CHAPTER 7: THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

7.1 The Rich, the Poor, and the Law

The obvious opposites with which Luke works in this particular parable (Lk 16:19-31), are those of the "rich" and the "poor". Luke's interest in the plight of the poor, accentuated in Lukan redactions, has been explored extensively and need not be repeated here (see, inter alia, Donahue 1988:174-176; Forbes 2000:228-233). Exploration of the relationship between this recurrent theme and that of the Law (Torah), however, has been largely neglected.

The link itself is provided by a number of sayings that directly precede the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (Lk 16:14-18). The sayings are introduced by a rebuke of the Pharisees as "money lovers" (verse 14). Although the Pharisees pride themselves as being just before men, they are, in fact, detestable in God's sight, God knowing what is in their heart. This rebuke is followed by a reference to the era of the "Law and the prophets" - which extended to the time of John (the Baptist). From this time onwards the Kingdom of God is being preached (verse 16). However, the new "era" of the Kingdom leads not to an abolition of the Law - the demands of the Law have rather been heightened by the radical demands of the Kingdom (verse 17). The final saying on divorce serves to confirm and to substantiate both the radical nature and the abiding validity of the Law (cf Donahue 1988:173-174). That these sayings provide a link between the plight of the poor (who suffer at the hands of the "money lovers") and the demands of the Law, is not a new idea and has been noted by other scholars (see, inter alia, Forbes 2000:181). However the dynamics of the link have not been explored sufficiently and need further investigation.

A clue to the dynamics involved is provided by the rather harsh description of the Pharisees as "money lovers". Scholars have noted that this description of the Pharisees scarcely coincides with what is historically known of them at the time of Jesus (see Moxnes 1988:1-9; Forbes 2000:301). Unlike the Sadducees

and many scribes who belonged to the upper classes, the Pharisees represented a popular movement not known for its wealth. Instead of being "money lovers", many Pharisees lived in relative poverty. An example is Hillel, who was poor and generous and most alert to the dangers of wealth (Forbes 2000:301). Inevitably those scholars who accepted the phrase "money lovers" as a historical fact, have proceeded to gather historical evidence to support this accusation. In studying these texts, however, Moxnes (1988:5) draws attention to two important issues: first, in no instance can it be proven that the accusations of greed are directed against the Pharisees as a historical group; and second, the accusations directed at the Pharisees are invariably "polemics and elaborations of traditional motifs" and not historical facts. Consequently, the historical question, "Were the Pharisees 'lovers of money'?" needs to be rephrased in terms of the literary question, "What motivated Luke's reference to the Pharisees as 'lovers of money'?"

This new line of questioning takes into account two important perspectives. The first view focuses on the word φιλάργροι (money lovers). Moxnes (1988:6) argues that in addition to Israelite material Luke also had Greek material as part of the background to this accusation. "Greed" (φιλαργυρία) is frequently found in Hellenistic lists of vices and is also the core of the well-known maxim, quoted in 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money (φιλαργυρία) is the root of all evil." The combination of this vice with that of love for honour is traced back to Plato. Plato (*Republica* I.347; cf Moxnes 1988:6) argued that the "lovers of money" are unfit to rule the state. This is an interesting remark to which we will return below. Especially striking, however, is Luke's use of the word φιλαργυρία in conjunction with the word δικαιόω. With reference to various Hellenistic sources, Moxnes (1988:6) postulates that the accusation levelled at the Pharisees (that they were "lovers of money" and that they tried to "justify themselves") echoes a popular theme in Hellenistic polemics against "false teachers". A true teacher is someone who does not covet money or honour. This theme is clearly taken up by the

followers of Jesus to provide their readers with an example of the *opposite* of the ideal teacher (see Ac 20:33-34; 1 Th 2:5-6; 1 Tm 6:5; 2 Tm 3:2; Tit 1:11). As such, the reference to the Pharisees as "lovers of money" prepares the reader of Luke 16 for the challenge between Jesus, the "ideal teacher", and the Pharisees, the "false teachers". This coincides with the construction of Luke's narrative as a whole, which is based on the tension between opposites, where the two main opposition groups are Jesus and his witnesses and the Israelite leaders and those who adopt their point of view.

The second perspective focuses on the literary function of wealth and riches in Luke's Gospel. With reference to Luke Johnson's book, *The literary function of possessions*, Donahue (1998:172-173) notes that in Luke's Gospel wealth and possessions are used both literally and metaphorically. On the one hand, Luke is concerned about those that are (literally) poor and the (literal) dangers of wealth. On the other hand, however, Luke speaks of wealth in the metaphorical sense as a symbol of "power and dominance". It is the latter reference that is important in order to understand the dynamics between rich and poor in Luke 16. The "rich" in the society that Luke describes were not only wealthy, but also belonged to the urban élite and were distanced from the ordinary peasant villagers. Notably, not all who were rich belonged to the élite. Certain merchants, toll-collectors, and "foreigners" had much wealth but nevertheless did not enjoy the status of the élite and remained outsiders. "Rich" and "poor" are therefore imprecise categories with which to describe ancient societies. More appropriate for the first-century Mediterranean is a distinction between "élite" and "non-élite" (Moxnes 1988:164). The (rich) élite, both within the narrative and within the contextual world of Luke's narrative, were those who had power and influence. It has been argued above that Pharisees at the time of Jesus hardly fit the description of the rich (élite). At the time of Jesus they were first and foremost a faction in Israel primarily concerned with observing ritual purity and trying to influence the rest of Israel to do the same. Extratextually, however, in the

contextual world of Luke's narrative, the dominant power belonged to the Pharisees, who after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, reorganised the Israelites under their leadership (see 4.4.1 above). It was this "world" that Luke tried to influence when telling his story. Using the Pharisees as a *topos* for those who had power and dominance may seem to a modern historian as a distortion of historical facts, but it coincides with the tradition of historical writing in Luke's time (Moxnes 1988:162). In this way, Luke made his narrative relevant to his readers. Green (1997:599) argues along similar lines: "[Luke is] providing his own polemical evaluation of them [the Pharisees] in a narrative aside." To substitute "Pharisees" in Luke 16:14 with the (more wealthy) "Sadducees", and to assume that the rich man in the parable is a Sadducee rather than a Pharisee, as Manson (cf Herzog 1994:117) proposes, is a case of mistaking narrative characterisation for historical reality.

These reflections on Luke's (metaphorical) characterisation counter any thoughts that the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (Lk 16:19-31) provides the reader with a mere *moral* reflection on "rich" and "poor". Moxnes (1988:169) writes:

> It is relatively easy to read the narratives [of Luke] as exhortations to benevolence and generosity towards the poor. This is a reading that can give instant gratification to the affluent. It is much more difficult to read them as stories empowering the poor, bringing liberations from the bonds of ideological dependency upon the wealthy. Both in the community described by Luke and in today's society, the structures of domination and exploitation by the powerful are in place, but the Gospel offers a liberation from the world view that legitimizes them.

Within Israel, the ideological dependence of the "poor" (the weak and the

vulnerable) is intrinsically related to the interpretation and the application of the Law of God that is motivated and enforced by the "rich" (the teachers and those who have power and influence over others). This explains the reference to the Law of God, both in the setting to the parable ("the Law and the prophets"; verse 16) and in the parable itself ("Moses and the prophets"; verses 29 and 31). It is made apparent that conventional views are to be *challenged* not only by the juxtaposition of "Pharisees" (as the false teachers) and "Jesus" (as the ideal teacher), but also by the placing of the parable within the social dynamics of "challenge-and-response" (cf Malina 1993:34-37). Verse 16 is the Pharisees' challenge to Jesus ("The Pharisees ... sneered at Jesus"). This challenge paves the way for Jesus' counterchallenge in verses 15-31 ("You are the ones justifying yourself before men...." followed by the parable) (cf Green 1997:599). Central to this challenge is the Law of God.

The importance of the Law of God within Israelite society is emphasised by the similarities between the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" and that of "The Good Samaritan" (see chapter 5 above). These similarities have largely been overlooked by scholars, who have instead drawn attention to the more obvious similarities between the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" and "A Man Had Two Sons" (see chapter 6 above). These include "*hunger, feasting, father/son,* and *clothing as a sign of honour/wealth*" (see Forbes 2000:180). The settings in which these two parables are told are also similar, with the "murmuring" of the Pharisees in Luke 15:2 corresponding with their "sneering" in Luke 16:14. One of the similarities between "The Rich Man and Lazarus" and "The Good Samaritan" is the "sneering" of the Pharisees in Luke 16:14 that corresponds to the lawyer "testing" Jesus in Luke 10:25. In both parables (10:29 and 16:15), the challenger is described as "justifying" himself, indicating that he is defending himself against a conventional position. This defensive feature is accentuated by the explicit reference to the Law, both in Luke 10:26-28 ("What is written in the Law ..."), and in Luke 16:16 ("The Law and the prophets"). The similarities

between the parables are less obvious, but once again characters represent "insiders" and "outsiders". In Luke 15, the Priest/Levite (insider) is juxtaposed with the Samaritan (outsider). In Luke 16, the rich man (insider) is juxtaposed with the poor man (outsider). The choice of characters within these Lukan parables is clearly not arbitrary. They determine the focus of Jesus' challenge. The challenge itself is in each case directed towards a worldview, based on the "Law of God", that legitimises division and separateness within different realms of Israelite society.

These reflections provide the impetus to explore further both conventional Israelite worldviews concerning the "rich" and the "poor", and the legitimisation of these worldviews by the ruling élite. The "grand narrative" on wealth and poverty at the time of Jesus can be summarised as follows: wealth was a sign of divine blessing and Torah obedience; poverty was a sign of disobedience and divine wrath. This view is the essence of what can be termed Israelite "prosperity teaching". Forbes (2000:299-303; see also Schmidt 1987:40-97) gives a helpful survey of this development. Hebrew Scriptures are characterised by both positive teaching and negative teaching on wealth. Within the positive approach, wealth is seen as a blessing of God (Gn 24:35; Dt 28:1-13: Jb 42:10-18: Ps 122:3; Ec 3:13). More often than not these blessings are qualified by the conditional clause: "If you obey the Lord your God ..." (cf Dt 28:1-2). Within this strand of teaching, wealth is also characterised as a mark of wisdom (Pr 14:20), and generally as good, if free from sin (Sir 13:34; 31:8). Within the negative strand of teaching, warnings are sounded against the folly of storing wealth (Ps 39:6; Ez 28:4-5; Zep 1:18; Sir 5:8). Wealth is severely condemned when it has been gained unjustly (Pr 10:2; Sir 5:8), or when it undermines concern for the poor (Ps 10:2-4; Am 4:1-3; 6:1-7; Sir 13:4).

Both these strands of teaching are still evident in the writings of the Qumran community and subsequently in rabbinical writings. Forbes (2000:300-302) shows that in the Qumran community, the number of disparaging descriptions of wealth,

especially of the wealth of the community's wicked opponents (1QS 11.1-2; CD 8.4-7; 1QH 10.25; 1QpHab 8.9-12; 12.10) exceeds the number of positive descriptions. However, the exact opposite trend is found in the rabbinical writings, culminating in a definite strand of "prosperity teaching". Forbes (2000:302) cites among others the following examples:

> Beauty and strength and riches and honour and wisdom and old age and grey hairs and children are comely to the righteous and comely to the world. (*m. Ab.* 6.8)

> For poverty comes nor from a man's craft, nor riches from a man's craft, but all is according to *merit.* (*m. Qid.* [*Kidd.*] 4.14)

> Rab on concluding his prayer added the following: May it be Thy will, O Lord our God, to grant us long life, a life of peace, a life of good, a life of blessing, a life of sustenance, a life of bodily vigour, a life in which there is not fear of sin, a life free from shame and confusion, a life of riches and honour, a life in which we may be filled with love of Torah and the fear of heaven, a life in which Thou shalt fulfil all the desires of our heart for good? (*b. Ber.* 16b)

What is notable in these quotations is the relationship that is created between riches (wealth) and a life of Torah obedience ("the righteous", "merit", "love of the Torah") leading to an implicit conclusion that poverty is the direct result of Torah disobedience. This mind-set is further established by the lack of passages (in contrast to Jesus' teachings) which praise the poor, and by the presence of a number of passages that clearly denounce poverty as a curse (*Exod. R.* 31.12; *b. Ned.* 64b; see also *b. Ket.* 50a; 67b; *y. Pe'ah* 15b; cf Forbes 2000:302). Although the rabbinical sources quoted by Forbes date from a post-Scriptural period, there

is evidence in the Gospel narratives that this mind-set was firmly entrenched during the first century CE. Such evidence is, for example, provided by the dismayed response of Jesus' disciples to the "camel through the eye of a needle" pronouncement (Lk 18:26; Mk 10:31). The mind-set, as Forbes (2000:303) notes, seems to have been, "*If the rich (who we thought were blessed by God) cannot be saved, then who can?*" The striking division caused by this conventional first-century Israelite mind-set is significant for our purpose, and is the essence of Jesus' challenge.

An issue that has not yet been addressed is that of the legitimising of this mind-set. As already noted, ideological legitimisation in Israel was intrinsically bound to the interpretation of the Law. The complexity of legitimisation is compounded by the perception of "limited goods" in ancient societies (cf Malina 1993:90-116). Taken at face value, "prosperity teaching" and the "accumulation of wealth" are exclusive notions. The former justifies wealth as a divine gift from God, the latter condemns the accumulation of wealth. The exclusivity of these notions rests, of course, on the assumption that the accumulation of wealth occurs at the expense of another person. "Rightful" accumulation of wealth would have been such that it was publicly visible as a blessing from God, as would be the case with a plentiful harvest after good rains. When, however, the accumulation of wealth was not obvious to the public eye, legitimisation was needed to confirm that wealth was indeed the result of divine blessing.

The above remarks further clarify the dynamics of a society with limited goods. In such a society all goods were available in limited amounts and were already (justly) distributed. Therefore, when one person improved his social position, this improvement was inevitably seen to occur at the expense of another person. In the first-century Mediterranean world, no honourable person would, therefore, seek to increase his wealth. A person who increased his wealth was inevitably labelled "greedy", and would be branded a thief, as evidenced by a fourth-century proverb that says: "Every rich person is a thief or the heir of a thief"

(Malina 1993:104). Instead of increasing his wealth, a honourable person would endeavour to *maintain* his given social status.

Status was generally not acquired through hard work, but was derived rather from birth, with every person having the basic right to fulfill his or her inherited role (see Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992:309-311; Malina 1993:97). One way social status was preserved was by entering into a dyadic contract (see Malina 1993:100). Such a contract was based on an informal principle of reciprocity: "I do something for you and you do something for me in return!" This contract was either between colleagues (of equal social status), or between a patron and a client (of unequal social status). In both cases the contract involved no legal contractual obligation, nor was it enforceable by any authority, but was based solely on one's sense of honour and of shame (Malina 1993:28-62). In a patron-client contract the "rich" (an urban élite) could provide work and food for the "poor" (a villager or urban non-élite) in return for public praise. Although these contracts were not overtly initiated by one party, which would have been dishonourable behaviour, but either "just happened" or were brokered by a third party, villagers and urban non-élite believed that they had a "right" to these contracts. This belief was based on the right one had to maintain one's social status (given to one by God), which in turn included the right to adequate subsistence (Malina 1993:100). In view of the challenge posed by Jesus' parables, this is important. The point of conflict between "rich" and "poor" in first-century Palestine was neither status nor wealth. The chasm separating the élite from the non-élite caused little concern to the non-élite as long as they could interact with the élite in a patron-client relationship. It was only when the right to adequate subsistence was lost, that the non-élites would rebel. Such rebellion was not in order to gain greater status, but to regain a basic level of subsistence.

The basic right to adequate subsistence is reflected in numerous passages in the Hebrew Scriptures (cf Ex 22:25-27; Lv 19:9-10; Dt 14:28-29; Is 10:1-2; Ez 22:29; Am 2:6-8). These passages denounce the exploitation of the poor and the

needy, that is, the failure to allow the poor to maintain their status and/or to maintain a basic level of subsistence. The term "poor" does not, strictly speaking, refer to those of low status, but to those who, as the result of some unfortunate event, such as the death of a spouse, famine, debt, living in a foreign country or physical accident, can no longer maintain their inherited status (cf Malina 1993:105-106).

In the light of the basic right to adequate subsistence, the question arises: How was poverty to the extent that a person was subjected to beggary justified in a society of limited goods, where subsistence was socially entrenched as a basic right? Most interpreters of the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" seek to answer the "what" question: *What* caused Lazarus to be a beggar? In describing the fate of the poor man in this parable, Herzog (1994:119), for example, proceeds to reconstruct a string of probable unfortunate events that could have led to Lazarus' misfortune. Of interest to us, however, is not the *cause* of his poverty, but the social and religious legitimisation of his poverty.

Although Herzog (1994) does not discuss this aspect in his exposition of "The Rich Man and Lazarus", he provides us with the necessary clues. In discussing the different classes within an agrarian society, Herzog (1994:58-59) highlights the important role played by priestly retainers in order to justify the emergent social order. The agrarian ruler who seized control had to have his rule institutionalised and legitimised. Central to this process of legitimisation were the priests who tended the temple, the religious institution of a particular society. It was their task to produce an ideology that would motivate people to pay tribute to the rulers so that the rulers could maintain their wealth. The priests, in turn, were exempt from paying state tribute and were allowed to maintain themselves by introducing their own forms of taxation. Despite high state taxation, priests introduced temple taxation and other forms of tribute, so as to share in the wealth redistributed through tribute. Needless to say, the purpose of taxation was not to provide social well-being but rather to enhance one's own status. Malina (1988:4)

writes: "As a rule patron-client societies are extensive and extractive; leadership is concerned with plundering rather than developing, taxation exists for the benefit of the élite, not for the common good."

As already noted, the development of an appropriate ideology in Israel was directly and inseparably connected to the interpretation of the Torah (the "Law and the prophets"). With reference to Fernando Belo, Herzog (1994:94, 179-184) distinguishes two codes in the Torah, the "debt code" and the "purity code". The debt code originated with the confession that all land belongs to God. Therefore, all people living and working on the land are "indebted" to God (Ex 19:15; Lv 25:23). The debt code was based on the principle of "extension" (Herzog 1994:94). The surplus produce generated by the land was to be "extended" and shared by all. The ideal of the debt code is expressed in Deuteronomy 15:4-5: the hope that there would be no poor in Israel if the principle of extension were observed. The more one received, the more one was to give. The principle of extension is, however, characterised by an inner tension: on the one hand, it serves to prevent the coveting of material possessions, but on the other hand it engenders the desire to own more. As such, the formulators of the Torah's debt code recognised the importance and the right to sustained an adequate subsistence for all, but at the same time were not prepared to forfeit any of their privileges. In fact, as Herzog (1994:94) writes, by the first century they "were not only powerless to impede its momentum in the life of Israel but had become its allies and retainers" (Herzog 1994:94). This was done, as will be shown, by interpreting the debt code as a function of the purity code.

The purity code originated out of the concept of God's holiness (see also 4.5.2 above). Because God is holy, God's people were to strive to be holy as well. This striving towards holiness found its expression in a number of "purity regulations" advanced by the Pharisees. The basic principle of the purity code was that of "demarcation". All spheres of life were "demarcated" into clean and unclean, pure or polluted, sacred and profane. These symbolic lines needed to

be drawn to perceive "set-apartness", to distinguish the insider from the outsider (Malina 1993:152). Uncleanliness could be contracted in many ways. Under the leadership of the Pharisees the purity codes were applied to all spheres of life. Persons could be rendered unclean because they had physical defects, were sick, had not followed proper slaughtering procedures, had eaten unclean or non-tithed food, and had failed to pay the tithe and other forms of temple taxation. Many peasants, already living at a subsistence level and facing heavy Roman taxation, could not meet the additional requirements of temple taxation (on tithes and taxes see Sanders 1992:146-169). Despite the fact that peasants were heavily taxed, temple authorities were not prepared to lessen the burden on the peasants. In fact, Pharisaic scribes applied the debt code (as they did the purity code) to *all* spheres of life, including the table and the household (Herzog 1994:183). Whereas however state taxation could be compelled, temple taxation needed to be motivated. This was done by negatively labelling the peasants who avoided temple tribute as enemies of the Torah. Peasants unable to meet the set requirements were ostracised, shunned, and vilified by the temple authorities. Herzog (1994:182) writes:

> Unable to meet their tithing obligations they [the peasants] were depicted as unwilling to fulfill the requirements of the redemptive media. Once they had been labelled, their further exploitation and degradation were made easier; they were no longer the people of God, whose covenant with Yahweh resided in their patrimonial plot of land, but rebellious reprobates, whose refusal to pay their tithes threatened the well-being of the land.

In short, by failing to meet the debt code, peasants were declared unclean. Once unclean they remained forever in debt. Instead of being an institution of extension, the temple had become an institution of accumulation. Debt itself was

a form of impurity.

These analyses present a probable scenario by which to explain how the poor who failed to preserve their inherited status could degenerate to the social level of beggary and dispensability. Conversely, it shows how the rich could justifiably ignore the plight of the poor, since their state of impurity excluded them from temple society and disqualified them as objects of neighbourly love to whom the extension code applied. The parables of "The Good Samaritan", "A Man Had Two Sons", and "The Rich Man and Lazarus" present different scenarios but common to all is a conventional Israelite mind-set, underscored by a Pharisaic interpretation of the Torah, that distinguishes between insiders and outsiders and promotes and justifies separateness. It is a world that is challenged and turned upside down by the subversiveness of Luke's metaphorical stories. Challenged in the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" is not wealth as such, but the ideology that professes wealth as a blessing of God despite the failure to show mercy to the poor and needy, the very core of God's Law.

7.2 The Parable

The exposition of the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" will fall into two parts. The first part presents a reflection on common folklore concerning "rich" and "poor", the second part is an analysis of the text in Luke 16:19-31.

7.2.1 Common folklore and the unity of the parable

Influential in the interpretation of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (Lk 16:19-31) has been Greßmann's (cf Grundmann 1978:325-236) study of Egyptian and Israelite folk-tales as possible sources of the parable. The oldest one is an Egyptian tale which will have found its way into Israelite folklore via Alexandrian Israelites (Jeremias [1963] 1984:123). The Egyptian tale is narrated by Si-Osiris who is reincarnated and sent by Osiris, the ruler of the realm of the dead (Amnte), to confute a powerful Ethiopian magician (see Scott 1990:156; Forbes 2000:182).

The part of the tale that parallels the Lukan parable relates to a remark made by the father of Si-Osiris, who observes the loud wailing (a means of honouring the dead) and the magnificent decorations of a rich man's funeral procession, and by contrast, the humble burial of a poor man. His remark expresses the wish that he would also like to enjoy the fate of the rich man in the life to come. However, Si-Osiris conducts him through the halls of Amnte in order to convince him of his error. The conducted tour reveals a reversal of fortunes: The rich man is in torment while the poor man is clothed in the rich man's burial outfit. The reason given is that in each case the evil deeds had been weighed against the good deeds. In the case of the poor man it had been found that his good deeds were more numerous than his evil deeds, and vice versa for the rich man.

Greßmann (in Grundmann 1978:325-326; cf Scott 1990:156) identified seven Israelite stories all belonging to the same family tree as the Egyptian tale. The earliest and the most well-known version, recorded in the Palestinian Talmud, tells of two holy men and a village toll-collector (see Scott 1990:157 for a translation of the full story). When one of the holy men died, he was not properly mourned. When however the toll-collector died, his death was mourned by many. When the surviving holy man expresses his shock, the deceased holy man appears to him in a dream. The apparent unfairness of the events are explained to him. The failure to mourn the holy man's death properly (bringing shame on him and on his family) is traced back to a solitary (unintended) "error" committed by him (a blot in an otherwise faultless life). In contrast, the well mourned funeral of the toll-collector is explained by an event in which the toll-collector provided food for the poor after town councillors had turned down his invitation to a banquet (a friendship creating act in an otherwise unmeritorious life). In another dream, depicting the afterlife, the roles of the two men are shown to be reversed. Whereas the deceased holy man walks amongst the gardens, orchards, and fountains of water in Paradise, Ma'jan, the toll-collector, is seen with his tongue hanging out, unable to quench his thirst.

Scholars have without failure identified the "reversal of roles" in the afterlife as the common motif of this story tradition: Those who enjoy honour on earth (depicted by the glory of a funeral with many mourners) are punished in the afterlife; and those who suffer shame on earth (depicted by a humble funeral not well mourned) are exalted thereafter. But generally overlooked have been the reasons put forward for the reversal of roles. In both stories related above the reward in the afterlife is directly related to the person's piety, that is, his good deeds. Notably in the Israelite story tradition, the person whose many good deeds outweigh his solitary error is depicted as a holy man, that is, a scribe (a functionary of the temple, well educated in the Torah, and scrupulous in adhering to its regulations). The story is thus not confined to a juxtaposition of the "rich" and the "poor" per se, but the "rich", the "poor" and the "Law" (see 7.1 above). The underlying principle is: He who does what the "Law" says, even if he should be shamed in this life, will receive glory and just reward in the afterlife. That the faithful within Israel are rewarded in proportion to their piety was recognised as one of the core elements of conventional Israelite wisdom. This is further attested by a number of rabbinic parables and their commentaries, cited by Knowles (2000:301-302) in his exposition of the parable of "The Workers in the Vineyard" (Mt 20:1-16). Rabbi Tarfon (c 50-120 CE), a contemporary both of Matthew and Luke, writes: "If you have studied much in the Law, much reward will be given you; and faithful is the taskmaster who will pay you the reward of your labour" (*m. Ab.* 2.16; cf Knowles 2000:302). The same conviction is echoed by Rabbi Abika (second century CE): "The world is judged by grace, yet all is according to the excess of works" (*m. Ab.* 3.17; cf Knowles 2000:302). The reversals that do take place in the afterlife are therefore without fail directly related to piety, that is, adherence to the Law. This aspect is important in analysing the subversiveness of Luke's metaphorical story.

There is no consensus among scholars whether or to what degree the parable in Luke's Gospel made use of the common folklore motif discussed above.

Recently various scholars have called its use into question. Forbes (2000:183), for example, draws attention to a number of *differences*: (1) The Rich Man and Lazarus are in some form of relationship with one another; (2) there is no emphasis on the difference in burials(!); (3) the good deeds/bad deeds theme is absent; and (4) there is no tour of the underworld. Although the differences may rightly question direct "dependency" on the folktales, they do not disqualify its use as a means to capture the audience's initial attention. Indeed if, as we have argued, Luke's stories are subversive in nature, differences in detail (also unexpected twists and turns) are to be expected. Hultgren (2000:111) pays no attention to the folklore owing to the late composition date of the known Israelite versions (all dated later than the New Testament). The parable is seen to be a creation in its own right, not a replica of any folktale. The similarities, however, can hardly be overlooked. And even if most Israelite versions are of a later date, the use of "a folkloric motif" remain probable. What is critical, however, is not the use of this folkloric motif as such, but the conventional mind-set reflected in these tales, with its "roots" dating back to an earlier period.

Much has been written on the division of the parable into two distinctive (and unrelated) parts. Indeed, the parable has often been read as two parables in one. Invariably this division is traced back to the folkloric material discussed above. Rudolf Bultmann ([1921] 1995:193, 213) distinguished between verses 19-26, based on the Egyptian and Israelite folktales relating the reversal of fortunes in the afterlife, and verses 17-31, which arose from an Israelite tradition forbidding to ask God for miracles (signs) to augment the Torah and the Prophets (cf Dt 30:11-14). Scholars have not always agreed with the specifics of Bultmann's argument (Herzog 1994:114-115). Whereas Bultmann ([1921] 1995:212-213) assigned both parts of the parable to "Jewish tradition", Crossan (1973:66-67) ascribed the second part of the parable to the "early church". Crossan's argument, in which he is closely followed by Scott (1990:142-143), is based on a number of affinities with the resurrection account of Jesus in Luke 24: (1) The recurring

theme of disbelief (Lk 16:30; 24:12, 25, 41), (2) the repeated reference to "Moses and the prophets" (Lk 16:29, 21; 24:27, 44), (3) the use of the verb ἀνίστημι in unison with "from the dead" (Lk 16:31; 24:26). Doing historical Jesus research, both Crossan (1973:66-67) and Scott (1990:146) therefore reject the second part of the parable as authentic Jesus material. Their analysis is restricted to part one (verses 16-26) which is seen to constitute the core parable. Jeremias ([1963] 1984:123) in turn had argued that the second part (verses 27-31) were added by Jesus as an epilogue to the folkloric material (verses 16-26). For Jeremias ([1963] 1984:123) the folkloric material is incidental, the true emphasis of the parable lying in the second part. The parable is therefore not about the rich man and Lazarus, but rather about the "six brothers" and the "challenge of the hour."

The consequence of this approach is apparent. Having assumed the division of the parable into two parts, the focus falls either on one or the other part, each part expressing distinctive messages (cf Herzog 1994:115). Since our focus falls on the metaphorical stories in *Luke*, that is, as they have been transmitted by Luke, it is our endeavour to read the parable as a unit. This does not exclude the possibility that the two parts of the parable can be traced back to different sources. The structural and stylistic analysis of the parable by Crossan (1973:66-67) and Scott (1989:142-143) indicate that the second part may indeed have been a Lukan composition. As such, the second part of the parable provides the key to the way Luke intended the parable to be understood. There is, however, little doubt that Luke intended the two parts to be read together. Bultmann ([1921] 1995:193) who clearly distinguished two parts, notes that Luke in his introduction to the parable (the "sayings" in verses 14-18) clearly prepares the reader on the "punch line" of *both parts* of the parable. In order to gain access to "Luke's story", it is therefore imperative to read the entire narrative, verses 19-31, as a unit. Such a reading is further enhanced by at least two important factors, noted by Forbes (2000:182-183) - the latter of the two being a feature which we have repeatedly identified as characteristic of the Lukan metaphorical stories: (1) verses 27-31 provide the

audience with a "justification" of the reversal of fortunes described in verses 19-26; and (2) verses 27-31 shift the focus away from a pure *description* of the afterlife to the earthly situation, enabling the parable to proceed with a *challenge* centred on an everyday issue.

7.2.2 Parable exposition

In typical Lukan style the parable proceeds with a description of opposites (verses 19-21):

> A certain *man was rich*, and he put on purple and fine linen, making merry every day sumptuously.
> A certain *poor man* by the name Lazarus has been placed at his gate, being full of sores and desiring to be fed from the thanks that fell from the table of the rich man.

The two main characters, the "rich man" and the "poor man" constitute the two extremes within an advanced agrarian society. Reference to a "gate" indicates that the setting is that of a preindustrial city, possibly, as will be argued below, a metaphorical reference to Jerusalem itself.

As already indicated above (see 7.1) an advanced agrarian society was in essence two-tiered, an upper class of élite and a lower class of non-élite (for a graphical representation see Lenski, Lenski & Nolan 1991:196; see also Herzog 1994:53-73; Stegemann & Stegemann 1997:74). The upper class constituted only between two to five percent of the population. It consisted of the ruler, the ruling class, retainers, and a few merchants. The lower class consisted of peasants, artisans, merchants, the lower members of the retainer class, the unclean and degraded, and at the very bottom the "expendables". The wealth distribution between these two classes was enormous. All land, for example, was owned by the rich upper class, who however never themselves worked the land itself. The

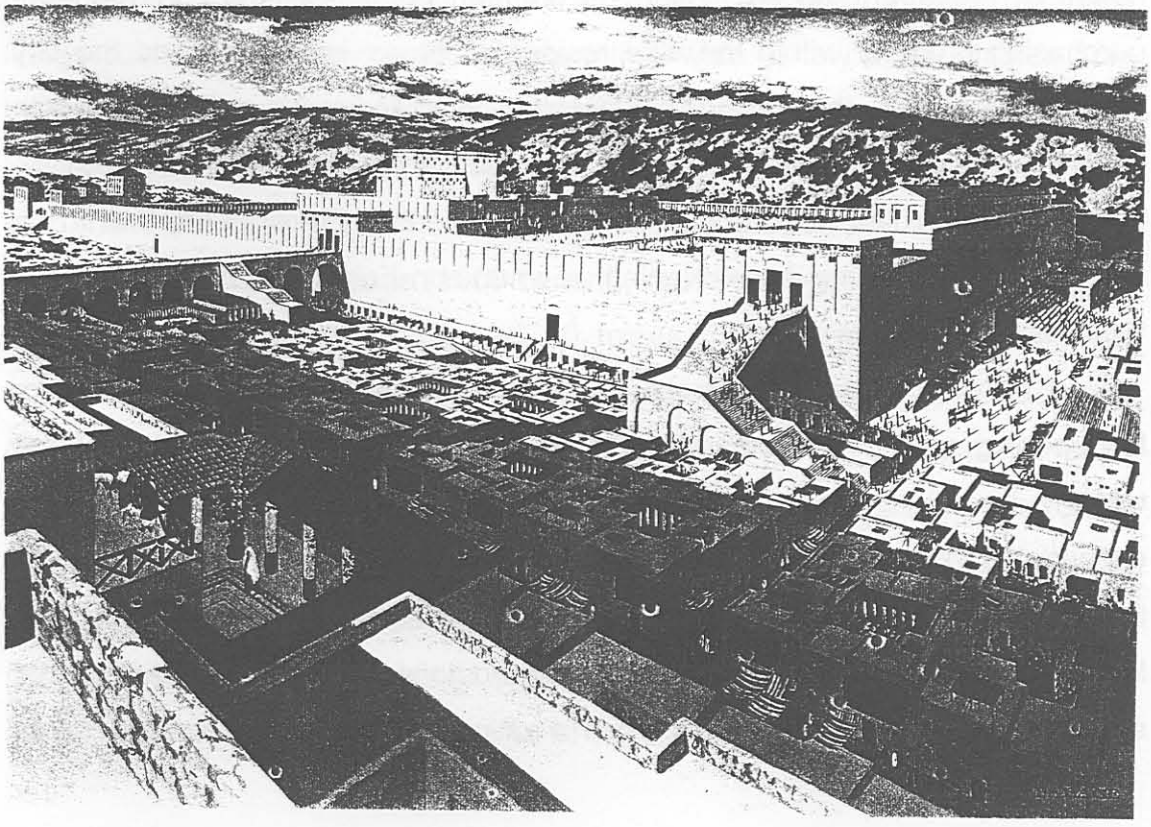
land was rented out and worked by the peasants. As the main goal of the élite was to maximise the yield on their land in order to enrich themselves, exploitation of the peasants was pushed to the limit (see Herzog 1994:64-65). The inevitable result was that the rich became richer and the poor became poorer.

In their description of the lower class, Stegemann and Stegemann (1997:73-74, 88-92) distinguish between the relatively poor (πένητες) and the absolute poor (πτωχοί), the latter being the term used for the "poor man" in the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus". From an economic perspective the relatively poor are defined as those who on the basis of their property or income still managed to provide the necessary subsistence for themselves and their families. This group could vary from relatively poor to relatively rich. The absolute poor, however, were those who lived *below* the subsistence level. Stegemann and Stegemann (1997:91) write: "Sie haben Hunger und Durst, nur Fetzen am Leibe, sind ohne Unterkunft und Hoffnung. Für das Nötigste zum Leben sind sie auf die Hilfe anderer angewiesen: etwa durch Betteln." Van Aarde (1996:953) also draws attention to the social distinction made between the πένητες as the "respectable poor" and the πτωχοί as the "unrespectable poor". Although the distinction is based primarily on economic factors as defined above (see also Scheffler 1993:60-63), the designation of the πτωχοί as the "unrespectable poor" reveals an underlying dimension which extends beyond economic factors, namely that those belonging to this group constitute a "subculture" (Van Aarde 1996:953-954). The term "subculture" indicates a classification of a person below any recognised social category, culminating in forms of social labelling which deprives the said person any social identity. He or she is a "nobody", the social identity of a nonperson, such as a dog or a pig.

In search of food, "the poor" were inevitably drawn to the large cities, where the élite lived. But just as society in general was split into two distinguishable parts, so were the large cities (cf Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:368-369; Malina 1993:90-94). The city centres, like that of Jerusalem, were dominated by the

temple and the palace. Around the temple and the palace lived the élite, many of whose members held positions in the administrative and religious institutions. They were the ones who had power and influence over others. In Jerusalem, these included the priests and the scribes who were tasked with the fulfilment of the sacred Scriptures. With the rich living in and around the city centre, the rest of the population lived at the city's outer limits, the poorest frequently being walled-off. Beggars, prostitutes, people with other undesirable occupations, as well as the landless peasants who drifted to the cities in search of day-labouring opportunities, lived outside the city walls. Locked out during the night, they only gained access to the city during the day.

Crossan and Reed (2001:201) provide a reconstructed picture of the temple mount in Jerusalem, viewed from the Upper City, the living quarters of the élite (see picture below). It shows clearly how the Upper City was segregated from the Lower City - the Lower City extending up the Tyropean Valley between the Temple Mount and the Upper City. From the verandas of their mansions (see the



reconstruction of a wealthy priest's home in Jerusalem's Upper City in Crossan & Reed 2001:213), the Jerusalem élite had a perfect view of the temple, the peasantry living in the Lower City almost hidden from their view. The pilgrims entered the temple either through the "Double Gate" (to the south), or around the corner (to the west, opposite the Upper City) through a huge staircase that led to the esplanade above (Crossan & Reed 2001:201). A striking feature is the "causeway" (pictured in the background) which joined the Upper City of the elites to the temple mount. The causeway made it possible for the élite to enter the temple without passing through the Lower City (although a set of stairs also led from the Lower City to the Upper City - see map in Rosseau & Arav 1995:149). Not pictured in the Crossan and Reed's reconstructed image of Jerusalem are the city walls (see map below, page 320), beyond which the poorest, the πτωχοί and others lived, well "fenced off" from the élite.

Being a South African one cannot but notice a slight resemblance between the preindustrial city and that of many large cities in South Africa. During the height of the apartheid era, the non-European population were barred from purchasing property within the élite residential areas in and around the city centres. As a result, the outskirts of most cities, even today, are still cluttered with the townships of the poor. Although the poor could enter the cities during the day, apartheid laws ruled that the city sectors of the "rich" (Europeans) had to be vacated at a given time in the evening, at when non-Europeans had to return to their residential areas.

This description of a typical pre-industrial city provides the social script for the opening stanza of the parable (verses 19-21). The rich man is not just wealthy, he belongs to the urban élite. The poor man is a beggar, that is, an expendable. The "rich man" is not named, nor is his position in the élite revealed. For the interpretation of the parable, his actual position or identity is not important. He serves as a "code" for those who are rich and dominate. The rich man's social status is exemplified by his clothing and his eating habits. He is dressed in purple

and fine linen. Purple and linen signify not only wealth but also royal power (Scott 1990:148). Both are mentioned in Revelations 18:12 as cargoes shipped by merchants around the Mediterranean. Clothes coloured with Tyrian purple dye, was a rarity and a striking luxury. Similarly the manufacturing of white linen was extremely time-consuming and costly (Green 1997:605). As a result, a white tunic under a purple robe, signified royalty. This dress code was often imitated by the rich (cf Jdg 8:26; Es 8:15). To demonstrate his royal claim, the revolutionary Simon bar Giora, for example, wore purple and fine linen (Stegemann & Stegemann 1997:80). Fine linen is also ascribed to royalty by Jesus. When asked to describe John (the Baptist), Jesus poses the rhetorical question: Do people expect to see somebody in the desert with fine linen? The answer given by him is that those who dress in fine clothes and live in luxury, live in palaces (cf Lk 7:24-25).

The verb εὐφραίνομαι is used by Luke in two other parables (12:19; 15:23, 24, 32) and means "to make a feast" (Scott 1990:149). Extravagant feasts or banquets were common among the rich (cf Green 1997:605). At such banquets it was customary to provide the guests with a wide variety of vegetables from beyond Israel's borders. Meat was restricted to the banquets of the very rich. Stegemann and Stegemann (1997:79-80) draw attention to an interesting tract from the Talmud, in which food regulations depend upon the citizen's wealth: Someone who had 10 minas (1000 denarii), could eat vegetables each day (in addition to his bread). If he had 50 minas (5000 denarii), he could eat approximately 450 grams of meat on the Sabbath. A person who had 1000 denarii could eat this amount each day. The feast of the rich man in the parable is not only sumptuous, but takes place "every day", placing the man at the very top of the social scale. Needless to say, the rich man is potentially a patron, upon whom society at large is dependent (Scott 1990:149). The rich man's excessive richness, however, also call to mind the "extension code" of the Hebrew Scriptures, according to which surplus of the produce in Israel should be shared

by all.

The extravagance of the rich man (verse 19) is contrasted with the lowly state of Lazarus, the poor man (verses 20-21). This contrast is drawn as strongly as possible, and is further stressed by setting the descriptions in parallel:

rich man	dressed in purple and fine line (verse 19a)
poor man	full of sores (verse 20b)
rich man	making merry sumptuously (verse 19b)
poor man	longing to be satisfied from the things falling from the table (verse 21a)

Whereas the rich man's description places him at the top of the social scale, the poor man's description places him at the very bottom. He is a beggar (πτωχός), unable to care for himself, dependent on the support of the rich (Scott 1990:150; Herzog 1994:118-119). His helplessness is accentuated in verse 21b by the phrase that he "was laid" at the gate where the dogs came and licked his sores. The Greek verb ἐβέβλητο, the perfect passive of βάλλω, is often used to depict a person confined to a sickbed (Hultgren 2000:112; cf Mt 8:6, 14; Mk 7:30).

The poor man "was full of sores" (verse 20b). This phrase in itself does not suggest that he was leper, as lepers were confined to remote places outside the city walls (Lv 13:46). But he was, as the verb ἑλκόομαι indicates, "ulcerated" (Forbes 2000:186). According to Israel purity regulations, any skin disorder rendered a person unclean and as such not fit to offer sacrifice (Malina 1993:166; cf Lv 21:18-20). Thus it is that mention of the poor man's sores immediately evokes a sense of dissociation.

Although the rich man feasted sumptuously each day, the poor man waiting for the scraps from the rich man's table, remained unsatisfied (verse 21a). This is indicated by the present particle ἐπιθυμῶν and recalls a similar phrase describing the plight of the younger son in the parable of "A Man Had Two Sons"

(cf Lk 15:16). Various commentators make reference to the practice of the rich of using loaves of bread as napkins, which after use were tossed out (cf Herzog 1994:118; Green 1997:606). Hultgren (2000:112) notes that no evidence has been provided for this use. If however this practice can be substantiated, it would provide just another form of conspicuous consumption that turned the necessities of life into throwaways for the rich (Herzog 1994:118). What we have here is a stark contrast between the sumptuous feasts of the rich man and the unsatisfied hunger of the poor man.

The dogs that came to lick the poor mans sores (verse 21b) have elicited a great range of comment. It is clear that this reference is not intended to raise feelings of compassion for the poor man, but rather to draw attention to a further abuse intensifying his deprivation. With regard to the identity of the dogs two possibilities are put forward (see Herzog 1994:118-119; Forbes 2000:187-188). They are either domestic animals belonging to the rich man or strays, "pariahlike mongrels that roamed the outskirts of town in search of refuse" (Green 1997:606). If they were domestic animals, the ironic point is being made that the dogs were allowed into the banquet hall after the guests had departed to eat the scraps, the poor man remaining *outside* unable to satisfy his hunger. If so, the poor man is pictured as less than a human being. More likely, however, is that the dogs were wild street animals. This would further underscore both the vulnerability of the poor man (not able to fend them) and his unclean and profane state. Being abandoned and exposed to scavenging dogs was gross indignity as evidenced by the words spoken to Ahab by Elijah: "Thus says the Lord: In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood" (1 Ki 21:19; see also Ps 16:4; 22:16, 20; Jr 5:3; Phlp 3:2; Rv 22:15). In the mind-set of conventional Israelite wisdom, the description of the poor man's wounds being licked by stray dogs renders him unclean, an outcast through-and-through, unrighteous, one who belongs to the heathens, rejected by God.

Notably there is a "gate" that separates the two men (verse 20a). The gate

is used metaphorically to convey not only one, but a number of related images. The images feature at different levels of reading and fluctuate ambiguously from one meaning to the other. Each image however serves to further contrast the rich and the poor. First, the "gate" is a figure of speech denoting the urban élite. Within the large cities of the preindustrial world the houses of the rich were often walled. At night the gates were closed, to prevent the poor and other unwelcome intruders trespassing upon the space of the rich (cf (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:378). As such, the gate serves as a boundary marker, symbolising not only the urban élite as such, but also the social barrier that separated the élite from the poor (cf Scott 1990:150). Although living in relatively close proximity to one another, the gate kept the urban élite and the poor apart, furthering division and separateness.

As a metaphor, the gate also recalls the important theme of "judgement", a theme central to this parable (cf Herzog 1994:121). The elders of Israel sat at the "gate" to adjudicate on the Torah (see Gn 22:15; 25:7; Am 5:10, 12, 15; Zch 8:16; cf De Vaux 1978:152-155). As such, the gate alludes not only to the entrance to an élite mansion, but also to that of a city. Although the difference is obvious, *both* references resonate in the parable. The gate recalls the harsh criticism in the Hebrew Scriptures directed at Israel's leaders in the light of their continued abuse of and injustice to the poor. Most striking is Amos' charge (Am 5:12, 15):

> For I know your many transgressions,
> and your sins are numerous -
> you oppress the righteous; you take a bribe,
> you push aside *the poor in the gate* ...
> Hate evil and love good, and establish justice *in the gate*.

In this passage the gate is a symbol of Israelite injustice to the poor. Although the

Israelite leaders were entrusted with adjudications on the Torah as the righteous will of God for his people, they were invariably more concerned with the advantages they themselves could gain. Hellmuth Frey (1965:109) comments:

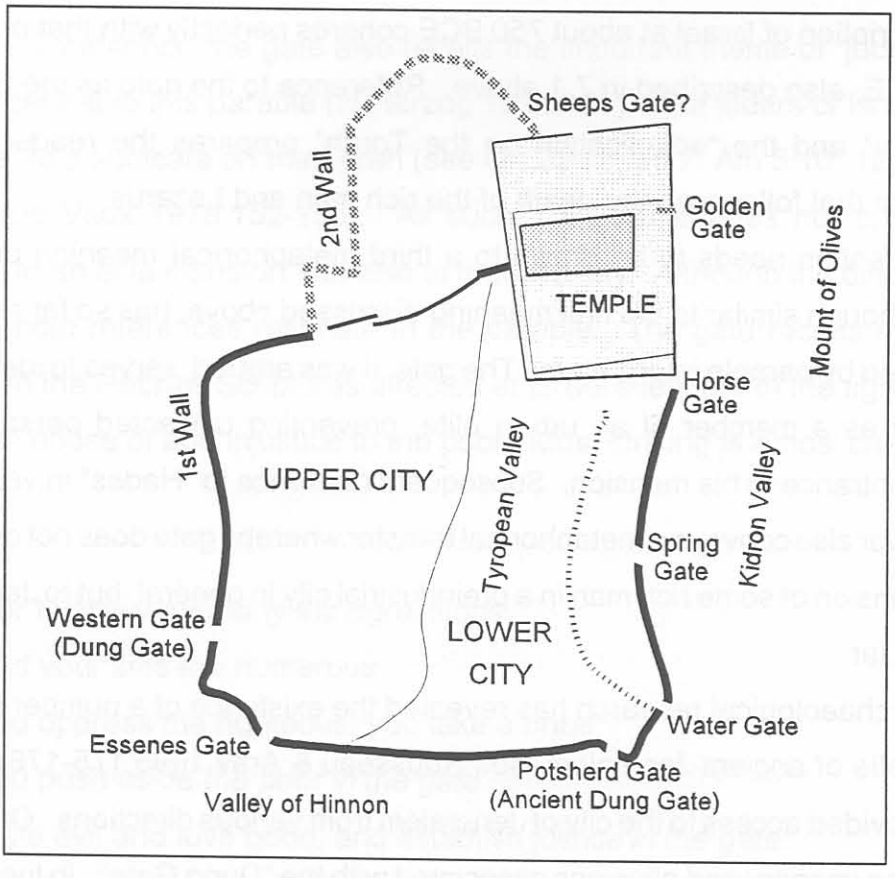
> Das *schielen* auf den eigenen *Vorteil*, das sich Aufschließen für Bestechung aller Art und das *Schauen auf den Menschen treibt in den Schein* und *macht blind für die Wahrheit und das Recht* [...] Solche Bestimmtheit durch den Blick auf Menschen *zerreißt die Gemeinschaft* in Klassen, Welten und Gruppen; in solche, die *Macht* haben, auf der einen Seite, und die *Armen*, Geringen und Demütigen [...] auf der anderen Seite.

This description of Israel at about 750 BCE coheres perfectly with that of the first century CE, also described in 7.1 above. Reference to the gate as the "place of judgement" and the "adjudication on the Torah" prepares the reader for the judgement that follows on the death of the rich man and Lazarus.

Attention needs to be drawn to a third metaphorical meaning of "gate", which although similar to the first meaning discussed above, has so far remained unexplored by parable interpreters. The gate, it was argued, serves to identify the rich man as a member of an urban élite, preventing unwanted persons from gaining entrance to his mansion. Subsequent reference to "Hades" in verses 23-26 however also conveys a metaphorical transfer whereby gate does not only refer to the mansion of some rich man in a preindustrial city in general, but to Jerusalem in particular.

Archaeological research has revealed the existence of a number of gates in the walls of ancient Jerusalem (see Rousseau & Arav 1995:175-176). These gates provided access to the city of Jerusalem from various directions. Of interest to us is the imagery and allusions associated with the "Dung Gate". In the writings of the first-century no gate is referred to by this particular name. However, the

existence of an ancient "Dung Gate" in the south wall of Jerusalem is evidenced in the writings of Nehemiah (2:13; 3:13-14; 12:31). The name surfaces again during the Ottoman Period (1517-1918 CE). Suliman the Magnificent (1520-66) rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and set six gates in the wall (Murphy-O'Connor 1998:5, 13). One of the gates set in the Western Wall (originally only a postern, widened after the Second World War) carried the Arabic name Bab-elMagharbeth, the "Gate of the Moors". The Jews however called it the "Dung Gate", probably after the gate in the writings of Nehemiah (Murphy-O-Connor 1998:21). The map below (a simplified version of a plausible rendering of "Herodian Jerusalem", in Rossaeu & Arav 1995:149) shows, among other, both "Dung Gates" (Western and Potsherd Gates) and the valleys in and around Jerusalem.



The western and southern gates provided access to the valley of Hinonn. The

valley was also known as the "Valley of the Son of Hinnon", indicating that the land originally belonged to the family of Ben Hinnon. In Israelite times, the valley was the site of Canaanite rituals involving child sacrifice (cf Rosseau & Arav 1995:145). At a time when priests were sacrificing to Baal and Asherah in the temple of Jerusalem, Kings Ahaz and Mannaseh of Judah offered their sons to Canaanite gods at a place called Topheth in the valley (cf 2 Ki 16:3; 21:6; 2 Chr 28:3; 33:6). Some Israelites followed their example (cf 2 Ki 23:10; Jr 7:31). The sacrifices came to an end when King Josiah instituted reforms and destroyed all non-Yahweh shrines (2 Ki 23:4-15). In later times the valley was used as a crematorium for the corpses of criminals and unclean animals. Notably, with the valley running adjacent to the living quarters of the élite, it also became a city dump for burning refuse (Rousseau & Arav 1995:145). This explains why certain gates in this part of the Jerusalem city wall were given the name "Dung Gate": through these gates the "rubbish" was thrown out of the city and burnt. Beyond these gates (in the Valley of Hinnon) was the place of the unclean.

Knowledge of the burning of corpses and refuse in the Valley of Hinnon also explains the association this valley had with hell" (in Greek γέεννα). Rossaeu and Arav (1995:145) note that with the Valley of Hinnon being used as a crematorium for the ungodly (signified by the "burning of corpses - see De Vaux 1978:57) it in due time became a "synonym" for hell. This is reflected in the similarity in announcement of the two words: *gêhinnon* (Valley of Hinnon) and *gehenna* (hell). Bietenhard (1983:712) notes that Israelite apocalyptic generally assumed that after the final judgement the Valley of Hinnon would become the place of torment for the wicked, associated with scorching fire (cf 1 En 27; 54; 56:3-4; 90:26-27).

In due time, therefore, γέεννα, (also when not directly associated with the Jerusalem Valley of Hinnon) began to refer to "hell" in general, and subsequently also began to assume the meaning of ᾅδης ("Hades"; in Hebrew שאל - "Sheol"). In the New Testament, the two terms, Gehenna and Hades, are largely used

distinctively, the former referring to a permanent place of torment *after* the final judgement, the latter an intermediate place for all the dead and a place of torment for sinners *before* the final judgement (cf Bietenhard 1983:713). Scholars have however also noted the fluidity of their meanings, the two words being used synonymously and interchangeably, especially in the rabbinic writings at the turn of the first century CE (cf Bietenhard 1983:712; Scott 1990:153; Forbes 2000:190-191). Both words thus assumed the meaning of the underworld and the place of torment for the wicked, whether intermediately or permanently. According to the Talmud, there was an entrance to this underworld in the Valley of Hinnon (*b. Erub.* 19a; Rossaeu & Arav 1995:145).

The metaphorical effect potentially inherent to the words "gate" and "Valley of Hinnon" (as Gehenna and/or Hades) on a first-century listener is immense. One can visualise the smoke rising from the valley beyond the city gates, a vivid image of Hades. The crematorium of the ungodly and the refuse dump of the élite, is seen as a "dumping site" of unrepentant sinners, which include the πτωχοί as the "unrespectable poor" and all those characterised by this "subculture".

That a first-century parable listener will have been aware of the meaning attached to the Valley of Hinnon is highly probable. Although there is no surviving archeological evidence of a refuse burning site in the Valley of Hinnon in the first century (Rossaue & Arav 1995:145), the association of Gehenna with fire in Matthew 5:22 and 18:9 indicates that its existence and its association with hell was generally known at that time. With the "gate of the rich man" possibly featuring as such a metaphor for Jerusalem, the above observations are important and further accentuate the contrast of the rich and poor. The gate places the poor man outside the walls of Jerusalem (the holy city of God) in the valley of the unclean and evil, where they deservedly suffer the fate of sinners. The "gate" is thus used epiphorically in this opening scene of the parable to illustrate conventional Israelite perceptions concerning the poor: They belong in the "Gehenna of fire", that is, in hell.

Unique to the parable is the naming of the poor man. The name itself is a shorted form of the Hebrew אֶלעזר, meaning "God helps". Various reasons have been given for this choice of name (see Forbes 2000:185-186). Noteworthy here is the connection made between the name Lazarus and the role played by Abraham, who features in the second half of the parable. According to Genesis 15:2 Abraham had a servant in his household called אלעזר (Eliezer), who might also be the servant who was sent by Abraham as his envoy to secure a wife for his son Isaac (Gn 24). Apart from its use in Genesis, Derrett (cited by Donahue 1988:169-170) shows that אלעזר became a well-known figure in the Haggadah. According to *Midrash Genesis* (cf Donahue 1988:170), Eliezer went about in disguise on this earth and reported to Abraham on how his children observed the Law, especially in regard to concerns for the poor. Although it is difficult to assess, whether (and if so to what degree) a parallel can be drawn between the parable and midrashic tradition, such a parallel cannot be discounted. Importantly, what we have here are both a connection with the Law and its concern for the poor and also the existence of a similar theme in the folkloric material (discussed above) concerning an envoy being sent from the dead. Purely at literary level, however, the naming of the poor man forms part of the continuing *contrast* drawn between himself and the rich man. Scott (1990:149) writes: "The first man has his richness; the poor man has only his name, Lazarus [...] one is full of possessions, and the other is empty except for a name, but the meaning of the name may well hold out a promise" (see also Green 1997:606). In both cases the name "Lazarus" prepares the audience for the reversal of fortunes that is about to occur.

The phrase ἐγένετο δέ (verse 22) introduces a decisive point in the parable. Both men die. The events immediately preceding their deaths are described in reverse order to their lives, possibly to highlight the reversal of the their status in the life to come (Blomberg 1990:203). The reversal of status is conveyed by a number of epiphors (contrasts) with increasing tension as the

parable continues. The first epiphor is a juxtaposition of "poor man" and "Abraham's bosom". Contrary to conventional expectations the poor man is carried by angels into the bosom of Abraham. Reference to angels highlights the status of honour ascribed to the poor man. The Hebrews Scriptures mention two similar events, both featuring men highly revered. Enoch is taken up to heaven by God (Gn 5:24), and Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind by a chariot and horses of fire (2 Ki 2:11). From a historical perspective it is difficult to determine whether the expression "carried by angels" appeared in the original parable, as the expression is not found in rabbinic sources until 150 CE (Forbes 2000:188, footnote 37). Where used, however, the expression regularly depicts the fortune of the righteous (see Hultgren 2000:113, footnote 12).

The figure "Abraham's bosom" is wide ranging and has generated a great deal of comment. Depending on the context in which it is used, it can refer to a child at a mother's bosom, indicating a place of protection and security, or the place of highest honour at a banquet (Jn 13:23), or the place of rest for martyrs (cf Herzog 1994:121). The eschatological context of the parable, however, conveys the meaning of close fellowship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets at the messianic banquet (cf Lk 13:28-29). This is, as noted by Forbes (2000:189), in stark contrast to verse 21: whereas the poor man was excluded from the rich man's table, he is now the honoured guest at the messianic banquet.

In the light of conventional perceptions of the poor as being unrighteous, the description of Lazarus' transport and final resting place is puzzling to say the least, imploring an explanation. The explanation is not given, but conventional perceptions would come forward with an answer similar to the one given by Si-Osiris in the Egyptian folks tale (see 7.2.1 above). If indeed Lazarus is righteous, the only plausible reason could be that taking Lazarus' *entire life* into account, his good deeds must have outweighed his evil deeds. Any thought along these lines is however frustrated by the omission of a burial, suggesting that Lazarus could have suffered the same fate as many of the poor, dumped in the valley of Hinnon

outside Jerusalem. Ancient Israelites were shaped by the belief that as long as the body existed, the soul existed as well and was like a shade over the body in the subterranean abode of Sheol (Hades) (De Vaux 1978:56). As long as the bones therefore existed, the soul would continue to feel what was done to the body. Non-burial, exposing the body to scavenger animals, for example wild dogs (verse 21), would therefore rob someone of his or her last honour and thus constitute the highest form of dishonour, tantamount to bearing a curse of God (cf Green 1997:607; 1 Ki 14:11; Jr 16:4; 22, 19; Ez 29:5). A proper burial on the other hand was an extended form of honour for the righteous, with great care being taken to lay a person to rest. That Lazarus is carried into the bosom of Abraham stands in stark contrast to his non-burial. Being rejected by man, he is accepted by God in the afterlife.

In contrast to Lazarus, the rich man enjoys a burial. That he is accorded a burial is important. It confirms his perceived righteousness and shows that the honour he enjoyed throughout his life is also extended to his death (Green 1997:607). Indeed, he experiences no misfortune that could be interpreted as an act of divine judgement. He enjoys both a prosperous life and an honourable burial. Grundmann (1978:328) summarises the importance of the burial with the following quote from the Ethiopian Enoch (103:5-6): "Selig sind die Sünder; sie haben all ihr Leben lang Gutes gesehen. Nun sind sie im Glück und Reichtum gestorben..., und ein Gericht wurde an ihnen nicht vollzogen." The quote expresses conventional perceptions that those who experience no misfortune in life and death (burial) will not be judged.

Whereas however the "burial" of the poor man constituted one narrative gap, the subsequent fate of the rich man after burial constitutes a second narrative gap. Scott's (1990:152) structural analysis of the parallelism of verse 22 highlights the two omissions:

the poor man	the rich man
died	died
(narrative gap)	was buried
carried away	(narrative gap)

Lazarus received no honourable burial (intimating his unrighteous status) ... but is carried away into the bosom of Abraham. The rich man was buried (confirming from a conventional Israelite point of view his righteous status) ... but the story does not immediately disclose his fortunes in the afterlife. This second narrative gap raises the audience's expectations and provides the necessary impetus for the continuation of the story.

Based on the fact that the parable does not explicitly refer to a proper funeral and an honourable burial for the rich man, some interpreters reject the contrast drawn above between the non-burial of the poor man and the burial of the rich man. It is argued that the contrast is between the poor man being "carried away" (honour), and the rich man who is simply "buried" (dishonour) (Hultgren 2000:113; Forbes 2000:188). However in the light of the importance attributed to burials in ancient societies, the burial of a rich man can hardly constitute the *negative* pole of a contrasting parallelism. Burial is inevitably a form of showing honour to a righteous person. It is the very burial of the rich man, followed abruptly by the narrative gap, that compounds the shock of the audience as the parable continues.

The narrative gap at the end of verse 22 is immediately filled in verse 23. It is not the poor man who appears in Hades, the place of torment and fire, but the rich man. If, as it was argued above, the gate of the rich man is used in the parable as a metaphor of Jerusalem with the Dung Gate leading into the valley of Hinnon, the initial epiphor of the opening scene (gate as an illustration of the poor in "hell") is used as a diaphor in verse 22 (the rich man is in "hell'). Based on conventional perceptions, the audience will have been surprised if not alarmed to

find the poor man in the bosom of Abraham and not in Hades. But to find the rich man in Hades, is shocking. Up to this point no indication had been given that the rich man may suffer misfortune in the afterlife. That he is judged is contrary to all conventional expectations. Both his fortune during life as well as his burial on death suggesting an appearance in "paradise" where he would enjoy the fruits of his righteous life.

With the description of the rich man being "in torment", the contrast with the poor man, who is seen "in the bosom of Abraham" is restored. The division that characterised their life on earth continues in the afterlife, albeit in reverse order. Notably in verse 23 the name of the poor man is reintroduced for the first time since the opening scene (Scott 1990:153). After the initial introduction, Lazarus was only the "poor man" (nameless). In the afterlife the promise of his name as one whom "God helps" is realised.

It is evident that the parable daws upon common folkloric imagery of conditions after death, the inconsistencies of which have raised a number of questions. As already noted above, Hades is generally considered to be a place to which all the dead go but only remain for a short time (Ac 2:27, 31; Rv 20:13-14) prior to the final judgement (Rv 20:13). In verse 23 however Hades appears to be a permanent abode and place of torment, comparable to hell. Although the term Hades is used, the description is that of Gehenna, which calls to mind the valley of Hinnon (*gêhinnon*) outside Jerusalem where the poor and unrighteous were dumped after death and often burnt. That Hades is not simply an abode of the dead is also clear from the fact that the rich man is there, but not Lazarus, who is in Abraham's bosom. Although in close proximity to one another, the two places are sharply distinguished, first by the phrase ἀπὸ μακρόθεν, and secondly by the great χάσμα (verse 26) that separates the two. That the chasm is "fixed" (ἐστήρικται) indicates that the judgement is irreversible (as will be the case at the final judgement when the wicket will be confined to Gehenna forever). It is clearly not the intention of the parable to give a literal and precise description of the

intermediate state of the afterlife. More important than any "literal" descriptions are the "literary" contrasts. Lazarus enjoys the fulfilment of the promises made to the people of God, whereas the rich man is judged and suffers torment. At this stage the reason why the two men suffer different fates is not disclosed.

The rich man calls out to Abraham (verse 24). That he calls him πάτερ (verse 24) is significant and compounds the confusion. The term πάτερ evokes family solidarity (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:378). As a family member he has a claim to be heard. More important however is the conventional belief that being a descendant of Abraham was enough to save a person from eternal punishment. This view finds expression in Midrash Rabbah (*Gen. R.* 48.8; cf Forbes 2000:297): "R. Levi said, 'In the Hereafter Abraham will sit at the entrance to Gehenna, and permit no circumcised Israelite to descend therein.'"

The scene of the rich man in torment despite being a descendant of Abraham reinforces the teaching of John (the Baptist), who advocated that having Abraham as a father counts for nothing (cf Lk 3:8). What counts is repentance (verse 30). The request of the rich man, however, shows no trace of repentance. He seeks alleviation of his pain. Herzog (1994:123) notes that the request of the rich man is delivered with two imperatives: show mercy and send Lazarus. The imperatives reflect the customary attitude of the élite in making demands and expecting obedience. The request of the rich man is hardly an effort to bridge the gulf separating him and Lazarus. The word ἐλέησον does however provide an ironical twist, highlighted, as noted by Green (1997:608), by the wordplay in the Greek text: "The one who now requests mercy (Greek: ἔλεος) at the hand of Lazarus seems never to have contemplated the merciful act of almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη) to benefit Lazarus." The scene recalls two similar scenes in the parable of "The Good Samaritan" and "A Man Had Two Sons" (see Lk 10:33; 15:20), both of which demonstrated that "mercy" constitutes both the essence of the Torah as well as the central virtue of God (see chapter 5 and 6 above). Ironically the role of showing mercy falls to Lazarus, the poor man, conceived

within conventional Israelite wisdom as being rejected by God. Lazarus dipping his finger in water, would of course not alleviate any pain or quench any thirst. But the imagery of the afterworld, running water (in paradise) and fire (in Hades), provides the literary tools to portray the contrast of fortunes (Scott 1990:154). Sumptuous meals during the rich man's life are now contrasted with a drop of water.

That the rich man's appeal is addressed to "Abraham" may have raised expectations among the audience of an imminent change in fortune for the rich man. Abraham is a model of hospitality to strangers (cf Gn 18:1-15). Scott (1990:153-154) shows that in rabbinic literature Abraham's virtue of hospitality is portrayed as even exceeding that of Job's. Rabbinic conclusion is based on the fact that Abraham, in contrast to Job, who only fed those who were accustomed to enough food, also fed strangers, that is the poor, and the needy. The request of the rich man is ironical and stands in stark contrast to the model of Abraham's hospitality. He was as wealthy as Abraham, but lacked his generosity (Wright, S I 2000:231). Not once did he open his gate to alleviate Lazarus' sufferings.

Abraham's response is not unkind (verse 25). It confirms kinship (τέκνον). But the request is nevertheless denied. On the surface, the reason for the denial seems to be based on economic prosperity: the rich man having enjoyed the good things on earth, suffers in the afterlife. Conversely, the poor man who suffered on earth is comforted in the afterlife. Simply being rich is however not the issue. Abraham himself was rich. The reversal can therefore not be based on social inequality. Forbes (2000:192-132) contests that the rich man's fate is directly related to his *relationship* with Lazarus. The word μνήσθητι (verse 25) recalls not only the contrast of a rich and a poor man in the opening scene, but also the reference to a "gate" that separated them (verse 20). The gate becomes the basis of reflection in verse 26.

As the gate separated the rich man from the poor man in the opening scene, now a great chasm prevents the poor man from being sent to the rich man

ancient literature of someone returning from the dead to reveal his or her own fate or the fate of others in the next world (cf Green 1997:609; Hultgren 2000:114). However, what is uncommon is the *refusal* of the request (verses 29-31). The refusal will have shocked the audience. Central to an understanding of the parable is the reason given by Abraham for the refusal: "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them" (verse 29). Although the previous verse indicates the realisation of the rich man that he should have shown concern for Lazarus, epitomised in his efforts to prevent his brothers from suffering the same fate as himself, the connection with the Torah is not made. This connection is made by Abraham. But instead of clarifying the refusal, it rather compounds the confusion. The Torah and the prophets constitute the core of the rich man's religion. His honour will have centred around Torah obedience, confirmed by the blessings he enjoyed in life. Herzog (1994:124) however poses the crucial question: "But *whose* Torah?" The question implies a contrast in Torah understanding which constitutes the backdrop to the parable. To which Torah does the phrase "Moses and the prophets" refer? Herzog (1994:124-125) elaborates:

> The Torah of the prophets or the Torah of the priests and scribes? The Torah that proclaimed, "There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the Lord is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, if only you will obey the Lord your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today" (Deut. 15:4-5), or the Torah that declared that the people must not make themselves unclean by any forbidden practices, "You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy" (Lev.20:26)? The Torah of the debt code with its sabbatical and jubilee provisions or the Torah of the purity code with its classifications into clean and unclean [...]? The Torah that

protected the poor or the Torah that blamed and condemned the poor?

That the poor man in this parable is not contrasted with a "priest" or a "scribe" does not invalidate the contrasts drawn by Herzog above. From a literary perspective it makes sense to contrast Lazarus, the poor man, with a rich counterpart, not with a priest or with a scribe. But priests, scribes and the rich all formed part of the same tier of a two-tiered agrarian society. Indeed, the priests and scribes served as retainers who provided the rich with the necessary ideology both to protect and justify their presumptuous life style.

The wording of Abraham's answer in verse 29 indicates that failure on the part of the rich man to show concern for the poor cannot be traced back to insufficient Torah information, but to an unwillingness to "listen". The rich man's request is denied, because his brothers should "listen" to Moses and the prophets. Any hidden accusation of unfair treatment towards himself in Hades is thereby also rebuffed, as, by implication, he should have listened as well. Green (1997:609) notes: "'Hearing' has a prominent role in Luke-Acts, where it either entails belief or is a necessary precursor to faith or repentance." The insistence on "listening" recalls the repeated warnings of Jesus: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Lk 8:8; 14:35). Ironically the "poor" (toll-collectors and sinners) gather to hear Jesus (Lk 15:1); the "rich" (the Israelite leaders) on the other hand, although being circumcised in the flesh, have "uncircumcised hearts and ears" (Ac 7:51).

The rich man continues to plead and argue his case: "No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead should go to them, they will repent" (verse 30). Ironically the rich man has again failed to "listen" and has clearly missed the point. By implication, he continues to argue that the witness of the Torah is insufficient and needs to be supplemented by an additional witness from the dead. Granting his request, would concede this very point (Herzog 1994:125).

The repeated and intensified request of the rich man to send an envoy from the dead is paralleled by an equally intensified denial: "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded even if one from the dead should rise" (verse 31). The use of the word ἀναστῇ has drawn much comment. It provides a shift from a "message" from the dead, to a "miracle" of resurrection. Whereas the rich man's request is confined to Lazarus appearing as a messenger from the dead, Abraham's denial indicates that not even a miracle of resurrection would sway those with "uncircumcised hearts and ears". As such, the denial rejects the use of signs to augment the Torah. The rejection of signs however hardly features as the main point of the parable (cf Herzog 1994:114). It is subordinate to the more important theme of Torah adequacy. The Torah does not need to be supplemented, be it by additional information from the dead (verse 29), or by the miracle of a resurrection of the dead (verse 31). Furthermore, based on the use of the word ἀνίστημι, scholars have noted the allusion to the later resurrection account of Jesus in Luke 24 (cf Crossan 1973:66-67). This allusion will hardly have been missed by the Lukan reader. A resurrection from the dead did occur. The continued unbelief by many Israelites served as a vindication of Abraham's words. Grundmann (1978:333) proposes that this verse suggests why the resurrection appearances of Jesus were confined to his disciples.

Although the end of the parable provides a number of allusions, its serves at literary level not only as an intensification of the rejection of the rich man's request, but also as an intensified appeal to the parable's audience to "listen" to the Torah. The Torah does not justify apartness and division whereby the rich become richer and the poor poorer. In essence the Torah promotes "mercy" (the very appeal of the rich man in Hades to Abraham). It is a mercy that leads to the opening of the "gate" separating the rich from the poor. But will the audience listen? Although the fate of the rich man in Hades seems to be sealed, the parable is not closed. It challenges the audience to act differently, not in contrast but in accordance with the Torah.

7.3 The challenge of a God who looks beyond "social class"

We have argued repeatedly that it forms part of Luke's literary style to juxtapose opposites, both at macro as well as micro level; and that the juxtaposition of these opposites serves the goal of challenging the audience to see reality and God differently. This literary style of Luke finds confirmation in the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus". "Rich" and "poor" are opposites and constitute exclusive entities on the social map of ancient Israel. Being opposites means that Luke uses them diaphorically to create a "tensive metaphor". That the story contains opposites does not in itself create the tension. The tension is created when contrary to conventional expectations the subsequent fortunes of the two characters after death are reversed, thereby placing the world of conventional Israel upside down.

The reversal of fortunes is generally recognised by interpreters of this parable. Less obvious is the *focus* of the challenge. The focus is largely determined by the approach adopted by the interpreter, and whether he or she views the parable as a unit or as consisting primarily of two distinctive part. If the focus falls on the second part (verses 27-31) the role played by Lazarus is minimised - and indeed the social difference between the two main characters becomes a secondary feature of minimal importance to the parable. Jeremias ([1963] 1984:125) writes:

> Da der erste Teil an einem bekannten Erzählungsstoff anknüpft, liegt der Ton auf dem Neuen, das Jesus diesem hinzufügt, auf dem Epilog. Wie allen anderen doppelgipfligen Gleichnisse hat also auch das unsere "Achtergewicht". Das heißt: Jesus will nicht zu dem Problem reich und arm Stellung nehmen, er will auch nicht Belehrung über das Leben nach dem Tod geben, sondern er erzählt das Gleichnis, um Menschen, die dem Reichen und seinen Brüdern gleichen, vor dem drohenden Verhängnis zu warnen. Der arme Lazarus ist also nur eine Nebengestallt, eine Kontrastfigur.

That the story-teller should make use of folkloric material portraying two characters from the extremes of the social scale, without both characters contributing significantly to the impact of the parable, is most unlikely. With Jeremias' focus falling on the second part of the parable, he and others scholars who follow his lead, disqualify the theme "rich-and-poor" and find the point of the parable in its polemic against signs. Jeremias ([1963] 1984:125) proposes the solution: "Denn wer sich dem Wort Gottes nicht beugt, wird auch nicht durch ein Mirakel zur Umkehr gerufen werden."

As noted above (7.2.1) most historical Jesus scholars have in turn eliminated the second part of the parable as authentic. Their interpretation is therefore restricted to the first part of the parable (verses 16-26). As such, however, it becomes exceedingly difficult to grasp the *challenge* of the parable. This is apparent in Crossan's analysis. Crossan (1973:68) discounts the belief that Jesus in telling this parable was interested in an "admonition on the dangers of wealth - which the folktales had already done admirably - but in the reversal of human situation in which the Kingdom's disruptive advent could be metaphorically portrayed and linguistically made present." Seemingly the challenge, if any, is confined to the knowledge that in the Kingdom of God human situations are reversed, based on either the fate or the fortune that someone suffered or enjoyed on earth. For Scott (1990:158-159) the challenge lies in passing through the "gate". The gate is provided by the Kingdom of God. But, in an endeavour to avoid any "moral" implications, the gate is interpreted as grace. "Grace is the gate" which disappears when God helps Lazarus.

The greatest shortcoming of these interpretations is that the parable tends to degenerate into an abstract issue, specific to none of the figures who inhabit the narrative world, be it that of the original Jesus or that of the Lukan community. Critical for an understanding of the parable is that the story narrates not abstract

social types but representatives of two "social classes", very real to the audience of the first-century Mediterranean world.

Historical Jesus and subsequent approaches have however provided many useful clues and have refocused parable interpretation on the contrast between wealth and poverty, the rich and the poor, and the subversion of conventional worldviews. With the focus on the discrepancies between rich and poor most interpreters stress the "dangers" that accompany wealth and see the challenge of the parable in overcoming these dangers. Great concern is shown to disclose that wealth in itself is not the issue. The rich man is not condemned to Hades because he is rich, nor is the poor rewarded with a place in Abraham's bosom because he is poor. The rich man's fate is rather the result of his callous lovelessness and impious self-indulgence, with Lazarus' fortune in the afterlife the result of his implicit piety and the faithful and uncomplaining acceptance of his plight (cf Blomberg 1990:205-206). Invariably the danger of wealth is seen in the failure of the rich man to "see" the poor man. Donahue (1988:171) writes: "... one of the prime dangers of wealth is that it causes 'blindness'." The text of the parable however focuses not on the failure of the rich man to "see" Lazarus (whom he seems to know), but on the failure of the rich to "listen" to Moses and the prophets (verse 29).

It is only when the two parts of the parable are read as a unity that the full metaphorical thrust of the parable within the narrative and contextual worlds of Luke-Acts becomes apparent. The description of social classes and the unexpected reversal of fortunes in the first part of the parable sets the scene for the exhortation to read Moses and the prophets in the second part (Herzog 1994:129). But the exhortation is not an epiphoric addition, that, is an illustration of the general truth already conveyed in the first part of the parable, but is itself *diaphoric* in nature and compounds the confusion. The confusion is compounded by the reference to the Torah (Moses and the Prophets). The Torah which apparently mandated and justified the rich man's callous behaviour to the poor

man, becomes the very source of his condemnation. This insight is attributed mainly to the work done by William Herzog (1994). The rich man and Lazarus not only refer to wealth and poverty respectively, but represent, as noted above, two "social classes", the urban élite (who had power and influence over others) and the very poor and desperate (generally perceived as expendables). The very existence of the πτωχοί (the absolute poor) within a society governed by the worldview that every person had the "right to subsistence", indicates exploitation and, within Israel, a failure to adhere to the principle of extension in the debt code. Reference to "Moses and the prophets" reveals the shocking (diaphoric) truth that the rich (urban élite) did not only live at the expense of the poor, but twisted Torah and Temple to serve their ends (Herzog 1994:128). Hospitality and almsgiving had been reinterpreted from the perspective of Israelite purity codes, thereby reinforcing the segregation of two tiers within society, the wealthy (clean) and the poor (unclean).

Blomberg (1990:206) already registered the subversiveness of the parable by noting: "The parable overturns conventional Jewish wisdom which saw the rich as blessed by God and the poor as punished for their wickedness." But he failed to note the parody played by the Law of God. Any (dominant) worldview (the grand-narrative of society) needs to be legitimised. Herzog (1994:129) writes:

> One powerful source of legitimation resides in how an ultimate ordering of things is used to justify current human arrangements. In the political sphere of first-century Palestine, this entailed the use of some form of the mandate of heaven, and in the social sphere, the use of the afterlife to justify the inequities of human life. Portraying the age to come as a confirmation of the present age provided potent support for a two-tiered society, the blessed wealthy in control and the cursed poor suffering from the consequences of their sin.

The "mandate from heaven" is none other than "Moses and the prophets".

Israelite "prosperity teaching" advocated: to be rich is a sign of God's blessing; to be poor a sign of God's wrath (cf Forbes 2000:195). The rich man in the parable was seemingly surrounded with signs of God's abundant blessing. After death, he should have been in Abraham's bosom. By contrast Lazarus should have been in Hades (in hell). The unexpected reversal of fortunes in the parable constitutes a contra-narrative which subverts the "ideology" that "social class" is an indicator of divine blessing. Once this perception had been sprung, the question of Torah-interpretation imposes itself. If indeed, "social class" is no longer an indicator of divine blessing, how could the scribes in Jerusalem conclude the opposite?

It is in this context, as Herzog (1994:130) notes, that the figure of Abraham, the patriarch of Israel, plays a critical role. In some ways the depiction of the rich man in the parable, parallels that of Abraham. Like the rich man, Abraham was also rich (Gn 13:2) and enjoyed a burial with honour (Gn 25:7-11). This parallelism indicates that the rich man is most likely to be identified as a "child of Abraham". But in contrast to the rich man of our parable, Abraham was the model of hospitality and generosity (Gn 18:1-15). Furthermore, Abraham refused to accept the king of Sodom's offer to keep the goods he had recovered in battle because of his desire to have his wealth known as a sign of God's favour (Gn 14:13-24; Herzog 1994:130). This is in stark contrast to the depiction of the Pharisees as "money lovers" in Luke 16:14. Reference to Abraham indicates that the Law of God cannot be used to justify a gate that shuts the door on the poor (see also Forbes 2000:195-196). The charge of the prophet Amos (5:12-15, quoted above) that the Israelite leaders - instead of establishing justice - "push aside the poor in the gate", resounds in the background. The gate as a metaphor of Israelite justice should not lead to a marginalisation of the needy, but to the breaking down and crossing of erected barriers.

There is little doubt that Abraham was a figure of great value to those

whose task it was to legitimise the social order of the day. But by using Abraham as an advocate of the desperately poor, the shock effect of the parable is increased. For a man who presumed to name Abraham as his "father", this rich man, as well as his brothers, should heed the Scriptures, "Moses and the prophets" (cf Green 1997:610).

At literary level, within Luke's narrative world the rich man and Lazarus are elements of the continuing tension of the two main opposition groups in Luke's narrative, that of the Israelite leaders and that of Jesus and his witnesses. Looking at "social classes", Jesus (a peasant) and those with whom he associated and shared table-fellowship (toll-collectors and sinners), belonged to the poor (the unclean and powerless). The Israelite leaders, as strict adherers of the Law, belonged to the rich (the clean and those who had power and influence). This is the world that is subverted by the father-figure of Abraham who adjudicates for the poor. The subversion is the result of the creation of an alternate symbolic universe in which "social class" does not determine one's status before God.

Extratextually, in the contextual world of Luke's narrative, this parable could be referring to the "rich" and "poor" within Luke's community. Esler (1987:183-200) puts forward convincing arguments that Luke's community encompassed individuals from the top and the bottom of society (see also Forbes 2000:228-233). The literary style of Luke, in particular the Prologue (Lk 1:1-4) indicates that Luke himself came from the upper segment of society. Furthermore, there is a focus in Luke's narrative on a number of converts of elevated status (cf Lk 7:1-10; 8:3; Ac 8:26-39; 10:1-47; 13:1, 7, 12). The priority accorded the utterly destitute in the scheme of salvation within Luke's narrative hardly needs mentioning. It constitutes the core of Jesus' inaugural preaching in Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30), but already begins earlier in the Magnificat (cf Lk 1:52-53). Luke's affinity for the poor is especially prominent in the redactional passages of Luke, the most obvious example being "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" in Luke 14:21 in place of the "good and the bad" in Jesus' parable of the Wedding Banquet as told

in Matthew 22:10. In Acts 4:32-35 Luke puts forward what to him seems to be the ideal of a community in which "social classes" do not lead to barriers and other forms of exclusivity. Possessions are no longer perceived to belong to oneself: everything is shared. The result of the successful implementation of almsgiving is that "there were no needy ones among them" (Ac 4:34). The importance of almsgiving is further accentuated in Acts 6:1-4 with the election of seven helpers so that the Hellenistic widows would not be overlooked in the daily distribution of food (διακονίᾳ). The contrast between "Hellenistic" widows and "Hebrew" widows in this passage could further reflect on Luke's community, since the tensions there resulted not only from the disparities between rich and poor but also from Israelite opposition to the "extension of goods" to the (unclean) Gentile followers of Jesus. Such an action, assisting *all* widows, would contribute to satisfying the need of the Gospel message for legitimisation (see 4.4.3 above).

Although most scholars agree that Luke shares a real concern for the impoverished (cf Green 1997:610; Forbes 2000:196: Hultgren 2000:115), we see the primary goal of Luke in telling his metaphorical stories, including the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus", not as promoting social welfare, but as his attempt to create an alternate symbolic universe in which conventional barriers that justify segregation and exploitation are broken down. Better living conditions for the poor will be the *result* of a radically changed worldview. Although this alternate worldview challenges conventional Israelite perceptions, the intended goal is not an alienation of the Israelites but rather reconciliation. Again, as with the parable of "The Good Samaritan", this reconciliation is achieved by reference to the Law of God, which is not rejected, but rather interpreted in such a way as to reveal the very core of God's heart, which is in essence "mercy", extended to all regardless of nationality or "social class". In the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" the priority of the Law is enhanced by the use of "Abraham". Although Abraham is enlisted as an advocate of the desperately poor, he nevertheless remains the father of *all* the children of Israel, both those of the very top strata of society as

well as those of the very lowest.

In our exposition of the parable of "The Good Samaritan" we indicated that Luke's use of a Samaritan is two-fold: on the one hand, the Samaritan provides Luke with a diaphor to shock his audience out of their comfort zone; on the other hand, however, the Samaritan provides Luke with the perfect "hinge" for the inclusion of Gentiles in God's salvation. The question that needs to be considered further is whether the use of the term πτωχός (referring to the unrespectable poor *within* Israel) in the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" plays a similar role to the "Samaritan" in the parable of "The Good Samaritan". It has been argued that the πτωχός constituted a subculture, whose members were characterised as "nonpersons" (Van Aarde 1996:953-954). On the conventional Israelite "map" of people, ordered in a hierarchy from most holy to least holy (see 4.5.2 above), the (Israelite) "nonperson" would, therefore, be placed on the same level, or even below, the level of the "most unholy" Gentile (the non-Israelite). In contrast to most Gentiles, however, the Israelite "nonperson" did not live far away, but just outside the "gate".

Mention must be made of the striking and most appropriate chapter heading of Scott's (1990:141) exposition of this parable: "Good fences make good neighbors." Conventional Israelite wisdom, fervently endorsed by the Israelite leaders through their interpretation of the Torah, erected fences not only on the borders of Israel, but also *within* Israel. These fences ensured "good neighbourliness", but they also caused division, and indeed not only Israelite-Gentile division but Israelite-Israelite division, leading to a divided Israel. In this parable it seems as though Luke impresses upon his community a symbolic universe in which not only Israelites and Gentiles are reconciled, but Israelites and Israelites. Mission and the work of reconciliation begin not beyond the borders, but in close proximity of one's own home: in front of the "gate".