascription of Fables to Aesop in Archaic and Classical Greece" Adrados writes, "la thèse développée par M. West au sujet de l'origine de la légende d'Esope est très proche de celle que j'ai exposée dans mon *Historia de la fábula greco-latina* (I pp. 286 sqq.) et dans mon article ("The 'Life of Aesop' and the Origins of Novel in Antiquity," in *Quaderni Urbinati* N.S. I (1979), 93–112), article que M. West semble ne pas connaître" (in *La fable: Huit exposés suivis de discussions: Vandœvres-Genève, 22–27 Août 1983*, ed. Francisco Rodríguez Adrados and Olivier Reverdin, Entretiens Sur l'Antiquité Classique 30 [Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1984], 105–36, here 130).

owing in no small part to its mammoth size, is recent enough that its waves have yet to be felt on the distant shores of biblical studies.

While Adrados is the most extreme example of verbiage, as we have already seen, he is far from unique. Nøjgaard's two-volume *La fable antique* falls into a similar category, at more than a thousand pages.[84] Nøjgaard's work is essential for providing what remains one of very few substantial treatment of the fables that is not focused on the sources and history of the ancient fable; rather, Nøjgaard offers a thorough examination of these miniature texts as literature, as objects worthy of literary criticism.[85] In spite of the work's importance, in Holzberg's frank assessment:

> Even the most benevolent readers need considerable patience to work their way through Nøjgaard's one thousand pages of abstractions, and more than a few fable scholars certainly seem to have thrown in the towel … work on the ancient fable published after 1967 shows few signs of Nøjgaard's book having been used, much less any form of grappling with his theories. Indeed, the majority of reviewers made no attempt to disguise the fact that reading the book had not afforded them much pleasure.[86]

While the thousand-page work can be tedious, much of his terminology for literary aspects of the fable have become standard for the likes of Adrados above, van Dijk below, and lay the groundwork for Chapter 10 in which we will discuss the structure and formal features of the ancient fable as they appear in Luke's Gospel.[87]

A third essential and hefty work is AINOI, ΛΟΓΟΙ, ΜΥΘΟΙ, by the Dutch scholar Gert-Jan van Dijk.[88] Van Dijk's volume is trim by comparison at 700 pages, about half of which are primary sources, English translations, and indices. At the time of its publication in 1997 it was the first attempt to collect—let alone treat in synthetic fashion—all fables found scattered across classical literature outside of the fable collections. Since Perry's *Aesopica* and the other editions of the fables are editions of the fable *collections*,[89] van Dijk's work is

84 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*.

85 Nøjgaard examines Babrius, Phaedrus, and the Augustana Collection specifically.

86 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 9.

87 Adrados often uses Nøjgaard's frameworks and vocabulary without an explicit notice that he is doing so and occasionally takes for granted that the reader is already familiar with his *La fable antique*.

88 Despite the title, the prose of the book is composed in English. Properly, the main title is written with its Greek lettering AINOI, ΛΟΓΟΙ, ΜΥΘΟΙ, though one most commonly encounters it as *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*.

89 Perry will often give cross-references to the primary sources outside of the collections, but his list is less useful for this purpose and incomplete.

the standard source for those fables located elsewhere, especially prior to the turn of the Era. Such an undertaking alone would have been an immense contribution to the field, much needed as it was, but van Dijk also includes valuable studies of the modern theory and ancient terminology as contributions to the complex and ongoing task of defining the fable and tracing its development. In addition to these sections on ancient and modern fable theory, van Dijk continues past the Hellenistic age, including material throughout the Imperial period, well into late antiquity, and occasionally even modern fables in Modern Greek and Latin.[90] In a new three-volume work, van Dijk completes the comprehensive study through to the present.[91] While the length of the works by these preeminent voices in fable studies presents a certain obstacle, another likely reason parable scholars have not taken notice of the fable is how recently these essential tools by Adrados and van Dijk have appeared in English.[92]

2.4.3 *Émile Chambry and How to Locate a Fable by Number*

While Babrius and Phaedrus provide two ancient authors onto whom enumerations are reasonably simple to hang, there are also the anonymous prose fables collections, comprised of several recensions in a variety of manuscripts. When one encounters a reference to "Aesop's fables" it usually refers (imprecisely) to these anonymous prose collections. Because of these prose collections, it is necessary to take additional measures when citing an ancient fable, and numbering systems for them have been devised. Ideally, scholars could all agree on a single system. These anonymous recensions, the most important of which is the Augustana Collection, have produced a pluriformity of enumerations in the secondary literature. The most important to note from the beginning is the Augustana Collection is Perry numbers 1–244.

It is essential to know whose numbering system one is using when discussing any given fable. The first truly critical edition of these anonymous prose fable recensions was published by Émile Chambry in two volumes in 1925

90 The only significant challenge with using van Dijk is that he cites the primary sources not by any standard reference system, but by a somewhat arcane system of his own invention that cross-references his indices, which makes his abbreviations of ancient authors and their works difficult to decipher.

91 Gert-Jan van Dijk, *Aesopica Posteriora: Medieval and Modern Versions of Greek and Latin Fables*, 3 vols. (Milan: Ledizioni, 2015–2019).

92 To these recent and necessary tools, I would add the English translations of the *progymnasmata*, which have likewise only been translated from Greek in the twenty-first century (see 5.6).

and 1926.[93] In addition to the Augustana recension, Chambry records all the parallel versions of these fables found also in the Byzantine Accursiana and Vindobonensis recensions. In other words, fables often have variant forms from manuscript to manuscript, and Chambry records these variants. The variants, while dependent either directly or indirectly on the Augustana, are valuable for many comparative and tradition-historical purposes. Naturally, Chambry assigned each fable its own number, establishing a straightforward way to refer to the fables in these recensions. In the year following the release of his second volume, Chambry revised his two volume edition into a single volume with the Greek text, a French translation, and an introduction.[94] Helpful as the translation may be, in this process Chambry also omitted hundreds of the variant versions of the fables and, far worse, introduced a new numbering system that is just different enough from the first edition that one can never be sure to which edition of Chambry a citation refers without an explicit notice.[95] Since the single volume edition became the standard, one even encounters chimerical citations, such as Laura Gibbs's, who must use the enumeration of the single-volume edition while using the texts of the earlier two-volume edition.[96] Here, when a variant version in Chambry is relevant, I cite the single volume edition and will alert the reader to a fable "with variants." One may then consult the variant in the first edition, normally one number higher, or utilize Gibbs' Aesopica website (on which, see below).

Augustus Hausrath's edition came not far behind Chambry's. Like Perry, Hausrath planned for an expansive multi-volume project, but died before work beyond volume one in two fascicles could be completed.[97] Hausrath's edition provides an improvement on Chambry's, includes also the versions from the three main recensions, and gives the Halm and Chambry numbers that accompany them.[98] The shortcomings of Hausrath are found in his critical

93 Chambry, *Aesopi Fabulae*.

94 Émile Chambry, *Ésope: Fables*, Nouvelle collection de textes et documents (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1927).

95 There is a certain parallel here in attempting to keep straight the numbering of the Psalms between the Septuagint and Masoretic Text.

96 Laura Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

97 Since the work of these two fascicles was completed, revised, and corrected by others, one encounters citations of this edition in several forms with various dates and editors commonly listed. Though Hausrath is always found as the lead editor, even his forename is inconsistently found as August or Augustus because the volume gives his name in Latin and Augustus is just as common a name as August when deciding how it should be retroverted to English. See Hausrath, Haas, and Hunger, *Fabulae Aesopicae*.

98 References to fable numbers in Adrados are to Hausrath, "H," while fables not found in Hausrath are called "non-H" and use Adrados's own numbering system.

apparatus, which uses idiosyncratic sigla for the manuscripts,[99] and that his edition is full of sufficient errors that one ought, as Holzberg recommends, "always to compare it with Chambry's and Perry's apparatuses (admittedly quite a chore …)."[100]

While still other enumerations exist, the last system one must be familiar with is that of Perry's *Aesopica*.[101] The downside of Perry's edition is that he does not print the variant versions of fables as do Hausrath and Chambry's first edition. Perry only includes one version of each fable from the Augustana Collection. He presents fables from the Accursiana and Vindobonensis recensions only when they are unparalleled in the Augustana. The standard English translation of the Augustana Collection is by Daly in his *Aesop without Morals*, which, fortunately, follows Perry's numbers.[102] While one can get the gist of any given fable from the prose collections in Perry, should one wish to see multiple versions of the same fable, one must sometimes rely on a combination of Chambry and Hausrath in conjunction with Perry.

Prior to Chambry, Karl Halm's edition and his enumeration were standard, and one still encounters citations of Halm's numbers especially in older works.[103] Halm's edition was not based on his own investigation of the manuscripts; it is rather a collection of various other editions of varying qualities put out by other scholars prior to him. That one still regularly encounters citations of Halm illustrates for Holzberg "the sorry state of affairs in present studies on the ancient fable,"[104] but help is on the way. Laura Gibbs, whose own book of Aesopic fables was published by Oxford, has a helpful website that includes Perry's and Chambry's Greek and Latin texts, with hyperlinks to their respective

99 For a collation of Hausrath's sigla to Perry and Chambry see Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 3:1014–1022; and for a handy way to locate an equivalent fable in Perry and Chambry, one can simply click on the reference to any fable in Laura Gibbs's Aesopica website. For Perry: http://mythfolklore.net/aesopica/perry/index.htm; for Chambry: http://www.mythfolklore.net/aesopica/chambry/index.htm.

100 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 6. Hausrath also does not give prime of place to the oldest manuscript G, using an inferior recension instead. See also Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:85, and the lengthy review of Hausrath by Perry in which these deficiencies are discussed (Ben Edwin Perry, "*Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum*. Augustus Hausrath," *CP* 37 [1942]: 207–18).

101 See the key to Perry numbers to locate the collection that contains a particular fable number when it is referred to with a Perry number in this project.

102 Daly, *Aesop without Morals*. Unfortunately, Daly's translation is out of print.

103 Karl Halm, *Fabulae aesopicae collectae*, BSGRT (Leipzig: Teubner, 1852).

104 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 7.

numbers, and often translations when they are found in her book.[105] Gibbs's book is also helpful in another way. Unlike the other standard works, she has organized the fables in her book topically and thematically, arguably as *promythia*, so that one can find numerous fables that take up a particular theme adjacent to one another.[106]

Finally, since the titles of many standard works tell little about their contents, I will give a few pointers here. The nearly identical and yet unspecific names such as Chambry, *Aesopi Fabulae*, and Hausrath, *Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum*, contain the prose fables recensions and not others. The Penguin Classics volume titled *Aesop: The Complete Fables*, contains perhaps half of the "complete fables."[107] Perry's imposing *Aesopica* tome does not include Babrius and Phaedrus, which are located instead in the Loeb volume, *Babrius and Phaedrus*. The Loeb volume, as mentioned above, provides the key to non-Babrian and Phaedrian fables in Perry's *Aesopica* in its appendix. One must know, but would never gather from the title, that Daly's *Aesop without Morals* contains the standard English translation of *The Life of Aesop* and the standard English translation of the Augustana Collection.

Two concrete ways that the challenge of working with this disarray of fable manuscripts, editions, and enumerations has affected biblical scholarship will illustrate the difficulty and provide the justification for meeting the challenge. As Ross and Reece have recently demonstrated independently in two nearly-simultaneous publications, the Lukan Jesus delivers a line to chastise the disciples after his resurrection, in iambic trimeter, directly paralleled by

105 http://www.mythfolklore.net/aesopica/oxford/index.htm. See Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables*. Though Gibbs follows her own enumeration in her collection, on her website every fable is collated to parallels in Perry, Chambry, and others.

106 It would have been more helpful to have these headings in the Table of Contents, but this is a helpful organization for the material, nonetheless. Many of her categories have close analogies to the themes taken up in the Lukan fables: "Fables about Friendship" (Gibbs 69–75), "Fables about False Friends" (Gibbs 86–94), "Fables about Treachery and Wickedness" (Gibbs 128–136), "Fables about Wickedness Punished" (Gibbs 137–144), "Fables about the Trickster Tricked" (Gibbs 145–152), "Fables about Justice" (Gibbs 165–173), "Fables about Court and Judges" (Gibbs 174–181), "Disputes and Debates" (Gibbs 182–187), "Fables about Boasting" (Gibbs 206–215), "Fables about Self-Important Creatures" (Gibbs 216–227), "Fables about Over-confident Creatures" (228–236), "Fables about the Underdog" (237–243), "Fables about Human Hypocrisy" (Gibbs 384–394), "Fables about Wealth and Riches" (Gibbs 405–414), "Fables about Foolish Plans" (Gibbs 432–440), "Fables about Unexpected Outcomes" (Gibbs 454–465). On many of these themes, see Chapter 11.

107 Robert Temple and Olivia Temple, trans., *The Complete Fables* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1998).

two Aesopic fables: "O foolish ones and slow in heart to believe in everything that was spoken by the prophets," ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεύειν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται· (Luke 24:25).[108] This phrase is found in two ancient fables located in Chambry's first edition: Ὦ ἀνόητε καὶ βραδὺ τῇ καρδίᾳ (Chambry 40 variant; cf. Perry 9) and ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ (Chambry 128 variant; cf. Perry 314, and Babrius, *Fab.* 62). The reason it took until 2016 for anyone to notice these direct parallels is because, as the authors explain, they are only buried in Chambry among the variants in his first edition.

A second practical implication of the cacophony of enumerations is that *The SBL Handbook of Style* shows symptoms of the same problem. There is no guidance for citing fable materials and it does not include Babrius, Phaedrus, or any other fabulist in the list of ancient authors. What does appear in the abbreviation section is "Aesop" as an author and *Fab.* as the abbreviation for the Latin, "*Fabulae*," English, *Fables.* Though I have yet to introduce the primary literature that will make evident the problem this creates, it would be something akin to listing the parables of Jesus under the author "Jesus" and suggesting his parables be cited by *Parabola*: Jesus, *Par.* 15:3. Not many of us have the parables sufficiently memorized to deduce that this is a reference to the parable of the Lost Sheep in its Lukan form at Luke 15:3. Fables should be cited by their author if there is one, e.g. Babrius, *Fab.* 32, and the prose fables of the Augustana Collection (*Collectio Augustana*) should be cited by the number given in the modern editions, e.g., Perry 147 or Chambry 200. The most comprehensive list of fables is that gathered in Adrados's third "Inventory" volume (1,485 fables compared to Perry's 725).[109] His fables are organized into "H," those found in Hausrath,[110] "not-H" for those fables not found in Hausrath, and "M" for Medieval fables.

Here I cite fables according to Perry numbers when possible, supplemented by Chambry when there is a relevant variant of a fable to cite. On the rare occasion when a fable does not have a number in Perry, I will provide the relevant information from Adrados. The back matter contains the key to Perry numbers.

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108 Ross, "Luke, Aesop, and Reading Scripture," *NovT* 58 (2016): 369–79; and Reece, "'Aesop', 'Q' and 'Luke.'" The authors disagree about which direction the dependency goes, whether the fables on Jesus's line, or Jesus's line on the fables. For further discussion, see 8.3.

109 Francisco Rodríguez Adrados and Gert-Jan van Dijk, *Inventory and Documentation of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, vol. 3 of *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, Mnemosyne Supplements 236 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

110 Hausrath, Haas, and Hunger, *Fabulae Aesopicae*.

2.5 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to dip our toes into preliminary issues of the fable that were necessary to address before moving forward. I dispelled several myths about the ancient fable that have caused them to receive only the rarest notice by biblical scholars—summarily that fables are stories for children, while parables are mature lessons for adults, that "fable" is a Hellenistic genre, while "parable" is a Jewish genre, and that fables are impossible stories about talking animals while parables are possible stories about humans. While New Testament interpreters generally have believed these myths because of a lack of familiarity with the ancient primary literature, when a "parable" of Jesus has obvious parallels in the fable materials, parable scholars can often do no better than to dismiss their relevance or assert that it is a coincidence. The short discussions of these myths in this chapter will be taken up in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. After addressing these myths, I then introduced some essential secondary literature to familiarize readers with how to work with fables and to demonstrate the additional challenges that may have dissuaded some from working with these materials. With this introduction to fables and scholarship on the fable now complete, we shall turn in the next chapters to the primary texts of the ancient fable.

CHAPTER 3

The Story of the Fable through the Hellenistic Period

3.1 Introduction

One reason the study of ancient fables is "fiendishly complicated and difficult"[1] has to do with the primary materials. Holzberg begins his book with the following line: "Travelers in the antique land of the genre *fable* will find themselves confronted not perhaps by a wreck of Ozymandian proportions, but still with a sizable selection of rubble."[2] Here we start our survey of this rubble, proceeding chronologically beginning in the Archaic period (3.2). We first encounter the fable in the Semitic world (3.2.1), and will highlight its cameos in the Hebrew Bible, then note its appearances in early Greek literature (3.2.2). Next, we turn to the Classical period of ancient Greece (3.3), describing the several contexts in which fables appear: rhetoric, education, and by condemned wise men. We then encounter the earliest traditions about Aesop the fable teller (3.3.4). Following that discussion, we shall turn to the Hellenistic period (3.4) for a treatment of Demetrius of Phalerum (3.4.1), Callimachus of Cyrene (3.4.2), and the fable collection on John Rylands papyrus 493 (3.4.3). In the next chapter, we will enter the Imperial age and introduce the fable authors and collections contemporary with Jesus and the Gospel of Luke. At the conclusion of these primary literature chapters, the reader should have a sense of how this material fits into the world of ancient Jews and Christians.

3.2 The Archaic Period

3.2.1 *The Semitic World*

The fable tradition is attested as early as ancient Sumer in the third millennium BCE and certainly extends back into oral culture before we can speak of history itself.[3] The origin of the fable and the relationship between fables

1 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 2.

2 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 1 (emphasis original).

3 For an overview of the ancient Near Eastern fables tradition, see Robert S. Falkowitz and the included discussion, "Discrimination and Condensation of Sacred Categories: The Fable in Early Mesopotamian Literature," in *La Fable: Huit exposés suivis de discussions:*

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found among the Mediterranean, Mesopotamian, and Indian peoples is a classic topic in scholarship on the fable. Of these three, the literary tradition of Mesopotamia extends furthest back, as far as we can reconstruct them. As many argue, Mesopotamia is the logical source for the fable to spread outward into the Indian and Mediterranean milieus.[4] While our knowledge of the Sumerian fable is fragmentary, we are on surer footing in the Old Babylonian period (first half of the second millennium BCE), during which time the fables were part of school curricula, specifically as a vehicle for teaching Sumerian to non-native speakers.[5]

Even if the tradition is a fairly slim one, the Hebrew Bible also attests to the use of fables among the ancient Israelites. Jeremy Schipper, for example, uses "parable" as a kind of umbrella term that includes fable.[6] Jewish folklore scholars and fable scholars who take notice of the Hebrew Bible invert this taxonomy: "parables" as a subset of fables. In any event, "parables" and fables in the Hebrew Bible number just a few. In addition to the paradigmatic fable in the Bible told by Jotham, there is Nathan's famous critique of King David using the fable of the man with the one ewe lamb.[7]

Vandœvres-Genève, 22–27 Août 1983, ed. Robert S. Falkowitz, Francisco Rodríguez Adrados and Olivier Reverdin, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique 30 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1984), 1–32. For a more in-depth study, see the recent dissertation by Kazuya Akimoto, "Ante-Aesopica: Fable Traditions of the Ancient Near East" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2010). Whether other early traditions in Egypt should be considered fables need not detain us.

4 According to Perry, there is no evidence of even one Indian fable exerting influence on the Greek fable tradition (*Babrius and Phaedrus*, LCL 436 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965], xix). In the view of Holzberg, "the narrative works found in the clay tablets display such close thematic and formal similarities to Greco-Roman fable literature that Mesopotamia may safely be regarded as the original home of this genre" (*The Ancient Fable*, 14).

5 Since language learning is their function, absent from these early fables are the later standard additions such as explicit morals and *epimythia*. At least some of these fables appear on the basis of Akkadian calques to be of non-Sumerian origin. There is often overlap of themes and contents between fables in these Mesopotamian sources and the later Greek ones. See Falkowitz, "Discrimination and Condensation," 13. Millenia later, fables would be used to teach Greek to Latin speakers and vice versa (see the discussion of the *Hermeneumata* at 5.4) and were used to teach Latin through to around the twentieth century.

6 Jeremy Schipper, *Parables and Conflict in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14. John P. Meier follows Schipper in this regard (*Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*, 63 n. 16).

7 Dan Ben-Amos and Perry, for example, describes the prophet Nathan's Ewe Lamb as a fable (Dan Ben-Amos, "Narrative Forms in the Haggadah: Structural Analysis" [Ph.D. diss. Indiana University, 1967], 136; Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxii). George W. Coats has also argued that Nathan's story is not a parable but rather a fable. He builds his argument, however, on some of the misconceptions about the two as discrete genres that we have eliminated in

> But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" (2 Sam 12:1–7a)

We will return in Chapter 9 to the prophetic use of fables and how those in positions of weakness effectively wield them against those in power, such as Nathan does here with David.

Among borderline cases of "parables" in the Hebrew Bible, some would include the allegory of the vineyard in Isa 5:1–7, the Widow of Tekoa's story (2 Sam 14:5–20), and others such as Joseph's dream of the other sheaves of wheat bowing down to the one sheaf (Gen 37:6–8). The story of Samson sending flaming foxes through the Philistine fields (Judg 15:4–5) is obviously related to several fables narrating similar stories in circulation during the first century CE (Babrius, *Fab.* 11; Perry 283), and, though there is no obvious parallel in the fable literature, one wonders about whether Balaam's talking donkey might be a historicized fable (Num 22:21–39).

There appears to be a particular *topos* in ancient Israel of invoking speaking flora fables. When Jotham learns that his seventy brothers have been killed by Abimelech, and that the lords of Shechem have anointed Abimelech king, Judges records Jotham's reaction:

> When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and cried aloud and said to them, 'Listen to me, you lords of Shechem, so that God may listen to you.
> The trees once went out
> to anoint a king over themselves.
> So they said to the olive tree,
> "Reign over us."
> The olive tree answered them,
> "Shall I stop producing my rich oil
> by which gods and mortals are honoured,

Chapter 2 and will time and again in the coming chapters (George W. Coats, "Parable, Fable, and Anecdote: Storytelling in the Succession Narrative," *USQR* 35 [1981]: 368–82).

> and go to sway over the trees?"
> Then the trees said to the fig tree,
> "You come and reign over us."
> But the fig tree answered them,
> "Shall I stop producing my sweetness
> and my delicious fruit,
> and go to sway over the trees?"
> Then the trees said to the vine,
> "You come and reign over us."
> But the vine said to them,
> "Shall I stop producing my wine
> that cheers gods and mortals,
> and go to sway over the trees?"
> So all the trees said to the bramble,
> "You come and reign over us."
> And the bramble said to the trees,
> "If in good faith you are anointing me king over you,
> then come and take refuge in my shade;
> but if not, let fire come out of the bramble
> and devour the cedars of Lebanon." (Judg 9:7–15)[8]

During the Divided Monarchy, king Amaziah sends a contingent of men to Jehoash, king of the Northern Kingdom, asking for a face-to-face meeting, presumably a military encounter. Jehoash sends a reply by way of a fable, congratulating Amaziah on killing ten thousand Edomites (2 Kgs 14:7), but warning him not to try his luck against the North:

> Then Amaziah sent messengers to King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face.' King Jehoash of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of Judah, "A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife;' but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thornbush. You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has lifted you up. Be content with your glory, and stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?" (2 Kgs 14:8–10; cf. 2 Chron 25:18–19)[9]

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8 Unless otherwise stated, biblical quotations are from the NRSV. Josephus's summary of this passage (*Ant.* 5.7.2 [235–237]) opens the fable with a line reminiscent of *The Life of Aesop*, "Once when trees were endowed with human speech," though the remainder of his version is a departure from the first-century norm, which is better reflected in the biblical version. Pseudo-Philo's version ruins the fable quality by naming the characters to which the flora correspond as he goes along (LAB 37.2–4). Curiously, as they do from time to time, Josephus and Pseudo-Philo do have certain details of the story in common that depart from the biblical text.

9 As Ben-Amos observes, "Political discourse, in either public address or private admonition, seems to have been a proper orational context for fables. Jotham's fable (Judges 9:6–20),

Finally, another example involving both flora and fauna appears in Ezekiel. This time the text signals explicitly that what follows is a *mashal* (absent from the episode of Nathan's fable to David):

> Son of man, propound a riddle and speak a parable to the house of Israel.[10] Say: Thus says the Lord GOD: A great eagle, with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colors, came to the Lebanon. He took the top of the cedar, broke off its topmost shoot; he carried it to a land of trade, set it in a city of merchants. Then he took a seed from the land, placed it in fertile soil; a plant by abundant waters, he set it like a willow twig. It sprouted and became a vine spreading out, but low; its branches turned toward him, its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine; it brought forth branches, put forth foliage. There was another great eagle, with great wings and much plumage. And see! This vine stretched out its roots toward him; it shot out its branches toward him, so that he might water it. From the bed where it was planted it was transplanted to good soil by abundant waters, so that it might produce branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine. Say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Will it prosper? Will he not pull up its roots, cause its fruit to rot and wither, its fresh sprouting leaves to fade? No strong arm or mighty army will be needed to pull it from its roots. When it is transplanted, will it thrive? When the east wind strikes it, will it not utterly wither, wither on the bed where it grew? (Ezek 17:2–10 [trans. adapted from NRSV])

With this handful of examples, we have exhausted the "parables" and "fables" in the vast corpus of the Hebrew Bible.

Since the Hebrew Bible is occasionally used to supply a context for Jesus's fables, it is appropriate to interrupt the story of the fable for a moment. The obvious theoretical problem with searching for "parables" in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism is that "parable" is a concept derived from the Synoptic Gospels, which is then read back into early Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. On the rare occasion that a scholar risks to identify additional "parables" in the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish texts, the fit with Jesus's "parables" is poor and the results are always modest. Craig Evans gathers further texts that he considers "parables" in some sense.[11] He is not especialy concerned to define the "parable" (or a fable for that matter) beyond equating it with the Hebrew

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which Yassif analyzes insightfully (pp. 32–35), and Nathan the Prophet's fable (II Samuel 12:1–6), which he does not, are two outstanding examples of the rhetorical use of fable" (Dan Ben-Amos, "The Hebrew Folktale: A Review Essay. Review of Eli Yassif, The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning" [1995]: 25–60, here 36).

10 Ezek 17:2 MT: בֶּן־אָדָם חוּד חִידָה וּמְשֹׁל מָשָׁל אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל; LXX: υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου διήγησαι διήγημα καὶ εἰπὸν παραβολὴν πρὸς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ισραηλ.

11 Craig A. Evans, "Parables in Early Judaism," in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 51–75.

mashal and Greek παραβολή (*parabolē*).[12] The problems with identifying texts as "parables" becomes apparent as Evans works through them. Of Judg 9:8–15, he says it is "more of the nature of a fable than a parable;"[13] of Ezek 19:1–9, he says it is "more of an allegory than a simple parable;"[14] of Ezek 21:1–5, he says it is "more of a metaphor;"[15] of Ezek 24:2–5, he says it is "more of an object lesson than a parable;"[16] and so on.[17] With so many necessary qualifications (to no fault of Evans), it is apparent that the modern scholarly usage of the term "parable" is contrived. When we are not insisting that Jesus's "parables" are something brand new, one gets the impression that "parable" is played, to use the phrase of Bernhard Heininger, as a "terminological joker" card to generate an acceptable context for them.[18] We play a hand made up of mostly jokers and declare it a full house. When this is all we have, it is one strategy, but it is not very satisfying or impressive. It is understandable why there are so few books written on "parables" in the Hebrew Bible.

The attested fables in the Hebrew Bible (among which I include the née "parables") accord with contemporary and later Graeco-Latin fables. The paucity of their number in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism, however, cannot account for the sudden rise in use by Jesus in the New Testament Gospels and the later rabbis. To recall Neusner's list from the introduction, like the "Pharisaic stratum," the Hebrew Bible gives no account for "such similitudes as servant/master, tower/war, lost sheep/lost coin, the thief, faithful servant, children at play, leaven, seed growing of itself, treasure in the field, pearl of great price, fish net, house builder, fig tree, returning householder, prodigal son, unjust steward, two sons, and the like."[19] In the Hebrew Bible, we apply the term "parable" without precision to a select group of texts, some of which are ill-fitting. Sometimes this is done to cobble together something sufficient to serve as a background for Jesus's "parables." This effort is not made very often

12 In the Hebrew Bible, *mashal* is applied to a variety of narrative forms. It is rarely, if ever, applied to texts that parable scholars would consider "parables."

13 Evans, "Parables in Early Judaism," 54.

14 Evans, "Parables in Early Judaism," 59.

15 Evans, "Parables in Early Judaism," 60.

16 Evans, "Parables in Early Judaism," 60.

17 For example, Evans also identifies one in the Genesis Apocryphon, which is also a fable ("Parables in Early Judaism," 63). On this fable, see 16.5. To these texts, Beavis adds what she reckons as a fable in Sir 1:14–20 ("Parable and Fable, 490).

18 On the use of "Gleichnis" and, *mutatis mutandis*, "parable" in English as a "terminologischer Joker," see Berhard Heininger, "Gleichnis, Gleichnisrede," *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik Online*, ed. Gert Ueding (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), https://www.degruyter.com/document/database/HWRO/entry/hwro.3.gleichnis_gleichnisrede/html.

19 Neusner, "Types and Forms in Ancient Jewish Literature," 376.

precisely because it relies on appealing to immense gaps in our knowledge, vague definitions of a "parable," and a small number of texts. This situation also contributes to why, unaware of the ancient fable, there is wide agreement on the novelty of Jesus's "parables."

3.2.2 *The Greek World*

The oldest fable in Greek literature is the Hawk and the Nightingale (Perry 4a), which appears in Hesiod's *Works and Days* 202–212 (ca. 700 BCE). By the first century, it was already known to Quintilian (*Inst.* 5.11.19–21) and Plutarch (*Sept. sap. conv.* 158b) as the oldest fable. Then, as now, it garnered attention from those interested in fable theory, who used it as a paradigmatic example of the genre and noted its differences from those fables found in the Imperial period.[20] Hesiod's version of this fable is as follows:

> And now I will tell a fable to kings who themselves too have understanding.
> This is how the hawk addressed the colorful-necked nightingale, carrying her high up among the clouds, grasping her with its claws, while she wept piteously, pierced by the curved claws; he said to her forcefully, "Silly bird, why are you crying out? One far superior to you is holding you. You are going wherever I shall carry you, even if you are a singer; I shall make you my dinner if I wish, or I shall let you go. Stupid he who would wish to contend against those stronger than he is: for he is deprived of the victory, and suffers pains in addition to his humiliations." So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the long-winged bird.
> *As for you, Perses, give heed to Justice and do not foster Outrageousness*. (Hesiod, *Op.* 202–213 [trans. Most, LCL])[21]

In the context of Hesiod, the fable is used to illustrate the situation of the poet, exemplified in the song bird, and the kings, zoormorphized in the hawk. The hawk's total control of the situation and the songbird's futility in resisting her

20 For recent scholarship on this fable and ancient theoretical testimonies making use of it, see van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 127 n. 31 and 29, respectively. Already in this first example we see the terminology of fable and parable bleed over into each other. It is called a "parable," for example, by Joseph Fontenrose, "Work, Justice, and Hesiod's Five Ages," *CP* 69 (1974): 1–16, here 14; Svein Østerud, "The Individuality of Hesiod," *Hermes* 104 (1976): 13–29, here 22; and Martin Litchfield West, *Hesiod, Works and Days* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 49. It is called a "Gleichnis" by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Hesiodos Erga*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1962), 64; Hartmut Erbse, "Die Funktion des Rechtsgedankens in Hesiods 'Erga'," *Hermes* 121 (1993): 12–28, here 13 n. 5.

21 The deviation of this archaic fable from the standard type has made it, in the words of van Dijk, "controversial" (*Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 128), and "problematically anomalous and complex" (*Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 137). Features that some claim are standard but absent here are the introductory sketch of the situation, the failure of the strong party, and the weaker party's use of cleverness in an attempt to escape.

capture reflects the king's "might makes right" sense of justice. The aberrations of this fable from the norm need not detain us here, but we may note that it points to the most common function of the fable in the Archaic and Classical Periods, as an *exemplum*.

Remarkably, we have quite a number of fables or references to known fables already in the Greek Archaic period.[22] Not long after Hesiod, the most important of these early authors is Archilochus (ca. 680–ca. 645 BCE). From what survives of Archilochus in various testimonia and two papyri, we know that he was familiar with several fables found in the later collections. From him we get our earliest versions of "The Eagle and the Fox" (Perry 1; Chambry 3; and cf. Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.28)[23] and "The Ape and the Fox" (Perry 81).[24] The forms of these fables are different from the versions that would later appear in the collections, but if it is not a coincidence, The Eagle and the Fox earned the prime of place as the opening fable in the Augustana Collection, perhaps in recognition of its antiquity.[25]

The best preserved of Archilochus's fables is the Fox and the Eagle (Phaedrus, *Fab*. 1.28; Perry 1; Chambry 3),[26] which comes down to us in numerous, mostly fragmentary or incomplete versions (frag. 172–181). While not the oldest, the most complete version is fragment 172:

> An eagle and a fox became friends and decided to live near each other, thinking that their friendship would be strengthened by cohabitation. And so the eagle flew up into a very tall tree and made its nest, while the fox went into a thicket that lay beneath and gave birth. One day, when the fox had gone out to forage, the eagle, at a loss for food, flew down into the thicket and seizing the cubs dined on them along with its nestlings. The fox, upon returning and realizing what had been done, was more distressed by the inability to exact vengeance than by the death of its cubs, since as a land animal it was unable to pursue one that had wings. Therefore, standing far away, it cursed its enemy, the only thing left for the powerless and weak. And it happened that the eagle soon paid the penalty for its sacrilege against friendship. Some people were sacrificing a goat in

22 These include Pseudo-Homer (*Margites*), Semonides, Solon, Theognis, Aeschylus, and an anonymous scholion. For a full list of fables, and references and allusions to known fables in the Greek Archaic and Classical periods, see Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 12–13.

23 Fragments 172–181, on which, see below. Already by Aristophanes (*Av*. 652–654), it had been attributed to Aesop. Francesco Bossi calls it a "parable;" see his *Studi su Archiloco*, 2nd ed. (Bari: Adriatica, 1990), 187.

24 Fragment 185–187.

25 Hence its place as number 1 in Perry's enumeration.

26 The versions recorded in Phaedrus, Perry, and Chambry are very different. This fable, as we would expect from one so old, has many forms. We may confidently ascribe the interior monologue to Archilochus's version, however, since only his fragment records direct speech.

> the countryside and the eagle flying down carried off from the altar a burning entrail. When it had been brought to the nest, a strong gust of wind kindled a bright flame from the thin and aged straw. Because of this the nestlings were set on fire and since they were not yet capable of flight they fell to the ground. The fox ran up within sight of the eagle and devoured them all. (trans. Gerber, LCL)

The significance of Archilochus for the fable tradition is not limited to his very early fables, but a number of features that would later become characteristic of the fable. The plot structure of this example follows a paradigm that we will see time and again (10.5 and 11.3): a morally dubious character enacts a plan that gives fleeting satisfaction but soon goes awry. Though it is less well preserved, fragment 176 of the same fable captures a feature that would later become significant in the fable literature of the first century. The fox enters into soliloquy, saying, "Do you see where that lofty crag is, rugged and hostile? On it (the eagle) sits, making light of your assault" (trans. Gerber, LCL).[27] Already in antiquity, it was Archilochus that was credited with the invention of iambic poetry and he was held in highest esteem throughout the Greek and Roman periods.[28] In the first century, Quintilian praises him:

> Thus of the three writers of iambics accepted by Aristarchus' ruling, Archilochus alone will be particularly relevant to the formation of *hexis*.[29] He has great force of language, powerful, concise, and pungent *sententiae*, and plenty of blood and sinew, so that some think that it is the fault of his subject rather than of his talent that he has any superiors. (*Inst.* 10.1.60)

Dio Chrysostom names Archilochus in the same breath as Homer and highlights some important features of his reputation:

> And, indeed, how much better it is to abuse people and to hold up to the light each man's stupidity and wickedness than to court favour by what is said and by compliments debauch one's auditors, you will discover best from what I am about to tell you. For while there have been since the world began two poets with whom no other poet deserves to be compared, namely, Homer and Archilochus, one of them, Homer, praised practically everything—animals, plants, water, earth, armour, and horses; in fact it may be said that there is nothing which he

27 ὁρᾷς ἵν' ἐστὶ κεῖνος ὑψηλὸς πάγος, //τρηχύς τε καὶ παλίγκοτος; // ἐν τῷ κάθηται, σὴν ἐλαφρίζων μάχην. This fragment has not been influenced by the versions of Phaedrus and prose recensions, which do not have any soliloquy for this fable. On the significance of soliloquy in the ancient fable and the Lukan fables, see 10.4.

28 J. P. Barron and P. E. Easterling, "Elegy and Iambus," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: Greek Literature*, ed. P. Easterling and B. Knox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985), 117–64, here 119.

29 *Hexis* is something like confidence and assuredness in one's speech. See *Inst.* 10.1.1.

> failed to mention with praise and honour … But Archilochus went to the other extreme, toward censure—seeing, I imagine, that men have greater need of that—and first of all he censures himself. That is why he alone, not only after his death, but before his birth, obtained the highest tribute from the deity. Certainly Apollo drove his slayer from the temple, declaring that he had slain a servant of the Muses. (*1 Tars.* 33.11–12 [trans. J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby, LCL])[30]

The association of Archilochus's poetry with introspection of the poet and his characters, exemplified in the use of soliloquy above, foreshadows this frequent feature of the fables of the first century.[31] As the "inventor" of iambic, and invective poetry especially, he foreshadows the later fable authors like Babrius (see 3.5.2 below), writing in invective iambs. The association of the fable with censuring and pointing out stupidity and wickedness is another focus of the fable that will become central at the time of Jesus and the Gospels.

3.3 The Classical Period of Ancient Greece

3.3.1 *Rhetoric*

The role of the fable in Hesiod and others accords with the other well-established purpose of the fable in the Archaic and Classical Periods: rhetorical use in political and forensic oratory. The first explicit discussion of the theory of the fable is found in Aristotle's *The "Art" of Rhetoric* 2.20, written about 330 BCE. The subject of Aristotle's second book of the *Rhetoric* is aptly summarized by J. H. Freese as "psychological or ethical proofs, based upon a knowledge of the human emotions and their causes, and of the different types of character."[32] The relevant passage appears in the context of using examples (παραδείγματα) to persuade. Of examples there are two kinds:

> … one which consists in relating things that have happened before (πράγματα), and another in inventing them oneself. The latter are subdivided into comparisons (παραβολή) or fables (λόγοι),[33] such as those of Aesop and the Libyan. (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.20.3 [trans. Freese, LCL])

30 Dio may also be found coming to Archilochus defense as one equal with Homer in *Hom. Socr.* 55.6–7.

31 In the introspection of the poet, especially Phaedrus (see 4.2); on the introspection of the characters, especially Babrius (see 4.1).

32 J. H. Freese, trans., *Art of Rhetoric*, LCL 193 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), xxv.

33 On this passage as a means for distinguishing "parables" from fables, see 7.3.1.

The examples of "things that have happened" consist of relevant historical situations in the past that are known to the audience or to the judge and that would be analogous to the present case in some way. One could then appeal to this analogous situation in an attempt to sway the ruling. For the fable, Aristotle gives among other examples, the story of Aesop defending a demagogue in a capital case by telling the fable of the Fox and the Hedgehog (Perry 427). The essential advantage of the fable, as Aristotle goes on to explain, is that "it is easier to invent fables" (*Rhet.* 2.20.7). While examples derived from facts are more useful for deliberative oratory, because "as a rule the future resembles the past" (*Rhet.* 2.20.8), there might not be a good example that comes to mind. What is one to do in such a situation? Invent a story, that is, a fable. Thus, the proof drawn from the example of a fable is much easier to provide because one simply makes up the story. The beauty of this rhetorical tool is that although all parties recognize it is not a true story, the story nevertheless is persuasive in conveying a truth. The paradox of the fable is that it effectively conveys truth by means of falsehood.[34]

Although explicitly absent from Aristotle's discussion, two other related rhetorical uses of the fable are widely attested in the setting of forensic oratory: recapturing the straying attention of an audience and buttering up a judge. The esteemed juror Lovecleon of Aristophanes's *Wasps* complains:

> I just listen to them spouting every sort of alibi. Tell me, is there any brand of wheedling I don't hear in court? Some of them bewail their poverty and go on exaggerating their troubles until they somehow seem as bad as my own. Others tell us stories, others something funny from Aesop. Others crack jokes to make me laugh and put away my anger. (Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 560–567 [trans. Henderson, LCL])

As we saw above (2.2.3), Lovecleon recounts numerous fables of his own, Aesopic and Sybaritic, during the court proceedings (*Vesp.* 1182; 1399–1405; 1427–1432; 1435–1440; 1448), and here he complains of this commonplace wheedling by means of "something funny from Aesop."[35] In the oldest surviving

34 We will return to this essential nature of the fable when discussing how to define it in Chapter 5.

35 The frequency of Lovecleon's use of fables is discussed in Kenneth S. Rothwell, "Aristophanes' 'Wasps' and the Sociopolitics of Aesop's Fables," *CJ* 90 (1995): 233–54. Rothwell's claim that Lovecleon invokes Aesop's fables more than any character in Greek literature (233) is a gross misstatement if one includes the authors discussed below. That he cites Aesop more than anyone else in Aristophanic comedy stands, however. For Aesop and fables in Aristophanes, see Silvio Schirru, *La favola in Aristofane*, Studia Comica 3 (Berlin: Verlag Antike, 2009) and Chapter 11, "The Aesopic in Aristophanes," in *Greek*

rhetorical handbook in Latin, the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* from ca. 86–82 BCE, we find the following instructions for the lawyer who finds himself in a situation when he is second to speak (the *exordium*):

> If the hearers have been fatigued by listening, we shall open with something that may provoke laughter—a fable, a plausible fiction, a caricature, an ironical inversion of the meaning of a word, an ambiguity, innuendo, banter, a naivety, an exaggeration.... (*Rhet. Her.* 1.10 [trans. Caplan, LCL])

Around the same time, Cicero (106–43 BCE) gives similar advice in his *On Invention*, recommending that one begin with a fable to refresh the audience if "weariness has alienated the sympathy of the auditor."[36] Later, in the fourth century CE, the preeminent rhetor in Rome and Christian convert Marius Victorinus recommends the same, elaborating on Cicero's discussion and recommending that one begin with an Aesopic fable or tale "to move the judge."[37] From Aristophanes in fifth-century BCE Athens to Marius Victorinus in fourth-century CE Rome, we may observe this steady tradition from across the centuries demonstrating that the fable is a staple of public speaking.

Comedy and the Discourse of Genres, ed. Emmanuela Bakola, L. Prauscello, and Mario Telò (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 277–97.

36 "If ... weariness has alienated the sympathy of the auditor from your case, it is a help to promise that you will speak more briefly than you were prepared to speak; that you will not imitate your opponent. If the case permits, it is not unprofitable to begin with some new topic, or a jest, either one which is extemporaneous—a kind which meets with uproarious applause and shouts of approval—or one already prepared containing a fable, or a story, or some laughable incident" (Cicero, *Inv.* 1.17 [trans. Hubbell, LCL).

37 "Accordingly then if you will have a suit, some novelty or a funny jest or at least a joke will be useful to move the judge, and these are of two sorts: either extemporaneous, as if to bring about a loud clamor or cause a din, or having been thought out beforehand and prepared, for instance either beginning with a fable (*fabula*) or Aesopic tale (*apologo*) to apply to the case at hand. *Fabulae* are those things that we see for the most part brought forth from Phaedrus, Medea (?) (*Medeis*), Clytemnestra (?) (*Clytaemestris*) and others like them. *Apologi* are composed of low-minded subjects whose forms and aspects are brought to life, such as the mouse and the lion" (Marius Victorinus, *Explanationes in Ciceronis rhetoricam* 1.17 [trans. mine]). The identity of Phaedrus is clear (see 4.2), but the other fable tellers Victorinus mentions are otherwise unknown, which is also the case for several more fable tellers of the ancient world. While the "n" of Clytemnestra is absent in the Latin text of Ippolito, she lists a variant containing it (Antonella Ippolito, *Marii Victorini: Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*, CCSL 132, [Turnhout: Brepols, 2006], here 82). For Marius Victorinus as a Christian, see F. F. Bruce, "Marius Victorinus and His Works," *EvQ* 18 (1946): 132–53; more recently, Stephen Andrew Cooper, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and idem, "The Platonist Christianity of Marius Victorinus," *Religions* 7, no. 10 (2016): 122, DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7100122.

3.3.2 *Education*

Aside from these more cultivated uses in oratory, the other primary context in which one encounters fables are oblique and direct references to their didactic role, including formal primary education. The didactic role of the fable in the Imperial age will be the focus of Chapter 5. Like the other surprisingly ancient testimonies of fables and their use, the educational function also goes back deep into the Classical period. In Aristophanes's *Birds*, when the chorus leader does not follow the reasoning of Peisetaerus, the following insult is hurled at him: "That's because you're uneducated and uninquisitive, and you haven't thumbed your Aesop" (*Av.* 471 [trans. adapted from Henderson, LCL]).[38] While the precise meaning of πεπάτηκας, "thumbed," has been debated since antiquity,[39] the insult is particularly saucy, communicating that there was a certain expectation that anyone with even the most rudimentary education would know the Aesopic fables—this already by the time Aristophanes was writing in the fifth century BCE. The character Peisetaerus then goes on to paraphrase the fable of the Lark and Her Father (Perry 447).

As I mentioned above, Aristophanes's younger contemporary, Plato, takes for granted that fables are used to educate children. Through the dialog with his interlocutor, Plato's *Republic* allows us to mirror-read the place of the fable in educating the young in fifth- and fourth-century BCE Athens:

> "Come on then, and like people in a fable telling stories (μύθῳ μυθολογοῦντές) with ample leisure, let's educate these men by our discussion."
> "Yes we must."
> "What is this education then? Or is it difficult to find anything better than what has been discovered over many years? I think I am right in saying that we have physical exercise for the body and the arts for the soul?"
> "Yes we do."
> "Shall we not begin our education with the arts before physical exercise?"
> "Of course."
> "Do you consider telling stories (λόγους) as part of the arts?"
> "I do."
> "And there are two kinds of story (λόγων): true ones and fictional (ἀληθές, ψεῦδος)?"
> "Yes."
> "We must educate them in both kinds, but in fiction (ψευδέσιν) first, mustn't we?"
> "I don't understand," he said.
> "What do you mean? Don't you understand," I said, "that we tell children fables (μύθους) first? I assume this means fiction (ψεῦδος) on the whole, but there can

38 ἀμαθὴς γὰρ ἔφυς κοὐ πολυπράγμων, οὐδ' Αἴσωπον πεπάτηκας.

39 See the discussion in van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 38. I take the reference as both literal, in referring to Aesopic material in writing, and as a joke, since the characters are birds without hands with which they might "thumb" anything.

> be truth (ἀληθῆ) in this too, and we use fables (μύθοις) with children before we go on to physical exercise."
> "That is so."
> "Indeed, that's what I was saying, that we must take up the arts before physical exercise." "And rightly so," he said. "You know that the beginning of everything we undertake is most important, especially in any young tender creature? That is when it is most malleable and when whatever character you desire to be stamped on the individual is fixed." (Plato, *Resp*. 2.376e–377a [trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL])

Socrates and his interlocutor go on to discuss the sorts of fables and stories that are beneficial for education and which will have negative effects on the developing minds of children, among other particulars. Already in this conversation we see the relationship of truth and falsehood as it relates to storytelling, that "fable" is the domain of the untrue story, and that even an untrue story can have truth in it. These concepts and the relationships between these terms—λόγος and μῦθος, ἀληθεία and ψευδής—remain central in discussion of the fable through the Roman period.

3.3.3 *Condemned Wise Men*

As we have now seen, the fable was used in several contexts, particularly in oratory and education. The fable was used to teach children, to persuade, and to appeal to popular and elite audiences alike. Another use is attested in Plato, who records important details about the purpose Socrates found for the fable while in his prison cell:

> But Socrates sat up on his couch, pulled up his leg and rubbed it hard with his hand. While he was rubbing it he said: "My friends, what a strange thing it is, it seems, that people call 'pleasant,' how remarkable it is in comparison with its apparent opposite 'painful': the fact that the two refuse to arise in a person together! But if someone pursues one of them and catches it, he is always pretty much forced to catch the other as well as if they're two beings fastened to a single head. What's more it seems to me," he said, "if Aesop had thought of it he would have written a fable how god wanted to reconcile them as they were warring against each other and, since he couldn't, he joined their heads together, and so whoever gets the one, the other follows on behind. This is just as in my own case, it seems: since there was a pain in my leg as a result of the fetters, so the pleasure seems to have come following on behind." (Plato, *Phaed*. 60b–c [trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL])

The fable that Socrates invents for this occasion is of the etiological type especially common in the early fables.[40] This is especially significant, since the

40 See Ben Edwin Perry, "Demetrius of Phalerum and the Aesopic Fables," *TAPA* 93 (1962): 287–346, here 301.

visitor, Cebes, responds that the friends of Socrates are surprised to learn that he has been composing poetry—something he has never done before. Cebes begins his response, "Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, you did well to remind me. You see, concerning the poems you've composed, putting the fables of Aesop into verse" (*Phaed.* 60c–d [trans. adapted from Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL]).[41] Socrates answers that he has been doing this in response to a recurring dream in which he is commanded to "compose and work music (or art)" (*Phaed.* 60e [trans. mine]),[42] and "thinking that if one were to be a poet one should compose stories (λόγους), not factual accounts, and I myself was not a fable-maker (μυθολογικός), then for this reason I worked up the first of the fables (μύθους) of Aesop I came across that I had available (οὓς προχείρους εἶχον) and that I knew" (*Phaed.* 61b [trans. adapted from Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL]). Though Socrates says he is no *muthologikos*, this episode is significant for the study of the ancient fable for many reasons. Beyond providing another attestation of the early classical uses of fables, on the lips of the first moral philosopher no less, it tells us that the fables Socrates knew were in prose. It is also an early attestation of a curious tradition of a righteous person, wrongly condemned to death for some impiety, using fables prior to their execution. In addition to this story, Diogenes Laertius records Socrates quoting the opening of a fable at trial, "'Judge not, ye men of Corinth,' Aesop cried, "Of virtue as the jury-courts decide" (*Vit.* 2.5.42 [trans. Hicks, LCL]). This connection between these two figures suggests that this tradition, by the time of Diogenes Laertius at least, was an established *topos*. Among the number of examples of characters, Greek and Jewish, reciting fables during their imprisonment or awaiting an undeserved death are Aesop, Socrates, the fabulist Phaedrus, Apollonius of Tyana, Rabbi Akiva, and as I shall argue later: Jesus in the Gospels (9.4).[43]

41 πεποίηκας ἐντείνας τοὺς τοῦ Αἰσώπου λόγους.

42 μουσικὴν ποίει καὶ ἐργάζου. As Emlyn-Jones notes, μουσική covers music, poetry, dance, and visual art, "what is usually meant in modern parlance by 'the arts'" (Christopher Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, trans., *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo*, LCL 36 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017], 305).

43 For Aesop in *The Life of Aesop* see 4.4. Phaedrus composes his third book while awaiting trial (see 3.5.3.1). Rabbi Akiva also tells a fable immediately prior to his martyrdom. On Apollonius of Tyana, see his discussion with Menippus in Chapter 2. On the relationship between the figures Aesop and Socrates, see Markus Schauer and Stefan Merkle, "Äsop und Sokrates," in *Der Äsop-Roman: Motivgeschichte und Erzählstruktur*, ed. Niklas Holzberg, Classica Monacensia 6 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1992), 85–96; Christos A. Zafiropoulos, "Socrates and Aesop: A Few Notes on Plato's Portrait of the Arch-Philosopher," *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 16 (2011): 203–16, and his subsequent monograph *Socrates and Aesop: A Comparative Study of the Introduction of Plato's* Phaedo, International Plato Studies 34 (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2015). For the Gospel depictions of Jesus as suffering a philosopher's death inspired by Socrates, see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Jesus as*

For the history of the fable, Socrates's oblique notice that these were the fables "that he had at hand" (οὓς προχείρους εἶχον) has been taken by fable scholars as a crucial hint that Socrates may have had a collection of some kind, perhaps in a *repertorium*.[44] As the earliest reference to a collection of fables, this episode in Socrates's cell gives us something to ponder as we segue into the subject of all our sources from this point on: the fable collections. But first, let us take a detour to introduce a figure who needs no introduction: Aesop. In what follows, we shall first introduce Aesop by noting some of the earliest traditions about him before introducing *The Life of Aesop* in Chapter 4.

3.3.4 *Early Traditions about Aesop*

The most famous fabulist of antiquity is the legendary Aesop, who has been a household name for millennia. Aesop would have lived at some time in the sixth century BCE, and from early in the Classical period, traditions about him were well-established. Known still today as the teller of fables *par excellence*, he was already a character in the history books by the fifth century BCE, when we first encounter him in Herodotus, *Histories* 2.134–135:

> Rhodopis flourished in the reign of Amasis, not of Mycerinus, and thus very many years after these kings who built the pyramids. She was a Thracian by birth, slave to Iadmon, son of Hephaestopolis, a Samian, and fellow-slave of Aesopus the fable-composer (λογοποιοῦ). For he also was owned by Iadmon; of which the chiefest proof is that when the Delphians, obeying an oracle, issued many proclamations inviting whosoever would to claim the penalty for the killing of Aesopus, none would undertake it but only another Iadmon, grandson of the first. Thus was Aesopus too shown to be the slave of Iadmon. (trans. adapted from Godley, LCL)

Though there are fundamental disagreements among the early attestations of Aesop,[45] from this passage we learn several biographical details of the legendary character that remain consistent into the Common Era. Aesop was a slave and a *logopoios*, spent time in servitude on the island of Samos, and was unjustly killed by the Delphians. What further traces we have of Aesop's life

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Philosopher: The Moral Sage in the Synoptic Gospels (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

44 Others are skeptical that this should be taken as a reference to a written document and think it refers simply to those fables that Socrates knew by heart and sprang to mind. For the skeptical opinion, see for example, Edith Hall, "The Aesopic in Aristophanes," in *Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres*, 277–97, here 288–89.

45 Among other discrepancies, these would include the name of the slave owner, here given as Iadmon, though the name of the slave owner in *The Life of Aesop*, Xanthus of Samos, appears in the next line (Herodotus, *Hist.* 135).

from the Classical period indicate that his association with fables and some form of biography about him were well-known.

Aristophanes and his characters Lovecleon and Loathecleon likewise are well aware of Aesop's story. When Lovecleon begins to relate the story of Aesop telling the fable of the Dung Beetle, Hare and Eagles (Perry 3) to the Delphians, Loathecleon interrupts his father after just three Greek words:

> Lovecleon: "Aesop was once accused …"
> Loathecleon: "I'm not interested!" (*Vesp.* 1445–1446 [trans. adapted from Henderson, LCL])

In the context of the comedy, the interruption is an indication that Loathecleon knows already what his father is going to tell him. Since such a rhetorical maneuver by Aristophanes would only be effective if the audience, too, already knew the story, it is another indication that Aesop's story was common knowledge. Unperturbed by his son's interjection, Lovecleon goes on to narrate how the Delphians framed Aesop for stealing a libation bowl belonging to their gods, and how he told them a fable in reaction to this accusation. This story is preserved centuries later in the *Life of Aesop* (see the next section, 3.3.4).

We do not have to wait long to find the association of Aesop with the characteristic portrayal of speaking animals that would later become uniquely tied to him. Thanks in part to Aesop's association with talking animals—the fox being the most paradigmatic among them—we can identify with some confidence a cup depicting Aesop from 460–430 BCE.[46]

The famous Aesop Cup depicts the fabulist in a caricature of a "thinker," staff in hand, the oversized head a physiognomic exaggeration.[47] The mouths of both Aesop and the fox are open as though talking and the fox gestures with its hand as though it is making a point. Since poets are scarcely depicted in Attic pottery,[48] this is either an exceptional case or an indication that Aesop

46 This identification was made already by Otto Jahn, *Archaeologische Beiträge* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1848), 432–44.

47 The full citation of the figure drawing is Francois Lissarrangue, "Aesop, between Man and Beast: Ancient Portraits and Illustrations," in *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, ed. Beth Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 132–149, here page 138. A more extreme example of this same caricatured physiognomic depiction, a gargantuan head, atrophied body, leaning on a staff—is found in the contemporary Askos painting in the Louvre, inventory number G610. Because of Aesop's normal grotesque physical description, it is not so straightforward to identify what other characteristics might be exaggerated.

48 Alexandre G. Mitchell, *Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humour* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 244.

Figure 1 Painting on the Aesop Cup. A fox converses with Aesop. Painter of Bologna 417. Gregorian Etruscan Museum, the Vatican, inventory number 16552. Dated between 460–430 BCE. Image available here: https://catalogo.museivaticani.va/index.php/Detail/objects/MV.16552.0.0. Figure drawing of the painting by Francois Lissarrangue in "Aesop, between Man and Beast."

had other associations, with the physiognomic typology given to him here suggesting a "thinker."

As with the legendary Homer, there is little to divide legend from history in what our sources say about Aesop. As a historical figure he would have lived sometime in the sixth century BCE, and while there is consistency in the basics, most of our information about him derives from half a millennium later. It is not until *The Life of Aesop*, a suspiciously gospel-like text, that we finally get a good sense of what some ancients seem to have known about Aesop for centuries before. While some scholars place *The Life of Aesop* in the early Hellenistic period (323–31 BCE), it is most likely a product of the first or second century

CE, so a sketch of the text will be offered in Chapter 4. While *The Life of Aesop* is later, there is no doubt about Aesopic biographical traditions circulating in the Hellenistic period, along with fables associated with his name.

If it is right to consider it such, the earliest literary material evidence of Aesop's story is an Aramaic papyrus of *The Tale of Ahiqar*, copied in the first half of the fifth century BCE, which was discovered among the ruins of the Judean garrison at Elephantine. The relationship between the Semitic *Tale of Ahiqar*—a narrative with a collection of proverbs, similes, and fables—and the *Life of Aesop* is exceedingly complex and debated.[49] At a minimum, the court tale section (*Vit. Aes.* 101–123) is directly paralleled in *Ahiqar*, and it is clear that the character Ahiqar was assimilated to Aesop in the Greek tradition by the Hellenistic period if not earlier. Here again we note the Semitic and even Judean connection to the fable tradition at this early period. We shall return to Aesop's *Life* and his influence upon later traditions at several points in this project.

Later biographical tradition, as exemplified by Plutarch, makes Aesop a contemporary of the Seven Sages, with whom he converses at a symposium. He is seated next to Solon of Athens and tells a fable (*Sept. sap. conv.* 150a). Plutarch (*Sept. sap. conv.* 155b) also connects Aesop with Croesus, the last king of Lydia (ca. 560–546 BCE), who is said to have sent Aesop on a mission to Periander of Corinth. Plutarch credits Aesop with the idea of building the Diolkos across the Isthmus of Corinth to transport goods (*Sept. sap. conv.* 150a), and connects Aesop with Delphi, where he met his death (*Sera* 556f). In the time of the Emperor Julian, he speaks of Aesop's relation to the fable: "But of fables—the Homer, or the Thucydides, or the Plato, or with whomever one wishes to equate him—was Aesop of Samos, a slave by fortune rather than temperament" (Julian, *Or.* 7.207C [trans. mine]).

3.4 The Hellenistic Period

3.4.1 *Demetrius of Phalerum*

Excluding the possible collection of fables that Socrates had "at hand," and the legendary transcription by Aesop of his fables for deposit in the library

49 For a translation of the Aramaic version, see James M. Lindenberger, "Ahiqar," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:479–507. For further details on the relationship between Aesop and Ahiqar, see Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:275–84; Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 176–85, and the exhaustive work of Konstantakos, cited in Chapter 2 note 79. In 4.4, we will return to *The Life of Aesop* for a sketch of the work.

of Lydia, the earliest securely-known collection of fables put into writing was that of a certain Athenian citizen, Demetrius of Phalerum (ca. 355–280 BCE). Of this Demetrius, all of his works have been lost, so that we have only *testimonia*, various sayings attributed to him, and spurious works. From the substantial legacy left behind in these diverse sources, it is clear he was an important figure, known to be an outstanding orator, and a prolific author on a variety of subjects.[50] Whether he studied under him directly or not, it is certain that Demetrius was one of the earliest inheritors of Aristotle's teaching.[51] He was famous in his day as a Peripatetic philosopher and a statesman in Athens. From the fragmentary evidence that survives, it is clear he was a colorful as well as controversial figure. As best as we can reconstruct his life, he was once a popular statesman in Athens, leading the city for around about a decade (317–307 BCE).[52] He then fell from power, was condemned to death on a capital charge, probably lived in exile for a decade in Thebes, but made a comeback of sorts. It would have been sometime around the year 300 that he found himself in Alexandria, but he would eventually lose favor there as well, ultimately dying under mysterious circumstances, reportedly from a snake bite.[53]

In our sources, he is commonly associated with the founding of the library of Alexandria during his time living there.[54] Never noted by the fables scholars, but of keen interest to the biblical scholar is that this very same Demetrius plays a central role in the Letter of Aristeas as the king's librarian.[55] Demetrius's books

50 For the scattered sources on his life and his writings as well as helpful essays, see William W. Fortenbaugh and Eckart Schütrumpf, eds., *Demetrius of Phalerum: Text, Translation, and Discussion*, Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities 9 (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2000). Though Quintilian may not have been his biggest fan, he acknowledges Demetrius's skill in oration, describing him as "just about the last of the Attic school who can be called an orator" (*Inst.* 10.1.80).

51 See Michael J. Sollenberger, "Diogenes Laertius' Life of Demetrius of Phalerum," in Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf, *Demetrius of Phalerum*, 311–29, here 316. He was certainly a student of Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle (8 SOD = text 8 of Stork, van Ophuijzen, and Dorandi, in Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf, *Demetrius of Phalerum*, 38–39).

52 On this period, see Lara O'Sullivan, *The Regime of Demetrius of Phalerum in Athens, 317–307 BCE: A Philosopher in Politics*, Mnemosyne Supplements 318 (Boston: Brill, 2014).

53 Reported in Cicero, *Rab. Post*. 9.23; and in the biography of Diogenes Laertius (see below).

54 The *testimonia* regarding the Alexandrian library and the origin of the Septuagint were originally collected by Paul Wendland, *Aristeae ad Philocratem epistula cum ceteris de origene versionis LXX interpretum testimoniis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1900). See now 58A–66 SOD in Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf, *Demetrius of Phalerum*, 109–27.

55 Demetrius appears at strategic points in the epistle, beginning with recommending to the king Ptolemy II Philadelphus the translation of the Jewish law books into Greek (Let. Aris. 9–11). After Demetrius explains the need for a translation, the king orders it made. The full report of Demetrius on the project is found in Aristeas (29–32). Demetrius was chaperone for the delegation of Judean translators, saw to their accommodations,

are what have attracted the notice of fables scholars. Though his biography is not everything one could hope for,[56] Diogenes Laertius includes Demetrius among the Peripatetics in book five of his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. In the Loeb edition, his biography runs about five pages of Greek, excluding the list of his works, but it is here we get some vital information. As is often the case, Diogenes is especially helpful in reporting the otherwise lost works in detailed catalogues of the individuals he describes.[57] In this context he states of Demetrius,

> In the number of his works and their total length in lines he has surpassed almost all contemporary Peripatetics. For in learning and versatility he has no equal. Some of these works are historical and others political; there are some dealing with poets, others with rhetoric. Then there are public speeches and reports of embassies, besides collections of Aesop's fables (λόγων Αἰσωπείων συναγωγαί) and much else. He wrote: Of Legislation at Athens, five books. Of the Constitutions of Athens, two books. Of Statesmanship, two books. … Aesop's Fables, one book. (Αἰσωπείων α′) Chreia, one book (Χρειῶν α′).[58] (Diogenes Laertius, *Vit.* 5.80–81 [trans. adapted from Hicks, LCL])

Demetrius's "collections of Aesop's fables" and this book of *Aesopica* are the holy grail of fable scholarship. Many fundamental questions about the ancient fable revolve around this brief notice, including whether we have any of this collection. The collection itself is mentioned nowhere else in antiquity

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and personally encouraged the translation (302–303). It was not one of the scribes, but Demetrius who first read the translation aloud in the presence of the translators and assembled Jews (308). According to the legend, then, we have Demetrius to thank in no small part for our Septuagint. Like *The Life of Aesop* above and other authors below, this is one of the many chance encounters between ancient fable authors and the Jews. The dubious historicity of the Aristeas correspondence aside, we are on surer footing in associating him in some way with the founding of the library of Alexandria. It is virtually guaranteed that his own books would have been added to the collection (Tracy, "Demetrius of Phalerum," 344). See now also L. Michael White and G. Anthony Keddie, *Jewish Fictional Letters from Hellenistic Egypt: The Epistle of Aristeas and Related Literature*, WGRW 37 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018).

56 Missing, for example, is any notice of his connection to the Alexandrian library. "In the case of Demetrius, Diogenes did not do his job as well as he might have done … Clearly, this is not one of Diogenes' better 'lives'" (Sollenberger, "Diogenes Laertius' Life," 312). Another explanation is that Diogenes does not mention Demetrius in connection to the library because there is no history to this story. Note also that Philo does not mention Demetrius in connection with the LXX (*Mos.* 2.25–44).

57 We know from other sources that even this list is incomplete. See Sollenberger, "Diogenes Laertius' Life," 312.

58 If it is not a coincidence that Diogenes places Demetrius's collection of fables next to his collection of *chreiai* in the list, we may note a certain resemblance between the two genres, both of which would later form adjacent lessons for the progymnasmatists.

and Demetrius's book has not come down to us; however, a couple of breadcrumbs have been left behind. If it is not a very strange coincidence, we find Demetrius pop up in one of our primary first-century fable authors, Phaedrus, as a character in one of his fables (*Fab*. 5.1) (see 4.2). It is also nearly certain that Demetrius's collection was still known in the tenth century CE.[59]

Though there is no manuscript claiming to be the collection of Demetrius, this has not stopped fables scholarship from attempting to give some reconstruction of it, to scrutinize the nature of its contents, to speculate about how it was used, to assign some of our other preserved fable material to it, or to make inferences about how it relates to the later fable collections and collectors that appeared around the time of Jesus.[60] Perry's attempt to deduce some of Demetrius's collection is based on the observation that the fables surviving from the Archaic period were very often etiological in message and mythological in content, with deities and personified elements appearing far more frequently than in the later collections. Perry then attempts to identify fables in the Imperial period that resemble the Archaic, arguing that those fables of this type that are not found in the collections but scattered in citations from diverse authors are more likely to be from Demetrius.[61] Perry, like many fable scholars, believes that some of Demetrius's collection has found its way, in one way or another, into the other primary collections discussed below.[62]

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59 He is referred to by name in a correspondence between two individuals, a certain Arethas, Archbishop of Caesarea, who is almost certainly requesting a copy of this fable collection from a friend, Stephanus, somewhere near Babylon. The collection is apparently written on papyrus and very old. Stephanus responds to the impatient Arethas by telling him the delay is in order to send a complete and accurate copy. Stephanus supports his reasoning by citing "Demetrius himself" with the fable of The Sow and the Bitch (Perry 223). In this fable, the dog brags to the sow that she gives birth more quickly and painlessly. The sow retorts that, in her haste, the dog does not complete the task, but gives birth to blind puppies, and it is better to take longer if the result is a finished product. For further details, see Perry, "Demetrius of Phalerum," 289–91.

60 See, for example, the thorough article by Perry, "Demetrius of Phalerum," and Adrados's attempt in *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:465–97. A more recent overview is Elisabetta Matelli, "Gli Aesopica de Demetrio Falereo," in Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf, *Demetrius of Phalerum*, 413–47.

61 Since those in *The Life of Aesop* are especially old, Perry thinks they are good candidates for Demetrian origin.

62 Perry, "Demetrius of Phalerum," 324–25, lists fables, in rough order of their probability to come from Demetrius, parentheses are pages in the article: The Sow and the Bitch: Perry 223 (288–91); Dionysus and the Wine (294–99); Shepherd who cried "Wolf" in Jest: Perry 210 (292–93); Honey in the Eyes: Perry 461 (314–15) Apollo, Muses and Dryads: Perry 432 (302–4); True and False Dreams: Perry 385 (299–300); Goat and Vine: Perry 374 (322–23); Man's Loquacity: Perry 431 (312–14); Man made of Clay and Tears: Perry 430 (304–7); Boreas and Helios: Perry 46 (307–9); Hunter and Dog: Perry 403 (Syntipas 21) (310 n. 23);

A few decades before Streeter popularized the Four-Source Hypothesis, Crusius was attempting to solve a synoptic problem of the first-century fabulists, Babrius and Phaedrus (discussed in the next chapter), with a similar solution involving Demetrius.[63] Both Babrius and Phaedrus, presumably writing independently of one another, tell us that they are using source materials. We know that, for Phaedrus at least, one of his sources was the Augustana Collection or an ancestor of it, but there are also fables common to Babrius and Phaedrus that are not found in the Augustana Collection. This group of fables, so the argument goes, is most likely to come from the fable equivalent of the Q source, the lost collection of Demetrius of Phalerum.[64] Perry, for example, supposes this collection to be the stock for the Augustana; the Rylands Papyrus (3.4.3) enjoys similar speculation. Others have attempted to isolate Demetrian material by identifying fables with resonances with the events of Demetrius's life or that are localized in some way in Ptolemaic Egypt,[65] or those that may evince a certain Athenian coloring.[66]

The significance of Demetrius of Phalerum for the study of fables is the antiquity of his collection, its probable influence on those collections of the first century CE as an archetype, and, lastly, its probable function. On the basis of (1) Demetrius's profession, (2) the other compositions attributed to him in Diogenes Laertius, such as a rhetorical manual, (3) the descriptions of how fables are used in Aristophanes, (4) Demetrius's close ties with Theophrastus and possibly Aristotle, and (5) the use of the fable described there (see above 3.3.1), the *status quaestionis* is that Demetrius's collection functions as a *repertorium* (a catalog or inventory) containing fables in series, topically organized

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Lion and Two Bulls: Perry 372 (309–10); Owl and Birds: Perry 437 (315–18); Fox and Crane: Perry 426 (321–22); Man Counting Waves: Perry 429 (320); Momus: Perry 100 (324). Among these we may note a good mix of fables featuring animals, deities, and people, with perhaps a slant, as Perry expects, toward the mythological and etiological.

63 Otto Crusius, "Babrius," PW 2 (1896): 2661–62. Perry provides a convenient list of the fables that Crusius thought were derived from the source used by Babrius and Phaedrus, and which Perry thinks "very likely" was Demetrius's collection ("Demetrius of Phalerum," 326–29).

64 Between the fable and Synoptic problem of the gospels a couple of differences are worth noting. On the one hand, unlike Q, we have reasonable confirmation through external attestation that Demetrius's collection existed. On the other hand, unlike the four-century gap between the source and its supposed use, the time difference between the earliest stage of Q and the canonical forms of Matthew and Luke could scarcely exceed more than fifty years.

65 Léon Herrmann, "Quelques fables de Demetrios de Phalere," *L'Antiquite classique* 19 (1950): 5–11. Hermann identifies eight fables from the collections and especially Lucian.

66 Otto Keller, *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte der griechischen Fabel*, Jahrbüchern für Klassische Philologie Supplement 4 (Leipzig, Teubner, 1862), 369–70.

by headings (*promythia*) indicating the situations and people to which the individual fables are applicable.[67] The fortunes of history have graced us with the preservation of one example of such a fable *repertorium*: John Rylands Papyrus 493. To a discussion of this important papyrus we shall turn after considering another Greek who was active in Alexandria and associated with its famous library: Callimachus of Cyrene.

3.4.2 *Callimachus of Cyrene*

Though we need not discuss him in detail, we would be remiss in following the story of the fable to leave out Callimachus of Cyrene (ca. 310–240 BCE), who taught poetry and grammar in Alexandria and enjoyed the support of the Ptolemies. As an heir of the iamb from Archilochus,[68] he is an important landmark on the way to the first-century fabulists such as Babrius and Phaedrus who are directly or indirectly influenced by him.[69]

Callimachus's fables are characteristic of the early type, featuring animals and deities most prominently, and being especially concerned with etiologies. An early version of an etiological fable that explains how the animals lost their ability to speak is found in his second *Iambus*:

> It was the time when birds and creatures of the sea and four-footed animals could talk in the same way as the Promethean clay … [Not more than 17 lines missing] in the time of Cronus, and even before … Just is Zeus, yet unjust was his ruling when he deprived the animals of their speech, and—as though we were not in a position to give part of our voice to others—(diverted) it to the race of men (defective in this way?). Eudemos, therefore, has a dog's voice, and Philton a donkey's, (the orators) that of a parrot, and the tragedians have a voice like the

67 On this see Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 22–25, and Ben Edwin Perry, "The Origin of the Epimythium," *TAPA* 71 (1940): 391–419.

68 For the dependence of Callimachus's second *Iambus* on Hesiod and Archilochus, see Deborah Steiner, "Framing the Fox: Callimachus' Second *Iamb* and Its Predecessors," *JHS* 130 (2010): 97–107. See also her "Feathers Flying: Avian Poetics in Hesiod, Pindar and Callimachus," *AJP* 128 (2007): 177–208. Schodel's claim that Callimachus "surely had access to" Demetrius's fable collection is unprovable, but possible given their locality (Ruth Scodel, "Callimachus and the Fable," in *Brill's Companion to Callimachus*, ed. Benjamin Acosta-Hughes, Luigi Lehnus and Susan Stephens [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 368–83, here 369). See also Benjamin Acosta-Hughes and Ruth Scodel, "Aesop *Poeta:* Aesop and the Fable in Callimachus' *Iambi*," in *Callimachus II*, ed. M. A. Harder, R. F. Regtuit, and C. Wakker, Hellenistica Groningana 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 1–22.

69 Babrius's sub-genre of four-line epigram fables may be a conscious imitation of Callimachus and, if he did not get it from another of the many other sources containing similar fables, Babrius, *Fab.* 142 may be based on Callimachus frag. 229. Patrick Glauthier has recently argued on the basis of their common *topoi* that Phaedrus was also influenced by Callimachus ("Phaedrus, Callimachus and the *Recusatio* to Success," *ClAnt* 28 [2009]: 248–78).

> dwellers in the sea. And for this cause, Andronicus, all men have become loquacious and wordy. Aesop of Sardis told this, whom the Delphians did not receive well when he recited his tale. (trans. Cedric H. Whitman, LCL)

If the poem itself is rather obscure, the reference to Aesop at the end informs us that it had been already attributed to him, and that some story of Aesop's abuse by the Delphians was known to Callimachus. His fourth *Iambus* concerns the Laurel and the Olive Tree—a lengthy fable almost entirely in direct speech of the two characters caught in an *agon* (Perry 439; and cf. Perry 213, 220).[70] This fable employs early versions of several fable features and narrative techniques that are typical in the later fables, especially the agonistic plot, the inevitable failure of the first actor, and the *survenant*, in this case a bramble bush, who enters at the end.[71] We have by now almost had our fill of lost and fragmentary works, but one more fragmentary record from this time is crucial to our study.

3.4.3 *John Rylands Papyrus 493 and the Rhetorical Collections*

Papyrus 493 in the John Rylands Library catalog is the earliest material evidence of a fable collection that we possess. This papyrus roll was edited by C. H. Roberts in 1938 and is dated by him to the first half of the first century CE.[72] Although the papyrus clearly belongs to the Roman period, scholars regard it as derived from an original document produced during the Hellenistic period.[73] That it was copied during the Roman period demonstrates its continuing relevance for those living in the age of Jesus and the Gospels.[74] The

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70 The *agonistic* fable was already in use by Archilochus's, as we saw above.

71 On these fable features and narrative techniques: direct speech, the *agon*, the failure of the protagonist, and the *survenant*, see Chapter 10.

72 Colin Henderson Roberts, ed., *Theological and Literary Texts*, vol. 3 of *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1938), 119–28, and plate 7.

73 Zafiropoulos notes that the original collection is believed to have been compiled between the third and first century BCE (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 24).

74 Roberts describes the writing as "a handsome hand, upright and angular" (121). For those acquainted with the biblical papyri, it is not altogether dissimilar from those informal round, or documentary-but-aspiring-to-book hands that are normally dated to the second century, though the impression of this papyrus suggests it was composed with greater haste. Ligatures are absent and one instance of punctuation is possible—a smooth breathing mark—though Roberts supposes this may also be a letter trace (128). Several inline corrections, grammatical peculiarities, spelling mistakes, and so on, appear with some regularity. As he notes regarding lines 40–41, "the degree of corruption is unusual for a literary text of this quality." This degree of corruption is disproportionately common in the papyri of fables. When the corrections are in the same hand, as here, it suggests that it was an autograph written for personal use.

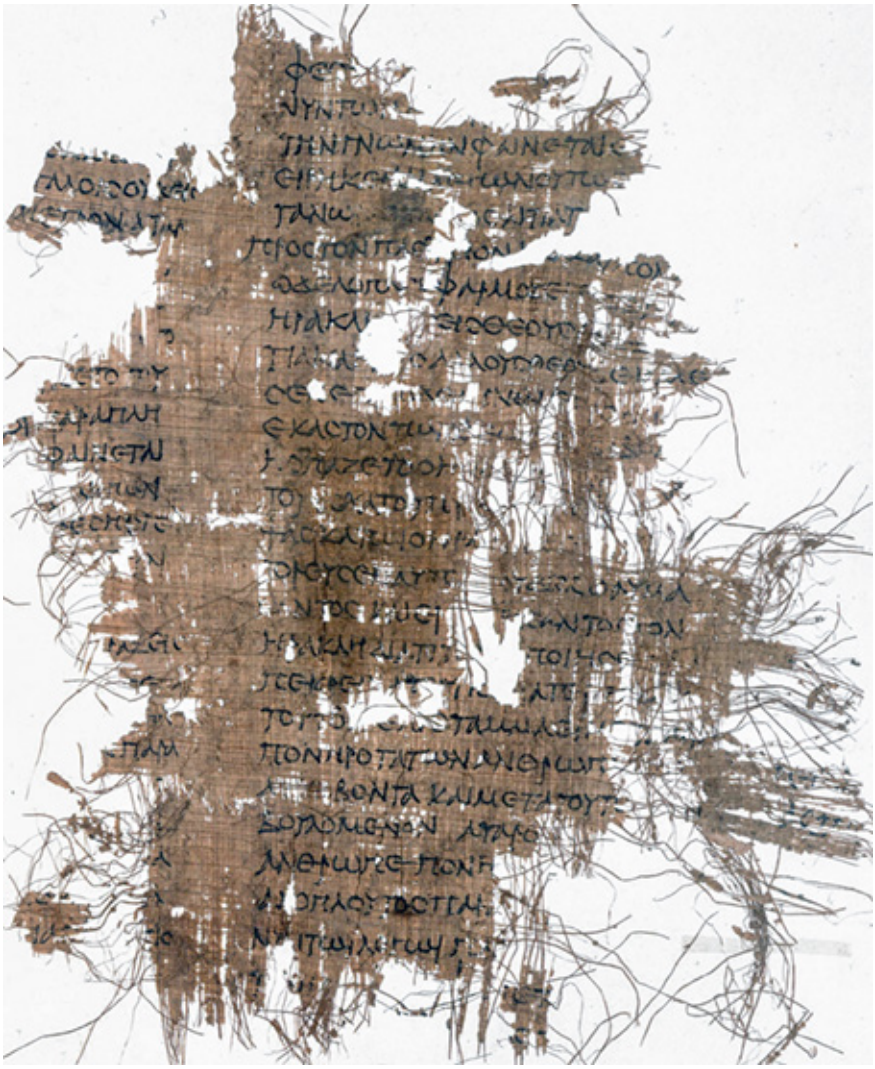

Figure 2 John Rylands Papyrus 493 (Fragment B). This is the oldest manuscript of a fable collection, an orator's repertorium, dated to the first half of the first century CE. Copyright of the University of Manchester.

roll appears to be a private copy of a fable *repertorium* that would be used in rhetorical contexts such as those described in 3.3.1 above.

The papyrus contains at least fourteen fables, several only in traces.[75] Of these fourteen, many are identifiable by a couple of important marginal and

75 On the whole, the papyrus is in a very fragile condition, badly frayed at the edges and with the fibers disordered. The text survives in three fragments, likely part of the same

paratextual features. Since we detect the seams between the fables thanks to the practice of beginning each fable on a new line with the initial letter projected into the margin, we can identify several seams and a handful of the beginnings are preserved (lines 19, 35[?], 75, 132, and 153). Several clues from the beginning topic of each fable—known as the *promythium*—will also be useful identifying marks for discerning fables in the Gospels.[76] Foremost among these is the introductory formula. When a fable begins on a new line it does not open with the narrative; rather it starts with a description of the situations or people to which the fable is applicable.

The *promythium* usually begins with the preposition πρός and the definite article followed by the object accusative indicating the subject matter. Depending on the subject we might render this "To those who …," "Against those who …," "On the subject of …," or "About…." In this collection, the *promythium* concludes each time with the same formula: ὅδε λόγος ἐφαρμόζει, meaning "this word [fable] is applicable." Those *promythia* that are preserved in this papyrus, with my tentative translations of those that can be fully recovered, are as follows:

προς το[ν] ισχυ[ρον] τον καὶ [α]λλ̣ο̣υ̣ς
. . κα . τ̣α[.]χ[.]ε̣θ̣η̣τ̣α̣ [...] . λ̣ε̣ .
νον οδε λογος εφ[α]ρμοζει̣ [ι]π̣π̣ος
Concerning the strong man and others [*who allow themselves to be controlled*],[77] *this fable is applicable.* A horse … (fragment A, column 2, lines 19–21)[78]

[κ]α̣[τα] τ̣ω̣ν [τους με]ν̣ α̣[λ]λους ευ ποι
ο̣υ̣ντων τους δε φιλους κακως
οδε λογος εφαρμοζει ποιμ̣ην̣ θ̣ει̣ς[79]

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manuscript. Fragment A is the largest at 23.5 by 13 cm and a lower margin of 4.5cm can be established, though all three are badly damaged and frayed. Fragments A and B preserve parts of three columns, and C part of two. Each column contains 29 lines and the verso is blank. Each fable begins on a new line, and the initial letter projects into the margin. This would allow the reader to scan through the fables more quickly.

76 When the text is after the fable instead of at the beginning, it is called an *epimythium*. We will discuss the *promythium* and *epimythium* in greater detail in Chapter 12 and Chapter 13.

77 Because of the lacunae, there are a few translation possibilities of this *promythium*. I have provided what I think is the most plausible.

78 The first fable here is the story of How the Horse Got Its Bridle, attested widely and with numerous variations (Phaedrus, *Fab*. 4.4; Babrius Prose Paraphrase 166; Aristotle, *Rhet*. 2.20; Conon, *Narr.* 42; Perry 269; Chambry 328 [with variants]).

79 With only the single letter nu secure in the opening formula, Roberts's justification for reconstructing a separate formula with κατα των in this case is unclear to me. Roberts does not discuss his reason for this reconstruction and virtually nothing is preserved of this obliterated line before the end.

Against those who treat strangers well but friends badly, this fable is applicable. A shepherd … (fragment A, column 3, lines 35–37)[80]

προς τον πλουσιον ι̣ρ̣α̣ και πονη̣[ρον]
οδε λογος εφαρμοζει ο̣ Ζ̣ευς τ̣[ον]
To the [*both*] *rich and wicked person, this fable is applicable.* Zeus … (fragment B, column 5, lines 75–76)[81]

π[ρος το]γ̣ [c. 18]
(fragment C, column 8, line 132)[82]

προ̣ς τ̣ο̣γ̣ μ[c. 13 οδε λο]
γος εφαμ[οζει c. 10 αν]
θρωποι ν[c. 18]
(fragment C, column 8, lines 153–155)[83]

Even if we do not have a great deal of text to work with, much like the brief mention of Demetrius's collection, there is a lot that we can learn from these three papyrus scraps. Rylands Papyrus 493 demonstrates a number of things relevant to the study of the fables of Jesus, especially in Luke.[84] First, in terms of the content of the stories, the divergence of those fables preserved in the papyrus from those attested in the Byzantine recensions is great. The divergence of the same fable into more than one version is a well-known phenomenon; however, this papyrus demonstrates that the differences are not a novelty of the Byzantine period. Second, it preserves the fable of the Owl and the Birds, which is absent from all codices of Aesopic fables that survived to modernity (lines 103–131) and is otherwise known only from Dio Chrysostom's use of it in two of his speeches: "On Personal Appearance" (*Hab*. 72.14–16) and

80 This *promythium* is attached here to the fable of the Shepherd and Sheep (Perry 208; Chambry 316).

81 This third fable is a variant of Heracles and Plutus (Phaedrus, *Fab*. 4.12; Perry 111; Chambry 130).

82 In spite of the poor preservation of this column, this line is identifiable as the start of a fable because the pi projects into the margin.

83 The content of the final two *promythia* are impossible to reconstruct. An additional *promythium* without its introductory formula intact precedes these at fragment A, column 1, lines 5–7:
[c. 10 letters π]φνηρο[.]σασι[.]…[.]
[c. 12 letters]ε[.]δομεν[…]σ
[c. 10 letters οδε λ]ογος εφαρμοζε[ι].
Given the space in the lacuna, the editor presumes the opening of line five runs: προς τους πονηρους… (126).

84 P.Ryl. 493 will return to the center stage in Chapter 12 and Chapter 13.

"The Olympic Discourse" (also known as "On the First Conception of God" [*Dei cogn.* 12.6–8]). This is one indication among many that we have only a portion of those fables that were circulating in the first century. The presence of *promythia* and absence of *epimythia* is a crucial datum used by fable scholars to trace the trajectory of the fable's development by the evolution of these framing devices. It gives us a glimpse, even if incomplete, of what a fable *repertorium* looked like and how the fable was transmitted in writing both before and during the life of Jesus. Most importantly, it gives an artifact with which to compare the Lukan fables in Book II.

3.5 Conclusion

With this chapter, we left behind the modern misunderstandings to begin our trek into the world of the ancient fable. We started off by noting the remarkable antiquity of the fable, with roots going back millennia before Jesus in the Semitic world. In the Archaic period of Greece and in the Hebrew Bible, we tallied the few famous fables that have survived in fragments and embedded into other texts. In the Classical period, we found the fable appearing in a variety of important settings. It served as a tool of rhetoric, used by lawyers and orators to score points in legal disputes and to keep the attention of an audience. It appealed to popular and elite audiences alike. The fable was recognized as especially beneficial for training the minds of the young in both informal and formal educational settings. During this time, we also encounter via Socrates the association of the fable with condemned wise men. Already in the Classical period, we found that Aesop was a well-known figure of the past, referred to by several important witnesses, including Plato, Aristophanes, and Herodotus, who each knew traditions about his life and his fables. From Aristophanes, it was apparent that he expected the audience to be familiar with these traditions as well. In the Hellenistic era we followed a few more breadcrumbs, with the continued appearance of the fable in Callimachus's iambs. The first certain collection of fables also comes to us from this time—perhaps lost, perhaps surviving in the later collections. It belonged to Demetrius of Phalerum, who we presume used it in a way consistent with other orators. The collection would have almost certainly looked like our earliest material evidence of a fable collection, the fable *repertorium* preserved on P.Ryl. 493. This early material artifact offers us a direct, albeit fragmentary point of comparison with the fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. With all this background in mind, we turn in the next chapter to the flowering of the fable at the time of Jesus and the Gospels.

CHAPTER 4

Fable Collections in the Days of Jesus and the Gospels

Leaving the Classical and Hellenistic periods behind for the Roman Imperial age we encounter a remarkable phenomenon. From the Archaic through the Hellenistic period, we had little to go on except scattered citations of individual fables, and breadcrumbs left behind in places like Aristophanes's comedies, the collection of Demetrius, and Socrates's prison fables. Fables were used for rhetoric, education, and presumably circulated in popular oral literature. Then, as we greet the turn of the Era, we encounter something of a fable renaissance and our evidence multiplies exponentially.[1] In the days of Jesus and the Gospels, numerous fable collections were produced, several of which have survived. Though none from this period are complete, the surviving collections from the days of Jesus and the Gospels preserve many hundreds of fables.[2] It is also in this timeframe that the gospel-like *Life of Aesop* was likely composed. The first century is also when our best evidence for the use of the fable in education begins. Growing from the rhetorical use, the fable was also apparently gaining currency for its literary merit, with some collections adopting verse rather than prose. All this, in addition to the continued use of fables

1 The most likely cause is the phenomenon of "letteraturizzazione" as the Roman Empire inherited the rhetorical tradition of the Greeks in the first century BCE. As Kennedy explains the concept, this "is the tendency of rhetoric to shift focus from persuasion to narration, from civic to personal contexts, and from speech to literature, including poetry" (George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd ed. [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999], 3). Following Kennedy, Temmerman notes that "ancient rhetoric pervasively influenced literary composition at least from the first century BC" (Koen De Temmerman, "Ancient Rhetoric as a Hermeneutical Tool for the Analysis of Characterization in Narrative Literature," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 28 [2010]: 23–51, here 23).

2 The accidents of history do not preserve the first *complete* collection of fables probably until the forty fables by Aphthonius, whom we meet in Chapter 5. If those we have from Aphthonius's collection are not the original total, then Avianus's collection from ca. 400 CE would be the earliest. In addition to those discussed here, a number of other fable authors are known only by name, e.g.: "Connis the Cilician and Thurus the Sybarite and Cybissus of Libya are mentioned by some as fablemakers" (Theon, *Prog*. 4).

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in various rhetorical and popular contexts.[3] The days of Jesus and the Gospels were a particularly active period in the history of the fable.

In this chapter, I will introduce the primary ancient fable collections contemporary with Jesus and the early gospels. First, we will go over the verse collections with named fable authors: Babrius and Phaedrus. Then I will introduce the anonymous prose collection, known as the Augustana, along with its dependent recensions. Finally, I will offer a short sketch of *The Life of Aesop.* If these authors and texts are foreign to the present readers until now, they are in good company. The opening words of Niklas Holzberg's 2019 translation of Babrius's fables, reads, "In the whole of world literature, there is probably no author of such high literary merit who has been so stubbornly neglected (indeed, essentially ignored) by the relevant scholarship … as the fable poet Babrius."[4] On Phaedrus, John Henderson's first words about his fables strike a similar note, "Let me let you into a very small secret. Hardly anyone at all is aware that the stories retold in this book exist."[5] These authors and materials are scarcely known to classicists and have gone virtually untouched by biblical scholars.[6] The present chapter will remedy this situation, bringing some new first-century authors into the conversation.

4.1 Babrius and the Babrian Tradition

Babrius, whom we met through his first five fables in Chapter 2, is the most important named author for getting a sense of what Greek fables and Greek

3 The fables of numerous rhetors of this time such as Plutarch, Horace, and Dio Chrysostom, will be discussed in Chapter 9.

4 "In der gesamten Weltliterature dürfte es keinen Autor von hohem künstlerischen Rang geben, der von der zuständigen Wissenschaft, in diesem Falle der Gräzistik, so hartnäckig vernachlässigt (ja im Grunde ignoriert) wurde wie der besonders durch sein Erzähltalent und seinen skurrilen Witz faszinierende Fabeldichter Babrios" (Niklas Holzberg, *Babrios: Fabeln* [Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2019], 9).

5 John Henderson, *Telling Tales on Caesar: Roman Satires from Phaedrus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), iv.

6 As noted earlier, even Jülicher, who knew about Babrius, Phaedrus, *The Life of Aesop*, and the prose collections of fables, cites them almost entirely for parable theory discussions. For exegesis of the fables of Jesus, Jülicher cites just Babrius, and only to compare one Babrian fable (*Fab.* 4) with one fable of Jesus: The Dragnet (Matt 13:47–50) (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2:563). Several are quoted by Beavis, "Parable and Fable." We look forward to the dissertation of Charlotte Haußmann, "Narrative Ethik in den Mythiamben des Babrios und den Parabeln des Neuen Testaments" (working title) (PhD diss., Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, forthcoming).

fable collections are like around the end of the first century CE.[7] From him we have close to two hundred fables in two books.[8] Babrius was known only through scattered references to him until 1842, when a tenth century manuscript preserving 123 of his fables was discovered. Babrius is most significant for the various points of contact with the gospel fables beyond simple matters of the content. His style, vocabulary, characters, plot structure, the didactic mode of the fable, the use of satire and comedy, among other points will be brought to bear in the coming chapters. All of Babrius's fables are written in choliambic (limping iambic) verse, normally reserved for invective, sarcasm, and satire, perhaps a kind of parody of Babrius's subject-matter. The peculiarity of this choice of meter is not lost on Babrius, who refers to it in the prologues to both books:

> That this was so, you may learn and fully understand from wise old Aesop, who has told us fables in the free manner of prose. And now I shall adorn each of those fables with the flowers of my own Muse. I shall set before you a poetical honeycomb, as it were, dripping with sweetness, having softened the hard chords of the stinging iambic. (Babrius, *Fab.* Prologue 1.15–19)[9]

Excluding a single very long outlier, Babrius's fables run from four lines to about thirty,[10] with most somewhere in between. He never uses *promythia*, preferring

7 A brief survey of Babrius is found in McGaughy, "Pagan Hellenistic Literature."

8 The most recent and extensive critical edition of Babrius is Maria Jagoda Luzzatto and Antonio La Penna, eds., *Babrii Mythiambi Aesopei*, BSGRT (Leipzig: Teubner, 1986). As I mentioned before, the prolegomena and discussion are in Latin. This updated edition is an improvement upon Perry's in the Loeb series. As Vaio has shown, the manuscript text is often unreliable and is not generally flagged as such in the editions (John Vaio, "The First Prologue of Babrius: Lines 14–16," *Illinois Classical Studies* 7 [1982]: 233–38). For some discussion of the text in English, see John Vaio, *The Mythiambi of Babrius: Notes on the Constitution of the Text*, Spudasmata 83 [Hildesheim: Olms, 2001). Rutherford's old and outdated edition of the text is nevertheless useful for its less-outdated introduction, which covers many of the technical details concerning the text and transmission of Babrius not discussed by Vaio or Perry. It is also a breath of fresh air for the Anglophone reader who wishes not to slog through the German and Latin introductions (Babrius was introduced to the Anglophone world especially through Rutherford) (William G. Rutherford, *Babrius: Edited with Introductory Dissertations, Critical Notes, Commentary and Lexicon* [London: MacMillan, 1883]). Otto Crusius's dissertation ("*De Babrii aetate*"), which is not to be confused with the prolegomena to his Teubner edition of Babrius (*Babrii Fabulae Aesopeae*), remains useful as well.

9 Unless indicated otherwise, all translations of Babrius are those of Perry (LCL). There is likely wordplay here referring to the "sting" (from a bee) of this meter, now being turned into sweet honeycomb.

10 The exception, *Fab.* 95, runs 102 lines, four full pages of Greek in the Loeb.

instead the *epimythium*—the application of the fable placed after the story.[11] The four-line fables (eighteen of them in all) form a kind of sub-genre reminiscent of Martial's epigrams in that they conclude with a witty remark told in direct speech by one of the main actors (known as a *réplique finale*). This final reply is usually substituted for the *epimythium*.[12] Here are a few examples:

> Εὐνοῦχος ἦλθε πρὸς θύτην ὑπὲρ παίδων
> σκεψόμενος. ὁ θύτης δ᾽ ἀγνὸν ἦπαρ ἁπλώσας
> "ὅταν μέν" εἶπε "ταῦτ᾽ ἴδω, πατὴρ γίνῃ,
> ὅταν δὲ τὴν σὴν ὄψιν, οὐδ᾽ ἀνὴρ φαίνῃ."
> A eunuch went to a sacrificing seer to consult him about the prospect of having children. The sacrificer, spreading out the sacred liver of the victim, said: "When I look at this it tells me that you'll be a father; but when I look into your face you seem to be not even a man." (Babrius, *Fab.* 54)

> Ζωμοῦ χύτρῃ μῦς ἐμπεσὼν ἀπωμάστῳ
> καὶ τῷ λίπει πνιγόμενος ἐκπνέων τ᾽ ἤδη
> "βέβρωκα" φησί "καὶ πέπωκα καὶ πάσης
> τρυφῆς πέπλησμαι· καιρός ἐστί μοι θνῄσκειν."
> Τότ᾽ ἂν λίχνος γένοιο μῦς ἐν ἀνθρώποις, ἐὰν τὸ καταβλάπτον ἡδὺ μὴ παραιτήσῃ.
> A mouse fell in a pot of soup which had no lid. Choked by the grease and gasping out his life, he said: "I've done my eating, and my drinking, I've had my fill of all delights; the time has come for me to die."
> *You will be like that gluttonous mouse among men, if you fail to renounce what is sweet but injurious.* (Babrius, *Fab.* 60)

> Μάνδρης ἔσω τις πρόβατα συλλέγων δείλης
> κνηκὸν μετ᾽ αὐτῶν λύκον ἔμελλε συγκλείειν.
> ὁ κύων δ᾽ ἰδὼν πρὸς αὐτὸν εἶπε "πῶς σπεύδεις
> τὰ πρόβατα σῶσαι, τοῦτον εἰσαγὼν ἡμιν;"
> A man gathering his sheep into the fold at evening was about to enclose a tawny wolf along with the flock. His dog, seeing this, said to him: "How can you be in earnest about saving the sheep when you bring this fellow in among us?" (Babrius, *Fab.* 113)

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11 How many of the *epimythia* go back to Babrius, if any, is a debated issue. No two editors agree. For some methodological considerations and how to determine which *epimythia* are interpolations, see Maria Becker, "Gefälschtes *fabula docet* in der Fabeldichtung des Babrios," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 149 (2006): 168–84.

12 According to Holzberg, Babrius prefers this *bon mot* to the *epimythium* (*The Ancient Fable*, 58). It was this affinity with Martial that suggested to Lachmann a date roughly contemporary with him in the late first century CE (Karl Lachmann, *Babrii fabulae Aesopeae* [Berlin: G. Reimer, 1845], xii). This same Lachmann produced an edition of the Greek New Testament. He is famed in the world of biblical scholarship as a critic of Griesbach and as an early advocate for the theory of Markan priority. For a discussion of Lachmann as an editor of the Bible, see Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method*, ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), especially chapter 4, "Lachmann as an Editor of the New Testament," 84–89.

4.1.1 *About Babrius*

Of the man himself, we have only the strong impression left on later fable authors and collectors in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine age. What Babrius says of himself is found in the two brief prologues to his two fable books and a handful of clues scattered throughout the fables.[13] His origin and race is generally assumed to be Italian because the name Βάβριος is otherwise unknown in Greek, but *Barbius*, "bearded," is an attested name in Latin. The other ground for this conclusion is the consensus that Babrius is influenced by Latin diction and meter in his unfailing practice of placing an accent on the penultimate syllable of every line. This dependence on Latin and thus a post-Augustan milieu is used to establish a *terminus post quem* of the turn of the Common Era.

Babrius's dates have always been a matter of debate, but as more evidence has gathered, the consensus *terminus ante quem* has crept earlier and earlier. In the late-1800s it was common to date his fables to the third century.[14] The first signs of strain on this late date came in the form of a Palmyran schoolboy's wax writing exercises, the Assendelft Tablets.[15]

Among other copying exercises, upon these tablets were written seven verifiable fables of Babrius in verse, along with four more Babrian fables that remain known in their verse form only here.[16] These were paleographically dated to the third century. Even if Babrius originally composed them for an educational purpose, this would demand a rather quick turnaround from their first composition to an accidental discovery in a Palmyran schoolchild's homework. A firm *terminus ante quem* excluding the third century was established by the identification of Babrian material in the *Hermeneumata* of Pseudo-Dositheus, a manual for teaching Latin speakers the Greek language, self-dated to the year 207 CE.[17] As part of the instruction, two Babrian fables (84 and 140) in their choliambic verse are given.[18] Pressing toward a still earlier date is P.Oxy. 10.1249, published in 1914 by Grenfell and Hunt and dated by them to the second century.[19] Portions of Babrius's fables 42, 110, 118, and 125 are contained on this

13 Babrius uses the first person in the *epimythia* to six of his fables (*Fab.* 11, 14, 56, 57, 65, 66).

14 For examples of these late daters, see page 300 of D. C. Hesseling, "On Waxen Tablets with Fables of Babrius (Tabulae Ceratae Assendelftianae)," *JHS* 13 (1892): 293–314.

15 Published by Hesseling, "On Waxen Tablets."

16 The editor's hands were full in correcting what was evidently a child's homework, replete as it was with errors.

17 For a discussion of the dating of the *Hermeneumata* of Pseudo-Dositheus, see Chapter 4.

18 *Fab.* 84 was the linchpin since it is known from the Athos collection of Babrius (see below). *Fab.* 140 is known only from Pseudo-Dositheus, testifying again to the chance nature of what has been preserved. See especially, Eric Getzlaff, "Quaestiones Babrianae et Pseudo-Dositheanae" (PhD diss., University of Marburg, 1907).

19 "It is a piece from the top of a column, neatly written in rather small round uncials, which can hardly be put later than the end of the second century, and may easily be appreciably

Figure 3 The Assendelft Tablets (folio 7, recto). Babrian fables scratched into the backing of a schoolchild's wax tablets, dating to the third century. CCY-BY license, Leiden University Libraries, BPG 109.

earlier … the close of the second century is on a liberal estimate the downward limit" (B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 10 [London: Egypt Exploration Society in Graeco-Roman Memoirs, 1914], 133–135, plate 5, here 133). More recently, Luzzatto and La Penna have dated the papyrus to the third century (*Babrii Mythiambi Aesopei*, xxix n. 1), and are followed by Gert-Jan van Dijk, "Babrius," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece*, ed. Nigel Wilson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 119–20, here 120. John Vaio,

papyrus. In light of this material evidence, Babrius is securely datable to the first or second century CE.[20]

The second century CE is as far back as the material evidence can take us, but two further points suggest a first-century date. If Perry is correct in his assertion that Babrius was the first to put Greek fables into iambic verses, as Babrius seems to claim (*Fab.* Prologue 2), then the fables in verse to which Quintilian refers in his *Institutio oratoria* (1.9.1–3) of ca. 95 CE are either Babrius's or one of the imitators whom Babrius complains about already during his lifetime.[21] For the biblical scholar, a more interesting chronological anchor comes from the prologue to Babrius's second book—the identity of a certain "King Alexander." Babrius second book begins, "Fable, son of King Alexander, is the invention of the Syrians of old, who lived in the days of Ninus and Belus…."[22] Prior to the material evidence demanding an earlier date, more options were available, but

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for his part, notes Luzzatto's redating but seems not to follow her (Vaio, *The Mythiambi of Babrius*, xxii and cf. lii).

20 So far as I am aware, the first scholar to date Babrius to the first century was Lachmann in his edition of Babrius (*Babrii fabulae Aesopeae*, xii), and later Julius Werner, *Quaestiones Babrianae* (Berlin: Calvary, 1891), 22–24, did the same. Adrados, based on the "King Alexander" reference, puts him in the second half of the first century CE, but he is not especially firm on this (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:103). Holzberg thinks we cannot say whether he is first or second century (*Ancient Fable*, 59); Perry believes Quintilian's allusion to fables in verse (*Inst.* 1.9.1) coupled with Babrius's claim to be the first to put fables into verse, allows us to use the publication of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, completed by 96 CE, as a firm *terminus ante quem* for Babrius in the first century CE (*Babrius and Phaedrus*, l [*note bene*, that's an "L" not a one]). In recent times Luzzatto and Vaio have carved out an alternative dating scheme for Babrius than that adopted here. Luzzatto dates Babrius to "no earlier than in the second century." Since we have multiple copies of Babrius already in the second century and beginning of the third century, this theory demands an explanation for the quick popularity. Her assertion that, "the quick fame of this work already in the 3rd cent. AD in Syria and Egypt (*tabulae ceratae* from Palmyra; papyri) may be explained by its dedication to an emperor of the Syrian dynasty," seems to me a bit unlikely (Maria Jagoda Luzzatto, "Babrius," BNP [2006]). Vaio, who dates Babrius's fables to the "second half of the second century," curiously seems to date the author so late partly on the basis of the chronological *proximity* to the earliest material evidence: "Internal evidence from the text (that is, analyses of language and meter) together with the external evidence (that is, the earliest fragments of the text preserved on papyrus and wax tablets datable to within approximately a half-century) indicate that the *Mythiambi* were composed sometime in the second half of the second century A.D" (John Vaio, "Babrius," in *Ancient Greek Authors*, ed. Ward W. Briggs, Dictionary of Literary Biography 176 [Detroit: Gale, 1999], 85–88, here 85). Vaio's statement is difficult to interpret, especially since he appears to accept the date of P.Oxy 10.1249 in the second century CE in his commentary (Vaio, *The Mythiambi of Babrius*, lii).

21 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, l–li.

22 Belus, the father of Ninus, is the mythical first king of the ancient Assyrians.

with a third-century composition excluded, Lachmann's proposal from 1845 has emerged as the most plausible.[23] Lachmann located the only candidate known by the name "King Alexander," during the first and second centuries CE in none other than the great-grandson of Herod the Great, known from a passage in Josephus:

> Alexander, King Herod's son, who had been put to death by his father, had two sons, Alexander and Tigranes, by the daughter of Archelaus king of Cappadocia. Tigranes, who was king of Armenia, died childless after charges were brought against him at Rome. Alexander had a son who had the same name as his brother Tigranes and who was sent forth by Nero to be king of Armenia. This Tigranes had a son Alexander, who married Jotape, the daughter of Antiochus, king of Commagene; Vespasian appointed him king of Cetis in Cilicia. The offspring of Alexander abandoned from birth the observance of the ways of the Jewish land and ranged themselves with the Greek tradition. (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.139–140 [trans. Feldman, LCL])

Naturally, such an appointment would have taken place during Vespasian's reign (69–79 CE), and the second book of Babrius dedicated to the child of this Alexander (named Branchus) would have been during this time or not long thereafter.[24]

We knew nothing more of this Alexander appointed by Vespasian to Cilicia, nor what locality in Cilicia this passage refers to, until Teresa Morgan took up the task not long ago.[25] The most recent attempt to date Babrius is tucked away in an appendix to her *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*.[26] She fleshes out the background to the King Alexander of Cilicia far beyond the mention of Josephus and establishes a much tighter chronology than Perry and Holzberg. She concludes, "If Babrius was addressing Alexander's children in verse, say, in their teens, at a time when they would have been able to read and appreciate his style, he might have been writing in the late 70s or 80s."[27] It is not necessary to suppose that the son of Alexander addressed in the prologue would be in his teens to read the fables, so we may include a few years earlier.

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23 Lachmann gives his position rather laconically, in only several (Latin) sentences (Lachmann, *Babrii Fabulae*, xii).

24 Lachmann specifies post-72 CE: "hoc igitur tempore postannum a Christo nato 72 in Syriae et Ciliciae cinfiniis Babrium fabellas Alexandri regis filio composuisse si dixero …" (Lachmann, *Babrii Fabulae*, xii).

25 Lachmann conjectures that Ἰσσιάδος in the place name Ἰσσιάδος τῆς ἐν Κιλικιᾳ is a corruption of Ἡσιοδος (Lachmann, *Babrii Fabulae*, xii).

26 Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*, "The Political and Literary Connections of Babrius," 326–30.

27 Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 329.

To take stock for a moment, according to our best evidence, this second half of the paradigmatic Greek fable collection was addressed to a Hellenistic Jewish child toward the end of the first century CE. Perry finds corroborating evidence for this identification of the addressee in observing what follows immediately after the addressee's name. Babrius tells us that the fable is the invention of the "Syrians of old" (Babrius, *Fab.* Prologue 2.2).[28] That Babrius makes this declaration in the opening sentence may well be an effort to please his patron who was of Semitic stock and to curry the interest of the son, Branchus.[29]

This King Alexander in Cilicia is used as a clue to the location of composition, somewhere on the Syrian borderland or Asia Minor. One further anecdote from within the fables can be added in limited support of this provenance. Babrius makes a cameo in a lamentable etiological fable titled by Perry, "How the Arabs Got to Be Liars:"

> Hermes, having filled a wagon with lies, with much deceit and villianies of every kind, journeyed through the world passing from one tribe to the next and distributing to each a small part of his wares. When he came to the country of the Arabs and was passing through, his wagon unexpectedly, they say, broke down and stalled. The natives plundered it as though it were the precious cargo of some merchant. They emptied it completely and prevented it from going on to other men, though some there were as yet unvisited.
> *That's why the Arabs, as I've learned from personal experience, are liars and impostors; not a word of truth is on their tongues.* (Babrius, *Fab*. 57)

It is this first-person claim to his own experience with Arabs, ὧς ἐπειράθην, that suggest to Perry and others a provenance such as Syria or its environs.[30]

From his prologues it seems clear that Babrius had imitators already in his lifetime, particularly his practice of putting fables into verse. Babrius claims to be the first to do this and it seems he was not pleased with his imitators:

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28 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xlix–l.

29 In the mid-1800s, a rabbi named Julius Landsberger wrote a detailed book arguing that the Hebrews invented the fable genre. As evidence he cites this notice of Babrius that the "Syrian's of old invented them," arguing that the Judeans were often called "Syrian" by the Greeks (*Die Fabeln des Sophos: Syrisches Original der griechischen Fabeln des Syntipas, in berichtigtem vocalisirtem Texte zum ersten Male vollständig mit einem Glossar hrsg. nebst literarischen Vorbemerkungen und einer einleitenden Untersuchung über das Vaterland der Fabel* (Posen: L. Merzbach, 1859), cvii [of the body]).

30 Perry *Babrius and Phaedrus*, l (*nota bene*, that is an "L" not a one). Babrius, *Fab*. 8, which also features an Arab and his camel, provides another indication that Babrius is at least familiar with Arabs. This fable is one of the four-line, epigram-like fables, making it nearly certain that Babrius composed it himself.

> It remains for me to present them in a new and poetic dress, bridling the iambic verse of my fables, like a war-horse, with trappings of gold. I was the first to open this door; but when I had done so, others entered in who publish poems resembling the riddles of a more learned muse, skilled in nothing more than imitating my example. (Babrius, *Fab*. Prologue 2.6–12)

Among his later imitators is Avianus, whose prologue offers a survey of the fable collections until his time (ca. 400 CE)[31] and confirms that Babrius's fables were collected into two volumes by then:

> They were taken up by Babrius in Greek choliambics and abridged into two volumes. A considerable portion also was expanded by Phaedrus to a length of five books. I have compressed forty-two of these into one book for publication—writing in unembellished Latin and attempting to set them forth in elegiacs (Avianus, *Fab*. Prologue 14–17 [trans. Duff and Duff, LCL]).[32]

4.1.2 *The Text*

The textual history of Babrius's fables represents the primary site of scholarly interest in this material.[33] As Perry puts it, discerning the genuine tradition is more difficult than for any other poet of the first century.[34] As we now have them, Babrius's fables come down to us in no complete form, but rather in a variety of manuscripts and recensions, in both their original choliambic verse and in later prose versions. Around two hundred fables are thought to have been in the original collection, and as Avianus tells us, they were known in antiquity to have been transmitted in two books.

The best manuscript of Babrius, Manuscript A from Mount Athos,[35] preserves the first 123 of his fables along with the prologues of both books (see Figure 12 for an image). Though the manuscript is dated to the tenth century, its text is superior to the much earlier but smaller fragments we have on papyrus.[36] Until the discovery of this manuscript in the mid-19th century, our

31 Historically, the date of Avianus has been set in relative chronology to Babrius as the *terminus a quo*. Since the revised dating of Babrius into the first or second century CE, the most significant reason for dating Avianus this late is no longer valid. The other reasons for a date circa 400, however, are based on philology and still stand.

32 The prologue is in the form of a dedicatory letter to Theodosius, who is perhaps Macrobius Theodosius, famous for his *Saturnalia*.

33 For bibliography on this topic, see Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 62.

34 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, lxi.

35 British Museum Additional Manuscript number 22087, from the tenth century.

36 The text is superior, for example, to the late third- or early fourth-century diglot of Babrius in P.Amh. 2.26. The editio princeps is by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, *The Amherst Papyri: Being an Account of the Greek Papyri in the Collection of Lord Amherst of Hackney*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1900–1901), 2:26–29, and plate 1. In the

only knowledge of Babrius was through various references to him in the *Suda*, by Avianus, and by Emperor Julian.[37] Were it not for his name being attached to this manuscript, we would not know he was responsible for the rest of the collection, scattered as his materials eventually became. The first edition of Babrius was published in 1844 by Boissonade on the basis of this single tenth-century manuscript. It remains the basis for the diplomatic editions such as Perry's in the Loeb series. Many improvements to the text in Perry have been made since, and those wishing to work critically with Babrius should avail themselves of the Teubner edition by Maria Jagoda Luzzatto and Antonio La Penna, as well as the text-critical commentary of John Vaio.[38]

These 123 fables are arranged in alphabetical order, breaking off at the letter omicron not far into the second book. The alphabetic distribution offers one rough estimate by which scholars conclude that the codex probably contained about two hundred fables. Another ancient manuscript recension of Babrius (Byzantine manuscripts G and V, and Paraphrase B) presents the fables alphabetically but in a very different order than the Mount Athos manuscript. The initial words are not identical in the two recensions and additional fables appear therein not found in Manuscript A. Babrian fables that survive only in prose form are known primarily from the Bodlean paraphrase (Paraphrase B above) in manuscript Bodleianus Auct. F. 4.7.[39] These add a further 57 Babrian fables, approaching the hypothesized two hundred total. As Perry notes, since Babrius published the work in two successive books, it is unlikely the original ran alphabetically, since one would expect each book to run from *alpha* to *omega*, rather than stopping halfway through the alphabet at the end of completing his first book.[40] For the task at hand, we need not be especially

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words of the editor, the Latin is "extraordinarily bad," and while the Greek is "moderately accurate," it is "clearly inferior" to the Athos Manuscript A (2:26).

37 *Ep*. 50 (362–363 CE). The sheer quantity of material in the Suda makes it an important witness. It preserves some one hundred choliambic verses, about one third of which are explicitly attributed to Babrius. The divergence of these, in Vaio's words, "are evidence of a radically different recension of Babrius" (Vaio, *The Mythiambi of Babrius*, xli).

38 See Luzzatto and La Penna, *Babrii Mythiambi Aesopei*, and Vaio, *The Mythiambi of Babrius.*

39 There are 148 Babrian fables total in the manuscript, which dates from the thirteenth century. Chambry, *Fables*, edited them together in his 1925 edition with the other prose fables from the Augustana so that one cannot distinguish which ones derive from Babrius.

40 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, lviii. Adrados puts it more strongly: "alphabetization … destroyed the ancient organization of the work of the poet into two books" (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:176). In spite of this, we must note that alphabetization had already taken place very early on. The three fables found in the Amherst papyrus (P. Amh. 2.26) from the late third or early fourth century all begin with the letter alpha, suggesting the manuscript was organized alphabetically.

concerned with the intricacies of this manuscript tradition of Babrius, but this is another fine example of the "fiendishly complicated"[41] nature of studying the ancient fable.

One respect in which the text tradition of Babrius does matter is the degree to which fables not found in the Athos manuscript can be certainly or confidently attributed to Babrius himself rather than to his imitators. On the one hand, the use of choliambic meter, normally reserved for invective, was an innovation of Babrius, as he tells us in the prologue to his first book. This enables us to easily distinguish those fables written in choliambs belonging to the Babrian tradition, as opposed to those composed in simple iambic meter, which are non-Babrian. But, as we saw above, already by the time he composed his second book, Babrius reports that people have begun imitating him. This creates an issue that divides fable scholars and is the reason for speaking of Babrius on the one hand, and a "Babrian tradition" on the other. "Babrian tradition" includes those imitators contemporary to Babrius and later. What belongs to Babrius, and what comes from his imitators? As Perry notes, between individual fables, lines within fables, and the *epimythia*, no two editors agree on what to athetize.[42] To paint in broad strokes, Perry represents the maximalist side, holding that fables not in the Athos manuscript can usually be ascribed to Babrius on the basis of a few key reasons: (1) the peculiar use of choliambic verse and stress on the penultimate word, (2) association, i.e. being present among genuine Babrian fables, and (3) the attribution of certain fables to Babrius by his early admirers.[43] The *Hermeneumata* of Pseudo-Dositheus and the Assendelft Tablets contain one and seven Babrian fables, respectively, that are also in the Athos manuscript. They also contain several additional fables *not* attested in the Athos manuscript. Perry and others accept that the remaining fables preserved elsewhere, especially when in verse, must belong

41 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 2–3.

42 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, lxi. See again, Becker, "Gefälschtes *fabula docet*."

43 Perry says, "it may well be doubted whether any of the *epimythia* in our manuscript were written by Babrius himself" (*Babrius and Phaedrus*, lxiii). While Perry represents a more maximalist position on the fables himself, he is far more critical about the *epimythia* going back to Babrius, and often gives them in brackets. In some instances, one might view this as something of a compromise, allowing Babrius to still be the author of a fable if it means only having to sacrifice the *epimythia*. Others might take the *epimythia* to be original, but demand the entire fable be a later Babrian imitator. Adrados is critical of Perry's marking of various *epimythia* as spurious since he does not provide justification and there is evidence of their antiquity in the papyri (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:452). In the Luzzatto and La Penna edition, only 47 of the *epimythia* are deemed to be original.

to the portions missing from the Athos manuscript of Babrius.[44] The same is true of the Bodlean prose paraphrase of Babrius.

Adrados, in contrast, represents a minimalist or at least a more sharply critical position. Of the Babrian text he says, "In short, in our view Babrius is only the Babrius of the Athos [manuscript], although the problem of the Babrian tradition in general terms is of course worthy of study."[45] As it relates, for example, to Pseudo-Dositheus and the Assendelft Tables, Adrados argues that they are from an early "Babrian tradition," rather than Babrius himself.[46] Adrados ultimately concludes that even in the Athos manuscript there are surely some fables that derive from later (if still quite ancient) Babrian tradition rather than Babrius himself, and also that it is very possible that some of Babrius's authentic fables were removed from it.[47]

Finally, the last issues of Babrius's text to address are those Babrian fables that survive in prose paraphrases, in a series of manuscripts known as the Bodleian Paraphrase—named after the chief representative of the tradition from the Bodleian collection.[48] Luzzatto has attempted to reconstruct the original verse form of twenty-one of these paraphrases in the critical edition. Whether or not we have them in prose or verse form does not much impinge on their usefulness to the current project.[49] What is important for readers to know is that such prose versions, the Babrian Prose Paraphrase, have a different numbering system to be aware of. While they often have a Perry or Hausrath number, Babrian fables extant only in prose will sometimes be cited

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44 Holzberg believes that 144 fables can be definitively attributed to Babrius, in addition to 21 further fragments found in the edition of Luzzatto and La Penna (numbers 1–21), and that Babrius may have invented 72 of these (*Ancient Fable*, 58).

45 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:107.

46 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:106.

47 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:176.

48 The chief representative is Cod. Oxon. Bodleianus Auct. F. 4.7 = Bodleianus 2906, referred to in Perry by "B" and Chambry by "Ba." The prose fables that were not in the Athos manuscript were introduced by Pius Knöll, "Neue Babrianische Fabeln," *Zeitschrift für die österreichischen Gymnasien* 27 (1876): 161–66; and idem, *Die babrianischen Fabeln des Cod. Bodleianus 2906* (Vienna: self-published, 1876). These were followed by his critical edition of the Bodleian prose paraphrase tradition of Babrius, which remains the standard critical edition: Pius Knöll, *Fabularum Babrianarum: Paraphrasis Bodleiana* (Vienna: Alfred Hoelder, 1877).

49 Luzzatto and La Penna, *Babrii Mythiambi Aesopei*, 140–66. The prose versions from which they made their reconstructions are printed beneath; however, these reconstructions are only of those prose versions of the Babrian fables that do not have a surviving verse form. This can give a misleading picture of the Bodleian prose paraphrase tradition as one of only several leftover fables, numbering a modest few. In fact, Bodleianus 2906 contains 148 Babrian fables in prose.

as "Babrian Prose Paraphrase" followed by a number, which refers to Crusius's Teubner edition.[50]

4.1.3 *Sources*

Because of the numerous permutations of dependency and possible means of transmission for any given fable, of Babrius's sources we know little beyond the aforementioned "synoptic problem" of the fables.[51] If Demetrius's book of fables is "the official Aesop" in the Roman age, as Perry believes, then that will surely have been one of Babrius's sources.[52] As we saw above, Babrius is generally considered to be independent of the Augustana and Phaedrus traditions.[53] In Adrados's reconstruction, there existed two hypothetical collections, one the antecedent of the Augustana and Phaedrus, and the other, the antecedent of Babrius.[54] Babrius also appears to have a number of fables derived from a version of the *Book of Ahiqar*, and two of these are nowhere else attested in Greek or Latin.[55] The connection between Babrius and older Semitic antecedents is an appropriate segue to an intriguing hypothesis about him.

4.1.4 *Babrius and the Bible*

Perhaps the most significant theory for the intersection of Babrius, Jesus, Luke, and the ancient fable, to say nothing of the field of biblical studies as a whole, is Luzzatto's detailed argument that Babrius read and was influenced by the style and vocabulary of the Septuagint and possibly the New Testament.[56] So far as I know, since its publication in 1975, her theory has gone completely unnoticed by biblical scholars.[57] The language (Italian), length (80 pages), and obscure, general title (no mention of the Bible whatsoever) is a fine example of

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50 Crusius, *Babrii Fabulae Aesopeae*. Most important are numbers from 142–194, those Babrian fables without verse parallels. Numbers 195–206 are further prose fables attributed to Babrius in ancient sources such as the Suda, while 207–250 are additional prose fables that Crusius thought might be of Babrian origin.

51 Discussed previously in 3.4.1.

52 Perry, "Demetrius of Phalerum," 322–23.

53 On the relationship between Babrius and Phaedrus, see also Tom Hawkins, *Iambic Poetics in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 128–34.

54 "We have postulated, in short, the existence of a collection I or 'Ancient Augustana,' from which Anonymous Fable Collection I [his term for the Augustana Collection] and Phaedrus fundamentally derive, and a collection II, from which Babrius derives" (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:180).

55 Babrius has nine or ten fables from *Ahiqar*. See Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, lx–lxi.

56 Luzzatto, "La cultura letteraria di Babrio."

57 Unmentioned in McGaughy, "Babrian Fables;" Mary Ann Beavis, "Parable and Fable," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 473–98; Francois Vouga, "Zur form- und redaktionsgeschichtlichen Definition der Gattungen;" Zimmermann, "Fable;" or elsewhere. Babrius has once been appealed to

the problems mentioned in Chapter 2. Such a radical thesis certainly warrants immediate skepticism; however, as Luzzatto is the editor of the most recent critical edition of Babrius, she is one of very few in a position to propose such a theory.[58] Luzzatto's goal is to establish the influence of style and vocabulary from Babrius's literary culture on his fables. The article is broken down into four chapters, including the influence of the Septuagint and New Testament and affinity with Alexandrian Judaism.[59] In Luzzatto's words:

> Babrius most probably knew the Greek version of the Old Testament: the proofs we propose are not only of a formal-linguistic type but also of a content type. A knowledge, I would add, not irrelevant, when we take into account the diversity of topics (trans. mine).[60]

In addition to this claim, Luzzatto also attempts to establish that there are multiple citations of the Septuagint within Babrius.[61]

Luzzatto argues that Babrius, *Fab.* 58, which is clearly some kind of adaptation of the myth of Pandora's Box, has been influenced by the Genesis story. Luzzatto sees in Babrius, *Fab*. 5, 10 and 133 an awareness of certain verses from the biblical Proverbs.[62] Luzzatto's boldest claim is that Babrius's fable of the Fir Tree and the Bramble (*Fab.* 64) is directly dependent upon Ezekiel 31:3 (LXX):

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in a note to explain a linguistic peculiarity found in Acts 24:24: G. M. Lee, "Two Linguistic Parallels from Babrius," *NovT* 9 (1967): 41–42.

58 This would not be the only theory of Luzzatto that is a departure from everyone else. As I mentioned above, she dates the Augustana recensions to the time of the manuscripts themselves, she dates the papyrus fragment of Babrius later (P.Oxy. 10.1249, to the early third century), and Babrius himself to the second half of the second century or third century. As I also mentioned above, her dating of the Augustana is rejected by everyone else, and her dating of Babrius is not very easy to follow.

59 The other chapters, on the influence of Greek poetry from the Archaic through the Hellenistic period, and Babrius's affinity with rhetorical-grammatical authors, are certainly not without interest. Luzzatto makes the comparison with the Septuagint and New Testament on pages 52–63.

60 "Come si vedrà, Babrio conobbe, molto probabilmente, la versione greca dell'Antico Testamento: le prove che propo niamo non sono solo di tipo formale-linguistico ma anche di tipo contenutistico. Una conoscenza, aggiungerei, non irrilevante, quando si tenga conto della diversità degli argomenti" (Luzzatto, "La cultura letteraria," 52).

61 It seems clear that Luzzatto is relying purely on biblical lexicons rather than digging into Septuagint studies. She may also be unaware of the deliberate imitation of Septuagint style in Luke-Acts.

62 Luzzatto, "La cultura letteraria," 56.

Babrius, *Fab.* 64.3–4
Καλὴ μέν εἰμι
Καὶ τὸ μέτρον εὐμήκης
Καὶ τῶν νεφῶν σύνοικος

Ezekiel 31:3
Καλός
Καὶ ὑψηλὸς τῷ μεγέθει
Εἰς μέσον νεφελῶν ἐγένετο …

While it appears beyond doubt that these two texts are making use of the same basic fable, fables involving vegetation seem to be far more common in the ancient Near East. Though they appear in the Hebrew Bible (see 3.2.1), they could have been picked up by Babrius from any number of places. Overall, the parallel fails to deliver on the promise of proving dependency of one of these texts on the other.

Luzzatto is more successful in identifying smaller affinities between style and vocabulary, and in working through a list of some two dozen parallels. Here is not the place to go through them all, but a few are worth noting now. An example found in the second prologue is significant since it can be assigned with certainty to Babrius himself. According to Luzzatto (and supported by a cursory look through the lexica), Babrius uses the verb πῦρουν with the meaning of "refining" as with a precious metal:

> But I tell my fables in a transparent style. I do not sharpen the teeth of the iambs but I test them and refine them as it were in the fire (πυρώσας), and I am careful to soften their sting. (Babrius, *Fab*. Prologue 2.13–15).[63]

This meaning is only elsewhere found in the Greek Bible (Ps 11:7; 65:10; Job 22:25; Prov 10:20; Zech 13:9; Rev 3:18). While she cites it in reference to the classical poets,[64] the well-known Semitism of using parts of the body pleonastically or as a synecdoche, e.g., "… and *he set his face* to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51),[65] is also spotted by Luzzatto in Babrius: "Once when the oak trees came to *the face* of Zeus …"[66] (Babrius, *Fab.* 142.1 [trans. mine]). One could argue that many of the other items on Luzzatto's list are from the shared Koine background of Babrius and the Bible, which Luzzatto herself acknowledges, and some seem

63 Perry's phrase, "but I test them and refine them as it were in the fire," is a lengthy attempt to translate the laconic ἀλλ΄ εὖ πυρώσας.

64 Euripides, *Hipp.* 720 where we find οὐδ' εἰς πρόσωπον Θήσεως ἀφίξομαι.

65 καὶ αὐτὸς τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστήρισεν τοῦ πορεύεσθαι εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ.

66 Αἰ δρῦς ποτ' εἰς Ζηνὸς πρόσωπον ἐλθοῦσαι.

altogether dubious. For example, Luzzatto suggests that ἐπέχειν only means "*volgere lo sguardo versa q.c.*" ("to turn to look toward something") in Babrius, *Fab.* 50.11 and Acts 3:5;[67] however, the line in Babrius is just as well translated "did not linger,"[68] which is a common definition.

At most, if Luzzatto's thesis is correct, then we must explain another fact. Since ancient people were not in the habit of reading the Septuagint unless they were Jews, Christians, or, rarely, their detractors, to confirm that Babrius had read the Septuagint would suggest he is one of the former two. This would also accord with the other tenuous bits of information about Babrius, including that the author is writing from Syria or its environs, and that the proposed audience is one of Herod's family. A full investigation of Luzzatto's theory will have to be made elsewhere.

At a minimum, Luzzatto has succeeded in demonstrating that there is another author that biblical scholars can mine for insights into the biblical Koine, including the fables of Jesus.[69] A number of other possibilities present themselves, however, if Luzzatto's entire thesis is correct, with implications that she does not realize. Short of Babrius having read and been influenced by biblical Greek, these affinities that Luzzatto has identified may point instead to Babrius being a speaker of a Semitic language rather than just Latin (or Greek), and this popping up here and there in his fables. If so, then several other fundamental issues about his identity may be impacted. For example, the standard explanation of Babrius's name is that it comes from Latin and depends on a metathesis of the "r" and second "b," yielding *Barbius*, "bearded." It may be worth exploring if Babrius's name is conceivably of Semitic origin rather than Latin. If the ubiquitous assumption of metathesis is correct, then *bar*, of course, is a standard Aramaic name prefix. ברבי is an extremely common title used, for example, in the Palestinian Talmud and also in epigraphy as an abbreviation for בר רבי meaning simply "son of Rabbi."[70] The Hebrew name בבי and its Semitic derivatives ביבי and ביבא also find their way into Greek in a number of close forms such as Βαρβαβί, βαβας, βουβας.[71] Βαρβαβί is particularly significant since there are several individuals attested, and it is potentially a

67 Luzzatto, "La cultura letteraria," 58.

68 So Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, 67.

69 For example, βεβλήσθαι meaning "lying" sick, as in the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:20) and Matt 8:14, is also said of a lion who "laid himself down" (Babrius, *Fab.* 103.4).

70 Tal Ilan, *Palestine 200–650*, vol. 2 of *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, TSAJ 148 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 2:13. It appears to be a name as well as a title (see eadem, 473–74).

71 Ilan, *Lexicon*, 2:70–71.

family name.[72] Names derived from the Aramaic form of "father," אבא, are also extremely common, including אבי אביא אבינא, and בא (the initial aleph often falls off). Greek derivatives of אבא are found, for example in Ἀβοῦς,[73] and the New Testament βαραββᾶς (Matt 27:16–17, 20–21, 26 and parallels). Similarly, of the Aramaic אבייה/אביי, "prayer," we have an individual named בר אביי.[74] In a later time a certain βάρβαρος is named on a 5th or 6th century epitaph in Naples, along with a menorah and Hebrew inscription.[75] A challenge comes in the fact that Greek and Latin versions of Semitic names are usually uniquely attested, i.e., just one example of each name is known. In these transcribed names superfluous letters are added occasionally, and metathesis also happens regularly.[76]

It is very odd for Greek verse to adopt the influence of Latin, rather than the other way around.[77] Nevertheless, the standard view attributes Babrius's consistent accent on the penultimate syllable of every line to a nod toward Latin diction. Consistent with the preceding discussion, this phenomenon may also find an alternative explanation of Semitic origin. This practice would also be consistent with the regular penultimate stress of Aramaic. This may also be another or an alternative reason for Babrius to tout the "Syrians of old," as the progenitors of the fable. It would also accord with the fact that the Assendelft Tablets were found in Palmyra, a Semitic city, that Babrius probably knows

72 Ilan, *Lexicon*, 2:71. Since we generally find only one example of a Hebrew name in Greek or Latin (see below) this is exceptional.

73 See Ilan, *Lexicon*, 2:313–17.

74 Ilan, *Lexicon*, 2:320.

75 Tal Ilan, *The Western Diaspora 330 BCE–650 CE*, vol. 3 of *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, TSAJ 126 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 3:233.

76 Ilan, *Lexicon*, 3:20.

77 Although linguistic influence in a bilingual context may theoretically go in either direction or in both directions, Greek usually influenced Latin. See, for example, Robert Coleman, "Greek Influence on Latin Syntax," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 74 (1975): 101–56. The influence occasionally did go in the opposite direction, as seen, for example, in the influence of Latin terminology on legal Greek vocabulary; the Greek word χείρ, for instance, is often a direct translation of the Roman legal term *manus*. On this phenomenon, see Ivars Avotins, "On the Greek Vocabulary of the Digest," *Glotta* 60 (1982): 247–80, and idem, *On the Greek of the Novels of Justinian: A Supplement to Liddell-Scott-Jones together with Observations on the Influence of Latin on Legal Greek*, Altertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien 21 (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1992). For Latin word order sometimes influencing Greek word order in a bilingual papyrus, see Elena Rizzi and Piera Molinelli, "Latin and Greek Compared: Word Order in a Bilingual Papyrian Text (*P. Bon.* 5)," in *Linguistic Studies on Latin: Selected Papers from the 6th International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics* (*Budapest 23–27 March, 1991*), ed. József Herman, Studies in Language Companion Series 28 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1994), 113–27.

Ahiqar, and even Babrius's surprisingly negative attitude toward pagan deities and religion. In short, it is possible that Babrius, the most important author of Greek fables around the time of Jesus and the Gospels, was not Italic at all, but was a hellenized Jew, writing to a Jewish child from Syria or its environs. A full consideration of such a possibility will have to be made elsewhere.

4.2 Phaedrus and the Phaedrian Tradition

In our survey of this uncharted land called the ancient fable, we can say the most about the next author: Phaedrus. Unlike the modern re-discoveries of Babrius and the Augustana Collection, the first-century fabulist Phaedrus has been a foundational figure in the intellectual history of the West. In contrast to the ancient fable tradition as a whole, Phaedrus became part of the canon of *belles lettres*, the archetypal beginner's text "for induction to Latinity in school."[78] John Henderson observes that Phaedrus was "the entrée" to Locke's *System of Classical Education*. About the young Samuel Johnson and his primary school classroom, we learn that Phaedrus "was the only book they memorized to the end."[79] Among the many complaints of John Wesley that motivated him to found his own school, he writes of the educational system of eighteenth-century England:

> In most schools little judgment is shown in the order of the books that are read. Some very difficult ones are read in the lower classes, "Phaedrus's Fables" in particular: and some very easy ones are read long after, in utter defiance of common sense.[80]

The modern Western fable tradition is, in the words of Joseph Jacobs, "Phaedrus with trimmings."[81] Now, however, the erosion of a classical education in the twenty-first century North American classroom is virtually complete. Even though he once enjoyed a wide readership, the task of this chapter, to introduce the significant primary fable literature relevant to the fables of Jesus, extends also to Phaedrus. As we read in the introduction to this chapter,

78 Henderson, *Telling Tales on Caesar*, 5.

79 John Henderson, "'*Phaedrus' Fables*' the Original Corpus," *Mnemosyne* 52 (1999): 308–29, here 321; James L. Clifford, *Young Sam Johnson* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), 56.

80 John Wesley, "'A Plain Account of Kingswood School' (1781)," in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872–1878), 13: 289–301.

81 Joseph Jacobs, *The Fables of Æsop: As First Printed by Caxton in 1484* (London: David Nutt in the Strand, 1889), 1.

"Hardly anyone at all is aware" of Phaedrus.[82] With the biblical scholar in mind, allow me to reintroduce Phaedrus and his fables.

Phaedrus, from whom we have portions of five books of fables, is the earliest author of fables in Latin.[83] Phaedrus versifies his fables using the *senarius*, the iambic meter most suitable for emulating the everyday language of educated Romans, though he varies it occasionally for the sake of comic effect.[84] Otherwise unknown patrons are the addressees of the third through fifth books: Eutychus, Particulo, and Philetus, respectively. About 150 Phaedrian fables have come down to us in one form or another, though we certainly do not have them all.[85] These fables reflect a much greater diversity of material than that found in the Augustana Collection and Babrius. Phaedrus uses both *promythia* and *epimythia*, with a visible trend toward the latter from book to book. In their length, Phaedrus's fables can run from a mere few lines (e.g., *Fab*. 4.15: Prometheus) to several pages (e.g., *Fab*. 5.7: The Flute-Playing Prince), and they contain numerous sub-genres. Since we have not yet read any fables by Phaedrus, here are a handful:

> *To go shares with the mighty is never a safe investment. This little fable bears witness to my statement.*
> A cow, a she-goat, and a sheep, patient sufferer when wronged, went into partnership with a lion in the forest. When they had captured a stag of mighty bulk the lion made four portions and spoke as follows: "I take the first portion by virtue of my title, since I am addressed as king; the second portion you will assign to

82 Henderson, *Telling Tales on Caesar*, iv.

83 Two recent commentaries on Phaedrus are Eberhard Oberg, *Phaedrus-Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000); and Ursula Gärtner, *Phaedrus: Ein Interpretationskommentar zum ersten Buch der Fabeln*, Zetemata 149 (Munich: Beck, 2015). See also M. J. Luzzatto, *Fedro: Un poeta tra favola e realità* (Turin: Paravia, 1976). As usual, Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 50–52, provides an excellent bibliography on all matters in Phaedrus studies. Since the most recent English edition of Holzberg in 2002, a number of important articles have been published on Phaedrus, including: Edward Champlin, "Phaedrus the Fabulous," *JRS* 95 (2005) 97–123; Glauthier, "Phaedrus, Callimachus and the *Recusatio* to Success;" Victoria Jennings, "Borrowed Plumes: Phaedrus' Fables, Phaedrus' Failures," in *Writing Politics in Imperial Rome*, ed. William J. Dominik, J. Garthwaite, and P. A. Roche (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 225–47; Brigitte B. Libby, "The Intersection of Poetic and Imperial Authority in Phaedrus' Fables," *CQ* 60 (2010): 545–58; Hanna Vámos, "Phaedrus and the Tradition," ActAnt 52 (2012): 173–89; Christopher B. Polt, "Polity across the Pond: Democracy, Republic and Empire in Phaedrus *Fables* 1.2," *CJ* 110 (2015): 161–90; Jeremy B. Lefkowitz, "Grand Allusions: Vergil in Phaedrus," *AJP* 137 (2016): 487–509, and idem, "Innovation and Artistry in Phaedrus' Morals," *Mnemosyne* 70 (2017): 417–35.

84 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 44.

85 The standard critical edition of Phaedrus is Antonio Guaglianone, *Phaedri Augusti liberti liber fabularum*, Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum (Turin: Paravia, 1969).

me because I am a partner; then, since I am superior to you in strength, the third portion will come my way; and it will be too bad for anyone who meddles with the fourth." Thus all the booty was carried off by ruthlessness alone. (Phaedrus, *Fab*. 1.5)[86]

Success invites many to their ruin.
A saucy fellow threw a stone at Aesop and hit him. "Good for you!" said Aesop; then he gave him a penny and added: "So help me, I haven't any more, but I'll show you where you can get some. Look, here comes a rich and influential man; throw a stone at him the way you did at me, and you will get an adequate reward." The fellow was persuaded and did as he was advised. But his hope deceived him and frustrated his impudent audacity, for he was arrested and paid the penalty on the cross. (*Fab*. 3.5)[87]

A eunuch was engaged in litigation with a rascal, who, in addition to obscene remarks and wanton abuse, ended by reproaching him with the loss sustained by his mutilated body. "There now," said the eunuch, "is the one thing in which I am at a great disadvantage, that I have no testicular evidence of integrity.[88] But why, fool, do you bring as a charge against me that which is the fault of Fortune? What is really disgraceful to a man is what he has deserved to suffer." (*Fab*. 3.11)[89]

Two soldiers fell in with a robber. One of them fled, the other stood his ground and defended himself with a sturdy right hand. When the robber had been beaten off, his cowardly companion runs up and draws his sword, throws off his cloak, and says: "Bring him on; I'll see to it that he finds out whom he has attacked." Then the one who had fought it out with the robber said: "I could wish that you had helped me just now, at least with those words of yours; I should have been encouraged, believing them to be true. But as it is, sheathe your sword, and your tongue too, since both are equally useless. You may be able to deceive

86 As with Babrius, all translations of Phaedrus unless otherwise noted are those of Perry in the LCL. As is often the case, Babrius and Phaedrus preserve their own version of the same fable. Cf. Babrius, *Fab.* 67 (and Perry 339). This fable is the origin of our term, "lion's share."

87 Aesop makes regular cameos in the fables of Phaedrus, including such episodes as this. Phaedrus apparently felt it appropriate to include a few such short stories along with the other fable material. About this phenomenon, Perry writes, "It is characteristic of Phaedrus, as of no other ancient fabulist whose book has survived, to represent a fable now and then as something that Aesop said or related in appropriate circumstances on a particular occasion in his life in conversation with others" (Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xcii). This practice, and the genre to which this refers, the *chreia*, will prove relevant to us in the coming chapters.

88 Much of this fable uses polyvalent language for the sake of dark humor. Here *testes integritatis* both means "witness to innocence" and references having suffered the loss of his testicles. We see in this fable the absence of any paratexts. Instead, the lesson is provided within the narrative as the last line of the protagonist's direct speech.

89 The line between this final sentence as an *epimythium* or as continuing the direct speech of the eunuch is blurred. It can be taken both ways.

> others who do not know you, but I who have learned by experience how stoutly you can run away, know also how true it is that no trust can be put in your valour. *This story should be applied to him who is brave when all goes well, but prone to run away when the outcome is in doubt.* (*Fab*. 5.2)

> The father of a family had a cruel-tempered son. Every time he withdrew from his father's sight he would beat the slaves excessively in the indulgence of his hot, youthful temper. So Aesop told the old man this little story: "A certain man was yoking an old ox with a young bullock. When the ox begged to be excused because his strength was enfeebled by age, and he objected to being yoked with a mate whose neck was much stronger, the farmer said to him: 'You needn't be afraid; I'm not doing this to make you work, but in order that you may tame that other fellow, who has made many lame with his heels and horns.' And so it is with you; unless you keep that boy with you constantly and restrain his wild nature by the example of your own gentle conduct, beware lest a still greater cause for complaint arise in your household."
> *For a savage disposition the remedy is gentleness.* (*Fab.* 12 of Perotti's Appendix)[90]

From these five, we have just a sample, and to say they are illustrative of the whole is not so easy, since there are a number of outlier fables.[91] We will discuss the issue of defining the fable genre in 5.7, but here we may simply note that *fabula* is an umbrella category for Phaedrus that contains fables as well as *chreiai*. In his collection of fables, he also uses a variety of overlapping terms to emphasize different aspects of the genre: comedy ("joke," *iocus* [*Fab*. 1 Prologue 7, 4.2.1; 4.7.2; "trifle" *neniae* [*Fab*. 3 Prologue 10; 4.2.3]), narrative (*historia* [*Fab.* 4.6.2]; *narratio* [*Fab.* 1.12.2; 4.5.2; 5.2.14]), and metaphor (*exemplum* [*Fab.* 1.3.3; 2 Prologue 1; 2.1.11; 2.2.2; 3.10.2; 4.3.6; 5 Prologue 10]).[92]

Phaedrus's aspirations to literary quality are evident in the use of occasional balancing chiastic structures. From what little survives of its original organization, it is also evident that thought was put into its arrangement. The best example of deliberate arrangement is found in Book 1, which still preserves fables in complementary parallels (e.g., *Fab.* 18 and 19; *Fab.* 4 and 20) as well as antithesis (*Fab.* 16 and 17; *Fab.* 5 and 21).[93] From book to book there is a progression in several ways, including the types of material included, or that have been preserved. The diminished quality of the fifth book, with only ten fables as we have it, has an air of miscellanea or leftovers. Ever self-conscious, Phaedrus asks us to judge him not in his tired old age as he writes this fifth

90 For an explanation of Perotti's Appendix, see 4.2.2 below.

91 "The range of material was—and is—without close parallel in ancient literature" (Henderson, "The Original Corpus," 318).

92 See further van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 95.

93 See further Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 41. On the functions of this arrangement in the corpus as a whole, see 14.3.

book, but by his former glory. Phaedrus achieves this through the final fable of the final book, which reads:

> A dog who had been bold and swift against all wild beasts, and had always so satisfied his master, began to grow feeble under the burden of years. One day when thrown into combat with a bristly boar he seized it by the ear, but owing to his decayed teeth his jaws lost their grip on the prey. The hunter was grieved at this and scolded the dog. But old Spartan replied: "It was not my spirit that failed you but my strength; praise me for what I was, if you condemn me now for what I am."
> *Why I have written this, Philetus, you can see very well.* (Phaedrus, *Fab*. 5.10)

The interpretation that the hound in this fable is an author surrogate seems invited by the *epimythium*, and the concluding direct speech reflects well the self-conscious personality of the author elsewhere.

In many ways, Phaedrus fills a complementary role to Babrius. The value of Babrius's fables is often in matters of form, vocabulary, content, and so on, rather than the personality of Babrius himself. In contrast, Phaedrus, who looms large in his fables, is most helpful in understanding matters of context: the social background of the fable in the first century CE, the reasons an author would choose to compose fables, and something of the character of a fable composer. While Babrius's ambitions are primarily didactic, Phaedrus's are more concerned with satire, in order to give voice to the oppressed, and to grant free expression by means of hidden subversive speech. In his own words:

> Now I will explain briefly why the type of thing called fable was invented. The slave, being liable to punishment for any offence, since he dared not say outright what he wished to say, projected his personal sentiments into fables and eluded censure under the guise of jesting with made-up stories. (Phaedrus, *Fab*. Prologue 3.34–37)

As Adrados characterizes his goals, "Phaedrus virulently attacks the vices of the society of his time: greed, hypocrisy, taking advantage of the weak, etc."[94] We will return to discuss the implications of these points for the gospel characterization of Jesus in Chapter 9.

4.2.1 *Phaedrus the Freedman*

Biographic information is not abundant on Phaedrus, though we have a bit more to go on than with Babrius thanks to Phaedrus's exuberant personality. Phaedrus does not merely present a collection of fables as a detached collector

94 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:122.

but imbues them with a kind of self-dramatization.[95] His books contain both prologues and epilogues and he regularly pops in at various points in his books to defend himself, add a personal anecdote about a fable, or insinuate that he has camouflaged himself as one of the characters in it. These personal interjections and the claims from his prologues and epilogues give the impression of a very self-conscious author with a chip on his shoulder,[96] a self-promoter,[97] a pretentious braggart,[98] with something to prove.[99] This puffed-up self-presentation can, in all likelihood, be tied to perhaps the most important detail we know about Phaedrus: he was once a slave. From the *tituli* of the best manuscripts, we learn that Phaedrus was a freedman of Emperor Augustus,[100]

95 Recently, Champlin, "Phaedrus the Fabulous," has put forward a theory that is currently making its way through Phaedrus scholarship, extending the fable author's self-dramatization to the extreme. He is convinced that virtually all of this self-presentation and the biographical data offered about himself is pure invention and that Phaedrus was a pseudonym of an anonymous author who was a native-born Roman lawyer writing in the time of Claudius and Nero. It remains too early to determine if Champlin's thesis will catch on, but it would not dramatically change the relevance to Luke's fables since Champlin's theory would only shift the date of Phaedrus about 30 years into the mid-first century CE. This shift to a later date is demanded by Champlin because Seneca, *Polyb*. 8.3, written circa 43 CE, says that Aesop's fables had not been translated into Latin by Roman genius: *fabellas quoque et Aesopeos logos, intemptatum Romanis ingeniis opus.* According to Champlin, "generations of scholars have positively contorted themselves to explain this away" (101), but it does not seem to me to demand much contortion to explain this, as others do, by the short time between Phaedrus's publication and Seneca's writing. Phaedrus even complains of a lack of acknowledgement and by his own admission is scorned by other poets. Presumably because it is equally problematic for his own thesis, Champlin does not address the oft-noted problem of why Quintilian, writing in the mid-90s CE, seems similarly ignorant of Phaedrus in his discussion of fables. Even if Champlin is correct that Phaedrus is a member of the Roman elite in an actor's mask, this would not change many of the important contextual clues offered by him for the gospel fables. The pseudonymous Phaedrian author would be using fables for the same purpose as the orthonymous author, and we would not be deprived of the persona associated with the fable composer, since the author's caricature would certainly aspire to a realistic if somewhat exaggerated stereotype of a fabulist. For an example of Champlin's theory put into application, see Enrica Sciarrino, "What 'Lies' behind Phaedrus' Fables," in *Private and Public Lies: The Discourse of Despotism and Deceit in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Andrew J. Turner, James H. Kim On Chong-Gossard, and Frederik Juliaan Vervaet, Impact of Empire 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 231–48.

96 "It is only with distaste that I am admitted into the society of poets" (*Fab.* Prologue 3.23).

97 *Fab.* Prologues 3 and 5.

98 See *Fab.* Prologue 3.38–39 and Prologue 4.1, 20 in particular.

99 "Away then, Envy, lest you lament in vain, when perpetual glory shall at length be given me" (*Fab.* Prologue 3.60–61).

100 Manuscripts P, R1 and D, with small variations, all claim this. Of course, there is the question of whether these *tituli* can be trusted. On the one hand, someone might be motivated to invent that Phaedrus was a slave in imitation of Aesop; however, if that were the

a detail significant for, along with dating, contextualizing his personality and the sort of literature to which the fable belongs. We are witnessing one side of the poet's contested status as he tells us of his many detractors, attempts to establish himself among the Latin poets, and puts on airs of high society. As Perry describes Phaedrus's challenge:

> One must reckon with the fact that putting a series of unconnected fables into verse was something new that had never before been done or approved by literary fashion, and that the inventor and sponsor of this new literary form was not a Roman poet of standing when he put it out, but an obscure Greekling in a servile position. In those circumstances some opposition and disapproval was to be expected and the opponents, while they might envy the poet's work, would look upon the author as an upstart.[101]

It certainly did Phaedrus no favors to select as his *oeuvre* the genre often devalued or disregarded by the lettered elite, and whose most famous user, Aesop, was also a slave. According to Martin Bloomer, these are among a handful of ways that Phaedrus "is marked as servile or libertine."[102] But, for Phaedrus, who had something to prove, he clearly took his inspiration from Aesop:

> The Athenians set up a statue in honour of the gifted Aesop, and by so doing placed a slave on a pedestal of everlasting fame, that all men might know that the path of honour lies open and that glory is awarded not according to birth, but according to merit. (Phaedrus, *Fab*. 2.9.1–4 [the epilogue])
>
> … where Aesop made a footpath, I have built a highway. (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3 Prologue 38)

For the classical scholar and biblical scholar alike, Phaedrus's five books of fables represent a rare and precious glimpse into the thought-world of the ancient slave in his own words.[103]

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case, we might expect Phaedrus to be a slave (*servus*) rather than a freedman (*libertus*) as appears invariably in the manuscripts. Then again, Aesop did eventually win his freedom in *The Life of Aesop* that has come down to us.

101 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, note on lxxvi.

102 The other ways Bloomer highlights Phaedrus marking himself as servile or libertine are his self-declaration that he is a freedman, that at least one of the addressees is also a freedman; that "freedmen are included as (vicious and self-seeking) characters in the poems;" and his self-presentation as one victimized (W. Martin Bloomer, *Latinity and Literary Society at Rome* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997], 75).

103 For studies interested in Phaedrus as a means to understanding ancient slaves, see Bloomer, *Latinity and Literary Society*, 73–109; Henderson, *Telling Tales on Caesar*, and the literature cited in 9.2.1.

The personal details offered in the prologues to his books, the lengthy prologue to the third book in particular, provide several useful clues that allow us to date him with some precision. Here he informs us that he was born on the Greek Pierian Mountain and considers the Thracian musicians Linus and Orpheus his countrymen. He speaks of being "all but born in a school" (*in ipsa paene natus sim schola* [20]), and that "it is only with distaste that I am admitted into the society of the poets" (*fastidiose tamen in coetum recipior* [23]), presumably owing to his servile past and choice of genre.

Though the details of the events are unclear, Phaedrus refers in his third prologue to being prosecuted by Lucius Aelius Sejanus, who was commander of the Praetorian Guard, consul, and friend of Tiberius Caesar.[104] Phaedrus tells us that he is in "great trouble" (*tantis malis*) and has busied himself with composing fables to soothe his grief. Since Sejanus was overthrown and put to death on October 18th of 31 CE,[105] and Phaedrus went on to write two more books, his *floruit* is securely datable to the first half of the first century CE. That Phaedrus may speak derisively of Sejanus in this prologue suggests that he was no longer around, allowing us to anchor the third book around this date of 31 CE. We are also given clues in the third book that he is probably middle-aged (Epilogue 15), and by the conclusion of the fifth book, claiming to be over the hill. Putting the pieces together, that he was a freedman of Augustus, wrote his third book in middle-age around 31 CE, and his fifth book in old age, would suggest a lifespan around ca 10 BCE–50 CE.[106]

4.2.2 *The Text*

As we have it now, the Phaedrian text is incomplete, at least in its original verse form.[107] At some point around the sixth century, Phaedrus was gutted for its

104 On the Pretorian Guard, see now Sandra Bingham, *The Praetorian Guard: A History of Rome's Elite Special Forces* (London: Tauris, 2013).

105 On the downfall of Sejanus, see Hugo Willenbücher, *Tiberius und die Verschwörung des Sejan*. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1896), and Dieter Henning, *L. Aelius Seianus: Untersuchung der Regierung des Tiberius* (Munich: Beck, 1975). For a discussion of the relationship of Sejanus and Pontius Pilate, see Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, SNTSMS 100 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. xiii–xiv, 22, 46, 201.

106 Other historical references that provide more evidence are found in Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, lxxiv. A reference in Martial's *Epigr*. 3.20 is very possibly our Phaedrus, but, as mentioned above, the fact that Quintilian (ca. 95 CE) seems to be unaware of fables in Latin verse requires explaining. Avianus, writing around 400 CE, is the earliest person to name him (along with Babrius) with absolute confidence.

107 For a reconstruction of what the original corpus may have looked like, see esp. Henderson, "The Original Corpus."

animal fables, which would go on to be the primary conduit for them into the Middle Ages and Modernity.[108] This suggests that what is missing is disproportionately fables concerning humans, plants, and gods.[109] The primary manuscript, P, Codex Pithoeanus, is from the ninth century and contains five books. This matches the book tally of Avianus (quoted in 4.1.1 above), however it is certain that Manuscript P does not preserve all the fables that originally stood in each book. Book One contains thirty-eight but is still incomplete because a concluding editorial is missing;[110] Book Two is probably just a fragment of the original with only eight fables; Books Three to Five, which have nineteen, twenty-six, and ten fables, respectively, on the basis of Perotti (see below), are known to be incomplete.

As we should expect by now, the text of Phaedrus is not without some intrigue. In the fifteenth century, the Italian humanist and archbishop Niccolò Perotti (1430–1480) had a copy of Phaedrus, and together with some fables from the later Latin fabulist, Avianus, he made a collection for his young nephew.[111] Perotti's collection contains, in addition to what we have elsewhere, thirty fables and three addresses by Phaedrus to the reader that are nowhere else extant. Though the manuscript Perotti used for Phaedrus is now lost, fortunately for us, we have Perotti's autograph.[112] He generally transcribes the fables literally, though he streamlines the texts and omits the original *promythia* and *epimythia*. In their stead, he supplies the fables with his own titles, which are sometimes rewritings of the original *promythia* and *epimythia*. These fables preserved only by Perotti, we call Perotti's Appendix or *Appendix Perottina*. Another possible source for Phaedrus is a collection of Aesopic fables produced by an eleventh century monk, Ademar of Chabannes. He had at his disposal either Phaedrus's original collection or a paraphrase of it. There is a good possibility that Ademar's fables that are not attested in other sources, go back

108 Henderson, "The Original Corpus," 322.

109 As we discussed in Chapter 2, this fact would surely have contributed to the modern myth of the fable as a talking beast tale. In the first prologue, Phaedrus tells us that not just wild beasts but also trees will be vocal in his fables, and yet not a single talking tree survives in any of the Phaedrian fables we have.

110 It survives in the prose paraphrase. According to Holzberg, the reference to talking trees in the prologue demands a fable including this, which one does not find in the currently preserved book one (*Ancient Fable*, 40). I am less confident by this since it could be a formulaic statement about the contents of fables generally.

111 *Nicolai Perotti epitome fabellarum Aesopi, Avieni et Phedri ad Pyrrhum Perottum fratis filium adolescentem suavissimum.*

112 Codex (N)eapolitanus (Bibl. Nat. IV F 58). The manuscript has water damage, rendering it illegible in places, however, a copy of Perotti's autograph was made and can restore some readings from Codex N.

a millennium to Phaedrus. Even including Perotti's Appendix and Ademar, as with Babrius, there are still more of Phaedrus's fables that survive only in prose paraphrase form. The Latin prose fable tradition, which was transmitted under the name of "Romulus," offers another probable source of lost Phaedrian fables. Though some would argue for additional Latin prose fables to be included in the list, the prose paraphrases of Phaedrus can be found in Perry numbers 558–579.[113] There are (to my knowledge) no papyri of Phaedrus, and our earliest certain secondary reference to his text is by Avianus,[114] who knows Phaedrus's collection in five books and makes use of it in his own collection.

4.2.3 *Sources*

Attempting to pin down the personality of an ancient author and to deduce his sources is usually a formidable task wrought with many challenges. The degree to which Phaedrus diverges from this, telling us precisely what we want to know about his practice of using sources as an author, is almost comical. His first words to us are:

> Aesop is my source. He invented the substance of these fables, but I have put them into finished form in senarian verse. A double dowry comes with this, my little book: it moves to laughter, and by wise counsels guides the conduct of life. Should anyone choose to run it down, because trees too are vocal, not wild beasts alone, let him remember that I speak in jest of things that never happened. (Phaedrus, *Fab*. Prologue 1)

From prologue to prologue, we can trace Phaedrus's use of source material by his own declarations, making progressively less use of source-material from book to book, presumably composing more and more himself. In the first book, Phaedrus gives all the glory to Aesop, ascribing all the fables to him. In the second book, he begins to take a little liberty:

> [A fable] should be approved on its own merits, not by the weight of the author's reputation. I shall indeed take every care to preserve the spirit of the famous old man; but if I choose to insert something of my own, in order that the variety of expression in details may please the taste, I would have you, Reader, take it in good part, provided that my brevity be a suitable recompense for the taking of that liberty. (Phaedrus, *Fab*. Prologue 2)

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113 A short overview of the main theories about the "Phaedrian Tradition," largely occupied with the relationship between Phaedrus and the later Latin collections (which are considerably different from the Babrian tradition), can be found in Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:126–28.

114 As mentioned in note 106 above, it is possible that Martial refers to him.

By the fifth book, Phaedrus plainly confesses to using the name Aesop pseudonymously. As Holzberg puts it, "any further mention of the name *Aesopus* merely represents a 'marketing strategy' for his own new products."[115]

As far as the source material he did use, Phaedrus is connected to the same fabulist tradition from which the Augustana Collection derives. How exactly Phaedrus relates to the recensions of the Augustana is not completely settled. Scholars have long recognized a relationship between these collections, but more recently, Adrados has refined the issue beyond simple dependence. He argues that Phaedrus had something like an ancestor of the Augustana recension that has come down to us, a hypothetical text he calls the "ancient Augustana."[116] Thus, according to Adrados, sometimes the Augustana and sometimes Phaedrus preserves the more ancient form of a given fable they have in common. Though they often preserve a version of the same fable, it does not seem that Babrius and Phaedrus know one another or the other's fables, even if they may have been near-contemporaries and do speak of imitators and rivals. Phaedrus's fables only relate to Babrius's in that they make use of a common ancient stock. Demetrius's collection is always a natural candidate for sources.[117] Given the attachment of a *chreia* to numerous fables that situate their delivery in an occasion of the life of Aesop, Hausrath suggested a version of *The Life of Aesop* from around the turn of the Era was an additional, if not the primary source for him.[118] Georg Thiele believes a collection of fables with a strong Cynic orientation stands behind Phaedrus.[119] The diversity of forms beyond what we might call the pure Aesopic sort, and Phaedrus's apparent adaptation of related forms into fables, have invited speculation about what sources beyond fable collections he might have used. While the use of other genre collections has been met with skepticism by some,[120] Phaedrus may have drawn from collections of *chreiai*, maxims, myths, novelettes, and so forth in the production of his fables.[121]

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115 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 45.

116 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:123, and see also the stemmata on 1:725–26.

117 This is the assumption of Perry regarding Phaedrus's sources, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xcvi.

118 August Hausrath, "Phaedrus," *PW* 19 (1938): 1480; and idem, "Zur Arbeitsweise des Phaedrus," *Hermes* 71 (1936): 70–103. This theory has not caught on and is rejected by Perry, Chambry, and Adrados (see Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xciv, for those publications).

119 Georg Thiele, "Phaedrus-Studien," *Hermes* 41 (1906): 562–92; 43 (1911): 337–72.

120 Adrados does not believe the different sub-genres require separate collections (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:120–28; 2:121).

121 In addition to the articles of Hausrath and Thiele just cited, see also Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, lxxxiv–xcii.

4.3 The Augustana Collection and the Prose Recensions

It was not long ago that the Greek fable tradition was known essentially through the Accursiana, a Byzantine prose collection so named for the 15th-century publisher Bonus Accursius.[122] Like Babrius (above) and *The Life of Aesop* (below), critical study of the ancestor of the Accursiana, the Augustana Collection, has only been a fairly recent possibility. That we may study this ancient collection now is thanks especially to the publication of Chambry in 1925, followed by the editions of Hausrath and Perry.[123] In the primary recension (Recension I) of the Augustana Collection, 231 Greek fables in prose are preserved. They are presented serially, with *epimythia*, and in rough alphabetical order. The Augustana is the largest and probably oldest substantial collection. A sizable portion of these fables are not attested elsewhere and yet we know there must have been many more. The Augustana Collection contains a particular set of identifiable characters, formulas, structures, lessons, themes, and subjects, especially of an ethical nature. These fable features will serve as one of our interlocutors in the coming chapters for examining the affinities between the Lukan fables and others.[124] It was during Chapter 2 that we drew the string of human fables from this text. These fables are typical of the Augustana Collection.

When scholars like Holzberg and Kurke speak of the near-Ozymondian state of the fable tradition, the detritus of what must have been a once glorious empire, with "parameters and transmission" that are "fiendishly complicated and difficult," they refer especially to the Greek prose fables.[125] These are now preserved in more than a hundred manuscripts. While there are early papyri attesting to many of these fables in prose, only three of these many manuscripts ante-date the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the antiquity of its contents is apparent for the reasons discussed below.[126] The anonymity of

122 The Accursiana, which dates to the fourteenth century, is often referred to as Recension III and sometimes as the *Recensio Planudea* or *Collectio Planudeana* (after Maximus Planudes, its putative compiler or editor).

123 Halm's Teubner edition chose one version of each fable arbitrarily without considering which was more original and without attempting to display them synoptically.

124 See especially Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables.*

125 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 1; Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 2–3.

126 The earliest manuscript of the Augustana Collection is known as Codex G, from the tenth-century, Codex Novoeboracensis, Pierpoint Morgan Library Manuscript 397, also known as Cryptoferratensis A 33. The importance of this manuscript cannot be overstated. It contains the oldest version of *The Life of Aesop*, 226 fables, and according to Perry's detailed study, preserves a very ancient text.

the Augustana, together with these many manuscripts that harken back to an ancient origin, make it a particularly mysterious tradition.

4.3.1 *The Date*

A fable's complete lack of references to historical events or other datable information means that its contents normally provide no clues as to its date. Because the Augustana Collection is anonymous and citations of it are difficult to track with certainty, we do not have the same biographical clues about the author(s) that might help us with other texts. To this we must add more essential problems of dating a fable collection. It is necessary to understand the dating of fable collections in more fluid terms, as we cannot speak of a proper canonical form, autograph, or even publication. Adrados, for example, believes the core of the Augustana stems from the Hellenistic period. Using this to pin the date of the Augustana would place it as early as the end of the fourth century BCE. If on the other hand, we would date it to when the contents became substantially similar to what they are now, this would supply a date of the late first century BCE. Adrados believes that Phaedrus used the Augustana in a form that "was almost identical with our Augustana in terms of content."[127] If we wish to date the collection based on when its very wording became secure, Adrados would place this "Augustana of the manuscripts" in the fourth or fifth century CE.[128] Likewise, Perry believes the core is made up of Demetrius collection, which would give us a date of some of this material in the fourth century BCE. Elsewhere, however, Perry dates the archetype of the Augustana to the second, or more likely the first century CE.[129] The text as it stands now, he suggests, was firm by the fourth or fifth century CE. While the Augustana has no autograph or moment of publication on its own, if it were bound with another document, this would give us something to work from. Holzberg dates the Augustana Collection to when he believes it was "published" with *The Life of Aesop*. According to his theory, *The Life of Aesop* and the Augustana Collection were published as a single text. He believes that while a great number of these fables are certainly older individually, this offers one peg

127 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:64. For the dates of Phaedrus, see 4.2 above.

128 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:65. Adrados concludes from a lexical study that the Augustana manuscripts go back to a form of the text that stopped being redacted in the fourth or fifth century CE. He argues that fables were in verse during the Hellenistic age, then prosified in the second century BCE and versified again in the first century CE, and these were again prosified starting in the fifth or sixth century CE through the Middle Ages (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:121). See Adrados's stemmata in *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:725–26.

129 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xvi; and his stemma in *Aesopica*, 308.

from which to hang a date. As we will see in a moment, *The Life of Aesop* is also a slippery text to date, but Holzberg suggests a first or second century CE date for the Augustana on this basis.[130]

While there is ambiguity in terms of their absolute dating, in relative dating terms, pride of place is usually given to the Augustana Collection as preserving the most ancient fable recension we have. According to Adrados, the Augustana is most faithful to the archetype to which the other fable collections are all reacting.[131] Although both Perry and Nøjgaard throw up their hands at the possibility of dating it by internal cues; Chambry and Adrados are undeterred. For Chambry, the present shape is datable by linguistic means to the time of Plutarch. He sees the vocabulary and syntax as fundamentally classical, and it fits the normal style of those authors around the turn of the Era.[132] Adrados's reasons for dating it originally to the Hellenistic period follow a study of the vocabulary in his *Estudios sobre el léxico de las fábulas esópicas*.[133] For Hausrath, the Augustana is datable in its most ancient form to the Imperial period because he believes it fits the development of *progymnasmata* and training in rhetoric of the Imperial age.[134] Some of these theories are more speculative than others. Neither Adrados nor Hausrath seem to have won a large following. A good argument can be made for dating some version of the Augustana recension with before the middle of the first century CE. This comes by way of Phaedrus's collection (4.2), which contains a substantial number of fables in common with the Augustana. As I mentioned above for Adrados's dating, if Phaedrus is not dependent on a version of the Augustana directly, then they share a close common ancestor. Since Phaedrus is securely datable

130 Holzberg has updated his views since writing, *Ancient Fable*, 3–4, 84.

131 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:121.

132 Chambry, *Fables*, xlvii.

133 Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, *Estudios sobre el léxico de las fábulas esópicas: En torno a los problemas de la koiné literaria* (Salamanca: Colegio Trilingüe de la Universidad, 1948); and see further Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:64. To my knowledge, not many have been endeared to Adrados's theory, since it involves dating vocabulary to a particular time period and milieu to the exclusion of others (Adrados quite literally tallies up "Atticisms"), and assumes the fables are stable enough in their vocabulary for this to be a reliable procedure.

134 See the discussion of Hausrath's view and its reception in Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:62–64. For the role of the fable in *progymnasmata*, see Chapter 5. Indeed, the fable collection of Aphthonius is almost indistinguishable from what we find in the Augustana Collection.

to the first half of the first century CE, some form of the Augustana Collection, whatever that may have looked like, must be relatively earlier.[135]

The range of dates on offer for the Augustana Collection are diverse and the scholarly arguments are often independent of each other. All this is to say, even if it would be folly to assign *the* date for *the* Augustana Collection, the individual Greek fables that make up the Augustana Collection, if not the collection itself much like we now have it, are temporally appropriate for comparison with the fables of the gospels. Somewhere between the first century BCE and the second century CE is the most-likely date for one snapshot in the life of the Augustana Collection, with plausible arguments for earlier and later dates for the collection's nucleus and final form.[136]

4.3.2 *The Text*

As noted above, the manuscript tradition of the Augustana and its descendants is exceedingly complex.[137] Determining the time when material found its way into the collection, the degree to which discrete fable collections cross-pollinated each other, and how much redaction individual stories have undergone over the centuries are some of the issues that come with the Augustana Collection and prose recensions. There are often two versions of the same fable in the same manuscript and sometimes a fable has a divergent version in two manuscripts.[138] The primary prose recension containing 231 fables, the

135 For Nøjgaard, Phaedrus's fables evince knowledge of the Augustana recension (*La fable antique*, 1:138), while Adrados believes that Phaedrus and the Augustana are independent variations of a common source. Scholars typically hold that the Augustana is more often closer to the "original" version of a fable than Phaedrus.

136 For authors supporting this dating, see Christina Meckelnborg and Bernd Schneider, *Opusculum fabularum: Die Fabelsammlung der Berliner Handschrift Theol.lat.fol. 142*, Mittellateinische Studien und Texte 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 4 n. 23, and Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 23 n. 73. One exception is the radical departure of Luzzatto, who dates the collection to around the time of the manuscripts themselves in the tenth century CE, as remains from political Byzantine poetry (Maria Jagoda Luzzatto, "La datazione della Collectio Augustana di Esopo ed il verso politico delle origini," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 33 [1983]: 137–77). Holzberg dismisses Luzzatto out-of-hand (*Ancient Fable*, 94).

137 See Perry's *Aesopica* 295–311 for the manuscripts of the main recensions, a stemma, and other details discussed in Latin. A more accessible study is found in Ben Edwin Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop*, Philological Monographs 7 (Haverford, PA: American Philological Association, 1936), 71–228.

138 Adrados actually assumes that the original collector of the Augustana "did not notice that he was taking two versions of the same fable" (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:84). In other words, Adrados thinks these doublets need not be interpolations. Peeling back layers of redaction and attempting to determine what variant of a particular fable is more original will sound familiar to the New Testament scholar.

Augustana (Recension I), has a close relative dubbed Recension Ia, consisting of 143 fables, 12 of which are not found in Recension I. Recension II is the Byzantine Codex Vindobonesis (127 fables) and Recensio III is the Accursiana (130 fables). Recension II is based mainly on Recension I and Babrius, and Recension III is based mainly on Recensions I and II. The fables found in these later recensions are also presented in the first edition of Chambry and often contain interesting variations of fables known from the Augustana. In addition to the Augustana recension and Babrius, the post-Augustana recensions contain fables drawn from other unknown sources. To those who wish to survey the Ozymondian wreckage in more detail, the colossal excavations of Adrados, Perry, Nøjgaard, Chambry, and others await.

4.3.3 *The Origin and Sources*

Unlike Babrius and Phaedrus, who make the Aesopic fables their own in various identifiable ways, the author(s) and collector(s) of the fables in the Augustana are anonymous. The compilers of the Augustana either actively or tacitly allow the reader to ascribe authorship, generally to Aesop. This is one reason why it is so difficult to tell if the Augustana Collection is being used when an ancient figure cites a fable of "Aesop." This is also why modern editions of "Aesop's fables" generally draw from these prose recensions and not from other authors such as Babrius. Holzberg supposes that this collection was intended to be read as though it were a copy of Aesop's personal autograph, which, according to *The Life of Aesop*, he deposited in the library of Lydia. Thus, "the original fable book [of the Augustana] was 'sold' as to the readers as the genuine Aesopic article."[139] Anecdotal support for this is found in our best copy of the Augustana, Codex G, which contains *The Life of Aesop* along with the Augustana Collection.[140]

For Holzberg, the Augustana was a unitary work from the beginning because of his view of its origin as a companion to *The Life*. Scholars such as Perry and Chambry also believe it can be studied as a unitary work because they see it as a descendent of the collection by Demetrius of Phalerum (see 3.4.1).[141] Adrados represents a different school of thought, rejecting that the Augustana should be conceived of as a unified work.[142] He believes the matter is much

139 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 88.

140 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 72.

141 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xviii.

142 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:74. A similar point serves as a guiding principle for Jeremy B. Lefkowitz, "Aesop's Pen: Adaptation, Authorship, and Satire in the Aesopic Tradition" (PhD, University of Pennsylvania, 2009).

more complex and is critical of the approach of all the standard editions of the Augustana recension:

> The heart of the matter is this; we are dealing with popular literature, from an open tradition, in which the variants are not simply faults or amendments. And among other things, there has never been a single archetype of the Augustana. It is impossible, then, to edit it in the way that has been done until now.[143]

In contrast, Adrados attempts to identify landmarks along the way, and he presents a no-less-complex theory of the Augustana's development.[144]

The issue of the Augustana's sources is complex, rendering the Synoptic problem enviably simple by comparison. As mentioned above, it seems that Phaedrus had the Augustana or something close to it for a source, and that this was the direction of influence. Babrius is generally regarded as an independent tradition, though Holzberg wonders if Babrius was not a source for the Augustana.[145] For Perry and Chambry, the fable Q-source, Demetrius's collection, is the evanescent specter making its influence felt on the Augustana with varying strengths. We can say next to nothing with certainty about the sources of the Augustana Collection in the first century CE. Fortunately for us, the scholarly skirmishes of the fable specialists are ones in which the biblical scholar can safely remain neutral. The challenges and uncertainties of the Augustana Collection are not in matters that impinge on their usefulness to the gospel fables, and this group rewards us with hundreds of fables for our labors.

4.4 *The Life of Aesop*: A Sketch

To do justice to the importance of this text would require a chapter of its own; here I will give only a thumbnail sketch.[146] Like Homer, the blind poet from days of yore, Aesop's genius is intertwined with infirmity: Aesop was born

143 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:88.

144 According to Adrados, the Augustana fables were prosified and versified several times in their transmission (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:121). He uses this process, alongside the linguistic studies discussed in the date section above (4.3.1), to trace the Augustana.

145 Holzberg ponders if we might conceive of the Augustana Collection as a prose response to Babrius (*The Ancient Fable*, 88).

146 For a stopgap see Pervo's in-depth but still preliminary article, "A Nihilist Fabula." For a survey of the secondary literature as of the turn of the millennium, see Niklas Holzberg, "The Fabulist, the Scholars, and the Discourse: Aesop Studies Today," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 6 (1999): 236–42.

mute. It was upon showing kindness to the disguised goddess Isis that she loosed his tongue and made him able to use his gifts to their fullest.[147] In spite of this touching act, the tone of the work as a whole is comic, generally ribald, and Aesop himself is portrayed as a *picaro*, arguably the original.[148] This tone of *The Life* is set by its opening:

> The fabulist Aesop, the great benefactor of mankind, was by chance a slave but by origin a Phrygian of Phrygia, of loathsome aspect, worthless as a servant, pot-bellied, misshapen of head, snub-nosed, swarthy, dwarfish, bandy-legged, short-armed, squint-eyed, liver-lipped—a portentous monstrosity. (*Vit. Aes.* 1.1 [trans. Daly]).

Despite his low station, Aesop eventually gains his freedom through his unique brand of folk wisdom. Much like Jesus with his interlocutors, along the way Aesop engages in battles of wits against all comers, especially intellectual elites whose rigid scholasticism is no match for the shrewd wisdom of the protagonist. As a matter of course, Aesop also takes every opportunity to lampoon the pretentions of all he encounters, gives biting comebacks to his hecklers, and relishes in exposing false claims of wisdom. These scenes result in the frustration and humiliation of his interlocutors and a laugh for Aesop and the reader. In addition to this tendency, however, there is the genuine good nature of Aesop, who performs some good deeds, such as his kindness toward the disguised Isis. He also helps his masters solve riddles (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 35–36 and 78–80), and gets him out of trouble (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 69–74). It goes without saying that Aesop makes use of fables (though perhaps not as many as one might expect) to solve riddles, to explain the natural order, to elucidate his circumstances, make a rhetorical point, and to augur his conviction and execution, among other things.[149] These fables, Aesop writes down and deposits in King Croesus of Lydia's library for posterity (and possibly the profit of the author of *The Life*) (*Vit. Aes.* 100).[150]

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147 The narrative fits the stock *donor sequence* very well (William F. Hansen, ed., *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998], 107). It is clear that Aesop was clever already before his encounter with Isis. The opening episodes narrate Aesop outwitting fellow slaves, even without the ability to speak.

148 See J. Papademetriou, *Aesop as an Archetypal Hero* (Athens: Hellenic Society for Humanistic Studies, 1997). According to Holzberg, narratologists have only recently begun to take an interest in it (*The Ancient Fable*, 76).

149 As mentioned in 2.2.3, of the dozen or so fables told in *The Life of Aesop*, the great majority concern common people and events, rather than talking animals.

150 On the function of this notice of a written collection of Aesop's fables, see especially the theory of Holzberg in section 4.3.3 above.

The *Life of Aesop*, as we have it, may be divided into three main sections: (1) Aesop the slave, primarily under the Master Xanthus, (2) Aesop in the court of Babylonia, and (3) Aesop's death at the hand of the Delphians. Like several biblical narratives including Tobit, the *Life of Aesop* also makes use of the Legend of Ahiqar, cribbing a substantial portion that takes place in the Babylonian court and making up the second section of the narrative. Elsewhere there are resonances with other biblical and Hellenistic tales, such as the story of Aesop's successful interpretation of an Egyptian king's dreams that no one else could interpret and by which he earned his freedom from imprisonment (*Vit. Aes.* 105–108, cf. Gen 41; Dan 2).[151] Though he would earn accolades as a "true prophet" by his wisdom and fables (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 93), ultimately, Aesop's mouth would be his undoing. After insulting the Delphians, he is framed when his detractors plant a golden cup taken from a temple in his baggage as he departs (*Vit. Aes.* 127–128; cf. Gen 31).[152] For this offense against the Delphian gods, he is condemned to be thrown off a cliff to his death (*Vit. Aes.* 132–142; cf. Luke 4:28–30).[153] In an attempt to argue for his innocence Aesop delivers several fables,[154] but recognizing that his efforts are futile, Aesop does not give the Delphians the satisfaction of killing him. He says, "I would rather travel around Syria, Phoenicia and Judaea than die at your hands here" (*Vit. Aes.* 141),[155] and hurls himself off.[156] The injustice of his death prompts supernatural repercussions, casting a curse upon the people, bringing about a plague, and then military campaigns against the Delphians (*Vit. Aes.* 142). There, the oldest version, like the Markan ending, abruptly concludes. The later traditions flesh out additional details. Recension W tell us that a temple and stele was dedicated to Aesop by the Delphians, while P.Oxy. 1800 tells us that an altar where he fell was put up and sacrifices are offered to him as a hero. If these many parallels with the gospel narratives were not impressive enough, there is even a tradition of Aesop's resurrection preserved in several *testimonia*.[157]

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151 For additional parallels to those listed here, see Pervo, "A Nihilist Fabula."

152 On the connection between this story in *The Life of Aesop* and Joseph in the Genesis story, see Cristiano Grottanelli, "The Ancient Novel and Biblical Narrative," Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica 27 (1987): 7–34.

153 This episode is one of many in the Lukan *Sondergut* with Aesopic connections, discussed later in 8.3.

154 These fables are examples of their use in forensic oratory discussed above.

155 ἠβουλόμην Συρίαν, Φοινίκην, Ἰουδαίαν μᾶλλον κυκλεῦσαι ἢ ἐνθάδε (παραλόγως ὑφ' ὑμῶν).

156 Whether Aesop is pushed by the Delphians or deprives his accusers of the satisfaction by hurling himself off is a difference found between the recensions. In the G recension, Aesop throws himself off, while in the MORN recension he is thrown off. On the recension of the text, see below.

157 See *testimonia* 45–48 in Perry, *Aesopica*, 226.

4.4.1 *The Date and Provenance*

Because we know some biography of Aesop was widespread centuries before (see 3.3.4), and the text comes down to us in multiple recensions, dating the *Life of Aesop* is not straightforward. As Kurke puts it, "we must conceptualize a text like the Life of Aesop, as one late moment—or several—of textual fixation within an ongoing oral tradition spanning centuries of time and a wide geographic area."[158] The proposed dates for the story as we know it range from the early Hellenistic period to the second century CE, with most placing it in the first or second century CE.[159] Setting the *terminus ante quem* are several papyri we have of *The Life*, such as P.Berol. 11628, dated to the 2nd/3rd century.[160] The same exigencies that make assigning a date a challenge also apply to the provenance of the text. Various locations, from Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor have been proposed.[161]

4.4.2 *The Ancient Recensions of the Text*

Prior to the mid-twentieth century when Perry published an edition of manuscript G in his *Aesopica, The Life of Aesop* was known only in medieval versions. The tenth-century Vita G is arguably the most important manuscript in the study of fables, preserving the sole example *The Life of Aesop* that is more ancient and also longer than the other recensions.[162] The G recension

158 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 8.

159 Perry first thought that "in the oldest form that we know [i.e., in manuscript G] it must have been composed, or rewritten, at some time between 100 B.C. and 200 A.D." (Perry, *Studies*, 25–26). Later in *Aesopica* he writes "Archetypus vulgaris, scriptus aliquot tempore intra annos fere 30 a. C. n. et 100 C. n. in Aegypto favent Musae et Isis, adversatur Apollo (Perry, *Aesopica*, 22). He narrows this still further in his *Babrius and Phaedrus* to "a product of the first century," meaning CE (Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxxvii). Jedrkiewicz likewise says first century CE (Marcel Delaunois Jedrkiewicz, *Sepere e paradosso nell'antichità: Esopo e la favola* [Rome: Ateneo, 1989], 158). For Adrados, the Cynic elements he sees in it dictate that it must come from the Hellenistic period (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:647–83). Pervo states that Holzberg believes it comes from the second or third century CE ("A Nihilist Fabula," 83). Holzberg is aware of P. Berol. 11628, which sets the *terminus ante quem* around the end of the second century CE, though Holzberg resists being pinned down on a date any more specific than "the first half of Rome's imperial age" (*The Ancient Fable*, 75).

160 For bibliography and images see: http://berlpap.smb.museum/03173/. Some papyri of *The Life* are closer to G, some closer to W. On the papyri of *The Life*, see the helpful digest given by Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 17.

161 For a brief survey, see Grammatiki Karla, *Vita Aesopi: Überlieferung, Sprache und Edition einer frühbyzantinischen Fassung der Äsopromans* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 2001), 8.

162 Codex G is Pierpont Morgan Library manuscript number 397. Recension W, which survives in many manuscripts, is named after Anton Westermann, its first editor: *Vita Aesopi*

also contains hundreds of fables in the Augustana Collection (see 4.3).[163] A translation into English of the G recension was made by Daly in his *Aesop without Morals* in 1961;[164] however, substantial text-critical work since then has improved both G and W texts.[165] The W recension is also presented in Perry's *Aesopica*. Other than a translation into Modern Greek, no critical translation into a modern language has been made. However, already at the time of printing it in his *Aesopica*, Perry recognized that the W branch was comprised of discrete recensions within it. Grammatiki Karla has identified the two main branches as BPThSA and MORN. She has produced an edition of the BPThSA recension,[166] and an edition with an English translation of the so-called MORN branch is in preparation for the WGRW series.[167] This should benefit biblical scholars especially who are only just realizing the importance of *The*

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ex vratislaviense ac partim Monacensi et Vindobonensi codicibus nunc primum (Brunsviga: G. Westermann; London: Williams and Norgate, 1845). In addition to the two ancient recensions, there is a Byzantine recension, the *Vita Accursiana*, associated with Maximus Planudes. For this version, see Alfred Eberhard, ed., *Fabulae Romanenses graece conscriptae, ex recensione et cum adnotationibus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1872), 225–305. For a more recent discussion, see Grammatiki A. Karla, "Die *redactio Accursiana* der *Vita Aesopi*: Ein Werk des Maximos Planudes," *ByzZ* 96 (2003): 661–69.

163 For a recent and more detailed discussion of the history of the text with the goal of orienting the unfamiliar reader, see Kurke's section "Explaining the Joke: A Road Map for Classicists" of her *Aesopic Conversations*, 16–46.

164 In a few places where the G manuscript is mutilated, Daly has supplied a translation of the W recension in brackets.

165 Daly's *Aesop without Morals* has gone out of print but his (not updated) translation appears in an anthology: William F. Hansen, *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature*, 106–62. The only other English translation of the G recension appears in an appendix to Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel*, 177–224. There is a French translation of G by Corinne Jouanno, *Vie d'Ésope: Livre du philosophe Xanthos et son esclave Ésope: Du mode de vie d'Ésope*, La Roue à Livres (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006). More recent editions of the Greek text than those in Perry's *Aesopica* have been completed and translated into Modern Greek by Papathomopoulos to mixed reviews. For recension G: Manoles Papathomopoulos, *Ho Bios tou Aisopou. He Parallage G. Kritike ekdose me Eisagoge, Keimeno, kai Metaphrase*, 2nd ed. (Ioannina: G. Tsoles, 1991); and recension W: Manoles Papathomopoulos, *Ho Bios tou Aisopou. He Parallage W. Editio Princeps. Eisagoge, Keimeno, Metaphrase, Scholia* (Athens: Ekdoseis Papadema, 1999). A more warmly received edition of recension G is by Franco Ferrari, *Romanzo di Esopo. Introduzione e testo critico a cura di Franco Ferrari. Traduzione e note di Guido Bonelli e Giorgio Sandrolini*, 2nd ed., Classici della BUR (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2002).

166 Karla, *Vita Aesopi*. There remains, to my knowledge, no translation of this recension.

167 The WGRW edition will be by Grammatiki Karla with the English translation by David Konstan, provisionally titled, *Life of Aesop: Recension MORN*. These two editions of BPThSA and MORN will replace that of Perry, whose edition of Vita W is a composite of both branches.

Life of Aesop. As Kurke exhorts, "precisely because of its almost unique and mysterious status, the weird, marginal text (and tradition) of the Life of Aesop urgently needs to be read with and against other ancient texts and cultural products of all kinds."[168] For other "mysterious," "weird," and "marginal texts," one could do no better than the early Christian gospels.

Like most other texts and contexts studied in the current project, *The Life of Aesop* is both a modern re-discovery and a text generally shunned by the academy. There is a certain resonance with the insults hurled at Aesop in *The Life* and those hurled by moderns at its author: "Even the most fanatical believers in the simple power of folk literature would feel embarrassed when confronted by this *Life*."[169] *The Life of Aesop* remained essentially untouched by biblical scholars until the 1990s;[170] it remains remarkably under-utilized, though this seems to be changing recently.[171] There is undoubtedly much work still to be written on the ancient Christian gospels in light of *The Life of Aesop*, and it is my hope that the present work will encourage more research in this direction.[172] Apart from the many parallels in the storyline with biblical narratives, *The Life of Aesop* is valuable in many ways for the study of the New Testament: from its pick-up-and-read kind of Koine and its possible reflection of a social

168 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 6.

169 Antonio La Penna, "Il romanzo di Esopo," *Athenaeum* NS 40 (1962): 264–314: "anche i più fanatici credenti nella potenza ingenua dell'arte popolare si sentirebbero imbarazzati di fronte a questa vita" (313). For further abuse, see Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 76–77.

170 The situation is not altogether different on the classics side. *The Life of Aesop* is snubbed, for example, in Bryan P. Reardon, ed., *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). On the biblical scholarship side, an early reference to *The Life of Aesop* comes from David Aune when discussing the issue of anonymity of the Gospels, citing *The Life of Aesop* and the Alexander Romance as parallel cases (David E. Aune, "The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels: A Critique of C. H. Talbert's *What Is a Gospel*?" in *Gospel Perspectives* 2, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 9–60, here 44–45.

171 As late as 1998, Pervo was still able to subtitle his article "Introducing *The Life of Aesop*" (Pervo, "A Nihilist Fabula: Introducing *The Life of Aesop*"). Since then, biblical scholars have taken notice in several articles and even a monograph: Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel*; Mauro Pesce and Adriana Destro, "La Lavanda Dei Piedi Di Gv 13,1–20, Il Romanzo Di Esopo e i Saturnalia Di Macrobio," *Bib* 80 (1999): 240–49; Whitney Shiner, "Creating Plot in Episodic Narratives;" Elliott, "Witless in Your Own Cause;" Lawrence M. Wills, "The Aesop Tradition," in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison, and John Dominic Crossan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 222–37; Watson, "The Life of Aesop and the Gospel of Mark;" Reece, "'Aesop', 'Q' and 'Luke;'" Ross, "Luke, Aesop, and Reading Scripture;" Froelich and Phillips, "Throw the Blasphemer off a Cliff;" Bryant, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*.

172 Such a project is planned for a future monograph.

stratum akin to the gospels,[173] to its anonymity, episodic structure, and textual fluidity.[174] For the current project, however, our interest in *The Life of Aesop* is in what it can tell us about the gospel fables, their genre, how traditional fable materials are imbedded into broader narratives, and how a fable teller is characterized.

4.5 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to introduce our primary interlocutors for the fables of Jesus: the fables of Babrius, Phaedrus, the Augustana Collection, and *The Life of Aesop*. These treasuries of comparanda all preserve materials dating to within a century of Jesus and the gospel authors, if not during their lifetimes. Despite their obvious relevance to the "parable" tradition and the world the early Judaism and Christianity generally, authors like Babrius and Phaedrus remain essentially unknown to biblical scholarship.[175] Biblical scholars are not alone in this oversight, as we read in the introduction, these texts have been "stubbornly neglected."[176] The present readers may now count themselves among the precious few acquainted with this material, which shall be applied in the coming chapters to the fables of Jesus.

173 Whoever was reading it, *The Life* is the only extended biography of a slave in the ancient world.

174 See, for example, Shiner, "Creating Plot in Episodic Narratives."

175 There are no citations of this material, for example, in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*. In Snodgrass's comprehensive commentary on the parables, which is a landmark work that I hold in the highest regard, this neglect is evident. Phaedrus is nowhere to be found and "Aesop" is collated under the heading "Appendix (Perry, LCL)" and "Babirius" [sic], with two fables mentioned. In one case, a fable under the "Appendix" heading is a Babrian fable, another is from the Augustana Collection, and the third is from Cod. Bruxellensis 536, Perry 666 (a fable probably of very-late Christian origin) (Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 831). The very few modern exceptions have already been mentioned in the Introduction and even these are largely citing "Aesop's fables" rather than an author like Babrius or Phaedrus.

176 Holzberg, *Babrios*, 9.

CHAPTER 5

The Fable in Graeco-Roman Education

5.1 Introduction

As we learned in Chapters 2 and 3, fables were used in education among the Greeks already by the time of Plato and Aristophanes. Upon reaching the Imperial period, when our evidence for ancient education becomes much greater and our understanding of the education system much firmer, we find that fables have an important place once again. Given the special role of the fable in the world of ancient education, how the fable tradition of Jesus in the gospels intersects with it demands consideration.[1] This chapter covers three main areas. I first introduce the fable as it was used in various Graeco-Roman

1 Book-length surveys of aspects of education in ancient Christianity include Hauge and Pitts, *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*; and Parsons and Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament.* Jewish education has received particular attention from Catherine Hezser: "Die Verwendung der hellenistischen Gattung Chrie im frühen Christentum und Judentum," *JSJ* 27 (1996): 371–439; *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); "Private and Public Education," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, ed. Catherine Hezser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 465–81. See also Jason M. Zurawski and Gabriele Boccaccini, *Second Temple Jewish Paideia in Context*, BZNW 228 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017); and James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (New York: Doubleday, 2007). Other relevant studies include Edwin A Judge, "Early Christians as a Scholastic Community," *JRH* 1 (1961): 125–37; Osvaldo Padilla, "Hellenistic Παιδεία and Luke's Education: A Critique of Recent Approaches," *NTS* 55 (2009): 416–37; Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee*, LNTS 413 (London: T&T Clark, 2011). The intersection of Paul and education is taken up by Claire S. Smith, *Pauline Communities as "Scholastic Communities:" A Study of the Vocabulary of 'Teaching' in 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, WUNT II/335 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Ryan S. Schellenberg, *Rethinking Paul's Rhetorical Education* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013); Adam G. White, *Where Is the Wise Man? Graeco-Roman Education as a Background to the Divisions in 1 Corinthians 1–4*, LNTS 536 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Devin L. White, *Teacher of the Nations: Ancient Educational Traditions and Paul's Argument in 1 Corinthians 1–4*, BZNW 227 (Boston: de Gruyter, 2017). For "ancient Christianity" and pagan education a few centuries later, see Sara Rappe, "Pagan Elements in Christian Education," in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Yun Lee Too (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 405–32. Other studies address the matter of "schools" without attention to the material discussed here. There is, of course, Krister Stendahl's classic study, *The School of Saint Matthew: Its Use of the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1954), and a host of literature on a Pauline "school." See, e.g., Thomas Schmeller, *Schulen im Neuen Testament: Zur Stellung des Urchristentums in der Bildungswelt seiner Zeit*, Herders Biblische Studien 30 (Freiburg: Herder, 2001). These studies, however, do not deal with the ancient educational system of the Romans in a systematic way.

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educational contexts. By working through the different levels of ancient education (5.2–5), I show that the fable was ubiquitous in both formal and informal educational settings of the first century. Next, in 5.6, I devote particular attention to the *progymnasmata*, a level of preliminary rhetorical training that an author such as Luke would have studied before composing his Gospel. While the rhetorical training of most New Testament authors is less certain, there is strong evidence that the author of the Lukan Gospel received instruction in the *progymnasmata*. As New Testament scholars have come to recognize, the forms and techniques learned at this stage give us insights into the rhetorical categories Luke would have used when writing. Here, I highlight the forms and techniques especially relevant for the fables of Jesus. In the next section (5.7), we use the *progymnasmata* as the baseline for our discussion of how the fable is defined in antiquity and modernity. With the appropriate qualifications, the *progymnasmata* supplies us with a definition of the fable that is used by many fable scholars today and endorsed by some parable scholars as well: "fable is a fictitious story picturing truth," μῦθος ἔστι λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν (Theon, *Prog.* 4). The final section (5.8) allows the ancient fable theorists to weigh in on the modern attempts to divide "parables" from fables on the basis of the characters they contain, or whether they are "possible." The ancient authors agree, at the end of the day, that they are all fables.

5.2 Education in the First Century

Our evidence for formal education in Graeco-Roman antiquity comes from ancient educational theorists, especially the detailed account in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and authors of *progymnasmata*. A second source of information comes by way of the literary artifacts—actual copies of students' school exercises—which are attested abundantly on papyri, ostraca, and wax tablets, especially from the primary and secondary levels of education.

The traditional scholarly reconstruction of formal education in the Roman world describes a system that was divided into three stages: exercises in reading and writing (*ludus litterarius*), the school of grammar (*schola grammatici*), and the school of rhetoric (*schola rhetorici*).[2] For the sake of convenience, I will often simply refer to these levels as primary, secondary, and tertiary. Outside of this system, we shall make note of one ancillary kind of education that would

2 More specialized training began at the tertiary level, with most students opting for rhetoric and the minority choosing another subject, such as law, medicine, or philosophy. Some pursued these other areas after first studying rhetoric.

have been used widely in the Empire: the *Hermeneumata* or school colloquies. The *Hermeneumata* were exercises for teaching Latin speakers the Greek language and vice versa.[3]

In the modern study of ancient education, two phenomena in tension with one another have borne out. The first phenomenon, stressed especially by Henri Marrou's landmark work, is the remarkable conservatism in the outline and the progression of the exercises used in each and every level.[4] This is best illustrated by the consistency in the scores of copies of school exercises that survive from antiquity. The Bouriant papyrus (4th century CE), for example, has been a particular source of interest to scholars of ancient education since it is the most complete copy of the assignments for students at the primary stage, consisting of exercises in increasing difficulty on eleven papyrus leaves. Comparing the Bouriant papyrus to a similar papyrus from the third century BCE, Morrou notes that "with more than five centuries between them, the procedure is the same."[5] As Marc Huys and Nele Baplu also note concerning these two papyri, the choice of words and even the sequence in which the child learns them correspond with one another.[6] We find further testament to this remarkable stability of the system in the *progymnasmata*, which deviate

3 Of course, there were many other kinds of learning going on in antiquity apart from the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, including physical exercise, the training in trade skills, or other well-known kinds of education, along with the mathematics learned in the schools. Among the more comprehensive surveys, see Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); W. Martin Bloomer, *Latinity and Literary Society at Rome* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and W. Martin Bloomer, *The School of Rome: Latin Studies and the Origins of Liberal Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

4 First published in French: Henri Irénée Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1948); it was quickly translated into English: *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956).

5 Marrou, *A History of Education*, 215. The third-century BCE papyrus he has in mind is available in Octave Guéraud and Pierre Jouguet, eds., *Un livre d'écolier du III^e siècle avant J.-C.*, Publications de la Société Royale Égyptiee de Papyrologie, Textes et Documents 2 (Cairo: L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1938). It is identified as follows in the standard modern catalogues: LDAB 1054; CPP0192; Cribiore 379.

6 There are also many verbal parallels in another papyrus from the first century CE (Marc Huys and Nele Baplu, "P.Bouriant 1, Fol I–V: Re-Edition and Commentary of the Syllabic Word-Lists," *ZPE* 169 [2009]: 29–57, here 38–39).

little from each other in the exercises used and are generally consistent in their order of progression.[7]

In tension with the first phenomenon is the second one, observed by more recent scholarship. This is the recognition that this three-level structure was not the only system available, and practically speaking, this three-tiered structure and the progression of exercises (*ordo dicendi*) within it were an idealization that was not always rigorously followed. In an area as vast as the Roman Empire, which had no state-endorsed or funded school system, we should not be surprised to find some diversity, especially in the first two stages. In many instances, it is apparent that a sharp distinction between the primary and secondary levels is overdrawn. We also know, for example, that some parents would use a private tutor, slave, or otherwise employ homeschooling for what would be equivalent to the primary stage. Since the elements of this level are so basic, they could be taught quickly and less formally. We find evidence of this in some places where the school of grammar (*schola grammatici*), what we have called the second stage, is presumed to be the first publicly available. In such cases, children have learned at least the bare necessities of primary school beforehand, and the school of grammar began, perhaps, with some of the later exercises from the primary level.[8] Stanley Bonner also points out basic matters of practicality.[9] Students of different ages and abilities, new students and those in the final stages were all attending at once. This ensured things were not so straightforward.

From Marrou's essential observation about the remarkable conservatism of the ancient educational system and the later scholars who have qualified this observation, a more nuanced understanding of education in antiquity has emerged, well-summarized by Robert Penella:

> The literary-rhetorical curriculum varied in content, length of study, and methods of delivery; the methods of delivery were affected by local resources. That having been said, it is still valid to think of this ancient curriculum as divided into three stages, even if those three stages were not all experienced by every student and did not always align with three distinct sequential teachers.[10]

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7 For a chart comparing the order and names of the exercises in the *progymnasmata*, see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xiii.

8 For a quick run-through of these complications, see Alan D. Booth, "Elementary and Secondary Education in the Roman Empire," *Floriligeum* 1 (1979): 1–14.

9 Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 179.

10 Robert J. Penella, "The *Progymnasmata* in Imperial Greek Education," *CW* 105 (2011): 77–90.

Bearing Penella's qualification in mind, it remains useful to think of ancient education in terms of these three levels, and this will be our point of departure.

5.3 Primary Education

Between the ages of five and seven, boys and some girls began the equivalent of primary school and the lessons were not unlike those of primary school today.[11] The first exercise was to learn the names of all the letters of the alphabet from alpha to omega, and backward from omega to alpha.[12] Once a child could recognize all the letters, they moved to syllables, first reading two-letter syllables, then three, and four. At four-letter syllables, the child then advanced to monosyllabic words, then words consisting of two syllables, three syllables, and so on.[13] This building block method of education (*ordo dicendi*) formed the theoretical rubric for education at all levels.[14] The lessons in writing proceeded much like the reading exercises. Once the alphabet was mastered, the

11 The tracing of letters is one particularly familiar practice. The teacher would first write the letter lightly on a surface and then hold the child's hand as they traced over the letter (see Quintilian's description in *Inst.* 1). Soon, the teacher would allow the student to trace the letters on their own. Also common with our own day, children of the Roman Empire would learn their alphabets in a sing-songy melody, and the concept of learning through play was carried over from Greek education (*ludus* itself can have the meaning "play" in Latin). Quintilian recommends the use of toy letter cutouts to familiarize the child with their letters: "Nor do I rule out the well-known practice of giving ivory letter-shapes to play with, so as to stimulate little children to learn—or indeed, anything else one can think of to give them more pleasure, and which they enjoy handling, looking at, or naming" (*Inst.* 1.1.24–26; unless indicated otherwise, translations from Quintilian are those of Donald Russell, LCL). Quintilian finds the group classroom setting to be an aid to learning, by means of stimulating competition among students: "let it be a game" (*Inst.* 1.1.20). Then as now age-appropriate rewards are recommended (*Inst.* 1.1.20), which apparently meant using sweets as an incentive for some teachers (Horace, *Sat.* 1.1.25–26; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae: Tacitus* 6.5–6).

12 We find a narrative example of this first lesson recorded in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas 6, when the boy Jesus appears before the instructor, Zacchaeus. Naturally, the precocious Jesus subverts the lesson and complains that the teacher does not grasp the true meaning of the alpha.

13 From the surviving papyri it is evident that the first words were not chosen for their usefulness but were often obscure tongue twisters that could then be joined to create sentences used to teach proper pronunciation and correct impediment of speech. Quintilian (*Inst.* 1.1.37) refers to these tongue twisters as χαλινοί, "bridles."

14 Again, we are reminded that it is theoretical insofar as it is an idealization described by the ancient educational theorists. In practice, matters could be more varied. Cribiore has shown, for example, that some students would copy even brief passages before they could read them (*Gymnastics of the Mind*, 161–62).

child would move onto syllables, then words, from words onto short sentences, and from short sentences onto short sayings, then metric couplets, and finally onto short metric stories: fables.

The Bouriant papyrus gives a good sense of the primary stage curriculum.[15] Though the beginning few leaves are lost, which would have consisted of the alphabet portion and syllable exercises, the eleven following leaves provide a helpful example of how the exercises would be written out, their quantity, what words and sentences were chosen, and the *ordo dicendi*. When the surviving portion begins, we find lists of one, two, three, and four-syllable words, some chosen for their challenging pronunciations, to be sure, but most are proper names of mythological characters and important cultural figures like poets. After the word lists come five *chreiai* of Diogenes Laertius, written one word per line. Then a series of 24 maxims (*gnomai monostichoi*) from Menander written in couplets in alphabetical sequence. Last of all, the final exercise for the primary level on this papyrus is the prologue to Babrius's *Fables* (see Figure 4). From the Bouriant papyrus we can get a very good sense of the typical *ordo dicendi*. Small steps of increasing difficulty begin with short words, to longer words, to short sayings (*chreiai*), to short metric couplets (*monostichoi*), culminating in a short metric passage (fables).

By the end of the primary level of education, when the majority of children concluded their studies, the skillset of the child would be the essentials enabling them to get through life: signing one's name, reading a simple text such as a public notice or a graffito, copying a simple text, and a modicum of social distinction above the unlettered. Beyond these basic practical skills, primary education served other important functions: citizenship training and the moral formation of the child. From the perspective on an educator like

15 The Bouriant papyrus was written by a Christian, confirming our other evidence that Christians participated in the same educational system as everyone else and used the same materials. It was first published by Pierre Jouguet and Paul Perdrizet, "Le Papyrus Bouriant n 1. Un cahier d'écolier grec d'Égypte, *Stud. Pal.* 6 (1906): 148–61. Cribiore and the editor believe this is a student's copy, and a later editor, Paul Collart, describes the hand as "an inelegant uncial of a child still with little ability and no doubt distracted" (une onciale inégale d'enfant encore peu habile et sans doute distrait) (Paul Collart, ed., *Papyrus Bouriant* [Paris: Édouard Champion, 1926], 17–27, here 17). Would that every child wrote so neatly! The handwriting seems too practiced to be a student's, there are very few mistakes, and there are many critical signs, such as breathing marks and diaeresis. Morgan thinks it is a teacher's exemplar (*Literate Education*, 101). Despite the author's Christianity, the focus of the lessons remains on the pagan culture, using a core set of names from Greek mythology and legendary history. The staurogram on the upper left margin is repeated on every page. While Christian markings such as this can be added by later scribes, the ink and strokes are consistent with the rest of the page, indicating they are not a later addition.

Figure 4
Bouriant Papyrus 1. 4th century CE. Folio 10 recto. Prologue of Babrius's Fables, with staurogram in left upper margin indicating a Christian scribe. l'Institut de Papyrologie de la Sorbonne.

Quintilian, it was the formation of a child's moral character that was the most important part in primary education:

> If it were agreed that schools were good for study, but bad for morals, I should put a higher value on respectability of life than on any excellence as a speaker. In my view, however, the two are inseparably connected. (*Inst.* 1.2.3)

Like Socrates before him (see 3.3.2), Quintilian and the educators at all times in antiquity recognized the importance of instilling morals and proper social behavior from the earliest lessons.

> Character reveals itself too more naturally in games—but bear in mind that no age is too immature to learn straight away what is right and what is wrong, and that the best age for forming character is when they do not know how to pretend, but obey their teachers most readily. It is easier to break than to straighten anything which has hardened into a bad shape. There must be no delay, then, in warning the boy that he must not behave greedily, dishonestly, or without controlling himself. (*Inst.* 1.3.12–13)

We find the theorists describe and papyri confirm that the sentences selected for a student to copy and recite reinforced the student's edification. Quintilian suggests that the lines

> should not be meaningless sentences, but should convey some moral lesson … The child may also be allowed to learn, as a game, the sayings of famous men and especially selected passages from the poets (which children particularly like to know). (*Inst.* 1.1.36)

Though Quintilian does not give us any more specifics about the types of sayings or names of authors at the level of primary education, the papyri, such as the Bouriant papyrus, are helpful to flesh things out. Maxims such as those by Menander and Euripides were popular,[16] as were apophthegmata, such as those sayings collected for the Seven Sages of Greece,[17] and *chreiai*, such as those involving Diogenes the Cynic, and, of course, fables.[18] At the primary level then, the child would have encountered fables that he or she probably had first heard from the nursery (Quintilian, *Inst*. 10.1), which were selected for their familiarity, for their simplicity, for their entertainment value, for their memorability, and especially for their warnings against vices and praises of virtues. Of the evangelists and anyone capable of reading their gospels then, we may safely assume that they were familiar with fables by virtue of knowing the basics of reading and writing.

5.4 Hermeneumata

Since Roman children at the secondary stage of education would encounter the poets in both Greek and Latin, I should offer a word about one of the ways this bilingualism was attained in formal settings. The *hermeneumata* were a curriculum of exercises for this purpose. Like the levels of education, these exercises presented topics in increasing difficulty, but in a bilingual format.[19] There are several local varieties of these *hermeneumata*, and the textual history reflects this; however, four broad stages are reasonably consistent. The first component of the *hermeneumata* is a Greek-Latin glossary of useful words in alphabetical order. Second is a glossary of words divided into thematic subjects. The third and fourth sections are what interest us. The third component, the colloquia, consists of didactic texts set out in two columns—Greek in one column and Latin in the other—relating scenes of everyday life in very simple

16 Bonner provides many example maxims culled from Menander used at the primary level (*Education in Ancient Rome*, 174).

17 As Bonner notes, Seneca remarks that one could find the wisdom of the Seven Wise Men simply by entering a primary school to see what was being copied (Seneca, *Ep*. 94.9) (*Education in Ancient Rome,* 176).

18 Those *chreiai* found on the Bouriant papyrus show that the tradition was associated strongly with Diogenes in particular.

19 Matters of dating are complex since there are a variety of recensions, but already in the second century, the recensions were starting to break up (Eleanor Dickey, *The Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana*, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015], 1:44). We also still do not know if they were originally used to teach Greek to Latin speakers, or the other way around (see Dickey, *Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana*, 1:39).

prose, generally one or two words per line. These colloquia are prized for their simple descriptions of daily living in the Roman Empire, particularly the daily lives of children going to school:

> I come | (I go) | to school. | First | I greet | the teacher, | who greeted me back. | 'Greetings, teacher! | Greetings, fellow students | (students)! | Fellow students, | give me my spot!' | (bench, | stool, | seat) | 'Squeeze yourself in!' | Go over there. | It's my place, | I | had it first! | (I sat, | I sit, | I learn, | you learn, | I study, | you study) | Now I master | my reading …[20]

The fourth stage consisted of bilingual texts of various kinds for reading practice, and here, once again, we encounter the fables. They were undoubtedly chosen for similar reasons to the primary school—their simplicity of language, their familiarity to the student, and enjoyability—along with the ease with which they are translated. Though much is uncertain about what traditions entered into the *hermeneumata* and when they did so, the fables are certainly one of the first.[21] Here is one fable that survives only in the *Hermeneumata* of Pseudo-Dositheus:

> A landlord once made a sea voyage and was annoyed by the bad weather. The oarsmen were slacking their efforts because of the weather, and the man said to them, "I'm going to throw stones at you if you don't get this boat going faster." Then one of them said, "We just wish we were in a spot where stones could be picked up!"
> *Like this man, we ought in our hearts to endure lesser evils in order to escape the greater ones.* (Perry 391 [trans. Daly])

As floating fables often are, those that pop up in the *hermeneumata* are something of a puzzle and are another indication that those fables that have survived are just a fraction of what circulated in the ancient world. Where they came from and when, we do not know, but the fables surviving in the *hermeneumata* attest to the ubiquity of the genre and the use of fables as didactic texts.

5.5 Secondary Education

Of those children receiving a formal education, if it did conclude, as most did, at the primary stage, then the level of grammar came next. At the beginning

20 *Hermeneumata* (Colloquium Leidense-Stephani) 2f–3c (text Dickey 1:198–99; trans. mine).
21 Dickey, *Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana*, 1:24.

of the grammarian level, the structure had much in common with the first. Starting over at the alphabet, a student would learn the "grammatical" qualities, vowels and consonants, short and long vowels, diphthongs, followed by the study of syllables, this time for the counting of meter. We need not tarry on the details, but the second stage familiarized the students with parts of speech, cases, and so on for the purpose of establishing correctness of speech. The understanding of meter in hand, the children would devote much time to reading the poets, Homer most of all, as well as Latin works such as Vergil's *Aeneid*, the Greek tragedians, and comedic works.[22] In addition to reciting and memorizing passages, students would be instructed in proper recitation and the literary techniques of the poets, such as the use of tropes, allegory, simile, and the like. A succinct account of this level is given by Dionysius Thrax:

> Grammatike is an *empeiria* ["acquired expertise"] of the general usage of poets and prose writers. It has six parts: first, accurate reading with due regard for the prosody; second, explanation of the literary devices contained; third, the provision of notes on phraseology and subject matters; fourth, the discovery of etymology; fifth, the working out of analogical regularities; sixth, the critical study of literature, which is the finest part of the *techne* ["art"]. (*Grammatici Graeci* 1.1)[23]

Along with the practical skills here described, once again we must note the emphasis on inculturation, accomplished by having the children swim in the literature of the received tradition. While the emphasis was on reaching the more illustrious works of Homer, Vergil, and the like, lo and behold, we find fables in use at this stage as well. As Raffaella Cribiore notes, "no prose was read in a grammarian's class except for fables and gnomic—that is, didactic and moralistic—works by Isocrates."[24] Thus far, we have seen fables play an exceptional role, appearing in every stage of education.

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22 While establishing any degree of dependence is ambitious, Dennis R. MacDonald has highlighted ancient education in his arguments that Luke imitates both Homer and Vergil: *Luke and Vergil: Imitations of Classical Greek Literature* (Lanhan, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?: Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

23 Trans. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 185. For the role of Dionysius Thrax in the process of systemizing the study and teaching of grammar, and the secondary stage of education in the Imperial period generally, see Stefanos Matthaios, "Greek Scholarship in the Imperial Era and Late Antiquity," in *Brill's Companion to Ancient Greek Scholarship*, ed. Franco Montanari, Stefanos Matthaios, and Antonios Rengakos, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 184–296.

24 Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 202. Contra Marrou, who claimed Aesop and Babrius were left to the primary school (*A History of Education*, 228).

5.6 *Progymnasmata*

During the third stage, teenage students encountered the *progymnasmata* or "preliminary exercises," which trained them in the basics of rhetoric. The *progymnasmata* were used in preparation for careers involving public speaking such as politics and law, and for anyone with ambitions to compose literature of their own, both historical and poetic. Five handbooks of progymnasmata have survive from the first through the fifth century CE: Theon (first century CE),[25] Pseudo-Hermogenes (second, or third–fourth century),[26] Aphthonius (fourth century), Libanius (314–393),[27] and Nicolaus

25 Theon refers to Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Theodorus of Gadara, establishing a terminus post quem of the late first century BCE. Quintillian refers to one and possible two "Theons" (*Inst.* 3.6.48; 9.3.76); either of them could be the author of Theon's *Progymnasmata*, and if so, sets a terminus ante quem of 95 CE. Even if neither is the Theon to whom Quintillian refers, the consensus for now is that Theon is the oldest, with the later progymnasmatists demonstrating a dependence on him at various points. On Malcolm Heath's alternative dating of Theon, see the next note.

26 Malcolm Heath has proposed alternative dates to Theon and Pseudo-Hermogenes ("Theon and the History of the Progymnasmata," *GRBS* 43 [2002–2003]: 129–60). Though it is too early to tell if the theory will prevail, the most significant challenge is to the dating of Theon, whom Heath would instead connect to a Theon of the fifth century. Penella describes Heath's theory as "attractive" ("The *Progymnasmata* in Imperial Greek Education," 80). Heath has an uphill battle, however, since we already have a papyrus of Theon's *Progymnasmata*, dated by Groenwald between the fourth and fifth century (M. Gronewald, "Ein Fragment aus Theon, Progymnasmata [P. Cairo Temp.Inv. No.26/6/27/1–41]," *ZPE* 24 [1977]: 23–24). There is also the problem for Heath that Theon claims to be introducing some new exercises to the curriculum. If Theon came after the other main progymnasmatists, then this would be a plain lie, since the other authors have all the exercises Theon does, save τόπος, which the other authors use somewhat differently. If Heath is correct about Theon, all is not lost, since the same author proposes that Pseudo-Hermogenes's *Progymnasmata*, normally dated to the fourth century, should be attributed to the rhetor Minucianus in the second century. Heath is effectively attempting to shuffle the deck of our progymnasmatists, but not in a way that would greatly affect the present undertaking, especially given the conservatism of the tradition discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Since Pseudo-Hermogenes quotes the same fable definition as Theon and places the fable first rather than second, one might even argue that Heath shuffles the deck in our favor.

27 As the precision of his dates indicate, in contrast to the other progymnasmatists, we know a great deal about Libanius. In addition to his *Progymnasmata*, he has left us an autobiographical oration, 63 additional speeches, and 1,544 letters. Though he was a pagan, he was the teacher of John Chrysostom and Basil of Caesarea and was appointed to the chair of rhetoric in Constantinople by the Emperor in 449. For Libanius's role in the fourth century, see Raffaella Cribiore, *Libanius the Sophist: Rhetoric, Reality, and Religion in the Fourth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). For an English translation of Libanius's *Progymnasmata*, see Craig A. Gibson, *Libanius's Progymnasmata Model*

(fifth century).[28] Though there is a significant time gap between some of the authors, we may once again justify the usefulness of them all by the incredible stability of the tradition from antiquity until the Modern period and the fact that these authors often reference one another. Pseudo-Hermogenes, for example, has an extensive scholia tradition, and a Latin translation of his treatise was widely used in the seventeenth century for education. The influence of Aphthonius, transmitted alongside Pseudo-Hermogenes in the Middle Ages, was still greater. As James Butts and Ronald Hock note:

> The influence of Aphthonius' little book on European culture—at first in the Greek East and then in the Latin West—is all out of proportion to its size. Indeed, it is hard to overestimate the impact of Aphthonius on European rhetoric and education, an impact that lasted well into the seventeenth century.[29]

We may find a parallel to the present undertaking among scholars of Shakespeare and Milton, who have sought insight into the literary forms of those authors in the Latin translation of Aphthonius.[30] Suffice to say, we are justified to compare these *progymnasmata* to contemporary works such as the early Christian gospels. Since Theon's *Progymnasmata* is probably the oldest, we will follow his work and Quintilian as a guide, supplemented by the later authors.

Unlike the first two stages, the *progymnasmata* have earned the attention of biblical scholars since the early 1980s.[31] As Theon informs us, the purpose of

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Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric, WGRW 27 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).

28 For the Greek of Theon, see the recent edition by Patillon: Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, ed. and trans. Michel Patillon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1997). The only editions of the other progymnasmatists are in the Teubner series: Hugo Rabe, ed., *Hermogenis Opera* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1913); Hugo Rabe, ed., *Aphthonii Progymnasmata* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1926); Richard Foerster, ed., *Libanii Opera*, 12 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–27), 8:1–571; Joseph Felten, ed., *Nicolai Progymnasmata* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1913).

29 James R. Butts and Ronald F. Hock, "The Chreia Discussion of Aphthonius of Antioch: Introduction, Translation and Comments," in Hock and O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 209–34, here 212. We will find in Chapter 8 that Aphthonius was influential into the eighteenth century as well.

30 See further, Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 251.

31 The attention given to them since the early 1980s is surely in part owing to the translations and editions put out by the SBL: Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, eds., *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, vol. 1 of *The Progymnasmata* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Vernon K. Robbins, "The Chreia," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres*, ed. David Edward Aune (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 1–23; Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, trans. and eds., *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises*, WGRW 2 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002);

the *progymnasmata* was to prepare a student not just for a career in rhetoric, but composition more broadly:

> There is no secret about how the exercises are very useful for acquiring the faculty of rhetoric. One who has expressed a narration (διήγησις) and a fable (μῦθος) in a fine and varied way will also compose a history well and what is specifically called "narrative" (διήγημα) in hypotheses—is nothing other than a combination of narrations. (*Prog.* 1)[32]

For this reason, scholars interested in how the books of the New Testament were composed have sought clarity for the arguments and techniques of the New Testament authors in the exercises of the *progymnasmata*. As George Kennedy writes on the first page of his introduction to the standard translations of these works:

> [The curriculum of the progymnasmata] was the source of facility in written and oral expression for many … Not only the secular literature of the Greeks and Romans, but the writings of early Christians beginning with the gospels and continuing through the patristic age, and of some Jewish writers as well, were molded by the habits of thinking and writing learned in schools.[33]

In other words, if we are right to assume that the gospel authors will have gone through the same educational system as everyone else, then we gain through the exercises a clear understanding of the paradigms and categories in which these ancient authors thought and wrote.[34] As we will see momentarily, the fable played no small role in this process.

The curriculum itself had its roots in the Hellenistic period and must have been fairly standardized by the turn of the Era.[35] All of the early *progymnasmata*

Ronald F. Hock, trans., *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Commentaries on Aphthonius's Progymnasmata*, WGRW 31 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012).

32 Unless otherwise stated, I am using the enumeration and translation of George A. Kennedy for the progymnasmatists Aelius Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus the Sophist (*Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*).

33 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, ix.

34 As I mentioned in the introduction, the evidence is clearer for some gospels than others, but it is beyond doubt that the author of the Gospel of Luke was trained in the *progymnasmata*. The Gospel of Mark is a more challenging case to prove, on which, see Mortensen, *Genres of Mark*, including my short article on the fable exercise therein, "*Mythos*: The Markan 'Parables' and Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Fable and Comparison."

35 The term "*progymnasmata*" first occurs in *Rhetoric for Alexander* 28 (1436a25) from the third or fourth century BCE, transmitted with the works of Aristotle. Aristotle himself does not discuss *progymnasmata* as a whole, but discusses particular forms within them

are written in Greek, yet Suetonius was using it for rhetoric in Latin in the early second century CE (*Rhet.* 1),[36] and Quintilian seems acquainted with the entire series.[37] While our understanding of the primary and secondary levels of education comes largely from a few authors like Quintilian and what we can glean from the abundant material artifacts, the *progymnasmata* have a much stronger association with the names of the rhetorical masters that produced them.[38] Thus, our main sources for these exercises are preserved for us under the names of Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonius, Libanius, Nicolaus, and so on. To these we may add Quintilian's *Education of the Orator*, which also describes the exercises at the end of the first century CE. We have encountered a few of these progymnasmatists already. Theon's definition of the fable as "a fictitious story imagining truth" will be of key importance later in this chapter (5.7). We have encountered Aphthonius as well, because in addition to his *Progymnasmata*, we are in possession of a collection of fables composed by him, certainly used in this didactic setting. Here are three fables from his collection:

> *A fable about a goose and a swan exhorting the young to words.*
> A prosperous man decided to keep both a goose and a swan, but his intentions toward the two were different, for he had got the one for the sake of its song and the other for the sake of his table. When it was time for the goose to die for the cause for which it was being kept it was night, and the darkness prevented telling one from the other. The swan, although he got caught instead of the goose, gave indication of his nature by singing and escaped death by means of his music.
> *Thus the musical ending completes the prelude.* (*Fab.* 2 [Perry 399], trans. adapted from Daly)

> *A fable about honeybees and a shepherd, urging us not to set our hearts on wicked gains.*
> Some honeybees were making honey in the hollow of an oak tree. A shepherd discovered the bees' work and attempted to carry away some of the honey. The honeybees flew all around him, stinging the man with their stings. In the end the shepherd exclaimed, "I give up! I don't need the honey if it means dealing with the bees."
> *Trouble awaits you if you pursue ill-gotten gains.* (*Fab.* 27 [Perry 400], trans. adapted from Gibbs)

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such as maxim, narrative, encomium, ekphrasis, thesis, and as we will see in 7.3.1, the fable.

36 For an edition of Suetonius's *On Teachers of Grammar and Rhetoric* with a translation and extensive preface, see Robert A. Kaster, *Lives of the Caesars & on Teachers of Grammar and Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

37 See further, Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 250–51.

38 In every case, the preliminary exercises were only one of many works composed of these authors. Sadly, with the exception of Aphthonius's fables (see below!) and Libanius's oeuvre, none of the other works by these authors has come down to us.

> *The fable of the farmer and the fox.*
> A wicked farmer envied his neighbor's abundant crops. In order to destroy the fruits of that man's labor, he caught a fox, attached a blazing firebrand to her tail, and then let the fox loose in his neighbor's crops. The fox, however, did not go where she was sent. Instead, as fate decreed, she set fire to the crops of the man who had let her loose.
> *Bad neighbors are the first to suffer from the harm they would do to others.* (*Fab.* 38, trans. adapted from Gibbs)[39]

Like the first two stages, the *progymnasmata* offered a curriculum of exercises of increasing difficulty, from the simplest rhetorical forms to the basics of declamation. According to Quintilian, Pseudo-Hermogenes, Aphthonius, and Nicolaus, the first and most basic exercise of progymnastic rhetoric is, as the reader should be able to guess, the fable (μῦθος). This is then followed by narrative/narration (διήγημα, διήγησις), *chreia* (χρεία), maxim (γνώμη), refutation (ἀνασκευή), confirmation (κατασκευή), and so on. Depending on how the exercises are divided, the total comes out to between ten and fourteen in all. Theon follows a slightly different order, beginning first with *chreia* (under which he includes maxim), placing fable second, narrative third, and so on.[40] So, when a student began their rhetorical training, the first or second exercise that he trained in was the fable.

As Bonner argues, the selection of fable, along with *chreia* and maxim to begin the exercises probably reflect an effort to interlock the secondary and tertiary levels—the grammarian and the *progymnasmata*—and to ease the transition.[41] Thus, some of the first exercises resemble what the students would have done at the secondary level. To begin with fable, *chreia*, and maxim also had the advantage of being familiar to the student from the primary stage, when they were used to practice writing their letters and memorization. Nicolaus the Sophist tells us explicitly in his preface that the fable serves this transitional function:

> We must speak about each in turn, and first about the fable. Just as by avoiding what is difficult in complete hypotheses those who arranged these things invented the use of progymnasmata, so they put the fable first among them as being naturally plain and simpler than the others and as having some relationship to poems. In their transition from poems to rhetoric, students should not all at once encounter things that are strange and unusual to them. Let us speak first, therefore, about fable. (*Prog.* 1)

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39 See again the parallels in Judg 15:4–5 and Babrius, *Fab.* 11 (Perry 283).

40 For the list of all the exercises and a chart of their order in each author, see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xiii.

41 *Education in Ancient Rome*, 252. Quintilian tells us that some of the early exercises from the third level, such as the *chreia*, can be used at the end of the second stage (*Inst.* 1.9.3).

Thus, in this third stage of education, the fable receives pride of place as well. It is on the fable that ancient authors like the evangelists cut their teeth on rhetorical expression. While it is beyond the scope of our discussion to treat the full *progymnasmata* curriculum in detail, because of the attention it has received by New Testament scholars, we will turn only briefly to one other exercise (the *chreia*) before devoting our attention to the fable.[42]

5.6.1 *The* Chreia

New Testament scholars have known the *chreia* exercise long enough to demonstrate the positive results of using the *progymnasmata* as a guide to the forms in the Gospels.[43] This fact makes the *chreia* an appropriate dry run for applying the fable exercise to this same end.

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42 Other exercises used in conjunction with fables and fable telling, such as prosopopoeia, will be brought into the discussion where relevant.

43 As we saw in the introduction, a couple of suggestive essays have examined this possibility since Parsons made this statement. See especially Stigall, "The Progymnasmata and Characterization in Luke's Parables," and now the monograph by Parsons and Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament.* For scholarship on the now "well-furrowed field" of the *chreia*, see James G. Williams, *Those Who Ponder Proverbs: Aphoristic Thinking and Biblical Literature*, Bible and Literature Series 2 (Sheffield: Almond, 1981); George Wesley Buchanan, "Chreias in the New Testament," in *Logia: Les paroles de Jésus—The Sayings of Jesus: Mémorial Joseph Coppens*, ed. Joël Delobel, BETL 59 (Leuven: Peeters, 1982), 501–505; idem, *Jesus, the King and His Kingdom* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984); James R. Butts, "The Chreia in the Synoptic Gospels," *BTB* 16 (1986): 132–38; Catherine Hezser, "Die Verwendung der hellenistischen Gattung Chrie;" Hock and O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric;* Kindstrand, "Diogenes Laertius and the Chreia Tradition;" James R. Butts, "The Voyage of Discipleship: Narrative, Chreia, and Call Story," in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownle*e, ed. Craig A. Evans (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 199–219; Burton L. Mack, *Anecdotes and Arguments: The Chreia in Antiquity and Early Christianity* (Claremont, CA: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1987); Martin J. Buss, "Appropriateness in the Form Criticism of the Teaching Source: A Response to James Williams," *Semeia* 43 (1988): 115–19; John Dominic Crossan, "Aphorism in Discourse and Narrative," *Semeia* 43 (1988): 121–40; Mary Gerhart, "Generic Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 43 (1988): 29–44; Robbins, "The Chreia"; James G. Williams, "Parable and Chreia: From Q to Narrative Gospel," *Semeia* 43 (1988): 85–114; Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1989); Fergus King, "The Chreia: The Return of the Form-Critic," *Africa Theological Journal* 22 (1993): 76–90; Burton L. Mack, "Persuasive Pronouncements: An Evaluation of Recent Studies on the Chreia," *Semeia* 64 (1993): 283–87; Jerome H. Neyrey, "Questions, 'Chreiai', and Challenges to Honor: The Interface of Rhetoric and Culture in Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 60 (1998): 657–81; Hock and O'Neil, *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises*; Marion C. Moeser, *The Anecdote in Mark, the Classical World and the Rabbis*, JSNTSup 227 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002); Anders Eriksson, "The Old Is Good: Parables of Patched Garment and Wineskins as Elaboration of a Chreia in Luke 5:33–39 about Feasting with Jesus," in *Rhetoric, Ethic,*

A *chreia*, plural *chreiai*, is something like an "anecdote"—a succinct, self-contained, narrative of the simplest kind.[44] For a definition we can turn once more to Theon, who defines a *chreia* as "a concise statement or deed that has been appropriately attributed to some specific person or something analogous to a person" (Theon, *Prog.* 3 [trans. mine]).[45] The later progymnasmatist Pseudo-Hermogenes defines a *chreia* as "a recollection of a saying or action or both, with a pointed meaning, usually for the sake of something useful" (*Prog.* 3). In the classical tradition, the fable and the *chreia* have been neighbors since Demetrius of Phalerum. If Diogenes Laertius is reliable in his presentation of Demetrius's works, we note that next on the list of works after his collection of fables is a collection of *chreiai* (*Vit.* 5.81).[46] The *chreia* can even be identical in form to the fable except for the primary difference that *chreiai* are short narratives about a specific person like Diogenes, while fables are about general characters and can have morals appended. The two genres are easily adaptable into each other.

As we just learned, for Theon and the other progymnasmatists, the *chreia* was one of the basic preliminary exercises adjacent to the fable. Also like the

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and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson (New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 52–72; Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); idem, *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist;* Thomas D. Stegman, "Reading Luke 12:13–34 as an Elaboration of a Chreia: How Hermogenes of Tarsus Sheds Light on Luke's Gospel," *NovT* 49 (2007): 328–52; Kathy Reiko Maxwell, *Hearing between the Lines: The Audience as Fellow-Worker in Luke-Acts and Its Literary Milieu*, LNTS 425 (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Keith A. Reich, *Figuring Jesus: The Power of Rhetorical Figures of Speech in the Gospel of Luke*, BibInt 107 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Hock, *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Commentaries*; Collin Blake Bullard, *Jesus and the Thoughts of Many Hearts: Implicit Christology and Jesus' Knowledge in the Gospel of Luke*, LNTS 530 (New York: T&T Clark, 2015); Meghan Henning, "Chreia Elaboration and the Un-Healing of Peter's Daughter: Rhetorical Analysis as a Clue to Understanding the Development of a Petrine Tradition," *JECS* 24 (2016): 145–71.

44 As Ronald Hock is quick to note, it is a difficult word to translate; "anecdote" is probably the closest we shall come ("General Introduction," in Hock and O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 1–60, here 49 n. 1). The examples in this section should flesh out the meaning.

45 Χρεία ἐστι σύντομος ἀπόφασις ἢ πρᾶξις μετ᾽εὐστοχίας ἀναφερομένη εἴς τι ὡρισμένον πρόσωπον ἢ ἀναλογοῦν προσώπῳ. Reference numbers follow the Kennedy edition.

46 Like his fable collection, Demetrius's *chreia* collection is also lost to history. In Diogenes's life of Antisthenes, we also find listed a work termed: χρείαν Σοφοκλέους (*Vit.* 7.19). Likewise of Aristippus we find a work named χρεία πρὸς Διονύσιον (*Vit.* 2.84). Like Demetrius's work, the works of Aristippus and Antisthenes have not come down to us, but it does suggest this may have been a tradition of the Socratics. See further Jan Fredrik Kindstrand, "Diogenes Laertius and the Chreia Tradition," *Elenchos* 7 (1986): 217–43.

fable, the *chreia* was a ubiquitous form in the ancient Mediterranean world. As Hock notes, citing Dio Chrysostom, "anyone could quote some *chreiai* of Diogenes the Cynic."[47] As we saw above on the Bouriant papyrus, at the primary stage of education, several of these were to be copied out by children for writing practice. Diogenes Laertius (*Vit.* 6.2) records a great many of them:

> When Plato defined man as a two-footed, featherless creature and was highly esteemed, Diogenes plucked a rooster, carried it into the school, and said, "This is Plato's man!" (*Vit.* 6.2.40 [trans. Hicks, LCL])[48]
>
> When Lysias the druggist asked him if he believed in the gods, "How can I help believing in them," said he, "when I see a god-forsaken wretch like you?" (*Vit.* 6.2.42)
>
> To the question what is wretched in life he replied, "An old man destitute." Being asked what creature's bite is the worst, he said, "Of those that are wild a sycophant's; of those that are tame a flatterer's." Upon seeing two centaurs very badly painted, he asked, "Which of these is 'Chiron' ['worse man']?" (*Vit.* 6.2.51)
>
> Seeing the child of a courtesan throw stones at a crowd, he cried out, 'Take care you don't hit your father." (*Vit.* 6.2.62)

Understandably, philosophers and intellectuals feature prominently in the *chreia* tradition, and we have a few of Aesop as well:[49]

> When a certain man had been torn by the bite of a vicious dog he dipped a piece of bread in his own blood and tossed it out to the evildoer, because he had heard that this was a remedy for such a wound. Then said Aesop: "Don't let any more dogs see you doing this, lest they devour us alive when they learn that guilt is rewarded in this way." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 2.3)
>
> Aesop, on being asked by someone how a great upheaval might happen among people, said, "If those who have died should arise and demand back what belonged to them."[50]

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47 Hock, "General Introduction," 7. On the widespread knowledge of Diogenes's sayings, Dio Chrysostom says, "Diogenes was also well provided with statement and answer on each and every topic. And the masses still remember the sayings of Diogenes, some of which he may have spoken himself, though some too were composed by others" (*Hab.* 11 = *Or.* 72.11, trans. adapted from Crosby, LCL). Dio Chrysostom also shows that he is aware that many of the *chreiai* attributed to Diogenes are spurious.

48 All translations of Diogenes Laertius, unless otherwise indicated, are from R. D. Hicks in the LCL.

49 On Aesop as an intellectual, see Chapter 9.

50 Trans. mine. This is item number 128 in Leo Sternbach, "De Gnomologio Vaticano Inedito," *Wiener Studien* 10 (1888): 11–49, 211–60, here page 24. Several more *chreiai* of Aesop are found there.

New Testament scholars have identified a great many *chreiai* of Jesus in the Gospels, including Luke:

> Upon entering the temple, Jesus began to drive out those who were selling things there; and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer;' but you have made it a den of robbers.'" (Luke 19:45–46)

> The same day, upon seeing someone working on the Sabbath, Jesus said to him, "Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed! But if you do not, you are accursed and a transgressor of the Law!" (Luke 6:4b in Codex Bezae [trans. mine])[51]

A cluster of *chreiai* appears in Luke 9:57–62:

> As they were going along the road, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

> To another Jesus said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

> Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (trans. adapted from NRSV)

From these examples, we get a sense of what the *chreia* is like. If we may speak of a kind of "pure" form of the *chreia*, it is a witty, short saying, often with a satirical or comic edge, and easy to memorize.[52] They are attributed to a specific person, prompted by a specific situation, normally in scenarios such as "upon seeing," "upon hearing that," and "upon being asked" especially, among a few others such as "once when," or "used to say." They can take the form of short dialogues and as they are adapted into narrative, such as the gospels, they show more variety. Given their number, it is clear that before the gospels were penned, many of Jesus's deeds and sayings had been transmitted in the form of *chreiai*. While the extent is a matter of ongoing debate, it is also clear that the *chreia* form was used as a basic rhetorical building block of the New Testament Gospels. Given the extent of this research, we must note again the remarkable absence of the discussion of fable. As Parsons remarks:

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51 τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ, θεασάμενός τινα ἐραζόμενον τῷ σαββάτῳ, εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ἄνθρωπε, εἰ μὲν οἶδας τί ποιεῖς, μακάριοις εἶ· εἰ δὲ μὴ οἶδας, ἐπικατάρατος καὶ παραβάτης εἶ τοῦ νόμου.

52 The *chreia* is the predominant form in the *Philogelos*, a popular ancient joke collection. The fable collections of Aesop have also been compared to such a collection (Temple and Temple, *The Complete Fables*, xviii).

> If the *chreia* tradition is a well-furrowed field in biblical studies, the second topic of the progymnasmata, the fable, is relatively untouched. This is somewhat surprising since Theon's definition of the fable as "a fictitious story which depicts or images truth" sounds like a typical, rough and ready definition many would use to describe Jesus's parables.[53]

Since we have ample confirmation of the Gospel authors using the *chreia* to preserve and hand down anecdotes about Jesus, it would be surprising if the fable form, including the practices of creating collections of them, were not used to the same end for Jesus's fables.

5.6.2 *Working with the Fable*

In a brief statement, Theon summarizes the training techniques learned by students to master the fable:

> As an exercise, *mythos*, is treated in a variety of ways, for we state the fable and inflect its grammatical form and weave it into a narrative and we expand it and compress it. It is possible also to add some explanation to it, or if this is prefixed, an appropriate fable can be adapted. In addition, we refute and confirm it. (Theon, *Prog.* 4)

Theon then goes on to elaborate on these points. He begins by repeating how students interacted with the fable at the earlier education stages, first to memorize them and then to inflect the story in its grammatical forms—in all the different cases and numbers. This is done not simply as a training exercise in grammar, but because mixing up the forms and constructions, such as direct and indirect discourse, produces a pleasing variety. The next task for the student is to learn how to weave a fable into a broader narrative context. This tells us that an author trained in the *progymnasmata* would know how to incorporate fables into a narrative. These would include written narratives and also those examples of the orators seen in Chapters 2 and 3 when delivering their speeches. Theon gives us an example of the techniques an author might use to incorporate fables into a narrative, such as they are in the gospels:

> We weave in narrative in the following way. After having stated the fable, we bring in a narrative, or conversely we put the narrative first, the fable second; for example, having imagined that a camel who longed for horns was deprived even of his ears, after stating this first, we go on to the narrative as follows: "Croesus

53 Mikeal C. Parsons, "Luke and the Progymnasmata," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, eds. T. Penner and C. Vander Stichele, SBLSymS 20 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 43–63, here 49–50.

> the Lydian seems to me to have suffered something similar to this camel," followed by the whole story about him. (Theon, *Prog.* 4)

In other words, the process of weaving the fable into a narrative is not complicated. As Theon describes it, there are two obvious approaches, putting the narrative first before the fable, or putting it after the fable. To add upon what Theon says here, authors embedding fables will normally apply the lesson to what is taking place in the macro-narrative, as in the example Theon gives. With *The Life of Aesop* and Phaedrus to compare, we will be able to witness just how weaving in a fable is accomplished in Luke's Gospel, especially with the aid of the *chreia*.[54]

The next technique a student learns is how to expand and contract a fable, again of keen interest for us as we try to detect the ways the Gospel authors reworked their materials and attempt to recover some earlier pre-Gospel form of Jesus's fables. On this technique, Theon is most laconic, saying simply that a fable is expanded by lengthening the remarks of the characters, and by adding details, "by describing a river or something of that sort." For condensing a fable, Theon simply says "do the opposite." On the technique of expanding and contracting a fable, Pseudo-Hermogenes gives a similar explanation: "Sometimes fables need to be expanded, sometimes to be compressed. How would this be done? If we sometimes recount the fable in a bare narrative, at other times invent speeches for the given characters" (*Prog.* 1). This example from Pseudo-Hermogenes essentially confirms what Theon has told us, that condensing involves removing non-essential details and direct speech, reporting the fable story indirectly,[55] or generally using few words. The expansion of a fable involves, in particular, inventing or lengthening the speech beyond what we find normally. These techniques of fable expansion, compression, and the use of invented speeches, called prosopopoeia or ethopoeia, are discussed with respect to the Lukan fables in 10.6 and Chapter 11.

5.6.3 *Applying the Morals*

For what the fable exercise can tell us about interpreting the fables of Jesus, Theon's subsequent explanation is especially relevant. The next task relates to the relationship of a fable to a moral—what the later progymnasmatists call the *epimythium*, or if it is before the fable, the *promythium*. Theon describes the task as follows, "after the fable has been stated, we venture to bring in some

54 See, for example, 10.7, 13.2, and 13.7.

55 By "indirectly" we should take to mean that it maintains narrator focalization, i.e., does not properly enter the story world of the fable. For further discussion of this technique in the Lukan fables, see 10.6.2.

gnomic statement fitting it."[56] He gives as an example of a widespread and well-known fable of a certain dog carrying a piece of meat beside a river, who upon seeing his reflection, thinks it is another dog with a bigger piece of meat, and drops what he had to jump in the river.[57] Theon follows the fable by composing an *epimythium* for it, "We shall add the following comment: 'You should note that often those hankering for greater things destroy themselves as well as losing what they have.'"[58] Next, Theon describes the options available for the moral:

> There can be several conclusions for one fable when we take a start from the contents of the fable, and conversely one conclusion when many fables reflect it. After proposing the simple meaning of the conclusion, we shall assign the young to imagine a fable suitable to the material at hand. (Theon, *Prog.* 4)

In other words, as we have glimpsed earlier in our sampling of Phaedrus, and as we will discuss in much greater detail below in Chapter 12 regarding the Gospels, when a fable is transmitted independently or in a collection, it can have more than one moral. Working the other direction, as with its usage in rhetoric and oratory that we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, when fabulists know the moral they wish to demonstrate, they may choose from a number of

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56 All quotations in this paragraph are from *Prog.* 4. Theon does not use the technical vocabulary of *epimythium*, but this is clearly what he is describing. Our earliest reference to the term "*epimythium*" is by Lucian (2nd century CE), who writes: "Permit me this joke at my own expense, in the spirit of Momus. I refuse to draw the moral (ἐπιμύθιον), I swear; for you already see how the fable applies to me" (*Dionysus* 8 [trans. Harmon, LCL]). Thus, the term was clearly already established by the mid-second century CE. Sophron of Syracuse (fl. 430 BCE) wrote a mime with the title *Promythion* (Προμύθιον), but as the LCL notes, it is unlikely to have anything to do with the later moral of the fable. Among the progymnasmatists, it is first used by Aphthonius: "When the moral (παραίνεσιν) for which the fable has been assigned is stated first, you will call it a *promythium* (προμύθιον), when added at the end, an *epimythium* (ἐπιμύθιον)" (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1). The earlier progymnasmatists, Theon and Hermogenes, among other authors, refer to these framing devices as λόγος or ἐπίλογος. The *OLD* does not give either *epimythium* or *promythium*, which means that they occur for the first time after 200 CE in Latin. *Mythos* as a Latin loan-word, however, does occur and is given in the glossary of Sextus Pompeius Festus (late second century CE), who did an abridgement of Verrius Flaccus's *On the Meaning of Words*. So, it is almost certainly a loan-word by the turn of the Era (Verrius was the tutor of Augustus' grandsons).

57 Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.4; Babrius, *Fab.* 79; Aphthonius, *Fab.* 35; Perry 133. The fable is already known well enough by the time of Democritus (born ca. 460 BCE) that he could refer to it simply as "the desire for more spoils than one has, like the Aesopic dog." This is preserved in a fragment in Stobaeus, *Flor.* 3.10.68.

58 On the significance of this address to "you," see 12.6.

fables that they believe will teach the lesson. Alternatively, one can begin with the lesson and compose a new fable to fit it, a practice known to the rabbis and perhaps reflected in the gospels.[59] In the educational context, how is this task of inventing fables and morals accomplished?

5.6.4 *Inventing Fables and Morals*

As we would expect, the lessons the student masters with the fable have taken place in stages of increasing sophistication. At the *progymnasmata* stage, students have reached the level at which they can now give a lesson upon hearing a fable and apply a fable upon hearing a lesson. Here, the student's encounter with the fable in the *progymnasmata* has turned a corner. At the first and second stage, education has largely been a matter of receiving information, acts of rote memorization, repetition, and imitation—the lessons designed to teach morals and to familiarize students with their culture and literature. As Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron describe it, this involves the perpetuation of the received social, political, and economic hierarchies and norms of the culture.[60] At the second stage, a student trained in grammar by adapting the literature of this received tradition material into different grammatical categories. In a sense, tasks like putting verses of Homer or fables into the plural accusative from the singular nominative, for example, served as training wheels for independent composition. At this third stage, the student takes an active role, expected now to compose literature outright. This begins with the fable.

As before, the steps in the *progymnasmata* start off small. The first step, the simplest, is for the student to hear a fable and to tell the teacher what it teaches. This can be done by inventing a gnomic statement or applying, for example, a maxim that one already knows. Here is an example of a fable for which a modern reader should be able to invent a moral without great difficulty:

> An ox-driver was bringing his wagon home from the village when it fell into a deep ravine. Instead of doing something about it, as the situation required, he stood by idly and prayed for help to Heracles, of all the gods the one whom he really worshipped and held in honor. Suddenly the god appeared in person beside him and said: "Take hold of the wheels. Lay the whip on your oxen. Pray to the gods only when you are doing something to help yourself. Otherwise your prayers will be useless." (Babrius, *Fab.* 20)

59 See the discussion in the next chapter, 7.3.4, and in 16.5.

60 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, trans. Richard Nice, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2000).

A modern reader of this fable may feel the inclination to scribble in the margin the apocryphal slogan, "God helps those who help themselves!" Applying this lesson to the fable is the same instinct the ancients had.[61] It is this very inclination that is the origin of many of the morals added to the fables in the manuscripts that have come down to us, like. We may also consider that to one who reads this fable with its *epimythium* attached, the maxim, "God helps those who helps themselves" rings a little truer than before. The reason is that the fable confirms it. Even though the fable reader knows that a fable is a false story, it nevertheless reinforces the idea that "God helps those who help themselves" is the truth. It is also possible, as Theon tells us, to come up with any number of other lessons from a given fable. The correctness of a lesson applied to a fable, which is the quality of the student's answer, is subjective.

Since those educated in the modern world do not swim in the fables like the first-century student, the inverse task of generating a fable from a maxim or gnomic statement would seem a far greater challenge. But for the ancient student who will have heard many fables by this time, it was not apparently particularly onerous. Theon describes the task as follows:

> After proposing the simple meaning of the conclusion, we shall assign the young to imagine a fable suitable to the material at hand. They will be able to do this readily when their minds have been filled with many fables, having taken some from ancient writings, having only heard others, and having invented some by themselves. (Theon, *Prog.* 4)

From this statement, a few things are clear. First, Theon assumes that anyone who has reached this stage of education will have memorized a great many fables they have encountered in writing. Second, he alerts us to the vibrancy of fables in oral culture. Third, Theon takes for granted that students have already invented fables of their own by this point, if not in previous schooling then

61 In the Augustana Collection, a fable similar in plot—about a rich man who stays aboard a sinking ship to pray while others swim to safety—supplies an explicit *epimythium*: "A rich Athenian man was sailing with certain others, and when a violent storm occurred and the ship capsized, all the other men began to swim away, but the Athenian called out invoking Athena with a myriad of pleas that he might be saved. Then one of the fellow seafarers swimming alongside said to him, 'Also move the hand with Athena!' [Σὺν Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ ξεῖρα κίνει] *So then it is necessary that we also, along with calling to the gods, give consideration also to those things that we may do ourselves*" (Perry 30; trans. mine). There is some word play going on with "Σὺν Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ ξεῖρα κίνει" that might be clearer with some unpacking. κίνει governs both "hand" and "Athena:" "Move/set in motion the hand," i.e., "Swim!" and "Athena will be moved (provoked to action)/set in motion."

as an extra-curricular activity that they did for fun.[62] While the twenty-first century reader may be at a loss as to how to compose a fable, students into the early Modern period did so with ease, having been raised with the genre and utilizing it in informal and formal educational settings. Grasping the basic literary mechanics of the fable (see Chapter 10), the characters (see Chapter 11), and knowing many examples removes most of this difficulty.

5.7 Defining the Fable

5.7.1 *Ancient and Modern Theory*

How is the fable defined? Through the fable examples so far, we have seen the similarity of contents, but the fable genre was also theorized already in antiquity. Once again, we find that the schoolmasters provide us with what we are searching for in a definition of the fable. One of the oldest and arguably still the best definition of a fable is provided by Theon. Theon's definition is not best simply for its antiquity and its first-century timing, but also because he asserts in his prologue that he has given a careful definition of each of his exercises, so that, when asked, one can give a definition and make a clear distinction between one exercise and another. The example Theon gives of this in the prologue is the fable:

> We have not only invented some additions to the exercises as described by others, but also we have tried to give a definition of each, so that, when asked what each of them is, one can say for example, that a fable is "a fictitious story picturing truth." (Theon, *Prog.* 1 [trans. adapted from Kennedy])

This definition is repeated verbatim at the start of the fable section of his *Progymnasmata*: "fable is a fictitious story picturing truth," μῦθος ἔστι λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν (Theon, *Prog.* 4). It is repeated faithfully by later authors of *progymnasmata* in their respective fable exercises.[63] Though the Greek is reasonably clear and straightforward, terse and laconic as it is, there is

62 In Plutarch's *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* (*Adol. poet. aud.*), Aesop's fables are first on the list of works that students enjoy (*Mor.* 14E).

63 Aphthonius repeats Theon's definition verbatim (see below), Nicolaus's definition is essentially identical (*Prog.* 2). Pseudo-Hermogenes does not define the fable; however, Priscian's *Praeexercitamina* (the Latin for *Progymnasmata*), which is an early Latin version based on Hermogenes, evinces this definition with a one-to-one translation: "fabula est oratio ficta verisimili dispositione imaginem exhibens veritatis" (*Rhetores Latini Minores*, ed. K. F. Halm [Leipzig: Teubner, 1863], 551).

some debate as to how best to translate this phrase into English.[64] This simple, four-word definition deliberately balances two central attributes: "falsehood" (ψευδής) and "truth" (ἀλήθεια). "Falsehood" reflects that the story is acknowledged from the outset to be a fabrication, and "truth" reflects that this made-up story will be acknowledged to convey an underlying truth. With all its versatility, λόγος may be rendered a number of ways, including "story" (Perry) or "discourse" (Kennedy). Similarly, ἀλήθεια is translated "truth" by most, but "reality" is preferred by van Dijk. The participle εἰκονίζων, related to "icon," colors the depiction of the fable as a kind of "image" (cf. εἰκών, "simile"), and an image turned to action is "imagining." Theon then hones not his definition, but the content he will treat:

> One should know that the present consideration is not about all fables but about those in which, after stating the fable, we add the meaning of which it is an image; sometimes, of course, we bring in the fables after having stated the meaning. (Theon, *Prog.* 4)

In other words, Theon alerts the reader that he is dealing specifically with fables that have a *promythium* or *epimythium*. By the late-fourth century, Aphthonius, whose *progymnasmata* would be the most influential in the Medieval period, followed similarly:[65]

> Fable (μῦθος) originated with poets but has come to be used also by orators for the sake of the moral (παραινέσεως). Fable is a fictive story, picturing truth.[66] It is called Sybaritic and Cilician and Cyprian, varying its names with its inventors, but calling it Aesopic has largely prevailed because Aesop composed fables best of all. Some fables are rational (λογικόν), some ethical (ἠθικόν), some mixed (μικτόν); rational when a human being is imagined as doing something, ethical when representing the character of irrational animals, mixed when made up of both, irrational and rational. When the moral (παραινέσεως) for which the fable has been assigned is stated first, you will call it a *promythium* (προμύθιον), when added at the end an *epimythium* (ἐπιμύθιον). (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1 [trans. adapted from Kennedy])

This ancient definition for the fable easily accommodates the fables of Jesus in the New Testament and provide us with the ancient theory that the evangelists would have known. Bearing in mind the caveats of rendering this phrase effectively into English, the fables of Jesus are "fictitious stories picturing truth."

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64 Cf. van Dijk, "a fable is a fictitious story which gives the semblance of reality" (*Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 48); Perry, "A fictitious story picturing a truth" (*Babrius and Phaedrus*, xx).

65 Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xii.

66 This phrase is identical to Theon's, ἔστι δὲ μῦθος λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν.

The definition offered by Theon and Aphthonius are the point of departure for modern theoretical definitions from preeminent fable scholars, such as Perry, Holzberg, and van Dijk. Holzberg writes, "There have been many attempts to find a definition of the genre that takes cognizance of this diversity, but the most convincing one is still the description found in the rhetors Theon and Aphthonius."[67] Perry writes, "This is a perfect and complete definition."[68] Van Dijk cites Perry approvingly, "This appears to be an ideal synthesis of ancient and modern fable theory."[69] As van Dijk notes, there are further advantages to this definition:

> "From this definition both characters and functions are conspicuously absent, as the former can be both rational and non-rational, and the latter may vary widely, notably from persuasive to moral-didactic, from satirical-comical to explanatory-illustrative, in accordance with the specific (pseudo-)historical or literary context in which the fable is employed."[70]

As I noted earlier, Theon's definition even receives an endorsement from New Testament scholars, Klyne Snodgrass and Mikeal Parsons, as a good working definition of the "*parable*."[71] We will shortly turn to focus on a few particulars, but for the present work, Theon's definition of the fable will be our point of departure.

Several other definitions and qualifications of Theon are helpful in identifying various facets of the fable that can be singled out, especially in our effort to identify them in the Gospel of Luke. First, Perry is concerned that Theon's definition is not understood too strictly. It is "a perfect and complete definition provided we understand the range of what is included under the terms λόγος (story) and ἀληθείαν (truth)."[72] Perry's qualification presses how broadly these terms must be understood: "story" may be contained in no more than a single short sentence, or it may be much longer, or include some dialog. The "truths" that it metaphorically pictures may be of many different kinds, among which he includes "general propositions," but also may be addressed to

67 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 19–20.

68 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xx.

69 Van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 5. Van Dijk, not to be outdone by Theon, gives a definition in three words, a "fictitious, metaphorical narrative" (*Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 113).

70 Van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 113.

71 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 8; Mikeal Parsons, "Luke and the Progymnasmata: A Preliminary Investigation into the Preliminary Exercises," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. T. Penner and C. Vander Stichele, SymS 20 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 43–63, here 49–50.

72 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xx.

a particular person, thing, or situation. Of the particular, Perry gives the example of the prophet Nathan and King David (2 Sam 12:1–7).[73] The "truth" may be an observation on the nature of things, with or without moral exhortation, or a fable may "not teach moral truths, strictly speaking, but rather matters of worldly wisdom and shrewdness; and even the moral lessons are formulated more often than not on that basis."[74]

A couple other major figures in fable scholarship, Nøjgaard and Adrados, do not take Theon's definition as their point of departure. On the opposite end of the spectrum from Perry is where we find Nøjgaard.[75] He defines fable as "a fictional narrative of mechanically allegorical characters with a moral action of evaluation."[76] By "*personnages mécaniquement allégoriques*" Nøjgaard means a necessity that the characters serve as allegories and for this to be indicated in some "mechanical," i.e., obvious way, such as the presence of talking animals, or a cameo by a deity. "*Action morale à évaluation*" refers to the acts of the characters involved, adhering to a specific structure wherein the moral action is the first decision made by a character, which is always a bad choice, followed by the evaluation, indicating what the good choice is or would have been. For Nøjgaard, this definition emerges from examining the individual fables in all the major first-century collections, and results in him excising much of the material found in the fable collections as not real fables. Other fable scholars have had little patience for Nøjgaard's overdrawn definitions. He is criticized by van Dijk and Adrados alike for this overaggressive winnowing of the material. According to van Dijk, "many of his oversophisticated distinctions serve as reductions *in absurdum* of his very theory."[77] Adrados, upon quoting Nøjgaard's definition, erupts into an incomplete sentence, "A terribly narrow definition."[78]

Adrados, always keen to tread his own path, begins with the fair assertion that a definition of the fable "needs to be established starting from the collections."[79] He observes that the ancient fable authors and collectors evidently saw in their collections something homogeneous: "The ancient collections clearly show that we are dealing with a single genre, though it has its

73 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxii.

74 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxii.

75 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 1:14, 20, and 82, respectively.

76 "un récit fictif de personnages mécaniquement allégoriques avec une action morale à évaluation" (Nøjgaard, *La Fable antique*, 1:82).

77 van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 8.

78 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:26. He adds further down the page, "the method of defining in a narrow and arbitrary form and then eliminating all that do not fit the definition is an erroneous one."

79 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:28.

subdivisions."[80] Within the fable umbrella, according to Adrados, we could tease out "anecdote, story, novel, maxim, joke, etc.,"[81] and also myth.[82] He attributes the origin of this mixing of material to all of it performing a "parallel, if not identical, function to the use of the fable as an 'exemplum.'"[83] In spite of this diversity, Adrados does believe there are certain essentials of the fable and certain patterns. Adrados wishes to show that when materials were incorporated into the fable collections, even from disparate genres, there was a process through which a particular end-form emerged. This telos, "approximately homogeneous in form and content … is that referred to as the 'Aesopic fable.'" Put another way, there is a paradigmatic fable form, but fable collections allowed for a variety of materials to be gathered along with them. Upon their entry into the collections, this disparate material would undergo changes to conform to the paradigmatic fable scheme. The fable collections as we have them include some items that had not completed this process of integration. Thus, in discerning the genre of fable, for Adrados, "the criterion does not lie in the origin of such and such a fable (anecdote, myth, novella, proverb), but in the degree of assimilation into fabulistic schemes: content, symbolic character, fixing as concrete event, conformity with fixed formal schemes."[84] We will put Adrados's paradigmatic fable models to good use when discussing the *epimythium* in 12.5.

For Adrados, the first and most essential element of conformity to the fable genre is that a fable has a *promythium* or an *epimythium*.[85] The presence of either a *promythium* or an *epimythium* transforms whatever previous genre the text was into an *exemplum*, while, for Adrados, the absence of these dictates something is not a fable in a strict sense.[86] This claim produces some curious

80 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:20.

81 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:17.

82 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:20.

83 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:19.

84 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:43.

85 The presence of this "moral of the story" is also the defining feature of the genre for Gibbs, since it distinguishes it most clearly from neighboring genres (*Aesop's Fables*, xii).

86 For one discussion of what Adrados sees as fundamental elements of the fable see (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:32–38). With respect to the requirement of an *epimythium*, Adrados does not express it in such literal terms, but at the conclusion of discussing the fundamentals of the fable, he claims, as I quote below, that when Babrius and Phaedrus include a fable in their books without an *epimythium*, they eliminate from the fable "something essential to it" (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:38). When this became a rule is unclear to Adrados. He argues that Demetrius's collection did not have either framing device. But he also notes that, in the Imperial period, even those collections preserved in scraps and fragments contain them (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:453).

results since not all of the Babrian and Phaedrian fables have an *epimythium*. As Adrados himself admits, "Phaedrus and Babrius … evidently eliminated from the definition of the fable something that was essential to it."[87] Even if one does not follow Adrados in his assertion, it does present us with a valuable positive criterion. The *inclusion* of a *promythium* or *epimythium* demands we understand a text as fable. Since these framing devices are the fable's calling card, found in no other genre and in use as far back as the first Greek fable in Hesiod, they offer a straightforward means of identifying fables in the New Testament Gospels. As we shall see in Chapter 12 and Chapter 13, *promythia* and *epimythia* are fairly simple to identify and catalog in Luke's fables, offering us abundant proof that they are to be read and interpreted as fables.

5.7.2 *Terminology*

With a definition that has remained the same, handed down for at least two thousand years, we are on solid ground in using Theon's as our starting point. The fable is so ancient, however, that the terminology used to refer to the genre in Greek evolved with the language. In Greek, αἶνος, λόγος, and μῦθος may each refer to fables (hence van Dijk's title), and in Latin there is the more easily recognizable *fabula, fabella*.[88] All of these terms are lexemes for "word" and "speech." These multiple lexemes available for the fable gave ancient authors the opportunity to further clarify what they mean by the genre, "fable." With three Greek terms, one might justifiably wonder how we can know that they refer to the same thing, and whether this should make us suspicious of any unifying genre consciousness by the ancient authors. Thanks to a number of first-century authors who reflect on this fact that there is more than one term for "fable," we can that, far from being a problem for them, these multiple terms were exploited precisely to indicate the unified concept of the fable genre. Once again, let us lean on the ancient theorists: Theon and Quintilian.

Theon seems to read our minds and provides us with a history of and explanation for these different lexemes. Continuing where our last quotation of him left off:

> Some of the poets of old called them [i.e., fables] αἴνοι, and others μῦθοι. Prose writers most often call them λόγοι rather than μῦθοι,[89] and thus they call Aesop

87 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:38. Other fable scholars such as Perry, van Dijk, and Hausrath do not follow Adrados here.

88 *Apologus* is another term used for fable, but so seldom employed that we will not need to treat it. See van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 90–92.

89 Patillon suggests that "it is possible that something dropped out here like περὶ τούτων δὲ προσῆκον, 'and in their case it is appropriate to say' (il paraît manquer ici quelque

> a λογοποιόν [maker of fables]. Plato, in the dialog on the soul, sometimes calls it μῦθος and other times λόγος.[90] A μῦθος is said to be a certain kind of λόγος since the ancients said that "to speak" was μυθεῖσθαι. It is called αἶνος because it also provides some παραίνεσιν [paraenesis]. The whole point is useful instruction. Now, however, some call αἰνίγματα [riddles] by αἴνοι. (Theon, *Prog.* 4 [trans. adapted from Kennedy])

So far as modern scholarship can tell, Theon is correct in every detail. αἶνος was the term used for the fable in the Archaic period, though how exactly it fell out of use is not clear because of the fragmentary nature of our evidence.[91] It is related to αἰνέω, "to speak" and αἴνιγμα, "riddle." In the first century, αἶνος is maintained as a *terminus technicus*,[92] and we have two terms that are widely used for the fable: μῦθος and λόγος. As Theon indicates here, contrary to the possible expectation of the modern reader, the primary meaning of μῦθος is not "myth," but "word."[93] The more recognizable term, λόγος, means the same thing.[94] The verbal form of all three terms convey ideas of storytelling.[95] As

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chose comme περὶ τούτων δὲ προσῆκον 'et à leur propos il est convenable')," from between συγγεγραφότες and τοὺς λόγους. Patillon's rendering of this sentence gives a slightly different sense, "But the number of authors who compose them in prose is much greater [and in their case it is proper] to call them λόγοι and not μῦθοι" (Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, ed. and trans. Michel Patillon [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1997], 32–33).

90 The reference is to the *Phaedo*, where Socrates uses μῦθος of an Aesopic fable (60b) and Cebes uses λόγος (60c).

91 It continued to be used as a *terminus technicus* for the fable through the Modern period. See van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Muthoi*, 80–81.

92 As Theon's reference to the ancient poets' use of the term suggests, αἶνος is primarily an early poetic and Ionic term. Note, however, that it seems to have come back into vogue in Theon's day to mean "riddle"; cf. the use of παραβολή as "riddle," discussed in Chapter 9.

93 As the LSJ notes in the μῦθος entry, it appears especially in the poets meaning "word" and "speech." Kennedy likewise notes that μυθεῖσθαι is frequently used by Homer and the early poets to mean, "to speak" (*Progymnasmata*, 24 n. 91). μῦθος also means "myth" of course, and sometimes this is used as a pejorative to denigrate Aesop's fables, much like the term "fable" and "myth" is used today.

94 Of course, λόγος is a flexible lexeme that may refer to a variety of genres and narrative forms, including whatever is meant by it in Luke 1:4 and Acts 1:1. So too, does μῦθος convey a variety of meanings depending on the context, including "story," "myth," "legend," "plot," "speech," and so on. The use of these terms with many other meanings is no cause for alarm. This is a phenomenon arguably characteristic of genre terminology in Greek. Consulting the LSJ shows, for example, that γνώμη means "a token," "the mind," "thought, judgement, intelligence," "a judgement, opinion," among other things in addition to its genre meaning of "maxim."

95 Nicolaus the Sophist and the commentary on Aphthonius attributed to John of Sardis provide further ancient attestation of this equivalence: "It is called μῦθος from μυθεῖσθαι, that is, "to speak," not because we do not speak in the other exercises but because in it we first learn how to speak in public. Some have called it αἶνος from the advice (parainesis)

Theon explains, in the first century, the reason for the two is that fables are composed in both prose and verse. As in Greek prose and poetry more broadly, the term λόγος is used for prose fables while μῦθος is used for those in verse. λόγος is the term used for Demetrius of Phalerum's collection,[96] in the John Rylands papyrus, in all but two cases in the *Life of Aesop*,[97] and throughout the Augustana Collection, which is the paradigmatic prose fable collection.[98] The use of μῦθος appears, of course, in the paradigmatic verse fable collection of Babrius,[99] to which we can add the verse fables at the three levels of education, including the various *progymnasmata*, which label the section on fable: ΠΕΡΙ ΜΥΘΟΥ.[100] As Theon also points out, on occasion we find both terms being used.[101] Since one of the primary ways to engage with fables throughout the ages has been to prosify or versify them, this is to be expected. Prose narrative texts will often depict a character composing or speaking in verse fables (e.g. Plato). Verse narratives will often depict a character composing or speaking

it gives" (Nicolaus, *Prog.* 1); "He says μῦθος is, as it were, a kind of λόγος, since the ancients used μυθεῖσθαι to mean λέγειν" (John of Sardis, *Prog.* 1).

96 This is, of course, Diogenes Laertius's term for the collections of Demetrius and not necessarily that used by Demetrius himself (Diogenes Laertius, *Vit.* 5.5.80).

97 One can never be too sure about how much rewriting has taken place in the text of *The Life of* Aesop, but as it is preserved in the G manuscript at least, μῦθος is used on one occasion out of the dozen or so to introduce a fable (*Vit. Aes.* 97). Similarly, μῦθος is used in the G manuscript on one of the occasions that the genre as a whole is referred to (*Vit. Aes.* 40bc).

98 λόγος is also used for "fable" by Dio Chrysostom, *Hab.* 72.13; Plutarch, *sept. sap. conv.* 164b; Theon, *Prog.* 4; Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.11.19–21; Martial, *Epigr.* 3.20.5; and in *The Life of Aesop* (*Vit. Aes.* 7, 100).

99 μῦθος is the first word of Babrius's second prologue, there used to describe the genre as a whole. μῦθος is the term he uses for many individual fables as well: *Fab.* 18, 22, 31, 34, 36, 38, 59, 96, 107, 116. Babrius, *Fab.* Prologue 2.6 refers to the collection of Cybisses, interestingly, as λόγοι rather than μῦθοι, suggesting that Cybisses's collection was in prose.

100 As a designation for the genre "fable," μῦθος is used in Pseudo-Demetrius's *On Style* 157–158, however the date of this text is much disputed (3rd BCE–1st CE). Even if it is early, it is certainly not by Demetrius of Phalerum; nevertheless, it is heavily influenced by Aristotle, possibly directly. For the date and authorship, see Stephen Halliwell, et al, *Poetics. Longinus: On the Sublime. Demetrius: On Style*, LCL 199 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 310–15 who inclines to date it to the second century BCE (311).

101 In Galen and the *scholia Platonica*, μῦθος is used for etiological fables, which are indeed "mythic" in that sense of the term, while λόγος is used for the standard type of fables. For the key primary texts, see van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 90.

in prose fables (e.g. Aristophanes). Thus, that the two terms would become entangled in certain contexts is not the least surprising.[102]

Understanding this phenomenon of using both μῦθος and λόγος together is also helpful in the context of the progymnasmatists. Theon and Pseudo-Hermogenes both consciously distinguish μῦθος, which is used for the fable narrative, from λόγος, which is used for the *promythia* and *epimythia*. Theon, for example, says, "It is possible to provide a conclusion whenever, after the fable (μύθου) has been stated, we venture to bring in some gnomic statement (λόγον) fitting it" (Theon, *Prog.* 4).[103] A scholion on this phrase puts it in still clearer terms: "The *epimythium* here teaches (λέγει) a lesson (λόγον), for indeed the *epimythium* is a lesson (λόγος) that is brought out from the fable (μῦθον) and shows what is useful in it."[104] Pseudo-Hermogenes puts it this way: "The lesson (λόγος) explaining the moral will sometimes be put before the fable (μῦθον), sometimes after it" (Hermogenes, *Prog.* 1 [trans. adapted from Kennedy]).[105] The use of these terms in this context then, helps to distinguish the fable body from its lesson.

Summarily, the fable is so old that the terminology for it evolved with the Greek language. In the first century, μῦθος and λόγος are used for fables in verse and prose, respectively, while αἶνος was the primary term in use before these. That there were multiple terms available for one genre in different contexts was known and commented on by ancient authors such as Theon above and Quintilian below, and is a remarkable indication of genre consciousness. Ancient authors applied these multiple fable terms with their various connotations to creative ends, such as Plato in 3.3.2. Perhaps the most interesting examples of this multi-lexeme genre awareness occurs in the W recensions of *The Life of Aesop*. It is in this recension that the first sentence describes Aesop as not just a λογοποιός, but a λογομυθοποιός, making sure to incorporate both

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102 As van Dijk demonstrates, μῦθος gradually overtakes λόγος as the standard term used to refer to a fable in the Medieval period (see *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 85). By the Medieval period (quite a bit later than we need to concern ourselves with), μῦθος is used even for the (mostly) prose recensions (Vindobonensis and Accursiana).

103 Ἐπιλέγειν δὲ ἔστιν ὧδε, ὅταν μύθου ῥηθέντος ἐοικότα τινὰ γνωμικὸν αὐτῷ λόγον ἐπιχειρῶμεν κομίζειν.

104 Λόγον ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἐπιμύθιον λέγει, καὶ γὰρ ἐπιμύθιόν ἐστι λόγος ὁ πρὸς τὸν μῦθον εἰσφερόμενος, καὶ δηλῶν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ χρήσιμον. The scholion is found in Christian Walz, *Rhetores Graeci* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1832–1836), 1:259, lines 24–27. The placement is given as "med p. 178" with "Τὸν λόγον δὲ οὕτως ἐποίσομεν."

105 Ὁ δὲ λόγος ὁ τὴν ὠφέλειαν δεκνὺς τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ μύθου ποτὲ μὲν προταχθήσεται, ποτὲ δὲ ὑποταχθήσεται. I will argue in 13.2 that the L fables employ this same technique, for example, in Luke 18:6.

genre terms in his title. Not to be left out, the third genre term, αἶνος, appears later in the story when Aesop adopts a son, who receives the name Αἶνος. To round out the appearance of the other two terms in *The Life* for "fable," the author incorporates the third term for the genre, with a wink and a nod, as the child of Aesop.[106] As to what form exactly these authors have in mind, this is the subject of Chapter 10.

In Latin, *fabula* and its diminutive *fabella* are the most common terms used for individual fables as well as the genre, derived from the Latin verbal form *for* (cf. *fari*) + *bulla*—a very general word for "to speak" or "to talk" (cf. Greek φημί).[107] *Fabula*, "talk" and "narrative," is thus the same as the Greek fable terminology. Though his discussion of the fable genre is not extensive, Quintilian is helpful for establishing the fable terminology in Latin. Immediately preceding his comments about the relationship between fable and proverb, we read:[108]

> "Consider also those fables (*fabellae*) which, though not originating with Aesop (for Hesiod seems to be the first author of them), are best known under Aesop's name … Horace too did not regard the use of this type as undignified even in poetry: witness the lines, "As the shrewd fox said to the ailing lion …"[109] The Greeks call this an *ainos* (Αἶνον), and speak of Aesopic fables (λόγους) (as I said) and 'Libyan [fables]';[110] some Roman writers use the word *apologatio*, though the name has not been accepted in common use. Close to this is the genre of *paroimia* (παροιμίας) a sort of abbreviated fable (*fabella brevior*) understood allegorically: 'Not my load, he says: the ox takes the panniers'" (*Inst.* 5.11.19–21 [trans. adapted from Russell, LCL]).

Once more, this first century author is remarkably accurate in the details he offers us, such as his knowledge that Hesiod contains the first Greek fable. Like Theon, Quintilian also tells us about the different terminology used for this single form in Greek. Quintilian also offers us one more crucial service since we are dealing with evidence from two languages here: Greek and Latin. One must tread lightly equating Greek and Latin concepts without such an explicit notice, but Quintilian provides us with precisely this, equating *fabula* with

106 The author is deliberate in this choice of name. See Ioannis Konstantakos, "Characters and Names in the Vita Aesopi and in the Tale of Ahiqar. Book II: The Adoptive Son," *Hyperboreus* 15 (2009): 325–39.

107 See LSJ, 776; *OLD* 665, 720.

108 Quintilian also mentions the fable in *Inst.* 1.9.2.

109 Horace, *Ep.* 1.1.73. The fable survives in many versions, see Perry 142, 258. On the indignity of the fable, see Chapter 9.

110 Et Horatius ne in poemate quidem humilem generis huius usum putavit in illis versibus: quod dixit vulpes aegroto cauta Leoni. Αἶνον Graeci vocant et Αἰσωπείους, ut dixi, λόγους et Λιβυκούς.

λόγος. If this bridge from Greek to Latin is good enough for Quintilian, one of the preeminent orators at the time of the Gospels, it should be good enough to ferry us across from Greek to Latin. As is the standard scholarly practice today, the Latin texts and Greek texts are the same genre, "fables."

Martial provides us with one more plank from the first century to shepherd us over the bridge between Greek and Latin with his reference to the fabulist Phaedrus. Phaedrus, of course, referred to his fables with the Latin word *fabula*, and Martial's epigrams were likewise composed in Latin. Despite the Latin source text and Martial's vernacular, Martial goes out of his way to refer to Phaedrus's Latin fables using the Greek term λόγοι in the following epigram to a certain Canius Rufus:

> Dic, Musa, quid agat Canius meus Rufus: utrumne chartis tradit ille victuris legenda temporum acta Claudianorum? an quae Neroni falsus astruit scriptor, an aemulatur improbi λόγους Phaedri?
>
> Tell me, Muse, what is my friend Canius Rufus doing? Is he putting on paper the acts of Claudian times for posterity to read? Or does he emulate the compositions that a mendacious writer ascribed to Nero or the fables of rascal Phaedrus? (Martial, *Epig.* 3.20.1–5 [trans. Bailey, LCL])

If we should connect this statement to the fabulist Phaedrus, then we have a second Latin author doing us the kind service of equating the Latin and Greek terminology for the fable.

In the first century then, there were multiple terms referring to the fable that the genre picked up over the centuries. This fact was widely recognized in the first century by various authors who applied the terms to emphasize different aspects of the fable and used them to theorize the genre. This practice provides us with a remarkable indication of genre consciousness. All the terms relate to notions of speaking, and together with the other concepts—fiction, truth, falsehood, simile, and story—are captured together in Theon's definition, "fable is a fictitious story picturing truth," μῦθος ἔστι λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν (Theon, *Prog.* 1).

5.8 Whether to Divide Fables by Characters or Possibility

As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, the education system of the ancient world shows a remarkable stability over the centuries. While Theon and other progymnasmatists agree on almost everything about the fable, there was apparently one matter to quibble about related to taxonomy. Theon writes:

> Fables are called Aesopic and Libyan or Sybaritic and Phrygian …, but if there is not any qualification to indicate the type, we commonly call it "Aesopic." Those who say that some are composed about talking animals,[111] while others human beings, that some are impossible, while others capable of being true, seem to me to make a silly distinction. All the specific features are found in all those mentioned. (Theon, *Prog.* 4 [trans. mine])

Theon here disputes that it is useful to divide fables into different subcategories based on whether they are "impossible" or "capable of being true," and what characters they contain, whether humans, animals, or a mix of both. In 2.2.3, we touched on this issue when we addressed the myth that fables are "impossible" stories about talking animals, which parable scholars have attempted to use as a means of separating "parables" from fables. Obviously, projecting modern post-Enlightenment notions of what constitutes Theon's ideas of "possible" and "impossible" is problematic at best,[112] nevertheless, the details offered by the other progymnasmatists provide still further ancient testimony to put the matter to rest. Aphthonius, Nicolaus, and the commentary on Aphthonius by John of Sardis, appear to reflect the perspectives against which Theon is reacting:[113]

> It is called Sybaritic and Cilician and Cyprian, varying its names with its inventors, but calling it Aesopic has largely prevailed because Aesop composed fables best of all. Some fables are rational [λογικόν], some ethical [ἠθικόν], some mixed: rational when a human being is imagined as doing something, ethical when representing the character of irrational animals, mixed when made up of both, irrational [ἀλόγου] and rational [λογικοῦ]. (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1)[114]

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111 The Greek is ἀλόγοις ζῴοις, "speechless animals," but Theon means of course that the animals are normally speechless but are given voice in the fable. This is clear from others who describe the animals as "mute" or "speechless" with reference to their ability to speak in the fable. See the quotations below of Aphthonius, the scholion in Aristophanes's *Birds*, and P.Mich. 6.

112 See especially Feddern, *Der antike Fiktionalitätsdiskurs*, discussed in 11.5. Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

113 This is a commentary explaining, expanding, and illustrating Aphthonius' discussion of *progymnasmata*. It is the earliest Byzantine commentary in Greek. The *terminus post-quem* is Aphthonius and the *ante-quem* set by the earliest manuscript in the tenth century. See further Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 173–75.

114 "Irrational" and "rational" are likely also deliberate references to the facility of the characters to speak, i.e., λογικόν, "possession the ability to speak," and ἀλόγου. "without the ability to speak."

Aphthonius then follows this statement with an example:

> *An ethical fable of the Cicadas and Ants, exhorting the young to toil.*
> It was the height of summer and the cicadas were offering up their shrill song, but it occurred to the ants to toil and collect the harvest from which they would be fed in the winter. When the winter came on, the ants fed on what they had laboriously collected, but the pleasure of the cicadas ended in want. *Similarly, youth that does not wish to toil fares badly in old age.* (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1)

In his commentary on Aphthonius, John of Sardis elaborates on these categories. On "Some fables are rational," John comments, "Those involving only a human being, maybe a farmer or an unfortunate old man, choosing to die but then begging to be spared out of love of life" (*Prog.* 1).[115] From Aphthonius's example of the "ethical fable," and John's clarification about the "rational fable," we can see that both are concerned with perfectly mundane, "possible" subjects.

On the *promythium* of Aphthonius's fable: "A fable of the Cicadas and Ants," John offers a paragraph-length commentary on various sub-divisions of fables. One is particularly relevant to the issue in parable scholarship:

> Of the political fables, some are fictitious, some historical. Those are said to be fictitious which contain in them much indication of being invented, like the one about the lion who had grown old and was feigning disease, or the one about the horse and the tortoise. The fictitious nature of these and others like them is easily perceived. Historical fables are those that seem to be the result of inquiry and to have been witnessed, although these too are acknowledged to be false; but by the nature of the material they divert attention from their ficticity, as does the present fable and the one about the dog that grabbed the meat and the one about the birdcatcher who was deceived by the voice of the cicada; for fables like these, on the surface giving an impression of truth, disguise the falsehood in them. (*Prog.* 1)

As John describes using the vocabulary of antiquity, "historical" fables are those that "disguise the falsehood" in them, while "fictitious" fables are those that "give much indication of being invented." Translated into modern anachronistic language, historical fables are "realistic" and fictitious fables are "unrealistic." John's comments take the wind out of the attempts of parable scholars to divide a "parable" from a fable on the basis of "possibility"—both kinds fall under the purview of fable. Nowhere among these doctors of rhetoric is παραβολή mentioned as creating a conflict with this.

115 The edition of the Greek is Hugo Rabe, ed., *Ioannis Sardiani Commentarium in Aphthonii Progymnasmata* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928).

Nicolaus the Sophist also brings in some pertinent information in his comments:

> Let some fables be called Aesopic, some Sybaritic, some Lydian, some Phrygian.... In Sybaritic fables the characters are limited to rational animals, in Aesopic there is a combination of irrational and rational, and Lydian and Phrygian fables use only the irrational. (*Prog.* 2)

What Nicolaus means in the Sybaritic fable by "rational animals" (λογικῶν ζῴων) are human beings. Here Nicolaus states that the use of human beings or animals is a distinction among the different ethnic varieties of fables. According to Nicolaus, some ethnic groups use only human characters in their fables, while others use only non-humans, and others use a mix of both. Naturally, this issue of preference likewise extends to individual fabulists, who are sometimes the vanguard of their ethnicity.[116] To draw a modern analogy that also captures a stigma perhaps like the use of fables in antiquity, fables are much like cartoons and comic strips. Some cartoons and cartoonists will use personified non-humans (Warner Brothers "Looney Tunes" or Walt Disney's "Mickey Mouse" comic strips), some use human characters (Matt Groening's "The Simpsons" or Garry Trudeau's "Doonesbury"), and some use a mix of both (Seth MacFarlane's "Family Guy" or Charles Schulz's "Peanuts").

The question is thus not *if* Jesus spoke in fables because there are no speaking animals, but *why* Jesus's fables in the gospels do not use such characters. The answer does not appear to be a concern for modern "realism," since the fables in the gospels are often anything but realistic and achieve "fictitiousness" through unrealistic scenarios, even including supernatural beings (see 11.5). There are many possibilities about which we can only speculate, beginning with the simple matter of personal taste. Other possibilities include Flusser's assumption, based on the rabbis, that Jesus did tell such fables, but the gospels did not transmit them.[117] Indeed, the rabbis, as we will see momentarily, used "irrational creatures" regularly.[118] A closely related possibility is that Jesus does tell them in the Gospels, but they are minimized by the evangelists

116 Theon seems to use the names of individual fabulists in this way, e.g., Connis the Cilician, Thurus the Sybarite, Cybissus the Libyan (Theon, *Prog.* 4).

117 See the discussion of Flusser in Chapter 1.

118 See Lieve M. Teugels, "Talking Animals in Parables: A Contradictio in Terminis?," in *Parables in Changing Contexts: Essays on the Study of Parables in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Eric Ottenheijm (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 129–48, here 143.

and overlooked by exegetes (e.g., Luke 7:24 // Matt 11:7; Matt 7:15; Luke 24:25).[119] David Daube offers similar ponderings as to why Jesus did not use speaking creatures in his fables—"Is it accidental? It may be. But more probably it is accounted for by his role as a prophet" and "their profound aversion to certain heathenish beliefs concerning beasts, trees, stones, vestiges of those damnable cults which they fight day in day out."[120] An argument from personal Jewish piety is certainly plausible.[121] Daube is speaking of the "historical Jesus" but the same principle woud also apply to the evangelists and the kind of stories Jesus ought to say to fit the desired characterization.[122] Even variance among ethnic varieties on these lines was also well-known in antiquity and could be another contributing factor.

That there are different individuals and ethnicities with their own fable associations goes back long before Nicolaus. The Sybaritic fable, which does not use talking animals, goes back at least to Aristophanes (ca. 446–ca. 386 BCE). He preserves the only two so-named fables in *Wasps*. To not be held responsible for a crime committed while intoxicated, Loathecleon recommends to Lovecleon that he can tell the victim "some witty story, something funny by Aesop or Sybaris,[123] one of the stories you learned at the party, and then you've turned the whole thing into a joke, so he lets you off and goes on his merry way" (Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 1257–1261 [trans. adapted from Henderson, LCL]). What distinction the reader is expected to know between Aesopic and Sybaritic fables is unnamed, but the Sybaritic fable that appear later in the comedy go as follows:

> A man from Sybaris fell out of a chariot, and somehow he got his head seriously injured. It happens he wasn't an experienced driver. And then a friend of his stood over him and said, "Let each practice the craft he knows." Thus also you[124]

119 See the discussion of the Lukan examples in 8.3 and Matthew in 16.2.1. To these we can add the other "rational fables" with well-known parallels outside the Jesus tradition (Luke 7:32 // Matt 11:17; Matt 13:47–50), and the scores of others discussed in Book II.

120 David Daube, *Ancient Hebrew Fables: The Inaugural Lecture of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies* (Oxford: Oxford Center for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1973), 7.

121 On the prophetic use of fables, see 9.4.

122 For the many possible motivations of the tradents of the Jesus tradition to exclude and minimize such fables in Chapter 9.

123 ἢ λόγον ἔλεξας αὐτὸς ἀστεῖόν τινα, Αἰσωπικὸν γέλοιον ἢ Συβαριτικόν. See also Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 566, 1401–1405.

124 On this phrase, οὕτω δὲ καὶ σὺ, as a formulaic fable marker (see 12.6).

> do the same and run off to Pittalus's clinic!"[125] (Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 1427–1432 [trans. adapted from Henderson, LCL]).[126]

The use of human actors instead of animals obviously has some merit. Lovecleon continues immediately with the next fable, the Woman and the Jar (Perry 438)—"Once upon a time in Sybaris a woman broke a jar …"—but he is interrupted mid-story by his accuser. There are also several scholia at Aristophanes, *Av.* 471 where Aesop is mentioned in passing. One of these reads, "Some fables, those which concern dumb animals, are Aesopic, while others about humans are Sybaritic."[127]

While Theon might be in the right to regard all these divisions as "silly" and overdrawn, Aphthonius, Nicolaus, and the commentaries by John and the scholia provide us with valuable insights into the ways ancient authors could sub-divide *fables*. Today we may associate the fable with animals but in antiquity it seems that some ethnicities and some individuals had the opposite impression, using only humans in fables. Like cartoons today, fables could be divided into those that wear their fictitiousness "on their sleeve," so to speak, and those that do their best to imitate reality. As we see here, "realistic" and "impossible" were used to describe kinds of *fables*, not as a means to divide fables from another genre. The issue is not if fables feature humans or animals or whether fables can be possible and impossible—both are obviously the case. For the progymnasmatists, the issue is whether it is *useful* to sub-divide fables along these lines. If there were some other genre that could be confused with the fable in any of these permutations or that went by another term such as παραβολή, we would have expected these ancient authors to say so.[128] If one wished to get overly specific, we could say that Jesus used mostly "historical,"

125 Pitallus was a famous doctor. See further van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 192.

126 This fable, the Sybarite and His Friend (Perry 428) has a storied legacy, quoted by Pseudo-Diogenianus and the *Suda*, alluded to and translated into Latin by Cicero, and exegeted by Erasmus.

127 Τῶν δὲ μύθων οἱ μὲν περὶ ἀλόγων ζῴων εἰσὶν αἰσώπειοι, οἱ δὲ περὶ ἀνθρώπων συβαριτικοί (471b) in W. J. W. Koster and D. Holwerda, eds, *Scholia in Vespas, Pacem, Aves, et Lysistratam*, Scholia in Aristophanem II.3 (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1991), 80. The oldest manuscript containing this scholium is from the twelfth century; however, the scholia tradition of Aristophanes goes back to the beginning of the Hellenistic age. This scholium is likely no younger than the first century CE.

128 Avoiding potential confusion with any other neighboring genre is precisely what Theon promises in his definitions (*Prog.* 1).

and mostly "rational" and "mixed" fables,[129] though I am of the same mind as Theon on this issue.

5.9 Conclusion

From this crash course in the role of the fable in ancient education, we may survey several important facts. The fable played an important role in education in the early centuries CE. It was through the fable that a child learned to build basic sentences, and fables were one of, if not the first, continuous texts given to a child learning how to read. Through memorization and writing, a child learned virtues from fables and, more often, the folly of vices. For learning Latin and Greek, the simplicity and familiarity of the fables made them ideal bridges between the languages. At the grammarian stage, fables and Isocrates were the only prose material used in mastering grammar.[130] It was also on the fable that students began to cut their teeth on rhetoric and composition. Fables were revisited again and again at every level of education, from the nursery to the bema. Apart from Homer, no one except the Homer of the fable, Aesop, can make such a claim.[131]

In the classroom, one learned to read and write, but the moral dimension was just as important. The first sentences children read—snippets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, maxims, epigrams, *chreiai*, and fables—praise or censure the actions and the characters in the story. Not only did the stories themselves provide moral guidance, in their attribution to the venerated figures from the past—Homer, Diogenes, Aesop, and Vergil—the student learned their precepts as a model for living the good life.[132]

Although biblical scholars have invested no small energy into the *chreia*, the fable exercise of the *progymnasmata* has gone essentially untouched. Since the presence of the *chreia* is so well-established in the gospels, it is difficult to imagine that the gospels would not have many examples of the fable as well. From the *progymnasmata* stage of education, we gained insight into how

129 For an early attempt to categorize Jesus's fables in this manner, see Gottlob Christian Storr in 8.2.3.

130 Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 202.

131 As Morgan notes, the evidence of the papyri bears out the popularity of the fables. After myth and epic, the second most common type of exercises preserved is based on fable (Morgan, *Literate Education*, 221). On Aesop as the Homer of μῦθος, see Julian, *Or.* 7.207c and 3.3.4 above.

132 For the possible influences of Homer and Vergil on Luke, see again the work of MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil* and *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer.*

authors contemporary with Jesus and the gospels defined and theorized the fable genre. From the rich discussion of the fable in the *progymnasmata* and the stability of the tradition as a whole, it was easy to see why many modern fable scholars have followed the path of ancient fable scholarship in defining the genre. This ancient and modern theory of the fable genre based on the *progymnasmata* easily accommodates the "parables" as "fictitious stories picturing truth."

From this widespread use of the fable in education, we may say with confidence that an author like Luke would have studied fables—memorized them, redacted them, applied morals to them, composed them, learned to incorporate them into narratives, and had an eye for what made a good fable. Having gone through the stages of education and having noted that the fable is used at every level, we may take away a negative conclusion by noting a conspicuous absence. In stark contrast to the fable, the "parable" is nowhere to be found.[133] Even if there were an evanescent genre known as the "parable" in the first century, it is hard to imagine that any author writing in Greek would transmit or interpret it as anything other than the fable. An ancient audience with even the most rudimentary education or exposure to popular oral culture would understand and interpret Jesus's fables from the fable context.

133 The scant references to "comparison" (παραβολή) will be taken up in 7.3.

CHAPTER 6

The Fables of the Rabbis

6.1 Introduction

Among the myths that interfere with identifying Jesus's fables with the rest of the ancient fable tradition is the prima facie observation that Jesus was "Jewish," and that whatever Jesus's "parables" were, they were also somehow "Jewish." Often accompanying this Jewish association comes the assumption that Jews shunned the Hellenistic. Thus, when searching to establish a Jewish context from which Jesus's "parables" might derive, if one does not wish to see them coming like a bolt from the blue,[1] one must assert a dependence on the poorly attested *meshalim* in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism. Those who wish to appeal to the centuries-removed rabbinic materials and their *meshalim* for clues about Jesus's "parables," generally do so with a subtle antagonism to the Hellenistic, and a misplaced association of the Hellenistic with the fable. The standard view thus sets "parables" and "fables" in opposition—the former Jewish and the later Greek. Robert H. Stein's view is representative of this outlook:

> Once we decide that we are interested in investigating the parables of Jesus, it becomes apparent that we are investigating the parables of one who lived and thought in a world governed by the Old Testament. Jesus' understanding of this genre was shaped by the Old Testament and early rabbinic *meshalim*, rather than by the Greco-Roman *fabellae*.[2]

As we have learned in preceding chapters, among the reasons that fables are rarely considered in relation to the "parables" of Jesus are the obscurity of the literature, the steep learning curve of fable scholarship, and especially a few key misunderstandings about the essentials of a fable. In this chapter we will address in depth another key misunderstanding that has unduly prejudiced scholarship on Jesus's fables: the view that Jesus, as a Jew, would not have spoken fables, because Jews and the later rabbis did not use fables. As

1 So Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 12.

2 Robert H. Stein, "The Genre of the Parables," in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, 30–50, here 39. If there is an opposite view it is that held by David Flusser, who argues that the Greek fable and not the Old Testament *mashal* was the springboard for the parables of Jesus and the rabbis (*Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 141–60). See also David Stern, below.

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we will quickly see, according to tradition, Jews of the Tannaitic period were engrossed in fables and used them without reservation in their teaching, in their study, and at key historical moments.

While in the biblical world, the word *mashal* (pl. *meshalim, mishlot*) has a much wider generic utility and includes such things as proverbs, riddles, and allegories, as David Stern notes, in the Bible, *mashal* "never, curiously enough, [refers] to the specific narrative forms that we call parables or fables. Only in Rabbinic literature does the word mashal become a formal generic title for parables and fables."[3] Though it is most likely a coincidence that an Old Testament fable is never titled as such, as Stern indicates here, the Hebrew term *mashal* is the sole term available to refer to both "parable" and "fable" in the Rabbinic Period.[4] Unlike the common view expressed by Stein, Stern describes an alternative background of the *mashal* in the Rabbinic Period. He places comparatively little emphasis on the biblical tradition and observes the similarities of the rabbinic *mashal* to the Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Greek fables. About the Greek fable tradition, he writes, it is "the *ainos* [αἶνος] that is directly analogous to the *mashal* ... the *ainos* as a genre includes the fables of Archilochus and Aesop as well as such takes as the one Odysseus tells Eumaios in the *Odyssey* (14.462–505)."[5] With David Stern receptive to the view advocated here, we are in good company. The fable is no less a Jewish genre and the Jewish "parable" may be influence by the Greek tradition, just as the Greek tradition may be influenced by the semitic.

While for some biblical scholars, these materials may be familiar, they will almost certainly be new to readers from the classical and fable scholarship side. Understandably, one seldom encounters semitic fables in the standard works of classicists. Semitic fables are seldom treated in fable scholarship because of the artificial bifurcation of the relevant fields. While Perry had intended to include semitic fables in future volumes of his *Aesopica*, these never came to fruition. In the inventory volume of Adrados's *Graeco-Latin Fable*, one occasionally finds references to semitic materials, but these are scant and unsystematic. This chapter, then, is intended especially for fable scholars, who have not yet dipped their toes into the semitic fables.

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3 David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 9–10. As he observes in a footnote, Ezek 17:2 uses *mashal* in reference to the allegory of the eagle, "perhaps a fable?" (*Parables in Midrash*, 289–90 n. 8).

4 Instead of using the term 'fable" or "parable," in this chapter I will often simply use the transliteration, "*mashal*," or the plural "*meshalim*" or "*mishlot*." The reasoning behind this will, I hope, not take long to recognize.

5 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 6. See also the views of Flusser, discussed in Chapter 1.

The value of rabbinic materials as a guide to the Jesus tradition is notoriously difficult to establish at any given point because they are so challenging to date, and most, if not all of these materials derive from centuries later.[6] If there is any value at all in the rabbinic corpus for understanding New Testament fables or establishing the background of this genre spoken by Jesus, the present chapter will show that the rabbinic materials confirm the ancient fable as the operative genre. Even if one dismisses entirely the relevance of the rabbinic materials for Jesus, the current chapter will nevertheless tear down this major myth dividing "parables" and "fables." Bearing this in mind, let us turn down this thoroughfare of the Jewish *meshalim*.

6.2 The Fables of the Tannaim

6.2.1 *Ben Zakkai: Talking Trees and Fox* Meshalim

When we turn to the rabbinic corpus of *meshalim*, we find that they do not provide evidence against Jesus using fables, quite the opposite.[7] The earliest figure we will discuss is a tanna from the end of the Second Temple period, Yohanan ben Zakkai (ca. 30–90 CE).[8] According to rabbinic tradition, he was brought up in the Galilee, the youngest of Hillel's eighty students.[9] As a Pharisee, he is recorded engaging in disputations with Sadducees throughout his career. Ben Zakkai also played an essential role in the legend of Yavne and the inchoate Mishnah. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, it was he

6 Here and there, we find plausible grounds to think certain material has been preserved in the tradition from the Tannaitic period, but the methodological problems accompanying the panacea of "oral tradition" to cover the chronological difference are largely insurmountable. While I stand with the consensus in being skeptical about our ability to bridge this gap, one of the possibilities offered by the ancient fable is to lay a span across it. At least insofar as New Testament fables and rabbinic fables are concerned, the ubiquity of this genre that I have now established may permit some very careful transit between the corpora.

7 For a recent study focusing on the *meshalim* of the rabbis, see Lieve M. Teugels, *The Meshalim in the Mekhiltot*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 176 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019).

8 He is the earliest named individual to whom a *mashal* is attributed in the rabbinic corpus. On Yohanan Ben Zakkai generally, see the two books by Neusner: Jacob Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai, ca.1–80 C.E.*, 2d ed., StPB 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1962); and idem, *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions Concerning Yoḥanan Ben Zakkai*, StPB 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

9 "Youngest" renders the root קטן in this case, which may mean instead "least," i.e., "worst." If the latter, it would imply that ben Zakkai's already legendary status was still nothing compared to others—a kind of "no true Scotsman" comparison. The former makes better sense, however, since the discrepancy in years between them guarantees that, if it is not wholly legendary, ben Zakkai would have to be a very young student of a very old Hillel.

who converted his school at Yavne into a surrogate academy for the Jewish leadership. Again, according to tradition, it is from this academy that rabbinic Judaism would emerge. A prominent characteristic of ben Zakkai conveyed in rabbinic tradition is his unceasing fervor for study.[10] The Talmud describes the content of his study, which include some relevant subjects:

> The Sages said about Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai that he did not neglect the Bible, Mishnah, Gemarah, *halakhot* and *aggadot*; minutiae of the Torah and minutiae of the scribes; the hermeneutical principles of the Torah with regard to *a fortiori* inferences and verbal analogies, the calculation of the calendrical seasons and gematria, the speech of ministering angels; the speech of demons, and the speech of palm trees (שיחת דקלים); fuller *mishlot* (משלות כובסין), fox *mishlot* (משלות שועלים), and more generally, a great matter and a small matter. (b. Sukkah 28a)[11]

The items that should jump out to us are in the sequence toward the end, which describes his study of esoteric matters, שיחת דקלים משלות כובסין משלות שועלים, "the language of palm trees, fuller *mishlot*, foxes *mishlot*." While one may quibble over the first two, since the fox is the emblematic character in animal fables, the last of these is a clear reference to a corpus of fables. With respect to the "language of palm trees," the translation is inexact, since this is not a usual word for "language" or "speech." It conveys foremost a sense of interiority, such

10 "The Sages said about Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, the teacher of Rabbi Eliezer: In all his days he never engaged in idle conversation; and he never walked four cubits without engaging in Torah study and without donning phylacteries; and no person ever preceded him into the study hall; and he never slept in the study hall, neither substantial sleep nor a brief nap; … and no person ever found him sitting and silent, rather, he was always sitting and studying; and only he opened the door for his students; and he never said anything that he did not hear from his teacher; and he never said to his students that the time has arrived to arise and leave the study hall except on Passover eves, and Yom Kippur eves, and Rabbi Eliezer, his student, accustomed himself to model his conduct after his example." (b. Sukkah 28a). The translation is from Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition* (New York: Random House, 1989–1996).

11 A parallel appears in b. B. Bat. 134a that reorders the clauses about *mishlot* and *shihat*: "parables of launderers, and parables of foxes, speech of demons, and the speech of palm trees, and the speech of ministering angels, ומשלות כובסים ומשלות שועלים שיחת שדים ושיחת דקלים ושיחת מלאכי השרת. Another parallel in Avot of Rabbi Nathan (recension B) 28 is more simplified: "He did not leave one section of the Torah unstudied; he studied Scripture and Targum, Halakah and aggadah, (arcane) speech and parable" (trans. Saldarini). Earlier in the treatise, Akiva, ben Zakkai's student, is described studying in an identical way (Avot R. Nat. 12). See other parallels in b. Sanh. 38b; Avot R. Nat. A 14. When translations are not from the Soncino edition or another named edition, they are my own, often in consultation with the Sefaria.org project.

that "thoughts of palm trees" might be more apropos.[12] It is also possible that שׂיח was the verb chosen for the palm tree, rather than משׁלות for the sake of a pun on שׂיח, a homograph meaning "plant," "tree."[13] If it is not some great coincidence, one of only a couple post-biblical narrative *meshalim* that appears in the Genesis Apocryphon features a talking palm tree (on which, see 16.5).

To what exactly "fuller *mishlot*," משׁלות כובסין, refers is a problem that has attracted some scholarly interest.[14] Are they fables about fuller or fable by fullers, both, or is there some other meaning now lost? Dov Noy, arguably the founder of Jewish folklore studies, believes that "fuller *mishlot*" refer to those told by fullers, i.e., those told by the popular class.[15] This is certainly a plausible explanation, and there is at least one story about a fuller attending a lecture containing fox *meshalim* (b. San. 38b). According to Louis Ginzberg, they are *about* fullers.[16] There are indeed a handful of fables about fullers in the early collections. Here are two examples:

> A charcoal burner saw a fuller living close by the house where he carried on his trade and went and asked the fuller to move in with him, explaining that they would be on closer terms with one another that they would live more economically if they occupied just one house. The fuller said, "Yes, but I can't do this at all, for you will cover everything I bleach with soot."
> *This story shows that all dissimilar things are irreconcilable* (Perry 29)[17]

> A tanner was about to move in next door to a rich man but the rich man tried to get rid of him on account of the foul smell. The tanner said to him, "It will bother you for a little while but then you will get used to it, and afterwards you will not even notice the smell." The rich man said, "We will not lose our sense of smell simply on account of your profession!"

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12 See שׂיח in Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 1559. Trees are depicted as singing, if only metaphorically, in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., 1 Chron 16:33; Isa 55:12; Ps 96:12.

13 See שׂיח in Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1559.

14 For a discussion of the history of the problem, see Dan Ben-Amos, "Narrative Forms in the Haggadah: Structural Analysis" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1967), 137–139.

15 Since the citation is buried in a Modern Hebrew article no longer in circulation (Dov Noy, "The Washerman and Washermen Fables" [Hebrew], *Machnayim* 91 [1964]: 34–40), see the discussion of Dov Noy's views in Ben-Amos, "Narrative Forms in the Haggadah," 138. This popular class association with the fable will be addressed in Chapter 9.

16 Louis Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (New York: Atheneum, 197), 241–42.

17 There are additional variants of this fable in Chambry 56, and see other fuller fable variants in Chambry 309. Since tanners and fullers both work under foul smelling conditions, the latter using vats of human urine to scour clothing in Roman times, and fables interchange similar characters regularly, it is easy to imagine fullers and tanners being used interchangeably.

> *The fable shows that a person should not accept foolish advice, especially if it is contrary to his nature.* (Perry 204 [trans. Gibbs])

There is a *mashal* in Avot of Rabbi Nathan that is a good candidate for a fuller fable as well:

> R. Simeon b. Eleazar says: I will parable to thee a parable. Unto what is the matter like? It is like a king who built a great palace and adorned it [variant: "who built great palaces and dwelt in all of them"], but a tannery pipe led through it and emptied at its doorway. Every passer-by said, "How beautiful and magnificent this palace would be if it were not for the tannery pipe coming through it!"
> *Also even so is man thus.*[18] *If now, with a foul stream issuing from his bowels, he exalts himself over other creatures, how much the more would he exalt himself over other creatures if a stream of precious oil, balsam, or ointment issued from him.* (Avot R. Nat. 19:3 [recension A])[19]

A third possibility is that כובסין is a corruption. The first option is that we should read instead, כבשׂין, "sheep." Sheep *meshalim* would make a natural pair for the fox *meshalim*, since the two animals regularly appear together. For this same reason, however, to distinguish sheep fables from fox fables in the list seems an unnecessary addition. An intriguing possibility that would shed light on an obscure fable tradition is that כובסין is a corruption of כובסיס, the proper name, "Kubsis." The final samekh would have simply been mistaken for a final mem in כובסים. This individual would be the same identified in both Theon (*Prog.* 4) and Babrius's second prologue: a certain Cybisses, Κυβίσσης. This figure is mentioned in connection with the Libyan fable: "The first to tell fables to the sons of the Hellenes, they say, was Aesop the wise; and to the Libyans Cybisses also told fables" (Babrius, *Fab.* Prologue 2). These passing references from Theon and Babrius are the only other known reference to this Cybisses. If this restoration is correct, then the rabbis attest to this obscure tradition of fables as well, which served as a component of ben Zakkai's Jewish education.

According to the rabbinic tradition, Yohanan ben Zakkai was a highly influential figure. This first-century Galilean was responsible for facilitating the council at Yavne, for laying much of the groundwork for the Mishnah, and what would become rabbinic Judaism. He also set a standard of pious Jewish scholasticism that included devoting oneself to the study of the thoughts of

18 We will discuss the line following the fable narrative, called the *epimythium*, and their formal patterns in Chapter 12 and Chapter 13. This is Adrados's *epimythium* form 5, a "thus also …" followed by a conditional (see 12.5).

19 Trans. McArthur and Johnston, *Parables*, 36. See also Der. Er. Rab. 3.2, where there is a parallel to the tannery pipe story, but not in *mashal* form.

trees, fox *mishlot*, and fuller *mishlot*, שיחת דקלים משלות כובסין משלות שועלים. While, according to tradition, Yohanan ben Zakkai was exceptional for the depth and breadth of his studies among first-century CE rabbis, his connection to fables was far from unusual. Although we do not have examples of ben Zakkai composing them, we do not have to look far to find rabbis composing fables.

6.2.2 *Ben Hananiah: Quelling a Revolt with a Fable*

Perhaps the two most famous occasions of rabbis using fables are set in the early second century. The first occasion is found in Genesis Rabbah on the lips of Joshua ben Hananiah (d. 131 CE).[20] Ben Hananiah was a leading tanna in the period between the Judean war of 70 CE and the Bar Kochba rebellion. He was one of five students of ben Zakkai who formed his inner circle following the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Pirqe Avot, he and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus were Zakkai's closest pupils (Avot 2:8). This is also intimated in the legend of Zakkai's escape from the siege of Jerusalem and appearance before Vespasian, when it is ben Hananiah and ben Hyrcanus who rescue him. After the death of ben Zakkai during the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE), Gamaliel II inherited the leadership of the Javne school. According to lore, the fate of the Jews soon became at stake. When he traveled to Rome to plead the case of the Jews,[21] Gamaliel brought an embassy composed of ben Hananiah, Eliezer ben Azariah, and Akiva. Many legends from this embassy are preserved in the aggadic literature, including several about ben Hananiah.[22]

It was Hananiah's experiences in Rome, his discourses with the emperors, debates with non-Jews, and apparent training in all manner of learning that made him the natural choice to mitigate tensions between the Jews and Romans.[23] It is during perhaps his most famous encounter with the Roman

20 In rabbinic literature he is often referred to simple as Rabbi Joshua.

21 According to the legend, Domitian was intent on eradicating them from the empire (Der. Er. Rab. 5).

22 These include him debating with Romans about God's foreknowledge and the resurrection of the dead (e.g., Gen. Rab. 28; b. Sanh. 90b), and a story about ben Hananiah coming to the aid of Gamaliel in a debate with a certain philosopher, possibly to be identified as Josephus (Gen. Rab. 20). Feldman entertains this possibility, pointing out that Josephus would have been the only Jew on Domitian's good side at the time, and also the similarities in spelling between *Flavius Josephus* and *philosophos* in Hebrew (Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, HCS 27 [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998], 67 n. 88).

23 Ben Hananiah is also depicted regularly encountering and debating non-Jews, including "heretics" (e.g., a צדוקי in b. Erub. 101a), at Caesar's palace, an "Epicurean" (אפיקורוסא)

envoy in rabbinic tradition, during the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, that we encounter the following story of Joshua ben Hananiah:

> In the days of Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah the [Roman] State ordered the Temple to be rebuilt. Pappus and Lulianus set tables from Acco as far as Antioch and provided those who came up from the Exile [i.e., Babylon] with all their needs. Thereupon the Samaritans went and warned [the Emperor]: "Be it known now unto the king, that, if this rebellious city be built and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, impost or toll—*halak* (Ezra 4:13): 'mindah' is land tax; 'belo' is poll-tax; 'halak' is *androtiga*. "Yet what can I do" said he, "seeing that I have already given the order"? "Send a command to them that they must change its site or add five cubits thereto or lessen it by five cubits, and then they will withdraw from it of their own accord." Now the community [of Israel] was assembled in the plain of Beth Rimmon; when the [royal] dispatches arrived, they burst out weeping, and wanted to revolt against the [Roman] power. Thereupon they [the Sages] decided: Let a wise man go and pacify the congregation. Then let Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah go, as he is a master of Scripture. So he went and harangued them: "A wild lion killed [an animal], and a bone stuck in his throat. Thereupon he proclaimed: 'I will reward anyone who removes it.' An Egyptian heron, which has a long beak, came and pulled it out and demanded his reward. 'Go,' he replied, 'you will be able to boast that you entered the lion's mouth in peace and came out in peace' [unscathed]. Even so, let us be satisfied that we entered into dealings with this people in peace and have emerged in peace." (Gen. Rab. 64:10 [trans. adapted from Soncino])[24]

After successfully currying enough favor with either Trajan or Hadrian to rebuild the Temple, the Romans renege on their promise. In this version of the story, it occurs after the Samaritans sabotage their efforts at the eleventh hour. The whole of Israel, weeping and enraged, are prepared to revolt, when ben Hananiah is put forward to resolve the situation. He is, after all, "a master of Scripture." The Soncino translation gives a somewhat Judaized rendition of the Aramaic אַסְכּוֹלוֹסְטַקְיָא דְאוֹרַיְיתָא. The word אַסְכּוֹלוֹסְטַקְיָא is an Aramaic transliteration of σχολαστικός "scholar," and דְאוֹרַיְיתָא refers to instruction generally, or specifically religious discourses or lessons.[25] The goal of this description

during the envoy to Rome (b. Hag. 5b), and especially during a visit to Athens in a lengthy tale in Bekh. 8b–9.

24 If the historical narrative is not invented whole cloth, then the details about it are muddled. If the emperor is to be understood as Hadrian, then Pappos will have already been executed. If Trajan, who is more likely since the second major Jewish rebellion took place at the end of his reign in 117 CE, then the rabbinic corpus conflates him with Hadrian. It is also a distinct possibility that it is an *ex eventu* creation to address the decree of Julian the Apostate to rebuild the Temple in 363 CE that was reneged upon his death.

25 See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 34. In the pericope we find several more Greek words: τραπεζίται, χρυσάργυρον, ἀγγαρευτικά.

is to convey that ben Hananiah is renowned for his scholarly erudition. Ben Hananiah proves his reputation as a master rhetor, proceeds to mollify the situation by pulling this apropos fable from his scholarly repertoire, and addresses it to the whole community of Israel.[26] He persuades the Jews with this fable of a lion and Egyptian heron.

The fable used by ben Hananiah is rather famous. It is found in all three of the major early fable collections, Babrius (*Fab.* 94), Phaedrus (*Fab.* 1.8), and the Augustana Collection (Perry 156):

> Once a wolf had a bone lodged in his throat. He promised a heron that he would give him a suitable fee if the latter would let his neck down inside and draw out the bone, thus providing a remedy for his suffering. The heron drew out the bone and forthwith demanded his pay. The wolf grinned at him, baring his sharp teeth, and said: "It's enough pay for your medical services to have taken your neck out of a wolf's mouth safe and sound."
> *You'll get no good in return for giving aid to scoundrels, and you'll do well not to suffer some injury yourself in the process.* (Babrius, *Fab.* 94)

The wild lion is exchanged for a wolf;[27] but, the plot and form are identical. The protagonist of the fable gives a *bon mot* with the same effect, and ben Hananiah also relates an identical moral as an *epimythium*, albeit more clandestinely than in the Babrian version. According to the mythos of this story of ben Hananiah, fables are part of the Jewish vocabulary, spoken by the rabbis and understood by the laity.

6.2.3 *Akiva: A Martyr's* Mashal

The second important example of a fable used by the rabbis in a story set during the early second century is delivered by Rabbi Akiva (ca. 50–132CE). Akiva was the student of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Joshua ben Hananiah, the two closest protégés of Yohanan ben Zakkai.[28] By the time of the embassy to Rome

26 The significance of this episode first appeared in New Testament scholarship in Paul Fiebig's, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Lichte der rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters: ein Beitrag zum Streit um die "Christusmythe" und eine Widerlegung der Gleichnistheorie Jülichers* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1912), 68: "Der Text zeigt, daß auch antike Fabelstoffe unter den Rabbinen verbreitet waren."

27 It is impossible to know which animal is original, lions and wolves being very common in fables. While the lion might be more typical for a Jewish audience, if it were changed from the wolf, the lupine parallel between the fable and the Roman Empire would have been a missed opportunity.

28 Within rabbinic literature, Akiva's fame is foremost as a master teacher who brought up the most important Tannaim of the second century, and who, according to rabbinic traditions, had 12,000 (Gen. Rab. 61:3), 24,000 (b. Yeb. 62b), or 48,000 (b. Ned. 50a) students.

discussed above, Akiva had achieved such renown that he was selected to go on the journey as one of the "four sages."[29] For modern scholarship, he is of particular interest for his historical connection to the Bar Kochba revolt. His martyrdom, which must have taken place during the reign of Hadrian, was almost certainly during this rebellion. It is in the midst of narrating the dramatic tale of his martyrdom that b. Berakhot records the following:

> "And you shall love the Lord your God …" it was taught. Rabbi Eliezer says: If it is stated: "With all your soul," why does it state: "With all your might"? But, if it stated: "With all your might," why does it state: "With all your soul?" … Rabbi Akiva says: "'With all your soul' means even if God takes your soul."
> The Sages taught: One time, the evil empire decreed that Israel may not engage in Torah study. Pappos ben Yehuda came and found Rabbi Akiva, who was convening assemblies in public and engaging in Torah study. Pappos said to him, "Akiva, are you not afraid of the empire?" Rabbi Akiva answered him, "I will relate a parable. To what can this be compared? It is like a fox walking along a riverbank when he sees fish gathering themselves together from place to place. The fox said to them, 'from what are you fleeing?' They said to him, 'From the nets that people cast upon us.' He said to them, 'Do you wish to come up onto dry land? We will reside together just as my ancestors resided with your ancestors.' They said to him, 'You are the one of whom they say, he is the cleverest of animals? You are not clever; you are a fool. If we are afraid in the place that gives us life, then in a place that causes our death, all the more so.' Just the same, now that we sit and engage in Torah study, about which it is written, 'For that is your life, and the length of your days …' (Deut 30:20). Thus, if we are going along but become idle (in Torah study, its abandonment is the place that causes our death), all the more so (if we go along with the empire is death assured)."
> They said: Not a few days passed until they seized Rabbi Akiva and incarcerated him in prison, and seized Pappos ben Yehuda and incarcerated him alongside him. Rabbi Akiva said to him, "Pappos, who brought you here?" Pappos replied, "Happy are you, Rabbi Akiva, for you were arrested for Torah study. Woe unto Pappos who was seized on for idle matters." (b. Ber. 61b)

As the text foreshadows, Akiva would die for adhering to what he understood as a compulsion to study Torah even at the expense of his life.

According to tradition, it was Akiva who systematized and arranged early rabbinic materials, especially what would become the Mishnah.

29 During the trip to Rome, Akiva is reported to have become closely acquainted with a certain Ketia ben Shalom, a proselyte of some authority in Domitian's house, who was martyred by the emperor and bequeathed his wealth to Akiva (Avod. Zar. 10b). There are a number of details related about this individual that make it likely he is to be identified as Flavius Clemens. Flavius Clemens was Vespasian's nephew and cousin of Domitian, whom the latter executed around 95 CE on charges of atheism, almost certainly after converting to Judaism or Christianity. The children of this Flavius Clemens are known to have been tutored by none other than Quintilian.

As Yassif writes concerning Akiva's *mashal*,

> Here the process of Hebrew fable creation seems to peak with regard to the Greek parable: no more retooling of readily available fables, but invention of new ones which fully reflect the sages' religious and social perceptions, with a clear connection to the form and character of the Aesopian fable.[30]

The fable of the fox and the fish is the final public lesson before Akiva's arrest. If the fable of ben Hananiah above is significant for its attestation in Babrius and Phaedrus, Akiva's fable is significant because it is not found in the other collections. It is attested only elsewhere in the Indian Jataka Tales. While it would take us far afield to investigate the connections between the fable traditions of Israel and those of Indian origin, the fact that we are here dealing with a fable is beyond dispute. Here we have a story of a rabbi that taps into the tradition binding condemned wise men to the genre that we encountered in 3.3.3 and will see again in 9.4.

Before moving past Akiva, his ironic fame for modesty also finds particular relevance for us, as he recites one of the L fables with some help from Hillel (cf. Luke 14:7–11):

> Rabbi Joshua of Sikhnin in the name of Rabbi Levi interpreted, reciting, "For it is better for to be told, 'come up' than for you to be brought low before the noble …" (Prov 25:7). Rabbi Akiva recited in the name of Rabbi Simon ben Uzzai, "Move down from your place two or three seats and sit, until they say to you, 'move up,' lest you move up and they say to you, 'move down.' It is better that they say to you, 'Move up! Move up!' lest they say, 'Move down! Move down!'" And thus Hillel says, "When I am brought low I am exalted, and when I am exalted I am brought low." (Lev. Rab. 1:5)[31]
>
> When you are invited by someone to a wedding, you should not sit at the place of honor, lest one more honored than you has been invited by him, and when the one who invited you and him comes he will say to you, "give him the place," and then you will begin to go down with shame to the last place. But when you are invited, arriving recline at the last place, in order that when the one who invited you comes he will say to you, "come up higher!" *Since everyone who lifts himself up will be brought down and the one who lowers himself will be brought up*. (Luke 14:8–11)

30 Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 206–207. It is Yassif's claim that this fable is unique to the rabbinic corpus, and thus composed by a Jew if not Akiva himself. Yassif does not directly address the fact that it is also found in the Jatakas, but merely says that parallels demonstrating dependence, which have been identified by others, are not convincing to him.

31 As in Greek, the verbal and nominal Hebrew words for "high" and "low" found throughout this comparison carry connotations of nobility or exaltation and shame or humility, respectively.

Which text reflects a more primitive version is impossible to say, but both the Gospel text and the rabbinic text display features characteristic of their respective literary milieus.

6.2.4 *Meir: The Fable Corpus and the End of an Era*

In the next generation of Tannaim, we gain a still "fuller" picture of the scope of fables among the rabbis. That the use of fables by the rabbis was not simply for special occasions is apparent when we observe the reputations of Rabbis Meir (fl. 2nd CE) and Bar Kappara (fl. 180 to 220 CE). Rabbi Meir was perhaps the most famous student of Akiva, though he first studied under the obscure, so-called apostate, Elisha ben Abuyah. Rabbi Meir's origins are likewise obscure.[32] Meir is famous for his *meshalim*, with his curriculum described as follows:

> As Rabbi Yohanan said, "When Rabbi Meir would teach, in his lesson he would teach a third *halakha*, a third *aggada*, and a third *mashal*." And Rabbi Yohanan says, "There were three hundred fox *meshalim* attributed to Rabbi Meir but we have none except three: "'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge' (Ezekiel 18:2); 'Just balances, just weights' (Leviticus 19:36); and 'The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead'" (Proverbs 11:8). (b. Sanh. 38b–39a)

This anecdote is prompted by the story of a fuller (כובס) in the previous pericope, who butts in on a debate between Rabbi Yishmael and a heretic. To the amazement of Yishmael, the fuller succeeds at refuting the argument of the heretic. Astonished at the working-class individual being able to answer the matter, Rabbi Yishmael inquired where the fuller learned his solution, to which the fuller replies, "I heard it in a lesson from Rabbi Meir." This anecdote offers further evidence that the Jews understood the didactic roles of fables and employed them in their own curricula. Rabbi Meir divided his curriculum into one third law, one third narrative, and one third *mashal*. This last group contained three hundred fox *meshalim*—what we would surely call "fables." We can also adduce another significant detail from the three fox *meshalim* that survive from Meir: they are apparently known by their lessons (*epimythia*),

32 According to one rabbinic tradition, Meir was born to a proselyte, descended from the Emperor Nero, who had fled to Asia Minor where Meir was born (b. Git. 56a). Other rabbinic lore equates him with Eleazar ben Arach, a student of Yohanan ben Zakkai. This Eleazar ben Arach is mentioned elsewhere in the Talmud in connection to the esoteric subjects studied by Zakkai. While the two are on a journey, ben Arach derives the design of the chariot of fire from ben Zakkai's teachings, the divine presence descends from heaven with ministering angels and with fire on the surrounding trees. Then all begin to sing (b. Hag. 14b).

which are all connected to verses from Scripture. One of the most obvious distinctions between Jesus's fables and those in rabbinic literature is the constant infiltration of Scriptural citations before and after the rabbinic *mashal*. The way these three fox *meshalim* are identified, by a Scriptural citation, provides a clue to how they were adapted and used. Meir's repertoire reflects the unique culture of rabbinic Judaism, swimming in Scripture, connecting fables with Scriptural application and identifying them by the Scripture to which they apply. In this respect, the rabbinic fable was useful for the same reason as legal argumentation in Greek culture. While tractate Sanhedrin records that there were just three left and the fables themselves are not specified, a few candidates for each of them stand out.[33]

There is a certain resonance with prophecy and miracles in this consciousness that the ability to tell *meshalim* was diminishing in the Tannaitic period.[34] Like the miracle worker and the prophet, the ability to render a *mashal* was also perceived by some rabbinic texts as technique that was lost. With respect to the *mashal*, this phenomenon was connected explicitly with Rabbi Meir:

> When Rabbi Meir died the tellers of *meshalim* ended; when ben Azzai died the studious ones ended; when ben Zoma died the exegetes ended; when Rabbi Akiva died the honor of the Torah ended; … when Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa died the men of (miraculous) deed ended … when Yohanan ben Zakkai died, the glory of wisdom ended. (m. Sotah 9:15 // b. Sotah 49a)

In the commentary on Genesis 33:1, when Jacob sees Esau on his way toward him, Genesis Rabbah also relates a story that may well allude to this very fact that the rabbis were losing their ability to tell *meshalim*:

> "And Jacob Lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau came …" (33:1) R. Levi said: "A lion was angry with the cattle and the beasts. Said they: 'Who will go

33 Whatever traces of Meir's fables there may be in the Talmud, there is no reason to assume that they should be equated with the three specified here. If it is not a fool's errand, then I may have identified a reference to at least one: "And he will prophecy against Esau the wicked, who dwelled between the two righteous ones and did not learn from their deeds. Ephraim Makshaah, student of Rabbi Meir, said in the name of Rabbi Meir, 'Obadiah was a foreigner from Edom, and it as those people who say, 'From it and within it the woods brings against itself the ax'" (b. Sanh. 39b). The proverb at the end seems to refer to the Woodcutters and the Pine (Babrius, *Fab.* 38). See also Rashi's commentary on Sanh 39a, claiming that one of these fables was the Lion's Reign, known in Babrius (*Fab.* 103). Meir's fable about "sour grapes," is appropriate, of course, for the fable on the topic (Babrius, *Fab.* 19; Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.3; Perry 15). On the Sour Grapes fable, see also 10.5.1.

34 Whether this is actually true would require a separate study. Do the *meshalim* diminish in the later layers of rabbinic literature?

> to appease him?' Said the fox: 'I know three hundred fables (מַתְלִין) and I will appease him.' 'Let it be so,' they replied. He went a short distance and halted. 'Why have you halted?' they asked. 'I have forgotten a hundred,' he answered. 'In two hundred there are blessings,' they replied. He went on a little and again halted. 'What does this mean?' they demanded. 'I have forgotten another hundred,' he replied. 'Even a hundred will do,' they replied. When he arrived there he said: 'I have forgotten them all, so every one must appease him for himself.'" So it was with Jacob. Rabbi Judah b. Simon said: [Jacob declared]: "I have the strength to engage in prayer [against him];" R. Levi said: [He declared]: "I have the strength to wage a battle." But when he arrived there, "Then he divided the children," etc. (33:1), saying to them: "Let the merit of each one protect him." (Gen. Rab. 78:7 [Soncino])

In addition to adding further testimony to this awareness of the disappearance of *meshalim*, a few other points are noteworthy. First, though this *mashal* (*mathla*) is composed in Aramaic, the animals appear to be bilingual. The promise of the fox to mollify the situation with his three hundred fables is responded to by the chorus of the animals with אֲגוֹמִין, an Aramaic transliteration of ἄγωμεν, "Let's go!" Perhaps this solitary trace of Greek is an indication that we have another lost Greek fable here, or maybe that Rabbi Levi imagined speaking animals would know some Greek. Here we have a fox fable about a fable-telling fox who forgets how to tell fables.[35] For fable scholarship this literary strategy of using a *mise en abyme* fable-within-a-fable is particularly significant because of how rare they are. There is just one example of this kind of fable in Greek, in Philostratus's *Vit. Apoll.* 5.14–16, shortly after the discussion cited in Chapter 2 between Apollonius and Menippus.[36] To my knowledge, Genesis Rabbah's example of this extremely rare kind of fable has gone unnoticed by fable scholarship until now. The second observation worth making is the number of fables. Twice now we have encountered the number "three hundred" as a total, and we will see it again. Such a number makes at least plausible that a specific corpus, whether written or oral, is in mind.[37] At the turn of the twentieth century, speculation that this referred to a collection of an obscure

35 It is surely a deliberate irony that it is the fox who forgets the fables. As with the fuller fables, it is as though Rabbi Levi is playing with the ambiguity of the relationship between the words "fox" and "fable," whether the speaker of them or the protagonist in them. On this occasion, the fable uses both possibilities.

36 Van Dijk, "Ἐκ τῶν μύθων ἄρξασθαι," 251.

37 Notley and Safrai conclude that the fable of the Lion and the Heron told by Yohanan ben Zakkai must have been part of a collection (R. Steven Notley and Zeev Safrai, *Parables of the Sages: Jewish Wisdom from Jesus to Rav Ashi* [Jerusalem: Carta, 2011], 63).

individual by the name of Nicostratus was common.[38] We may also note that it is around the turn of the era that substantial collections of fables have come down to us, including Babrius's original collection, which would have had two hundred fables or more.

6.2.5 *Bar Kappara and the Jewish Aesops*

Given that Hebrew has no discrete word for two supposedly different genres called "parable" and "fable," we should not be the least surprised to find that the rabbis who are famed for telling *meshalim* appear to adopt more than simply the genre. Some rabbis who are famed for fables take up the mantle of Aesop himself. While a complete investigation of the extent of this phenomenon will need to wait for another project,[39] here I will identify one clear example of a rabbinic episode cribbed straight from *The Life of Aesop*, and one particular rabbi, Bar Kappara, whose characterization is strongly allusive to Aesop as he is portrayed in *The Life* and elsewhere.

Since *The Life of Aesop* is not familiar to many, to see the evident borrowing will require we read one if its many entertaining episodes:

> The next day Xanthus sent out invitations to the students who had entertained him at dinner and said to Aesop, "I've invited my friends to dinner; go cook the best, the finest thing imaginable." Aesop said to himself, "I'll show him not to give me stupid orders." So he went to the butcher shop and bought the tongues of the pigs that had been slaughtered. When he came back, he prepared them all, boiling some, roasting some, and spicing some. At the appointed hour the guests arrived. Xanthus said, "Aesop, give us something to eat." Aesop brought each a boiled tongue and served hot sauce with it. The students said, "Hah, Xanthus, even your dinner is fraught with philosophy. You never do anything that isn't carefully worked out. At the very beginning of the dinner we're served tongues." After they had two or three drinks, Xanthus said, "Aesop, give us something to eat." Again Aesop served each a roast tongue with salt and pepper. The students said, "Wonderful, professor, excellent, by the Muses. Every tongue is sharpened by fire, and best of all by salt and pepper, for the salt combines with the sharpness of the tongue to give it a glib and biting effect." After they had drunk again, Xanthus said, for the third time, "Bring us food." Aesop brought each of them a spiced tongue. One student said to another, "Democritus! I'm getting tongue-tied eating tongues." Another student said, "Is there nothing else to eat? Whatever Aesop has a hand in will come to no good end." When the students tried to eat

38 See for example, Joseph Jacobs, *History of the Æsopic Fable*, vol. 1 of *The Fables of Aesop: As First Printed by William Caxton in 1484, with Those of Avian, Alfonso and Poggio* (London: D. Nutt, 1889), 122–23.

39 See my article, Justin David Strong, "Aesop and Bar Kappara: The Literary Personality of the Fable Teller" (working title) in *The Power of Parables*, ed. Eric Ottenheim and Marcel Poorthuis. Jewish and Christian Perspectives (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

> the spiced tongues, they were seized with nausea. Xanthus said, "Aesop, give us each a bowl of soup." Aesop served them tongue broth. The students didn't even touch this but said, "This is Aesop's master stroke; we admit defeat by tongue." Xanthus said, "Aesop, do we have anything else?" Aesop said, "We have nothing else." Xanthus said, "Nothing else, damn you? Didn't I tell you: 'Buy the finest, the most delicious thing imaginable?'" Aesop said, "I am glad you find fault with me in the presence of scholarly gentlemen. You told me: 'Buy the finest, the most delicious, the greatest thing imaginable.' Well, what can one imagine finer or greater than the tongue? You must observe that all philosophy, all education depends on the tongue. Without the tongue nothing gets done, neither giving, nor receiving, nor buying. By means of the tongue states are reformed and ordinances and laws laid down. If, then, all life is ordered by the tongue, nothing is greater than the tongue." The students said, "Yes, well put, by the Muses. It was your mistake, professor." They went home, and all night long they suffered from seizures of diarrhea. (*Vit. Aes.* 51–53)

Comic scenes like these are typical in *The Life*, where we find Aesop outwitting his master through cunning intellectual maneuvers that show the slave to be wiser than the master. From this scene we also get a sense of Aesop's fabulous qualities extending beyond his stories to symbolic actions such as serving the tongues, what parable scholars might recognize as "parabolic actions."

Leviticus Rabbah, one of the oldest Midrashim, probably from fifth century Palestine, contains an episode with a familiar ring:

> "And the Lord spoke unto Moses … and if thou sell aught unto thy neighbour … ye shall not wrong one another" (Lev 25:14). This bears on the text: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov 18:21). … R. Ḥiyya b. Abba said: "If he had before him a basket of figs, then if he ate of it before tithing there is death in the power of the tongue, but if he first tithed it and then ate there is life in the power of the tongue. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel said to Tabbai his servant: 'Go and buy me good food in the market.' He went and bought him tongue. He said to him: 'Go and buy me bad food in the market.' He went and bought him tongue. Said he to him: 'What is this? When I told you to get good food you bought me tongue, and when I told you to get bad food you also bought me tongue!' He replied: 'Good comes from it and bad comes from it. When the tongue is good there is nothing better, and when it is bad there is nothing worse.' Rabbi made a feast for his disciples and placed before them tender tongues and hard tongues. They began selecting the tender ones, leaving the hard ones alone. Said he to them: 'Note what you are doing! As you select the tender and leave the hard, so let your tongues be tender to one another!' Accordingly Moses admonishes Israel by saying: 'And if thou sell aught … ye shall not wrong one another.'" (*Lev. Rab.* 33:1 [trans. Soncino])

The method by which this rabbinic text incorporates the episode from *The Life of Aesop* is familiar from the *meshalim*. It has applied fable materials to scriptural exegesis. One might wonder if this could be a floating story about a slave

who serves tongue and embarrasses his master that both traditions picked up independently. It seems unlikely, however, because the rabbinic episode is prompted by a reference to another story in *The Life of Aesop*. Just before the story of the tongues begins, R. Ḥiyya b. Abba refers to a basket of figs as a kind of prompt for death and life in the tongue. A basket of figs appears in one of the first scenes in the *Life of Aesop* (2–3) and would have prompted the recollection of this other story. A couple of Aesop's fellow slaves eat the master's figs while he is away. The fellow slaves then conspire to blame Aesop who is mute and thus unable to defend himself: "Tell him that Aesop found the storeroom door conveniently open, got in, and ate the figs. Since Aesop can't talk, he'll get a beating, and you'll get what you want" (*Vit. Aes.* 2). As one might expect, Aesop outsmarts his opponents in this episode that revolves around figs and tongues. It is easy to see how this reference to the *Life of Aesop* would naturally lead to the other about the tongue banquet. Though this story is an isolated rabbinic reference to Aesop, there is at least one rabbi with an Aesopic personality that tracks through the rabbinic materials about him.

In the last generation of Tannaim we encounter Bar Kappara, a student of Judah the Patriarch.[40] He was born in Caesarea, where he would later establish his own academy as a rival school to that of his master. Bar Kappara is associated with several traditions relevant for evaluating not only the use of fables by the rabbis, but also the influence of the characterization of the fable teller, Aesop, on the literary persona of a rabbi. Rabbinic literature relates many anecdotes about the falling out between Bar Kappara and his master, Judah the Patriarch, and all indications are that their separate schools were not ones of friendly rivalry. Bar Kappara is depicted engaging in picaresque antics resembling those of Aesop in *The Life*.[41] In the *Life of Aesop*, the protagonist is portrayed as having a natural rather than bookish wisdom. He can solve riddles that his pretentious philosopher master cannot, and Aesop regularly outwits

40 There are some complications with Bar Kappara's full name. Jastrow and Ginzberg summarize: "His real and complete name was Eleazar (there seems to be no ground for the form 'Eliezer') ben Eleazar ha-Ḳappar. This is the form appearing in the tannaite sources, Tosefta (Betzah 1:7; Hul. 4:3) and Sifre (Num. 42, ed. Friedmann, 12b): the usual Talmudic form, 'Bar Ḳappara,' and the frequent appellation, 'Eleazar ha-Ḳappar Berabbi,' are abbreviations of this" (Marcus Jastrow and Louis Ginzberg, "Bar Kappara," *EncJud* 2:503).

41 So far as I know, a comparison of the two has never been made. In the twelfth and thirteenth century a certain Rabbi Berechiach Ha-Nakdan developed a reputation for being the Jewish Aesop, and likewise stylizes his genre as *Mishle Shualim*. On this figure, see 8.2.7, and Moses Hadas and Fritz Kredel, *Fables of a Jewish Aesop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); and Haim Schwarzbaum, *The Mishle Shualim* (*Fox Fables*) *of Rabbi Berechiach Ha-Nakdan: A Study in Comparative Folklore and Fable Lore* (Kiron, Israel: Institute for Jewish and Arab Folklore Research, 1979).

and sometimes humiliates his interlocutors using witty retorts and fables. He revels in subterfuge that lays bare the pretentions of elite people and generally ruins their day, all of this to great comedy effect. The relationship between Bar Kappara and Judah the Patriarch is strongly reminiscent of this dynamic. For much of his story, the master of Aesop is a philosopher, Xanthus, who runs a school, with many scenes depicting Aesop resolving intellectual problems for his master (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 34–37), wreaking havoc and embarrassing him before his students (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 51–53) and his wife (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 49–50). Bar Kappara is regularly depicted engaging in antics to outwit and humiliate Judah the Patriarch, along with his students and his family. Like Aesop, Bar Kappara does not engage in this behavior merely for the point of a gag, but in order to display his intellect and to point out corruption and the pretentiousness of those in power. Several stories are transmitted in b. Ned. 51a–b that relate Bar Kappara's brand of comic wisdom.

> On the day when Rabbi (Judah the Patriarch) would laugh, calamity[42] would befall the world.[43] He said to Bar Kappara, "Don't make me laugh and I'll give you forty measures of wheat." Bar Kappara replied, "Master will see that any measure I want I will take." He took a large palm basket, covered it with pitch,[44] flipped it upside down and put it on his head. He came out and said, "Master, give me forty measures of wheat that you owe me!" Rabbi (Judah the Patriarch) laughed and said to him, "I warned you, don't make me laugh!" Bar Kappara said, "I'm only taking from you the wheat you owe me."

The first thing we learn of Bar Kappara in this tractate is his reputation for causing laughter. Judah the Patriarch, depicted as joyless curmudgeon, is the perfect foil for the antics of Bar Kappara. Bar Kappara delivers his line from within an upturned basket, made grotesque by the pitch smeared mess. The reader can only imagine Bar Kappara's voice comically muffled or perhaps with an echo from within. Like Aesop, Bar Kappara finds a way to win on a technicality, while also wreaking havoc on this occasion with the melodramatic ramification that the world will end. If there is any historicity to the event or to the reputation that Judah the Patriarch's austerity would atone for the sins of the world, Bar Kappara actions may also be understood as mocking such

42 פורענותא from the Latin, *perniciosus*.

43 The tradition is that Judah the Patriarch's sufferings would atone for the sins of the Jewish people. The story plays with the idea that his pleasure would destroy it.

44 Aside from the comedic appearance, there are a number of possible puns with the name Kappara, קפרא: with כופרא, "pitch," also possibly with כפר as a verb, "wipe out," "atone," or כפרה the noun, i.e., Kappara can fill the basket with atonement/himself whenever he wants.

pretentions. Bar Kappara proves through forcing him to laugh that the fate of the world does not depend on Judah the Patriarch.

Like Aesop in the banquet above and elsewhere (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 41–43, 54–55), Bar Kappara loves to use a banquet as an opportunity to humiliate his master's family. In one such story, Bar Kappara accomplishes this through telling fables no less:[45]

> Rabbi [Shimon, son of Judah ha-Nasi] made a wedding feast for his son. He invited the Rabbis, but forgot to extend an invitation to Bar Kappara. The latter went and wrote above the door [of the banqueting hall]: "After all your rejoicing is death, so what is the use of rejoicing?" Rabbi inquired, "Who has done this to us?" They said, "It was Bar Kappara whom you forgot to invite. He was concerned about himself." He thereupon arranged another banquet to which he invited all the Rabbis including Bar Kappara. At every course which was placed before them Bar Kappara related three hundred fox fables, which were so much enjoyed by the guests that they let the food become cold and did not taste it. Rabbi asked his waiters, "Why do our courses go in and out without the guests partaking of them?" They answered, "Because of an old man who sits there, and when a course is brought in he relates three hundred fox fables; and on that account the food becomes cold and they eat none of it." Rabbi went up to him and said, "Why do you act in this manner? Let the guests eat!" He replied, "So that you should not think that I came for your dinner but because you did not invite me with my colleagues. Did not Solomon declare what profit hath a man of all his labor seeing that one generation passeth away and another generation cometh!" (Eccl. Rab. 1:3 [Soncino])[46]

Like Rabbi Meir, Bar Kappara attests to a tradition of rabbis who know three hundred fox *meshalim*. Ecclesiastes Rabbah, unlike the parallels, multiplies this number by relating that it was three hundred fables at each course of the dinner. With the proverbial cold dishes, Bar Kappara gets his revenge against Judah the Patriarch for neglecting to invite him. Whatever the historical circumstances regarding their falling out between him and Judah the Patriarch, Bar Kappara is not only a rabbi famous for captivating audiences with hundreds of fables, his personality and antics bear a suspicious resemblance to the Aesop. Were this story of Bar Kappara found in an ancient rubbish heap with lacunae where the names appear, the discoverer would assume these to be lost episodes from *The Life of Aesop* preserved in Hebrew.[47] We will return to flesh out this characterization of the fable teller once more in Chapter 9.

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45 For another ruined banquet, see b. Ned. 51a.

46 A similar story is also found in Lev. Rab. 28:2.

47 I have not included all there is to say about bar Kappara. For more on him, see Strong, "Aesop and Bar Kappara."

6.3 Spotting Fables in the Rabbinic Corpus

6.3.1 Meshalim *Adapted from Hellenistic Fables*

If we are unfortunate to have just three titles of Rabbi Meir's three hundred fables, we are in a still worse situation with Bar Kappara, of whom we have no fables preserved at all. This seems to be a problem of the genre generally. As Ben-Amos writes, "There is no folklore genre in the Haggadah which has so few examples and yet describes so many details of the storytelling situation as the fable."[48] Elsewhere in the rabbinic corpus, fables are difficult to identify because they are often in short allusions or, in characteristic rabbinic fashion, only the first few words are supplied with the expectation that the reader will call to mind the remainder. Still more challenging is identifying allusions to those fables with human protagonists since they lack the giveaway of talking animals found in the animal *meshalim*. To convey the difficulty of spotting some fables, a few examples from tractate Sanhedrin should suffice.

In the span of about 15 folia, tractate Sanhedrin contains no less than five fables or allusions to them. Beginning at folio 89b, we are given an apocryphal story of Satan tempting Abraham. Satan tries to convince Abraham that God wishes him to sacrifice a sheep for an offering rather than Isaac, but Abraham responds, "Thus is the punishment of the liar, that even if he tells the truth, no one listens to him" (San 89b). Discerning a connection with certainty is impossible, but Yassif identifies this as the moral found in the Boy who Cried Wolf (Perry 210).[49] A few folia later at 91b, we find the well-known story of Judah the Patriarch telling the tale of the Blind Man and the Lame Man to Emperor Antoninus Pius.[50] On folio 105a we find a story about two dogs in

48 Ben-Amos, "Narrative Forms," 134. This observation cuts the other way as well. Since the details of the situation in which a *mashal* is delivered are so rare, books on the rabbinic fables often relate one of these episodes in their introduction chapters. Stern, for example, opens with the story of bar Kappara telling fables at the wedding (Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 4). Similarly, Harvey K. McArthur and Robert Morris Johnston, *They Also Taught in Parables: Rabbinic Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990), 8.

49 Yassif, *Hebrew Folktale*, 195.

50 First discussed in relation to the version found in the Apocryphon of Ezekiel in Luitpold Wallach, "The Parable of the Blind and the Lame: A Study in Comparative Literature," *JBL* 62 (1943): 333–39. The earliest Hellenistic reference to the tale are attributed to Leonidas of Alexandria and Plato the Younger in *The Greek Anthology* 9.12–13. For more recent scholarship on the origin and transmission of the tale, see Richard Bauckham, "The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1–14) and the Parable of the Lame Man and the Blind Man (Apocryphon of Ezekiel)," *JBL* 115 (1996): 471–88; Marc Bregman, "The Parable of the Lame and the Blind: Epiphanius' Quotation from an Apocryphon of Ezekiel," *JTS* 42 (1991): 125–38.

one kennel who always fought with each other, but when one was attacked by a wolf, teamed up against it, lest they both be killed. A similar story is found in the Babrian prose paraphrase (*Fab*. 149, Perry 338). Folio 105b–6a relates a lengthy version of the fable of the Oak Tree and the Reed found also in Babrius (*Fab.* 36), the Augustana (Perry 70), Aphthonius (*Fab.* 36), Avianus (*Fab.* 16), and in the Gospels (Luke 7:24 // Matt 11:7). This fable is also the basis of the proverb in Ta'an. 20a, "Our Rabbis taught: A man should always be gentle as the reed and never unyielding as the cedar." As Yassif notes, the practice of compressing a fable into a proverb is common in the rabbinic corpus and likewise among the Graeco-Roman fables.[51] Several lines down, we find another example of this in Sanhedrin: "Mar Zutra bar Tobiah said, 'Rav said, "These are those people who say, 'A camel went to demand horns, the ears which it had were cut off of it'"" (b. Sanh. 106a). The peculiar specifics of this example allow us to identify it easily with the fable well-known from elsewhere:

> A camel saw a bull with a fine set of horns. She was envious of them and decided to try to get a pair just like them. So she went to Zeus and asked him to give her horns. Zeus lost his temper with her for not being satisfied with her size and strength, but wanting something more and not only didn't give her horns but even reduced the size of her ears. (Perry 117; cf. Apthonius, *Fab.* 15; Syntipas, *Fab.* 59; Avianus, *Fab.* 8; Babrian Prose Paraphrase 161)

Apart from the tale of the Blind Man and the Lame Man known by Judah the Patriarch, the easiest fable about people to identify is the Two Mistresses, extant in multiple early fable collections, including the Augustana (Perry 31), Phaedrus, *Fab.* 2.2, and Babrius, *Fab.* 22:

> *That men are always fleeced by women, whether they love them or are loved, is something that we learn, sure enough, from our model tales.*
> A woman who was no tiro kept her hold on a certain man of middle age, concealing her years by the finesse of her toilet. At the same time a beautiful young creature had captured his fancy. Both women, in their desire to appear of the same age as their lover, began, each in turn, to pluck out his hairs; and, while he supposed that the women's attentions were sprucing him up, he was suddenly made bald. For the young woman had pulled out by the roots all the white hairs, and the old woman all the black ones. (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 2.2)

Once more, the peculiar circumstances of the narrative enable us to identify it with certainty in Bava Qamma:

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51 Yassif, *Hebrew Folktale*, 192–96. On folding and unfolding fables and how the concept relates to "parables," see also 7.3.4.

> Rav Ami and Rav Asi sat before Rabbi Isaac Nappaha. One said, "Let the master teach *halakhah*" and (the other) said, "Let the master teach *agaddah*." Isaac Nappaha began to teach *agaddah* and (one said) "No, leave it!" Isaac Nappaha began to teach *halakhah* and (the other said) "No, leave it!" Isaac Nappaha said to them, "I will parable to you a parable. To what is the matter like? To a man who had two wives: one young and one old. The young one pulls out his white hair, the old one pulls out his black, he is found bald from here and from there." (b. B. Qam. 60b)[52]

An etiological fable about human aging is also shared by Ecclesiastes Rabbah and Babrius:

> R. Samuel b. R. Isaac taught in the name of R. Samuel b. Eleazar: "The seven '*vanities*' mentioned by Koheleth correspond to the seven worlds which a man beholds. At a year old he is like a king seated in a canopied litter, fondled and kissed by all. At two and three he is like a pig, sticking his hands in the gutters. At ten he skips like a kid. At twenty he is like a neighing horse, adorning his person and longing for a wife. Having married, he is like an ass. When he has begotten children, he grows brazen like a dog to supply their food and wants. When he has become old, he is [bent] like an ape. What has just been said holds good only of the ignorant; but of those versed in the Torah it is written, *Now king David was old* (1 Kings 1:1)—although he was '*old*,' he was still a '*king*.'" (Eccl. Rab. 1:2 [Soncino])

> A horse, an ox, and a dog, suffering from the cold, came to a man's house. He opened his doors to them and took them in. He warmed them by his hearth, filled with abundant fire, and set before them what he had on hand for them to eat. He gave barley to the horse and vetch to the labouring ox, but the dog stood beside him at the table as a fellow-diner. In return for his hospitality they gave to the man each a portion of the years allotted them to live. The horse gave first, and that is why, in the early time of life, each one of us is haughty of spirit. After him, the ox gave man a portion of his years, which circumstance explains why man in middle age becomes a toiler, fond of work and bent on gathering wealth. The dog, they say, gave man his latest years. That's why everyone who gets to be old, Branchus, is ill-tempered; he only wags his tail when someone gives him sustenance, he's always barking, and he has no love for strangers. (Babrius, *Fab.* 74)

Though the narrative preceding the etiology is absent from the rabbinic text, it supplies more comparisons, and uses a few different animals, the essentials of the fable are the same. Both equate the horse with a period of youth, the ass and ox relate the focus on labor of adulthood, and the dog appears with different explanations for a later stage in life.[53] The rabbinic version also adds the

52 On the connection between the Talmudic and Aesopic version, see Lorena Miralles Maciá, "The Fable of 'the Middle-Aged Man with Two Wives': From the Aesopian Motif to the Babylonian Talmud Version in b. B. Qam 60b," *JSJ* 39 (2008): 267–81.

53 Another version of this fable is found in Tanhuma Pequde 3.

characteristic application to Scripture. In sum, even if they are often difficult to identify, several dozen quotations of, or allusions to, specific Greek fables in the rabbinic corpus are identifiable without tremendous effort.[54]

6.3.2 *Characteristics of the Jewish Fable*

Reading the rabbinic *mashal* from the wider context of the fable, we should not overlook a few important ways the rabbis have made the form their own. It is not the least surprising that the Jews would have a particular brand of fable since we have references to numerous ethnic varieties of fables, most of them Eastern, listed by Theon—Libyan, Sybaritic, Phrygian, Cilician, Carian, Egyptian, and Cyprian (*Prog.* 4)—and attested by Babrius (*Fab. Prologue* 2). A second peculiarity of the Jewish fable is the role of Scripture that is usually central in the rabbinic corpus. In the rabbinic *mashal*, the story is regularly for the purpose of elucidating scripture, often with the intrusion of a scriptural quotation within the *mashal* itself. In this prevailing rabbinic context, as in the context of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37; see 9.3), this use of the fable draws on the long tradition of the fable as a forensic tool. That Jesus's interlocutor there is a lawyer is no coincidence. So too does the rabbinic use of the fable for legal/scriptural exegesis fit with the forensic application of the fable. In terms of the characters and contents, like the reputations of other ethnic varieties of fables, there are a great many rabbinic fables starring only human characters, and emblematic characters as well. More specifically, the rabbinic fable has a strong tendency to adapt earlier fables into ones involving a king character, generally as a stand in for God.[55] Even if they account for a small minority of Jesus's fables, this is one more obvious point of contact between him and the later rabbis.[56]

6.4 Greeks and Romans on the Semitic Fables

Though we have long since debunked the standard view that "fables" are Greek and "parables" are Jewish, there remains still one more angle that we can approach the "Jewish" use of fables: what Greek and Roman authors tell us

54 See further Haim Schwarzbaum, 'Talmudic-Midrashic Affinities of Some Aesopic Fables," *Laographia* 22 (1965) 466–83; and Joseph Jacobs, "Aesop's Fables among the Jews," *JE* 1:221–22.

55 See Alan Appelbaum, *The Rabbis' King-Parables: Midrash from the Third-Century Roman Empire* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010).

56 Kings are a prominent target as a character in many of Phaedrus's fables as well. On which, see Henderson, *Telling Tales on Caesar.*

about who is using the genre and what its origin is. Our primary sources indicate precisely the opposite of the present consensus in biblical scholarship. Ancient authors regularly comment on the diversity of the genre's users, and even claim that fables were a Semitic genre, rather than a Greek one.

As we observed in Chapter 3, as far back as we can trace the genre into the third millennium BCE, the fable in some form was being used by the people of Mesopotamia. As we noted there, it was in Mesopotamia that most agree we find the earliest use of fables. By the first half of the second millennium BCE, Semitic peoples were using the fables to learn Sumerian. Two of our most important Greek sources for information about fables around the time of the Gospels inform us that the association of the fable with Semitic people was not lost on them. The opening words of Babrius's second book read, "Fable, O son of King Alexander, is the invention of the ancient Syrian peoples" (Babrius, *Fab.* Prologue 2 [trans. mine]). While many a Greek or Latin author can be found trying to claim that this or that genre, science, or craft originated with his people, here Babrius states as explicitly as anyone can that the fable is a Semitic genre. As we also learned in Chapter 3, Babrius's addressee is most likely a Jew as well. A second possible acknowledgment by a Greek source of the Semitic origins and Jewish connection to fables comes at the end of *The Life of Aesop*. In the moments before Aesop meets his untimely end, the oldest version records him exclaim, "I would rather be forced to go on a circuit around Syria, Phoenicia, and Judea than to die at your hands" (*Vit. Aes.* 141).[57] What prompts this peculiar alternative to death is quite obscure. Since Aesop is far off in Delphi when he utters this, we should wonder why a tour of these three Semitic areas is named. If no other reasons are forthcoming, one could speculate that these were chosen because of the association of Semites with circulating fables. If this is the case, Aesop is saying he would rather be consigned to the fate of an itinerant fable teller like those of the Semites than to be killed by the Delphians.

Even when authors do not associate the fable with Semites, there is a widespread phenomenon observable in Quintilian (*Inst.* 5.11.19–20), Theon (*Prog.* 4), the later progymnasmatists, and just about anyone who reflects on the fable in the ancient world. They all comment on how the fable is by no means owned by the Greeks and Romans. They all attest that, in the first century, the fable was conceived as world literature, produced also by Cilicians of Anatolia, Libyans of Africa, Sybarites of Italia, and so on. There are no Greek authors I am aware

57 Perhaps because of the obscure meaning, recension W says that Aesop would rather have to walk around all of Sicily than to die at the hands of the Delphians.

of who claim ownership of the fable as a Greek genre. The fable was a world genre with strong associations with Semitic peoples.

6.5 Supersessionism and the Parable

In certain ways, modern critical scholarship on the rabbinic *mashal* has been attached to New Testament studies and Christian theology until the present. This is evidenced most of all in the very use of the term "parable" for rabbinic *meshalim*. "Parable" derives from and is inescapably steeped in Christian convictions surrounding Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels. With the term "parable" comes an implicit supersessionist claim about the primacy of Jesus, both in terms of chronology and importance. We observed this already in the Introduction, when Jeremias admitted the rabbis could be influenced by the "fable" but not Jesus:

> Jesus' parables are something entirely new … It is among the sayings of Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai (d.c. AD 80) that we first meet with a parable. As its imagery resembles one of Jesus' parables, we may well ask whether Jesus' model (together with other factors, such as Greek animal fables) did not have an important influence on the rabbi's adopting parables as a narrative form.[58]

The issue of chronology and the absence of fables with talking animals in the Gospels has been used to supersessionistic ends, arguably until the present. Commenting on the absence of animal fables in the Gospels, Daube remarks, "if it were the other way round, we should never hear the end of it: Jesus's *Naturnähe*, nearness to nature, in contrast with rabbinic aridity."[59] Here I wish to point out the unfortunate irony that Daube exposes this supersessionism of setting Jesus's "parables" above the rabbinic "fables," and then proceeds to reinscribe it. Daube goes on to offer a several plausible explanations for why the gospel fables do not have personified non-humans, but never considers that the division between the "parables" of Jesus and "fables" of the rabbis is forced and unnecessary.[60] Even ostensibly philojudaic books make clear that Jesus stands above the rest. Paul Fiebig, concerned to prove the pure, Jewish background of Jesus's fables against all other possibilities, concludes the book,

58 Jeremias, *Parables*, 12.

59 Daube, *Ancient Hebrew Fables*, 7.

60 See again 5.8 for other reasons Jesus's fables do not contain personified creatures.

> By their delightful freshness and vividness, and above all by the great general human objects they serve, the parables of Jesus, free from the pettiness and exegetical spirit of Jewish learning, stand high above them. … they carry in themselves the guarantee that no one but Jesus alone could have created them.[61]

Other books focusing explicitly on rabbinic "parables," such as McArthur and Johnston, can have a tacit subordination of the rabbis to Jesus. I intend to attribute no supersessionist motivations to them, but from their title, "*They Also Taught in Parables: Rabbinic Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era*," it is clear to whom the primary association with "parables" belongs.

If the Synoptic Gospels were never written, no one would have ever suggested that the rabbinic *mashal* should be translated as "parable." The ancient fable offers a way forward that does not subordinate rabbinic *meshalim* to Jesus's "parables" and Christian theology. If the narrative *mashal* should receive an English name, "fable" is the best candidate for several reasons. For the appropriate literary Sitz im Leben of the narrative *mashal*, it is the proper English genre term current in scholarship. "Fable" was recognized by the Greek author Babrius to have Semitic origins. "Fable" is the term translated for this genre that the progymnasmatists tell us was current among peoples around the Mediterranean, particularly eastern groups that once belonged to the Assyrian Empire. While the perception has been that "fable" is a genre of Greeks and "parable" is a genre of Semites, the evidence presented here and in the next chapter shows just the opposite. The "parable" has its closest ties to the Hellenistic, while "fable" is an ancient genre of Semitic peoples.

6.6 Conclusion

So much then for the myth that Jews tell "parables" and Greeks tell "fables." Like their Near Eastern and Mediterranean neighbors, the evidence we have gathered demonstrates that, according to rabbinic tradition, speaking in fables was typical for the rabbis. We observed the rabbis engaging with fables in the same contexts as their neighbors. They were used in education, for rhetorical and exegetical purposes. In addition to these contexts, depending on the meaning

61 "Durch ihre entzückende Frische und Anschaulichkeit, vor allem aber durch die grossen, allgemein menschlichen Gegenstände, denen sie dienen, stehen die Gleichnisse Jesu, frei von dem Kleinigkeitsß und Exegetengeist der jüdischen Bildung, hoch über diesen. … tragen sie die Gewähr dessen in sich selber, dass niemand sie hat schaffen können als Jesus allein" (Paul Fiebig, *Altjüdische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1904], 163).

of "fuller *meshalim*," they may also attest to the association of the fable with the popular class. Like the Greek and Latin authors, the rabbis also attest to the use of fables by condemned wise men. There is even solid evidence of certain authors of rabbinic texts characterizing their fable tellers like Aesop.

We have seen that stories of rabbis telling fables are not found in obscure corners of rabbinic literature, but at climactic moments in the history of Judaism. It is obvious that the rabbis composed some of their own *meshalim* and there are also many smoking guns proving they copied many from Hellenistic originals. The rabbis renowned for teaching in *meshalim*, by our modern anachronistic definition, are famous for their many *fables*. To the rabbis, however, there is no lexical distinction between "parables" and "fables," a fact that has confounded some parable scholars who wish to force an artificial division.[62] Despite all the Greek and Latin loanwords in Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic, the Greek and Latin fable terminology are not among them. They are all *meshalim*, a form of narrative short story that came to prominence after the Hebrew Bible. If one wishes to insist on the continuity of the fables of Jesus with the *mashal* of the Old Testament before him, and the rabbinic period after him, then Jesus, too, spoke in fables. Jesus and the rabbis of later centuries tapped into the same stream of the ancient fable that flowed uninterrupted in the centuries between them. With respect to the state of scholarship on rabbinic fables, the context given here offers a means to move beyond the explicit and tacit supersessionism that is sometimes lurking in the background of the "parable."

62 A good example of the artificiality of this division occurs in Notley and Zafrai, *Parables*. They state, "In any case, the fox parables do not belong to the parables we are discussing" (38). Then, in their anthology of rabbinic parables, unknowingly cite a "parable" on page 200 that is certainly based on a Hellenistic fable (compare Sifre Deut. 343 to The Donkey and the Mule [Perry 263; Chambry 272]); similarly, McArthur and Johnston, who cite the "parable" of the Two Dogs in Sifre Num. 137 // b. Sanh. 105a, without knowing it is paralleled in the Babrian prose paraphrase 149 (Perry 338) (*Parables*, 66).

CHAPTER 7

The Parable and the Ancient Fable

7.1 Introduction

With this chapter, we come into harbor for Book I. We began with the remarkable consensus among biblical scholars of every stripe that the "parables" are both an original and a reliable tradition of Jesus reflected in the Gospels. According to this view, Jesus crafted a repertoire of many dozens of "parables" centuries ahead of the other rabbis. For many, the "parable" is nothing less than a genre inaugurated by Jesus, unparalleled because it is the product of his divine genius. Because of this sweeping consensus, biblical scholarship has devoted immense efforts to studying the "parables" and constructing a portrait of Jesus from them as though they offer windows into his very mind. Upon this foundational cornerstone rests broader issues such as what we can claim to know about Jesus and the reliability of certain traditions in the Gospels. This *status quaestionis* has been reached by a field that has remained virtually unaware of the materials discussed in the previous (and coming) chapters. In this final chapter of Book I, I integrate the fable with the present understanding of the "parables" of Jesus. First, I will apply the fable to the unsolved puzzles of parable theory, arriving at a synthesis of "parable" and "fable." Solving these issues, the ancient rhetorical discussions of παραβολή will be incorporated.

7.2 The Synthesis of Parable and Fable

Alongside this curious pride of place held by the "parable" and this historically most implausible originality of the genre, there are a couple problems fundamental with the "parable." Laying aside everything about fables in the preceding chapters for just a moment will be useful for comprehending other longstanding puzzles in biblical scholarship on the "parable." The first problem relates to the usage of the term παραβολή. It has often been noted that the Greek word παραβολή is used frequently with reference to texts we would not associate with the English term "parable." The Synoptic Gospels, rather strangely, apply the single term παραβολή to a variety of genres that go by other terms elsewhere. As Günter Haufe describes, for example:

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> In the Synoptics, παραβολή is used to identify proverbs (Luke 4:23; 6:39), maxims (Mark 7:17; Matt 15:15), metaphorical sayings (Mark 3:23; Luke 5:36), enigmatic sayings [i.e., riddles] (Mark 4:11; Matt 13:10; Luke 8:10), general rules (Luke 14:7), similes … in addition to "parables."[1]

All of these forms in the Synoptics do not go by the Greek words we would expect to encounter in other texts—proverb is not παροιμία, but παραβολή, maxim is not γνώμη, but παραβολή, simile is not εἰκών, but παραβολή, riddle is not αἴνιγμα, but παραβολή, in addition to the "parable" … which is also παραβολή. Not once do any of the literary terms for these genres appear in the Synoptics. This fact is well known, as Gerd Theißen and Annette Merz observe, "The Synoptics call all forms of Jesus' figurative discourse παραβολή, from proverbs (Luke 4.23) or logia which use imagery (Luke 6.39), to extended parables."[2] To the clear frustration of interpreters who often refuse to treat them as such, Luke also has a particular habit of explicitly calling things παραβολή that most would not consider "parables."[3] Jesus's lesson in table manners, about where one should sit at a wedding, begins, "And he began to tell those gathered a 'parable' (παραβολή)" (Luke 14:7).[4] Though Luke could not be more explicit, one will search in vain to find a discussion of this passage in most commentaries on the "parables" of Jesus. Likewise, παραβολή is the term used in Luke 4:23: "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb (παραβολήν), 'Doctor, cure yourself!'" Again, Luke could not be more explicit in his terminology, the ubiquitous translation of παραβολή here is "proverb."[5] Elsewhere in Luke, παραβολήν is used in non-narrative similes such as the "parable" of New Wine in Old Wine Skin (Luke 5:36), and even a simple question about the Blind Leading the Blind

1 Günter Haufe, "παραβολή," EDNT 3:15.

2 Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 324.

3 "One of the major problems is that persons will disagree concerning what among the sayings of Jesus fits under the form-critical category of 'parable' and what does not. In this regard the evangelists themselves are not much help. At times, to be sure, they write of speech material of Jesus as 'parables,' and the signation seems to fit. But they also call some materials "parables" that virtually no one would classify as such today" (Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000], 2).

4 Ἔλεγεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς κεκλημένους παραβολήν.

5 παραβολή is rendered as "proverb" here by the NRSV, for example. As Graham Stanton writes, "In Luke 4.23 just three words are said to be a parabolē: 'Physician, heal yourself'. This is obviously a proverb, as is the parabolē in Luke 6.39: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?'" (Stanton, "Message and Miracles," 62).

(Luke 6:39). In connection with the Mustard Seed, Jesus's clandestine message brings παραβολή into the realm of a "riddle" (Mark 4:1–34; Luke 8:4–10).[6]

Peculiar as the situation is, this murky use of παραβολή is not the problem, as the explanation for it is straightforward and uncontroversial among biblical scholars: παραβολή in the New Testament corresponds to the use of παραβολή in the Septuagint, which renders the equally broad Hebrew umbrella term מִשְׁל (*mashal*).[7] Bernhard Heininger summarizes this view:

> The term παραβολή, commonly used in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) to denote the parables of Jesus, was brought over using the bridge of the Septuagint from the wide range of meanings of its Hebrew equivalent *mashal*, which comprises a wealth of mostly short figures of speech.[8]

As it fits the rhetorical use of παραβολή, I concur that this solution is correct; however, a problem remains with the category, "parable," that is best conveyed by Figure 5. In this format, the issue is apparent. The "parable" is employed as an umbrella category taken over from the Septuagint, referring to proverbs, riddles, and so forth, but also as a sub-genre that we have been calling the "parable." Zimmermann captures the problem well: "It is problematic that the term parable is both a neutral heading for all parable-like texts as well as a *genre* term for the description of a specific type of text."[9] Indeed, a student who would hand in such a diagram should have it marked incorrect for that

6 Other prototypical "parables" are never directly called such: not the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), not the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), and not even the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). That these texts are "parables" must be inferred from the secondary context, if any (such as Luke 15:3 in the case of the Prodigal Son), rather than from any explicit notice.

7 In the Hebrew Bible, מִשְׁל is applied to various forms of comparison with respect to any particular form. Snodgrass includes a helpful collection of all the occurrences of מִשְׁל (the verb and noun) in the Hebrew Bible, παραβολή in the New Testament, Septuagint, and Apostolic Fathers, and how these are translated in each case (*Stories with Intent*, 567–75). For a helpful summary of the מִשְׁל in the Hebrew Bible, see Andreas Schüle, "Mashal (מָשָׁל) and the Prophetic 'Parables,'" in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu: Methodische Neuansätze zum Verstehen urchristlicher Parabeltexte*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Gabi Kern (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 205–216.

8 "Der in den synoptischen Evangelien Mt., Mk und Lk. zur Bezeichnung der Gleichnisse Jesu gebräuchliche Begriff παραβολή bringt über die Brücke der *Septuaginta* das weite Bedeutungsspektrum seines hebräischen Aquivalents *mashal* ein, das eine Fülle von meist kurzen Redefiguren umfaßt" (Heininger, "Gleichnis, Gleichnisrede," 1002). See also Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 20; Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 324; and Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 10.

9 Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables*, 125. See also Heininger, "Gleichnis, Gleichnisrede," 1000.

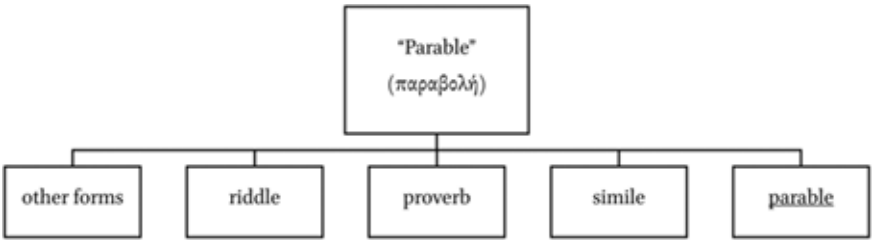

Figure 5 The Septuagint παραβολή as it is used in the Synoptic Gospels. Justin David Strong.

very reason, and yet, this is the state of the art in parable theory.[10] To make this situation stranger still, it is the sub-genre called "parable" that is the most familiar and predominate category of them all. Sensing the issue, in order to circumvent it, parable scholars are forced to refer to this subcategory with additional qualifications, "parables proper,"[11] "narrative parable,"[12] "true parable,"[13] or similar. Richard Lischer clarifies this clumsy verbiage, "What is sometimes called a 'true parable' is a freely invented short story with two or more characters whose action is cast into the past tense."[14] Combined with the first problem is the second perplexing puzzle of this "true parable:" in the words of Bernard Brandon Scott, "Jesus and the rabbis developed and employed a genre of *mashal* not evidenced in the Hebrew Bible."[15] This view is standard fare in parable interpretation, from scholars focusing on Jesus's παραβολαί, such as

10 Indeed, that this is the logical terminus if one follows this path is evidenced by Zimmermann, who goes down it. The result is that he must resort to calling just about everything a "parable:" (Ruben Zimmermann, "Parabeln—Sonst Nichts!: Gattungsbestimmung jenseits der Klassifikation in 'Bildwort', 'Gleichnis', 'Parabel' und 'Beispielerzählung,'" in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 383–419). Zimmermann is addressing the problem of the term "Gleichnis" in German, which is analogous to (but not identical with) the English "parable." Zimmermann is to be praised for consistency and taking this logical step of standard parable theory, but that it required labeling nearly everything a "parable" is, in my view, an indication that the current path of parable theory is a dead end that requires a new solution.

11 Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 328; Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 7.

12 Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 3; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 11.

13 Richard Lischer, *Reading the Parables* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 33.

14 Lischer, *Reading the Parables*, 33. Lischer is here providing a helpfully concise synthesis of Dan Otto Via, *The Parables*, 2–13. See also the similar vocabulary used to distinguish "similitudes" from "parables proper" with present tense and the aorist tense, respectively, in Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 328.

15 Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 8. So also, Hultgren, "There are no instances in the OT where the noun *mashal* is applied to a figure of speech in narrative form that moderns would call a parable. The parables of Jesus fit more precisely in form and content within the context of the various *meshalim* known from rabbinic sources" (Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 6).

Luise Schottroff, "the literary form 'parable' belongs to the history of postbiblical parable culture. It is not yet found in the First Testament,"[16] from scholars comparing the παραβολαί of Jesus and the *meshalim* of the rabbis, e.g., Michael Krupp, "In any event the parables of Jesus and the parables of the rabbis are unified in form and content, which exists nowhere else otherwise, not once in the Old Testament,"[17] and by scholars focusing on rabbinic "parables," such as David Stern, "[*mashal*] never, curiously enough, [refers] to the specific narrative forms that we call parables or fables. Only in Rabbinic literature does the word *mashal* become a formal generic title for parables and fables."[18] Put another way, this sub-genre of the "true narrative parable proper" found so much in the Gospels and rabbinic materials was not in the Hebrew Bible. It is as though there is a very specific missing genre here, one that has somehow escaped the notice of parable interpreters, a genre of short fictional didactic metaphorical narratives that came into vogue after the Hebrew Bible, used by Greeks and Jews around the turn of the Era.

Combining these two conundrums with what we have learned in the past chapters about the fable, we have a straightforward solution. This "new *mashal* not evidenced in the Hebrew Bible," this "true parable" genre of short fictional didactic metaphorical narratives is the ancient fable. The Graeco-Semitic genre that we associate with the word "parable" is the ancient fable, and likewise is the predominate form to which the umbrella concept of παραβολή refers in the Synoptics. By simply slotting in the fable, as in Figure 6, the categorization problem and the mystery of whence the new genre are both resolved. Without the availability of the fable genre to fill the gap, this suggestion has not been possible. Until now, the removal of the sub-genre "parable" would have left a gaping void accounting for most of the stories so-named "παραβολή" in the Jesus tradition. Once the fable, the ubiquitous and most basic story form in the ancient Mediterranean, is incorporated into our purview, the problem is solved. In the Synoptics, παραβολή is used for the "proverb," for the "maxim," for the "simile," for the "riddle," and, most of all, for the "fable." To use a taxonomic

16 "Die literarische Form 'Gleichnis' gehört in die Geschichte nachbiblischer jüdischer Gleichniskultur. Sie ist so noch nicht im Ersten Testament zu finden" (Schottroff, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 137).

17 "Allerdings zeigen die Gleichnisse Jesu und die Gleichnisse der Rabbinen in Form und Inhalt Gemeinsamkeit, die es sonst nirgedswo gibt, nicht einmal im Alten Testament" (Michael Krupp, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu und die Gleichnisse der Rabbinen* [Jerusalem: Lee Achim Sefarim, 2017], 1).

18 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 9–10. As he observes in a footnote, Ezek 17:2 uses *mashal* in reference to the allegory of the eagle, "perhaps a fable?" (*Parables in Midrash*, 289–90 note 8).

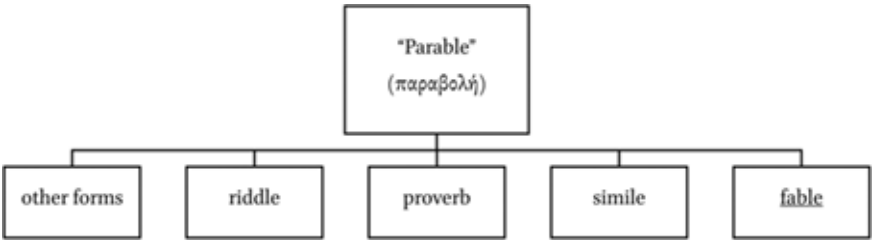

Figure 6 The Septuagint παραβολή as it is used in the Synoptic Gospels, with the fable form incorporated. Justin David Strong.

metaphor, παραβολή is a genus, not a species. As we will see from the rhetorical treatises next, this is how the term παραβολή is normally used, and as it is also used in the Synoptics. It has a broad and general meaning of "comparison," which made it the logical choice to render the Hebrew *mashal* in the Septuagint. Likewise, παραβολή was an ideal collective term to take into the Gospels, where it easily accommodated the popular fable genre. That such a high percentage of the Synoptic comparisons are fables helps to explain why the fable has been mistaken for and equated with the term παραβολή.

The resulting synthesis of all these observations for the New Testament umbrella term παραβολή may be rendered in a simple figure like so:

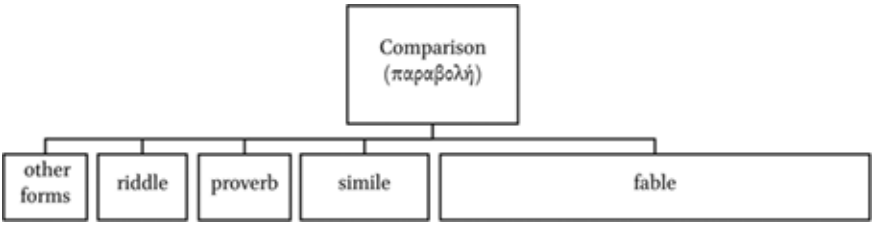

Figure 7 The genres to which the term παραβολή is applied in the Synoptic Gospels in proportion to each other. Justin David Strong.

With the forms displayed in a roughly proportional arrangement, it is understandable how it would be possible to confuse the term παραβολή with the genre of the fable, since the fable is the predominate form to which the term παραβολή is applied. This is perhaps a new way of saying, as Jülicher did long ago, "The majority of Jesus's παραβολαί that have a narrative form are fables, like those of Stesichorus and Aesop."[19] The hundreds of examples of the fable

19 "Die Mehrzahl der παραβολαί Jesu, die erzählende Form tragen, sind Fabeln, wie die des Stesichoros und des Aesop" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:98).

also help us to eliminate some other minor categories, such as the "allegory" and Jülicher's "example story." Since an *exemplum* was one of the primary functions of the ancient fable, we need not maintain a distinction between fable and example story.[20] The absence of allegorization in the "parables" of Jesus has been rightly criticized in recent generations of parable scholars,[21] and we also have a great many fables with a spectrum of allegory.[22] While it is of course possible to create allegories unrelated to the fable form, we have none of these in the Gospels. The riddle is likewise related to the fable, as we saw in 5.7.2 and will discuss in Chapter 9.

To salvage the term "parable" in our modern tongues for the genre I have identified as the ancient fable, we may expect attempts to cleave this category of fable once more into two forms, "parable" and "fable." Given all the information gathered here, such an endeavor would require some careful genre gerrymandering. One might still maintain the term "parable" as an overarching category for a broad swath of some half-dozen kinds of comparison available, but it may be more misleading than useful. For the sake of euphony or specificity, it seems better to render παραβολή with "proverb," "simile/similitude," or "fable" as appropriate to the gospel context. Translating παραβολή in this manner is not new; it is commonly rendered as "proverb," as we saw for example, in Luke 4:23: "He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb (παραβολήν), "Doctor, cure yourself!"'" (NRSV). So also should we render παραβολή in locations like Luke 12:16, 15:3, 18:1, and 18:9 as "fable." We might perhaps use the term "parable" for the fables of Jesus, recognizing that doing so is purely for reasons of tradition and theological conviction. If the "parable" is to be salvaged on historical and literary grounds, it would be the genre that developed out of the fable in some post-Gospel contexts. Like the rest of the Bible, the fables of Jesus were divested of their genre qualities and invested with theologically oriented allegory. As von Heydebrand characterizes the genre "parable" that developed in the Church:

> At least from the Church Fathers through the Middle Ages until the Reformation, and to some degree still well into the eighteenth and nineteenth century,

20 The fact that all four of Jülicher's "example stories" are found in Luke, the gospel author who seems to be using the fable form best and to the fullest, is another hint that it should be incorporated into the fable category. On the "example story," see Jeffrey T. Tucker, *Example Stories: Perspectives on Four Parables in the Gospel of Luke*, JSNTSup 162 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998).

21 Especially in Hans-Josef Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten*, 2nd ed., NTAbh 13 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1986).

22 The *topos* of the wise man who tells a fable before being unjustly murdered will be discussed again in 9.4.

> parables are dark, incomprehensible speeches that require allegory and bind the interpretation to arcane knowledge and overarching systems of meaning.[23]

These dark allegorical speeches are the only distinct genre of the "parable." The "parable," then, would be a genre first spoken by Jesus and last spoken by Jesus, but was not invented until more than a century after him. In other words, a parable is a fable invested with Christian allegory—a genre that emerged after the New Testament Gospels and was extinguished by the approaches of modern scholarship.

In the remainder of the chapter, I will show how this understanding of παραβολή matches the use of the term as it was understood by ancient rhetoric, another context parable scholars have largely ignored. With the clear understanding of the ancient fable constructed over the previous chapters and a grasp of how παραβολή was used in the ancient world, the backstory will be complete and we will have a firm basis going forward. With this path cleared, in the next chapter we will work our way backward, before Jülicher and before the moderns who have forgotten the fables.

7.3 The Meaning of παραβολή in the Ancient Rhetoricians

Every first-year student of "New Testament Greek" has a vocabulary to build, and this is where most encounter the word παραβολή, dutifully translated into English as "parable." Like translating the Greek word ἐκκλεσία with "church," this practice conjures strong associations that are foreign to the word. For those coming from the biblical studies background, that there might be another way to render παραβολή comes, perhaps, as something of a surprise. In fact, παραβολή is almost never rendered this way by classical scholars when it appears in wider Greek literature. Until the Septuagint, παραβολή was used most often as a term of architecture and geometry by Apollonius, Archimedes, and Euclid. Like many rhetorical terms in Greek—χρεία, γνώμη, εἰκών, λόγος—παραβολή is taken from a non-literary context ("something set alongside another" such as planks of wood) and given a literary meaning. There are no Greek authors who reflect at length on the concept of παραβολή in a literary sense: Aristotle, Apsines, and Trypho have brief discussions. Aristotle

23 "Für die anderen sind sie dunkle, unverständliche Reden, die Allegorese erfordern und die Deutung an überlegenes Wissen und übergreifende Deutungssysteme knüpfen. Zumindest von den Kirchenvätern über das Mittelalter bis zur Reformation, aber teilweise noch bis ins 18., ja 19. Jahrhundert hinein, war die zweite Auffassung die herrschende" (von Heydebrand, "Parabel," 67).

is well-known, and the passage in question that is discussed below has not gone unnoticed by a few parable scholars. The latter individuals, however, are obscure and very little-known indeed. A closer look at these authors will be instructive. As we will quickly see, neither Aristotle nor any other Greek or Latin writer who discusses παραβολή uses the term in a way that much resembles the genre of Jesus's fables. For this reason, parable scholars have largely ignored these authors, because, as Arland Hultgren puts it, "In no case is their designated use comparable to that in the Gospels."[24] We will observe this first with Aristotle and then the other rhetors. We will see that the reason they do not resemble "true parables" of Jesus is because παραβολή is a broadly construed idea of "analogy," never exemplified by past-tense narrative.

7.3.1 *Aristotle's "Comparisons and Fables"*

The only possible direct comparison between "παραβολή" and "λόγοι" in antiquity is a brief one in Aristotle's *"Art" of Rhetoric* (2.20.1–8).[25] In his discussion of proofs (πίστεις), Aristotle divides them into two kinds: example (παράδειγμα) and enthymeme (ἐνθύμημα) (*Rhet.* 2.20.1). Aristotle then divides examples into two kinds: "one which consists in relating things that have happened before, and another in inventing them oneself. The latter are subdivided into comparisons (παραβολή) or fables (λόγοι), such as those of Aesop and the Libyan" (*Rhet.* 2.20.2–3 [trans. Freese, LCL]).[26] In other words, παραβολή and λόγοι are deep in a stemma.

The main problem with using Aristotle's distinction to divide "parables" and "fables" is that he has in mind with the term παραβολή something that no one would recognize as a "true narrative parable" of the sort we imagine Jesus told. Hultgren's point above becomes clear when we lay out the standard English translations of Aristotle produced by classicists without a vested interest in the question of New Testament "parables." The phrase in question, τούτου δ' ἓν μὲν παραβολὴ ἓν δὲ λόγοι, is rendered as follows in English translations:

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24 Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 9.

25 Ruben Zimmermann has done the most work considering how Aristotle might inform modern discussions of Jesus's fables, and how they might fit into classical rhetorical categories. See Ruben Zimmermann, "Jesus' Parables and Ancient Rhetoric: The Contributions of Aristotle and Quintilian to the Form Criticism of the Parables," in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 238–58; originally published as Ruben Zimmermann, "Urchristliche Parabeln im Horizont der antiken Rhetorik," in *Jesus als Bote des Heils: Heilsverkündigung und Heilserfahrung in frühchristlicher Zeit*, ed. L. Hauser, et. al., SBB 60 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008), 201–25. See now also Parsons and Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament.*

26 Unless stated otherwise, translations of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* are those of Freese.

> "Of the latter again, one kind is comparison or illustration; the other λόγοι, fables."[27]
>
> "And of this method, one species is illustration, the other fable."[28]
>
> "The latter are subdivided into comparisons or fables."[29]
>
> "There are two varieties, illustrative parallel and the fable."[30]
>
> "The latter type is divided into 'comparisons' (parabole) and 'fables' (logoi)."[31]
>
> "Of the latter, comparison (*parabolē*) is one kind, fables (*logoi*) another."[32]
>
> "Of this latter, one form is comparison, the other fables."[33]

To state the obvious, none of these translators believe "parable" is an appropriate rendering here.[34] Should it be any different when we render παραβολή in the New Testament? Aristotle goes on to elaborate on this important clause:

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27 Edward Meredith Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle, with a Commentary*, rev. and ed. John Edwin Sandys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877), 2:196.

28 Theodore Alois Buckley, *Aristotle: Treatise on Rhetoric, Literally Translated with Hobbes' Analysis, Examination Questions, and an Appendix Containing the Greek Definitions* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1894), 166.

29 Freese's Loeb translation above.

30 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation One Volume Digital Edition*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4618–4865, here 4757.

31 Larry Arnhart, *Aristotle on Political Reasoning: A Commentary on The Rhetoric* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), 144.

32 George A. Kennedy, *Aristotle: On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse, Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Appendices*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 162.

33 Robert C. Bartlett, *Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric: Translated and with an Interpretive Essay* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 121.

34 For additional discussion of who uses what terminology see van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 40, note 15, and who likewise renders the term as "comparison." Most recently Teresa Morgan uses "comparison" (*Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*, 58). In Aristotle's *Topica*, παραβολή appears a number of times and is never rendered "parable" in either the Oxford translation by W. A. Pickard-Cambridge, or in the Loeb by Hugh Tredennick and E. S. Forster. None of these examples come near the supposed New Testament narrative "parables." For a full treatment of the use of παραβολή and *parabola* in the most important Greek and Latin authors, see Marsh H. McCall, *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

> Comparison (παραβολή) is illustrated by the sayings of Socrates; for instance, if one were to say that magistrates should not be chosen by lot, for this would be the same (ὅμοιον) as choosing as representative athletes not those competent to contend, but those on whom the lot falls; or as choosing any of the sailors as the man who should take the helm, as if it were right that the choice should be decided by lot, not by a man's knowledge. A fable (λόγος), to give an example, is that of Stesichorus concerning Phalaris, or that of Aesop on behalf of the demagogue. (*Rhet.* 2.20.4–5)

Aristotle then narrates the historical occasions on which Stesichorus and Aesop delivered the fables: The Horse and the Hunter (Perry 269) and The Fox and the Hedgehog (Perry 427), respectively. Aristotle includes quotations of the fable narratives, along with the *epimythia* the fable teller derives from them in these situations. It is doubtful that Aristotle has any specific formal generic qualities in mind for his παραβολή. One gets the impression that by παραβολή, Aristotle intends the term in the simplest etymological sense, setting something alongside another—an "analogy" or "comparison" not grounded in a historical event, not requiring narrative. He intends it without any of the baggage invested in the term "parable" imagined by New Testament scholars.

Aristotle does not name any distinction, but one which is apparent from the examples of παραβολή and λόγος provided there, is the lack of narrative in the παραβολή and the presence of it in the λόγος. Thus, a complete παραβολή in the quote above involves entering into non-indicative moods and making a comparison that is exhausted in a clause or two, e.g., "if one were to say that magistrates should not be chosen by lot, for this would be the same as choosing as representative athletes not those competent to contend, but those on whom the lot falls." One may suppose, then, that Aristotle uses the term παραβολή in a manner similar or equivalent to our "simile" or "similitude." The one challenge with this is that Aristotle describes in his third book, εἴκων, generally rendered into English as "simile." There, Aristotle also gives examples, such as:

> That poets' verses resemble (ἔοικε) those who are in the bloom of youth but lack beauty; for neither the one after they have lost their bloom, nor the others after they have been broken up, appear the same (ὅμοια) as before … He also compared the Boeotians to holm-oaks; for just as (ὅμοιοι) these are cut down by axes, the handles of which are made of their own wood, so are the Boeotians by their civil strife. (*Rhet.* 3.4)[35]

35 There are variants in this quotation. I have chosen the variant that preserves the reference to the fable. Aristotle provides several more examples of "simile" in the passage. Aristotle has created the εἴκων of the Boeotians from a widely known fable (cf. Babrius, *Fab*. 38 and especially 142; Perry 302, 303; Chambry 99 with variants; b. Sanh. 39b; Ahiqar 8.24, and

What Aristotle intends by παραβολή as distinct from εἴκων, if any, is not spelled out anywhere. As Kennedy notes, "The distinction between tropes and figures is not explicit in Aristotle's work and is a development of his successors in the Hellenistic period. Aristotle has discussed *parabolē*, or comparison, as a topic of invention in 2.20.2–7, but neither there nor here does he relate it to simile, which he regards purely as a device of style."[36] Marsh McCall, who discusses the problems of Aristotle's terminology, lays plain some additional problems:

> The identifying features of παραβολή do not, in Aristotle's mind, seem to include a particular form. This is indicated both by the careless phrasing of the illustration of παραβολή and by the similar form given to the surrounding illustrations of historical example and fable (λόγοι)... Aristotle is simply imprecise in choice of words here—a fault he would probably avoid if form were crucial.[37]

It is, presumably, this lack of relationship between παραβολή and a particular form or genre that makes it well-suited to the needs of the biblical authors to refer to many comparative forms. Taking our cue from McCall, Kennedy, Aristotle's many translators, from the examples Aristotle uses and those of the following rhetors, it is clear that παραβολή is not a genre of fictional short stories. Fictional short stories are Aristotle's λόγοι, fables. παραβολή in Aristotle is a "comparison," "analogy," "Vergleich" of the non-historical kind, which he exemplifies with non-narrative similes.

Before looking at the "comparison" in the other ancient rhetors, we may turn to a few important modern parable theorists who have noticed that Aristotle's fables look more like Jesus's "true parables" than they do Aristotle's παραβολή: Adolf Jülicher, Francois Vouga, and David Stern. Between Aristotle's comparisons and fables, the distinction between the two that might hold, based on the examples he uses, is that λόγος, "fable," uses a narrative mode and tells a story, while παραβολή, "comparison," is a simple illustrative parallel without a narrative mode, essentially a "similitude." This possible difference is an important one, because it reflects Jülicher's distinctions. Jülicher's equivalence of parable and fable, and indeed, his divisions between "Gleichnis" and "Parabel/Fabel," stems from Aristotle's terms.[38]

Callimachus, *Lyric Poems* 229). The technique for folding a simile from a fable is discussed below.

36 Kennedy, *Aristotle: On Rhetoric*, 205.

37 McCall, *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison*, 27.

38 For Jülicher's use of Aristotle and the reception history of his use of Aristotle among parable scholars, see Stefan Alkier, "Die 'Gleichnisreden Jesu' als 'Meisterwerke Volkstümlicher Beredtsamkeit': Beobachtungen zur Aristoteles-Rezeption Adolf Jülichers," in Mell, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu 1899–1999*, 39–74.

> One component of παραβολαί I consider simply for "Gleichnisse." I connect with this sense of the word what Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.20 assigns to παραβολαί. "Gleichnis" is the comparison on a higher level, the illustration of a proposition through the setting alongside of another, similar proposition.[39]

In other words, Jülicher considers Aristotle's narrative λόγοι to be the "parables" of Jesus, while Aristotle's παραβολαί are the "similes" or "similitudes" of Jesus. Later in the first volume, it is after citing this passage in Aristotle (*Rhet.* 2.20) that Jülicher delivers the line I quoted in Chapter 1: "The majority of Jesus's παραβολαί that have a narrative form are fables, like those of Stesichorus and Aesop."[40] It is clear that Jülicher is referring to the technical vocabulary of Aristotle both from the paragraph that immediately precedes this quote, and from him specifying Stesichorus and Aesop, the two figures cited in Aristotle's examples.[41] Since I am attempting to render subtleties of nuanced terminology across three languages at once here, I will spell this out as carefully as possible and provide some diagrams to best convey the concepts.

In Jülicher's understanding, what Aristotle calls παραβολή is not equivalent to the English word etymologically related to it, "parable," but is "Gleichnis," properly rendered into English in this case as "simile," or "similitude." Jülicher equates the English "parable" and German "Parabel" to Aristotle's λόγος. This second category, as we saw in 1.3.3, he describes as "Parabel-Fabel," "Parabel (Fabel)" and simply "Fabel." He then describes parable in the "narrow sense" in a sub-category of fable—"parable in the narrow sense means the fable in the service of religious ideas."[42] In a diagram, Jülicher's conception is represented in Figure 8. Jülicher recognized that the ancient fable is actually what we mean by "narrative parable," but fixed the categorization problem just long enough to break it again. He then describes "parable in the narrow sense" as a sub-category of fable, "a fable in the service of religious ideas."

This confusing situation in Jülicher's schema was simplified by Francois Vouga. Vouga follows the same operation as Jülicher, mapping our idea of

39 "Einen Teil der παραβολαί halte ich einfach für 'Gleichnisse.' Ich verbinde mit diesem Wort den Sinn, welchen Aristoteles *Rhet.* II 20 der παραβολαί zuweist. Das 'Gleichnis' ist die Vergleichung auf höherer Stufe, die Veranschaulichung eines Satzes durch Nebenstellung eines andern ähnlichen Satzes" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:69).

40 "Die Mehrzahl der παραβολαί Jesu, die erzählende Form tragen, sind Fabeln, wie die des Stesichoros und des Aesop" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:98).

41 See the quote from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in 3.3.1.

42 "Die Parabel im engeren Sinne, das heißt die Fabel im Dienst religiöser Ideen und die Beispielerzählung" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:117).

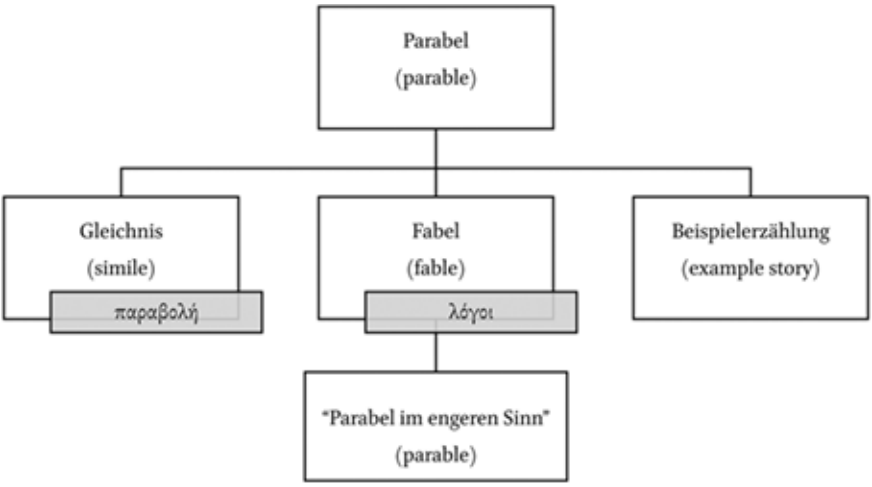

Figure 8 Jülicher's conception of parable categories. Justin David Strong.

"parable" and "fable" onto Aristotle's categories. His generic comparisons between parable and fable, follows from this insight:

> Die Parabel ist keine παραβολή (Gleichnis), obwohl die beiden Formen der Parabel und des Gleichnisses zu der Klasse der erfundenen und fiktionalen Beispiele (παραδίγματα) gehören. Das griechische Äquivalent für Parabel/Fabel ist λόγος (= "Logos") oder μῦθος (Mythos), das lateinische *fabula*.[43]

Vouga's conclusion, like Jülicher's, and the ancient fable theorists discussed below, is one more permutation of saying that the English word "parable," the predominant referent of the term παραβολή in the Gospels, should be equated with the ancient fable. Vouga's conception is represented in diagram form by Figure 9 on the next page.

Like Vouga, David Stern articulates these categories in essentially the same way. Because he does so in English, Stern is worth quoting:

> The Greek word *parabolē* … has its own history. Literally "something set aside," it is a term used by ancient rhetoricians like Aristotle to describe the brief comparisons, usually fictitious, that orators invent (as opposed to borrowing them from history) to serve as proofs or demonstrations in their speeches. In Aristotle, these "parables" are in fact closer to similes than to genuine stories; for the latter

43 Vouga, "Die Parabeln Jesu," 152. I have left this untranslated since doing so would obfuscate his careful wording. See also his "Zur form- und redaktionsgeschichtlichen Definition der Gattungen."

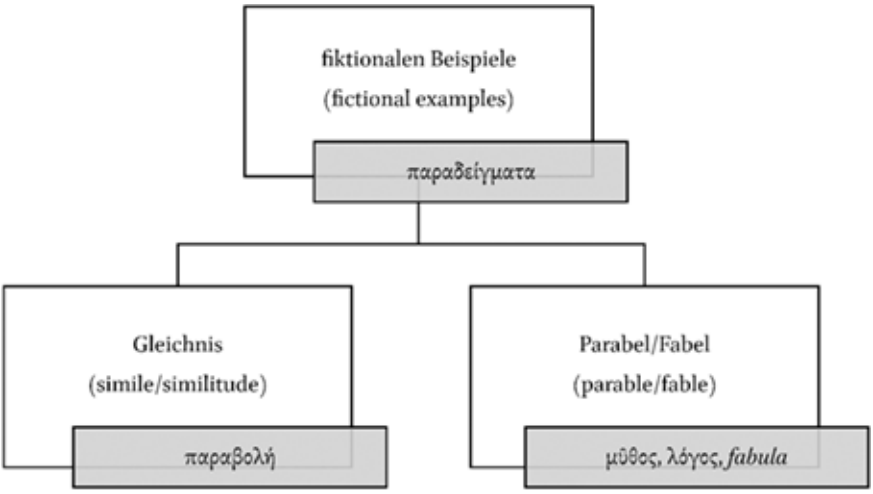

Figure 9 Vouga's description of "parable" and "fable" as they relate to Aristotle's categories. Justin David Strong.

type, Aristotle in fact employs a separate rhetorical term, *logoi*, a word usually translated as "fables."[44]

The common view between Jülicher, Vouga, and Stern (certainly no slouches in parable scholarship), is that the Greek equivalent for both our English "fable" *and* our "true parable" from Aristotle is *not* παραβολή, strangely enough, it is λόγος.[45] Aristotle's παραβολή are non-narrative similes. In the next chapter, we will see that this was recognized by parable scholars of centuries past, before we forgot our fables.[46]

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44 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 10.

45 Beavis begins her article by observing Jülicher's statement about Aristotle ("Parable and Fable," 474–75). She suggests that a reexamination of the issue is due, but never actually returns to the subject to state whether she agrees with Jülicher's evaluation or to dig into ancient theory.

46 Parsons and Martin also discuss fable and Aristotle's παραβολή, but argue that Aristotle "incorrectly defined" λόγος and παραβολή (*Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 60) by using a criterion of "realism" to divide them. Correcting Aristotle is hazardous. Since Aristotle nowhere mentions anything about realism, where Parsons and Martin got this impression is unclear. Where the "incorrect definition" came from is possibly rooted in Parsons and Martin reading Aristotle through Ruben Zimmermann and not anything Aristotle says. As the classicists above noted, Aristotle is simply imprecise. If one were to make any inference from the other authors who mention παραβολή, the difference in Aristotle would be the narrativity of the fable, and the absence of narrative of the παραβολή.

For the sake of completeness, we can consider two modern authors who have attempted to make a distinction between Aristotle's παραβολή and λόγος. Ruben Zimmermann, as before, supposes that the distinction is the impossibility of the fable and the possibility of a parable.[47] He reads into the fact that Aristotle's two examples of the fable contain talking animals to conclude that possibility is the operative distinction for Aristotle. Aristotle nowhere mentions anything about possibility here and the presence of the animals in these examples is accidental to why they were chosen. Far more likely is that Aristotle chose these particular fable examples because they were used in famous rhetorical circumstances to great effect. In *Rhet.* 2.20, Aristotle recounts both fables in the famous settings of their delivery, "For Stesichorus, when the people of Himera had chosen Phalaris dictator and were on the point of giving him a bodyguard, after many arguments related a fable to them…," followed by the famous fable of The Horse and the Hunter (Perry 269, see 3.4.3). Then follows Aesop telling The Fox and the Hedgehog (Perry 427) in a forensic setting, "when defending at Samos a demagogue who was being tried for his life, related the following fable…." The evidence of the fable collections and the many authors who use fables, Josephus for instance, all show that this is not the distinction.[48] There are far too many "possible," human fables and scores more examples to come. We also find that many a παραβολή of Jesus does not respect the limit of the "possible" (11.5). And, once again, the examples of παραβολή given by Aristotle look nothing like Jesus's "parables."

William Grimaldi attempts to distinguish Aristotle's παραβολή from λόγος by arguing that "in contrast to the parable, the fable is not invented by the speaker (writer) but deliberately selected from material at his disposal which Aristotle points to here as Aesopic or Libyan."[49] Since a few lines down Aristotle says they are both invented, "it is easier to invent fables (λόγους); for they must be invented, like comparisons (παραβολάς)" (2.20.7), Grimaldi later walks back his claim.[50] The idea that orators invented "parables" extemporaneously but

47 Zimmermann, "Jesus' Parables and Ancient Rhetoric."

48 Josephus adds decisive confirmation, attributing to Tiberius a fable close to the Fox and the Hedgehog with the "impossible" animals exchanged for human actors (*Ant.* 18.174–75). If possibility were at issue or if there were a distinct Jewish "parable" genre, we would expect Josephus of anyone to know it and use παραβολή here. He uses λόγος. The fable begins, "And he gave them an example (παράδειγμα), speaking this fable (λόγον)…."

49 William M. A. Grimaldi, *Aristotle: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1980–1988), 2:251. Grimaldi cites Jesus in his discussion. So far as I am aware, Grimaldi's commentary is the only one to render παραβολή as "parable," though he does so by writing "parable (parallel)" (2:249) and clarifying that "the word [παραβολή] means: a juxtaposition for comparison" (2:251).

50 Grimaldi, *Aristotle: A Commentary*, 2:256.

drew fables from pre-invented stories relies on the hypothetical early uses of fables in rhetoric, namely that they circulated in collections for rhetors during Aristotle's time. Grimaldi's is also not a genre distinction. Obviously, we can imagine that people were capable of preparing comparisons before using them, and fable tellers outside the rhetorical context are generally depicted coming up with their fables extemporaneously. Even in the context of rhetoric, however, we saw Aristophanes depict Lovecleon change the Sybaritic fable of the Woman and the Jar extemporaneously as he was telling it (Aristophanes, *Vesp*. 1435–1440). Grimaldi's distinction is identical to Blackham's that we encountered in 2.3 and it is not a helpful one.

Taking our cue from all the classicists translating Aristotle, παραβολή simply means here "a comparison" of the non-historical kind, lacking narrative. Jesus's "true parables" are equivalent to Aristotle's λόγοι.

7.3.2 *Apsines of Gadara: No People in Parables?*

In a brief passage from a rhetorical handbook attributed to a certain Apsines of Gadara (ca. 190–250 CE), written in Greek, the term παραβολή appears among the rhetorical techniques. The treatise was first translated into a modern language only in 1997 and has gone untouched by parable scholarship.[51] So far as I am aware, Parsons and Martin's monograph on ancient rhetoric and the New Testament is the first to note its existence.[52] Apsines's sixth chapter, "On Paradigm," begins as follows:

> A *parabolē* (or comparison) differs from a *paradeigma* (or example) in this, that the parabole is taken from something inanimate or from irrational animals, as in Homer: "As when some stabled horse, corn-fed at a manger …" or from inanimate things, as in Demosthenes: "For as in the case, I think of a house and a boat…." Paradeigms, on the other hand, are taken from persons of the past, as in Demosthenes, "It is said that Alcibiades lived in the good old happy time…." (Apsines, *Art of Rhetoric* 6.1 [trans. adapted from Dilts and Kennedy])[53]

51 Mervin R. Dilts and George A. Kennedy, eds., *Two Greek Rhetorical Treatises from the Roman Empire: Introduction, Text, and Translation of the Arts of Rhetoric, Attributed to Anonymous Seguerianus and to Apsines of Gadara*, Mnemosyne Supplements 168 (Leiden: Brill, 1997). It is missing, for example, in the otherwise exhaustive, one-hundred-page history of "parable" by von Heydebrand: "Parabel: Geschichte eines Begriffs zwischen Rhetorik, Poetik und Hermeneutik."

52 Parsons and Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament.*

53 Παραβολὴ παραδείγματος τούτῳ διαφέρει, ὅτι ἡ μὲν παραβολὴ ἀπ' ἀψύχων ἢ ζῴων ἀλόγων λαμβάνεται· ἀπὸ μὲν ἀλόγων, ὡσ παρ' Ὁμήρῳ· "ὡς δ' ὅτε τις στατὸς ἵππος ἀκοστήσας ἐπὶ φάτνῃ" ἀπὸ δ' ἀψύχων ὡς παρὰ Δημοσθένει· "ὥσπερ γὰρ οἰκίας οἶμαι καὶ πλοίου.

If Apsines's terminology for defining the παραβολή sounds familiar, it is because it is the very same vocabulary that Theon, Aphthonius, Nicolaus, and others use to describe the fable. Compare Apsines's "something inanimate and irrational animals" (literally "dumb animals," which would include plants), ἀψύχων ἢ ζῴων ἀλόγων, to the fable descriptions we have encountered already, e.g., "In Sybaritic fables the characters are limited to rational animals (λογικῶν ζῴων), in Aesopic there is a combination of irrational and rational, and Lydian and Phrygian fables use only the irrational (ἀλογικῶν)" (Nicolaus, *Prog.* 2).[54] As best as we can tell, Apsines *excludes* human characters from the παραβολή.[55] Apsines employs the term essentially as "comparison," with no narrative involved. Though we have long been disabused of the belief that fables are just about animals, we should add that apparently, in antiquity, there was a belief that "parables" could be stereotyped by the appearance of animals and inanimate objects. Apsines's second example, in particular, shows that παραβολή is much closer to the English "simile" or "similitude:" "For a house, I take it, or a ship or anything of that sort must have its chief strength in its substructure; and so too in affairs of state the principles and the foundations must be truth and justice" (Demosthenes, *2 Olyth.* 10 [trans. Vince, LCL]). Apsines's comparison (παραβολή), is then not the "narrative parable," but as Jülicher, Vouga, and Stern see it,[56] something closer to the simile that uses non-indicative moods and focuses on objects, plants, or the like. It is clear from his description and his examples that neither the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, nor any other Lukan fable would fit among Apsines's παραβολή.[57] In the Gospels, a good match for Apsines's comparison (παραβολή), would be Mark 13:28–29: "Learn from the comparison with the fig tree: 'Whenever its branch becomes tender and when the leaves come forth, that is when you know the summer is near.

54 So also, "Some fables, those which concern dumb animals (ἀλόγων ζῴων), are Aesopic, while others about humans are Sybaritic" (Scholion on Aristophanes, *Av.* 471b); "If there is not any qualification to indicate the type, we commonly call it 'Aesopic.' Those who say that some are composed about dumb animals (ἀλόγοις ζῴοις) while others human beings …" (Theon, *Prog.* 4); "… rational when a human being is imagined as doing something, ethical when representing the character of irrational [ἀλόγον] animals (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1).

55 The first example Apsines chose from Homer even has a formal marker of the fable, beginning with the *pronomina indefinita* τις, on which see 10.3. As we saw above, Aristotle does not forbid human characters in his παραβολή, though his examples, like Apsines, are also not narratives.

56 See also the views of Storr in the next chapter. Without knowing Apsines, that the position of these scholars predicted his description would seem to be strong evidence that they got it right.

57 The only L fable that foregrounds nature or inanimate objects is the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9). Even this fable, however, is more about the discussion between the owner and the gardener than the tree itself. For a parallel, see note 59.

So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates."[58] This brief, non-narrative comparison (παραβολή) about a plant is passed over even in many comprehensive books on Jesus's "parables." Ironically, if there is a "true parable," according to Apsines, such examples are it.[59] If the "true parable" is actually something like a simile about an object, plant, or animal, what then are all the fleshed-out narratives about people? These are fables. While Apsines's rhetorical handbook throws a wrench into standard parable theory, it accords well with the thesis advanced in this chapter. The next author, Trypho, lends some further support to Apsines.

7.3.3 *Tropes of Trypho and Homer's Parables*

Taking our leave of Apsines of Gadara, we can look over the shoulder of the grammarian, Trypho, *On Tropes*.[60] The term παραβολή occurs in his description of the techniques of ὁμοίωσίς, "comparison." He writes:

> *Homoiōsis* is a technique in which one thing is compared to another. There are three kinds, *eikōn, paradeigma*, and *parabolē*. *Eikon* is an expression attempting to manifest in the mind's eye something visually similar by means of something substituted for it, to which the thing is compared. For example, something is like an ox that stood out far above the herd. (Trypho, *Tropes* I 5 [Spengel 200, lines 4–10]; trans. mine)[61]

Trypho defines *paradeigma* essentially as Aristotle had: "*paradeigma* is an application of matters from the past that resemble the underlying subjects in order to exhort either moving forward with an action or steering away from

58 Cf. Matt 24:32–33; Luke 21:29–30.

59 It is missing, for example in Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, and mentioned only in passing by Snodgrass as context for the L fable at Luke 13:6–9 (*Stories with Intent*, 260–61). To multiply the irony, it is with regard to the "parable" at Luke 13:6–9 that Snodgrass makes a rare observation that there is a fable to shed light on it (256): "A farmer had a tree on his land that did not bear fruit but was only a roost for singing birds and locusts. The farmer was on the point of cutting the tree down because it was unproductive. In fact, he had taken his axe in hand and given it the first stroke, when the locusts and the birds begged him not to cut down their refuge but let it stand, 'for,' they said, 'we will sit in it and sing for your pleasure.' The farmer paid no attention to them but gave the tree a second and third stroke. When he had cut into the hollow of the tree, he found a swarm of bees and honey. Then when he had tasted the honey, he dropped his axe, respected the tree as something sacred, and tended it carefully" (Perry 299).

60 Written in the first century BCE if orthonymous, and third century CE if not. On its authenticity, see McCall, *Ancient Rhetorical Theories*, 137.

61 Ὁμοίωσίς ἐστι ῥῆσις, καθ' ἣν ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ παραβάλλομεν, εἴδη δὲ αὐτῆς εἰσι τρία, εἰκών, παράδειγμα, παραβολή. εἰκών ἐστι λόγος ἐναργῶς ἐξομοιοῦν πειρώμενος διὰ τοῦ παραλαμβανομένου, πρὸς ὃ παραλαμβάνεται, οἷον ἠΰτε βοῦς ἀγέλῃφι μέγ' ἔξοχος ἔπλετο πάντων. παρέπεται δὲ τῇ εἰκόνι μέγεθος, σχῆμα, χρῶμα.

it."[62] Trypho then gives some "historical" examples from Homer of how to use a *paradeigma* to advance or avoid a course of action. He then explains the difference between a *paradeigma* and a *parabolē*: "*Paradeigma* differs from *parabolē* since the *paradeigma* is taken from real events, while the *parabolē* is from matters without bounds and from whatever things are appropriate."[63] The correct rending of ἀορίστων καὶ ἐνδεχομένων is a challenge since Trypho is so laconic, but it is set in simple opposition to the historical example. Trypho then gives us a definition and a few examples drawn from Homer that help to clarify things somewhat: "*parabolē* is an expression that, by means of a juxtaposition, stands a matter alongside of a similar thing underlying the actuality, such as the motion of the agora is like the great waves of the open sea of Icarus."[64] Trypho's example of the παραβολή is not a short story in any sense, but a comparison of a few words relating an agora to the moving sea. Trypho's other examples of the παραβολή are simple non-narrative similes, such as "Even as the leaves of the trees, such is the race of men" (*Il.* 6.416). None of these terms in Trypho is explicitly applied to a genre or form, rather they are techniques that could presumably be accomplished through various means and genres. If they were to be classified as a genre, they would be mere similes—what Jülicher, Vouga, and Stern would expect. To repeat what Hultgren reported at the outset, none of these examples of the παραβολή resemble the "narrative parables" of Jesus. Instead, the last cited example of a παραβολή from Homer points perhaps in an unexpected direction. What Trypho uses as a paradigmatic example of the παραβολή is recited by Aesop in *The Life*, "Seeing that the men were as pale as potherbs, Aesop said to them, 'Even as the leaves of the trees, such is the race of men'" (*Vit. Aes.* 124 [G]).[65] If we are to believe the ancient authors before modern parable theorists, then this comparison, a non-narrative simile from Homer, told by Aesop, is what a "true parable" really is.[66] The narratives told by Jesus and Aesop are fables.

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62 παράδειγμά ἐστι τοῦ προγεγονότος πράγματος παρένθεσις καθ' ὁμοιότητα τῶν ὑποκειμένων πρὸς παραίνεσιν προτροπῆς ἢ ἀποτροπῆς ἕνεκεν (21–24).

63 διαφέρει δὲ παράδειγμα παραβολῆς, ὅτι τὸ μὲν παράδειγμα ἀπὸ γεγονότων πραγμάτων παραλαμβάνεται, ἡ δὲ παραβολὴ ἐξ ἀορίστων καὶ ἐνδεχομένων γενέσθαι.

64 Παραβολή ἐστι λόγος διὰ παραθέσεως ὁμοίου πράγματος τὸ ὑποκείμενον μετ' ἐνεργείας παριστάνων, οἷον κινήθη δ' ἀγορή, ὡς κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης πόντου Ἰκαρίοιο.

65 Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Αἴσωπος λαχάνοις τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὁμόχροας, ἔφη πρὸς αὐτούς, οἵ περ φυλλῶν γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ανδρῶν.

66 Other passing uses of παραβολή, e.g., in Demetrius, *Eloc.* 23 and Philodemus, confirm our result. As McCall summarizes, παραβολή is used "in a broad sense of 'comparison'" "in a manner synonymous with σύγκρισις" (McCall, *Ancient Rhetorical Theories*, 135–36).

7.3.4 *Folding Fables with Lucillus, Quintilian, and Aesop*

We can see now why the παραβολή of the rhetors so poorly aligns with the "parables" of Jesus. In the ancient rhetors, it has a broad force, describing more of a rhetorical mode, apparently not tied to a specific form, but generally used with very short, non-narrative similes about objects or nature. They are not short stories about human activities. Once we grasp this, we can benefit from further ancient theory on the relationships between the fable and other genres in Jesus's repertoire.[67] One such problem in parable theory is the fuzzy boundary between the (née) "parable," "simile," and "proverb." Ancient reflections on the fable help clarify the relationship between the genres. On this relationship, the Semitic context is useful. As Perry notes, the genre boundaries between proverb and fable become fuzzy when the text is very short: "When it happens to be very short, [a fable] is indistinguishable from what we call a proverb, and what the ancient Semitic writers call a 'likeness' (Aram[aic] *mathla*, Heb[rew] *mashal*, Ar[abic] *mathal*, likewise Armen[ian] *arak*)."[68] In other words, we should not imagine that the progression runs from proverb to simile to "parable," rather it is from proverb to simile to *fable*. This relationship between the genres of proverb and fable—that they are reciprocal in this way—was recognized by a number of ancient authors. As early as the first century CE,[69] we have several testimonies to a useful analogy: ἔστιν ὁ αἶνος ἐξηπλωμένη παροιμία, "the fable is an unfolded proverb."[70] This ancient concept of unfolding a

67 This understanding also solves the other New Testament examples of the term παραβολή that parable interpreters would prefer to ignore at Hebrews 9:9 and 11:19. See the discussion of Clare K. Rothschild, "Παραβολή in Hebrews," in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 365–379. As Rothschild notes on 366, "The term [παραβολή] is very broadly construed in classical antiquity," citing then the rhetorical passages discussed here.

68 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xx.

69 For the various ancient authors, see Van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Muthoi*, 78. Probably the earliest surviving author to make this analogy is Lucillus Tarrhaeus (first century CE?), who is probably to be identified with Loukillios, though the identity of the figure or figures associated with this name and numerous close forms is a Gordian knot. For an attempt to untangle it, see Gideon Nisbet, *Greek Epigram in the Roman Empire: Martial's Forgotten Rivals, Greek Epigram in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). This concept of the fable as an unfolded proverb is also known to Pseudo-Ammonius and Ptolemaeus of Ascalon, on whom, see van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Muthoi*, 51 and 56, respectively.

70 As recorded in the fragment of Lucillus Tarrhaeus, the full sentence is: "Fable is an unfolded proverb, fleshing out that which is apprehended in the mind by way of a narrative with reference to an explanation and something useful to people," καὶ ἔστιν ὁ αἶνος ἐξηπλωμένη παροιμία μετὰ διηγήσεως ἀπαρτίζουσα τὸ νοούμενον πρὸς παραμυθίαν τε καὶ ὠφέλειαν ανθρώπων. (Linnenkugel, frag. 1 [trans. mine]). The standard edition of "Lucius Tarrhaeus" is Albert Linnenkugel, *De Lucillo Tarrhaeo epigrammatum poeta, grammatico, rhetore* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoeningh, 1926).

proverb into a fable by making it into a narrative (and vice versa) may be one and the same as the techniques of fable compression and expansion learned in the *progymnasmata*. Teresa Morgan astutely observes that this process is reminiscent of what biblical scholars imagine occurring when "similitudes" are developed into narratives to create a "narrative parable."[71] John Meier, for example, uses the metaphor of narrative parables as "stretched out" similes.[72] When we recognize that the "narrative parable" is the ancient fable, we find ancient testimony confirming that this process took place.

On this same subject of the relationship between the fables of Jesus and the related concepts of proverb and simile, we may bring Quintilian into the conversation:

> "Consider also those fables (*fabellae*) which, though not originating with Aesop (for Hesiod seems to be the first author of them), are best known under Aesop's name … Close to this is the genre of *paroimia* (παροιμίας) a sort of abbreviated fable (*fabella brevior*) understood allegorically: 'Not my load, he says: the ox takes the panniers.'" (*Inst.* 5.11.19, 21 [trans. adapted from Russell, LCL])

Though Quintilian is fully aware of the Greek word παραβολή,[73] he does not call the proverb (παροιμία) a kind of abbreviated allegorical "parable," rather an abbreviated *fable*.[74] A full treatment of this observation will have to be made elsewhere, but the relationship between the fable and proverb may also shed some light on the issue of "parables" in John, since he never once uses the term παραβολή but appears to substitute παροιμία for it. Quintilian does not describe a relationship between "parable" (παραβολή) and proverb (παροιμίαι), rather between fable (λόγος) and proverb (παροιμίαι). John, the one Gospel author who does not play along with the Synoptists in following the Septuagint, clues

71 Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 58. Morgan cites Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 324–30.

72 Meier, *Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*, 37.

73 Quintilian refers to "*parabole*" (he transliterates it into Latin characters) twice. From the examples provided, nothing is added to the information that we may glean from Aristotle, Apsines, and Trypho. I will not be contributing to the ink spilled attempting to equate the "true parable" with Quintilian's *similitudo*. It is a perilous endeavor to appeal to Latin without a bridge to the Greek such as Quintilian offers between λόγος and *fabula.* The Latin authors clearly do not have the same idea in mind, with Quintilian equating *parabole* with *similitudo* (*Inst.* 5.2.8), Cicero with *collatio* (*Inv.* 1.30), and Seneca with *imago* (*Ep.* 59).

74 I would be remiss not to note that there are two hundred proverbial sayings attributed to Aesop, including sixteen that are named παροιμίαι. See Perry, *Aesopica*, 261–91; those explicitly named παροιμίαι Αἴσωπου are found on page 290.

us in that the Synoptic "narrative parable" should be reckoned as the fable when he uses παροιμία for his corresponding genre.[75]

In *The Life of Aesop*, we find precisely this same gamut of genres: proverbs—similes—fables. For two chapters, Aesop dispenses some twenty consecutive proverbs, some of which have a familiar ring to Jesus's. In *The Life of Aesop*, they begin:

> First, reverence God as is right. Honor your king, for his power deserves the same honor as that of God. Honor your professor as your parents, for you are naturally obliged to treat them well, but you should be doubly grateful to him whose affection is freely bestowed. Take good food for the day as well as you can so that you may be ready for work of the next day and keep your health.... (*Vit. Aes.* 109)

In addition to fables and proverbs, there is finally the matter of the "simile/similitude." A simile is a very brief comparison, generally not cast into the past tense like a fable, generally without a plot, using the words such as "like" or "as" (normally from ὡς). Jesus delivers a number of brief, non-narrative similitudes, such as the παραβολή of the Blind Leading the Blind (Luke 6:39), Tying up the Strong Man (Mark 3:27), and a number of short similes only a verse in length that begin with "it is like ...," such as "That one is like a man building a house ..." (Luke 6:48) or "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field ..." (Matt 13:44). Particularly considering similes that we find associated with Aesop, I think it proper to consider the "simile," partially rolled up from the fable or unrolled from the proverb. We find Aesop delivering several "simile" versions of his fables in *The Life of Aesop*:[76]

> You're like a man who has been suddenly wounded; he cries out on the spur of the moment at the suddenness of what has happened. (*Vit. Aes.* 98)

> Aesop said, "You are like the sun and those about you like its rays, for as the sun is bright and undefiled, so you too present yourself pure to men who wish to behold you and are brilliant as the sun, and these are flaming red like the rays of the sun." (*Vit. Aes.* 115)

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75 It is clear that they are corresponding forms because the Johannine Jesus utters a line that is close to the Markan Jesus: "And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables'" (ἐν παραβολαῖς) (Mark 4:11; and cf. Matt 13:13; Luke 8:10). In John's Gospel, we have a similar idea with παραβολή swapped out for παροιμία: "I have said these things to you in figures of speech (ἐν παροιμίαις). The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures (ἐν παροιμίαις), but will tell you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25).

76 Since these examples in *The Life* survive in both their simile and full-fledged fable versions, it offers new materials with which to compare the differing, perhaps abbreviated versions of Jesus's fables that appear in simile form. Such a study is still to be written.

> Still jibing at them he said, "Men of Delphi, you are like a piece of driftwood floating on the sea; when we see it at a great distance, tossing on the waves, we think it is something worthwhile, but then when we approach and come to it, we find that it is a very insignificant thing of no value." (*Vit. Aes.* 125)

This folding and unfolding, proverb—simile—fable, reflects the ancient understanding of these genres. In a figure, one way to represent it would look like this:

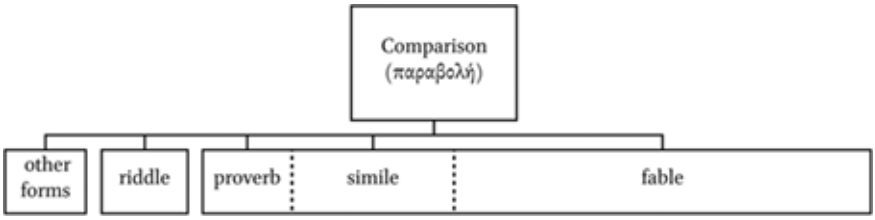

Figure 10 The folding and unfolding of proverbs and fables. Justin David Strong.

The proverb, the simile, and the fable, these are the primary genres shared by Jesus and Aesop.

7.4 Conclusion

Against the consensus view that the gospel "parable" emerged from a historical and literary vacuum or positing an unfalsifiable theory of a missing, purely Jewish genre that has left us no record, this synthesis offers a more plausible alternative. The Synoptic Gospels employ παραβολή like the Septuagint and other sources, as a broadly construed term for non-historical comparison. The few Greek and Latin rhetors who discuss the term παραβολή never use it in a sense of a past-tense story. They use it most simply as a mode of analogy—a "comparison" with no particular form in mind, though normally exemplified with a non-indicative simile. In the New Testament, παραβολή is used to refer to a variety of genres that go by other terms elsewhere, including proverbs, symbols, riddles, maxims, similes, and especially fables. That παραβολή is applied to the fable genre most of all explains why the fable has been mistaken for and equated with the term παραβολή. In the past 125 years, just a few parable scholars have acknowledged this information or made any attempt to make sense of it. Adolf Jülicher, Francois Vouga, and David Stern have concluded

that Aristotle's λόγοι category are what we think of as "parables."[77] Based on the ancient evidence, I have shown that the fable supplies this missing historical and literary context for what we have been calling "true" or "narrative parables" in the time of Jesus and the Gospels. The new *mashal* not evidenced in the Hebrew Bible, the missing first-century Graeco-Semitic genre of short, fictional, didactic, metaphorical narratives is the ancient fable. Far from the first figure in history to use the "parable" with any regularity, Jesus's most characteristic teaching genre, the fable, has a long and rich history before him and taking place around him.

7.5 Conclusion to Book I

Book I has offered a solution to a fundamental problem for the discipline of New Testament studies, identifying the fable as the missing historical and literary context for the "parables" of Jesus. To achieve this outcome involved accomplishing several goals along the way. First, I dispelled several of the most widespread myths circulating in biblical scholarship concerning the ancient fable. These myths have inhibited us from considering the relevance of the ancient fable to the Jesus tradition—summarily, that fables are merely Gentile animal stories for children. Second, I introduced the essential secondary literature for the study of the ancient fable and how to access the primary literature. I noted how recently it became possible to attempt the current project, while identifying the essential challenges that remain in studying the ancient fable. While most parable scholars will seemingly hunt for any reason to gerrymander the "parable" around the fable or simply dismiss it, the couple fable scholars to attempt diachronic surveys conclude otherwise.[78]

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77 Jülicher's study of more than a century ago was the last time it formed a significant part of any monograph on Jesus's "parables." Vouga, of course, made this argument, but did not apply it to any further study of Jesus's fables. Stern devotes just a handful of pages to discussing Aristotle and classical rhetoric.

78 "A fundamental difference between fable and parable does not exist" (van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 36); "Despite the many attempts to differentiate them paradigmatically, paradigms that are often in contradiction with each other, there is no fundamental or universal difference between fable and parable," "Trotz der vielen Unterscheidungsversuche mit Paradigmata, die sich oft widersprechen, gibt es keinen Unterschied zwischen Fabel und Parabel, der als grundsätzlich und allgemeingültig gelten kann" (Dithmar, *Die Fabel*, 98).

Turning to the primary literature, we surveyed the significant authors and sources of fables relevant to the fables of Jesus, from their ancient Near Eastern origin, their use in and transmission through classical literature, and the dawning of a fable renaissance at the beginning of the Imperial Roman period. In the Roman Imperial age, we met the fable poets, Babrius, Phaedrus, and their imitators. We then encountered the prose fables of the Augustana Collection and the gospel-like narrative, *The Life of Aesop*. We next considered the place of the fable in ancient education, noting its ubiquity and privileged place among the exercises at every level. We observed along the way that the "parable" was missing in action in this setting. The role of the fable in education was then used as a springboard into how ancient and modern theorists define and categorized the "fable" based on a first-century definition that accommodates the Gospel "parables." We observed that an author such as Luke would have been well-acquainted with the fable—how they are composed, redacted, interpreted, woven into a narrative, and so on.

From the contemporary Greek and Latin literature, we turned to examine the rabbinic *mashal* and those rabbis famous for telling *meshalim*. We observed from the outset that the fable is a thoroughly Jewish genre. We found that there are not two terms available for "parable" and "fable," only one: *mashal*, a prima facie indication that the rabbis did not distinguish them. I demonstrated that the fable was frequently used in the rabbinic period and that those rabbis famous for their *meshalim* reflect the *fable* background most of all. I suggested that "fable" is the preferable English term for *mashal* as it corresponds to the ancient genre well-known to have Semitic associations and because it does not carry the heavy Christian theological baggage of "parable."

Finally, I brought the fable and "parable" into a synthesis, identifying "narrative parables" as fables. This synthesis provided answers to several longstanding "parable" puzzles. It solves the problems concerning how we describe and categorize them and it solves the puzzle of whence the "parable," Jesus's most characteristic didactic genre. The elusiveness of the solution offered here and the need for Book I stem from the fact that hardly any biblical scholars today, parables specialists included, are familiar with the ancient fable. Since the turn of the twentieth century,[79] New Testament scholarship has been mining first-century authors for context and parallels to the biblical text, but has remained essentially oblivious to authors like Babrius, Phaedrus, the prose collections, and other fable contexts such as the *progymnasmata*. Book I has described many of the reasons for this and endeavored to remedy

79 I specify this time frame because, as we will see in the next chapter, scholars before Jülicher knew their fables well.

the situation. As the context offered here has demonstrated, Jesus's most characteristic teaching genre, the fable, was widespread in his time and before him.

Now that we have filled in the backstory and offered a solution to the puzzle, the proof will come in Book II by putting the theory into practice. We will set the fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke alongside the hundreds of contemporary examples. We will step beyond making a comparison of one corpus with another. We will enter the gospel story of Jesus the fable teller and learn to read and interpret his fables from the fable perspective.

BOOK II

The Fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

CHAPTER 8

Before We Forgot Our Fables

8.1 Introduction

One hundred and twenty years ago was the last time a book on the "parables" of Jesus discussed the fable at any length. That book, Adolf Jülicher's *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (1899), is widely regarded as the foundation of modern parable studies. Jülicher's work is not a foundation, however, but rather a fulcrum. His was not the first to attempt a comprehensive treatment of the "parables" of Jesus nor to compare them with the fable context. One of the reasons that the fable has not been recognized as the context for Jesus's "parables" is precisely this convention of beginning with Jülicher. With respect to the fable, the turn of the twentieth century marked another fulcrum: the erasure of the fable from popular consciousness in the West. Before Jülicher, as the field of critical biblical scholarship was on its way in, so too was the presence of fables in western education and the popular imagination vanishing.[1] For this reason, in works on the "parables" prior to Jülicher, it was commonplace to discuss fables in the opening pages. An author would simply expect the reader to be familiar with them. In this chapter, we will see where Jülicher learned that "the majority of Jesus's παραβολαί that have a narrative form are fables, like those of Stesichorus and Aesop."[2] This chapter is devoted to the time before we forgot our fables.

By way of introduction to Book II, we will work backwards chronologically to the Gospel of Luke itself. We begin with the views of Edward Greswell and Richard Trench, who penned perhaps the two most influential writings on the "parables" in the 1800s. Both figures offer reasons to divide parables and fables that will strike twenty-first century readers as somewhat uncritical, but which continue to serve as the basis for the modern attempts to divide them. We then press earlier to Gottlob Christian Storr and Hugo Grotius, two colossal scholars at the beginning of the critical study of the Bible. Despite their floruit, both figures strike a remarkably critical note, concluding alike that Jesus's "parables"

1 On the loss of the fable in the West, see Bonnie F. Fisher, "A History of the Use of Aesop's Fables as a School Text from the Classical Era through the Nineteenth-Century" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1987). Fisher notes several factors for this quick decline but draws the strongest connection between the removal of Latin instruction in schools, through which most would have encountered the fable.

2 "Die Mehrzahl der παραβολαί Jesu, die erzählende Form tragen, sind Fabeln, wie die des Stesichoros und des Aesop" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:98).

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are fables. These figures served as Jülicher's foundation and the views that the churchmen, Greswell and Trench, reacted against. From there, we sweep across the Middle Ages to draw attention to the terminology used for fables, including Hebrew, Latin, and Nordic languages like Icelandic, in which a terminological split between "parable" and "fable" never occurred. We then enter more familiar territory with the Gospel of Thomas. I point out that Thomas nowhere uses the term ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲟⲗⲏ and demonstrate that he attributes a number of well-established Aesopic fables to Jesus. Finally, we turn to Aesop in the Gospel of Luke. To pave the way for the chapters to follow, here I note the many indisputable examples of Lukan material borrowing directly from fables and Aesopic traditions.

8.2 Steps down the Path before Jülicher

8.2.1 *Edward Greswell: "What is There to Discriminate Them Asunder?"*

In the nineteenth century, Edward Greswell (1797–1869) enjoyed a long and prolific career as Fellow of Corpus Christi College in Oxford. Before he took the post of vice-president of the college, which he held for nearly thirty years, he wrote a compendious five-volume study on the "parables" and the Gospels. Greswell's first volume treats background matters of the "parables."[3] In this "General Introduction," he devotes chapter five to "Why the use of parables is peculiar to the Gospels" and chapter six to "Whether the parables are real or fictitious narratives? [sic]." In these chapters, he offers his understanding of the fable and how it differs from the "parable." In his chapter on why "parables" are peculiar to the Gospels, he compares Jesus to earlier Jewish and Greek antecedents. He describes the ancient rhetorical theories of comparison that we studied in the previous chapter, and then comes to the fable:

> The use of the fable, which is merely the use of an imaginary example, designed to supply the place of a real one, is of still more ancient date; and will be found to go back in the records of every nation, to a period coeval with their origin itself. The moral parables of our Saviour are instances of the same mode of reasoning in general; and if they had consisted of impossible or improbable circumstances, must have been pronounced fables; and as they consist both of possible and probable, may be real histories: but whether real histories or fictitious, they are to all intents and purposes examples, and only enlarged specimens of the

3 Edward Greswell, *An Exposition of the Parables and of Other Parts of the Gospels* (Oxford: Collingwood, 1834).

> argument from analogy or *a pari*, purposely so contrived as to illustrate one thing by its resemblance to, or its identity with another.[4]

Unlike the twentieth-century studies of the "parables," this is a quote from a man who knew his fables. He notes the antiquity of the genre, notes its function in rhetoric, that Jesus's "moral parables" use the same mode of reasoning, and that "parables" and fables are designed with the same intents and purposes. He concludes that if Jesus's "parables" contained impossible or improbable scenarios instead of "real histories," then they would be fables.

What Greswell means by "real histories" is key to understanding this distinction he imagines. He explains this in his next chapter, once again with reference to Aesop:

> The narratives contained in the moral parables, are not merely possible *per se*, (and therefore such as to bar any antecedent improbability of their being true,) but probable also: nor are they merely probable, so as to warrant a kind of weak presumption of their truth, but withal so eminently probable—so close an approximation to realities, both in the matter and in the manner of the relation—so consistent with nature and experience, tried by any rule we may please to adopt; that nothing but the force of inveterate prejudice—nothing but the confirmed habit of associating with the idea of a parable the notion of a fictitious history, could induce us to suppose they were not real. Our Saviour's moral parables are surely not like the apologues of Aesop: yet if both alike are really fictitious, what is there to discriminate them asunder? And why may not the fables of the one be called parables, and the parables of the other fables? But the fables of Aesop, however ingenious, are still fables, and would not impose on a child: the parables of our Saviour, if not real histories, are yet so like them, that we must do violence to our first impressions, on hearing or reading them, not to believe them real.[5]

Greswell is insistent that "Our Saviour's moral parables are surely not like the apologues of Aesop," but then strains to find a justification for this surety. Knowing that the fable is the genre of fictitious storytelling, Greswell concludes that the only way to differentiate between a parable and a fable is that parables must be real—well, not exactly. To gerrymander the parable around the fable, he admits that parables are indeed fictional, but so plausible and real that it would "do violence to our first impression" to say that they are fictional. While this view was possible in his day, many of Jesus's fables portray implausible

4 Greswell, *An Exposition of the Parables*, 80.

5 Greswell, *An Exposition of the Parables*, 85–86.

and unrealistic events, a fact increasingly recognized by parable scholars.[6] As we have noted many times already, the ancient fables contain many perfectly quotidian situations and ancient authors such as Theon reject possibility and impossibility as a dividing line. For Greswell, the "parable" must be somehow *more* real than the realistic fables.

8.2.2 *Richard Trench: "***Fabula** *... An Unpleasant Sound in the Ear"*

Greswell's contemporary and countryman, Richard Trench (1807–1886), was archbishop in the Anglican Church, serving first as Dean of Westminster Abbey, before taking the post of Archbishop of Dublin, Primate of Ireland. Like Greswell, Trench composed a book on the "parables" that was well-known and widely read into the nineteenth century, going through at least fifteen editions in the 1800s. On the first page of chapter one, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, Trench writes:

> Rather than attempt to add another to the many definitions already given, I will seek to note briefly what seems to me to difference [the parable] from the fable, the allegory, and such other forms of composition as are most nearly allied to, and most closely border upon it ... There are some who have identified the parable with the Aesopic *fable*, or drawn a slight and hardly perceptible line of distinction between the two: as, for instance, Lessing and Storr, who affirm that the fable relates an event as having actually taken place at a certain time, while the parable only assumes it as possible. But not to say that examples altogether fail to bear them out in this assertion, the difference is much more real, and far more deeply-seated than this. The parable is constructed to set forth a truth spiritual and heavenly: this the fable, with all its value, is not.[7]

Unlike Greswell, Trench admits that Lessing and Storr (on whom, see below) have shown that matters of possibility are not the operative distinction. Instead, he locates it in the "spiritual and heavenly" nature of the parable. As Trench goes on to argue, parables are not concerned with everyday morality like fables. While popular in earlier literature up to the early twentieth century, Trench's view has been met with general skepticism in critical scholarship of

6 Greswell probably does not wish us to draw attention, for example, to the eyebrow-raising, implausible, and impossible fables of Jesus in Luke about widows punching judges in the face (Luke 18:1–8), a steward receiving praise from his master for defrauding him (Luke 16:1–8), cameos by deities and angels (Luke 12:16–21; 16:19–31), or of a landowner paying hired hands the same for one hour of work as the full day (Matt 20:1–16). See further 11.5.

7 Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1841). I am citing from the twelfth edition (1867), here page 9.

today.[8] For Trench it is this loftiness of the "parable" that is operative, unlike the fable where there is "a glorification of cunning as a guide to life and the delivery from evil."[9] This spiritual, heavenly, and lofty genre thus does not permit for anything that could be construed as ribald or humorous: "It belongs to this, the loftier standing-point of the parable, that it should be deeply earnest, allowing itself therefore in no jesting nor raillery at the weaknesses, the follies, or the crimes of men."[10] Finally, because creation comes from God, Trench argues it is "too perfect, has too much reverence owing to it, to be represented otherwise than as it really is." Parables therefore do not transgress "the established laws of nature—in nothing marvelous or anomalous."[11] Trench offers here a familiar list of defining "parable" qualities since rejected by parable scholarship, and differences between parable and fable that do not survive close investigation, but which remain imprinted on many moderns. Among the more scholarly of these arguments that survives today, one subtle shift in them has taken place since this period. Still during the 1800s, parable scholars and their audiences knew their fables, and presumably recognized that they contain many "possible" stories. Thus, to make the "parable" separate, it cannot just be "possible." It must have "nothing anomalous" and it must be a "real history," so real that it "does violence" to them if they do not appear real at the first impression. This is a far cry from present attempts to divide "parables" and "fables" on the issue of realism. Today, scholars have permitted "parables" to encroach on all of the fable's territory, confining the fable to impossible stories alone. To get away with such a distinction is only possible when no one knows their fables.

While fable scholars lay blame on Grimm and La Fontaine for the modern myths about the ancient fable, it seems likely to me that the widespread views about the supposed distinctions between "parables" and "fables" have their origin in these opening pages of Trench's immensely popular, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*. Trench's reasons for dividing parables and fables most likely have piety at their root, wishing not to attribute anything to Jesus that could be potentially embarrassing or taboo. These divisions are surely those

8 Most recently, see Meier, "To try to make *all* the Synoptic parables speak directly and primarily of the grand history of God's dealings with Israel or of the kingdom of God is to force them onto a Procrustean bed. Many of the so-called example stories specific to Luke's Gospel—notably the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Rich Fool—do not operate on such a grand scale" (*Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*, 41 [emphasis original]).

9 Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, 10.

10 Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, 11. This is the primary distinction on which Jülicher ultimately decided to distinguish "parables" and "fables."

11 Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, 12.

"dangerous" motivations based in personal theology that Jülicher warned against.[12] Each of Trench's taboos that he cannot accept in the "parables" are found in the fables of Jesus in Luke: for "parables" recommending cunning, see 11.3; for ribald and humorous "parables," see 11.4; for the marvelous and anomalous, see 11.5.

One final point worthy of discussion that disconnects Trench from his predecessors is the use of English. His work reflects a transition in scholarship to compose in modern languages rather than Latin. Trench casts his aspersions on earlier scholarship that was composed in Latin prose, and which routinely wrote about Jesus's fables with the word "fabula:" "There is then some reason for the fault which Calov finds with Grotius, though he is only too ready to find fault, for commonly using the terms fabula and fabella in speaking of our Lord's parables, terms which certainly have an unpleasant sound in the ear."[13] We turn now to a couple of these scholars, who, writing in Latin, refer to Jesus's fables regularly as "fabula," and reckon them as belonging to the ancient fable.

8.2.3 *Gottlob Christian Storr: "Parables Are Rational Fables"*

Prior to Trench, and prior even to the discovery of Babrius's fables in 1842, several books on the "parables" give a different impression, blissfully unaware that later scholars would insist they divide "parables" and "fables." Though few today have the wherewithal to slog through the dense academic Latin prose of Renaissance scholarship, the fruit of this labor reveals a lively discussion taking place before the transition to modern languages. The first foremost figure to mention is Tübingen professor of Theology, Gottlob Christian Storr (1746–1805). He was the founder of the so-called "Tübingen School," instructed Hegel, and was the first proponent of the view that Mark's gospel came first.[14] In addition to presaging what would become a highly influential view on Mark's gospel, Storr deserves remembrance also for situating the "parables" of Jesus in the ancient fable tradition.

In a dense but reasonably trim twenty-thousand-word essay, "Dissertatio hermeneutica de Parabolis Christi,"[15] Storr covers the ancient rhetorical and

12 "Gefährlicher indess ist der Widerstand aus theologischen Motiven" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100).

13 Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, 12.

14 D. Gottlob Christian Storr, *Über den Zweck der evangelischen Geschichte und der Briefe Johannis* (Tübingen: J.F. Heerbrandt, 1786).

15 Gottlob Christian Storr, "Dissertatio hermeneutica de Parabolis Christi," (Tübingen: Fuesian, 1779). The essay later appears in D. Gottlob Christian Storr, *Opscula Academica ad Interpretationem Librorum Sacrorum Pertinentia* (Tübingen: Cotta, 1796), 89–144. Mercifully for my readers (but too late for me), I discovered an English translation of

theoretical ground of "parable" and "fable" in significant detail. Storr brings attention to the fact that writing in Latin, using "fabula" might give the wrong impression when equating it with the ancient genre.[16] He addresses the difference between παραβολή and λόγος in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, addresses the fable of the progymnasmata, discusses other ancient authors who describe comparative terminology, and he remarks that there are a great many scholars who "have called the parables of Christ 'fables,'" such as Grotius and Cocceius.[17] Certainly emboldened by Grotius and in a similar manner to him, Storr likewise argues that fables are the operative genre here. Though the dependence has never been studied, Jülicher's own theory on the fables of Jesus was influence by Storr, whose essay he hails as "the most excellent study on the topic in the entire century."[18]

In Storr's view, the difference between παραβολή and λόγος in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, is that παραβολή conveys a hypothetical situation, while λόγος frames the events as a narrative. It is on this basis that he believes, for example, that the Lukan version of the Mustard Seed is a fable (Luke 13:19), while the version of the Mustard Seed in Mark is a parable (Mark 4:30–31). The essential difference is that Luke's version has cast it into a past-tense narrative, while Mark's remains a purely hypothetical scenario:

> The example found in Luke 13:19 has the form of a *fable*, while the very same in Mark 4:30f is a *parable*. Mark's version does not take as a fact that any *certain man*, took any *certain grain of mustard* and sewed it into *his garden*, rather, that it was possible and customary to happen at *any time or place.*[19]

Storr also appeals to the *Progymnasmata* for answers, specifically Aphthonius, whose *progymnasmata* was the most popular through this period. As we did in 5.6, Storr noted that Aphthonius classified fables into "rational," "irrational,"

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this important article: D. Gottlob Christian Storr, "Dissertation on the Parables of Christ," in *Tracts, Philological and Exegetical, on the Old and New Testaments*, trans. William R. Whittingham, ed. John Brown, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1835), 2:59–137.

16 This is the cause of Trench's burning ears when reading Abraham Calov's criticism of Hugo Grotius.

17 Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 94.

18 "das Trefflichste zur Sache im ganzen Jahrhundert" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:288).

19 "Itaque apud Lucam XIII 19 *fabulae* formam habet, quod apud Marcum IV 30 f. est *parabola*, quoniam hoc loco non sumitur *certus* aliquis *homo*, qui *certum granum* sinapis *suo horto* mandaverit, sed, quid fieri *universe* possit et soleat, exponitur." Translations of the Latin in this section are my own. These authors signal when they refer to ancient Latin terminology by using italics, so the emphasis throughout is original (Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 90). Jülicher rejects this distinction, attributing it to Lessing in *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100.

and "mixed," and believes the first of these is the kind of fable Jesus used: "The 'rational fable' relates an event that is *absolutely* possible, i.e. which occurs customarily, or is possible that it *could.*"[20] This he distinguishes from the other kinds of fables that rely on irrational objects or creatures.

It is from this comparison with Aphthonius that Storr states matter-of-factly, "The first type of *fables* (i.e., "rational fables"), the only kind which Christ frequently used, the Evangelists call by the name '*collatio*,' in contrast to the Greek custom."[21] He goes on to offer the familiar explanation for the peculiar use of terminology in the Synoptic Gospels based on the umbrella-term of the Hebrew *mashal* (see 7.2 above). Though he does not say so explicitly, it is either coincidental or deliberate that he defines "parables" in a manner familiar from the *progymnasmata*: "*parabolae*, discerning the sense of which I have set out to establish, are *rational fables*, or *fictitious narratives, approximating the truth, by which our Lord illustrated certain moral doctrine*."[22]

Toward the beginning of his essay, Storr is careful to reassure the hesitant reader in his use of the term "*fabula*," writing,

> There is no reason to consider this most ancient and, as Luther rightly sees, most excellent method of teaching through fables as trifling or beneath the dignity of Christ. Nor should we jump to the conclusion that because our Lord did not use the term "apologus" and they are not completely *moral* fables, that none of that kind were ever told by him.[23]

Storr goes on to point out that the common definition of a parable as "a history bearing similitude to the truth" would fit many of Aesop's fables, if only Jesus's parables were not devoted to spiritual doctrine.[24] From this he concludes that,

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20 "Illae rem, *absolute* possibilem, i.e. quae fieri vel *solet*, ut [scriptural references], vel *potest* certe" (Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 93–94).

21 "Primi generis *fabulas*, quas Christus solas frequentavit, evangelistae contra graecam consuetudinem ipso *collationis* nominee appellant" (Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 94–95).

22 "*Parabolae*, de quarum sensu inveniendo praecipere instituimus, *fabulae* sunt *rationales*, seu, *narrationes fictae, veris proximae, quibus Dominus morale aliquam dotrinam illustravit*" (Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 111).

23 "Neque etiam indignum Christo, aut vile haberi debet antiquissimum, idemque, ut Lutherus (various references) probe vidit, praestantissimum (more references) per fabulas docendi genus, neque, cum apologos, aut universe morales fabulas, tradidisse non legatur, nullas continuo narrasse Dominus dicendus est … etc … Ea autem est parabolarum Christi specifica, quam vocant, differentia, quae profecto non efficit, ut fabularum genere contineri haud possint" (Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 94). On Luther's love of Aesopic fables, a corpus which he considered second only to the Bible, see Carl P. E. Springer, *Luther's Aesop* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2011).

24 Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 94–95.

this spiritual focus, "however, is only what is called the *specific* difference of Christ's parables, but this certainly does not deprive them of the *generic* character of fables."[25] Even though Babrius was only discovered after his death and he was a century ahead of what we recognize as the beginning of critical parable scholarship, Storr worked before apologetic concerns could stamp out the view he espoused. With the *progymnasmata* in view, he held that Jesus taught in "rational fables." In his approach, as Storr says himself, he was not the first.

8.2.4 *Hugo Grotius: "These αἴνους (Fables) of Christ"*

The Dutch humanist, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), was a prodigious intellect, entered Leiden University at eleven, published his first academic book at sixteen, and was a towering figure in law, political theory, philosophy, and theology, among other areas. The subsequent reaction to his work by scholars like Storr is especially consequential. Grotius's theological insights, some of which he penned in prison, and which often formed the backbone of his work in other areas,[26] are on full display in his four-volume *Opera Omnia Theologica*.[27] Grotius was one of (if not) the first to apply historical-critical methodology to the biblical text, combining the method imported from humanist philosophy with the training he had received since boyhood in the classics. In the second volume of *Opera Omnia Theologica*, which takes up the Gospels and Acts, Grotius's work resembles a modern philological commentary. When he reaches "ἐν παραβολαῖς" at Matthew 13:3, Grotius identifies the correspondence to the Hebrew משל and leaps into a dense discussion of the rhetorical terms and categories of comparison used by the ancient rhetors (see 5.6). Like Storr after him, he rehearses all the comparative forms, from Quintilian to Cicero, 2 Samuel, Ezekiel, and so on. Grotius homes in on the fabulist Phaedrus (again, Babrius was not discovered yet), whose first prologue he quotes to explain the origin of speaking *in fabellis*. He notes that the Hebrews, in contrast to others such as Quintilian, say "*mashal*" for both παραβολήν (comparison) and αἶνον

25 "Ea autem est parabolarum Christi *specifica*, quam vocant, differentia, quae profecto non efficit, ut fabularum *genere* contineri haud possint" (Storr, *Opscula Academica*, 95).

26 E.g., his work on international law: Christoph A. Stumpf, *The Grotian Theology of International Law: Hugo Grotius and the Moral Foundations of International Relations* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

27 Hugo Grotius, *Opera Omnia Theologica*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Blaeu, 1679). The earliest locatable edition is after Grotius's death. Citations here are taken from the 1732 printing: (Basel: Thurneysen, 1732).

(fable).[28] Finally, he offers the explanation for the situation he sees in the Gospels:

> Hellenistic Jews, in order to give the closest approximation to the Hebrew words, paid less attention to the Greek forms of speech, מִשׁל turns into παροιμίαν (proverb) and into παραβολὴν (parable). So then, these αἴνους (fables) of Christ (for few are full παραβολαί [comparisons]) John calls παροιμίας (proverbs) and the other evangelists παραβολής: just as, likewise, γνώμη (maxim) is called παραβολή (parable) at (Matthew) 15:15.[29]

In short, Grotius understands the texts we familiarly think of with the term "parable" as fables. He believes the Gospel authors, including John, have deviated from the expected terminology in an effort to maintain the closest fidelity to the Hebrew tradition. Elsewhere in Grotius's commentary, he observes that the fables of Jesus use the telltale fable genre indicator of the *epimythium*, such as the οὕτως ἔσται that begins Matt 13:49.[30] Though Grotius's arguments in the realm of biblical criticism have essentially been lost today, his views were engaged with and inherited by no small number of Renaissance scholars.[31] His practice of referring to "parables" with the term "fabula" was far from the exception.[32]

In the work of these early historical-critically minded scholars, Storr and Grotius present a marked contrast to the views expressed in reaction to them by the likes of Trench who were theologically motivated to distinguish Jesus's

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28 "Sed Hebraei & παραβολήν (*comparationem*) & αἶνον [*fabulam*] מִשׁל dixere" (Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in Quatuor Evangelia et Acta Apostolorum*, vol. 2 of *Opera Omnia Theologica* [Basel: Thurneysen, 1732], 134).

29 "Judaei Hellenistae, qui ut vim Hebraicarum vocum quam proxime effingant, ad Graeci sermonis proprietatem minus solent attendere, מִשׁל modo παροιμίαν [*proverbium*] modo παραβολὴν [*parabolam*] vertunt. Atque ita hos Christi αἴνους [*fabulas*] (nam paucae sunt plenae παραβολαί [*comparationes*]) caeteri Scriptores παραβολής, Johannes παροιμίας [*proverbium*] dixit: sicut vicissim γνώμη [*sententia*] vocatur παραβολή [*parabola*], infra xv, 15" (Grotius, *Annotationes in Quatuor Evangelia*, 135).

30 Grotius, *Annotationes in Quatuor Evangelia*, 144. We will discuss this straightforward genre indicator at length in Chapter 12.

31 As Trench noted above, Abraham Calov interacts heavily with Grotius in his *Biblia Novi Testamenti Illustrata*. One of the few places that Calov does not cite Grotius is when he begins his commentary on Matthew 13 by essentially plagiarizing a complete page from Grotius's commentary. Calov repeats verbatim the passage quoted from Grotius above, and then some, and cites him throughout his commentary. The influence of Grotius upon Calov is significant to say the least. See Abraham Calov, *Biblia Novi Testamenti Illustrata: in quibus emphases vocum ac mens dictorum genuina è fontibus, contextu & analogia Scripturæ eruuntur*. (Dresden: Zimmermann, 1719), 295.

32 A full treatment of this practice and a complete study of how Renaissance scholars describe the fables of Jesus in relationship to the ancient fable context is beyond the scope of the present undertaking but would be a valuable study.

fables from their literary environment. That it occurred to Storr and Grotius already at the dawning of critical scholarship to situate Jesus in the literary environment of the fable is also reflective of the disparity between their time and ours, before the fables were forgotten in later centuries. It has taken until this twenty-first century undertaking to work out in full what was inchoate in the 17th and 18th century, to situate Jesus's "parables" in the literary context of the ancient fable.[33]

8.2.5 *An Icelandic Monk and the* Dæmisögur *of Jesus*

I turn only briefly here to the Middle Ages. It is evident that fables were used widely at this time. Here I offer just a few snapshots that have implications for the current project. A second practical approach to recognizing the artificial division between "parable" and "fable" in the history of their transmission is to observe what takes place in languages that do not have two distinct words for them. While those of us who use the languages of biblical scholarship—English, French, and German—probably have never considered the possibility that there would be just one term for "parable" and "fable," this is the case in several languages. In Icelandic, for example, the modern language closest to Old Norse, and famous most of all for its storytelling tradition, there is a single word for both "fable" and "parable:" *dæmisaga* (plural *dæmisögur*). In this linguistic situation, Icelanders associate *dæmisögur* equally with Aesop and Jesus. One may wonder if Old Norse speakers and Icelanders ever learned to interpret the fables of Jesus and the fables of Aesop as two separate things. Until the thirteenth century at least, we have evidence that they did not. One of the oldest manuscripts that survives from Iceland, Sarpur Collection manuscript 622/1868–212, is a collection of Jesus's *dæmisögur* in Latin used for a liturgy.[34] Here Jesus's fables have been plucked out of their narrative context from the Gospel of Matthew and laid out on the page in a manner quite similar to the Aesopic fable collections.[35]

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33 It was a year and a half after submitting my dissertation that I learned of and read these works by Storr and Grotius, which have been essentially cut off from modern scholarship because they were composed in Latin. I consider myself in good company and have found no small reassurance in the thesis offered here, having learned that the thoughts of Storr and Grotius *in nuce* closely resemble my own. The ancient evidence that has come to light since their time offers further support of the present thesis.

34 From what survives of the manuscript, the specific liturgical setting appears to be a Pre-Tridentine Matins of a common confessor, made of nocturns. Appreciation to my colleague, Kelsi Ray, for her help in identifying the specific liturgical context.

35 The caption reads, "Blað úr skinnhandriti með dæmisögum úr Nýja testamentinu á latínu og latneskum nótnasöng. Frá 13. öld, komið úr Svarfaðardal" (http://sarpur.is/Adfang.aspx?AdfangID=315885).

Figure 11 Jesus's Fables in an Icelandic Liturgy. Manuscript 622/1868–212 in the Sarpur collection: "Leaf from a vellum manuscript of fables in Latin from the New Testament, and musical notation for a Latin song, 13th century, from Svarfaðardal." Justin David Strong.

These two codex leaves from a lost manuscript preserve Matt 13:44–52 (the Treasure Hidden in a Field, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Dragnet), followed immediately by Matt 25:14–23 (the Talents), without any of the preceding or intervening narrative material. This manuscript, a fable collection of Jesus produced by an Icelandic monk, demonstrates that, to this culture at least, Jesus's fables could be read in the same manner as the collections of Aesop we know from elsewhere.

8.2.6 *Odo of Cheriton and the* Parabolae *of Aesop*

A thirteenth-century Cistercian monk on the British Isles, Odo of Cheriton (ca. 1180/1190–1247), was famous in his lifetime for many religious publications including sermons and a manual for priests on penitence. To posterity he is

best known for his collection of Latin *parabolae.*[36] Like other figures of the period such as Luther, these *parabolae* were given a strong Christian character and used to make illustrations in his sermons. The collection thus employs the fable to the same end as the rhetoricians of the Classical period. Though modern discussions of this work describe it as a book of "fables," the title of the work is *parabolae.* Odo is quite conscious in his choice of terminology for the title as well.[37] The first line of the prologue describes his collection using an adaptation from Matt 13:35, "I will open my mouth in "parables' (*parabolae*) and I will set forth similitudes (*similitudines*) and example stories (*exempla*)." At the conclusion of his prologue, he transitions to the collection of *parabolae* by writing, "And because this is a parabolic (*parabolicus*) treatise, let us take our beginning in a parable from the book of Judges." The first "parable" from Judg 9:8–15 is then followed by a mix of Aesopic fables, some from classical authors like Ovid, Seneca, and Juvenal, and others inspired by the Old and New Testament. As John Jacobs notes, to Odo,

> Any distinction among *similtudines* and *exempla* and *fabulae* and *parabolae* seem insignificant … even more strikingly, he is presenting his teaching *method* as nothing less than the method of the Bible, as the very method which the Truth himself used to teach Truth.[38]

These Aesopic fables to which he has applied Christian morals he terms *parabolae*. The implicit understanding from Odo is that a "parable" is a Christian fable.

8.2.7 *Berechiah ha-Nakdan and the Medieval* משלי שועלים

As we saw in Chapter 6, the most important language group that does not distinguish between "parable" and "fable" is the Semitic, including Hebrew and Aramaic. We saw there that the traditional rendered of the polysemous term משל as "parable" is problematic. We also saw that there are rabbinic figures who imitated Aesop from *The Life of Aesop*, references to the fables of Aesop as משלים, and to Aesop himself as a Jewish figure.[39] Contemporary with our Icelandic monk and Odo of Cheriton, the English rabbi Berechiah

36 First translated into English with introduction by John C. Jacobs, *The Fables of Odo of Cheriton* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985). All the translations of Odo given here are from Jacobs.

37 Odo's *parabolae* are assigned to Perry numbers 588–643. The total number of Odo's original collection is unknown, but it was probably around one hundred, give or take twenty-five. To these we could add nearly two hundred more various exempla from his sermons.

38 Jacobs, *The Fables of Odo of Cheriton*, 10.

39 In Modern Hebrew as well, "fable" is משל and Aesop (אֵיזוֹפּוֹס or אֵיסוֹפּוֹס) is known as a ממשיל משלים, *mamshil meshalim*, woodenly, "fabler of fables/parabler of parables."

ha-Nakdan (fl. 12th–13th century) continued the tradition of those rabbis from late-antiquity who knew hundreds of משלי שועלים "fox fables." Ha-Nakdan produced a collection of more than a hundred "fox fables" (משלי שועלים) from Aesopic materials, the Talmud, and far Eastern sources.[40] From languages like Icelandic and Hebrew, monks like Odo, and rabbis like Berechiah ha-Nakdan, we may draw this important insight. In languages that do not distinguish them, the supposed differences imagined by the likes of Greswell, Trench, and some modern scholars do not manifest themselves.

8.2.8 *Nonnus and the μῦθοι of Jesus*

We have noted that the fables of Aesop were read in Semitic contexts, and the same term was applied to them as the "parables" of Jesus in Syriac ܡܬܠܐ, *mathla* (e.g., throughout the Peshitta); likewise that Jews have always used the same Semitic terms for "parables" and fables in Hebrew: משל *mashal* and Aramaic: מתלא, *mathla*. Like these other linguistic indications prior to the Middle Ages that there is no distinction in Semitic contexts, at least one Christian author well-acquainted with pagan literature saw fit to apply the term μῦθοι to the fables of Jesus. In the fourth or fifth century, Nonnus of Panopolis composed two poetic works that have survived. His principal work is *Dionysiaca*, a 48-book epic, the longest surviving poem from antiquity, describing the life of Dionysius in Homeric hexameters. The other work from Nonnus that survives is a paraphrase of the Gospel of John in Homeric verse.[41] It is here that Nonnus applies a familiar fable term for those of Jesus:

> The Hebrews linked together, encircling Christ like a crown, and were saying to him in crazed speech: "How long will you conceal your meaning in 'parables' (μύθοις)?" (*Paraphr. Jo.* 10.85–87)[42]

40 For an English translation, see Hadas and Kredel, *Fables of a Jewish Aesop*. On the man, see Haim Schwarzbaum, *The Mishle Shualim* (*Fox Fables*) *of Rabbi Berechiach Ha-Nakdan: A Study in Comparative Folklore and Fable Lore* (Kiron, Israel: Institute for Jewish and Arab Folklore Research, 1979).

41 Lee F. Sherry, "The Hexameter Paraphrase of St. John Attributed to Nonnus of Panopolis: Prolegomenon and Translation" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1991). Though I have not been able to access this dissertation, it apparently provides the first English translation. The author argues that the paraphrase of John is not by Nonnus himself, rather produced by one of his followers. The only complete Greek edition remains the Teubner: Nonni Panopolitani, *Paraphrasis S. Evangelii Joannei*, ed. Augustinus Scheindler (Leipsig: Teubner, 1881).

42 Ἑβραῖοι στεφανηδὸν ὁμόζυγες εἰν ἑνὶ χώρῳ Χριστὸν ἐκυκλώσαντο καὶ ἔννεπον ἄφρονι μύθῳ· ἡμείων τέο μέχρις ὑποκλέπτεις φρένα μύθοις.

There is no obvious point of reference in John for Nonnus's verse. The closest in John is 16:25, in which Jesus says to the disciples, "I have said these things to you ἐν παροιμίαις." Somewhat closer is Matt 13:10, "The disciples came to him and said, 'Why do you speak to them ἐν παραβολαῖς?" Though he offers no explanation for his choice of terminology here, Nonnus has opted for the familiar term used for verse fables, μῦθος, when he places the "parables" in verse here.

8.2.9 *The Gospel of Thomas and the Missing* παραβολη

From this intermingling of terminology, we can also find the intermingling of content already in the Gospel of Thomas. Practically speaking, if a well-known Aesopic "fable" were attributed to Jesus, or a "parable" of Jesus were attributed to Aesop, this would be a good indication that the two were not separate concepts. We have exactly this in the Gospel of Thomas: "Jesus said, 'Woe to the Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in the cattle manger, for it does not eat or [let] the cattle eat'" (Gos. Thom. 102).[43] Here the Gospel of Thomas attributes to Jesus a well-known fable in a similitude form, attested widely in various allusions by the second century CE.[44] In the second century, it is referred to twice by Lucian (*Tim.* 14; *Ind.* 30), alluded to by Straton in an epigram preserved in the Anth. pal. 12.236.3–4, and in a version first spotted only in 2014, in the lexicon of Diogenianus:[45] "The dog in the manger: concerning those who neither themselves use nor allow others to use: insofar as the dog neither itself eats the barley-corns nor allows the horse to" (Diogenianus 83).[46] I can still add one further allusion that has gone unnoticed until the present in Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 6.99. Here the Cynic ("dog") attendee starves himself and does not allow others to "consume" a discussion either: "But you, dog, are always starving and do not allow us to share a nice extended discussion—or rather, you do not let us consume one; for good conversation nourishes the soul" (trans. Olson, LCL). The earliest preserved fable version is Perry 702 (Gibbs 163):[47]

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43 Trans. Elaine H. Pagels et al., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts Complete in One Volume*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 152; cf. Luke 11:52 and Matt 23:13.

44 The most thorough treatment of "the Dog in the Manger" from antiquity to the present is a chapter devoted to the history and meaning of the fable and its proverb form in Wolfgang Mieder, *Behold the Proverbs of a People: Proverbial Wisdom in Culture, Literature, and Politics* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 363–414.

45 It was first identified by Mieder, *Behold the Proverbs*.

46 Ἡ κύων ἐν τῇ φάτνῃ: πρὸς τοὺς μήτε αὐτοὺς χρωμένους, μήτε ἄλλους ἐῶντας· παρόσον ἡ κύων οὔτε αὐτὴ κριθὰς ἐσθί̓ει, καὶ τὸν ἵππον κωλύει (E. L. Leutsch and F. G. Schneidewin, eds., *Corpus paroemiographorum graecorum*, vol. 2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1851], 32).

47 That is in the fables of Heinrich Steinhöwel, published in 1480.

> *People frequently begrudge something to others that they themselves cannot enjoy. Even though it does them no good, they won't let others have it. Listen to a fable about such an event.*
> There was a wicked dog lying in a manger full of hay. When the cattle came and wanted to eat, the dog barred their way, baring his teeth. The cattle said to the dog, "You are being very unfair by begrudging us something we need which is useless to you. Dogs don't eat hay, but you will not let us near it." The same thing happened when a dog was holding a bone in his mouth: the dog couldn't chew on the bone that way, but no other dog was able to chew on it either.
> *The fable shows that it is not easy to avoid envy: with some effort you can try to escape its effects, but it never goes away entirely.* (trans. Gibbs)

The Dog in the Manger is a straightforward example of an Aesopic fable being attributed to Jesus, but it is only the most obvious example among many more probable ones. Another strong parallel in Thomas and the canonical Gospels is the Dragnet (Matt 13:47–50; Gos. Thom. 8) with Babrius, *Fab.* 4 and 9 (as we saw already in 2.2.3). While fishing fables are very common indeed, there is one clue suggesting direct literary dependence of the Gospel version on an Aesopic predecessor. Of all the references to the dragnet (σαγήνη) in antiquity, the only examples in which a *group* of men is not required to wield it (as would normally be the case) are this fable of Jesus in Matthew and Thomas, and the Babrian version.[48]

The version of the Dragnet fable in the Gospel of Thomas alerts us to another unnoticed facet of the fables of Jesus when they are preserved in Thomas. There are fables in Thomas that have a parallel with a canonical Gospel fable, but which have been replaced or redacted to be closer to a known Aesopic version of that fable.[49] The Treasure Hidden in a Field is still a stronger case of this phenomenon—attributing a more elaborate, perhaps more satisfying version of an Aesopic fable to Jesus, who tells a cognate form in the Synoptics. In Matthew, the Treasure Hidden in a Field occupies a single verse: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matt 13:44). The Gospel of Thomas preserves a longer version with embellishments paralleled in the Aesopic version from the Augustana Collection. Here are the two versions:

48 This clever observation was made by my colleague Jimmy Haring in a term paper on Matthew's dragnet parable.

49 The notable exception to this is the Rich Fool, which is less fable-like in the Thomasine version than the Lukan version.

> Jesus said, "the Kingdom is like a man who had in his field a hidden treasure without knowing of it. And after he died, he left the field to his son. The son did not know. He took that field and sold it. And the one who bought it went ploughing. He found the treasure and began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished." (Gos. Thom. 109 [trans. Gathercole])[50]

> A farmer who was about to die wanted his sons to be knowledgeable about the farm, so he summoned them and said, "My children, there is a treasure buried in one of my vineyards." After he died, his sons took plows and mattocks and dug up the entire farm. They did not find any treasure, but the vineyard paid them back with a greatly increased harvest.
> *Thus they learned that man's greatest treasure consists in work.* (Perry 42; Chambry 83 with three versions [trans. Gibbs])[51]

There are still other parallels gathered by Priest,[52] but from these examples we have decisive evidence that the Gospel of Thomas uses a contemporary fable from Aesop and attributes it to Jesus to improve upon the canonical form.[53] Given the quantity of the "parables" in Thomas, it is remarkable that never once does the Graeco-Coptic term ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲟⲗⲏ "*parabolē*" appear. If Thomas is independent of the canonical gospels, then we have separate and arguably more significant evidence that Jesus was understood as a fable teller. Unimpeded by the Synoptic tradition, it would never occur to the author to refer to the fables with a cognate like παραβολή. Whether the Gospel of Thomas is independent or not, it describes its contents as λόγοι, which would encompass the fable genre along with the other material.[54] In any case, if parables and fables were perceived to be different genres by these early Christians responsible for Thomas, then this practice of attributing Aesopic fables to Jesus speaks against it. Based on these examples, it seemed that it was natural to attribute Aesopic fables to Jesus by the author(s) of Thomas.

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50 Simon James Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 592.

51 Note also J. D. Crossan, "Hidden Treasure Parables in Late Antiquity," *SBLSP* (1976): 359–76. Horace, *Sat.* 2.6.10–13 also refers to a story of this kind.

52 John Priest, "Thomas and Aesop," in *Religion, Literature, and Society in Ancient Israel, Formative Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al., vol. 2 of *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 115–32.

53 If Thomas is independent, then one could argue that Thomas's version reflects an older fable form, while Matthew preserves only compressed versions.

54 P.Oxy. 654, which preserves the incipit of Thomas in Greek, reads "These are the *logoi* …," Οὗτοι οἱ {οι} λόγοι…. λόγος, as we learned in 5.7.2, is the genre term used for prose fables.

8.3 Aesop and the Fable in The Gospel of Luke

The last layer of this excavation is the Gospel of Luke itself. For the present chapter, I will highlight several remarkable connections to Aesop and the fable in the Lukan *Sondergut* that prepare the way for the comparisons in the coming chapters. The first remarkable discovery tying the Lukan *Sondergut* together with the fable tradition appears in the resurrection narrative. As we first noted in 2.4.3, the Lukan Jesus quotes a line from Aesop, in iambic trimeter, to chastise the disciples after his resurrection: "O foolish ones and slow in heart to believe in everything that was spoken by the prophets," ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεύειν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται· (Luke 24:25).[55] This phrase is found in variants of two fables recorded in Chambry:

> Ὦ ἀνόητε καὶ βραδὺ τῇ καρδίᾳ (Chambry 40 variant; cf. Perry 9)

> ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ (Chambry 127 variant; cf. Perry 314)

These two fables, The Fox and the Goat in the Well,[56] and The Frogs and the Sun,[57] were well-known already in the first century, appearing in both Phaedrus and Babrius. Ross and Reece disagree about the direction of dependence, the former holding that the fables took the line from the Gospel, and the latter holding that the Lukan Jesus is quoting a well-known fable. As Ross notes, it is either one way or the other since this phrase is not found anywhere in Greek literature apart from these two fables and Luke.[58] Reece makes many compelling arguments for why it must be Jesus quoting a fable rather than the other way around. One of the most compelling is that embedded in the prose of the Gospel, the phrase in Luke 24:25 scans as a complete line of iambic trimeter:

> ⏑̆⏑–/⏑||⏑⏑–/⏑⏑–⏑ ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ.

While a heap of scholarly skepticism is appropriate for any argument that a quotation on the lips of Jesus has gone undiscovered until 2016, the neglect of the fable in modern critical scholarship makes it less surprising. Reece

55 Ross, "'Ὦ Ἀνόητοι Καί Βραδεῖς Τῇ Καρδίᾳ'"; Reece, "'Aesop', 'Q' and 'Luke'."

56 The sheer number of variants of this fable indicates its popularity, with seven recorded in Chambry and also a version in Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.9. This quote is found in Chambry 40, variant 7, line 8.

57 It appears in Babrius, *Fab.* 24, Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.6 (and cf. Ademar 10) and the prose version (Perry 314). *Note bene*, this fable is Chambry 127 in his first edition, the variant is located under 128 in the second edition, variant 2, line 6.

58 Ross, "'Ὦ Ἀνόητοι Καί Βραδεῖς Τῇ Καρδίᾳ'," 376.

rightly points out that the presence of meter here gives strong support for his argument:

> The iambic trimeter is, of course, the metre most like natural human speech, as Aristotle reminds us in his *Poetics* (1449a), and so it is possible that Luke at some point in his life blurted out a full iambic trimeter verse entirely by accident. It seems most unlikely, however, that this event, remarkable as it was on its own, would have coincided, again entirely by accident, with the utterance of a rhetorical and poetic expression like this one—and, moreover, that this expression would then appear in two Aesopic fables in a metrical form that evolved from the iambic trimeter.[59]

In addition to the arguments marshalled by Reece, the most obvious to add is its coherence with the Aesopic connections that we are identifying throughout the Lukan Gospel.[60] A further and more specific connection is that criticism of foolish behavior is a preoccupation of the Lukan fables and perhaps the most common topos of the first-century fable as a whole.[61] Thus, it is not simply that the line is unparalleled elsewhere, but also that it scans as iambic trimeter. The verse is also typical of a fable in censuring foolish behavior, and in a gospel with many further Aesopic connections. Finding Jesus recite a line in iambic trimeter from an Aesopic fable at this climactic point in the Gospel is remarkable on its own, but it is only the first curious connection we must account for. From this climactic address to the disciples at the conclusion of the Gospel, we may look back to another episode of climactic L material preceding the Central Section (Luke 9:51–19:27).

Prior to the Central Section, the Rejection at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30) is an episode with significance for the overarching plot of Luke-Acts. John Nolland regards this episode as "a programmatic text for Luke's whole enterprise,"[62] and I. H. Marshall describes it in similar terms: "[This] narrative is placed here, then, for its programmatic significance, and it contains many of the main themes of Lk.-Acts *in nuce*."[63] In this famous pericope that inaugurates

59 Reece, "'Aesop', 'Q' and 'Luke'," 366.

60 Reece notes the other references to Aesopic fables that Luke quotes in the Q material, and the similarities of "parables" to fables ("Aesop', 'Q' and 'Luke,'" 367–75).

61 In addition to the explicit language of foolishness in fables of the Rich Fool and the Moronic Builder, the majority of the L fables are concerned with foolish and prudent behavior, including the Friend at Midnight, the Place at the Table, the Warring King, the Prodigal Son, the Crafty Steward, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Judge and the Widow, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. We will have occasion to return to this subject often in Book II.

62 John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas: Word, 1989), 195.

63 I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 177–78.

Jesus's ministry, he enters his home synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath and reads from Isaiah 61. His message is received positively at first, "All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth" (Luke 4:22a). Then Jesus turns to chastising the audience, however, causing the crowd to quickly turn on him, "When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage" (Luke 4:28). A mob then attempts to hurl Jesus off a cliff, but he is able to slip past them and go on his way. Despite the significance of this episode for Luke's message, its conclusion has been no small conundrum, not least because there are no cliffs near Nazareth. Why not simply stone Jesus for blasphemy?

As Froelich and Phillips have demonstrated in a 2019 article, the Rejection at Nazareth is illuminated by the conclusion of *The Life of Aesop*, which contains uncanny parallels to the Lukan passage.[64] The narrative arc of both scenes is identical in that the audience first delights in the message of the fable teller, but turn against him when his message becomes chastisement and rebuke concerning the status of their race vis-à-vis their neighbors:

> And when he came to Delphi, he undertook to give an exhibition there, too, and the people enjoyed hearing him at first but gave him nothing. Seeing that the men were as pale as potherbs, Aesop said to them, "Even as the leaves of the trees such is the race of men." Still jibbing at them he said, "Men of Delphi, you are like a piece of driftwood floating on the sea; when we see it at a great distance, tossing on the waves, we think it is something worthwhile, but then when we approach and come to see it, we find that it is a very insignificant thing of no value. So it has been with me; when I was far from your city, I was impressed with you as men of wealth and generosity, but now that I see you are inferior to other men in your breeding and in your city, I recognize that I was mistaken. I shall carry away a bad impression of you, for I see that you act in no way unworthy of your ancestors." (*Vit. Aes.* 124–25)

Much like the Lukan Jesus's rebuke of the Jewish crowd at Nazareth, Aesop is here calling into question the claim of the Delphians that they have a privileged status with respect to the neighboring peoples because of their ancestry. In response to this perceived blasphemy, the mobs in both narratives attempt to punish the offender by hurling him off a cliff: "The Delphians came in to Aesop and said, 'You are to be thrown from the cliff today, for this is the way they voted to put you to death as a temple thief and a blasphemer who does not deserve the dignity of burial'" (*Vit. Aes.* 132).[65] These and many other paral-

64 Froelich and Phillips, "Throw the Blasphemer off the Cliff."

65 The degree of agency ascribed to Aesop in meeting his end, not unlike the differences in the Gospels, depends on the recension of the text. In the MORN recension, the Delphians

lels of content and theme are discussed by Froelich and Phillips, who note that a number of classicists have argued that accounts of Aesop have served as the source of inspiration for many other ancient stories.[66] Apart from the connection to fables itself, the death of Aesop is the best known tradition about him.[67] Given the topographical implausibility of this scenario described in Luke 4, the simply alternatives such as stoning, the renown of how Aesop met his unjust demise, the other Aesopic overlaps noted here, we must determine to what these numerous parallels should be attributed. Is Luke sacrificing the plausibility of the story in order to appeal to a common view about the appropriate punishment for a would-be prophet blasphemer like Aesop and Jesus? This could be and is what Froelich and Phillips conclude. This is somewhat surprising, however, because they are forthcoming in stating that they turned up little evidence for such a tradition outside of *The Life of Aesop* and the Lukan Gospel. It is either an unlikely coincidence, a common tradition between them both for which we have no antecedent on record, or an appeal to the tradition of Aesop in Lukan Gospel.

A third remarkable intersection of the Lukan *Sondergut* and the ancient fable tradition comes by way of a unique use of zoomorphism. That is, the Lukan Jesus has a peculiar habit of characterizing people as animals. There are two obvious and familiar examples in Luke that suit the tradition of fable tellers like Aesop who zoomorphize their opponents in their fables. It is in the L material that we encounter Herod the fox: "At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me …'" (Luke 13:31–32a). The fox is, of course, the paradigmatic animal of the Aesopic fable tradition (see Figure 1) and yet this characterization has not been discussed from the first-century fable context. The second clear example in L material of Jesus speaking of humans in animal terms is equally famous and comes from Acts. During the second account of Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, the risen Lord addresses Paul as a stubborn beast of burden, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

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push him from the cliff, while in the G text, Aesop deprives the Delphians of the satisfaction by leaping off on his own.

66 Froelich and Phillips, "Throw the Blasphemer off the Cliff," 22. I have highlighted a number of the parallels in 3.3.3 and 3.3.4.

67 On the death of the fable teller, see 9.4. I should also point out that it is in this L passage that the term παραβολή appears in the Gospel for the first time. It is easy to miss because no translation ever renders it as "parable:" "He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb (παραβολήν), 'Doctor, cure yourself!'" (Luke 4:23). As I argue in Book I, the instinct of translators here to render παραβολή with the genre that it represents is the correct one. The genre of this παραβολή is the proverb.

It hurts you to kick against the goads" (Acts 26:14). Human beings do not kick against goads, animals do. It is the common view among New Testament scholars that Jesus is reciting a known Greek proverb here, usually reckoned as a quotation of Euripides, though the proverb goes back at least to the *Pythian Odes* (2.173–175) and Aeschylus (*Ag*. 1624).[68] Existing scholarship has worked to establishing the literary dependence of Acts on Euripides here and occasionally pondered what Jesus is doing quoting a Greek proverb, but not the significance of characterizing Paul as an animal.[69] This line is particularly significant since Jesus has only a minimal speaking role in Acts. Luke uses the opportunity to have Jesus utter this zoomorphizing proverb, joining the other occasion on which Jesus apparently quotes directly from a known Greek text (Luke 24:25 above).

To these instances from the Lukan *Sondergut*, we may also add two more fable allusion in a single Double-Tradition passage. Jesus discusses John the Baptist, saying: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?" (Luke 7:24 // Matt 11:7), and shortly thereafter, "We piped and you did not dance; we wailed and you did not weep/mourn." (Luke 7:32 // Matt 11:17)." While the fable backgrounds of neither has been explored at any length in scholarship, both are allusions to two of the best attested ancient fables: the former alludes to the Oak Tree and the Reed,[70] and the latter allusion to the final reply of the Fisherman and His Pipe.[71]

68 The source text is normally quoted from *Bacch*. 795, but there is another version in frag. 604 (Nauck²). In *Bacchae*, the god Dionysius disguises (we could say zoomorphizes) himself as the animal most closely associated with him: the bull. The proverb was used ironically here by Dionysius addressing Pentheus, the other main character, because of the former's association with the bull.

69 Robert C Horn, "Classical Quotations and Allusions to St. Paul," *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* 11 (1938): 281–88; W. Nestle, "V. Anklänge an Euripides in der Apostelgeschichte," *Phil* 59 (2016): 46–57; Alfred Vögeli, "Lukas und Euripides," *TZ* 9 (1953): 415–38; John Hackett, "Echoes of Euripides in Acts of the Apostles?," *ITQ* 23 (1956): 218–27; John Moles, "Jesus and Dionysus in 'The Acts of the Apostles' and Early Christianity," *Hermathena* 180 (2006): 65–104.

70 This fable is found in every ancient collection apart from Phaedrus, including Babrius (*Fab.* 36), the Augustana (Perry 70, with a Chambry variant, 143), Aphthonius (*Fab.* 36), and Avianus (*Fab.* 16).

71 This fable also clearly had a wide distribution considering how many examples of it survive. It is found in Babrius (*Fab.* 9), the Augustana (Perry 11), Aphthonius (*Fab.* 33), on the second-century papyrus fragment, P.Hak. 1, and already recorded in Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.141. Herodotus depicts Cyrus the Great speaking it in response to Ionians and Aeolians. They initially wished to fight against Cyrus, but upon seeing how he easily defeated the Lydians, they asked for peace. He responds with the fable to convey the message that they are asking for mercy too late, which concludes, "You may as well stop your dancing now; you would not come out and dance before, when I piped to you."

One could not ask for surer confirmation of the generic overlap of "parable" and "fable" than for the Lukan Jesus to utter an iamb from an Aesopic fable at his resurrection. It is especially remarkable these overlaps are concentrated in L material. If the Lukan Jesus utters an iamb from a fable upon his resurrection, if the Aesop tradition is connected in some way to the story that inaugurates the Lukan ministry, and if the Lukan Jesus characterizes his opponents like a fable teller, what then are we to make of Luke's Central Section, nearly half of which is comprised of fable (née parable) material? There are as many L fables gathered there in Luke's Central Section as there are in the entire *Life of Aesop.* It is in light of the results of Book I and these recent findings that Book II explores the fables of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

8.4 Conclusion

Before we forgot our fables, there was an active discussion taking place among scholars about whether and how to situate Jesus's "parables" among the fables of the ancient world. A colossal intellect like Hugo Grotius did not think twice about regarding Jesus's fables as such and could not have anticipated the blowback centuries later. Gottlob Christian Storr, who was influential upon Jülicher is not so easily dismissed. He, too, worked out that Jesus told fables. We also saw that the reasons parable scholars divide "parables" from fables today have precedence in dubious arguments of centuries past. The current permutations of these divisions also depend especially on the ignorance of the fable. From the several snapshots of the Middle Ages, it was apparent that no distinction between "parable" and "fable" was cut and dry, the terms for them cross-pollinated in some environments, while, in others, there was no possibility to ever distinguish them. When we reached the material more familiar to biblical scholars, we saw that the synthesis offered in Book I has implications for the Gospel of Thomas as well. With the fable background in view, we saw that there is no need to appeal to some separate "parable" tradition in Thomas. It contains known Aesopic fables and is absent of any terminology to indicate any other genre. Arriving at the Gospel of Luke, we found some remarkable and only recently discovered overlaps between the Lukan special material and the fable tradition. These overlaps, as I will argue in the coming chapters, are the tip of the iceberg. In Chapter 9, I will identify these Aesopic connections as part of a broader interest in characterizing Jesus as a fable teller in Luke. In Chapters 10 and 11 we will learn how fables were read and then read the Lukan fables from this perspective. In Chapters 12 and 13, we will learn how fables were interpreted and apply this approach to the Lukan fables. In Chapters 14

and 15 we will see the uncanny resemblance of the Lukan fables to other fable collections of the day, finding good reason to think that Luke possessed just such a collection of Jesus's fables. Chapter 16 will point to the horizons of integrating parable scholarship with the ancient fable, from the other Gospels, to Paul, and from Early Judaism to the early Church.

CHAPTER 9

The Gospel Jesus and the Fable Teller

9.1 Introduction

In addition to helping redescribe those fools, friends, slaves, widows, neighbors, animals, and deities that populate the plots of the Lukan fables, the fable context invites a new portrait of the character who would speak them. With "no contemporaneous evidence of parable tellers at the time of Jesus,"[1] biblical scholars have been left wanting. The closest "parable" tellers for comparison, when the rare scholar dares to make one, are the rabbinic figures of centuries later. In view of Jesus as a self-reflective "parable" teller, Payne argues that his uniqueness takes on an added dimension because it has "generally been overlooked" that "such self-portrayal is unique to Jesus. In the vast corpus of rabbinic parables there seems to be none in which a rabbi depicts himself."[2] The fable supplies the missing context and a clear source for the gospel portrayals of Jesus's self-characterization. As scholars of the fable have long been aware, self-characterization is not just found in fable literature, but is one of the most well-known features of the genre. Perhaps more than any other ancient genre, the fable is noted for its heavy authorial presence. In narratological terms, the fable maintains a persistent "teller mode"—a narrative that features a prominent narrator persona. Thus, the evangelists' characterizations of Jesus telling fables and Jesus's occasional self-characterizing within the fables are far from exceptional.[3] This chapter will describe the expectations a fable teller could

1 Scott, *Re-Imagine the World*, 15.

2 Philip Barton Payne, "Jesus' Implicit Claim to Deity in His Parables," *TJ* 2 (1981): 3–23, here 3. As his title suggests, Payne goes on to argue, based on this singular self-understanding and the language within the plots, that these "parables" amount to nothing less than Jesus's implicit claim to deity. This same conclusion is reached by Craig Blomberg, "Jesus' parables include implicit claims to deity" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990], 327).

3 Jesus's self-characterization is present most famously in the Wicked Tenants (discussed later in this chapter). Kurt Erlemann locates a more thoroughgoing self-characterization across the Jesus fable tradition in "Die Selbstpräsentation Jesu in den synoptischen Gleichnissen," in *Metaphorik und Christologie, Metaphorik und Christologie*, ed. Jörg Frey, Jan Rohls, and Ruben Zimmermann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 38–52. For example, Erlemann claims that, "To a certain extent, theology and christology lie in and on top of each other in the synoptic parables," "Theologie und Christologie liegen in den synoptischen Gleichnissen gewisser Maßen ineinander bzw. übereinander" (42). He summarizes his view as follows, "The parables place

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anticipate when using fables, what characteristics an ancient author would impart (or avoid imparting) to a fable telling character, and what associations an audience would have when encountering a fable teller in literary works and in public. To say from the outset, my goal is not to offer any reconstruction of the historical Jesus here.[4] Rather, I will describe the fable teller as a character that the evangelists, Luke especially, has drawn upon and engages with to describe Jesus.

9.2 The Presence of the Author

In the Graeco-Roman literary world, two seemingly antipodal character associations came part and parcel with the person speaking in fables: the slave and the sophist. Numerous ancient authors, well-aware of this strong authorial association of the genre, are deliberate and particular in their selection of which elements of the fable teller tradition they adopt, omit, or contest.[5] Our two primary sources for insights into these personalities are the fable collections and narratives featuring fable tellers.

Fable collections, as Enrica Sciarrino observes, for example, are "characterized by a heavy authorial presence in the promuthion and epimuthion"[6] in which the author(s) communicate to the reader. In the case of Phaedrus, the author "transforms the promuthion and the epimuthion into spaces in which

Jesus' deeds in a theological-eschatological context and at the same time interpret the works of the God of Israel as reality-transforming salvific action aiming toward an eschatological community," "Die Gleichnisse stellen Jesu Wirken in einen theologisch-eschatologischen Kontext und interpretieren zugleich das Handeln des Gottes Israels als ein auf eschatologische Gemeinschaft zielendes, Wirklichkeit verwandelndes Heilshandeln" (43). Unlike Payne above, Erleman bases his theological and christological implications on the content and messages of Jesus's fables as they stand in the gospels. Most of Erlemann's insights are compatible with reading Jesus's fables within their fable context. An integration of this christological and theological orientation with the fable—a theology of the fable so to speak—would be a welcome study.

4 The very existence of the fable teller tradition stands in the way of using the singular uniqueness of the "parable" for this purpose. On some implications for questions concerning the historical Jesus, see 16.4.

5 This phenomenon of contesting the characterization of the fable teller has been studied most of all with reference to the portrayals of Aesop. See, for example, Miles and Demoen, "In Praise of the Fable. The Philostratean Aesop," especially 36.

6 Sciarrino, "What 'Lies' behind Phaedrus Fables?," 233. Sciarrino is using the Greek transliteration of the same concepts "promythium" and "epimythium" that I take from the Latin, and which are the subject of the following chapters.

he most freely expresses his subjectivity."[7] Bloomer observes, "First-person pronouncements circumscribe Phaedrus's own controlled speech."[8] The implied authors of fable collections interject regularly using these paratexts,[9] both to supply the meaning to "you," the implied reader, and to relate the fable to the narrator from time to time (especially in Phaedrus). In the body of the fable, it is not only the implied reader or addressee who is sometimes allegorized, but it is the implied author as well. In Phaedrus, Babrius, and Avianus, the authors also frame their collections with prologues (and epilogues in Phaedrus's case). These framing texts dictate the tone of the work, suggest the intended reading strategies, and define the characters played by the implied author and implied reader, e.g., teacher and student. As Kristin Mann has argued, "the author's biography serves as a framing narrative that guides the interpretation of the fables. Essentially, each fabulist emphasizes the part of his identity that explains for what purpose he is writing fables, and this gives the reader a hermeneutic frame through which to interpret the text."[10] Phaedrus, as we found in 4.3.1, leans into his slave background, while Babrius and Aphthonius play the part of tutor. The implied author's presence is more imminent in some collections than others and not evenly present throughout each collection, but the engagement of the author in and around the fables of his collections is beyond dispute.[11]

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7 Sciarrino, "What 'Lies' behind Phaedrus Fables," 234.

8 Bloomer, *Latinity and Literary Society*, 73–74.

9 On these paratexts, see Chapter 12.

10 The first extensive treatment of the fable collections is Kristin Leilani Mann, "The Fabulist in the Fable Book" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2015). Mann's chapter titles give a good sense of the range she sees in the author's goals and their authorial persona: "The Life and Fables of Aesop: An Instruction Manual for the Low," "Phaedrus: Fables as Covert Speech," "Babrius: Fables as Education," and "Avianus: Dressing up the Fable Genre." "The Life and Fables of Aesop: An Instruction Manual for the Low" is how Mann refers to the anonymous Augustana Collection. She follows Holzberg in his theory that the Augustana Collection was originally attached to the *Life of Aesop*, produced to go along with *The Life*, and should thus be read in this light. While I think this is one possible origin for the Augustana Collection, this conclusion is assumed rather than proven in her dissertation. While there are, perhaps, more patterns and consistency in the Augustana than have been previously realized (on which, see 14.3), I also do not think the Augustana presents a neat or consistent ethic throughout the collection. In broad outline, I agree with her characterization of Babrius, even if I would dispute some of the particulars.

11 As Mann notes, it is not necessary that we equate the self-presentation of the implied author with the "real" author. "Regardless of whether or not their self-characterizations are 'real,' what matters is why the authors chose to present themselves in the way that they do" (Mann, "Fabulist in the Fable Book," 19).

This authorial weight appears not only in the fable collections where we expect the interjection of the implied author, but in more traditional narratives as well—the fable author's presence is never far from the text. This is true in narratives where the implied author is the fable teller (extradiegetic narration),[12] such as Horace, Plutarch, and Dio Chrysostom, and where the author has a character within a narrative who tells fables (an intradiegetic narrator) such as the *Life of Aesop* and the Gospels.[13] As Ilaria Marchesi notes, "In the case of fables, the pre-history of the genre seems to go hand in hand with the biographical circumstances of its practitioners."[14]

This authorial presence is also not limited to the Greek and Latin fable tellers. Though these classicists are unaware of it, as we learned in Chapter 6, Ben-Amos made the same observation decades before about the later Jewish fables: "There is no folklore genre in the Haggadah which has so few examples and yet describes so many details of the storytelling situation as the fable. In most cases, when a fable is cited in the Midrash, the circumstances of its delivery are given as well."[15] "Unlike the other folklore forms in the Haggadah, which are often presented as anonymous traditions or rabbinical teachings, the fable is attributed to definite personalities in almost every case."[16] As we saw in 6.2.5, we have a fine example of this in the character of Bar Kappara, whose antics and fable teller persona are obviously borrowed from Aesop. Thus, the rabbinic fable, too, offers another independent witness that this genre stands out for drawing attention to its teller. Like the Greek and Latin fables, the Hebrew and Aramaic fables are likewise characterized by heavy authorial presence.

The ancient fable offers us a plausible, indeed quotidian, literary milieu in which to situate Jesus's fable telling. We can tap into this rich literary heritage of the fable teller by simply situating Jesus in the Gospels among the fable teller portrayals known around the first century. The fable tradition offers us

12 Jesus telling stories within Luke's story is a textbook example of intradiegetic narration. Without getting bogged down in the narratology terminology, the Gospels present a complex narratological situation when describing the self-characterization of Jesus within his fables and as a reflection of himself as a fable teller. The Gospel authors (extradiegetic narrators) depict the character telling his fables at the story level (an intradiegetic narrator), who embodies himself within the fables at still one level deeper (a hypodiegetic narration).

13 There are still more fable tellers not covered in this chapter, and still more whom we know only by name: Cybisses/Cybissus, Thurus, and Connus (see van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 104–105).

14 Ilaria Marchesi, "Traces of a Freed Language: Horace, Petronius, and the Rhetoric of Fable," *Classical Antiquity* 24 (2005): 307–30, here 307–308.

15 Ben-Amos, "Narrative Forms in the Haggadah," 134.

16 Ben-Amos, "Narrative Forms in the Haggadah," 137.

two clear paths forward to evaluate the portrayal of Jesus as a fable teller: slave and sophist. In the following paragraphs, I will introduce the literary portraits of fable telling characters and self-descriptions of historical fabulists, so that we can step beyond the limitations of "parable" scholarship until now. This brief discussion here, it is hoped, will be the first and not the last word on this matter.

9.2.1 *For Slaves*

Written within a few years of Jesus's ministry, Phaedrus's third prologue informs us of the fable telling associations that more well-to-do figures must contend with when using the genre:

> Now I will explain briefly why the type of thing called fable was invented. The slave, being liable to punishment for any offence, since he dared not say outright what he wished to say, projected his personal sentiments into fables and eluded censure under the guise of jesting with made-up stories. (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3 Prologue 33–37)

Such a sentiment is absent in the Ancient Near Eastern fables that ante-date the Greek tradition,[17] but in Greek and Latin literature, this association of the fable with the rebellious language of the powerless, if not slavery itself, is evident from the beginning. As Sara Forsdyke indicates, "something about the fable—either its actual popularity among slaves or the content of these early fables—caused the Greeks to associate it with a slave."[18] Viewed with Phaedrus's etiology of the genre in mind, James Scott's now-famous model of "public" and "hidden transcripts" is applicable.[19] "Public transcript" is "a shorthand way of describing the *open* interaction between subordinates and those who dominate,"[20] "to put it crudely, the *self*-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen."[21] On the lips of the subordinate these are those speech acts performed in the presence of superiors that give the pretense of

17 Holzberg, observing this, speculates that it could have been slaves who brought fables into the Greek environment from the Near East that led to this association of the fable with slavery (*Ancient Fable*, 15–16).

18 Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales and Other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 62.

19 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Scott has been read in dialogue with Jesus's fables most fruitfully in William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), on which, see note 99 below.

20 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 2 (emphasis added).

21 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 18 (emphasis original).

accepting the social order of the ruling class and a deference to it. The "hidden transcript" is characterized by "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders,"[22] "a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant."[23] These are especially speech acts performed when the superior is gone, when peasants are able to speak freely their sentiments about their situation and articulate opposition that would be punished otherwise. Between these two lies a third mode that Scott describes as lying "strategically" between them, a "disguised form of public descent."[24]

> This is a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors. Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes and euphemisms—a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups—fits this description.[25]

As examples of this third mode, Scott draws upon the slave literature tradition of the American South, especially the slaves and trickster tales of the Brer Rabbit stories. Though Scott is dealing with modern phenomena, this third strategic mode has an obvious resonance with Phaedrus's description from thousands of years earlier. Compare Phaedrus's statement in his prologue above, with Scott's analysis: "At one level these are nothing but innocent stories about animals; at another level they appear to celebrate the cunning wiles and vengeful spirit of the weak as they triumph over the strong."[26] Working from the other chronological direction, studying the fable within ancient phenomena of civil disobedience, David Daube makes a similar comparison, "Even today one need only visit the Southern region of the United States of America to understand the two factors which, combined, help a genre take root among the oppressed: the protective shield of simile and easy access, simplicity (The Negro Spiritual, like the fable, has both these advantages)."[27] Even if the historical origin of the fable is more complex than Phaedrus's claim, the fable was particularly apt as a rhetorical tool of slaves, the powerless, and those low in social standing for the reasons he describes. In twenty-first-century language, the fable made sense for this group because the genre was easy to wield and offered a cloak for the hidden transcript through simile.

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22 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 4.
23 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, xii.
24 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 20.
25 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 19.
26 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 19.
27 David Daube, *Civil Disobedience in Antiquity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 54.

Already in the earliest Greek examples, Forsdyke identifies a preoccupation with subjects of oppression, justice, power and weakness, which were amenable to slave contexts.[28] In Archilochus's fable of the Fox and the Eagle, for example, the fox is described "standing far away, it cursed its enemy, the only thing left for the powerless and weak."[29] Forsdyke argues that slaves would have felt a particular resonance with the themes of this fable:

> 1. There is a natural and inevitable hostility between animal species (just as between master and slave), 2. The weak are unable to avenge themselves directly for the injustices committed against them by the strong (just as slaves are helpless before their masters). 3. The gods ultimately will ensure that justice is upheld, and thereby the weak will gain revenge on the strong (just as the gods will ultimately avenge slaves).[30]

Similar subjects appear regularly in the other early fables such as the Hawk and the Nightingale (Hesiod, *Op.* 202–213; Perry 4a) and the Eagle and the Dung Beetle (Perry 3; Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 1446–49, *Pax* 129–34, *Lys.* 694–99). While Holzberg would say that the fables present a variety of ideologies and a plurality of perspectives, with no particular emphasis on the powerless,[31] the slavery of the most famous fable user, Aesop, makes the slave associations of the genre unavoidable. In antiquity, the low associations with prose literature generally and the fable specifically is reflected in Hegel's famous dictum with which he refers directly to Aesop, "Im Sklaven fängt die Prosa an."[32]

As I described in Book I, the traditions about Aesop from the Classical period vary in certain details, but they consistently describe him as a slave who was unjustly killed by the Delphians. By the time we reach *The Life of Aesop*, more than the fables embedded in the story, Aesop's homely appearance and slave status are recurring focal subjects. Aesop must repeatedly assert his worth as a human being in the face of many accusations to the contrary on the basis of

28 Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales*, 37–89.

29 For the text, see 3.2.

30 Forsdyke sees the violent revenge found in some early fables as an indication it was used for the "psychological relief" of slaves (*Slaves Tell Tales*, 66–67). She also points out that the fable of the Dung Beetle, found already in Aristophanes, depicts the lowly but clever protagonist outwitting not only the more powerful eagle but Zeus himself: "Here cunning intelligence, rather than divine will, ensures the victory of the weak over the strong." (*Slaves Tell Tales*, 68).

31 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 16–17.

32 G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 387. Dressing up the fable in verse is surely one of Phaedrus's strategies to elevate himself and the genre.

his slavery and his beast-like appearance.[33] Aesop achieves this through his impeccable savior faire, solving intellectual challenges, and outmatching all-comers in various battles of wits and clever dupes. Aesop proves himself the intellectual better of his social superiors and his formally educated master. The characterization of Aesop in *The Life*, at least for the first half, revolves around his body and his slavery. He is a gadfly, a picaro, a challenger of established wisdom, a clever slave determined to improve his station.

The name Aesop (Αἴσωπος) itself likely bears slave connotations. There is a good chance that "Aesop," derives from "Aethop," i.e. "Ethiopian," which was used as a metonym for African descent.[34] In other words, if indeed it should be traced to this etymology, Aesop is a slave name, meaning simply "the Ethiopian" or "the Black One."[35] Even with this likely reference to African origins, the data about Aesop's race and appearance are muddled in the ancient evidence, or perhaps change from context to context, as they do from the Middle Ages to the present. He is sometimes European, sometimes African, sometimes extremely deformed, sometimes well-dressed with token gestures to his deformity, depending on which aspect of Aesop one wishes to emphasize. The earliest certain reference to his African descent is made by Maximus Planudes (1260–1330) in his version of *The Life of Aesop*.[36] In ancient times, he is typically described as a Phrygian (Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.134–35), and though

33 Because of his deformities and ugliness, Aesop is regularly compared to animals. On the general practice of dehumanizing the slave with animal descriptions, see Keith Bradley, "Animalizing the Slave: The Truth of Fiction," *JRS* 90 (2000): 110–125. For Aesop's appearance as a site of contention, see Jeremy Lefkowitz, "Ugliness and Value in *The Life of Aesop*," in *KAKOS, Badness and Anti-Value in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph Rosen (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 59–82; and Lissarrague, "Aesop, Between Man and Beast: Ancient Portraits and Illustrations." In this quality, Aesop's repeated insistence that he deserves the dignity of a human being is the inverse of Jesus, who, in the Synoptics anyway, must regularly conceal his divinity.

34 Αἰθίοψ derives from αἴθω and ὄψ, literally "burnt-face."

35 It would also make sense for the name to be an ethnic reference to Ethiopia or black Africans since some of the progymnasmatists set "Aesopic" fables in the list occupied otherwise by ethnic varieties, e.g., "Fables are called Aesopic and Libyan or Sybaritic, and Phrygian and Cilician and Carian, Egyptian, and Cyprian" (Theon, *Prog.* 4).

36 The opening synathroesmus includes the description: "flat-nosed … with lips, thick and pendulous and a black skin from which he contracted his name (Esop being the same with Ethiop)" (*Vit. Aes.* 1 [Planudes, trans. mine]). Later when Aesop is on the sale block, he tells the prospective buyer that he is a Negro. For a modern depiction of Aesop as an African, see William Mulready's frontispiece for William Godwin, *Fables Ancient and Modern* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1807), available here: https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/77f514e9-dc56-14de-e040-e00a18064e39.

sometimes he is placed elsewhere,[37] never is an African toponym suggested. Of course, it is certainly possible for someone of African descent to be born outside of Africa, especially if Aesop was born into slavery, however none of the early visual depictions of Aesop (see Figure) represent him with African features.[38] Certain literary clues from *The Life of Aesop* do, however, suggest an African heritage. In the opening synathroesmus of his appearance, the description of Aesop as σίμος ("flat nosed")[39] and μέλας ("swarthy") probably indicate African physiognomy.[40] A significant and overlooked clue to support the race background of Aesop's name is the name of his master, Xanthus. Xanthus means "yellow," typically referring to "blonde" hair but sometimes complexion as well. I find it an unlikely coincidence that nothing about their race is implied by the names of the two main characters that are set in apposition in the title of the work in manuscript G.[41] The title "*The Life of Aesop*" is a bowdlerization of what may be translated, in keeping with the low-brow and ribald tone of the narrative, "*Blondie the Philosopher and Blackie His Slave*." The contrast in their race fits well with the other entertaining and intended comic

37 Callimachus calls him "Aesop of Sardis" (*Iambus* 2) and Maximus of Tyre calls him "the sage of Lydia" (*Oration* 36.1). I find the fact that Xanthos is mentioned in the very next line to suggest that Herodotus, too, knows the tradition that Aesop is associated with Xanthos and merely rejects the authenticity of the tradition.

38 In addition to the Aesop cup, Philostratus the Elder offers an ekphrasis of a painting of Aesop in *Imag. 1.3. Fables*, but describes nothing noteworthy about his appearance, whether his race or deformity. A second-century sculpture of a man with a hunchback, which served as the basis for the Aesop depicted on the cover of this book, has also been commonly associated with Aesop (Rome, Villa Albani-Torlonia, Inv. 964). The identification of the figure is uncertain however (see Lisa Trentin, "What's in a Hump? Re-Examining the Hunchback in the Villa-Albani-Torlonia," *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 55 [2009]: 130–56). For some additional images and the transformation of Aesop's appearance in various later contexts, see Lissarrague, "Aesop, Between Man and Beast."

39 According to LSJ, the term is used for "Ethiopians and their gods." It is, however, also used with the opposite sense of a turned-up nose.

40 For the opening lines of *The Life*, see 4.4. In recension G these terms are divided by the obscure term σόρδος, while μέλας follows σίμος in the other recensions. Later on in *The Life*, Aesop is said to be "dirty, long-haired, and pale," ῥυποῦντος καὶ κομῶντος και ὠχρῶντος (*Vit. Aes.* 107). I take the "paleness" to be the result of the imprisonment and a deviance from his expected darker complexion, not an indication that Aesop is of pale complexion normally.

41 The full title in the G version is, "The book of Xanthus the Philosopher and Aesop His Slave concerning the Life of Aesop," ΒΙΒΛΟΣ ΞΑΝΘΟΥ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΙΣΩΠΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΣΤΡΟΦΗΣ ΑΙΣΩΠΟΥ. Of course, this title belongs to the manuscript, which itself is from only a few centuries before Planudes. That said, it is doubtful the scribe of this manuscript invented the title because the miniature depicting Aesop on folio 24 recto does not show him with African features.

contrasts between the two main figures in *The Life*. The elite philosopher, the *kalos kagathos* "Blondie," is subjected to endless tricks and outwitted at every turn by his clever slave, the deformed "Blackie," who proves himself to be the true master and eventually wins his freedom. *The Life of Aesop* and modern slave literature of the American South have many striking parallels between them, with both describing crafty animals and trickster slaves outwitting masters and more powerful characters. They share similarities not only in their contents, characters, and themes, but also in the function of offering vicarious freedom from and justice, revenge, and vengeance against those holding power over them.

The progression of the story in *The Life* may offer some explanation for the opposing views of the fable as a slave genre and a genre for sophists. Aesop does not remain a slave throughout, of course, but wins his freedom (*Vit. Aes.* 89–90). As Jeremy Lefkowitz has shown, the antipodal associations of the fable are present already in *The Life*.[42] He observes that the characterization of Aesop differs in significant ways during the portions of the story in which he is a slave and after he wins his freedom: "In the fictional world of the *Life of Aesop*, the conditions and exigencies of enslavement and freedom give rise to two distinct modes of performance."[43] Once Aesop is freed, two important shifts in the narrative take place. For all of his clever uses of language and besting his opponent with verbal performances, it is only after he is released from slavery in the narrative that Aesop begins telling most of the recognizable fables. In one sense then, the fable genre may also be reckoned as a "freed" genre. Second, the descriptions of his hideous, animalistic appearance falls away. No longer are insults hurled at Aesop because of his appearance and there is scarcely a mention of his body after he is free. Thus, it may be a matter of which Aesop these authors wish to emphasize, the slave at the beginning or the sophist at the conclusion.

The first-century fabulist Phaedrus, like Aesop whom he names as his inspiration ("Aesop is my source" [*Fab.* Prologue 1]), belong to the exceptional group of ancient authors who were not of aristocratic stock. In 4.2, I described the handful of ways identified by Bloomer that Phaedrus, as a freedman, wears his servile background on his sleeve. He accomplishes this directly (1) by describing the fable as the slave's medium and (2) by naming himself as a freedman of Augustus. Indirect means of pointing to slavery are (3) by associating himself

42 Jeremy Lefkowitz, "Reading the Aesopic Corpus: Slavery, Freedom, and Storytelling in the Life of Aesop," in *Slaves and Masters in The Ancient Novel*, ed. Stelios Panayotakis and Michael Paschalis (Groningen: Barkhuis and Groningen University Library, 2019), 233–57.

43 Lefkowitz, "Reading the Aesopic Corpus," 253.

with Aesop the slave author, (4) by addressing at least one of his books is to a fellow freedman, and (5) by narrating fables with freedmen characters who typify negative qualities.[44] Phaedrus perhaps implies this also by presenting himself as a victim for not having his poetic talents recognized. Reading between the lines, Phaedrus's chip on his shoulder, his reason for self-promotion, for bragging, and complaining that his work is not recognized, he attributes to the prejudice against him as a freedman and the slave associations of the genre. He is probably right.

Having signaled to the audience that the fable is a genre used by the slave to speak in coded language, Phaedrus puts this into practice, relating numerous fables in verse that describe his slave experience and provide an example for how others without alternative sources of power can wield them. Like so much else in the ancient fable, precisely how programmatic this goal is throughout Phaedrus's books remains understudied.[45] Mann, who also finds the work of Scott and Forsdyke highly relevant, takes a maximalist view, arguing that Phaedrus's fables as a whole should be read within the framework of the author's personal experience of slavery: "Phaedrus's fables are both the sort of fables that slaves tell, and the actual fables of a freed slave who wishes to demonstrate how fables function as a method of covert speech."[46] Others such as K. R. Bradley and Holzberg represent a moderate and minimalist position, respectively, and do not think coded autobiographical fables and fables about slavery are quite so prevalent.[47] Despite these reservations,

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44 Bloomer, *Latinity and Literary Society*, 75.

45 Mann's recent treatment is the most thorough. Prior to her, a programmatic attempt to decode Phaedrus was Attilio de Lorenzi, *Fedro* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1955); however, this book is not available to me.

46 Mann, "Fabulist in the Fable Book," 105.

47 Bradley points out that "many of his fables have no relevance, by any stretch of the imagination, to servile situations" (K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1987], 151). Holzberg describes some efforts to decode the fables for autobiographical information about Phaedrus as "overshooting the mark" (*Ancient Fable*, 48). Elsewhere, Holzberg has shown little patience with those scholars who have argued that the fable genre should, as a whole, be read from the perspective of social protest, "What the figure of Aesop definitely does not personify is the common people's spirit of rebellion against oppressive rule" (Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 16). He lays the blame at the feet of Otto Crusius, whom he regards as the originator of this view in his introduction to *Das Buch Der Fabeln* (Otto Crusius, introduction to *Das Buch Der Fabeln*, by C. H. Kleukens [Leipzig: Insel, 1913], esp. vii–xxi). Holzberg justifiably points out that Phaedrus's fables do not encourage ordinary folk to defy authorities, "On the contrary, they are advised repeatedly to accept things as they are" (Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 49). Whether the fable should be regarded as a genre teaching a conformist ethic or a rebellious one is an old controversy, and one that Zafiropoulos rightly describes as a

both Holzberg and Bradley, as anyone else who has studied the issue, do find numerous examples of fables using coded speech and the author's experience within them. Holzberg notes, for example, that when one is able to compare Phaedrus's adaptations of fables that are attested in the prose recensions like the Augustana (and probably drawn from them), there is a visible trend. Phaedrus's version is characterized by "his efforts to heighten his reader's awareness of certain problems: of the trouble, that is, which arises when the weak clash with the strong, or when ordinary folk become personally entangled with the established powers."[48] He identifies several fables, such as the Wolf and the Lamb (*Fab.* 1.1), the Frog and the Cow (*Fab.* 1.24), and the Town Mouse and Country Mouse (Ademar 13) that "virtually cry out for us to track down possible allusions in the picture of life presented to the author's own sphere."[49] The opening fable of Phaedrus's corpus, for example, the Wolf and the Lamb, describes the injustice faced by the weak and is perhaps intended to portray his or others' slave experience. In this fable, a wolf comes upon a lamb and, wishing to eat him, searches for any pretext for offense. The lamb rebuffs the wolf's false pretexts with the truth, but the wolf devours him regardless. It concludes: "The wolf pounced upon the lamb and tore him, and the lamb died for no just cause. *This fable was composed to fit those persons who invent false charges by which to oppress the innocent*" (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.1). At the other end of the corpus, Phaedrus's final fable presents a personification either of a slave or of the author himself, who must have been well on in years. It relates a story of an old hunting dog who can no longer keep up in combat. Having lost his grip on the hunter's prey, the fable concludes with the direct speech of the dog: "It was not my spirit that failed you but my strength; praise me for what I was, if you condemn me now for what I am. *Why I have written this, Philetus, you can see very well*" (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 5.10). This could be a reference to Phaedrus's literary talents, as his self-perceived quick wit is faded with age. It could also be a fable about elderly slaves. K. R. Bradley argues that,

> It recalls the sources which speak of the abandonment by owners of old and sickly slaves … any may be understood as the response of slaves to the onset of old age and the fear of abandonment it brought. The story is a statement to the

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false dilemma: "The scholarly debate on the class basis of the fable's messages (whether that of the dominant social groups or the dominated …) is a false dilemma that diverts us from the function of fable as a vehicle for ideas that are addressed to the common people" (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 40). Given the recent trends in the literature, Holzberg's view has clearly not won the day. For a direct response to Holzberg on this issue, see Mann, "Fabulist in the Fable Book," 22–26.

48 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 46.

49 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 48.

> slave-owner that long years of loyalty should be rewarded with human treatment when high work performance can no longer be maintained. Perhaps defiantly so.[50]

Suffice it to say here that the slave associations with the fable genre, and the authorial presence around and in the fables are on full display in Phaedrus.[51] They combine to create the slave, or perhaps the freedman fable teller persona.

From the use of fable as a critique from below, riddle speech to tell someone off without being understood, and coded language that only insiders are privy to, a particularly nebulous area of the Jesus tradition becomes comprehensible. The tradition of speaking in "parables" in order to not be understood has escaped a satisfying scholarly explanation, and yet it is found in all three Synoptics:

> And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in fables; in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand;' so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.'" (Mark 4:11–12; cf. Matt 13:13 and Luke 8:10)

Puzzling as these verses are, they are comprehensible from this fable background in which the genre is employed as riddle speech, with the intention that the "hidden transcript" will not be understood, except to the "in" group: "he explained everything in private to his disciples" (Mark 4:34b).[52]

9.2.2 *For Sophists*

A substantial portion of this work has already taken up the task of demonstrating how the fable is used in rhetoric and education and that need not be repeated here. How then should the use of the fable in education, by rhetors, philosophers, and sophists, be reconciled with the popular or even slave associations of the genre? Working this out will give us some clues about how the evangelists and early Christians navigated this same issue. From one perspective, we should be reminded again that the Ancient Near Eastern traditions that ante-date even the Archaic period of Greece do not appear to reflect the

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50 Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, 153.

51 For an extensive treatment of this topic in Phaedrus and examinations of numerous specific examples, the interested reader may consult Mann, "Fabulist in the Fable Book," 100–78; Bradley also offers a short catalog of Phaedrian fables he argues describe slave situations (*Slaves and Masters*, 151–153).

52 Mark 4:33–34 continues this theme about exactly how thoroughgoing the secrecy of Jesus's fables were. This second mention is not found in Matthew and Luke, presumably unsuitable to the character they wished to impart to Jesus in his fable telling.

slave connotations that frequent the Greek and Latin fable.[53] In the same vein, the Ahiqar materials that were influential upon some of the Greek traditions, most obviously *The Life of Aesop*, focused on the sage without any obvious lower-class connotations.[54] Likewise, in the educational setting, which names numerous fable sources apart from the Aesopic, there is no hint that the fable bears low-class connotations. If anything, the fables and their lessons from this context serve to reinforce the prevailing moral and socio-political norms of society rather than to critique them. Thus, to limit the fable to slave associations would be to greatly oversimplify matters. Nevertheless, from the numerous ancient authors who reflect on the lower-class connotations of the fable, it is evident that Greek and Latin authors considered it a problem worth dealing with.

The most thorough discussion of how elite authors navigated the low associations of the fable genre is found in Kurke's *Aesopic Conversations*.[55] A central argument of the book is that, before the fable collections and *The Life of Aesop* as we know it, the Aesopic was present and influential already in Classical times.[56] Kurke's theory focuses especially on the Platonic modes of discourse. She sees "Aesop and the traditions around the figure of Aesop as significant precursors for Platonic dialogue in general and the characterization of Socrates in particular."[57] She thus inverts the traditional inter-textual reading strategy of the Aesopic and Socratic materials that give the latter precedence, arguing instead for a "mobile dialogue of Aesop and Socrates traditions behind the textual fixation of Platonic writing."[58] In her view, the Socratic representations are, in fact, "shot through" with older popular Aesop traditions.[59] As she argues, several aspects of the Aesopic persona suit the depiction of Socrates: "insofar as we have seen Aesop's characteristic stance as challenger, debunker, and parodist of traditional wisdom, the Aesopic role is the perfect

53 Though they do often reflect a subordinate character telling a fable to a more powerful figure. A prime example is Nathan's fable of the Ewe Lamb told to King David (2 Sam 12:1–7), including the dramatic revelation of the hidden transcript.

54 For the influence of Ahiqar on Aesop, see Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 176–85, and Konstantakos, *Ἀκίχαρος*.

55 For an in-depth review and digest, see Stefano Jedrkiewicz, "Between Abjection and Exaltation: Aesop Once Again," *Quaderni Urbinati Di Cultura Classica* 102 (2012): 199–211.

56 Kurke traces the "ideological uses of a long-lived oral tradition behind the written texts" in some cases to the fifth century BCE (*Aesopic Conversations*, 46).

57 Leslie Kurke, "Plato, Aesop, and the Beginnings of Mimetic Prose," *Representations* 94 (2006): 6–52, here 7.

58 Kurke, "Plato, Aesop, and the Beginnings of Mimetic Prose," 12.

59 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 326.

one for Socrates the 'gadfly' to adopt."[60] The usefulness of the figure Aesop comes especially from his "oddly double" relation to classical wisdom, participating in the discourse of high wisdom on the one hand, while excoriating it with critique and parody from below on the other.[61] At the same time, the low associations of Aesop and the fable are a liability. Kurke reads the persistent efforts to transform Socratic materials from prose into poetry as efforts to occlude "the crucial fact that Plato chose the medium of mimetic prose." To the ancient tradents of Socrates, he "simply cannot be thought together with Aesop and the representatives of other scurrilous low forms."[62] The Aesopic mode is too fitting and useful to leave aside and the platonic dialogues thus reflect "a simultaneous appropriation and disavowal of Aesop for the character and discursive strategies of Socrates."[63]

The strategies used by the tradents of Socrates may reflect similar strategies used by early Christians who had similar goals with respect to Jesus. The first strategy to deal with the unwanted aspects of the Aesopic is to reinscribe them in a more palatable setting. "The bodily, the abjected, and the low" associations of Aesop are detached and transferred to the realm of *logos* and argument.[64] The second strategy is to avoid wearing the fable teller mantle any longer than necessary, but to limit Aesop to what Kurke describes as an "instrument:" "Plato always deploys the Aesopic instrumentally, as a set of moves or a mask donned for a deadly serious battle over the cultural prestige and authority of sophia, and then, once the territory is won, discarded and disavowed."[65] The tactic of appropriating him and then elimination him is one strategy of adopting the character of Aesop while mitigating the low associations. From an early point in the Greek wisdom tradition, how to adopt and adapt Aesop and the fable were already being undertaken.[66] For some early tradents of the Jesus tradition, whose goal was to depict Jesus as a divine man, it is easy to imagine that they too would be interested in mitigating the potentially embarrassing associations. For a "scurrilous low form" like the fable, there is an established

60 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 308.

61 Kurke, "Plato, Aesop, and the Beginnings of Mimetic Prose," 7.

62 Kurke, "Plato, Aesop, and the Beginnings of Mimetic Prose," 18.

63 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 308.

64 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 358.

65 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 325.

66 Kurke also addresses other early authors including Xenophon and Herodotus. For how Aristophanes addresses the "low" standing of Aesop, see Rothwell, "Aristophanes' 'Wasps' and the Sociopolitics of Aesop's Fables." Rothwell argues that the elite characters do employ the fable regularly, but do so in ways that reinforce the low standing and lower-class social context of the fable ("Aristophanes' 'Wasps' and the Sociopolitics of Aesop's Fables," 243).

precedent of employing strategies to transfer these associations somehow into a more reverential form.

A variety of other strategies to address the fabulist character and these associations with the genre were employed over the centuries—omitting, ignoring, or contesting the characteristics of Aesop and the fable that are embarrassing. While Phaedrus embraces the slave background, for example, he dresses up the characteristically prose form in verse. For Emperor Julian, Aesop was a slave perhaps, but only technically: "a slave by fortune rather than temperament" (*Orations* 7.207C). As mentioned above, in Philostratus's ekphrasis of a painting of Aesop in *Imag.* 1.3, none of the unusual physical features of Aesop are mentioned, neither his race nor deformity. As Miles and Demoen write, "Given Philostratus' assumed acquaintance with the Aesopic tradition, one of the most striking features of his portrait of Aesop is the omission of key elements from this tradition."[67] In this ekphrasis, Aesop is a "wise man" whom his characters have gathered about in order to crown him with a garland. One finds an oblique reference, perhaps, to Aesop's slavery in mentioning that the fox is leading a chorus. Philostratus presumes the fox was selected because "Aesop uses him as a slave in developing most of his themes" (*Imag.* 1.3 [trans. Henderson]), but it is Aesop who is now the master. As we also encountered early on, in Philostratus's life of Apollonius of Tyana, Apollonius rushes to the defense of Aesop, disabusing Menippus of his prejudice against his "low" wisdom. Apollonyius regards Aesop as "one who from cheap food sets a beautiful feast, from matters of little account he teaches great things" (*Vit. Apoll.* 5.14.2). In both passages from Philostratus, Aesop and the fable are presented consistently through the lens of wisdom and teaching.

Plutarch (ca 46–120 CE) likewise pays tribute to Aesop, including him in the Dinner of the Seven Sages, seated just beneath Solon.[68] Aesop engages with the other wise men and dishes out advice with no mention made of any inferior station in life or alarm at his appearance when he arrives (*Sept. sap. conv*. 150a). Plutarch himself regularly uses fables in his *Moralia* and *Lives*, and among his lost works there are "three fable books" (Μύθων βιβλία γ′), and another work titled, "Concerning Speechless Animals, in Verse" (Περὶ ζῴων ἀλόγων, ποιητικός).[69] As Holzberg has ingeniously surmised, the fact that eleven of the thirty-one fables that Plutarch uses in his *Moralia* and *Lives*

67 Miles and Demoen, "In Praise of the Fable," 37–38.

68 Though Aesop is presumably not to be numbered as one of the seven, Kurke makes an argument in his favor (*Aesopic Conversations*, 131–32, 135).

69 This latter work is quite possibly a fable book based on the use of the term "ζῴων ἀλόγων," which we have so often encountered in association with fables, and also based on the fact that this is the only work of Plutarch known to be composed in verse. On the lost works of

are attested only in these works, suggests that they belonged to his lost fable books.[70] Much like the dialogue between Apollonius of Tyana and Menippus (see 2.1.1), Plutarch paints the scene of a philosopher coming to the defense of Aesop when a haughty interlocutor denigrates Aesop and the fable.

In his first prologue, Babrius also designates the Aesopic associations he wishes to impart on the fable and himself as the fable teller of his collection. His description of Aesop sets the didactic tone of the work, in which "you may learn and fully understand from wise old Aesop, who has told us fables in the free manner of prose" (Babrius, *Fab.* 1 Prologue).[71] This physical description makes no mention of deformity, but instead imparts to Aesop the simple physiognomics of a wise person—an elderly man. A straightforward reading of Babrius's prologues gives no explicit notice concerning Aesop's slavery, however Mann finds an oblique reference to it in the "free manner of prose," literally "free muse" (ἐλευθέρας μούσης).[72] The straightforward reading acknowledges that Aesop wrote in prose rather than verse, however it could also indicate a recognition that Aesop was freed from slavery and only then wrote down his fables.[73] Thus, Babrius presents quite a different Aesop to Phaedrus, one more suitable to his didactic aims. For Babrius, the fable is not a slave genre for coded speech and back talk, rather it is an effective and enjoyable teaching tool. Phaedrus offers a relentless critique of contemporary morality, depicting the abuse of the weak by the strong with fables of violence and misfortune. Babrius, on the other hand, promises to "set before you a poetical honeycomb, as it were, dripping with sweetness, having softened the hard chords of the stinging iambic" (*Fab.* 1 Prologue). Babrius, then, establishes himself in the character of Aesop as the wise teacher, with the implied reader adopting the character of the student.

The final three authors treated here, Avianus, Horace, and Dio Chrysostom, also offer us portraits of Aesopic characterization and strategies for navigating the generic associations. In the process, they each take up subjects applicable to specific aspects of the Jesus fable tradition. Avianus presents a tradition of

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Plutarch, see the lists in Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume XV: Fragments*, trans. F. H. Sandbach, LCL 429 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 2–29.

70 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 26–27. Plutarch's unique fables are Perry 433, 434, 440, 441, 446, 449, 453, 460, 462, 467, and 468.

71 Adrados departs from others in his view that this should simply be translated as "free muse" rather than "free manner of prose." He believes that Babrius's *Vorlage* was also in meter and that Babrius is merely saying that he is using a stricter meter (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:597).

72 Mann, "Fabulist in the Fable Book," 189.

73 Perhaps an allusion to the fable as a "freed" genre, discussed above.

"flipping the script" on the connotations of the fable. Horace attests to a number of methods of circumventing fable stigma, including mislabeling them using the Latin equivalent of παραβολή. Dio gives us a first-hand account of what an audience's expectations of fables were when they encountered an itinerant sage.

Arguably the earliest *Nachleben* of the Classical and Imperial Period fable authors, Avianus (late 4th or early 5th century CE) knows all the traditions of Aesop, Babrius, and Phaedrus before him. Like the earlier fabulists, Avianus employs the authorial "I" to begin his collection: "I was in doubt, most excellent Theodosius, to what class of literature I should entrust the memory of my name, when the narration of fables occurred to my mind" (*Fab*. Prologue). Departing from the other fabulists so far, Avianus takes the efforts to rehabilitate Aesop the character and the fable to the extreme. While Babrius is selective in the Aesopic characteristics he emphasizes, the "wise old Aesop," Avianus refutes the narrative altogether. He apparently knows the traditions of Aesop in *The Life*, but attempts to impart precisely the opposite connotations to the fable genre. As James Uden observes, "Avianus' dedicatory letter seems deliberately to obscure any generic association of fable with a non-elite perspective and positively mischaracterizes Aesop in accordance with Avianus' own literary agenda."[74] Absent is any mention of his slavery, race, deformity, and his death, conspicuously so. Avianus writes in the prologue:

> My pioneer in this subject, you must know, is Aesop, who on the advice of the Delphic Apollo started droll stories in order to establish moral maxims. Such fables by way of example have been introduced by Socrates into his inspired works and fitted by Horace into his poetry. (Avianus, *Fab*. Prologue)

Rather than having been framed and executed for stealing from the Delphic Apollo, hurling fabular insults against the Delphians along the way, Avianus claims that Aesop was literally inspired by this god to use the fable. As Mann and others have recognized, Avianus is "raising the caliber of the fable genre by giving it a divine source,"[75] "this *primus inventor* is seen to be inspired by a god."[76] The reference to Socrates both shores up the status of the genre, but also betrays an awareness of the other obvious connection between the two—that

74 James Uden, "The Failure of Fable: Art and Law in Avianus," in *Lateinische Poesie der Spätantike*, ed. H. Harich-Schwarzbauer and P. Schierl (Basel: Schwabe, 2009), 109–128, here 110.

75 Mann, "Fabulist in the Fable Book," 258; see the discussion there for previous scholarship on this issue.

76 Uden, "The Failure of Fable: Art and Law in Avianus," 114.

they told fables on the way to their (heroic) deaths. Avianus knows, in other words, the "true story" of Aesop, but turns the fable on its head as a rhetorical maneuver. Avianus thus spins an etiology of the fable that is reminiscent of the *Nachleben* of the Gospel "parable:" a sacred tradition, originating in an inspired figure, thereby disinvested of its low connotations and rendered palatable as an elite genre befitting the august character of its most famous user.

The Latin poet Horace (65 BCE–8 BCE), whom Avianus mentioned as a fabulist, and whom Holzberg also thinks gave no small inspiration to Phaedrus,[77] is especially significant for his tactics of addressing fable stigma. Horace was the son of a freedman, whom "the reproach of servile origin rankled (*Sat.* 1.6.45–48), but was later exploited by the poet when he wished to exaggerate the humbleness of his background (*Ep.* 1.20.20)."[78] While Phaedrus wears the slave character on his sleeve, as Marchesi argues, Horace treads lightly in his use of the fable precisely because of his status as the son of a freedman, whom all mock with the taunt—"son of a freedman father!" (quem rodunt omnes libertino patre natum [*Sat.* 1.6.46]).[79] Unlike other elite authors who could deploy the fable with the presumption that it was attained through the course of their education, Horace's ignoble heritage was a liability that could instead draw in the other connotation of the fable as the slave genre. Thus, he is careful and controlled about when and how he employs the fable, lest his audience impart the stereotypical slave fable associations to him. As part of a thorough study, Marchesi gathers numerous Aesopic connections in the writings of Horace, both allusions to and explicit uses of various fables. She also tends to the various nuances of the author's choices of when and how to use the genre. In standard fable-telling fashion, Horace personifies himself in his fables, first in an allusion to the fable of The Donkey and the Lion's Skin:[80]

> For let us grant that the people would rather give office to a Laevinus than to an unknown Decius, and that an Appius as censor would strike out my name if I were not the son of a free-born father—and quite rightly, for not having stayed quiet in my own skin. (Horace, *Sat.* 1.6.19–23 [trans. Fairclough])[81]

77 "He is the one on whom Phaedrus models himself most closely in terms of form and content" (Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 41).

78 Robin Nisbet, "Horace: Life and Chronology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, ed. Stephen Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7–21.

79 Marchesi, "Traces of Freed Language."

80 This fable is widespread in the ancient collections: Babrius, *Fab.* 139; Aphthonius, *Fab.* 10; Avianus, *Fab.* 5; Perry 188 and 358.

81 Fairclough likewise assumes this is a reference to the fable of the Donkey in the Lion's Skin (Horace, *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, LCL 194

Horace also composes what would become the most famous version of the fable of the Town Mouse and the Country Mouse (Perry 352), which all subsequent Latin versions appear to reference.[82] He does so in a clever manner that spares him the fable association altogether. The fable is placed on the lips of a different character in the Satire, the rustic neighbor, Cervius: "Now and then our neighbor Cervius rattles off old wives' tales that fit the case" (Horace, *Sat.* 2.6.76–77). As Eleanor Leach writes, Horace is "taking care to distance himself intellectually from the story by the designation *anilis fabella*, he relates what he has heard" from Cervius, rather than speaking the fable himself.[83] Thus Horace is not a fable user here, rather merely a listener. According to Marchesi, it is the cast in the second book of Satires, "a mix of voices … a mix into which slaves and freeborn are allowed to appear" that permits the open use of the fable.[84] Summarizing Horace's approach to the genre, "allusions to fable material, then, appear only in specific contexts, emerge only in a qualified and localized manner, and their vocabulary is misappropriated."[85]

It is this last strategy mentioned by Marchesi, through the misappropriation of vocabulary," that we have a curiously specific application to Jesus's fables. As Marchesi observes, Horace applies "rhetorical misnomers" to the fable in order to circumvent its stigma.[86] Though he is obviously telling a fable, Horace will use a different term than *fabula* to describe it. Having referenced the Frog Who Burst (*Sat*. 2.3.314–320; cf. Phaedrus, *Fab*. 1.24, Babrius, *Fab*. 28), the fable is followed with an *epimythium* applying it to Horace: "This *imago* is rather fitting to you," "Haec a te non multum abludit imago." Marchesi describes the problem:

> The word *imago* is not merely "image" or "picture" (as the common translation has it), but the Latin technical equivalent of the Greek term παραβολή that is, "simile." The fable might fit Horace's situation, but the label Damasippus attaches to it is not immediately appropriate. … It is clear that the appropriate term for Damasippus' Aesopic tale would be λόγος, that is to say *fabula*, fable, not *imago*, which is παραβολή, simile. Damasippus' argument thus relies on a

[Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926], 79). For a translation of the full fable, see Chapter 11, note 30.

82 See Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 3:510; see also Niklas Holzberg, "Die Fabel von Stadtmaus und Landmaus bei Phaedrus und Horaz," *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* 17 (1991): 229–239.

83 Eleanor Winsor Leach, "Horace's Sabine Topography in Lyric and Hexameter Verse," *AJP* 114 (1993): 271–302.

84 Marchesi, "Traces of a Freed Language," 316.

85 Marchesi, "Traces of a Freed Language," 316.

86 Marchesi, "Traces of a Freed Language," 307.

> miscategorization that counteracts any immediate association. His fable can be applied to the poet only because it is not called a fable.[87]

Marchesi identifies this same terminological disavowal of the fable on a few occasions, which she argues are attempts to distance Horace from his servile lineage. *Imago*, as the LSJ defines, is used in rhetorical contexts for "a figurative representation, similitude, comparison." Whether Horace has *imago* in mind as a specific formal alternative category or employs it in the broader rhetorical sense of a comparative image (I would presume the latter), Marchesi identifies παραβολή as the underlying term that Horace employs to deliberately mislabel a fable. The goal is to preserve the high standing of Horace. As I described in Chapter 7, I concur with the consensus of biblical scholarship that the practice of assigning all of Jesus's comparative forms an umbrella label of παραβολή is best explained by the Septuagint usage. As I argued there, the fable has been the missing genre that solves the terminological and theoretical muddle, indeed, the most significant genre to which the umbrella term παραβολή is applied. What Marchesi has identified here in Horace is precisely the "parable" miscategorization that Jülicher identified more than a century ago, and which Vouga and Stern further articulated. They each observe that Aristotle's παραβολή are similes while the appropriate term for the narrative comparisons we have traditionally called "parables" is λόγος, "fable."[88] Based on the precedent we have seen so far, it is at least conceivable that the strategy of deliberately mislabeling fables to distance the speaker from their base associations could be a contributing factor to the Synoptics using only the Septuagint term. As we have noted in the previous chapter, some Christians had a disparaging attitude toward literature like fables from early on: "Reject worldly old wives' tales," τοὺς δὲ βεβήλους καὶ γραώδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ (1 Tim 4:7).[89] Horace's fable of the Town Mouse and Country Mouse is introduced precisely as the sort of literature 1 Timothy warns against, "Now and then our neighbor Cervius rattles

87 Marchesi, "Traces of a Freed Language," 314–15.

88 As a reminder of the discussion in 7.3: "In Aristotle, these 'parables' are in fact closer to similes than to genuine stories; for the latter type, Aristotle in fact employs a separate rhetorical term, *logoi*, a word usually translated as 'fables'" (Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 10); "The majority of Jesus παραβολαί that have a narrative form are fables [λόγοι], like those of Stesichorus and Aesop," "Die Mehrzahl der παραβολαί Jesu, die erzählende Form tragen, sind Fabeln, wie die des Stesichoros und des Aesop" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:98). See also Vouga's taxonomy in 7.3.1.

89 Without giving specific examples, one cannot say whether the author of 1 Timothy has fables specifically in mind or a broader idea that would surely include fables.

off *old wives' tales* that fit the case," Cervius haec inter vicinus garrit anilis ex re fabellas (Horace, *Sat.* 2.6.76–77).[90]

Lastly, with Dio Chrysostom (40–120 CE), we have an orator and itinerant philosopher who, "in a sense identifies with Aesop."[91] Dio informs us of his attitude toward the figure and articulates in the following discussion how he often has no choice in taking on the character of the fable teller:

> And there are those who think that Aesop too was somewhat like the Seven Sages, that while he was wise and sensible, yet he was crafty too and clever at composing tales such as they themselves would most enjoy to hear. And possibly they are not wholly mistaken in their suppositions and in reality Aesop did in this way try to admonish mankind and show them wherein they were in error, believing that they would be most tolerant toward him if they were amused by his humour and his tales—just as children, when their nurses tell them stories, not only pay attention to them but are amused as well. As the result, then, of this belief, that they are going to hear from us too some such saying as Aesop used to utter, or Socrates, or Diogenes, they draw near and annoy and cannot leave in peace whomever they may see in this costume, any more than the birds can when they see an owl. (Dio Chrysostom, *Hab.* 13 [*Or.* 72] [trans. Crosby, LCL])

Dio, too, gives Aesop a privileged status as a wise man, making no mention of his disfigurement, slavery, or death, perhaps only through oblique reference that he was "crafty." Following his description of Aesop's place among the Seven Sages, Dio relates the impact of Aesop on the life of an itinerant philosopher such as himself. He is now accustomed to crowds expecting him to relate some "such saying as Aesop used to utter, or Socrates, or Diogenes." In other words, Dio tells us that the masses, upon seeing someone dressed in the costume of the sage, would annoy him until he would speak fables to them. Such a scenario is more than a little reminiscent of many Gospel scenes. Immediately following the lines quoted above, and certainly with a nod to irony, Dio begrudgingly capitulates and obliges his audience, donning the mantle of Aesop by concluding *Oration* 72 with a telling of the fable of the Owl and the Birds (Perry 437).[92]

From Dio, we can contextualize a number of other somewhat-disparaging statements from elite authors on the use of fable telling in non-elite contexts. From Quintilian's discussions of the fable elsewhere, it is apparent that it is a perfectly acceptable genre to use.[93] Among his comments on the rhetorical

90 So also does Menippus associate fables with old women (*Vit. Apoll.* 5.14).

91 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 26.

92 Dio's fable is catalogued under Perry 437, but is related to Perry 39, 277, and Babrian Prose Paraphrase 164.

93 He justifies it by appealing to Horace, for example: "Horace too did not regard the use of this type as undignified even in poetry: witness the lines, 'As the shrewd fox said to the ailing lion …'" (*Inst.* 5.6.20–23), citing Horace, *Ep.* 1.1.73.

effectiveness of the fable in forensic and educational settings, however, he also relates how the fable is employed in public settings like the bucolic landscapes described in the Gospels: "[fables] often attract the mind, particularly that of uneducated rustics, who listen to fiction in a simpler spirit and, in their delight, readily assent to things that they enjoy hearing (*Inst.* 5.11.19). Strabo, Jesus's contemporary (ca. 63 BCE–24 CE), makes similar remarks on the appeal of storytelling to communicate with and persuade non-elite audiences:

> Every illiterate and uneducated man is, in a sense, a child, and, like a child, he is fond of stories; and for that matter, so is the half-educated man, for his reasoning faculty has not been fully developed, and besides, the mental habits of his childhood persist (Strabo, *Geogr.* 1.2.8 [trans. Jones, LCL])

For elite authors such as Dio, Quintilian, and perhaps Strabo, the fable is a perfectly acceptable genre for use in elite settings. It is not the author, rather the audience that bear the risk of low associations.

9.3 Jesus and the Fable Teller Tradition

Fables in the Roman Imperial period were used throughout education and as exempla by the intellectual and cultural elite in professional rhetorical settings. At the same time, the fable had a long-established association with slaves and the lower class that caused the dignity of the genre to be regularly contested. From a deformed slave and human garbage, to a wise old man seated among the seven sages, the tradition presents "rival interpretations of Aesop's social character and function."[94] Whether embracing the slave connotations, embracing the sophist connotations, or using any number of the strategies described above to combine them, adapt them, mitigate them, circumvent them, etcetera, the authorial persona and undertones of the fable genre weigh heavily on its performance. This rich and complex background of the fable tradition and these many other authors using the genre offer exegetes a new corpus with which to compare the character of Jesus as a fable teller. How did the Gospel authors navigate these associations?

Perhaps the best place to begin is simply to note that the Gospels attest to the seemingly antithetical uses of the fable. One more famously unsolved "parable" puzzle has been why Jesus in the Gospels uses fables to elucidate his meaning, but sometimes appears to use his fables to conceal his meaning. As we noted above, the use of fables as coded speech is attested in the Gospels

94 Annabel Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 20.

(Mark 4:11–12, cf. Matt 13:13 and Luke 8:10). This practice is perfectly comprehensible from the fable context in which we have these antipodal uses. While, unsurprisingly, the portrayal of Jesus using the fable as a teacher, sophist, and rhetor predominates, the Gospel tradition also preserves testimony of Jesus using the fable according to the manner of the lower class. Jesus uses fables as riddles to conceal his meaning, while divulging the hidden transcript only to the insiders.[95] The other fables Jesus tells, as they are presented in the Gospels at least, serve the rhetorical ends of the sophists, to score points in arguments and teach lessons to characters in the story and to the implied reader.

Just as we witness the many authors who engage with the character of the fabulist and the connotations of the fable in a variety of ways, so also should we expect the authors of the Jesus tradition to do the same. Already in the second century, Tatian takes up the task of denigrating Aesop from the Christian perspective:

> And the liar/fabulist (τὸν ψευδολόγον) Aesop is kept in everlasting remembrance not only by his fables (μυθολογήματα), but the statue Aristodemus made of him has even increased his celebrity. How is it then that you, who have so many poetesses whose productions are mere trash, innumerable prostitutes, and knavish (μοχθηρούς) men, are not ashamed to slander the reputation of our women? (Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 34 [PG 6.272, trans. mine])[96]

Perhaps with a hint of envy at his fame, Tatian characterizes Aesop as a rascal whose career was telling lies; fitting company for prostitutes and poetesses. Distancing Jesus from the fable or disavowing the genre is one strategy that is comprehensible from the intellectual ambivalence toward it and the potential stigma of those who use it; "Aesopic fables are humble in content and style, just as Aesop himself is poor, lowly, and marginal."[97] As a socio-political genre, fables are tools for those of low status or background who have neither the financial resources nor political influence to accomplish their goals otherwise.[98] As a tool to teach the public, fables persuade the childlike minds of the rustics and illiterates; nonsense for women, children, and slaves to chew on. With such prevailing connotations, it is easy to understand why some early Christians would be loath to ascribe fables to Jesus, would mitigate and

95 Note that Theon also attests to the use of fables like riddles: "Now, however, some call *ainigmata* (riddles) *ainoi* (fables)" (Theon, *Prog.* 4).

96 With ψευδολόγον, Tatian has deliberately chosen polyvalent fable vocabulary that paints Aesop in the most negative light. For "fables," a variant reading of ψευδολογήματα for μυθολογήματα is preferred by some editors.

97 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 2.

98 So already in the case of Nathan's fable (see The Semitic World 3.2.1).

eliminate associations with the genre through various means, or hasten to ascribe to Jesus the character of an elite fable teller. With their efforts to distinguish the heavenly "parable" from the earthly fable, these same impulses seem to have recrudesced in modern exegesis.

As a method of subversive speech and popular class teaching, this fable background offers no small support to those parable scholars who, though unaware of the fable context, have argued for this social location of Jesus's "parables."[99] Indeed, a number of Jesus's fables presented in the didactic mode of fable telling, take up popular class concerns. From several examples in the Lukan Fable Collection, it is evident that it contained especially those fables offering critiques from below. The Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1–8), the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8), to a lesser extent the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5–8), and the Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14), all depict the weak overcoming the strong. The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) meanwhile present scathing critiques of the wealthy. While perhaps Luke dresses them up to a certain degree,[100] he could have just as easily omitted them if they did not suit his goals.

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99 In this regard, the work of William Herzog is especially relevant: "Jesus used parables to present situations familiar to the rural poor, to encode the systems of oppression that controlled their lives and held them in bondage … Even the illiterates could learn to 'read' their culture and life dilemmas" (Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 27–28). Similarly, Ernest van Eck establishes this as his starting point, "The social location of Jesus most probably was the Galilean peasantry; This means that the interpreter of the parables should ask the question what message the parables carried in this rural context, and how the parables were heard by their rural audience." Of one group of fables, van Eck observes that they are "mundane stories of day-to-day peasant life and experience, stories that contained meaning for people close to the soil," and of another, "By telling these parables, Jesus most probably acknowledged the needs and frustrations of the peasants in his first-century rural context" (Ernest van Eck, *Parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a Social Prophet* [Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016], the quotations are from pages 11, 12, and 13 respectively). While Herzog and van Eck read the "parable" tradition tightly with the historical Jesus in this respect, their observations function just as well at the level of the gospel text. As Jennifer Glancy has noted, "The figure of the Christian as a slave of Christ or of God is inchoate in a number of Jesus' parables" (Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* [Oxford: University Press, 2002], 97. The frequent references to slaves and masters could likewise be read with this social context. See also Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context," 37–54. Among the L fables, the Worthless Slaves (Luke 17:7–10) is the most prominent example of a story describing slavery.

100 Jeremias notes, for example, "We may pause for a moment over [the Judge and the Widow and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector] to remark that neither 18:9–14 nor, probably 18:1–8 is really intended as an instruction about the right way to pray; both parables seem rather intended to show to Jesus' hearers God's pity for the despised and oppressed" (Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* [New York: Scribner, 1966], 74).

We have found evidence already that Luke seems clued in to this fable teller persona. The Lukan ministry is inaugurated by the encounter in the synagogue that leads to the crowd attempting to hurl Jesus off a cliff (Luke 4:28–30; cf. *Vit. Aes.* 130–42). The Lukan Jesus carries over two Aesopic fable references from Matthew or Q in Chapter 7: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?" (Luke 7:24), "We piped and you did not dance; we wailed and you did not weep" (Luke 7:32). Luke's risen Lord quotes another in iambic trimeter to chastise the disciples after his resurrection: "O foolish and slow in heart to believe" (Luke 24:25). It is the Lukan Jesus who zoomorphizes Herod into the crafty fox (Luke 13:32) and Paul into the stubborn beast of burden (Acts 26:14).

For an author like Luke, who wishes to portray Jesus as a man who identified with and was empowered to preach good news to the poor, yet simultaneously educated and dignified, there could be no more appropriate genre to accomplish this characterization than the fable. As a genre ideally suited to the unpretentious intellectual, the fables serve as prosopoeic speeches that reinforce this characterization.[101] In the Central Section, nearly half of which is comprised of fable material, Jesus's frequent routine of fable telling shows him using the resources of one aligned to the popular class. At the same time, he wields the fable to display his intellectual superiority. The fable genre also enables Jesus to teach at both the story level and level of the implied reader. If we are right to assume a mix of wealthy and poor, all ages and ranks, slaves and free people, men, women, and children in the early Christian audience,[102] then the fable is the ideal genre to mediate between the backgrounds of high and low readership (and listenership).

Based on the prevailing didactic orientation of the Gospel, Luke marshals the fable not only to educate the reader but to support his portrait of Jesus as a teacher.[103] The Lukan prologue confirms from the outset that the Gospel has a didactic orientation, "so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed" (Luke 1:4). Several uniquely Lukan

101 I consider the L fable material to be pre-Lukan by and large. I thus regard the many Lukan episodes with Aesopic connections identified above to be the author's efforts to craft appropriate narratives suitable to the speeches, rather than the other way around. On prosopoeic speech (prosopopoeia), see 10.4 and 11.2.

102 I take Pliny at his word that Christians came from all ages, ranks, and both sexes (*Ep.* 10.96).

103 On Jesus as teacher, see the classic study by Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, WUNT II/7 (Tübingen: Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1981).

episodes make this clear.[104] It is only in Luke's Gospel that we find John the Baptist instructing the crowds, tax collectors and soldiers, who ask the familiar, "What shall we do?" (Luke 3:10–15). It is here at Luke 3:12 and only here in the early Christian tradition that John is titled "*didaskalos*." Of course, this image of John the Teacher foreshadows Jesus, who is portrayed as the teacher *par excellence* in Luke's Gospel through a number of episodes not found elsewhere. The first hints of this begin already in Luke 2, with the uniquely Lukan episode of Jesus's precocious youth, when he stays behind in Jerusalem after the Passover festival. The story is typically rendered in such a way as to indicate Jesus is a passive party, sitting at the feet of the teachers and learning from them. But we might render this scene in such a way that Jesus is not so subordinate to the teachers, but is being depicted as one of them (Luke 2:46–47). At a minimum, this brief episode shows that the Lukan Jesus is at home in an educational setting.

To inaugurate the Lukan ministry, Jesus is empowered with the Holy Spirit and he "began to teach in their synagogues" (Luke 4:15). It is the uniquely Lukan episode immediately following that has struck interpreters, because of its substantial departure in content and order from the narrative in Matthew. Matthew does not narrate the rejection at Nazareth until his thirteenth chapter. Luke stresses the first thing Jesus did was to go—Spirit empowered—*teaching* in the synagogues. The details unique to Luke stress Jesus's intellect: "He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written …" (Luke 4:16b–17). Jesus then proceeds to read. This uniquely Lukan pericope is our only indication in the gospel tradition that Jesus was literate. This act signaling Jesus's education is bound together with the pronouncement of his commission to bring good news to the poor. He stands in vivid contrast to his disciples Peter and John, who were "illiterate," ἀγράμματοι (Acts 4:13).

The Lukan pericope that contains the fable of the Two Debtors is likewise significant (Luke 7:36–50). It narrates the story of a certain Pharisee named Simon, who witnesses a sinful woman anoint Jesus and considers this a scandal.[105] Only in Luke's version is Jesus addressed by Simon as "teacher." This

104 Of course, Jesus has a teaching ministry in all four Gospels, but Luke implies something more than the other evangelists who emphasize Jesus as the master and rabbi. In no case when Luke takes over a Markan verse where Jesus is called rabbi (Mark 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45) does Luke translate it "teacher," διδάσκαλος. Instead, Luke renders it "master," ἐπιστατῆς. When a Markan verse gives Jesus the title διδάσκαλος, on two occasions (Mark 4:38; 9:38) Luke even changes this to "master," ἐπιστατῆς, as well.

105 The pericope is clearly related somehow to the anointing of Jesus at Bethany (Mark 14:3–9; Matt 26:6–13; John 12:1–8).

is the first occasion Jesus is so addressed in the Gospel. From Luke's treatment of the Markan material using διδάσκαλος, we have good reason to think that Luke's practice in using the title "teacher" is not haphazard. Like the opening narrative for the fable of the Two Debtors, twice more is Jesus addressed as "teacher" in the immediate context of his use of fables. In the two subsequent *chreia* openings for the fables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25) and the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13), the title of "teacher" is applied to him.

For characterizing Jesus as a master rhetor through the fable, one could do no better than the first fable of the Central Section: The Good Samaritan. The explicit notice that Jesus's interlocutor (perhaps opponent) is a lawyer, signals to the reader that Jesus is engaging in a forensic disputation. As we learned in Chapter 3, this is one of the specific contexts in which the educated wielded the fable to score rhetorical points and win lawsuits. After their initial back and forth to establish Jesus's credentials, "A certain lawyer stood up to test him, saying, 'Teacher!'" (Luke 10:25). The lawyer then poses a legal-exegetical challenge, asking Jesus what precisely constitutes a "neighbor." In perfect rhetorical fashion, as a trained lawyer would, Jesus draws an impressive analogy by way of a short, invented story applicable to the point at hand—a fable. This narrative context could not be more ideal for capturing the character of Jesus as the model educated fable teller. A lawyer, whom a Hellenized reader would assume is trained in disputing with fables, defers to Jesus the teacher and functions as a foil for Jesus's argument. Jesus remains in command of the exchange throughout, and by the convincing fable of the Good Samaritan, outlawyers the lawyer. The Good Samaritan is a powerful fable indeed, not merely for its contents (good and bad neighbors are a popular subject in ancient fables of course), but because of how effective it is for disarming the lawyer. From the start of the Central Section then, Jesus's rhetorical skill is on full display through his mastery of the fable.

A number of other episodes may also highlight the characterization of Jesus as a teacher and intellectual in his use of fables less explicitly. The use of fables in the episodes that Luke has crafted into symposia are prime examples.[106] To these we may join the not-so-subtle didactic sub-text by which the Lukan Jesus addresses the gospel reader. In the Lukan version of Jesus's teaching material,

106 E. Springs Steele, "Luke 11:37–54: A Modified Hellenistic Symposium," *JBL* 103 (1984): 379–94; Willi Braun, "Symposium or Anti-Symposium? Reflections on Luke 14:1–24," *TJT* 8 (1992): 70–84; Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14*; Raymond F. Collins, "The Man Who Came to Dinner," in *Luke and His Readers: Festschrift A. Denaux*, ed. R. Bieringer, Ronald Van Belle, J. Verheyden (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 151–72; Michaelis Christoffel Dippenaar, "Table Fellowship and Lukan Christology I: Jesus as Guest of Tax Collectors and Pharisees," *Taiwan Journal of Theology* 35 (2012): 2–43.

there is a clear shift from the third person narrative to the second person. In the Sermon on the Plain, for example, it is the Lukan version that addresses the entire Sermon to "you."[107] This address to "you"—the characters in the narrative and the reader—is one of the didactic hallmarks of the fable genre and mutually supports the reader-oriented fable teaching material in the Gospel.[108] The fables in Luke provide lessons by example.[109] They are spaced evenly through the course of the Gospel to maintain the attention of the reader,[110] to entertain, and to educate. This didactic thread through the Gospel of Luke characterizes Jesus as the fable telling teacher, much like Babrius and the contemporary educators. In the use of fables as rhetorical tools for intellectual sparring, such as the Good Samaritan and the Rich Fool, the fables contribute to the characterization of Jesus as a sophist.

9.4 The Death of the Fable Teller and the Wicked Tenants (Luke 20:9–19)

The final tradition of the fable teller that the Gospels tap into may be the most significant of all. Apart from the fable itself, the most famous tradition about Aesop is his unjust death at the hand of the Delphians. Like the Gospels, the readers of *The Life of Aesop* know from the beginning how the protagonist will meet his end. The literary tradition of a wrongly accused wise man using fables while in prison for a capital offense or on the way to his death is a well-attested

107 Compare Matt 5:2–11, where there are only two instances of "you" to Luke 6:20–27 where there are sixteen instances of "you," represented in every single verse. Luke makes this same reader-oriented shift often, in both Q/Matthean material (e.g., Matt 8:12 // Luke 13:28) and in Markan material (Mark 13:12–13 // Luke 21:16–19). For further examples and discussion, see Henry J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 124–26.

108 On the fables addressed to "you," see 12.6.

109 This is the most effective didactic method according to Quintilian: "In everything that we teach, examples are more effective even than the rules that are taught in the schools … the elementary study of every branch of learning is directed by reference to a definite model that is placed before the learner" (Quintilian *Inst.* 10.1.15).

110 "If the hearers have been fatigued by listening, we shall open with something that may provoke laughter—a fable, a plausible fiction, a caricature, an ironical inversion of the meaning of a word, an ambiguity, innuendo, banter, a naivety, an exaggeration…." (*Rhet. Her.* 1.10 [trans. Caplan, LCL]). See further 3.3. As we noted in the previous chapter, it cannot be accidental that Luke (unlike Matthew and Mark) deliberately spaces his fables out about one or two per chapter.

topos. It probably began even before Aesop (*Vit. Aes.* 132–42),[111] and is continued by Socrates,[112] the fabulist Phaedrus,[113] Jesus, Apollonius of Tyana,[114] and Rabbi Akiva.[115] Of all these examples, the parallels between Aesop and Jesus are the most alike. For his characterization of Jesus as a fable teller, it is surely no coincidence that the last fable Jesus utters in the Gospel of Luke—indeed the only one told in Jerusalem—is the Wicked Tenants:[116]

> "A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time. When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him." What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others. (Luke 20:9b–16a)

111 It is possible that the broader tradition of the unjust death of the poet extends to other, possibly earlier accounts about Hesiod and Homer. The texts listed here, however, are those that specifically invoke fable-telling as part of the protagonist's unjust imprisonment or death. See Todd Compton, "The Trial of the Satirist: Poetic Vitae (Aesop, Archilochus, Homer) as Background for Plato's Apology," *AJP* 111 (1990): 330–47. For how Jesus may fit into this broader tradition, see Adela Yarbro Collins, "Finding Meaning in the Death of Jesus," *JR* 78 (1998): 175–96. For how Jesus fits into the narrower hero tradition of Aesop, including a comparison of the Wicked Tenants discussed below, see Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel*, 23–50. See also Andreassi, "The Life of Aesop and the Gospels."

112 *Phaed.* 61a5–b7. On the relationship between the figures Aesop and Socrates, see Schauer and Merkle, "Äsop und Sokrates;" Zafiropoulos, "Socrates and Aesop," and his subsequent monograph Christof A. Zafiropoulos, *Socrates and Aesop: A Comparative Study of the Introduction of Plato's* Phaedo, International Plato Studies 34 (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2015); and Papademetriou, *Aesop as an Archetypal Hero*. For the Gospel depictions of Jesus as suffering a philosopher's death inspired by Socrates, see Thorsteinsson, *Jesus as Philosopher*.

113 *Fab.* 3 Prologue (i.e., the prologue to Book 3). According to the prologue of his third book of fables, Phaedrus is composing them while awaiting his trial.

114 Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.30.3.

115 b. Ber. 61b. See also the discussion in 6.2.3.

116 The evangelist also designates the Sign of the Fig Tree at Luke 21:29–31 a comparison. It is obviously not a narrative, however.

This fable is "the gateway to the passion;"[117] preserved in all Synoptic Gospels and Thomas (Mark 12:1–12; Matt 21:33–46; Luke 20:9–19; Gos. Thom. 65–66), and programmatic for the Gospel tradition as a whole. This chapter began by noting the claims among New Testament scholars about Jesus's uniqueness in inserting himself into his fables. This final fable describing the murder of the beloved son is both an extreme and transparently allegorical depiction of the protagonist's unjust death, and the best example with which to compare the Aesop tradition. Contrary to the consensus we encountered in the introduction, Jesus's self-characterization here is not unique, but is illuminated especially by the conclusion of *The Life of Aesop* in which Aesop likewise allegorizes himself into the fables.

Aesop's confrontations with the Delphians, the story arc that leads to his being hurled from the cliff, begins only at the end of the story (*Vit. Aes.* 124). As we read at the end of the last chapter, the Delphians initially respond positively to Aesop's message, "the people enjoyed hearing him at first" (124), but his message soon pivots to criticism. After telling the fable of the Driftwood (cf. Perry 177), he criticizes the Delphians as being unworthy of their ancestors, indeed inferior to their neighbors:

> When I was far from your city, I was impressed with you as men of wealth and generosity, but now that I see you are inferior to other men in your breeding and in your city, I recognize that I was mistaken. I shall carry away a bad impression of you, for I see that you act in no way unworthy of your ancestors. (*Vit. Aes.* 125)[118]

The Delphians then look for an excuse to kill Aesop in retaliation, ultimately framing him: "The Delphians came in to Aesop and said, 'You are to be thrown from the cliff today, for this is the way they voted to put you to death as a temple thief and a blasphemer who does not deserve the dignity of burial' (*Vit. Aes.* 132). In Luke, the parallel antagonism that leads to the protagonist's murder begins already with the failed attempt to hurl Jesus from a cliff back in Luke 4. There, too, the audience delights in Jesus's message at first, but turns against him when he rejects their claims to ancestral privilege. After the many intervening fabulist connections through the Gospel, Luke rejoins this concluding Aesopic thread in Chapter 20, when Jesus allegorizes himself into his fable.

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117 Lischer, *Reading the Parables*, 52.

118 Whether the Delphians are doing "nothing worthy of their ancestors" or "nothing *un*worthy of their ancestors," appears to be a difference in the MORN and G versions of the text, respectively.

Now condemned to die, Aesop relates a litany of fables allegorizing himself. The final two fables on the way to the cliff continue:

> Seeing his own fate, Aesop said, "Since I've used every kind of argument and you will not be persuaded by me, listen to this fable of mine: A farmer grew old in the country and having never seen the city entreated his children to help him to go and see the city before he died. They yoked a wagon and donkeys for him, saying to him, 'Just drive and they will ferry you to the city.' When a storm came and darkness fell in middle of the journey, the donkeys lost their way and brought him to a cliff. Seeing the danger, he said, 'O Zeus, what injustice have I done to you that I am to die like this, and this not by horses but by worthless donkeys?'" This then I also have to bear, that not by worthy men but by worthless donkeys I die. And when he was about to be thrown from the cliff, he told yet another fable: "A certain man fell in love with his own daughter and suffering from this desire he sent his wife to the country. He then overpowered and raped the daughter, who said, 'Father, you are doing something unholy, I would wish rather submit myself to a hundred men than to you.' This I say to you also, O Delphians." (*Vit. Aes.* 140–141 [trans. mine])[119]

For both Aesop and Jesus, one must set these stories into the narrative of the fable teller plot to grasp their significance. For both fable tellers, this is a paradigmatic act of socio-political resistance, arguably its culmination. For them both, the veil of the hidden transcript is pulled back and their targets, the Delphians and the scribes and chief priests, understand exactly what the fable teller means: "When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this fable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people" (Luke 20:19). In both *The Life of Aesop* and the Gospels, the fate of the author is sealed and he has allegorized himself into the fable as a victimized character. Aesop is the vulnerable old man and virgin daughter, just as Jesus is the innocent beloved son. Aesop's opponents the Delphians are characterized as worthless donkeys and a rapist father, while Jesus's opponents are conniving murderous farmers. Unlike the comic tone of so many others, both fables told by our authors speak of heinous violence, "unholy," and perverse. Like seldom elsewhere in the Gospel tradition, Jesus the fabulist uses the Wicked Tenants to divulge his self-understanding; a fact that has cast a long shadow on the history of this fable's interpretation. As Snodgrass notes, "The stakes are high, for, unlike most parables, this one is of direct and major christological significance."[120]

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119 This second fable (Perry 379) is not preserved in the G recension, where a separate fable has fallen out. It is preserved in the W recension and I have supplied a translation of it from the text in Perry's *Aesopica*.

120 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 276.

For Jesus and Aesop, fable telling in this coded speech to anticipate his death serves a prophetic function.[121] The fables are examples of both foretelling what is to come and then later validating the speaker in this prophetic role when they comes to pass.[122] Jesus predicts that God, "the vineyard owner," will punish "the wicked tenants," the Israelites, for abusing his "slaves," the prophets, and for murdering "the beloved son," Jesus, by destroying them, "the wicked Israelites," and giving their land to "others," the foreign nations. Jesus's prophetic vocation is validated when these events later transpire. In the two fables preceding those quoted above from *The Life of Aesop*, Aesop warns the Delphians of what will come to pass when they kill him:

> Aesop said, "Once when the animals all spoke the same language, a mouse made friends with a frog and invited him to dinner. He took him into a very well-stocked storeroom where there was bread, meat, cheese, olives, figs. And he said: 'Eat.' When he had helped himself generously, the frog said: 'You must come to my house for dinner, too, and let me give you a good reception.' He took the mouse to his pool and said: 'Dive in.' But the mouse said: 'I don't know how to dive.' The frog said: 'I'll teach you.' And he tied the mouse's foot to his own with a string and jumped into the pool, pulling the mouse with him. As the mouse drowned he said: 'Even though I'm dead, I'll pay you off.' Just as he said this the frog dove under and drowned him. As the mouse lay floating on the water a water bird carried him off with the frog tied to him, and when he had finished eating the mouse, he got his claws into the frog. This is the way the mouse punished the frog. Just so, gentlemen, if I die, I will be your doom. The Lydians, the Babylonians, and practically the whole of Greece will reap the harvest [literally, make fruitful (καρπίσονται)] of my death." (*Vit. Aes.* 132–33; Perry 384)

Aesop's mouse foretells the post-mortem recompense awaiting the frog for murdering him. Unlike Jesus's fable in which the vineyard owner's return remains a future event, the prophecy of Aesop's fable is fulfilled at both this intradiegetic level and the story level. The "frog," the Delphians, is taken along with the "mouse," Aesop, by the water bird, who kills the frog. Returning to the story level, Aesop tells the *epimythium*, auguring the fate prepared for the Delphians if they go through with the execution. Like Jesus, Aesop also foretells that through his death and the resulting destruction of the murderers, foreign nations will reap a bounty. Aesop's next fable, the Eagle and the Beetle (Perry 3), immediately follows and concludes with Zeus validating the claim

121 On the prophetic function of Jesus's fables see, Klyne Snodgrass, "Stories with Prophetic Intent," in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 150–64.

122 Aesop has already been hailed as a "true prophet" in *Vit. Aes.* 93.

of the humble insect.[123] Aesop implores the Delphians to show reverence to Zeus, but they remain undeterred. In doing so, like Jesus's accusers, they reveal themselves to be the true blasphemers and the punishment to follow thus takes on divine proportions.

At first, the fabulist appears to be an ironic failure since he is killed: Aesop admonished others but could not heed his own advice, Jesus saved others but could not save himself (Luke 23:35). But, as Kurke observes, the fulfillment of Aesop's prophecies are located only partially in the narrative: "The judgment of Aesop as the winner in these Delphic competitions of *sophia* is outside the narrative frame. Here it falls to the reader or listener to make that final judgment."[124] The story records the plague falling upon the Delphians but continues on after the text. So also is Jesus's fable of the Wicked Tenants only partially satisfied when darkness descends and the curtain of the temple is torn in two (Luke 23:44–45). Like Aesop's, Jesus's fable relies on the gospel reader to confirm that Jesus's prophecy has fully come to pass, presumably with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE. The readers know that the prophetic fables have proven to be true, confirming the fable teller as a true prophet.

Finally, as with the different versions of the gospel, so also do the several versions of *The Life of Aesop* report different consequences of the protagonist's death in the immediate aftermath, shortly after, and at the time of the reader.[125] A number of classical scholars have noted the resonance between Aesop's death and the *pharmakos* typology—a person acting or treated as an atonement or purification for others.[126] Jesus's relationship to this typology has obvious resonances as well that have been examined by Adela Collins,[127] and Wills has compared the *pharmakos* traditions shared by Aesop and Jesus.[128]

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123 As we discussed in 3.3.4, the outline of this portion of the story appears to be intact already by the Classical Period. What details were in place at that time are less clear, but this story of Aesop speaking this fable against the Delphians is preserved already in Aristophanes and presumed to be common knowledge (*Vesp*. 1445–49).

124 Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 189.

125 The degree of agency ascribed to Aesop in meeting his end, not unlike the differences in the Gospels, depends on the recension of the text. In the MORN recension, the Delphians push him from the cliff, while in the G text, Aesop deprives the Delphians of the satisfaction by leaping off on his own.

126 For the treatment of the *pharmakos* generally see Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), *passim* and on Aesop specifically, 279–288; see also Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 75–94.

127 Collins, "Finding Meaning in the Death of Jesus."

128 Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel*, 23–50.

The fable teller and *pharmakos* characterizations cross-pollinate, so also do the traditions of the fable teller and resurrection of the sage. While the G recension of *The Life* ends like the Markan Gospel, numerous testimonia preserve Aesop's various resurrection appearances or metempsychoses.[129] For Jesus, it is on the road to Emmaus that he delivers the last fable line. He quotes from an Aesopic fable that calls back to the predictions of his death, which culminated with the Wicked Tenants: "Then he said to them, 'Oh foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?'" (Luke 24:25–26).[130]

The Wicked Tenants sets Jesus amid a long and widely-known tradition of wrongly condemned wise men who tell fables in prison or on the way to the gallows. This tradition bears strong associations with the character Aesop. As part of a fable telling persona, the story would be incomplete without a fable like the Wicked Tenants. In allegorizing themselves, their situation, their opponents, and the divine overseers into these fables, Aesop and Jesus share the most in this tradition. The allegorical fable serves as a dramatic high point. It is a highly effective means to call out and condemn the opponents. The fable confirms that the protagonist was a righteous and innocent victim, and authenticates a prophet who has a deity on his side. The fable draws in the reader to confirm the truth of the teller's story.

9.5 Conclusion

On their quest for comparable "parable" telling figures, New Testament scholars have been at a loss. Against the prevailing view that Jesus is alone and idiosyncratic in his use of this genre, this chapter has situated the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels amid the long, complex heritage of the fable teller. Fabulists often allegorize themselves and others into their fables and often engage with the character associations of the genre. The primary character associations were the slave and the sophist. While the fables in the educational setting remain largely neutral, we saw a number of rhetorical strategies employed both to appeal to these character associations and respond to them.

In the first century Roman world, the fable was a highly valued means of teaching reading, grammar, and rhetoric—one that the Gospel authors would

129 For the primary texts, see Perry, *Aesopica*, 226–27. For discussions, see Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, 279–288; and Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 189–90.

130 For the fable sources of this quote, see 8.3.

have themselves known well. In educational contexts, the fable served as a vehicle to cultivate moral virtues and citizenship. It was a valuable tool in the sophist's repertoire, from winning legal disputes to persuading crowds. Based on the first-century collections that put fables into verse, efforts were clearly underway to read the fable as high literature as well. At the same time, one of the primary associations of the fable was with slaves and the popular class. The interest in the ancient fable that has begun to gather momentum over the last decade or two among classical scholars is surely due in no small part to a burgeoning scholarly interest in recovering non-elite discourses. It was a genre for slaves, beloved by rustics and illiterates, nonsense for old women and children to chew on, whose most famous user was a deformed African slave, regarded as human garbage (*Vit. Aes.* 14, 31).[131] The fable is the paradigmatic genre of low wisdom. It is evident that these disparate associations often motivated the fabulist or their tradents to address them, explicitly or implicitly. We encountered authors who leaned into one persona, wed the two, or employed one of the many strategies to dispute, mitigate, minimize, or circumvent them. For a figure as esteemed as Jesus, we should expect that the early Christians and evangelists would be no less interested in minimizing certain fable teller characteristics while emphasizing others. We saw some evidence of them using the same strategies as other ancient authors.

From the appeals direct and indirect to the fable tradition in Luke, the presentation of Jesus the fabulist is an evident concern of the author. In Jesus's insider-only fables and the many fables of the weak overcoming the strong, Luke preserves the "low" fable tradition, though it has been somewhat muted. Otherwise, Jesus dons the mantle of the fabulist as a teacher and sophist, resolving legal questions with fables, and offering "you" lessons with fables through the course of his ministry. In the Wicked Tenants, the Jesus tradition achieves the same results as Aesop in employing the fable to authenticate him in the office of prophet and righteous victim. The fable teller character encompasses the seemingly contrasting portrayals of Jesus as one who identifies with the poor, while at the same time a model *didaskalos* and a prophet. With the aim of appealing to as broad an audience as we imagine the early Christian communities were, Luke using fables throughout his gospel was an ingenious rhetorical maneuver to gain universal appeal.

For biblical scholars, situating Jesus within the tradition of the fabulist carries significant interpretive potential for historical and literary-critical pursuits.

131 Περικάθαρμα, "garbage," is quite a rare word that appears in metaphors twice in *The Life* and once by Paul, 1 Cor 4:13b: "We have become like the garbage (περικαθάρματα) of the world."

While I have focused on the specific context of Luke's Gospel, much of what has been noted here could be easily adapted to the other Gospels and such topics as the historical Jesus. The fable telling persona is valuable as well for contextual hermeneutical and theological approaches. The fable is, indeed, a Jewish and Greek genre for the rhetorically gifted, but it had taboo connotations as well. While associating a genre with a deformed black slave, for the lowly, for women, and children, was once cause for embarrassment, a liability at best, current movements in biblical scholarship and classics have begun to welcome such hermeneutical lenses. This background invites readings of Jesus's fables as a black genre, a womanist genre, a dis/abled genre, a critique from below and vehicle for backtalk against the powerful and oppressive structures in society.[132] For these many approaches, the fable context has much to offer.

132 For the application of "back talk" to biblical hermeneutics, see Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2018). For a recent treatment of the Lukan fables from the womanist perspective, see Febbie C. Dickerson, *Luke, Widows, Judges, and Stereotypes* (Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2019).

CHAPTER 10

The Form of the Fable

10.1 Introduction

Over the past century, form criticism has been the bread and butter for much New Testament scholarship. It is especially from the assertion that the "parable" form makes its debut in the New Testament that scholars like Jeremias have declared, "The student of the parables of Jesus … may be confident that he stands upon a particularly firm historical foundation. The parables are a fragment of the original rock of tradition."[1] For the present undertaking, form offers a straightforward method for comparing "parables" with fables. This chapter will begin by demonstrating that the modern form of the "true parable" is identical to the form of the fable; that parable and fable scholars, laboring independently, have arrived at the same result. Since one common approach to determining a text's genre is based on form, this offers further confirmation that the fables of Jesus should be situated within the broader fable milieu. Having demonstrated the synonymity of the form in broad outline, the chapter continues by examining the formal elements in finer detail. First, we will examine a formula that begins many fables and occurs especially often in Luke, using the *pronomina indefinita*. Second, we will compare the characteristic direct speech and soliloquy of Luke's fables to the form and function of direct speech and soliloquy in other fable literature going back to the Archaic period. Third, we will explore some theory of the fable plot-structure that will be used in the coming chapters to describe components of the fable.

Having demonstrated in detail that the Lukan fables adhere to the expected form and having introduced the vocabulary to describe their formal elements, we then turn to consider how an author like Luke would adapt his fable material. One of the lasting interests of form criticism in biblical scholarship has been to identify secondary additions and reaching earlier, more "original" versions. For scholars with these interests, understanding techniques of fable adaptation provides new strategies for making such determinations. Here we follow up on the techniques laid out in Chapter 5 to consider how Luke's training in expanding, condensing, and paraphrasing fables may have been applied to the Lukan Fable Collection. After looking at examples of expanded fables, the Lukan Prodigal Son is then compared with other prodigal son fables. Here I

1 Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 11.

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highlight how they differ and point to the many indications that Luke has expanded his fable. We then see how the Two Debtors and a group of potentially paraphrased fables measure up to techniques of condensing and paraphrasing described by the ancient rhetoricians. Finally, we will observe how the combination of a *chreia* with a fable serves to incorporate a fable into a wider narrative framework and signals the author's intended interpretation.

10.2 The Form of the "Parable"

Sifting the pages for their formal elements, Snodgrass offers a helpful summary of the formal features of the "parable:"

> Jesus's parables are first of all brief, even terse … all the characters are anonymous. Parables are marked by simplicity and symmetry. Never are more than two persons or groups together in the same scene … the crucial matter of parables is usually at the end, which functions something like the punch line of a joke … While some parables do not have explanations, many do … This is usually accomplished by statements beginning "Thus also …'"[2]

Snodgrass has offered a fair description of the *fable* form here, which was present already in the Archaic and Classical periods. Formal features such as these were recognized in antiquity as one reason for associating diverse contents with the fable genre. As Holzberg describes,

> Given the fable's broad spectrum of contents, it is somewhat surprising that the outward form of Aesopica already presents a relatively uniform picture in archaic and classical times. This, of course, makes it all the easier for us to regard the texts, themselves termed varyingly αἶνος, μῦθος, and λόγος by their authors … the oldest Greek fables even display something like formulaic phraseology of the kind later to be used systematically by the author of the Collectio Augustana. This is very evident at those points where the narrator, after finishing a fable inserted into the text, explains to the audience or readers the conclusion they are expected to draw from the exemplum 'Thus you too …" (οὕτω δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς/σύ…), or a similar expression.[3]

2 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 17–19. This description echoes Bultmann's parable form from a century earlier (Rudolf Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 10th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995], 193–223), which can be read in a helpful one-page English summary in Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 331–332.

3 Holzberg, *The Ancient Fable*, 20.

Next, Holzberg highlights the consistency of the actors, the structure, and the plot:

> Leaving aside the etiological fables, we find that, of the fifteen narratives which survive in their entirety [from the Archaic and Classical periods]—all except one of these involve two characters—nine actually end with a remark that comments on the events recounted. The words are spoken by one of the figures, and the moral exemplified by the story can be derived from what is said; in several cases the closing comment censures the other character's behavior. The preceding events are sometimes divided into an exposition and the action proper, so that the fable as a whole is then tripartite.[4]

I have let Holzberg do most of the talking here so that I may not be accused of fudging the details. The form of the fable was already in a recognizable state in this inchoate period of Classical history and it should look very familiar to parable specialists. The predominance of two characters in a tripartite plot, the proportion of direct speech, the emphasis on the concluding comment, and transferring the conclusion to a moral takeaway using "thus also …," are the very same that parable theorists have identified in the Gospels.

Here we have two learned experts on their subjects, "parables" and "fables," describing the form in the same terms. Of course, I should point out again that the Greek fable form ante-dates Jesus's "parables" by more than half a millennium, we have hundreds of examples of the fable, and it was familiar to anyone that learned Greek in the first century. From the fable collections and the fable exercise in the *progymnasmata*, this is the fable form one was trained to compose. Holzberg continues:

> Simple as these formal devices in the early Greek fables may be, our ability to recognize them as such will be extremely important when we come to a formal and stylistic evaluation of the texts written for fables books, of fables, that is, which were intended by their authors as literary pieces. Such fabulists would refine these narrative techniques.[5]

In the face of a *status quaestionis* that insists the gospel "parables" emerged as a new, unique genre—this thumbnail sketch of the form alone points in a different direction. This chapter continues now by exploring in finer detail the fable form and its use in the Lukan Gospel. Let us advance in the *ordo docendi*, beginning with the simplest marker of the fable form: τις.

4 Holzberg, *The Ancient Fable*, 20.

5 Holzberg, *The Ancient Fable*, 21.

10.3 The pronomina indefinita τις and δύο

The first regular marker of the fable form is the way it begins. In Babrius, Phaedrus, the Augustana Collection, and so on, the first word of a fable is regularly the subject and protagonist, importantly, without an article.[6] Of the Augustana Collection, it was Nøjgaard who was first to note this consistent feature: "the first word of the great majority of Augustana fables is the name of one of the characters, most often in the nominative, but *without the article*."[7] In place of the article and sometimes even the identity of the character, the fable uses the indefinite form of τις; in technical vocabulary, referred to as the *pronomina indefinita.* In fables, this opening, "X τις," where X is usually the protagonist, operates as the fable genre equivalent of, "Once upon a time…."[8] This technique establishes the character as anonymous (see Snodgrass above). Van Dijk, who is perhaps the most suspicious of pinning down the fable definition beyond "a fictitious, metaphorical narrative," observes, "Nevertheless, identification of fables may be facilitated by the occurrence of particular formal elements, notably unspecified protagonists (τις)…."[9] Adding Adrados to the chorus, who painstakingly catalogs every time τις accompanies a fable in his "Inventory" volume, it is clear that this is a deliberate and reliable generic marker of the fable. Thus, when a text or speaker begins a story with this formula, "X τις," it would be a recognizable cue to a first-century Greek-speaking audience that a fable is beginning.[10]

In the pre-Augustan period, this feature is not particularly prominent but is regular enough that we can identify it in a few places. The Shadow of the Ass (Perry 460), often ascribed to the fourth century BCE Demosthenes, follows this form:

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6 In Phaedrus's Latin, obviously it would not be possible to begin with an article anyway. Nevertheless, the equivalent of the τις fable opening appears in the regular use of forms such as *quidam*.

7 "le premier mot de la grande majorité des fables d'augustana est le nom d'un des personnages, le plus souvent au nominatif, mais *toujours sans article*" (Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 1:511 [italics original]).

8 For Nøjgaard's discussion of the τις formula, see *La fable antique*, 1:388–90. He brings up this formula at various other points throughout his lengthy work as well.

9 Van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 113–14. Van Dijk catalogs a number of early examples and notes that sometimes it appears in adverbial expressions (*adverbia indefinita*) (*Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 362–63).

10 See also Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2:384–85 for a discussion, and the third volume, *passim*.

> A certain young man (νεανίας [τις]) in the summer time hired an ass to go from the city to Megara. When noon came and the sun was blazing fiercely, both he and the owner of the ass wished to lie down in its shadow. Each tried to prevent the other from so doing, the owner maintaining that he had rented him the ass, not its shadow, and the one who had hired the ass that he had complete rights in him. (Plutarch, *Mor*. 848a [trans. Fowler, LCL, modified])[11]

In the Hellenistic period, we find some early examples approaching this opening formula, such as in the epigrammatist Carpyllides (third century BCE):

> A certain man angling on the beach with a hook attached to a fine hair line (Ἰχθῦς ἀγκίστρῳ τις ἀπ' ᾐόνος εὔτριχι βάλλων) brought to shore the hairless head of a shipwrecked man. Pitying the bodiless corpse, he dug a little grave with his hands, having no tool, and found there hidden a treasure of gold. Of truth then righteous men lose not the reward of piety. (Anth. pal. 9.52 [trans. adapted from van Dijk])[12]

Another opening from Antipater of Sidon (second century BCE) begins, "a certain man by the dreadful fury of the goddess, in a frenzy …," ἔκ ποτέ τις φρικτοῖο θεᾶς σεσοβημένος οἴστρῳ (Anth. pal. 6.219). When we arrive at the fable collections in the first century, we find that the anarthrous nominal noun identifying the protagonist, supplemented by τις, is a prevalent and identifying feature in scores of fables. In Chambry's second edition,[13] eighty-nine of the three hundred and fifty-eight fables, or about twenty-five percent, begin with this "X τις" formula or something very close to it.[14] Here are two examples:

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11 This fable has a widespread reception in the ancient world from Pseudo-Plutarch to scholia on Plato's *Phaedrus* at 260c and Lucian's *Hermotimus* at 71. I have given the most easily accessible translation of this fable. Though the τις marker is absent in Plutarch, both scholia have it. In the estimation of Adrados and van Dijk, it is so widely dispersed in its attestation as to be untraceable (see the discussion in van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 296–301). It is also significant that the version given by Plutarch begins in a *chreia* (see 10.7).

12 A separate fragment of this same fable from Carpyllides begins similarly: ἁλιέα τινὰ ἀντὶ ἰχθῦς.… The primary texts of this fable are scattered across many difficult to access sources and editions, and it is not numbered in Perry's Aesopica. Van Dijk offers the simplest way to access the Greek and includes references to the relevant sources in *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 267 and 534.

13 As a reminder, Chambry includes the prose collections of the Augustana and its descendants and the Babrian fables that only survive in prose paraphrases.

14 A form of indefinite τις appears on the first line of Chambry numbers 2, 5, 8, 11, 16, 21, 27, 32, 34, 41, 42, 44, 45, 48–50, 53, 56, 58, 61, 75, 82–84, 88, 90, 93, 97, 100, 102, 104, 106, 114, 117, 128, 131, 141, 150, 154, 157, 158, 160, 164, 165, 167, 175–178, 181, 184, 195, 202, 214, 220–222, 225, (233), 235, 249, 253, 255, 258–260, 263, 264, 266, 274, 275, 281, 295, 297, 298–302, 308, 316, 327, 332, 335, 338, 343, 344, 355, 357.

> Ἄνθρωπός τις ἡτοίμαζε δεῖπνον..., "A certain man prepared a dinner ..." (Perry 328, Babrius, *Fab.* 42)
> Ἁλιεύς τις αὐλοὺς εἶχε..., "A certain fisherman had a flute ..." (Babrius, *Fab.* 9; cf. Perry 11)

In Babrius, we find a similar prevalence of this formula. Of the one hundred forty-three fables surviving in the Athos manuscript, there are thirty that begin with "X τις," and several more clearly derive from it.[15] Thus, about one quarter of our two primary collections of fables in Greek circulating in the first century exhibit this very easy to identify opening formula. The formula also appears in *The Life of Aesop*, e.g.: "'Listen,' he said. 'A certain poor man (ἄνθρωπος τις πένης) was hunting grasshoppers ..." (*Vit Aes.* 99 [SBPVO]).

Turning to the Gospel fables now, we may compare the openings in search of this "X τις" formula. In the fables unique to Luke, we find the following openings, with examples of the "X τις" formula underlined:[16]

> δύο χρεοφειλέται ἦσαν <u>δανιστῇ τινι</u>..., A certain creditor had two debtors ... (Luke 7:41)
> <u>ἄνθρωπός τις</u> κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλὴμ..., A certain man descended from Jerusalem ... (Luke 10:30)
> τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἕξει φίλον..., Who among you having a friend ... (Luke 11:5)
> <u>ἀνθρώπου τινὸς</u> πλουσίου εὐφόρησεν ἡ χώρα..., A certain rich man had a well-producing field ... (Luke 12:16)
> <u>συκῆν</u> εἶχέν <u>τις</u> πεφυτευμένην..., A certain man had a fig tree planted ... (Luke 13:6)
> ὅταν κληθῇς ὑπό τινος εἰς γάμου..., When you are invited by someone to a banquet ... (Luke 14:8)
> [<u>ἄνθρωπός τις</u> ἐποίει δεῖπνον μέγα..., A certain man made a great feast ... (Luke 14:16)]
> Τίς γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν θέλων πύργον οἰκοδομῆσαι..., Which one of you, wishing to build a tower ... (Luke 14:28)
> Ἢ τίς βασιλεὺς πορευόμενος..., What king, going out ... (Luke 14:31)
> [τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν ἔχων ἑκατὸν πρόβατα..., Which one of you, having a hundred sheep ... (Luke 15:4)]
> Ἢ τίς γυνὴ δραχμὰς ἔχουσα δέκα..., What woman having ten drachmas.... (Luke 15:8)

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15 Babrius, *Fab.* 9, 10, 15, 22, 27, 30, (33), 38, 42, 45, 48, (51), 55, 63, 66, 83, 88, 92, 99, 101, 102, 108, 110, 111, 113, 116, (117), 119, 125, 128, 129, 135, 138. On many more occasions, Babrius does not use it for stylistic reasons, though he signals throughout a recognition of this opening as a fable marker.

16 In order, these are the openings of the Good Samaritan, the Shameless Neighbor, the Rich Fool, the Barren Fig Tree, the Place at the Table, the Banquet, the Moronic Builder, the Warring King, the Lost Coin, the Prodigal Son, the Crafty Steward, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Worthless Slaves, the Judge and the Widow, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, and the Pounds.

ἄνθρωπός τις εἶχεν δύο υἱούς..., A certain man had two sons.... (Luke 15:11)
ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον..., A certain rich man who had a steward.... (Luke 16:1)
Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος..., A certain rich man.... (Luke 16:19)
Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν δοῦλον ἔχων..., Who among you having a slave.... (Luke 17:7)
κριτής τις ἦν ἔν τινι πόλει..., A certain judge in a certain city.... (Luke 18:2)
Ἄνθρωποι δύο ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν προσεύξασθαι..., Two men went up to the temple to pray.... (Luke 18:10)
[ἄνθρωπός τις εὐγενὴς ἐπορεύθη..., A certain nobleman was traveling.... (Luke 19:12)]

The quantity of Lukan fables beginning with "X τις" is not only sufficient to establish that they make use of this characteristic opening fable formula, but also the rate at which it is used is even higher than that found in the other Greek fable collections.[17]

Two of the L fables that do not begin with "X τις" are also explicable by another common fable opening. The Two Debtors and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector begin exactly like many other fables, with the lemma δύο. Naturally, fables often feature two main actors and in such cases they often begin with the formula, "Δύο X." Like the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, we find, for example: "Two friends were traveling down the same road ..." (Δύο φίλοι τὴν αὐτὴν ὁδὸν ἐβάδιζον...) (Perry 65); or perhaps better, "Two enemies ...," such as those stuck on the same ship (Δύο ἐχθροὶ ἐν μιᾷ νηῒ ἔπλεον...) (Perry 68); we also find "Two youths ..." (Δύο νεανίσκοι...) (Perry 66), "Two men were fighting ..." (Ἄνδρες δύο ἐμάξοντο τίνες...) (Perry 278), and many other examples.[18] In this last example we see the combination of the δύο and the τις formula, exactly as we find in the fable of the Two Debtors above: "δύο χρεοφειλέται ἦσαν δανιστῇ τινι."

One reasonable concern with appealing to the "X τις" formula is that it could be possible to reach a false positive result. Since Luke makes regular use of τις, far more than Mark and Matthew, we should ask if it is the author Luke who is responsible for this formula, instead of fable style generally or a fable source in particular.[19] Fortunately, there is a very simple way to control for this by

17 Different fable authors have different penchants for using the τις formula. One may observe this, for example, in the different recensions of *The Life of Aesop*. Some of them do not use τις often, while others seem deliberate in adding it when possible. So far as I am aware, Berger is the only New Testament scholar to have taken note of this fable marker as such and pointed out how frequently it appears in the New Testament fables (Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," 1117).

18 Other examples include Chambry numbers 20, 67, 68, (149), 299, 307, and 310.

19 Matthew uses τις only with a somewhat obscure force in 11:12 (οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα τις ἐπιγινώσκει εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς), and Mark uses it once to alert us of a certain youth soon deprived of his covering in Mark 14:51 (καὶ νεανίσκος τις συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα

seeing if Luke adds τις to the fables he takes over from Mark and Q/Matthew. When considering the Q/Matthew material, we must tread lightly. The Wedding Banquet/Feast (Matt 22:1–14; Luke 14:15–24) and the Talents/Pounds (Matt 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27) are so divergent that they probably derive from two different sources. Nevertheless, we may note that in these two fables, the L form has the characteristic "X τις" formula, while the M version does not. We are on safer ground in ascribing the Leaven (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20–21) and the Two Builders (Matt 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49) to Q/Matthew, and safest of all with the Markan fables. In the fable of the Leaven, we read, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid …," ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ζύμῃ, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἐνέκρυψεν… (Matt 13:33). If Luke were responsible for the τις in the other fables, we might expect him to add the *pronomina indefinita* after γυνή, but his version reads just like Matthew's, "It is like yeast, which a woman hid …," ὁμοία ἐστὶν ζύμῃ, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ [ἐν]έκρυψεν… (Luke 13:21). In the fable of the two builders Q/Matthew presents Luke with another golden opportunity to throw in a τις. The Matthean version reads, "It is like a prudent man, who built his house on the rock," ὁμοιωθήσεται ἀνδρὶ φρονίμῳ, ὅστις ᾠκοδόμησεν αὐτοῦ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν· (Matt 7:24). Though Luke's version is different from Matthew's, if Luke is responsible for those differences, we may note that once again Luke does not add a τις to ἄνθρωπος: "it is like a man building a house …," ὅμοιός ἐστιν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδομοῦντι οἰκίαν…. The situation is the same in the fables that Luke takes over from Mark. Mark presents Luke with several perfect opportunities to add a τις if this were his inclination, and though Luke redacts the Markan fables, not once does he add a τις to them. Mark's "sower went out to sow," ἰδοὺ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων σπεῖραι (Mark 4:3) remains the same, "a sower sowing," ὁ σπείρων του σπεῖραι (Luke 8:4). Mark's mustard seed on the ground is a prime example, since the Markan form specifies no agent: "It is like a mustard seed that, when thrown on the ground …," ὡς κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃς ὅταν σπαρῇ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς… (Mark 4:31). To this Luke's version adds a human character, "It is like a mustard seed, which *someone* took and sewed …," ὁμοία ἐστὶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔβαλεν… (Luke 13:19). If Luke were going to add a τις anywhere, it would be here after he inserts the noun ἄνθρωπος, but he does not. Lastly, in Mark's Vineyard Workers, there is another golden opportunity for Luke to add τις, "a man planted a vineyard …," ἀμπελῶνα ἄνθρωπος ἐφύτευσεν… (Mark 12:1). The Lukan remains, simply, "a man planted

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ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ). Relative to the other evangelists, in Luke-Acts we encounter the formula in abundance: (underlined verses are L fables) Luke 1:5; 7:2, 41; 8:2, 27; 9:8, 19; 10:30, 31, 33, 38; 12:16; 14:2, 16; 15:11; 16:1, 19; 18:2; 19:12; [20:9]; 22:56; 23:26; 24:22; Acts 5:1; 8:9; 9:33, 36; 10:1, 5; 13:6; 16:1, 9, 16; 17:5; 18:7; 21:16; 22:12; 24:1; 25:14.

a vineyard …," ἄνθρωπός ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα… (Luke 20:9).[20] From the fables that Luke takes over from Mark and those we can attribute to Q/Matthew with certainty, there is not a single τις to be found, which suggests that the presence of the genre marker in the L fables is not from Luke's penchant for adding τις elsewhere. Thus, the τις opening that begins so many Lukan fables is a genre signal marking that a fable is beginning.

10.4 Soliloquy and Direct Speech

A high proportion and frequent use of direct speech is characteristic of the ancient fable. The reason comes from the tendency of the narratives to be short, but regularly involving dialogues between two characters, soliloquies, and the frequent and characteristic use of a memorable final reply (*réplique finale*).[21] At least a few parable scholars have noted that the proportion of direct speech in the L fables is also particularly high.[22] Berhard Heininger has put together a helpful tabulation of the word counts in the L fables, showing the number of words in direct speech compared to narrative:[23]

20 In the Lukan version of the Workers in the Vineyard at Luke 20:9, there is a τις following ἄνθρωπος in Codex Alexandrinus and some later manuscripts; however, Sinaiticus, Vaticanius, and Bezae do not have this τις. It seems beyond doubt that τις was added by later scribes who recognized it was missing the fable formula and wished to bring it closer into conformity with the other L fables, if not the fable genre as a whole.

21 On the *réplique finale*, see the next section, "Plot and Structure."

22 Michal Beth Dinkler, "'The Thoughts of Many Hearts Shall Be Revealed': Listening in on Lukan Interior Monologues," *JBL* 134 (2015): 373–99; Philip Sellew, "Interior Monologue as a Narrative Device in the Parables of Luke," *JBL* 111 (1992): 239–53; John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 21–25; Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables*, 74–78; and Heininger, see below.

23 Bernhard Heininger, *Metaphorik, Erzählstruktur und szenisch-dramatische Gestaltung in den Sondergutgleichnissen bei Lukas*, NTAbh 24 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991), 14. Heininger includes the "who among you" fables in a footnote. I have put them all together for convenience. To his credit, Heininger thinks of the ancient fable as an appropriate analog to compare with the ratio of direct speech and narrative in the L fables. He does so, however, in a curious way. He chooses six prose fables, observes that they have a higher ratio of narrative to direct speech, and concludes from this that they are not the appropriate literary context for the Lukan fables. Heininger does not offer a reason for the six fables he chose or why only six, but we can be sure that the six he chose should not be considered representative of the hundreds in circulation in the first century. In contrast to those with a large percentage of direct speech, Heininger believes that those Lukan fables with less direct speech such as the Friend at Midnight resemble the contemporary fables more closely. Heininger also attempts to distinguish Luke's fables from the others

Table 1 Direct Speech in the L Fables

	Narrative	Direct Speech
The Good Samaritan (10:30–35)	90	14
The Shameless Neighbor (11:5–10)	17	42
The Rich Fool (12:15–21)	18	61
The Fig Tree (13:6–9)	27	50
The Moronic Builder and King (14:28–35)	75	9
The Lost Coin (15:8–10)	31	8
The Prodigal Son (15:11–32)	212	180
The Crafty Steward (16:1–8)	65	78
The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31)	106	138
The Worthless Slaves (17:7–9)	20	21
The Judge and the Widow (18:1–8)	37	33
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9–14)	40	35

Tabulated in this manner, a remarkable trend emerges. The amount of direct speech in the L fables is usually about equal with narrative and often far higher, such as it is in the Rich Fool and the Fig Tree.

As with direct speech generally, the same scholars have noted one particular kind of direct speech characteristic of the L fables: the soliloquy. As it is used in ancient storytelling, a soliloquy may be defined as a monologue given in direct speech, spoken by a character in the drama (not a narrator or author), who either believes they are alone or deliberately ignores the presence of other characters.[24] In the L fables, the use of soliloquy is arguably the most characteristic dramatic technique, often occurring at the climax:

> The rich fool "debated with himself, saying 'What should I do …,'" διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ λέγων τί ποιήσω… (Luke 12:17)
> The prodigal son, at the point of starvation: "when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here

by noting that direct speech most commonly occurs at the conclusion of a fable. This is a strange point to make if one wishes to distinguish Luke's fables from those in the collections. If concluding in direct speech is characteristic of the fable (and on this point he is quite correct!), we should note that direct speech concludes many Lukan fables.

24 This definition goes back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century. Here it is adapted from John Dean Bickford, "Soliloquy in Ancient Comedy" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1922), 1–2.

> I am dying of hunger!'" εἰς ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἐλθὼν ἔφη· πόσοι μίσθιοι τοῦ πατρός μου περισσεύονται ἄρτων, ἐγὼ δὲ λιμῷ ὧδε ἀπόλλυμαι. (Luke 15:17)
> After being confronted by the master, "Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me?'" εἶπεν δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ οἰκονόμος· τί ποιήσω, ὅτι ὁ κύριός μου ἀφαιρεῖται τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ; (Luke 16:3a)
> The judge, having been repeatedly accosted by the widow, "said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone …,'" εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ· εἰ καὶ τὸν θεὸν οὐ φοβοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον ἐντρέπομαι… (Luke 18:4b)
> "The Pharisee stood praying to himself these things, 'O God …,'" ὁ Φαρισαῖος σταθεὶς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ταῦτα προσηύχετο· ὁ θεός…. (Luke 18:11a)[25]

The consistent use of soliloquy and its significance for establishing the appropriate milieu through which to read the Gospel fables is widely overlooked, especially since, as Sellew has noted, this literary device is "otherwise rarely if ever employed in the Gospel tradition."[26]

Surveying these soliloquies that occur in the L fables we may note that, in addition to their remarkable prevalence, there are a few differences and commonalities between them. Two soliloquies are examples of crisis—the prodigal son and the crafty steward. The crafty steward shares with the rich fool the contemplation about "what to do." The Pharisee's and Tax Collector's prayer soliloquies serve a function of characterization, allowing each to divulge to the audience the nature of person he is. The characterization function is shared with the judge who divulges his negative characteristics. In the judge's case, however, his soliloquy is more focused on marking the narrative conclusion of the fable. The judge concludes the story by expressing his folly and defeat. This terminal expression of the judge's folly is mirrored in Simon the Pharisee, whose soliloquy is a divulgence of his wrongheadedness. While the boundary is fuzzy between a character who speaks aloud in soliloquy and one whose thoughts are intended to be internal, in at least a few of these cases, the soliloquy appears to take place in the inner psyche of the character. With such a rich variety of soliloquies, it would be valuable if it were possible to situate the examples in the L fables within a literary milieu that might shed light on their function and help us to interpret their meaning.

In Sellew's detailed study of these soliloquies, he does not do much in the way of discussing the possible literary milieu from which they emerge or give parallel examples from other literature. He notes that soliloquy is rare in

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25 One might add the tax collector, who also prays to God "be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). Simon the Pharisee also uses a soliloquy, which introduces the fable of the Two Debtors: "(he) said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet …'" (Luke 7:39).

26 Sellew, "Interior Monologue," 239.

"writing of a historical, philosophic, or rhetorical flavor," but is more at home in mimetic and dramatic literature, such as poetry, tragedy, and Hellenistic novels.[27] Dinkler, on the other hand, notes many ancient authors who use interior monologue, but points out that it is used sparingly.[28]

The most detailed attempt to excavate a literary background for the use of soliloquy in the L fables is by Heininger, who is convinced that they are all composed by Luke.[29] In search of Luke's reasons for adding soliloquies, Heininger first turns to the background Sellew considers relevant: ancient novels. In early romances such as Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus's *The Ephesian Tale*, and *Joseph and Aseneth*, direct speech is common. The use of soliloquy sometimes appears at key moments, including the phrase "what should I do?"[30] Heininger concludes that there are fundamental problems with identifying the ancient novels as an appropriate literary milieu:

> The monologues of the ancient romances are certainly a great distance removed from the monologues that we confront in the L parable material. To be sure, the reason is mostly because they are situated in disparate genres (romance, parable telling) and find their most significant expression using separate content and different lengths.[31]

In other words, the monologues of the ancient romance and those in the L fables bear not the greatest resemblance. We may paraphrase Heininger who notes that the genres are clearly different, that the content and length of the soliloquies are clearly different, and that the contexts are clearly different.[32]

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27 Sellew, "Interior Monologue," 239–40.

28 Dinkler, "The Thoughts of Many Hearts," 380–81. Sellew and Dinkler do not consider the contemporary fable literature.

29 While it is certainly possible that Luke has redacted or composed some speeches (on which, see 10.6 below), I do not think he has composed all the soliloquies whole cloth. Given the source-critical indications taken up later, I am inclined to attribute the soliloquies to the Lukan Fable Collection when there is no evidence to the contrary.

30 Heininger, *Sondergutgleichnissen*, 239.

31 "Die Monologe des antiken Liebesromans sind von den Monologen, wie sie uns im Lk Gleichnissondergut entgegentreten, gewiß ein ganzes Stück weit entfernt. Das liegt zum Großteil sicher an der Situierung in disparaten Gattungen (Roman, Gleichniserzählungen) und findet seinen signifikantesten Ausdruck in untershiedlichen Inhalten, auch in der differierenden Länge" (Heininger, *Sondergutgleichnissen*, 61).

32 Heininger, *Sondergutgleichnissen*, 61. To expand on these differences between the soliloquies in the L fables and the ancient romances, a few more points are worth noting. Even in the romances, which are long works regularly employing direct speech, soliloquies are relatively few and far between. Those soliloquies that do appear are (always?) spoken by women in a lover's crisis, to the point that it is the soliloquy characteristic of the ancient romance. For an example of a typical soliloquy in the ancient romances, here is one of

Heininger is on surer footing when he turns to New Comedy, a corpus with certain affinities with the ancient fable. In New Comedy, Heininger suggests the plays of Menander, Plautus, and Terence serve as a better backdrop to the monologues in the L fables than the ancient novel. As in the ancient novel, the proportion of monologue is high, especially in Menander, and we also find a greater variety of soliloquies.[33] Here are two examples of soliloquy in Menander's *Dyskolos* to give a sample of their length, content, and function:

> Girl: I'm so unhappy, oh, it's all gone wrong! // What am I going to do now? Nurse was hauling up // the bucket, and she dropped it in the well! (Menander, *Dysk.* 189–91 [trans. W. G. Arnott, LCL])[34]

> The stew-pot? You've forgotten it, you say? // You're all asleep—with hangovers! Well, what // shall we do now? Apparently, disturb // Pan's next-door neighbours! (Menander, *Dysk.* 457–58 [trans. W. G. Arnott, LCL])[35]

At least compared to the ancient romances, here we have a much closer analogy to the L fables. The soliloquies in Menander are reasonably brief, are not delivered by a damsel in distress, and in the examples I have provided, make use of a phrase similar to the characteristic, "What shall I do?" Given the prevalence of comic elements we should not be the least surprised to find influences of New Comedy on the fable collections and Gospel fables alike.[36] Heininger's comparison between New Comedy and Luke's fables is helpful for providing additional background for the world in which the L fables are participating, namely, the world of the ancient fable. That said, the obvious benefit of comparing the Lukan "parables" to fables is that they are cut from the same cloth. When we turn to the soliloquy in the ancient fable, we find that those in Luke fit like a glove.

Callirhoe, "She fell to bewailing her lot. 'Oh, what a terrible fate,' she sobbed. 'Buried alive! I haven't done anything wrong! Dying a lingering death! They're mourning for me, and there's nothing wrong with me! Who will send a messenger? Who will be the messenger? Wicked Chaereas, I blame you—not for killing me, but for being so quick to remove me from the house. You should not have buried Callirhoe quickly, even if she had been dead. But perhaps you already have plans for marriage!'" (*Chaer.* 8 [trans. Reardon]).

33 In ancient comedy, Bickford counts ten types of soliloquy in all (Bickford, "Soliloquy in Ancient Comedy," 3–16).

34 οἴμοι τάλαινα τῶν ἐμῶν ἐγὼ κακῶν·//τί νῦν ποήσω; τὸν κάδον γὰρ ἡ τροφὸς//ἴμῶσ᾽ ἀφῆκεν εἰς τὸ φρέαρ.

35 τὸ λεβήτιον, φῄς, ἐπιλέλη[σθ]ε; παντελῶς // ἀποκραιπαλᾶτε. καὶ τί νῦν ποιή[σ]ομεν; // ἐνοχλητέον τοῖς γειτνιῶσι τῷ θεῷ // ἐσθ᾽, ὡς ἔοικε.

36 Menander is even one of the many famous characters to make a cameo in Phaedrus's fables (*Fab.* 5.1.).

In the ancient Greek fable, the use of direct speech, soliloquy, and interior monologue stretches back into some of the earliest fragments of the Archaic period, earlier even than Old Comedy. As we have seen with the other fable features up to this point, recovering fables from the Archaic period in fragmentary authors is no easy task. The precious data we have from them, supports the claim that soliloquy and direct speech were characteristic of the fable genre reaching back as far as the literature allows.[37] Now that we are up to speed on the story of the ancient fable, we know that the place to begin is with that paradigmatic fable in Hesiod:

> This is how the hawk addressed the colorful-necked nightingale, carrying her high up among the clouds, grasping her with its claws, while she wept piteously, pierced by the curved claws; he said to her forcefully, "Silly bird, why are you crying out? One far superior to you is holding you. You are going wherever I shall carry you, even if you are a singer; I shall make you my dinner if I wish, or I shall let you go. Stupid he who would wish to contend against those stronger than he is: for he is deprived of the victory, and suffers pains in addition to his humiliations." So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the long-winged bird. (*Op.* 202–212 [trans. Most, LCL])

Since this is the oldest attested Greek fable and a paradigmatic example, one which the evangelists would conceivably have known as such, the high proportion of direct speech to narrative here is noteworthy.

Archilochus (ca 680–ca 645 BCE), the rough contemporary of Hesiod, whom we also encountered in Chapter 3, offers further evidence from this very early period in the fable's history. As we recall, his best-preserved fable is a version of the Fox and the Eagle (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.28; Perry 1).[38] The plot structure of the fable is a paradigm we will see again and again: a morally dubious character enacts a plan that gives fleeting satisfaction but that soon goes awry. Though it is only preserved in fragments, already in Archilochus's fable, we

37 The high proportion of direct speech to narrative goes back to the earliest documents we have containing fables in the Sumerian Proverb Collections (from the first half of the second millennium BCE). Here are two examples from Collection Five: "The horse, after he had thrown off his rider, (said): 'If my burden is always to be this, I shall become weak!'" (5.38); "The ass was swimming in the river and the dog held tightly onto him, (saying): '[W]hen will he climb out and be eaten?'" (5.42). The translation and edition are found in Edmund I. Gordon, "Sumerian Animal Proverbs and Fables: 'Collection Five,'" *JCS* 12 (1958): 1–21, 43–75. The first of these fables is the oldest record of horseback riding.

38 The versions recorded in Phaedrus, Perry, and in the Chambry variants are very different. This fable, as we would expect from one so old, has many forms. We may confidently ascribe the interior monologue to Archilochus, however, since only his fragment records direct speech.

find the character enter into soliloquy, as the fox says to herself, "Do you see where that lofty crag is, rugged and hostile? On it (the eagle) sits, making light of your assault" (*Fragments* 176 [trans. Douglas E. Gerber, LCL]).[39] As I noted in Chapter 3, Archilochus's poetry was associated with character introspection, rendering the use of soliloquy in fables at this inchoate stage rather natural.[40]

We have another example from this very early period in a fable told by Simonides (ca 556–468 BCE) and later by Timocreon (fl. 480 BCE) that is preserved in more than one fragment: The Fisherman and the Octopus (Perry 425).[41] As it is preserved in Pseudo-Diogenianus (first-century CE?) it reads as follows:

> The Carian fable is the name of the one which is told of a Carian man, a fisher who encountered wintry weather after spotting an octopus and said, 'If I take off my clothes and dive for it, I shall freeze, and if I don't catch the octopus, I shall starve my children to death.' Timocreon uses this story in his songs, and Simonides mentions it. (Pseudo-Diogenianus, *Proverbs*, Preface [Timocreon fragment 734, trans. Campbell, LCL])

In this fable, the protagonist is depicted using the soliloquy to express the quandary in which he finds himself. The fisherman is caught in a dilemma—a moral and an existential one at that. Dive to eat and freeze, or stay aboard and starve his family? It is this kind of soliloquy, the point of decision, often in a time of crisis that appears in many first-century fables, Luke's Gospel included. From these several examples, it is clear that the inner conflict soliloquy is an established literary technique of the fable going back to the Archaic period.

When we reach the first-century fable collections that have come down to us, one does not have to go hunting in fragments for soliloquy—they occur

39 ὁρᾷς ἵν᾽ ἐστὶ κεῖνος ὑψηλὸς πάγος, //τρηχύς τε καὶ παλίγκοτος; // ἐν τῷ κάθηται, σὴν ἐλαφρίζων μάχην.

40 On the influence of Archilochus on later poets, see Barron and Easterling, "Elegy and Iambus."

41 The attribution to Simonides is also found in Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7.31 and by an anonymous paroemiographer in Cod. Paris. suppl. gr. 676. In the latter, the fable is recorded as follows: "The Carian fable: Simonides mentions this when singing the praises of a charioteer who had been victorious at Pallene and had won as his prize a cloak which he used to keep off the cold; for (the games) were held at Pallene in winter. They say that a fisherman saw an octopus in the winter and said, 'If I don't dive, I shall starve,' and that this is the Carian fable" (fragment 514 [trans. Campbell, LCL]). The preservation of the soliloquy in both the Archaic authors, along with the fact that the fable does not appear in any of the later surviving collections, confirms that the soliloquy is original to the Archaic period.

in more than fifty fables.[42] Inventing speeches for fable characters was part and parcel of fable composition for every student of ancient rhetoric. In the *progymnasmata*, composing appropriate speeches for invented characters receives its own exercise: prosopopoeia (προσωπωποιία) or ethopoeia (ἠθοποιία).[43] Theon gives a detailed description of what prosopopoeia is and how to be successful at composing it:

> Personification (prosōpopoeia) is the introduction of a person to whom words are attributed that are suitable to the speaker and have an indisputable application to the subject discussed; for example, what words would a man say to his wife when leaving on a journey? Or a general to his soldiers in time of danger? … One should have in mind what the personality of the speaker is like, and to whom the speech is addressed: the speaker's age, the occasion, the place, the social status of the speaker … Different ways of speaking would also be fitting *by nature* for a woman and for a man and *by status* for a slave and a free man, and *by activities* for a soldier and a farmer, and *by state of mind* for a lover and a temperate man, and *by their origin* the worlds of a Laconian, sparse and clear, differ from those of a man of Attica, which are voluble. … "We become masters of this if we … give what is appropriate to each subject, aiming at what fits the speaker and his manner of speech and the time and his lot in life and each of the things mentioned above." (Theon, *Prog.* 8)

Theon and the others stress the importance of consistency between a character's nature and speech, which will be a subject of the next chapter. Hermogenes specifically mentions composing such speeches as a means of

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42 By my tally, twenty examples are found in the Athos manuscript of Babrius, and three more in the prose paraphrase. Eight soliloquies are preserved in the surviving verse fables of Phaedrus, and twenty in the Augustana recension. There are more examples in the other collections. This number would multiply if a more lenient interpretation of a monologue were used that included direct speech declarations regardless of whether other characters are present.

43 Theon uses the term "prosopopoeia" for all invented speeches, while other progymnasmatists such as Hermogenes (*Prog.* 9) divide speeches into prosopopoeia for fictional characters and ethopoeia for characters in history. On the difference or lack thereof between prosopopoeial and ethopoeia, Nicolaus the Sophist comments on the issue: "Different writers regard what is called 'prosopopoeia,' being almost the same as ethopoeia, as differing from it in different ways. Some call prosopopoeia that which specifies both the persons and the supposed circumstances, and ethopoeia what is in all respects freely made up, which they also called a rhēsis, giving this name to the same thing. Those who have the best opinion think that in ethopoeia real persons are specified, while proposopoeia is that in which we invent persons and attribute words to them. This they attribute especially to the poets, who have the privilege of changing lifeless things into persons and giving them things to say" (*Prog.* 10). Quintilian claims that the matter was settled in his day (*Inst.* 9.2.31–32), but from the later progymnasmatists, it is apparent that it was not. For a study of the Latin authors who also use this technique, see Joachim Küpper, Jan Mosch and Elena Penskaya, eds., *Variants of Rhetorical Ventriloquism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

expanding fables (*Prog.* 1), which we will explore in greater detail below. The goals and effects of prosopopoeia are laid out succinctly by Quintilian:

> [prosopopoeic speeches] both vary and animate a speech to a remarkable degree. We use them (1) to display the inner thoughts of our opponents as though they were talking to themselves (but they are credible only if we imagine them saying what it is not absurd for them to have thought!), (2) to introduce conversations between ourselves and others, or of others among themselves, in a credible manner, and (3) to provide appropriate characters for words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise, or pity. (*Inst.* 9.2.30–31)

Quintilian identifies not only the effectiveness of using direct speech for characterization, he specifies interior monologue or soliloquy as the foremost means to achieve it. Prosopopoeic speech lend credibility to the story, and as Quintilian hints at, they assist in moral-didactic goals as well.

We have seen several powerful examples already from the earlier period. Here we continue with some first-century examples of direct speech and soliloquy to show how Luke's fables fit in with the others. Perhaps the longest example is in the Augustana Collection:

> A cowardly miser found a golden lion and said, "I don't know how to behave in the face of this. I'm beside myself and don't know what to do. I'm torn between my love of wealth and my cowardly nature. What kind of chance or what god produces a golden lion? I'm in internal conflict over this. Desire drives me to seize it and my character to stay away from it. What kind of luck is this that offers a gift but won't let me accept it? What kind of treasure that gives me no enjoyment? What kind of divine benefaction that has no benefit? What next? What trick shall I use? What scheme shall I resort to? I'll go get my servants and bring them here. There are enough of them that they ought by their very numbers to capture it, and I shall stand by and watch from a distance."
> *The fable is appropriate for a man of wealth who doesn't have the courage to put his hand to his wealth and use it.* (Perry 71)

The soliloquy, spoken by the protagonist of less than upstanding moral character, is used first to express the character's nature, then his dilemma, next his consideration of a scheme to solve it, and ultimately his solution. This is as good an analog as any to those soliloquies found in Luke's fables as we summarized them above. Examples of characters speaking to themselves in dilemmas are found elsewhere such as:

> The truthful man thought to himself: "If this deceiver, whose words are all lies, has received such a recompense, then I, if I tell the truth, shall receive an even greater one." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.13.20–22)[44]

44 For more on this fable, see 11.3.

In Babrius, a fox utters the iconic, "what shall I do?" (τί ποιήσω) (Babrius, *Fab.* 95.79), and in another fable, "A fox standing not far from a trap was turning over many thoughts in his mind about what he should do (τί ποιήσει)" (Babrius, *Fables* 130.1–2 [trans. mine]). Apart from characters caught in decisions, examples of soliloquy of a mundane variety appear, for example, in Phaedrus:

> An old woman saw a wine jar that the drinkers had left empty; but from the Falernian lees, still lingering in its noble shell, it spread forth a delightful odour. Eagerly she sniffed it up with all her nostrils, then exclaimed: "Ah, sweet ghost, how good you must have been before, when even your remains are so excellent!" *Anyone who knows me will tell you what this refers to.* (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.1)[45]

By far the most common soliloquies in Babrius and the Augustana Collection are those uttered in the position of the final reply (*réplique finale*). They are most typically the protagonists commenting on their own folly. Here is an example:

> A farmer picked up a viper that was almost dead from the cold, and warmed it. But the viper, after stretching himself out, clung to the man's hand and bit him incurably, thus killing (the very one who wanted to save him). Dying, the man uttered these words, worthy to be remembered: "I suffer what I deserve, for showing pity to the wicked." (Babrius, *Fab.* 142)[46]

Babrius's use of direct speech and particularly his use of soliloquy is deserving of closer attention since it resonates strongly with the L fables. As Sellew describes the functions of the soliloquies in the L fables, "When a narrator renders his or her characters' thoughts and decision-making processes so directly, the reader or dramatic audience is able to grasp their self-understanding and moral dilemmas with increased psychological depth and empathy."[47] Though

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45 As we discussed in the previous chapter and as Perry explains in the note, the *epimythium* is deliberately obscure, probably intended for a few insiders. See Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, 258–59 for the explanations some have offered.

46 The number of such concluding soliloquies about a character commenting on his or her failure are too many to count, but here is one more example from the Augustana Collection: "A shepherd found some wolf cubs and carefully brought them up with the idea that when they were grown, they would not only guard his own sheep but would also steal sheep from others and bring them to him. As soon as they were grown, the shepherd set them loose, and the first thing they did was to destroy his own flock. He groaned and said, 'I got just what I deserved. Why did I save these wolves when they were young? I ought to have killed them even if they were full-grown.' *So it is that those who spare bad men find that they have strengthened enemies against themselves first*" (Perry 209; cf. Perry 234).

47 Sellew, "Interior Monologue," 240.

Sellew appears unaware of the contemporary fable literature or the prosopopoeic speech, we may note how well his statement resonates with Babrius. There is a subtle but important shift in emphasis in Babrius's soliloquys, first described by Nøjgaard: a shift toward the psychological.[48] Babrius's increased ratio of direct speech to narrative, and his emphasis on the psychological may be observed by comparing a fable found in Babrius with the same preserved in the Augustana Collection. Here are two examples:

Table 2 Fables in the Augustana Collection and Babrius

Fable in the Augustana Collection	**Fable in Babrius**
A wayfarer who had walked a long distance and was exhausted sank down beside a well and fell asleep. Luck appeared at his side, wakened him and said, "My good man, if you had fallen in, you would have blamed me instead of your own foolishness." *So it is that many men blame the gods although they are the cause of their own misfortune.* (Perry 174)	A workman was sleeping at night close to a well without being aware of it. In his sleep he seemed to hear the voice of Fortune standing over him and saying: "You there, wake up! I fear lest, if you fall, I shall be held to blame by men and get an evil reputation. They charge me with responsibility for everything in one lump, including all the misfortunes and failures that come to a man by his own fault." (Babrius, *Fab.* 49)
A farmer's sons were quarrelsome. When he was unable, after much admonition, to persuade them by what he said to change their ways, he decided that he would have to do it by action and told them to bring him a bundle of sticks. When they had done as he told them, he first gave them the sticks all together and told them to break them in two. When they couldn't do it, although they tried with all their might, he undid the bundle and gave them each a single stick. They broke the sticks easily, and their father said, "Well now, boys, it's just the	Among the worthies of old there lived an aged man with many sons, on whom he laid, when now about to die, the following behest: He bade them fetch, if any could be found, a sheaf of slender rods. One came and brought them. "Try now, my sons," said he, "with all your might to break these rods, thus bound together with each other." They tried, but could not. "Now then," he commanded, "try them one by one," They did, and each rod easily was broken. "So it is, my sons," said he, "if with one mind you cling together, all of you, no one can harm you, however

48 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 2:206–14.

Table 2 Fables in the Augustana Collection and Babrius (*cont.*)

Fable in the Augustana Collection	**Fable in Babrius**
same with you; if you stick together, your enemies won't be able to get you in their clutches, but if you quarrel, you'll be easy to catch." (Perry 53)	great his power may be. But if your purposes are different one from the other, then each of you will fare the same as did those single rods." *Brotherly love is the greatest good for men; even the humble are exalted by it.* (Babrius, *Fab.* 47)

From these examples, we get a sense of Babrius's style, his elevated ratio of direct speech to narrative, and observe the increase in psychological concerns expressed in his version. As Holzberg characterizes the fables of conflict in Babrius, the common exchange "between two characters, is recast as the inner conflict which one of the two fights out with its own self."[49] In this manner of exposition, we find strong resonances in Luke's fables. In the L fables, as in Babrius, despite the narrative casting the conflict between two characters, the story becomes dominated by the psychological reasoning of just one. In the fable of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:2–5), for example, the majority of the story takes place not through the actions of the characters, but in the mind of the judge, who reasons about how he should deal with the widow.

While this parallel emphasis on the psychological in the ancient fable and the Lukan Fable Collection is significant in its own right, we can say something more about the functions of this psychological emphasis as well. In Nøjgaard's words, Babrius emphasizes that "what is opposed to the character is not the material situation, but this true nature of the self that the character refuses to recognize."[50] Thus, it is less about the situation and far more about the reasoning used in how the character responds to it. This mechanism for Nøjgaard points to "a simple generalization of *spiritual conflict*."[51] The characters face a situational problem, but through the soliloquy it becomes a dilemma that is the product of the character's fundamental nature—their greed, their

49 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 57.

50 "ce qui s'oppose au personnage n'est pas la situation materielle, mais cette nature veritable du moi que le caractere se refuse a reconnaitre" (Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 2:209).

51 "le mecanisme resemble a une simple generalisation du *conflit spiritual*" (Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 2:209 [italics original]).

recklessness, their impiety, their boastfulness. Zafiropoulos likewise describes the function of direct speech in the fables as one of "cognition."[52] This shift of emphasis from narrative conflict to conflict of spirit in the characters is the very same that makes the Lukan fables stand out from those of the other gospels. The L fables are less about the exigencies of a narrative than how the characters respond to them. The prosopopoeic speeches of the characters in the fable collections, as in the Lukan Fable Collection, divulge their true natures and serve as (primarily negative) examples from which the reader can draw a lesson.

While negative examples predominate in the ancient fable generally and Luke's specifically,[53] the effect does not work only for those soliloquies that are divulging negative qualities. As Nøjgaard goes on to explain, this technique of expressing spiritual conflict can serve another role: the provocation of sympathy.[54] It is one thing to narrate a situation of a character in dire straits, it is another to tell us their thoughts from the heart. We are prepared to relish whatever misfortune befalls the prodigal son for his foolishness, but it is by his sincere and self-debasing soliloquy that an adversarial audience is turned into a sympathetic one:

> How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." (Luke 15:17–19)

Nøjgaard finds this sympathetic turn especially effective in the fables featuring prayer. By "prayer," Nøjgaard means those characters who are captured and are making pleas for their life, but it serves just as well for a character like the tax collector. The tax collector's prayer for mercy in soliloquy hits home with readers in a way that a narrative description could not, triumphing over our prejudice against him. As Sonia Pertsinidis describes,

> A further result of the use of direct speech and internal evaluation is that it increases the likelihood that the audience will empathise with the characters rather than evaluating the story from a distance at a purely intellectual level. This is especially the case when a protagonist transitions from a lack of

52 Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 175.

53 As Dinkler observes, "Luke's thinkers … tend to be *un*-heroic, requiring correction" ("The Thoughts of Many Hearts," 382 [italics original]).

54 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 209–10.

> self-knowledge or an incorrect interpretation of a situation to full realisation and understanding.[55]

The soliloquies in the L fables are not ones of trapped lovers, or of slaves who have spilled the soup and wonder what to do. The soliloquies of Luke's and other fable collections are a key part of characterization. The dilemmas display their actors' true nature or drop us into the midst of a conflict of spirit. While the L fables are often good for a laugh (something shared with New Comedy), the soliloquies of the fable have a moral dimension that are used to persuasive and didactic ends as well.

While Babrius is perhaps the most skilled first-century fabulist at revealing his characters' natures and inner machinations, Nøjgaard is quick to point out that it is not as though Babrius's fables have this quality the other fabulists do not.[56] As we saw from the Archaic period examples, we find forerunners to the spiritual conflict already in the sixth century BCE. It is this same use of soliloquy, drawn from the fable tradition, that Luke and his fable collection make use of to the same ends—drawing out the spiritual conflict and true nature of the fable characters to direct the reader to a moral evaluation.

10.5 How a Fable Is Structured

With only the few dozen "narrative parables" of Jesus and the much later rabbinic material, there is not much evidence to go on when posing questions about the form and function of "parables." Bringing Jesus's fables alongside the vast corpus of comparanda puts us in a better position to describe their narrative structure. In Babrius, the Augustana Collection, and Phaedrus to a lesser extent, we observe the gravitation toward a single end-form, a fable form "par excellence."[57] Like the *epimythium* and *promythium* (covered in Chapter 12), and the τις formula above, the narrative structure is a heuristic tool to identify a fable. Like the other genre markers, the structure is descriptive rather than prescriptive. While most short fables can be slotted into the fable plot structure with ease, longer fables generally do not follow it strictly, especially when they belong to a broader narrative rather than a fable collection. Nevertheless,

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55 Sonia Pertsinidis, "Articulate Animals in the Fables of Babrius," in *Speaking Animals in Ancient Literature*, ed. Hedwig Schmalzgruber (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020), 81–102, here 98.

56 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 2:209.

57 This is how Zafiropoulos (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 7) describes Nøjgaard's fable form that we will discuss below.

the repetition of the same pattern in a great many fables provides us with a helpful tool for identifying fables and comparing them with Jesus's.

The technical vocabulary introduced by Morten Nøjgaard offers a straightforward framework to describe elements in fable plots, their structures, and characters.[58] Fable plots tend to follow a basic, dualistic, tripartite narrative structure.[59] The first element is "*la donnée*:" the fable begins in a brief presentation of the time and space in which the story takes place and of the situation of the protagonist.[60] The second central element is "*l'action de choix*:" the protagonist has to make a choice that will promote a particular course of action. The third and final element of the structure is "*l'action finale*" or "*réplique finale*:" a final action or a final reply of one of the characters that brings the fable to a close.[61] For Nøjgaard, it is this logical structure that facilitates the production of ethical meanings drawn from the fable at the end. The final component of the fable form are the quasi-paratextual *promythium* and *epimythium*, to which Chapters 12 and 13 are devoted.[62] The plot at its core is thus: a situation is presented, a character makes a choice, and that choice is evaluated.

While the presence of the first component, "*la donnée*," in the Lukan fables is probably not very impressive, since one could argue any narrative would begin this way, the presence of the other two central elements is a different story. We have observed above the quantity of direct speech in the Lukan

58 Though Nøjgaard's fable scheme has been described by most as too restrictive for the diverse plots of the ancient fable, it nevertheless provides valuable insights into how a large portion of fable narratives progress and convey their meanings. Nøjgaard's fable plot "par excellence" is this in a nutshell: a fictive situation involving real actions by one or more individuals who are obviously allegorical characters by virtue of something fantastic about them, such as being a deity or talking animal, one of whom initiates an act by free choice (always a bad one) applicable to the lives of people, to which another character responds by choice (always a good one) with a reply in word or deed. Since we are essentially robbing the temple of Nøjgaard, it is not essential that we unpack this entire complex framework here, merely to establish the context for what follows. We should qualify that the "bad" choice and "good" choice are not the same thing as "right" and "wrong" in a moral sense, but in terms of the outcomes they predict; in some examples it may be better to think of them in terms of losing and victorious choices. This is worked out in some detailed in Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 1:71–82.

59 Van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 114. As he notes, there are a great many possible variations even from this simple structure, which are cataloged by Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable, passim*.

60 According to van Dijk, the opening component, "la donnée," is the most common element to drop out (*Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 114).

61 As I noted in 10.2, this scheme was largely intact already by the Archaic and Classical periods.

62 These are the "explanations … by statements beginning, "thus also …'" that Snodgrass identified above.

fables and how these speeches are regularly central soliloquies in which the protagonist considers, "what to do." This characteristic feature of the L fables is the "*l'action de choix*." The third element, the *réplique finale* or the *action finale*, is especially helpful for identifying how Luke's fables were intended to be read, and how they convey their meaning. The *action finale* is a decisive conclusion of the fable by deed and the *réplique finale* is the conclusion of the fable with the direct speech of one of the fable characters. As is often noted, many of the L fables end in direct speech, often as a réplique *finale*: The Rich Fool (Luke 12:20), the Fig Tree (Luke 13:9), the Moronic Builder (Luke 14:30), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:31–32), the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:31), the Worthless Slaves (Luke 17:7–10), the Judge and the Widow (18:5), and the Pharisee and Tax Collector (18:13). This is the element Snodgrass identifies as "something like the punchline of a joke."[63] The *réplique finale* is generally a message of criticism, either self-criticism or of one character to another. When the *réplique finale* is delivered by the protagonist, it is usually an admission of defeat and a reflection on the character's ill fortune, regularly in soliloquy.[64] For Nøjgaard, the decisive end achieved by these narrative devices serves a purpose: "With its form of finishing the narration, the fable wants to force the reader to continue his activity outside the action alone, that is to say: to do the translation [into the moral that one should draw from it]."[65]

Before looking at some examples, it will be helpful to look at one last literary device peculiar to the fable genre, identified by Nøjgaard: the use of a character he describes as "*le survenant*." We may translate *le survenant* as something like "the newcomer" or "the surveyor." As Nøjgaard defines it, the *survenant* is a tertiary character, "A character introduced after the main story, not actively engaged in the action, but who comments in his reply, ending the fable."[66] In other words, the *survenant*, though not involved in the central plot, can pop up to deliver the *réplique finale*. Here is an example:

> An astronomer was in the habit of going out regularly in the evening to observe the stars. Once as he was strolling through the outskirts of the town with his attention completely fixed on the heavens, he fell into a well before he knew what was happening to him. While he was howling and shouting, a passer-by

63 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 19.

64 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 1:74–82, 141–70.

65 "la fable veut forcer, avec sa forme de terminer la narration, le lecteur a continuer son activite en dehors de la seule action, c.-a-d. a faire la translation" (Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 1:79).

66 "personnage introduit après l'action finale (s'il y en a), non engagé activement dans l'action, mais qui la commente dans sa réplique terminant la fable" (Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 1:159–60).

> who heard his pitiful tones came up and, as soon as he found out what happened, remarked, "My good fellow, while you're trying to watch things in the heavens, you don't even see things on the earth." (Perry 40)

In this example, we see the *réplique finale*, a form that complements the humor of the abrupt ending, delivered by one explicitly named a passer-by. Other *survenant*s can be any number of characters not directly involved in the events. We can look once more at the now-familiar fable of the chariot driver:

> A man from Sybaris fell out of a chariot, and somehow he got his head seriously injured. It happens he wasn't an experienced driver. And then a friend of his stood over him and said, "Let each practice the craft he knows."
> *Thus also you do the same and run off to Pittalus's clinic!*" (Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 1427–32)

In this fable, the chariot driver's friend, not involved in the action of the fable, pops in to deliver the concluding line. In the technical terminology, the friend is the *survenant* delivering a *réplique finale.*

10.5.1 *The Fool Acting Alone*

Let us proceed once more in the *ordo dicendi*, with the simplest possible structure that appears regularly in the ancient fable. This is a fable about a certain character who engages in some folly, which is then optionally reported or evaluated by a party not directly involved in the situation (the *survenant*). Here is a familiar fable that exemplifies the simple structure:

> Some bunches of grapes were hanging from a dark-colored vine on a hillside. A crafty fox, seeing the clusters so fully laden, tried with many a leap to reach the dangling purple fruit; for it was ripe indeed and ready for the vintage. After toiling in vain and being unable to reach it, he went away beguiling his grief with these words: "The grapes are sour, not ripe as I supposed." (Babrius, *Fab.* 19)

In this fable, which is the origin of the metaphor "sour grapes," a scene is set (*la donnée*) and a single protagonist has a choice to make (*action de choix*)—a poor choice, which produces failure as we would expect. The character then uses a soliloquy to render the *réplique finale*. As is often the case, the protagonist's *réplique finale* is used for him to come to terms with his folly. In this fable, the protagonist rebuffs the obvious reason for self-condemnation, which would surprise the readers and encourage them to draw out a relevant lesson from that fact.

Using all of the fable vocabulary and formal elements discussed so far, the Rich Fool is an ideal L fable to bring them all together. It represents the stock

fable features and creates a plot about a single character engaging in some folly:

> A certain rich man's field produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, "What shall I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God said to him, "You fool! This very night they are asking for your soul. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" [*So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.*] (Luke 12:16–21 [trans. adapted from NRSV])

The fable opens in the τις *pronomina indefinita* formula, "a certain rich man's field …," ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου…. The first sentence is *la donnée*. The fable continues to describe the situation by depicting the main actor contemplating what to do in an internal soliloquy (*l'action de choix*). The actor then makes his choice (a bad one, as we might predict), deciding to tear down his storehouses to build larger ones. Though this plan suffices to give the rich man fleeting satisfaction, a deity (*le survenant*) cracks the sky to deliver a direct speech, laying bare the folly of the protagonist and ending the fable (*réplique finale*). An *epimythium* follows, potentially added by a later scribe, just as in many *epimythia* in other fable collections.

When comparing this example to the Sour Grapes above, knowing the form and vocabulary of the fable plot enables us to see how similar the two are regardless of differences in content. If we wished, we could use our knowledge of the formal elements, like a first-century student, to conform one pattern to the other. For example, instead of a *survenant* speaking, we could conclude the Rich Fool like the Sour Grapes, with a direct speech from the foolish protagonist. We might conclude the Rich Fool with something like: "That very night, when the man suddenly fell ill, he said to himself, 'Woe is me, all these things I have prepared, whose will they be?'"[67]

Even a very brief fable such as the Moronic Builder matches up to the fable plot:

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67 Note that the version of this fable found in the Gospel of Thomas relates more explicitly that the Rich Fool died that very night, and also has removed God the *survenant*. Knowing how fables were reworked by adding, changing, and removing these fable plot elements allows us to better articulate how the two versions differ: "Jesus said, 'There was a rich man who had considerable wealth. He said, 'I shall invest my wealth so as to sow, reap, plant, and fill my barns with crops, lest I run short of something.' These things are what he was thinking in his heart, and that very night the man died. Whoever has ears should listen!'" (Gos. Thom. 63 [trans. Layton]). For further discussion, see 11.5 and 15.2.2.

> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." (Luke 14:28–30)

The fable opens with a compressed *donnée*, a protagonist who intends to build a tower. The individual considers whether he has the funds to build it (*l'action de choix*). The protagonist fails, as expected, and *survenants* appears at the end to utter the *réplique finale* in direct speech, criticizing the action of the protagonist. Though the contents of all three fables are completely different, these examples are nearly identical permutations of the same structure.

10.5.2 *The Agonistic Fable*

Whereas this first paradigm with a single character is the simplest, the second paradigm, describing two characters is probably the most common. We may compare again Snodgrass's observation that "never are two persons or groups together in the same scene,"[68] with Nøjgaard's "law of two."[69] While sometimes fables describe two characters working productively together, they are normally set in conflict. The *agon* can range from a deadly physical confrontation to a friendly disagreement or sportsman-like competition. The *agon* is then optionally evaluated by a *survenant*. According to Nøjgaard, when there are two characters, fables revolve not around the characters, but the *agon*, the conflict. Here are two examples of this plot from Phaedrus:

> A eunuch was engaged in litigation with a rascal, who, in addition to obscene remarks and wanton abuse, ended by reproaching him with the loss sustained by his mutilated body. "There now," said the eunuch, "is the one thing in which I am at a great disadvantage, that I have no testicular evidence of integrity. But why, fool, do you bring as a charge against me that which is the fault of Fortune? What is really disgraceful to a man is what he has deserved to suffer." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.11)

> A bald man happened to find a comb in the street. Another equally destitute of hair came up and said: "Hey there, share in the profit!" The other man showed him the booty and added: "We have been favoured by the will of the gods, but by an unkind fate we have found, as the saying goes, coals in place of a treasure." *This complaint befits one who has been fooled by hope.* (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 5.6)

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68 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 17.

69 Nøjgaard describes this as "la loi du deux," but it is only a "law," as he sees it, in the Augustana Collection. He contrasts this with the possibilities for additional characters in the other collections (*La fable antique*, 1:194). Of course, for both Snodgrass and Nøjgaard, these are more rules of thumb than laws. Some fables have more characters at once, e.g. The Two Debtors (Luke 7:41–42) and the Athenian Debtor (Perry 5).

In both examples, the fable begins with a *donnée*, followed by an *agon*, and is concluded by a *réplique finale*. The second reflects a common outcome—neither is a commendable character and there are no real winners.

With the fable form in hand, let us consider the *agon* between the Judge and the Widow:

> In a certain city there was a certain judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me vengeance against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Even though I neither fear God nor have respect for anyone, on account of the beating this widow is giving me I will avenge her, lest by the end of her coming she gives me a black eye!" (Luke 18:2–5 [trans. mine])

The fable opens with the τις *pronomina indefinita* formula and *la donnée* describing the situation: "a certain judge in a certain town…." The judge, the first character, has chosen a course of action (usually a losing one)—neither fearing God nor regarding people. This is contested by the second character, the widow, who repeatedly comes to the judge demanding vengeance. The judge considers the situation (*l'action de choix*) and, using soliloquy, he issues the *réplique finale* commenting on his own failure. As we can see from the example of the Eunuch and the Rascal above (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.11), agonal fables often begin with the *agon* already underway in the opening *donnée*, such as it is in the Judge and the Widow.

The Crafty Steward is another easy example to match up with the fables. In this case, the fable plot structure helps to resolve a long-established controversy regarding its interpretation:

> There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer." Then the manager said to himself, "What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes." So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?" He answered, "A hundred jugs of olive oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty." Then he asked another, "And how much do you owe?" He replied, "A hundred containers of wheat." He said to him, "Take your bill and make it eighty." And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. (Luke 16:1–8a)

As expected, the fable begins with the "X τις" formula, and the *donnée*. The manager utters his soliloquy in direct speech, considering his course of action

to escape ruin (*l'action de choix*). Where this fable ends is a famous problem in scholarship (see 11.3), and the fable structure provides a helpful clue that it is at verse 8a. Here the manager admits his defeat in an *action/réplique finale*, confessing that he has been bested by the clever actions of his manager, ending the fable. Once more, the first character (the rich man), makes a losing decision (firing the manager), while the second character (the steward) takes a winning course of action (settling the debts) and comes out ahead in the end.

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector works just as well, this time using Jesus the fable teller as the *survenant*:

> Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income …" But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other. (Luke 18:10–14a [trans. adapted from NRSV])

The fable does not open in the τις formula, but in the other common formula with δύο, "two men." This is followed by *la donnée*: "went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector." The Pharisee, the first character, is undertaking his first action (generally the losing one): praying a comically outrageous prayer, using direct speech, arguably a soliloquy. With the clear winner and loser in verse 14a, the story is interpreted agonistically. The Pharisee's prayer is contested by the second character, the tax collector, who gives his prayer also in direct speech. The *réplique finale* is here supplied by Jesus as a *survenant* after the shift out of the character focalization to the narrator focalization at the story level.[70] In Luke 18:14a, we have partially, but not completely, left the fable microcosm. It is Jesus's audience (and gospel reader) who is addressed, and yet further narrative events of the fable are also given. Jesus the *survenant* delivers the direct speech *réplique finale* using clearly agonistic language to specify a winner and a loser: the tax collector went to his house vindicated, whereas the Pharisee left unjustified.[71] From

70 Aesop occasionally acts as a *survenant* to his own fables. On the issue of focalization in the Lukan fables, see below and 9.2.

71 The blurring of the ending of the fable narrative with the moral occurs occasionally in fables, such as Babrius, *Fab.* 112: "the mouse squeaked to him this moral: "It's not always the big fellow who has the power; there are times when being small and humble has more force." So also, Phaedrus, *Fab.* 5.2 (a secondary *epimythium* was presumably added). On this phenomenon, see 13.3.

these many examples it is sufficiently clear that the L fables follow the same formal structure as other fables.

10.6 Expanding and Condensing the Lukan Fables

While there are no hard and fast divisions, the Lukan fables break down into roughly three categories by length. These are the longer fables, such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the Pounds, which are roughly the same as the longer fables one finds, for example, in Babrius. The medium, and one could say standard fable length, are fables like the Rich Fool, the Crafty Steward, the Judge and the Widow, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The third group are like those rather short, epigram-like fables found in Babrius, including the Two Debtors, the Moronic Builder, the Warring King, the Lost Coin, and the Worthless Slaves. Observing how fables were expanded and condensed can shed some light on these different groups. The longer and shorter fables in Luke likely reflect the author's use of the established techniques for adapting fables: compressing them, expanding them, and paraphrasing them to suit his needs.

In Chapter 5, we looked briefly at the expansion and contraction of fables in the *progymnasmata* and saw that Theon gives a description of the practice. He says that a fable is expanded by lengthening the speeches of the characters, and by adding details, "by describing a river or something of that sort," and for condensing, simply to "do the opposite" (*Prog.* 4). While this gives us something to go on, as we noted there, we are in better hands with Pseudo-Hermogenes, who gives us a more detailed explanation of how Luke would have handled his fables:

> Sometimes fables need to be expanded, sometimes to be compressed. How would this be done? If we sometimes recount the fable in a bare narrative, at other times invent speeches for the given characters; thus, to make it clear to you by an example, "The apes gathered to deliberate about the need to found a city. Since it seemed best to do so, they were about to begin work. An old ape restrained them, saying that they will be more easily caught if hemmed in by walls." This is how you would tell the fable concisely, but if you wanted to expand it, proceed as follows: "The apes gathered to deliberate about building a city. One stepped forward and delivered a speech to the effect that they had need of a city: 'For you see,' he says, 'how happy men are by living in a city. Each of them has his house, and by coming together to an assembly and a theater all collectively delight their minds with all sorts of sights and sounds,'" and continue in this way, dwelling on each point and saying that the decree was passed; then fashion a speech also for the old ape. So much for this. (Pseudo-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 1)

From this example we can see how the progymnasmatists imagined working with the fable to expand and compress it. The quantity of speech is increased in a fable expansion, and in a fable compression the quantity of speech is decreased, put into indirect speech, or removed. Compression involves removing unnecessary details, while expanding it involves fleshing out the scene with ornamental detail. Fables thus have an accordion-like quality that enables them to be expanded and contracted as the occasion demands.

We can see this practice of expansion and compression in action by comparing two versions of the same fable side by side. Among the fabulists, Avianus tells us explicitly that he is adapting his fables from Babrius and Phaedrus. We can thus use examples from Avianus and be confident that we know from which text it was adapted. Perhaps the best example is Avianus's expansion of the Crab and Its Mother, taken over from Babrius's very short version.[72]

Table 3 Babrius, *Fab.* 103 and Its Expansion in Avianus, *Fab.* 3

Babrius, *Fab.* 109	**Avianus, *Fab.* 3**
"Μὴ λοξὰ βαίνειν" ἔλεγε καρκίνῳ μήτηρ, "ὑγρῇ τε πέτρῃ πλάγια κῶλα μὴ σύρειν." ὁ δ' εἶπε "μῆτερ ἡ διδάσκαλος, πρώτη ὀρθὴν ἄπελθε, καὶ βλέπων σε ποιήσω."	Curva retro cedens dum fert vestigia cancer, hispida saxosis terga relisit aquis. hunc genetrix facili cupiens procedere gressu talibus alloquiis emonuisse datur: "ne tibi transverso placeant haec devia, nate, rursus in obliquos neu velis ire pedes, sed nisu contenta ferens vestigia recto innocuos proso tramite siste gradus." cui natus "faciam, si me praecesseris" inquit, "rectaque monstrantem certior ipse sequar. nam stultum nimis est, cum tu pravissima temptes, alterius censor si vitiosa notes."

72 Holzberg identifies this as a prime example of fable expansion. For a discussion, see Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 66–68.

Table 3 Babrius, *Fab.* 103 and Its Expansion in Avianus, *Fab.* 3 (*cont.*)

Babrius, *Fab.* 109	**Avianus, *Fab.* 3**
"Don't walk aslant!" said a mother crab to her young one. "Don't drag yourself crosswise over the wet rock." "Mother and teacher," replied the young crab, "first walk straight yourself, then I'll do so by watching you."	While a crab was walking backwards and tracing its crooked way, it banged its scaly back in the rocky pools. Its mother, eager to go forward with step unhindered, is said to have delivered a warning to it in such words as these: "Don't go zigzag and choose these crooked ways, my child, and don't seek to move backwards and slantwise on your feet. Step out vigorously with straightforward effort and plant your footsteps safely in the onward path." "I will do so," the young crab replied, "if you go ahead of me; and, if you show me the correct road, I will follow the more surely. For it is exceedingly foolish of you, when you are attempting the most crooked of courses yourself, to set up as censor and criticize the faults of another." (trans. Duff and Duff, LCL)

This fable is one of Babrius's epigram-like and, therefore, original compositions.[73] Babrius's four choliambic verses, made up of twenty-six words, have been expanded by Avianus into six elegiac distichs made up of seventy-two words.[74] Babrius's fable is about as brief as it can be, while Avianus has taken these four lines and expanded on each, tripling its length. Babrius's version had no *donnée*, which Avianus has added. Avianus has also added many details, such as numerous adjectives in the opening lines: the "crooked way," "scaly back," and "rocky pools." As we would expect, based on the statements

73 On Babrius's group of epigram-like fables, see 4.1.

74 The final distich in Avianus is another good example of how it is sometimes not easy to tell if a line is to be interpreted as part of the fable, or as an *epimythium*. In whose voice should we read, "For it is exceedingly foolish of you, when you are attempting the most crooked of courses yourself, to set up as censor and criticise the faults of another?" Is it the young crab completing his *réplique finale* to his mother, or is it the author telling the reader the moral of the fable?

of Theon and Pseudo-Hermogenes, the quantity of direct speech for the characters is significantly expanded as well.[75]

10.6.1 *Expanding the Prodigal Son* (*Luke 15:11–32*)

At twenty-one verses (Luke 15:11–32) and 389 Greek words, the Prodigal Son is the longest preserved fable of the Jesus tradition. At this length, it is a strong candidate for an expanded fable. Both internal evidence and evidence from the fable context supports this conclusion. At least as early as 1904, it was suggested that the second act of the story is Luke's composition (Luke 15:25–32),[76] and the issue has been the subject of a fair amount of scholarship since.[77] Michael Goulder has advocated the position that the Prodigal Son is Luke's expansion of the fable of the Two Sons in Matt 21:28–32.[78] Of course, Goulder was not aware of the practices of fable expansion described above, but there is nothing to exclude this possibility if Luke knew Matthew. On balance, there are more plausible options than copying Matthew, however. The number of fables about the foolish behavior of youth is sufficient that Luke's and Matthew's respective fables could be drawn from the common vocabulary of this group. Thus, there is no need to posit literary dependency on any one particular fable. It is most likely that Luke has expanded a shorter version of the Prodigal Son not preserved elsewhere. While we do not need to assume literary dependency, there are remarkable parallels to Luke's prodigal son in the first century fable collections. Both Babrius and the Augustana Collection record the fable of the Prodigal Youth and the Swallow. The Babrian version is likely

75 We may note, in reference to the previous discussion concerning the quantity and ratio of direct speech in the fables, that both versions of this fable are very high in direct speech. As we learned above, Babrius characteristically uses a high ratio of direct speech in his fables, and here a mere six words are not in direct speech.

76 Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Lukae* (Berlin: Reimer, 1904), 84.

77 Jack T. Sanders, "Tradition and Redaction in Luke 15:11–32," *NTS* 15 (1969): 433–38; and cf. the refutation of Sanders by Joachim Jeremias, "Tradition und Redaktion in Lukas 15," *ZNT* 62.3–4 (1971): 172–89. Since Jeremias is mainly refuting Sander's arguments, which are largely limited to vocabulary and phraseology, Snodgrass's claim "that the second part has more Lukan traits has been discredited" is probably a bit optimistic (*Stories with Intent*, 128). Charles Edwin Carlston offers the best survey of the debate until then and a fine analysis of the philological evidence, "Reminiscence and Redaction in Luke 15:11–32," *JBL* 94 (1975): 368–90.

78 Michael Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm*, 2 vols., JSNTSup 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 2:603–18. With his theory of Luke's programmatic rewriting of Matthew, Francis Watson has made a nod in this direction more recently (*Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013], 207–208).

an expanded version of the same fable attested in the Augustana. Precisely how it is expanded is strongly reminiscent of Luke's fable.[79]

Table 4 Expanding Prodigal Son Fables: Augustana Collection (Perry 169) and Babrius, *Fab.* 131

Augustana Collection (Perry 169)[80]	**Babrius, *Fab.* 131**
Νέος ἄσωτος καταφαγὼν τὰ πατρῷα, ἱματίου μόνου καταλειφθέντος αὐτῷ, εἶδε χελιδόνα παρὰ καιρὸν ἐλθοῦσαν καὶ θέρος εἶναι νομίσας, μηκέτι δεόμενος τοῦ ἱματίου, τοῦτο φέρων ἐπώλησε. Μετὰ μικρὸν δὲ χειμῶνος καὶ ψύχους σφοδροῦ γενομένου, ἐπειδὴ εἶδε τὴν χελιδόνα φερομένην ὑπὸ τῶν ὑδάτων νεκράν, ἔφη· Ὦ αὕτη, σὺ κἀμὲ καὶ σεαυτὴν ἀπώλεσας. Ὁ μῦθος δηλοῖ ὅτι πᾶν τὸ παρὰ καιρὸν πραττόμενον ἐπικίνδυνόν ἐστι.	Νέος ἐν κύβοισιν οὐσίην ἀναλώσας στολὴν ἑαυτῷ κατέλιπεν μίαν <μούνην>, χειμῶνος ὄντος μὴ πάθοι τι ῥιγώσας. ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸν ἡ χεὶρ ἐξέδυσε καὶ ταύτης. 5πρὸ γὰρ εἴαρος λιποῦσα <τὰς> κάτω Θήβας ἐφάνη χελιδὼν ἐκπεσοῦσα τῆς ὥρης· ταύτης ἀκούσας μικρὰ τιττυβιζούσης “τί μοι περισσῶν” εἶπε “φαρέων χρείη; ἰδοὺ χελιδὼν ἥδε· καῦμα σημαίνει.” 10ὡς δ᾽ εἶπεν, ἐλθὼν τοῖς κύβοισιν ὠμίλει καὶ σμικρὰ παίξας τὴν στολὴν ἐνικήθη. νιφετὸς δ᾽ ἐπῆλθε καὶ χάλαζα φρικώδης, κροκύδος δὲ καινῆς πᾶσιν ἦν τότε χρείη. γυμνὸς δ᾽ ἐκεῖνος τῆς θύρης ὑπεκκύψας καὶ τὴν λάλον χελιδόν᾽ <αὖ> κατοπτεύσας πεσοῦσαν ὥσπερ στρουθίον <τι> τῷ ψύχει “τάλαινα” φησίν “εἴθε μοι τότ᾽ οὐκ ὄφθης ὡς γὰρ σεαυτὴν κἀμὲ νῦν διεψεύσω.”

79 As we have come to expect, scarcely any parable scholars have observed this parallel: Beavis, “Parable and Fable” (who mentions only the Babrian version) and Eckhard Rau, *Reden in Vollmacht: Hintergrund, Form und Anliegen der Gleichnisse Jesu*, FRLANT 149 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 244–52.

80 The fable has three versions of similar length recorded in Chambry 248.

Table 4 Expanding Prodigal Son Fables (*cont.*)

Augustana Collection (Perry 169)	**Babrius, *Fab.* 131**
A prodigal youth had consumed the inheritance from his father and had nothing left but his coat. Then one day he saw a swallow that had arrived ahead of the season, and being convinced that summer had already come and that he wouldn't need his coat any longer, he sold it, too. But afterwards winter returned with severe cold, and as the youth wandered around, he saw the swallow lying dead and neglected. He said to her, "Dear friend, you have destroyed both yourself and me." *The fable shows that every untimely action is dangerous.*	A young man who had lost his fortune in playing dice saved apart for himself just one garment, lest he should suffer from the cold in winter-time; but in the end a throw of the dice stripped him even of that. Before spring had arrived a swallow left Thebes of the South and appeared out of season. Hearing the bird faintly twittering, the youngster said to himself: "What need have I now for extra clothing? Behold, here is a swallow. That means warm weather." So saying, he went off and joined in the dice game, and, after playing a little, was beaten and forfeited his only garment. Then a snowstorm came on and a shivering hail, and everyone had need of extra clothing. Naked, he peeped out from the door and saw the noisy swallow lying dead like a young chick from the cold, "Poor creature," he said, "I wish I hadn't seen you before. You fooled both yourself and me."

The Augustana version is a mere fifty words, while Babrius's fable is more than double at 107 words. Noteworthy details that Babrius adds to his version begin already in *la donnée*. Here we learn in greater detail about how exactly the prodigal son lost his fortune (gambling with dice). The Augustana does not specify how he lost his inheritance and the *l'action de choix* describes him deciding to sell his coat rather than deciding to gamble it away. A similar elaboration is also found in the Lukan fable, when describing how the prodigal lost his fortune. Early in the fable, we know only that he squandered it by "living recklessly," ζῶν ἀσώτως (Luke 15:13). In the speeches added to the second act, we get the additional information that visiting prostitutes was the cause or at least a synecdoche for this and other vices. Like the Lukan prodigal son, the

Babrian version is expanded by a soliloquy in *l'action de choix*, through which the character considers his decision:

> The youngster said to himself: "What need have I now for extra clothing? Behold, here is a swallow. That means warm weather." So saying, he went off and joined in the dice game.
>
> But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father. (Luke 15:18–20a)

Throughout the fable, Babrius adds many ornamental details to his version. He specifies that the swallow "left Thebes of the South." The prodigal does not just see the swallow, but instead he hears the bird "faintly twittering." The winter does not just return, but a snowstorm came with "a shivering hail." The swallow is not just dead, but dead "like a young chick from the cold." The ornamental details in Luke's version likewise fit the practice of expansion. We are given a list of items adorning the lost son, for example: "bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet" (Luke 15:22). The *réplique finale* to conclude Babrius's fable is expanded from seven words to twelve words. Also like the Lukan fable, we have no *epimythium* following the fable in Babrius's version. The *epimythium* of the Augustana Collection reads as an anticlimax, taking away some of the punch of its *réplique finale*.[81] The fate of the prodigal is less certain in Babrius's version, in which he merely describes himself as a fool. Between the Augustana Collection and Luke's fable, there is a particularly striking parallel in the conclusion. Like Luke's prodigal son who is lost/destroyed, ἀπολωλὼς (Luke 15:24, 32), the Augustana's prodigal declares with his final word that he has been destroyed: "Dear friend, you have destroyed both yourself and me," Ὦ αὔτη, σὺ κἀμὲ καὶ σεαυτὴν ἀπώλεσας.

In terms of the narrative, this plot of a prodigal youth who squanders his inheritance, makes a foolish choice at a point of decision, and meets his "destruction," bears an obvious similarity to Luke's Prodigal Son. Perhaps the most striking insight from the other fable versions is how they differ from Luke. Unlike the other versions, Luke's prodigal makes a wise decision—a fact that we only learn a few verses later. An ancient audience, aware of fables such as this, would probably not be so optimistic about the prodigal's chances. Indeed, the happy ending of Jesus's fable would probably come as a surprise.

81 On this negative effect of the *epimythium*, see 12.2.

As if to refute the fable of the Augustana Collection that ends with the word "destroyed," ἀπώλεσας, Luke's fable ends with, "destroyed *and found*," ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὑρέθη (Luke 15:32).

With respect to style and philology, there are other strong indications that Luke has set his hand to expanding this fable from a previous and unrecoverable version. While the issue of source criticism and Lukan redaction of his fables will be discussed in detail in Chapters 14 and 15, we can note here the stylistic evidence. One very subtle indication is the shift in conjunctions. Luke prefers constructions with δέ to joining clauses with καί, and we can watch the former take over as the fable progresses. At the beginning of the periodic sentences, we find the initial conjunctions as follows: 12 (καί), 12b (δέ), 13 (καί), 14 (δέ), 15 (καί), 17 (δέ), 20b (δέ), 20 (καί), 21 (δέ), 22 (δέ), 25 (δέ), 27 (δέ), 28 (δὲ καί), 29 (δέ), 30 (δέ), 31 (δέ), 32 (δὲ καί). Until around verse 21 we have an even mix of καί and δέ, then rather abruptly it looks as though Luke has begun to put his hand to redacting the fable, with the exclusive use of δέ or δὲ καί through to the end. The presence of Luke's speaking formula in 15:22,[82] and the use of the optative are also very strong indications of Lukan composition or redaction. In Luke 15:26, the optative occurs in the elder son's question, "what this might be," τί ἂν εἴη ταῦτα. Especially compared to the other evangelists, Luke's use of the optative stands out.[83] Optative εἰμί is especially common in Luke.[84] "What this might be," is likely another Lukan expression, since similar phrases for characters expressing their puzzlement or amazement appear at Luke 1:29; 8:9, and Acts 10:17. Another hint that Luke is composing here is the phrase, "fell on his neck and kissed him," ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν (Luke 15:20). This line resembles a very similar phrase from Acts when Paul departs from Ephesus: ἐπιπεσόντες ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον τοῦ Παύλου κατεφίλουν αὐτόν (Acts 20:37).

Now that we know the form of the fable and what to look for in an expanded version, it is easy to see how these kinds of elaborations map onto what makes the Prodigal Son the longest fable of the Jesus tradition. In terms of content, the fable adds ornamental details and speeches. The Lukan stylistic features noted in the previous paragraph, the speaking formula, and the use of the optative are connected to the characters' speeches, suggesting it is the gospel author composing here. Starting around verse twenty-two, we can see that

82 Luke's speaking formula is εἶπεν πρός + the accusative object, rather than the normal way to express speaking with εἶπεν + the dative indirect object. On the application of this speaking formula, see 15.3.4.

83 There are twenty-eight examples of the optative in Luke-Acts, compared to just a single example in Mark, one in John, and none at all in Matthew.

84 The optative of εἰμί is only elsewhere in the New Testament at John 13:24.

the fable is chiefly made up of the speeches given by several characters. With Luke 15:12–24 alone, we have all the main elements, *la donnée, l'action de choix*, and *l'action/réplique finale*. Each of these three elements are drawn out longer than one usually finds in the fable collections. Then, after these elements, there is a second act as it were. Luke 15:25–32 does not conform neatly to the three-part structure. If form and structure are useful to this end, they also hint that this second section was added by Luke.

We do not have literarily dependent versions of the Prodigal Son to compare, but one should not look to the fable collections for that. There are too many examples, such that we should speak only of motifs like prodigal youth or fathers and sons. The ancient fables offer scores of similar characters, plots, and motifs to set alongside the familiar fables of Jesus. Knowing how first-century authors were trained to expand fables provides us with a plausible explanation for the length of the Prodigal Son. The form, structure, style, and other prodigal son fables are suggestive of how Luke may have adapted it. The other prodigals also give us some noteworthy contrast. Rather than meeting the unforgiving natural consequences of his actions, the Lukan fable departs from this expectation—this prodigal is found.

10.6.2 *Condensing the Two Debtors* (*Luke 7:41–42*) *and Paraphrasing Fables*

At a mere twenty words, the Two Debtors is the briefest fable Luke gives us:

> A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them.
>
> δύο χρεοφειλέται ἦσαν δανιστῇ τινι· ὁ εἷς ὤφειλεν δηνάρια πεντακόσια, ὁ δὲ ἕτερος πεντήκοντα. μὴ ἐχόντων αὐτῶν ἀποδοῦναι ἀμφοτέροις ἐχαρίσατο. (Luke 7:41–42a)

A fable of normal length about a debtor not being able to repay a loan is found in the Augustana Collection and offers an appropriate contrast:

> A debtor at Athens, upon being dunned by his creditor, first asked that he be given an extension on the ground that he had no means to pay. When he couldn't persuade his creditor he brought the only sow he had and put it up for sale in the creditor's presence. When a purchaser appeared and asked if it was a brood sow, the debtor said that she had not only farrowed but in a most remarkable way; she produced female pigs at the Mysteries and males at the Panathenea. When the man showed astonishment at this statement, the creditor said, "Oh, don't be surprised at that. She'll even bear you lambs at the Dionysia." (Perry 5)

Now that we are familiar with how fables are expanded and compressed, it is not difficult to imagine how the Two Debtors could be expanded into a fable of a more normal length, and it is also easy to see what is missing. While it begins

with the "Χ τις (and δύο)" formula, we have only the briefest *donnée* possible. The *action de choix* is required for the narrative progression but has been left only implied. We have no description at all about the cause of the debt, the negotiation between the debtor and creditor, or how they attempted to remedy the situation. We simply know that they cannot pay. The creditor considered what to do about the debts. The *action finale* is also as brief as possible: the creditor cancelled the debts. No direct speech is used. No *epimythium* follows. While it is obviously easier to demonstrate fable expansion than compression, by omitting any direct speech and keeping the detail to an absolute minimum, the Two Debtors bears all the markings of a compressed fable. Though we do not have any other version of the story, setting it alongside the Athenian Debtor, which takes up a similar subject, allows us to see the missing elements. As to why Luke would have compressed the Two Debtors, we can only make only guesses. Perhaps he did so because it is the only L fable before the Central Section and it is not yet time for those fables to take center stage. It also comes on the heels of two very short references to Aesopic fables (Luke 7:24, 32) and so could be a matter of coherence. As in these examples, perhaps the Two Debtors is so short in order to give priority to what was taking place in the context—the story of the sinful woman who washes Jesus's feet with her tears. This modest one-and-a-half verse fable still succeeds at evocating a powerful narrative image and highlights Luke's rhetorical skill in compressing a fable.

Another group of fables is conspicuous in Luke, perhaps appearing in a paraphrased form. This group is made up several beginning with a formulaic "who among you?" In this group are the Friend at Midnight (τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν [Luke 11:5–8]), the Moronic Builder (Τίς γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν [Luke 14:28–30]), the Warring King ("Η τίς βασιλεὺς [Luke 14:31–32]), the Lost Sheep (τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν [Luke 15:4–7]), the Lost Coin ("Η τίς γυνὴ [Luke 15:8–10]), and the Worthless Slaves (Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν [Luke 17:7–10]). Four of these are in fable pairs. The first fable of the pair has the τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν formula and the second has a postpositive τίς and the subject. These semi-narratives stories sound like fables in terms of their characters, plots, and structures, but have some notable differences from the rest. In addition to this distinct introductory formula, these fables are all brief and speech is made indirect or kept to a minimum when direct. These same qualities are characteristic of fable compression.

With the introductory question formula, Luke presents these fables not simply as compressed like the example of the Two Debtors, but somewhat differently, in what best resembles a paraphrase.[85] Rather than bringing us into the

85 As Henry J. Cadbury suggested some time ago, "Luke's method was to recast his material, paraphrasing in his own style" (*The Making of Luke-Acts*, 2nd ed. [London: SPCK, 1968], 58).

narrative world of the story, where we encounter fable characters speaking in response to events of their microcosm, we remain at the story level of the narrative, observing Jesus the fable teller:

> Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table"? Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink"? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? (Luke 17:7–9)

Here in the fable of the Unworthy Slaves, for example, we hear what the characters say, but remain at the level of the main narration—at the level of Jesus telling fables. Since it is unlikely that Luke has composed these fables whole cloth, it is possible that Luke is utilizing a technique of paraphrasing fables.[86]

As we noted briefly in Chapter 5, paraphrasing was an essential task assigned to students at the stage of progymnastic rhetoric. In his preface, Theon tells us the following:

> Despite what some say or have thought, *paraphrasis* (paraphrase) is not without utility … it is stirred in a number of different ways, and sometimes we are making a declaration, sometimes asking a question, sometimes making an inquiry, sometimes beseeching, and sometimes expressing our thought in some other way. There is nothing to prevent what is imagined from being expressed equally well in all these ways. (Theon, *Prog.* 1)[87]

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86 One small hint that Luke has at least occasionally introduced this τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν formula rather than taking it from a source is found in Luke 22:23. This pericope about Jesus foretelling his betrayal is common to all four Gospels (Luke 22:21–23; cf. Mark 14:18–21; Matt 26:21–25; [John 13:21–30]), but Luke alone adds something resembling this formula: τίς ἄρα εἴη ἐξ αὐτῶν, "who among them could do (this)" (Luke 22:23). The presence of εἴη, εἰμί in the optative, is a dead giveaway for Luke's hand, since he uses it eleven times and it appears only once outside of Luke-Acts in the New Testament (Luke 1:29; 3:15; 8:9; 9:46; 15:26; 18:36; 22:23; Acts 8:20; 10:17; 20:16; 21:33; John 13:24). As I mentioned above, the Matthean version of the Lost Sheep does not have this formula. If Luke is relying on the Matthean version or an independent version of the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:10–14), we may observe that Luke uses the telltale τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν formula when paraphrasing the Matthean version. If there was a Q, then we cannot say whether Matthew or Luke has the more original version of the Lost Sheep, but the Lukan version is at least consistent with the other L fables. Given the popularity of the "Good Shepherd" imagery in the earliest Christian iconography and extra-biblical literature, and the association of this fable with that image, it seems equally likely to me that Luke could have had his own version in his collection, regardless of whether he knew Matthew or had a Q source.

87 Theon is discussing the practice of paraphrase generally, without specific reference to the fable exercise. Quintilian takes us this extra step of specifying the fable: "Let them learn then to tell Aesop's fables … Verse they should first break up, then interpret in

Theon first rebuffs the idea that a paraphrase is inferior to the way something was originally said. Based on this assessment of paraphrase, Luke probably would not be concerned to give us the "*ipsissima verba*" of Jesus or of his fable collection. He would feel empowered to paraphrase fables attributed to Jesus's as suited his needs and goals.[88] The second key insight from Theon is that, among the five methods he describes for paraphrasing a text, paraphrasing by "asking a question" and "making an inquiry" are among them.

In the discussion of paraphrase in his Prologue, Theon demonstrates how good a paraphrase can be by citing several examples of the different types. In light of the "which of you" formula found in Luke's Gospel, the two examples of the "asking a question" type of paraphrase, both from Demosthenes, are eye-catching. Theon quotes Thucydides who writes: "There is envy in rivalry with the living, but one who no longer stands in the way has been honored with unchallenged good will …" (*Hist.* 2.45). Theon then cites the paraphrase of this from Demosthenes, "Who among all of us does not know (Τίς γὰρ οὐκ οἶδε τῶν παντῶν) that some envy, greater or smaller, exists for all the living, but not even one of their enemies hates the dead" (*Cor.* 264 [315]) (Theon, *Prog.* 1).[89] The second example of Demosthenes paraphrasing this same passage, goes like this: "Which one of you (Τίς γαρ ὑμῶν) does not know that the cause of many such things happening is that those who do wrong are not punished …" (*Mid.* 37) (Theon, *Prog.* 1). These opening formulae of the question paraphrasing form, described by Theon and exemplified by Demosthenes, resemble this group of Lukan fables.[90]

In paraphrasing fables, Luke would not have felt any qualms about sacrificing the "*ipsissima verba*," rephrasing the words of Jesus. Nor would Luke have hesitated to produce what we may consider to be an inferior text. The gospel author would have supposed that he was achieving something of higher literary merit in expanding, contracting, and paraphrasing. Given the sheer quantity of

different words, then make a bolder paraphrase, in which they are allowed to abbreviate and embellish some parts, so long as the poet's meaning is preserved. This task is difficult even for fully trained teachers; any pupil who handles it well will be capable of learning anything" (*Inst.* 1.9.2–3). From Quintilian, we can see that not only was paraphrasing something students of rhetoric were trained to do, but it was understood to be a sign of great skill to pull off successfully with the fable.

88 We do not know who in antiquity was saying that paraphrase was not useful. Quintilian also recommends it (see above), but he also notes that there are detractors.

89 This is a quotation from Theon, and thus, even for the embedded quotations from Thucydides and Demosthenes, the translation is that of Kennedy.

90 This pleonastic use of the preposition we may simply chalk up to a characteristic difference of Koine Greek. See James Morwood, *The Oxford Grammar of Classical Greek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 231.

Luke's fable material—more than forty percent of the Central Section as it now stands—to compress some of it would have been practical, as well.

10.7 The *Chreia* and the Fable

There is one more literary feature worth discussing that appears *before* the fable narratives: the *chreia*. On several occasions, the abrupt shifts from the narrative context into the fable narratives are mitigated by a short situation preceding the fable. As we learned in 5.6.1, an anecdote of this form is known as a *chreia*, plural *chreiai*. For the present discussion, the *chreia* is important because it is a deceptively atypical structure in the Gospels—a *chreia* followed by a fable—and yet a remarkably frequent technique of Luke and the contemporary Greek authors.

It was Dibelius's second edition of his *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* that brought attention to the *chreia* as a form and its potential relevance for Gospel scholarship. At this time, Dibelius argued that Luke alone among the evangelists seems to possess many parables that start with *chreiai*. In his estimation the "parables" beginning with *chreia* are the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29), the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13), the Banquet (Luke 14:15), the Lost Sheep, Coin, and Son, (Luke 15:1–3), the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9), and the Pounds (Luke 19:11).[91] The fables of chapter 15 begin, for example:

> When all the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to hear him, and both the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling saying that this man is receiving sinners and eating with them, he told them fable parable, saying.... (Luke 15:1–3)

Dibelius either did not notice or did not think it worth mentioning that it was not merely Luke who seems to use this technique, but within Luke, every example he identified is an L fable.[92] He is presumably also among those who

91 Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 161. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector has a narrativized *promythium*, which would approach, perhaps, something like the *chreia*. It is certainly possible that Luke has transformed certain *promythia* or *epimythia* into *chreiai*, including the Rich Fool, and the Place at the Table; "to those who choose for themselves the places of honor" sounds very much like a *promythium*. Dibelius discusses the *chreia* in *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959) from pages 150–64. The English translation of the second edition with the same discussion of *chreia* appears in *From Tradition to Gospel*, 152–64.

92 The Banquet (Luke 14:16–24) and the Pounds (Luke 19:12–27) may be L fables or versions of Matthean/Q fables.

snub the Place at the Table as a "parable," but this too also begins with a possible *chreia* (or narrativized *promythium*): "He told a παραβολή to those invited, upon seeing that they chose for themselves the places of honor, saying to them …" (Luke 14:7).

Though it may seem like a peculiar but insignificant point of Lukan style that a *chreia* set-up occurs before Jesus tells some of his fables, this is a significant point of contact with the fable tradition. It is another promising sign that Luke and perhaps his predecessors are imitating a very specific fable technique. Outside of the scattered anecdotes about Aesop in classical literature, we observe this technique of introducing a fable by means of a *chreia* in *The Life of Aesop* and Phaedrus. As Perry writes concerning Phaedrus:

> It is characteristic of Phaedrus, as of no other ancient fabulist whose book has survived, to represent a fable now and then as something that Aesop said or related in appropriate circumstances on a particular occasion in his life in conversation with others.[93]

Thus, among the Phaedrian fables, we find a *chreia* introduce a fable from time to time:[94]

> When a certain man was complaining about his ill fortune, Aesop invented the following story to comfort him: A ship had been badly tossed about by fierce storms so that its passengers were in tears and fear of death, when suddenly the weather changed and took on a serene aspect; the ship began to ride safely, borne

93 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xcii. Perry continues on the next page, "An Aesopic fable, no less than an apophthegm, may be the presumed utterance of a famous man. As such it may be introduced and framed according to the same purely plasmatic and arbitrary formula as that by which the apothegm (χρεία, γνώμη) is regularly introduced: So-and-so (an historical person) on being asked by so-and-so (either another historical person or an unnamed somebody), how, why, or what, replied in these words, or with this fable" (*Babrius and Phaedrus*, xciii).

94 In addition to fables opened by a *chreia*, there are also stand-alone *chreiai* of Aesop such as: "A certain man had recited to Aesop some poor compositions, in the course of which he had inappropriately sounded his own praise at great length. Wishing, therefore, to know what the old man thought of it, he said: 'I hope I have not appeared to you to be too proud of myself? The confidence that I feel in my own genius is no illusion.' Aesop, who was completely worn out by listening to the miserable volume, replied: 'For my part, I emphatically endorse your bestowing praise on yourself; for it will never come to you from any other source'" (Phaedrus, *Fab.* Perotti Appendix 9). Other *chreiai* and short narratives occur with some regularity in Phaedrus (*Fab.* 1.2, 6; 2.3; 3.3–5, 9, 14; 4.4, 16, 18; Perotti Appendix 9, 12, 13, 27). Among these, not all are attributed directly to Aesop. *Phaedrus* 3.9 and Perotti 27 are both *chreiai* of Socrates, for example. This opens a vexing question of the relationship between the protagonist, the collector, and the author. Should we conceive of these as Aesop's fables told about Socrates collected by Phaedrus?

> along by favourable winds, which raised the spirits of the sailors to an excessive pitch of joy. Hereupon the pilot, made wise by danger in the past, remarked: "One must be cautious in rejoicing and slow to complain, for the whole of life is a blend of grief and joy." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.18)

Here, the formulaic *chreia* introduction is easily recognizable. We are given an addressee, an occasion, and a purpose for Aesop to deliver this fable about a ship tossed in the sea. As we saw in the last chapter, like the Gospels, *The Life of Aesop* incorporates fables into a narrative framework, sometimes using an opening *chreia*: "A friend of his came and with the permission of the guards went in to him. With tears in his eyes the friend said, 'What have we come to?' And Aesop told him a fable. 'A woman who had buried her husband …'" (*Vit. Aes.* 129). Among the evangelists, Luke seems especially keen to introduce fables attributed to Jesus with this *chreia* introduction technique, just like *The Life of Aesop* and Phaedrus. This technique follows naturally from those learned in ancient education and is a simple way for Luke to stitch a floating fable into a narrative context.

10.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have set the fables attributed to Jesus in Luke among the rest of the ancient fable tradition to demonstrate that they are formally synonymous. The fable form has its roots in the Archaic Greek period and is exemplified in the first or second century fable collections of Babrius, the Augustana, and the Lukan Gospel. After our initial survey of the form, we found that the Lukan Gospel matched every formal element. We began by noting that the *pronomina indefinita* fable marker is rigorously observed in the Lukan Fable Collection. We found that direct speech and soliloquy, recognized as characteristic of the L fables, are a hallmark of the fable genre going back to the Archaic period. We then discussed the rhetorical uses and effects achieved through the use direct speech and soliloquy in fables. I then introduced Nøjgaard's elements of the fable plot structure—*la donnée, l'action de choix, l'action finale, réplique finale, le survenant*—identifying the various ways these elements manifest in the Lukan fables. Summarily, form points once more to the ancient fable as the proper literary milieu in which to situate the "parables" of Jesus in Luke.

We then came to how an author like Luke would have applied his rhetorical training to expand, contract, and paraphrase a fable. Based on style and

other prodigal son fables, we observed the many signs that the Prodigal Son was expanded by Luke using the established techniques. We then found the inverse procedure in the very compressed fable of the Two Debtors and found an explanation in fable paraphrase for the curious group of τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν fables. Lastly, I noted that many of Luke's fables were introduced by means of a *chreia*, a technique that facilitates stitching a floating fable into a narrative framework. From these examples, we have good reasons to doubt that Luke shared our concern to preserve anything like Jesus's *ipsissima verba* in these fables. If Quintilian is a suitable guide to the practice, he tells us that these redactions to the fable were encouraged, "so long as the poet's meaning is preserved" (*Inst.* 1.9.3). A skillful author would feel emboldened to improve fables in his possession, including through paraphrase, compression, and expansion. In doing so, Luke would not have felt that he was leaving to us inferior versions of the fables of Jesus known to him, but better ones. The form and vocabulary of the fable now in hand, we will turn in the next chapter to reading the Lukan fables from the fable perspective.

CHAPTER 11

Reading from the Fable Perspective

11.1 Introduction

Setting Jesus's fables in the context of the other ancient fable materials, we are presented with scores of parallels to the plots, parallels to the characters that populate them, and guidance to the lessons one should learn from them. The ancient fables provide us with a compendium of narrative vignettes of first-century daily life, popular ethics, and characters to contextualize the examples preserved in the Gospels. It is unlikely that one will find a character, plot, or theme in the fables of Jesus that is not also found in the fable collections. So voluminous are the opportunities for further study that there is room for many monographs to come. My goal in this chapter is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of these subjects, but rather to offer an initial exploration into a few meaningful examples—continuing to carve a footpath for the future.

Whereas the previous chapter demonstrated that the Lukan fables fit neatly into the fable genre by virtue of their form, this chapter takes seriously the Bakhtinian approach to narrative genres, which gives weight to both linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions—the "ideology" of a text—in determining and articulating issues such as genre.[1] From this perspective, genres have a life of their own. Genres accumulate experience, genres remember the contexts in which they were established and adapted. Genres express a certain worldview. Thus, to read a text from within a particular genre perspective is to learn how to think on the genre's terms. After a preliminary sketch of the characters and themes in the ancient fables, this chapter offers several such exercises in reading from within the fable's worldview. The fable perspective on the commendation of morally dubious conduct in the Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1–13), the use of humor in the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8), and the lack of "realism" in the Rich Fool (Luke 12:15–21), will establish a basis to read the rest

1 Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the most influential literary critics of the twentieth century and his popularity shows no signs of abating. For Bakhtin's theory of genre, see Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 271–305. For biblical scholarship on Bakhtin, see Roland Boer, *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*, SemeiaSt 63 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007); and Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction*, SemeiaSt 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). On Bakhtin and the Gospel of Luke, see Bettina Fischer, "Bakhtin's Carnival and the Gospel of Luke," *Neot* 40 (2006): 35–60.

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of the Lukan Fable Collection with these issues in mind. The clarity brought to Lukan fables by viewing them through this lens will both enrich our readings of them and give weight to the historical claim that, indeed, the ancient fable is the appropriate lens.

11.2 Characters and Themes in the Fable

Categorizing the hundreds of fables in a systematic way and on what basis is a challenge that necessitates a somewhat artificial schema.[2] The themes identified by Adrados,[3] the topical categorizations of Gibbs,[4] and the ethical subjects identified by both Morgan[5] and Zafiropoulos, provide useful overviews of

2 Whether one attempts to address the ancient fables on the basis of their themes or their characters, treats the ancient fable as a monolithic corpus or treats the fable authors individually—there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach. Biblical scholars have been so industrious in their application of modern character studies and narrative criticism that I may mercifully assume the reader's familiarity with it here. For helpful surveys and bibliography, see the incisive treatments by Michal Beth Dinkler, "Building Character on the Road to Emmaus: Lukan Characterization in Contemporary Literary Perspective," *JBL* 136 (2017): 687–706; and "New Testament Rhetorical Narratology: An Invitation toward Integration," *BibInt* 24 (2016): 203–28. On the gospels generally, see David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, eds., *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). In addition to Dinkler, on Luke-Acts specifically, see John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992); Frank Dicken and Julia A. Snyder, *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts*, LNTS 548 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). For the ancient world outside of the New Testament, see Koen de Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas, *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

3 "Nature," "Fortune," "Criticism of Wealth and Greed, of Power and False and Useless Beauty, of the Search for Pleasure," Against Selfishness, Ingratitude and Falsehood," "Boasting and Ignorance," "Death and Addiction to Life," "Misogyny, Homosexuality, Doctors, Athletes, and Fortune-tellers," "Freedom of Speech and Shamelessness," "The Cynics Ideal" (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:604–35).

4 Here are some of the salient topics from Gibbs: "Fables about Friendship" (Gibbs 69–75), "Fables about False Friends" (Gibbs 86–94), "Fables about Treachery and Wickedness" (Gibbs 128–136), "Fables about Wickedness Punished" (Gibbs 137–144), "Fables about the Trickster Tricked" (Gibbs 145–152), "Fables about Justice" (Gibbs 165–173), "Fables about Court and Judges" (Gibbs 174–181), "Disputes and Debates" (Gibbs 182–187), "Fables about Boasting" (Gibbs 206–215), "Fables about Self-Important Creatures" (Gibbs 216–227), "Fables about Over-confident Creatures" (228–236), "Fables about the Underdog" (237–243), "Fables about Human Hypocrisy" (Gibbs 384–394), "Fables about Wealth and Riches" (Gibbs 405–414), "Fables about Foolish Plans" (Gibbs 432–440), "Fables about Unexpected Outcomes" (Gibbs 454–465) (*Aesop's Fables, passim* [*note bene*: the numbers above are fable numbers, not page numbers]).

5 Morgan breaks down the themes as follows: "the weak and the strong," "friends and enemies," "intelligence and foolishness," "overambition and failure," "truth, honesty, lies and deceit,"

the salient topics.[6] Here, I will be working in the opposite direction, singling out a few themes and characters with particular relevance to the Lukan Fable Collection.

While for parallels in the strictest sense, fables concerning human characters are the most striking, the animal characters are no less valuable for illuminating human characteristics and characterizations in Jesus's fables. The actions or natures of animal characters, no less than the human, are intended to draw out a lesson about a given virtue or vice, critique or praise a given behavior, offer warning about certain situations or people, or explain "the way things are." The animals in the ancient fable corpora normally behave according to certain character expectations that are consistent from fable to fable.[7] Thus, although any given fable is short, the character is intertextual—one instantiation of the character may reflect on another.[8] This focus on characterization in the fable was already theorized in antiquity, as the progymnasmatists show.[9] As a means of making an animal fable credible, for example, it should be depicted according to its proper nature:

> How would it become plausible? If we attribute appropriate things to the characters. For example, someone is arguing about beauty; let him be represented as a

"Gods, the metaphysical and humanity," "what goes around," "women family and love" (Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 63–79).

6 Zafiropoulos is dealing only with the Augustana Collection, but offers the most nuanced treatment of the subject by far: "Conflict in the Augustana", "Reciprocity in the Augustana," and "The Fable as a Form of Ethical Reasoning," each with multiple levels of nested subheadings. Under "Conflict in the Augustana," sub-headings include: "The Agon in the Augustana," "Lessons on Survival," "The Fulfillment of Personal Interest," "Learning through Suffering and the Theme of Toil," "Respect your Limits." Under "Reciprocity in the Augustana," sub-headings include: "The Norm of Reciprocity," "Reciprocity in the Augustana," "Factors that Control the Function of Positive Reciprocity." Under "The Fable as a Form of Ethical Reasoning," only one sub-heading appears: "The Inner Qualities in the Augustana." Under most of these subheadings are further sub-headings addressing topics highly relevant to biblical scholars interested in ancient ethics, from friendship and justice to learning through suffering and the need for immediate action (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, vii–viii).

7 The backgrounds for these expectations come from within the fable corpus as well as informed by any number of other sources, including personal experience. Among the numerous ancient authors who write about the characteristics of animals, Aelian's seventeen-book *De Natura Animalium* (On the Characteristics of Animals) offers a good overview of many ancient ideas.

8 It occasionally seems that fable characters are not just intertextual characters, but even trans-textual, i.e., not just a lion, but the same lion appears in two fables.

9 On this subject, see especially de Temmerman, "Ancient Rhetoric as a Hermeneutical Tool." For the application of this to the Rich Fool, see Stigall, "The Progymnasmata and Characterization."

> peacock. Cleverness needs to be attributed to someone; here a fox is appropriate. For imitators of the actions of human beings, choose apes. (Pseudo-Hermogenes, *Prog.* 1)

> So we do not say that a mouse gave advice about the kingdom of the animals or that a lion was captured by the savor of cheese—and if there is need to attribute some words to them, if we make the fox speak subtle things and the sheep naive and simple-minded things; for such is the nature of each; and so that the eagle is introduced as rapacious for fawns and lambs, and the jackdaw does not so much as think of anything like that. (Nicolaus the Sophist, *Prog.* 2)

When considering the trait of craftiness or fair-weather friend characters, for example, one is not limited to human fables, but can bring the entire fable corpus into view.

An example of these multiple characters and characteristics working together will be helpful. One can expect the fox to use its intelligence, behave in a way that exemplifies cunning, and generally in a self-interested way. Naturally, the lion is known for its unparalleled strength in the animal kingdom and, with this power, assumes a regal position (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.14). This power is combined with an intelligence that enables it to exploit and impose its will on the other animals, generally with the goal of consuming them.[10] A donkey or mule, while occasionally exemplifying stubbornness, is more characteristically a pitiable and slavish character. The donkey suffers under the burden of its labor and becomes a literal and figurative punching bag because of its foolishness, especially when it attempts to rise above its station.[11] Here is an example of these three characters together in the same fable expressing their typical characteristics:

> The fox and the donkey were partners in a hunting expedition but when they encountered a lion, the fox recognized the danger they were in. She went to the

10 The fable of the Lion's Share, for example (Babrius, *Fab*. 67). Similar relationships can be observed between other predator and prey animals, such as between the wolf and the heron or wolf and sheep.

11 Examples of the donkey receiving a beating for one reason or another include Babrius, *Fab.* 125; Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.1; Perry 91, 164, 359. A common theme of punishing those who attempt to subvert their nature is widespread across all of the ancient collections. The fable of the Donkey in the Lion's Skin is a popular one (Babrius, *Fab.* 139; Aphthonius, *Fab.* 10; Avianus, *Fab.* 5; Perry 188 and 358). For a translation, see Chapter 11, note 30. In Babrius, *Fab.* 72 a jackdaw is beaten for borrowing feathers and pretending to be a different bird. In the Phaedrian version, *Fab.* 1.3, the jackdaw is kicked out of every tribe for ignoring his nature. In the next fable in Babrius, a kite loses its voice attempting to imitate a horse (*Fab.* 73). In the Augustana, a seagull attempts to swallow a fish but is condemned by the kite for attempting to be a sea creature even though it has wings (Perry 101).

> lion and offered to betray the donkey if the lion would promise to spare her life in return. The lion agreed to let the fox go, and the fox then led the donkey into a trap and made him fall in. Once he saw that the donkey could not escape, the lion immediately seized the fox, saving the donkey for later.
> *Likewise, it is often the case that if you plot against your associates, you will be destroyed together with them*. (Perry 191 [trans. Gibbs])

The use and presentation of these established characterizations varies from fabulist to fabulist, as it would with any author, but their general character expectations remain the same.[12] In addition to their behavior in fables like this one, the animal characterizations through speech in character are also applicable to the human fables. Prosopopoeic speeches are intended to fit the nature of the actor and divulge their character, regardless of what species that character happens to be. For this reason, speeches that are placed on the lips of proud lions, stubborn donkeys, crafty foxes, and foolish apes, are just as useful to understand the speeches of Luke's proud Pharisees, stubborn judges, crafty stewards, and foolish farmers.

Despite the consistency, the degree of characterization for these animals is perhaps greater than one would expect. The lion, for example, is famous for not sharing (Babrius, *Fab.* 67; Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.5; Perry 149, 339), but in a separate fable, rewards a humble man with a share (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 2.1). The lion is the "most powerful of all the beasts," but is startled by a mouse (Babrius, *Fab.* 82). In another fable, the lion is old and feeble rather than strong, which leads to it receiving its comeuppance from the other animals (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.21). A boar avenges an old wrong, while a donkey kicks him in the face. When reading any given fable, one presumes that a reader will bring the knowledge of the characters from many other fables into view.

The human characters share the same breadth of characterization, perhaps even more. There is no one stock "human," rather, they are fleshed out by a variety of details—about their profession, status, age, gender, and so on. The roles on offer are too many to number. There are professions such as fishermen,

12 While most scholars agree that the animals appeal to standard characterizations, Nøjgaard (*La Fable Antique*, esp. 1.303–19) and Zafiropoulos (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 28–30) argue that there is too much variety and too many cases of surprising departures from the expected stereotypes. To the present author, it seems clear that fabulists who depart from the stereotypes, do so in a way derivative of the stereotypical expectations. It would not be possible to surprise a reader by an animal behaving in an uncharacteristic way without a characteristic expectation lying behind it. In many ways, such departures from the stereotypical expectations can be what make a fable so memorable. When the reader is surprised by this departure from the norm, it presumes there is a norm from which to depart in the first place.

farmers, tanners, shepherds, butchers, artisans, soldiers, athletes, merchants, musicians, nurses, prostitutes, money lenders, thieves, physicians, judges, slaves, masters, noblemen, kings, and priests, and other relevant roles such as friends, neighbors, banqueters, fathers, husbands, mothers, wives, sons, daughters, youths, children, widows, the elderly, pregnant women, bald men, and gods. Doctors are normally swindlers, judges are often corrupt, children and youth are rebellious in some fables but obedient in others. At the same time, parents can be good or bad. It can be the drunkard husband that a wife tries to help or a quarrelsome wife that a husband tries to calm. As we learned in the previous chapter, this characterization can be achieved from the information supplied in the narrative, it can be revealed as the character acts, shares their thoughts, or contends with others, or it can be supplied by the implied author making an explicit evaluation in the paratextual material. I bring now this treasury of material to bear on the following Lukan fables, which also function as case studies for fundamental issues of "parable" exegesis that have gone unresolved for want of comparanda.

11.3 Live and Die by Your Wits: In Praise of the Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1–13)

> There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer." Then the manager said to himself, "What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes." So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?" He answered, "A hundred jugs of olive oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty." Then he asked another, "And how much do you owe?" He replied, "A hundred containers of wheat." He said to him, "Take your bill and make it eighty." And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. *Thus, the children of this age are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. 'Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*
> (Luke 16:1b–13 [trans. adapted from NRSV])

Craftiness, cunning, shamelessness, audacity, and even dishonesty are prominent qualities that receive commendation in the Lukan Fable Collection—often to the embarrassment of exegetes and translators who seek to minimize them. Before we forgot our fables, it was this matter of ethics that Trench thought could separate them from the "parables" of Jesus. In fables were found "a glorification of cunning as a guide to life and the delivery from evil,"[13] in contrast to "the loftier standing-point of the parable, that it should be deeply earnest, allowing itself therefore in no jesting nor raillery at the weaknesses, the follies, or the crimes of men."[14] Indeed, in the ancient fable collections, these qualities, along with their corollaries of prudence and shrewdness, are one of the most common subjects.[15] In the Augustana Collection alone, more than a dozen fables use the term φρονίμος in the *epimythia*, such as "So it is with οἱ φρόνιμοι among people. Once they have escaped danger, they guard against it in the future" (Perry 134) and "So it is that οἱ φρόνιμοι among people sense danger from signs in advance and avoid it" (Perry 142). Eight more examples are offered in 13.4. Of the Lukan fables that take up these subjects, easily the most confounding by traditional methods of interpretation is the Crafty Steward—also known as the Shrewd Manager, Dishonest Manager, Unjust Steward, Foolish Master, etc. Already at the turn of the twentieth century, Jülicher complained of the innumerable attempts to make sense of this fable.[16] Several monographs have been written on the Crafty Steward, and so immense is the literature on it that there is a monograph on its history of interpretation alone.[17] As for the interpretive conundrums, Baergen summarizes the most pressing issues:

> The nature of the accusation against the parable's steward is ambiguous. The moral character of his response is problematic. The identity of the *kurios* who praises the steward is unclear, and in any case, why the steward should be commended for ostensive fraud is far from apparent … On the maximalist reading, Luke 16:1–13 admits of different and perhaps even conflicting trajectories of interpretation: verses 8b and 9 make the steward's actions exemplary for the parable's audience ("make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth"),

13 Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, 10.

14 Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, 11.

15 While there are various shades of meaning between such terms, I am using "prudence" and "shrewdness" both with reference to the Greek notion of φρονίμος (cf. Luke 16:8).

16 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2:45.

17 Michael Krämer, *Das Rätsel der Parabel vom ungerechten Verwalter Lk 16, 1–13: Auslegungsgeschichte, Umfang, Sinn: Eine Diskussion der Probleme und Lösungsvorschläge der Verwalterparabel von den Vätern bis Heute*, BiblScRel 5 (Zürich: PAS, 1972).

but verses 10–13 appear to rebuke the steward's unfaithfulness ("whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much").[18]

So far as I am aware, no one has suggested that the characters, themes, plots, and interpretive methods applied to the fable might eliminate these problems.[19] Here we will look to the fable to explain the "problematic" moral character of the steward's solution and why he is commended for dishonesty. The issue of the differing and conflicting interpretations apparent from verses 8–13 is a simple matter that will be touched on here and resolved in 13.4.

In terms of the plot and structure, the Crafty Steward follows the regular and expected patterns of a fable. It begins with the *pronomina indefinita*, "There was a certain rich man …," ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος (Luke 16:1). Verses one and two comprise *la donnée* indicating the setting and problem. A fine example of an *action de choix* follows: the steward contemplates what to do, hatches his plan in interior monologue, and then carries it out. The fable concludes with the *l'action finale* in 8a: the master praises the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. The fable then pivots to a stack of epimythia, beginning with verse 8b, rendering the lessons of the fable. If form is a useful indication as to the end of the fable, then there is no problem at all—it ends in verse 8a before shifting to the *epimythia*. The reason to think there is any problem in verse eight is that exegetes are unsatisfied with the resolution of the plot in which the master praises the steward for his dishonestly.[20] The text becomes only marginally

18 Rene A. Baergen, "Servant, Manager or Slave? Reading the Parable of the Rich Man and His Steward (Luke 16:1–8a) through the Lens of Ancient Slavery," *SR* 35 (2006): 25–38. Snodgrass piles on further issues (*Stories with Intent*, 402–403).

19 This includes Beavis, who unfortunately, or perhaps shrewdly, devotes less than a page of her article on this fable to discussing verses eight through nine (Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context"). For summaries of the interpretation attempts, see the six options listed in Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, BECNT 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1337–38; and Snodgrass, who lists sixteen interpretations (*Stories with Intent*, 406–409). Since Snodgrass often combines different opinions that he judges similar under one heading, there are many more than sixteen, in fact.

20 E.g., Jeremias, "It is hard to believe that the κύριος of v. 8 refers to the lord of the parable: how could he have praised his deceitful steward?" (*The Parables of Jesus*, 45), and Crossan, "I would insist on the elimination of 16:8a from the original story because it is unlikely" (Crossan, "Structuralist Analysis," 206). The way most exegetes attempt to resolve it (futilely), is to appeal to the appearance of ὁ κύριος in verse eight. Since ὁ κύριος appears in verse eight as the individual praising the steward and could, in theory, apply to Jesus instead, some prefer to apply the evaluation of the steward's actions to Jesus. In narratological terms, for this solution to work, it would mean that verse eight pulls out of the fable narrative level (a hypodiegetic narration) to the story level of Jesus narrating the fable (the intradiegetic narration).

more palatable or "realistic" for Jesus to offer the positive evaluation of the steward instead of the master.

Apart from other Lukan examples such as the Unjust Judge and the Friend at Midnight, there are no other "parables" like the Crafty Steward, wherein cunning, dishonesty, or other normally condemnable ethical qualities are praised. While they do not discuss fables, Herzog, Heininger, and Beavis provide the closest examples to the themes under discussion here.[21] Herzog situates the narrative in the realia of first-century Palestine under Roman rule as he reconstructs it. He reads this fable through the lens of the theory of power and subversion laid out in James Scott's work (see 9.2.1). Though Herzog does not consider any fables or other literature, he nevertheless arrives at a conclusion consonant with the fable mentality considered shortly, "This may not be a parable of the reign of God, but it suggests how the weapons of the weak can produce results in a world dominated by the strong."[22] Both Heininger and Beavis, for their parts, set this fable against the background of narratives about picaresque slaves.[23] As before, Heininger appeals to the background of comedic plays to enlighten the Lukan fables, focusing here on the plays of Plautus—*Pseudolus* and *Epidicus*—which feature slave protagonists. Especially impressive to Heininger is the final line of *Epidicus*, spoken by the master to the slave: "This is a man who through his trickery has gained his freedom" (*Epid.* 732).[24] While impressive at first blush, this is not quite the same as the Crafty Steward, since the slave's trickery alluded to in this line resulted in the master being reunited with his long-lost daughter. In other words, unlike the Crafty Steward, it is a deed that greatly benefits the master that resulted in the slave's manumission. Beavis, for her part, compares the Crafty Steward to

21 Heininger, *Sondergutgleichnissen*, 168–89; Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context." Both write independently of one another, with Heininger's book appearing the year before Beavis's article. Like Heininger, Beavis also points to Plautus's plays, just not in reference to this fable specifically. Like Heininger and Beavis, Crossan and Via also discuss the Crafty Steward being told in a picaresque mode featuring a picaresque or "rascal" protagonist, though they offer no examples for comparison (Via, *The Parables*, 159–62; Crossan, "Structural Analysis," 206–208).

22 Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 258. Herzog's reading receives a strong endorsement from the ethics of the ancient fable.

23 While I certainly do not rule it out, it is also not obvious to me that the steward is a slave. The steward fears, for example, that a consequence of his misdeeds will be that he is forced to beg (Luke 16:3). This strikes me as a peculiar concern for a slave, since it implies the steward must financially support himself. Most probably, Herzog is correct: "The fact that the steward is dismissed indicates that he is a retainer, not a slave, although a retainer in the household of an elite was nearly as dependent as a slave but without the security associated with slavery" (*Parables as Subversive Speech*, 241).

24 Hic is homo est qui liberatum militia invenit sua.

the picaro slave *par excellence*, Aesop, specifically a couple episodes in *The Life of Aesop* and a *chreia* about him recorded in Perotti's Appendix (17). Indeed, as I have discussed previously, *The Life* depicts Aesop the slave utilizing his savoir faire to trick the tricksters (*Vit. Aes.* 3), to escape trouble, and to outwit his philosopher master, Xanthus (*Vit. Aes.* 20–91 *passim*).[25] While Aesop sometimes receives a beating, other times he earns begrudging praise, if not from Xanthus, then from his students who are witness to or also victims of Aesop's antics (e.g., *Vit. Aes.* 53). Since they were likely in popular circulation, the stories *about* Aesop are certainly worthy episodes for Beavis's goal of providing context for picaresque slaves that the author and audience of the gospel would be familiar with. Both Heininger and Beavis provide helpful contexts from Greek and Latin popular narratives that star picaresque slaves who have the support of the audience. I concur with their evaluations that such popular narratives about slave picaros provide analogous situations to the Crafty Steward. While the surface narratives are fine examples of crafty slaves tricking masters, two problems remain. Responding to Heininger's proposals, Michael Wolter remains unconvinced because "there is far too great a distance between the literary genre of comedy and the parable to permit such a cross connection."[26] Once again, we are in a better position to gain insight into the Crafty Steward by comparing it to other fables within the same genre. Second, while the ethics of slave behavior in these narratives are immediately relevant to this Crafty Steward in ways that biblical scholars have not recognized, the fables offer an explicitly ethical context. The fable context not only depicts the qualities of craftiness and deceit, but also tells us directly how these qualities are to be evaluated from a moral perspective—including when they are to be praised.

Perhaps surprisingly, the fable collections do not treat the craftiness, trickery, lies, and deceit, from a single perspective and are far from uniformly negative towards them.[27] Concerning the Augustana Collection, Zafiropoulos remarks:

> The collection neither wholly appreciates nor criticizes cunning and eloquence as a means of cheating an opponent. It underlines their utility, but at the same

25 Aesop also causes the slave master to fear he will lose his stewardship (*Vit. Aes.* 11–15).

26 "Zwischen der literarischen Gattung der Komödie und dem Gleichnis besteht ein viel zu großer Abstand, um eine solche Querverbindung zuzulassen" (Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 548).

27 Morgan asserts that "lies and deceit are a consistently bad thing," (*Popular Morality*, 74); however, we will quickly see that this is an oversimplification. As a taste of things to come, consider Zafiropoulos's evaluation of the Augustana Collection, "Telling lies and manipulating words is a wholly legitimate and profitable means of fulfilling one's aims … Personal interest matters most in the collection and, therefore, lies are absolutely acceptable in so far as they are effective" (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 166).

> time points out the negative consequences when a devious plan fails. The message is rather that, in order for it to be effective, a cunning plan must be well thought out, considering all the possible mishaps, and must also be carefully carried through.[28]

The diversity of perspectives regarding these characteristics in the ancient fables will provide us with examples that can be set in contrast to the Crafty Steward and examples that help to elucidate it by their similarity. The diversity of viewpoints among the ancient fables on these ethical topics is also useful for explaining why the Crafty Steward has received such a mixed reception, already canonized into the Gospel of Luke with its catena of *epimythia*. We will begin by looking at examples of craftiness that receive a different evaluation than the Crafty Steward and which, as we would expect, condemn cunning and trickery. From this baseline, we will then be in a position to examine a different group of fables with the opposite evaluation: praising craftiness and dishonestly like our fable of the Crafty Steward.

In the collections, which are so often concerned with providing examples of moral behavior, we can begin with the first and perhaps expected characterization. Craftiness, lies, and deceit are negative qualities that should be condemned:

> A mischievous man had gone to visit Apollo in Delphi, wanting to test the god. He took a sparrow in one hand, concealing it with his cloak, and then stood by the oracle and inquired of the god, "Apollo, the thing that I am carrying in my hand: is it living, or is it dead?" The man planned to show the sparrow alive if the god said "dead," and if the god said "living, he would strangle the sparrow immediately and present the dead bird. But the god recognized the man's evil purpose, and said, "Listen, do whatever you want: it is entirely up to you whether you will show me something living or dead!"
> *The fable shows that the divine gods cannot be deceived.* (Perry 36 [trans. adapted from Gibbs])

In this example of what is perhaps the most prominent response to this trait, the crafty character is found out and suffers a negative consequence. Caught in his deceit, the mischievous man gets away with only a rebuke, and the reader learns from it the moral that the gods are not to be trifled with. While rebuke

28 Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 161. Zafiropoulos is the only scholar to date who has attempted an exhaustive treatment of the ethics of one of the ancient collections. Though he focuses on the Augustana Collection, I am applying his insights to the other collections when they are consistent with what one finds in the Augustana. For the ethics of Babrius as they relate to the ethics of New Testament fables, see the forthcoming dissertation of Haußmann, "Narrative Ethik in den Mythiamben des Babrios."

is very common, often the result of a character's trickery and deceit is more serious in nature:

> A shepherd who pastured his flock at some distance from a village repeatedly played a joke which consisted of shouting for the villagers to come and help him because the wolves were attacking his sheep. Two or three times the people from the village came dashing out in alarm only to go back with the shepherd laughing at them. Finally, as luck would have it, some wolves really did come. They got between the shepherd and his flock, and when he shouted for help, the villagers, supposing that he was joking as usual, paid no attention to him, and the result was that he lost his sheep.
> *The story shows that liars get paid off by not being believed even when they tell the truth.* (Perry 210)

In this familiar fable of the Boy who Cried Wolf (Perry 210; Chambry 318 [with five variants]),[29] the protagonist suffers the loss of his livelihood for his deceit. No rebuke is necessary—the absence of a response from the village rendered the negative outcome. There are many more examples of tricksters being exposed and punished, including fatal outcomes.[30] While the readers can enjoy a little *Schadenfreude* and learn a lesson from the shepherd, these two examples portray cunning and trickery punished as we might expect to transpire at the end of the Crafty Steward. These kinds of fables affirm, on the one hand, the expectation of readers ancient and modern that trickery should be punished. On the other hand, they offer a model contrast to a different set of fables that operate by different rules.

Running parallel to the Crafty Steward, there is a different breed of fables dealing with deception and cunning that play by different rules—those focusing on power dynamics. The theme of power is entangled especially with fables about craftiness, deceit, and featuring would-be tricksters, particularly in fables that portray situations that could lead to ruin or death (e.g., Luke 16:3).

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29 In some versions it is simply a shepherd (ποιμήν), in others a youth (παιδίον), and others "a certain child" (παῖς τις).

30 As an example of a typical fable with a fatal outcome resulting from trickery, consider the fable of the donkey who wishes to graze freely upon the farmers' crops: *A story about a donkey, urging us not to yearn for more than we deserve.* A donkey wanted to appear to be a lion. Since he could not change his nature, he tried to realize his dreams by a change of costume, and like a lion he wreaked havoc on the fruits of the farmers' labour. But when a gust of wind blew up, it stripped the lion bare of his disguise. As soon as the farmers whose crops he had eaten saw that he was just a donkey, they came and clubbed him to death. *Adornments that do not belong to you can be dangerous* (Perry 258 [trans. Gibbs]). In Babrius's version, *Fab.* 139, the ass gets away with only a beating.

This group of fables complicates the ethics of the former and supplies us with many untapped parallels to the Crafty Steward.

In many fables, the status of the protagonist is key to the evaluation of craftiness and deceit—is the individual a master or a slave, strong or weak, predator or prey? Fables abound with crafty powerful characters devising schemes to abuse and exploit the weak; usually they are successful. Here is another version of the fable that Jesus probably quotes in Luke 24:25, for example:[31]

> *When a crafty man finds himself in danger he looks for a way out at another's expense.*
> When a fox by accident had fallen into a well and was imprisoned by its coping high above, there came to the same spot a thirsty goat, who inquired of the fox whether the water was fresh and plentiful. Immediately the fox saw his way out by means of deceit: "Come down, my friend; the water is so good that my pleasure in drinking it cannot be satisfied." The bearded fellow let himself down. Then the little fox escaped from the well by planting his feet on the other's lofty horns, leaving the goat imprisoned in the walled pool. (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.9)

In this cautionary fable, the reader is not to identify with the fox, rather to learn from the mistake of the goat to avoid falling victim to deceit.[32] This example introduces the partner concept to cunning and deceit: prudence or shrewdness (φρονίμος): "And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly (φρονίμως). *For the children of this age are shrewder* (*φρονιμώτεροι*) *in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light*" (Luke 16:8).[33] Like many others, this fable depicts prey failing to use prudence and suffering for it. The alternative plot is also frequently depicted: a weaker character using prudence to uncover the deceit or crafty plan of the powerful character in order to escape unharmed. The following fable spells this out explicitly in the moral:

> There was a hen who was not feeling well. The cat bent over her and said, "How are you? Is there anything you need? I will bring you whatever you want; please just take care of yourself." "I'll live," said the hen, "if you will just go away!"

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31 On Jesus quoting this fable, see 8.3.

32 A similar fable occurs twice in the Augustana Collection. In Perry 9 (Chambry 40 with seven variants), the plot is parallel to Phaedrus's version, while Perry 157 describes a similar situation, except this time the goat uncovers the deceit and lives to fight another day.

33 Note once more Luke 12:42, which extols this same quality: And the Lord (ὁ κύριος) said, "Who then is the faithful clever manager (ὁ φρόνιμος), whom the master (ὁ κύριος) will set over his attendants to give them their portion of food at the proper time?" See also note 37.

> *Thus also with humans, the wicked* (οἱ πονήροι) *do not go unnoticed by the shrewd* (τοὺς φρονίμους)*, even if they pretend to be useful.* (Perry 7 [trans. Gibbs, modified])[34]

In dozens more fables, this interplay of power is at work—between strength and weakness, cunning and prudence. The fable of the Cat and the Hen applies an *epimythium* praising the same quality in the first *epimythium* of the Crafty Steward: shrewdness. As we will see in the next examples, this dynamic takes a different direction when the weak character, like the steward, is the crafty one: not just prudence, but craftiness itself becomes something praiseworthy.[35]

The use of trickery and deceit by the weak to escape a dire situation is a theme that occurs regularly in the Augustana Collection, Phaedrus, and Babrius:

> A kid had wandered off from the flock and was being chased by a wolf. Unable to get away, the kid fell into the wolf's clutches so she turned to him and said, "I know for a fact that I am about to become your dinner, but I would like to die with dignity: please play the flute for me so that I can do a little dance." The wolf played the flute and the kid danced to the music. The sound alerted the shepherd's dogs who attacked the wolf and chased him away. As the wolf ran off he said to himself, "Justly this has befallen me for trying to be a musician instead of a butcher!"
> *The story shows that being bested in a contest of words can induce bewilderment even in persons who are wicked by nature.* (Perry 97; Chambry 107 with variants [trans adapted from Gibbs])

Like the Lukan crafty steward, who pivots from his inner monologue to a quick and decisive deceit, this example depicts a common plot element of the weak character who "quickly forms a plan under extremely pressing conditions."[36] The need for immediate action or to employ the strategy at the appropriate time (καιρός), is another important theme of the ancient fables. As Zafiropoulos explains, "The course of action that is chosen is important not only in terms of

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34 More examples of a weak character who survive by uncovering the plots of crafty powerful characters include Perry 7, 142, 143, 157. Another very common plot portrays a character attempting to rise above their station by means of trickery. The results of such efforts are never rewarded and often result in a fatal outcome. This theme is independent of the one described here wherein a weak character is not attempting to rise above their standing, rather simply to survive a trial. The trickster tricked is another common fable plot, e.g., Perry 252, 258, 279, 333.

35 While I am focusing on the Crafty Steward at the moment, these same dynamics are applicable to other fables in Luke such as the Judge and the Widow and the Friend at Midnight below.

36 Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 164.

whether it is the right or the wrong one, but also in terms of timing. The fable's narrative leaves no room for any lapses of time."[37] The weak character wins and is not blamed for using deception as a solution. The implied author and audience praise the crafty actions and it is a powerful character, the one who was tricked, that acknowledges his fault. Of the scores of fables dealing with craftiness and deceit, the deceived character, whether weak or strong, never blames the trickster for their misfortune. When the crafty character prevails, the victim blames themselves, e.g., "This is what I deserve to suffer" (Babrius, *Fab.* 122.14).[38] In other words, counterintuitively, it would be out of character for a fable if the master *did* blame the steward for the trickery. When the role of supplying the lesson is transferred from the implied author to a character in the story, far from receiving blame, the deceiver can even be named as didact of the deceived. Here is an example of a shrewd old man who outwit a lion and taught him a lesson through deceit: "And there he lay helpless, dying like a pig, having learned from the shrewd device of a wily old man that there can be no joining in love of mankind with lions or of lions with men" (Babrius, *Fab.* 98.16–20).

In what survives of Phaedrus's fourth book, written within a decade or two of Jesus's ministry,[39] the treatment of craftiness, cunning, and shrewdness appears several times. In Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.9 above, we encountered a lesson about the crafty escaping danger at the expense of others, and the theme is picked up again in *Fables* 4.13 and 14. In the *promythium* of *Fab.* 4.13, we read an explicit recognition from Phaedrus that the power dynamics between the weak and the strong often dictate the reversal of common morality—commending deception and cautioning against honesty:

> *"Nothing is more profitable to a man than to speak the truth." This is a maxim that should, of course, be approved by everyone; but moral purity is usually brought to its own destruction.*

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37 Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 57. See Zafiropoulos's discussion of "The Need for Immediate Action and the Issue of Καιρός" (*Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 57–62). The steward of Luke 16 behaves with haste (ταχέως) and prudence (φρόνιμος), while the parallel conjunction of prudence (φρόνιμος) and timeliness (καιρός) appears in connection with the steward of Luke 12:42: "And the Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful, shrewd (φρόνιμος) steward, whom the Lord will set in charge of his slaves to distribute the measure of food at the right time (ἐν καιρῷ).'"

38 The character's self-critical confession in the *réplique finale* that he, she, or it deserves the negative outcome abound in the collections: e.g., Babrius, *Fab.* 129, 137, 143; Perry 97, 148, 176, 203, 234; Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.4.

39 On the date of Phaedrus, see 4.2.

> Two men, one in the habit of practicing deception, the other habitually truthful, were making a journey together. In the course of their travel they came into a territory ruled by apes. When one of the crowd of apes, he who seemed to be chief among them, caught sight of the travelers, he ordered them to be detained, that he might question them concerning what men were saying about himself. He gave orders that all his fellow apes should stand before him in a long line on the right and on the left, and that a throne should be placed for himself. As he had once seen the Emperor do, so likewise he caused his followers to stand before him. Orders were given that the men should be brought in. Said the chief of the apes: "Who am I?" The deceptive man answered: "You are the Emperor." Again he inquired: "And what about these whom you see standing before me?" "These," he replied, "are your high-ranking courtiers, chancellors, field marshals, military officials." Because he and his crowd had been praised by this man's lie, he ordered him to be given a reward; and the man, because he had flattered them all, likewise deceived them all. But the truthful man thought to himself: "If this deceiver, whose words are all lies, has received such a recompense, then I, if I tell the truth, shall receive an even greater one." Then said the chief of the apes: "You, too, speak up; who am I, and who are these whom you see before me?" But the man who loved the truth and always spoke it, replied: "You are in fact an ape, and all these present who are like you are apes, and always will be." Immediately orders were given for this man to be torn to pieces by teeth and claws, because he had told the truth.
> *This is a tale for wicked men who love deceit and malice, and who murder honesty and truth.* (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.13)

This fable depicts reality as well as any true story. It portrays the fate of two powerless men who face a dire situation, their fates in the hand of a more powerful figure. It describes what happens to them when one practices deceit and one honesty. Like our crafty steward, the honest man enters into an interior monologue to contemplate what he should do. The honest man employs what some biblical scholars might otherwise recognize as evidence of a Jewish background, reasoning utilizing the logic of *qal weḥomer*—"how much more…." He reasons to himself, "If the wicked man is rewarded for deceit, how much more will I be rewarded for honesty." The honest man takes the path the Crafty Steward did not. Lacking prudence, he speaks the truth to the face of power, which results in his grizzly fate. The crafty man, by contrast, demonstrates his shrewdness through practicing deceit and receives praise and a reward for doing so. So also, in these fables in Phaedrus, which depict shrewdness going hand in hand with deceit, lies and craftiness offer the best chance of survival. In this fable, as in the Crafty Steward, the prudence is praiseworthy.

One further reason an audience would praise a weak character who prevails in their deceit against the strong becomes evident when that audience knows a great many fables: the success of the weak is far from guaranteed. The powerful prey upon the weak and plots featuring the weak behaving cleverly do not have

a determined outcome—often their efforts are futile.[40] Phaedrus undoubtedly wishes to teach us this lesson by placing *Fables* 4.14 after the previous one. Here a lion schemes to consume all the animals by asking them if his breath stinks. Those who say "yes," he consumes for insulting him, and those who shrewdly say "no" he consumes for lying. When the ape demonstrates an exceptional shrewdness by praising the lion so well that he would feel guilty about eating him, the lion devises a new trick and consumes him regardless. A more nuanced approach to the interplay of prudence, cunning, and deceit as they are played out in scores of ancient fables, reveals that "the fable's figures lie in order to pursue their plans. Being a form of cunning, the deceiving speech has ambiguous consequences … it can be effective or ineffective, according to the liar's skills or the listener's cleverness."[41]

Taking stock of the variety of ways the ancient fables treat notions like craftiness, deceit, and prudence, we can see the negative effects but observe the positive evaluations as well. With respect to the ancient fables as a whole, we may echo once more Zafiropoulos's evaluation of the Augustana Collection, which

> … reports both the positive and the negative effects of trickery and falsehood. Its messages are practical and cautionary. They present them both as effective ways to succeed and survive, but only provided that the protagonist is competent and prudent enough to practice them successfully. Otherwise, their consequences are disastrous.[42]

The ancient fable shows that interpretative attempts to exculpate the steward of wrongdoing are unnecessary.[43] Praising the crafty is at home in the ancient fable tradition. Whether ὁ κύριος in verse eight is the master or Jesus, both are explicable from the fable context. If it refers to the master, then he is like so many fable characters coming to terms with his defeat—the deceived

40 Phaedrus begins his corpus by taking up the same theme as Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.14 with a wolf and a lamb (and cf. Babrius, *Fab.* 89). Here, Phaedrus addresses the subject from both angles. On the one hand, he describes the futility of the lamb's truthful answers, and on the other, the wolf's intent to consume the lamb regardless of the answers. In some examples, a clever appeal will permit the weaker character to live, e.g., the Lion and the Mouse (Babrius, *Fab.* 107), while in others, the persuasion fails, e.g., How the Fowler Served His Guest (Babrius, *Fab.* 124). This is another context in which *The Life of Aesop* is relevant. Sometimes Aesop escapes and is praised, other times he is beaten regardless (cf. the *chreia* of Aesop in Phaedrus, *Fab.* Perotti Appendix 17).

41 Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 166. Here again Zafiropoulos refers to the Augustana, but his observation is well suited to the ancient genre as a whole.

42 Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 170.

43 For a handy summary of the views, see Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 406–410.

have only themselves to blame. A capitulation to affirm the shrewdness of the steward would be in-character for the master. If "the Lord" is Jesus, then the fable context provides all the background we need to understand why Luke would depict Jesus describing the steward as praiseworthy.[44] He praises the crafty character for the same reason Phaedrus and the Augustana Collection praise some of their tricksters. Whether Jesus or the master, the steward is praised precisely for the quality we would expect from the ethical context of the fable: his "shrewdness." At the same time, this is a fable that confronts a moral quality that has an ambiguous status in the collections. We saw that deception is condemned as unvirtuous in a number of fable contexts, and we might expect an ancient audience would be divided about how to evaluate the steward's deceit. To draw a parallel again to the slave folk literature of the American South, Lawrence Levine has observed the same ethical incongruity between stories about tricksters and other moral tales, "In many respects the lessons embodied in the animal trickster tales ran directly counter to those moralistic tales considered [elsewhere]."[45] It is the ambivalence in the ancient fable materials toward cunning, deceit, and trickery that keeps the plot outcomes unpredictable and could easily prompt debates already in the pre-gospel tradition. The menacing variety of *epimythia* following this fable that disagree about what stance to take are evidence for precisely this ambivalence (16:8b–13).[46]

Setting the Crafty Steward in the context of the broader fable background, we can see why the steward is praised. The fable corpus warns that craftiness can result in disaster and death, that the chances for failure are greater than success. But in situations that require it, those who survive and succeed at their scheme are praised and even rewarded. Thus, in the case of the Crafty Steward, the fable corpus does not merely provide us with parallel exemplars of managers, but rather a host of plots featuring crafty characters and explicit explanations about how their craftiness and trickery should be evaluated. While the Crafty Steward has stood out to exegetes for generations as unique among the

44 On the basis of the parallel formulation in the fable of the Judge and the Widow, "and the Lord says, hear what the unjust judge says," Jeremias argues that "the Lord" here also refers to Jesus (*The Parables of Jesus*, 45–46). So also I. Howard Marshall, "Luke xvi. 8—Who Commended the Unjust Steward?," *JTS* 19 (1968): 617–19.

45 Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 116. Like the other Lukan fables, those tales outside the sphere of the trickster stress righteous living and moral conduct, especially with respect to friendship, parental love, hard work, and the dangers of pride, self-assertiveness, and for children who misbehave (Levine, *Black Culture*, 90–99).

46 On the pluriformity of evaluations of this fable, and fables generally, see Chapter 12.

"parable" tradition, it is but one of a large stock of similar examples in the fable corpora. "The best hope of the weak is to be clever, and fables describe many kinds of cleverness. Successful cleverness means living to plot another day."[47] The Lukan Jesus offers a fable here that reflects the moral perspective of the powerless. This group faces a reality in which they are often forced to resort to behavior that would be regarded as immoral were they in a different life circumstance. Should one hold to his or her scruples even in situations that will cost life and livelihood? According to the ethics of fables generally and this fable specifically, it would seem not. The Lukan Jesus appears to exonerate the weak who resort, in desperation, to behavior that would be considered morally dubious. Indeed, he encourages it. Already in the pre-Gospel tradition, early interpreters were not entirely onboard with this evaluation of the Crafty Steward, but this is not the lone Lukan fable to take up this issue. The Shameless Friend at Midnight and the next example, the Judge and the Widow, readily attest to this same perspective, though it has been concealed in translation.[48]

11.4 Comedy and Austerity: Getting the Punchline of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8)

In popular imagination, tied closely to the literature about and authored by Jesus are notions of sacrosanctity—a quality that lends a certain impression to the stories he tells in the gospels. The fable and Aesopic literature on the other hand are associated with notions of the vulgar, both the etymological and common meaning. With sacrosanctity we associate austerity and with vulgarity we associate comedy. Reading many of Jesus's "parables" through the fable lens eases the inclination to resist their comic elements and liberates us to read them with comic potential.

When we set out on this journey into the forgotten land of the ancient fable, we observed that the most thorough treatment of fable vis-a-vis parable was undertaken by Adolf Jülicher more than a century ago. Although he

47 Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 82.

48 Snodgrass confronts head-on the exegetical contortions performed to get around the obvious conclusion that ἀναίδειαν means "shamelessness" in the fable of The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5–8): "no way exists to make shamelessness in this passage positive" (Klyne Snodgrass, "*Anaideia* and the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:8)," *JBL* 116 [1997]: 505–13, here 510). Though many classical authors are cited for analogies, Snodgrass does not mention ancient fables, such as those involving characters who are described using the same term (e.g., Babrius *Fable* 95.57; Perry 173 in Chambry 253.18–19).

never actually compared any of Jesus's "parables" with the other first-century fables, save one, he incorporated them into parable theory at some length.[49] As we saw in the introduction, Jülicher regularly used terminology that equated "Parabel" and "Fabel." Against his better instincts, Jülicher saw a non-essential distinction between "parable" and "fable" from a perspective current in scholarship of the nineteenth century:

> The best way to distinguish between the fable and our parables is to point out the tone in which they are told. The parables of Jesus are always serious and noble, while the fable often lapses into the comic, even burlesque and vulgar.[50]

This distinction between parable and fable—the austerity and solemnity of the former, and the vulgarity and comedy of the latter—is one imposed on Jesus by well-meaning but wrongheaded exegetes of centuries past.

Of course, it is easy enough to demonstrate that the fables are often comical and likewise austere. Jülicher's resistance is rather toward seeing the fables of Jesus with a comic tone—as anything but austere. While we should always tread lightly in ascribing motives, we must recognize the prevailing views of Jülicher's day. As scholars of humor in the Bible now recognize, for the theologian and biblical scholar of the nineteenth century, the need to assert the place of theology as a legitimate science in the face of secular rationalism demanded the effacement of humor and anything else considered fatuous by this prevailing mentality.[51] As Willie Van Heerden so eloquently describes the process of expunging humor from the Bible:

> During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the modern scientific worldview muscled its way into power … Christianity took a defensive stand, careful not to be outshone in rational thinking by modernists who, once and for all, wanted to separate modern science from irrational practices like religion. Christian theologians adopted the thinking habits of the modern era in an effort to preserve the prestige of the Bible … In view of their vested interest in the prestige of the Bible, biblical exegetes could not allow it to fail the test of rationality,

49 For his actual exegesis of Jesus's fables, Jülicher cites just Babrius once to compare *Fab.* 4 to the Dragnet (Matt 13:47–50) (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2:563).

50 "Am ehesten würde behufs der Unterscheidung der Fabel von unsern Parabeln auf den Ton, in dem sie gehalten sind, gewiesen werden können, Jesu Parabeln immer ernst und vornehm, während die Fabel oft ins Komische, sogar ins Burleske und Gemeine verfallen ist" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100–101).

51 For the history of Gospel humor scholarship, see Terri Bednarz, *Humor in the Gospels: A Sourcebook for the Study of Humor in the New Testament, 1863–2014* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015).

> with the natural result that appreciation of the humorous, the playful, and the ambiguous was readily sacrificed to this attempt to "save" the Bible.[52]

More recently, the tables have turned and there is a renewed interested in comedy and humor in the Bible. In these works, one always finds a preface explaining why the topic was so seldom addressed in the past and justifying the search for humor. Yehuda Radday's assessment is rather blunt:

> The fathers of literary research in the Bible were German professors of the nineteenth century, and the state of the art to date is still deeply indebted to and influenced by them. But theologians in general are not noted for their wit; their other than scholarly titles having been given them chiefly *honoris*, not *humoris causa*. Thus, not all of them are mentally or psychologically conditioned to comprehend that a text of sublime religiosity may also contain something not consonant with Catonic *gravitas*.[53]

As easy as it would be to lay blame at the feet of a German like Jülicher, the view of the Bible as a humorless artifact was not unique to Germans of the day. As the nineteenth-century French essayist and intellectual, Charles Boudelaire, put it, "Holy books never laugh, to whatever nations they belong."[54] In the United Kingdom, A. N. Whitehead claimed, "The total absence of humour from the Bible is one of the most singular things in all literature."[55] Even G.K. Chesterton, Jülicher's contemporary and a man whose appreciation for drollery is beyond doubt, concludes his *Orthodoxy* with the final line about Jesus's lack of humor: "There was some one thing that was too great for God to show us when He walked upon our earth; and I have sometimes fancied that it was His mirth."[56] With this prevailing outlook, it is no surprise that Jülicher found no humor in the fables of Jesus. His position is more reflective of the mentality of biblical scholars at the end of the nineteenth century than the prevailing views today.

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52 Willie Van Heerden, "Why the Humour in the Bible Plays Hide and Seek with Us," *Social Identities* 7 (2001): 75–96.

53 Yehuda Thomas Radday, "On Missing Humour in the Bible," in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Yehuda Thomas Radday and Athalya Brenner, JSOTSup 92 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 21–38, here 33–34.

54 Charles Baudelaire, "On the Essence of Laughter, and, in General, on the Comic in the Plastic Arts," in *Comedy: Meaning and Form*, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965), pages 448–465, here 455.

55 Alfred North Whitehead, *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), 199. See several more comments to the same effect on pages 30, 109, and 355.

56 Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane, 1909), 297.

Approaching the issue from the other chronological direction, the forceful antigelastic tendency of the early Church ensured the quick erasure of humorous elements in Jesus's fables from early on.[57] The conviction by some of the doctors of the Church that comedy and humor do not befit sacred writ nor the devoted Christian, goes back even to the New Testament corpus in the Letter to the Ephesians. The author extols the audience to "be imitators of God, as beloved children … for whom obscenity, silly talk, and coarse jesting are not proper" (Eph 5:1, 4).[58] This view is fully formed in authors like Basil of Caesarea, who writes "Since our master condemns those who laugh in this life, it is patent that for the believer there is never a right time for laughter" (*Reg. brev*. 31 [31.1104 PG] [trans. Halliwell, 471]). John Chrysostom provides the justification for his antigelastic viewpoint by appealing to Jesus's life in which he sees nothing but sorrow:

> If you also weep such tears, you have become a follower of your Lord. For he too wept, both over Lazarus and over the city, and he was deeply moved over the fate of Judas. And this indeed one may often see him do, but nowhere laugh nor smile even a little, no one at least of the evangelists mentions this … That is why Christ says so much about mourning, and blesses those who mourn, and calls those who laugh wretched. For this is not the theatre for laughter, neither did we come together for this intent, that we may give way to immoderate mirth, but that we may groan, and by this groaning inherit a kingdom. (*Matt. Hom.* 6.7 [trans. Prevost])

As with the apparent unease of ascribing the fable genre to Jesus in the first place, it is also easy to see why some early readers of Jesus's fables would be disinclined to recognize their comic potential.

While fables can have a neutral or even quite solemn tone, that the ancient fable was also known for its comedic capacity is beyond doubt.[59] Here is one fable featuring a comic punchline delivered by a pregnant woman:

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57 For a survey of the antigelastic tendencies of early Christianity, see Stephen Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 471–519.

58 Γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ … καὶ αἰσχρότης καὶ μωρολογία ἢ εὐτραπελία, ἃ οὐκ ἀνῆκεν.

59 Especially in the Augustana Collection, as Zafiropoulos describes it, "their scenes and messages are rather violent and solemn instead of comic or mocking" (Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 6). The comic aspect is pressed a bit too far by Temple, who states that "the fables are essentially a joke collection" (Temple, *Aesop*, xviii). Below, I am refraining here from getting into the weeds of humor theory and relying simply on these explicit statements from ancient authors as proof of fact.

> *No one likes to revisit the place that has brought him injury.*
> Her months of pregnancy having duly gone by, a woman on the point of giving birth was lying on the ground uttering piteous moans. Her husband urged her to lay her body on the bed, where she might better deposit the burden of nature. "I'm not at all convinced," said she, "that my troubles can be ended in the very place where they began." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.18)

As we learned during Book I, in Old Comedy and in forensic rhetoric the fable was especially valuable because it is humorful.[60] The references to using "something funny from Aesop" in Aristophanes reflects an authentic rhetorical tactic attested from fifth century BCE Athens to fourth century CE Rome, from *Rhetoric ad Herennium* and Cicero to Marius Victorinus. The function of the fable in rhetoric, in addition to providing a convincing analogy to the case at hand, also served to butter up the judge, wake up a tired audience, and get a laugh.

In the first century, we have Dio Chrysostom, Quintilian, and Phaedrus himself to tell us about the reputation of the fable as something light and humorful. As we read in Chapter 9, according to Dio, Aesop was associated both with wisdom and with the stories that people are eager to pay attention to:

> And there are those who think that Aesop too was somewhat like the Seven Sages, that while he was wise and sensible, yet he was crafty too and clever at composing tales such as they themselves would most enjoy to hear. And possibly they are not wholly mistaken in their suppositions and in reality Aesop did in this way try to admonish mankind and show them wherein they were in error, believing that they would be most tolerant toward him if they were amused by his humor and his tales—just as children, when their nurses tell them stories, not only pay attention to them but are amused as well. (*Hab.* 13 [*Or.* 72.13], trans. adapted from Crosby, LCL)

This natural combination of amusement and education is exploited in the first century by educators who naturally wished to keep their students on task. In his preface to *On Rhetoricians*, Suetonius lists retelling fables in different ways as an exercise that pupils are eager to do (*Rhet.* 1 [25.4]). Quintilian describes how fables are appealing as "enjoyable fiction" (*Inst.* 5.11.19–21), and elsewhere that they "usually succeed in provoking laughter" (*Inst.* 6.3.44). Phaedrus describes the link between the comedic and didactic value of humor best of all:

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60 From Aristophanes, we read a recommendation to say, "some witty story, something funny by Aesop or Sybaris, one of the stories you learned at the party, and then you've turned the whole thing into a joke, so he lets you off and goes on his merry way," and Lovecleon elsewhere complains about the litigants: "Others tell us stories, others something funny from Aesop. Others crack jokes to make me laugh and put away my anger (Aristophanes, *Vesp*. 560–67 and 1257–61 [trans. adapted from Henderson, LCL]).

> Aesop is my source. He invented the substance of these fables, but I have put them into finished form in senarian verse. A double dowry comes with this, my little book: it moves to laughter, and by wise counsels guides the conduct of life. (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1 Prologue 1–4)

In the prologue to his second book, Phaedrus reminds the reader that just because fables are jesting, does not mean they should be dismissed. Of course, *The Life of Aesop* is replete with comic intentions, from the synathroesmus of ugly attributes that begins *The Life* to the vulgar humor and ironic reversals. In addition to his reputation as a "fable poet" (λογοποιός), Aesop is also made out to be as a jester, a "joke poet" (γελωτποιός) in Lucian's *A True Story* (2.18). The very transmission of the materials also provides confirmation of the comic associations of fables. After the Babrian fables in the Pierpoint Morgan Library Manuscript 397,[61] the manuscript ends with seven witty sayings from the *Philogelos*, an ancient joke book. Given their ubiquity, humorous fables need not be repeated here, but they populate every source, from two bald men who fight over a comb (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 5.6), to an astrologer who falls into a well (Perry 40), and a dog that exits a banquet through a window like a happy drunk (Babrius, *Fab.* 42).

While austere perspectives remain the common view, the notion that Jesus's fables are often humorous is no longer a fringe perspective. One can find many scholars, often somewhat bashfully, ask if we are supposed to laugh. The Lukan fable that reads the most differently depending upon its "austere" or "comic" reading is the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8). A side-by-side comparison between the NRSV translation of the fable body and one more faithful to the Greek will make this plain:

> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming." (Luke 18:2–5 NRSV)

> There was a certain judge in a certain city, who neither feared God nor regarded people. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him saying, "Grant me vengeance against my opponent!" And for a time, he was unmoved, but after a while, he said to himself, "Even though I neither fear God nor have regard for people, on account of the beating this widow is giving me I will avenge her, lest she eventually gives me a black eye!" (Luke 18:2–5 [trans. mine])

61 As we learned in Chapter 4, it contains the G version of the *Life of Aesop*, the oldest copy of the Augustana Collection, and some Babrian fables.

As we read in the previous chapter, the story follows the expected fable form closely, beginning with the *pronomina indefinita, la donnée* that sets the scene, then a problem that requires the judge to make a decision (*l'action de choix*), and a *réplique finale* by the protagonist confessing his defeat at the end. The issue here is obviously not the form, rather the differences in the underlined words that give the fable quite a different flavor—"bothering me … wear me out" on the one hand, and something so specific as "beating … give me a black eye" on the other. The NRSV sounds like Jülicher's austere Jesus, the more faithful translation sounds like his Aesop.[62]

Between the two versions, the verb underlying "give me a black eye," ὑπωπιάζω, is the crux, and it has had a new definition manufactured for it to avoid having Jesus say the plain meaning. The etymology could not be clearer. It derives from the nominal form, ὑπωπίον. ὑπὠ—"under," ὀπίον, the diminutive form of ὄψ, "the eye." Thus, "the place under the eye," "a bruise there." The nominal form appears regularly in medical literature,[63] and all examples of the verb refer to physical acts of violence and disfigurement, never anything approaching a meaning like "annoy" or "wear out."[64]

It was not until the English translation of Bauer's lexicon in 1957 that a second definition, "annoy greatly, wear me out," was introduced as a possible translation for ὑπωπιάζω.[65] The only ancient source cited to justify this second translation is Luke 18:5, and Luke 18:5 is the only justification for the existence

62 See also note 48, on the deceptive translation of ἀναίδεια as "persistence" instead of the accurate meaning: "shamelessness."

63 In the ancient medical corpus, the nominal form appears regularly to refer both to a bruise under the eye, i.e., a black eye, but is also a term applied to bruises generally.

64 ὑπωπιάζω appears at the conclusion of Aristophanes, *Pax* 545: a comic image of the cities having black eyes. They all wear ancient medical contraptions on them that accentuates the humorous image of the already harlequin faces. Aristotle uses it to give an example of hyperbole, comparing a man with black eyes to basket of mulberries (*Rhet.* 3.15). It appears in Plutarch to mock the Cynic opinion that the moon is a goddess, because it would mean her face is all bruised (*Fac.* 921F–922A). It occurs in Diogenes Laertius to describe a black eye suffered by the protagonist (*Vit.* 6.5. *Crates* 89–90). Paul uses the term to describe brutalizing his body like a boxer with a face full of bruises (1 Cor 9:26–27). If there is anything metaphorical in any of these examples, it is the appearance of literal bruising within metaphors. Paul, for example, uses the metaphor of the boxer, but the metaphor is the boxer, not the bruises. The runner runs a literal race, and the boxer takes literal blows, the metaphor is of Paul as the boxer, not that boxers take metaphorical punches.

65 ὑπωπιάζω, BAG. In addition to the literal definition, the German version also offers the obscure phrase, "damit sie mir nicht ins Gesicht fährt," translated into English with the still more nonsensical, "that she many not fly in my face" (Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 4th ed. [Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1952], 1540).

of the second translation.[66] It is circular logic at its finest. Today, BDAG lists "to bring someone to submission by constant annoyance, wear down" as the second possible meaning for ὑπωπιάζω.[67] The primary literature is presented in a way that gives the false impression that both readings have equal support. This philological domestication of the widow has contributed to a host of contradictory interpretations that are illustrated by the wide variety of names given to the fable, which range in describing the behavior from "insistent" to "vengeful."[68]

Putting aside the lexicons, the real reason for opting for the translation "annoy," "wear out" becomes apparent. Today, the problem translators and many scholars have with "to give a black eye" has little to do with philology. All major English translations have censored the humor, preferring instead an inaccurate but pious reading, normally rendered: "yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming" (Luke 18:5). Even some of the best parable scholars appear to miss the "punchline." Snodgrass remarks, "Even if ὑπωπιάζειν connotes

66 BAG cites the LSJ lexicon for support for the "wear out" and "annoy" meaning. In this entry, LSJ only cites Luke 18:5 as a reference. The source of the translation in the LSJ is certainly pulled from the English translations of the Bible, making the justification circular.

67 ὑπωπιάζω, BDAG.

68 "The Persistent Widow:" Mary W. Matthews, Carter Shelley and Barbara Scheele, "Proclaiming the Parable of the Persistent Widow (Lk. 18.2–5)," in *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work and Wisdom*, 46–70; "The Nagging Widow:" Bock, *Luke*, 1444; "The Feisty Widow and the Threatened Judge:" Wendy Cotter, "The Parable of the Feisty Widow and the Threatened Judge (Luke 18.1–8)," *NTS* 51 (2005): 328–343; "*Von der bittenden Witwe*:" Annette Merz, "Die Stärke der Schwachen (Von der bittenden Witwe)," in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 667–680; "The Parable of the Unjust Judge and the Insistent Widow:" François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27*, Hermeneia (ed. Helmut Koester; trans. Donald S. Deer; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 528; "The Parable of the Dishonest Judge:" Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV*, AB 28B, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:1175; "The Parable of Unrighteous Judge:" Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922), 411. "The Unjust Judge:" Charles W. Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 187. Or most basically, "The Judge and the Widow:" Herman Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 215. Levine tries on many adjectives for size, "persistent" "tenacious" and "nagging." She concludes, "'The Vengeful Widow and the Co-opted Judge' is accurate but doesn't preach as well." Amy-Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 225.

physical violence, its use here is surely metaphorical or sarcastic."[69] Bernard Brandon Scott similarly reflects on the issue,

> It can be taken literally, in which case the judge will be afraid of physical abuse. But this does not really seem feasible. Since a chief characteristic of a widow is her defenselessness, why should a judge fear physical attack from her? They are an uneven match.[70]

Scott is surely correct in one respect: how outlandish a match up! What a ridiculous scene this portrays—a widow punching a judge in the face. As the reader familiar with the ancient fable knows, this is the very point. Reading a fable such as the Judge and the Widow along with the comedic tone of many others does not permit us to divide parables and fables on this basis. Situating the comic fables of Jesus in the broader fable context forces us to confront the "syndrome of reverence"[71] that underlies certain scholarship—that laughing at something means we cannot take it seriously. But this attitude should not stand in our way. When we look at the Judge and the Widow through the comic lens of the ancient fable, it permits us to read against a stern interpretation and offers validation to the many scholars who are not convinced by the comedy whitewashing. With John Carrol and others, we are free to recognize that the Judge and Widow are intended to be an uneven match, "these character sketches are humorous, of course."[72] With modern antigelasticism blamed on the Germans, it is appropriate to give Heininger the last word, "Imagine the

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69 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 458. Hultgren likewise prefers a "metaphorical" sense and points to a philological issue: that we expect aorist forms here instead of present (*The Parables of Jesus*, 254–55). The philological answer is a simple one that is older than the manufactured definition. This is late Greek, and by the first century CE, distinguishing between the aorist and present nonindicatives was already on its way out. One does not need to read far in Mark, for example, to find the same conflation of aspect (e.g., Mark 3:9).

70 Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 185.

71 Athalya Brenner and Yehuda Thomas Raday, "Between Intentionality and Reception: Acknowledgment and Application (A Preview)," in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Yehuda Thomas Radday and Athalya Brenner, JSOTSup 92 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 13–20, here 15.

72 "Jesus draws cartoon-character sketches that defy expectation: a judge who cares not a whit for justice; a vulnerable widow who acts aggressively … These character sketches are humorous, of course" (John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* [Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2012], 356). So also, Luke Timothy Johnson, who describes the widow as "an enraged bag lady," and concludes, "We are meant, I think, to laugh" (*The Gospel of Luke* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991], 276). Joel Green at least raises the possibility of humor, "The language Luke uses is startling, perhaps even humorous …" (*The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 641).

situation: a widow giving a black eye to a judge who doesn't make much of God or people. Hilarious!"[73]

The comedic tone established then, how should we interpret the various aspects of the fable? As one would expect, the Judge and the Widow has been a magnet for feminist hermeneutics.[74] Along with the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10), it is an L fable featuring a woman prominently. Hunting for context among ancient legal materials and papyri can only provide so much insight, and within the feminist approaches there is anything but consensus.[75] Luise Schottroff, for example, regards the portrayal of the widow as sexist, supposing that the judge wrongly assumes the widow is capable of anything, including violence.[76] Amy Jill Levine takes the opposite stance, "Women can be violent, we can kill, we can rape, we can seek vengeance. This point cannot be ignored either; it would be sexist to do so."[77] Crossan, for his part, remarks, "I look at the widow and I don't consider her right or good. Maybe her adversary is right, but more polite."[78] Should we regard the widow as an admirable feminist forebear fighting for her rights or a first-century "Karen"?[79]

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73 "Man stelle sich die Situation einmal vor: eine Witwe, die einem Richter, der sich weder viel aus Gott noch den Menschen macht, ein blaues Auge schlägt. Zum Lachen!" (Heininger, *Sondergutgleichnissen*, 202).

74 While fewer feminist interpreters are impressed by the humor, they have also been more skeptical about the newly invented definition of ὑπωπιάζω. It "means a violent blow to the face under the eyes with the fist and has no symbolic meaning" (Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995], 104); "Der Richter fürchtet schließlich, von der Witwe ein blaues Auge verpasst zu bekommen. Dies ist die der Wortbedeutung entsprechende Übersetzungen von ὑπωπιάζω, oft wird das Verb jedoch abgeshwächt übersetzt oder gänzlich übertragen aufgefasst. Dazu besteht jedoch kein Anlass, der Text is vielmehr offensichtlich daran interessiert, dem Richter eine lächerlich wirkende Angst vor einer öffenlichen Eskalation mit einer handgreiflich werdenden Witwe zuzuschreiben" (Merz, "Die Stärke der Schwachen," 667).

75 Cotter, "The Parable of the Feisty Widow," provides several helpful examples of widows engaged in legal disputes recorded in the papyri. The search was not exhaustive however, and there are several more examples not discussed that complicate the results.

76 Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters*, 104.

77 Levine, *Short Stories*, 243. In comparison to the solemnity associated with violence in the opposite direction, the physical abuse of men by women remains a lamentably current comedic trope. It is dismissed to such a degree, in fact, that Levine must refute Schottroff, who appears to regard it as non-existent and therefore based in misogynistic fantasy.

78 Quoted in Gary Philips, "Panel Discussion," in *Semiology and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*, ed. Daniel Patte (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1976), 57–70, here 58–59.

79 On whether it is an either-or question, see the next chapters on how to interpret fables. As Tavishi Bhasin, et. al. summarize, the character of a "Karen" is "a stereotypical white middle-aged woman who confidently complains to managers" with "defining traits of

There is no reason to assume that the widow is just or honest in her claim. Fables are perfectly capable of pitting two characters with typically negative qualities against one another. In light of this fable's tone, appealing to realistic portrayals of widows will only take us so far. The stereotypes about widows in the ancient Mediterranean offer a more appropriate context.[80] While widows were objects of pity, they carried all the negative connotations of women,[81] and added to these are further stereotypes prompting suspicion, caution, and even fearfulness from the public.[82] A widow is a woman who has no man to control her.[83] Since women were expected to remain in the household, a widow who was forced to carry out business in public, signaled thereby that she had no male supervision. The ancient fable materials offer us numerous literary depictions of widows contemporary with Jesus and the Gospels to elucidate and complicate these perceptions. An example of their breadth occurs in the Augustana Collection, where four fables in a row describe women in comparable circumstances to Luke's (Perry 55–58):

> A hardworking widow had some maidservants and used to get them up at cockcrow while it was still dark to go to work. They were always worn out and decided that they would have to wring the household cock's neck, for they thought he was the cause of all their troubles, waking their mistress before daybreak. But it turned out that they were in worse straits after they had done this than they had

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entitlement, selfishness and the tendency to complain." Her "ruthless self-interest" is exhibited in behaviors that flout legal norms and standards that she assumes for others, especially in public settings. Famous examples have included demanding action from legal authorities when her complaints are baseless, trivial, or even when she is a guilty party. The term can take on a patronizing or sexist tone, suggesting "that such women are 'crazy' or 'hysterical'" (Tavishi Bhasin, et al., "Does Karen Wear a Mask? The Gendering of COVID-19 Masking Rhetoric," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 40 [2020]: 929–37, here 931).

80 The most detailed study of widows (and orphans) in the Roman world is the four volume(!) Habilitationschrift by Jens-Uwe Krause, *Witwen und Waisen im Römischen Reich*, Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 16–19, 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994–1995).

81 With specific reference to courts, we may cite a relevant opinion from Juvenal, "There was never a case in court in which the quarrel was not started by a woman" (*Sat.* 6.242).

82 Widows were regularly blamed for their husband's death, whether because she did a bad job as the homemaker in taking care of him or more actively by killing him (see Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.10, discussed below). The age of the widow determined whether this danger included the concern about the woman's sexual lust, which must normally be kept under control through male supervision.

83 While, indeed, a widowed mother was normally honored and supported by her surviving family, it is clear than many widows did not have male family members able or willing to support her.

> been before, for since their mistress couldn't tell the hour of cockcrow, she got them up even earlier.
> *So it is that many men find that their own schemes are the cause of their troubles.* (Perry 55, Chambry 89 [two versions])

> A sorceress who professed to carry out incantations and exorcisms had a record of many successes and made no small profit on her practice. As a result, certain persons indicted her for religious innovation, brought her to trial, accused her, and got her condemned to death. As they led her away from the court, someone said, "My good woman, how is it that, while you profess to be able to appease supernatural wrath, you can't even persuade your fellow men?"
> *One might use this story of an impostor who promises great things and is shown up as incompetent in ordinary matters.* (Perry 56, Chambry 91 [two versions])

> An elderly woman who was having eye trouble called in a doctor. Every time he came to see her, he would apply some ointment, and while her eyes were still closed, he would carry off some of her household utensils. When he had carried off all she had and successfully completed his treatment, he asked her for the fee they had agreed on. She would not pay it, and he took her before the magistrates. She said that she had promised to pay the fee if he restored her sight, but that now, as a result of the treatment, she was in a worse condition than before. "As it was," she said, "I could see all the utensils in my house, but now I can't see them at all."
> *This is the way evil men through their greed unwittingly bring about their own exposure.* (Perry 57, Chambry 87 [four versions])

> A widow had a fowl that laid an egg every day. She supposed that if she gave it more feed, it would lay twice a day. In fact she tried this, but the result was that while the bird got fat, it didn't even lay once a day.
> *The fable shows that most men through their greed for more lose even what they have.* (Perry 58, Chambry 90 [three versions, trans. adapted from Daly])

With such a variety of situations and personas, we are clearly not dealing with one particular stereotype of women or widows, but with a rich set of characters. Perhaps any one of these fables could describe another day in the life of the Lukan widow.[84] Both Perry 56 and 57 conclude with a comic punchline like the Judge and the Widow, which detracts from the severity of the situation in neither case. Whether we should assume the widow is in the right is also complicated by these fables, which portray one of the women as innocent and the other (at least in the pretense of the fable) as guilty. Perry 55 and 58 also show

84 This includes the sorceress. Popular witchcraft and fortunetelling were, in fact, one of the few professions women could practice independently in the ancient world. On the economics of widowhood and employment options available to them, see Krause, *Wirtschaftliche und Gesellschaftliche Stellung von Witwen*, vol 2 of *Witwen und Waisen im Römischen Reich.*

markedly different dispositions and social situations for a widow, confounding the view that a widow must be weak and defenseless. In Perry 55, the widow is wealthy, industrious, and a hard slave master, while in Perry 58 the widow is poor and pitiable.

Still other characters from across the ancient fable tradition flesh out the Judge and the Widow. Another fable contemporary with Luke describes a poor widow with only one sheep to her name. The widow draws blood by sheering the sheep too closely, attempting to get every bit of wool (Babrius, *Fab.* 51; Perry 212). Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.10 narrates a lengthy fable of a recently widowed woman who is brought to court on charges of murdering her husband and is set free when she is judged to be innocent.[85] Injustice, the quality imparted to the judge (Luke 18:6), is such a frequent theme in the ancient fables that it could be a chapter all of its own. Legal contexts are common enough for Gibbs to devote a section of her book to "Fables about Courts and Judges" (Gibbs 174–181).[86] For popular portrayals of women in the ancient world, the ancient fable materials host numerous vignettes waiting to be mined.[87]

Widows in the literary world of the ancient fable demand that we substantially broaden the possible life circumstances we entertain for the widow in Luke 18. The fable contexts invite us to read it with a sense of humor. The other fables inform us that we should not simply assume the widow is in the right or that it relies solely on the more familiar stereotypes of weakness and defenselessness. While, indeed, we are to root for the ostensibly weaker party as we did for the crafty steward, and to celebrate even when they win by less than upstanding means, this does not make the widow a righteous character. There are many moral shades in between. Despite the judge being the clear proto-*agon*ist in this fable,[88] from how much attention she receives in scholarship, it is clear that the widow has won the agon.

The fable of the Judge and the Widow captures the comic potential and pseudorealistic caricatures endemic to the genre, but it is only one example

85 At sixty lines, it is long enough that Phaedrus comments on its length in the *epimythia*. The fable may have its origin in a forensic model text (cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.35–37).

86 Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables*.

87 Some other fables starring women include Perry 94, 95, 246, 388; Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.1, Perotti 4, 15; Babrius, *Fab.* 10. Fables such as the Wolf and the Nurse/Old Woman and the Child (Babrius, *Fab.* 16; Perry 158, Chambry 223 [five versions]; Avianus, *Fab.* 1; Aphthonius, *Fab.* 39), vary enough between the versions to be worth a comparative study of their own. For the representations of gender in Phaedrus, see Kristin Mann, "Reading Gender in Phaedrus' Fabulae," *The Classical Journal* 115 (2019): 201–27.

88 That the judge is the intended protagonist is suggested by him receiving the *pronomina indefinita* that begins the fable.

of Luke's "cartoon-character sketches"[89] that appear throughout the Lukan Fable Collection. The ancient fable invites us to read the success of the trickster characters like the steward as humorous,[90] the bombastic self-praising speech of the Pharisee in the Pharisee and the Tax Collector as a comic exaggeration (Luke 18:11–12).[91] The fools of the fables are held up as warnings to the reader, but fools are also for laughing at. In the Lukan Fable Collection, the fools abound, including the Moronic Builder who could not finish his tower (Luke 14:28–30) and especially the ironic fate of the Rich Fool, whose soliloquy telling his soul to rest comes just in time for God to announce his death (Luke 12:17–20). It permits us to relish in the delicious irony of the rich man's punishment in the Rich Man and Lazarus. The rich man ignores poor Lazarus at his gate, who only has the tongues of the dogs to soothe his pain.[92] In perfect Dantean contrapasso, when they both die, the rich man cries out from Hades in agony, begging Lazarus for a wet tongue (Luke 16:24). At the turn of the twentieth century, Jülicher divided "parables" and "fables" on the basis of their respective solemnity and levity. Contra Jülicher, the Judge and the Widow and many more of the Lukan fables show that they are by no means always

89 Carroll, *Luke*, 356.

90 Most recently, see Fergus J. King, "A Funny Thing Happened on The Way to the Parable: The Steward, Tricksters and (Non)Sense in Luke 16:1–8," *BTB* 48 (2018): 18–25.

91 "The picture is drawn with the few bold strokes of a cartoon–not even the most Pharisaic of Pharisees is likely to have prayed as though he were the only righteous person in the world" (C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke* [London: SCM, 1990], 641).

92 As they function in the Rich Man and Lazarus, dogs are paradigmatic liminal creatures in the ancient fable. The dog draws attention to the blurred lines between the human, slave, and animal worlds (e.g., Babrius, *Fab.* 100, Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.7; Perry 92). It is domestic and wild, both member of the household and animal kingdom, loyal and vicious: "it might equally lick a human hand or bite it" (Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 29). Its liminal position can be used to highlight human depravity, as here, or be used for a laugh (Babrius, *Fab.* 42). They are the ideal company for Lazarus, who is equally liminal, literally laying at the passage to the home, longing to be a table dog of the rich man. On the characters of Lazarus and the dogs, see Justin David Strong, "Lazarus and the Dogs: The Diagnosis and Treatment," *NTS* 64 (2018): 178–93. The widespread view among New Testament scholars that the dogs function as flat, negative characters is due primarily to the Hebrew Bible serving as the horizon for their conceivable intertexts. This is a methodological failing of our field broadly and in studies on Jesus's fables specifically, evidenced most recently in Reuben Bredenhof, "Looking for Lazarus: Assigning Meaning to the Poor Man in Luke 16.19–31," *NTS* 66 (2020): 51–67. The content of the fable assumes the presence of table dogs, and by the first-century, Jews kept dogs as pets, companions, and for other purposes, like the rest of the Mediterranean world. Nevertheless, Bredenhof believes that negative biblical references about dogs in Iron Age Israel are the only admissible comparanda. For an accurate survey of dogs in the biblical world, see Justin David Strong, "Dogs in the World of the Bible," *BAR* 45 (2019): 46–50.

serious and genteel. Like those of his contemporaries, the fables of Jesus are often comic, even burlesque and vulgar. The ancient fabulists, philosophers, and fable theorists remind us that these are comic fables that should be taken seriously.

11.5 "Parables" Are Unrealistic: The Scale of Fictionality and the Rich Fool (Luke 12:15–21)

One of the clearest indications that parable scholars today are unfamiliar with the ancient fable, is the frequent assertion that fables are impossible stories—generally from the view that fables contain gods and talking plants and animals as characters. This has served as the basis for the claim that "the parable is realistic ≠ the fable whose narrative content breaks out of the real world of experience."[93] Here are four fables about farmers, one of which is commonly called a "parable:"

> A farmer, who was about to die and wanted to familiarize his sons with his farm, called them to him and said, "Boys, a treasure is buried in one of my vineyards." After he died, they took plows and mattocks and dug up their whole farm. They didn't find the treasure but the vineyard repaid them with a much increased crop.
> *The fable shows that work is a treasure for people.* (Perry 42 [trans. adapted from Daly])

> A lion got into a farmer's yard, and the farmer, wishing to catch him, shut the yard gate. At first, when he couldn't get out, the lion killed the sheep, and then he turned to the cattle. The farmer began to worry about himself and opened the gate. After the lion was gone, the man's wife found him groaning and said, "You got just what you deserved. Why did you want to shut in an animal you ought to have feared even at a distance?"
> *So it is that men who annoy those more powerful than themselves pay the penalty for their bad judgment.* (Perry 144)

93 "Parabel = realistic ≠ Fabel, Mythos, deren Erzählhandlung die reale Erharhrungswelt sprengt" (*Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 25). Despite the mathematical imitation, latent in this short equation is a certain imprecision that makes a substantial difference. It gives the false impression that fables *must* leave the "real world of experience" rather than that they simply *can* do it. Determining whether parables are "realistic" is the task at hand, but even if they were, it would simply mean that fables can do everything the parable does, only more. In mathematical terms, that would render the parable a subset of fable—a fable with clipped wings. Put a different way, Jesus's "parables" would be "rational fables" (see the view of Storr in 8.2.3 above).

> The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"
> *So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.* (Luke 12:16–20)

> A farmer was being bitten by fleas while plowing. Twice the farmer stopped plowing to clean out his shirt. But when he was bitten again, he burned the shirt, to avoid repeated interruptions in his work.
> *So, it is my personal advice to those who have been beaten twice, not to necessitate the use of fire a third time*. (Appian, *Bell. Civ.* 1.101 [trans. McGing, LCL] [Perry 471])

Only one of these farmer fables is "impossible," leaving the real world of experience—it is the "parable."[94] A subtle and slippery shift in this criterion has taken place over the last century as parable scholars attempt to claim the territory of the "possible" and "realistic" for the parable. As we read in Chapter 8, before we forgot our fables, this criterion had a very different emphasis. It was not that parables could be anything except the impossible, because scholars like Greswell knew better; scores of fables are "realistic" and "possible." Instead, to differentiate them, parables had to be so "realistic" as to be perfectly true to life, while the fable occupied the remaining realm spanning across "realistic" and "unrealistic" alike. Greswell articulated in the strongest terms how realistic parables must be in order to be gerrymandered around the fable:

> The narratives contained in the moral parables, are not merely possible *per se*, (and therefore such as to bar any antecedent improbability of their being true,) but probable also: nor are they merely probable, so as to warrant a kind of weak presumption of their truth, but withal so eminently probable—so close an approximation to realities, both in the matter and in the manner of the relation—so consistent with nature and experience, tried by any rule we may please to adopt; that nothing but the force of inveterate prejudice—nothing but the confirmed habit of associating with the idea of a parable the notion of a fictitious history, could induce us to suppose they were not real … The parables of our Saviour, if not real histories, are yet so like them, that we must do violence to our first impressions, on hearing or reading them, not to believe them real.[95]

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94 There are many mundane fables about farmers, foolish and wise, that I have quoted elsewhere, e.g., the Farmer Who Lost His Mattock (Babrius, *Fab.* 2); the Farmer's Quarrelsome Sons (Perry 53); the Farmer Who Lost His Way (*Vit. Aes.* 140); and the Farmer and the Snake (Babrius *Fab.* 143; cf. Perry 176, Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.20).

95 Greswell, *An Exposition of the Parables*, 85–86.

We have turned aside to shoot a new hole in this flimsy genre criterion of "possible" and "impossible" at several stops along the journey. What has yet to be discussed is exactly how unrealistic the "parables" in the gospels are.

Starting in 2.2.3, we noted that modern claims that fables are impossible and "unrealistic" can scarcely survive removing the cellophane from any edition of Babrius, Phaedrus, the Augustana Collection, or *The Life of Aesop*. They all feature fables describing the quotidian lives of everyday people. We also noted there that even fables featuring gods and talking animals establish a Sitz im Leben in which they are "realistic." While *The Life of Aesop* mostly contains human fables with no such introduction, all of those featuring talking animals are introduced with the Golden Age as their historical setting: "Once, when animals spoke the same language as people" (*Vit. Aes.* 97, 99), and "Once, when the animals all spoke the same language" (*Vit. Aes.* 133). Babrius, likewise, begins his fable books by situating the fable in the Golden Age when all creatures had the power of speech and spoke one language (Babrius, *Fab.* 1 Prologue).[96] Like the Garden of Eden (Gen 3), the ability of the animals, deities, and humans of different lands to converse with each other is established by the setting of the mythic past[97]—what Charles Hedrick describes as "mythical realism."[98] This

96 "'Twas a race of just men who lived first on the earth, Branchus my boy, the race that men call Golden. After them there came, they say, a different generation, the one of Silver; and we are third in descent among these, and ours is the generation of Iron. Now in the Golden age not only men but all the other living creatures had the power of speech and were familiar with such words as we ourselves now use in speaking to each other. Assemblies were held by these creatures in the midst of the forests. Even the pine tree talked, and the leaves of the laurel. The fish swimming about in the sea chatted with the friendly sailor, and quite intelligibly, too, the sparrows conversed with the farmer. Everything grew from the earth, which made no demands on men, and good fellowship prevailed between gods and mortals. That this was so, you may learn and fully understand from wise old Aesop."

97 The fact that Eve thinks nothing out of place about speaking to the serpent nor directly with God, indicates that the biblical tradition imagines a similar scenario at the beginning of humankind. West assumes the Near Eastern tradition informed the Greek, while Gnuse assumes the opposite direction of influence (Martin West, "Ancient Near Eastern Myths in Classical Greek Religious Thought," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack Sasson [New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1995], 33–42; Robert K. Gnuse, "Greek Connections: Genesis 1–11 and the Poetry of Hesiod," *BTB* 47 [2017]: 131–43). The direction of influence does not matter for our purposes, simply that they share a number of the same motifs about the harmony among all creatures at the beginning of creation, such as vegetarianism and the ability to speak to each other.

98 Charles W. Hedrick, "Realism in Western Narrative and the Gospel of Mark: A Prolegomenon," *JBL* 126 (2007): 345–59. I recognize the irony that elsewhere Hedrick insists on the realism of "parables" (*Parables as Poetic Fictions*, 39–56). Hedrick admits to "exceptions" (40), which he hides under a bushel in an appendix without further comment. We are giving them the light of day here.

setting was likewise known by a first-century Jew like Josephus, who begins his version of Jotham's fable with this familiar formula, "When the trees had a human voice …," ὡς τὰ δένδρα φωνὴν ἀνθρώπειον (*Ant.* 5.7.2 [236], Judg 9:8). It was known to the later rabbis as well, such the fox who says to the fish, "We will reside together just as my ancestors resided with your ancestors" (b. Ber. 61b).

In going through the few ancient authors who describe the technique of comparison (παραβολή) (see 7.3), which appears to mean something closest to non-narrative simile, not once is any notion of realism mentioned as a criterion. From this background alone, it is clear that applying a criterion based in a post-Enlightenment rationalist framework of what is "realistic" to the ancient world and the biblical authors is highly problematic.[99] The criterion also immediately fails, as we saw in Chapter 6, when encountering the rabbinic "parables," which take no issue with including talking animals. As Lieve Teugels concludes with respect to defining the "parable," "qualifications such as 'realism' are not helpful, as shown by the two examples [examined in the article] of rabbinic parables that include conversing animals."[100] For scholars of Jesus's "parables," it seems that the *meshalim* of the rabbis are deemed relevant when they support Jesus's uniqueness and Jewish milieu, but are deemed irrelevant when they controvert "parable" theory such as this criterion of realism. The criterion also demands we look the other way from the Lukan Fable Collection, which contains "impossible" fables.

As in the Rich Fool, the surprise appearance of a deity at the conclusion of a fable to censure the protagonist is commonplace. For many such fables, their popularity is indicated in how many versions of it have survived in the tradition. The fable of the Wayfarer and Fortune is one popular example that was contemporary with Luke (Perry 174; Chambry 261 [6 versions]; Babrius, *Fab.* 49):

> A wayfarer who had walked a long distance and was exhausted sank down beside a well and fell asleep. Luck appeared at his side, wakened him, and said, "My good man, if you had fallen in, you would have blamed me instead of your own foolishness."
> *So it is that many men blame the gods although they are the cause of their own misfortune.* (Perry 174)

99 Many parable scholars now recognize this, e.g., Tolbert (*Perspectives on the Parables*, 89) and Jacobus Liebenburg, "There is no a priori law governing the genre 'parable' which requires that they adhere to realism" (*The Language of the Kingdom of Jesus: Parable, Aphorism, Metaphor in the Sayings Material Common to the Synoptic Tradition and the Gospel of Thomas*, BZNW 102 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001], 355).

100 Teugels, "Taking Animals in Parables," 143. For many more examples than the two provided by Teugels, see Chapter 6 and also the secondary literature cited there.

The form of this fable's *epimythium* is identical to that of the Rich Fool (on which, see 12.5). Unsurprisingly, the topic of the protagonist's death is another common subject in fables featuring deities, e.g.: The Old Man and Death (Perry 60, Chambry 78 [five versions]) and The Spirit of the Oath (Perry 239). Following the Old Man and Death in the Augustana Collection, there is another popular fable about a farmer whose misuse of newfound wealth results in receiving a visit from an angry god (Perry 61, Chambry 84 [three versions]; Avianus, *Fab.* 12):

> A farmer found gold as he was digging in the earth, and after that he began putting a wreath on the statue of Mother Earth every day to show his gratitude for her kindness. When Lady Luck [Fortuna] saw this, she said, "You simpleton, why do you ascribe to Mother Earth the gifts I gave you because I wanted you to be rich? If your circumstances change and your wealth is spent upon evil purposes, then you won't blame Mother Earth but Lady Luck."
> *The fable teaches us that we must recognize our benefactor and show our gratitude to him.* (Perry 61)

As in the other examples, including the Rich Fool, the angry deity appears to offer a revelation to the rich farmer. The conclusion of this fable in other versions, such as Avianus's, contains a criticism of the rich farmer closer to the gospel version, focusing on the vanity of wealth and the reversal of fortune:

> … She thus appeared to the man and gave him this warning about the future: "Instead of making an offering of your new-found wealth in my temple, you are sharing it with all the other gods. Yet when your gold is stolen and you are stricken with grief, then you will turn to me first of all in your despair and deprivation." (Avianus, *Fab.* 12 [trans. Gibbs])

The number of ancient fables containing deities are many and some further salient examples with similar forms or plots include Aphrodite and the Slave Woman (Babrius, *Fab.* 10; Perry 301), the Wayfarer and Truth (Perry 355; Babrius, *Fab.* 126), and the Woodcutter and Hermes (Perry 173; Chambry 253 [4 versions]).

With a deity appearing as a *survenant*, the plain reading of Luke's fable offers another firm repudiation of the criterion of realism for "parables." The vulgar and even emotional outburst of God is "out of character" for Luke's reverential presentation of the deity elsewhere. God is normally represented by angels and elsewhere speaks only to declare his relationship to Jesus: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him" (Luke 9:35, cf. 3:22). As out of place as it may be for Luke's characterization of God, God's speech is unremarkable here in this fable. The prosopopoeic speech conforms to the character of the deities appearing in

many other examples.[101] As Quintilian comments while lauding the usefulness of prosopopoeia, "We are even allowed in this form of speech to bring down the gods from heaven!" (*Inst.* 9.2.31). The fable context offers a straightforward explanation for the deity's appearance here and the same can be said for the fable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), which describes angels taking Lazarus to be with Abraham (16:22) before cutting away to the "unrealistic" afterlife scene in the remainder of the fable (16:23–31). With both fables "breaking out of the real world of experience," it does not seem that Luke ever learned this rule for "parables." Even in his ratio of fables with such elements, Luke is in the same category as *The Life of Aesop*, which contains gods or speaking animals in only four or five out of the fourteen or so fables preserved therein.[102]

While the Rich Fool and the Rich Man and Lazarus make it clear that Luke never learned that there is a genre called a "parable" that is supposed to be "realistic," we can problematize the matter still further with respect to others. In Hedrick's helpful catalogue of Eric Auerbach's features of realism in narrative, we may simply note the first two features.[103] A narrative is realistic:

> When as much of the narrative as possible is left in the background. … Hence, a narrator's explanation of the interior views of characters in the narrative is a mark of unreality. A narrative that explains to the reader what would not be available to a character in the narrative by reading a character's mind or explaining matters in an aside to readers is simply not realistic.[104]

> A narrative is realistic: "When it is a serious action involving common people." [Unrealistic when:] "Caricaturing personae and deliberately casting them in comedic situations to create a comic effect are not part of life as we encounter it. Things happen in real life, and some of these may strike us humorously, but there is no omnipotent script writer setting us up in everyday life to be the brunt of a joke, as narrators sometimes deliberately arrange for characters in the narrative."[105]

As we observed in 10.4, the use of interior monologue to express a character's thoughts is one of the hallmarks of the Lukan Fable Collection and fables generally. As we just read in the previous section, the humor of Jesus's fables has

101 I draw source-critical implications from the difference between how the deity is characterized in Chapter 15.2.2.

102 For the fables in *The Life of Aesop*, see 4.4, 7.3.4 and 9.4.

103 Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

104 Hedrick, "Realism in Western Narrative," 347.

105 Hedrick, "Realism in Western Narrative," 348.

been subdued by modern and ancient interpreters alike. Both of these qualities render the fables less realistic.

The fables considered already in this chapter invite further reflection on the matter of realism. While certainly many of Jesus's fables are perfectly "realistic:" a farmer chopping down a tree (Luke 13:6–9), a shepherd searching for a lost sheep (Luke 15:4–5), what kind of realism is it for a widow to give a judge a black eye (Luke 18:2–5)? Has such an event ever been witnessed? Are money lenders in the habit of simply forgiving a 500 denarii loan (Luke 7:41–42)? Outside of fables, are masters in the habit of praising slaves who deceive them (Luke 16:1–8)? Earlier in the chapter we saw that Scott, for example, could not suffer the plain reading of the Judge and the Widow because he thought it "unfeasible." So, also, is the praise of the master incomprehensible apart from the fable context. Many more examples from the other gospels can be marshalled, such as the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1–16), who each receive the same pay regardless of how long they worked. Matthew is also rather famous for using ludicrous sums in his fables that no one would think "realistic," such as a slave who owed ten thousand talents (Matt 18:23–35). David Flusser sees the cause of these and other incongruities as the result of endemic "pseudorealism" in "parables" of both Jesus and the rabbis: "In the 'parables' the story told is not realistic, but only pseudo-realistic. If the parables only imitated reality, they would be ineffective."[106] For Flusser, it is precisely by escaping the realistic that they achieve an effect of defamiliarization.[107] This aspect makes them effective by forcing listeners into a higher state of perception and enabling a separate meaning outside of the text.[108] Flusser immediately draws a parallel to this phenomenon in the "animal fable."[109]

This notion of realism and possibility with respect to the fable was already rejected in the first century by Theon, who addresses it from the start: "Those who say that some involve mute beasts, others human beings, some are

106 "In den Gleichnissen … die erzählte Geschichte ist nicht realistisch, sondern nur pseudorealistisch. Wenn die Gleichnisse nur die Wirklichkeit nachahmen würden, wären sie unwirksam" (*Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 34) Flusser does appear to mean that parables as a whole are "pseudo-realistic." The term is more fitting to some than others.

107 "Ostranenie," for collectors of obscure narratology terms. See "Ostranenie" in Ian Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), doi:10.1093/acref/9780199532919.001.0001.

108 Ironically, it is precisely because the fables of Jesus have grown so familiar over the centuries that the effect has been nullified. For most of their contents, a Samaritan for example, our primary point of reference is now the fable of Jesus. As Buchanan describes, "this process suffers from the logic of diminishing returns—what was shocking yesterday is all too familiar today" (Buchanan, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*).

109 Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 34–35.

impossible (ἀδυνάτους), others capable of being true (δυνατῶν), seem to me to make a silly distinction" (Theon, *Prog.* 4). As Stefan Feddern has demonstrated in detail, rather than a bifurcation between "realistic" and "unrealistic," a "scale of fictionality" is the most helpful way of imagining the ancient worldview.[110] Feddern analyzes the categories used by dozens of ancient authors, finding that many simply have one category for fiction of any kind. Theon and most other progymnasmatists who theorize the fable fall into this category: "[Theon] conceives only of a fictional narrative genre that stands in opposition to the historical narrative genre."[111] When, contrary to Theon, an ancient theorist does give an indication of dividing fables, they do so on the basis of "rationality:" "rational when a human being is imagined as doing something, ethical when representing the character of irrational animals, mixed when made up of both, irrational and rational" (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1).[112] The "rational" type would map most closely onto the modern notion of "realistic," but at no point are they classified as anything apart from fables.

Just how early the efforts to limit, redact, or reinterpret fantastic or "unrealistic" elements in Jesus's fables began would be a worthwhile study in its own right. Examining "fantastic elements" in Jesus's fables, Aichele argues that already from Mark to Matthew and Luke a trend to "neutralize the fantastic" was underway: "The parables become more clearly referential and thus more 'realistic.' We see here the emergence of an institutionalised hermeneutic, one of whose functions is to neutralise the fantastic."[113] Aichele highlights the contextual framing of the Lukan fables especially, "the Good Samaritan, the

110 Feddern, *Der antike Fiktionalitätsdiskurs*. Feddern draws the concept from modern fiction theory and notes how it should be adapted to reflect appropriately the ancient materials: "In contrast to the modern scaling of fictionality, the ancient distinctions between different narrative genres are strictly speaking not scaling of fictionality, but scaling of the entire spectrum of the portrayed story, since regularly the true report (historia/ἱστορία) and sometimes the court speech are part of the scaling [ie., have fictive elements]," "Im Unterschied zur modernen Skalierung der Fiktivität handelt es sich bei den antiken Unterscheidungen zwischen verschiedenen Erzählgattungen streng genommen nicht um Skalierungen der Fiktivität, sondern um Skalierungen des gesamten Spektrums der dargestellten Geschichte, da regelmäßig der wahre Bericht [historia/ἱστορία] und manchmal auch die Gerichtsrede Teile der Skalierung sind" (*Der antike Fiktionalitätsdiskurs*, 297).

111 "Er konzipiert also nur eine fiktionale Erzählgattung, die in Opposition zur historischen Erzählgattung steht" (Feddern, *Der antike Fiktionalitätsdiskurs*, 367).

112 See also the commentary in section 5.8.

113 George Aichele, "The Fantastic in the Parabolic Language of Jesus," *Neot* 24 (1990): 93–105, here 100. And later, "when a version of the same saying is found in Matthew, Luke, or John, that saying usually appears in a less fantastical form (a form which is more clearly referential, more realistic)" (103).

dishonest steward, and the importunate widow," as failed attempts to tame the fantastic elements in the stories.[114] Assuming Thomas's dependence on the Synoptics, there is a good case to be made for such an effort to remove the "fantastic" from Luke's fables in their early reception. In Thomas's version of the Rich Fool, the most substantial difference is that the deity has been removed. Following the rich fool's soliloquy, we read simply: "This was what he was thinking in his heart; and on that night, he died" (Gos. Thom. 63.3). It is the canonical Lukan fable that is the more "fantastic" version.

The Lukan Fable Collection depicts the full "scale of fictionality," from quotidian, to pseudorealistic, to transgressing modern frameworks of "realism." To summarize then, the criterion of realism does not hold because it is based on a modern anachronistic framework, ignores "realistic" fables, ignores the setting of other fables within the mythical past, ignores the rabbinic "parables" containing things like talking animals, and ignores the Lukan "parables" like the Rich Fool and the Rich Man and Lazarus. Realism is never mentioned in any ancient discussions of comparison (παραβολή), nor does any ancient fable theorist give any hint that the fable could be divided from comparison (παραβολή) on this basis. There are no signals within Babrius, Phaedrus, or the Augustana that their "realistic" and "unrealistic" fables should be divided or called anything else. It ignores that a bifurcation of possible and impossible is rejected by both modern and especially ancient theory on fictionality in literature. Scholars knew more than a century ago that fables span the breadth of realism and possibility and insisted, therefore, that parables had to portray uncanny realism. Today the criterion is rejected by most parable scholars who have pointed out how unrealistic many "parables" are and who have refuted the criterion directly for many of these reasons discussed here. There is no sense of the term "realism," whether ancient or modern that divides "parables" and "fables"—certainly not in the Lukan Fable Collection. Shoehorning realism into the fables of Jesus does them a disservice that pushes them away from their literary context. Situating the fables of Jesus in Luke among the contemporary "unrealistic" examples, reading them as fables enables us to encounter them again from a defamiliarized perspective.

114 Aichele, without naming them as such, is referring to the *chreia* introduction and the *promythia* and *epimythia* of these fables.

11.6 Conclusion

This chapter has offered several exercises in reading from the genre perspective of the fable. In the course of this undertaking, several goals were achieved at different levels. At the most basic level, situating the Crafty Steward, the Judge and the Widow, and the Rich Fool in the midst of many similar contemporary fables offered essential context to direct our exegesis. The many fables about crafty characters who overcome stronger opponents and receive praise enabled us to grasp why the rogue steward behaved as he did and why his cunning was deemed praiseworthy. The comic tone of many fables, especially those about women at court and widows, validated the many tentative readings of the Judge and the Widow as humorous against the hermeneutical contortions to translate it otherwise. The numerous plots that present deities appearing to censure human characters showed that the Rich Fool is but one of many unrealistic and impossible fables that feature deities breaking in for a cameo. At the same time, the exegetical results from reading these three examples individually, legitimates reading the other Lukan fables from the same perspective. At a deeper level, these fables work in concert to reflect on the others. The Crafty Steward invites us to read other fables like the Judge and the Widow and the Friend at Midnight with the ethics of the powerless in view. The Judge and the Widow invites us to read many other fables with comic potential, from the Crafty Steward and the Rich Fool to the Pharisee and the Tax Collector and the Rich Man and Lazarus. Acknowledging the fundamental unrealism and impossibility inherent to the Rich Fool complements the unrealism of the comic and invites us to read the other Lukan fables like the Crafty Steward, the Judge and the Widow, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector without constricting them to misleading notions of realism. At the deepest level, these three fables were chosen as examples because they directly contradict established scholarly approaches to reading and interpreting "parables." The lofty ethics of the "parable" is meant to contrast with the glorification of cunning as a guide to life in the fable. The serious and noble tone of the "parable" is meant to contrast with the comic and burlesque of the fable. The realistic and possible "parable" is meant to contrast with the unrealistic and impossible fable. As this chapter has demonstrated, not one of these distinctions holds. Anyone still wishing to somehow mark a genre difference between the fables of Jesus and the others will need to find a compelling explanation for how the primary texts cited in this chapter are different; one would have to divide the Crafty Steward from the Mischievous Man with the Hidden Sparrow (Perry 36) and the Boy Who Cried Wolf (Perry 210), the Judge and the Widow from the Hardworking Widow

and Her Maidservants (Perry 55) and the Widow and the Thieving Physician (Perry 57), and the Rich Fool from the Sleepy Wayfarer (Perry 174; Babrius, *Fab.* 49) and the Foolish Farmer and Fortune (Perry 61, Avianus, *Fab.* 12). The clarity brought to the Lukan fables by reading them through the fable lens not only enriches our understanding, but gives further weight to the claim that, indeed, the ancient fable is the appropriate lens for them.

CHAPTER 12

The Lessons of the Fable and How to Interpret Them

12.1 Introduction

The presence of a *promythium* or *epimythium* is one positive criterion that may be used to distinguish the fable from any neighboring form and validates interpreting a text as a fable.[1] Since the early twentieth century, biblical scholars have remarked on what they perceived to be various notes, lessons, and applications appended to the end of many of Jesus's fables, Luke's especially.[2] Noting the applications after the Crafty Steward, for example, Dodd ruminates, "We can almost see here notes for three separate sermons on the parable as text."[3] Dibelius grapples with these post-"parable" verses in some detail as secondary "notes," "applications," "explanatory sentences," and "exhortations" of the primitive Church.[4] The simple thesis of this and the next chapter is that these long-recognized "notes" and "applications" are the *promythia* and *epimythia* of the fable. From the style and function of the *promythium* and *epimythium* in the first-century fable literature, I will show that it was natural and appropriate for Jesus's fables to make use of this same literary technique. I will demonstrate that most of Luke's fables have easily identifiable *epimythia* and that recognizing them as such fundamentally reorients how we should approach their interpretive possibilities.

First, in 12.2, I will introduce what the *promythium* and *epimythium* are. Then I will provide an overview of how the *promythium* and *epimythium* came into being and how they were used in the first century CE. In 12.3, I will identify a problem that arises from contemporary fable research with respect to Jülicher's "single point" theory of parable interpretation that is fundamental to their modern exegesis. In 12.4 and 12.5, I then make a direct comparison between *promythia* and *epimythia* of the fable collections and the Lukan fables. In these respective sections, I will describe the form and typical content

1 On this point, see the previous discussion in 5.7.

2 I am speaking here of the point after we forgot our fables. Before the twentieth century, Hugo Grotius and other early scholars recognized these texts as fable *pro-* and *epimythia*. Grotius, for example, identifies Matt 13:49 as an *epimythium*: "οὕτως ἔσται, sic erat] Idem ἐπιμύθιον interpretamentum fabulae" (Grotius, *Annotationes in Quatuor Evangelia*, 144). For more on Grotius, see 8.2.4.

3 Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 17.

4 Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 248–58.

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of the *promythium* and *epimythium*. I then demonstrate that the *promythium* and especially the *epimythium* are found ubiquitously across the Lukan fables. Finally, I describe how fable authors use these framing devices for hybrid utterances that address both characters in the storyworld and the implied reader. I then identify several examples of this in the Lukan fables. Like the previous chapters, we are identifying and interpreting the fable genre through multiple approaches. Here we are identifying the *promythium* and *epimythium* as particular components of the fable form as an indication of genre. At the same time, genre can also be described in terms of how a text communicates. Since the *promythium* and *epimythium* are quite explicitly how a fable communicates with the reader, we are presented with a wealth of material to understand how the fable genre accomplishes this. When it comes to the Lukan fables, this chapter and the next will demonstrate how standard approaches to "parable" communication fail. At the same time, I will demonstrate how the modern approaches of fable interpretation fit the Lukan fables.

12.2 The *Promythium* and the *Epimythium*

The *promythium* and *epimythium* are tightly associated with the fable genre. As far back as the evidence of Greek literature can take us, the *epimythium* was already a fixed element of the fable form. As we learned in Book I, the earliest example of the Greek fable appears in the archaic Greek epic, Hesiod's *Works and Days* (ca. 700 BCE). Already there, in the Hawk and the Nightingale (*Op.* 202–213), the *epimythium* appears. As Holzberg puts it, "a 'moral of the story' belongs to the earliest reachable beginnings of the genre among the archaic epics of the Greeks as a fixed element of the text."[5] While fables without a *promythium* or *epimythium* are common enough,[6] when one of the framing devices appears, it is a straightforward genre indicator that a given text is a

5 "Eine 'Moral von der Geschichte' gehört seit den für uns greifbaren Anfängen der Gattung in Griechenlands archaischer Literaturepoche zu den festen Elementen der Text" (Holzberg, *Babrios*, 13–14).

6 Fables that have neither a *promythium* nor *epimythium* often omit them because the fable story contains within it what some fable specialists call an *endomythium* (see Laura Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables*, xv–xviii). An *endomythium* is the lesson supplied by a character within the fable, who speaks it aloud at the conclusion within the storyworld. Fables with *endomythia* may still be framed with the other literary devices as well, such as the example from Aristophanes provided below. Perry suggests that *promythia* together with *endomythia* would be the norm for a rhetor's fable *repertorium*, such as appears to be the case in P.Ryl. 493 (Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xiv–xv).

fable.[7] Any first-century reader would recognize a conclusion in this manner as that of a fable. Thus, the simple identification of *promythia* and *epimythia* in the gospels will yield abundant evidence that we should conceive of these "parables" as fables and interpret them accordingly.

In fable collections, the *promythium* and *epimythium* are short explanatory texts outside the frame of the fable narrative, addressing the reader, typically having no literary continuity with the world of the story.[8] When it appears before (*pro*) the fable (*mythos*) begins, it is a *promythium*, and when it follows (*epi*) the fable (*mythos*), it is the *epimythium*; the plural forms are *promythia* and *epimythia*, respectively.[9] Here is one familiar fable and one new, with the *promythium* and *epimythium* italicized, showing how they are used in first century fable collections:

> *No one likes to revisit the place that has brought him injury.*
> Her months of pregnancy having duly gone by, a woman on the point of giving birth was lying on the ground uttering piteous moans. Her husband urged her to lay her body on the bed, where she might better deposit the burden of nature. "I'm not at all convinced," said she, "that my troubles can be ended in the very place where they began." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.18)
>
> Two boys were buying meat together. When the butcher turned around, one of them quickly picked up a pig's foot and stuffed it in the other's shirt. The butcher turned again and looked around for it. He accused the boys, but the one who had

7 According to Adrados, "strictly speaking" a fable requires an *epimythium* to be a fable in the ancient sense (Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:42), but this strictness is clearly not enforced in his third volume.

8 Whether it is better to describe the *promythium* and *epimythium* as paratextual or to use other vocabulary such as "framing devices" will depend on how one defines paratextuality. For an introduction to the idea of paratext in the Roman period and Roman studies generally, see Laura Jansen, "Introduction: Approaches to Roman Paratextuality," in *The Roman Paratext: Frame, Texts, Readers*, ed. Laura Jansen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–18. For the issues of paratextuality and the Bible, see Liv Ingeborg Lied and Marilena Maniaci, eds., *Bible as Notepad: Tracing Annotations and Annotation Practices in Late Antique and Medieval Biblical Manuscripts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018). The most cited theoretical work is Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

9 Our earliest reference to the terms "*promythium*" and "*epimythium*" is by Aphthonius (4th–5th century CE), who uses them in the fable exercise of his *progymnasmata* and may have coined the terms: "When the moral (παραίνεσιν) for which the fable has been assigned is stated first, you will call it a *promythium* (προμύθιον), when added at the end, an *epimythium* (ἐπιμύθιον)" (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1). The standard terms are obviously latinized from the Greek, though one still occasionally encounters "*epimythion*" in the secondary literature. The earlier *progymnasmatists*, Theon and Hermogenes, among other authors, refer to these framing devices as λόγος or ἐπίλογος.

> taken it swore he didn't have it, and the one who had it swore he hadn't taken it. The butcher saw through their trick and said, "You may deceive me with your lies, but you won't deceive the gods."
> *The story shows that perjury is still a sin, even if it is cleverly done.* (Perry 66)

In the first-century fable collections, both the *promythium* and *epimythium* generally provide a lesson for the reader.

When fables appear in narrative contexts, our only surviving sources for them prior to the turn of the Era, *epimythia* are usually addressed to characters at the story level of the fable teller. A couple typical examples of fables that are embedded in narrative and that we have seen before will be instructive. In this first example from *The Life of Aesop*, Aesop delivers a fable addressed to the Delphian's, who are intending to kill him:

> The Delphians were not deterred but took him off and stood him on the cliff. When he saw the fate that was prepared for him, he said, "A certain farmer who had grown old in the country and had never seen the city begged his children to let him go and see the city before he died. They hitched the donkeys to the wagon themselves and told him: 'Just drive them, and they'll take you to the city.' On the way a storm came up, it got dark, the donkeys lost their way and came to a place surrounded by cliffs. Seeing the danger he was in, he said: 'Oh Zeus, what wrong have I done that I should die this way, not even by horses, but only these miserable donkeys to blame it on?'" *So it is that I am annoyed to die not at the hands of reputable men but of miserable slaves.* (*Vit. Aes.* [G] 140 [trans. adapted from Daly])

Here is an example from Aristophanes that we have also seen before:

> Accuser: "You say. I don't need any lawsuits and trouble."
> Philocleon: "A man from Sybaris fell out of a chariot, and somehow he got his head seriously injured. It happens he wasn't an experienced driver. And then a friend of his stood over him and said, 'Let each practice the craft he knows.' *Thus also you do the same and run off to Pittalus's clinic!*" (Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 1427–1432 [trans. adapted from Henderson, LCL]).

In narratives then, we can see that an epimythium is used to apply the fable to the situation at hand in the overarching story. In the second example, the fable concludes with the character speaking a moral within the fable itself,[10] but this did not deter Aristophanes's character Philocleon from supplying an *epimythium* as well. With these examples in mind, a brief history of the *promythium*

10 This is an example of what some call an *endomythium*. On this, see note 6 above.

and *epimythium* will be helpful groundwork for the comparison between these framing devices and what we find in the Gospel of Luke.

12.2.1 *Differentiating the* Promythium *and* Epimythium

Though they would eventually become almost synonymous in function, originally the *promythium* did not serve the same function as the *epimythium*. The distinction is a nuanced, but important one. As Perry describes it,

> The function of the *promythium* was to index the fable under the heading of its moral application for the convenience of a writer or speaker who would consult the fable-repertoire for the purpose of finding a fable that would illustrate an idea that he wished to express effectively.[11]

As Perry indicates, the *promythium* probably began as nothing more than an index for the orator, providing the subject matter or the topic of the fable to come. For this reason, the *promythium* generally begins with a formula that we would render something like, "on the topic of …," or "against those who…." The nature of the *promythium* as an index meant that its syntax was normally arranged with the object prioritized at the front, and any formulaic statements, such as "… this fable applies," often appearing at the end. Here are a couple of examples of *promythia* with this syntax in Phaedrus:

> *Anyone who has once acquired a reputation for deceit is no longer believed even when he speaks the truth. This is made evident by a short fable of Aesop's* (*hoc adtestatur brevis Aesopi fabula*). (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.10)

> *A thing disdained is often found in practice to be more valuable than a vaunted one, as this story shows* (*testis haec narration est*). (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.12)

In these two examples, the *promythia* do not serve their original function of providing the topic or subject matter, but the original formulaic endings remain.

In contrast to the *promythium*, the *epimythium* was developed to tell what "the story teaches" in the opinion of whoever felt compelled to write the *epimythium*.[12] This could be composed by the author of the fable, but often it

11 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xv.

12 When the *epimythium* developed is a debated matter. According to Perry, it was not until the final centuries BCE that it came into being. Others suppose that the *epimythium* is as old as the *promythium*, but because orators like Demetrius wanted the fable rather than the *epimythium* when they scraped fables into their collections, they did not copy the *epimythium* along with it. This debate is not crucial for our purposes, but for a survey of

was a later interpreter. In the first century CE, the *epimythium* normally gave the moral of the fable—what the fable shows looking back on the story. The conclusions contained in an *epimythium* may be broken down into two main categories: first are morals that explain "the way things are," that is, the natural order. The function of inanimate objects, animals, and gods are especially apt in these morals since they grant speech and action to normally speechless, actionless, or invisible characters. This type is particularly useful for the purpose of giving etiologies. The second class of *epimythia* are those that attempt to influence the reader's behavior. The fables containing only people generally follow this second class. The way the fable intends to influence one's behavior can then be of two different sorts, the negative and the positive. The more prevalent of the two are cautionary fables that warn against certain behaviors, situations, or character traits by providing negative examples, which are explicated in the *epimythium*. Negative examples are provided in several ways, as Adrados describes, "by means of the joke, the dissuading maxim, etc., or else by means of a lament by someone who has suffered the consequences of a certain type of behavior."[13] The other is the positive example, exhorting the reader to emulate the behavior of one of the characters, with a particular trait or virtue extolled in the *epimythium*. Especially when more than one moral is appended, it is also possible for a third type: the commendation of one character with the exhortation for the reader to emulate that individual, alongside the condemnation of the other character, warning the reader against that individual's behavior by way of a negative example.

Because their functions are normally separate, the *promythium* and *epimythium* tend to use different formulae. To speak in a general way, according to Perry's thesis, we can imagine the *promythium* originally would be used in the context of oratory, providing the speaker with an example "cheat sheet."[14] Education—in the broadest sense—would be the domain of the *epimythium* in the collections, providing the student with (or demanding they compose) the lesson after the narrative.[15] The erosion of the distinction between these

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the debate, see Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:443. What is clear is that, around the turn of the Era, the *epimythium* was taking over the function of the *promythium.*

13 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:36.

14 Perry presumes Demetrius of Phalerum's book of fables must have taken this same form (Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xiv–xv), though Adrados disagrees (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:444–65).

15 We are painting in broad strokes. On the early use of the *epimythium* in narratives, see below.

two framing devices began quite early.[16] As with the fable generally, it seems that the turn of the Era was an important transitional period in their use, offering evidence for how we might situate the Lukan fables in this process.

By the turn of the Common Era, the erosion of the distinction between the *promythium* and *epimythium* was well underway, with the moralizing function of the *epimythium* appearing more and more in the *promythium*. This shift had a few detectible effects. By the first century CE, a few variations of these framing devices were possible, and the gradual disappearance of the *promythium* probably took place in this period. In the history of their development, the lateness of the *epimythium* can be seen in its frequent appearance as superfluous, redundant, or an anticlimax to the last line of the fable itself. In many fables, a concluding gnomic statement (*réplique finale*) often indicated the moral of the fable without the need for an *epimythium.*

Our earliest material evidence, Rylands Papyrus 493, contains only *promythia* of the older oratorial kind.[17] In Phaedrus, we find the best representation of the various forms available in the first century, and of the shifts taking place in the framing devices. Internal clues suggest that Phaedrus published his five books over a long period, and we may observe how the distribution of *promythia* to *epimythia* changes, as the latter begin to appear with increasing frequency from one book to the next.[18] In the first book, the proportion of *promythia* to *epimythia* is twenty-five to four. By Phaedrus's final book, the proportion of *promythia* to *epimythia* is two to seven. Some of Phaedrus's fables, especially the more aberrant ones, lack a moral either before or after. As Perry notes, already in Phaedrus, the originally distinct roles of the *promythium* and *epimythium* are "only very dimly, if at all, recognized."[19] In Babrius we find no *promythia* at all, an *epimythium* semi-regularly, and neither in many cases. In the Augustana Collection, the *promythium* has also disappeared entirely with an *epimythium* following nearly all fables.[20] Theon, for his part, mentions both the *promythium* and *epimythium*: "After stating the fable, we add the meaning of which it is an image; sometimes, of course, we bring in the fables after

16 For the reasons behind the erosion of the distinction, see Ben E. Perry, "The Origin of the Epimythium," *TAPA* 71 (1940): 391–419.

17 This is also the form we presume Demetrius's book of fables must have taken (Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xiv–xv).

18 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xvi–xvii.

19 Perry, "Origin of the Epimythium," 408.

20 Since our manuscripts for the Augustana are comparatively late, it is difficult to determine if the Augustana was originally organized this way, or if it was conformed to the later norm with these *epimythia* at some point in its transmission. Perry believes he can identify several *epimythia* in the Augustana recension that were originally *promythia* based on their *promythium* formula ("Origin of the Epimythium," 411–412, and see below).

having stated the meaning" (Theon, *Prog.* 4).[21] From Theon's statement it is evident that he assumes the *epimythium* to predominate, and if he is aware of the *promythium* having a separate function, he does not tell us so. In Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* of the fourth century, he describes them with no distinction: "When the moral (παραίνεσιν) for which the fable has been assigned is stated first, you will call it a *promythium*, when added at the end, an *epimythium*" (Aphthonius, *Prog.* 1 [trans. adapted from Kennedy]). Aphthonius associates both the *promythium* and *epimythium* with the "moral" of the story and says nothing further about the reason for using one or the other. From Aphthonius, we also have a collection of forty fables, each of which contains both a *promythium* and an *epimythium*. Given the lateness of the collection, it is perhaps surprising that it has *promythia* at all, but reading a couple of examples we can see how the *promythium* has become blended into the function intended for the *epimythium.*

> *A story about a bird catcher, exhorting us to pay attention to deeds, not words.*
> A bird catcher heard a cricket and thought he was going to make a big catch, estimating its size by the volume of its song. But when he walked up and seized his prey, he discovered that it was worthless. The bird catcher then denounced the whole process of deducing from appearances, since it often leads people to make mistaken judgments.
> *The fable shows that persons of no value can seem to be greater than they really are.* (Aphthonius, *Fab.* 4 [Perry 397; trans. Daly])

> *A story about honeybees and a shepherd, urging us not to set our hearts on wicked gains.*
> Some honeybees were making honey in the hollow of an oak tree. A shepherd discovered the bees' work and attempted to carry away some of the honey. The honeybees flew all around him, stinging the man with their stings. In the end the shepherd exclaimed, "I give up! I don't need the honey if it means dealing with the bees."
> *Trouble awaits you if you pursue ill-gotten gains.* (Aphthonius, *Fab.* 27 [Perry 400; trans. Gibbs])

From these two examples we can see that both framing devices—the *promythium* and *epimythium*—are nearly synonymous in indicating the fables ethical lesson. That said, we may still detect a relic of the *promythium*'s original function, providing the subject matter of the fable, "a story about…."

Though any reconstruction of the history of the process remains speculative, we may imagine a few ways that the displacement of the *promythium*

21 Μετὰ τὴν ἔκθεσιν ἐπιλέγομεν τὸν λόγον, ὅτου εικών ἐστιν, ἔστθ' ὅτε μέντοι τὸν λόγον εἰπόντες ἐπεισφέρομεν.

by the *epimythium* might affect the reader. The first change caused by this displacement is in a way advantageous to using fables in a didactic setting. By shifting the framing device to the end, the clues concerning the possible lessons to be gleaned from the fable are not spoiled before the story begins. Nicolaus explains this practice:

> Some put the moral at the beginning and call it a *promythion*; others, prescribing a more sensible and consequential organization, have thought it necessary always to attach the moral to the end of the fable, saying, "If, because the young do not enjoy accepting advice that is explicitly stated, we invented the fable in order that by being persuaded and beguiled by the pleasantry of it they may promptly accept advice offered in this way, how is it not necessary to put at the end of the fable the moral drawn from it? Since, if they would accept the advice otherwise, the use of a fable is unnecessary." (Nicolaus, *Prog.* 2)[22]

Thus, the *epimythium* does not prejudice the reader and the student toward a specific moral, but forces one into a discerning frame of mind, to stay attuned to what the fable might teach as one reads. The absence of the *promythium* also preserves the surprise that is expected with the final utterance of the fable. There were undoubtedly downsides as well with the shift to the *epimythium*. Though they are framing devices as a rule, arguably paratextual, placing the lesson after the conclusion of a fable occasionally results in contamination. The *epimythium* is sometimes combined with the end of the fable to which it was appended in the course of its transmission.[23] The result is that, occasionally, the concluding *action* or *réplique finale* of the fable breaks from direct speech or blends in unusual ways into the *epimythium*. The *epimythium* can also enervate some of the impact of the narrative conclusion when it tacks on what may appear to be superfluous, redundant, or contradictory morals. The placement of the lesson at the end also mirrors the problem of the *promythium* in that a final rhetorical question, which once stood leaving the reader to contemplate, is no longer rhetorical. It has a ready-made response in the form of the *epimythium* following it. The shift to the *epimythium* also yielded another phenomenon apparent in the first century CE—it permitted the application of multiple morals to a single fable.

12.2.2 *Multiple Morals*

The development of the *epimythium* and its replacement of and conflation with the *promythium* made a fable more versatile in allowing for multiple

22 John of Sardis has the same complaint that the *promythium* announces the purpose ahead of time and thus spoils the fable (John of Sardis, *Prog.* 1).

23 See, for example, Chapter 10 note 74 on the fable of the Crab and Its Mother.

applications to be appended. When a group of fables is organized solely by the *promythium*, as in a *repertorium*, one must choose either a single idea or person to which the fable is applicable. If the fable applies to more than one situation, one would need to write out the fable a second time under a second heading elsewhere. There were a few solutions to this problem of practicality. If a reader concluded from a fable a different lesson from what was given in his *promythium*, the logical place to put it would be following the fable, so as not to supplant the *promythium*. Similarly, when fables were no longer organized by the subject supplied in the *promythium*, and the reader was no longer primed with the topic for which it was relevant, interpreters would have greater liberty to deduce from the same fable multiple morals.

By the time of Phaedrus in the first century CE, multiple morals were applied to the same fable in the same collection and this is achievable in two ways. The first is to provide both a *promythium* and *epimythium* bookending a single fable with two discrete lessons drawn from it.[24] Typically, these dual morals are complementary, such as:

> *Where silence brings torment, the penalty for speaking out is equally great.*
> When the lion had made himself king of the beasts, and wished to acquire a reputation for fair dealing … No sooner had he spoken than the ape of the flattering tongue was killed, in order that the lion might have the benefit of his flesh for food without delay.
> *The penalty is the same for the one who speaks and for him who does not speak.* (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.14)

But one may also qualify the common wisdom of the other, such as:

> *"Nothing is more profitable to a man than to speak the truth." This is a maxim that should, of course, be approved by everyone; but sincerity is usually brought to its own destruction* [*in places where the current value of falsehood is greater than that of truth.*]
> Two men, one in the habit of practicing deception, the other habitually truthful, were making a journey.… Immediately orders were given for this man to be torn to pieces by teeth and claws, because he had told the truth.
> *This is a tale for wicked men who love deceit and malice, and who murder honesty and truth.* (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.13)

Or, the two morals may be unrelated, as in the following examples:

24 This organization is found with all the fables in Aphthonius's collection, save one.

> *The fable warns us not to do anything in which there is no profit.*
> An ant and a fly were disputing vigorously with each other which was the more important "… you challenge me in the summer; when it is winter you are silent. I've said enough, I'm sure, to deflate your pride."
> *A fable of this kind distinguishes two brands of men, those who decorate themselves with illusory honours and those whose quality displays the charm of genuine worth.*
> (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.25)

> *A story about a bird catcher, exhorting us to pay attention to deeds, not words.*
> A bird catcher heard a cricket…. The bird catcher then denounced the whole process of deducing from appearances, since it often leads people to make mistaken judgments.
> *The fable shows that persons of no value can seem to be greater than they really are.*
> (Aphthonius, *Fab.* 4; Perry 397 [trans. Daly])

The second way of organizing the fable to draw out multiple morals, is simply to dispense with the *promythium* altogether and tack on a second, or even a third lesson after the end. As we learned in Chapter 8, Phaedrus regularly speaks as the author and pens several lessons for the reader:

> A thief lit his lamp at the altar of Jupiter, then robbed the god with the aid of his own light…. And so to this day it is not lawful either for a lamp of any kind to be lighted from the flame sacred to the gods or for a sacrificial fire to be kindled from a lamp.
> *How many useful lessons are contained in this story will now be explained by the author himself, no other. In the first place, it means that often those whom you yourself have fed turn out to be the most hostile to you; secondly, it shows that crimes are punished not by the anger of the gods, but in time as decreed by the Fates; and, lastly, it forbids the good man to share the use of anything with the wicked.*
> (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.11)[25]

From these examples we can clearly see that the fable does not have a "single point" when multiple morals are applied to it. It should also be no surprise to discover that when a fable is preserved in more than one ancient collection,

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25 Another fine example is provided by the lengthy *epimythia* appended to Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.10, which read:

> *"Let the ear spurn nothing, nor yet let it give credence all at once; for either may happen: those whom you least suspect may be at fault, and those who are not at fault may be attacked by guile. This may serve as a warning also to the simple-minded not to weigh anything in the scale of another's recommendation; for the striving of mortal men is in different directions, being enlisted in the cause either of their own good will or of their personal hatred. Only that man will be known to you whom you have come to know by personal experience. I have pursued this subject at greater length because I have offended certain persons in the past by too great brevity."* Other fables in Phaedrus with morals both before and after include *Fab.* 4.13, 14.

as many are, the morals attached to them can be quite different. Consider the following fable:

> Once a wolf had a bone lodged in his throat. He promised a heron that he would give him a suitable fee if the latter would let his neck down inside and draw out the bone, thus providing a remedy for his suffering. The heron drew out the bone and forthwith demanded his pay. The wolf grinned at him, baring his sharp teeth, and said: "It's enough pay for your medical services to have taken your neck out of a wolf's mouth safe and sound."
> *You'll get no good in return for giving aid to scoundrels, and you'll do well not to suffer some injury yourself in the process*. (Babrius, *Fab.* 94)

The same fable is preserved in several ancient collections, with the following morals appearing in those sources:

> The *promythia* from Phaedrus: "He who wants to serve rascals and be duly paid for it makes two mistakes: first, he helps the undeserving, and, secondly, he enters into a deal from which he cannot emerge without loss to himself." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.8)

> The *epimythium* in the Augustana Collection: "The fable shows that the greatest return for good service to bad men is not to be wronged by them in a bargain." (Perry 156)

> The *promythium* and *epimythium* in Aphthonius: "The fable of the wolf teaches not to show kindness to mean individuals … The wicked are saved by doing wrong to their saviors." (Aphthonius, *Fab.* 25 [trans. mine])

> The *epimythium* in Genesis Rabbah: "Thus, let us be satisfied that we entered into dealings with this people in peace and have emerged in peace." (Gen. Rab. 64:10 [trans. adapted from Soncino])

From these many examples, we can see the variety and multiplicity of lessons that regularly accompany the ancient fables. Observing this clustering of morals around a single fable in the collections allows us to draw out several key implications for interpreting Luke's fables in the following sections.

The *promythia* and *epimythia* preserved in the collections offer a host of new evidence for what is possible and expected in interpreting a fable. Typically, a fable will have one moral application in any given context. That said, the goal of a fable is not necessarily to divine some single essential meaning or moral lesson that the author has in mind. Rather, in rhetorical contexts, the fable offers a story that is adaptable to situations as broad as the rhetor is clever. In an educational setting the fable not simply permits but demands students to draw out a lesson from the story for themselves. While it may well be that the

original author had composed a fable at a specific time and place to teach a specific moral, and an orator will use it with one meaning in mind at a given time, it is perfectly in keeping with the goals of the genre to create separate lessons from the same fable. In the collections, this seems particularly welcomed by those fables without any *promythium* or *epimythium*, as is often the case in Babrius. In Phaedrus, it is evident when he flexes his intellect by personally offering more than one lesson. Whether the lessons derived from the fable are synonymous, one qualifies another, or they stand in contradiction with each other, all are acceptable in this genre. While Phaedrus does inform us directly that he is adding his morals to the fables, in the manuscript tradition it is equally clear that scribes through the ages felt empowered to offer up their own lessons in the form of *epimythia* as they transmitted these stories.[26] What is especially peculiar about Luke, however, is that fables embedded into narratives normally only apply a single lesson that makes the most sense for the point of the narrative. In Luke, there are several fables that feature a multitude of embedded morals. Thus, the many fables in Luke's Central Section with multiple morals resemble more closely the fable collections rather than other narrative texts with embedded fables. It appears as though Luke has somewhat awkwardly inserted several fables from a fable collection source (the subject of Chapter 14 and Chapter 15). With all this in mind, and considering how Jesus's fables have been interpreted over the last century, a *promythium* to Jülicher's approach to parable interpretation is called for.

12.3 A *Promythium* to "Parable" Interpretation: Lessing and Jülicher's Single Point Approach

In the Introduction, we gave our obligatory nods to Adolf Jülicher as the founder of twentieth-century parables research and observed that he pondered most of all the connection of the ancient fable to the fables—née parables—of Jesus. It was Jülicher's work that served as a turning point in parable interpretation at the start of the twentieth century: parables were not intended to be interpreted like allegory; instead, they had a single moral point to be derived in a "tertium comparationis." Jülicher was certainly justified in pushing back against the prevailing method of interpreting parable as allegory, but, though it may seem natural to us now, it is not the case that the alternative to an allegorical interpretation should be to limit the interpretation of the

26 On the subject of Christian scribes participating in this practice with the New Testament fables, see 13.5.

"parables" to a single point. As I have pointed out before, Jülicher receives a great deal of credit for ideas that were not original to him. Jülicher did not pull this alternative to allegorical interpretation out of thin air. Behind Jülicher, we may locate the origin of this alternative "single point" interpretation of "parables" in the now widely-rejected eighteenth-century fable theory of Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781).

Like Grotius and Storr, Lessing was the epitome of the Enlightenment polymath. In the world of philosophy and theology he is known for his many theological writings, and "Lessing's Ditch." Within the guild of biblical scholarship, Lessing is best known for publishing Reimarus's *Fragments from an Unnamed Author*, the pamphlets that arguably sparked the modern discipline of biblical scholarship.[27] As for the impact of Lessing's own work on the guild, it has probably had its greatest influence in an unexpected way: through his book, *Fabeln*.[28]

Hans G. Klemm has demonstrated the little-known influence, both direct and indirect, of Lessing's fable theory on Jülicher's understanding of the "parable." Succinctly put, the idea that a "parable" has a single point derives from eighteenth-century *fable* theory. This influence includes Jülicher's motivation for rejecting allegorical interpretation and his alternative to it, his "single point of broadest moral application."[29] It was Lessing who claimed that,

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27 The seven *Fragmente eines Ungenannten* of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) were published anonymously by Lessing from 1774 to 1778. For an English translation, see Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Reimarus: Fragments*, trans. Ralph S. Fraser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 59–269.

28 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Fabeln: drey Bücher; nebst Abhandlungen mit dieser Dichtungsart verwandten Inhalts* (Berlin: Bey C. F. Voß, 1759). The publication details of this work can be very confusing. The citations below are from the second book in this three-book volume, *Abhandlungen über die Fabel*. This work is, in turn, broken up into five pamphlets: 1: Von dem Wesen der Fabel; 2: Von dem Gebrauche der Tiere in der Fabel; 3: Von der Einteilung der Fabeln; 4: Von dem Vortrage der Fabeln; 5: Von einem besonderen Nutzen der Fabeln in den Schulen. Within the 1759 publication there were even two different page numbering systems running side-by-side. The citations below are from *Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, with volume and page as given in the article by Klemm, discussed below. An excellent reproduction of the first edition with the Fraktur transcribed into a more legible script, is available online at the Deutsches Textarchiv: http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/lessing_fabeln_1759.

29 Hans G. Klemm, "Die Gleichnisauslegung Adolf Jülichers im Bannkreis der Fabeltheorie Lessings," *ZNW* 60 (1969): 153–74. This is also noted by Harnisch, who follows Klemm (Wolfgang Harnisch, *Die Gleichniserzählungen Jesu* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985], 97–98).

> The fabulist wants to bring to our intuition just a single moral in a fable. Therefore, he will carefully avoid arranging the parts in such a way that they would give us reason to recognize some other truth in them than we would of all parts.[30]

The point of bringing Jülicher's dependence on Lessing into the discussion is this: Lessing was wrong.

Lessing's theory of the fable was widely influential upon other discussions of the fable at the time of Jülicher,[31] but contemporary fable scholars have largely rejected this prescriptive "single meaning" theory of interpretation.[32] As Carnes puts it, "that a number of meanings or resolutions of the metaphor are possible ought to be obvious at least for the fable to even the most casual observer by looking at the *epimythia* given to the same fable by different fable writers, editions, translators and collectors through the centuries."[33] We have just seen quite clearly in 12.2 above that the fables circulating at the time of the gospels could have multiple moral applications—whether synonymous, complementary, or antithetical—and that the *epimythia* are often at odds with the apparent lesson of the narrative.[34] Multiple lessons could be ascribed by those copying down the fables later on, but they could also be appended by the author himself. When an orator delivered a fable, in such cases they would have a single application in mind for that present moment, but this is not to say that the same fable could not be used by the same orator in a different context to make a different point. In the case of oratory, in the collections, and in *The Life of Aesop*, we have also seen that the fables regularly have strong allegorical elements as well (on which, see Chapter 9).

There are a few fundamental issues with Lessing's conception of the fable that make it problematic to apply to the fables of Jesus. Lessing's *Abhandlungen über die Fabel* was published in 1759, nearly a century before the fable collection

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30 "Der Fabulist will in einer Fabel nur eine Moral zur Intuition bringen. Er wird es also sorgfältig vermeiden, die Teile derselben so einzurichten, daß sie uns Anlaß geben, irgend eine andere Wahrheit in ihnen zu erkennen, als wir in allen Teüen" (Lessing, *Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, 4:3:384).

31 See, for example, the similar indebtedness to Lessing in the introductory essay of Thomas Bewick, *Bewick's Select Fables of Aesop and Others* (London: Bickers, 1886), xxxvii–xl.

32 Nøjgaard, *La Fable Antique*, 1:117; Pack Carnes, "Introduction," in *Proverbia in Fabula: Essays on the Relationship of the Proverb and the Fable*, ed. Pack Carnes (Bern; New York: P. Lang, 1988), 11–36, here 14–15; van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi*, 379, *idem*, "There Were Fables before Aesop: Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature," *Reinardus* 11 (1998): 205–14, here 210–12; Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 28–29; Harnisch, *Die Gleichniserzählungen Jesu*, 101.

33 Carnes, "Introduction," 15.

34 On the occasional contradictory messages of fable bodies and their *epimythia*, see Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 7–8.

of Babrius was discovered in the Athos monastery. As Klemm details, Lessing based his conception foremost on the fables in the version of *The Life of Aesop* known to him. Lessing observed that when Aesop tells his fables therein, he delivers them to make a single point. To paint in broad strokes, from this and his study of the other Greek fables to which he had access, Lessing postulated that each fable could be distilled into its essence—a single, essential, irreducible meaning. But Lessing's theory was not intended to provide a historical description of the fable in the first century. On the contrary, he was giving a prescriptive *theory* of the genre. This distinction is key because it allowed Lessing to chastise Phaedrus for departing from his "true" fable: "So often as he takes even one step aside from the simplicity of the Greek fable, Phaedrus makes a grievous error."[35] Lessing not only denigrated Phaedrus's fables, but he also, to accommodate his theory, was forced to argue that the lessons attached to them in the *promythia* and *epimythia* were both weak and secondary. With no knowledge of Babrius, and the rejection of Phaedrus as one making "plumpen Fehler" ("clumsy mistakes") in his fables, it is not reasonable to expect that Lessing could provide an accurate impression of the ancient fable.

It seems that Lessing also had an ax to grind against the immensely popular La Fontaine, who published twelve books of what he called "fables" between 1668 and 1694. The fables of La Fontaine were a significant departure from what we know of the ancient fables in matters of form, especially length, and their lessons. Lessing's exposition of the fable form was in some ways a reaction to, and polemic against, La Fontaine's fables. Lessing stipulated in his prescriptive and essential definition of the fable the emphasis on "precision and brevity,"[36] and that for each fable, "it assuredly can be told well only in a single way."[37] Klemm even supposes that Lessing's statement, "Is a bad fable even really a fable?"[38] is directed at La Fontaine.[39] That Jülicher inherited Lessing's dislike for Phaedrus and the rejection of his fables as "false" fables is evident when he says, "So long as a fable remains fable, it is not intended for amusement but for instruction, and not through the imposition of boring abstract morals or rules for prudence, as Phaedrus already attached to his fables for example."[40] That

35 "Daß Phädrus, so oft er sich von der Einfalt der griechischen Fabeln auch nur einen Schritt entfernt, einen plumpen Fehler begeht" (Lessing, *Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, 4:3:386).

36 "Präzision und Kürze" (Lessing, *Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, 4:3:380).

37 "Ganz gewiß nur auf eine einzige Art gut erzählen läßt" (Lessing, *Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, 5:3:388).

38 "Ist aber eine schlechte Fabel ehre Fabel?" (Lessing, *Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, 1:3:341).

39 Klemm, "Die Gleichnisauslegung Adolf Jülichers," 158–59.

40 "So lange die Fabel Fabel bleibt, will sie nicht zur Unterhaltung, sondern zur Belehrung dienen, und das nicht durch Einprägung der langweiligen abstrakten Morallehren oder

Jülicher's "parable" approach is based on fable theory would have been obvious to most scholars of the 1800s, but is today another casualty of forgetting the fables.

All the ways Jülicher takes Lessing as his point of departure need not detain us, but Klemm identifies the influence from the titles they use down to their phraseology.[41] Despite his clear dependence on Lessing, it is evident that Jülicher did not simply take Lessing's as the final word on the fables. That Jülicher discusses Babrius at all (and more so than any parable scholar until this author)[42] is proof that he examined the ancient fables unavailable to Lessing. Just a few sentences after he follows Lessing's lead on Phaedrus, Jülicher can also be found rejecting one of the ways Lessing attempts to divide fable and parable.[43] But, the extent to which Jülicher's "single moral point of broadest application" depends on Lessing's fable interpretation is the extent to which modern parable scholarship began off course.

It is this "single point" method that may be at fault for setting parable and fable on two different paths since Lessing, providing exegetes a way to distinguish parables and fables. It does not hold up to scrutiny. The great irony, of course, is that in recent generations, the relevance of fables has been almost universally dismissed. All the while, these dismissive parable scholars have been relying on the "single point" method of interpretation derived from the theory of *the fable*. There is nothing more to the belief that parables have one essential meaning or are not intended to be allegorical than this outdated fable theory. Subsequent generations of scholars have relied on the work of Jülicher for their foundation, and on this most crucial matter it is particularly sandy. As

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Klugheitsregeln, die z.B. Phaedrus schon seinen Fabeln anhängte" (*Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100).

41 The section in which Jülicher does most of his legwork comparing parable to fable and in which he cites Lessing regularly is titled "Das Wesen der Gleichnisreden" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:25–118), resembling Lessing's "Von dem Wesen der Fabel." [Jülicher cites Lessing on pages 79, 80, 83, 89, 97–98, 100, 107 and later on pages 187, 199, 287–88, 294 and 301]). In phraseology, Lessing's principle of "Präzision und Kürze" (*Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, 4:3:380) is reflected in Jülicher's statement, "Kein Word zu wenig, keines zu viel; keines bloß der Unterhaltung oder der Glättung der Form zu Liebe, jedes zu Gunsten des Inhalts, zur Schärfung des Gedankens" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:110). Lessing's "Ist aber eine schlechte Fabel ehre Fabel?" (*Abhandlungen über die Fabel*, 1:3:341) is reflected in Jülicher's "Ein undurchsichtiges Gleichnis ist schlechter als gar keins" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:73). Jülicher also availed himself of other scholarship that applied Lessing's fable theory to the fables of Jesus, in particular the work of Storr (on which, see 8.2.3).

42 This fact is remarkable in its own right but says more about the rut of parable scholarship in our day than Jülicher's work.

43 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:100.

Funk describes the trajectory, it was "Jülicher's moral point of broadest possible application" that served as the base for Dodd and Jeremias's "eschatological point of particular historical application,"[44] and from them the *status quaestionis*.[45] At the end of the next chapter, I will return to the essential contribution of Dodd to show that the parables as "the preaching of the Kingdom of God" will not be able to weather the storm either. In the following pages, we will lay aside Jülicher's single "moral point of broadest possible application." We will read the Lukan fables in light of how we know fables were interpreted at the time of the Gospels. We will see what happens when we make no attempt to conflate multiple lessons into a single point but allow them to stand as they are.

12.4 The *Promythium* and the Lukan Fables

The thesis of this section is a simple one: the verses immediately preceding the fables of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1) and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9) are easily recognizable fable *promythia*. They follow the pattern known from the available collections and offer fable scholarship two precious examples of early Greek *promythia*.

12.4.1 *The Style of the* Promythium

Because Phaedrus, who writes in Latin, is the only largely-intact early fables source in which we have a *promythium* preserved, the philological clues for detecting a *promythium* in Greek are meager. Though Phaedrus is of limited

44 Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God*, 148.

45 In recent decades, some parable scholars have drawn upon approaches such as reader-response criticism, in which locating a single historical meaning is not especially relevant. These approaches, as part of some trends in literary criticism more broadly, do not so much tackle the issue of whether parable and fable as genres can have multiple meanings; rather, they draw from the view that literary objects have inexhaustible creative potential. It is perhaps more remarkable that most scholars who avail themselves of such literary critical approaches still maintain the view that parables have a single meaning. Scott, for example, has it both ways: "Thus we can distinguish two levels of meaning. Situational meaning is the particular meaning that a given real hearer or reader imparts to the text depending on his or her situation and context. But a secondary level, the literary level … provides the possibility of both multiple and specific applications in the situation of Jesus and the narrative of the Gospels, and in subsequent readings" (*Hear Then the Parable*, 75). For additional discussion of literary critical approaches to the fables of Jesus and their goals, see Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables*; Gowler, *What Are They Saying about the Parables*, 16–40; and Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables*, 151–79.

value for in-depth philological comparison, we should count ourselves fortunate because the first century CE Rylands papyrus, our earliest material evidence of the fable in Greek, follows the older form using *promythia*.[46] As a reminder, the *promythia* that are preserved in this papyrus, with my tentative translations of those that can be fully recovered, are as follows:

προς το[ν] ισχυ[ρον] τ̣ον κ̣α̣ι̣ [α]λ̣λ̣ο̣υ̣ς
. . κα . τ̣α̣[.]χ[.]ε̣θ̣η̣τ̣α̣ [...] . λ̣ε̣ .
νον οδε λογος ε̣φ̣[α]ρμοζ̣ε̣ι̣ [ι]π̣π̣ος
Concerning the strong man and others [*who allow themselves to be controlled*],[47] *this fable is applicable*. A horse ... (fragment A, column 2, lines 19–21)

[κ]α̣[τα] τ̣ω̣ν [τους με]ν̣ α̣[λ]λους ευ ποι
ο̣υ̣ντων τους δε φιλους κακως
οδε λογος εφαρμοζει ποιμ̣η̣ν̣ θ̣ε̣ις
Against those who treat strangers well but friends badly, this fable is applicable. A shepherd ... (fragment A, column 3, lines 35–37)[48]

προς τον πλουσ̣ιον ισ̣α̣ κ̣αι πονη̣[ρον]
οδε λογος εφαρμοζει ο̣ Ζ̣ευς τ̣[ον]
To the [*both*] *rich and wicked person, this fable is applicable*. Zeus ... (fragment B, column 5, lines 75–76)[49]

π[ρος το]ν̣ [c. 18]
(fragment C, column 8, line 132)[50]

προ̣ς̣ τ̣ο̣ν̣ μ[c. 13 οδε λο]
γος εφαμ[οζει c. 10 αν]
θρωποι ν[c. 18]
(fragment C, column 8, lines 153–155)[51]

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46 As mentioned above, it is an open question whether an earlier version of the Augustana Collection contained *promythia.*

47 Because of the lacunae, there are a few translation possibilities of this *promythium*. I have provided what I think is the most plausible.

48 This *promythium* is attached here to the fable of the Shepherd and Sheep (Perry 208).

49 This third fable is a variant of Heracles and Plutus (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.12; Perry 111).

50 Despite the poor preservation of this column, this line is identifiable as the start of a fable because the pi projects into the margin.

51 The content of the final two *promythia* are impossible to reconstruct. An additional *promythium* without its introductory formula intact precedes these at fragment A, column 1, lines 5–7:

[c. 10 letters π]ο̣νηρο[.]σασι[.]...[.]
[c. 12 letters] ε[.]δομεν[...]σ
[c. 10 letters οδε λ]ογος εφαρμοζε[ι].

Given the space in the lacuna, the editor presumes the opening of line five runs: προς τους πονηρους... (126).

With the possible exception of the second fable, even those *promythia* impossible to reconstruct fully all begin with the same introductory formula: the initial letter extends into the margin (*ekthesis*),[52] and the *promythium* begins with the preposition πρός followed by the accusative indicating the subject matter. Depending on the subject, we might render πρός, "to those who …," "against the person who …," "on the subject of …," or "about…." In this collection, the *promythium* concludes each time with the same formula, attested only in this papyrus: ὅδε λόγος ἐφαρμόζει, meaning "this fable is applicable." As we should expect from the pattern described earlier, the syntax of these *promythia* follow the formulaic scheme with the subject and verb shunted to the end.

Though it is necessarily conjectural, Perry was confident in a relatively standard formula: πρός, followed by the accusative indicating the subject matter, combined with "this fable applies." He was confident enough, in fact, to argue that at least thirty-six of the *epimythia* adhering to this pattern in the Augustana Collection once stood as *promythia*.[53] Some examples of this formula that appear in *epimythia* in the Augustana Collection are:

> About those who readily borrow money but with grievance give it back, this fable applies.
> πρὸς τοὺς ῥᾳδίως δανειζομένους, μετὰ λύπης δὲ ἀποδιδόντας ὁ λόγος εὔκαιρος. (Perry 102)

> To the lying man, this fable applies.
> πρός ἄνδρα ψευδολόγον ὁ λόγος εὔκαιρος. (Perry 103)[54]

Here are two examples with the reverse order, πρός and its object at the end:

> This fable may be applied to the old man who is ill-tempered and surly.
> Τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ χρήσαιτο ἄν τις πρὸς ἄνδρα πόρνον. (Perry 105)

> This fable may be applied to the incapable man, who is neither near at hand (to help), nor far from hurtful or helpful.
> Τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ χρήσαιτο ἄν τις πρὸς ἄνδρα ἀδύνατον, ὃς οὔτε παρὼν οὔτε ἀπὼν ἐπιβλαβὴς ἢ ὠφέλιμός ἐστι. (Perry 137)

From the examples in Rylands Papyrus 493 and perhaps these once-*promythia* here, we can note the same formula: the preposition πρός followed by the person or idea of the fable, with the subject ("fable") and verb more flexibly placed

52 In later fable manuscripts without *promythia*, divisions between fables are often indicated by *ekthesis*.

53 Perry, "Origin of the Epimythium," 411–12.

54 For dozens more, see Perry, "Origin of the Epimythium," 412.

at either the end or the beginning, with the presumption that the end was a more original form.

With this formula in mind, we can identify at least two examples of this more ancient version of the *promythia* in Luke: the two sequential fables of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8) and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14). Prior to the narrative of each fable, Luke gives us a narrativized but recognizable version of a *promythium* introducing the subject matter of the fables. Since visualization aids in the recognition of these framing devices as they stand out from their context, here they are with the surrounding verses:

> (17:37) He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather." (18:1) And he told a fable to them about the need for them to pray always and not to stop; (18:2) saying, "There was a certain judge in a certain town …
> πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν. (17:37b–18:2a)

> (18:8)… Yet when the son of Man comes, will he find faith on Earth? (18:9) And he said against those who are confident in themselves that they are just while treating others with contempt, this fable. (18:10) "Two men went up to the temple to pray …"
> …πρός τινας τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι εἰσὶν δίκαιοι καὶ ἐξουθενοῦντας τοὺς λοιποὺς (Luke 18:8b–10a [trans. adapted from NRSV])

As seems natural, Luke incorporates his fable material by adding a narrative transition so that the non-narrative *promythia* are stitched into the story.[55] In the *promythia* here, as we will see especially in the discussion of the *epimythia* below, Luke is not the greatest seamster and struggles to create fluent transitions. It is also apparent that some early scribes also felt compelled to come to his aid.[56] Since he wishes to preserve in the *narrative* framework of the gospel the content of the *promythium*, a *non*-narrative quasi-paratextual feature of his source, his task is not an easy one.

In the *promythium* to the Judge and the Widow, Luke creates an unwieldy sentence that, as he has concocted it, now refers to the disciples twice in quick succession by αὐτοῖς and αὐτοὺς.[57] At least one of them is superfluous and is a way to fit the *promythium* into the literary context in which it currently stands. Following the *promythium* of 18:1, and before the beginning of the fable narrative in 18:2 (λέγων· κριτής τις ἦν ἔν τινι πόλει…), Luke also eases the stark

55 This same transition is found in Luke 16:1 at the beginning of the Crafty Steward.

56 Bezae, Family 1, and most of the Syriac versions omit the pleonastic λέγων in Luke 18:2, for example.

57 As Evans notes, this construction with the preposition πρός governing a verb in the infinitive is unique to this verse, and more peculiar still in that it does not indicate purpose (*Saint Luke*, 637).

disjunction of the fable from its *promythium* by inserting a pleonastic λέγων.[58] In spite of the Lukan additions, recovering something like the original *promythium* is not particularly challenging, since its core—πρός followed by the subject matter or person, is readily apparent: πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν, "On needing always to pray and not give up."[59]

In the Pharisee and Tax Collector, Luke succeeds at incorporating the *promythium* into the narrative more fluently, with a clever use of the speaking formula: εἶπεν + πρός + accusative direct object.[60] Luke employs this formula uniquely in this verse in a way that helps incorporate the *promythium* into the narrative. An English translation reflecting the syntax of this verse will explain the point more clearly: "And he also said to those people convinced about themselves that they are righteous and regard everyone else with contempt, this fable," Εἶπεν δὲ καὶ πρός τινας τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι εἰσὶν δίκαιοι καὶ ἐξουθενοῦντας τοὺς λοιποὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· The words Luke writes at the beginning and end of the verse create an artificial transition into the *promythium* that gives it narrative continuity with what preceded. By simply allowing these narrativizing words (Εἶπεν δὲ καὶ) to drop out, we arrive at a stock *promythium*:

> πρός τινας τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι εἰσὶν δίκαιοι καὶ ἐξουθενοῦντας τοὺς λοιποὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην
> Against those who are confident in themselves that they are righteous and regard everyone else with contempt, this fable [applies].

Thus, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, like the Judge and the Widow, begin with the same now-familiar *promythium* formula: πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι… (Luke 18:1) and πρός τινας τοὺς πεποιθότας… (Luke 18:9). The narrativized phrases that lead into Luke's *promythia*, Ἔλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς and Εἶπεν δὲ καὶ, may also be derivations or redactions of similar formulae, like ὅδε λόγος ἐφαρμόζει in P.Ryl. 493 or ὁ λόγος εἴρηται πρὸς… in the Augustana Collection (e.g., Perry 59, 211). The main difference between the fables in the collections and those in the Gospel is that Luke supplies a speaker, namely

58 This pleonastic nature is again reflected in its absence from the important manuscripts mentioned above. We see this pleonastic λέγων repeatedly at this transition in the L fable introductions to smooth the disjunction between the fable and the preceding text (Luke 12:16; 14:7; 15:3).

59 What is less easy to ascertain is whether Luke's adaptation of the fable's *promythium* into the narrative of the Gospel included the word "παραβολή" (Ἔλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν), but this is not a crucial matter.

60 On Luke's use of this speaking formula as a source-critical identifier, see 15.3.4.

Jesus. Rather than having the fable itself (ὁ λόγος) stand as subject in the sentence, the natural subject for Luke is his protagonist.

12.4.2 *"Against Those Who …" and Other Subjects*

In addition to the philological clues, equally weighty reasons to read Luke 18:1 and 18:9 as *promythia* are found in their arrangement and contents. In terms of their arrangement, we may note that there is only the barest indication of narrative continuity with the material before or after, or between the two fables. As Luke orders things, the Judge and the Widow is addressed to the disciples both as the audience and as the subject matter of the fable. Then, without any signal of a change of time, setting, or audience, when the Judge and the Widow fable ends in 18:8, the Pharisee and Tax Collector begins in 18:9 with "He also told a parable to certain ones who think of themselves that they are just and treat others with contempt" (NRSV). If we render πρός not as "to," as if we suddenly changed the scene and the addressees without notice, but as a *promythium* in a fable collection—"concerning," "about" or "against"—then these difficulties are resolved. Thus, the link between the two fables is not one of any *narrative* sequence, but instead the sequence of the rhetorical subject matter. This sequence is exactly what we would find in a fable *repertorium*. That these two fables neighbor one another because of their topical link, despite defying the logic of the narrative progression in the gospel, is further evidence that they are derived from a source in which these fables were arranged topically, rather than sequentially in a narrative.

As for the content of the *promythia*, these are two of just a few occasions in the Gospels where we find fables giving their subject matter, really the topic, spelled out in this manner *before* the narrative.[61] And what sort of subject matter do we find? The faults of certain types of people, and subjects of prudent behavior and morality. In their content then, the Lukan *promythia* fit right in with the abundant fable *promythia* we have seen throughout:

> *Concerning those confident in themselves that they are just and regard everyone else with contempt …* (Luke 18:9)

> *Concerning the strong man and others who allow themselves to be controlled …* (P.Ryl. 493)

61 There appears to be a *promythium* of the later type, based on the *epimythium*, preceding the Rich Fool (Luke 12:15); see section 13.6. Luke 14:7, which begins the Place at the Table, is also a good candidate for a narrativized *promythium*. It is also possible that Luke 13:5, the verse preceding the fable of the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9), is the *promythium* belonging to that fable. Note that all of these *promythia* are found in the Lukan Gospel. For the possibility that "the kingdom of God is like" is a *promythium*, see section 13.7.

To the [*both*] *rich and wicked person …* (P.Ryl. 493)

On how some treat strangers well, but friends badly … (P.Ryl. 493)

A fable about a bird catcher, exhorting us to pay attention to deeds, not words. (Aphthonius, *Fab.* 4)

A fable about honeybees and a shepherd, urging us not to set our hearts on wicked gains. (Aphthonius, *Fab.* 27)

A fable about needing to pray always and not give up … (Luke 18:1)

Were these two Lukan fables found with no context in an ancient rubbish heap like Oxyrhynchus, one would presume they belonged to a fable collection much like P.Ryl. 493.

From the preceding observations, it should be clear that these two unique fables in the gospel tradition, which supply interpretive material before they begin, owe this uniqueness to the widely known framing device of the fable. As we noted in 5.7 and the introduction to this chapter, the use of a *promythium* or *epimythium* is a positive criterion for distinguishing a fable from neighboring genres. Understanding how a *promythium* is intended to be used, what it signals to the reader, and unpacking how Luke has adapted it to fit a narrative context, grants us a clearer understanding of the lessons of these two fables.

12.5 The Forms of the *Epimythium*

The *promythium* is relatively straightforward to analyze because they almost never pile up in the same way that *epimythia* can. With the *epimythium*, we are often dealing with more than one attached to a single fable. We also have the additional difficulty that they occasionally become entangled in the conclusion of a fable body. Both issues appear in the fables in the Lukan Gospel and complicate matters.[62] Since we need not provide an exegesis of every single fable lesson to establish the many takeaways, it will suffice to give the complete list of *epimythia* here before drawing out implications from particular examples in the next chapter:

62 Beavis briefly discusses the *promythium* and *epimythium* vis-à-vis the parables as "morals" ("Parable and Fable," 482–83), with an appendix cataloguing some of them (497–98). Given how much ground Beavis attempted to cover in her article, that she could not discuss these phenomena in the greatest depth is to be expected. She does not discuss, for example, the distinction between the *promythium* and *epimythium*, or matters of their style.

Table 5 The *Epimythia* of the Lukan Fables

Fable	***Epimythia***
The Shameless Neighbor	So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. (Luke 11:9–10)
The Rich Fool	[So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.] (Luke 12:15, 21)
The Place at the Table	For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted. (Luke 14:11) [Seek to increase from that which is small, and from the greater to become less.] (Matt 20:28)
[The Great Banquet]	[For many are called, but few are chosen.] (Luke 14:24)
The Moronic Builder and Warring King	So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen! (Luke 14:33–35)
[The Lost Sheep]	Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:7)
The Lost Coin	I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:10)
The Crafty Steward	For the children of this age are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?

Table 5 The *Epimythia* of the Lukan Fables (*cont.*)

Fable	***Epimythia***
	No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (Luke 16:8b–13)
The Worthless Slaves	So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!" (Luke 17:10)
The Judge and the Widow	Hear what the unjust judge teaches, and will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:6–8)
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted. (Luke 18:14b)
[The Pounds]	I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. (Luke 19:26)

The *epimythia*, like Luke's plots and characters, accord nicely with the lessons we encounter in the first-century fable collections. As in these fable collections, the lessons from failing characters are emphatic warnings about the folly of vices such as pride (14:11; 18:14), greed (12:15), and the dangers of wealth (Luke 12:21; 14:33; 16:13). The lessons drawn from the commendation of traits that might otherwise be considered vices such as craftiness and trickery, ascribed to the "underdog" characters, are here extoled just as they are in the fable collections (11:9–10; 16:8–9; 18:7–8). These lessons are joined together with exhortations to virtues such as humility (17:10), penitence (15:7, 10), and faithfulness (16:10–12; 18:8). While apocalyptic lessons are not foreign to the ancient fable,[63] the theme is prominent in the Lukan *epimythia* about election ([14:24]; 16:8; 18:7–8), which can be contrasted with the theme of striving in others (11:9–10; 15:7, 10). They are reminiscent of the classic debate in fable scholarship concerning the primacy of the competing ethics of fatalism

63 On apocalyptic *epimythia* see 13.4.

against striving to improve one's status.[64] We need not craft a systematic ethic from these *epimythia*, since the *epimythia* of the other fable collections do not have a unified ethic either, but we may now look back on their many lessons to observe that they are not a hodgepodge of unrelated miscellanea. The L fables are united in teaching lessons of moral (Christian) behavior and the relationship of the divine to humankind.

Because it appears the *epimythium* became the norm around the first century CE and we have hundreds of examples in Greek, we are in a much better position than we were with the *promythium* to identify patterns, styles, and the like. While there is an abundance of other forms, Adrados has identified seven general types of the *epimythium* that occur with such regularity that they can be systematized.[65] The following table conveys the most common forms of *epimythia* in a digestible format:[66]

Table 6 Forms of the *Epimythium*

Type	**Description**	**Sub-types**	**Description**
1 Maxims	Generally with ἐστί (elidible). The subject occurs frequently with a relative, or with an article and participle, or with a neutral adjective used as a noun.		

64 For a summary of the issues, see Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 30–40.

65 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:460–61.

66 Adrados presents the list as follows, with the bracketed words corrected, completed, or added by me: "[1] Maxims, generally with ἐστί (elidible); the subject frequently with relative, [or] with article and participle, [or] with neutral adj[ective] used as a noun. [2] Exhortations, frequently with χρή, δεῖ, etc., with voluntative subj[unctive] in [first person plural] ("let us do …"), etc. [3] Personal sentences directed at a "you," in the imperative, [or] optative, [or] future, [or] μή and subj[unctive] and with subordinates: temporal types ("when you do …"), conditional types ("if you do …"), etc. [4] Type ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ capable of being followed by [types] 1, 2, or 3; sometimes there is 4 + 5 + 1, 2 or 3. [5] Type οὕτως (καί), followed by [types] 1, 2 or 3. [6] Type ἀτάρ always with [type] 2 (δεῖ). [7] Different types of reference, already described" (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:460–61).

Table 6 Forms of the *Epimythium* (*cont.*)

Type	Description	Sub-types	Description
2 Exhortations	Frequently with χρή, δεῖ, etc., with the hortatory subjunctive in first person plural ("let us do …"), etc.		
3 Personal sentences directed at a "you"	In the imperative, optative, or future, or μή and subjunctive and with subordinates: temporal types ("when you do …"), conditional types ("if you do …"), etc.		
4 "This fable shows …" (ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ)[67]	Regularly it is followed by types 1, 2, or 3 (or even 5 + 1, 2, or 3). The types that follow this formula thus appear as the sub-types to the right.	A Maxims	Generally with ἐστί (elidible). The subject occurs frequently with a relative, or with an article and participle, or with a neutral adjective used as a noun.
		B Exhortations	Frequently with χρή, δεῖ, etc., with the hortatory subjunctive in first person plural ("let us do …"), etc.
		C Personal sentences directed at a "you"	In the imperative, optative, or future, or μή and subjunctive and with subordinates: temporal types ("when you do …"), conditional types ("if you do …"), etc.

67 Though Adrados lists this number with the formula, "this fable shows" (ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ), we should also include here the many closely related formulae using other verbs, such as διδασκάλειν, λέγειν, "this fable teaches/says," and so on, as well as other words for "fable," such as the term μῦθος.

Table 6 Forms of the *Epimythium* (*cont.*)

Type	Description	Sub-types	Description
5 "Thus/so (also/even) …" (οὕτως [καί])	This type is then followed by types 1, 2, or 3. In other words, just as in type four, it can take the same sub-types, shown to the right.	A Maxims	Generally with ἐστί (elidible). The subject occurs frequently with a relative, or with an article and participle, or with a neutral adjective used as a noun.
		B Exhortations	Frequently with χρή, δεῖ, etc., with the hortatory subjunctive in first person plural ("let us do …"), etc.
		C Personal sentences directed at a "you"	In the imperative, optative, or future, or μή and subjunctive and with subordinates: temporal types ("when you do …"), conditional types ("if you do …"), etc.
6 "Nevertheless …" (ἀτάρ)	Conveying a strong contrast. With ἀτάρ it is always with a variant of type 2 (δεῖ), hence subtype A.[68]	A Exhortations (with δεῖ)	δεῖ, with hortatory subjunctive in first person plural ("let us do …"), etc.
7 Different types of reference[69]	Certain types of people or situations to which a fable is applicable, similar to the promythium.		

68 This permutation with ἀτάρ is an older Attic formula, which creates the same strong contrastive as πλήν in the Judge and the Widow (see below). Adrados's insistence that ἀτάρ be followed by δεῖ does not always bear out (e.g. the fable at Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.20, using ἀτάρ without δεῖ).

69 Here Adrados refers to epimythia that address certain types of people or situations to which a fable is applicable, similar to the promythium. See Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:454–55.

To give a few examples of how these forms look in practice, and to demonstrate how well the verses immediately following the L fables conform to them, consider the following:

The *epimythium* to the Place at the Table, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector:
Type 1 A maxim with a relative clause, using articular participles.

> πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται. *All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.* (Luke 14:11; 18:14b)

An *epimythium* to the Crafty Steward:
Type 3 A personal sentence directed at a "you" (ὑμῖν, ὑμᾶς) in the imperative (ποιήσατε) with a temporal subordinate clause (ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπῃ δέξωνται) telling the reader "when you do …/if you do …"

> ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπῃ δέξωνται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς. *And I say to you, make for yourselves friends of mammon of injustice, in order than whenever it should run out, they will receive you into their eternal tabernacles.* (Luke 16:9)

The *epimythium* to the Rich Fool:
Type 5A An opening οὕτως ("thus," "so"), followed by type 1, a maxim in which the subject is an articular participle.

> οὕτως ὁ θησαυρίζων ἑαυτῷ καὶ μὴ εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν. *So it is for the one who stores up treasures for himself and is not wealthy unto God.* (Luke 12:21)

The *epimythium* to the Worthless Slaves:
Type 5C An opening οὕτως καί, ("thus," "so") followed by type 3, a personal statement direct at a "you" (ὑμεῖς) with the imperative (λέγετε) and a conditional, "when you do …" (ὅταν…).

> οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ποιήσητε πάντα τὰ διαταχθέντα ὑμῖν, λέγετε ὅτι δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, ὃ ὠφείλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν. *So also you, when you do all the things that were commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done."* (Luke 17:10)

An *epimythium* to the Judge and the Widow:

Type 6 A strong contrastive statement, beginning with "nevertheless …"
πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;
Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes then will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8b)

From these examples, we can see that the lessons of Jesus's fables completely align with Adrados's *epimythium* forms. The fact that these examples represent not just one, but numerous types of the staple *epimythia* patterns offer us ample confirmation that these are indeed the very same *epimythia* found in other first-century fable collections.[70]

12.6 "You" in the Ancient Fable

Finally, the "you" formulations in the ancient fable paratexts represent one more significant point of overlap. In quite a number of Jesus's fables in Luke, the lessons introduced afterward employ a formula such as, "Thus also you …" or "I say to you …," sometimes rendered, "I tell you." This formula occurs after the Friend at Midnight (11:8), [the Great Banquet] (14:24), the Moronic Builder and Warring King (14:33) the Lost Sheep (15:7), the Lost Coin (15:10), the Crafty Steward (16:9), the Worthless Slaves (17:10), the Judge and the Widow (18:8), the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:14), and [The Pounds] (19:26). Mark never uses this phrase in his fable material, and while Matthew is partial to introducing apothegms this way, he rarely uses it with similes or fables (21:31, 43; 25:40). As Jeremias argues, this introductory formula does not appear to come from Luke himself, since a similar form appears only once in Acts (5:38),[71] and he normally removes it from his Markan material.[72] Scott calls attention to this transitional formula as peculiar to Luke's Gospel and describes it as the way by which the speaker "indicates the story's actual point."[73] Bultmann observes, in particular, the use of οὕτως with a number of these sayings ("thus I say to you …," "thus also you …") and sees a resemblance between these phrases and

70 For further discussion of the *promythium* and *epimythium* in the other gospels and rabbinic fables, see Strong, "How to Interpret Parables in Light of the Fable."

71 In this example, the formula is quite different from the others: καὶ τὰ νῦν λέγω ὑμῖν (Acts 5:38), and the episode may also be drawn from traditional material.

72 Joachim Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums: Redaktion und Tradition im Nicht-Markusstoff des dritten Evangeliums*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 106.

73 Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 257.

the concluding logia of poems and fairy tales, though, oddly, he does not mention fables.[74] For the first-century fable reader and the reader of Luke's Gospel, this aside to the reader would be recognized immediately as a fable transition.

The common element in all these formulae is the addressee, "you." As Holzberg observes, already in Archaic and Classical times, this formula was used for fables:

> The oldest Greek fables even display something like formulaic phraseology of the kind later to be used systematically by the author of the *Collectio Augustana*. This is very evident at those points where the narrator, after finishing a fable inserted into the text, explains to the audience or readers the conclusion they are expected to draw from the exemplum.[75]

In other words, before the first-century fables collections, authors who incorporated fables into their narratives used this same transitional phrase as the formal introduction to the *epimythium*. Here is an early example of this formula in Sophocles:

> Once I saw a man of reckless speech urging sailors to sail during a storm. But one heard no word from him when he was in the grip of the storm's attack; he huddled up under his cloak and allowed any sailor who wished to trample on him. *So also you* (οὕτω δὲ καὶ σέ) *and against your loud mouth shall a small cloud issue in a mighty tempest that shall blow upon you and put a stop to all your shouting.* (Sophocles, *Ajax* 1142–49 [trans. adapted from Hugh Lloyd-Jones, LCL])

Also recall the Sybarite fable from Aristophanes about the man who fell out of the chariot, which concludes with the *epimythium*, "*So why don't you* (οὕτω δὲ καὶ σύ) *do the same and run off to Pittalus's clinic!* (Aristophanes, *Vesp*. 1431–32). In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates concludes his fable using both transitional phrases—οὕτω καί and a καὶ σύ formula:

> "Then why not tell them the fable of the dog?" asked Socrates. "They say that when animals could talk, a sheep said to her master: 'It's strange that you give us sheep nothing but what we get from the land, though we supply you with wool and lambs and cheese, and yet you share your own food with your dog, who supplies you with none of these things.' The dog heard this and said: 'Of course he does. Don't I keep you from being stolen by thieves and carried off by wolves? Why, but for my protection you couldn't even eat for fear of being killed.' *So indeed it is said even the sheep admitted the dog's claim to preference. So also you tell these women that you are their watchdog and keeper …*" (οὕτω δὴ λέγεται καὶ τὰ

74 Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 199–201.

75 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 20.

> πρόβατα συγχωρῆσαι τὸν κύνα προτιμᾶσθαι. καὶ σὺ οὖν ἐκείναις λέγε, ὅτι ἀντὶ κυνὸς εἶ φύλαξ καὶ ἐπιμελητὴς…) (2.7.14 [trans. adapted from E. C. Marchant, O. J. Todd, and rev. Jeffrey Henderson, LCL]).

Here, the fable narrative world is bridged to the *epimythium* with a sentence summarizing the conclusion, "So indeed it is said even the sheep admitted the dog's claim to preference," followed by the "also you …" formula. This passage also includes another important fable narrative technique of shifting from the world within the fable (a hypodiegetic narrative) to the world of the fable narrator (intradiegetic narrative) as the story concludes. The end of the fable is not told within the hypodiegetic story; rather the conclusion is given by the narrator, Socrates, in the summarizing sentence, "So indeed it is said even the sheep admitted the dog's claim to preference." Luke will also use this same technique, as we will see below (e.g., Luke 16:8; 18:14).

Since Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric has been important for the ancient theory of the fable, we should also observe that he makes use of the same techniques. In the two fables Aristotle uses as examples of the genre, both contain the same linking phrases with their *epimythia*:

> *…"So then," said he, "do you take care lest, in your desire to avenge yourselves on the enemy, you be treated like the horse."* "οὕτω δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς," ἔφη, "ὁρᾶτε μὴ βουλόμενοι τοὺς πολεμίους τιμωρήσασθαι ταὐτὸ πάθητε τῷ ἵππῳ·" (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.20.5)
> *… You in like manner, O Samians, will suffer no more harm from this man, for he is wealthy* …"ἀτὰρ καὶ ὑμᾶς," ἔφη, "ὦ ἄνδρες Σάμιοι, οὗτος μὲν οὐδὲν ἔτι βλάψει (πλούσιος γάρ ἐστιν)·" (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.20.6)

From very early on then, it is apparent that this transition from fable to lesson was fairly standardized.

Jumping forward to the Common Era, in the fables imbedded in *The Life of Aesop* we find similar formulae, for example: ἔδει δὲ οὖν ὑμᾶς… and ὥστε καὶ σύ… (at *Vit. Aes.* 97 and 129 respectively).[76] With all these narrative examples in mind, it is not a challenge to recognize this same formula when it is used in a Lukan fable like the Worthless Slaves:

> Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table?" Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and

76 For many more permutations of the transition and more early authors, see Van Dijk, *Ainoi, Mythoi, Logoi*, 365, and Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 20.

> serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink?" Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?
> *So you also* (οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς), *when you do all the things that were commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done."* (Luke 17:7–10)

As Holzberg noted above, this ancient formula was often adopted by the first-century collections in their *epimythia*. Perhaps the biggest difference in the fable collections, especially Phaedrus and Babrius, is the specter of the author who stands over our shoulder like a *pedagogus*. The fundamentally didactic orientation of Babrius is most reminiscent of Luke's recurring: "I tell you…." Babrius is, as we recall, writing in the role of a pedagogue to the son of King Alexander, and regularly addresses the reader in the second person in his *epimythia*.[77] As Holzberg notes, "the role of tutor adopted by the poet is underlined in six *epimythia* by the use of the first person."[78] In the Lukan Fable Collection and in Luke's Gospel, Jesus takes on the role of tutor to address "you."[79] This transition is recognizable from the context of the ancient fable, which transitions to its *epimythium* in precisely this way.

Given the reader-orientedness of the *epimythium*, the question of who the addressee of this "you" is in the Gospel according to Luke is not so straightforward. It is either deliberately or accidentally ambiguous—a hybrid utterance addressing both the narrative characters and the reader. There is at least one explicit example confirming this, as Luke either deliberately breaks the frame of the narrative or forgets to correct the Lukan Fable Collection.[80] At Luke 14:24, the conclusion of the Great Banquet, we find, "For I tell you, none of those men who were invited will taste my dinner," λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων τῶν κεκλημένων γεύσεταί μου τοῦ δείπνου. As many commentators have noticed, the number of "you" (ὑμῖν) here is incorrect. The master is speaking to just one slave, and Jesus is telling this fable in response to one man's query. As Eta Linnemann and the many scholars following her on this point conclude, "He steps as it were on the apron of the stage and addresses

77 Seventeen of the forty-five *epimythia* in Babrius that Luzzatto regards as genuine use the second person address.

78 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 60.

79 For Jesus as teacher in Luke, see also 9.3 and 15.6.

80 As Nolland observes, while a version of this fable is paralleled by Matthew, there is nothing in that version that would cause this issue with the text at Luke 14:24 (John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, WBC 35B [Dallas, TX: Word, 1989], 758).

the audience."[81] Willi Braun, whose monograph discusses the audience orientation of the chapter as a whole, even describes this verse as an "*epilogion*,"[82] which is another ancient term for the *epimythium*.[83] Though Braun does not appear to be aware of fable literature, his instinct is correct. Considering the long-established formula in the fable literature, the use of "I tell you" and "thus also you" in Luke's fables shares in the reader-grabbing address to "you." It has been native to the fable since the beginning.

12.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the framing materials of the ancient fable—their development in antiquity, how they relate to the body of the fable, and what they signal to the reader. As we have seen, the *promythium* was originally a heading, a subject index for the fable user, telling the reader the topic or type of person to which a fable is applicable. The *epimythium* describes "the moral of the story." For both the *promythium* and *epimythium*, I described the forms and offered examples of typical contents. The presence of the *promythium* and *epimythium*—the topic and lesson of the fable—are one sure way to identify a fable and distinguish it from any other genre. With hundreds of examples preserved in Greek, the forms of these framing devices are fairly easy to identify. From the communication approach to genre, I also introduced how the fable uses the *promythium* and *epimythium* for this purpose. While appending one lesson per fable is typical, I described how that one lesson can vary greatly for the same fable when it appears in multiple sources. I also demonstrated that there are several strategies available to have multiple lessons accompany a single fable. This multiplicity of lessons indicates that the *promythia* and *epimythia* framing a particular fable are not intended to exhaust its potential, nor to be synonymous or even necessarily compatible with each another. In the course of the chapter, I also excavated a tremendous irony in parable interpretation, showing the belief that "parables" having a "single point" derives from fable interpretation. The "single point" approach was taken from the ancient fable, picked up by Jülicher from Lessing at the end of the nineteenth century.

81 Eta Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables: Introduction and Exposition*, trans. John Sturdy (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 90. Both Nolland and Hultgren follow Linnemann here, quoting the same analogy (Nolland, *Luke*, 758–59; Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 338).

82 Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14*, SNTSSup 85 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 122.

83 On the history of the term *epimythium*, see Chapter 5 note 56.

It was transmitted especially through C. H. Dodd, as "the most important principle of interpretation."[84] This approach has resulted in an interpretive method that is incompatible with the fables in Luke's Gospel. Grasping that the *promythia* and *epimythia* accompanying the fables of Jesus derive from the fable context demands substantial revision as to how we read and interpret them.

84 Dodd, *Parables*, 7.

CHAPTER 13

Interpreting from the Fable Perspective

13.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I lay aside "parable" interpretation and apply the appropriate method for interpreting the fable genre in the first century. A number of case studies are used to exegete the Lukan fables individually, while drawing out broader exegetical implications at each step. By examining numerous Lukan fables, this chapter confronts how standard approaches to "parable" interpretation consistently fail. Knowing how the fable genre communicates, interpreting these texts as fables offers resolution to the interpretive challenges and confirms that the fable is the operative framework here.

Beginning with the Judge and the Widow (13.2), we will examine how the fables in Luke's Gospel have been incorporated with multiple morals appended to them. We will discuss how exegetes have attempted to reconcile this fact with the view that parables have a "single point." We will address the source-critical indications of its *epimythia* on the basis of their style, vocabulary, and theology. Lastly, we will conclude the discussion of the Judge and the Widow by observing the competing interpretive demands of a fable and of a scriptural text. With the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (13.3), we will continue down the path of comparing the paratexts of the fable with the similar contents found in other ancient collections. We will then address the frequent incongruity between the content of a fable and the lessons appended to it by later hands. Finally, we will observe the ways that modern readers have been appending their own paratexts to Jesus's fables. With the Crafty Steward (13.4), we confront once more the confounding story and the multiplicity of *epimythia* attached to it. We will address source-critical indications of its *epimythia* on the basis of their style, vocabulary, and theology. We will compare its lessons to the many others about φρόνιμος. Then, unencumbered by the "single point" theory, we find cause to praise the Crafty Steward as a successful fable, eliciting diverse responses from early readers. With the Place at the Table (13.5), we will examine the fluidity of fable paratexts generally and those framing the Lukan fables specifically. From variants across the early gospel manuscripts, we will observe that Christian scribes, like those of other fable collections, penned their own *epimythia* to the fables of Jesus. With the Place at the Table as a starting point, other fables with this characteristic instability will be identified, such as the Rich Fool. With the Rich Fool (13.6), we will take stock of all the tools in Luke's

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rhetorical chest. Now that we, too, are familiar with the components used to construct a fable in a narrative, we will see how Luke builds plot in the gospel narrative using a fable. At the end of the chapter, we survey the lessons of the Lukan fables to point out that they cannot be reconciled with the common notion that they teach lessons primarily about the "kingdom of God."

13.2 The Challenge of Weaving a Fable into a Gospel: The Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8)

In our treatment of the Judge and the Widow, we will look most closely at how the fables in Luke's Gospel have been incorporated with multiple morals appended to them. We will witness biblical exegetes puzzling over how to reconcile this multiplicity with the view that parables have a "single point." We will address the source-critical indications of the *epimythia* along the way. We will conclude the discussion of the Judge and the Widow by observing the competing interpretive demands of a fable and of a scriptural text.

After the narrative of the Judge and the Widow is completed in verse five, we encounter two or (more likely) three *epimythia* in verses 6–8.

> And he told them a fable *on the need always for them to pray without ceasing.*
> There was a certain judge in a certain city … "Even though I neither fear God nor have regard for people, on account of the beating this widow is giving me I will avenge her, lest by the end of her coming she gives me a black eye!"
> *And the Lord said, "Hear what the judge of injustice says!" And would not God grant justice to his elect when they call out to him day and night, and longsuffer over them? I say to you that he will grant vengeance for them in haste. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?* (Luke 18:1, 5–8)

As a "parable," Luke 18:1–8 has puzzled modern scholars. As François Bovon notes, it as though there were several individuals commenting and competing over the meaning of this "parable" in verses 6–8.[1] So curious are these concluding morals that Stephen Curkpatrick is able to devote a lengthy article to examining the ways verses 6–8 relate to each other, how they relate to 18:1, to the "parable" they surround in 18:2–5, and how any attempt to read Luke 18:1–8 together with a single interpretation is folly.[2] Although it has eluded

1 François Bovon, "Apocalyptic Traditions in the Lukan Special Material: Reading Luke 18:1–8," *HTR* 90 (1997): 383–91.

2 Stephen Curkpatrick, "Dissonance in Luke 18:1–8," *JBL* 121 (2002): 107–21, and a subsequent double-dip: Stephen Curkpatrick, "A Parable Frame-up and Its Audacious Reframing," *NTS* 49 (2003): 22–38.

interpreters, a simple explanation for the many peculiarities comes by understanding verses 6–8 as *epimythia*, together with verse one as a *promythium*.

Reading the text as a fable, the solutions are fairly straightforward. We have seen from the fable collections that it is possible for a single individual to append more than one lesson. It is also possible that these *epimythia* derive from a different hand than the *promythium*. One difference between the *promythium* and the *epimythium* is that the former does not have quite the same eschatological tone evident in the latter. Within the *epimythia* there also seems to be at least two competing voices, 18:7–8a and 8b.[3] As Curkpatrick puts it, "The conclusion, Luke 18:8b, appears to mock the allegory that the frame has created from the parable."[4] "Not only is there dissonance between parable and frame, but there is also dissonance within the frame between assured speedy vindication and a doubt that such eschatological vindication will occur."[5]

In terms of their language, it is also clear that these *epimythia* are of quite a different character than anything Luke would compose, different even from what he normally allows. In addition to their stylistic elements, the language of imminent eschatology, the "Son of Man," and the focus on election are all not typically Lukan. For whatever reason, it seems that Luke has exercised much restraint here from engaging in his well-established tendency of minimizing imminent eschatology.[6] Verse seven records the only occasion in Luke-Acts in which "the elect" are referred to, and arguably the only occasion where the concept of election appears at all.[7] For Bovon, "the chosen ones must have been a popular ecclesiastical title (cf. 1 Cor 1:2, 24) in the community to which the author of L belonged."[8] Similarly, the verb μακροθυμέω appears just here in Luke-Acts, and certainly has an eschatological flavor as well. The Son of Man saying is also deceptively peculiar. While Luke uses the phrase "Son of Man" a total of twelve times, they are all derived from Mark or Matthew/Q—except for this single example, here in verse eight.[9] Other stylistic peculiarities include

3 The relationship of verse six to what came before or comes after will require some unpacking of its own (see below).

4 Curkpatrick, "Dissonance," 119.

5 Curkpatrick, "Dissonance," 119.

6 This view is most commonly associated with Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1954). For a quick overview, see E. Earle Ellis, "Present and Future Eschatology in Luke," *NTS* 12 (1965): 27–41.

7 The only other instance of the lemma ἐκλεκτός in Luke-Acts appear at Luke 23:35, the mocking of Jesus on the cross: "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, σωσάτω ἑαυτόν, εἰ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐκλεκτός.

8 Bovon, *Luke* 2, 535.

9 Luke 5:24; 6:5; 7:34; 9:26; 11:30; 12:8, 40; 17:24, 30; 18:8; 19:10; 22:69. It appears in one other occasion in L material, the apothegm attached as the moral (*epimythium*?) of the Zacchaeus

the Semitic genitive, ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας (and cf. 16:8), the arthrous τήν πίστιν, and a paratactic καί expressing a hypotactic relationship preceding μακροθυμεῖ. These many oddities are a good indication that these verses come not from Luke but from a source.[10] While it is not numbered among Adrados's list, the rhetorical question and answer format of verses seven and eight is found occasionally in the *epimythia* of fables, such as the following example from Babrius:

> *… What does this story tell us? Strive to create something, and let not Envy be the judge. Nothing whatever is entirely pleasing to the fault-finder.* (Babrius, *Fab*. 59)

Formally, this example is very close to the *epimythia* of the Judge and the Widow. It contains the rhetorical question and answer format as well as a complementary second moral.

As commentators often note, verse six is strange in several ways:[11] "And the Lord said, 'hear what the judge of injustice says'" (εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος· ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει). In the first place, it uses the absolute title, "the Lord," for Jesus.[12] For Green, the use of the title is to state "Jesus' role as authoritative teacher,"[13] and for others it reflects the post-Easter Jesus.[14] A bigger problem with the verse is its temporal relationship to what precedes and what follows, exacerbated by the use of the present tense λέγει. If the verse refers to what precedes, then the statement is superfluous and arbitrary. It would also make λέγει a historical present, which Luke avoids.[15] If verse six refers to the material following, then it demands a certain amount of time to pass between verses five and six. As Plummer imagines, "The insertion indicates a pause, during which the audience consider the parable, after which Jesus makes a comment

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narrative: ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός (Luke 19:10). This apothegm is paralleled in Matt 18:11 but is only present in Western or mixed text witnesses.

10 So, Snodgrass, for example: "The wording of vv. 6–8 is not Lukan and has Semitic features" (*Stories with Intent*, 455).

11 Bovon, *Luke*, 535: "The use of the present λέγει ("he [the unjust judge] says") constitutes something of a problem. This verb could initiate a new speech and refer to what follows (v. 7, maybe even vv. 7–8), but that seems improbable to me. I prefer to understand this verb as a reference to the decision the judge has just made (vv. 4b–5)."

12 Fitzmyer argues that ὁ κύριος refers to Jesus here, in contrast to 18:8a (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV*, AB 28A [New York: Doubleday, 1985], 1179). See below for a discussion of this same issue in the fable of the Crafty Steward. See also Luke 10:1 where the title is applied to Jesus at the appointing of the 70 and the material at Luke 12:42.

13 Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 641.

14 Evans, *Saint Luke*, 635; Greg W. Forbes, *The God of Old: The Role of the Lukan Parables in the Purpose of Luke's Gospel*, JSNTSup 198 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 204.

15 On the historical present as a source-critical indicator, see 15.3.1.

and draws the moral of the narrative."[16] Of course, if this were the goal then the verse creates both an awkward pause not signaled in the narration and leads to an expectation that we will hear something more of what the judge says. The reader is left hanging in suspense. Most exegetes hedge their bets and opt for the former solution, though neither is entirely satisfactory. For Funk and Curkpatrick, here "a change of 'speaking subject' indicates 'a seam in the discourse (story),' further compounding the argument for incorrigible dissonance between parable and frame."[17]

What all these exegetes are observing in verse six, but without the vocabulary to identify it precisely, is the shift of the fable to its *epimythia.* The "seam" between verses five and six, the "pause" during which the audience reflects on the fable, is the break between the fable and its *epimythium*. The imperative form, unusual in the context of a "parable," is familiar to the reader acquainted with the ancient fables. As we learned in 12.6, originally this "you" would have been the reader of the fable, but here its role is an ambivalent one. It is ostensibly directed to the disciples of Jesus in the narrative, but, naturally, it draws in the reader to consider the message also. If, as seems likely, Luke has added the words, "and the Lord said" (Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος), to ease the disjunction between the fable and its *epimythia* as he did also in the *promythium*, then we have a small but important clue to Luke's frame of mind in inserting these fables. Luke refers to Jesus in a post-Easter perspective, as the authoritative teacher—the Lord.

Identifying verse six as the opening of an *epimythium*, either as it originally stood or a redaction of such a phrase that Luke has narrativized, would account for several of its peculiarities. It explains the use of λέγει, whether historical present or otherwise. It explains why we are told to listen to what the unjust judge says, but then are not given any speech after this verb of speaking. It explains also, perhaps, the reason for the use of the semitic genitive: ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας. After the narrative but before the explanation, the *epimythium* of a fable will often begin with a stock phrase such as, "the fable says," "the fable teaches," "the fable shows."[18] We find examples of this in every major collection:

16 Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 413. Bock thinks similarly, "Jesus tells the disciples to reflect on the judge's response" (*Luke*, 1450).

17 Curkpatrick, "Dissonance," 114. The quotation of Funk in Curkpatrick is from R. W. Funk, "Unravelling the Jesus Tradition: Criteria and Criticism," *FF* 5 (1989): 31–62.

18 In the Augustana Collection, the formula Ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ predominates. One could speculate that the verb δηλόω replaced λέγω to avoid the redundancy of Ὁ λόγος λέγει. Ὁ λόγος διδασκει also appears regularly in the fables (Perry 3, 78), as does the formula with ἐλέγχει.

> λέγει δ' ὁ μῦθος "εἰς τὸ ζῆν ἀκινδύνως τῆς λαμπρότητος ηὐτέλεια βελτίων. The fable says: "If to live without danger is one's goal, it is better to be obscure than distinguished." (Babrius, *Fab.* 31)

> λέγει δ' ὁ μῦθος "πρᾳότητα, παῖ, ζήλου. ἀνύσεις τι πειθοῖ μᾶλλον ἢ βίᾳ ῥέζων. The fable says: "Cultivate gentleness, my child; you will get results oftener by persuasion than by the use of force." (Babrius, *Fab.* 18)

> *Hac re probatur quantum ingenium valet; virtute semper praevalet sapientia.* This affair shows how much ingenuity can accomplish; cleverness is always more than a match for hardihood. (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 1.14)

> Οὗτος ὁ λόγος λεχθείη ἂν κατὰ ἀνδρῶν οἵτινες τοὺς εὐεργέτας ἀδικοῦντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ κολάζονται. This fable would be said concerning men who are punished by God for their unjust deeds. (Augustana Collection [Perry 77, trans. mine])

The first parallel evident in these transitional phrases is the shift from the narrative past tenses of the fable story to the present tense governing the *epimythium*. In Babrius, this is achieved by way of the same verb and form encountered in Luke 18:6: λέγει. If it seems reasonable, as scholars agree, that the opening words of the verse, εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος, are secondary, then we are left with ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει, leading into the *epimythia* of verses 7–8. In this case, λέγει functions as it does in the fables, not in the sense of "says," as in the judge's direct speech of the preceding verses or some speech to follow; rather, λέγει functions in the sense of "teaches," "shows," or "demonstrates."[19] Here it is also appropriate to recall once more the scholion commenting on Theon's statement: "It is possible to provide a conclusion whenever, after the fable (μύθου) has been stated, we venture to bring in some gnomic statement (λόγον) fitting it" (Theon, *Prog.* 4).[20] The scholion reads: "The *epimythium* here teaches (λέγει) a lesson (λόγον), for indeed the *epimythium* is a lesson (λόγος) that is brought out from the fable (μῦθον) and shows what is useful in it."[21] Taking all this into account, this meaning of λέγω allows us to

19 Though the lexicographical insights from the Derveni papyrus have yet to be incorporated into BDAG, as John Fitzgerald notes, it contains support for this rendering of λέγω: "BDAG correctly notes that the verb λέγω ('I say') is sometimes used in the sense of "proclaim as teaching". The Derveni papyrus offers support for this claim when the author notes, '"to say' (λέγειν) and "to teach" (διδασκάλειν) can have the same sense' (col. X.3)" (John T. Fitzgerald, "The Derveni Papyrus and Its Relevance for Biblical and Patristic Studies," *EC* 6 [2015]: 157–78).

20 Ἐπιλέγειν δὲ ἔστιν ὧδε, ὅταν μύθου ῥηθέντος ἐοικότα τινὰ γνωμικὸν αὐτῷ λόγον ἐπιχειρῶμεν κομίζειν.

21 Λόγον ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἐπιμύθιον λέγει, καὶ γὰρ ἐπιμύθιόν ἐστι λόγος ὁ πρὸς τὸν μῦθον εἰσφερόμενος, καὶ δηλῶν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ χρήσιμον. The scholion is found in Christian Walz, *Rhetores Graeci*

translate Luke 18:6 in a way that makes sense for the first time: "The Lord said, 'hear what the unjust judge teaches,'" followed by the lessons.

This recognizable fable transition offers the best explanation of the present tense use of λέγει in Luke 18:6. The fable formula also resolves the relationship between verse six and the material that follows: they are the lessons derived from the fable. Rather than the awkward, backwards-looking, non-quote of the judge in Luke's much avoided historical present, the phrase is a transition to the *epimythia* that follow in verses 7–8. This solution also supplies the explanation for how Luke could allow a historical present in this case. It was not originally a historical present from a narrative at all; rather it was the beginning of a fable framing device that dropped out of narrative past tense to address the reader. Thus, the *epimythium* fits most closely with Adrados's fourth pattern, which is an opening formula about what the fable "shows/teaches/says," followed by the third type, an imperative giving instructions to the fable's reader.

Scholars have traditionally attempted to resolve the problems of what the fable of the Judge and the Widow means by appealing to the framing material. When they do this, they attempt to force a single meaning on the fable, and so create an ill-fitting interpretation that matches some of the frames, but not all. With its more comprehensible, perhaps more palatable mention of prayer, normally the *promythium* is accepted and the *epimythia* ignored. Curkpatrick makes many insightful observations about the dissonance of these readings, and he is correct in stressing the futility of attempting to harmonize the framing materials into a single meaning for the fable. Curkpatrick is also correct in observing that the framing materials employ two different reading strategies for the fable—one focusing on the widow and one focusing on the judge. He notes still a third strategy that expresses skepticism about at least one of the other interpretations (Luke 16:8b). However, scholars such as Curkpatrick and Bovon, who are able to recognize these irreconcilable differences as the product of separate interpreters, still stop short. Curkpatrick makes no attempt to explain how such a textual situation could make its way into Luke's Gospel, and suggests it best "to live with their unresolved tension."[22] Knowing how fables communicate their lessons, we may move past the "unresolved tension" of the dissonance between the Judge and the Widow and its applications. The lessons here are natural for the fable form and the proposed Sitz im Leben of a collection of Jesus's fables embedded into Luke's Gospel. As we learned in the last chapter, it is perfectly in keeping with the goals of the genre to

(Stuttgart: Cotta, 1832–1836), 1:259, lines 24–27. The placement is given as "med p. 178" with "Τὸν λόγον δὲ οὕτως ἐποίσομεν."

22 Curkpatrick, "Dissonance," 121.

create separate lessons from the same fable and to write them down before and after the narrative. These lessons could be synonymous, complementary, or antithetical—even demanding irreconcilable readings. While foreign to us, and clearly perplexing to modern exegetes, this was not any audacious activity for the first-century reader, but the expected way to read a fable and, arguably, the very point. Based on this example, it is clear that early Christians read some of Jesus's fables in the same way.

What is unnatural about the fable of the Judge and the Widow (*mutatis mutandis* the others we will treat subsequently) are two features that we can attribute to Luke's genius. According to Perry, the use of a fable in a narrative or by an orator demands that "the fable should have only one obvious moral (or teaching).... There can be only one moral to a fable used by a Menenius Agrippa in addressing a Roman crowd in a political crisis, or by a writer like Horace or Plutarch intent on bringing an idea forcefully to his reader's attention."[23] We saw this in the examples above and in *The Life of Aesop* throughout, that when a fable is delivered in a narrative, it naturally has a moral application to that setting. While this is normally the case, it is abundantly clear that Luke disagrees. When Luke incorporated these fables into his gospel, he did not prune at least a few of them from all but one lesson, as we might expect. Instead, Luke incorporated them in such a way that the addressees of the *promythia* and *epimythia* are now characters in the story. It may be deliberate (we shall never know) that Luke did not cover his tracks very well, and the *promythium* and *epimythia* also remain aimed at the reader. The second and most unnatural aspect of the fable of the Judge and the Widow is that the morals, by their canonization in the gospel, have become frozen. What we have in Luke 18:1–8 is a snapshot of a living fable mid-stride, plucked from one literary environment where it was clearly flourishing in provoking diverse responses, for use in another literary environment that plays by completely different rules. Without knowing the rules of the fable *pro-* and *epimythia*, it has been impossible for exegetes to interpret this fable effectively. The fable of the Judge and the Widow is applicable to the topic of needing to pray without giving up (Luke 18:1). The fable demonstrates that God will grant justice without delay to those who cry out to him (Luke 18:7–8a). The fable also highlights a contrary notion, that when the Son of Man comes, there might not be any faithful left (Luke 18:8b). These lessons belong to different voices but have been homogenized into one single voice of canonical Scripture. To read them as parts of a fable permits us to choose one lesson over another, or to accept all of them. What other lessons

23 Perry, "Fable," 21–22. In Livy, *Hist. Rom.* 2.32, Menenius Agrippa tells a fable version of the Body and its Members, used also by Paul (1 Cor 12:12–27; cf. Rom 12:4).

we might still derive from this fable have not been exhausted. Deriving new lessons from a fable is the subject of the next section.

13.3 The Production of New Paratexts by the Fable Collector: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14)

In comparison to the rough waters of the framing material of the Judge and the Widow, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector is smooth sailing. In this fable, we encounter one *epimythium*, and the transition from the narrative to it is not nearly so muddled.

> *Concerning those who are convinced about themselves that they are righteous but treat others with contempt.*
> Two men went up to the temple to pray … But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"
> *I say to you, this one went vindicated to his house rather than that one, since all who lift themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.*
> (Luke 18:9–14 [trans. adapted from NRSV])

The fable ends properly at Luke 18:13 with the tax collector's exclamation: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The conclusion of the fable shifts out of hypodiegetic narrative to the intradiegetic story level for Jesus, the narrator, to make explicit the takeaway. The narration concludes, a transition phrase occurs, and finally an *epimythium* appears: "I tell you, this one went down righteous to his house instead of the other, since all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:13b–14). The twist ending is that the tax collector, who gets the last word, goes away justified because of his humility, rather than the Pharisee. In this fable, the shift to the *epimythium* is less abrupt because of the intervention of the intradiegetic narrator, Jesus, who makes explicit the moral of the fable. This transition is the same sort that Socrates used in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (discussed in 12.6 above), presenting the conclusion of the fable outside of the fable narrative world as a transition to the *epimythium*.

As we saw in the catalogue above, the *epimythium* of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector fits Adrados's first type exactly: a maxim with a relative clause, using articular participles.

> ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται. Since all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

The inclusion of this maxim here is remarkable, because it is the second time it is appended to an L fable (cf. Luke 14:11).[24] Since Luke avoids doubles of saying material, its presence here is a good sign that it was appended to the fable before Luke got ahold of it.[25] There is a sharp disjunction between the end of the *epimythium* in verse fourteen and the pericope that begins in the next verse (the children coming to Jesus). After the maxim in verse fourteen, Luke immediately resumes his narrative without the barest continuity between this fable *epimythium* and the next episode.[26] Like the others, this fable appears as though plucked from elsewhere and deposited here with minimal adaptation to its new, narrative context.

The narrative of the Pharisee and Tax Collector concerns two individuals praying, and like the Judge and the Widow, there is a tension between this story and those lessons appended to it. The effort to find a single moral in the Judge and the Widow is an interpretive approach no less doomed with the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The only difference is that, with the fable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, it is easier to fudge the multiple lessons together and harmonize them with the content. This is not the method the author would have intended us to use in interpreting this fable, and we may now tease apart its multiple lessons rather than harmonize them.

While the Judge and the Widow had no content at all about individuals praying, this topic was supplied in its frames. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector, on the other hand, is a story about two men who go to pray, but the framing devices give no lessons at all about prayer.[27] That the Pharisee and the Tax Collector contains characters praying is not the same as saying that the fable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector is limited to lessons on prayer; that is, it is no more a prayer fable than the Judge and the Widow is a fable limited to the ethics of judge punching. At least according to the *promythium* and *epimythium*, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector is not about its content, prayer; it is about boasting, acting contemptuously toward others, pride, and humility:

24 See the discussions of this verse later in 13.5.

25 We also cannot rule out the possibility that this doublet is an indication that this *epimythium* (or any other) was added in the earliest transmission of the gospel.

26 On the stark disjunctions between the fable endings and the neighboring material, see 14.3.

27 We find similar examples in the other fables. Babrius *Fab.* 23, which has no content about prayer, draws a lesson about prayer, while *Fab.* 63, which depicts a person praying, draws no lesson about prayer. Babrius, *Fab.* 20 and Perry 30 are fables that contain characters praying and also draw lessons about prayer.

> *To those convinced about themselves that they are just and regard everyone else with contempt … All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.* (Luke 18:9, 14b)

Because the morals appended to the Pharisee and Tax Collector are complementary, it is also easy to overlook that they are not the same. The topic from the *promythium* stresses self-perception, not boasting. The treatment of others plays a role not found in the *epimythium* after the fable. The lesson applies to the ethics of daily life rather than to how one prays. The lesson of the *epimythium* after the fable gives a warning against self-exaltation but emphasizes a premise absent from the *promythium* as well: that there is a reward in being humble. This, too, is an exhortation for daily living rather than limited to a specific stance we should take in prayer. Unlike the Judge and the Widow, these discrete lessons are in the same ballpark and so have generally been conflated, their divergences glossed over. The fable genre teaches us that when we do so we have failed our lessons.

The same problem Curkpatrick and others have identified in the Judge and the Widow is found in the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, and its solution is the same. Rather than conflate the lessons, we need to tease apart the two responses to the fable. When we succeed at doing this, we reap a double reward and can begin to take stock of very similar lessons found in the other fable collections. Examples of boastfulness and pride in the *epimythia* include:

> *You too, man, never be boastful when fortune elevates you above another. Many have been saved by the very fact of not succeeding.* (Babrius, *Fab.* 5)

> *Exult not overmuch in the pride of thy youthful strength. Many a man's old age is spent in weary toil.* (Babrius, *Fab.* 29)

The value of humility is also a common but *separate* theme:

> *Whenever a people is hard pressed by a grim calamity it is their leaders in high position who are in danger; the humble, common people easily find safety in obscurity.* (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.6)[28]

The specific pairing of the lemmata "uplifting" (ὕψος) with "the humble" (ταπεινός) is also found in the *epimythium* of the following Babrian fable:

28 See also Babrius, *Fab.* 12 (the *epimythium*), and especially 112.

> *Brotherly love is the greatest good for people; even the humble are exalted by it.* φιλαδελφία μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ἀνθρώποις, ἥ καὶ ταπεινοὺς ὄντας ἦρεν εἰς ὕψος. (Babrius, *Fab*. 47; and cf. Perry 53)

Thus, from their form and content, the lessons applied to the Pharisee and the Tax Collector fit perfectly with the other collections contemporary with Jesus and Luke.

To close the discussion of the *promythium* and *epimythium* framing the Pharisee and Tax Collector, we take up an issue alluded to earlier: placing the Judge and the Widow and the Pharisee and Tax Collector adjacent to one another. It seems a reasonable inference that these two fables are adjacent because prayer, in some way, links them. That said, I have stressed now the importance of rejecting that the Pharisee and Tax Collector may be glossed simply as a fable about prayer. On this point, Jeremias notes, for example, "We may pause for a moment over [the Judge and the Widow and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector] to remark that neither 18:9–14 nor, probably 18:1–8 is really intended as an instruction about the right way to pray; both parables seem rather intended to show to Jesus' hearers God's pity for the despised and oppressed."[29] This distinction and even incongruity between the fable story and the paratexts is common among ancient fables. As Zafiropoulos writes,

> In many fables there is a contradiction between the message (or messages) that the reader draws from the plot and the one that the *epimythium* points to. This is so because the message of the *epimythium* is the product of a single reader's (i.e., the compiler's) interpretation of the fable and therefore reflects his ethical views. It is also the main framework for the articulation of the compiler's moralizing interventions in the fable's messages.[30]

This production of new lessons, the perspective of compilers, and the ethical views of interpreters did not stop at the canonical versions of Jesus's fables. To the extent that exegetes and parable scholars today ascribe to this fable lessons about prayer, is the extent to which they break from the frozen canonized form to treat it as a fable, generating new lessons from it, and even writing for it our own paratexts. Consider now the *promythia* and *epimythia* written for the Judge and the Widow and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector by two preeminent parable scholars in their tables of contents:

29 Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables*, 74.

30 Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, 7.

Klyne Snodgrass:[31]
Parables concerning God and Prayer 437
The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5–8) 437
The Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1–8) 449
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Bernard Brandon Scott:[32]
Part Two. Family, Village, City, and Beyond
1. Identity 79
A Man Had Two Children (Matt. 21:28–31a)
Who Has a Friend? (Luke 11:5–8)
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4. Good Fences Make Good Neighbors 141
A Rich Man Clothed in Purple (Luke 16:19–31)
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A Man Gave a Banquet (Matt. 22:2–14; Luke 14:16-24; *Gos. Thom.* 64)
6. You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down 175
In a City There Was a Judge (Luke 18:2–5)
7. Who's That Masked Man? 189
From Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30–35)

From Snodgrass we get the predictable association of the two fables in a *promythium*, "Parables concerning God and Prayer," included along with the Friend at Midnight.[33] This table of contents operates much the same way as the *promythia* of a *repertorium*. Scott also unites the two fables under the main heading of "Family, Village, City, and Beyond," but then he also gives us moralizing *promythia* as well, such as we find in Phaedrus and Aphthonius. For the Rich Man and Lazarus, he supplies the lesson in a maxim, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors," and does the same for the Judge and the Widow, "You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down." Whether we have recognized it or not, in this regard, parable scholars have treated the Lukan "parables" as fables all along.

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31 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, ix.

32 Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, viii.

33 The Friend at Midnight, alias the Shameless Neighbor, is a "twin" of the Judge and the Widow. On their literary interconnectedness, see 14.4.1.1.

13.4 The Futility of the "Single Lesson" Theory: The Crafty Steward (Luke 16:1–13)

As we learned in 11.3, the Crafty Steward presents insurmountable challenges to anyone attempting to interpret it using standard parable methods. Our goal at present is simply to identify its framing devices, to show the futility of interpreting it in the "single meaning" approach, and to indicate how reading the fable with the help of its *epimythia* allows us to understand what is going on.

The Crafty Steward immediately follows the Prodigal Son (15:11–32) and lacks a *promythium*, though perhaps any of verses 9–13 could have once stood at the beginning. As Luke has presented this text, it is not entirely clear whether there is narrative continuity intended with chapter 15. On the one hand, there is no shift in geographical location, and there is a clear catchphrase between the Prodigal Son and the Crafty Steward.[34] On the other hand, this fable has a different group of addressees: the disciples. At any rate, there is nothing essential to the setting that affects the fables interpretation. The fable is introduced by Luke's telltale speaking formula: Ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς· (Luke 16:1).[35] Removing this clear Lukan redaction, we lack any narrative framing and begin simply with "There was a certain rich man …," ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος (Luke 16:1).

Just as with the Judge and the Widow, we find multiple *epimythia* following the narrative of the fable. This time, however, the challenge is identifying where they begin and end.

> And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. *And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.*
> *Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.*
> *If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?*
> *And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?*
> *No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.*
> *You cannot serve God and wealth.* (Luke 16:8–13)

It was in noting these many "applications," that Dodd made the observation we read above: "We can almost see here notes for three separate sermons on

34 On the catchphrase between these two fables, see 14.4.1.3.

35 On Luke's speaking formula, see chapter 15.3.4.

the parable as text."[36] Reading the *epimythia* all in sequence, we can see that Luke has made little attempt to turn them from *epimythia* following a fable into something that resembles a narrative progression.

In the ancient collections, no fable has more than three morals appended, but it is not until the Pharisees make a reappearance in verse fourteen that we change subjects completely. Beavis, who is aware that these verses are the *epimythia* of a fable, is similarly tentative about what to include and exclude.[37] Verses eight and nine form two discrete *epimythia*, and most interpreters wish to end the textual unit at one or the other. It is possible that the *epimythia* accompanying the fable in Luke's source ended at verse nine, but there is no way to be certain. Because continuity in the morals is by no means demanded, the only reason to exclude verses 10–13 from those preceding is that such a number of *epimythia* is unprecedented.[38] There is one other early Christian text, however, which does contain this unusual quantity of didactic material: the *Physiologus*.[39] Much like the Crafty Steward, the lessons of the *Physiologus*

36 Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 17.

37 In the appendix of Beavis's article, the parable is listed as "The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–9)" with two *epimythia* given; however, after printing the text of these verses, she adds "(see also vv. 10–13)" ("Parable and Fable," 498).

38 Among those who argue that verses 9–13 must be included are Markus Barth, "The Dishonest Steward and His Lord: Reflections on Luke 16:1–13," in *From Faith to Faith*, ed. Dikran Y. Hadidian (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979), 65–74.

39 The *Physiologus* is a kind of Christian bestiary, clearly drawing from the ancient fable tradition both in its animal characters and its lessons. It dates to either the second half of the second century or the second half of the third century CE. The most complete study remains that of F. Lauchert, *Geschichte der Physiologus* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1889). Still today, there is no translation of the Greek text into English. There are several English translations of the later versions, e.g., the Latin (Michael J. Curley, *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009]) and Romanian (Guy R. Mermier, "The Romanian Bestiary: An English Translation and Commentary on the Ancient 'Physiologus' Tradition," *Mediterranean Studies* 13 [2004]: 17–55). The closest one will find to an English edition of the Greek is by Gohar Muradyan, who translates the Armenian into English. The author prints the Greek alongside the Armenian text, noting differences between the two in the English translation (Gohar Muradyan, *Physiologus: The Greek and Armenian Versions with a Study of Translation Technique* [Leuven: Peeters, 2005]). A translation of the Greek is available in French (Arnaud Zucker, *Physiologos. Le bestiaire des bestiaires: Texte traduit du grec, introduit et commenté par Arnaud Zucker* [Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2005]), and there has never been a shortage of German translations. The most recent German translation as of this writing is Otto Schönberger, *Physiologus Griechisch/Deutsch* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014). See also Garský Zbynek Kindschi and Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, eds., *Christus in natura: Quellen, Hermeneutik und Rezeption des Physiologus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). As to the date, Lauchert argued that it was in circulation around 140 (*Geschichte der Physiologus*, 65), and a date from 150–200 CE was unanimous until recently (see Joseph Imorde, "Physiologus," *RPP*, http://dx.doi.

are generally esoteric and apocalyptic in nature. It also uses similar formulations, such as καὶ σύ and οὕτως καί (e.g., *Physiologus* 1.6 and 2.5, 17, respectively). The number of lessons also tend to pile up much in the same way. Here is one example:

> *Concerning the fox.*
> Physiologus says that this animal is in all respects insidious and perfidious. When it gets hungry and does not find any prey to hunt and to eat, it goes and finds a muddy place or wherever there is chaff, and rolls over the earth and falls on its back in a field and looking upwards, holds its breath and swells thoroughly. And the birds consider it dead and come down to eat it. And so it deceitfully seizes and disembowels the birds and the birds die cruelly and the fox eats.
> *So also* (οὕτως ἐστὶν καί) *the devil is small in all respects, and his intrigues are great and the tricks are deceptive.*
> *The one who wants to partake of his flesh dies.*
> *His flesh is fornications and love of money, hatred, arrogance, envy, and all other vices.*
> *It* [*i.e., Scripture*] *likens even Herod to a fox.* (Luke 13:32)
> *And the scribe heard from the Savior: "Foxes have holes…."* (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58)
> *And in the "Song of Songs:" "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards."* (Song 2:15)
> *And David: "they shall be the portion for foxes."* (Ps 63:10)
> *So then the Physiologus spoke well about the fox.* (Physiologus 18.0–12 [trans. adapted from Muradyan])[40]

The *Physiologus* offers us something akin to the fable of the Crafty Steward in the multitude of lessons, in the explanation to the reader of what the Lord/Savior taught concerning the subject, and in the concern for the moral behavior of the Christian, set out in similarly apocalyptic vocabulary.

In Luke 16:8–13, the pervasive asyndeton is one clue that indicates the previous life of these verses. They were *epimythia* stacked as independent morals

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org.proxy.library.nd.edu/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_024554>). This dating was for a number of complex reasons, the simplest of which is that Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215), Origen (ca. 185–ca. 250), and possibly Tertullian (ca. 160–ca. 225) know it. More recently, a date in the third or even the fourth century has been advocated by some, again for several complex reasons. The simplest argument for a late date is the theory that the author(s) of the *Physiologus* know(s) Origen. The *terminus ante quem* is Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340–397), who already knows a secondary Latin version. For a survey of the issues, see Alan Scott, "The Date of the Physiologus," *VC* 52 (1998): 430–41.

40 I have adapted Muradyan's translation to reflect the Greek rather than Armenian, and to highlight some fable qualities in the *epimythia* such as the οὕτως καί formula, and the asyndetic breaks between certain of the *epimythia*. The zero in the citation is correct; it marks the *promythium*.

at the end of a fable.[41] We have observed that Luke eases the disjunction between the frames and the fable proper to create a narrative continuity. Here, Luke does not go to this same trouble. Even as they now stand in the canonical gospel, these verses are independent and disjointed. There are no linking words between verses nine and ten, ten and eleven, twelve and 13a, and 13a and 13b. The dominant use of καί and complete absence of δέ, especially when it would resolve the asyndeton, also point to this being traditional material from some genre in which this was standard practice.[42] For an image of a Babrius manuscript with *epimythia* added to the fables in this way, see Figure 12 and the discussion there. For the Crafty Steward, an explanation from the fable *epimythium* fits once more.[43]

Since there is close to unanimous agreement that at least part of verse eight and all of verse nine are connected to the Crafty Steward, these sayings are an ideal group to discuss the matter of eschatology and apocalypticism in the Lukan *epimythia*. If the *epimythia* of the Judge and the Widow are noteworthy for their out of place apocalyptic seasoning, these *epimythia* of the Unjust Steward are still more piquant. The title "the sons of light" is unique to this verse in the Gospels, and it, along with its similar ring to "the chosen ones" from the Judge and the Widow, could scarcely have come from Luke's hand. Based on these and similar phrases of Semitic idiom in the Lukan fables, Blomberg argues for a Palestinian provenance of his proposed parable collection source.[44] Since the earliest publications from the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has become apparent that their authors had something to say about these "sons of light." In the preamble to the Rule of the Community, the title appears as a self-designation for the members of the *yachad*: "… in order to love all the sons

41 For a detailed analysis of asyndeton in the Lukan Fable Collection, see 15.3.3.

42 For Luke's decided preference of δέ over καί in the initial position and its source-critical usefulness in the fable material, see 15.3.2. For asyndeton as an indication of a fable collection, see the comparison with British Library Add. MS 22087 in 15.3.3.

43 These *epimythia* can be categorized according to Adrados's *epimythium* types. Verse 8b is the first type, a maxim with εστί. Verse nine is a fine example of the third type, directed at a "you" (ὑμῖν, ὑμᾶς) in the imperative (ποιήσατε) with a temporal subordinate clause (ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίπῃ δέξωνται). Verse ten is the first type again, a maxim with ἐστί, with a relative clause making a contrast. After verse ten the *epimythium* patterns do not fit exactly, and this may be an indication that the fable's original *epimythia* ended here after this third lesson. The use of rhetorical questions in verses eleven and twelve are reminiscent of the rhetorical question pattern we encountered in the Judge and the Widow and Babrius above; however here we do not receive any answer. The closest type for these would again be third type, personal sentences directed at a "you." Verse thirteen is made up of two discrete maxims: Adrados's first type.

44 Blomberg, "The Tradition History of the Parables," 209.

of light, each one according to his lot in God's plan, and to detest all the sons of darkness, each one in accordance with his guilt in God's vindication" (1QS I, 9–11).[45] Flusser is impressed enough with the common language to argue that Jesus directed the Crafty Steward against the Essenes.[46]

While it is important to identify the common eschatological outlook and the affinities between the titles in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Lukan *epimythia*, essential parallels in the fables have escaped our notice until now. Consider the following fable and its *epimythium*:

> A man journeying into the desert found Truth in person standing all alone. He said to her: "Why, venerable dame, have you left the city and now are dwelling in the wilderness?" To which she, deeply wise, replied forthwith: "Among the men of old 'twas only with a few that falsehood found a place, but now it has spread beyond to all mankind."
> *If I may say so, and you care to hear it, the life of men in the present age is wicked.*
> (Babrius, *Fab.* 126)

It is impossible to say whether the *epimythium* is original or perhaps even added by a Christian tradent of Babrius, but the fables collections, too, bear witness to this outlook on the world.

From a strictly philological standpoint, the *epimythia* of the Crafty Steward are replete with interesting peculiarities.[47] Many of them point against the possibility that Luke composed these verses. At the same time, they give several indications that they share an origin with the *epimythia* of other fables such as the Judge and the Widow. Like the "judge of injustice," ὁ κρίτης τῆς ἀδικίας, the steward is referred to as "the steward of injustice" τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς

45 Also IQS II, 16 and III, 13, 24, 25. The translation is from Eibert Tigchelaar and Florentino Garcia Martinez, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 143. Instead of "the sons of this age" in Luke, the opponents contrasted with the sons of light in the Dead Sea Scrolls are more aptly named, "the sons of darkness," e.g., in the War Scroll (1QM I, 1–2). See further, IQS I, 3, 9, 11, 13, 14. See the additional references to the "Sons of Light" in the Dead Sea Scrolls that appear in 4QCatena A, 4QSongs of the Sage[b], 4Q548, 4QVisions of Amram[f] Ar, and 11QMelchizedek in M. De Jonge and A. S. Van Der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1966): 301–26.

46 David Flusser, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward: Jesus' Criticism of the Essenes," in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 176–97.

47 μαμωνᾶς, which appears here three times in verses nine, eleven, and thirteen, is found nowhere else in the New Testament apart from the parallel to the logion in verse thirteen, found at Matt 6:24. Likewise, we may note σκηνάς, "tabernacles" appears in the gospel only here at Luke 16:11, apart from the Synoptic verse about making tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. As we might expect by now, the adjective "eternal," τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνάς, yields a decidedly eschatological sense and is attested uniquely here in the Bible.

ἀδικίας, using identical terminology and the Semitic genitive.[48] In both cases, this title does not occur in the fable, but is exclusive to their *epimythia*. While this title seems to have stuck for the judge, the steward is let off with the title "crafty" or more positive "shrewd" from φρόνιμος.

As we discussed at length in 11.3, φρόνιμος is a focal subject in the ancient fable corpus. It is particularly noteworthy in the *epimythia* of the Crafty Steward, because the idea of φρόνιμος appears almost exclusively in the *epimythia* in the other ancient Greek fable collections. From nearly twenty examples, here are ten:

> So it is with people: the wicked do not fool those who are φρονίμους no matter how much they make a show of goodness. (Perry 7)
>
> So it is with people, too. It behooves τοῦς φρονίμους not to undertake anything until they have seen where it leads. (Perry 9)
>
> The fable shows that οἱ φρόνιμοι more readily endure wrong at the hands of those around them when they see that these do not even spare their own kind. (Perry 23)
>
> This fable shows that οἱ φρόνιμοι won't be deceived any longer by some people's pretenses once they get a taste of their evil ways. (Perry 79)
>
> So it is with οἱ φρόνιμοι among people. Once they have escaped danger, they guard against it in the future. (Perry 134)
>
> So it is that οἱ φρόνιμοι among people sense danger from signs in advance and avoid it. (Perry 142)
>
> The fable shows that the tricks of the evil do not fool τοῦς φρονίμους. (Perry 143)
>
> The fable teaches that τοῦς φρονίμους should not disregard even small matters. (Perry 146)
>
> This fable shows that οἱ φρόνιμοι among people, too, in the same way, when they meet any trouble, regularly deploy their forces against it. (Perry 252)
>
> That we must pay debts of gratitude to our benefactors but make repayment φρονίμως to bad men. (Perry 275 [trans. adapted from Daly])

The Crafty Steward's lesson about φρόνιμος is clearly at home in the ancient fable tradition.

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48 The only turn of phrase approaching this construction elsewhere in Luke is τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ νυμφῶνος (Luke 5:34), "the sons of the bridegroom," though here it is taken over verbatim from Mark 2:19. The lemma φρόνιμος, "shrewd," appears only in this fable and at Luke 12:42. As we observed in 11.3, it is exceedingly common in the fable tradition.

What then does the fable mean? The "parable" genre with its single point clearly will not do. The multiple *epimythia* to the Crafty Steward in verses eight and nine, combined with the applications of verses 10–13, prohibit interpreting it as a "parable." As we pile on moral after moral, the orientation of the story around the author and his possible didactic goal in the narrative diminishes with every step as the focalization shifts more and more to the lessons learned by the readers. Knowing how the fable genre communicates, the *epimythia* of the Crafty Steward give us a guide for how it was understood by its earliest auditors. Like the Judge and the Widow, there simply is no single lesson that naturally arises from the fable over all the others, and it is unlikely that the intent was for there to be one particular lesson. The Crafty Steward is designed to bring its reader into active thought, but once brought there, it is the reader's task to derive an appropriate lesson. The incongruity between the fable story and its paratexts, or between any two morals appended to it are common in ancient fables. The morals reflect the ethical views of the readers as the wrangle with the lessons of this fable, and they need not have a single reading strategy. The multiplicity of them suggests just the opposite.

One way to measure the success of a fable is how effectively it can illustrate a pre-dictated moral, but another way in which a fable can succeed is by generating multiple morals—eliciting from an audience a reflective response in many forms. For the traditional reader of parables this may smack of an "anything goes" hermeneutic. While the ancient fable allows for a greater interpretive breadth than has traditionally been imagined for the ancient "parable," this is far from saying all interpretations, then and now, are equal. After all, the first-century student who generated a poorly deduced moral from a fable was liable to earn a thwack from his *pedagogus*. Within the appropriate range of interpretation for a given context, it is clear that attempting to derive a single meaning for each "parable" is folly. This is plainly evident in the *epimythia* following fables such as the Crafty Steward, which was highly successful at eliciting responses. The extent to which ancient people and present biblical scholars have generated new interpretations is the extent to which they, knowingly or not, have participated in the original goal.

13.5 Scribes Interpreting Jesus's Fables: The Place at the Table (Luke 14:7–11)

During the transmission of the New Testament, it is clear that some scribes understood these stories of Jesus to be fables and appended their own morals to them at various times and places. The fable of the Place at the Table is the

best starting point for examining this phenomenon.[49] The Place at the Table and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector are linked by their virtually identical *epimythium*:

(Luke 14:10–11a) But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, "Friend, move up higher;" then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you …

(Luke 18:13–14a) But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other …

… since everyone who lifts himself up will be brought down, and the one who brings himself down will be raised up.

> ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ὁ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται. (Luke 14:11b)
> ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται. (Luke 18:14b)

There is also the curious parallel in Leviticus Rabbah that we noted in 6.2.3. It seems to be aware of this text and its *epimythium*, appended in a decidedly rabbinic way. Since, unlike the Gospels, Leviticus Rabbah can attribute the fable and its *epimythium* to multiple rabbis, it does exactly this:

> Rabbi Joshua of Sikhnin in the name of Rabbi Levi interpreted, reciting, "For it is better to be told, 'come up' than you to be brought low before the noble …" (Prov 25:7). Rabbi Akiva recited in the name of Rabbi Simon ben Uzzai, "Move down from your place two or three seats and sit, until they say to you, 'move up,' lest you move up and they say to you, 'move down.' It is better that they say to you, 'Move up! Move up!' lest they say, 'Move down! Move down!'" And thus Hillel says, "When I am brought low I am exalted, and when I am exalted I am brought low." (Lev. Rab. 1:5 [trans. Soncino])[50]

Still another version is found in the "Western" text of Matthew, with its own unique spin:

> *And you, seek to increase from that which is small, and from the greater to become less.*
> When you enter into a house and are invited to dine, do not recline in the prominent places, lest perchance one more honorable than you come in, and the host

49 This is a fine example of a text that has been transformed into a fable by virtue of an appended *epimythium*.

50 As in Greek, the verbal and nominal Hebrew words for "high" and "low" found throughout this comparison carry connotations of nobility or exaltation and shame or humility, respectively.

> come and say to you, "Go farther down;" and you will be put to shame. But if you recline in the lower place and one inferior to you comes in, the host will say to you, "Go farther up;" and this will be advantageous to you. (Matt 20:28 in Bezae, Φ, the Old Latin, and the Curatonian Syriac and Harklean Margin)[51]

The reason for its inclusion at this position in the "Western" text is possibly because the preceding verses were also thought to be appropriate *promythia*: "and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came to serve, not to be served …" (Matt 20:27–28a). No link with the verses following is apparent, which simply record Jesus leaving Jericho. This *promythium*, "*And you, seek to increase from that which is small, and from the greater to become less*," fits neatly into type three of Adrados's *epimythium* formulae: a sentence addressed to "you" with the imperative.[52]

The presence of this fable in different locations with different lessons is reminiscent of the same phenomenon in the fable collections. As we observed in 12.2.2, the fable of the Wolf and the Heron has several different morals across the different collections. So, too, has the fable of the Place at the Table preserved separate morals in its framing devices in the Lukan version and in the "Western" text of Matthew.[53] Much like the lessons of the Wolf and the Heron, we need not attempt to reconcile them but to accept each as valid: "Since everyone who lifts himself up will be brought down, and the one who brings himself down will be raised up" (Luke 14:11), and "Seek to increase from that which is small, and from the greater to become less" (Matthew 20:28).

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51 Ὑμεῖς δὲ ζητεῖτε ἐκ μικροῦ αὐξῆσαι καὶ ἐκ μείζονος ἔλαττον εἶναι. Εἰσερχόμενοι δὲ καὶ παρακληθέντες δειπνῆσαι μὴ ἀνακλίνεσθε εἰς τοὺς ἐξέχοντας τόπους, μήποτε ἐνδοξότερός σου ἐπέλθῃ καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ δειπνοκλήτωρ εἴπῃ σοι, Ἔτι κάτω χώρει, καὶ καταισχυνθήσῃ. Ἐὰν δε ἀναπεσῃς εἰς τὸν ἥττονα τόπον καὶ ἐπέλθῃ σου ἥττων, ἐρεῖ σοι ὁ δειπνοκλήτωρ, Σύναγε ἔτι ἄνω, καὶ ἔσται σοι τοῦτο χρήσιμον (trans. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament: Fourth Revised Edition*, 2nd ed. [New York: American Bible Society, 2002], 43).

52 Paola Buzi has identified a Coptic manuscript containing several titles for certain biblical passages and notes that above the first column containing a portion of Luke 14, there is something the author describes as a title, "About those who choose the chief seats …" (Paola Buzi, "Additional Notes in Christian Egyptian Biblical Manuscripts (Fourth–Eleventh Centuries)," in *Bible as Notepad*, 54–65, here 62. This title and paratextual relationship to the Place at the Table is very reminiscent of the fable *promythium*.

53 This is also true of the Lost Sheep, which has different lessons in its Lukan and Matthean forms. Matthew's version also has an *epimythium*: "So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost," οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν θέλημα ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἵνα ἀπόληται ἓν τῶν μικρῶν τούτων (Matt 18:14).

The Place at the Table is the most obvious example of an L fable with differences in the "Western" text, but on more careful examination, it is by no means the only fable that is not frozen in the manuscript tradition. The "Western" text and some other smaller manuscript clusters bear witness to different fable traditions that survive in the manuscripts. When we recognize that these variant texts are fables with fable lessons, we can explain the differences in the manuscripts. They behave as fables and their lessons were approached as fables by the scribes.

In the canonical form of Luke's Gospel, when the narrative of the Rich Fool concludes, a clear *epimythium* follows: "… And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" *So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.* He said to his disciples …" (Luke 12:20b–22a). In Codex Bezae, the *epimythium*, the entire verse, is nowhere to be found. Bezae moves from verse twenty directly to verse twenty-two: "'… And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' He said to his disciples…." On the manuscript itself, a distigma is present, which is a known paratextual indicator to mark textual variants.[54] Metzger considers the omission by Bezae an accidental one, and rates the inclusion of the verse with an "A," but what we now know about *epimythia* should make us less sure about this conclusion.[55] It is conceivable that this *epimythium* was not in the autograph, but added by a very early copyist, who was doing what a good, educated fable reader would do—add a relevant *epimythium* to a fable without one. We have proof of other scribes up to this same practice in another fable, the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16–24). This fable ends without an appended *epimythium*, and this apparently motivated some scribes to compose one for it. After verse twenty-four, in Γ, Family 13, and several majuscules, whether in the body of the text or in the margin, we find an added *epimythium*: "For many are called, but few are chosen."[56] While these manuscripts are medieval, we can be certain that the addition of this *epimythium* to the Great Banquet is an ancient one. Codex Vaticanus marks the end

54 Philip B. Payne and Paul Canart. "Distigmai Matching the Original Ink of Codex Vaticanus: Do they Mark the Location of Textual Variants?" in *Le manuscrit B de la Bible* (*Vaticanus graecus 1209*)*: Introduction au facsimilé, Actes du Colloque de Genève* (*11 juin 2001*)*, Contributions supplémentaires*, ed. Patrick Andrist (Lausanne: Éditions du Zèbre, 2010), 199–226; and Christian-B. Amphoux, "Codex Vaticanus B: Les points diacritiques des marges de Marc," *JTS* 58 (2007): 440–66.

55 Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 135. Since Bezae is also missing the pleonastic λέγων at Luke 18:2, it may be that the "Western text" preserves a more fabulized version of the L fables.

56 πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰσὶν κλητοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί.

of verse twenty-four with the aforementioned distigma, indicating the presence of a substantial variant, likely this *epimythium*.[57] This same manuscript cluster also adds something like a second *epimythium* to the Rich Fool after the end of 12:21: "Saying these things he proclaimed, 'the one who has ears to hear let him hear.'"[58] The tradition of manuscript Γ, in particular, seems to have a penchant for clothing naked fables with lessons. It adds this same *epimythium* after the fable of the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9). Though a full treatment is beyond the scope of the present chapter, this same phenomenon is observable elsewhere in Matthew. While the verse preceding Matthew's Lost Sheep (18:11) is not printed in most modern Bibles, in most manuscripts there is a *promythium*, "For the Son of Man came (to seek and) to save the lost."[59] The cacophony of variants and interpretations offered in the manuscript tradition to Matthew's fable of the Two Sons (Matt 21:28–31) perhaps reflects this same engagement with the norms of fable interpretation.[60]

Among those fables in Luke's collection, the presence of the Place at the Table in the Western text of Matthew demonstrates that it was circulating in early Christian groups and that it generated at least two morals. Within the scribal culture of early Christianity, it appears that some scribes would engage with the fables in Luke's Gospel just as they would a fable collection, adding morals of their own.[61] We also now have reason to question exactly how early the Rich Fool's *epimythium* is and to wonder if there were other *epimythia* that slipped in before our earliest textual witness. While these quasi-paratextual lessons sometimes become frozen in a "canonized" text, from the examples discussed here, we know that this was not always the case. There were still some intrepid scribes willing to add lessons of their own. Given the instability of any given fable paratext, that the variants in the gospels fable lessons are preserved in different manuscript clusters warrants further study.

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57 On the dating of the distigma to around the time of the manuscript itself, see Philip B. Payne, "Do the Marginalia of Vaticanus Support or Undermine the Originality of its Distigmai?," Payne Loving Trust (2010): 1–35.

58 Ταυτα λεγων ἐφώνει ὁ ἐχων ωτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω.

59 ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (ζητήσαι καὶ) σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός. Some form of this saying is found in D, K, L^{mg}, N, W, Γ, Δ, Θ^{c}, numerous majuscules, the Majority Text, and most versions. It is absent from both Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.

60 For a summary of the issues with this fable, see Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 44–47.

61 This is in addition to the textual variants within the fables themselves that conform them more closely to standard fable forms, such as the addition of τις at the beginning of the Pounds (Luke 19:12) and the catch phrases discussed in 14.4.1.

13.6 Creating Plot with the *Chreia*, the Fable, and Its Framing Devices: The Rich Fool (Luke 12:15–21)

The fable of the Rich Fool checks every fable box. It opens with the "x τις" formula, has a fable structure complete with a soliloquy, a *réplique finale* from a *survenant*, and a comic plot involving a foolish character and a supernatural being. Now that we are acquainted with all of the components of constructing a narrative with a fable embedded into it, the Rich Fool allows us to see them working together in concert—a *chreia*, a *promythium*, a fable, and an *epimythium*:

> [*chreia:*] Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, [*promythium:*] "*Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions*" (ὁρᾶτε καὶ φυλάσσεσθε ἀπὸ πάσης πλεονεξίας, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ περισσεύειν τινὶ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῷ). Then he told them a fable, [fable:] "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'" [*epimythium*:] [*So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God*] (οὕτως ὁ θησαυρίζων ἑαυτῷ καὶ μὴ εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν). (Luke 12:13–21)

Before the fable begins in 12:16b, Luke has inserted a transitional phrase to ease the abrupt transition from *promythium* and/or *chreia* to the narrative: "and he told them a fable, saying …," Εἶπεν δὲ παραβολὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγων· (Luke 12:16a). In this brief clause we find two of Luke's characteristic stylistic markers: the participle λέγων preceding the first word of direct speech, and the verb of speaking with πρός and an accusative object. At the beginning, a *promythium* of the later type is attached to the Rich Fool:[62] "*Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions*" (Luke 12:15).[63] Following the concluding interjection (*réplique finale*) of God (*survenant*) that abruptly ends the fable, the *epimythium* appears, "*So it is for the man who stores up treasures for himself but is not rich*

62 We saw another case of this later *promythium* form above in the "Western" version of the Place at the Table, and in most manuscripts of Matthew's Lost Sheep.

63 It is possible that this exhortation was a piece of the preceding *chreia*, but the transition phrase "And he said to them" makes this less likely.

toward God."[64] We must take care once more to observe that while the *pro-* and *epimythium* are complementary, they are not identical. The former is not particularly concerned with amassing wealth, but with greed, and wholly secular ethical advice suitable for anyone. The latter provides a theological spin on the matter and emphasizes having one's priorities straight, rather than abstention of some kind. As we have now come to expect, the story itself does not dictate to the reader the moral to be drawn from it.

Just prior to the *promythium*, Luke makes use of a *chreia*—a brief narrative anecdote providing a setting and occasion.[65] As we explored in 5.6.1 and 10.7, the *chreia* is an important literary form in ancient education and often used in conjunction with the fable. When a *chreia* is used in connection to the fable, it helps to reign in the interpretive possibilities, since the *chreia* supplies a concrete situation to which the fable is being made applicable. With the aid of a *chreia*, the need to incorporate an *epimythium* is alleviated and so most fables without *epimythia* have a *chreia* introduction: The Good Samaritan, the Fig Tree, and the Prodigal Son.[66] Here before the Rich Fool, the *chreia* of the man asking Jesus to adjudicate his inheritance provides a helpful segue that anticipates the subject matter of the fable. Recognizing the parts of the whole, the *chreia*, the *promythium*, the fable, and the *epimythium*, we can deconstruct the evangelist's narrative into its constituent parts—the fable with its framing devices drawn from the collection are inserted here after a *chreia* composed by the evangelist. The *chreia* provides a relevant historical circumstance that suits the fable (sufficiently at least). It transforms the fable into a text legible in a narrative framework. Now that we have the tools and know the parts, we can

64 The *epimythium* fits type 5A exactly: it begins with οὕτως followed by a maxim in which the subject is an articular participle, ὁ θησαυρίζων.

65 Thomas D. Stegman misidentifies the entire episode as a *chreia* elaboration ("Reading Luke 12:13–34 as an Elaboration of a Chreia," *NovT* 49 [2007]: 328–52). Nevertheless, many of his observations are relevant because treatments of *chreia* and fable were similar.

66 The lone exception, a fable with no obvious *chreia* introduction nor moral appended, is the Rich Man and Lazarus. Intriguingly, William Farmer has suggested that Luke 16:14–15 is, in fact, a *chreia* that belongs attached to this fable (William Reuben Farmer, "Notes on a Literary and Form-Critical Analysis of Some of the Synoptic Material Peculiar to Luke," *NTS* 8 [1962]: 301–16, here 309). Indeed, the text would be a fitting introduction to the fable: "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God'" (Luke 16:14–15).

see the mechanics of the different components working together. Here we can watch Luke building a plot using the forms and techniques of his training.[67]

13.7 An *Epimythium* to Fable Interpretation: C. H. Dodd and the Kingdom of God

As we learned in the introduction chapter, Dodd did not take Jülicher's thesis at face value but disagreed fundamentally about what that "single point" was. For Jülicher, it was the single point of broadest moral application. This, Dodd rejected: "Can we really be content with the pure generalization which Jülicher produces as the moral of the parable? Is it much more than an ethical commonplace?"[68] Dodd took Jülicher's single point and argued that, instead of an "ethical commonplace," the single point concerned the kingdom of God. Dodd's central thesis provided at the conclusion of his first chapter is as follows:

> It is therefore certain that Jesus did make use of parables to illustrate what Mark calls "the mystery of the Kingdom of God" (iv.11). I shall try to show that not only the parables which are 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 upon its meaning.[69]

This thesis is important for what it says and what it does not say. During the twentieth century, Dodd's work was used to justify interpreting all the "parables" together as a homogeneous eschatological slurry of kingdom of God teachings. This is not what Dodd promised. At least according to his thesis here, he argues that the kingdom of God theme can be found in "many others," but he does not say "all parables." That later exegetes took Dodd's theory and ran with it is not surprising, since Dodd showed little restraint in performing redaction criticism with an air of positivism about his results that would embolden his followers. "Parables" with morals that have an eschatological flavor he deemed original. Those that did not fit the thesis of the coming kingdom of God, he threw out as secondary. "Parables" told in eschatological settings he deemed authentic. "Parables" in other settings he rejected as inauthentic or made no comment on them. By and large, Dodd applied a very simple equation: Jesus preached the eschatological kingdom of God; the early Church added morals.

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67 On the joining of *chreia* and "parable" to create plot, see Williams, "Parable and Chreia," 85–114; and Moeser, *The Anecdote in Mark*.

68 Dodd, *Parables*, 12.

69 Dodd, *Parables*, 20.

Ergo kingdom of God lessons are original, non-kingdom of God lessons are not. In his *Parables of the Kingdom*, Dodd is far from comprehensive. Many of the L fables are not mentioned: The Two Debtors, the Rich Fool, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Judge and the Widow, and the Pharisee and Tax Collector, for example, are nowhere to be found in it. Put another way, Dodd can be correct about the "kingdom of God" focus in Mark and Matthew, even if he is wrong about Luke.

Even if some of his followers were the ones to complete the bulwark, the results of this chapter demand felling Dodd's titular tower, the intrinsic link between "parable" and the kingdom of God. As John Meier has said, "to try to make all the Synoptic parables speak directly and primarily of the grand history of God's dealings with Israel or of the kingdom of God is to force them onto a Procrustean bed."[70] In this chapter, we saw a great many lessons appended to the most famous and most bizarre fables in the gospel tradition, but now we must reckon with an equally important detail. For the most part, the Markan and Matthean fables explicitly claim to teach lessons about the kingdom of God. In the Lukan Fable Collection, by contrast, no mention is made of the kingdom of God. It is referenced neither to introduce the fables nor in the morals. The kingdom of God is absent from the two Debtors, the Friend at Midnight, the Rich Fool, the Fig Tree, the Place at the Table, the Moronic Builder, the Warring King, the Lost Sheep, Coin, the Prodigal Son, the Crafty Steward, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Worthless Slaves, the Judge and the Widow, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The kingdom of God may be "within you," but it is not in the Lukan Fable Collection.[71] The Lukan Fable Collection is not concerned with providing stories that reveal the kingdom of God. Like the fable collections of its day, Luke and his collection are concerned with warning against vices and encouraging (Christian) moral behavior.

When confronted with this total absence of the kingdom of God in the L fables, many will wish to bargain, saying something to the effect of, "But cannot all these lessons still be about the kingdom of God?" The answer is yes; they still can be. But when we say that the L fables can say something about the kingdom of God, it is in the same way that one can make fables in Babrius or any other fable collections teach lessons about the kingdom of God. Perhaps this absence of kingdom of God lessons in Luke's fables can crack open those in Mark and Matthew again. After all, Jülicher characterized these applications

70 Meier, *Parables*, 41.

71 Note the *chreia* about the kingdom of God at Luke 17:20–21, and the kingdom of God (*chreia*?) introductions to the ever-problematic Pounds (Luke 19:11) and the Banquet (Luke 14:15).

in Mark and Matthew as superficial: "their almost constant introduction: 'the kingdom of heaven is like …' has little meaning."[72] Now that the fables are freed from the "single point" prison, perhaps readers and exegetes will find many more dimensions of meaning in addition to lessons about "the kingdom of God." If we may salvage some kingdom message, it is how this collection of fables in Luke's Gospel was used like the other fable collections in the first century. It is concerned with inculcating moral values to produce good citizens of a different kingdom and good slaves of a heavenly master.

Finally, we need to pose one last question on our way to the next chapter. How is it possible that *none* of the L fables say a word about the kingdom of God when this seems to be a focal interest of those from other sources? How is it possible at the same time that *all* of the L fables go a similar direction with their lessons about ethical behavior and the relationship between human beings and the divine? I will offer a source-critical explanation, proposing that the L fables were a pre-Lukan collection, much like other fable collections of the day. Luke then inserted the fables of this collection into his gospel, chapter by chapter, for the edification and entertainment of his readers.

13.8 Conclusion

The form and content of the *promythium* and *epimythium* allowed for easy identification of these same framing texts in Luke. The presence of *promythia* and *epimythia* surrounding the Lukan fables warrants interpreting them as fables. We have found that, in every case where they are present, the L fables follow the same formal characteristics. They relate content that is consonant with the framing materials in the other fable collections. Interpreting the Lukan fables from within their appropriate literary context demands a fundamental shift in approach from the canons of parable interpretation since Jülicher. No "single point" method of interpretation will suffice for the L fables around which orbit multiple applications.

Interpreting the Lukan fables according to modern fable theory rather than that of centuries ago resolves their exegetical difficulties. In addition to a single intended lesson in specific circumstances, fables permit multiple morals and multiple applications. The lessons applied to the Lukan fables accord perfectly with the moral instruction of the other fable collections, while the topic of the kingdom of God is conspicuously absent. This fact demands we also dispense

72 "ihre fast konstante Einleitung: das Himmelreich ist ähnlich … hat blos Sinn" (Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:98).

with interpreting the Lukan fables through Dodd's eschatological kingdom of God hermeneutic, in favor of the context analogous to the other fable collections: Christian moral instruction. The fable background also brought new insight into the state of the Lukan text, including the disjointedness of the narrative when these framing devices are used, variants in the gospel manuscripts, and how narrative progression is achieved with an embedded fable. The framing devices are often un-Lukan in style and theology, and they pile up in such a number that we would not expect the evangelist to be responsible for composing them all. Thus, the *promythia* and *epimythia* of the Lukan fables also hold source critical implications. The Lukan fables most likely derive from a source: The Lukan Fable Collection.

CHAPTER 14

The Lukan Fable Collection: A Source

14.1 Introduction

This and the next chapter are concerned with discerning a fundamental issue of these fables unique to the Lukan Gospel: how they found their way into his narrative. While none of the preceding chapters hinge upon the results here, the sheer quantity of fable material in Luke, more even than what is found in *The Life of Aesop*, demands an explanation. My goal at present is to offer evidence that the author of Luke's Gospel had a written collection of Jesus's fables at hand. This collection looked much like the other fable collections known around the end of the first century CE. It would have been incorporated from a collection into the gospel much in the same way as fables were incorporated into other narratives. The Lukan Fable Collection then, alongside Mark and Q or Matthew, was one of Luke's major sources, accounting for some forty percent of the Central Section.[1] This chapter will first survey the history of the theory that Luke possessed a "parable collection." I will then describe how other early fable collections made deliberate arrangements and links between fables. Their techniques included placing thematically related fables adjacent to each other and making intertextual references between fables through catch phrases, inclusios, and chiasms. We will then observe this same concern for arrangement and intertextual reference in the Lukan fables.

In Chapter 15, we will dust off the source-critical tools and tend there to matters of grammar, style, and vocabulary in Luke's Gospel. There, we will identify differences between the Lukan Fable Collection material and the rest of the gospel. This evidence will further support the presence of a source behind the canonical Lukan text composed essentially of the fables.[2] With this information in hand, I will discuss catechesis in the early Church as a possible Sitz im Leben of the collection.

1 For the proposed contents of this collection, see 15.5.

2 At the conclusion of Chapter 15, I will also present the natural alternative to the view advocated here, that Luke is responsible for all of this material or has heavily redacted his tradition. There, I will highlight what I see as the challenges to these alternatives.

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14.2 Luke's "Parable" Collection in Gospel Scholarship

Quellenforschung and the search for lost sources of the gospels is long past its heyday. With respect to the Lukan *Sondergut*, Michael Wolter describes the central methodological problem in the history of scholarship.[3] The L *Sondergut* began as a negative category—simply material not in Mark and Q. It then quickly turned into a positive category, changing from "leftover" material to a primary category of a distinct, cohesive source. Such a document would be a peculiar textual potpourri—an assortment of various sayings, *chreia*, fables, miracle stories, etcetera—with no clear structure, resembling no ancient text that has come down to us. The material's only unifying characteristic would be its absence in Mark and Matthew. As Wolter observes, this negative criterion does not justify the proposal for a positive assertion—a hypothetical document.[4] The lessons learned from the quest for L are well taken, but we cannot escape a fact that scholars of Luke have observed since the earliest days of critical scholarship: The Central Section (Luke 9:51–19:27) is scarcely a narrative at all. Two centuries ago, even a pious Catholic scholar such as Johann von Hug could write regarding this portion of Luke:

> Here it appears, or better it is clear, that we have no connected story before us, rather individual pieces and scraps, or "fragments" and "*collectanea*" if one wishes to use the word, which the author again transmitted to us just as his own investigation had supplied him.[5]

A century later, C. C. McCown spoke of this as the consensus view.[6] This state of the text requires an explanation. The goal here is not to account for all of the L *Sondergut*; rather, we are using positive criteria to evaluate cohesive material that is homogeneous in terms of its genre, material that looks like well-known

3 Michael Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 2:16–18.

4 Wolter, *Gospel according to Luke*, 2:15.

5 "Hier hat es den Anschein, oder vielmehr ist es klar, das wir keine zusammenhangende Geschichte, sondern einzelne Theile und Bruchstücke, oder wenn man das Wort will, Fragmente vor uns haben und Collectaneen, die uns der Schriftsteller wieder gab, wie sie ihm seine Erforschungen angeboten hatten" (Johann Leonhard von Hug, *Einleitung in die Schriften des neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. [Stuttgart and Tübingen, J.G. Cotta, 1821], 2:159–60).

6 C. C. McCown, "The Geography of Luke's Central Section," *JBL* 57 (1938): 51–66.

ancient documents fitting this genre, and material that even has some possible overlap with the other gospels.[7]

While the majority of Lukan scholars today devote comparatively little space to his sources, and parable scholars are largely silent on the issue of how Jesus's fables reached the specific evangelists, it may be surprising that the theory advanced here is not a fringe view. Over the last century, some prominent New Testament scholars and Luke specialists have suggested that Luke had a collection or collections of "parables." Much like the central issues addressed in the preceding chapters, these scholars who have correctly observed the phenomena we will discuss here have simply not had the tools, the vocabulary, or the comparanda afforded by the ancient fable. One of the goals of this chapter then, is simply to bring this theory of a "parable collection" in Luke's Gospel to a wider audience. By making the simple lexical shift from "parable collection" to "fable collection," we will be in a position to move the hypothesis of such a collection from plausible speculation to a persuasive reconstruction.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, around the same time as Jülicher's discipline-defining project, Vincent Stanton's *The Gospels as Historical Documents* appeared in three volumes.[8] After he methodically worked through every section of the Synoptic Gospels in his second volume, he concluded that the parables unique to Luke were drawn from a written collection—a parables source. Since Stanton was the first to propose this, it is worth quoting from these pages at some length:

> I pass to certain well-known and interesting features of Luke's peculiar matter. And first, it includes several parables, and these parables have a character of their own … [they] may have had a special interest and attraction for particular individuals or portions of the Church, and so may have been separately collected and preserved. But it is also not unlikely, as I have had occasion to observe in my last chapter, that there may have been a tendency on the part of some who rendered parables from the Aramaic, or repeated them orally, or committed them to writing, to work out more fully the original idea. To one or other of these causes, or partly to one and partly to another, the fact that the parables peculiar to the third Gospel are of a special type must be attributed.[9]

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7 The overlaps may be those fables that are also found in Mark or Matthew/Q, such as the Lost Sheep, the Banquet, and so on. We should not be surprised if a version was found in the other gospels as well as in the Lukan Fable Collection. For the proposed contents of the fable collection, see 15.5.

8 Vincent Henry Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: University Press, 1903–1920). Volume 1: *The Early Use of the Gospels*, was published in 1903; Volume 2: *The Synoptic Gospels*, was published in 1909; and Volume 3: *The Gospel of John*, was published in 1920.

9 Stanton, *Gospels as Historical Documents*, 2:230–32.

The many well-known, interesting, and characteristic differences unique to Luke's peculiar "parables" that bring Stanton to this conclusion are the very same we encountered in the previous chapters. He notes the absence of the predominant theme of the "parables" in the other evangelists—the kingdom of God—with generally applicable moral lessons in its stead:

> They differ in subject alike from those which Luke has in common with both the other Synoptics, or with St. Matthew, and from those peculiar to the latter. The theme of all these is the Kingdom of God, the manner of its progress, the attitude of various classes of men to it, the day of its final triumph. On the contrary the parables peculiar to the third Gospel contain strictly speaking no reference to the Kingdom of God. In most of them this is plain; they teach moral and spiritual lessons, applicable under all circumstances.[10]

As we also observed in Chapters 10 and 11, Stanton notes the difference in characters and content. Luke leaves aside the nature imagery for emotive characters, human conflict, and inner debates:

> Again, the parables peculiar to St Luke differ from the others in regard to their form and imagery. With one exception—that of the Barren Fig-tree—they do not bring before us Nature, or Man in his relations with Nature, as so many of the others do. They are concerned with human emotions and motives, inner debatings and actions, which are vividly described; they are in fact short tales of human life. Even in the exception to which I have alluded, the conversation of the proprietor and the gardener forms a large and significant part of the parable.[11]

He notes, as well, that the "parables" are uniquely driven home by means of what I have identified as a *réplique finale* or an *epimythium*: "They bear their moral on the face of them, and in several instances it is driven home by an emphatic saying at the conclusion."[12] Finally, in explaining why Luke has this "special type" of "parable," Stanton observes that they lack Lukan characteristics, and have a style of their own (the subject of this and the next chapter). He concludes from all this that the L "parables" and their unique qualities come not from Luke, but from a written source document:

> To one or other of these causes, or partly to one and partly to another, the fact that the parables peculiar to the third Gospel are of a special type must be attributed. But the question remains whether the selection, or moulding, was due to the evangelist himself, or was connected with an earlier stage in the history of their transmission. It has been held by some that the evangelist's powers of

10 Stanton, *Gospels as Historical Documents*, 2:231.

11 Stanton, *Gospels as Historical Documents*, 2:231.

12 Stanton, *Gospels as Historical Documents*, 2:231.

> description and delicate perception of various traits of human character are to be seen in these parables. The idea is attractive in some respects; but the characteristics of the Lucan style are with one exception, that of the Good Samaritan, to which reference has already been made, not specially noticeable in them. And the difference of style in the rest is the more noteworthy by contrast, and renders it probable that the evangelist has derived them from a document.[13]

The present author fully endorses Stanton's conclusion. Stanton's theory was immediately picked up by J. Vernon Bartlet (1911),[14] who supposes such a collection will have "passed through the medium of some Hellenistic circle of Palestinian Christianity," and along with other L material, would have been "already prepared for easy assimilation into the work of such an evangelist as Luke."[15] After Bartlett, however, it seems that Stanton's observations laid fallow for some while.

In the meantime, Wilfred Knox argued for several collections of "parables" in both Luke and Matthew.[16] Knox begins with the theory that the Lukan fables came to him in *several* collections, roughly equivalent to where they fall in the gospel: a tract of banquet parables in chapter 14, a tract of forgiveness parables in chapter 15, a tract of "God and Mammon" parables in chapter 16, and still another tract in chapters 18–19. Knox uses this as a working theory, but he is clearly open to the possibility that they were originally united as well. When discussing the division between the fables of chapters 15 and 16, for example, he says "it is perfectly possible that with the parable of the prodigal son they formed a compilation of longer parables."[17] Observing the "explanations" (*pro-* and *epimythia*), Knox supposes that the "parable tract" of chapters 18–19 was used for catechesis (on which, see 15.6).[18]

Not long after Knox, William Farmer published an article arguing that the fables of chapter 15 as well as Luke 13:1–9 (containing the Fig Tree along with its opening *chreia*) were drawn from the same written source.[19] His study is intended as a test-case and he does not decide what other fables might be in

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13 Stanton, *Gospels as Historical Documents*, 2:232.

14 J. Vernon Bartlet, "The Sources of St. Luke's Gospel," in *Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, ed. W. Sanday (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911), 313–63.

15 Bartlet, "The Sources of St. Luke's Gospel," 349–50.

16 Wilfred L. Knox, *St. Luke and St. Matthew*, vol 2 of *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

17 Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels*, 93.

18 Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels*, 111. He speculates that the "parable tract" would have come to Luke through a "Hellenistic and probably Pauline medium" (118).

19 Farmer, "Notes on a Literary and Form-Critical Analysis of Some of the Synoptic Material Peculiar to Luke," 301–16.

this same source, though he notes some of the non-Lukan features of the fables found in chapter 14.[20] Equally important in this article, is Farmer's observation that the "parables" of this putative source, as well as others unique to Luke, have *chreiai* attached to their beginnings.[21] Farmer identifies, in addition to the fables of chapter 15 and the Fig Tree, the *chreia* before the Rich Fool, and suggests that Luke 16:14–15 may have originally been a *chreia* preceding the Rich Man and Lazarus.[22]

Though Dodd does not seem to take up the question apart from the usual thematic links between the fables, Jeremias does address the matter of "parable collections." In his popular book, *Rediscovering the Parables*, he devotes a chapter to "Collection and Fusion of Parables."[23] He begins by noting that, quite often, all three Synoptic Gospels will pair up similes and fables: "lamp and measure" (Mark 4:21–25), "salt and light" (Matt 5:13–14a), and "tower builder and king" (Luke14:28–32). Jeremias then lays out the simple thesis that "the primitive Church had begun early to make collections of parables,"[24] and he identifies the usual suspects: Luke 6:39–49, 12:35–59, 14:7–24, chapter 15, chapter 16, 18:1–14.[25] Unlike Stanton, Jeremias says nowhere explicitly that Luke got his parables in a single collection, but he concludes the chapter by observing that "the primitive Church made collections of parables, which were sometimes fused."[26]

Stanton's theory is taken up again in the dissertation of Craig Blomberg, "The Tradition History of the Parables Peculiar to Luke's Central Section."[27]

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20 Farmer, "Notes on a Literary and Form-Critical Analysis," 313–14.

21 Hawkins already notes that Luke adds introductions to his fables, but the *chreia* genre was presumably unknown to him (*Horae Synopticae: Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1899], 161). Dibelius was the first to properly identify these as *chreia*, though he was not making a source-critical argument (*From Tradition to Gospel*, 152–64).

22 Farmer, "Notes on a Literary and Form-Critical Analysis," 309. Farmer believes that these *chreiai* were attached already in Luke's source. On the basis of their style and the way ancient authors would have incorporated fables into a narrative, I think it is more likely that Luke is responsible for joining the fables to the *chreiai*.

23 Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables*, 71–88.

24 Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables*, 73.

25 Jeremias also identifies several in the other Synoptic authors, e.g., Mark 4 and Matt chapters 13 and 18 (*Rediscovering the Parables*, 73–74).

26 Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables*, 88.

27 Craig L. Blomberg, "The Tradition History of the Parables Peculiar to Luke's Central Section" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1982). Portions made it into articles, such as Craig L. Blomberg, "Midrash, Chiasmus, and the Outline of Luke's Central Section," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 217–61; and into *Interpreting the Parables*.

Blomberg's work remains, until now, the most thorough investigation into the theory that the L fables were a pre-Lukan "parable collection." Blomberg recognizes that he must discuss not merely the "parables" themselves, but "framing materials" that seem to have been added to the L "parables" before Luke received them. Blomberg includes these materials, which I have identified as the fable *promythium, epimythium*, and preceding *chreiai*, as part of his parable source. Though he is unaware of the ancient fable, Blomberg sees these "framing materials" as pieces of dominical tradition that have been added after the "parables" were composed, but before Luke received the collection. This conclusion accords well with the one advocated here, that Jesus's fables, by and large, received their *promythia* and *epimythia* before they reached Luke's Gospel.

Blomberg is at his best during his concluding chapters on source-critical analysis and how the fables fit in Luke's Gospel plan. He discusses the usefulness or non-usefulness of previous linguistical surveys for determining things like characteristic vocabulary of the gospel authors, their redactional tendencies, and their sources. He then applies this to the issue of the L fables as a source. With the appropriate caution due for reaching results from this method, Blomberg employs the formulae of Lloyd Gaston,[28] which he adapts to the L fables without great difficulty. His conclusion is worth quoting:

> For the person convinced of the deutero-Pauline nature of the Pastorals: on stylistic grounds, then the conclusion necessarily follows that the stylistic case for pre-Lucan vocabulary in the parables of L is significantly stronger still … At best one can conclude only that, to the extent that word frequencies apply at all to texts of this size, the data tend to suggest pre-Lucan authorship. One can phrase it no more strongly.[29]

The computational measures of style and vocabulary that support the pseudo-Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles are stronger for the pre-Lukan origin of the L fables. The significant result is a negative one, that Luke's style and vocabulary are distributed quite thinly in the L fables compared to elsewhere, while in other L passages, Lukan style and vocabulary appear much more thickly.[30] In other words, the L fables have disproportionately little Lukan style, while the other L material has disproportionately greater Lukan style.

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28 Lloyd Gaston, *Horae Synopticae Electronicae: Word Statistics of the Synoptic Gospels* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973).

29 Blomberg, "The Tradition History of the Parables," 332.

30 We will examine this evidence in the next chapter. For a history of L scholarship generally, and a more recent examination of these issues, see Kim Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus According to L*, JSNTSup 147 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

Blomberg concludes that all the "parables," their frames, and the context in which they appear in the narrative are all historical, the *ipsissima vox* if not the *ipsissima verba Jesu*. He allows that Luke paraphrased, clarified, improved the style, and abbreviated the "parable" material he received in the source, but a careful reader will observe that Blomberg did not permit Luke to *add* anything to the source. Following the arguments of Stanton and Bartlet, he argues that, between the historical Jesus and Luke, the "parables" were used in a Jewish-Christian group in Palestine.[31] The "parable collection" was arranged chiastically for mnemonic purposes and written down.[32] This is how Luke, and Luke alone among the evangelists, found them. Luke, then, used the "parables" of the collection to provide the framework for his Central Section, maintaining the chiastic structure.

The views of Blomberg and Michael Goulder provide a helpful counterbalance and complement to one another. According to Goulder, all the "parables" unique to Luke were freely composed by the evangelist, while according to Blomberg, they were all dominical and transmitted intact in a parable collection, with nothing added to them.[33] Goulder's observations about the unique features of the Lukan fables are incisive and well argued, while Blomberg's thorough investigation of a parable source is impressive and persuasive. The arguments of both Blomberg and Goulder are all the more remarkable, since neither makes any appeal to fables or fable collections that greatly resemble their results and enhance the persuasiveness of their claims.

Though Blomberg's dissertation was never published as such, his advancement of the parable collection theory was adopted by two major Lukan scholars. In his three-volume Word Biblical Commentary on Luke (1982–1998), John Nolland cites Blomberg's theory with approval:

> … this study of Blomberg's adds up to a very strong case for the view that Luke has used a parables source as core source for the construction of his journey narrative. He has retained the parables in the original chiastic order of that source, but he has heavily expanded with other materials and seems to have made no attempt to use as his own the structure of his source.[34]

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31 Blomberg, "The Tradition History of the Parables," 461.

32 Blomberg, "The Tradition History of the Parables," 461–62.

33 Michael Goulder, "Characteristics of the Parables in the Several Gospels," *JTS* 19 (1968): 51–69, and later in his *Luke: A New Paradigm, passim*. In the next chapter, I will address what I believe are the essential problems with the alternative answers for Luke's Fable Collection, such as Goulder's suggestion that Luke has composed his L fables.

34 Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 530–31. This reflects what is probably an evolution of Nolland's view expressed in the first volume before Blomberg's dissertation: "I would prefer the complexity of a view that combines the origin of the parables with the historical Jesus,

Nolland also follows Blomberg's argument that this chiastic structure of the fables is the framework for Luke's Central Section.[35]

Parsons first adopts Blomberg's theory in an article,[36] and a subsequent monograph: *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*.[37] Like Blomberg and Nolland, Parsons sees a chiastic structure and follows the same pairings of fables given above.[38] Unlike Blomberg and Nolland, however, Parsons appears, at least initially, to attribute this structure to the evangelist rather than the collection.[39] Though Parsons does not follow Blomberg in including all of the L fables in his collection, he credits Blomberg for the proposed links between the fables in the chiasm.[40] These chiasms include the Good Samaritan (10:30–35) and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9–14), since both concern reversed heroes and villains, and both are the only fables to contain the theme of justification with the lemma δικαιόω. The Friend at Midnight (11:5–8) and the Judge and the Widow (18:1–8), as we shall show below, have linguistic and thematic parallels: shameless characters who beat the person they are entreating into submission (παρέχειν κόπον). Likewise, the Rich Fool (12:16–21) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) are both fables of rich fools and open with a variant of "a certain rich man" (ἀνθρώπος τις πλούσιος). Parsons also suggests there are two sub-groups of five fables, the first group beginning with the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–35) and the second with the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). Parsons extends the hypothesis of Blomberg and Nolland by highlighting that Luke has not merely used these fables to provide an organizational structure but has placed the fables as "landmarks along the way" of the journey. Most importantly, Parsons suggests that they are "landmarks for instructing the disciples," among which we are to include the reader.[41] This didactic,

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their development through use in the church's life prior to the production of our canonical Gospels, a selection by the evangelists made possible by the range of parables and by the emergence of different forms of the same parable in the course of church use, and development of the parables by the different evangelists for the purpose of maximizing their effectiveness in their particular Gospel texts" (*Luke 1–9:20*, xlviii).

35 The structure is: 10:25–37 with 18:9–14; 11:5–8 with 18:1–8; 12:13–21 with 16:19–31; 12:35–38 with 16:1–13; 13:1–9 with 15:1–32; and chapter 14 is the central piece, i.e. A 10:25–37 B 11:5–8 C 12:13–21 D 12:35–38 E 13:1–9 F 14:7–24 E' 15:1–32 D' 16:1–13 C' 16:19–31 B' 18:1–8 A' 18:9–14.

36 Mikeal C. Parsons, "Landmarks along the Way: The Function of the 'L' Parables in the Lukan Travel Narrative," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 40 (1997): 33–47.

37 Parsons, *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*.

38 Parsons, *Luke*, 118–19.

39 In his article, Parsons states that the structure was "probably by Luke himself" ("Landmarks along the Way," 37).

40 Parsons, *Luke*, 119–21 and cf. Blomberg, "Luke's Central Section," 240–44.

41 Parsons, *Luke*, 122.

reader-oriented function is wholly appropriate to the fable genre, and fits well the theory of the origin of the Lukan Fable Collection laid out in 9.3 and 15.6 below.

Several more scholars have independently argued for a Lukan "parable collection" since Blomberg. Helmut Koester thought a "parable collection" was the most likely origin for the Lukan fables:

> Because of the variety of the special materials in Luke, it is difficult to argue for one source as the wellspring of all his special materials. Luke probably used several smaller collections of sayings in this section [(the Lukan Travel Narrative)], most prominent among these a collection of parables, and also a collection of miracle stories, which Luke used in this section and elsewhere.[42]

Douglas Parrot, who appears unaware of Blomberg's work and whose article appeared before Nolland's commentary, argues likewise that Luke's special "parables" are drawn from a written collection.[43] His putative collection resembles that of Blomberg fairly closely, with the framing devices removed and other small differences.[44] Parrot likewise believes that the collection had structural features like an inclusio in its pre-Lukan form, which Luke then altered.[45] Most recently, Garwood Anderson has come down this same path. In his article "Seeking and Saving What Might Have Been Lost: Luke's Restoration of an Enigmatic Parable Tradition," Anderson makes many of the same observations that first brought Stanton to suppose there must be a written collection of "parables" behind Luke's Gospel.[46] Anderson concludes his study,

> Luke thus indirectly bears witness to the polyvalence of parables detached from performative contexts, even while he set himself to safeguarding his performance

42 Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM, 2013), 336–37.

43 Douglas M. Parrott, "The Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1–8a) and Luke's Special Parable Collection," *NTS* 37 (1991): 499–515.

44 Parrot includes in the collection the following: "The Two Debtors (7:41–42) (incorporated in the story of the woman with the ointment); The Good Samaritan (10:30–36); The Reluctant Friend at Midnight (11:5–8); The Foolish Rich Man (12:16–20); The Barren Fig Tree (13:6–9); Not Seeking Honour at Table (14:8–10); Inviting the Poor to Table (14:12–14); Counting the Cost (14:28–33); The Lost Coin (15:8–10); The Prodigal Son and His Brother (15:11–32); The Dishonest Steward (16:1–8a); The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31); The Dutiful Servant (17:7–10); The Unrighteous Judge (18:2–5); The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:10–14a)" ("Luke's Special Parable Collection," 506).

45 Parrot, "Luke's Special Parable Collection," 507.

46 Garwood P. Anderson, "Seeking and Saving What Might Have Been Lost: Luke's Restoration of an Enigmatic Parable Tradition," *CBQ* 70 (2008): 729–49.

> of the parables from the same fate. Luke is a conservator of a tradition so enigmatic that it required an abundant supplement of interpretive coordinates.[47]

This enigmatic tradition of "parables," polyvalent without narrative contexts or secondary applications, is certainly consistent with the explanation of this enigma offered in the current project.

The scholars who have suggested that Luke had a written collection of "parables," with various organizational characteristics, have reached this conclusion unaware of the contemporary fable collections. Their results, in broad outline, will be confirmed here by bringing these fable collections into the conversation. The following exploration will demonstrate that these same characteristics—thematic links between fables, chiastic structures and inclusios, and catchwords and phrases—are found both in the Lukan fable material and in the other ancient fable collections.

14.3 Aesthetic Features of the Ancient Fable Collections

The vicissitudes of transmission for our primary fable collections—Babrius, Phaedrus, and the Augustana Collection—make it a challenge to detect their original structures and any internal cross-references. As we learned in Book I, the Augustana Collection had fables added, removed, and rearranged. Phaedrus's five books have probably all been abbreviated in the course of transmission. Babrius's two books most probably were not composed in the alphabetical order that now survives, and thus any original structure would have been destroyed.[48] Avianus, a later fabulist whose collection is better preserved, can come to our aid here. His collection seems to be essentially intact as written. We also encounter another difficulty remarkably common between parable and fable specialists. Much like parable scholars, fable scholars are far more concerned with getting back to the original forms of fables and performing atomistic analyses of individual fables. They are far less interested in how fable books were structured.[49] In spite of these essential difficulties, what evidence we have to go on lends a good deal of support to the claim that the

47 Anderson, "Luke's Restoration of an Enigmatic Parable Tradition," *CBQ* 70 (2008): 49.

48 Holzberg believes the alphabetic arrangement is original (*Ancient Fable*, 53–55). Others, including Adrados (*Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:103), Vaio (*Mythiambi of Babrius*, xxxiii), and Perry (*Babrius and Phaedrus*, lviii–lix) think that it was not.

49 As we will see below, only Nøjgaard, Holzberg, and Luzzatto on Avianus expend any real effort on this kind of study.

thematic links between neighboring fables, chiasms, inclusios, and catchwords spotted by New Testament scholars are not figments of the imagination.

14.3.1 *Phaedrus*

In Phaedrus's collection, we know that the five original books have been greatly altered in transmission. Nøjgaard summarizes the problem in three main issues.[50] First, we have the impossibility of knowing with certainty the definitive number of the fables in the original collection. Just by looking at the figures, it is easy to recognize that the number of fables included in each book now—31, 8, 19, 26, and 10, respectively—could not have been original. Second, those fables that survive in various secondary places, like Perotti's Appendix, are impossible to put into their original place within the five books. Third, their current order in the manuscripts is not necessarily original. From this, Nøjgaard concludes that "the state of the text prohibits an overall hypothesis on a possible composition of the collection."[51] In spite of these essential issues, there are a number of patterns that appear to have survived. In contrast to the rest, Book 1 appears to be in an approximately complete state.[52] In this book, Holzberg, for example, observes a chiastic arrangement between *Fables* 1.1–2 and 30–31 that provided the original framework for the book. According to Holzberg, the two pairs "deal with each of the two themes addressed several times in the book: cruelty of the stronger toward the weaker, and ordinary people in the face of superior powers."[53] The first fable, the Wolf and the Lamb (1.1, cf. Perry 155) mirrors the Kite and the Doves (1.31), while the Frogs Ask for a King (1.2, cf. Perry 44) is mirrored by the Frogs Dread the Battle of the Bulls (1.30). Both *Fables* 1.1 and 2 are based on Greek originals, while *Fables* 1.30 and 31 appear to be original compositions of Phaedrus to create this *abba* chiasm.[54] Other thematically-linked pairs neighbor each other, such as the fable about a woman in labor (1.18), and a dog about to deliver puppies (1.19).[55] Still others are separated by several fables, such as the two fables of dogs engaging in follies involving rivers (1.4 and 20). Others provide a thematic antithesis, such as a lion taking shares from the other animals in *Fab.* 1.5, and the animals getting their recompense from an aged lion in *Fab.* 1.21.

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50 *La fable antique*, 2:159.

51 *La fable antique*, 2:159.

52 *La fable antique*, 2:159. Holzberg is actually less optimistic that even Book 1 has not been gutted in the middle (*Ancient Fable*, 40).

53 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 41.

54 Holzberg raises the possibility that Phaedrus is imitating Horace, whose first book of *Odes* has a similar thematic pairing of its second and penultimate poem (*Ancient Fable*, 41).

55 Holzberg also suggests *Fables* 1.16 and 17 as an antithetical pair (*Ancient Fable*, 41).

Outside of Book 1, Nøjgaard has collected a number of other links of various kinds.[56] One of the more ingenious links fable scholars have noted is between *Fab.* 3.8 and 3.9. Phaedrus, *Fab.* 3.9 is about Socrates and his friends, opening like this:

"When Socrates had laid the foundation of a small house…." The fable that precedes it, 3.8, goes like this:

> *Be warned by this lesson and examine yourself often.*
> A certain man had a very ugly daughter, and also a son remarkable for the beauty of his features. These two, while at their childish play, happened to look into a mirror which had been placed on their mother's boudoir chair. The boy made much of his own good looks; the girl was angry and could not bear the quips of her proud brother, construing everything he said—what else would you expect?—as a reproach against herself. Accordingly, she ran off to her father, bent on getting back at her brother. Full of malice, she pressed her charge against the boy, that he, though a male, had been meddling with something that belongs only to women. The father took both in his arms and, as he kissed them, sharing his warm love between the two, he said: "I want you both to use the mirror every day; you, that you may not spoil your beauty by the vices of profligacy; you, that you may overcome by virtuous qualities the handicap of your looks." (Phaedrus, *Fables* 3.8)

In this fable, the father concludes the story with a *réplique finale* based on a famous saying of Socrates, preserved among various authors such as Plutarch:

> Socrates used to urge the ill-favoured among the mirror-gazing youth to make good their defect by virtue, and the handsome not to disgrace their face and figure by vice. (Plutarch, *Mor.* 141d [Advice to Bride and Groom 25] [trans. Babbitt, LCL])[57]

This *réplique finale*, a famous saying attributed to Socrates, provides a clever link to the next fable, which takes up Socrates as the protagonist. Earlier in Book 3, there is an antithetical pair in *Fables* 3.1 and 3.2. *Fables* 3.1 bewails the exhausted strength of the author, while he threatens his enemies that he will rally back with a vengeance in 3.2. In Book 4, Phaedrus the author speaks, probably to provide us with confirmation that these links—subtle and not so subtle—are deliberate:

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56 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 161–64.

57 There are several other attestations of this saying, including Diogenes Laertius, *Vit.* 2.33, and others collected in Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 3:558–59. Given his importance for the Greek fable, it is noteworthy that it is preserved in the fragment of Demetrius of Phalerum, *Sayings of the Seven Wise Men* (Stobaeus, *Flor.* 3.1.172).

> But take a careful look into these trifles; what a lot of practical instruction you will find in tiny affairs! They are not always just what they seem to be. Many people are deceived by the façade of a structure; it is the unusual mind that perceives what the artist took pains to tuck away in some inner nook." (Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.2)

Pairs in Book 4 include two neighboring fables about Prometheus. *Fables* 4.16 makes a direct reference to the preceding story of 4.15 (fables do not normally do that). The three fables, 4.21–23, form a unit. The first, 4.21, is a fable about fake wealth (a treasure find fable), with an antithesis fable about true wealth ("a man of learning always has riches within himself") (*Fab.* 4.23). This antithetical pair is divided by a direct address of the fabulist to the reader in 4.22.

14.3.2 *The Augustana Collection*

In the Augustana Collection, which is arranged semi-alphabetically in the manuscripts, no aesthetic logic governs the arrangement of the work overall. But, as Nøjgaard and Holzberg following him argue, the design of the original compilation in the first or second century CE was a deliberate one.[58] Still now, certain original clusters of inter-connected fables can be identified.

According to Holzberg, these linked fable clusters can give us an idea of the original layout. A couple of examples of these linked fables are the stag fables (Perry 74–77), and a collection of Zeus fables (Perry 105–109).[59] It is not significant that fables about stags or Zeus neighbor each other, as this is largely dictated by the alphabetic order; rather, what is noteworthy is their repetition of themes, structural schematics, style, and catchphrases and catchwords. In the stag fables, each ends in a soliloquy of the stag lamenting its choice that results in its death. They all resonate with each other in a recognizable formula:

> ἔφη πρὸς ἑαυτήν, "δειλαία ἔγωγε, ἥτις…" (Perry 74)
> εἶπε πρὸς ἑαυτήν, "ἀλλ' ἔγογε ἀθλία, ἥτις…" (Perry 75)
> ἔφη, "βαρυδαίμων ἐγώ, ἥτις…" (Perry 76)
> πρὸς ἑαυτήν ἔφη, "δίκαια πάσχω, ὅτι…" (Perry 77)

These links between the stag fables, with their final soliloquies, are fairly straightforward. More complex are the Zeus fables, which form a group that is, as Holzberg puts it, "elegantly linked by a web of thematic, structural, and stylistic allusions."[60] The complexity of this interconnectedness is difficult to con-

58 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 1.131; Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 86.
59 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 85–86.
60 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 86.

vey without a close reading of them all, but a presentation of a few catchwords and phrases will offer some indication of the extent:

> When Zeus was married, he gave a banquet for all the animals. Only the turtle failed to come, and Zeus wondered why. The next day he asked her why she was the only one who didn't come to his dinner. When she said, "I love my home; it's the best place," he became angry with her and provided that she should carry her house around on her back. (Perry 106 [trans. adapted from Daly])
> Ζεὺς γαμῶν τὰ ζῷα πάντα εἱστία. Μόνης δὲ χελώνης ὑστερησάσης, διαπορῶν τὴν αἰτίαν, τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ ἐπυνθάνετο αὐτῆς διὰ τά μόνη ἐπὶ τὸ δεῖπνον οὐκ ἦλθε. Τῆς δὲ εἰπούσης· Οἶκος φίλος, οἶκος ἄριστος, ἀγανακτήσας κατ' αὐτῆς παρεσκεύασεν αὐτὴν τὸν οἶκον αὐτὸν βαστάζουσαν περιφέρειν. (Perry 106)

> Zeus, in admiration of the fox's intelligence and cunning, conferred upon him the kingship over the speechless animals. But, wishing to know whether the fox had lost her cupidity, he set a tumblebug loose right before her eyes as he rode along in his litter. Unable to resist as it flew about the litter, the fox jumped up in a most undignified way to try to catch it. Zeus became angry with her and demoted her again to her old station. (Perry 107 [trans. adapted from Daly])
> Ζεὺς ἀγασάμενος ἀλώπεκος τὸ συνετὸν τῶν φρενῶν καὶ τὸ ποικίλον τὸ βασίλειον αὐτῇ τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων ἐνεχείρισε. Βουλόμενος δὲ γνῶναι εἰ τὴν τύχην μεταλλάξασα μετεβάλετο καὶ τὴν γλισχρότητα, φερομένης αὐτῆς ἐν φορείῳ κάνθαρον παρὰ τὴν ὄψιν ἀφῆκεν. Ἡ δὲ ἀντισχεῖν μὴ δυναμένη, ἐπειδὴ περιίπτατο τῷ φορείῳ, ἀναπηδήσασα ἀκόσμως συλλαβεῖν αὐτὸν ἐπειρᾶτο. Καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς ἀγανακτήσας κατ' αὐτῆς πάλιν αὐτὴν εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν τάξιν ἀποκατέστησεν. (Perry 107)

The thematic links and the identical catchphrase "Zeus became angry with her," in particular, recall one fable in the other. Another linking phrase between three Zeus fables also appears in a group:

> When Zeus formed man and woman he commanded Hermes …
> Ζεὺς πλάσας ἄνδρα καὶ γυναῖκα ἐκέλευσεν Ἑρμῆν… (Perry 102)

> Zeus commanded Hermes … to pour in … and measuring it out he gave an equal amount to each.
> Ζεὺς Ἑρμῇ προσέταξε … χέαι…καὶ μέτρον ποίησας ἴσον ἑκάστῳ ἐνέχει (Perry 103)

> When Zeus formed humankind he commanded Hermes … to pour in … and Hermes measured out equal portions and poured them into each.
> Ζεὺς πλάσας ἀνθρώπος ἐκέλευσεν Ἑρμῆν…ἐγχέαι. κἀκεῖνος μέτρον ἴσον ποιήσας ἑκάστῳ ἐνέχεεν. (Perry 108)

This web of interconnectedness between the three may best capture what was a broader phenomenon in the collection.

According to Holzberg, "The significance of these and other interconnected fables has yet to be properly assessed in studies focusing specifically on such

groups."[61] Holzberg's assessment may be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to all of the fable collections. Each evince such patterns, mentioned in passing by various fable scholars, but none of which have been properly studied.

14.3.3 *Babrius*

Since scribes most likely rearranged Babrius's fables into their present alphabetical order, his collection has become so jumbled that we are essentially at a loss to reconstruct any major catchphrases or thematic units.[62] In spite of this, Nøjgaard observes one way past this obstacle, "a curious phenomenon that allows us to glimpse isolated links between stories: self-citations."[63] These deliberate cross-references include Babrius repeating idiosyncratic usages of certain words, and the repetition of *hemistichia*, or even entire verses in different fables.[64] Here is an example of a repeating half-line catchphrase that appears three times toward the end of Babrius's collection:

> "ὁ λέων" ἔφασκεν, "οἶδας, ἔστι μοι γείτων,
> ἔχει δὲ φαύλως, κἀγγύς ἐστι τοῦ θνήσκειν.
> "The lion is my neighbor, as you know," said he.
> "But now he's very ill and close to death." (*Fab.* 95.14–15)

> Δεῦρο, γλυκεῖα, καί με ποικίλοις μύθοις
> παρηγόρησον ἐγγὺς ὄντα τῆς μοίρης."
> Come hither, sweet one, console me with talk of every kind
> now that I'm so near to death. (*Fab.* 103.15–16)

> ὁ δ' οἰκότριψ κλὼψ ἐγγὺς ὢν μόρου τλήμων
> τοιοῖσδε μύθοις ἱκέτευε τονθρύζων
> The little house-bred thief, now close to death, poor creature,
> faintly muttering begged for life with words like these: (*Fab.* 107.2–3)

These three fables are all clustered toward the end of the book, and all three feature a lion in the fable. It suggests, perhaps, that the three phrases are intended to reference each other. Another example toward the beginning of the current order occurs in two fables featuring birds at odds with a farmer:

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61 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 86.

62 For the full order of all the fables in the various recensions in full detail, see Luzzatto and La Penna, *Babrius*, lxv–lxvii.

63 "Il y a pourtant un phénomène curieux qui permet d'entrevoir des liens isolés entre les récits: *les citations personnelles*" (Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 351 [italics original]).

64 For the repeating idiosyncratic use of words Nøjgaard provides the examples of ἀλοάω in the sense of "to break" (*La fable antique*, 351). While one can locate numerous repeating *hemistichia* as I do here without great difficulty, I have yet to spot any repeating complete lines, and Nøjgaard does not provide any examples.

> Γέρανοι γεωργοῦ κατενέμοντο τὴν χώρην
> ἐσπαρμένην νεωστὶ πυρίνῳ σίτῳ…
> κατεφρόνησαν λοιπὸν ὥστε μὴ φεύγειν,
> Cranes were overrunning a farmer's field lately sown with wheat … they ignored him thereafter and did not flee. (*Fab.* 26.1–2, 6)

> οἱ ψῶρες ἦλθον κἀνέμοντο τὴν χώρην.
> ὁ δ' ἄρτον ᾔτει, καθάπερ εἶχε συνθήκην
> οἱ δ' οὐκ ἔφευγον. Τῷ δ' ὁ παῖς λίθων πλήρη
> On came the starlings and settled in the field. The farmer called for "bread" according to the plan, and the starlings did not flee … (*Fab.* 33.15–17)

These fables resonate with each other, from plot, structure, the characters, as well as these catchphrases. Other possible catchphrases may be displaced from their original linked fable in the current manuscripts by a hundred fables. One such example is the *end* of fable 34 about the foolish boy who forfeits his lunch, which would make a fitting match to the *opening* line of 131 about a foolish youth who forfeits his fortune:

> Ὅταν ὀρφανοῦ τις οὐσίαν ἀναλώσας
> ἔπειτα ταύτην ἐκτίνων ἀποιμώζῃ,
> πρὸς τοῦτον ἄν τις καταχρέοιτο τῷ μύθῳ.
> One might apply this fable to a guardian who has squandered an orphan's inheritance and wails when he is obliged to pay it back. (*Fab.* 34.12–14)

> Νέος ἐν κύβοισιν οὐσίην ἀναλώσας
> στολὴν ἑαυτῷ κατέλιπεν μίαν <μούνην>,
> A young man who had lost his fortune in playing dice saved apart for himself just one garment … (*Fab.* 131.1–2)

These examples are merely illustrative. Nøjgaard appropriately describes the quantity of these "*citations personnelles*" (self-citations) as "legion."[65] Indeed, there are easily *fifty* such paired *hemistichia* identifiable in the critical apparatus.[66] We can also see that some of the paired *hemistichia*, such as those given as examples here, have thematic links as well. In the Babrian fables, we can be fairly certain that many of these paired *hemistichia* were intended as catchphrases, though deciphering which ones with any certainty is a lost cause. Holzberg, who argues that the alphabetical arrangement is original, believes that a certain detectible latitude in the alphabetic order was a deliberate maneuver that enabled Babrius to join certain fables. As an example, he

65 Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 351.

66 Like any poet worth his salt, Babrius probably kept some *hemistichia* of a certain metrical value in his back pocket to use as needed, but surely not this many.

points to *Fables* 39 (Δε- after Δρ-) and 40 (Διε- after Δια-), which belong together because they are both political in their lesson—a topic Babrius does not take up often.[67] Adrados and Vaio concur that there has been extensive contamination of Babrius's fables in terms of content and order, but both acknowledge in passing that later scribes were responsible for putting small collections of fables together in Babrius's books.[68]

14.3.4 *Avianus*

In contrast to the three main collections we have compared, the fable book of Avianus, perhaps owing to its late arrival, has not suffered the same demolition of its original structure. With Avianus, as is true with ancient fables generally, the lion's share of scholarly interest is text-critical in nature. But, it was in attempting to answer some of these issues with Avianus's text that Luzzatto put forward a relevant theory for our present purpose.[69] She argues that Avianus chose only those fables that he could arrange into sequential thematic pairs—*Fables* 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, and so on—producing 21 pairs through the end of the book.[70] The last pair, in *Fab.* 41 and 42, is a fine example. Both *Fab.* 41 and 42 take up the prospect of mortality, the necessity of not lamenting one's fate, the inevitability of life coming to an end, and the virtue of a good death. Their *epimythia* read:

> *This example will serve in the future to warn the wretched not to lament their destiny when it is under the control of the great.* (Avianus, *Fab.* 41)

> *So every time we face disaster of twofold hazard, it is the noble death which it is expedient to achieve.* (Avianus, *Fab.* 42 [trans. Duff and Duff, LCL])

Luzzatto highlights the lesson from the fate of the unfired earthen jar in a rainstorm in *Fab.* 41: "Even a man of the noblest birth, will have his form disfigured without mercy in the violent and ineluctable waters of death that will melt the mud with which he was modeled."[71] As Luzzatto observes, this is a fitting conclusion to the book of fables and creates an inclusio with Avianus's prologue in which he intends to offer "a work to delight the mind, to exercise the brain, to

67 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 54–55.

68 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 1:106, echoed by Vaio, *Mythiambi of Babrius*, xxxiii.

69 Some of these textual questions include what form of Babrius and Phaedrus was known to Avianus, why he rewrote them as he did, and why he selected these and only these forty-two fables for his collection.

70 Maria Jagoda Luzzatto, "Note su Aviano e sulle raccolte esopiche greco-latine," *Prometheus. Rivista di studi classici* 10 (1984): 75–94.

71 "Nelle violente et ineluttabili acque della morte che scioglieranno il fango con cui è stato modellato e sfigureranno impietose la sua forma" (Luzzatto, "Note su Aviano," 94).

relieve anxiety—one that will give you a wary knowledge of the whole course of life" (Avianus, *Fab.* Prologue 18–20 [trans. Duff and Duff, LCL]).[72] Luzzatto attempts to identify the link between all of the fable pairs and invites more detailed analysis.[73] As Holzberg notes thirty years later, Luzzatto's still remains "the one currently available study."[74] Although Holzberg is not convinced by all of Luzzatto's pairs, he concurs that Avianus chose their present order due to deliberate planning, though there remains no specialized study of the issue.[75]

Phaedrus's first book and Avianus, the two best preserved ancient collections, have reasonably easy-to-identify patterns, while the Augustana Collection and Babrius require a bit more effort. While the present state of the fable collections is generally regarded as a pitiful representation of the originals that hinders the detection of the original structure, what remains still leaves us something to go on. The authors of the ancient collections and those who transmitted them were interested in linking fables, whether by their theme, moral, structure, or by catchwords and phrases. These links were achieved by placing related fables next to each other, or by creating other patterns, such as chiasm and inclusio. We should recall that the scholars who have identified a "parable collection" in Luke have noted these very same features in the gospel. A confirmation of these patterns in the Lukan Fable Collection will be further validation that we are dealing with a collection of Jesus's fables resembling the others. On balance, we may also observe that the ancient fabulists were probably not completely rigorous in forcing a chiasm, inclusio, catchphrase, or thematic links between every single fable in their collection. This fact also permits us not to demand that every fable in Luke's collection be shoehorned into an overarching pattern.

14.4 Aesthetic Features of the Lukan Fable Collection

We can begin with the Lukan fables that have thematic links, since these are well-established and easy to recognize. The fables of Luke 15 are closely connected, both by the theme and catchwords that relate to the idea of "lost and found." As we noted in 13.3, we can observe a (secondary) thematic link between the fables of Luke 18, the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8) and the Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14). Another less famous but still obvious thematic pair is the Tower Builder and Warring King (Luke 14:28–35). As

72 Luzzatto, "Note su Aviano," 94.
73 Luzzatto, "Note su Aviano," 92–94.
74 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 65.
75 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 65.

Knox noted above, we may also observe thematic links in the fables of Luke 14 that have to do with banquets. The Friend at Midnight and the Judge and the Widow also share a great deal in common that we will explore momentarily.

While it would certainly be consistent with a pre-Lukan fable collection for the fables to be ordered according to various themes, it would also be practical for the evangelist to organize some of his fables into thematic blocks. Such thematic links then are no smoking gun of a source. While thematic connections between neighboring fables in Luke are obvious, there are still others catchphrases between fables several chapters apart. These kinds of linguistic links have no business in a narrative text like Luke's Gospel. That we can identify a number of these surviving in Luke's canonical form will provide further support of a pre-Lukan fable collection.

14.4.1 *Twin Fables and Coordinating Catchphrases*

14.4.1.1 The Friend at Midnight and the Judge and the Widow

The most interesting example in the Lukan Fable Collection of a catchphrase linking twin fables is the uncanny pair of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5–8) and the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1–8). Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, New Testament scholars have regarded these as "twin parables," from Jülicher,[76] to Bultmann,[77] Jeremias,[78] Ott,[79] Goulder,[80] Bovon,[81] Hultgren,[82] Merz,[83] Snodgrass, and so on. There is universal agreement that these fables mirror one another in form, style, content, and with catchphrases. We may cite Snodgrass for the *consensus communis*:

> The central section of Luke, the "travel narrative," is largely chiastic and this parable [The Friend at Midnight] intentionally corresponds to the parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge … Luke 11:5–8 is an obvious parallel to this parable

76 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2.268, and 281. Note as well that Jülicher treats these two fables sequentially rather than in their canonical order.

77 Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931), 211.

78 Jeremias, *Parables*, 157–59.

79 Wilhelm Ott, *Gebiet and Heil: Die Bedeutung der Gebetsparänese in der lukanischen Theologie*, SANT 12 (Munich: Kösel, 1965), 23–27, 59–60. Ott's is the most thorough treatment of the affinities between the two.

80 Goulder, *Luke*, 498–99.

81 Bovon, *Luke*, 539.

82 "In both form and content the Parable of the Unjust Judge is a twin of the Parable of the Friend at Midnight" (Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 253).

83 Annette Merz, "Freundschaft verpflichtet (Vom bittenden Freund) Lk 11,5–8," and "Die Stärke der Schwachen," in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 556–63, here 562, and *eadem*, 667–79, here 679.

> [The Judge and the Widow] as the verbal similarities and the chiastic structure of Luke's travel narrative show.[84]

There is strong parity in the structure and plot of the two narratives. It consists, first, in the active character needing something from a passive and obstinate character. Second, shameless behavior is applied until the asking character gets what he or she wants. Third, the passive character is perturbed by the actions of the active character (with the combination of παρέχειν κόπον in both) and is disinclined to help the active character. Finally, the passive character capitulates and performs the task demanded by the active character.

At the level of literary interdependence, many have noted the catchphrase between them, μοι κόπους πάρεχε (Luke 11:5) // παρέχειν μοι κόπον (Luke 18:5). This is a unique idiom that appears nowhere else in the gospel apart from these fables.[85] The idiom παρέχειν κόπον means, literally, "to render blows" (see also 11.4). This connection between the two fables is all the more remarkable because in each fable it refers to the antagonist accosting a different object. In the case of the Friend at Midnight, the catchphrase refers to rendering blows on the door mentioned a few words later, "stop beating on the door!" In the case of the Judge and the Widow, the catchphrase refers to the black eye the judge fears from the widow in the next verse, "the beating given me." The literary inter-connectedness continues by the use of the identical syntax of εἰ καὶ … οὐ … διά γε (Luke 11:8; 18:4–5) to formulate the response of the judge and the awakened neighbor: "though he will not rise and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his shamelessness …," and "though I do not fear God … yet because this widow…."

τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἕξει φίλον καὶ πορεύσεται πρὸς αὐτὸν μεσονυκτίου καὶ εἴπῃ αὐτῷ· φίλε, χρῆσόν μοι τρεῖς ἄρτους, ἐπειδὴ φίλος μου παρεγένετο ἐξ ὁδοῦ πρός με καὶ οὐκ ἔχω ὃ παραθήσω αὐτῷ· κἀκεῖνος ἔσωθεν ἀποκριθεὶς εἴπῃ, μή μοι κόπους πάρεχε· ἤδη ἡ θύρα κέκλεισται καὶ τὰ παιδία μου μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ εἰς τὴν κοίτην εἰσίν· οὐ δύναμαι ἀναστὰς δοῦναί σοι. λέγω ὑμῖν, εἰ καὶ οὐ δώσει αὐτῷ ἀναστὰς διὰ τὸ εἶναι φίλον αὐτοῦ, διά γε τὴν ἀναίδειαν αὐτοῦ ἐγερθεὶς δώσει αὐτῷ ὅσων χρῄζει. (Luke 11:5–8)

κριτής τις ἦν ἔν τινι πόλει τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος. 3 χήρα δὲ ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσα· ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου. καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐπὶ χρόνον. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ· εἰ καὶ τὸν θεὸν οὐ φοβοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον ἐντρέπομαι, διά γε τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον τὴν χήραν ταύτην ἐκδικήσω αὐτήν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με. (Luke 18:2–5)

84 Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 440 and 458.

85 Note that Luke does not take over the one other occasion where it appears in the New Testament (Mark 14:6).

Still more parallels are found in their literary frames concerning prayer. The Friend at Midnight immediately follows the Lord's Prayer and the disciples' request (perhaps a *chreia*) for Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1–4). It precedes other material about the assurance of God answering prayers. The Judge and the Widow opens with a *promythium* that reads: "a fable about the need to pray always and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1). They both have similar morals appended that rely on *quanto potius*, "like to unlike" reasoning: the belief that convincing the other party to capitulate is far harder than convincing God.[86] In both of these agonistic narratives, the interpretations are a comparison to the believer's persistence in prayer. This *epimythium* is introduced in both fables by the break from the narrative frame into direct speech. In Luke 18:6, this is accomplished by the narrator who interjects with, "the Lord says," while in Luke 11:9a it remains the voice of Jesus who continues, "I say…." If indeed the Lukan Travel Narrative and the fable collection has a chiastic structure, these two fables are in the right location. The consensus is that these are "twin parables"—they have a similar structure, similar plot, and catchphrases that link them. The fables of the Friend at Midnight and the Judge and the Widow have everything we could want in a linked fable pair such as we find in the ancient collections.

14.4.1.2 The Place at the Table and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

In a pair of very different fables, we find another remarkable parallel: The Place at the Table (Luke 14:7–11), and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14). In 13.5, we noted the very unusual presence of a nearly identical *epimythium* in these two fables: "*since everyone who lifts himself up will be brought down, and the one who brings himself down will be raised up*."

> ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ὁ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται (Luke 14:11)
> ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται (Luke 18:14)

Given Luke's well-known aversion to doublets in his gospel, it is remarkable that he would allow this near verbatim parallel to stand. Either Luke was not fastidious in his efforts, one or the other was added by a later scribe, or both were attached *epimythium* already in the Fable Collection. Perhaps it functioned as a catchphrase between them.

86 This is not quite the same reasoning as *qal waḥomer*, "how much more."

14.4.1.3 The Prodigal and the Steward

Since the fables in Luke chapter 15 are so regularly interpreted together as a discrete unit, it may be surprising to find that the Prodigal Son has an important link with the fable of the Crafty Steward, which begins chapter 16. The modern versification that separates them into two chapters artificially strengthens the disconnection. It is possible that these fables also stood beside one another in the Lukan Fable Collection. Though it is very seldom noted, there is a catchphrase linking these two very different fables:

> καὶ μετ᾽ οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας συναγαγὼν πάντα ὁ νεώτερος υἱὸς ἀπεδήμησεν εἰς χώραν μακρὰν καὶ ἐκεῖ διεσκόρπισεν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ ζῶν ἀσώτως. (Luke 15:13)
> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

> ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον, καὶ οὗτος διεβλήθη αὐτῷ ὡς διασκορπίζων τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ (Luke 16:1)
> There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.

The resemblance of both phrases is clear and the meaning is identical: διεσκόρπισεν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ (15:13) and διασκορπίζων τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ (16:1). The lemma διασκορπίζω is especially worth commenting on. It is first attested in the Hellenistic period and is rare outside of the Septuagint, where it means "to scatter" or "disperse." It appears nine times in the New Testament, four of which are found in Luke-Acts.[87] The first of the four occurrences is in the Magnificat (Luke 1:51) where it is from traditional material (Ps 89:10 [88:11 LXX]), referring to the scattering of enemies. The last occurrence is found in Acts 5:37 on the lips of Gamaliel as he recounts the uprising of a certain Judas the Galilean, whose followers were "scattered" following his death. The only two other occurrences in Luke are in these fables, the Prodigal Son and the Crafty Steward. In these fables, it has a meaning apparently unique to them: "to squander." Since (1) there seem to be no further examples in Greek literature of a metaphorical usage of διασκορπίζω meaning "to squander," (2) they occur in neighboring fables, and (3) both are joined with a word for possessions and a masculine genitive pronoun, it seems very likely that this is a deliberate connection between the two fables. In the Lukan Fable Collection, the first

87 The remainder are found in Mark 14:27//Matt 26:31; 25:24, 26; John 11:52. σκορπίζω is used in the Johannine parallel to Mark 14:27//Matt 26:31 without the prepositional prefix at John 16:32. σκορπίζω is also quite rare, appearing just here and Tobit 13:5 in the Greek Bible.

example of the catchphrase in the Prodigal Son would prime the hearer for the opening to the Crafty Steward.[88]

14.4.1.4 The Prodigal and Lazarus

The Prodigal Son shares a different catchphrase with the other fable in Luke 16, the Rich Man and Lazarus. Having run out of his inheritance in the far-off land, the story relates that the lost son longed to fill himself with the carob pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything (Luke 15:16). A verse with a strong literary parallel and identical in the goal of conveying the character's dire hunger appears in the opening scene of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Here we find Lazarus longing to fill himself with what falls from the table of the rich man:

> καὶ ἐπεθύμει χορτασθῆναι ἐκ τῶν κερατίων ὧν ἤσθιον οἱ χοῖροι, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ (Luke 15:16)
> καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου (Luke 16:21a)

In addition to the linguistic parallel, we may note the parallel in the plot. In both cases the man is in dire straits and longs to satisfy his hunger with scraps intended for animals—the pigs in the former and table dogs in the latter. The coordination of ἐπιθυμέω and χορτάζω appears only here in the Greek Bible between these two L fables.[89] Once again, the parallels of plot, the proximity of the two phrases to one another, and their unique attestation in these places suggest a deliberate linking of the two fables.

In the case of the Prodigal Son and the Rich Man and Lazarus, we also receive some helpful external evidence from the manuscript tradition. Early readers of these fables saw the connection between them. At the end of the verse in the Rich Man and Lazarus, several manuscripts insert καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ, "and no one gave him anything," exactly what is found at the end of the verse containing the Prodigal Son's catchphrase:

> καὶ ἐπεθύμει χορτασθῆναι ἐκ τῶν κερατίων ὧν ἤσθιον οἱ χοῖροι, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ. (Luke 15:16)

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88 While one might have preferred the phrase to appear in 15:30 on the lips of the brother, who says instead ὁ καταφαγών σου τὸν βίον (Luke 15:30), it is possible that the original fable ended around verse 19 or 20. For other evidence for Luke's redaction or composition of a portion of the Prodigal Son, see the next chapter and 10.6.1.

89 Neither word on its own is particularly uncommon, though χορτάζω is seldom used in the active mood.

> καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν χορτασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ πλουσίου [καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ.] (Luke 16:21a in Family 13, a portion of Family 1, and the Clementine Vulgate)

While the reading is certainly not original, as Metzger and the NA28 editors note, the source of this variant in the Rich Man and Lazarus is a conscious repetition of 15:16 of the Prodigal Son.[90] This confirms that later readers recognized the parallel and, like tradents of the fable collections, were interested in fashioning connections between fables. From a separate variant, we even have some evidence of a version of the Prodigal Son that circulated without this catchphrase. A number of important manuscripts begin Luke 15:16 with a different phrase: καὶ ἐπεθύμει γεμίσαι τὴν κοιλίαν αὐτοῦ.[91] While Sanders argues that this variant is an attempt to improve the objectionable Greek, if this were the case, we would expect a similar variant in Luke 16:21 where we have none.[92] One wonders then if this variant reading might be original and scribes are to blame for the creation of the entire catchphrase as it stands in NA28.

While the links between the fables of chapter 15 have long been recognized, the fables of chapter 16 are also intertwined with this same group by their catchphrases with the Prodigal Son. We must reckon with the sheer improbability that the Prodigal Son would have two phrases in common with, and only with, the two very next fables in Luke. One final and obvious way that the two fables of chapter 16 form a group is how they both begin: ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος (Luke 16:1) and Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος (Luke 16:19). If not merely a topical resonance, this is perhaps a catchphrase that they both share with the Rich Fool: ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου (Luke 12:16).

14.4.1.5 The Steward and the Judge

One subtle connection between the fables of the Crafty Steward and the Judge and the Widow comes in the *epimythia*. In both we find the protagonist referred to using the so-called Hebraic genitive, reflecting the Semitic construct chain:[93] τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας (Luke 16:8)[94] and ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας (Luke 18:6). The steward and the judge are not described with the term ἀδικία

90 Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 141.

91 A K N P Q Γ Δ Θ Ψ, numerous majuscules, the Majority Text, the Latin, Syriac, and Bohairic Coptic. Washingtonius has a conflationary reading of the two.

92 Sanders, "Tradition and Redaction in Luke 15:11–32," 435.

93 There is, however, a Greek parallel uninfluenced by the Semitic background called the adnominal genitive (BDF § 162).

94 οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος and τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός in 16:8 as well as "wealth of injustice" μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας in 16:9 would also fall under this category. Because of Luke's characteristic Septuagintalisms, it is difficult to evaluate if these reflect an underlying Semitic language.

anywhere in the fable bodies, the semitic genitive is unusual, and the *epimythia* to these two fables are the only places in the gospel where "Χ τῆς ἀδικίας" appears. It is possible that this is one more resonance between them intended to link the two fables.

14.4.1.6 Seek and Find! Knock and Open!

"Seek and find," "knock and open" are all quite common lemmas,[95] but, as they appear in many L fables, may be deliberate intertextual references. In the collection material, they first appear in possible *epimythia* to the Friend at Midnight:

> So I say to you, "ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."
> Κἀγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὑρήσετε, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν· πᾶς γὰρ ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει καὶ ὁ ζητῶν εὑρίσκει καὶ τῷ κρούοντι ἀνοιγ[ήσ]εται. (Luke 11:9–10)[96]

As a lesson drawn from the content of the fable, the "knock" and "open" pair is a natural pun since the fable features both a door (Luke 11:6) and someone knocking (κόπους πάρεχε [Luke 11:5]). The same terms appear in the next chapter where we find "knock" and "open" catchwords: "be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks" (Luke 12:36). Less obvious from the way it is normally rendered into English, but quite "striking" in Greek, is how these catchwords appear embedded in the Fig Tree:

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95 "Knock and open" and "seek and find," appear a number of times in the New Testament without any metaphorical meaning: Luke 11:24 // Matt 12:43; Mark 14:55; Gal 2:17; 2 Tim 1:17; Rev 9:6. Acts 17:27 may echo this tradition: "so that they would search (ζητεῖν) for God and perhaps grope for him and find (εὕροιεν) him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us." It is also tempting to find a connection between this saying, the fable of the Crafty Steward, and 1 Cor 4:2: "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy," ὧδε λοιπὸν ζητεῖται ἐν τοῖς οἰκονόμοις, ἵνα πιστός τις εὑρεθῇ. Elsewhere, it probably appears in Johannine sayings engaging with the same theme (John 7:34, 36).

96 The verses following the *epimythium* to the Friend at Midnight are very close to Matt 7:7–8 and are often regarded as Q material. It is possible that Luke has set his hand to adding Q material as *epimythia* to the fables in his fable collection. It is also conceivable that this material could have survived independently in near verbatim form in oral tradition, given where else it appears in the New Testament.

> A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?"
> συκῆν εἶχέν τις πεφυτευμένην ἐν τῷ ἀμπελῶνι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἦλθεν ζητῶν καρπὸν ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ οὐχ εὗρεν. εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἀμπελουργόν· ἰδοὺ τρία ἔτη ἀφ᾽ οὗ ἔρχομαι ζητῶν καρπὸν ἐν τῇ συκῇ ταύτῃ καὶ οὐχ εὑρίσκω. ἔκκοψον [οὖν] αὐτήν, ἱνατί καὶ τὴν γῆν καταργεῖ; (Luke 13:6–7)

"Seeking" and "finding" occur twice within the fable. Following the second pair, the very next word, ἐκκόπτω, is yet another cognate of κόπον, "strike," and like κόπτω, is used in the context of knocking on doors.[97] The theme of seeking and finding may also be hinted at in the *epimythia* following the Judge and the Widow. In the final closing statement of the fable, "finding" appears in the phrase πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; (Luke 18:8b). Within the fable, the judge, like the neighbor, and the tree, also gives way after some "knocks" (παρέχειν μοι κόπον [Luke 18:5]).

The "seeking and finding" continues in chapter 15, with the "lost and found" variation. In the span of two verses, the Lost Coin manages to use all three linking words "seek," "lost," and "find."

The Lost Sheep	τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν ἔχων ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ ἀπολέσας ἐξ αὐτῶν ἓν οὐ καταλείπει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ πορεύεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπολωλὸς ἕως εὕρῃ αὐτό; καὶ εὑρὼν ἐπιτίθησιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὤμους αὐτοῦ χαίρων καὶ ἐλθὼν εἰς τὸν οἶκον συγκαλεῖ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς γείτονας λέγων αὐτοῖς· συγχάρητέ μοι, ὅτι εὗρον τὸ πρόβατόν μου τὸ ἀπολωλός. (Luke 15:4–6)
The Lost Coin	Ἢ τίς γυνὴ δραχμὰς ἔχουσα δέκα ἐὰν ἀπολέσῃ δραχμὴν μίαν, οὐχὶ ἅπτει λύχνον καὶ σαροῖ τὴν οἰκίαν καὶ ζητεῖ ἐπιμελῶς ἕως οὗ εὕρῃ; καὶ εὑροῦσα συγκαλεῖ τὰς φίλας καὶ γείτονας λέγουσα· συγχάρητέ μοι, ὅτι εὗρον τὴν δραχμὴν ἣν ἀπώλεσα. (Luke 15:8–9)
The Prodigal Son	ὅτι οὗτος ὁ υἱός μου νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἀνέζησεν, ἦν ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὑρέθη. καὶ ἤρξαντο εὐφραίνεσθαι. (Luke 15:24)
	εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἔζησεν, καὶ ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὑρέθη. (Luke 15:32)

As we have noted already, the thematic "lost and found" unity of the fables in Luke 15 is well-established. We may also observe that the Matthean version

97 The fact that this fable repeats the theme of knocking against a wooden object, albeit this time with an axe, might be a coincidence, but it might not.

of the Lost Sheep does not fit the Lukan paradigm, using πλανάω, "stray" (Matt 18:12), rather than "lost," ἀπολλύμι (Luke 15:4, 5, 6). The absence of the pattern in Matthew's Lost Sheep lends support to the notion that the Lukan version is participating in the pattern observed in the others. As the vocabulary is so common, many of these textual links may have been present in the fable collection, and many could have been added by the gospel author.

14.4.2 *Conspicuous Catchwords or Thematic Vocabulary*

In a few fables, the vocabulary is specific, obscure, or used in a particular way that may be intended to link one fable with another. One can hardly speak with any certainty about catchwords, but even if they are not, this vocabulary highlights specific themes of the collection.

The noun χρεοφειλέτης, "debtor," is not well attested before church fathers were prompted to comment on the New Testament usage. It appears twice in the Septuagint, in Prov 29:13 and Job 31:37.[98] Around New Testament times it appears in three fables in the Augustana Collection, including once as the titular opening, and in a handful of other classical authors.[99] In 10.6.2, we read the fable of the Athenian debtor, which has the following opening: "In Athens, there was a man who had taken out a loan, Ἀθήνησι χρεωφειλέτης ἀνὴρ ἀπαιτούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ δανειστοῦ τὸ χρέος."[100] Luke uses the more common lemma for debtors, οφείλω, for example, in the Lord's Prayer "… as we forgive our debtors (ὀφείλοντι)" (Luke 11:4). Given the scarcity of the lemma, χρεοφειλέτης, the only two places it appears in the New Testament are certainly eyebrow-raising. It appears in two L fables, once in the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41), and once for the two debtors in the Crafty Steward (Luke 16:5).[101]

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98 As is often the case in wisdom literature, the relationship between the Greek and Hebrew is muddled. The former is a free rendering of a Hebrew maxim and the latter appears in rendering of some rather obscure Hebrew poetry. Like Luke 7:41, Prov 29:13 LXX also pairs χρεοφειλέτης with δανιστής.

99 According to the TLG, it appears once in the Hippocratic corpus, twice in Aeneas, a fragment of the grammarian Comanus, in one section of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, once in Diodorus Siculus, and a handful of times in Plutarch. In the papyri it seems clear that other words were preferred to refer to debts and debtors.

100 The other two fables are Perry 47 and 101.

101 One curiosity in need of an explanation is the fact that, with one apparent exception (*SIG* 742.53 [Ephesus, 1st century BCE]), χρεοφειλέτης is only spelled this way in the Bible. In every other Greek source, as it is in the Augustana Collection, it is spelled with an omega instead of an omicron: χρεωφειλέτης. With two examples appearing in the Fable Collection out of the four attested in the entire corpus of Greek literature, it is conceivable that the fables are drawing from the vocabulary of the Septuagint, the example of the term in Proverbs in particular.

καρπός is a quite common word that may function as link between two adjacent fables: the Rich Fool (12:15–19) and the Fig Tree (13:6–9). In the fable of the Rich Fool, the presence of καρπός is perhaps somewhat surprising, since it is normally rendered into English as "I have nowhere to store my 'crops'," οὐκ ἔχω ποῦ συνάξω τοὺς καρπούς μου (Luke 12:17). In both fables, there is common concern about producing "fruit," καρπός, and it would be a helpful prompt or mnemonic in the Rich Fool for the next fable of the Fig Tree.

δικαιόω, "to justify," "to be righteous," as Parsons argued above, is an important thematic link between the Good Samaritan and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.[102] Obviously, this is a very common lemma, but it appears nowhere else in the proposed corpus of the Lukan Fable Collection. If there is a chiastic structure to the collection, or more plausibly, to certain fable pairs like the Friend at Midnight and the Judge and the Widow, then this lemma would be a catchword between the two. This would be the chiastic pair outside the Friend at Midnight and the Judge and the Widow.

14.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have surveyed the theory that Luke possessed a collection of Jesus's "parables" and have begun to marshal the fable collections to support it. We noted the many ways fables in ancient collections could be organized, and how the individual fables could be linked with others—by their theme, by style, or catchphrases or catchwords, with their neighbors, in chiasm or inclusio patterns. We noted that biblical scholars have seen these same patterns in the Lukan fables, and a few have related them to the parable collection theory. We also found some evidence that early Christian scribes, like the tradents of other fable collections, created some links between the Lukan fables as well. In terms of this interconnectedness, the Lukan Fable Collection fits well alongside the other collections. Just as Holzberg described the cluster of fables in the Augustana Collection, the Lukan Fable Collection is "elegantly linked by a web of thematic, structural, and stylistic allusions."[103] For biblical scholars, it provides an explanation for why Luke has so many fables and for such peculiarities as the "twin parables." For fable scholars, the results of this chapter should help to confirm the findings of Nøjgaard, Holzberg, and Luzzatto, and provide justification for a more systematic study of these patterns in the ancient fable collections.

102 Parsons, *Luke*, 119.
103 Holzberg, *Ancient Fable*, 86.

CHAPTER 15

Source Criticism of the Lukan Fables

15.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed the aesthetic features of the Lukan Fable Collection that show its affinity with other fable collections of the day. In this chapter we will observe the basic source-critical value of the previous observations, followed by arguments from style and vocabulary. In 15.2, we will begin with the source-critical value of the fable features noted already, including the form and content of the *promythia* and *epimythia*, and the heavy use of soliloquy and interior monologue. From there, in 15.3, we take up a detailed analysis of style and vocabulary, considering the historical present, conjunctions and parataxis, asyndeton, the absence of the Lukan speaking formula, and issues of vocabulary. Making a source-critical argument necessitates a certain degree of philological detail. For some scholars, detailed philological arguments are fascinating, while it is the height of tedium for others. Thus, these first sections are there "to show the work" to reach the result, for those interested in checking it. In 15.4, we depart from the philological minutia and I identify what I think are the problems with non-source critical explanations. In 15.5, I offer an estimation of what constitutes this source in Luke's Gospel. In 15.6, we pivot to a discussion of what context such a fable collection would come from. Here I situate the Lukan Fable Collection in the catechetical setting of the early Church and discuss the advantages for the Lukan author in incorporating it into his gospel.

15.2 The Source Critical Value of the Fable Features

In Book II, I have addressed certain source-critical issues at stops along the way, for example, the *pronomina indefinita* genre marker ("x τις") formula in 10.3. There we observed that Luke never adds it to fables incorporated from Mark or Q/Matthew, while it appears frequently in the L fables. In the present chapter, we will follow the same procedure as the "x τις" fable identifier. Other than "x τις," there are three major features unique to the L fables in terms of their theme and content with source-critical implications. First, we concluded Chapter 13 with the negative observation that the L fables never draw a comparison with the kingdom of God. Second, as we observed in 10.4,

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the appearance of interior monologue or soliloquy is one of the most noteworthy stylistic features of the L fables. Third, the framing devices of the fables have a fundamental source-critical significance given the multiple voices they represent. We will address the source-critical weight of these three phenomena before moving to the grammatical indications. Here we will determine whether it is Luke the author who is responsible for all these fable qualities, if they stem from a fable collection in the evangelist's possession, or a combination of them both.

15.2.1 *The Absence of the Kingdom of God in the Lukan Fable Collection*

It has become tautological to speak of Jesus's fables as preaching "the kingdom of God." We can see just how greatly the L fables depart from this convention by comparing them to the Markan and Matthean fables. In the Synoptic tradition, fables usually begin with a variation on a familiar formula, "And he said, 'the kingdom of God is like….'" As we should expect, this and similar formulas are found frequently among the Synoptic Gospels. We find this used in the following Markan fables:

The Mustard Seed	οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς (Mark 4:26)
The Seed Growing by Itself[1]	πῶς ὁμοιώσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (Mark 4:30)

A couple of additional Markan fables refer to "the kingdom of God" without using the stock phrase within the fable itself. The Sower is connected to the kingdom of God in Jesus's private explanation following the public delivery: καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ· (Mark 4:11). This private explanation connecting the fable to the kingdom of God/heaven is preserved in Matthew and Luke, who both take over the verse nearly verbatim at Matt 13:11 and Luke 8:10. Luke also makes the link between the fable and the kingdom of God *more* explicit by beginning the chapter, "Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God." (Luke 8:1a). The content of Jesus's first preaching of the kingdom of God after this signpost is the fable of the Sower (Luke 8:4–8). More loosely connected to the kingdom of God is the fable of the Strong Man, which follows the comparison of the kingdom and the divided house (Mark 3:27 // Luke 11:21–22). Set in the context of a dispute about whence Jesus's power, whether from the kingdom/house of Satan or, implicitly, the kingdom of God, the fable points to the latter. The obscurity of the kingdom of God in this fable

1 This is the only Markan fable not taken over by any of the other Gospels.

is most likely related to the Markan Messianic Secret and the clandestine purpose of "speaking in riddles" that is much diminished in the other gospels.

So, too, in the fables unique to the Gospel according to Matthew, clustered especially in chapter 13, do we find the kingdom of God/heaven:[2]

The Tares	ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 13:24)
The Treasure in the Field	Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 13:44)
The Pearl of Great Price	Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 13:45)
The Dragnet	Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 13:47)
The Unforgiving Servant	Διὰ τοῦτο ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 18:23)
The Laborers in the Vineyard	Ὁμοία γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 20:1)
The Two Sons[3]	ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οἱ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρναι προάγουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. (Matt 21:31)
The Ten Virgins	Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 25:1)

All of these similitudes and fables unique to Matthew take up the kingdom of God/heaven as their subjects.[4] Matthew has also added "the kingdom of God" to his version of Mark's Wicked Tenants (cf. Mark 12:1–12 // Luke 20:9–19) in an *epimythium*: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom" (Matt 21:43).

As in Mark and Matthew, fables are predominately used as a vehicle to compare the kingdom of God in the Q/Double Tradition material as well:

The Leaven	ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 13:33) // τίνι ὁμοιώσω τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ; (Luke 13:20–21)
[The Great Banquet]	ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 22:2) // μακάριος ὅστις φάγεται ἄρτον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ (Luke 14:15)[5]

2 The exchange of 'heaven' for 'God' is a well-known Matthean custom.

3 That this fable uses τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ rather than ἡ βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν may suggest a different origin than the others. As we noted in 10.3, τις is even added to the opening of the fable by numerous manuscripts.

4 The only exception would be the Sheep and the Goats, but as it is only superficially fictionalized or set into a narrative, parable scholars generally do not consider it a proper "parable."

5 The Lukan form places the mention of the kingdom of God on the lips of someone at the banquet scene, which is the setting for the entire chapter of Luke 14. Jesus responds to the individual's declaration with the Wedding Banquet fable.

[The Talents/The Pounds][6]	Ὥσπερ γὰρ… (Matt 25:14)[7] //δοκεῖν αὐτοὺς ὅτι παραχρῆμα μέλλει ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναφαίνεσθαι. (Luke 19:11)[8]

The only fable in Q/Double Tradition that does not contain "the kingdom of God" is the Wise and the Foolish Builder (Matt 7:24–27 // Luke 6:46–49).[9] "The kingdom of God" also does not appear in the Lost Sheep, a fable common to Matthew and Luke (Matt 18:10–14 // Luke 15:4–6), but possibly known in multiple independent traditions, including the Lukan Fable Collection.[10]

Listing all of these fables with their formulas and their connection to the preaching of the kingdom of God makes emphatic just how different the L fables are. Among the fifteen to nineteen fables that are unique to Luke, with exceptions of the possibly "Q" or L fables of the Banquet (Luke 14:15) and the ever-problematic Pounds (Luke 19:11), not a single one has any association with the kingdom of God. Neither in their introductions or their lessons does "kingdom of God" appear. While Luke does minimize eschatological dimensions of other gospel traditions, from both the Markan fables and the Q/Matthew fables that Luke takes over, it is clear that Luke has no aversion to "kingdom of God" fables. He does not remove "the kingdom of God" from those he takes over from Mark and Q/Matthew. On the contrary, Luke has a tendency to make an explicit reference to the kingdom of God when it is in the background of these fables. As we saw when he took over the fable of the Sower, Luke makes the link between the fable and the public preaching of the kingdom of God more explicit.[11] We have another clear example of Luke adding the kingdom of God in his version of the simile of the Budding Fig Tree (Mark 13:28–32 // Matt 24:32–36 // Luke 21:29–33). Here Luke does not merely make "the kingdom

6 Whether the Talents/Pounds should be understood as a single fable derived from Q or independent M and L traditions has long been debated. This is not the place to settle the matter, but it suffices here to show that both have some engagement with the concept of "the kingdom of God."

7 A stock phrase including "kingdom of God/heaven" is omitted here but is to be inferred from Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 25:1) that opens the fable of the Ten Virgins, which immediately precedes the fable of the Talents.

8 In the Lukan version, it is not in direct speech but the narrator who supplies the connection to the kingdom of God.

9 The wording differs substantially between Matthew and Luke. Independent traditions of the same fable are not outside the realm of possibility.

10 The version in the Gospel of Thomas does include a kingdom of God reference: "Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is like …'" (Gos. Thom. 107).

11 This may be part of Luke's broader program of downplaying the Messianic Secret.

of God" more emphatic, he *adds* it to the simile where it was not before.[12] In neither the Markan nor even the Matthean version does "kingdom of God/heaven" occur:

> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. (Mark 13:29)
>
> So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. (Matt 24:33)
>
> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. (Luke 21:31)

From this evidence, it is rather unlikely that Luke would have gone to the trouble of stripping all of his unique fables of their "kingdom of God" message, or that he would himself compose such a large collection and never once create a "kingdom of God" fable. As we saw in the previous chapters, the L fables fit tightly together and yet depart greatly from those fables outside the Lukan Fable Collection, including even the other fable material Luke has taken over from Mark and Q/Matthew. The best explanation for the widespread use of "kingdom of God" comparisons and the total absence of it in the L fables is that the latter derive from a discrete source. This source was not concerned with the "kingdom of God" as such, rather with inculcating virtues appropriate for Christians living in the Roman Empire toward the end of the first century.

15.2.2 *Soliloquy and Interior Monologue*

As we learned in 10.4, the appearance of soliloquy or interior monologue is perhaps the most noteworthy stylistic feature of the L fables. The most famous examples appear in the Rich Fool, the Prodigal Son, the Crafty Steward, the Judge and the Widow, and the Pharisee and Tax Collector.[13] As with fables generally, it adds complexity to the stories, heightens the drama, pulls in the reader, and makes the L fables stand out from those in the other Gospels. It grants the reader inside access to the thoughts, dilemmas, and inner turmoil of the actor, and is characteristic of the ancient fable. What we will now explore are the source-critical implications of the fact that, as Sellew notes, this literary device is "otherwise rarely if ever employed in the Gospel tradition."[14] Our

12 The introduction of the Banquet at Luke 14:15 may be one more such example of an L fable with a kingdom of God referent added by Luke.

13 A soliloquy also occurs in the Prudent Manager (Luke 12:42–46), the Wicked Tenants (Luke 20:13), and in the narrative context of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:39).

14 Sellew, "Interior Monologue," 239.

task here is to decide whether we should attribute the use of soliloquy, even direct speech, or at least the contents of these speeches, to the evangelist or to his source.[15]

The closest analogy to the soliloquies of the fables that is certainly attributable to Luke appears in Acts 12. In this pericope, Peter is awaiting his death in prison, under close guard by four squads of soldiers. Bound with chains, Peter is sleeping between two soldiers, when a light suddenly shines in the room and an angel of the Lord appears. The angel jabs Peter in the ribs to rouse him, instructs him to rise, and as he does, Peter's chains fall off. Peter dresses and proceeds to sneak past the guards by following the angel until he is outside, at which point the angel departs. It is at this point that Acts describes Peter delivering a soliloquy:

> Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."
> Καὶ ὁ Πέτρος ἐν ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος εἶπεν· νῦν οἶδα ἀληθῶς ὅτι ἐξαπέστειλεν [ὁ] κύριος τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς Ἡρῴδου καὶ πάσης τῆς προσδοκίας τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων (Acts 12:11)

The difficulty here is assessing the meaning of ἐν ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος. In the course of the story, the narrator informs us that Peter did not think what was taking place was real, but rather that the whole ordeal was merely a vision (Acts 12:9). From this we might infer that we are to understand Peter in an altered state of consciousness, believing himself to be dreaming still, or in a daze, having just been awoken in the middle of the night to such a harrowing ordeal. It is

15 This question of attribution is one of the more divisive issues among parable scholars. While most parable scholars maintain the default view that the soliloquies go back to the historical Jesus, and Luke has just preserved these, some scholars who have looked more closely at this issue have taken other positions. Heininger believes that Luke has composed the soliloquies outright on the basis of his rhetorical training (Heininger is sure to note that this training included fables) (*Sondergutgleichnissen*, 226). Drury identifies the soliloquy as proof that Luke has composed all his peculiar fables (*The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory* [New York: Crossroad, 1989], 141–43). It seems that Sellew never really entertains the possibility that the soliloquy of the fables could come from Luke's sources (Sellew, "Interior Monologue"). Meier believes the soliloquies are Lukan stylistic traits but attributes them to Luke apparently only on the basis of how common they are in the L fables (*A Marginal Jew*, 5:198). Scott believes that Luke fashions introductions to them and can frame them as interior monologue but does not compose the soliloquies outright himself (*Hear Then the Parable*, 129–130, 262, etc.). Dinkler is concerned with literary rather than source-critical issues and does not state a position explicitly, but remarks that they are "tools in the Lukan narrator's toolbelt" ("The Thoughts of Many Hearts," 398).

clear that the narrator conveys that Peter was not in a full state of comprehension during his escape. From this, it would also be reasonable to understand ἐν ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος εἶπεν with a meaning of when Peter "became himself," "came to his senses, he said," or more colloquially, "when Peter snapped out of it, he said…." The intervening γενόμενος would seem to prohibit the reading, "Peter said to himself." In other words, when Peter realized that it was not a vision, but understood the reality of what had just transpired, the narrator indicates that his arrival at a full state of comprehension immediately prompted a declaration. Although this would paint the soliloquy a shade different than the characters in the fables who "come to themselves" in the midst of ethical deliberation, Peter's declaration is still a soliloquy.

While there is variance in the phraseology used to express interior speech in Luke's fables, the phrase at Act 12:11 would also be unique among them by using γίνομαι. The closest analog to Peter's declaration in the L fables is the soliloquy found in the Prodigal Son. Instead of the preposition ἐν with a reflexive pronoun and a verb of speaking, which is the more common means of introducing a soliloquy, the Prodigal Son uses the phrase εἰς ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἐλθὼν ἔφη (Luke 15:17). In this case, as in Acts, the reflexive pronoun refers to the character "coming to his senses" rather than coordinating with the verb of speaking. With this solitary example in Acts, we have exhausted the examples in that book.

Just as with the "x τις" formula and the kingdom of God above, we may find source-critical indications based on what Luke consistently does not do elsewhere. We may lean on Sellew once again, who draws helpful distinctions between the soliloquies of the Lukan fables and Luke's techniques for narrating speech that appears elsewhere in the Gospel. Here we may examine a number of helpful examples in the Infancy Narrative, which relates a number of events that produce surprise, wonder, and focalize individual characters. Throughout the Infancy Narrative, Luke largely maintains the standard third person narrative strategy. For example, the author conveys the character Zechariah's terror at the appearance of the angel through a simple narrative description rather than anything vocalized by the character (Luke 1:12). If ever there was a missed opportunity in Luke's Gospel for a chance to employ inner monologue, it would be here, when a character is struck mute by surprise in the midst of an astonishing circumstance. Shortly thereafter, the group waiting for Zechariah to emerge from the temple, likewise are described as "wondering" (Luke 1:21) and "realizing" (Luke 1:22), but like Zechariah, they are given no lines to speak. Later, the crowd expresses its wonderment with the curious expression: "And all who heard them, laid them up in their heart, saying, 'who then will this child be?'" καὶ ἔθεντο πάντες οἱ ἀκούσαντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῶν

λέγοντες· τί ἄρα τὸ παιδίον τοῦτο ἔσται (Luke 1:66a).[16] Thus the crowd expresses a common reaction, almost as a corporate interior monologue, if such a thing is not a contradiction in terms.

A few verses later, after Elizabeth discovers she is pregnant, we learn that she keeps to herself, and she then supplies the reason in direct speech:

> After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."
> Ἐλισάβετ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ περιέκρυβεν ἑαυτὴν μῆνας πέντε λέγουσα. ὅτι οὕτως μοι πεποίηκεν κύριος ἐν ἡμέραις αἷς ἐπεῖδεν ἀφελεῖν ὄνειδός μου ἐν ἀνθρώποις. (Luke 1:24–25)

Mary, for her part, expresses being perplexed and debating the meaning of what sort of greeting the angel Gabriel gave, but we do not hear any of the content of this debate or expression of the emotion: "But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be," ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ διεταράχθη καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἴη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος (Luke 1:29). Mary "ponders" a few more times in her heart during these first two chapters at Luke 2:19 and 52. In each of these cases, the verbs for pondering, debating, and treasuring are never the same. It is clear that the author intends to convey astonishment and a sense of wonder about what is taking place, but for whatever reason, the author does not express what these thoughts and feelings entail in direct speech. The Magnificat makes abundantly clear that Luke had no qualms about allowing Mary to speak, but for some reason, the author does not draw out her inner thoughts. As Sellew puts it, "The narrator knows that Mary is thinking, and probably what she is thinking too; but we are left in the dark."[17] In the Infancy Narrative, then, we have some mixed evidence. When we would most expect to hear them speak, characters are not provided with soliloquies or interior monologue, though it is also clear that Luke or his source for the Infancy Narrative is not opposed to giving characters things to ponder.

Our evidence from Mark and Q/Matthew material is also mixed. What Luke does in his Markan material adds some evidence that Luke does not value soliloquy so highly that he will refrain from deleting it. In the Gospel of Mark, a soliloquy appears in only a few places. The first occurrence is in the story of the woman with the flow of blood (Mark 5:25–34). This episode appears also in Matthew 9 and Luke 8, where both evangelists redact the episode in their

16 The unusual combination of τίθημι with ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ is also found at Acts 5:4. For groups of people "considering things in their hearts" without using direct speech, see Luke 3:15.

17 Sellew, "Interior Monologue," 243.

own ways. In this familiar story intercalated into the healing of Jairus's daughter, a woman suffering from a chronic hemorrhage sneaks up on Jesus from behind and, pressing through the crowd, touches the fringe of his garment. At Mark 5:28 the woman gives the justification for her actions: "For she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well,'" ἔλεγεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἅψωμαι κἂν τῶν ἱματίων αὐτοῦ σωθήσομαι (Mark 5:28). While the interiority of her speech is not explicit, a soliloquy is at least implied. Matthew, in an attempt to clarify matters, adds the preposition ἐν plus the reflexive pronoun to make explicit that the woman is thinking to herself: "for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well,'" ἔλεγεν γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῇ· ἐὰν μόνον ἅψωμαι τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ σωθήσομαι (Matt 9:21). Given the ample use of soliloquy in Luke's fables, we might expect Luke to make the soliloquy more explicit as Matthew has, but instead we find Luke do something remarkable. Luke simply deletes the entire soliloquy. This is peculiar for a number of reasons. Later on in the Lukan account, the narrator declares that "the woman fell down before him in the presence of all the people and declared why she had touched him" (Luke 8:47). With the deletion of the soliloquy, the reader of Luke's Gospel was not previously informed of her motivation and is simply left guessing. Luke omits the first half of Mark 5:27, where the narrator informs the reader that she had heard reports of Jesus's abilities, and then also omits the reason made explicit by her soliloquy. It is difficult to attribute this kind of redaction solely to Luke's tendency to abbreviate Mark, since these are Luke's only substantial omissions from the Markan story. A comparison with the Matthean redaction here shows that we might expect abbreviating this pericope to go quite differently, since Matthew preserves little else in this episode apart from these words that Luke has deleted.

In Mark's Tenants of the Vineyard, we find another case of soliloquy. In spite of Luke's apparent ambivalence about preserving direct speech and soliloquy in the previous episode, this example offers the strongest evidence that Luke is either composing or redacting soliloquy. At the climactic moment when the vineyard owner decides to send his beloved son, Mark supplies him with the following soliloquy preserved in both Matthew and Luke:

> ἔτι ἕνα εἶχεν υἱὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν ἔσχατον πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγων ὅτι ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱόν μου.
> He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, "They will respect my son." (Mark 12:6)

> ὕστερον δὲ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ λέγων· ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱόν μου.
> Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." (Matt 21:37)

> εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος· τί ποιήσω; πέμψω τὸν υἱόν μου τὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἴσως τοῦτον ἐντραπήσονται.
> Then the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him." (Luke 20:13)

While Matthew has rewritten the verse, deleting the reference to the "beloved" son, he has left the soliloquy as it was. Luke, on the other hand, has improved on his source by incorporating the narrative description preceding the soliloquy into the direct speech. To this he has added, τί ποιήσω, "What shall I do?" also found in the soliloquies of the Rich Fool (12:17) and the Crafty Steward (16:3, 4).[18] One final example to add to the scant number of soliloquies in the New Testament is in the Unfaithful Servant (Matt 24:42–51 // Luke 12:39–48), found within a block of Double Tradition material. There we have a slave utter a very brief soliloquy: "… that slave should say in his heart, 'My master is delaying in coming….'"

> δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ· χρονίζει ὁ κύριός μου ἔρχεσθαι. (Luke 12:45)
> δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ· χρονίζει μου ὁ κύριος (Matt 24:48)[19]

In this verse from Q/Matthew, unlike the previous example of the Workers in the Vineyard, Luke has left the soliloquy essentially untouched.

There is at least one example of a character speaking in the L fables that I think can confidently be ruled out as a Lukan composition: God's speech in the Rich Fool. This is the only Lukan fable in which God speaks, and the speech itself is completely out of character for Luke's pious and exalting presentation of the deity elsewhere. Only twice elsewhere God is not so remote that he sends messengers. The last time God spoke was at the Transfiguration, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him" (Luke 9:35), and only elsewhere at the baptism, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). From these reverential and benevolent declarations, the clash of God's vulgarity in the fable is jarring: "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Luke 12:20). I think it unlikely that Luke would compose this speech.[20]

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18 See also the repetition of τί ποιήσωμεν at Luke 3:10, 12, and 14—another L passage.

19 There are a number of syntax variants in Matthew's version, but the sense is identical.

20 For those convinced that the Gospel of Thomas is an independent tradition, the version of the Rich Fool found there is noteworthy on the issue of soliloquy: "Jesus said, 'There was a rich man who had considerable wealth. He said, "I shall invest my wealth so as to sow, reap, plant, and fill my barns with crops, lest I run short of something." These things are what he was thinking in his heart, and that very night the man died. Whoever has ears should listen!'" (Gos. Thom. 63 [trans. Layton]). If Thomas is independent, then we can

The evidence from the use of soliloquy and interior monologue is not as strong as the "x τις" formula, or the absence of the kingdom of God, and it is certainly more varied. In contrast to the consistency of the other features, Luke either removes soliloquy entirely from his sources, preserves it as he found it, or redacts it. While indeed we found one example of Luke redacting a soliloquy to look more like the other fables (Luke 20:13), it is certainly noteworthy that in the cases where he takes over the Markan or Q/Matthew fables, Luke has not created direct speech or a soliloquy where there was not one before. If Luke were responsible for composing the numerous soliloquies and speech acts in the L fables, we would expect there to be at least some evidence of him creating them in other fables as well. His speaking formula is also essentially missing (see 15.3.4). While the Lukan Fable Collection makes use of it far more often, soliloquies are not completely alien to Mark and Q/Matthean fables. Given their quantity alone, it seems most likely that these soliloquies in the Lukan Fable Collection are largely original to the source, even if Luke has redacted them or composed one on certain occasions. As we learned in 10.4, the prevalence of these soliloquies and direct speech in the Lukan Fable Collection are a good indication of the generic affinity of these texts to other ancient fables. Here their prevalence lends weight to the theory that this cohesiveness is owed to a source.

15.2.3 *Narrative Framing Devices*

On our way to style and vocabulary, we should take a moment to point out one final conclusion from Chapter 12 and Chapter 13. The peculiar use of the framing devices (*promythia* and *epimythia*) have source-critical implications. The *promythium* and *epimythium* are at home in fable collections, where they are not in a narrative. While we do have numerous examples of narrative texts incorporating fables along with *epimythia* following them, these applications are never more than one because they apply to the narrative situation at hand. Luke often accomplishes the same by means of a *chreia*, by which he limits the moral application to a single lesson, but he often does not follow this practice. Luke often does not even go to the trouble of supplying a narrative context to which the fable and its framing devices can apply. Unlike other narrative texts, Luke's fables often have multiple morals appended. They often appear unrelated to the narrative of the Lukan Gospel as well. To put it another way, a

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see that it preserves the soliloquy as an interior speech with a somewhat different formula than is found in Luke. The τί ποιήσω characteristic of the soliloquies in some of the Lukan fables is gone, and the interiority of the speech is only clarified afterward in Thomas. As we noted earlier, God is also missing!

fable and subsequent moral can be used in a broader narrative story, and this is perfectly normal. But, in Luke, one gets the impression that Luke has his fables in a source already and often needs to come up with a narrative excuse to insert them. Even *The Life of Aesop*, which draws its fables from known collections, does a better job of incorporating them into meaningful and appropriate places of the narrative. *The Life of Aesop* is the closest narrative text to the Gospel of Luke in terms of how it uses fables, but in terms of proportion to the rest of the narrative and their quantity, Luke's Gospel outdoes even Aesop. The presence of the multiple lessons for individual fables provides a good indication that they belong to a source in existence before the Gospel of Luke incorporated them. To this evidence we should add, as we have noted elsewhere, that the lessons occasionally have a rather un-Lukan apocalyptic flavor (Luke 16:8; 18:8). These same lessons also attest to multiple voices that do not always agree with each other. From the sheer quantity of fables in Luke and from the presence of so many interpretations surviving in the framing devices appended to them, we are on a firm foundation to view this as pre-Lukan material. The simplest way to account for these facts is that the evangelist had a substantial written collection of fables with the *promythia* and *epimythia* already appended to them.

15.3 Style and Vocabulary

An exhaustive study of Lukan style vis-à-vis the style of the Lukan Fable Collection would require a separate project.[21] But we do not need to consider style in the finest detail to arrive at compelling results. Several stylistic differences are sufficiently systematic that we are able to differentiate composition and redaction of the gospel author from the Fable Collection. As we have seen a few times now, Luke's dependence on other known sources provides the critic looking to discern his compositional and redactional habits a rare opportunity. By observing several more of Luke's habits when redacting known documents,

21 One issue of style requiring a more detailed study than possible here are the various Semitisms. It is well known that Luke writes in a style imitating the Septuagint. There are also a number of possible hints of Semitic influence in the Lukan fables. Some of Luke's Septuagint style is simple enough to identify when it bleeds over into his fable material, but there are many cases where the source is not so easily decided between Luke or the Fable Collection. These would need to be determined, if it is possible, on a case-by-case basis. The extent to which Luke redacts the fables and the extent to which Semitic style is from the Lukan Fable collection itself is deserving of further attention.

Mark, Q/Matthew, and even other L material, we will be able to identify several consistent tendencies of the author that allow the fable material to stand out.

15.3.1 *The Historical Present*

More than a century ago, New Testament scholars observed the source- and redaction-critical usefulness of the historical present in the Gospels.[22] Discernible habits are apparent in each of the four evangelists, who use and avoid the historical present in recognizable ways. Mark's habits are particularly helpful for establishing the redactional tendencies of Matthew and Luke and identifying when Mark is influencing them as a source. Mark's well-known affinity for using the historical present, at least 151 times by Hawkins's tally, is generally regarded as having the effect of heightening the drama and reflecting his more colloquial speech.[23] In light of the pervasiveness of the historical present in Mark, it is noteworthy that not a single example appears in his fable material.[24] Both of these tendencies, the abundance of historical present in Mark's gospel and their complete absence in his fables, offer us something to contrast with the Lukan Fable Collection.

As a control for Luke's tendencies, we may compare Matthew's use of the historical present and his approach to Markan material. In Matthew's Gospel, on 42 occasions where he takes over Markan material with a historical present, it is retained in 21 of them. In total, Matthew uses the historical present 93 times. Thus, while Matthew does reduce the number by half from Mark, he is by no means averse to the historical present in his other material. As Kilpatrick observes, between Matthew chapters 9 and 27, with the exception of verbs of speaking, and two fables,[25] Mark is responsible for all of Matthew's historical

22 Already by Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 143–49. See especially George Dunbar Kilpatrick, "The Historical Present in the Gospels and Acts," *ZNW* 68 (1977): 258–62; reprinted as George Dunbar Kilpatrick, "The Historical Present in the Gospels and Acts," in *The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays of G.D. Kilpatrick*, ed. J. K. Elliot, BETL 96 (Leuven: Peeters, 1990), 169–76.

23 The standard tallies are by Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 143–49. The figures below follow Hawkins, unless otherwise noted. It is common in the Markan text to find textual variants related to verb tense, specifically the historical present. The evidence in some of these variants is quite evenly balanced for or against the present tense (e.g., Mark 2:8; 6:45; 8:6, 20). Thus 151 is a low estimate. See further Carroll D. Osburn, "The Historical Present in Mark as a Text-Critical Criterion," *Bib* 64 (1983): 486–500.

24 Since Mark does not use verbs of speaking in his fables, and these verbs account for a substantial percentage of his historical presents, it is possible that this is just a coincidence.

25 In his fables and similes, Matthew uses the historical present 15 times. These occur twice in the Tares (Matt 13:28, 29), three times in the Treasure Hidden in a Field (Matt 13:44), once in the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:32), four times in the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:6, 7 [2x], 8), once in the Ten Virgins (25:11), and twice in his version of the Pounds

presents. In the temptation narrative in Matt 4:1–11, there is also a cluster of historical presents. As Kilpatrick demonstrates, based on this information, one can see when Matthew is using Mark and probably other source material such as Q in the temptation narrative, and a source behind some of Matthew's similes and sayings.[26] In light of this, Kilpatrick concludes, matter-of-factly, that the historical present allows one "to detect the influence of sources."[27]

Kilpatrick, following Hawkins, observed in Luke a "sharp contrast to the other Gospels."[28] Luke's radically divergent tendency is apparent when we take note of the material shared between Mark and Luke. Luke has taken over material from Mark where 94 of Mark's 151 historical presents are found. In 93 of these 94 cases, Luke has changed Mark's historical present to a past tense verb, a participle, or omitted the verb altogether.[29] The same tendency is reflected in Luke's material taken over from Q/Matthew, where Luke removes at least seven historical presents.[30] From his clear redactional tendency to eliminate the historical present from Markan and Double Tradition material, and the almost complete absence of the historical present in Luke's Gospel generally, we may confidently say that "the evangelist's consistent practice … was to avoid the historical present."[31] Given this fact, a list of the exceptions to this consistent practice is intriguing. The surviving historical presents in Luke's Gospel are as follows:

(Talents) (25:19). In a few of these cases, such as the Treasure Hidden in a Field, it is difficult to determine to what degree the present tense is used deliberately with a "historical" color, whether it reflects an avoidance of the subjunctive and optative moods, or is simply a breakdown of the sequence of tenses. As for the Q/Matthew material, apart from this possible case of the Pounds/Talents, there are no historical presents used in Q fables.

26 Kilpatrick, "The Historical Present," 170. For the origin of Matthew's fables, see, for example, Eduard Schweizer, "Zur Sondertradition der Gleichnisse bei Matthäus," in *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt. Festgabe für Karl Georg Kuhn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Gert Jeremias, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, and Hartmut Stegemann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 277–82.

27 Kilpatrick, "The Historical Present," 175.

28 Kilpatrick, "The Historical Present," 171.

29 For the complete list of Luke's substitutions, see Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 144–48 and Henry J. Cadbury, *Style and Literary Method of Luke*, 158–59.

30 Five in the Temptation: Matt 4:5 παραλαμβάνει to Luke 4:9 ἤγαγεν, Matt 4:6 λέγει to Luke 4:9 εἶπεν, Matt 4:8 παραλαμβάνει to Luke 4:5 ἀναγαγών, Matt 4:8 δείκνυσιν to Luke 4:5 ἔδειξεν; and two further examples of changing λέγει to εἶπεν in Matt 8:20, 22 and Luke 9:58–60. As Cadbury notes, in light of the paucity of narrative material in the Double Tradition, we could not expect more than this (*Style and Literary Method of Luke*, 159.

31 Kilpatrick, "The Historical Present," 171.

Table 7 The Historical Present in Luke's Gospel

Verse	Historical Present	Pericope	Source
Luke 7:40	φήσιν[32]	The Two Debtors	The Lukan Fable Collection
Luke 8:49	ἔρχεται	Raising of Jairus's Daughter	Mark 5:35
Luke 11:37	ἐρωτᾷ	Discourse against Pharisees and Lawyers	Mark 7:1 or L *Sondergut*
Luke 11:45	λέγει	Discourse against Pharisees and Lawyers	L *Sondergut*
Luke 13:8	λέγει	The Fig Tree	The Lukan Fable Collection
Luke 16:7	λέγει	The Crafty Steward	The Lukan Fable Collection
Luke 16:23	ὁρᾷ	The Rich Man and Lazarus	The Lukan Fable Collection
Luke 16:29	λέγει	The Rich Man and Lazarus	The Lukan Fable Collection
Luke 17:37[33]	λέγουσιν	aphorism	L *Sondergut*
Luke 18:6[34]	λέγει	The Judge and the Widow	The Lukan Fable Collection
Luke 19:22	λέγει	The Pounds	[The Lukan Fable Collection]

Apart from four cases, one of which is taken over from Mark, the historical present appears exclusively in the material possibly drawn from the Lukan

32 While it is noteworthy that so many of these examples are verbs of speaking, this is not out of the ordinary. Nearly three-fourths of Matthew's historical presents are also verbs of speaking (Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 148).

33 This entry is not found in Hawkins.

34 This entry is not found in Hawkins. We discussed this example in detail, including whether we should reckon it a historical present, in 13.2.

Fable Collection.[35] With only eleven examples, the historical present is "extremely rare" in Luke as Hawkins noted long ago,[36] but, here in the fables, they greatly outnumber what is found elsewhere in the entire gospel. So many historical presents in Luke's Fable Collection provide a stark contrast to the author's programmatic eradication of the historical present from Markan material, and his clear aversion to them elsewhere.

This distribution of historical presents in Luke's Gospel demands an explanation. Because they are so uncharacteristic of Luke and perhaps because the examples do not neighbor each other, Kilpatrick wonders if these might be later scribal corruptions.[37] We have no evidence for any such scribal activity of introducing historical presents into Luke; if anything, there seems to be a tendency to remove them.[38] Their distribution, spread over numerous chapters of the gospel, yet almost entirely in one genre of material, would also suggest scribes are not to blame. Apart from a source-critical solution, one may wonder whether there is something characteristic of the fable genre that would encourage Luke to use a historical present in many of his fables. While there is nothing out of the ordinary in encountering a historical present in a fable as one means of relating past events,[39] the historical present is not a marker or characteristic of the fable genre. It seems clear that Luke has not used the historical present in these fables either in imitation of Mark or Q, or because of an affinity for it. This stylistic difference suggests an origin of this material

35 There are two possible historical presents in the post-resurrection accounts, but both appear in verses with text-critical issues: Luke 24:12 (= John 20:5? βλέπει) and Luke 24:36 (= John 20:19? λέγει). The verse or clause in question is absent in Bezae, and both instances are among Wescott and Hort's "Western non-interpolations." The problem of sources and dependence in the passion and resurrection narratives at both places further complicates things, and whether they are original to Luke is controversial. In Acts there are a total of 13 historical presents: Acts 8:36 (φήσιν); 10:11 (θεωρεῖ), 27 (εὑρίσκει), 31 (φήσι); 12:8 (λέγει); 19:35 (φήσιν); 21:37 (λέγει); 22:2 (φήσιν); 23:18 (φήσιν); 25:5, 22, 24 (φήσιν); 26:24 (φήσιν). On the whole, Acts approaches speech and speeches somewhat differently than the Gospel, and this may be reflected in the avoidance of historical present in the Gospel and its occasional use in Acts, almost exclusively with verbs of speaking. Another related example of a substantial change in habit as it relates to speaking is the regular omission of the verb of speaking altogether (Acts 2:38; 5:9; 9:5, 11; 19:2; 25:22; 26:25, 28, 29). Luke never omits the verb in the Gospel.

36 Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 143.

37 Kilpatrick, "The Historical Present," 171–72.

38 Regarding the Markan historical presents, see note 23. Among the historical presents in Luke, we may observe a tendency to change the historical present to aorist in the example from Luke 11:37 where P^{75}, Alexandrinus, and Vaticanus have the present tense, whereas a past tense form is found in Clarmontanus, Bezae, and 1141.

39 See van Dijk, *Ainoi, Mythoi, Logoi*, 114 n. 11.

foreign to Luke, and the spread of historical presents across the several fables is consonant with this material being unified in its pre-Lukan form.

15.3.2 *Conjunctions and Parataxis*

The most frequent improvement Luke makes to Mark is to the structure of the sentence, substituting a variety of more complex elements for Mark's successive coordinated verbs. The effect is an immense reduction of parataxis, and paratactic καί in particular, as Mark uses this conjunction most frequently.[40] Whether Mark's abundant use of καί and his sentence structure are owing to the more colloquial λέξις εἰρομένη (continuous or running style) or to an influence of Semitic syntax is unclear. Luke's preference for the conjunction δέ over καί, however, is decidedly characteristic of the periodic style of writing. Luke is invested enough in this preference for δέ over καί that he frequently changes Mark's καί to δέ for no discernible reason of stylistic improvement, e.g.:

Mark 1:9 καὶ ἐγένετο	Luke 3:21 ἐγένετο δέ
Mark 1:38 καὶ λέγει	Luke 4:43 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν
Mark 2:8 καὶ ἐπιγνούς	Luke 5:22 ἐπιγνούς δέ
Mark 2:18 καὶ λέγουσιν	Luke 5:33 οἱ δὲ εἶπεν
Mark 2:19 καὶ εἶπεν	Luke 5:34 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν

One gets the picture from these five examples, but they total 36 cases altogether.[41] Simply tallying when καί is used compared to δέ will not give us strong evidence for sources, but a close look at how their usage differs does reveal a subtle change that takes place when we encounter the fable material. Particularly when there is no advantage to using καί over δέ, in certain material, the repeated use of καί is a sign that Luke has stayed his redactional hand upon a source.

Luke 15 is an ideal testing ground for discerning sources and Lukan redaction since we have an opening *chreia*, evidently composed by Luke (15:1–3),

40 Luke achieves this in a variety of ways, documented in detail by Cadbury, *Style and Literary Method of Luke*, 132–47.

41 For the verses, see Cadbury, *Style and Literary Method of Luke*, 143. It is difficult to deduce when this procedure takes place in the Double Tradition because Matthew has a similar penchant for changing Mark's καί to δέ. Nevertheless, a few cases are identifiable at Luke 6:49 // Mat 7:26; Luke 11:18 // Matt 12:26; Luke 11:19 // Matt 12:27. Luke also frequently builds upon a solitary καί in the Double Tradition, the combination δὲ καί (Luke 3:9 // Matt 3:10; Luke 9:61 // Matt 8:21; Luke 11:18 // Matt 12:26; Luke 14:34 // Matt 5:13). The construction δὲ καί is used much more frequently in Luke than the other Gospels—just five or six times in Matthew, twice in Mark, nine times in John, but 28 times in Luke and twenty more in Acts.

followed by a lengthy block of three fables with plenty of conjunctions. The conjunctions used throughout the chapter will allow us to discern if there is any difference between places where Luke is composing and where he is relying on a possible source. The first three verses of chapter 15 that Luke has composed have the conjunctions underlined here:

> 1 Ἦσαν δὲ αὐτῷ ἐγγίζοντες πάντες οἱ τελῶναι καὶ οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀκούειν αὐτοῦ. 2 καὶ διεγόγγυζον οἵ τε Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς λέγοντες ὅτι οὗτος ἁμαρτωλοὺς προσδέχεται καὶ συνεσθίει αὐτοῖς. 3 Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην λέγων· (Luke 15:1–3)

We find δέ opening verse one, a καί joining two nouns, a καί opening verse two, followed by a τε καί construction and one more καί. Verse three, the last of the *chreia* before the fables begin, opens with δέ, and employs Luke's speaking formula.[42] In other words, on stylistic grounds, verses one through three are consistent with Luke's compositional habits. The evidence of his composition disappears immediately beginning in verse four and through verse ten where not a single δέ appears in the Lost Sheep or the Lost Coin. Instead, the only coordinating conjunctions that appear are καί or ἤ: καί, καί (15:4), καί (15:5), καί, καί (15:6), *asyndeton* (15:7), ἤ, καί, καί (15:8), καί, καί (15:9).[43] The only conjunctions in initial position are three examples of καί in verses five, six, and nine. Noteworthy also is the paucity of initial conjunctions. We would expect one in verse seven at least, but it begins in asyndeton (see 11.3.3 below). Quantitatively, the number of coordinating conjunctions is not overwhelming proof; however, the fact that καί rather than δέ is used at the opening of the periodic sentences in verses five and nine is noteworthy. As soon as the fables end, we see Luke's style appear again. Before the narrative of the Prodigal Son begins in verse eleven, the initial conjunction returns to δέ in the two-word opening: "Εἶπεν δέ." Subsequently, in the Prodigal Son narrative we observe a subtle shift from καί predominating to δέ taking over, with Luke's δὲ καί construction twice making an appearance. As we noted in 10.6.1, at the beginning of the periodic sentences we find the initial conjunctions as follows: 12 (καί), 12b (δέ), 13 (καί), 14 (δέ), 15 (καί), 17 (δέ), 20b (δέ), 20 (καί), 21 (δέ), 22 (δέ), 25 (δέ), 27 (δέ), 28 (δὲ καί), 29 (δέ), 30 (δέ), 31 (δέ), 32 (δὲ καί). Until around verse twenty-one we have an even mix of καί and δέ, then rather abruptly it looks as though Luke has begun to put his hand to redacting the fable, with the exclusive use of δέ or δὲ καί

42 Luke's speaking formula is the subject of section 15.3.4.

43 The occurrence of ἤ in 15:7 is the circumlocution of the comparative form by using the simple adjective plus ἤ.

through to the end. This is consistent with further hints of Luke's redaction or composition found in the second half of the Prodigal Son.

From this small case study looking at the use of conjunctions and parataxis in Luke 15, we may make a few observations. The chapter opens with a *chreia*, which is a characteristic composition used by Luke to introduce fables. There he uses a blend of conjunctions. When the first two fables occur, The Lost Sheep and Coin, they do not show other signs of Lukan interference except perhaps the introductory τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν formula. In these two fables, not a single δέ appears. Then in the third fable, the Prodigal Son, there is a fair mix of καί and δέ when there are no other signs of Lukan redaction, and when the other signs of Lukan redaction begin, constructions with δέ completely take over. Thus, while we cannot say that the mere use of δέ is an indication of Lukan redaction when there are no other signs, where paratactic καί is clustered and δέ is not used, it is a small indication that Luke has not composed or redacted the source material.[44]

15.3.3 *Asyndeton*

More impressive than the very subtle tendency pertaining to which conjunctions Luke uses is the trend that emerges when no conjunctions appear at all. The significance of asyndeton for the present investigation requires we imagine how a fable collection would look on the page or scroll and the key places where we would not expect conjunctions or bridgewords. The fables on the page of a collection manuscript do not use conjunctions between any of the individual elements—the *promythium*, the fable body, the *epimythium*, or the next fable. In the figure below we may observe the standard procedure as it appears in the Athos manuscript of Babrius. Here is the last line of *Fab.* 14, followed by its *epimythium*, and then the beginning of *Fab*. 15:

> εἰ νεκρὸν εἵλκες, τοῦ δὲ ζῶντος οὐχ ἥπτου
> Ὁ ζῶντα βλάπτων μὴ νεκρόν με θρηνείτω
> Ἀνὴρ Ἀθηναῖός τις ἀνδρὶ Θηβαίῳ
>
> "… you would tear the dead body, and not touch the living man."
> Let not him who injures me when living shed tears for me when dead.
> A man from Athens with a man from Thebes …

As we observe, there are no bridgewords or conjunctions between *Fab*. 14, its *epimythium*, or *Fab*. 15. Further down the page, when *Fab.* 15 ends, there is an

44 An exception to this would be where καί is part of Luke's recognizable Semitic formulae such as καὶ ἐγένετο.

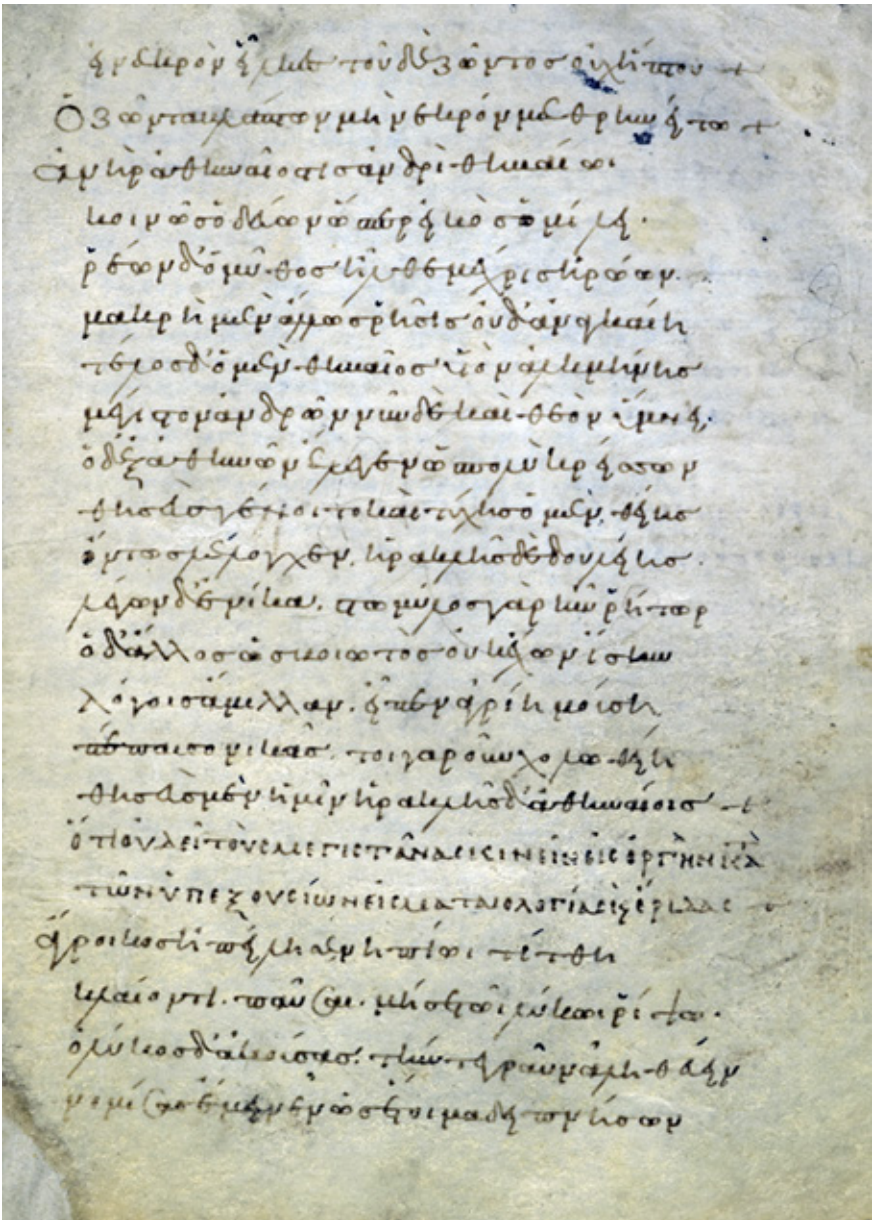

Figure 12 Babrius, *Fab.* 14.4–16.4 on the Mount Athos manuscript. Copyright British Library Board Add. MS 22087 (folio 8, recto).

epimythium added by a later hand in the space between it and *Fab.* 16.[45] It was added into the gap without disturbing the fable before or the fable following. No bridgewords or conjunctions connect the fable elements. Since Babrius does not have *promythia*, we can verify the same phenomenon by looking to P.Ryl. 493 (see Figure 2). Here are the *promythia* in italics and the beginnings of the fable bodies underlined:

[κ]ᾳ̣[τα] τ̣ῳ̣ν [τους με]γ̣ α̣[λ]λους ευ ποι
ο̣ὐ̣ντων τους δε φιλους κακως
οδε λογος εφαρμοζει ποιμ̣ῆν̣ θ̣ε̣ις
(fragment A, column 3, lines 35–37)[46]

προς τον πλουσ̣ιον ι̣σ̣ᾳ̣ και πονη̣[ρον]
οδε λογος εφαρμοζει ο̣ Ζ̣ευς τ̣[ον]
(fragment B, column 5, lines 75–76)

In this papyrus, though the fable body begins on the same line as the *promythium*, there are no conjunctions between the two elements. In other words, save for conjunctions with other functions such as adverbial καί ("also you …") or οὕτως, "thus …," the seams between two fables, between a fable and its framing devices, and between multiple *epimythia*, have no conjunctions joining them.[47] According to Cadbury, "asyndeton is perhaps even more carefully avoided by Luke than parataxis."[48] Thus, where asyndeton is clustered in Luke's Gospel is also consequential. Asyndeton is exactly where we would expect it if he were plucking fables from a collection to incorporate in his gospel.

We can again compare Luke's treatment of Mark as a control. The primary means of correcting Markan asyndeton, twenty-four occasions by Cadbury's tally, are by adding καί, γάρ, δέ, and οὖν, and by omitting ὕπαγε. According to Jeremias, there are forty examples of asyndeton in the Markan material that

45 Note that this later *epimythium* on this manuscript is not printed in Perry's Loeb edition of Babrius.

46 As I discussed in Chapter 3, note 79, with only the single letter nu at the end of the article secure in the opening formula of this fable, I am uncertain of Roberts's justification for reconstructing a separate formula with κατα των in this case. Roberts does not discuss his reason for this reconstruction and virtually nothing is preserved of this obliterated line before the end. The regular formula opening with προς τον would also work.

47 Certain paratextual conventions are utilized in the collections to indicate when an *epimythium* or a new fable begins. In both the Athos manuscript and P.Ryl. 493 a new fable begins on a new line with the first letter extending into the margin (*ekthesis*). As we can see in the figure of the Babrian fables, (inconsistent) markings in the margins indicate the end of a fable and the end of its *epimythium*.

48 Cadbury, *Style and Literary Method of Luke*, 147.

Luke has taken over, with thirty-six of these changed by Luke to remove the asyndeton.[49] Luke also corrects asyndeton in the Markan fable material as he does, for example, in the Workers in the Vineyard: τί ποιήσει (Mark 12:9) // τί οὖν ποιήσει (Luke 20:15). The exceptions to Luke's avoidance of asyndeton in his gospel causes the fables to stand out and demonstrate the source of these exceptions is most probably not the evangelist. The base number given by Hawkins and Cadbury includes a very small but significant number: Luke 7:42, 43, 44; [14:27]; 17:32, 33; [19:22]; and 21:13.[50] The underlined examples are candidates for the Lukan Fable Collection.

The first cluster makes up the verses of the Two Debtors:

> 42 μὴ ἐχόντων αὐτῶν ἀποδοῦναι ἀμφοτέροις ἐχαρίσατο. τίς οὖν αὐτῶν πλεῖον ἀγαπήσει αὐτόν; 43 ἀποκριθεὶς Σίμων εἶπεν· ὑπολαμβάνω ὅτι ᾧ τὸ πλεῖον ἐχαρίσατο. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ὀρθῶς ἔκρινας. 44 καὶ στραφεὶς πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα τῷ Σίμωνι ἔφη· βλέπεις ταύτην τὴν γυναῖκα; εἰσῆλθόν σου εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, ὕδωρ μοι ἐπὶ πόδας οὐκ ἔδωκας· αὕτη δὲ τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἔβρεξέν μου τοὺς πόδας καὶ ταῖς θριξὶν αὐτῆς ἐξέμαξεν. (Luke 7:42–44)

In verse forty-two one expects καί in the initial or δέ in the post-positive position, likewise in verse forty-three. According to Hawkins and Jeremias, the absence of a conjunction or connecting word at the beginning of forty-three is the only case in Luke-Acts where this takes place in a narrative.[51] In verse forty-four, prior to ὕδωρ we would expect καί, or better, μέν to balance the δέ of the next clause. To these examples identified by Cadbury one may wish to add an absent καί, or μέν to balance the δέ of verses forty-five and forty-six, and we might also expect a καί or δέ at the beginning of verse forty-one as well.

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49 Jeremias, *Sprache des Lukasevangeliums*, 60. The remaining cases he identifies are Mark 1:41 // Luke 5:13; Mark 2:9 // Luke 5:23; Mark 2:17 // Luke 5:32; Mark 12:9b // Luke 20:6.

50 Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 138. The lists of Hawkins and Cadbury are identical with the exception of Cadbury adding Luke 7:44 (Cadbury, *Style and Literary Method of Luke*, 147). Luke 17:32, 33 and 21:13 are inconsequential for our purposes. The first is the strange terse command to remember Lot's wife: μνημονεύετε τῆς γυναικὸς Λώτ (Luke 17:32). The second is the saying known also to Matthew and John: ὃς ἐὰν ζητήσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ περιποιήσασθαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν, ὃς δ᾽ ἂν ἀπολέσῃ ζῳογονήσει αὐτήν. (Luke 17:33 and cf. Matt 10:39; John 12:25). The third is in the prophecy about giving a testimony in all four Gospels: ἀποβήσεται ὑμῖν εἰς μαρτύριον (Luke 21:13 // Matt 10:18 // Mark 13:9 and cf. Luke 12:11–12; John 14:26; 15:21). According to Jeremias, Luke creates asyndeton in three cases where there was not asyndeton in Mark, including this verse (Luke 21:13), and also verses 19 and 23 of this same chapter.

51 Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 138; Jeremias, *Sprache des Lukasevangeliums*, 61.

Luke 14:27 could be a *promythium* to the fables of the Tower Builder and Warring King:[52]

> ὅστις οὐ βαστάζει τὸν σταυρὸν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἔρχεται ὀπίσω μου, οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής. Τίς γὰρ ἐξ ὑμῶν θέλων πύργον οἰκοδομῆσαι
> *Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.* For which of you, intending to build a tower … (Luke 14:27–28a)

The many scribes who attempted to correct this case of asyndeton make clear that this seam at the insertion of the Lukan Fable Collection material stuck out.[53] When a case of asyndeton appears at the beginning of a fable or framing device such as this, it is particularly helpful for identifying seams between Luke's composition and the Fable Collection.

Luke 19:22 occurs in the middle of the Pounds: λέγει αὐτῷ· ἐκ τοῦ στόματός σου κρινῶ σε, πονηρὲ δοῦλε, "He says to him, 'by your own mouth I will judge you, wicked slave!'" In addition to the asyndeton, note the historical present in this verse, λέγει. This gives us two features of anti-Lukan style that provide some assurance the evangelist was not composing here.[54]

To these examples of asyndeton identified by Hawkins and Cadbury we may add many more. According to Jeremias, they total 55, and this number he finds surprising given his conclusion, like that of Hawkins and Cadbury, that Luke suppresses asyndeton.[55] From Luke's suppression of asyndeton on the one hand and the verses in which it survives on the other, Jeremias concludes that asyndeton is characteristic of pre-Lukan material.[56] In particular, Jeremias highlights the opening formula λέγω ὑμίν/σοί.[57] This formula is made up only

52 Added support that this is a *promythium* is its adherence to the more original form, namely that it is addressed to an individual or class of people, emphasizing the subject-matter of the subsequent fable. There is also a possible link between the "raising" of both a cross and a tower. The saying is also found in Matt 10:38.

53 Many important manuscripts add an initial καί here: ℵ², A, D, W, etc.

54 This line also has no parallel in Matthew. The hypothesis that Luke has simply redacted Matthew's fable of the Talents cannot account for the two anti-Lukan stylistic markers in this verse.

55 Jeremias, *Sprache des Lukasevangeliums*, 61.

56 Jeremias, *Sprache des Lukasevangeliums*, 61. Jeremias counts five cases of asyndeton attributable to the psalmic style of the Magnificat and gives some ten examples from the Double Tradition.

57 Jeremias, *Sprache des Lukasevangeliums*, 155–56. While this breakdown is technically accurate, one might accuse Jeremias of splitting hairs, since he does not count the many examples of a verse beginning with λέγω σοί preceded by ἀμήν. This is found in all four gospels, including four times in Luke at 4:25; 12:37; 18:17; 21:32. Luke 22:34 is good evidence that the construction without ἀμήν is Luke's preference, and that he may be removing

of Q and L material (Luke 7:9 [Q], 28 [Q]; 10:12 [Q]; 11:8; 12:59 [Q]; 13:27 [Q]; 15:7; 17:34 [Q? cf. Matt 27:40]; 18:8, 14; 19:26, 40 [L]; 22:34 [Q]).[58] Apart from the "Q" examples, all of the others save one are located in the Lukan Fable Collection. As we recall from 12.6, this personal instruction to "you" is one of the most ancient formulas found appended to the fables. This λέγω ὑμίν/σοί expression always has a preceding conjunction in Mark, Matthew (except in Double Tradition material), and John.

Apart from the λέγω ὑμίν/σοί formula, the number of asyndeton examples that belong to the Lukan Fable Collection stand out: The Good Samaritan (10:30), the Fig Tree (13:7),[59] [the Great Banquet] (14:21), the Prodigal Son (15:18, 19), the Crafty Steward (16:4, 10, 13a, 13b), the Judge and the Widow (18:8b), and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:10 [?], 11, 12, 14). To observe the concentration of asyndeton in the fables generally we may take a quick look at the last of these, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector:

> 10 Ἄνθρωποι δύο ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν προσεύξασθαι, ὁ εἷς Φαρισαῖος καὶ ὁ ἕτερος τελώνης. 11 ὁ Φαρισαῖος σταθεὶς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ταῦτα προσηύχετο· ὁ θεός, εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ ὥσπερ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἅρπαγες, ἄδικοι, μοιχοί, ἢ καὶ ὡς οὗτος ὁ τελώνης· 12 νηστεύω δὶς τοῦ σαββάτου, ἀποδεκατῶ πάντα ὅσα κτῶμαι. 13 ὁ δὲ τελώνης μακρόθεν ἑστὼς οὐκ ἤθελεν οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπᾶραι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, ἀλλ᾽ ἔτυπτεν τὸ στῆθος αὐτοῦ λέγων· ὁ θεός, ἱλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ. 14 λέγω ὑμῖν, κατέβη οὗτος δεδικαιωμένος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ παρ᾽ ἐκεῖνον· ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται. (Luke 18:10–14)

Just as we encountered in the Two Debtors above, there is not simply a stray example of asyndeton here; it is the norm. Verses eleven, twelve, and fourteen (and perhaps the opening at verse ten as well) should have initial conjunctions. Still another example that may be attributed to emphasis is the Pharisee's list, where we would expect a conjunction between σαββάτου and ἀποδεκατῶ. In

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ἀμήν from other cases, since his λέγω σοί here is paralleled in all the other evangelists with ἀμὴν λέγω σοί (Matt 26:34 // Mark 14:30 // John 13:38).

58 Outside of this formulaic λέγω ὑμίν/σοί use, by Jeremias's figuring there are four cases Luke takes over from Mark, and three that Luke introduces into Markan material, always for emphasis. These are not counted towards his tally of asyndeton in non-Markan material and presumably the thirteen examples in Acts (3:25, 26; 7:42, 52; 8:21; 10:3b, 37; 20:29, 33, 34, 35; 25:10b; 26:8), all of which are for emphasis, are not either. He lists ten in Q material, once again for emphasis. A total of 13 are with the λέγω ὑμίν/σοί formula. He tallies five in the Magnificat. The remainder of the 55 are unlisted.

59 NA28 preserves an οὖν after ἔκκοψον here in brackets. This οὖν is not found in ℵ, B, D, most other uncials, Family 1, and so on. It is found in P^{75}, A, a few uncials, and other versions. The asyndetic is the more difficult reading and more probably original.

other words, in the span of five verses we have at least three and as many as five cases of asyndeton. The point is more striking when we observe that, as soon as the Pharisee and Tax Collector ends, so do the asyndeta: Προσέφερον δὲ αὐτῷ… (Luke 18:15), ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς… (Luke 18:16), ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν (Luke 18:17), and so on. As the Pharisee and Tax Collector demonstrates, it may well be that the regular asyndeton *within* the fable bodies is a stylistic marker of the Lukan Fable Collection (e.g., Luke 7:42; 11:8(?); 13:7; [14:21]; 15:18, 19; 16:4; 18:11, 12).

As a point of style, the appearance of asyndeton in the fables is remarkably un-Lukan. Equally significant though, is the usefulness of asyndeton as a generic marker. While the use of the historical present is largely a *stylistic* marker of the source rather than a generic marker, asyndeton is the opposite. Sometimes Luke smooths out the asyndetic disjunctions between two fables, the fables and their framing devices, and so on. He does this with various narrative transitions. But Luke is not consistent in this procedure. In the many places where Luke has not smoothed things out, he leaves asyndeton in precisely the places one would expect in a fable collection. The indisputable cases of asyndeton at the seams of fables appear at:

7:43	the transition after the Two Debtors back to the narrative
10:30	the transition into the beginning of the Good Samaritan
[12:35	the transition into the beginning of the Watchful Servants]
14:27	the beginning of the *promythium* before the Tower Builder and Warring King
15:7	between the Lost Coin and its *epimythium*
16:10	between two *epimythia* of the Crafty Steward
16:13a	between two *epimythia* of the Crafty Steward
16:13b	between two *epimythia* of the Crafty Steward
18:8a	between two *epimythia* of the Judge and the Widow
18:8b	between two *epimythia* of the Judge and the Widow
18:14	between the Pharisee and the Tax Collector and its *epimythium*

To all of these examples we might add the beginning of most of the fables. By way of contrast, only in the Rich Man and Lazarus, do we find an intervening conjunction as the fable opens: Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις… (Luke 16:19).

More so than the historical present, cases of asyndeton can be subjective, but a strong trend emerges by any "ballpark" tally. Luke programmatically removes asyndeton from Markan material, especially in narrative. Whether one goes by a minimal tally like Cadbury's, or Jeremias's maximalist tally, the preponderance of asyndeton is clustered in the Lukan Fable Collection and in Q material. The high concentration of asyndeton would be natural in a document largely composed of disconnected sayings like Q. It is also the norm in

fable collections between the individual fables and framing devices.[60] Though Luke will often smooth out these transitions, where he has not reveals the contours of a fable collection used as his source.

15.3.4 *The Absence of the Lukan Speaking Formula*

We have now worked through a few significant non-Lukan stylistic features that suggest Luke did not compose the material on the one hand, and that indicate the material was unified in its pre-Lukan form on the other. We may also distinguish between Luke and his sources working by observing a conspicuous absence of Lukan style in the fable material. A famous marker of Lukan style is the use of a verb of speaking with the preposition πρός and an accusative object. Here are two examples:

> εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ ἄγγελος· μὴ φοβοῦ..., The angel said to him, "Fear not ..." (Luke 1:13a)

> ἀναβλέψας ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν· Ζακχαῖε, σπεύσας κατάβηθι..., Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down ..." (Luke 19:5)

The more standard formula is simply to use a verb of speaking with the addressee expressed by the dative: εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν > εἶπεν αὐτῷ. The verb of speaking followed by πρός and an accusative is a frequent expression of the author's idiosyncratic style, probably imitating the Septuagint.[61] Luke appears to be willing to use the normal expression—a simple dative indirect object after a verb of speaking—with some regularity. But, when we encounter a verb of speaking with πρός and an accusative object in Luke's Gospel, it is a good indication that we are dealing with the author's hand, whether it his redaction or outright composition. Almost everywhere, Luke uses his speaking formula—in Markan, Matthean/Q, and other L material. The one place that Luke does not use his speaking formula is in the Fable Collection. Of more

60 The high concentration of asyndeton in Q is easily explained if indeed it was a document largely composed of disconnected sayings.

61 For the data and summary of scholarship see the terse article by John J. O'Rourke, "Construction with a Verb of Saying as an Indication of Sources in Luke," *NTS* 21 (1975): 421–23. See also Fitzmyer, "It does occur occasionally in classical and Hellenistic Greek, often for emphasis or in poetry; but these sources cannot explain Luke's frequent use of this construction" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, AB 28 [New York: Doubleday, 1981], 116). It appears in at least a few fables in the Augustana Collection: ἔφη πρὸς ἑαυτήν, "δειλαία ἔγωγε, ἥτις..." (Perry 74); εἶπε πρὸς ἑαυτήν, "ἀλλ' ἔγογε ἀθλία, ἥτις..." (Perry 75); πρὸς ἑαυτήν ἔφη, "δίκαια πάσχω, ὅτι..." (Perry 77).

than one hundred examples of a verb of speaking within the fables,[62] Luke's speaking formula almost never occurs. The pattern is broken a mere two times in the certain Fable Collection material (Luke 13:7; 15:22), and twice in the possible Fable Collection material ([Luke 14:23], [19:13]). Given the strength of this tendency, it would be especially valuable to know how and why the pattern is broken and we will return to those exceptions shortly.

As in previous sections, Luke's treatment of his other known sources is a helpful tool for teasing out the Lukan Fable Collection. There are a total of 25 examples of Luke introducing his speaking formula into the Markan text, and three examples of the same for the Double Tradition material (Matt 11:7 // Luke 7:24; Matt 8:22 // Luke 9:59; Matt 21:16 // Luke 19:36). In addition to his redaction of the Markan and Double Tradition material, Luke's speaking formula is also helpful for separating the Lukan Fable Collections from other L material. We find Luke's speaking formula throughout the other L material: in the Nativity (Luke 1:13, 18, 61; 2:34), in the story of Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:48, 49), the preaching of John the Baptist (Luke 3:12, 13), Jesus's reading in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:21, 23), the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5, 8, 13), and in the post-resurrection appearances (Luke 24:5, 10, 17, 18, 25, 32, 44). So, in Mark, Q/Matthew, and in his other L material, Luke can be found regularly using his peculiar speaking formula.

Luke's speaking formula is often concentrated in the immediate *surroundings* of the fables, but not *within* them. In the following quotations I will place the putative Fable Collection material in italics. I will then underline examples of speaking formulas, both Luke's—verb of speaking + πρός and the accusative—and the normal formula with the dative. In the Friend at Midnight, the fable is immediately preceded by Luke's formula, but reverts to the normal formula once the fable has begun: Καὶ <u>εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς</u>· *τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἕξει φίλον καὶ πορεύσεται πρὸς αὐτὸν μεσονυκτίου καὶ <u>εἴπῃ αὐτῷ</u>· φίλε, χρῆσόν μοι τρεῖς ἄρτους* (Luke 11:5). Luke's style occurs immediately before the fable, but then suddenly cuts off when the fable begins. There are several more examples of this phenomenon.

In the fable of the Rich Fool, we find Luke's speaking formula both immediately before the *promythium* at 12:15, and then once again in the narrative transition between the *promythium* and the fable story at 12:16. There are three speech acts in the fable itself, and here we find only the normal formula with the dative. In the rich man's address to his soul, and likewise when God speaks to him, the standard formula is used. Then, no sooner has the fable ended than

62 By my tally, in the L fables that I have not bracketed as questionable, there are 108 examples of a verb of speaking.

does Luke return to his peculiar formula with the next words. Visualized with the fable narrative and framing devices highlighted, and the speaking formulas underlined, it looks like this:

> 15 εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· *ὁρᾶτε καὶ φυλάσσεσθε ἀπὸ πάσης πλεονεξίας, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ περισσεύειν τινὶ ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῷ.* 16 Εἶπεν δὲ παραβολὴν πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγων· ἀνθρώπου τινὸς πλουσίου εὐφόρησεν ἡ χώρα. 17 καὶ διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ λέγων· τί ποιήσω, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχω ποῦ συνάξω τοὺς καρπούς μου; 18 καὶ εἶπεν· τοῦτο ποιήσω, καθελῶ μου τὰς ἀποθήκας καὶ μείζονας οἰκοδομήσω καὶ συνάξω ἐκεῖ πάντα τὸν σῖτον καὶ τὰ ἀγαθά μου 19 καὶ ἐρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου, ψυχή, ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κείμενα εἰς ἔτη πολλά· ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου. 20 εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ θεός· ἄφρων, ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτὶ τὴν ψυχήν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ· ἃ δὲ ἡτοίμασας, τίνι ἔσται; 21 *οὕτως ὁ θησαυρίζων ἑαυτῷ καὶ μὴ εἰς θεὸν πλουτῶν.* Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς [αὐτοῦ]… (Luke 12:15–22a)

In other words, this feature of Lukan style is found densely *around* the fable, in the places the author would need to intervene in order to weave it into a narrative, but Luke's style completely misses the fable itself.

Between the end of the Prodigal Son and the beginning of the Crafty Steward we find Luke's speaking formula, Ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς (Luke 16:1), but if we look backward to the Prodigal Son, and forward to the Crafty Steward where numerous speech acts take place (Luke 16:2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9), only the normal formula is used. Here is the text visualized from the conclusion of the Prodigal Son, the narrative transition to the Crafty Steward, and the opening of Crafty Steward, with the fable text highlighted:

> …ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τέκνον, σὺ πάντοτε μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ εἶ, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐμὰ σά ἐστιν· εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἔζησεν, καὶ ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὑρέθη. Ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς· ἄνθρωπός τις ἦν πλούσιος ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον, καὶ οὗτος διεβλήθη αὐτῷ ὡς διασκορπίζων τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ. καὶ φωνήσας αὐτὸν εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τί τοῦτο ἀκούω περὶ σοῦ; ἀπόδος τὸν λόγον τῆς οἰκονομίας σου, οὐ γὰρ δύνῃ ἔτι οἰκονομεῖν. εἶπεν δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὁ οἰκονόμος·… (Luke 15:31–16:3a)

Note that the entirety of the narrative transition between the fables is a clause composed of Luke's speaking formula. On either side, the fables use just the standard speaking formula with the dative. In the next fable, the Rich Man and Lazarus, only one speech act takes an object, in the last verse (Luke 16:31). Nevertheless, we see immediately after the fable concludes and the narrative resumes, Luke returns to his speaking formula:

> …εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ· εἰ Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν οὐκ ἀκούουσιν, οὐδ᾽ ἐάν τις ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῇ πεισθήσονται. Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ… (Luke 16:31–17:1a)

Further examples occur in Luke's introduction to the Good Samaritan where we find Luke's peculiar formula at Luke 10:26, 29 in the opening *chreia*, but the normal formula in the fable at verse thirty-seven. The same is true again for the fables of chapter 14, where we see Luke's speaking formula *before* the fable begins at verse seven, and the normal formula *during* the Place at the Table in verses nine and ten:

> Ἔλεγεν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς κεκλημένους παραβολήν, ἐπέχων πῶς τὰς πρωτοκλισίας ἐξελέγοντο, λέγων πρὸς αὐτούς· ὅταν κληθῇς ὑπό τινος εἰς γάμους, μὴ κατακλιθῇς εἰς τὴν πρωτοκλισίαν, μήποτε ἐντιμότερός σου ᾖ κεκλημένος ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλθὼν ὁ σὲ καὶ αὐτὸν καλέσας ἐρεῖ σοι· δὸς τούτῳ τόπον, καὶ τότε ἄρξῃ μετὰ αἰσχύνης τὸν ἔσχατον τόπον κατέχειν. ἀλλ᾽ ὅταν κληθῇς, πορευθεὶς ἀνάπεσε εἰς τὸν ἔσχατον τόπον, ἵνα ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὁ κεκληκώς σε ἐρεῖ σοι· φίλε, προσανάβηθι ἀνώτερον· τότε ἔσται σοι δόξα ἐνώπιον πάντων τῶν συνανακειμένων σοι. (Luke 14:7–10)

And again, Luke's formula appears in the introduction to the block of fables at 15:3, but disappears in the Lost Sheep where speech acts appear (15:6, 7):

> Εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην λέγων· τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν ἔχων ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ ἀπολέσας ἐξ αὐτῶν ἓν οὐ καταλείπει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ πορεύεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπολωλὸς ἕως εὕρῃ αὐτό; καὶ εὑρὼν ἐπιτίθησιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὤμους αὐτοῦ χαίρων καὶ ἐλθὼν εἰς τὸν οἶκον συγκαλεῖ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς γείτονας λέγων αὐτοῖς· συγχάρητέ μοι, ὅτι εὗρον τὸ πρόβατόν μου τὸ ἀπολωλός. λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὕτως χαρὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔσται ἐπὶ ἑνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι ἢ ἐπὶ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα δικαίοις οἵτινες οὐ χρείαν ἔχουσιν μετανοίας. (Luke 15:3–7)

The Lost Coin likewise uses only the standard formula (Luke 15:9, 10). Simply put, the stylistic tendency is practically an on-off switch. Before and after fables, Luke's speaking formula is used often and regularly—in the fable material it is gone.

Of more than one hundred examples of a verb of speaking in the Lukan Fable Collection, the pattern of the Lukan formula dodging the fables appears to be broken just twice in the certain Lukan Fable Collection material: Luke 13:7, 15:22; and twice in the possible Fable Collection material: [Luke 14:23], [19:13].[63] During the fable of the Prodigal Son, Luke's speaking formula occurs when the father commands his slaves, εἶπεν δὲ ὁ πατὴρ πρὸς τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ… (Luke 15:22). The use of Lukan style in this verse is consonant with many other indications that Luke composed or (more likely) heavily redacted the second

63 There appears to be one case at Luke 18:9, but this is a false positive. It is simply the verb of speaking connecting to the beginning of the *promythium* of the Pharisee and Tax Collector, which begins with πρός, as we would expect (see 12.4).

half of this fable. The one example in the collection not discussed previously appears at Luke 13:7. This is in the heart of the fable of the Fig Tree, when the owner tells the gardener to cut the tree down, "εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἀμπελουργόν…." This is presumably an example of Luke intruding into a fable of his source. The fable otherwise shows no Lukan interventions and there are indications that Luke would not have composed it, such as the use of the historical present and asyndeton.

The two remaining cases are found in the Great Banquet and the Pounds, fables that may be drawn from the Lukan Fable Collection with some Lukan adaptation, or from Q/Matthew.[64] Toward the end of the Great Banquet scene we find the following at Luke 14:23: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ κύριος πρὸς τὸν δοῦλον· ἔξελθε εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ φραγμοὺς καὶ ἀνάγκασον εἰσελθεῖν, ἵνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος. This Lukan speaking formula occurs in a brief dialogue between the servant and the master that does not appear in the Matthean parallel, suggesting Luke has inserted it. In the Pounds there are a number of verses unique to Luke, and it has been argued that these may derive from a separate fable altogether, called the Throne Claimant.[65] Lukan style is evident in much of the fable, and Luke betrays his hand particularly in *some* portions without Matthean parallel. At Luke 19:13, we find his characteristic speaking formula: καλέσας δὲ δέκα δούλους ἑαυτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς δέκα μνᾶς καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· πραγματεύσασθε ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι. That Luke has redacted the fable of the Pounds no one would contest, so we should not be surprised that his characteristic speaking formula is here as well. From each of these examples where Luke has used his speaking formula in a fable, we may note that, with the exception of the fable of the Fig Tree, there are always other indications that Luke is redacting or composing the material.

To summarize, Luke's formula of a verb of speaking with πρός and an object accusative appears regularly in the author's redaction of Mark and Q, in his redaction or composition of other L material, and in fable material that he is evidently redacting. In spite of the thoroughgoing and regular use of this stylistic peculiarity, it appears to dodge and weave around the L fables at almost every turn. While the speaking formula avoids the fables themselves, we have noted that it is often present immediately before and the fable and before and after the framing devices. These are composed by Luke as narrative transitions. The distribution of Luke's speaking formula feels like a texture on the surface

64 Both are sufficiently different from their Matthean counterparts that scholars are divided as to their origin.

65 For a summary of the scholarship and issues, see Francis D. Weinert, "Parable of the Throne Claimant (Luke 19:12, 14–15a, 27) Reconsidered," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 505–14.

of the Lukan Gospel—roughest surrounding the fable material, smooth within the fable material. These seams give a strong overall impression that there is a discrete source Luke is stitching into his narrative: the Lukan Fable Collection.

15.3.5 *Vocabulary*

In the previous chapter, we concluded with some conspicuous catchwords in the Lukan Fable Collection and noted there that other vocabulary might hint at source differences.[66] Arguments from vocabulary are always weak, but even if the following four entries are neither catchwords nor hold convincing source-critical clues, they offer thematic resonances between the fables.

Luke is unique among the Gospel authors in using the verb εὐφραίνω, "make merry" or "to celebrate," which appears eight times in Luke-Acts. The two occurrences in Acts are both traditional material. In Acts 2:26 εὐφραίνω appears in a quotation of Ps 15:9, and again in Acts 7:41 during Stephen's speech when recounting the making of the golden calf and the Israelites who "rejoiced (εὐφραίνοντο) in the works of their hands." The six occurrences of εὐφραίνω in the gospel are all within L fables. The first example appears in the soliloquy of the Rich Fool as the man's last word, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years, relax, eat, drink, be merry (εὐφραίνου)!" (Luke 12:19). In the span of nine verses, the Prodigal Son uses εὐφραίνω four times (Luke 15:23, 24, 29, 32). It expresses the celebration taking place upon the lost son's return, the elder brother's complaint, and as the headword of the final statement in the fable: εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, "it was necessary to make merry and rejoice" (Luke 15:32). The final appearance of the verb εὐφραίνω is in the opening verse of the Rich Man and Lazarus, setting the scene with the description of the Rich Man's opulence, "clothed in purple and fine linen, every day making merry resplendently" (Luke 16:19). The common translation of εὐφραίνω in this verse as "feast" comes from its regular use in the context of banquets. So rendered, the parallel between the fables of the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Rich Fool is obscured. εὐφραίνω in the passive (so Luke 16:19) conveys "making merry," or "enjoying oneself." In light of the similar description of these two characters, and their common reckless gluttony, both stories may fittingly be described as fables about rich fools.

66 The most influential attempt at identifying the vocabulary of L goes back to Friedrich Rehkopf, *Die lukanische Sonderquelle: Ihr Umfang und Sprachgebrauch*, WUNT I/5 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959). See also Vincent Taylor, "Rehkopf's List of Words and Phrases Illustrative of Pre-Lukan Speech Usage," *JTS* 15 (1964): 59–62. More recently, see Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L*, 66–95.

This frequent use of εὐφραίνω in the fables and nowhere else is especially remarkable because the synonym χαίρω is so prevalent in Luke's writing elsewhere. It occurs in his own composition (e.g., Luke 13:17; Acts *passim*), as well as in a variety of other probable source material outside the fables, such as the Infancy Narrative (Luke 1:14, 28), the Zacchaeus episode (Luke 19:6), and the Passion Narrative (Luke 23:8). Compared to Mark's two examples, and Matthew's six, Luke's twelve examples of χαίρω in his gospel, with a further seven in Acts, is a fair indication that this is his preferred term. In the L fables, χαίρω appears twice, once in the Lost Sheep and again in the Prodigal Son where it may be redactional (15:32).[67] At the level of vocabulary, especially where χαίρω would work equally well, this may be a stylistic difference between Luke and his fable source. The Fable Collection, on the other hand, uses εὐφραίνω a half dozen times across three fables. This difference in vocabulary might provide a small source-critical hint, while also highlighting a particular theme via this catchword. This theme of prudent and imprudent times to celebrate and spend wealth is familiar from many fables from the ancient collections.

ὀφείλω is not a rare verb generally, but where it appears in Luke is noteworthy. ὀφείλω occurs a total of five times, four of which are accounted for in the L fables: the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41), the Crafty Steward (16:5, 7), and the Worthless Slaves (17:10). In the Worthless Slaves it occurs in the ethical imperative *epimythium*, which reads: λέγετε ὅτι δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, ὃ ὠφείλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν (Luke 17:10). Here, ὀφείλομεν means something like, "that which we ought to do," in contrast to elsewhere where financial transactions are in view.[68] The final example appears in the Lord's Prayer, the crux of the famous divergence between Matthew and Luke. It is Luke who has the οφείλω just once, contrasting τάς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν and παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν (Luke 11:4), compared to Matthew, who uses ὀφείλω twice in the more balanced τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν and τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν (Matt 6:12).

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67 Whether χαίρω in the Prodigal Son is original or redactional is a tossup. It appears in a pair with εὐφραίνω at the beginning of Luke 15:32: εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, which makes the χαίρω in the phrase natural, if superfluous. We find Luke making a similar addition of χαίρω to the Markan triumphal entry at Luke 19:37 (cf. Mark 11:9). In the other example of χαίρω in a fable, in the Lost Sheep, the word occurs only at the first example of "rejoicing" (Luke 15:5), and a verse later, when there is no Matthean parallel, the related συνχαίρω appears instead. We also see συνχαίρω with the identical form in the Lost Coin paralleled at Luke 15:9, rather than χαίρω. These two cases, along with Luke 1:58 are the only times this lemma appears in New Testament narrative material. There is not enough information to distinguish a use of χαίρω and συνχαίρω among Luke's sources, but distinguishing the two from the use of εὐφραίνω seems to be a different case.

68 This usage is found in the one appearance of ὀφείλω in Acts at 17:29.

The curious verb σπλαγχνίζω, derived from the lemma σπλάγχνον, is helpful source-critically since its unique usage in the fables is distinguishable from the usage in non-fable L material. The noun's most basic sense refers to those organs consumed as the opening of a banquet that follows a ritual animal sacrifice. By metaphorical extension, the noun came to mean the seat of one's feelings and affections, especially anger, derived from one's internal organs. The verbal form is late, the earliest case found in 2 Macc 6:8, where it has the literal meaning "to sacrifice." It seems that only the medio-passive form of the verb conveys its more familiar sense in late Greek, "to show compassion." Apart from 2 Macc 6:8 and Prov 17:5 LXX, the earliest attestation of σπλαγχνίζω is in the Synoptic Gospels.[69] In Luke, all three occurrences of the lemma are in L material, including two L fables: The Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, where it appears at the climax of both stories. In the fable of the Good Samaritan, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη conveys the climactic moment, "But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity" (καὶ ἰδὼν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη) (Luke 10:33). Likewise, in the Prodigal Son, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη occurs as the climactic word at the height of the drama, "But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion" (Luke 15:20b).[70] The third instance in Luke, again in L material, occurs in the story of the widow at Nain. On this occasion the same form ἐσπλαγχνίσθη is used to convey the emotion of Jesus, "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep'" (Luke 7:13).[71] The appearance of σπλαγχνίζω in this verse is significant for a number of reasons. As Paffenroth has noted in his discussion of this lemma, the use of the verb here is in tension with Luke's aversion to depicting Jesus's emotions.[72] Of the four verses in which the verb σπλαγχνίζω appears in the Markan gospel, Luke has a parallel to three of them (Mark 1:41//Luke 5:13; Mark 6:34//Luke 9:11; Mark 9:22//Luke 9:42). In all three of these cases, Luke has removed σπλαγχνίζω from his version. Given Luke's established tendency to remove the verb elsewhere, and his proclivity to diminish Jesus's emotions, the use of σπλαγχνίζω in the L material of 7:13 is a good indication that the episode is not a Lukan composition, but from a pre-Lukan tradition.[73]

The use of σπλαγχνίζω in the story of the Widow at Nain at Luke 7:13, the one example not in the fables, may be another case in which we can draw some

69 Five times in Matthew, four in Mark, and three in Luke (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20).

70 Ἔτι δὲ αὐτοῦ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος εἶδεν αὐτὸν ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσπλαγχνίσθη.

71 καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν ὁ κύριος ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· μὴ κλαῖε.

72 Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus*, 7.

73 Other details of the narrative are contrary to Lukan interests, such as Jesus touching the bier and thus affecting the healing through physical means.

distinction, if only the barest, between the Fable Collection and other Lukan *Sondergut*. In the story of the widow at Nain, the style of the verse in which σπλαγχνίζω appears is different in one important way. Like every other case of the verbal form in the Synoptic tradition (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; Mark 6:34; 8:2), the verb has taken a preposition and indirect object, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ' αὐτῇ, "moved with compassion for her." In the fable material at Luke 10:33 and 15:20, the Good Samaritan, and the Prodigal Son, respectively, there is no grammatical reason that would forbid the same construction, and yet there is no preposition or pronoun affixed in either case. The character is "moved with compassion" but not "… for him." Since the third feminine pronoun appears three times in rapid succession in Luke 7:13, at least one of which is pleonastic: ἰδὼν αὐτὴν ὁ κύριος ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ' αὐτῇ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, there would be good reason not to use the pronoun in 7:13 if the author thought it acceptable. In addition to the rarity of σπλαγχνίζω and Luke's shaky acceptance of using it at all, using σπλαγχνίζω without a preposition and an indirect object is perhaps a subtle stylistic difference that appears twice in the L fables. It is a peculiarity that appears only in these fables and may distinguish the Fable Collection both from Luke and also from the other L material.

The noun αἰσχύνη, "shame," and the verb αἰσχύνομαι, "to feel shame," are only found among the literary books of the New Testament at Luke 14:9 and 16:3, respectively—the former in the Place at the Table, and the latter in the Crafty Steward. In the New Testament, compound forms such as καταισχύνω and ἐπαισχύνομαι (Mark 8:38 // Luke 9:26; Luke 13:17) have almost completely taken over. The use of augmented forms by Luke at these other verses might betray a stylistic contrast between Luke and the Fable Collection, which uses only unaugmented forms. The paucity of the data makes this conclusion only plausible, but it is noteworthy at least for the thematic interest of the proposed collection.

15.4 Problems with the Alternative Theories

Now that I have put forward what I think is the most plausible solution, it is worthwhile to identify the alternatives to the fable collection theory that I have advanced here. The first alternative is that Luke invented the L fables based on the training in fable composition he would have received as part of his education. The second alternative is that Luke heavily redacted material of disparate origins, conforming it more closely to the established fable form so that it now appears roughly homogeneous and reminiscent of a fable collection. In light of current trends in Luke scholarship that attribute to the author greater literary

creativity than has previously been allowed, either of these alternatives would be more appealing to many. It would be more appealing to the present author, too, who knows that *Quellenforschung* is out of fashion. I will briefly highlight here what I see as the main obstacles to alternative theories that ultimately render the Lukan Fable Collection the most plausible solution.

There are several issues with the alternatives that relate to the basic content. First, in terms of quantity, the L fables account for almost half of the Central Section. One will need an explanation for the sheer quantity of this fable material if it is not from a source. A few more issues related to the content and structure of the gospel are also apparent. If this is not source material, if Luke has composed or heavily redacted it, then why has Luke done such a poor job composing a narrative? For all his rhetorical training, as we have seen on multiple occasions, the narrative of the Central Section often breaks down completely. It leaves us reading fables and *epimythia* without any narrative connections between them (see, for example, 13.4). We would need to explain why Luke has done a superb job redacting or composing in the fable narratives such that his style is undetectable, and yet is so clumsy preceding and following the fables that it is occasionally not even clear that we are reading a narrative. The location of some fables in their narrative contexts is also peculiar, often jerking us from one setting to another. As we can see from Acts, Luke is not incapable of delivering a smooth narrative progression. In the gospel, Luke often falls short of literary success in crafting narrative settings for the fables. This is more easily explicable by the author stitching in source material.

While the evidence for the links between some fables is stronger than it is for others, there are at least a few indisputable instances of two L fables being linked at the literary level. Such links are at home in fable collections but make little sense in a narrative text that divides these links by several chapters. The alternative theories will need to resolve what would motivate Luke to produce these links.

There are also a number of obstacles to these alternative theories that pertain to the fable framing devices. In addition to the fact that Luke sometimes does not even try to fit them into the narrative, one would need to reckon with the fact that sometimes they refute each other. As I highlighted above, it is perfectly acceptable for a single author to draw more than one lesson from one fable, but a single author will not contradict himself. The sheer number of *epimythia*, including some that refute the preceding *epimythium* (e.g., Luke 18:7–8), strongly suggests at least two authors. If Luke is responsible for even these disagreeing *epimythia*, one will need to account for his split personality. Similarly, a number of these *epimythia* are not lessons that we would expect Luke to write. While the style of the *epimythia* is a subject in its own

right, it seems rather unlikely that Luke would compose the eschatological and apocalyptic lessons for fables like the Crafty Steward (Luke 16:9–13) or the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:6–8). If such lessons are in tension with Luke's theological interests in the rest of the gospel, then one would need to explain why Luke has composed them.

The alternative that Luke has heavily redacted the fable has its own problems. The differences between the fables in Luke and the other gospels are not superficial such that they are explicably by redaction. Put another way, the distinguishing features of the L fable plots and characters are fundamental to them. Removing these features as if they were later redactions would cause them to completely unravel. There is no Friend at Midnight without his shamelessness, no Judge and the Widow without his soliloquy, no Crafty Steward without his dubious ethics. Whether they are from a source, or composed by the evangelist, it is either one way or the other—the defining qualities of the L fables are essential to them. In addition to the fundamental features, one would need to find an answer to at least one character. The bawdy speech of the deity in the Rich Fool suggests that Luke has not composed or redacted it (Luke 12:20). It would not be especially challenging to remove this irreverent depiction of the deity as Thomas probably did (Gos. Thom. 63). If Luke has composed these fables, or their speeches, then one must find a way to incorporate the depiction of the deity here into Luke's theology.

Finally, as we discussed in 14.2, there is far less evidence of Lukan style in the fables than in his other material. If Luke had composed or heavily redacted these fables, we would expect the opposite result. To be sure, Luke's style is more variable than was recognized during the heyday of source criticism, but the style of the fables is a substantial departure from Luke's other material. As we observed in 15.3, there are a number of inexplicable stylistic tendencies in the fable materials that run contrary to Luke's apparent compositional and redactional inclinations elsewhere. In terms of redaction, as we discussed in 10.3 and throughout Chapter 15, if Luke was keen to redact fables in order to bring them into harmony with the fable form, one will need to explain why he did not redact also his Markan and Matthean/Q fables in this way. While, indeed, Luke may have composed specific fables, redacted others, and inserted a "What shall I do?" now and again, the quantity and uniformity of the L fables suggest that they come from a common source.

15.5 The Shape of the Source

The Lukan Fable Collection would have been structured just as the other fable collections of its day: a series of short texts with lessons appended to them,

with no overarching narrative structure. While a few fables and some other L *Sondergut* fall into a source-critical grey area, the contents of this source will have consisted of the following fables, with items that are questionable placed in square brackets:[74] The Two Debtors (7:41–42a), [perhaps some of the narrative context of the Two Debtors (7:36–50)],[75] the Good Samaritan (10:30–35),[76] the Friend at Midnight (11:5–10), the Rich Fool (12:15–21),[77] [Watchfulness for the Master (12:34–38)],[78] the Fig Tree (13:6–9), [the introduction to the Place at the Table (14:7)],[79] the Place at the Table (14:8–11), [the Great Dinner/Banquet (14:16–24)].[80] Then we have the fable block that spans Luke 14:28 to about 16:8, less Luke's narrative compositions within it. This block of fables includes the Tower Builder and Warring King (14:28–35), [the Lost Sheep (15:4–7)],[81] the Lost Coin (15:8–10), the Prodigal Son (15:11–32), the Crafty Steward (16:1–8), [the verses (*epimythia*?) following the Crafty Steward (16:9–13)].[82] After the

74 In a number of the following fables, I have not split verses into "a" and "b" components. It is regularly the case that a fable from the Collection will begin after half a verse.

75 Whether the fable was transmitted along with this narrative setting is impossible to say for certain. This pericope, which appears in all four Gospels, is a famous source critical conundrum. The fable only appears in Luke's version of the episode. It is possible that Luke inserted the fable here into the episode that he had from another source, but also conceivable that the episode was also in the fable collection.

76 The literary context, a *chreia* beforehand (10:25–29) and the instruction after, derive from Luke. It is possible that Luke has also composed the fable as well.

77 The *chreia* preceding shows signs of Lukan composition.

78 These verses have distant parallels in the other Synoptic episodes like Matthew's Ten Maidens (Matt 24:42–51), but the two have little in common. We also have the two catchwords, "knock" and "open" from the Lukan Fable Collection not found in any of the distant parallels. While Luke 12:34 matches a Double Tradition passage (Luke 12:33–34 // Matt 6:19–21), Luke also has a form of this saying at 18:22. This suggests that he likely had more than one source for it.

79 Luke 14:7 looks as though it might be a redacted *promythium*. The pericope that precedes the Place at the Table is also L material.

80 Matthew has a parallel to this pericope (Matt 22:1–14) but the story is rather different. Matthew's version, with its king protagonist more closely resembles the Jewish fable paradigm where kings are the most prominent character.

81 Matthew also has the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:12–14), though the two versions have a number of differences and the image of shepherd and sheep is one of the most popular early Christian images. It is possible that Luke got the fable from Q/Matthew, but it seems just as likely that Luke had it in his fable collection. As it stands, it is probably in a paraphrased form that mirrors the fables at the end of chapter 14. It is preceded by a *chreia* that introduces the three fables of chapter 15 and possible the Crafty Steward, which begins chapter 16.

82 The verses following the Crafty Steward are clearly *epimythia*. The question is where the *epimythia* end and other traditional materials begin. In the fable manuscripts and collections, not for any rule but for reasons of practicality, three *epimythia* appears to be the maximum.

consecutive fable block, we need only wait six verses before returning again to fables: the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31), the Worthless Slaves (17:7–10), the Judge and the Widow (18:1–8), the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9–14), and [the Pounds (19:11–27)].[83] From this tally, we have fifteen fables most likely, and four additional possible candidates. It is also possible that the collection would have had some of the Markan fables preserved in Luke's Gospel, perhaps especially Luke's version of the Tenants of the Vineyard (Luke 20:9–19) or the Sower with its narrative explanation (Luke 8:5–8). There is nothing to rule out that the collection could have contained other fables of Jesus preserved in the other gospels or lost completely. In other words, it is conceivable that Luke has been selective rather than exhaustive in using the fables of this collection in his gospel.

From the fables identified in the paragraph above, a remarkable pattern emerges that cannot be accidental. Within a chapter of the beginning of the Travel Narrative at Luke 9:52, until his arrival in Jerusalem at Luke 19:28, Jesus tells a fable from the Collection in every single chapter, without exception: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19.[84] Here, in Luke's Central Section, where most of the teaching material is gathered, Jesus dispenses his fables iteratively along the way to Jerusalem.

15.6 The Sitz im Leben

As we saw in Chapter 8, the Lukan Gospel has a strong interest in didactic matters, especially evident in the uniquely Lukan episodes. Luke gives us John, who is not just the baptizer, but the "didaskalos" instructing the crowds, "What they should do" (Luke 3:10–15). Luke gives us Jesus's precocious exploits in the Jerusalem temple (Luke 2:46–47). Luke gives us a literate Jesus (Luke 4:15–20) who wins rhetorical exchanges with the educated (Luke 10:25–37). Luke portrays Jesus as the teacher *par excellence*, not just addressed as "didaskalos" but

83 Matthew has the Talents (Matt 25:14–30), which is clearly related to the Pounds, but the two are substantially divergent such that most consider Matthew and Luke to be relying on two discrete traditions rather than a common Q source. There are certain fable features in this pericope, but it also seems likely that Luke has at least edited it. It is not possible to determine whether Luke has redacted a version from Q/Matthew or from his fable collection. I follow the view that the Pounds/Talents has most likely come to Matthew and Luke via two different traditions. The verbal similarity is minimal, the plots diverge greatly, and such a lengthy story is also not what one is accustomed to finding in Q.

84 When we include the Two Debtors and the Pounds, we have a fable in chapter 7 and in chapter 19. The gap between chapters 7 and 10 is filled in chapter 8 by Luke's lengthy version of the Sower and its allegorical interpretation.

giving "you" instruction, most of all through his fables, which he dispenses chapter after chapter. While any proposal is conjectural, on the basis of these prevailing didactic concerns and the known uses of fable collections at the end of the first century, I suggest that the Lukan Fable Collection belongs to the sphere of Christian catechesis.

A further indication of Luke's interest in the intellectual and moral formation of the reader and a possible clue to the origin of his Collection is found in the prologue to Theophilus.[85] The Greek of Luke's prologue, a single ornate sentence, is a challenge to interpret as a whole, and no less its individual clauses, including the fourth verse where he states his objective. Luke 1:4 reads ἵνα ἐπιγνῷς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν and is generally rendered into English something like:

> … so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (NASB)
> … that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (ESV)
> … so that you might come to appreciate the certainty of the instruction you have received.[86]
> … so that your Excellency may realize what assurance you have for the instruction you have received.[87]
> … so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. (NRSV)
> … so that you (that is, Theophilus) may have assured knowledge about the things in which you have been instructed.[88]

Virtually every word in the clause is a challenge: ἐπιγνῷς, κατηχήθης, λόγων, ἀσφάλειαν, including even ὧν, since its antecedent has been absorbed into the clause.[89] λόγων of course can mean a variety of things from "story," "word,"

85 Whether Theophilus is the name of a historical individual or is intended as a cypher for any Christian is of little consequence to the present thesis. Loveday Alexander, who has done the most in-depth study on Luke's preface, is confident that he was historical. "Was Theophilus a real person? Yes: this is one of the few facts about Theophilus on which we can be reasonably certain" (Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1*, SNTSMS 78 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 188).

86 Richard J. Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1–4)," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 205–27, esp. 223.

87 Fitzmyer, *Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, 287.

88 Alexander, *Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 187.

89 For the various ways to resolve the syntax of the sentence, see Cadbury, "Appendix 3," in *Prolegomena II: Criticism*, vol. 2 of *The Beginnings of Christianity, Book I: The Acts of the*

"fable," "matter," and so on, depending on the context.[90] ἀσφάλειαν is an abstract idea that means something like "certain." The verb κατηχήθης is the crux of the matter for us. From this term derives the English word, "catechesis," and many think the term here refers to exactly this.[91] It occurs in the Bible three times each in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25, 21:21, 24) and in Paul (Rom 2:18; 1 Cor 14:19; Gal 6:6), all with connotations of religious instruction. For example, about the Alexandrian Jew, Apollos, we read that he, "Was an eloquent man, mighty with the Scriptures. This man had received instruction (κατηχημένος) in the Way of the Lord; and zealous in spirit he was speaking and teaching accurately (ἀκριβῶς) the things about Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:24b–26).[92] Indeed, Alexander concludes from her thorough studies of the preface that it is possible to pinpoint a specific context for Luke's project. Prefaces such as Luke's

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Apostles, ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: Macmillan and Company, 1922), 508.

90 Fitzmyer includes "instruction, teaching and message" as possible meanings for the term here (*Luke*, 301). Bovon includes among the possibilities "even Jesus's concrete sayings" if not his preaching as a whole (*Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, 24).

91 David P. Moessner, "Luke as Tradent and Hermeneut," *NovT* 58 (2016): 259–300, here 265, and see also idem, "The Meaning of Kathexēs in the Lukan Prologue as a Key to the Distinctive Contribution of Luke's Narrative among the 'Many,'" in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 1513–28; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 45–46; Carroll assumes it is also basic Christian instruction (*Luke*, 22). Garland supposes it is instruction but does not mention a specific formal kind (David E. Garland, *Luke* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 57). Klein goes so far as to infer that Theophilus has been instructed by Luke himself. Klein argues that it cannot refer to a pre-baptismal Christian catechism, which is first mentioned in 2 Clem 17:1 but thinks it possible that it could be post-baptismal, such as we find in Gal 6:6 (Hans Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006], 76). Evans believes it would imply that whatever instruction the reader received before was in some way defective (Evans, *Saint Luke*, 135–36). We may point to the parallel in Acts 18:25, however. Here Apollos is said to teach "accurately." Nevertheless, the next verse tells us the Priscilla and Aquila taught him things "more accurately." Thus, it is probably better to understand the issue as a matter of degree (Fitzmyer, *Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, 289–90). Schürmann regards this as a particular individual who has been baptized and undergone instruction in the faith (Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 2 vols. [Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1969], 1:15).

92 The meaning of ἀκριβῶς here, "accurately" or "fully," is significant because it also appears in Luke 1:3. On the translation of ἀκριβῶς, see David L. Balch, "Ἀκριβῶς… γράψαι (Luke 1:3): To Write the Full History of God's Receiving All Nations," in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim upon Israel's Legacy*, ed. David P. Moessner, Luke the Interpreter of Israel 1 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 229–50.

> derive more or less directly from a school context: they are "school texts," that is, not elementary, watered-down textbooks in the modern sense, but the written deposit of the *techne*, the distillation of the teaching of a school or a craft tradition as it was passed down from one generation to another.[93] Luke is writing from within a Christian social context which is in significant respects like that of the hellenistic schools.[94]

Though firm in her conclusion, Alexander highlights a challenge that has to do with the Lukan Gospel's biographical character. Situating Luke's prologue within the context of biographies in this didactic tradition, she notes that "for the Gospel we lack the essential component of the analogy, namely a body of Jesus' teaching separate from and pre-existent to the narrative of his life."[95] The incorporation of a collection of Jesus's fables at the center of Luke's Gospel would be an ideal candidate for this missing body of teaching. The Lukan Fable Collection is a likely part of "those *logoi* by which you were catechized."

The "confirmation" of what Theophilus learned in his catechism offers a good motivation for Luke to include the collection of Jesus's fables. We may simply imagine the reaction of a Christian catechumen reading this gospel, having known Jesus's fables only in a disconnected series. Here, in the gospel, the catechumen encounters the fables within a broader narrative setting for the first time—learning that it was "here" that Jesus said that fable, and "then" that he said another. What joy, what "confirmation" of the truth of his catechism this would impart, to encounter a portrayal of Jesus telling the fable collection, chapter by chapter through the course of Luke's Gospel.[96]

Given Luke's stated purpose here in the prologue, we should not be at all surprised to find the didactic orientation of much of the L material. The didactic orientation of the Central Section and the shift to second person address also fit this concern. We should also not be surprised that Luke would incorporate some of Theophilus's catechetical material into his Gospel, such as this collection material. The Lukan Fable Collection would thus derive from the

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93 Loveday Alexander, "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing," *NovT* 28 (1986): 48–74, esp. 69.

94 Alexander, *Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 211.

95 Alexander, *Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 205. Though she appears to reject the Q thesis, Alexander also acknowledges that Q would be a fitting document to this end.

96 An intertextual dynamic between a collection and a narrative about the fable teller who tells bits of the collection in it would not be unique. This is precisely what Holzberg believes provides some of the appeal to *The Life of Aesop*, which he believes was linked to the Augustana Collection and marketed with it (on which, see 4.3.1). *The Life of Ahiqar* likewise circulated with his collection of wise sayings and presumably curried thereby some interest in the collection.

catechetical setting of the author and his audience. As an ancient, entertaining, universally-recognized genre for literate and moral education, easy to comprehend by rich and poor, young and old, men and women, slave and free, illiterate and educated, intelligible across the Roman and Persian Empires by Jews and Gentiles, the use of a fable collection for catechesis would be a sensible choice.

15.7 The Date, Location, and Authorship of the Lukan Fable Collection

If the catechetical setting at the end of the first century is the correct Sitz im Leben, then we may attempt to scrape together a few details. We have discussed at length in Book I the difficulty of dating fable collections and the same issues affect the Lukan Fable Collection: they are "open texts." Given the textual fluidity of fable collections, at what point should we date it? At the point some fables of Jesus were gathered together and put to writing? Or when all the fables were put into the collection? Or when all the fables in the collection reached their final form, including their framing devices? Like the dating strategies for the other collections, we will need to locate datable internal and external data. Here we are left wanting. The gospel author would have taken whatever version was available to him in his community when he sat down to write. In other words, the Lukan Fable Collection in its final form—with the narratives and framing devices as Luke preserves them—should be pinned to roughly whenever one dates the Gospel according to Luke. We may assume that the Collection would need to be established for a certain time for it to be recognized when it appears in the gospel, but how long this would be is not ascertainable. Since fable collections accrue material during the life of the text, we cannot say how early some form of the document might have existed. Pressing for an early date is the nature of the collection, which shares an important characteristic with those earliest Christian traditions. The Lukan Fable Collection comes from a time when Jesus was still the author rather than the object of stories about him.

The fact that the other evangelists did not use this collection in their respective gospel may be an indication of several things. It may mean that they did not think to include this material for one reason or another. It may mean that the Lukan Fable Collection had not yet been assembled or composed by the time they wrote. It may mean that, while it was in existence, the other evangelists did not have access to it because it was a local or private production. It is most likely that the other evangelists show no signs of being aware of most of Luke's fables because Luke alone among the evangelists had access to them.

As for the location and authorship, we have even less to go on than the ancient fable collections. We could be content to accept that it may have come from anywhere outside of Palestine, as is the general consensus on Luke's Gospel, were it not for the observations going back to Stanton and Bartlet's "parable collection" that supported a Palestinian milieu.[97] In the collection, we have several likely Semitisms in both the fables and in the *epimythia*, along with some apocalyptic imagery in *epimythia* that do not allow us to rule out first-century Palestine. On the other hand, we cannot tell when these framing devices were added. Moreover, apocalyptic expectations were found among the early Christians outside of Palestine and the issue of whence the Semitisms in these texts is complicated. We cannot make any confident determination without further evidence. The Lukan Fable Collection could have been produced anywhere in the Greek-speaking world where there were Christians organized enough for catechesis.

Given the nature of fable collections, it is also a challenge to speak of authorship. We have between one author, or perhaps editor, and as many as a handful with numerous "authors" contributing their morals to the collection. The composition of a fable collection, especially one in public use, could easily become a corporate affair. Since we would expect the reader to be familiar with these fables, and probably their lessons as well, we can probably rule out that it was based on the private fable collection of an individual. For the reasons given above, we may rule out that it was composed by the gospel author himself.

15.8 Conclusion

In the last two chapters, I have offered a new take on an old theory—that the fables unique to Luke go back to a collection. With many new texts at our disposal with which to compare this collection of Jesus's fables, we found a source behind Luke that looked very much like the other first-century fable collections. After presenting the aesthetic features of other fable collections, we were able to recognize many of the same features in Luke's Fable Collection. From our examination of style, vocabulary, and dissimilarities in content, we were able to detect a number of differences between the evangelist, his other sources, and this collection of fables. In doing so we gained a rough guide

97 Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, 2:231–32; Bartlet, "The Sources of St. Luke's Gospel," 349–50. Heininger also concludes there is "a Palestinian apocalyptic milieu" for at least some of the sources on the basis of the framing devices joined to the Crafty Steward and the Judge and the Widow (*Sondergutgleichnissen*, 219).

to which fables belonged to the collection and which ones Luke probably reworked. However much he did or did not redact them, the fact that many of the fables contain multiple voices in the *epimythia* is solid evidence that these fables were not composed by Luke. On the basis of this information and the didactic interests of Luke's Gospel, I then offered a hypothesis for the Sitz im Leben of the Lukan Fable Collection in the catechetical setting of the Church. Whatever its original function, the fable collection source explains why Luke's Gospel has so many more fables than all the others, why they have "explanations" attached concerning practical ethics, and whence they came.[98]

98 So the explanation of Knox already in the 1950s (*Sources of the Synoptic Gospels*, 111). See as well, Dibelius, who remarks, "The tendency of the churches to derive as much exhortation as possible from the words of Jesus must have affected the handing down of the parables" (Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 248–58).

CHAPTER 16

Fables beyond the Lukan Gospel

16.1 Introduction

Book II has focused on the Gospel according to Luke for many reasons, some of which I list here in retrospect. The Lukan Gospel contains not only the largest, but also the most famous and confounding "parable" tradition. Among the evangelists, Luke displays the clearest evidence of rhetorical training. Outside of the fables themselves, the Lukan narrative and the Lukan Jesus show points of contact with the Aesopic and fable tradition. The Lukan fables break all of the rules of the "parable," especially those used to divide "parables" and "fables." The Lukan fables stand apart in their abundance of lessons about practical ethics. The fables contained in the Lukan Gospel are suggestive of a collection source. The preceding chapters have covered these and many more areas, demonstrating that the fable supplies the solution for many "parable" puzzles, while illuminating the Lukan fables like never before. I have touched on the other early Christian and Jewish writings at many points. For biblical and fable scholarship, this concluding chapter identifies some open doors for future research into these materials.

16.2 Fables and the Other Early Christian Writings

With this groundwork laid, how does the fable context described here illuminate other early Christian writings? The gospel according to Mark, Matthew, John, Thomas, and other authors, including Paul, Q (?), and more, are open for exploration. It has been primarily for reasons of space that I have not covered these materials in depth. As we established in Book I, all of these authors would be well-acquainted with fables from a number of contexts. How do the fables of the other evangelists compare to those in Luke in terms of their conformity to the fable form and the fable lessons? Do their fable characters resonate with those found in other fable literature? Do they convey their lessons in the same way using *epimythia*?[1] Do they engage with the fable teller tradition? Does the fable tradition develop from earlier to later sources?

1 As we read in Chapter 8, Grotius had already identified Matt 13:49 as an *epimythium* in the 17th century (Grotius, *Annotationes in Quatuor Evangelia*, 144). Beavis likewise concludes that

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16.2.1 *Matthew*

At points along the way, we have touched on the parallels between the Matthean fables and those in other sources. Fables such as the Dragnet (Matt 13:47–50) and the Treasure in the Field (Matt 13:44) should now be recognized as obvious representatives of the many contemporary fishing and treasure fables, respectively. A study of individual Matthean fables and the Matthean tradition in relation to the ancient fable context as a whole would be a worthwhile pursuit. In particular, Matthew contains two classes of comparisons that he seems especially inclined to use. The first is the group of single-verse fables that border on similitudes. As I discussed at length in Chapter 7, how the similitude fits in with the fable is open for further study. As we saw there, Aesop uses this form as well, not in the collections, but in the narrative *Life of Aesop.* At least one of these similitudes in *The Life* is a shorter version of a full-fledged fable taken from a collection.[2] Might we learn something about these brief Matthean similitudes by comparing them to similitude versions of fables in *The Life of Aesop*?

In addition to the full narrative fables, Luke also contains several quotations or allusions to well-known fables, two of which are shared with Matthew (Luke 7:24 // Matt 11:7; Luke 7:32 // Matt 11:17). These are not the only two allusions to known fables in Matthew, however. To offer one further example, Matthew also preserves a saying about "the wolves in sheep's clothing." The Matthean Jesus warns, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves," Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν ψευδοπροφητῶν, οἵτινες ἔρχονται πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ἐνδύμασιν προβάτων, ἔσωθεν δέ εἰσιν λύκοι ἅρπαγες (Matt 7:15). This verse from Matthew is the first recorded reference to the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing in history. Unlike the other sayings of Jesus with parallels in the fable collections, Jesus's allusion to the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing precedes the earliest-known fable version by more than a thousand years. Wolves using cunning to make a meal of a sheep are quite common in the first-century collections (e.g., Babrius, *Fab.* 89, 105, 132; Perry 234), and animals wearing the

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there are a number of *epimythia* in Mark and Matthew ("Parable and Fable," 297–98). I demonstrate the same in a forthcoming article, Strong, "How to Interpret Parables in Light of the Fable."

2 E.g., "Still jibing at them he said, 'Men of Delphi, you are like a piece of driftwood floating on the sea; when we see it at a great distance, tossing on the waves, we think it is something worthwhile, but then when we approach and come to it, we find that it is a very insignificant thing of no value'" (*Vit. Aes.* 125). A more normal length version of this fable is also found in the Augustana Collection (Perry 177).

"clothing" of another is a common fable theme.[3] In its fable form, the earliest surviving version is in the twelfth century *Progymnasmata* of Nikephoros Basilakes:

> *A false disguise is dangerous to those who adopt it.*
> Once a wolf thought it a good idea to change his natural form, in order thus to have unlimited food. After putting on the skin of a sheep, he grazed among the flock, deceiving the shepherd with his trick. When night came, the shepherd locked the beast in the sheepfold with the other animals. The gate was shut, and the enclosure completely secured. And when the shepherd became hungry, he killed the wolf with a knife.
> *And so the one who plays a role in a false disguise is often deprived of his life and finds his pretense to be the cause of a great downfall.* (*Prog.* 1.4 [Perry 451])[4]

The only word the fable and Matthew's saying have in common is λύκος, "wolf;" even "sheep" is only implied and has been supplied by the translator. The story itself, which emphasizes the folly of the wolf who winds up dead rather than the sheep, also does not fit Jesus's metaphor. The lessons drawn from the fable are also unrelated to Jesus's message. Do the two versions relate to each other, and if so, how? Did Nikephoros invent this fable from Jesus's saying, or does Jesus attest to this fable first preserved by Nikephoros a millennium later?

16.2.2 *Q (?)*

If they do not belong to Matthew's fable tradition, then at least two clear references to fables appear in the Q material: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?" (Luke 7:24 // Matt 11:7) and shortly thereafter, "We piped and you did not dance; we wailed and you did not weep/mourn" (Luke 7:32 // Matt 11:17).[5] Why does Q give us mere allusions rather than the full fables? What would their function have been in the Q collection?

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3 E.g., Phaedrus, *Fab*. 1.3; Babrius, *Fab*. 72, 139; Aphthonius, *Fab*. 10; Avianus, *Fab*. 5; Perry 188 and 358; Horace, *Sat*. 1.6.19–23. A fable of a wolf pretending to nurse a lamb is worth quoting: "A fox slipped into a flock of sheep, took one of the suckling lambs, and pretended to be mothering it. When the dog asked, 'What are you doing here?' she replied, 'I'm suckling this lamb and playing with it.' Whereupon the dog said, 'And now, if you don't let the lamb go, I'll give you some pups to suckle'" (Perry 41).

4 The text and translation are from Jeffrey Beneker and Craig A. Gibson, eds., *The Rhetorical Exercises of Nikephoros Basilakes: Progymnasmata from Twelfth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), here 10–11.

5 As we discussed earlier, both fables were widely known in the ancient world. The Oak and the Reed is found in every ancient collection apart from Phaedrus, including Babrius (*Fab.* 36), the Augustana (Perry 70, with a Chambry variant, 143), Aphthonius (*Fab.* 36), and Avianus (*Fab.* 16). The Flute Player is found in Babrius (*Fab.* 9), the Augustana (Perry 11), Aphthonius (*Fab.* 33), on the second-century papyrus fragment, P.Hak. 1 and Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.141.

What might these allusions at this inchoate stage of the literary tradition about Jesus tell us about the fables in the later materials?[6] With the Q, Markan, M, and L traditions in view, there is also a discernible trend toward longer and, one could say, more fabulized versions of Jesus's comparisons as the Synoptic Tradition progresses from earlier to later sources. Is this an indication that these comparisons developed toward the fable form in the course of transmission? Now that the form and genre characteristics of the fable are available for comparison, a study of the trajectory of the fables from source to source would be worthwhile.

Like Thomas and John, there is no indication that παραβολή occurs in Q. As I have noted in passing, the vocabulary of φρόνιμος and καιρός in the Double Tradition material at Luke 12:42 // Matt 24:45 also could not have stronger fable associations.[7] The Q fable material here and elsewhere contains a fairly high concentration of imagery with references to slaves and masters as well.[8] These references may certainly be read productively in light of the slave fables and slave associations of the genre, perhaps even to characterize the fable teller in Q.

A separate phenomenon in need of further attention is the fact that Luke's fable *epimythia* are, now and then, Double Tradition material or found also in Mark.[9] How should we account for this overlap? Might Luke be appending appropriate Q sayings to his fables as *epimythia*? This would explain some of the intercalations of L fables with Q material, such as following the Friend at Midnight (beginning at Luke 11:9) and between the Crafty Steward and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:13).[10] It is tempting to attribute to Luke this very clever practice of affixing certain Q logia as *epimythia* to fables he felt were appropriate. If there was not a Q, it is also easy to imagine these Double Tradition gnomic sayings of Jesus circulating independently. They would have come to Mark and Matthew through a different stream, while coming to Luke

6 Reece, for example, is mainly concerned with identifying these passages, rather than to explore their function, "'Aesop,' 'Q' and 'Luke.'" The identification was made already by Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 52.

7 See especially Chapter 11, note 37.

8 See especially the studies of Dieter T. Roth, *The Parables in Q*, LNTS 582 (London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2018), 87–144 and "'Master' as Character in the Q Parables," in *Metaphor, Narrative, and Parables in Q*, ed. Dieter T. Roth, Ruben Zimmermann, and Michael Labahn, WUNT I/315 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 371–96.

9 See, for example, Chapter 14 note 96.

10 For a discussion and analysis of how the material between the Crafty Steward and the Rich Man and Lazarus may be explained source critically, see Cilliers Breytenbach, "'Was die Menschen für großartig halten, das ist in den Augen Gottes ein Greuel' (Lk 16,15c): Geld angesichts des Eschatons," *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 21 (2006): 131–144.

affixed to his fables. Now that we are acquainted with the fable form and its framing devices, the fable genre may be brought into the debates about the existence and shape of Q.

16.2.3 *Mark*

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark's comparisons are normally not narratives involving a developed plot or human drama. If one were to represent the ratio of Mark's comparisons in a figure, between short similes and fables, like Figure 7, it would look rather different. Mark's comparisons are mostly about inanimate objects and nature such as the Seed Growing Secretly (Mark 4:26–29), the Lamp under a Bushel (Mark 4:21–25), New Wine into Old Wineskins (Mark 2:21–22), and the Budding Fig Tree (Mark 13:28–29). As I noted at the end of Book I, such comparisons accord with Apsines (7.3.2), who describes the παραβολή using only brief non-narrative comparisons with just inanimate objects, plants, and animals. As we saw there, this genre obviously not fit the "narrative parables" about people in the remainder of the Synoptic tradition. Does Mark understand παραβολή in a different sense than Luke and Matthew? We may face once more, the temptation of genre gerrymandering—artificially carving out an enclave to play the terminological joker card, "parable." Nevertheless, the ancient genre concepts I have brought to our attention are available now for mapping onto the Markan tradition. Does Mark draw straight from the Septuagint terminology, does he fold and unfold proverbs and fables, or is he simply unsystematic?

Though Mark regularly uses similitudes, he also transmits several full-fledged fables. These include the Sower (Mark 4:3–9), and what is, perhaps, the fable most steeped in the tradition of the fable teller—the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–12). As we discussed in Chapter 9, the latter carries strong associations with the fable telling tradition. We also noted there that the Markan Jesus employs the fable more widely as coded speech. This aspect of fable telling appears diminished in the later gospels. As the Wicked Tenants and this mode of coded fable telling cohere with one another, it is very possible that the appeal to the fable teller character is already present at the beginning of the Synoptic tradition. What light the fable can shed on Mark's characterization of Jesus is in need of further study.

16.2.4 *John*

Joining Thomas and Q, the conspicuous absence of "parables" in John's gospel is another puzzle that I have touched on in passing. The belief that John contains no "parables" is largely upheld because the term παραβολή never

appears. A number of scholars have asked how John's παροιμία could relate to the "parables" of the Synoptics.[11] The Johannine Jesus, for example, utters a line that resonates with Jesus in the Synoptics, only with παραβολή swapped out for παροιμία: "I have said these things to you in figures of speech (ἐν παροιμίαις). The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures (ἐν παροιμίαις), but will tell you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25 cf. Mark 4:11; Matt 13:13; Luke 8:10). As we touched on in 7.3.4, it is worth considering not how παροιμία relates to "parable," but rather, how παροιμία relates to "fable." Even a cursory comparison is promising, since Quintilian tells us explicitly that a παροιμία is a sort of abbreviated fable (*Inst.* 5.11.19–21).[12] This allegorically understood fable, the παροιμία, is what we find in John. Perhaps it is a coincidence that John features so much symbolic language and attributes to Jesus this παροιμίαι form that Quintilian describes, but perhaps not.[13] Among the two hundred proverbial sayings attributed to Aesop, we may note that sixteen are named παροιμίαι as well.[14]

16.2.5 *Paul*

In the Pauline corpus, too, there are a number of references—both possible and certain—to first-century fables that are waiting to be sifted and compared. Paul's body metaphor in 1 Cor 12:12–26 (and cf. Rom 12:4) is one example that stands out. There have been a great many investigations into the possible sources and parallels to this particular Pauline metaphor in the classical materials. So far as I am able to tell, little attention has been given to

11 For an introduction and the *status quaestionis*, see Ruben Zimmermann, "Einleitung" in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, 695–709. See further Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, "Klartext in Bildern. Ἀληθινός κτλ., παροιμία—παρρησία, σημείον als Signalwörter für eine bildhafte Darstellungsform im Johannesevangelium," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John*, ed. Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 200 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 61–102; Uta Poplutz, "Paroimia und Parabolē. Gleichniskonzepte bei Johannes und Markus," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John*, ed. Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 200 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 103–120; Eduard Schweizer, "What about the Johannine 'Parables?,'" in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Clifton C. Black (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 208–19; Simon Kaipuram, *Paroimiai in the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Parables of Jesus' Self-Revelation: With Special Reference to John 12,24, The Grain of Wheat* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1993).

12 The text of this passage is quoted in 7.3.4.

13 From Quintilian's description, it would appear that he distinguishes the παροιμία from the proverb or similitude by the presence of allegorical elements.

14 Some of the proverbs are compressed versions based upon fables, of course. For the proverbs of Aesop, see Perry, *Aesopica*, 261–91; those explicitly named παροιμίαι Αἴσωπου are found on page 290.

the fable versions found in the collections.[15] This neglect of the fable material we may attribute once more to misinformation and common misunderstandings about the ancient fable. Summarizing the classical parallels to Paul's fable, Timothy Brookins states, for example, "In sum, at least partial parallels seem to have existed as far back as Aesop (7th/6th century BC?)."[16] Indeed, the Body and Its Members is a fable attributed to Aesop by both Dio Chrysostom (*Or*. 33.16)[17] and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. rom.* 6.83.1–5).[18] But, we have been disabused of this misconception that an Aesopic fable must originate with the historical Aesop in the seventh or sixth century BCE. While it is clear that the metaphor is indeed much older than Paul, the fable versions that we know do not come from six hundred years before him, they would have come from Paul's lifetime. A form of this fable survives in Babrius, the prose paraphrase of Phaedrus, and in the Augustana Collection.[19] Pauline scholars until now have not had a proper introduction to the relevant materials. Daniel Smith writes, "I am not aware of any extant witnesses prior to the medieval period in which the fable itself appears outside of a larger narrative context."[20] Though, indeed, the manuscripts themselves are late, there are several new ancient witnesses to compare with Paul's fable. From this cursory

15 For a recent appraisal, see Timothy A. Brookins, "Paul and the Ancient Body Metaphor: Reassessing Parallels," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 6 (2016): 75–98.

16 Brookins, "Paul and the Ancient Body Metaphor," 77.

17 "Something must have happened to you like what Aesop says happened to the eyes. They believed themselves to be the most important organs of the body, and yet they observed that it was the mouth that got the benefit of most things and in particular of honey, the sweetest thing of all" (trans. Cohood and Crosby, LCL).

18 Dionysius of Halicarnassus attributes the version of the fable delivered by Menenius Agrippa to Aesop: λέγεται μῦθόν τινα εἰπεῖν εἰς τὸν Αἰσώπειον τρόπον, "he is said to have related a kind of fable that he composed after the manner of Aesop" (*Ant. rom*. 6.83.2 [trans. Cary, LCL]). Cf., Livy, *History of Rome* 2.32.9.

19 Babrius, *Fab*. 134. Both the Augustana version and the Phaedrian version, which survives only in a prose paraphrase, are assigned to Perry 130; Chambry 160 refers to the Augustana version, but he does not record the Phaedrian paraphrase. A medieval version of the fable, certainly composed with an awareness of 1 Corinthians, appears catalogued by Adrados among the Medieval fables as "M 336." For more information on the ancient fable version, see the sources in the next note.

20 Daniel Lynwood Smith, "Why Paul's Fabulous Body Is Missing Its Belly: The Rhetorical Subversion of Menenius Agrippa's Fable in 1 Corinthians 12.12–30," *JSNT* 41 (2018): 143–60. Like others, Smith is essentially limited in his discussion to the fable exercise known from the *progymnasmata*, the only way biblical scholars know how to work with the fable at present. He does not mention Babrius, Phaedrus, or the Augustana Collection, for example.

look into the matter, this Pauline version has also never benefitted from the work already invested by fable specialists into the other versions.[21]

As we have come to recognize throughout this project, the ancient fable corpora have much more to offer than the new parallels with the fables of Jesus. The fable context presents a complex web of characters, themes, ethical topics, and lessons across hundreds of stories. They bring the same value to the Pauline corpus. More valuable than source materials and parallels, the ancient fables can shed new light on important Pauline social and ethical concepts. The ancient fable tradition offers scores of new vignettes on such subjects as the ethics of friendship, family relationships, human nature, what to ask for in prayer, the challenges of self-control, suffering with dignity, justice, wickedness, pride, humility, strength in weakness, and other familiar Pauline topics.

16.2.6 *Thomas*

To briefly recapitulate what we noted about Thomas at the beginning of Book II (8.2.9), the fable context invites a new perspective. In the Gospel of Thomas, we find Jesus delivering his fables not merely in the fable form, but sometimes in closer conformity to an Aesopic version known elsewhere. We also have established Aesopic fables quoted by Jesus in Thomas like the Dog in the Manger (Gos. Thom. 102; Perry 702). We also noted that nowhere in Thomas does the term παραβολή in Greek or ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲃⲟⲗⲏ in Coptic appear. Having now introduced the ancient fable, do we have any reason to think that the authors and readers of Thomas would consider Jesus's fables as anything but fables? Like Q, the disconnected sayings in the Gospel of Thomas also resemble a fable collection much more than the narrative gospels. The fables of Jesus preserved in the Gospel of Thomas invite a more detailed comparison not only with individual fables but also with their presentation as part of a collection.

As it relates to the materials in Luke, it would be worthwhile to give a closer look to the one L fable that is taken up by the Gospel of Thomas: The Rich Fool (Gos. Thom. 63). In this case, the Lukan version is closer to the paradigmatic fable form. To what should the differences between the two versions be attributed? Has Thomas compressed an original fable version as he does other canonical sayings? Does Thomas preserve a more primitive version than Luke, who sought to bring the Rich Fool into alignment with the fable form? There are significant implications for either result that cannot be worked out here. At a minimum, in the scholarly conversation surrounding this much-debated

21 See Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 2.106–107, and 3.170–73 for the parallels and bibliography of fable scholarship. See also Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, 2.425–28. Admirably, Smith cites both Holzberg and van Dijk in "Why Paul's Fabulous Body Is Missing Its Belly."

Thomas logion, many of the conclusions drawn from the differences must be reevaluated in light of the fable.[22]

16.3 Church Fathers

Already by the end of the second century, a number of church fathers such as Irenaeus (ca. 140–200), Tertullian (ca. 160–220), and Origen (185–254), were interpreting the fables of Jesus in an allegorical manner. This is universally regarded by parable scholars as a later development, not how the "parables" were originally intended to be read and interpreted.[23] How should this shift to allegory be accounted for? Perhaps, in treating Jesus's words as sacred, and later as part of Scripture, generic considerations were laid aside, much as they were for other biblical forms. As von Heydebrand observes, "Since nothing can change in Holy Writ, especially in the parable corpus handed down in the New Testament, the history of the biblical parable concept is tied closely to the interpretation of the parables and the Bible as a whole."[24] The fable might also shed some light on the issue. Perhaps, the process was influenced by the multiple responses that we now know can be generated by a fable. Irenaeus acknowledges that "parables admit of many interpretations" (*Against Heresies* 2.27.3 [*ANF* 1:399]), but describes the problem when anyone is allowed to draw the lessons:

> And therefore the parables ought not to be adapted to ambiguous expressions. For, if this be not done, both he who explains them will do so without danger, and the parables will receive a like interpretation from all, and the body of truth remains entire, with a harmonious adaptation of its members, and without any collision. But to apply expressions which are not clear or evident to interpretations of the parables, such as every one discovers for himself as inclination leads

22 Jeremias and Koester, for example, both conclude that Luke's version is secondary. They reach this conclusion partly on the basis that Luke 12:21 (the *epimythium*) is not found in Thomas's version (Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 106; and Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 98). As we now know, an *epimythium* can be added or taken away with the greatest of ease and tells us nothing about which version is more primitive. For the opposite view, that Thomas is dependent on Luke, see John P. Meier, "Is Luke's Version of the Parable of the Rich Fool Reflected in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas?," *CBQ* 74 (2012): 528–47.

23 On the reception of Jesus's fables through history, see David B. Gowler, *The Parables after Jesus: Their Imaginative Receptions across Two Millennia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

24 "Da sich an dem in der Heiligen Schrift, besonders im Neuen Testament überlieferten Parabel-Korpus nichts ändern kann, steht die Geschichte des biblischen Parabel-Begriffs in engem Zusammenhang mit der Auslegung der Parabeln und der Bibel als ganzer" (von Heydebrand, "Parabel," 67).

> him, [is absurd]. For in this way no one will possess the rule of truth; but in accordance with the number of persons who explain the parables will be found the various systems of truth, in mutual opposition to each other, and setting forth antagonistic doctrines, like the questions current among the Gentile philosophers. (*Haer.* 2.27.1 [*ANF* 1:398, trans. Roberts])

Thus, to vouchsafe the teachings of Jesus, efforts to lock down the meaning of the "parables" were evident early on. Earlier, Irenaeus complained of how the Valentinians interpreted the "parables," and the specter of the fable might be lurking in the background in both texts.[25]

To the flattening of genre across sacred writ and the danger of unwelcome interpretations, we can add a third potential contributing factor. As we saw in Chapter 9, the fable genre could be seen as unbecoming of Jesus, especially in high christological contexts. Aesop and the fable had associations with the lowly and powerless, and were known for humor, levity, and even vulgarity. It seems unavoidable that some early Christians would employ various strategies to gild the fables to make them christologically appropriate, such as investing them with esoteric meanings. We have at least a little evidence of Neo-Platonists doing the same to a fable in another canonical text: Plato's *Phaedrus*. Plato's etiological fable of the Cicadas (*Phaedr*. 259B–C [Perry 470]) is read against its original intentions by his later followers. It is given the appropriate treatment for an august philosopher, including an allegorical reading by Iamblichus (ca 245–ca 305 CE),[26] while Hermias (5th century CE) offers a philosophical exegesis in a scholion.[27] It is through this later interpretive approach to the fables of Jesus that the parable as a new genre really comes into being—a fable interpreted through Christian allegory. As Chapter 8 demonstrated, however,

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25 Irenaeus writes, "They endeavor to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables (παραβολὰς) of the Lord, the sayings (ῥήσεις) of the prophets, and the words (λόγους) of the apostles … Their manner of acting is just as if one, when a beautiful image of a king has been constructed by some skillful artist out of precious jewels, should then take this likeness of the man all to pieces, should rearrange the gems, and so fit them together as to make them into the form of a dog or of a fox … [and persuade the ignorant that] that miserable likeness of the fox was, in fact, the beautiful image of the king. In like manner do these persons patch together old wives' fables (γραῶν μύθους), and then endeavour, by violently drawing away from their proper connection, words, expressions, and parables whenever found, to adapt the oracles (τὰ λόγια) of God to their baseless fictions (τοῖς μύθοις)" (*Haer.* 1.8.1 [*ANF* 1:326, trans. Roberts]).

26 Fragment 7. For the text, commentary, and translation of Iamblichus, see John M. Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, Philosophia Antiqua 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

27 The scholion may be located in Carlo M. Lucarini and Claudio Moreschini, eds., *Alexandria Hermeias: In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, BSGRT (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 225–226.

this was far from a universal phenomenon. There remains much work to be done on the subject of how Christians read fables and the whens and ifs of how they separated them from sacred parables.

16.4 The Historical Jesus

The "parable" tradition has always been tightly associated with the "historical Jesus." So close is this association that it has propped up reading his fables as a unique and unprecedented genre called the "parable." As I identified in the introduction, the consensus is that "there is no contemporaneous evidence of parable tellers at the time of Jesus."[28] Plying the supposed uniqueness of the genre to support claims about the historical Jesus is as current as ever. In response to John Meier's conclusion that few "parables" can be assigned with any certainty to the historical Jesus, Klyne Snodgrass offered a rebuttal in part appealing to the consensus: "no one was telling narrative parables like Jesus' parables—certainly not in the church and not in early rabbinic parables. If Jesus did not tell these parables, who did?"[29] On these pages, we have confronted the reality that such a scenario is not possible from a literary or historical perspective. "Narrative parables" are fables. This fact gives us all the historical and literary context for Jesus that one could ask for. While other reasons to attribute the fables to the historical Jesus may stand, it is no longer valid to claim that the "parable" tradition is dominical based on the genre's originality.

That "parables" are a cornerstone of the "historical Jesus" tradition is presumably one contributing factor to why this most improbable consensus about them has gone unchallenged. Most have chosen to look the other direction from the problem or resorted to special pleading. It is as if to reject that they emerged from nowhere or some uniquely Jewish tradition of which we have no record, is to deny the creative genius of the historical Jesus. Whatever the

28 Scott, *Re-Imagine the World*, 15.

29 Snodgrass, "Are the Parables Still the Bedrock of the Jesus Tradition?," 131. Snodgrass is addressing Meier, *Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*. Later in the article, Snodgrass claims that "In the Greco-Roman world there are narrative parables as early as the fifth century B.C., although they are not numerous apart from Aesop's fables, which are pretty far from Jesus' parables" (142). Snodgrass asserts rather than provides evidence for why "Jesus's parables" and "Aesop's fables" are "pretty far." The text that he claims is a "parable" from the fifth century BCE is Cyrus's *fable* in Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.141, which appears in Babrius (*Fab.* 9), the Augustana Collection (Perry 11), Aphthonius (*Fab.* 33), and P.Hak. 1 as we just read above in note 5. See further Chapter 8 note 71.

reason, studies on the fables of the historical Jesus can no longer turn a blind eye to the ancient fable tradition, which offers a ubiquitous and perfectly mundane context for them.

With the fable context in view, there are a number of avenues in historical Jesus studies waiting to be explored. We have seen literary and historical reconstructions of Jesus the miracle worker,[30] Jesus the Cynic-like sage,[31] Jesus the philosopher,[32] Jesus the Mediterranean Jewish peasant,[33] Jesus the political revolutionary,[34] Jesus the charismatic rabbi,[35] Jesus the marginal Jew,[36] Jesus the prophet,[37] and so on—but with the supposed dearth of comparable figures, we have yet to see a portrait of the historical Jesus as a fable teller. This is remarkable because, in the words of Crossan, "There is an intrinsic and inalienable bond between Jesus' experience and Jesus' parables."[38] That is not to say that these scholarly works have left out the "parables" in their reconstructions of Jesus; quite the contrary,[39] but all of these books have left the world of the fable untouched. The ancient world provides many new, compelling vignettes of historical figures using the fable genre with which to compare Jesus.

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30 Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999); or exorcist: Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT II/54 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993); or magician: Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

31 Francis Gerald Downing, *Christ and the Cynics: Jesus and Other Radical Preachers in First-Century Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988). See also Betz's analysis of this trend in interpretation: Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis," *JR* 74 (1994): 453–75.

32 Thorsteinsson, *Jesus as Philosopher*.

33 John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

34 S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967).

35 Géza Vermès, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

36 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*.

37 William R. Herzog, *Prophet and Teacher: An Introduction to the Historical Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005); see also Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985).

38 Crossan, *In Parables*, 22.

39 Van Eck foregrounds the "parables" in his *Parables of Jesus the Galilean*. See also Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 57–100. Luise Schottroff devotes the third section of her book to "Jesus, der Gleichniserzähler," however, the focus remains the content of the fables themselves as a reflection of Jesus. It does not focus on Jesus from a historical and literary Sitz im Leben of "parable" telling (*Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 149–294). Obviously, there has been little alternative to Schottroff's approach until now.

16.5 Biblical and Post-biblical Judaism

Outside the field of New Testament studies, there are other significant implications to tally. For the handful of fables in the Old Testament and post-biblical Judaism, I have supplied the methods and means to interpret them from within the broader fable context. To provide just one example, consider the following fable nested in the Genesis Apocryphon:

> I Abram dreamed a dream, on the night when I went up from the land Egypt, and lo I saw in my dream a certain cedar and a certain palm tree and sons of men were eager to cut down and to uproot the cedar and to leave the palm tree by itself. But the palm tree cried out and said, "Do not cut down the cedar, because the two of us are from one root …" and the cedar was left alone on account of the palm tree and was not [cut down]. (1QapGen XIX, 14–17)

14 וחלמת אנה אברם חלם בלילה מעלי לארע מצרין [וה]זית בחלמי והא ארז חד ותמרא
15 חדא …[…]וב[ני] אנוש אתו ובעון למקץ ולמעקר ל[א]רזא ולמשבק תמרתא בלחודיה
16 ואכליאת תמרתא ואמרת אל תקוצו ל[א]רזא ארי תרינא מן שרש… …א ושביק ארזא
בטלל תמרתא
17 ולא [אתקץ

The scribe apparently recognized this as a discrete unit, as it is both preceded and followed by blank spaces. Now that we are familiar with the fable and its form (articulated by Classical scholars no less), we can see how neatly this Aramaic text matches it. The narrative begins using an Aramaic *pronomina indefinita* fable marker: "a certain cedar," ארז חד, and "a certain palm tree," תמרא חדא. We then get the initial, brief description of the situation (*la donnée*), followed by a character responding to the climax of dramatic tension using direct speech, presumably a *réplique finale*, though there is a small lacuna. The characters, talking trees, as we noted in 3.2.1, appear more commonly in Semitic fables. Though the fable is not preserved entirely, there is enough here to confirm that it has not survived in the fable collections. As the scrolls often do, this text raises a great many questions that we probably cannot answer, such as whether it was a conscious effort to follow the fable form described in Chapter 10. Here, the author of the Genesis Apocryphon thought it good and proper to place a fable on the lips of Abraham during his "rewriting" of Genesis.

To the perennial question of what Athens has to do with Jerusalem, the fable offers us a genre neither Hellenic nor Semitic, rather a "Graeco-Semitic"[40] genre ideal for exploring these fuzzy boundaries. As we discussed in Chapter 6,

40 Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxi.

there is much still to be done comparing the fable literature to the rabbinic *meshalim*. To offer just one example, the fable can weigh in on the chicken-egg debate about the primacy of the *mashal* or the *nimshal*. That is to say, do rabbinic texts and rabbis begin with the answer and then craft a *mashal* to illustrate it, or begin with a story from which they derived a lesson? Such an essential question has been debated to a stalemate by the likes of David Stern and Daniel Boyarin, for example, and is essentially unresolved.[41] Situating the *mashal* in the fable-telling world, we can shed light on this debate from new angles. If recent research trends are correct to find analogies between the rabbinic and hellenic rhetorical forms, then we have detailed discussions on this issue from antiquity. As we learned from the discussion of the *progymnasmata* in Chapter 5, an essential task of the student was to draw out a moral (*mutatis mutandis* the *nimshal*) from the fable, and also to do the reverse, to begin with a moral from which a student creates a fable. In other words, if the classical rhetorical forms serve as the basis for the rabbinic forms, then neither the *mashal* nor the *nimshal* has any prescriptive priority over the other. It would be worthwhile to apply what we know about the use and function of the ancient fable in education and rhetoric to this question further.

16.6 Fable Scholarship

In the collision and synthesis of parable studies and fable studies, parable scholarship will certainly bear the brunt of the impact, but fable scholars too stand to benefit because these findings are not unlike discovering a new first-century fable collection. The presence of fables in the gospels also offers a host of new evidence concerning how fables and fable collections were embedded into larger narrative frameworks. From the portrayal of Jesus as a fable teller in the Gospels, and the later rabbinic Aesop imitators, fable scholars gain not just one but several new personalities from which to flesh out the fable-teller persona. On the more technical side, Luke's fables give us important data about the formal markers of the genre and the development of the framing devices. For example, we found that the Lukan Fable Collection adheres to the *pronomina indefinita* formula more rigorously than any other collection. Luke

41 Stern gives priority to the *mashal*: "The *nimshal* is merely a device for facilitating understanding, not necessarily an attempt to conserve the original or true meaning" (*Parables in Midrash*, 18). In his review of Stern, Boyarin argues the reverse, "I have argued and continue to claim that the so-called *nimshal* is ontologically primary in the exegetical *mashal*" (Daniel Boyarin, "Midrash in Parables," *AJSR* 20 [1995]: 123–38, here 129).

preserves a snapshot of how the *promythium* and *epimythium* were used in Greek at the end of the first century. The use of fables in the Lukan Gospel provides fable scholarship a new point from which to plot the trajectory of the ancient fable during this crucial point in its history.

The question of how much influence Christian scribes have had on the fable collections, including the morals applied to them is also in need of further study. As one example, Zachary Margulies, responding to Thomas Römer, has demonstrated that Perry 262 is dependent on the Septuagint text of Jotham's fable (Judg 9:8–15).[42] The fable of the Fire-bearing Fox (Babrius, *Fab.* 11; Aphthonius, *Fab.* 38) offers another striking parallel to the story of Samson (Judg 15:4–5). Adrados believes it is very likely that the fable versions derive from the biblical story.[43] As I identified in 4.1, there are various points of contact between Babrius and Semitic backgrounds that may add up to more than mere coincidence, including whether he knew the Bible.

On any given fable of Jesus, there are scores of studies if not monographs from many methodological approaches. For scholarship on the fables, which is now beginning to move beyond the purely source and text-critical studies, this is one area in which parable scholarship is far ahead. Fable scholars may look to parable scholarship for new models and techniques for interrogating the primary literature. If indeed I have successfully knocked down the disciplinary barrier to a not-a-very-high hurdle, we will hopefully soon welcome fable scholars into the discussion of Jesus's fables as well.

16.7 Conclusion to Book II

To return to the language used in the introduction, I set out to solve the fundamental puzzles of a bedrock Jesus tradition: his "parables." From these dozens of examples across the early gospel tradition, New Testament scholars have regarded the "parable" as Jesus's characteristic teaching genre and hold it to be axiomatic that Jesus taught in "parables." At the same time, according to the standard scholarly assessment, this "parable" genre is something new. On both historical and literary grounds, this *status quaestionis* advances a most implausible scenario. Yet, this view has prevailed and gone largely unquestioned for generations. On these pages, I have rejected these deeply entrenched views

42 Zachary Margulies, "Aesop and Jotham's Parable of the Trees (Judges 9:8–15)," *VT* 69 (2019): 81–94; Thomas Römer, "The Hebrew Bible and Greek Philosophy and Mythology—Some Case Studies," *Sem* 57 (2015): 185–203.

43 Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, 3:418.

and broken from this consensus to bring answers from an unfamiliar corpus: the ancient fable.

In Book II, I continued the work of Book I to flesh out the fable context, now applying it to the fables in the Lukan Gospel. At each step along the way, we found that the ancient fable offered the appropriate context for the Lukan "parables" and brought with it the treasury of new literature for comparison. Conventional approaches to "parables" have left the field with intractable problems. The Lukan "parables," in particular, demand a long list of exceptions to parable theory, from how many points they are allowed to have, to whether they are allowed to be "impossible," to whether they need to preach about the kingdom of God, or are permitted to make us laugh. We found that reading the Lukan fables as fables provided simple and elegant solutions to all of these issues. We no longer need to shoehorn them into "parables;" the fable fits. It is against the ubiquitous fable background established in Book I that Luke and his audience would encounter and interpret these texts.

We began by adding to the reasons that biblical scholars have studiously ignored the ancient fable: the erasure of fables from the public conscience and the neglect to read behind Jülicher. I traced the current division of "parables" and "fables" among New Testament scholars to a root before Jülicher's time. There, we found that the fables of Jesus were divided from others for theological reasons, nineteenth-century convictions about the historical Jesus, and views about the tone of his teaching that are now abandoned. From this root, we were able to see that the present understanding of the fable among parable scholars is an atrophied version of these same arguments. It is worse today because parable scholars are no longer constrained by basic facts about ancient fables, which are now unknown to them. Though they did not have most of the ancient fable materials available to us today, nor the approaches developed later, critical scholars of centuries past, Grotius, Storr, and Jülicher, have recognized that Jesus's "parables" are fables.

Working back in history, I showed that Jesus's fables have always been intertwined with others. Reaching the wheelhouse of New Testament scholarship, I pointed out that there is no evidence for Thomas knowing any such thing called a "parable." We then encountered the many remarkable narrative overlaps between the Lukan Gospel and the ancient fable tradition. We first noted the Aesopic material taken over from Q/Matthew. We then found that the special Lukan material has a number of strong resonances with this tradition. These resonances included the beginning of Jesus's ministry, uttering a fable iamb after his resurrection, zoomorphizing his opponents, and auguring his death with a fable. I noted that all of these Aesopic and fable connections

frame the Central Section, where the Lukan Fable Collection is gathered. This unique Lukan material coheres with the fable resonances surrounding it.

I filled the empty stage of earlier and contemporary "parable" tellers with the chorus of fable tellers and narratives about them. I described the associations that came with telling fables, including the personas of the slave and the sophist, and how these divergent associations were navigated, mitigated, circumvent, or contested. Given these taboos, I demonstrated why some early Christians would hasten to disassociate Jesus from fables. I then offered a sketch of how Jesus is characterized in Luke as a fable teller. I demonstrated how it served the needs of the author to portray Jesus as an unparalleled teacher, rhetor, and intellect, while also a humble man who associated with the lowly. I argued that it was an ingenious maneuver of Luke to reach and maintain the interest of a diverse audience by depicting the protagonist using the fable, chapter after chapter. I then showed that the gospel Jesus and Aesop employ their fables to augur their deaths, condemn their opponents, and validate their office as prophets.

We found the form of the "parable" and the fable to be identical. They are identical in how they begin, how the narrative advances, the plot elements they contain, the number of characters in them, their length, the speeches of their actors, and how lessons are applied to them. Though New Testament scholars have often noted the stand-out elements of the Lukan fables, such as the nearly mechanical repetition of τις, the soliloquy, and "appended explanations," a satisfying reason for this has escaped them. I showed that these formal elements of the fable extend back into the Archaic period of Greece, if not earlier. We observed that at the end of the first century, this form was known to anyone trained in composing Greek. Thus, the special L fables should not be assigned to some new genre, but reckoned among the hundreds of other formally identical fables. An ancient audience would likewise have encountered these texts as fables and interpret them as such. An author like Luke knew how to compose, redact, expand, and compress fables as well. By comparing the fables of prodigal sons and debtors, we saw indications that Luke, too, applied these techniques to the fables of Jesus.

We undertook several exercises in reading from the genre perspective of the fable for the first time. I brought the hundreds of new texts and new authors to bear on the fables of Jesus in Luke, including the fables of Babrius, Phaedrus, the Augustana Collection, and *The Life of Aesop*, among others. As they are particularly incongruous with the ethics, tone, and limits of "parables," our entry points were the Crafty Steward, the Judge and the Widow, and the Rich Fool. From scores of fables about crafty characters and the ethics of the weak, from

fables about women, widows, and the use of humor, and from fables about fools, deities, and the spectrum of possibility, we put to rest dubious reasons for dividing parables and fables. Reading these fables from their appropriate genre perspective resolved exegetical issues, enriched our readings, and alerts us that these are merely examples of currents present elsewhere in the fables of Jesus.

We learned to interpret according to the appropriate techniques for fables. From the use of the *promythium* and *epimythium* in other narratives and fable collections, we found that the Lukan fables adhere to all the conventional patterns known elsewhere. This validated once more that the fable is the operative genre and that Jesus's fables should be interpreted accordingly. We found, again, that the Lukan fables strain against the requirements demanded by parable interpretation, which limit "parables" to a single meaning. We found that this constraint was imposed on Jesus's fables by outdated fable theory. Liberating the Lukan fables from this constraint and interpreting them with modern approaches resolved their exegetical difficulties. The fable interpretation background also explained many further peculiarities, such as how they were transmitted in the manuscript tradition. We found that the Lukan fables do not mention the kingdom of God, but rather, like those of the contemporary collections, offered ethical lessons. The Lukan Fable Collection is concerned with such virtues as prudence, piety, friendship, humility, and the dangers of vices such as those associated with foolishness, hubris, wealth, and pride.

We learned how the literary features of fable collections support an old theory about how the Lukan fables found their way into the gospel: by way of a pre-Lukan collection. While there were no "parable" collections available for comparison since the theory's introduction, the other fable collections meet this need. The long-noted "twin parables," catchphrases, and catchwords between the L fables, which make little sense in a narrative, are paralleled by the same phenomena in the other fable collections. We found that considerations of style, poorly narrativized fable elements, and the incongruities between Luke's lessons and those of other hands, all point to a pre-Lukan source. This source, which I identified as the Lukan Fable Collection, would perhaps have come from the early Christian catechetical setting. Incorporating this material into the gospel would support Luke's aim of confirming the catechesis of the gospel reader. Finally, I made some initial soundings in other early Christian and Jewish materials. From the other gospel authors to Pauline ethics, and the historical Jesus, the trove of ancient literature opens many new avenues for further study.

The ancient fable tradition remains scarcely known and studiously ignored no longer. I have brought the hundreds of examples into focus and set them alongside the foundation stone of the Jesus tradition, the "parables." I hope to have given this foundation a firm tug in a new direction and offered a new starting point on which to build. The fables of Jesus belong to the rich and complex heritage of this humble but potent genre blooming during the first century.

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Key to Perry Numbers

Perry numbers are one of the standard ways to locate fables. Perry numbers begin first with an edition of the Augustana Collection, followed by fables from other anonymous codices. These are then supplemented by Babrian fables and others that are unattested in the lower numbers. In other words, Perry assigns a new number to fables not counted already. Because the collections regularly overlap, Perry numbers cannot be used as a guide to the number of fables in a given collection. Aphthonius's collection contains forty fables, for example, but receives only Perry numbers 393–400. Because fables normally vary greatly from version to version, there may be numerous roughly parallel but substantially divergent fables that Perry has assigned to a single number. See further details and other numbering systems in 2.4.3.

Following Perry numbers, the index of named fable authors is also provided. Additional fables that I have discussed—from gospels, rabbinic literature, and in other ancient writings—are included in their respective indices.

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1–231	The Augustana Recension (I)
232–244	The Augustana Recension (Ia)
245–273	Odd Fables in Various Manuscripts of Aesop
274–378	Addition Fables of Babrian Origin (Verse and Prose Paraphrase)[1]
379–388	Addition Fables in *The Life of Aesop*
389–392	Addition Fables from the *Hermeneumata of* Pseudo-Dositheus
393–400	Addition Fables from Aphthonius[2]
401–415	Addition Fables from the Collection Ascribed to Syntipas
416–418	Addition Fables the Byzantine *Tetrasticha*
419–421	Addition Fables in the Mss. Laurentianus 57.30 and Atheniensis 1201
422–471	Additional Fables Excerpted from Various Greek Authors

1 When citing the Babrian Prose Paraphrase apart from Perry numbers, the numbers are those from Otto Crusius, *Babrii Fabulae Aesopeae*. For a list of the specific Perry numbers for Babrian fables only in prose, see Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, 187.

2 This is Aphthonius the progymnasmatist and these are the fables first preserved in his collection.

Latin Fables

472–579	Addition Fables from Phaedrus and His Paraphrases[3]
580–584	Addition Fables from Avianus
585–587	Addition Fables of the Carolingian Age Transmitted Together with the Poems of Paulus Diaconus
588–635	Addition Fables Excerpted from the Writings of Odo of Cheriton
636–643	Addition Fables Added to Odo's Fables in the Manuscripts Harleianus 219 and Gudianus 200
644–645	Addition Fables Composed by John of Schepey
646–647	Two Metrical Fables of Uncertain Origin
648	A Fable by Alexander Neckam
649	A Fable in Rhymed Verse from Ms. Add. 11619 in the British Museum
650–659	Fables from the Collection known as "Robert's Romulus" in Mss 347b and 347c of the Bibliotheqe Nationale
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693–707	Fabulae Extravagantes
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720	From a Promptuarium of the Fourteenth Century
721–725	Fables from Poggio and Abstemius

3 For a list of the specific Perry numbers for Phaedrian fables not surviving in their metrical form, see Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, 417.

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